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I

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*Nov. 1. Thursday. P. M.* — Up Assabet, a-wooding.

After a rain-threatening morning it is a beautiful Indian-summer day, the most remarkable hitherto and equal to any of the kind. Yet we kept fires in the forenoon, the warmth not having got into the house. It is akin to sin to spend such a day in the house. The air is still and warm. This, too, is the *recovery* of the year, — as if the year, having nearly or quite accomplished its work, and abandoned all design, were in a more favorable and poetic mood, and thought rushed in to fill the vacuum. The river is perfectly smooth. Whole schools of *little* minnows leap from the surface at once with a silvery gleam. The wool-grass, with its drooping head and the slender withered leaves dangling about its stem, stands in little sheaves upon its tussocks, clean dry straw, and is thus reflected in the water. This is the November shore. The maples and swamp oaks and willows are for the most part bare, but some of

the oaks are partly clothed yet with withered ones [*sic*]. I see one white maple quite thick and green, and *some* black willows are thinly clad with *green* leaves, and many yellowish leaves are seen on the salallows rising above the bare button-bushes. Yet I see no painted tortoises out, and I think it is about a fortnight since I saw any.<sup>1</sup>

As I pushed up the river past Hildreth's, I saw the blue heron (probably of last Monday) arise from the shore and disappear with heavily-flapping wings around a bend in front; the greatest of the bitterns (*Ardea*), with heavily-undulating wings, low over the water, seen against the woods, just disappearing round a bend in front; with a great slate-colored expanse of wing, suited to the shadows of the stream, a tempered blue as of the sky and dark water commingled. This is the aspect under which the Musketaquid might be represented at this season: a long, smooth lake, reflecting the bare willows and button-bushes, the stubble, and the wool-grass on its tussock, a muskrat-cabin or two conspicuous on its margin amid the unsightly tops of pontederia, and a bittern disappearing on undulating wing around a bend.

The wood I get is pretty rotten. The under side of an oak which has lain for years on the miry bank is turned almost to mould, — in this I find ants, — while the upper is hard and dry. Or else it is stumps whose fangs have so rotted off that I can kick them over at last, but then I must shake out a half a peck or more of mould. I made out to get one great and heavy stump

<sup>1</sup> See forward, Nov. 11

to the water twenty rods distant by ant-like turning it over and over laboriously. It sunk my craft low in the water. Others are boughs which in the winter fell or were dragged down by the ice, their tops in the water and their butts on shore. These I saw off where they dip into the water, though the saw pinches.

Returning in the twilight, I see a bat over the river.

Nov. 4. P. M. — To Hill by Assabet.

This forenoon the boys found a little black kitten about a third grown on the Island or Rock, but could not catch it. We supposed that some one had cast it in to drown it. This afternoon, as I was paddling by the Island, I saw what I thought a duck swimming down the river diagonally, to the south shore just below the grassy island, opposite the rock; then I thought it two ducks, then a muskrat. It passed out of sight round a bend. I landed and walked alongshore, and found that it was a kitten, which had just got ashore. It was quite wet excepting its back. It swam quite rapidly, the whole length of its back out, but was carried down about as fast by the stream. It had probably first crossed from the rock to the grassy island, and then from the lower end of this to the town side of the stream, on which side it may have been attracted by the noise of the town. It was rather weak and staggered as it ran, from starvation or cold, being wet, or both. A very pretty little black kitten.

It is a dark, almost rainy day. Though the river *appears* to have risen considerably, it is not more than nine or ten inches above the lowest summer level, as

I see by the bridge. Yet it brings along a little drift-wood. Whatever rails or boards have been left by the water's edge the river silently takes up and carries away. Much small stuff from the pail-factory.

The winter is approaching. The birds are almost all gone. The note of the *dee de de* sounds now more distinct, prophetic of winter, as I go amid the wild apples on Nawshawtuct. The autumnal dandelion sheltered by this apple-tree trunk is drooping and half closed and shows but half its yellow, this dark, late, wet day in the fall.

Gathered a bag of wild apples. A great part are decayed now on the ground. The snail slug is still eating them. Some have very fiery crimson spots or eyes on a very white ground.

Returned, and went up the main stream. Larches are now quite yellow, — in the midst of their fall.

The river-brink — at a little distance at least — is now all sere and rustling, except a few yellowed willow leaves, though beyond in the meadows there is some fresh greenness, but cattle seem to stray wider for food than they did. They are turned into the meadows now, where is all the greenness. New fences are erected to take advantage of all the fall feed. But the rank herbage of the river's brink is more tender and has fallen before the frosts. Many new muskrat-houses have been erected this wet weather, and much gnawed root is floating. When I look away to the woods, the oaks have a dull, dark red now, without brightness. The willow-tops on causeways have a pale, bleached, silvery, or wool-grass-like look.

See some large flocks of *F. hyemalis*, which fly with a clear but faint chinking chirp, and from time to time you hear quite a strain, half warbled, from them. They rise in a body from the ground and fly to the trees as you approach. There are a few tree sparrows with them. These and one small soaring hawk are all the birds I see.

I have failed to find white pine seed this year, though I began to look for it a month ago. The cones were fallen and open. Look the first of September.

From my experience with wild apples I can understand that there may be a reason for a savage preferring many kinds of food which the civilized man rejects. The former has the palate of an outdoor man. It takes a savage or wild taste to appreciate a wild apple.<sup>1</sup> I remember two old maids to whose house I enjoyed carrying a purchaser to talk about buying their farm in the winter, because they offered us wild apples, though with an unnecessary apology for their wildness.

