

IV

NOVEMBER, 1857

(ÆT. 40)

Nov. 1. P. M. — To Fair Haven Pond over Cliffs.
Another cloudy afternoon after a clear morning.

When I enter the woods I notice the drier crispier rustle of withered leaves on the oak trees, — a sharper susurrus.

Going over the high field west of the cut, my foot strikes a rattle-pod in the stubble, and it is betrayed. From that faint sound I knew it must be there, and went back and found it. I could have told it as well in the dark. How often I have found pennyroyal by the fragrance it emitted when bruised by my feet!

The lowest and most succulent oak sprouts *in exposed places* are red or green longest. Large trees quite protected from sun and wind will be greener still. The larches are at the height of their change.

I see much witch-hazel in the swamp by the south end of the Abiel Wheeler grape meadow. Some of it is quite fresh and bright. Its bark is alternate white and smooth reddish-brown, the small twigs looking as if gossamer had lodged on and draped them. What a lively spray it has, both in form and color! Truly it looks as if it would make divining-rods, — as if its twigs knew where the true gold was and could point to it. The gold is in their late blossoms. Let them

alone and they never point down to earth. They impart to the whole hillside a speckled, parti-colored look.

I see the common prinus berries partly eaten about the hole of a mouse under a stump.

As I return by the Well Meadow Field and then Wheeler's large wood, the sun shines from over Fair Haven Hill into the wood, and I see that the sun, when low, will shine into a thick wood, which you had supposed always dark, as much as twenty rods, lighting it all up, making the gray, lichen-clad stems of the trees all warm and bright with light, and a distinct black shadow behind each. As if every grove, however dense, had its turn.

A higher truth, though only dimly hinted at, thrills us more than a lower expressed.

Jersey tea has perhaps the most green leaves of any shrub at present.

Nov. 2. P. M. — To Bateman's Pond.

Row up Assabet as far as the Pokelogan, thence on foot. It is very pleasant and cheerful nowadays, when the brown and withered leaves strew the ground and almost every plant is fallen or withered, to come upon a patch of polypody on some rocky hillside in the woods, — as in abundance on hillside between Calla Swamp and Bateman's Pond, and still more same hillside east of the callas, — where, in the midst of the dry and rustling leaves, defying frost, it stands so freshly green and full of life. The mere greenness, which was not remarkable in the summer, is positively interesting now. My thoughts are with the polypody a long

time after my body has passed. The brakes, the sarsaparilla, the osmundas, the Solomon's-seals, the lady's-slippers have long since withered and fallen. The huckleberries and blueberries, too, have lost their leaves. The forest floor is covered with a thick coat of moist brown leaves. But what is that perennial and spring-like verdure that clothes the rocks, of small green plumes pointing various ways? It is the cheerful community of the polypody. It survives at least as the type of vegetation, to remind us of the spring which shall not fail. These are the green pastures where I browse now. Why is not this form copied by our sculptors instead of the foreign acanthus leaves and bays? The sight of this unwithering green leaf excites me like red at some seasons. Are not the wood frogs the philosophers who walk (?) in these groves?¹ Methinks I imbibe a cool, composed, frog-like philosophy when I behold them. I don't care for acanthus leaves; they are far-fetched. I do love this form, however, and would like to see it painted or sculptured, whether on your marble or my butter. How fit for a tuft about the base of a column!

I come to a black snake in the wood-path, with its crushed head resting on a stone and its uninjured body trailing thence. How often I see where thus some heel has bruised the serpent's head! I think it an unnatural antipathy.

Crossed over that high, flat-backed rocky hill, where the rocks, as usual thereabouts, stand on their edges, and the grain, though usually running northeasterly

¹ [Channing, p. 103.]

and southwesterly, — by compass east-northeast, west-southwest, — is frequently kinked up in a curious manner, reminding me of a curly head. Call the hill Curly-pate.

Bateman's Pond is agitated by the strong wind, — a slate-colored surface under the cloudy sky. I find some good blue pearmaines under their tree in a swamp, amid the huckleberry bushes, etc., all fallen. They lie with a rich bloom on them still, though half of them are gnawed by squirrels or rabbits; low in the sedge, with decayed leaves adhering to them.

How contagious are boys' games! A short time ago they were spinning tops, as I saw and heard, all the country over. Now every boy has a stick curved at the end,  a *hawkie* (?), in his hand, whether in yards or in distant lanes I meet them.

The evergreen ferns and lycopodiums now have their day; now is the *flower* of their age, and their greenness is appreciated. They are much the clearest and most liquid green in the woods, more yellow and brown specked in the open places.

The form of the polypody is *strangely* interesting; it is even outlandish. Some forms, though common in our midst, are thus perennially foreign as the growths of other latitudes; there being a greater interval between us and their kind than usual. We all feel the ferns to be further from us, essentially and sympathetically, than the phænogamous plants, the roses and weeds, for instance. It needs no geology nor botany to assure us of that. We feel it, and told *them* of it first. The bare outline of the polypody thrills me strangely. It

is a strange type which I cannot read. It only piques me. Simple as it is, it is as strange as an Oriental character. It is quite independent of my race, and of the Indian, and all mankind. It is a fabulous, mythological form, such as prevailed when the earth and air and water were inhabited by those extinct fossil creatures that we find. It is contemporary with them, and affects as the sight of them.

As I stood on Curly-pate, the air had become gradually thick with mist in the southwest. The sky was overcast, and a cool, strong wind blew from the same quarter, and in the mist I perceived the strong scent of smoke from some burning. Standing on one of those curly-headed rocks, whose strata are vertical, gives me a sense of elevation like a mountain-top. In fact, they are on the axis of elevation.

There are no fresh — or blue — fringed gentians by the swamp-side by Bateman's now.

Wild apples have lost some of their brilliancy now and are chiefly fallen.

Returning, I see the red oak on R. W. E.'s shore reflected in the bright sky water. In the reflection the tree is black against the clear whitish sky, though as I see it against the opposite woods it is a warm greenish yellow. But the river sees it against the bright sky, and hence the reflection is like ink. The water tells me how it looks to it seen from below. I think that most men, as farmers, hunters, fishers, etc., walk along a river's bank, or paddle along its stream, without seeing the reflections. Their minds are not abstracted from the surface, from surfaces generally. It is only

a reflecting mind that sees reflections. I am aware often that I have been occupied with shallow and commonplace thoughts, looking for something superficial, when I did not see the most glorious reflections, though exactly in the line of my vision. If the fisherman was looking at the reflection, he would not know when he had a nibble! I know from my own experience that he may cast his line right over the most elysian landscape and sky, and not *catch* the slightest notion of them. You must be in an abstract mood to see reflections however distinct. I was even startled by the sight of that reflected red oak as if it were a black water-spirit. When we are enough abstracted, the opaque earth itself reflects images to us; *i. e.*, we are imaginative, see visions, etc. Such a reflection, this inky, leafy tree, against the white sky, can only be seen at this season.

