

## FARM AND FIELD.

## AN AUTUMN RAMBLE.

A delightful day! Not a day odorous with flowers and new-mown hay, but one of those rare Indian summer days when the woods stand transfigured in the mellow light. Come, let us have a ramble. This city life of ours is monotonous at best, and the country will at least have the charm of novelty. But you do not care for the woods? No matter; you cannot help admiring them now. Come, I will try to point out their beauties.

Observe that maple! How pleasantly the sunshine ripples through its foliage!

The creek is a very talkative companion. It is seldom quiet, and never dull. Its current is more copious than I had thought, doubtless owing to the late rains. The great blocks of sandstone in its bed are smoothly polished, and the impetuous current rubs away at them unceasingly, foaming and bubbling as it breaks against them.

See this pine! Isn't it a giant? He must be lonely here by the roadside, with no company but puny saplings. It is singular that the lumbermen have spared his trunk. How tall he is! Rub your bump of calculation and give a guess at his height. One hundred feet! Not less surely; doubtless considerably more. His trunk is straight as an arrow—a magnificent shaft. Throw a stone over him! Indeed you cannot, friend of mine. Try it, if you will; I'll be your judge. Hardly half way up, honestly. See the branches up there quivering. The old giant is laughing at you.

Now the valley opens out. Yonder is a farmhouse, while there is a saw mill with its unsightly dam—far from picturesque objects. But notice the old bridge—a tumble-down, half-ruined structure that would adorn a sketch of woodland scenery. Look now beyond house and mill and bridge. Was ever hill more gorgeous than that one? What autumnal colours could be brighter than those oaks, dog woods, hickories and beeches? Off here to the left, through that pine-walled gap, notice that distant hill with the blue haze above it. What richer or lovelier tints could an artist desire?

See this pine thicket. It is twilight in there, even in the brightest sunlight. There goes a squirrel!—a piny, the boys would call him, to distinguish him from the gray squirrel. Hear him chatter! He thinks we have no business here no doubt; but we will call in and see what kind of a housekeeper he is, for this seems to be his home. There, he has vanished without a word of welcome. How quiet and dark it is! These brown pine needles make a capital turf to walk on, but they choke out the grass, even if the scanty light would permit of such growth. This is something akin to the "dim religious light" one reads of in the old cathedrals of Europe. There is a sombreness about the place that produces weird fancies. Pine woods have always been prolific of legends. Unlike oak or maple woods, they have little affinity for sunshine.

We have had quite a long walk, and it is almost lunch time. I see a glade across the creek, that would be an excellent place to lunch in. But how shall we cross? Really I had not thought of that. The bridge is a mile away, and the creek is deep and rapid. Ah, I have it! There are two big sandstone boulders in the stream, not a dozen feet apart, and here is a rail fence. Are we engineers enough to build a bridge, provided the owner of the fence didn't discover us? Certainly. There, two rails are safely laid. Not strong enough yet. Two more. That will do, I think.

Even a prosy fellow like yourself must acknowledge that this is a pretty spot. Here are rhododendrons, with green and lustrous leaves that remind one of spring; there are little pines grouped as if planted by hand, and back of us is a thicket of yellow-leaved bushes that I am not botanist enough to call by name—all inclosing a glade made pleasant by the mild October sunshine. Here is a dry log to sit on, and now for lunch.

Hear the bird singing! Its voice is not musical, but in keeping with the wild woods it lives in. I think it is a jay. The robins, bluebirds, and catbirds have all gone southward, and it will soon follow. The blackbirds are holding a caucus yonder on the hillside, doubtless deliberating about their removal. What harsh voices they have! They are nearly related to the crow, I believe—a natural thief and vagabond. By the way, there goes a crow now off that chestnut tree—a lazy-winged fellow, with a most melancholy caw.

Little else is stirring in the woods but birds. Perhaps a squirrel springs into vision at long intervals, or a rabbit darts out of some thicket; but silence reigns among the trees. It is a silence broken by many sounds, all so in harmony with it that it remains undisturbed. Leaves drop ceaselessly—red, yellow, green—rustling against the branches as they fall. There goes a golden hickory leaf into our lunch basket. It must have sailed quite a distance, for I can see no hickory tree near us. A puff of wind sometimes blows off a flurry of leaves, scattering them in all directions, to seek erratic courses to the ground.

What can this be? Surely not a flower! Yes; a violet growing in this nook by the roadside, and November almost here! A beautiful little flower, isn't it?—too delicate for these wild woods. I shall take it home with me, root and all, to keep Jack Frost from nipping it.

