

REFLECTIONS.

THERE is no jesting in nature ; she may seem glad or sad, but she is earnest. A trifling man in the field cannot fool the crickets ; and yet there is much misrepresentation in nature. I see the hickory trees turn yellow and brown in Autumn ; they would have me believe that they didn't bear any fruit this year. God's creatures often appear to one another what they are not—they are tricky. Harmless snakes mimic poisonous ones, the semblance of many moth to yellow leaves is striking ; white spiders inhabit white flowers, and yellow spiders occur on yellow ones. Thus they escape their enemies, or prove the hidden enemies of others. The operations of nature are akin to those of Wall Street. When we walk in the woods we cannot be sure of what we see, so much is done for appearance sake alone, the truth is hidden mid a pageant of bright petals. Circe is ever abroad, and the milk-weeds lure flies and bees and hold them captive till they die.

Any action that is possible is permissible in nature ; she even tolerates murder. Let those who can, do, is the motto in the fields. The crimes that a lone man may commit in the woods, or on the sea shore know no law,

and even seem without the pale of the conscience. If he crushes a snail, or barks a tree nature does not revenge herself.

Yet the ants have a standard of justice among themselves, that is a conscience as far as their community and species go. Also there is a law among crows, they do not destroy each other's nests. Our own justice hardly steps outside of human affairs, but we owe something to animals. The cow in the field appreciates kindness, and we should strive to please the more helpless creatures, as well as our friend and our kindred.

Perhaps the chief value of going afield, is that we are judged by a true standard—a dollar isn't worth a cent there. Death is a great leveller it is said, and so is nature's influence. In the city a man is surrounded by artificial conditions and has the help of his fellows, but in the open country he comes more to the realization of himself. A lone journey in the meadows or a day spent silently in the woods, is sobering, and many suffer considerably when thus imprisoned with themselves. They cannot find anything of interest in the meadows, they complain of quiet in the midst of warfare, and are generally fretful.

A man who concerns himself principally with the artificial, and who thinks that the world is for stirring business alone, misses entirely that divine halo that rests about much in nature. To him all things are certain. He can have a particular tree cut down or an ox killed at command, and he is ever busy spinning a web of affairs. You see him hurrying across the street with rapid strides, for hasn't the Valley railroad declared a dividend! Such

things must be, but they are not the safest springs of pleasure. We must not put by entirely the chippy singing in the apple tree, or the white clouds, for nature declares a dividend every hour—the dew-drops always pay par to the summer leaves.

If we could constantly bear in mind many of our experiences, most of us would be quite content to remain in some sequestered nook for the length of our days, but the freshness of the smart wears off—we forget, and are burned again.

Those who are unconsolably miserable, and feel that they have all of the ills, should inspect the lilies of the field. There is hardly a perfect one among them, and no doubt they would often be glad to spin and reap, if they might thereby forget the gnawing caterpillars that devour their leaves. There should be many doctors among the plants. I meet with ailing individuals that would gladly consult specialists on stamens and pistils.

We sometimes get a wider view of our homes by going afield. Like Lynceus we see well at a distance. The chief value of an excursion is often the last step across the threshold. We walk twenty miles in order to get acquainted with our family cat. We walk and walk, and think we are going to discover something of interest; we go a long way from home and find ourselves finally in some man's back yard, where he is already at home. Stanley in all his explorations always found some one at home. The black men fed him with vegetables from their kitchen gardens.

Our enjoyment of a place is often proportioned to the effort we have made to get there. The further it is away

and the longer the tramp, the sharper our eyes become, and vivid is the mental picture we carry away. One of the chief advantages in visiting different meadows and pieces of woodland, is, that it whets our perception, we are more on the look out. But probably there isn't a ten acre wood-lot even near home, that has been thoroughly explored. If you think there is, go through it again, and see if there isn't a nut tree, that you have before passed by without discovery.

It is often well to select some circumscribed piece of mother earth, and watch it particularly throughout the year; comparing it with the other fields to which occasional journeys are made. The rhythm of the warmer months is broken by scattering our observation too wide. There is a cadence of the year; one continuous song changing gradually and almost imperceptibly, and of which each musical creature sings in turn his part. The first outburst of melody of the song-sparrow, the black birds in the swamp, the crickets, the katy-dids, the *z-ing* of the harvest flies, and the late fall notes of the birds going southward; these and many more, all come as signs of the seasons, and mark for each patch of mother earth, the progress of the year. They make a beautiful and pathetic march, and are best seen and most forcibly impressed, by looking steadily at the same acres. If we stand with open eyes, there is no pageant so varied as the march of the warmer days. But the rapid change that characterizes Summer is gone in Winter. There may be snow or there may be none, but we have generally to look close to note that a few more dead leaves have blown off an oak

on the hill-side, or that the blackhaw berries are a little more shrivelled than they were a month ago. When the ban of Boreas is o'er the land, and the leaves huddle together in the depressions in the woods, as if they would keep one another warm, and the snow lays on the earth, then a view of one field, of one hill-side, is so similar to the view a month hence, that one falls back on the calendar, for the want of any change betokening the march of time out of doors.

Nature does indeed will us strange fortunes, but generally she is tolerably kind, and if we do not try to visit the North Pole, or spend a Summer in the Sahara, we may live along without any marked break in our mutual, friendly relations. We may go musing calmly in the meadows, in the woodland, and along the country lanes, and hark to those inward murmurings of fancy that cause a strange array of natural and human transactions, to move in turn over old Staten Island, that seems to sleep so peacefully to-day beneath the autumn sun. Yet no doubt the present is quite as unquiet and wrangling as many a bygone year, but over the past there always rests a halo, and time, like a kind critic, idealizes for us the jumbled maze, and only gives forth a poetic tincture of the whole.

The patroons and their Bouwries, the Peach war, the British troops quartered on the Island, and the domestic scenes in the Dutch and Huguenot families, wear to us a garment of quiet and pleasing interest, though its seams chafed harshly enough, many of those who wore it of old.