The water is falling fast, and I push *direct* over the meadow this evening, probably for the last time this fall, scraping the cranberry vines and hummocks from time to time with my flat-bottomed boat.

Nov. 3. P. M. — To the Easterbrooks moraine *via* Ponkawtasset-top.

Islands, pale-brown grassy isles, are appearing again in the meadow as the water goes down. From this hilltop, looking down-stream over the Great Meadows away from the sun, the water is rather dark, it being windy, but about the shores of the grassy isles is a lighter-colored smooth space.

Pitch pine needles are almost all fallen.

There is a wild pear tree on the east side of Ponkaw-tasset, which I find to be four and a half feet in circumference at four feet from the ground.

Looking westward now, at 4 P. M., I see against the sunlight, where the twigs of a maple and black birch intermingle, a little gossamer or fine cobwebs, but much more the twigs, especially of the birch, waving slightly, reflect the light like cobwebs. It is a phenomenon peculiar to this season, when the twigs are bare and the air is clear. I cannot easily tell what is cobweb and what twig, but the latter often curve upward more than the other.

I see on many rocks, etc., the seeds of the barberry, which have been voided by birds, — robins, no doubt, chiefly. How many they must thus scatter over the fields, spreading the barberry far and wide! That has been their business for a month.

Follow up the Boulder Field northward, and it terminates in that moraine. As I return down the Boulder Field, I see the now winter-colored — *i. e.* reddish (of oak leaves) — horizon of hills, with its few white houses, four or five miles distant southward, between two of the boulders, which are a dozen rods from me, a dozen feet high, and nearly as much apart, — as a landscape between the frame of a picture. But what a picture-frame! These two great slumbering masses of rock, reposing like a pair of mastodons on the surface of the pasture, completely shutting out a mile of the horizon on each side, while between their adjacent sides, which are nearly perpendicular, I see to the now purified, dry, reddish, leafy horizon, with a faint tinge of

blue from the distance. To see a remote landscape between two near rocks! I want no other gilding to my picture-frame. There they lie, as perchance they tumbled and split from off an iceberg. What better frame could you have? The globe itself, here named pasture, for ground and foreground, two great boulders for the sides of the frame, and the sky itself for the top! And for artists and subject, God and Nature! Such pictures cost nothing but eyes, and it will not bankrupt one to own them. They were not stolen by any conqueror as spoils of war, and none can doubt but they are really the works of an old master. What more, pray, will you see between any two slips of gilded wood in that pasture you call Europe and browse in sometimes? It is singular that several of those rocks should be thus split into twins. Even very low ones, just appearing above the surface, are divided and parallel, having a path between them.

It would be something to own that pasture with the great rocks in it! And yet I suppose they are considered an incumbrance only by the owner.

I came along the path that comes out just this side the lime-kiln.

Coming by Ebby Hubbard's thick maple and pine wood, I see the rays of the sun, now not much above the horizon, penetrating quite through it to my side in very narrow and slender glades of light, peculiarly bright. It seems, then, that no wood is so dense but that the rays of the setting sun may penetrate twenty rods into it. The other day (November 1st), I stood on the sunny side of such a wood at the same season,

or a little earlier. Then I saw the lit sides of the tree stems all aglow with their lichens, and observed their black shadows behind. Now I see chiefly the dark stems massed together, and it is the warm sunlight that is reduced to a pencil of light; *i. e.*, then light was the rule and shadow the exception, now shadow the rule and light the exception.

I notice some old cow-droppings in a pasture, which are decidedly pink. Even these trivial objects awaken agreeable associations in my mind, connected not only with my own actual rambles but with what I have read of the prairies and pampas and Eastern land of grass, the great pastures of the world.

Nov. 4. P. M. — To Pine Hill via Spanish Brook.

I leave the railroad at Walden Crossing and follow the path to Spanish Brook. How swift Nature is to repair the damage that man does! When he has cut down a tree and left only a white-topped and bleeding stump, she comes at once to the rescue with her chemistry, and covers it decently with a fresh coat of gray, and in course of time she adds a thick coat of green cup and bright cockscomb lichens, and it becomes an object of new interest to the lover of nature! Suppose it were always to remain a raw stump instead! It becomes a shell on which this humble vegetation spreads and displays itself, and we forget the death of the larger in the life of the less.

I see in the path some rank thimble-berry shoots covered with that peculiar hoary bloom very thickly. It is only rubbed off in a few places down to the purple

skin, by some passing hunter perchance. It is a very singular and delicate outer coat, surely, for a plant to wear. I find that I can write my name in it with a pointed stick very distinctly, each stroke, however fine, going down to the purple. It is a new kind of enamelled card. What is this bloom, and what purpose does it serve? Is there anything analogous in animated nature? It is the *coup de grace*, the last touch and perfection of any work, a thin elysian veil cast over it, through which it may be viewed. It is breathed on by the artist, and thereafter his work is not to be touched without injury. It is the evidence of a ripe and completed work, on which the unexhausted artist has breathed out of his superfluous genius, and his work looks through it as a veil. If it is a poem, it must be invested with a similar bloom by the imagination of the reader. It is the subsidence of superfluous ripeness. Like a fruit preserved in its own sugar. It is the handle by which the imagination grasps it.

I frequently see a spreading pitch pine on whose lower and horizontal limbs the falling needles have lodged, forming thick and unsightly masses, where anon the snow will collect and make a close canopy. The evergreens, with their leaves, are, of course, more likely to catch this litter than the deciduous trees, and the pines especially, because their lower branches are oftener horizontal and flat, beside being unyielding to the wind. Robins build there.

I notice the new and as yet unswollen scales of willow catkins or buds (the first [?] by the pond) quite yellow in the sun, but nearer I find that half are turned black.

The evergreen ferns and lycopodiums, etc., on the forest floor, though partly fallen, represent the evergreen trees among humbler plants.

