

A WALK IN SEPTEMBER.

“Mext [sic] him September marched eeke on foote;
Yet was he heavy laden with the spoyle
Of harvest’s riches, which he made his boot,
And him enricht with bounty of the soyle:
In his one hand, as fit for harvest’s toyle,
He held a knife-hook; and in th’ other hand
A Paire of Waights, with which he did assoyle
Both more and lesse, where it in doubt did stand,
And equall gave to each as Justice duly scann’d.”
—*Spenser*.

SEPTEMBER is the month of dewy mornings and evenings, of ripening fruit and changing leaves, of harvest moon, and joyous Harvest Home. Our Saxon forefathers called it Gerst-monat “for that,” says Verstegan, “barley, which that moneth commonly yeelded, was antiently called gerst, the name of barley being given unto it by reason of the drinke therewith made, called beere, and from beerlegh it came to be berlegh, and from berleg to barley. So in like manner beereheym, to wit, the over-decking or covering of beere, came to be called berham, and afterwards barme, having since gotten I wot not how many names besides.” It was also known as Halege or Heilige, that is Holy monath, “for that our forefathers, the while they heathens were, in this month celebrated their devil-gild.”

In Russia St. Giles’s Day (September 1st) is considered the carrier away of Summer, while in Rome it is said that St. Matthew (September 21st) bids good-bye to Summer, and St. Maurice (22nd) shuts the door after him, and in Milan you will not see many fine days after St. Matthew. English proverbs tell us that “St. Matthew brings cold, rain and dew,” and bid us

“At St. Matthew
Get candlesticks new,”

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and

“At S. Matthee
Shut up the bee.”

The Germans have a rhyme,

“Wie der Sanet Egilde¹ Tag
So der ganze Monat mag.”

and a similar prophecy is connected with the 8th, the day of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, for “Wie das Wetter an Maria geburt, so soll es vier Wochen bleiden,” while *The Shepherd’s Kalendar* tells us that “If Michaelmas Day be fine, the sun will shine much in the winter, though

the wind at north-east will frequently reign long, and be sharp and nipping." The French say "Quand le vent est au nord le jour de la Saint Michel le mois d'Octobre est sec," and

"Pluie de Saint Michel
Soit devant on [sic] derriere elle ne demeure au ciel."

The age of the moon on Michaelmas Day determines, it is said, the number of floods to follow, so many days as the moon is old on that Festival, so many will be the succeeding floods.

"... Now their winds the birds of passage wait,
And bid a last farewell to every grove;"

The Ring Ousel is seen before its departure to Africa, the last of the Martins will disappear early in October, of those still here, many are travelling south, and, taking the places of those already gone, seem to keep up the number for a time. Blackbird and Thrush are heard again, the Wood-owl hoots, the Stone-curlew or Stone-plover calls, and

"through the wheaten stubble
Is heard the frequent gun"

as the startled Partridges rise on rapid wing.

The Ring Ousel (*Merula torquata*) belongs to the family of Thrushes, and resembles a large Blackbird with broad white band across the front of its throat, the plumage is blackish-brown, with wings of brown with whitish edgings. The Wood or Tawny Owl (*Syrnium aluco*) though rare in Scotland, is common in England. Its favourite haunts are the hollow trunks of oak and beech woods, but it is also found in towers and ruined buildings and its clear cry hoo-hoo or tu-whit, tu-whoo, sounds morning and evening.

All our game birds—Pheasant, Woodcock, Snipe, Partridge and Grouse, are of mottled brown plumage, very difficult to distinguish from their surroundings. The long bill of Woodcock [p 84]

and Snipe is extremely sensitive, and is thrust into soft ground in search of grubs, larvæ, worms, etc.,—a tame Snipe has been known to eat nearly twice its own weight of worms in twelve hours. Three species of Snipe visit Britain, the Common Snipe (*Scolopax gallinago*) the Jack Snipe or Judcock (*S. gallinula*) and the Great or Solitary Snipe (*S. major*). The first is plentiful [sic] on marsh and moor, it migrates in Autumn, returning to breed in Spring, while the Snipe found in England during the winter months are visitors from Scandinavia. The Jack Snipe, a common winter visitor, is smaller than the others, being only 7½ inches in length, whereas the Common Smipe [sic] is 10½, and the Great Snipe an inch longer than that. This last is less frequently seen and is indeed rare in Scotland and Ireland, though an annual visitor to our eastern and southern counties. Snipe migrate by night, when, too, they chiefly feed, rarely flying by day unless disturbed, when they rise suddenly and dart off with great rapidity, and the curious zig-zag flight which renders them a difficult mark for the sportsman. The Woodcock (*Seolopax rusticola*) rises with a louder "whirr" of the wings than its neighbour, it flies less rapidly and darts less, like them it is nocturnal in habit, and while the Snipe inhabits open marshy ground

