

# VARIOUS

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# Содержание

A MAGAZINE OF LITERATURE, ART, AND POLITICS	4
VOL. X.—OCTOBER, 1862.—NO. LX	4
AUTUMNAL TINTS	5
THE PURPLE GRASSES	9
THE RED MAPLE	16
THE ELM	21
FALLEN LEAVES	23
THE SUGAR-MAPLE	30
THE SCARLET OAK	38
DAVID GAUNT	50
PART II	50
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	84

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**A MAGAZINE OF LITERATURE,**  
**ART, AND POLITICS**

**VOL. X.—OCTOBER, 1862.—NO. LX**

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# AUTUMNAL TINTS

Europeans coming to America are surprised by the brilliancy of our autumnal foliage. There is no account of such a phenomenon in English poetry, because the trees acquire but few bright colors there. The most that Thomson says on this subject in his "Autumn" is contained in the lines,—

"But see the fading many-colored woods,  
Shade deepening over shade, the country round  
Imbrown; a crowded umbrage, dusk and dun,  
Of every hue, from wan declining green to sooty dark":—

and in the line in which he speaks of

"Autumn beaming o'er the yellow woods."

The autumnal change of our woods has not made a deep impression on our own literature yet. October has hardly tinged our poetry.

A great many, who have spent their lives in cities, and have never chanced to come into the country at this season, have never seen this, the flower, or rather the ripe fruit, of the year. I remember riding with one such citizen, who, though a fortnight too late for the most brilliant tints, was taken by surprise, and would not believe that there had been any brighter. He had never

heard of this phenomenon before. Not only many in our towns have never witnessed it, but it is scarcely remembered by the majority from year to year.

Most appear to confound changed leaves with withered ones, as if they were to confound ripe apples with rotten ones. I think that the change to some higher color in a leaf is an evidence that it has arrived at a late and perfect maturity, answering to the maturity of fruits. It is generally the lowest and oldest leaves which change first. But as the perfect winged and usually bright-colored insect is short-lived, so the leaves ripen but to fall.

Generally, every fruit, on ripening, and just before it falls, when it commences a more independent and individual existence, requiring less nourishment from any source, and that not so much from the earth through its stem as from the sun and air, acquires a bright tint. So do leaves. The physiologist says it is "due to an increased absorption of oxygen." That is the scientific account of the matter,—only a reassertion of the fact. But I am more interested in the rosy cheek than I am to know what particular diet the maiden fed on. The very forest and herbage, the pellicle of the earth, must acquire a bright color, an evidence of its ripeness,—as if the globe itself were a fruit on its stem, with ever a cheek toward the sun.

Flowers are but colored leaves, fruits but ripe ones. The edible part of most fruits is, as the physiologist says, "the parenchyma or fleshy tissue of the leaf" of which they are formed.

Our appetites have commonly confined our views of ripeness

and its phenomena, color, mellowness, and perfectness, to the fruits which we eat, and we are wont to forget that an immense harvest which we do not eat, hardly use at all, is annually ripened by Nature. At our annual Cattle Shows and Horticultural Exhibitions, we make, as we think, a great show of fair fruits, destined, however, to a rather ignoble end, fruits not valued for their beauty chiefly. But round about and within our towns there is annually another show of fruits, on an infinitely grander scale, fruits which address our taste for beauty alone.

October is the month of painted leaves. Their rich glow now flashes round the world. As fruits and leaves and the day itself acquire a bright tint just before they fall, so the year near its setting. October is its sunset sky; November the later twilight.

I formerly thought that it would be worth the while to get a specimen leaf from each changing tree, shrub, and herbaceous plant, when it had acquired its brightest characteristic color, in its transition from the green to the brown state, outline it, and copy its color exactly, with paint, in a book, which should be entitled, "*October, or Autumnal Tints*";—beginning with the earliest reddening,—Woodbine and the lake of radical leaves, and coming down through the Maples, Hickories, and Sumachs, and many beautifully freckled leaves less generally known, to the latest Oaks and Aspens. What a memento such a book would be! You would need only to turn over its leaves to take a ramble through the autumn woods whenever you pleased. Or if I could preserve the leaves themselves, unfaded, it would be better still.

I have made but little progress toward such a book, but I have endeavored, instead, to describe all these bright tints in the order in which they present themselves. The following are some extracts from my notes.

# THE PURPLE GRASSES

By the twentieth of August, everywhere in woods and swamps, we are reminded of the fall, both by the richly spotted Sarsaparilla-leaves and Brakes, and the withering and blackened Skunk-Cabbage and Hellebore, and, by the river-side, the already blackening Pontederia.

The Purple Grass (*Eragrostis pectinacea*) is now in the height of its beauty. I remember still when I first noticed this grass particularly. Standing on a hill-side near our river, I saw, thirty or forty rods off, a stripe of purple half a dozen rods long, under the edge of a wood, where the ground sloped toward a meadow. It was as high-colored and interesting, though not quite so bright, as the patches of Rhexia, being a darker purple, like a berry's stain laid on close and thick. On going to and examining it, I found it to be a kind of grass in bloom, hardly a foot high, with but few green blades, and a fine spreading panicle of purple flowers, a shallow, purplish mist trembling around me. Close at hand it appeared but a dull purple, and made little impression on the eye; it was even difficult to detect; and if you plucked a single plant, you were surprised to find how thin it was, and how little color it had. But viewed at a distance in a favorable light, it was of a fine lively purple, flower-like, enriching the earth. Such puny causes combine to produce these decided effects. I was the more surprised and charmed because grass is commonly of a sober and

humble color.

With its beautiful purple blush it reminds me, and supplies the place, of the Rhexia, which is now leaving off, and it is one of the most interesting phenomena of August. The finest patches of it grow on waste strips or selvages of land at the base of dry hills, just above the edge of the meadows, where the greedy mower does not deign to swing his scythe; for this is a thin and poor grass, beneath his notice. Or, it may be, because it is so beautiful he does not know that it exists; for the same eye does not see this and Timothy. He carefully gets the meadow hay and the more nutritious grasses which grow next to that, but he leaves this fine purple mist for the walker's harvest,—fodder for his fancy stock. Higher up the hill, perchance, grow also Blackberries, John's-Wort, and neglected, withered, and wiry June-Grass How fortunate that it grows in such places, and not in the midst of the rank grasses which are annually cut! Nature thus keeps use and beauty distinct. I know many such localities, where it does not fail to present itself annually, and paint the earth with its blush. It grows on the gentle slopes, either in a continuous patch or in scattered and rounded tufts a foot in diameter, and it lasts till it is killed by the first smart frosts.

In most plants the corolla or calyx is the part which attains the highest color, and is the most attractive; in many it is the seed-vessel or fruit; in others, as the Red Maple, the leaves; and in others still it is the very culm itself which is the principal flower or blooming part.

The last is especially the case with the Poke or Garget (*Phytolacca decandra*). Some which stand under our cliffs quite dazzle me with their purple stems now and early in September. They are as interesting to me as most flowers, and one of the most important fruits of our autumn. Every part is flower, (or fruit,) such is its superfluity of color,—stem, branch, peduncle, pedicel, petiole, and even the at length yellowish purple-veined leaves. Its cylindrical racemes of berries of various hues, from green to dark purple, six or seven inches long, are gracefully drooping on all sides, offering repasts to the birds; and even the sepals from which the birds have picked the berries are a brilliant lake-red, with crimson flame-like reflections, equal to anything of the kind,—all on fire with ripeness. Hence the *lacca*, from *lac*, lake. There are at the same time flower-buds, flowers, green berries, dark purple or ripe ones, and these flower-like sepals, all on the same plant.

We love to see any redness in the vegetation of the temperate zone. It is the color of colors. This plant speaks to blood. It asks a bright sun on it to make it show to best advantage, and it must be seen at this season of the year. On warm hill-sides its stems are ripe by the twenty-third of August. At that date I walked through a beautiful grove of them, six or seven feet high, on the side of one of our cliffs, where they ripen early. Quite to the ground they were a deep brilliant purple with a bloom, contrasting with the still clear green leaves. It appears a rare triumph of Nature to have produced and perfected such a plant, as if this were enough

for a summer. What a perfect maturity it arrives at! It is the emblem of a successful life concluded by a death not premature, which is an ornament to Nature. What if we were to mature as perfectly, root and branch, glowing in the midst of our decay, like the Poke! I confess that it excites me to behold them. I cut one for a cane, for I would fain handle and lean on it. I love to press the berries between my fingers, and see their juice staining my hand. To walk amid these upright, branching casks of purple wine, which retain and diffuse a sunset glow, tasting each one with your eye, instead of counting the pipes on a London dock, what a privilege! For Nature's vintage is not confined to the vine. Our poets have sung of wine, the product of a foreign plant which commonly they never saw, as if our own plants had no juice in them more than the singers. Indeed, this has been called by some the American Grape, and, though a native of America, its juices are used in some foreign countries to improve the color of the wine; so that the poetaster may be celebrating the virtues of the Poke without knowing it. Here are berries enough to paint afresh the western sky, and play the bacchanal with, if you will. And what flutes its ensanguined stems would make, to be used in such a dance! It is truly a royal plant. I could spend the evening of the year musing amid the Poke-stems. And perchance amid these groves might arise at last a new school of philosophy or poetry. It lasts all through September.

At the same time with this, or near the end of August, a to me very interesting genus of grasses, Andropogons, or Beard-

Grasses, is in its prime. *Andropogon furcatus*, Forked Beard-Grass, or call it Purple-Fingered Grass; *Andropogon scoparius*, Purple Wood-Grass; and *Andropogon* (now called *Sorghum*) *nutans*, Indian-Grass. The first is a very tall and slender-culmed grass, three to seven feet high, with four or five purple finger-like spikes raying upward from the top. The second is also quite slender, growing in tufts two feet high by one wide, with culms often somewhat curving, which, as the spikes go out of bloom, have a whitish fuzzy look. These two are prevailing grasses at this season on dry and sandy fields and hill-sides. The culms of both, not to mention their pretty flowers, reflect a purple tinge, and help to declare the ripeness of the year. Perhaps I have the more sympathy with them because they are despised by the farmer, and occupy sterile and neglected soil. They are high-colored, like ripe grapes, and express a maturity which the spring did not suggest. Only the August sun could have thus burnished these culms and leaves. The farmer has long since done his upland haying, and he will not condescend to bring his scythe to where these slender wild grasses have at length flowered thinly; you often see spaces of bare sand amid them. But I walk encouraged between the tufts of Purple Wood-Grass, over the sandy fields, and along the edge of the Shrub-Oaks, glad to recognize these simple contemporaries. With thoughts cutting a broad swathe I "get" them, with horse-raking thoughts I gather them into windrows. The fine-eared poet may hear the whetting of my scythe. These two were almost the first grasses that I learned to distinguish, for

I had not known by how many friends I was surrounded,—I had seen them simply as grasses standing. The purple of their culms also excites me like that of the Poke-Weed stems.

Think what refuge there is for one, before August is over, from college commencements and society that isolates! I can skulk amid the tufts of Purple Wood-Grass on the borders of the "Great Fields." Wherever I walk these afternoons, the Purple-Fingered Grass also stands like a guide-board, and points my thoughts to more poetic paths than they have lately travelled.

A man shall perhaps rush by and trample down plants as high as his head, and cannot be said to know that they exist, though he may have cut many tons of them, littered his stables with them, and fed them to his cattle for years. Yet, if he ever favorably attends to them, he may be overcome by their beauty. Each humblest plant, or weed, as we call it, stands there to express some thought or mood of ours; and yet how long it stands in vain! I had walked over those Great Fields so many Augusts, and never yet distinctly recognized these purple companions that I had there. I had brushed against them and trodden on them, forsooth; and now, at last, they, as it were, rose up and blessed me. Beauty and true wealth are always thus cheap and despised. Heaven might be defined as the place which men avoid. Who can doubt that these grasses, which the farmer says are of no account to him, find some compensation in your appreciation of them? I may say that I never saw them before,—though, when I came to look them face to face, there did come down to me a purple

gleam from previous years; and now, wherever I go, I see hardly anything else. It is the reign and presidency of the Andropogons.