*Nov. 5.* I hate the present modes of living and getting a living. Farming and shopkeeping and working at a trade or profession are all odious to me. I should relish getting my living in a simple, primitive fashion. The life which society proposes to me to live is so artificial and complex — bolstered up on many weak supports, and sure to topple down at last — that no man surely can ever be inspired to live it, and only "old fogies" ever praise it. At best some think it their duty to live it. I believe in the infinite joy and satisfaction of help-

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 313; Riv. 385.]

ing myself and others to the extent of my ability. But what is the use in trying to live simply, raising what you eat, making what you wear, building what you inhabit, burning what you cut or dig, when those to whom you are allied insanely want and will have a thousand other things which neither you nor they can raise and nobody else, perchance, will pay for? The fellow-man to whom you are yoked is a steer that is ever bolting right the other way.

I was suggesting once to a man who was wincing under some of the consequences of our loose and expensive way of living, "But you might raise all your own potatoes, etc., etc." We had often done it at our house and had some to sell. At which he demurring, I said, setting it high, "You could raise twenty bushels even." "But," said he, "I use thirty-five." "How large is your family?" "A wife and three infant children." This was the real family; I need not enumerate those who were hired to *help* eat the potatoes and waste them. So he had to hire a man to raise his potatoes.

Thus men invite the devil in at every angle and then prate about the garden of Eden and the fall of man.

I know many children to whom I would fain make a present on some one of their birthdays, but they are so far gone in the luxury of presents — have such perfect museums of costly ones — that it would absorb my entire earnings for a year to buy them something which would not be beneath their notice.

P. M. — To foot of Fair Haven Hill *via* Hubbard's Grove.

I see the shepherd's-purse, hedge-mustard, and red clover, — November flowers. Crossing the Depot Field Brook, I observe the downy, fuzzy globular tops of the *Aster puniceus*. They are slightly tinged with yellow, compared with the hoary gray of the goldenrod. The distant willow-tops are yellowish like them in the right light.

At Hubbard's Crossing I see a large male hen-harrier skimming over the meadow, its deep slate somewhat sprinkled or mixed with black; perhaps young. It flaps a little and then sails straight forward, so low it must rise at every fence. But I perceive that it follows the windings of the meadow over many fences. I pass a great white pine stump, — half a cord in it and more, — turned up out of a meadow. I look upon it with interest, and wish I had it at my door, for there are many warm fires in that. You could have many thoughts and tell many stories while that was burning.

Walked through Potter's Swamp. That white birch fungus always presents its face to the ground, parallel with it. For here are some on an upright dead birch whose faces or planes are at right angles with the axis of the tree as usual, looking down; but others, attached to the top of the tree, which lies prostrate on the ground, have their planes parallel with the axis of the tree, as if looking round the birch. When the epidermis is cracked, apparently as they grew, they are watered handsomely with white streams an eighth of an inch wide above. They have remarkably thick necks. They protrude through a rent in the bark, carrying it along with their necks, a little way.

The brightness of the foliage generally ceased pretty exactly with October. The still bright leaves which I see as I walk along the river edge of this swamp are birches, clear yellow at top; high blueberry, some very bright scarlet red still; some willows; *Viburnum nudum*, fresh dark red; alder sprouts, large green leaves. Swamp-pink buds now begin to show. The late growth of the pyrus is now checked by the frost. The bark of many frostweeds is now cracked or burst off, and curled backward in five or six strips for about an inch, leaving the woody part bare at, or an inch above, the ground, sometimes five or six inches above the ground. I suspect the frost is the dying breath of the weed congealed.

I am pleased to see that the lower and larger four or five leaves of the water andromeda on the edge of the meadow next the swamp are pretty commonly turned a dark scarlet now, just as they fall, confirming my old impression. I have not observed for some years.

A nest made very thick, of grass and stubble, and lined with finer grass and horsehair, as big as a king-bird's, on an alder, within eighteen inches of ground, close to the water, at Cardinal Shore. The alder had been broken down at that height by the ice, and the nest rested on the stub ends. I took a few dead leaves out and to my surprise found an egg, — *very pale greenish-blue*. Probably the *wood thrush*,<sup>1</sup> if not the olivaceous one, whose eggs I have not seen described. Not quite so big as a bluebird's. This egg popped and

<sup>1</sup> No.

burst suddenly, with a noise about as loud as popping corn, or like a pop-gun, while I held it in my hand in my chamber. It had been addled when new. I had another pop in the chamber some months ago. So you must blow them before you bring them into a warm room.<sup>1</sup>

I am puzzled with the lecheas. Are there not four kinds? First, there is the *L. major*, with broad leaves; and second, the *least*, with fine spreading branches and with *branched* shoots at base. Third, there is the very common one, intermediate in size, with large fruit and linear-lanceolate leaves, now commonly fallen. But I see, fourth (?), this afternoon, one fifteen inches high, half a dozen rods from Cardinal Shore, and stout, with leaves like the third, but fruit very small and *abundant* (there is apparently a little recent-growth opening of leaves at the extremities of it, some radical shoots on stem six inches from ground!); and fifth, close by, a slender one a foot high, with leaves elliptic pointed, one half inch by one sixth, and larger fruit than last, at top and generally. (May be a variety of *L. major*? It has some leaves like it.) It is perhaps the third kind which, when only three or four inches high now, has such dense linear leaves one half inch plus long, pine-tree-like and spreading branches just above radical shoots.<sup>2</sup>

I find that one of my old oak logs, which was lying on the damp bank of the river, half rotted through below, contained many great black ants gone into winter quarters in those great eaten cells of the rotten wood. Yet this would have been covered with water

<sup>1</sup> Vide Nov. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Vide July 30, 1856.

in the winter. Those with wings were three quarters of an inch or more long. They move but slowly when exposed. In one I set up for splitting in the yard, I find a clamshell, carried in by a muskrat.