the Woodcock, as its name implies, prefers woods and plantations; as these latter have increased, the number of birds that spend the year in Britain has also increased, while Snipe, owing to the improved drainage of bogs and fens, are becoming less common.

In the same way the Partridge, which feeds on both insects and grain, has increased in number with the extended cultivation of the land, and is now the most common of British game-birds. From the gastronomical point of view it has been well said that

“If the woodcock had the partridge’s wing
’Twould be the best bird that ever did sing.
If the partridge had the woodcock’s thigh
’Twould be the best bird that ever did fly.”

The Common or Grey Partridge (*Perdix cinerea*) ranges over Europe, and Western and Central Asia, and is found also in Africa; like most game-birds its nest is little more than a hollow in the ground, and contains from twelve to twenty eggs, and the chicks can run as soon as hatched. The Red-legged or French Partridge (*Perdix* or *Caccabus rufa*) is a native of South-west Europe and is said to have been first introduced into England in the reign of Charles II. According to Carlyle the French Revolu-

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tion of 1789 (with its abolition of the existing game-laws) caused “emigrant flights of French [sic] siegneurs, emigrant winged flights of French game.” The French Partridge inhabits heavy clay lands and heaths, is stronger on the wing and rather larger than its confrère, whom it has largely displaced in Norfolk and Suffolk, and to whom, it has been suggested, it has taught the trick of running, though others assert that this development, which is recent, is the result of the introduction of the reaping machine and sowing drill. In the days of ragged stubble and irregularly growing turnips running was impracticable and the Partridge waited for his enemy to approach before rising on the wing, now he can race down the furrows in accordance with the French bird’s supposed advice.

“Ah non! fellow sportsbird, *mon frère de la chasse*,
If you shall permeet, I shall say a few things
That shall prove you how partrich is—how you say?—ass,
What fly from the chasseur away on the wings.

It is so much bettaire to *ron* through the crop,
Ron *most queek* on your legs! Now I go tell you why,
The Francais say always ‘I shoot ven he stop’
And the Anglais say always, ‘I shoot ven he fly,’”

so that running, from the Red Partridge’s point of view, baffles sportsmen on either side of the Channel. Both Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*) and Grouse are closely allied to the Partridge, the former is so-called from the scientific name of the genus, *Phasianus*, which itself is derived from the river *Phasis*, in Colchis, from the banks of which the bird was introduced into Europe in ancient days, it is alleged by the Argonauts. The date of its naturalization in Britain is unknown,

but in 1199 King John granted a license to one William Brewer, "to hunt the hare, fox, cat, and wolf, throughout all Devonshire, and to have free warren throughout all his own lands, for hares, pheasants and partridges." Of Grouse we have the Capercaillie (*Tetrao urogallus*), Black-Game (*T. tertix*), Ptarmigan (*Lagopus mutus*) and the Red Grouse (*L. hyperboreus*), the first three natives of Scotland, the last peculiar to the British Isles, being found only in Scotland, the North of England, Wales, and Ireland, it is supposed to be an insular form of the Willow Grouse of the Continent. The Red Grouse varies in colour from black—the least common form—through rufous chestnut to a white-spotted plumage; it is probable that, like its continental allies and others of its genus, it originally changed to white for the winter, but has abandoned a habit no longer necessary for protection.

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A second brood of the Wood White Butterfly appears this month, and the Vapourer and Figure-of-eight Moth emerge from their cocoons. The little brown Vapourer Moth (*Orygia antiqua*) is widely distributed, and fond of flying in the sunshine; the female is wingless and of a paler colour, she never travels far from her pupa case, on which, indeed, she usually places her eggs, which hatch the following summer. The Figure-of-eight Moth (*Diloba cæruleocephala*) is also common, but a night-flier; it may readily be identified by the two 8's on each wing, the outer figure rather blurred but the inner most distinct. The larvæ of the Gold Tail, Buff Arches, Hedge Dagger, Orange, Knot Grass, and Lovers' Knot Moths may now be found on their respective food plants.