Almost the very sands confess the ripening influence of the August sun, and methinks, together with the slender grasses waving over them, reflect a purple tinge. The impurpled sands. Such is the consequence of all this sunshine absorbed into the pores of plants and of the earth. All sap or blood is now wine-colored. At last we have not only the purple sea, but the purple land.

The Chestnut Beard-Grass, Indian-Grass, or Wood-Grass, growing here and there in waste places, but more rare than the former, (from two to four or five feet high,) is still handsomer and of more vivid colors than its congeners, and might well have caught the Indian's eye. It has a long, narrow, one-sided, and slightly nodding panicle of bright purple and yellow flowers, like a banner raised above its reedy leaves. These bright standards are now advanced on the distant hill-sides, not in large armies, but in scattered troops or single file, like the red men. They stand thus fair and bright, representative of the race which they are named after, but for the most part unobserved as they. The expression of this grass haunted me for a week, after I first passed and noticed it, like the glance of an eye. It stands like an Indian chief taking a last look at his favorite hunting-grounds.

# THE RED MAPLE

By the twenty-fifth of September, the Red Maples generally are beginning to be ripe. Some large ones have been conspicuously changing for a week, and some single trees are now very brilliant. I notice a small one, half a mile off across a meadow, against the green wood-side there, a far brighter red than the blossoms of any tree in summer, and more conspicuous. I have observed this tree for several autumns invariably changing earlier than its fellows, just as one tree ripens its fruit earlier than another. It might serve to mark the season, perhaps. I should be sorry, if it were cut down. I know of two or three such trees in different parts of our town, which might, perhaps, be propagated from, as early ripeners or September trees, and their seed be advertised in the market, as well as that of radishes, if we cared as much about them.

At present, these burning bushes stand chiefly along the edge of the meadows, or I distinguish them afar on the hill-sides here and there. Sometimes you will see many small ones in a swamp turned quite crimson when all other trees around are still perfectly green, and the former appear so much the brighter for it. They take you by surprise, as you are going by on one side, across the fields thus early in the season, as if it were some gay encampment of the red men, or other foresters, of whose arrival you had not heard.

Some single trees, wholly bright scarlet, seen against others of their kind still freshly green, or against evergreens, are more memorable than whole groves will be by-and-by. How beautiful, when a whole tree is like one great scarlet fruit full of ripe juices, every leaf, from lowest limb to topmost spire, all aglow, especially if you look toward the sun! What more remarkable object can there be in the landscape? Visible for miles, too fair to be believed. If such a phenomenon occurred but once, it would be handed down by tradition to posterity, and get into the mythology at last.

The whole tree thus ripening in advance of its fellows attains a singular preeminence, and sometimes maintains it for a week or two. I am thrilled at the sight of it, bearing aloft its scarlet standard for the regiment of green-clad foresters around, and I go half a mile out of my way to examine it. A single tree becomes thus the crowning beauty of some meadowy vale, and the expression of the whole surrounding forest is at once more spirited for it.

A small Red Maple has grown, perchance, far away at the head of some retired valley, a mile from any road, unobserved. It has faithfully discharged the duties of a Maple there, all winter and summer, neglected none of its economies, but added to its stature in the virtue which belongs to a Maple, by a steady growth for so many months, never having gone gadding abroad, and is nearer heaven than it was in the spring. It has faithfully husbanded its sap, and afforded a shelter to the wandering bird, has long

since ripened its seeds and committed them to the winds, and has the satisfaction of knowing, perhaps, that a thousand little well-behaved Maples are already settled in life somewhere. It deserves well of Mapledom. Its leaves have been asking it from time to time, in a whisper, "When shall we redden?" And now, in this month of September, this month of travelling, when men are hastening to the sea-side, or the mountains, or the lakes, this modest Maple, still without budging an inch, travels in its reputation,—runs up its scarlet flag on that hill-side, which shows that it has finished its summer's work before all other trees, and withdraws from the contest. At the eleventh hour of the year, the tree which no scrutiny could have detected here when it was most industrious is thus, by the tint of its maturity, by its very blushes, revealed at last to the careless and distant traveller, and leads his thoughts away from the dusty road into those brave solitudes which it inhabits. It flashes out conspicuous with all the virtue and beauty of a Maple,—*Acer rubrum*. We may now read its title, or *rubric*, clear. Its *virtues*, not its sins, are as scarlet.

Notwithstanding the Red Maple is the most intense scarlet of any of our trees, the Sugar-Maple has been the most celebrated, and Michaux in his "Sylva" does not speak of the autumnal color of the former. About the second of October, these trees, both large and small, are most brilliant, though many are still green. In "sprout-lands" they seem to vie with one another, and ever some particular one in the midst of the crowd will be of a peculiarly pure scarlet, and by its more intense color attract our eye even at

a distance, and carry off the palm. A large Red-Maple swamp, when at the height of its change, is the most obviously brilliant of all tangible things, where I dwell, so abundant is this tree with us. It varies much both in form and color. A great many are merely yellow, more scarlet, others scarlet deepening into crimson, more red than common. Look at yonder swamp of Maples mixed with Pines, at the base of a Pine-clad hill, a quarter of a mile off, so that you get the full effect of the bright colors, without detecting the imperfections of the leaves, and see their yellow, scarlet, and crimson fires, of all tints, mingled and contrasted with the green. Some Maples are yet green, only yellow or crimson-tipped on the edges of their flakes, like the edges of a Hazel-Nut burr; some are wholly brilliant scarlet, raying out regularly and finely every way, bilaterally, like the veins of a leaf; others, of more irregular form, when I turn my head slightly, emptying out some of its earthiness and concealing the trunk of the tree, seem to rest heavily flake on flake, like yellow and scarlet clouds, wreath upon wreath, or like snow-drifts driving through the air, stratified by the wind. It adds greatly to the beauty of such a swamp at this season, that, even though there may be no other trees interspersed, it is not seen as a simple mass of color, but, different trees being of different colors and hues, the outline of each crescent tree-top is distinct, and where one laps on to another. Yet a painter would hardly venture to make them thus distinct a quarter of a mile off.

As I go across a meadow directly toward a low rising ground this bright afternoon, I see, some fifty rods off toward the sun,

the top of a Maple swamp just appearing over the sheeny russet edge of the hill, a stripe apparently twenty rods long by ten feet deep, of the most intensely brilliant scarlet, orange, and yellow, equal to any flowers or fruits, or any tints ever painted. As I advance, lowering the edge of the hill which makes the firm foreground or lower frame of the picture, the depth of the brilliant grove revealed steadily increases, suggesting that the whole of the inclosed valley is filled with such color. One wonders that the tithing-men and fathers of the town are not out to see what the trees mean by their high colors and exuberance of spirits, fearing that some mischief is brewing. I do not see what the Puritans did at this season, when the Maples blaze out in scarlet. They certainly could not have worshipped in groves then. Perhaps that is what they built meeting-houses and fenced them round with horse-sheds for.

## THE ELM

Now, too, the first of October, or later, the Elms are at the height of their autumnal beauty, great brownish-yellow masses, warm from their September oven, hanging over the highway. Their leaves are perfectly ripe. I wonder if there is any answering ripeness in the lives of the men who live beneath them. As I look down our street, which is lined with them, they remind me both by their form and color of yellowing sheaves of grain, as if the harvest had indeed come to the village itself, and we might expect to find some maturity and flavor in the thoughts of the villagers at last. Under those bright rustling yellow piles just ready to fall on the heads of the walkers, how can any crudity or greenness of thought or act prevail? When I stand where half a dozen large Elms droop over a house, it is as if I stood within a ripe pumpkin-rind, and I feel as mellow as if I were the pulp, though I may be somewhat stringy and seedy withal. What is the late greenness of the English Elm, like a cucumber out of season, which does not know when to have done, compared with the early and golden maturity of the American tree? The street is the scene of a great harvest-home. It would be worth the while to set out these trees, if only for their autumnal value. Think of these great yellow canopies or parasols held over our heads and houses by the mile together, making the village all one and compact,—an *ulmarium*, which is at the same time a nursery of men! And then

how gently and unobserved they drop their burden and let in the sun when it is wanted, their leaves not heard when they fall on our roofs and in our streets; and thus the village parasol is shut up and put away! I see the market-man driving into the village, and disappearing under its canopy of Elm-tops, with *his* crop, as into a great granary or barnyard. I am tempted to go thither as to a husking of thoughts, now dry and ripe, and ready to be separated from their integuments; but, alas! I foresee that it will be chiefly husks and little thought, blasted pig-corn, fit only for cob-meal, —for, as you sow, so shall you reap.

# FALLEN LEAVES

By the sixth of October the leaves generally begin to fall, in successive showers, after frost or rain; but the principal leaf-harvest, the acme of the *Fall*, is commonly about the sixteenth. Some morning at that date there is perhaps a harder frost than we have seen, and ice formed under the pump, and now, when the morning wind rises, the leaves come down in denser showers than ever. They suddenly form thick beds or carpets on the ground, in this gentle air, or even without wind, just the size and form of the tree above. Some trees, as small Hickories, appear to have dropped their leaves instantaneously, as a soldier grounds arms at a signal; and those of the Hickory, being bright yellow still, though withered, reflect a blaze of light from the ground where they lie. Down they have come on all sides, at the first earnest touch of autumn's wand, making a sound like rain.

Or else it is after moist and rainy weather that we notice how great a fall of leaves there has been in the night, though it may not yet be the touch that loosens the Rock-Maple leaf. The streets are thickly strewn with the trophies, and fallen Elm-leaves make a dark brown pavement under our feet. After some remarkably warm Indian-summer day or days, I perceive that it is the unusual heat which, more than anything, causes the leaves to fall, there having been, perhaps, no frost nor rain for some time. The intense heat suddenly ripens and wilts them, just as it softens

and ripens peaches and other fruits, and causes them to drop.

The leaves of late Red Maples, still bright, strew the earth, often crimson-spotted on a yellow ground, like some wild apples,—though they preserve these bright colors on the ground but a day or two, especially if it rains. On causeways I go by trees here and there all bare and smoke-like, having lost their brilliant clothing; but there it lies, nearly as bright as ever, on the ground on one side, and making nearly as regular a figure as lately on the tree. I would rather say that I first observe the trees thus flat on the ground like a permanent colored shadow, and they suggest to look for the boughs that bore them. A queen might be proud to walk where these gallant trees have spread their bright cloaks in the mud. I see wagons roll over them as a shadow or a reflection, and the drivers heed them just as little as they did their shadows before.

Birds'-nests, in the Huckleberry and other shrubs, and in trees, are already being filled with the withered leaves. So many have fallen in the woods, that a squirrel cannot run after a falling nut without being heard. Boys are raking them in the streets, if only for the pleasure of dealing with such clean crisp substances. Some sweep the paths scrupulously neat, and then stand to see the next breath strew them with new trophies. The swamp-floor is thickly covered, and the *Lycopodium lucidulum* looks suddenly greener amid them. In dense woods they half-cover pools that are three or four rods long. The other day I could hardly find a well-known spring, and even suspected that it had dried up, for

it was completely concealed by freshly fallen leaves; and when I swept them aside and revealed it, it was like striking the earth, with Aaron's rod, for a new spring. Wet grounds about the edges of swamps look dry with them. At one swamp, where I was surveying, thinking to step on a leafy shore from a rail, I got into the water more than a foot deep.