Nov. 6. A mizzling rain from the east drives me home from my walk. The knawel in the sand on the railroad causeway grows in dense green tufts like the hudsonia, six or eight inches in diameter and one or two high. It is still in bloom. The gooseberry leaves at the end of the currant row, being wet, are a still more brilliant scarlet.

A great many rainy or mizzling days the last fortnight, yet not much rain.

Pennyroyal has a long time stood withered and dark, blackish brown, in the fields, yet scented.

I can hardly resist the inclination to collect driftwood, to collect a great load of various kinds, which will sink my boat low in the water, and paddle or sail slowly home with it. I love this labor so much that I would gladly collect it for some person of simple habits who might want it. Men ordinarily do not have the pleasure of sawing and splitting their wood even, for while they are buying it an Irishman stands by with his sawhorse on his back, and the next thing I see him in their yards — him and his understrapper — sawing for dear life and two shillings a cut. When I think, too, of the many decaying stumps and logs which the coming freshets will carry off perchance to sea. Rails and posts and bits of boards and boughs are carried far into the swamps.

Nov. 7. Another drizzling day, — as fine a mist as can fall.

P. M. — Up Assabet.

I see a painted tortoise swimming under water, and to my surprise another afterward out on a willow trunk this dark day. It is long since I have seen one of any species except the *inseulpta*. They must have begun to keep below and go into winter quarters (?) about three weeks ago.<sup>1</sup>

Looking west over Wheeler's meadow, I see that there has been much gossamer on the grass, and it is now revealed by the dewy mist which has collected on it. Some green-briar leaves still left, a dull red or scarlet, others yellowish; also the silky cornel is conspicuously dull-red, and others yellowish-red. And the sallow on river's brink (not *cordata*), with a narrow leaf pointed at both ends, shows some clear chrome-yellow leaves atop. The white birches lose their lower leaves first, and now their tops show crescents or cones of bright-yellow (spiring flames) leaves, some of the topmost even *green* still. The black willows almost everywhere entirely bare, yet the color of their twigs gives them the aspect of the crisp brown weeds of the river's brink. How completely crisp and shrivelled the leaves and stems of the *Polygonum amphibium* var. *terrestre*, still standing above the water and grass!

The river has risen a little more, the North Branch especially, and the pail-stuff which has drifted down it has been carried a few rods up the main stream above the junction. It rises and falls very suddenly, and I was

<sup>1</sup> Come out again. *Vide* Nov. 11.

surprised to see the other day a line of sawdust more than a foot above the water's edge, showing that it had risen to that height and suddenly fallen without my knowledge.

Opened a muskrat-house nearly two feet high, but there was no hollow to it. Apparently they do not form that part yet.

I find it good to be out this still, dark, mizzling afternoon; my walk or voyage is more suggestive and profitable than in bright weather. The view is contracted by the misty rain, the water is perfectly smooth, and the stillness is favorable to reflection. I am more open to impressions, more sensitive (not calloused or indurated by sun and wind), as if in a chamber still. My thoughts are concentrated; I am all compact. The solitude is real, too, for the weather keeps other men at home. This mist is like a roof and walls over and around, and I walk with a domestic feeling. The sound of a wagon going over an unseen bridge is louder than ever, and so of other sounds. I am *compelled* to look at near objects. All things have a soothing effect; the very clouds and mists brood over me. My power of observation and contemplation is much increased. My attention does not wander. The world and my life are simplified. What now of Europe and Asia?

Birds are pretty rare now. I hear a few tree sparrows in one place on the trees and bushes near the river, — a clear, chinking chirp and a half-strain, — a jay at a distance; and see a nuthatch flit with a ricochet flight across the river, and hear his *gnah* half uttered when he alights.

A gray squirrel — as day before yesterday — runs down a limb of an oak and hides behind the trunk and I lose him. A red one runs along the trees to scold at me, boldly or carelessly, with a chuckling, bird-like note and that other peculiar sound at intervals, between a purr and a grunt. He is more familiar than the gray and more noisy. \*What sound does the gray make?

Some of my driftwood is the burnt timbers of a mill, which the swollen river has gleaned for me.

Found in Wheeler's potato-field, which has been burned over to get rid of the weeds before digging, near the Hemlocks<sup>1</sup> by river, a little mouse dead. Whole length three inches (minus); tail hardly seven eighths of an inch, so short (less than half the body) I thought at first it had been bitten off by some animal. General color above, a rust of brown or tawny brown, with mouse-color seen through it; beneath, rather hoary mouse-color, but nowhere white; the fur dark-slate. Snout and head blunt, the latter large. Hind legs longest. Ears quite concealed in the fur. It answers to Emmons's *Arvicola hirsutus*, or meadow mouse, except that it is smaller. Is it a young one? Tips of incisors light-yellow.

Nov. 8. A quite warm and foggy morning. I can sit with my window open and no fire. Much warmer than this time last year. Though there is quite a fog over the river and doubtful weather behind, the reflection

<sup>1</sup> Hemlock cones all closed, but open partly next day in chamber, and *entirely* in a day or two.

of the wool-grass, etc., is quite distinct, the reflection from the fog or mist making the water light for a background.

Nov. 9. 7 A. M. — Grass white and stiff with frost.  
9 A. M. — With Blake up Assabet.