A noticeable feature of insect life this month is the abundance of gossamer spun by the young spiders who thus literally launch themselves into the world. Ascending some elevation—a blade of grass or clod of earth near their birthplace, the little creatures produce a few short threads which they fix firmly, then grasping these, they spin a long fine thread, which blowing hither and thither and tangling itself with the rest forms a raft, which, lifted by the wind, is carried to some fresh place, where the little spinner will pass the winter. After a dewy morning these tiny threads, bedecked with pearly drops, are conspicuous on grass and bush; in Germany they are known as "Sommer fäden," and "Marien" or "unserer lieben Frauen fäden."

Eye-bright, Ragwort, Chamomile, Corn Marigold, Mayweed, Yarrow, Toadflax, Knotgrass, Climbing Buckwheat (*Polygonum convolvulus*), Heartsease, Knapweed, Fumitory, Thistles, Hard-head, Hare-bell, and Red Campion still brighten fields and hedge-row, but our flower list grows smaller and smaller, only the Pheasant's-eye, the Naked-flowered Crocus, the Saffron Crocus, the misnamed Meadow Saffron or Autumn Crocus, the Michaelmas Daisy, and the Arbutus can be considered as September flowers, and these are all more or less local.

The Pheasant's-eye (*Adonis autumnalis*) is not native, but was probably introduced among grain; Gerarde says of it "The red flower of Adonis groweth wilde in the West parts of Englande, among their corne as Maie-weed does; from thence I brought the seeds, and have sowed it in my garden for the beautie of the flower's sake." Miller, in *The Gardeners' Dictionary*, tells us that

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numbers of these flowers were annually brought to London and sold under the name of Red Morocco. It received its name of Adonis from the legend that when the unfortunate youth was slain by the wild boar this flower, growing where he fell, was crimsoned by his blood. In France

is it [sic] known as “L’Adonide,” and as “Goutte de Sang,” in Italy as the “Fiore d’Adone,” in Germany as “Die Adonis blume,” and “Adonis Rose,” and the Dutch call it “Adonis bloem.”

The Naked-flowered (*Crocus nudiflorus*) and the Saffron Crocus (*Crocus sativa*) produce their flowers in Autumn and their leaves the following Spring; the former is chiefly found in the Midlands, and the latter is interesting as supplying the saffron—prepared from the dried stigmas, so highly esteemed in former days, and still employed in cake-making and in medicine. Saffron Waldren takes its name from this flower, which was extensively cultivated there, having been introduced, it is said, from the East, in 1339. It was employed as a dye by various nations, including the ancient Greeks, who used it especially for the dress of royal personages, as did the Irish. According to Giraldus Cambrensis, saffron with milk forms the food of Fairyland. The Clown in *The Winter’s Tale* “must have saffron to colour the warden pies,” (*Act IV., sc. 2*) and the saffron bag was in high esteem for its effect in promoting cheerfulness, so that among the ancients it was said, when a man was merry, that he had slept on a saffron bag. “Nothing,” according to the philosophical Mr. Caxton, “more conduces to longevity than a saffron bag,” though, as he explained to the young Pisistratus, it is not the saffron bag “but the belief in the saffron bag” that is so efficacious.

The Meadow Saffron or Autumn Crocus (*Colchicum autumnale*) though resembling the foregoing, is, as its six stamens denote, a member of the Lily family. It is remarkable for the protection of its seeds; like the Naked-flowered and Saffron Crocus the flowers appear in Autumn and the leaves in Spring, the seed-vessel is at the base of the long perianth tube at a depth of ten or twelve inches below ground, here it remains through the winter safe from frost, but with the return of Spring it is borne aloft by an ascending stem, and the seeds ripening towards midsummer, scatter themselves in the ordinary way.

Now,

“The Michaelmas daisy among dead weeds
Blooms for St. Michael’s valorous deeds.”

