# A Rare October

~~A Rich October~~.

To the lover of nature — and every one ought to be a loving and reverent observer of the life and scenery around him — the seasons of each year have their own distinctive features. He who watches closely will soon learn to trace these visible results to antecedent causes and will derive all the more pleasure therefrom because of this intimacy of knowledge. There is something almost personal in the delight with which one looks upon a tree or a plant with this knowledge of the secret of its growth and development. It is as if one said to the plant, "Aha, you cannot deceive me with all your reticence. I know what is going on in your silent heart. You need not change your hues or flint your gaudily painted leaves in the round so boastfully. I know the secret you are bravely trying to hide." The mere external facts of nature are thought by some to constitute its chief attractions and the thoughtful observer

CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2014

' is sometimes ridiculed as a scientific ~~fool~~ Paul Pry, to whom beauty is nothing and for whom Nature spreads her feast of ~~beauty~~ ever changing loveliness only to invite him to pry among the compost from which her subtle alchemy evokes & at the same time the blush of the petal and the verdure of the leaf.

The autumn of 1884, ~~prominently~~ is a notable one in the region where we write — the very crest of the Northernmost spur of the Appalachian range in close embrace of whose granite hills Lake Chautauqua lies embosomed while eight miles away away to the northwestward, and almost a thousand feet below Lake Erie spreads her couch of changeful gold for the setting sun. This region consists of two distinct and clearly marked sections. The one is the narrow almost level plateau which stretches along the southern shore of Lake Erie — low-lying, cut with sharp ravines, hardly any portion of it more than

fifty or sixty feet above the level of the lake. Every foot of its soil tells of recent origin and shows that it has been but lately won from the dominion of the waves. Low gravelly hills abound whose contours show the action of the water and the wavy crest of which marks the direction of a shore when the waves were beat against the rugged line of the granite hills beyond. The soil is loamy and interspersed with stubborn bits of clay which even the waves could not subdue and so in sheer vengefulness swept bare and left for the storm and frost to shake and conquer if they could.

The other section rises sharp and swift, but without rock or precipice to a height of six or eight hundred feet, from two to five miles from the shore of the lake. Though the ascent is sharp, the surface of the slope is softly smoothly rounded, full of graceful curves and covered with verdant fields. From the summit

'it slopes away to the southeastward in a long series of gentle undulations among which ~~mea~~ wind the streams which constitute the head waters of the Ohio — one of the three great arms which the Mississippi stretches as if to tap the great lakes and grasp again that source of supply which once made his bed an inland sea which ~~engulfed~~ overspread three-fourths of a continent. It is a curious fact that here, within five miles of Lake Erie, the rain-drops falling upon one side of a roof find their way through the St. Lawrence to the ocean, while those falling on the other wind along the devious channels that bring them finally to the much-amended mouths of the Mississippi.

This beautifully undulated higher plateau is one of the most richly verdant. The soil is mostly a stiff clay with here and there gravelly knolls in the valleys. The channels of the streams are not steep and sharp-spots upon the continent. It is almost yet but smoothly rounded and verdant from crest to base.

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a region devoted to grazing. The small grains entirely ~~given up to grazing~~ ~~and~~ The prevailing and small fruits which ~~are~~ abound upon the lower level are little cultivated here forest growth is beech and maple, scattered in close ~~evenly~~ smoothly rounded groves upon the hillsides, with hemlocks and elms ~~scattered through~~ stretching in dark lines along the valleys. The flora of this region is peculiarly rich and varied — and the ~~changes of~~ arboreal changes are very striking because of the ~~rolling character of the~~ undulating outline of the surface and the unbroken background of velvety verdure against which they are displayed. This year is what the farmer-folk term a "backward ~~one~~ fall". The second week of October is now upon us and yet at an elevation of fifteen hundred feet above sea level, the fields are as green as in the middle of June and save that here and there is to be seen a bit

CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY NY HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2013

of pale yellow, the groves are in as full leaf and of as deep a verdure. The maples, especially those growing by the roadsides and in the open fields are adding to the exceptional character of our autumn sights by shedding their leaves ~~almost~~ without a touch of frost and almost without a show of that brilliant robe of red and gold in which are usually clothed at this season. Only a pale yellow tint like a delicate amber light shows through the outer green of the sturdily rounded forms. They are ripening at the core — reversing the usual order — and shedding the inner leaves while the outer ones, those on the very tips of the ~~[illegible]~~ limbs ~~[illegible]~~ retain

CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY NY HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2013

the soft, rich green of summer. This is a phenomenon not unfrequently ~~of~~ observed ~~to~~ in regions south of ~~the southward of~~ Philadelphia, but very rare in more northern latitudes.

Perhaps one of the most noticeable ~~facts~~ phases of our autumnal verdure is the entire absence of that golden exclamation point which generally marks the intervals of green and brown in the line of the wooded horizon. The hickory usually changes the hue of its foliage more suddenly and evenly than any other forest tree. Not unfrequently within three days it will change from base to summit from a mere dark mass of unnoticeable dull heavy green, into a softly rounded spire of ~~the~~ pure Eclinsean gold framed between brown-leaved oaks, ~~or~~ and slowly bronzing beeches. or set like

a pillar of flame although the deep dark green of the hemlock which seems to grow all the more somber as the season advances with the advancing season, as if resenting the snowy covering that will soon weigh down it branches and half hide its evergreen verdure.

Another marked feature of the autumn scenery this year, is the peculiar freshness of the undergrowth and of the shrubs and flowers, whose the foliage of which is wont to give such variety to the hillsides. Even the thistles are yet green and the lady who walked with me through the fields yesterday brought home a basket-full of the burrs yet crowned with the purple fringe the wild bees love so well to clamber over with their frowzy legs white with pollen while they thrust their antennae deep down into the velvety cushion as if in search of some treasures which the fairies may have hidden away from them.

From my window I see the wind tossing
in the vineyard that follows the curve of the hillside across
up the little valley the ~~arbor~~ grape leaves, and showing
the downy = white ~~the~~ & that marks the
under side of the ~~curved~~ leaf and
revealing the soft bloom of the heavy

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clusters where
~~clusters~~ which for a month ~~have been~~
~~boosting the skunk~~ fruit, the grapes
have been burbling their tender skins
from over = much treasuring of juicy sweet-
therein. Along the hedge rows the clematis
has burst into dull brown puffs while
the ripened foliage has fallen away without
a glint of color to relieve the sober buff
of the shy Quakeress that half hides and
half discloses her dim beauty to the passer by.
The poke = berry (Phytolacca decandra) stands in the
corner of the fence, its ~~straggling~~ sprawling
branches, yet showing their delicate pink tone,
its clusters fresh and red and its tender
leaves yet unscathed by frost. The mounds
of moss along the edges of the woodland,

CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY NY HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2013

reversing the usual order, are brown and dull while the leaves of the overhanging beeches are yet ~~bright and~~ of a glistening green. The golden-rod has lost its luster but the leaves are yet fresh and dark, so that instead of the dull brown that usually lines the ~~to~~ roadsides in October the ~~are~~ ~~still brown roadways which are~~ drives which are showing brown and muddy from the effects of the equinoctial storm are yet bordered with dark rich green.

~~is fierce but balmy~~. The leaves of the milkweed have ripened and fallen off, leaving the dark slender stems yet laden with the light green balls, which from their perch seem to gaze wonderingly around in search of the frost which should have come before to liberate the silky down so deftly stowed away within ~~their stubborn walls~~ the silver lined cells which only the frost king can unlock.

CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY NY HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2013

The lawns are still green with only now and then a pictured leaf stuck stem downwards in the mass of soft rich grass that yields ~~with a cushioned~~ like a deep velvet pile beneath the loitering step. ~~The wind~~

The robins still clamor ravenously in the early morning among the branches of the mountain ash before my window. The leaves have dropped one by one and left only the scarlet clusters on the slender, swaying limbs. The tree-frogs still pipe in the balmy gloaming and the few duck that find sanctuary among the green reeds that line the shores of the dimpling ~~lake~~ lake seem conscious that they untimely visitants and hide in solitary shyness ~~along~~ among the sedgy growth as if waiting for the southward flying multitudes which

CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY NY HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2013

should ere this have brought the courage that comes with numbers to tempt them to the open lake and the unsheltered publicity of the feeding-grounds where the dainties of the water-hidden harvest fields are most abundant. The ferns grown tired of waiting for the season that usually turns their spines to the softest of golden tints or the richest of ~~[illegible]~~ browns, either flannel ~~it~~ their rusted verdure ~~in 'under the thick verdure of the woods under the~~ under the ~~over arching~~ green arches of the woodlands or have drooped into neutral leathery insignificance and twine in stringy loops about the loitering feet. The chestnut burrs have not thought of opening. The polished hull of the hickory-nut is yet tightly clasped about the

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rich=meated pearly shell within. Summer

Perhaps hardly one who notes these peculiar features of our autumn days can recall another season resembling it ~~at~~ in this climate. There have been seasons which were ~~for more~~ ~~be~~ even more "backward", so far as storm and frost and the forerunners of wintry weather are concerned. ~~In most respects~~ Most people are inclined to regard it as a dull unattractive autumn. The maples do not blaze and the landscape is, of almost as uniform and dense a green as in July. The sereh of it all is a dry

CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY NY HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2013

~~A~~ cool August and September and a moist and balmy October. In the room where as an invalid we lay day after day in July under double blankets, we now write by day and by night with open windows. These conditions of ~~rail~~ humidity and temperature ~~and~~ in this climate are very rare. They do not give us the flaunting glories of the ordinary Indian summer but from their very rarity disclose peculiar and unexpected charms which tend to bring the real lover of Nature closer to the ever changing yet always beautiful bosom of the infinite mother of all life.

CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY NY HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2013

Perhaps the one thing that has gained in magnificence by the peculiar character of our autumn weather is the sumac. The two varieties of the Rhus family which are found here are almost indistinguishable and owing to the richness of the soil grow with great luxuriance. Usually at this time the leaves have become either a pale yellow with uncertain patches of red or else are of a dull pictured brown among which the cones of red berries show but dully. This year however the sumac leaves are either flaming red or unfaded green and the close dark thickets of a month ago are transformed into ~~billows~~ crests of scarlet light resting upon emerald ~~undulations~~ waves.

CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY NY HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2013

This scarlet hue of the *sumac* leaf is hardly distinguishable from the color of the berry and seems for some reason to prevail only at the very tips of the ~~plants~~ branches directly about the glowing clusters as if the hue of the latter had been caught by reflection or splashed over them by the rush of autumn rains. Perhaps it betokens a light touch of first that has kissed the topmost branches but left those below still clad in the deep sea green of their midsummer growth.

