

Autumn of 1920

Sept. 20th - Spring promises - Autumn fulfils;
I am filled to, with ripe apples & pears & grapes.
'Tis a fruitful out-of-the-way farm where
honey & ham are brewed down. There is no one
around to order us off the premises, so Mother and
I take our choice from the ripe fruit on the ground.
What we don't eat will probably rot or make
the neighbour's cattle drunk. What a day it is
to live! Crows cawing, jays calling, hawks
sailing, chipmunks frisking, apples dropping. In the
fields the thistles are blooming, the weeds are
yellow with goldweed & blue with asters, & the hillside
are crimson with sumach.

Tonight the katydids are singing and the
screech owl calls. There is a harvest moon
shedding a soft silver light over our hill &
valley. All the corn hunters and their corn
dogs will be out hunting big fat corn-fed crows.

Oct. 5th - The Jenners are returning. They

flutter in front of Mother and I all the way up the mountain road till we come to the path that leads to High Point - the Skyline Trail. Along our path a few huckleberry bushes still hold a few berries. Great black clouds go scudding across a cold October sky, & the wind is so strong that not only branches are bending, but whole tall trees are swaying. The smell of autumn leaves is good. On the path across the ridge we come out to beautiful open spaces where all the surrounding country is seen; then again our path dips down into sheltered hollows. Finally we reach Wyandott High Point where the wind is blowing such a gale that we are glad to get down into a sheltered nook on the southeast side. Here we watch the shadows on the mountains while we eat our lunch. A black cloud hangs heavy in the east, & the sun shining beneath it, makes Ramapo Mountain a clear electric blue. As I sit here in this cozy warm spot in

the shelter of scrub pines I look down over the wooded valley & the mountains beyond it - old Winkham. It is not only an autumn scene I see before me, but visions of all the seasons in the year, & every road & path in these mountains, all the running brooks, & old plank bridges over the little brooks. I think of my hundred vagabond days; my trusses with the wilderness. In spongy swamp where I floundered thru wild undergrowth; on spongy mountain range to the northeast where I battled thru scrub oaks for a mile. I look down to spongy wooded hillside where a dozen old woodroads of charred days lay - go, cross & recross. And over on Yonshack Ridge to the trail Mother loves to follow - To spongy road winding at the foot of Winkham the road that leads past grandfather's old farm up past the little gray school-house & up past the little white church on the hill. I know this mountain & valley & all the surrounding mountains & valleys. I know them & I love them.

Oct. 6th - Over fences, thru fences, & under
fences Mathew and I climbed. We started this a.m. for
hickory nuts, & we brought home all the trophies of
the woods - Big wild grapes so ripe they had
dropped from the vines - They are at their best now.
We brought home apples from the roadside, hickory nuts,
a smooth round hickory stone from the mountain road,
hutternut from the back lot, & an armful of hight
foliage. Back from our tramp we look down to the
woods at the edge of the meadow & try to count
the different colors. There are the tall dark firs
& hemlocks, & the emerald green of maples not turned
the yellow maples with the sun shining upon them
making a golden glow, the deeper orange-yellow leaves
of the hickorys, the soft pale yellows of the birches,
all the ripe browns, the flaming scarlet of red maples,
the rich plum color of the ash trees, & the smouldering
crimson of the oaks. Always these days when we
return from our mountain walks we look down at
that mass of glorious color; then we look brightly

at our little house & at all the late flowers blooming about it, and we say - "There is no place in the country so beautiful as our little home - no place in these mountains like our hill & valley."