I climb Pine Hill just as the sun is setting, this cool evening. Sitting with my back to a thick oak sprout whose leaves still glow with life, Walden lies an oblong square endwise to, beneath me. Its surface is slightly rippled, and dusky prolonged reflections of trees extend wholly across its length, or half a mile, — I sit high. The sun is once or twice its diameter above the horizon, and the mountains north of it stand out grand and distinct, a decided purple. But when I look critically, I distinguish a whitish mist — such is the color of the denser air — about their lower parts, while their tops are dark-blue. (So the mountains too have a bloom on them; and is not the bloom on fruits equivalent to that blue veil of air which distance gives to many objects?) I see one glistening reflection on the dusky and leafy northwestern earth, seven or eight miles off, betraying a window there, though no house can be seen. It twinkles incessantly, as from a waving surface. This, probably, is the undulation of the air. Now that the sun is actually setting, the mountains are dark-blue from top to bottom. As usual, a small cloud attends the sun to the portals of the day and reflects this brightness to us, now that he is gone. But those grand and glorious mountains, how impossible to remember daily that they are there, and to live accordingly! They are meant to be a perpetual reminder to us, pointing out the way.

Nov. 5. P. M. — To the Dam Meadows.

But little corn is left in the field now, and that looks rather black. There is an abundance of cat-tail in the Dam Meadows.

Returning, talked with Minott. He told me how he and Harry Hooper used to go to Howard's meadow (Heywood's, by the railroad) when it was flowed and kill fishes through the ice. They would cut a long stick and go carefully over the ice when it was only a couple of inches thick, and when they saw a fish, strike the ice smartly, cracking it in all directions, right over him, and when he turned his belly, being stunned, would cut him out quickly before he came to. These were little fishes which he called "prods." He did n't know much more about them. They were somewhat like a small pout, but had different heads. They got so many once that he told Harry to cut a stick and string them and they'd give them to Zilpha as they went by. He has caught pickerel in the brook there which weighed two or three pounds.

He went to Bateman's Pond once in the winter to catch minnows with a net through the ice, but did n't get any. He went — rode — with Oliver Williams first into Acton and then round to this pond on this errand.

Minott was rather timid. One day early in the winter he had been over to Fair Haven Hill after a fox with John Wyman, but they did n't get him. The pond was frozen about two inches thick, but you could easily see the water through the ice, and when they came back, Wyman said he was going straight across because it was nearer, but Minott objected. But Wyman told

him to follow; it was safe enough. Minott followed half a dozen rods and then decided that he would n't risk it and went back; he'd go ten miles round sooner than cross. "But," said Minott, "the fellow kept on and I'll be hanged if he did n't get safe across."

The pitch pines generally have lost their leaves now, and the larches are fast falling. The elms have been bare some time.

Sometimes I would rather get a transient glimpse or side view of a thing than stand fronting to it, — as those polypodies. The object I caught a glimpse of as I went by haunts my thoughts a long time, is infinitely suggestive, and I do not care to front it and scrutinize it, for I know that the thing that really concerns me is not there, but in my relation to that. That is a mere reflecting surface. It is not the polypody in my pitcher or herbarium, or which I may possibly persuade to grow on a bank in my yard, or which is described in botanics, that interests me, but the one that I pass by in my walks a little distance off, when in the right mood. Its influence is sporadic, wafted through the air to me. Do you imagine its fruit to stick to the back of the leaf all winter? At this season polypody is in the air.¹ It is worth the while to walk in swamps now, to bathe your eyes with greenness. The terminal shield fern is the handsomest and glossiest green.

Start up a snipe feeding in a wet part of the Dam Meadows.

I think that the man of science makes this mistake, and the mass of mankind along with him: that you

¹ [Channing, p. 103.]

should coolly give your chief attention to the phenomenon which excites you as something independent on you, and not as it is related to you. The important fact is its effect on me. He thinks that I have no business to see anything else but just what he defines the rainbow to be, but I care not whether my vision of truth is a waking thought or dream remembered, whether it is seen in the light or in the dark. It is the subject of the vision, the truth alone, that concerns me. The philosopher for whom rainbows, etc., can be explained away never saw them. With regard to such objects, I find that it is not they themselves (with which the men of science deal) that concern me; the point of interest is somewhere *between* me and them (*i. e.* the objects). . . .

And where does your Eastern stuff go to?¹ Whose houses does it build? It has built Bangor, and what is the precise value of Bangor, omitting the lumber on its wharves? Western stuff is good enough for me. I think that this craving a better material than we deserve, and wasting what we get, is the secret of bankruptcy. And what is it, after all, but lumber? I do not wish to see any more poor men in rich houses. I would rather see one rich man in a poor house. No more cripples on stilts. . . .

For a man to pride himself on this kind of wealth, as if it enriched him, is as ridiculous as if one struggling in the ocean with a bag of gold on his back should gasp out, "I am worth a hundred thousand dollars!"

¹ [Refers, of course, to the lumbering operations of the Maine woods.]

I see his ineffectual struggles just as plainly, and what it is that sinks him.

Nov. 6. Very warm but rather cloudy weather, after rain in the night. Wind southwest. Thermometer on north of the house 70° at 12 M. Indian summer. The cocks crow in the soft air. They are very sensitive to atmospheric changes.

P. M. — To Curly-pate *via* old Carlisle road.

Stedman Buttrick tells me that Dr. Ripley used to have his pork packed with the best pieces at the top of the barrel, and when some parishioner wondered at it, that he should thus eat these first, he answered that when packed thus the topmost were the best all the way through.

He said that his grandfather lived in the Jarvis house, and that the other old house whose upper story projected over the lower like the Hunt house, and which I saw in the picture of Concord Fight, stood close to his own house, and he pulled it down when he was sixteen.

I passed through that chestnut wood in the hollow southeast of Curly-pate. Turning over the wet chestnut leaves in the hollows, looking for nuts, I found a red-backed salamander, between three and four inches long, bluish-gray beneath (*Salamandra erythronota*). It jerked itself about in a lively manner, trying to hide itself under the leaves, and would quickly slip out of my fingers. Its motions appeared to partake of those of a snake and a frog, — between a squirm and a hop. It was not particularly swift, yet, from the character

of the motion and its glossiness, it was *glancing*. A dozen rods further I turned [up] another, very similar but without a red back, but rather slightly clay-colored. I did not observe any transverse bands; else it might be the *S. fasciata*.

