

### An Autumn Day.

What a beautiful season we have had, with its days of bright sunshine and genial warmth. It is now past the middle of October, the 18th. We are in the midst of that brief but elusive season which we call Indian summer. In the distance, the St. John River, seen through a vista of trees of every imaginable hue, reflects all the glories of forest and meadow in its still waters.

Everything in nature seems to have caught the spell of quiet on this calm Sabbath morning, as we sit out on the lawn and enjoy the fleeting beauties of the day. But the hush is only seeming. The sounds, as well as the sights, are myriad. The slow freight train, whose rumbling has been heard for nearly an hour, and whose whistle has called up echoes from rocks and hillside, now clatters noisily by, sending hosts of birds in alarm to their covers in the nearby grove. But the discordant notes of traffic have died away in the distance, leaving this little world to nature and to us. The soft alarm note of the thrush is heard as he poises himself on the roof of the cottage, his tail tilting backward and forward—an animated interrogation point. His comrade perching on the very top of the chimney looks curiously down where repose the dead embers of last evening's grateful fire. Another gets an unsteady hold on the now leafless vine, and looks in at the window. Evidently they scorn such a dwelling for they flirt their tails (equivalent to turning up their noses) and are soon rollicking in sport among the branches of a red maple, sending to earth rustling showers of gold and crimson leaves.

It was this steady rustling, as we sat listening in the calm of the night before—leaves jostling each other in their fall—that made the grove alive with sounds. Voices were they? Who knows but the trees sing a requiem over the dying leaves that have nourished them, and whose fresh summer tints have made all nature rejoice.

As we have been sitting here quietly hour after hour in the autumn sunshine, listening to the falling leaves, the flies, crickets, and other insects singing

their minor lays, and the song sparrow, and vesper sparrow pouring forth an occasional lilt, we have been grateful to those birds who have paused here for a day or two on their southbound flight. A thrush has been by turns feeding and observing us for some time from a shrubby buck-thorn (*Rhamnus frangula*), whose berries, fleshy but ill-tasting, have evidently been left for the last of the migrating clans. Encouraged, he drops noiselessly to the lawn, and hops to within a few feet of the two figures whose acquaintance he seems to court. What a graceful bird he is! His flecked breast, reddish-brown tail, are in the full morning sunshine. His eye is steady, alert, apprehensive. We watch him in his nervous, graceful poises. Our eye-winkers flinch and droop before his steady gaze; a flirt of the tail and he is gone.

Two downy woodpeckers are playing among the branches of a white birch, scattering the leaves as they chase each other about; suddenly they pause—tap, tap; and some luckless grub is dragged from his comfortable winter quarters to furnish forth the morning meal.

All at once the lawn is alive with juncos, their white V-shaped tail feathers gleaming in the sun as they skim to and fro. One scans us closely as he sits on the grandfather's arm-chair beneath the elm and tries how nearly he can graze a nose as he darts swiftly to the tree opposite. Belated butterflies are lazily moving in the sunshine. In the distance a few straggling crows—"monks of the feathered tribe"—utter their hoarse "Ca—a—a—ws, less discordant than the screaming whistle of the freight train. Robins and chickadees, red-squirrel and chip-munk are abroad, seeking their food and enjoying the day.

At intervals the sharp report of a gun has rung forth from the adjoining woods. We hope none of those innocent, happy creatures has fallen on a day such as this, when it is a delight to live.

A red-polled linnet, gay in his rosy plumage is seated upon an ash tree near by. How deftly he handles one of the winged fruits, detaching the seed, unmoved by the fluttering of wings and rustling of leaves around him. Next, he flies to a birch, where he finishes his meal (if a bird's meal is ever finished) on a catkin which takes more time and gives the opportunity, as he twists and turns, to observe the flecks of colour on this animated mass of feathers.

A passing breeze, and the leaves fall in such