Oct. 7th - Not a single cloud in the whole wide blue sky, only a golden sun shining with soft warmth. Right after dinner Mather & I start down our back road for a tramp - our beautiful old grassy road that takes us a little way thru woods, then after a climb thru wooden bars, thru a shabby old farm & between stone walls where a great cornfield spreads on one side; the stacked corn like little brown mounds, & all between the stacks lay great big orange-colored pumpkins. After the cornfields comes an old pasture lot where there is the most beautiful little grove of trees nestling on the sunny south side of a grassy hill. There are white birches, cedars & dogwoods all grouped together. Here woodbine trines its rich crimson leaves among the dark green cedar branches, & in one of the tall cedars hangs clusters of

purple grapes among the yellowing leaves of its vines.
The dogwoods fairly glow with scarlet leaves &
berries, & the white birches makes a silver light among
the richer shades. A flock of cedar waxwings flutter
among the dogwoods & in the grapevines, stripping the
berries & grapes with their bills & dropping the ripest to
the ground. I find it hard to leave this pretty spot &
I walk backwards looking at it, & turn for a last look
when we enter the shade of the woods at the far end
of the pasture lot. Now we follow a narrow pathing
& down into the heart of the woods till we come to a
little open glade, a gently sloping hillside fairly blue
with fringed gentians; bluer than the blue sky
above them. What a rare frail flower - this airy
spiral fringed blossom! What a treat to find it blooming
in this secret place! Someone has called the fringed
gentian "the last beautiful words of the season; the
daintiest & most eloquent that she ever speaks."

Another surprise when we come out of the woods - a great boggy meadow ablaze with little swamp maples - all bright scarlets with here & there a touch of emerald green or a touch of soft golden yellow, & among all the other trees, one stands out a gem, every leaf of that tall young maple a deep wonderful crimson.

On our homeward way we cross an old abandoned farm; then we follow a narrow road by a little running brook where tangled vines hedge either side, & underneath the tangle the stream tinkles a little melody. This is a ramble we will remember and love to remember all our lives.

Oct. 9th - A dreamy content I feel on this little cedar hill - the ground covered with green & gray moss. A butterfly flits past me. I hear the twitter of a Juncos in yonder cedar tree. Away off a rooster crows; from the woods sounds the drumming of a partridge; there is the rattle of a cart down the

road, crons are cawing, a dog barks. The
katy-dids sing. All around me are cedar trees, &
a warm sun shines on my back. In front of me
thru the cedars I glimpse the valley & the mountains
beyond it. 'Tis a bit of heaven thro little cedar hills
on this dreamy gold day. My heart is content.
There is nothing on earth like such days as these.

Oct. 10th. - There is not a cloud in the sky today
& it is very warm & still & beautiful. Out under my
bellied oak tree I sit on my wooden box-seat &
listen to nothing leaves in the thicket. A chickadee is
scratching thru under a blooming witch hazel bush.
Yesterday I saw a whole flock of them getting ready
to go south. The robins & bluebirds too, come flocking
in my cedar trees these warm October days.

This afternoon I discovered a soft warm spot
deep in dry grass on the south side of my little
knoll by the big rocks. I made a nest there and found
it a delightful place to day-dream.

Oct. 14th - Warm & hazy & beautiful. Climbed
Wrightsum today with Mrs. Crand, up the steep side of
the mountain - many steep ledges & rough rocks to climb over
all the way to the top. We came out right by the
town & we climbed it. Mr. Stalter told us that the
high building we see forty miles away is Metropolitan
Tower in New York, and he told me that the
Barnet Macdon Road was the oldest Indian Trail
in northern New Jersey. I had always supposed that
West Branch Trail was older, but Charlie Stalter
ought to know. He has traveled the road a lot, and
his people have lived in these parts as long as we.

On our way home our neighbor John Hinkwater,
treated us to hard cider & it made me a bit tipsy.
Mrs. Crand & I gathered black walnuts by the old
Wrightsum place & so we had no bags to put them
in, we put them in our gaiters & so carried them home.
Mother & Mr. Crand got worried over my absence &
came to meet us - Tried to scold us, but laughed instead
when they saw their jolly rascals coming with a skint full of nuts.

Oct. 17th - Mother's birthday today. The country is beautiful & at its best. The bluebirds are flocking & getting ready to return south.

Oct. 20th - Another clear beautiful day. Just walked down our grassy old woodroad where the sun slanted across the path. - Saw a wood thrush on an old rail fence, & a bush of witch hazel in full bloom, its yellow blossoms beautiful among the dead rustling leaves of the thicket.