When I came out on to the old Carlisle road in the dusk on my return, I saw Brooks Clark coming homeward, with his axe in his hand and both hands behind his back, being bent almost double. He said he was over eighty. Some years ago he bought some land up that way, and, the birches having sprung up there, he called it his birch pasture. There was enough birch wood there to carry him through the winter, and he was now cutting it. He remembered when they began to burn lime there, and bought the right to get out stone of Easterbrooks more than sixty years ago. It was Peter Barrett that began it. The lime sold for \$5.00 a cask (larger casks than now). But the stone was difficult to get out. He remembers seeing the mowers at work in the meadow where Stedman Buttrick's handsome pine and maple wood is, seventy years ago, and where there was a large old chestnut by the roadside there, which being cut, two sprouts came up which have become the largest chestnut trees by the wall now. As for the yellow birch cellar-hole, Ephraim Brown told him that old Henry Flint (an ancestor of Clark's wife) dug it, and erected the frame of a house there, but never finished it, selling out, going to live by the river. It was never finished. Clark's father told him that he remembered when there were no fences between his house and Lawrence's; it was

all open. This road was the new one; the bridle-road the old one.

Minott is a very pleasing figure in nature. He improves every scenery, — he and his comrades, Harry Hooper, John Wyman, Oliver Williams, etc. If he gets into a pond-hole he disturbs it no more than a water-spirit for me.

Nov. 7. You will sometimes see a sudden wave flow along a puny ditch of a brook, inundating all its shores, when a musquash is making his escape beneath. He soon plunges into some hole in the bank under water, and all is still again.

P. M. — To Bateman's Pond with R. W. E.

Stedman Buttrick, speaking of R. W. E.'s cow that was killed by lightning and not found for some days, said that they heard a "bellering" of the cows some days before they found her, and they found the ground much trampled about the dead cow; that that was the way with cows in such cases; if such an accident happened to one of their number, they would have spells of gathering around her and "bellering."

Minott adorns whatever part of nature he touches; whichever way he walks he transfigures the earth for me. If a common man speaks of Walden Pond to me, I see only a shallow, dull-colored body of water without reflections or peculiar color, but if Minott speaks of it, I see the green water and reflected hills at once, for he *has been* there. I hear the rustle of the leaves from woods which he goes through.

This has been another Indian-summer day. Thermometer 58° at noon.

Nov. 8. A warm, cloudy, rain-threatening morning.

About 10 A. M. a long flock of geese are going over from northeast to southwest, or parallel with the general direction of the coast and great mountain-ranges. The sonorous, quavering sounds of the geese are the voice of this cloudy air, — a sound that comes from directly between us and the sky, an aerial sound, and yet so distinct, heavy, and sonorous, a clanking chain drawn through the heavy air. I saw through my window some children looking up and pointing their tiny bows into the heavens, and I knew at once that the geese were in the air. It is always an exciting event. The children, instinctively aware of its importance, rushed into the house to tell their parents. These travellers are revealed to you by the upward-turned gaze of men. And though these undulating lines are melting into the southwestern sky, the sound comes clear and distinct to you as the clank of a chain in a neighboring stithy. So they migrate, not flitting from hedge to hedge, but from latitude to latitude, from State to State, steering boldly out into the ocean of the air. It is remarkable how these large objects, so plain when your vision is rightly directed, may be lost in the sky if you look away for a moment, — as hard to hit as a star with a telescope.

It is a sort of encouraging or soothing sound to assuage their painful fears when they go over a town, as a man moans to deaden a physical pain. The direction of their flight each spring and autumn reminds us inlanders how the coast trends. In the afternoon I met Flood, who had just endeavored to draw my attention to a flock of geese in the mizzling air, but encounter-

ing me he lost sight of them, while I, at length, looking that way, discerned them, though he could not. This was the third flock to-day. Now if ever, then, we may expect a change in the weather.

P. M. — To the swamp in front of the C. Miles house.

The great white pines on the hill south of it were cut, apparently last winter. I count on two stumps about one hundred and twenty-five rings, and the sap averages in each case about three inches thick.

In a thick white pine wood, as in that swamp at the east end, where the ground is level, the ground now (and for some time) is completely covered with a carpet of pale-brown leaves, completely concealing the green mosses and even some lycopodiums. The effect is exactly as [if] a uniform pale-brown matting had been spread over the green and russet floor. It is even soothing to walk over this soft and springy bed. How silently and unobserved by most do these changes take place! This additional warm matting is tucked about their roots to defend them from the frost. It is interesting to see the green of mosses peeping out here and there. You hear only the soft crisped sound of sinking needles under your feet.

I find in the swamp there by the larches the *Kalmia glauca*, good specimens.

I have no doubt that a good farmer, who, of course, loves his work, takes exactly the same kind of pleasure in draining a swamp, seeing the water flow out in his newly cut ditch, that a child does in its mud dikes and water-wheels. Both alike love to play with the natural forces.

There is quite a ravine by which the water of this swamp flows out eastward, and at the bottom of it many prinos berries are conspicuous, now apparently in their prime. These are appointed to be an ornament of this bare season between leaves and snow. The swamp-pink's large yellowish buds, too, are conspicuous now. I see also the swamp pyrus buds, expanded sometimes into small leaves. This, then, is a regular phenomenon. It is the only shrub or tree that I know which so decidedly springs again in the fall, in the Indian summer. It might be called the Indian-summer shrub. The clethra buds, too, are decidedly expanded there, showing leafets, but very small. Some of the new pyrus leaves are nearly full-grown. Would not this be a pretty device on some hale and cheery old man's shield, — the swamp pyrus unfolding its leaves again in the fall? Every plant enjoys some preëminence, and this is its. The most forward to respond to the warmer season. How much spring there is in it! Its sap is most easily liquefied. It takes the least sun and mildness to thaw it and develop it. It makes this annual sacrifice of its very first leaves to its love for the sun. While all other shrubs are reserved, this is open and confiding. I see it not without emotion. I too have my spring thoughts even in November. This I see in pleasant October and November days, when rills and birds begin to tinkle in winter fashion through the more open aisles of the swamps.

I do not know exactly what that sweet word is which the chickadee says when it hops near to me now in those ravines.

The chickadee
Hops near to me.

When the air is thick and the sky overcast, we need not walk so far. We give our attention to nearer objects, being less distracted from them. I take occasion to explore some near wood which my walks commonly overshoot.