When I go to the river the day after the principal fall of leaves, the sixteenth, I find my boat all covered, bottom and seats, with the leaves of the Golden Willow under which it is moored, and I set sail with a cargo of them rustling under my feet. If I empty it, it will be full again to-morrow. I do not regard them as litter, to be swept out, but accept them as suitable straw or matting for the bottom of my carriage. When I turn up into the mouth of the Assabet, which is wooded, large fleets of leaves are floating on its surface, as it were getting out to sea, with room to tack; but next the shore, a little farther up, they are thicker than foam, quite concealing the water for a rod in width, under and amid the Alders, Button-Bushes, and Maples, still perfectly light and dry, with fibre unrelaxed; and at a rocky bend where they are met and stopped by the morning wind, they sometimes form a broad and dense crescent quite across the river. When I turn my prow that way, and the wave which it makes strikes them, list what a pleasant rustling from these dry substances grating on one another! Often it is their undulation only which reveals the water beneath them. Also every motion of the wood-turtle on the shore is betrayed by their rustling there. Or even in mid-channel, when

the wind rises, I hear them blown with a rustling sound. Higher up they are slowly moving round and round in some great eddy which the river makes, as that at the "Leaning Hemlocks," where the water is deep, and the current is wearing into the bank.

Perchance, in the afternoon of such a day, when the water is perfectly calm and full of reflections, I paddle gently down the main stream, and, turning up the Assabet, reach a quiet cove, where I unexpectedly find myself surrounded by myriads of leaves, like fellow-voyagers, which seem to have the same purpose, or want of purpose, with myself. See this great fleet of scattered leaf-boats which we paddle amid, in this smooth river-bay, each one curled up on every side by the sun's skill, each nerve a stiff spruce-knee,—like boats of hide, and of all patterns, Charon's boat probably among the rest, and some with lofty prows and poops, like the stately vessels of the ancients, scarcely moving in the sluggish current,—like the great fleets, the dense Chinese cities of boats, with which you mingle on entering some great mart, some New York or Canton, which we are all steadily approaching together. How gently each has been deposited on the water! No violence has been used towards them yet, though, perchance, palpitating hearts were present at the launching. And painted ducks, too, the splendid wood-duck among the rest, often come to sail and float amid the painted leaves,—barks of a nobler model still!

What wholesome herb-drinks are to be had in the swamps now! What strong medicinal, but rich, scents from the decaying

leaves! The rain falling on the freshly dried herbs and leaves, and filling the pools and ditches into which they have dropped thus clean and rigid, will soon convert them into tea,—green, black, brown, and yellow teas, of all degrees of strength, enough to set all Nature a-gossiping. Whether we drink them or not, as yet, before their strength is drawn, these leaves, dried on great Nature's coppers, are of such various pure and delicate tints as might make the fame of Oriental teas.

How they are mixed up, of all species, Oak and Maple and Chestnut and Birch! But Nature is not cluttered with them; she is a perfect husbandman; she stores them all. Consider what a vast crop is thus annually shed on the earth! This, more than any mere grain or seed, is the great harvest of the year. The trees are now repaying the earth with interest what they have taken from it. They are discounting. They are about to add a leaf's thickness to the depth of the soil. This is the beautiful way in which Nature gets her muck, while I chaffer with this man and that, who talks to me about sulphur and the cost of carting. We are all the richer for their decay. I am more interested in this crop than in the English grass alone or in the corn. It prepares the virgin mould for future cornfields and forests, on which the earth fattens. It keeps our homestead in good heart.

For beautiful variety no crop can be compared with this. Here is not merely the plain yellow of the grains, but nearly all the colors that we know, the brightest blue not excepted: the early blushing Maple, the Poison-Sumach blazing its sins as

scarlet, the mulberry Ash, the rich chrome-yellow of the Poplars, the brilliant red Huckleberry, with which the hills' backs are painted, like those of sheep. The frost touches them, and, with the slightest breath of returning day or jarring of earth's axle, see in what showers they come floating down! The ground is all party-colored with them. But they still live in the soil, whose fertility and bulk they increase, and in the forests that spring from it. They stoop to rise, to mount higher in coming years, by subtle chemistry, climbing by the sap in the trees, and the sapling's first fruits thus shed, transmuted at last, may adorn its crown, when, in after-years, it has become the monarch of the forest.

It is pleasant to walk over the beds of these fresh, crisp, and rustling leaves. How beautifully they go to their graves! how gently lay themselves down and turn to mould!—painted of a thousand hues, and fit to make the beds of us living. So they troop to their last resting-place, light and frisky. They put on no weeds, but merrily they go scampering over the earth, selecting the spot, choosing a lot, ordering no iron fence, whispering all through the woods about it,—some choosing the spot where the bodies of men are mouldering beneath, and meeting them half-way. How many flutterings before they rest quietly in their graves! They that soared so loftily, how contentedly they return to dust again, and are laid low, resigned to lie and decay at the foot of the tree, and afford nourishment to new generations of their kind, as well as to flutter on high! They teach us how to die. One wonders if the time will ever come when men, with their boasted faith in

immortality, will lie down as gracefully and as ripe,—with such an Indian-summer serenity will shed their bodies, as they do their hair and nails.

When the leaves fall, the whole earth is a cemetery pleasant to walk in. I love to wander and muse over them in their graves. Here are no lying nor vain epitaphs. What though you own no lot at Mount Auburn? Your lot is surely cast somewhere in this vast cemetery, which has been consecrated from of old. You need attend no auction to secure a place. There is room enough here. The Loose-strife shall bloom and the Huckleberry-bird sing over your bones. The woodman and hunter shall be your sextons, and the children shall tread upon the borders as much as they will. Let us walk in the cemetery of the leaves,—this is your true Greenwood Cemetery.

# THE SUGAR-MAPLE

But think not that the splendor of the year is over; for as one leaf does not make a summer, neither does one fallen leaf make an autumn. The smallest Sugar-Maples in our streets make a great show as early as the fifth of October, more than any other trees there. As I look up the Main Street, they appear like painted screens standing before the houses; yet many are green. But now, or generally by the seventeenth of October, when almost all Red Maples, and some White Maples, are bare, the large Sugar-Maples also are in their glory, glowing with yellow and red, and show unexpectedly bright and delicate tints. They are remarkable for the contrast they often afford of deep blushing red on one half and green on the other. They become at length dense masses of rich yellow with a deep scarlet blush, or more than blush, on the exposed surfaces. They are the brightest trees now in the street.

The large ones on our Common are particularly beautiful. A delicate, but warmer than golden yellow is now the prevailing color, with scarlet cheeks. Yet, standing on the east side of the Common just before sundown, when the western light is transmitted through them, I see that their yellow even, compared with the pale lemon yellow of an Elm close by, amounts to a scarlet, without noticing the bright scarlet portions. Generally, they are great regular oval masses of yellow and scarlet. All the sunny warmth of the season, the Indian summer, seems to be

absorbed in their leaves. The lowest and inmost leaves next the bole are, as usual, of the most delicate yellow and green, like the complexion of young men brought up in the house. There is an auction on the Common to-day, but its red flag is hard to be discerned amid this blaze of color.

Little did the fathers of the town anticipate this brilliant success, when they caused to be imported from farther in the country some straight poles with their tops cut off, which they called Sugar-Maples; and, as I remember, after they were set out, a neighboring merchant's clerk, by way of jest, planted beans about them. Those which were then jestingly called bean-poles are to-day far the most beautiful objects noticeable in our streets. They are worth all and more than they have cost,—though one of the selectmen, while setting them out, took the cold which occasioned his death,—if only because they have filled the open eyes of children with their rich color unstintedly so many Octobers. We will not ask them to yield us sugar in the spring, while they afford us so fair a prospect in the autumn. Wealth in-doors may be the inheritance of few, but it is equally distributed on the Common. All children alike can revel in this golden harvest.

Surely trees should be set in our streets with a view to their October splendor; though I doubt whether this is ever considered by the "Tree Society." Do you not think it will make some odds to these children that they were brought up under the Maples? Hundreds of eyes are steadily drinking in this color, and by these

teachers even the truants are caught and educated the moment they step abroad. Indeed, neither the truant nor the studious is at present taught color in the schools. These are instead of the bright colors in apothecaries' shops and city windows. It is a pity that we have no more *Red Maples*, and some *Hickories*, in our streets as well. Our paint-box is very imperfectly filled. Instead of, or beside, supplying such paint-boxes as we do, we might supply these natural colors to the young. Where else will they study color under greater advantages? What School of Design can vie with this? Think how much the eyes of painters of all kinds, and of manufacturers of cloth and paper, and paper-stainers, and countless others, are to be educated by these autumnal colors. The stationer's envelopes may be of very various tints, yet not so various as those of the leaves of a single tree. If you want a different shade or tint of a particular color, you have only to look farther within or without the tree or the wood. These leaves are not many dipped in one dye, as at the dye-house, but they are dyed in light of infinitely various degrees of strength, and left to set and dry there.

Shall the names of so many of our colors continue to be derived from those of obscure foreign localities, as *Naples yellow*, *Prussian blue*, *raw Sienna*, *burnt Umber*, *Gamboge*?—(surely the *Tyrian purple* must have faded by this time)—or from comparatively trivial articles of commerce,—*chocolate*, *lemon*, *coffee*, *cinnamon*, *claret*?—(shall we compare our *Hickory* to a *lemon*, or a *lemon* to a *Hickory*?)—or from ores and oxides

which few ever see? Shall we so often, when describing to our neighbors the color of something we have seen, refer them, not to some natural object in our neighborhood, but perchance to a bit of earth fetched from the other side of the planet, which possibly they may find at the apothecary's, but which probably neither they nor we ever saw? Have we not an *earth* under our feet,—ay, and a sky over our heads? Or is the last *all* ultramarine? What do we know of sapphire, amethyst, emerald, ruby, amber, and the like,—most of us who take these names in vain? Leave these precious words to cabinet-keepers, virtuosos, and maids-of-honor,—to the Nabobs, Begums, and Chobdars of Hindostan, or wherever else. I do not see why, since America and her autumn woods have been discovered, our leaves should not compete with the precious stones in giving names to colors; and, indeed, I believe that in course of time the names of some of our trees and shrubs, as well as flowers, will get into our popular chromatic nomenclature.

But of much more importance than a knowledge of the names and distinctions of color is the joy and exhilaration which these colored leaves excite. Already these brilliant trees throughout the street, without any more variety, are at least equal to an annual festival and holiday, or a week of such. These are cheap and innocent gala-days, celebrated by one and all without the aid of committees or marshals, such a show as may safely be licensed, not attracting gamblers or rum-sellers, nor requiring any special police to keep the peace. And poor indeed must be that New-

England village's October which has not the Maple in its streets. This October festival costs no powder, nor ringing of bells, but every tree is a living liberty-pole on which a thousand bright flags are waving.

No wonder that we must have our annual Cattle-Show, and Fall Training, and perhaps Cornwallis, our September Courts, and the like. Nature herself holds her annual fair in October, not only in the streets, but in every hollow and on every hill-side. When lately we looked into that Red-Maple swamp all ablaze,—where the trees were clothed in their vestures of most dazzling tints, did it not suggest a thousand gypsies beneath,—a race capable of wild delight,—or even the fabled fawns, satyrs, and wood-nymphs come back to earth? Or was it only a congregation of wearied wood-choppers, or of proprietors come to inspect their lots, that we thought of? Or, earlier still, when we paddled on the river through that fine-grained September air, did there not appear to be something new going on under the sparkling surface of the stream, a shaking of props, at least, so that we made haste in order to be up in time? Did not the rows of yellowing Willows and Button-Bushes on each side seem like rows of booths, under which, perhaps, some fluviate egg-pop equally yellow was effervescing? Did not all these suggest that man's spirits should rise as high as Nature's,—should hang out their flag, and the routine of his life be interrupted by an analogous expression of joy and hilarity?