A clear and beautiful day after frost.

Looking over the meadow westward from Merrick's Pasture Shore, I see the alders beyond Dodd's, now quite bare and gray (maple-like) in the morning sun (the frost melted off, though I found a little *ice on my boat-seat*), — that true November sight, — ready to wear frost leaves and to transmit (so open) the tinkle of tree sparrows. How wild and refreshing to see these old black willows of the river-brink, unchanged from the first, which man has never cut for fuel or for timber! Only the muskrat, tortoises, blackbirds, bitterns, and swallows use them.

Two blackbirds fly over pretty near, with a chuck, — either red-wings or grackles, but *I see no red*. See a painted tortoise and a wood-tortoise in different places *out on the bank still!*

Saw in the pool at the Hemlocks what I at first thought was a brighter leaf moved by the zephyr on the surface of the smooth dark water, but it was a splendid male summer duck, which allowed us to approach within seven or eight rods, sailing up close to the shore, and then rose and flew up the curving stream. We soon overhauled it again, and got a fair and long view of it. It was a splendid bird, a perfect floating gem, and Blake, who had never seen the like, was greatly surprised, not

knowing that so splendid a bird was found in this part of the world. There it was, constantly moving back and forth by invisible means and wheeling on the smooth surface, showing now its breast, now its side, now its rear. It had a large, rich, flowing, green burnished crest, — a most ample head-dress, — two crescents of dazzling white on the side of the head and the black neck, a pinkish(?)—red bill (with black tip) and similar irides, and a long white mark under and at wing point on sides; the side, as if the form of wing at this distance, light bronze or greenish brown; but, above all, its breast, when it turns into the right light, all aglow with splendid purple (?) or ruby (?) reflections, *like the throat of the hummingbird*. It might not appear so close at hand. This was the most surprising to me. What an ornament to a river to see that glowing gem floating in contact with its waters! As if the hummingbird should recline its ruby throat and its breast on the water. Like dipping a glowing coal in water! It so affected me.

It became excited, fluttered or flapped its wings with a slight whistling noise, and arose and flew two or three rods and alighted. It sailed close up to the edge of a rock, by which it lay pretty still, and finally sailed fast up one side of the river by the willows, etc., off the duck swamp beyond the spring, now and then turning and sailing back a foot or two, while we paddled up the opposite side a rod in the rear, for twenty or thirty rods. At length we went by it, and it flew back low a few rods to where we roused it. It never offered to dive. We came equally near it again on our return. Unless you are thus near, and have a glass, the

splendor and beauty of its colors will not be discovered.

Found a good stone jug, small size, floating stopple up. I drew the stopple and smelled, as I expected, molasses and water, or something stronger (black-strap?), which it *had* contained. Probably some meadow-haymakers' jug left in the grass, which the recent rise of the river has floated off. It will do to put with the white pitcher I found and keep flowers in. Thus I get my furniture.

Yesterday I got a perfectly sound oak timber, eight inches square and twenty feet long, which had lodged on some rocks. It had probably been the sill of a building. As it was too heavy to lift aboard, I towed it. As I shall want some shelves to put my Oriental books on,<sup>1</sup> I shall begin to save boards now.

I deal so much with my fuel, — what with finding it, loading it, conveying it home, sawing and splitting it, — get so many values out of it, am warmed in so many ways by it, that the heat it will yield when in the stove is of a lower temperature and a lesser value in my eyes, — though when I feel it I am reminded of all my adventures. I just turned to put on a stick. I had my choice in the box of gray chestnut rail, black and brown snag of an oak stump, dead white pine top, gray and round, with stubs of limbs, or else old bridge plank, and chose the last. Yes, I lose sight of the ultimate uses of this wood and work, the immediate ones are so great, and yet most of mankind, those called

<sup>1</sup> [Cholmondeley's gift arrived Nov. 30. See p. 25 and *Familiar Letters*, p. 270; Riv. 319.]

most successful in obtaining the necessaries of life, — getting their living, — obtain none of this, except a mere vulgar and perhaps stupefying warmth. I feel disposed, to this extent, to do the getting a living and the living for any three or four of my neighbors who really want the fuel and will appreciate the act, now that I have supplied myself. There was a fat pine plank, heavy as lead, I gave to Aunt L. for kindling.

That duck was all jewels combined, showing different lustres as it turned on the unrippled element in various lights, now brilliant glossy green, now dusky violet, now a rich bronze, now the reflections that sleep in the ruby's grain.

I see floating, just above the Hemlocks, the large sliding door of a railroad car, burnt to a cinder on one side and lettered in large bright-yellow letters on the other, "Cheshire 1510." It may have been cast over at the railroad bridge.

I affect what would commonly be called a mean and miserable way of living. I thoroughly sympathize with all savages and gypsies in so far as they merely assert the original right of man to the productions of Nature and a place in her. The Irishman moves into the town, sets up a shanty on the railroad land, and then gleans the dead wood from the neighboring forest, which would never get to market. But the so-called owner forbids it and complains of him as a trespasser. The highest law gives a thing to him who can use it.

Nov. 11. P. M. — Up Assabet.

As long as the sun is out, it is warm and pleasant.

The water is smooth. I see the reflections, not only of the wool-grass, but the bare button-bush, with its brown balls beginning to crumble and show the lighter inside, and the brittle light-brown twigs of the black willow, and the coarse rustling sedge, now completely withered (and hear it pleasantly whispering), and the brown and yellowish sparganium blades curving over like well-tempered steel, and the gray cottony mikania.