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It is always found near the sea and is common on salt marshes, hence its name of Sea Starwort. The last of our September flowers, the blossom of the Arbutus, or Strawberry tree, is only found wild in Ireland, where the shrub is said to have been introduced, from Spain or Italy, by the Monks of Mucross Abbey. The fruit formed one year ripens the next, so that the waxy greenish-white bells and scarlet balls hang together. Now

“Drops the ripe acorn in the fern,
The mellow apple in the grass,
The gipsy cheeks of nature burn
As Autumn’s fingers o’er them pass,
He strides across the purple heath,
Blue corn-flowers round his sunburnt head,
Loosing brown filbert from its sheath,
Crims’ning the forest bed.”

And not only Acorn and Filbert, but the fruits of Walnut, Chestnut, Yew, and Holly are fast ripening, the coral fruit of the Mountain Ash or Rowan somewhat resembles the crimson-tinted clusters borne by the Guelder Rose, the Bramble is laden with purple-black berries, Hops are ready for picking, Rose-hips and the scarlet berries of the Bryony brighten our hedge-rows, with the darker red of the Haws, the deep purple fruit of the Blackthorn, and the dark clusters of the Elder. By the roadside gleam the poisonous but beautiful berries of the Cuckoo-pint; the solitary black fruit of the Deadly Nightshade (*Atropa Belladonna*) is ripe, and on the moorlands we find Cranberry, Bilberry, and Juniper, the fruit of the last takes two years to mature. Ferns drop their spores, and Fungi of various shapes and colours abound both in our woods and on open land.

Originally all Fungi were divided, as they still are in popular parlance, into Mushrooms and Toadstools, witness *The Grete Herball of 1526*—"Fungi ben Mussherons there be two maners of them, one maner is deadly and sleeth them that eateth of them, and be called Todestoles, and the other doeth not." This distinction is hardly satisfactory, and at the present day, pending a further classification, Fungi are grouped mainly by the colour of their spores. There are several thousand varieties of Fungi, but the majority may be divided into two classes, the Agarics and the Boleti; the former, which includes the various Mushrooms, have plates or gills on the underside of the cap, the Boleti have no gills, but a level surface underneath punctuated with innumerable holes like pin-pricks; these are the openings of fine tubes closely pressed together, which contain the spores, which, in the

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Agarics, are borne on the gills. In addition to these two main groups, we have the Hedgehog Mushrooms, the Puff-balls, the Clavaria or Fairy Clubs, the pretty scarlet Fairy or Elf cups (*Peziza*), found on decaying wood, and others.

Many Boleti are edible and one, the Edible Boletus (*Boletus edulis*) is much in use on the Continent, where it is dried and sold as *cèpe*. Other wholesome British species are the rare Summer Boletus (*B. æstivalis*), which appears in June or July, Granular Boletus (*B. [sic] grandulatus*), *Boletus elegans*, Dingy Boletus (*B. bovinus*), and the Bay Boletus (*B. badius*). The "flesh" of several species turns blue when bruised or cut, all such are more or less poisonous in character.

Mr. Cooke, in his *British Edible Fungi*, tells us that Mushrooms were well known to the ancients, there are Chaldean words for "fungi" and "boleti," the boleti of Greece and Rome were what we now know as Mushrooms, and so highly were these esteemed that a Latin writer advises that they should not be sent by messenger, lest they be devoured on the way; silver and gold are safe, but not the esculent fungus.

"Argentus atque aurum facile est, laenamque togamque,
Mittere; boletos mittere difficile est."

Of the Chanterelle Fungus (*Cantharellus cibarius*), found in woods an old writer, Battarra, said that properly prepared it would arrest the pangs of death, the False Chanterelle (*C. aurantiacus*), which is inedible, grows in the open.

The Lactar group of fungi contains a freely-flowing milk-white juice, and among these are several edible species, including the Sweet Milk (*Lactarius subdulcis*) and the Orange Milk Mushroom (*L. deliciosus*), the last, as its scientific name implies, is the best for culinary

purposes, it grows under fir trees, and its orange juice changes to green when the plant is broken or cut. The Slayer (*L. rufus*) has a reddish-brown, and the Slimy Lactar (*L. blennius*) a dingy-green glutinous cup; neither is fit for food. The poisonous Fly Agaric or Fly-bane (*Agaric muscarius*) grows in woods; it is a singularly handsome fungus with scarlet cap dotted with pale lumps, and ivory gills, and contains a strong narcotic juice much used in the manufacture of fly-papers, hence the name. The Stinkhorn (*Phallus impudicus*) also grows in woods, and may be known by its fetid smell. In its early stages it resembles a soft white egg, indeed, this fungus is known in Kent as Ghosts' Eggs; presently the "shell" breaks and a spongy