No annual training or muster of soldiery, no celebration with

its scarfs and banners, could import into the town a hundredth part of the annual splendor of our October. We have only to set the trees, or let them stand, and Nature will find the colored drapery,—flags of all her nations, some of whose private signals hardly the botanist can read,—while we walk under the triumphal arches of the Elms. Leave it to Nature to appoint the days, whether the same as in neighboring States or not, and let the clergy read her proclamations, if they can understand them. Behold what a brilliant drapery is her Woodbine flag! What public-spirited merchant, think you, has contributed this part of the show? There is no handsomer shingling and paint than this vine, at present covering a whole side of some houses. I do not believe that the Ivy *never sear* is comparable to it. No wonder it has been extensively introduced into London. Let us have a good many Maples and Hickories and Scarlet Oaks, then, I say. Blaze away! Shall that dirty roll of bunting in the gun-house be all the colors a village can display? A village is not complete, unless it have these trees to mark the season in it. They are important, like the town-clock. A village that has them not will not be found to work well. It has a screw loose, an essential part is wanting. Let us have Willows for spring, Elms for summer, Maples and Walnuts and Tupeloes for autumn, Evergreens for winter, and Oaks for all seasons. What is a gallery in a house to a gallery in the streets, which every market-man rides through, whether he will or not? Of course, there is not a picture-gallery in the country which would be worth so much to us as is the western view at

sunset under the Elms of our main street. They are the frame to a picture which is daily painted behind them. An avenue of Elms as large as our largest and three miles long would seem to lead to some admirable place, though only C— were at the end of it.

A village needs these innocent stimulants of bright and cheering prospects to keep off melancholy and superstition. Show me two villages, one embowered in trees and blazing with all the glories of October, the other a merely trivial and treeless waste, or with only a single tree or two for suicides, and I shall be sure that in the latter will be found the most starved and bigoted religionists and the most desperate drinkers. Every wash-tub and milk-can and gravestone will be exposed. The inhabitants will disappear abruptly behind their barns and houses, like desert Arabs amid their rocks, and I shall look to see spears in their hands. They will be ready to accept the most barren and forlorn doctrine,—as that the world is speedily coming to an end, or has already got to it, or that they themselves are turned wrong side outward. They will perchance crack their dry joints at one another and call it a spiritual communication.

But to confine ourselves to the Maples. What if we were to take half as much pains in protecting them as we do in setting them out,—not stupidly tie our horses to our dahlia-stems?

What meant the fathers by establishing this *perfectly living* institution before the church,—this institution which needs no repairing nor repainting, which is continually enlarged and repaired by its growth? Surely they

"Wrought in a sad sincerity;  
Themselves from God they could not free;  
They planted better than they knew;—  
The conscious trees to beauty grew."

Verily these Maples are cheap preachers, permanently settled, which preach their half-century, and century, ay, and century-and-a-half sermons, with constantly increasing unction and influence, ministering to many generations of men; and the least we can do is to supply them with suitable colleagues as they grow infirm.

# THE SCARLET OAK

Belonging to a genus which is remarkable for the beautiful form of its leaves, I suspect that some Scarlet-Oak leaves surpass those of all other Oaks in the rich and wild beauty of their outlines. I judge from an acquaintance with twelve species, and from drawings which I have seen of many others.

Stand under this tree and see how finely its leaves are cut against the sky,—as it were, only a few sharp points extending from a midrib. They look like double, treble, or quadruple crosses. They are far more ethereal than the less deeply scalloped Oak-leaves. They have so little leafy *terra firma* that they appear melting away in the light, and scarcely obstruct our view. The leaves of very young plants are, like those of full-grown Oaks of other species, more entire, simple, and lumpish in their outlines; but these, raised high on old trees, have solved the leafy problem. Lifted higher and higher, and sublimated more and more, putting off some earthiness and cultivating more intimacy with the light each year, they have at length the least possible amount of earthy matter, and the greatest spread and grasp of skyey influences. There they dance, arm in arm with the light,—tripping it on fantastic points, fit partners in those aërial halls. So intimately mingled are they with it, that, what with their slenderness and their glossy surfaces, you can hardly tell at last what in the dance is leaf and what is light. And when no zephyr stirs, they are at

most but a rich tracery to the forest-windows.

I am again struck with their beauty, when, a month later, they thickly strew the ground in the woods, piled one upon another under my feet. They are then brown above, but purple beneath. With their narrow lobes and their bold deep scollops reaching almost to the middle, they suggest that the material must be cheap, or else there has been a lavish expense in their creation, as if so much had been cut out. Or else they seem to us the remnants of the stuff out of which leaves have been cut with a die. Indeed, when they lie thus one upon another, they remind me of a pile of scrap-tin.<sup>1</sup>

Or bring one home, and study it closely at your leisure, by the fireside. It is a type, not from any Oxford font, not in the Basque nor the arrow-headed character, not found on the Rosetta Stone, but destined to be copied in sculpture one day, if they ever get to whittling stone here. What a wild and pleasing outline, a combination of graceful curves and angles! The eye rests with equal delight on what is not leaf and on what is leaf,—on the broad, free, open sinuses, and on the long, sharp, bristle-pointed lobes. A simple oval outline would include it all, if you connected the points of the leaf; but how much richer is it than that, with its half-dozen deep scollops, in which the eye and thought of the beholder are embayed! If I were a drawing-master, I would set my pupils to copying these leaves, that they might learn to draw firmly and gracefully.

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<sup>1</sup> The original of the leaf copied on the next page was picked from such a pile.

Regarded as water, it is like a pond with half a dozen broad rounded promontories extending nearly to its middle, half from each side, while its watery bays extend far inland, like sharp friths, at each of whose heads several fine streams empty in,—almost a leafy archipelago.

But it oftener suggests land, and, as Dionysius and Pliny compared the form of the Morea to that of the leaf of the Oriental Plane-tree, so this leaf reminds me of some fair wild island in the ocean, whose extensive coast, alternate rounded bays with smooth strands, and sharp-pointed rocky capes, mark it as fitted for the habitation of man, and destined to become a centre of civilization at last. To the sailor's eye. It is a much-indented shore. Is it not, in fact, a shore to the aërial ocean, on which the windy surf beats? At sight of this leaf we are all mariners,—if not vikings, buccaneers, and filibusters. Both our love of repose and our spirit of adventure are addressed. In our most casual glance, perchance, we think, that, if we succeed in doubling those sharp capes, we shall find deep, smooth, and secure havens in the ample bays. How different from the White-Oak leaf, with its rounded headlands, on which no light-house need be placed! That is an England, with its long civil history, that may be read. This is some still unsettled New-found Island or Celebes. Shall we go and be rajahs there?

By the twenty-sixth of October the large Scarlet Oaks are in their prime, when other Oaks are usually withered. They have been kindling their fires for a week past, and now generally

burst into a blaze. This alone of *our* indigenous deciduous trees (excepting the Dogwood, of which I do not know half a dozen, and they are but large bushes) is now in its glory. The two Aspens and the Sugar-Maple come nearest to it in date, but they have lost the greater part of their leaves. Of evergreens, only the Pitch-Pine is still commonly bright.

But it requires a particular alertness, if not devotion to these phenomena, to appreciate the wide-spread, but late and unexpected glory of the Scarlet Oaks. I do not speak here of the small trees and shrubs, which are commonly observed, and which are now withered, but of the large trees. Most go in and shut their doors, thinking that bleak and colorless November has already come, when some of the most brilliant and memorable colors are not yet lit.

This very perfect and vigorous one, about forty feet high, standing in an open pasture, which was quite glossy green on the twelfth, is now, the twenty-sixth, completely changed to bright dark scarlet,—every leaf, between you and the sun, as if it had been dipped into a scarlet dye. The whole tree is much like a heart in form, as well as color. Was not this worth waiting for? Little did you think, ten days ago, that that cold green tree would assume such color as this. Its leaves are still firmly attached, while those of other trees are falling around it. It seems to say,—"I am the last to blush, but I blush deeper than any of ye. I bring up the rear in my red coat. We Scarlet ones, alone of Oaks, have not given up the fight."

The sap is now, and even far into November, frequently flowing fast in these trees, as in Maples in the spring; and apparently their bright tints, now that most other Oaks are withered, are connected with this phenomenon. They are full of life. It has a pleasantly astringent, acorn-like taste, this strong Oak-wine, as I find on tapping them with my knife.

Looking across this woodland valley, a quarter of a mile wide, how rich those Scarlet Oaks, embosomed in Pines, their bright red branches intimately intermingled with them! They have their full effect there. The Pine-boughs are the green calyx to their red petals. Or, as we go along a road in the woods, the sun striking endwise through it, and lighting up the red tents of the Oaks, which on each side are mingled with the liquid green of the Pines, makes a very gorgeous scene. Indeed, without the evergreens for contrast, the autumnal tints would lose much of their effect.

The Scarlet Oak asks a clear sky and the brightness of late October days. These bring out its colors. If the sun goes into a cloud, they become comparatively indistinct. As I sit on a cliff in the southwest part of our town, the sun is now getting low, and the woods in Lincoln, south and east of me, are lit up by its more level rays; and in the Scarlet Oaks, scattered so equally over the forest, there is brought out a more brilliant redness than I had believed was in them. Every tree of this species which is visible in those directions, even to the horizon, now stands out distinctly red. Some great ones lift their red backs high above the woods, in the next town, like huge roses with a myriad of fine petals;

and some more slender ones, in a small grove of White Pines on Pine Hill in the east, on the very verge of the horizon, alternating with the Pines on the edge of the grove, and shouldering them with their red coats, look like soldiers in red amid hunters in green. This time it is Lincoln green, too. Till the sun got low, I did not believe that there were so many redcoats in the forest army. Theirs is an intense burning red, which would lose some of its strength, methinks, with every step you might take toward them; for the shade that lurks amid their foliage does not report itself at this distance, and they are unanimously red. The focus of their reflected color is in the atmosphere far on this side. Every such tree becomes a nucleus of red, as it were, where, with the declining sun, that color grows and glows. It is partly borrowed fire, gathering strength from the sun on its way to your eye. It has only some comparatively dull red leaves for a rallying-point, or kindling-stuff, to start it, and it becomes an intense scarlet or red mist, or fire, which finds fuel for itself in the very atmosphere. So vivacious is redness. The very rails reflect a rosy light at this hour and season. You see a redder tree than exists.

If you wish to count the Scarlet Oaks, do it now. In a clear day stand thus on a hill-top in the woods, when the sun is an hour high, and every one within range of your vision, excepting in the west, will be revealed. You might live to the age of Methuselah and never find a tithe of them, otherwise. Yet sometimes even in a dark day I have thought them as bright as I ever saw them. Looking westward, their colors are lost in a blaze of light; but

in other directions the whole forest is a flower-garden, in which these late roses burn, alternating with green, while the so-called "gardeners," walking here and there, perchance, beneath, with spade and water-pot, see only a few little asters amid withered leaves.

These are *my* China-asters, *my* late garden-flowers. It costs me nothing for a gardener. The falling leaves, all over the forest, are protecting the roots of my plants. Only look at what is to be seen, and you will have garden enough, without deepening the soil in your yard. We have only to elevate our view a little, to see the whole forest as a garden. The blossoming of the Scarlet Oak,—the forest-flower, surpassing all in splendor (at least since the Maple)! I do not know but they interest me more than the Maples, they are so widely and equally dispersed throughout the forest; they are so hardy, a nobler tree on the whole;—our chief November flower, abiding the approach of winter with us, imparting warmth to early November prospects. It is remarkable that the latest bright color that is general should be this deep, dark scarlet and red, the intensest of colors. The ripest fruit of the year; like the cheek of a hard, glossy, red apple from the cold Isle of Orleans, which will not be mellow for eating till next spring! When I rise to a hill-top, a thousand of these great Oak roses, distributed on every side, as far as the horizon! I admire them four or five miles off! This my unfailing prospect for a fortnight past! This late forest-flower surpasses all that spring or summer could do. Their colors were but rare and dainty specks

comparatively, (created for the nearsighted, who walk amid the humblest herbs and underwoods,) and made no impression on a distant eye. Now it is an extended forest or a mountain-side, through or along which we journey from day to day, that bursts into bloom. Comparatively, our gardening is on a petty scale,—the gardener still nursing a few asters amid dead weeds, ignorant of the gigantic asters and roses, which, as it were, overshadow him, and ask for none of his care. It is like a little red paint ground on a saucer, and held up against the sunset sky. Why not take more elevated and broader views, walk in the great garden, not skulk in a little "debauched" nook of it? consider the beauty of the forest, and not merely of a few impounded herbs?