The bricks of which the muskrat builds his house are little masses or wads of the dead weedy rubbish on the muddy bottom, which it probably takes up with its mouth. It consists of various kinds of weeds, now agglutinated together by the slime and dried confervæ threads, utricularia, hornwort, etc., — a streaming, tuft-like wad. The building of these cabins appears to be coincident with the commencement of their clam diet, for now their vegetable food, excepting roots, is cut off. I see many small collections of shells already left along the river's brink. Thither they resort with their clam to open and eat it. But if it is the edge of a meadow which is being overflowed, they must raise it and make a permanent dry stool there, for they cannot afford to swim far with each clam. I see where one has left half a peck of shells on perhaps the foundation of an old stool or a harder clod, which the water is just about to cover, and he has begun his stool by laying two or three *fresh* wads upon the shells, the foundation of his house. Thus their cabin is first apparently intended merely for a stool, and afterward, when it is large, is perforated as if it were the bank! There is no cabin for a long way above

the Hemlocks, where there is no low meadow bordering the stream.

The clamshells freshly opened are handsomest this month (or rather are most observable, before the ice and snow conceal them) and in the spring.

I am surprised to see quite a number of painted tortoises out on logs and stones and to hear the wood tortoise rustling down the bank. Frogs are rare and sluggish, as if going into winter quarters. A cricket also sounds rather rare and distinct.

At the Hemlocks I see a narrow reddish line of hemlock leaves and, half an inch below, a white line of sawdust, eight inches above the present surface, on the upright side of a rock, both mathematically level. This chronicles the hemlock fall, which I had not noticed, we have so few trees, and also the river's rise. The North Branch must have risen suddenly before the South, for I see much pail-stuff from the Fort Pond Brook, which has been carried eighteen rods up the latter stream above the Rock, or as far as it extends immediately due west there. By "pail-stuff" I mean the curved and grooved pieces which form the sides and the flat ones for the bottom and their trimmings.

High blueberry leaves still conspicuous bright scarlet; also duller and darker green-briar leaves hold on on the Island.

I hear gray squirrels coursing about on the dry leaves, pursuing one another, and now they come in sight, coursing from pine to pine on their winding way, on their unweariable legs, on their undulating and winding course. It is a motion intermediate between run-

ning and flying. I hear but a tree sparrow and a chickadee this voyage.

*Nov. 13.* In mid-forenoon (10.45), seventy or eighty geese, in three harrows successively smaller, flying southwest — pretty well west — over the house. A completely overcast, occasionally drizzling forenoon. I at once heard their clangor and rushed to and opened the window. The three harrows were gradually formed into one great one before they were out of sight, the geese shifting their places without slacking their progress.

P. M. — To Cardinal Shore.

Going over Swamp Bridge Brook at 3 P. M., I saw in the pond by the roadside, a few rods before me, the sun shining bright, a mink swimming, the whole length of his back out. It was a rich brown fur, glowing internally as the sun fell on it, like some ladies' boas, not black, as it sometimes appears, especially on ice. It landed within three rods, showing its long, somewhat cat-like neck, and I observed was carrying something by its mouth, dragging it overland. At first I thought it a fish, maybe an eel, and when it had got half a dozen feet, I ran forward, and it dropped its prey and went into the wall. It was a muskrat, the head and part of the fore legs torn off and gone, but the rest still fresh and quite heavy, including hind legs and tail. It had probably killed this muskrat in the brook, eaten so much, and was dragging the remainder to its retreat in the wall.

A fine clear afternoon after the misty morning and heavy rain of the night. Even after all this rain I see the streaming lines of gossamer from trees and fences. From Fair Haven Hill the air is clear and fine-grained, and now it is a perfect russet November landscape, — including the reddish brown of the oaks, excepting where the winter-rye fields and some low meadows show their green, the former quite bright, and also the evergreen patches of pines, edged in the northwest by the blue mountain ridges.

Got the wood thrush's (?) nest of November 5th. It is about five inches [in] diameter from outside to outside, and two and a half within. Outside of some weedy tufts (beneath), weed stems and stubble (some dry galium stems, small), and lined with a little fine grass and horsehair. I found the egg partly concealed by some dry alder leaves which had fallen into the nest.

*Nov. 14.* Minott hears geese to-day.

Heard to-day in my chamber, about 11 A. M., a singular sharp crackling sound by the window, which made me think of the snapping of an insect (with its wings, or striking something). It was produced by one of three *small* pitch pine cones which I gathered on the 7th, and which lay in the sun on the window-sill. I noticed a slight motion in the scales at the apex, when suddenly, with a louder crackling, it burst, or the scales separated, with a snapping sound on all sides of it. It was a general and sudden bursting or expanding of all the scales with a sharp crackling sound and motion of the whole cone, as by a force pent up within it.

I suppose the strain only needed to be relieved in one point for the whole to go off.

I was remarking to-day to Mr. Rice on the pleasantness of this November thus far, when he remarked that he remembered a similar season fifty-four years ago, and he remembered it because on the 13th of November that year he was engaged in *pulling turnips* and saw wild geese go over, when one came to tell him that his father was killed by a bridge giving way when his team was crossing it, and the team falling on him walking at its side.

P. M. — Up Assabet with Sophia.

A clear, bright, warm afternoon. A painted tortoise swimming under water and a wood tortoise out on the bank. The rain has raised the river an additional foot or more, and it is *creeping over the meadows*. My boat is two thirds full and hard to come at. The old weedy margin is covered and a new grassy one acquired. The current is stronger, though the surface is pretty smooth. Much small rubbish is drifting down and slowly turning in the eddies. The motion of my boat sends an undulation to the shore, which rustles the dry sedge half immersed there, as if a tortoise were tumbling through it. Leaves and sticks and billets of wood come floating down in middle of the full, still stream, turning round in the eddies, and I mistake them for ducks at first. See two red-wing blackbirds alight on a black willow.