What a difference it makes between two ravines in other respects exactly similar that in the one there is a stream which drains it, while the other is dry!

I see nowadays in various places the scattered feathers of robins, etc., where some hawk or beast of prey has torn them to pieces.

I step over the slip-noose snares which some wood-ling has just set. How long since men set snares for partridges and rabbits?

Ah, my friends, I know you better than you think, and love you better, too. The day after never, we will have an explanation.

Nov. 9. Surveying for Stedman Buttrick and Mr. Gordon.

Jacob Farmer says that he remembers well a particular bound (which is the subject of dispute between the above two men) from this circumstance: He, a boy, was sent, as the representative of his mother, to witness the placing of the bounds to her lot, and he remembers that, when they had fixed the stake and stones, old Mr. Nathan Barrett asked him if he had a knife about him, upon which he pulled out his knife and gave it to him. Mr. Barrett cut a birch switch and

trimmed it in the presence of young Farmer, and then called out, "Boy, here's your knife;" but as the boy saw that he was going to strike him when he reached his hand for the knife, he dodged into a bush which alone received the blow. And Mr. Barrett said that if it had not been for that, he would have got a blow which would have made him remember that bound as long as he lived, and explained to him that that was his design in striking him. He had before told his mother that since she could not go to the woods to see what bounds were set to her lot, she had better send Jacob as a representative of the family. This made Farmer the important witness in this case. He first, some years ago, saw Buttrick trimming up the trees, and told him he was on Gordon's land and pointed out this as the bound between them.

One of the company to-day told of George Melvin once directing Jonas Melvin, for a joke, to go to the widow Hildreth's lot (along which we were measuring) and gather the chestnuts. They were probably both working there. He accordingly took the oxen and cart and some ladders and another hired man, and they worked all day and got half a bushel.

Mr. Farmer tells me that one Sunday he went to his barn, having nothing to do, and thought he would watch the swallows, republican swallows. The old bird was feeding her young, and he sat within fifteen feet, overlooking them. There were five young, and he was curious to know how each received its share; and as often as the bird came with a fly, the one at the door (or opening) took it, and then they all hitched

round one notch, so that a new one was presented at the door, who received the next fly; and this was the invariable order, the same one never receiving two flies in succession. At last the old bird brought a very small fly, and the young one that swallowed it did not desert his ground but waited to receive the next, but when the bird came with another, of the usual size, she commenced a loud and long scolding at the little one, till it resigned its place, and the next in succession received the fly.

Bigelow, the tavern-keeper, once, wrote C., put up this advertisement in the streets of Concord, "All those who are in favor of the universal salvation of mankind, are requested to meet at the school-house (?) next Saturday evening (?), to choose officers."

Very warm to-day; rainy in forenoon.

Nov. 11. Clear and fine Indian-summer day.

P. M. — To Lincoln limestone with E. Hoar.

Hoar showed me last evening the large fossil tooth of a shark, such as figured in Hitchcock, which he bought at Gay Head the other day. He also bought one or more other species.

I heard, day before yesterday, much firing of guns in the chestnut woods by Curly-pate Hill, probably at gray squirrels. George Buttrick says it is late for them; were thickest in chestnut time.

That cellar-hole off northwest of Brooks Clark's is where Boaz Brown used to live, and the andromeda swamp behind is "Boaz's (pronounced Boze's) meadow," says Jacob Farmer, who has seen corn growing in the

meadow. The Lincoln limestone dips east by north, strikes north by west; the hornblende slate (?) on Bare Hill, northeast and northwest.

Nov. 13. Some rain in the night.

I see, on a white oak on Egg Rock, where the squirrels have lately made a nest for the winter of the dry oak leaves, probably using those on the tree before they fell. Now that the top of the oak is bare, this is a dark round mass against the sky, as big as a peck measure, very conspicuous. There are considerable many still hanging on the lower parts. I suspect it is a gray squirrel's nest.

I observed on the 7th, between the site of Paul Adams's and Bateman's Pond, in quite open land, some very prominent Indian corn-hills. I should say that they were higher above the intermediate surface than when they were first made. It was a pasture, and they were thickly covered with grass and lichens. Perhaps the grass had grown better on the hillocks, and so they had grown while the intermediate spaces had been more trodden by the cows. These very regular round grassy hillocks, extending in straight rows over the swells and valleys, had a singular effect, like the burial-ground of some creatures.

I find that I can see the sun set from almost any hill in Concord, and some within the confines of the neighboring towns, and though this takes place at just about 5 P. M., when the cows come in, get to the post-office by the time the mail is distributed. See the sun rise or set if possible each day. Let that be your pill. How

speedily the night comes on now! There is some duski-ness in the afternoon light before you are aware of it, the cows have gathered about the bars, waiting to be let out, and, in twenty minutes, candles gleam from distant windows, and the walk for this day is ended. It remains only to get home again. Who is weary? Why do we cease work and go to bed? Who taught men thus to spend their nights and days? Yet I must confess that I am surprised when I find that particular wise and independent persons conform so far as regularly to go to bed and get up about the same time with their neighbors.

My assistants and company in surveying on the 9th were, Gordon and Buttrick, the principals in the dispute; Jacob Farmer, the principal witness; George Buttrick, son of Stedman; and French, son-in-law of Gordon. I had the most to do with Gordon, who came after me. He was quite eloquent at our house on the subject of two neighbors disputing at his time of life about a "pelfry" sum or a few rods of land; seemed really to have a very good heart; thought that the main thing in this life was to keep up friendly relations; and as he rode along, would quote Scripture in a low tone, and put his whole soul into some half-whispered expression which I could not hear, but nevertheless nodded assent to. He thought it was too bad that he should have spent his seventy-third birthday settling that dispute in the woods. Apparently did not know it till afterwards.

Buttrick is a rather large man, in more senses than one. His portly body as he stood over the bound was

the mark at which I sighted through the woods, rather too wide a one for accuracy. He did not cease to regret for a day or two that I should have had no dinner, but Gordon detained me. Buttrick said that he had a piece of meat cooked and expected me at his house. Thought it too bad in Gordon to make a man go without his dinner, etc. He offered me a glass of gin, or wine, as I chose. Lamented the cutting down of apple orchards and scarcity of cider-mills. Told of an orchard in the town of Russell, on the side of a hill, where the apples rolled down and lay four feet deep (?) against a wall on the lower side, and this the owner cut down.