Let your walks now be a little more adventurous; ascend the hills. If, about the last of October, you ascend any hill in the outskirts of our town, and probably of yours, and look over the forest, you may see—well, what I have endeavored to describe. All this you surely *will* see, and much more, if you are prepared to see it,—if you *look* for it. Otherwise, regular and universal as this phenomenon is, whether you stand on the hill-top or in the hollow, you will think for threescore years and ten that all the wood is, at this season, sear and brown. Objects are concealed from our view, not so much because they are out of the course of our visual ray as because we do not bring our minds and eyes to bear on them; for there is no power to see in the eye itself, any more than in any other jelly. We do not realize how far and widely, or how near and narrowly, we are to look. The greater

part of the phenomena of Nature are for this reason concealed from us all our lives. The gardener sees only the gardener's garden. Here, too, as in political economy, the supply answers to the demand. Nature does not cast pearls before swine. There is just as much beauty visible to us in the landscape as we are prepared to appreciate,—not a grain more. The actual objects which one man will see from a particular hill-top are just as different from those which another will see as the beholders are different. The Scarlet Oak must, in a sense, be in your eye when you go forth. We cannot see anything until we are possessed with the idea of it, take it into our heads,—and then we can hardly see anything else. In my botanical rambles, I find, that, first, the idea, or image, of a plant occupies my thoughts, though it may seem very foreign to this locality,—no nearer than Hudson's Bay,—and for some weeks or months I go thinking of it, and expecting it unconsciously, and at length I surely see it. This is the history of my finding a score or more of rare plants, which I could name. A man sees only what concerns him. A botanist absorbed in the study of grasses does not distinguish the grandest Pasture Oaks. He, as it were, tramples down Oaks unwittingly in his walk, or at most sees only their shadows. I have found that it required a different intention of the eye, in the same locality, to see different plants, even when they were closely allied, as *Juncaceoe* and *Gramineoe*: when I was looking for the former, I did not see the latter in the midst of them. How much more, then, it requires different intentions of the eye and of the mind to

attend to different departments of knowledge! How differently the poet and the naturalist look at objects!

Take a New-England selectman, and set him on the highest of our hills, and tell him to look,—sharpening his sight to the utmost, and putting on the glasses that suit him best, (ay, using a spy-glass, if he likes,)—and make a full report. What, probably, will he *spy*?—what will he *select* to look at? Of course, he will see a Brocken spectre of himself. He will see several meeting-houses, at least, and, perhaps, that somebody ought to be assessed higher than he is, since he has so handsome a wood-lot. Now take Julius Caesar, or Immanuel Swedenborg, or a Fegee-Islander, and set him up there. Or suppose all together, and let them compare notes afterward. Will it appear that they have enjoyed the same prospect? What they will see will be as different as Rome was from Heaven or Hell, or the last from the Fegee Islands. For aught we know, as strange a man as any of these is always at our elbow.

Why, it takes a sharp-shooter to bring down even such trivial game as snipes and woodcocks; he must take very particular aim, and know what he is aiming at. He would stand a very small chance, if he fired at random into the sky, being told that snipes were flying there. And so is it with him that shoots at beauty; though he wait till the sky falls, he will not bag any, if he does not already know its seasons and haunts, and the color of its wing,—if he has not dreamed of it, so that he can *anticipate* it; then, indeed, he flushes it at every step, shoots double and on the

wing, with both barrels, even in cornfields. The sportsman trains himself, dresses and watches unweariedly, and loads and primes for his particular game. He prays for it, and offers sacrifices, and so he gets it. After due and long preparation, schooling his eye and hand, dreaming awake and asleep, with gun and paddle and boat he goes out after meadow-hens, which most of his townsmen never saw nor dreamed of, and paddles for miles against a headwind, and wades in water up to his knees, being out all day without his dinner, and *therefore* he gets them. He had them half-way into his bag when he started, and has only to shove them down. The true sportsman can shoot you almost any of his game from his windows: what else has he windows or eyes for? It comes and perches at last on the barrel of his gun; but the rest of the world never see it *with the feathers on*. The geese fly exactly under his zenith, and honk when they get there, and he will keep himself supplied by firing up his chimney; twenty musquash have the refusal of each one of his traps before it is empty. If he lives, and his game-spirit increases, heaven and earth shall fail him sooner than game; and when he dies, he will go to more extensive, and, perchance, happier hunting-grounds. The fisherman, too, dreams of fish, sees a bobbing cork in his dreams, till he can almost catch them in his sink-spout. I knew a girl who, being sent to pick huckleberries, picked wild gooseberries by the quart, where no one else knew that there were any, because she was accustomed to pick them up country where she came from. The astronomer knows where to go star-gathering, and sees one

clearly in his mind before any have seen it with a glass. The hen scratches and finds her food right under where she stands; but such is not the way with the hawk.

These bright leaves which I have mentioned are not the exception, but the rule; for I believe that all leaves, even grasses and mosses, acquire brighter colors just before their fall. When you come to observe faithfully the changes of each humblest plant, you find that each has, sooner or later, its peculiar autumnal tint; and if you undertake to make a complete list of the bright tints, it will be nearly as long as a catalogue of the plants in your vicinity.

# DAVID GAUNT

## PART II

It was late. Palmer, unhitching his horse from the fence, mounted and rode briskly down the hill. He would lose the girl: saw the loss, faced it. Besides the love he bore her, she had made God a truth to him. He was jaded, defeated, as if some power outside of himself had taken him unexpectedly at advantage to-night, and wrung this thing from him. Life was not much to look forward to,—the stretch it had been before: study, and the war, and hard common sense,—the theatre,—card-playing. Not being a man, I cannot tell you how much his loss amounted to. I know, going down the rutted wagon-road, his mild face fell slowly into a haggard vacancy foreign to it: one or two people at the tavern where he stopped asked him if he were ill: I think, too, that he prayed once or twice to whatever God he had, looking up with dry eye and shut lips,—dumb prayers, wrung out of some depth within, such as Christian sent out of the slough, when he was like to die. But he did stop at the tavern, and there drank some brandy to steady his nerves; and he did not forget that there was an ambuscade of Rebels at Blue's Gap, and that he was to share in the attack on them at daylight: he spurred his horse, as he drew nearer Romney. Dode, being a woman, thinking love lost, sat by

the fire, looking vacantly at nothing. Yet the loss was as costly to him as to her, and would be remembered as long.

He came up to the church where the meeting had been held. It was just over; the crowded room was stifling with the smoke of tobacco and tallow-candles; there was an American flag hanging over the pulpit, a man pounding on a drum at the door, and a swarm of loafers on the steps, cheering for the Union, for Jeff Davis, etc. Palmer dismounted, and made his way to the pulpit, where Dyke, a lieutenant in his company, was.

"All ready, Dyke?"

"All right, Capt'n."

Palmer lingered, listening to the talk of the men. Dyke had been an Ohio-River pilot; after the troubles began, had taken a pork-contract under Government; but was lieutenant now, as I said. It paid better than pork, he told Palmer,—a commission, especially in damp weather. Palmer did not sneer. Dykes, North and South, had quit the hog-killing for the man-killing business, with no other motive than the percentage, he knew; but he thought the rottenness lay lower than their hearts. Palmer stood looking down at the crowd: the poorer class of laborers,—their limbs cased in shaggy blouses and green baize leggings,—their faces dogged, anxious as their own oxen.

"'Bout half on 'em Secesh," whispered Jim Dyke. "'T depends on who burned their barns fust."

Jim was recruiting to fill up some vacancies in Palmer's company. He had been tolerably successful that day; as he said,

with a wink, to the Captain,—

"The twenty dollars a month on one side, an' the test-oath on t' other, brought loyalty up to the scratch."

He presented some of the recruits to Palmer: pluming himself, adjusting the bogus chains over his pink shirt.

"Hyr's Squire Pratt. Got two sons in th' army,—goin' hisself. That's the talk! Charley Orr, show yerself! This boy's father was shot in his bed by the Bushwhackers."

A mere boy, thin, consumptive, hollow-chested: a mother's-boy, Palmer saw, with fair hair and dreamy eyes. He held out his hand to him.

"Charley will fight for something better than revenge. I see it in his face."

The little fellow's eyes flashed.

"Yes, Captain."

He watched Palmer after that with the look one of the Cavaliers might have turned to a Stuart. But he began to cough presently, and slipped back to the benches where the women were. Palmer heard one of them in rusty black sob out,—*"Oh, Charley! Charley!"*

There was not much enthusiasm among the women; Palmer looked at them with a dreary trail of thought in his brain. They were of the raw, unclarified American type: thick-blooded, shrewish, with dish-shaped faces, inelastic limbs. They had taken the war into their whole strength, like their sisters, North and South: as women greedily do anything that promises to be an

outlet for what power of brain, heart, or animal fervor they may have, over what is needed for wifehood or maternity. Theodora, he thought, angrily, looked at the war as these women did, had no poetic enthusiasm about it, did not grasp the grand abstract theory on either side. She would not accept it as a fiery, chivalric cause, as the Abolitionist did, nor as a stern necessity, like the Union-saver. The sickly Louisianian, following her son from Pickens to Richmond, besieging God for vengeance with the mad impatience of her blood, or the Puritan mother praying beside her dead hero-boy, would have called Dode cowardly and dull. So would those blue-eyed, gushing girls who lift the cup of blood to their lips with as fervid an *abandon* as ever did French *bacchante*. Palmer despised them. Their sleazy lives had wanted color and substance, and they found it in a cant of patriotism, in illuminating their windows after slaughter, in dressing their tables with helmets of sugar, (after the fashion of the White House,)—delicate *souvenirs de la guerre!*

But Theodora and these women had seen their door-posts slopped with blood,—that made a difference. This woman in front had found her boy's half-charred body left tied to a tree by Rebel scouts: this girl was the grandchild of Naylor, a man of seventy,—the Federal soldiers were fired at from his house one day,—the next, the old man stood dumb upon its threshold; in this world, he never would call to God for vengeance. Palmer knew these things were true. Yet Dode should not for this sink to low notions about the war. She did: she talked plain Saxon

of it, and what it made of men; said no cause could sanctify a deed so vile,—nothing could be holy which turned honest men into thieves and assassins. Her notions were low to degradation, Palmer thought, with the quickening cause at his heart; they had talked of it the last time he was here. She thought they struck bottom on some eternal truth, a humanity broader than patriotism. Pah! he sickened at such whining cant! The little Captain was common-sensed to the backbone,—intolerant. He was an American, with the native taint of American conceit, but he was a man whose look was as true as his oath; therefore, talking of the war, he never glossed it over,—showed its worst phases, in Virginia and Missouri; but he accepted it, in all its horror, as a savage necessity. It was a thing that must be, while men were men, and not angels.

While he stood looking at the crowd, Nabbes, a reporter for one of the New-York papers, who was lounging in the pulpit, began to laugh at him.

"I say, Captain, you Virginia Loyalists don't go into this war with *vim*. It's a bitter job to you."

Palmer's face reddened.

"What you say is true, thank God,"—quietly.

Nabbes stuck his hands into his pockets, whistling. He shrewdly suspected Palmer wasn't "sound." No patriot would go into the war with such a miserable phiz as that. Yet he fought like a tiger up in the mountains. Of course, the war was a bad business,—and the taxes—whew! Last summer things

were smashed generally, and when Will (his brother) sailed in Sherman's expedition, it was a blue day enough: how his mother and the girls did carry on! (Nabbes and Will supported the family, by the way; and Nabbes, inside of his slang, billiards, etc., was a good, soft-hearted fellow.) However, the country was looking up now. There were our victories,—and his own salary was raised. Will was snug down at Port Royal,—sent the girls home some confoundedly pretty jewelry; they were as busy as bees, knitting socks, and—What, the Devil! were we to be ridden over rough-shod by Davis and his crew? Northern brain and muscle were toughest, and let water find its own level. So he tore out a fly-leaf from the big Bible, and jotted down notes of the meeting,—“An outpouring of the loyal heart of West Virginia,”—and yawned, ready for bed, contented with the world, himself, and God.

Dyke touched Palmer's arm.