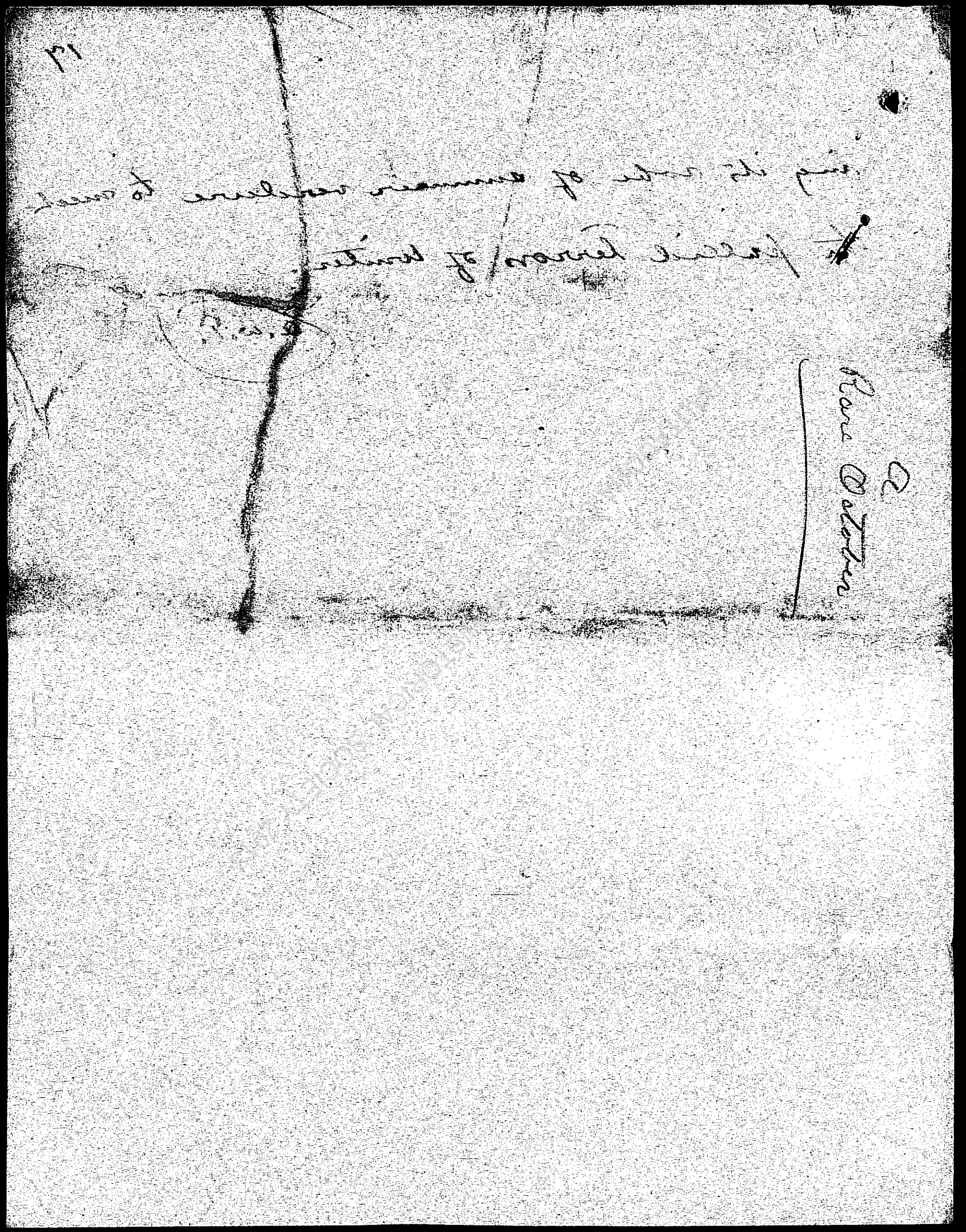
CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY NY HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2013

The northwest wind has the genuine autumn rough as it sweeps along the hillsides and ~~a~~ bends the full-leaved branches angrily together as if it resented being robbed of its October sport. Here and there it gathers up a few ~~golden and brown~~ brown and golden leaves, tosses them up and down and seems trying in vain to muster enough to make one of them ~~golden~~ glittering whirlpool with which it is wont to sport at this season of the year. The sky is soft and blue. The clouds as white and fleecy as if they loitered above June meadows. The year is going to its grave laden not only with brown and golden sheaves and bowed with the russet and golden fruitage of the orchards, but also but also proudly wears

ing its robe of summer verdure to meet the pallid terrors of winter.

A. W. T.

CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY NY HISTORICAL SOCIETY 201



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Rare October

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