Farmer, half a dozen years since, saw Buttrick trimming up the trees there and observed [to] him, "You are on Mr. Gordon's land." This was the beginning of the trouble. Buttrick adhered to the bounds which Abel Brooks, who sold to him, had pointed out. Farmer was sure of the bounds between them, because when Jacob Brown's Bateman wood-lot was divided between Mrs. Farmer (his mother) and her sister, the mother of Mrs. Gordon, he had witnessed the setting of the bounds as the representative of his mother, and came near being whipped at this one.

Nov. 14. P. M. — Ride to limestone quarries on old Carlisle road with E. Hoar.

This morning it was considerably colder than for a long time, and by noon very much colder than heretofore, with a pretty strong northerly wind. The principal flight of geese was November 8th, so that the bulk of them preceded this cold turn five days. You

need greatcoat and buffalo and gloves now, if you ride. I find my hands stiffened and involuntarily finding their way to my pockets. No wonder that the weather is a standing subject of conversation, since we are so sensitive. If we had not gone through several winters, we might well be alarmed at the approach of cold weather. With this keener blast from the north, my hands suddenly fail to fulfill their office, as it were begin to die. We must put on armor against the new foe. I am almost world-ridden suddenly. I can hardly tie and untie my shoe-strings. What a story to tell an inhabitant of the tropics, — perchance that you went to walk, after many months of warmth, when suddenly the air became so cold and hostile to your nature, that it benumbed you so that you lost the use of some of your limbs, could not untie your shoe-strings or unbutton your clothes! This cold weather makes us step more briskly.¹

I hear that the Indians say we are to have a hard winter, because of the abundance of acorns, also because of the unusual thickening of corn-husks in the summer!

The stone at those quarries strikes northeasterly and southwesterly, or apparently with the rocks of Curly-pate, a third of a mile off. The strata appear to be nearly vertical. In the most southwesterly quarry, I noticed in the side of an upright sliver of rock, where the limestone had formerly been blasted off, the bottom of the nearly perpendicular hole which had been drilled for that purpose, two or three inches deep and about two and a half feet from the ground. In this

¹ *Vide* forward.

I found two fresh chestnuts, a dozen or more amphicarpeæ seeds, as many apparently either prinus (?) or rose (?) seeds (single seeds and fresh), and several fresh barberry seeds mixed with a little earth and rubbish. What placed them there? Squirrel, mouse, jay, or crow? At first I thought that a quadruped could hardly have reached this hole, but probably it could easily, and it was a very cunning place for such a deposit.¹ I brought them all home in order to ascertain what the seeds were and how they came there. Examining the chestnuts carefully in the evening and wondering if so small a bird as a chickadee could transport one, I observed near the larger end of one some very fine scratches, which it seemed to me might have been made by the teeth of a very small animal when carrying it, but certainly not by the bill of a bird, since they had pricked sharply into the shell, rucking it up one way. I then looked to see where the teeth of the other jaw had scratched it, but could discover no marks and was therefore still somewhat in doubt. Coming up-stairs an hour afterward, I examined those scratches with a microscope, and saw plainly that they had been made by some fine and sharp cutting instrument like a fine chisel, a little concave, and had plowed under the surface of the shell a little, toward the big end of the nut, raising it up; and, looking farther, I now discovered, on the larger end of the nut, at least two corresponding marks made by the lower incisors, plowing toward the first and about a quarter of an inch distant. These were a little

¹ *Vide* Nov. 19th.

less obvious to the unarmed eye, but no less plain through the glass. I now had no doubt that they were made by the incisors of a mouse, and, comparing them with the incisors of a deer mouse (*Mus leucopus*) whose skull I have, I found that one or two of the marks were just the width of its two incisors combined (a twentieth of an inch), and the others, though finer, might have been made by them. On one side, at least, it had taken fresh hold once or twice. I have but little doubt that these seeds were placed there by a *Mus leucopus*, our most common wood mouse. The other nut, which had no marks on it, I suppose was carried by the star end, which was gone from both. There was no chestnut tree within twenty rods. These seeds thus placed in this recess will account for chestnut trees, barberry bushes, etc., etc., growing in chinks and clefts where we do not see how the seeds could have fallen. There was earth enough even in this little hole to keep some very small plant alive.

I hear that Gardiner Heywood caught a trout in Walden Pond the other day and that it weighed five pounds.¹

It seems that the Abel Davis who caught the pickerel in Temple Brook, which would make such a meal for his "Lavinia" and himself, was addicted to talking to himself, thinking aloud. He was once talked of for captain of the company, and about that time, they say, was overheard saying to himself, "Captain Abel Davis! What a fine-looking man!"

¹ And a little over. Speared it about a week ago, and saw another not quite so large. Henry and John Bigelow put a couple into the pond some ten years ago. Were these the ones?

Can those straight ridges running north by west and south by east over the most level part of Curly-pate have anything to do with diluvial furrows?

Returning along the edge of Calla Swamp, under the fern-clad hill, I feel the crunching sound [*sic*] of frost-crystals in the heaving mud under my feet, and see and feel the sphagnum already stiffened into a crust, and what probably in the forenoon was water trickling from a fern-clad rock is now half a dozen icicles, six or eight inches long. Such is the first freezing day. Such phenomena are first observed under the north side of a hill in a cold swamp like this. Such are the first advances of winter. Ice-crystals shoot in the mud, the sphagnum becomes a stiffened mass, and dropping water in these cold places, a rigid icicle.

E. Hoar tells me that his partner, having a new adobe house, or perhaps roof to it, built in Santa Barbara, on the California coast, corrected the bad leveling of his carpenters by taking such a position as to make the ridge-pole coincide with the horizon line where the Pacific appeared to meet the sky.

The thermometer is 27° at 6 P. M. The mud in the street is stiffened under my feet this evening.

Where there is a wall near a pitch pine wood, I see the scales of the cones which the squirrels have carried to the wall and stripped, strewn all along the wall on the ground.

Nov. 15. The obvious falling of leaves (*i. e.*, not to include the fall of the pitch pines and larches and the complete fall of the birches, white willows, etc.) ended

about the first of November. A very few bright-colored leaves on small shrubs, such as oak sprouts, black cherry, blueberry, etc., have lingered up to this time in favorable places. By the first of November, or at most a few days later, the trees generally wear, in the main, their winter aspect, their leaves gradually falling until spring.