“Lor', Capt'n,” he whispered, “ef thar a'n't old Scofield! 'n the back o' th' house, watchin' you. Son killed at Manassas,—George,—d' ye know?”

“I know.”

“Danged ef I don't respect Secesh like them,” broke out Dyke. “Ye'll not sin his soul with a test-oath. Thar's grit thar. Well, God help us!”

Palmer stepped down from the pulpit; but the old man, seeing him coming, turned and shouldered his way out of the crowd, his haggard face blood-red.

"What'll the old chap say to Gaunt's enlistin'?" said Dyke.

"Gaunt in? Bully for the parson!" said Squire Pratt.

"Parson 'listed?" said the reporter. "They and the women led off in this war. I'm glad of it,—brings out the pith in 'em."

"I dunno," said Dyke, looking round. "Gaunt's name brought in a dozen; but—It's a dirty business, the war. I wish 'n somebody's hands hed stayed clean of it."

"It's the Lord's work," said Pratt, with a twang, being a class-leader.

"Ye-s? So 'ud Bishop Polk say. Got a different Lord down thar? 'S likely. Henry Wise used to talk of the 'God of Virginia.'"

"Was a fellow," said Nabbes, nursing one foot, "that set me easy about my soul, and the thing. A chaplain in Congress: after we took down that bitter Mason—and—Slidell pill, it was. Prayed to Jesus to keep us safe until our vengeance on England was ripe,—to 'aid us through the patient watch and vigil long of him who treasures up a wrong.' Old boy, thinks I, if that's Christianity, it's cheap. I'll take stock in it. Going at half-price, I think."

"I am tired of this cant of Christians refusing to join in the war," said Palmer, impatiently. "God allows it; it helps His plans."

"Humph! So did Judas," muttered Dyke, shrewdly. "Well, I a'n't a purfessor myself.—Boys, come along! Drum-call time. You're in luck. We'll have work afore mornin',—an' darned ef you sha'n't be in it, in spite of rules!"

When the recruits went out, the meeting broke up. Palmer put on his hat, and made his way out of a side-door into the snow-covered field about the church, glancing at his watch as he went. He had but little time to spare. The Federal camp lay on a distant hill-side below Romney: through the dim winter shadows he could see points of light shifting from tent to tent; a single bugle-call had shrilled through the mountains once or twice; the regiments ordered for the attack were under arms now, he concluded. They had a long march before them: the Gap, where the Confederate band were concealed, lay sixteen miles distant. Unless the Union troops succeeded in surprising the Rebels, the fight, Palmer knew, would be desperate; the position they held was almost impregnable,—camped behind a steep gash in the mountain: a handful of men could hold it against Dunning's whole brigade, unshielded, bare. A surprise was almost impossible in these mountains, where Rebel guerrillas lurked behind every tree, and every woman in the village-shanties was ready to risk limbs or life as a Rebel spy. Thus far, however, he thought this movement had been kept secret: even the men did not know where they were going.

Crossing the field hurriedly, he saw two men talking eagerly behind a thorn-bush. One of them, turning, came towards him, his hat slouched over his face. It was Scofield. As he came into the clear starlight, Palmer recognized the thick-set, sluggish figure and haggard face, and waited for him,—with a quick remembrance of long summer days, when he and George, boys

together, had looked on this man as the wisest and strongest, sitting at his side digging worms or making yellow flies for him to fish in the Big Cacapon,—how they would have the delicate broiled trout for supper,—how Dode was a chubby little puss then, with white apron and big brown eyes, choosing to sit on his lap when they went to the table, and putting her hand slyly into his coffee. An odd thing to think of then and there! George lay stiff now, with a wooden board only at his head to tell that he once lived. The thoughts struck through Palmer's brain in the waiting moment, making his hand unsteady as he held it out to the old man.

"Uncle Scofield! Is the war to come between you and me? For George's sake! I saw him at Harper's Ferry before—before Manassas. We were no less friends then than ever before."

The old man's eyes had glared defiance at Palmer under their gray brows when he faced him, but his big bony hand kept fumbling nervously with his cravat.

"Yes, Dougl's. I didn't want to meet yer. Red an' white's my colors,—red an' white, so help me God!"

"I know," said Palmer, quietly.

There was a silence,—the men looking steadily at each other.

"Ye saw George?" the old man said, his eyes falling.

"Yes. At Harper's Ferry. I was making my way through the Confederate lines; George took me over, risking his own life to do it, then reported himself under arrest. He did not lose his commission; your general was just"—

Scotfield's face worked.

"That was like my boy! Thar's not a grandfather he hes in the country whar he's gone to that would believe one of our blood could do a mean thing! The Scofields ar'n't well larned, but they 've true honor, Dougl's Palmer!"

Palmer's eyes lighted. Men of the old lion-breed know each other in spite of dress or heirship of opinion.

"Ye 've been to th' house to-night, boy?" said the old man, his voice softened. "Yes? That was right. Ye 've truer notions nor me. I went away so 's not till meet yer. I'm sorry for it. George's gone, Dougl's, but he'd be glad till think you an' me was the same as ever,—he would!" He held out his hand. Something worthy the name of man in each met in the grasp, that no blood spilled could foul or embitter. They walked across the field together, the old man leaning his hand on Palmer's shoulder as if for support, though he did not need it. He had been used to walk so with George. This was his boy's friend: that thought filled and warmed his heart so utterly that he forgot his hand rested on a Federal uniform. Palmer was strangely silent.

"I saw Theodora," he said at last, gravely.

Scotfield started at the tone, looked at him keenly, some new thought breaking in on him, frightening, troubling him. He did not answer; they crossed the broad field, coming at last to the hill-road. The old man spoke at last, with an effort.

"You an' my little girl are friends, did you mean, Dougl's? The war didn't come between ye?"

"Nothing shall come between us,"—quietly, his eye full upon the old man's. The story of a life lay in the look.

Scofield met it questioningly, almost solemnly. It was no time for explanation. He pushed his trembling hand through his stubby gray hair.

"Well, well, Dougl's. These days is harrrd. But it'll come right! God knows all."

The road was empty now,—lay narrow and bare down the hill; the moon had set, and the snow-clouds were graying heavily the pale light above. Only the sharp call of a discordant trumpet broke the solitude and dumbness of the hills. A lonesome, foreboding night. The old man rested his hand on the fence, choking down an uncertain groan now and then, digging into the snow with his foot, while Palmer watched him.

"I must bid yer good-bye, Dougl's," he said at last. "I've a long tramp afore me to-night. Mebbe worse. Mayhap I may n't see you agin; men can't hev a grip on the next hour, these days. I'm glad we 're friends. Whatever comes afore mornin', I'm glad o' that!"

"Have you no more to say to me?"

"Yes, Dougl's,—'s for my little girl,—ef so be as I should foller my boy sometime, I'd wish you'd be friends to Dode, Dougl's. Yes! I would,"—hesitating, something wet oozing from his small black eye, and losing itself in the snuffy wrinkles.

Palmer was touched. It was a hard struggle with pain that had wrung out that tear. The old man held his hand a minute, then turned to the road.

"Whichever of us sees Geordy first kin tell him t' other's livin' a true-grit honest life, call him Yankee or Virginian,—an' that's enough said! So good bye, Doug's!"

Palmer mounted his horse and galloped off to the camp, the old man plodding steadily down the road. When the echo of the horse's hoofs had ceased, a lean gangling figure came from out of the field-brush, and met him.

"Why, David boy! whar were ye to-night?" Scofield's voice had grown strangely tender in the last hour.

Gaunt hesitated. He had not the moral courage to tell the old man he had enlisted.

"I waited. I must air the church,—it is polluted with foul smells."

Scofield laughed to himself at David's "whimsey," but he halted, going with the young man as he strode across the field. He had a dull foreboding of the end of the night's battle: before he went to it, he clung with a womanish affection to anything belonging to his home, as this Gaunt did. He had not thought the poor young man was so dear to him, until now, as he jogged along beside him, thinking that before morning he might be lying dead at the Gap. How many people would care? David would, and Dode, and old Bone.

Gaunt hurried in,—he ought to be in camp, but he could not leave the house of God polluted all night,—opening the windows, even carrying the flag outside. The emblem of freedom, of course,—but — He hardly knew why he did it. There were flags

on every Methodist chapel, almost: the sect had thrown itself into the war *con amore*. But Gaunt had fallen into that sect by mistake; his animal nature was too weak for it: as for his feeling about the church, he had just that faint shade of Pantheism innate in him that would have made a good Episcopalian. The planks of the floor were more to him than other planks; something else than sunshine had often shone in to him through the little panes,—he touched them gently; he walked softly over the rag-carpet on the aisle. The LORD was in His holy temple. With another thought close behind that, of the time when the church was built, more than a year ago; what a happy, almost jolly time they had, the members giving the timber, and making a sort of frolic of putting it up, in the afternoons after harvest. They were all in one army or the other now: some of them in Blue's Gap. He would help ferret them out in the morning. He shivered, with the old doubt tugging fiercely at his heart. Was he right? The war was one of God's great judgments, but was it *his* place to be in it? It was too late to question now.

He went up into the pulpit, taking out the Bible that lay on the shelf, lighting a candle, glancing uneasily at the old man on the steps. He never had feared to meet his eye before. He turned to the fly-leaf, holding it to the candle. What odd fancy made him want to read the uncouth, blotted words written there? He knew them well enough. "To my Dear friend, David Gaunt. May, 1860. the Lord be Betwien mee And thee. J. Scofield." It was two years since he had given it to Gaunt, just after George had

been so ill with cholera, and David had nursed him through with it. Gaunt fancied that nursing had made the hearts of both son and father more tender than all his sermons. He used to pray with them in the evenings as George grew better, hardly able to keep from weeping like a woman, for George was very dear to him. Afterwards the old man came to church more regularly, and George had quit swearing, and given up card-playing. He remembered the evening when the old man gave him the Bible. He had been down in Wheeling, and when he came home brought it out to Gaunt in the old corn-field, wrapped up in his best red bandanna handkerchief,—his face growing red and pale. "It's the Book, David. I thort ef you'd use this one till preach from. Mayhap it wouldn't be right till take it from a sinner like me, but—I thort I'd like it, somehow,"—showing him the fly-leaf. "I writ this,—ef it would be true,—what I writ,—"The Lord he between me and thee'?"

Gaunt passed his fingers now over the misspelled words softly as he would stroke a dead face. Then he came out, putting out the candle, and buttoning the Bible inside of his coat.

Scofield waited for him on the steps. Some trouble was in the old fellow's face, Gaunt thought, which he could not fathom. His coarse voice choked every now and then, and his eyes looked as though he never hoped to see the church or Gaunt again.

"Heh, David!" with a silly laugh. "You'll think me humorsome, boy, but I hev an odd fancy."

He stopped abruptly.

"What is it?"

"It's lonesome here,"—looking around vaguely. "God seems near here on the hills, d' ye think? David, I'm goin' a bit out on the road to-night, an' life's uncertain these times. Whiles I think I might never be back to see Dode agin,—or you. David, you're nearer to Him than me; you brought me to Him, you know. S'pose,—you'll think me foolish now,—ef we said a bit prayer here afore I go; what d'ye think? Heh?"

Gaunt was startled. Somehow to-night he did not feel as if God was near on the hills, as Scofield thought.

"I will,"—hesitating. "Are you going to see Dode first, before you go?"

"Dode? Don't speak of her, boy! I'm sick! Kneel down an' pray,—the Lord's Prayer,—that's enough,—mother taught me that,"—baring his gray head, while Gaunt, his worn face turned to the sky, said the old words over. "Forgive," he muttered,—"resist not evil,"—some fragments vexing his brain. "Did He mean that? David boy? Did He mean His people to trust in God to right them as He did? Pah! times is different now,"—pulling his hat over his forehead to go. "Good bye, David!"

"Where are you going?"

"I don't mind tellin' you,—you'll keep it. Bone's bringin' a horse yonder to the road. I'm goin' to warn the boys to be ready, an' help 'em,—at the Gap, you know?"