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stalk, bearing a sort of helmet covered by a dark green slimy mass containing spores, shoots up so rapidly that in two or three hours it measures five or six inches in length. Now the whole fungus, and especially the slimy material, gives out a horrible odour, most attractive to flies, Bluebottles especially, who greedily devour the stuff, thus disseminating the spores. The Dog Stinkhorn (*Mutinus caninus*) is similar but smaller, and has no cap, the sticky mucus simply covering the top of the stalk, its scent is faint and not unpleasant.

The Rooting-shank (*Agaricus radicans*) has a polished twisted stem which ends underground in a tapering point. The *Agaric canobrunneus* grows in fields and open places, its colour is pale brown or flesh tint, and as the cap expands it frequently splits at the edge. In appearance it is something like the edible Champignon or Fairy Ring Mushroom (*Marasmius oreades*).

Most fungi extract their nourishment from dead and decaying vegetable matter, but some attack living plants, usually through a wound, as when a branch of a tree is broken. The Stump-tuft (*Agaricus melleus*) is one of these, and a great cause of timber disease; it grows in groups at the base of trees or stumps, its fibrils passing inward and absorbing nourishment from its host. An even commoner species is the Sulphur Tuft (*A. fascicularis*) with sulphur coloured caps and gills of greenish-grey with purple-brown spores. The Beech-tuft (*A. mucidus*) is usually ivory white, and almost translucent, it is edible and said to be delicious. The Vegetable Beef-steak or Oak Tongue (*Fistulina hepatica*) is also edible; out of the various species in the Oyster group Mr. Cooke recommends the Elm Mushroom (*Agaricus almaris*) [sic] as the best for culinary purposes.

Most of the Parasol Mushrooms appear in late Summer or early Autumn; various Russules, too, and Warty Cap Mushrooms. The Hedgehog Mushrooms are so called from the spines found beneath the cap, which spines take the place of the gills in the Agarics and the tubes of the Boleti.

The Great Puff-ball (*Lycoperdon giganteum*) was formerly dried and used for binding over wounds, it was also burnt to stupefy bees before taking their honey, and is said to have been employed as tinder in the days of flint and steel. Gerarde tells us, "In divers parts of England, where people doth dwell farre from neighbours, they carry them kindled with fire, which lasteth long," so that

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"The aged Puff-balls shall help us to cheat
The dainty bees of their luscious meat;
While others shall turn to give us light

And scare from our dell the dreary night.”

When young and edible the Giant Puff-ball is white inside and out, but as the season advances the interior turns yellow, and lastly olive—a mass of threads mixed with minute spores—and an opening appears at the top through which these puff out as a cloud of dust when the ball is compressed. This species sometimes attains to a foot in diameter, and one was mentioned in *The Gardeners' Chronicle* for September 20th, 1884, that measured five feet four inches in circumference, but even this is beaten by a record from America. These Puff-balls are known in Norfolk as Bulfers or Bull-fists, there are several smaller species, common on lawns and pasture lands.

The Earth-ball (*Scleroderma vulgare*) resembles the Puff-ball, but its interior is bluish-grey and no pore develops at the top—the spores are set free by the decay of the outer coat. The rare and striking-looking Earth-star (*Geaster seriscus*) is an allied species; in this there are two coats of which the inner encloses the spores and the outer splits into seven or eight segments, which turn backwards and form the points of the star. Of the various species of *Clavaria*, known as Stag's Horn, or Fairy Club Fungi, found this month, several grow among dead leaves, but the majority among the grass on lawns or in parks. Except the Hercules Club (*Clavaria pistillaris*) which may be six or seven inches in length, these fungi are of small size, usually two or three inches long and no thicker than a knitting needle; one of the most common is the *Clavaria fastigiata*, the *Clavaria amethystina* is of a beautiful violet colour, and the *Clavaria botrytes*, with its thick stem dividing upward into numerous branches, somewhat resembles a cauliflower.

¹ St. Ægidius or Giles.