Nov. 15. The river rising. I see a spearer's light to-night.

Nov. 16. Minott speaks of the last fortnight as good weather to complete the harvesting, — corn, potatoes, turnips, carrots, etc. It seemed late for harvest, but some of the above crops were not gathered.

A part of to-day and yesterday I have been making shelves for my Oriental books, which I hear to-day are now on the Atlantic in the Canada.

Mr. Rice asked me to-night if I knew how hard a head a goat had. When he lived in Roxbury a man asked him to kill a goat for him. He accordingly struck the goat with a hatchet, hard enough, as he supposed, to dash his brains out, but the goat instantly, with a bleat, leaped on to a wall and ran twenty rods on the wall faster than they could on the ground after him, and he saw him as much as a month afterward none the worse for the blow.

He thinks that muskrats have always, even in the winter, a dry bed in the bank, as well as the wet place to eat in their cabins. Told me again the story of the muskrat which he saw *resting* under the ice, he himself lying flat and still upon the ice and the muskrat having a long way to go from the bank to his cabin. As soon as he stopped with his nose against the ice, a bubble issued from his mouth and flattened out to three inches in diameter against the ice, and he remained for half a minute with his mouth in it. Then drew it in, all but a little, and proceeded.

He spoke of the mud turtle resting on the "river-bush" (meaning the button-bush) in the spring, so near the top of the water that he could put his snout out when he pleased. Has taken them in April formerly, on Fast-Day.

I think that by the "swamp robin" he means the veery.

I see many more nests in the alders now than I suspected in the summer.

*Nov. 17.* Just after dark the first snow is falling, after a chilly afternoon with cold gray clouds, when my hands were uncomfortably cold.

It is interesting to me to talk with Rice, he lives so thoroughly and satisfactorily to himself. He has learned that rare art of living, the very elements of which most professors do not know. His life has been not a failure but a success. Seeing me going to sharpen some plane-irons, and hearing me complain of the want of tools, he said that I ought to have a chest of tools. But I said it was not worth the while. I should not use them enough to pay for them. "You would use them more, if you had them," said he. "When I came to do a piece of work I used to find commonly that I wanted a certain tool, and I made it a rule first always to make that tool. I have spent as much as \$3000 thus on my tools." Comparatively speaking, his life is a success; not such a failure as most men's. He gets more out of any enterprise than his neighbors, for he helps himself more and hires less. Whatever pleasure there is in it he enjoys. By good sense and calculation he has become rich and has invested his property well, yet practices a fair and neat economy, dwells not in untidy luxury. It costs him less to live, and he gets more out of life, than others. To get his living, or keep it, is not a hasty or disagreeable toil. He works slowly but surely, en-

joying the sweet of it. He buys a piece of meadow at a profitable rate, works at it in pleasant weather, he and his son, when they are inclined, goes a-fishing or a-bee-hunting or a-rifle-shooting quite as often, and thus the meadow gets redeemed, and potatoes get planted, perchance, and he is very sure to have a good crop stored in his cellar in the fall, and some to sell. He always has the best of potatoes there. In the same spirit in which he and his son tackle up their Dobbin (he never keeps a fast horse) and go a-spearing or a-fishing through the ice, they also tackle up and go to their Sudbury farm to hoe or harvest a little, and when they return they bring home a load of stumps in their hay-rigging, which impeded their labors, but, perchance, supply them with their winter wood. All the woodchucks they shoot or trap in the bean-field are brought home also. And thus their life is a long sport and they know not what hard times are.

Rice says there are no bees worth hunting about here now. He has sometimes been to a large wood in the west part of Sudbury, and also to Nagog, yet there was little honey there.

Saw Goodwin this afternoon returning from the river with two minks, one trapped, the other shot, and half a dozen muskrats. Mink seem to be more commonly seen now, and the rising of the river begins to drive out the muskrats.

Labauve says that he wrote his journal of the Campaign in Russia each night, in the midst of incredible danger and suffering, with "a raven's quill, and a little gunpowder, mixed with some melted snow, in the

hollow of my hand," the quill cut and mended with "the knife with which I had carved my scanty morsel of horse-flesh." Such a statement promises well for the writer's qualifications to treat such a theme.

Nov. 18. About an inch of snow fell last night, but the ground was not at all frozen or prepared for it. A little greener grass and stubble here and there seems to burn its way through it this forenoon.

It clears up at noon, and at

2 P. M. I go to Fair Haven Hill *via* Hubbard's Grove.

As I sat in the house, I was struck with the brightness and heat of the sun reflected from this our first snow. There was an intenser light in the house, and I felt an uncommon heat from the sun's rays on my back. The air is very clear, and the sky heavenly, with a few floating downy clouds. I am prepared to hear sharp, screaming notes rending the air, from the winter birds. I do, in fact, hear many jays, and the tinkling, like rattling glass, from chickadees and tree sparrows. I do not detect any peculiar brightness whatever in the osiers on the Hubbard causeway; they are scarcely, if at all, brighter than the tops of the trees. Now first mark the stubble and numerous withered weeds rising above the snow. They have suddenly acquired a new character. Tansy still shows its yellow disks, but yarrow is particularly fresh and perfect, cold and chaste, with its pretty little dry-looking rounded white petals and green leaves. Its very color gives it a right to bloom above the snow, — as level as a snow-crust on the top

of the stubble. It looks like a virgin wearing a white ruff.