"The Gap? Merciful God, no!" cried Gaunt. "Go back"—

The words stopped in his throat. What if he met this man

there?

Scofield looked at him, bewildered.

"Thar's no danger," he said, calmly. "Yer nerves are weak. But yer love for me's true, David. That's sure,"—with a smile. "But I've got to warn the boys. Good bye,"—hesitating, his face growing red. "Ye 'll mind, ef anything should happen,—what I writ in the Book,—once,—'The Lord be between me an' thee,' dead or alive? Them's good, friendly words. Good bye! God bless you, boy!"

Gaunt wrung his hand, and watched him as he turned to the road. He saw Bone meet him, leading a horse. As the old man mounted, he turned, and, seeing Gaunt, nodded cheerfully, and going down the hill began to whistle. "Ef I should never come back, he kin tell Dode I hed a light heart at th' last," he thought. But when he was out of hearing, the whistle stopped, and he put spurs to the horse.

Counting the hours, the minutes,—a turbid broil of thought in his brain, of Dode sitting alone, of George and his murderers, "stiffening his courage,"—right and wrong mixing each other inextricably together. If, now and then, a shadow crossed him of the meek Nazarene leaving this word to His followers, that, let the world do as it would, *they* should resist not evil, he thrust it back. It did not suit to-day. Hours passed. The night crept on towards morning, colder, stiller. Faint bars of gray fell on the stretch of hill-tops, broad and pallid. The shaggy peaks blanched whiter in it. You could hear from the road-bushes the chirp of

a snow-bird, wakened by the tramp of his horse, or the flutter of its wings. Overhead, the stars disappeared, like flakes of fire going out; the sky came nearer, tinged with healthier blue. He could see the mountain where the Gap was, close at hand, but a few miles distant.

He had met no pickets: he believed the whole Confederate camp there was asleep. And behind him, on the road he had just passed, trailing up the side of a hill, was a wavering, stealthy line, creeping slowly nearer every minute,—the gray columns under Dunning. The old man struck the rowels into his horse,—the boys would be murdered in their sleep! The road was rutted deep: the horse, an old village hack, lumbered along, stumbling at every step. "Ef my old bones was what they used to be, I'd best trust them," he muttered. Another hour was over; there were but two miles before him to the Gap: but the old mare panted and balked at every ditch across the road. The Federal force was near; even the tap of their drum had ceased long since; their march was as silent as a tiger's spring. Close behind,—closer every minute! He pulled the rein savagely,—why could not the dumb brute know that life and death waited on her foot? The poor beast's eye lightened. She gathered her whole strength, sprang forward, struck upon a glaze of ice, and fell. The old man dragged himself out. "Poor old Jin! ye did what ye could!" he said. He was lamed by the fall. It was no time to think of that; he hobbled on, the cold drops of sweat oozing out on his face from pain. Reaching the bridge that crosses the stream there, he

glanced back. He could not see the Federal troops, but he heard the dull march of their regiments,—like some giant's tread, slow, muffled in snow. Closer,—closer every minute! His heavy boots clogged with snow; the pain exhausted even his thick lungs,—they breathed heavily; he climbed the narrow ridge of ground that ran parallel with the road, and hurried on. Half an hour more, and he would save them!

A cold, stirless air: Gaunt panted in it. Was there ever night so silent? Following his lead, came the long column, a dark, even-moving mass, shirred with steel. Sometimes he could catch glimpses of some vivid point in the bulk: a hand, moving nervously to the sword's hilt; faces,—sensual, or vapid, or royal, side by side, but sharpened alike by a high purpose, with shut jaws, and keen, side-glancing eyes.

He was in advance of them, with one other man,—Dyke. Dyke took him, as knowing the country best, and being a trustworthy guide. So this was work! True work for a man. Marching hour after hour through the solitary night, he had time to think. Dyke talked to him but little: said once, "P'raps 't was as well the parsons had wakened up, and was mixin' with other folks. Gettin' into camp 'ud show 'em original sin, he guessed. Not but what this war-work brought out good in a man. Makes 'em, or breaks 'em, ginerally." And then was silent. Gaunt caught the words. Yes,—it was better preachers should lay off the prestige of the cloth, and rough it like their Master, face to face with men. There would be fewer despicable shams among them.

But *this*?—clutching the loaded pistol in his hand. Thinking of Cromwell and Hedley Vicars. Freedom! It was a nobler cause than theirs. But a Face was before him, white, thorn-crowned, bent watchful over the world. He was sent of Jesus. To do what? Preach peace by murder? What said his Master? "That ye resist not evil." Bah! Palmer said the doctrine of nonresistance was whining cant. As long as human nature was the same, right and wrong would be left to the arbitrament of brute force. And yet—was not Christianity a diviner breath than this passing through the ages? "Ye are the light of the world." Even the "roughs" sneered at the fighting parsons. It was too late to think now. He pushed back his thin yellow hair, his homesick eyes wandering upwards, his mouth growing dry and parched.

They were nearing the mountain now. Dawn was coming. The gray sky heated and glowed into inner deeps of rose; the fresh morning air sprang from its warm nest somewhere, and came to meet them, like some one singing a heartsome song under his breath. The faces of the columns looked more rigid, paler, in the glow: men facing death have no time for fresh morning thoughts.

They were within a few rods of the Gap. As yet there was no sign of sentinel,—not even the click of a musket was heard. "They sleep like the dead," muttered Dyke. "We'll be on them in five minutes more." Gaunt, keeping step with him, pressing up the hill, shivered. He thought he saw blood on his hands. Why, this was work! His whole body throbbed as with one pulse. Behind him, a long way, came the column; his quickened

nerves felt the slow beat of their tread, like the breathing of some great animal. Crouching in a stubble-field at the road-side he saw a negro,—a horse at a little distance. It was Bone; he had followed his master: the thought passing vaguely before him without meaning. On! on! The man beside him, with his head bent, his teeth clenched, the pupils of his eyes contracted, like a cat's nearing its prey. The road lay bare before them.

"Halt!" said Dyke. "Let them come up to us."

Gaunt stopped in his shambling gait.

"Look!" hissed Dyke,—"a spy!"—as the figure of a man climbed from a ditch where he had been concealed as he ran, and darted towards the rebel camp. "We'll miss them yet!"—firing after him with an oath. The pistol missed,—flashed in the pan. "Wet!"—dashing it on the ground. "Fire, Gaunt!—quick!"

The man looked round; he ran lamely,—a thick, burly figure, a haggard face. Gaunt's pistol fell. Dode's father! the only man that loved him!

"Damn you!" shouted Dyke, "are you going to shirk?"

Why, this *was* the work! Gaunt pulled the trigger; there was a blinding flash. The old man stood a moment on the ridge, the wind blowing his gray hair back, then staggered, and fell,—that was all.

The column, sweeping up on the double-quick, carried the young disciple of Jesus with them. The jaws of the Gap were before them,—the enemy. What difference, if he turned pale, and cried out weakly, looking back at the man that he had killed?

For a moment the silence was unbroken. The winter's dawn, with pink blushes, and restless soft sighs, was yet wakening into day. The next, the air was shattered with the thunder of the guns among the hills, shouts, curses, death-cries. The speech which this day was to utter in the years was the old vexed cry,—"How long, O Lord? how long?"

A fight, short, but desperate. Where-ever it was hottest, the men crowded after one leader, a small man, with a mild, quiet face,—Douglas Palmer. Fighting with a purpose: high,—the highest, he thought: to uphold his Government. His blows fell heavy and sure.

You know the end of the story. The Federal victory was complete. The Rebel forces were carried off prisoners to Romney. How many, on either side, were lost, as in every battle of our civil war, no one can tell: it is better, perhaps, we do not know.

The Federal column did not return in an unbroken mass as they went. There were wounded and dying among them; some vacant places. Besides, they had work to do on their road back: the Rebels had been sheltered in the farmers' houses near; the "nest must be cleaned out": every homestead but two from Romney to the Gap was laid in ashes. It was not a pleasant sight for the officers to see women and children flying half-naked and homeless through the snow, nor did they think it would strengthen the Union sentiment; but what could they do? As great atrocities as these were committed by the Rebels. The war, as

Palmer said, was a savage necessity.

When the fight was nearly over, the horse which Palmer rode broke from the *mélée* and rushed back to the road. His master did not guide him. His face was set, pale; there was a thin foam on his lips. He had felt a sabre-cut in his side in the first of the engagement, but had not heeded it: now, he was growing blind, reeling on the saddle. Every bound of the horse jarred him with pain. His sense was leaving him, he knew; he wondered dimly if he was dying. That was the end of it, was it? He hoped to God the Union cause would triumph. Theodora,—he wished Theodora and he had parted friends. The man fell heavily forward, and the horse, terrified to madness, sprang aside, on a shelving ledge on the road-side, the edge of a deep mountain-gully. It was only sand beneath the snow, and gave way as he touched it. The animal struggled frantically to regain his footing, but the whole mass slid, and horse and rider rolled senseless to the bottom. When the noon-sun struck its peering light that day down into the dark crevice, Palmer lay there, stiff and stark.

When the Federal troops had passed by that morning, Scofield felt some one lift him gently, where he had fallen. It was Bone.

"Don't yer try ter stan', Mars' Joe," he said. "I kin tote yer like a fedder. Lor' bress yer, dis is nuffin'. We'll hev yer roun' 'n no time,"—his face turning ash-colored as he talked, seeing how dark the stain was on the old man's waistcoat.

His master could not help chuckling even then.

"Bone," he gasped, "when will ye quit lyin'? Put me down, old

fellow. Easy. I'm goin' fast."

Death did not take him unawares. He had thought all day it would end in this way. But he never knew who killed him,—I am glad of that.

Bone laid him on a pile of lumber behind some bushes. He could do little,—only held his big hand over the wound with all his force, having a vague notion he could so keep in life. He did not comprehend yet that his master was dying, enough to be sorry: he had a sort of pride in being nearest to Mars' Joe in a time like this,—in having him to himself. That was right: hadn't they always been together since they were boys and set rabbit-traps on the South-Branch Mountain? But there was a strange look in the old man's eyes Bone did not recognize,—a new and awful thought. Now and then the sharp crack of the musketry jarred him.

"Tink dem Yankees is gettin' de Debbil in de Gap," Bone said, consolingly. "Would yer like ter know how de fight is goin', Mars'?"

"What matters it?" mumbled the old man. "Them things is triflin', after all,—now,—now."

"Is dar anyting yer'd like me ter git, Mars' Joe?" said Bone, through his sobs.

The thought of the dying man was darkening fast; he began to mutter about Dode, and George at Harper's Ferry,—"Give Coly a warm mash to-night, Bone."

"O Lord!" cried the negro, "ef Mist' Dode was hyur! Him's

goin', an' him's las' breff is given ter de beast! Mars' Joe," calling in his ear, "fur God's sake say um prayer!"

The man moved restlessly, half-conscious.

"I wish David was here,—to pray for me."

The negro gritted his teeth, choking down an oath.

"I wish,—I thort I'd die at home,—allays. That bed I've slep' in come thirty years. I wish I was in th' house."

His breath came heavy and at long intervals. Bone gave a crazed look toward the road, with a wild thought of picking his master up and carrying him home. But it was nearly over now. The old man's eyes were dull; they would never see Dode again. That very moment she stood watching for him on the porch, her face colorless from a sleepless night, thinking he had been at Romney, that every moment she would hear his "Hillo!" round the bend of the road. She did not know that could not be again. He lay now, his limbs stretched out, his grizzly old head in Bone's arms.

"Tell Dode I didn't fight. She'll be glad o' that. Thar's no blood on my hands." He fumbled at his pocket. "My pipe? Was it broke when I fell? Dody 'd like to keep it, mayhap. She allays lit it for me."

The moment's flash died down. He muttered once or twice, after that,—"Dode,"—and "Lord Jesus,"—and then his eyes shut. That was all.