P. M. — To Holden Swamp and C. Miles Swamp.

Where the earth has been freshly exposed and so lies light, it is now heaved up and white with asbestos-like crystals two or three inches long, which sink and are crunched by my feet. Cold pools in shady woods and under the north sides of walls are now skimmed over. Ice a quarter of an inch thick. I see its large flaky crystals like low undulations, a mosaic of slightly concave, perhaps triangular pieces. The paths whose surface was frozen each night are now thawing and wet.

The water of the brook beyond Hubbard's Grove, where it spreads out a little, though not frozen, is clear, cold, and deserted of life. There are no water-bugs nor skaters on it. Rennie, in "Library of Entertaining Knowledge," says they are seen all winter on some pools in England, *i. e.* the *Gyrinus natator*. I see no ants on the great ant-hills, and methinks I have not for three weeks at least. There is but little insect-life abroad now. You wonder what nourishment the cattle can extract from the withered and bleached grass. This cold blast has swept the water-bugs from the pools. My walk is the more lonely when I perceive that there are no ants now upon their hillocks in field or wood. These are deserted mounds. They have

commenced their winter's sleep. I break my way into the midst of Holden Swamp to get a specimen of *Kalmia glauca* leaf. The surface is composed of great porous tussocks, or hummocks, of sphagnum, fifteen or twenty inches high or more, about the stems of blueberry bushes, choke-berry, water andromeda, swamp-pink, spruce, etc., etc., in which my feet sink five or six inches, and my shoes are filled with the rubbish. The water is frozen solid in the leaves of the pitcher-plants. This is the thickest ice I've seen. This water was most exposed in the cool swamp. I part the scraggy bushes with my hands and press my way through them. I come out covered with the fragments of lichens and rotten twigs and sphagnum.

Going by my owl-nest oak, I saw that it had broken off at the hole and the top fallen, but, seeing in the cavity some leaves, I climbed up to see what kind of nest it was and what traces of the owls were left. Having shinned up with some difficulty to the top of this great stump some fifteen or eighteen feet high, I took out the leaves slowly, watching to see what spoils had been left with them. Some were pretty green, and all had evidently been placed there this fall. When I had taken all out with my left hand, holding on to the top of the stump with my right, I looked round into the cleft, and there I saw, sitting nearly erect at the bottom in one corner, a little *Mus leucopus*, panting with fear and with its large black eyes upon me. I held my face thus within seven or eight inches of it as long as I cared to hold on there, and it showed no sign of retreating. When I put in my hand, it merely withdrew

downward into a snug little nest of hypnum and apparently the dirty-white wool-like pappus of some plant as big as a batting-ball. Wishing to see its tail, I stirred it up again, when it suddenly rushed up the side of the cleft, out over my shoulder and right arm, and leaped off, falling down through a thin hemlock spray some fifteen or eighteen feet to the ground, on the hillside, where I lost sight of it, but heard it strike. It will thus make its nest at least sixteen feet up a tree, improving some cleft or hollow, or probably bird's nest, for this purpose. These nests, *I suppose*, are made when the trees are losing their leaves, as those of the squirrels are.

At C. Miles Swamp, I see that the larches have finished falling since the 8th (say the 12th?). Find plenty of *Andromeda Polifolia* there, where you can walk dry-shod in the spruce wood, together with *Kalmia glauca*. The former is linear, about twice as long and two thirds as broad as the latter, alternate mucronate, round-stemmed. The *Kalmia glauca* has fewer leaves now, opposite, glossy above; a very sharp two-edged twig, the edges springing from the base of the leaves and decussating like them, so that when the twig is held up to the light it appears alternately thicker and thinner. This plant is commonly seen now with only a few narrow and erect young leaves in a tuft near the end of the twigs, but in many cases older, broader, and nearly horizontal ones, half a dozen of them along the last four or five inches of the twig. The andromeda is most white beneath; the other is more greenish.

The white willows, which retain many of their leaves even yet, are of a peculiar buff (?) or fawn (?) color.

Raspberry shoots, too, have their bloom like the thimble-berry, but they are not so rank nor smooth.

Of the evergreen trees described by Loudon, methinks these it would be worth the while to have on one's premises: —

Pinus sylvestris, Scotch pine or fir; the most valuable pine of Europe. Looks like our pitch pine.

Pinus Pinaster, which is planted on the sands in France.

Abies excelsa, the lofty or Norway spruce fir.

Perhaps *Picea pectinata*, the comb-like-leaved silver fir.

The Scotch larch, which is not indigenous in Britain, but on the mountains of the middle of Europe. I have,

Of western American trees: —

The *Pinus Lambertiana*, the gigantic or Lambert's pine, Columbia River, one hundred and fifty to two hundred feet high, twenty to near sixty in circumference, allied closely to *P. Strobus*.

Abies Douglassii, northwestern America, one hundred to one hundred and eighty feet high.

Picea grandis, great silver fir, northern California, one hundred and seventy to two hundred feet high.

Nov. 17. Rain last night.

Nov. 18. P. M. — To Dam Meadows.

Going along the Bedford road at Moore's Swamp, I hear the dry rustling of seedy rattlesnake grass in the wind, a November sound, within a rod of me.

The sunlight is a peculiarly thin and clear yellow, falling on the pale-brown bleaching herbage of the fields at this season. There is no redness in it. This is November sunlight. Much cold, slate-colored cloud, bare twigs seen gleaming toward the light like gossamer, pure green of pines whose old leaves have fallen, reddish or yellowish brown oak leaves rustling on the hillsides, very pale brown, bleaching, almost hoary fine grass or hay in the fields, akin to the frost which has killed it, and flakes of clear yellow sunlight falling on it here and there, — such is November.

The fine grass killed by the frost, withered and bleached till it is almost silvery, has clothed the fields for a long time.

Now, as in the spring, we rejoice in sheltered and sunny places. Some corn is left out still even.

What a mockery to turn cattle out into such pastures! Yet I see more in the fields now than earlier.

I hear a low concert from the edge of Gowing's Swamp, amid the maples, etc., — suppressed warblings from many fitting birds. With my glass I see only tree sparrows, and suppose it is they.

What I noticed for the thousandth time on the 15th was the waved surface of thin dark ice just frozen, as if it were a surface composed of large, perhaps triangular pieces raised at the edges; *i. e.*, the filling up between the original shooting of the crystals — the midribs of the icy leaves — is on a lower plane.