The snow is the great track-revealer. I come across the tracks of persons who, at a different hour from myself, have crossed, and perhaps often cross, some remote field on their errands, when I had not suspected a predecessor; and the track of the dog or staff are seen too. The cattle have tracked their whole pasture over, as if there had been a thousand. I have this silent but unerring evidence of any who have crossed the fields since last night. It is pleasant to see tracks leading towards the woods, — to be reminded that any have engagements there. Yet for the most part the snow is quite untrodden. Most fields have no track of man in them. I only see where a squirrel has leaped from the wall.

I now remark how the perfectly leafless alder thickets are much darker than the maples, now that the ground is whitened. The pasture directly under my face is white, but, seen aslant a few rods off, mostly russet. Gathered a bagful of fair apples on Fair Haven, showing their red cheeks above the snow.

I was so warmed in spirit in *getting* my wood that the heat it finally yielded when burnt was coldness in comparison. That first is a warmth which you cannot buy.

These apples which I get nowadays — russets and Baldwins — are the ripest of all, being acted on by the frost and partly left because they were slightly over-ripe for keeping. I come home with a heavy bagful and rob no one.

Instead of walking in the wood-market amid sharp-visaged teamsters, I float over dark reflecting waters in which I see mirrored the stumps on the bank, and am dazzled by the beauty of a summer duck. Though I should get no wood, I should get a beauty perhaps more valuable. The price of this my wood, however high, is the very thing which I delight to pay. What I obtain with the most labor — the most water-logged and heaviest wood which I fish up from the bottom and split and dry — warms the most. The greater, too, the distance from which I have conveyed it, the more I am warmed by it in my thought. All the intervening shores glow and are warmed by it as it passes, or as I repass them in my mind. And yet men will cut their wood with sorrow, and burn it with lucifer matches. This was where I drove my team afield, and, instead of the grey-fly,<sup>1</sup> I heard the wood tortoises even yet rustling through the sedge to the water, or the gray squirrel coursing from maple to maple.

One man thinks that he has a right to burn his thirty cords in a year because he can give a certain sum of money in exchange for them, but that another has no right to pick up the fagots which else nobody would burn. They who will remember only this kind of right do as if they stood under a shed and affirmed that they were under the unobscured heavens. The shed has its use, but what is it to the heavens above?<sup>2</sup>

So of the *warmth* which food, shelter, and clothing

<sup>1</sup> ["We drove a-field, and both together heard

What time the grey-fly winds her sultry horn." — *Lycidas*.]

<sup>2</sup> [Channing, p. 90.]

afford, or might afford, if we used *economical stoves*. We might burn the smoke which now puts our eyes out. The pleasure, the warmth, is not so much in *having* as in a true and simple manner *getting* these necessaries.

Men prefer foolishly the gold to that of which it is the symbol, — simple, honest, independent labor. Can gold be said to buy food, if it does not buy an appetite for food? It is fouler and uglier to have too much than not to have enough.

*Nov. 19.* A cold, gray day, once spitting snow. Water froze in tubs enough to bear last night.

Minott had two cats on his knee. One given away without his knowledge a fortnight before had just found its way back. He says he would not kill a cat for twenty dollars, — no, not for fifty. Finally he told his women folks that he would not do it for five hundred, or any sum. He thought they loved life as well as we. Johnny Vose would n't do it. He used to carry down milk to a shop every day for a litter of kittens.

Speaking of geese, he says that Dr. Hurd told a tough story once. He said that when he went out to the well there came a flock of geese flying so low that they had to rise to clear the well-sweep. M. says that there used to be a great many more geese formerly; he used to hear a great many flocks in a day go "yelling" over. Brant, too, he used to see.

Told me of his fishing for pickerel once in the brook, when a mink leaped into the water toward his bait (a frog), but, seeing the end of his pole, he dived and

made off. Some years ago he saw a mink steal out of the brook, which, being disturbed, dropped a pout half grown which it had caught. This was in his rye, then five or six inches high. Presently it returned and carried the pout to the wall by the elm at R. W. E.'s bound. He followed, looked under a rock, and saw two young minks. He has taken the jackets off many a one, but they smell so rank it is unpleasant work.

Rice says that that brook which crosses the road just beyond his brother Israel's is called Cold Brook. It comes partly from Dunge Hole. When the river is rising it will flow up the brook a great way.

Rice told his turtle story the other night: "One day I was going through Boston market and I saw a huddle of men around something or other. I edged my way between them and saw that they had got a great mud turtle on a plank, and a butcher stood over him with a cleaver in his hand. 'Eh,' said I, 'what are you trying to do?' 'We are waiting for him to put out his head so that we may cut it off. Look out,' they said; 'don't come so near, or he'll bite you.' 'Look here,' said I, 'let me try. I guess I can make him put his head out.' 'Let him try. Let him try,' they said, with a laugh. So I stepped into the ring and stood astride of the turtle, while they looked on to see the sport. After looking at him a moment, I put down my hands and turned him over on to his back, whereupon he immediately ran out his head and pushed against the plank to turn himself back, but, as they were not ready to cut at once, or his neck was not in a good position, I seized his head in both hands and,

putting my feet against his breast-bone, drew his head out the full length of his neck and said, 'Now cut away. Only take care you don't cut my fingers.' They cut, and I threw the head down on the floor. As I walked away, some one said, 'I guess that fellow has seen mud turtles before to-day.'"