They had buried her dead out of her sight. They had no time for mourning or funeral-making now. They only left her for a

day alone to hide her head from all the world in the coarse old waistcoat, where the heart that had been so big and warm for her lay dead beneath,—to hug the cold, haggard face to her breast, and smooth the gray hair. She knew what the old man had been to her—now! There was not a homely way he had of showing his unutterable pride and love for his little girl that did not wring her very soul. She had always loved him; but she knew now how much warmer and brighter his rough life might have been, if she had chosen to make it so. There was not a cross word of hers, nor an angry look, that she did not remember with a bitterness that made her sick as death. If she could but know he forgave her! It was too late. She loathed herself, her coldness, her want of love to him,—to all the world. If she could only tell him she loved him, once more!—hiding her face in his breast, wishing she could lie there as cold and still as he, whispering, continually, "Father! Father!" Could he not hear? When they took him away, she did not cry nor faint. When trouble stabbed Dode to the quick, she was one of those people who do not ask for help, but go alone, like a hurt deer, until the wound heals or kills. This was a loss for life. Of course, this throbbing pain would grieve itself down; but in all the years to come no one would take just the place her old father had left vacant. Husband and child might be dearer, but she would never be "Dody" to any one again. She shut the loss up in her own heart. She never named him afterwards.

It was a cold winter's evening, that, after the funeral. The January wind came up with a sharp, dreary sough into the defiles

of the hills, crusting over the snow-sweeps with a glaze of ice that glittered in the pearly sunlight, clear up the rugged peaks. There, at the edge of them, the snow fretted and arched and fell back in curling foam-waves with hints of delicate rose-bloom in their white shining. The trees, that had stood all winter bare and patient, lifting up their dumb arms in dreary supplication, suddenly, to-day, clothed themselves, every trunk and limb and twig, in flashing ice, that threw back into the gray air the royal greeting of a thousand splendid dyes, violet, amber, and crimson,—to show God they did not need to wait for summer days to praise Him. A cold afternoon: even the seeds hid in the mould down below the snow were chilled to the heart, and thought they surely could not live the winter out: the cows, when Bone went out drearily to feed them by himself, were watching the thin, frozen breath steaming from their nostrils with tears in their eyes, he thought.

A cold day: cold for the sick and wounded soldiers that were jolted in ambulances down the mountain-roads through its creeping hours. For the Federal troops had evacuated Romney. The Rebel forces, under Jackson, had nearly closed around the mountain-camp before they were discovered: they were twenty thousand strong. Lander's force was but a handful in comparison: he escaped with them for their lives that day, leaving the town and the hills in full possession of the Confederates.

A bleak, heartless day: coldest of all for Dode, lying on the floor of her little room. How wide and vacant the world looked to

her! What could she do there? Why was she born? She must show her Master to others,—of course; but—she was alone: everybody she loved had been taken from her. She wished that she were dead. She lay there, trying to pray, now and then,—motionless, like some death in life; the gray sunlight looking in at her, in a wondering way. It was quite contented to be gray and cold, till summer came.

Out in the little kitchen, the day had warmed up wonderfully. Dode's Aunt Perrine, a widow of thirty years' standing, had come over to "see to things durin' this murnful affliction." As she had brought her hair-trunk and bonnet-box, it was probable her stay would be indefinite. Dode was conscious of her as she would be of an attack of nettle-rash. Mrs. Perrine and her usual burying-colleague, "Mis' Browst," had gotten up a snug supper of fried oysters, and between that and the fresh relish of horror from the funeral were in a high state of enjoyment.

Aunt Perrine, having officiated as chief mourner that very morning, was not disposed to bear her honors meekly.

"It was little Jane Browst knew of sorrer. With eight gells well married,—*well* married, Jane,—deny it, ef you can,—what can you know of my feelins this day? Hyur's Mahala's husband dead an' gone,—did you say tea or coffee, Jane?—Joseph Scofield, a good brother-in-law to me's lives, laid in the sod this day. You may well shake yer head! But who 'll take his place to me? Dode there's young an' 'll outgrow it. But it 's me that suffers the loss,"—with a fresh douse of tears, and a contemptuous shove

of the oyster-plate to make room for her weeping head. "It's me that's the old 'n' withered trunk!"

Mis' Browst helped herself freely to the oysters just then.

"Not," said Aunt Perrine, with stern self-control, "that I don't submit, an' bear as a Christian ought."

She took the spoon again.

"'N' I could wish," severely, raising her voice, "'s all others could profit likewise by this dispensation. Them as is kerried off by tantrums, 'n' consorts with Papishers 'n' the Lord knows what, might see in this a judgment, ef they would."

Mis' Browst groaned in concert.

"Ye needn't girn that away, Jane Browst," whispered Aunt Perrine, emphatically. "Dode Scofield's a different guess sort of a gell from any Browst. Keep yer groans for yer own nest. Ef I improve the occasion while she's young an' tender, what's that to you? Look at home, you'd best, I say!"

Mis' Browst was a woman of resources and English pluck. She always came out best at last, though her hair was toffy-colored and her eyes a washed-out blue, and Aunt Perrine was of the color of a mild Indian. Two of Mis' Browst's sons-in-law had been "burned out" by the Yankees; another was in the Union army: these trump-cards of misery she did now so produce and flourish and weep over that she utterly routed the enemy, reduced her to stolid silence.

"Well, well," she muttered, getting breath. "We 'll not talk of our individooal sorrers when affliction is general, Jane Browst.

S'pose we hev Bone in, and hear the perticklers of the scrimmage at Blue's Gap. It's little time I've hed for news since,"—with a groan to close the subject finally.

Mis' Browst sighed an assent, drinking her coffee with a resigned gulp, with the firm conviction that the civil war had been designed for her especial trial and enlargement in Christian grace.

So Bone was called in from the cow-yard. His eyes were quite fiery, for the poor stupid fellow had been crying over the "warm mash" he was giving to Coly. "Him's las' words was referrin' ter yer, yer pore beast," he had said, snuffling out loud. He had stayed in the stables all day, "wishin' all ole she-cats was to home, an' him an' Mist' Dode could live in peace."

However, he was rather flattered at the possession of so important a story just now, and in obedience to Aunt Perrine's nod seated himself with dignity on the lowest step of the garret-stairs, holding carefully his old felt hat, which he had decorated with streaming weepers of crape.

Dode, pressing her hands to her ears, heard only the dull drone of their voices. She shut her eyes, sometimes, and tried to fancy that she was dreaming and would waken presently,—that she would hear her father rap on the window with his cowhide, and call, "Supper, Dody dear?"—that it was a dream that Douglas Palmer was gone forever, that she had put him away. Had she been right? God knew; she was not sure.

It grew darker; the gray afternoon was wearing away with

keen gusts and fitful snow-falls. Dode looked up wearily: a sharp exclamation, rasped out by Aunt Perrine, roused her.

"Dead? Dougl's dead?"

"Done gone, Mist'. I forgot dat—ter tell yer. Had somefin' else ter tink of."

"Down in the gully?"

"Saw him lyin' dar as I went ter git Flynn's cart ter—ter bring Mars' Joe, yer know,—home. Gone dead. Like he's dar yit. Snow 'ud kiver him fast, an' de Yankees hed n't much leisure ter hunt up de missin',—yi! yi!"—with an attempt at a chuckle.

"Dougl's dead!" said Aunt Perrine. "Well!—in the midst of life—Yer not goin', Jane Browst? What's yer hurry, woman? You've but a step across the road. Stay to-night. Dode an' me'll be glad of yer company. It's better to come to the house of murnin' than the house of feastin', you know."

"You may be thankful you've a house to cover you, Ann Perrine, an'"—

"Yes,—I know. I'm resigned. But there's no affliction like death.—Bone, open the gate for Mis' Browst. Them hasps is needin' mendin', as I've often said to Joseph,—um!"

The women kissed each other as often as women do whose kisses are—cheap, and Mis' Browst set off down the road. Bone, turning to shut the gate, felt a cold hand on his arm.

"Gor-a'mighty! Mist' Dode, what is it?"

The figure standing in the snow wrapt in a blue cloak shook as he touched it. Was she, too, struck with death? Her eyes were

burning, her face white and clammy.

"Where is he, Uncle Bone? where?"

The old man understood—all.

"Gone dead, darlin'."—holding her hand in his paw, tenderly.

"Don't fret, chile! Down in de Tear-coat gully. Dead, chile, dead! Don't yer understan'?"

"He is not dead," she said, quietly. "Open the gate," pulling at the broken hasp.

"Fur de Lor's sake, Mist' Dode, come in 'n' bathe yer feet 'n' go to bed! Chile, yer crazy!"

Common sense, and a flash of something behind to give it effect, spoke out of Dode's brown eyes, just then.

"Go into the stable, and bring a horse after me. The cart is broken?"

"Yes, 'm. Dat cussed Ben"—

"Bring the horse,—and some brandy, Uncle Bone."

"Danged ef yer shall kill yerself! Chile, I tell yer he's dead. I'll call Mist' Perrine."

Her eyes were black now, for an instant; then they softened.

"He is not dead. Come, Uncle Bone. You're all the help I have, now."

The old man's flabby face worked. He did not say anything, but went into the stable, and presently came out, leading the horse, with fearful glances back at the windows. He soon overtook the girl going hurriedly down the road, and lifted her into the saddle.

"Chile! chile! yer kin make a fool of ole Bone, allays."

She did not speak; her face, with its straight-lidded eyes, turned to the mountain beyond which lay the Tear-coat gully. A fair face under its blue hood, even though white with pain,—an honorable face: the best a woman can know of pride and love in life spoke through it.

"Mist' Dode," whined Ben, submissively, "what are yer goin' ter do? Bring him home?"

"Yes."

"Fur de lub o' heben!"—stopping short. "A Yankee captain in de house, an' Jackson's men rampin' over de country like devils! Dey'll burn de place ter de groun', ef dey fin' him."

"I know."

Bone groaned horribly, then went on doggedly. Fate was against him: his gray hairs were bound to go down with sorrow to the grave. He looked up at her wistfully, after a while.

"What'll Mist' Perrine say?" he asked.

Dode's face flushed scarlet. The winter mountain night, Jackson's army, she did not fear; but the staring malicious world in the face of Aunt Perrine did make her woman's heart blench.

"It does n't matter," she said, her eyes full of tears. "I can't help that, Uncle Bone,"—putting her little hand on his shoulder, as he walked beside her. The child was so utterly alone, you know.

The road was lonely,—a mere mountain-path striking obliquely through the hills to the highway: darkening hills and sky and valleys strangely sinking into that desolate homesick mood of

winter twilight. The sun was gone; one or two sad red shadows lay across the gray. Night would soon be here, and he lay stiff-cold beneath the snow. Not dead: her heart told her that imperiously from the first. But there was not one instant to lose.

"I cannot wait for you, Uncle Bone. I must go alone."

"Debbil de step! I'll take yer 'cross fields ter Gentry's, an' ride on myself."

"You could not find him. No one could find him but me."

Something possessed the girl, other than her common self. She pushed his hand gently from the reins, and left him. Bone wrung his hands.

"'N' de guerrillas,—'n' de rest o' de incarnate debbils!"

She knew that. Dode was no heroine,—a miserable coward. There was not a black stump of a tree by the road-side, nor the rustle of a squirrel in the trees, that did not make her heart jump and throb against her bodice. Her horse climbed the rocky path slowly. I told you the girl thought her Helper was alive, and very near. She did to-night. She thought He was beside her in this lonesome road, and knew she would be safe. She felt as if she could take hold of His very hand. It grew darker: the mountains of snow glowered wan like the dead kings in Hades; the sweeps of dark forests whispered some broken mysterious word, as she passed; sometimes, in a sudden opening, she could see on a far hill-side the red fires of a camp. She could not help the sick feeling in her throat, nor make her hand steady; but the more alone she was, the nearer He came,—the pale face of the

Nazarene, who loved His mother and Mary, who took the little children in His arms before He blessed them. Nearer than ever before; so she was not afraid to tell Him, as she went, how she had suffered that day, and that she loved this man who lay dying under the snow: to ask that she might find him. A great gulf lay between them. Would *He*

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