These aimless wanderings through autumn woods have a strange charm for me. They take me out of my selfish life, and exert a refining influence. It is like wandering in dreamland, save that one sees nothing distorted or unnatural but beauty of a simple and fascinating type. No poetry is sweeter than that of Indian summer, but few of our poets have yet succeeded in giving it adequate expression.

Beautiful! You exclaim, and I echo the word, pleased at this evidence of your appreciation.

Our walk has taken us some hours from business; but I do not regard it as time lost. We have spent a short season with Nature, in one of her most delightful moods. If she has taught us nothing of practical use in our business life, she has at least left pleasant impressions of her beauties that will linger with us in the winter, and lifted us for an hour or two out of the monotony and worriment of our every-day existence.—*The Workman.*

## LUCERNE.

ITS REMARKABLE MERITS AND THE REASONS FOR ITS NEGLECT.

Lucerne is the *Medicago sativa* of the botanists, a leguminous plant that has been known and cultivated for forage from the earliest historical times. This plant was introduced from Media, in Asia, to Greece, in the time of Darius, 500 years before Christ, and from thence its cultivation extended to Italy and to the south of France, where it has been grown to this day, having always continued to be a favourite forage crop. Through the Spaniards, probably, it was early introduced into Mexico and South America, where, under the name of alfalfa, it has flourished with great luxuriance on soils suitable to its growth, spreading spontaneously, and proving of

immense value for the vast herds of cattle and horses that roam over the pampas.

Such is a general statement of the characteristics of Lucerne, and it is evident that it must be regarded as one of the most important perennial plants that cover the surface of the earth. It has never become a universal favourite in this country for several reasons. One is that it will not endure so severe a climate as red clover, requiring greater heat, while it is not adapted to quite so wide a range of soils, but perhaps the chief reason is that our farmers will not give it the minute care and attention it requires to start it properly. They don't like the idea of having to cultivate and weed a forage crop. In common parlance it would be ranked among the grasses, and the idea of weeding and cultivating a grass with all the nicety of a garden crop, seems absurd to the average farmer when he can get his respectable crop of clover with even the most slovenly treatment.

Lucerne is exacting in its requirements. It must have a deep soil and will never succeed in a thin one. It languishes in compact and clay soils, and cannot flourish on light soils, lying over impermeable subsoil. In loose and permeable subsoils of loam, sand or gravel, its roots penetrate to great depths. They have been found in sandy soils thirteen feet long. They are nearly destitute of lateral shoots, but have numerous fibrous rootlets which imbibe the moisture needed to sustain the plant from great depths. Its nutriment comes from layers of soil far below the average of other plants. Hence its wonderful adaptation to tropical climates and to long continued drouths. I have seen it flourishing in California and in Utah where it had not received a drop of rain for many months.

From what has been said, the soil most suitable for Lucerne is a deep, rich, mellow loam with a light subsoil. This latter is of the utmost consequence. Deep tillage and especial care to break through an underlying hard pan will do something, to be sure, but a neglect of this precaution, wherever a hard pan exists, will lead to inevitable failure. A calcareous soil, or a sandy soil lying over a loose calcareous subsoil, may be regarded as the best for lucerne or alfalfa. Growers of this crop in England and the south of France, sow it in drills, and hoe it often enough to keep out weeds, that is, to keep it perfectly clean for the first year or two, or till it covers the ground. This is essential to the highest success. But the chief difficulty is in getting it started well. It does not come to its perfection till the third year, and then it is superb, if the soil is suitable for it, and after it is well started, it will last for many years. It may be counted on for twenty or twenty-five years, and will furnish several cuttings each year, beginning early in May, and furnishing a crop once in about thirty days.

In one case eleven acres kept eleven horses 299 days. In another case eight acres kept eight horses 815 days, and in both cases a large number of sheep were pastured on the ground for a long time after the last cutting for the horses. It is greatly relished by all kinds of stock, especially for cows where the milk is sold in the market, but is not thought the best food for butter-making. Sow twenty pounds of seed to the acre. If the seed is pure that is sufficient, but as much of the seed is impure and old, it is safer to use twenty-five pounds. The seed is usually covered with a hard coating, and if it happens to be very dry it retards vegetation, so that it is better to steep it in warm water for six or eight hours before sowing. We should be glad to record a thoroughly successful experiment with this crop. It is worth an effort to grow it in the best manner.—*Hon. C. L. Flint in N. Y. Tribune.*