

October

IF THE Pilgrims and their successors had had more sense we would celebrate Thanksgiving in October. Late November in most of New England and the Northern states is a melancholy season, bleak and bare-imbbed, not yet gay with snow. The birds are gone; the garden is brown; even the cabbages freeze. But October...

October is the climax of the year, a fit season for giving thanks. The swamp maples and the sumac are still afire; the sugar maples blaze their orange glory from Maine to the Great Smokies and out to Michigan. Robins still comfortably yank earthworms from the lawn; the woods are full of silent thrushes. Goldenrod still glows in every fencerow; the purple asters hang out their banners; and if you know where to find it October is the month for that shy reflection of blue sky, the fringed gentian.

Call it Indian Summer if you will. That is a good name for October. The sun still knows its duty is to warm. Squash vines may have wilted at a hint of frost, but a self-respecting garden—one that the gardener has respected with late plantings—still has fresh lettuce, late beans, and in a good year the dividend of late corn. The major harvesting is done; a farmer can relax. This is the time of year when any American with outdoor sense really gives thanks, whether the Governor proclaims a day for it or not.

I say "American." For October is a special season in America; the sugar maples see to that. Most Americans have roots, or memories, of sugar-naple country; and there is no tree in all the world which proclaims the season's glory as does our sugar maple. The West has its cottonwoods; Europe has its golden beeches; the tropics have exotic blooming trees at any time of year. But, in the forests and along our roadsides, we have a triumphant fire—every shade of orange, red, and yellow—that is all our own. It is this remembered glory of countryside color that so often makes an American nostalgic abroad.

When the maple leaves fall summer, even Indian summer, is done. Oak-leaves, of course, cling to the trees all winter, but they lose their October red. When the maple leaves are down October is over. There will be a lingering smell of burning leaves in the air, for few of us are wise enough to turn all our leaves into precious mulch. It is a good smell. It is the end-October smell, the smell that spells the end of the living year.

—LEWIS GANNETT.

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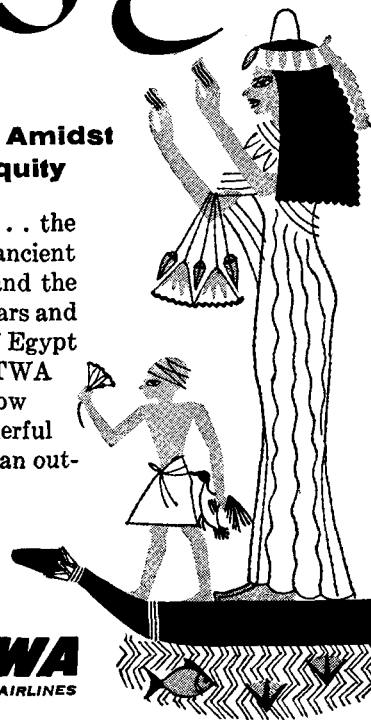
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| 1 | Melbourne Cup. Melbourne, Australia. World-famous horse race. |
| 2 | Weizman Day. Israel. Visit tomb of Dr. Chaim Weizman, Rehovot. |
| 3 | Fishing Contest. Bermuda. Try for biggest, best chub. Nov. 1-Mar. 31. |
| 4 | Fiesta of San Carlos Borromeo. Aquadilla, P. R. |
| 5 | Coronation Weeks. Vienna, Austria. Reopen famous Opera House. Nov. 5-30. |
| 6 | State Fair. Phoenix, Ariz. Nov. 5-14. |
| 7 | Gastronomic Fair. Dijon, France. Samples for small fee. Nov. 1-14. |
| 8 | March of Candles. Montaign, Belgium. Nighttime religious procession. |
| 9 | Lord Mayor's Show. London, England. Inaugural procession big attraction. |
| 10 | Youth Day. Indonesia. Fireworks, parades, native dances. |
| 11 | \$25,000 Golden West Trot. Hollywood Park, Calif. Meet Nov. 2-18. |
| 12 | Final 100-mile auto race of season. Las Vegas, Nev. Pick 1955 champ. |
| 13 | "Cuerpos Santos". Medinaceli, Spain. Season's final bullfight. |
| 14 | Diwali. India. Hindu Festival of Lights. |
| 15 | Shichigosan. Throughout Japan. Children's day at the shrines. |
| 16 | "Las Posadas". Claremont, Calif. Dramatize Christmas in Old Mexico. |
| 17 | Sixth Pan-American Auto Race. Juarez, Mexico to Guatemala border. |
| 18 | Art Industry Exhibition. Helsinki, Finland. Nov. 15-30. |
| 19 | Coronation Anniversary. Monte Carlo, Monaco. Prince Rainier II crowned 1949. |
| 20 | Burgundy Wine Fair. Beaune, France. November 20, 21. |
| 21 | Feast of the Virgin of El Quinche. Near Quito, Ecuador. |
| 22 | Liberation Day. Beirut, Lebanon. Patriotic ceremonies, parade. Nov. 22-30. |
| 23 | Gardens open. Charleston, S. C. Nov. 24-April. |
| 24 | Baseball. Havana, Cuba. American big-leaguers take part. Nov. 1-Feb. 7. |
| 25 | Christmas Parade. Hollywood, Calif. Movie stars in procession. |
| 26 | Western Band Review. Long Beach, Calif. Attracts 7,000 young musicians. |
| 27 | Advent Sunday. Religious festival; Confirmation services in Finland. |
| 28 | Art Show. Wilmington, Del. Primarily for Delaware artists. Nov. 4-Dec. 4. |
| 29 | Feis. Halla Columban and An Taibdearc, Ireland. Nov. 20-Dec. 4. |
| 30 | St. Andrew's Day. Eastern Orthodox patriarchal church, Fener, Turkey. |