Nov. 20. Again I hear that sharp, crackling, snapping sound and, hastening to the window, find that another of the pitch pine cones gathered November 7th, lying in the sun, or which the sun has reached, has separated its scales very slightly at the apex. It is only discoverable on a close inspection, but while I look the whole cone opens its scales with a smart crackling and rocks and seems to bristle up, scattering the dry pitch on the surface. They all thus fairly loosen and open, though they do not at once spread wide open. It is almost like the disintegration of glass. As soon as the tension is relaxed in one part, it is relaxed in every part.

A cold day. The snow that fell November 17th in the evening is still seen on the ground.

Nov. 24. Geese went over on the 13th and 14th, on the 17th the first snow fell, and the 19th it began to be cold and blustering. That first slight snow has not yet gone off! and *very little* has been added. The last three or four days have been quite cold, the sidewalks a glare of ice and very little melting. To-day has been exceedingly blustering and disagreeable, as I found while surveying for Moore. The farmers now

bring the apples they have engaged (and the cider); it is time to put them in the cellar, and the turnips. Ice has frozen pretty thick in the bottom of my boat.

*Nov. 26.* Bottom of boat covered with ice. The ice next the shore bore me and my boat.

*Nov. 27.* P. M. — By river to J. Farmer's.

He gave me the head of a gray rabbit which his boy had snared. This rabbit is white beneath, the whole length, reddish-brown on the sides, and the same spotted with black, above; the hairs coarse and homely, yet the fur beneath thick and slate-colored as usual. Well defended from the cold. Sides I might say *pale* brick-color, the brown part. The fur under the feet dirty-yellowish, as if stained by what it trod upon. He makes no use of their skins or fur. The skin is very tender. The tail, short and curled up, is white on the inside like that of the deer described by Loskiel, *q. v.*, Indian book.

He showed me the preserved skin of the heads of a double-headed calf, still-born, also the adjoining portion of the spine, where two short spinal columns, two or three inches long, merged in one. Only one body and other organs.

I told him I saw a mink. He said he would have given me \$1.50 and perhaps something more for him. I hear that he gives \$1.75, and sells them again at a profit. They are used to trim ladies' coats with, among other things. A mink skin which he showed me was a darker brown than the one I saw last (he says they

changed suddenly to darker *about* a fortnight since); and the tail was nearly all black.

He said that his grandfather, who could remember one hundred and twenty-five years before this, told him that they used to catch wolves in what is now Carter's pasture by the North River (east of Dodge's Brook) in this manner: They piled up logs, cob-house fashion, beginning with a large base, eight or ten feet square, and narrowing successively each tier, so as to make steps for the wolves to the top, say ten feet high. Then they put a dead sheep within. A wolf soon found it in the night, sat down outside and howled till he called his comrades to him, and then they ascended step by step and jumped down within; but when they had done they could not get out again. They always found one of the wolves dead, and supposed that he was punished for betraying the others into this trap.

A man in Brighton, whom he fully believes, told him that he built a bower near a dead horse and placed himself within to shoot crows. One crow took his station as sentinel on the top of the tree, and thirty or forty alighted upon the horse. He fired and killed seven or eight, but the rest, instead of minding him, immediately flew to their sentinel and pecked him to pieces before his eyes. Also Mr. Joseph Clark told him that, as he was going along the road, he cast a stick over the wall and hit some crows in a field, whereupon they flew directly at their sentinel on an apple tree and beat and buffeted him away to the woods as far as he could see.

There is little now to be heard along the river but

the sedge rustling on the brink. There is a little ice along most of the shore throughout the day.

Farmer told me that some one told him he found a pickerel washed up in the river, choked by a bream which it had endeavored to swallow.

*Nov. 30.* River skimmed over behind Dodd's and elsewhere. Got in my boat. River remained iced over all day.

This evening I received Cholmondeley's gift of Indian books, forty-four volumes in all, which came by the Canada, reaching Boston on the morning of the 24th. Left Liverpool the 10th.

Goodwin and Farmer think that a dog will not touch the dead body of a mink, it smells so strongly. The former, after skinning them, throws the carcass into a tree for the crows. He has got eleven this fall; shot two and trapped the rest.

On the 27th, when I made my last voyage for the season, I found a large sound pine log about four feet long floating, and brought it home. Off the larger end I sawed two wheels, about a foot in diameter and seven or eight inches thick, and I fitted to them an axle-tree made of a joist, which also I found in the river, and thus I had a convenient pair of wheels on which to get my boat up and roll it about. The assessors called me into their office this year and said they wished to get an inventory of my property; asked if I had any real estate. No. Any notes at interest or railroad shares? No. Any taxable property? None that I knew of. "I own a boat," I said; and one of

them thought that that might come under the head of a pleasure carriage, which is taxable. Now that I have wheels to it, it comes nearer to it. I was pleased to get my boat in by this means rather than on a borrowed wheelbarrow. It was fit that the river should furnish the material, and that in my last voyage on it, when the ice reminded me that it was time to put it in winter quarters.

I am waiting for colder weather to survey a swamp, now inaccessible on account of the water.

I asked Aunt L. to-night why *Scheeter* Potter was so called. She said, because his neighbors regarded him as so small a man that they said in jest that it was his business to make mosquitos' bills. He was accused of catching his neighbor's hens in a trap and eating them. But he was crazy.

William Wheeler says that he went a-spearing on the 28th (night before Thanksgiving) and, besides pouts and pickerel, caught two great suckers. He had one of the last stuffed and baked for Thanksgiving, and made himself sick by eating too heartily of it.