November

"NO WARMTH, no cheerfulness, no healthful ease, . . . no shade, no shine, no butterflies, no bees, . . . November!" said Thomas Hood.

What an uncle of mine used to say about the month was even grimmer: "Saddest month of all the year, too warm for whiskey, too cold for beer."

But against the gray backdrop of the weather Americans have set three of their most dramatic holidays, Election Day, Armistice Day (now cynically watered down to Veterans' Day), and the American Saturnalia called Thanksgiving, the only one of the three that is as glorious as ever.

Before the days of Civil Service and radios and closed saloons Election Day really stirred a town up. People ran from newspaper offices to barrooms with hair-raising bulletins on who was probably going to be postmaster, marched around with torches, and got into epic brawls. Now you just stay at home beside your radio.

Neither V-E Day nor V-J Day, and certainly not the present Veterans' Day, can compare with the real Armistice Day of 1918. It is etched on my memory in gooseflesh. I spent most of the day marching with a hundred-odd other veterans of the SATC and some thousands of soldiers from Camp Dodge down Grand Avenue in Des Moines from the Drake campus, which, since September, I had been defending from the Boche. And all the eyes of the crowd were upon me. I mean *me* alone.

We were all stylishly dressed in the broad-brimmed hats and wrapped puttees and rumpled blouses dreamed up by some Dior of the Armed Services to scare the Germans out of battle; but I—and only I—was wearing what was known in our company as THE OVERCOAT. It had been made by an insane contractor for a man of seven feet four, and I was only six feet one. It hung within an inch of the ground and flapped on my toes so that I varied my martial gait with a little skip every now and then to keep from falling on my face.

"Gloomy Gus" they called me, long after Kaiser Wilhelm started wood-chopping and released me from THE OVERCOAT.

(Note to be added *sotto voce*—don't anyone tell McCarthy: We were carrying Russian rifles, for which no ammunition ever appeared in this country. But we were dangerous with fixed bayonets. I could have served up several cat-callers *en brochette* before that twenty-mile march ended.)

—PHIL STONG.

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