Flannery is the hardest-working man I know. Before sunrise and long after sunset he is taxing his unweariable muscles. The result is a singular cheerfulness. He is always in good spirits. He often overflows with his joy when you perceive no occasion for it. If only the gate sticks, some of it bubbles up and overflows in his passing comment on that accident. How much mere industry proves! There is a sparkle often in his passing remark, and his voice is really like that of a bird.

Crows will often come flying much out of their way to caw at me.

In one light, these are old and worn-out fields that I ramble over, and men have gone to law about them long before I was born, but I trust that I ramble over them in a new fashion and redeem them.

I noticed on the 15th that that peculiar moraine or horseback just this side of J. P. Brown's extends southerly of Nut Meadow Brook in the woods, maybe a third or a half a mile long in all.

The rocks laid bare here and there by ditching in the Dam Meadows are very white, having no lichens on them.

The musquash should appear in the coat of arms of some of the States, it is so common. I do not go by any permanent pool but, sooner or later, I hear its plunge there. Hardly a bit of board floats in any ditch or pond-hole but this creature has left its traces on it.

How singularly rivers in their sources overlap each other! There is the meadow behind Brooks Clark's and at the head of which Sted Buttrick's handsome

maple lot stands, on the old Carlisle road. The stream which drains this empties into the Assabet at Dove Rock. A short distance west of this meadow, but a good deal more elevated, is Boaz's meadow, whose water finds its way, naturally or artificially, northeastward around the other, crossing the road just this side the lime-kiln, and empties into the Saw Mill Brook and so into the main river.

There are many ways of feeling one's pulse. In a healthy state the constant experience is a pleasurable sensation or sentiment. For instance, in such a state I find myself in perfect connection with nature, and the perception, or remembrance even, of any natural phenomena is attended with a gentle pleasurable excitement. Prevailing sights and sounds make the impression of beauty and music on me. But in sickness all is deranged. I had yesterday a kink in my back and a general cold, and as usual it amounted to a cessation of life. I lost for the time my *rapport* or relation to nature. Sympathy with nature is an evidence of perfect health. You cannot perceive beauty but with a serene mind. The cheaper your amusements, the safer and saner. They who think much of theatres, operas, and the like, are beside themselves. Each man's necessary path, though as obscure and apparently uneventful as that of a beetle in the grass, is the way to the deepest joys he is susceptible of; though he converses only with moles and fungi and disgraces his relatives, it is no matter if he knows what is steel to his flint.

Many a man who should rather describe his dinner imposes on us with a history of the Grand Khan.

Nov. 19. P. M. — To Cliffs.

In Stow's sprout-land west of railroad cut, I see where a mouse which has a hole under a stump has eaten out clean the insides of the little *Prinos verticillatus* berries. These may be the doubtful seeds of the 14th. What pretty fruit for the mice, these bright prinos berries! They run up the twigs in the night and gather this shining fruit, take out the small seeds, and eat their kernels at the entrance to their burrows. The ground is strewn with them there.

Turning up a stone on Fair Haven Hill, I find many small dead crickets about the edges, which have endeavored to get under it and apparently have been killed by the frost; quite under it and alive, two or three small purplish-brown caterpillars; and many little ants, quite active, with their white grubs, in spacious galleries, somewhat semicylindrical, whose top often was the bottom of the stone. You would think they had been made by a worm.

Going along close under the Cliffs, I see a dozen or more low blackberry vines dangling down a perpendicular rock at least eight feet high, and blown back and forth, with leaves every six inches, and one or two have reached the ground and taken firm root there. There are also many of the common cinquefoil with its leaves five inches asunder, dangling down five or six feet over the same rock. I see many acorn and other nut shells which in past years have been tucked into clefts in the rocks.

Nov. 20. High wind in the night, shaking the house, apparently from the northwest.

About 9.30 A. M., though there is very little cloud, I see a few flakes of snow, two or three only, like flocks of gossamer, straggling in a slanting direction to the ground, unnoticed by most, in a rather raw air. At ten there is a little more. The children in the next yard have seen it and are excited. They are searching to see if any rests on the ground.

In books, that which is most generally interesting is what comes home to the most cherished private experience of the greatest number. It is not the book of him who has travelled the farthest over the surface of the globe, but of him who has lived the deepest and been the most at home. If an equal emotion is excited by a familiar homely phenomenon as by the Pyramids, there is no advantage in seeing the Pyramids. It is on the whole better, as it is simpler, to use the common language. We require that the reporter be very permanently planted before the facts which he observes, not a mere passer-by; hence the facts cannot be too homely. A man is worth most to himself and to others, whether as an observer, or poet, or neighbor, or friend, where he is most himself, most contented and at home. There his life is the most intense and he loses the fewest moments. Familiar and surrounding objects are the best symbols and illustrations of his life. If a man who has had deep experiences should endeavor to describe them in a book of travels, it would be to use the language of a wandering tribe instead of a universal language. The poet has made the best roots in his native soil of any man, and is the hardest to transplant. The man

who is often thinking that it is better to be somewhere else than where he is excommunicates himself. If a man is rich and strong anywhere, it must be on his native soil. Here I have been these forty years learning the language of these fields that I may the better express myself. If I should travel to the prairies, I should much less understand them, and my past life would serve me but ill to describe them. Many a weed here stands for more of life to me than the big trees of California would if I should go there. We only need travel enough to give our intellects an airing. In spite of Malthus and the rest, there will be plenty of room in this world, if every man will mind his own business. I have not heard of any planet running against another yet.

P. M. — To Ministerial Swamp.

Some bank swallows' nests are exposed by the caving of the bank at Clamshell. The very smallest hole is about two and a half inches wide horizontally, by barely one high. All are much wider than high (vertically). One nest, with an egg in it still, is completely exposed. The cavity at the end is shaped like a thick hoe-cake or lens, about six inches wide and two plus thick, vertically. The nest is a regular but shallow one made simply of stubble, about five inches in diameter, and three quarters of an inch deep.

I see many pollywogs in cold pools now.

I enter the Ministerial Swamp at the road below Tarbell's. The water andromeda leaves are brown now, except where protected by trees. In some places

where many of the bright-erimson shoots of high blueberry are seen together, they have a very pretty effect, a crimson vigor to stand above the snow. Where the larches stand thick with their dark boles and stems, the ground is thickly strewn with their fine and peculiarly dark brown leaves, chaff-like, *i. e.* darker than those of other *pin*es, perhaps like black walnut or cherry shavings. As where other evergreens stand thick, little or nothing grows beneath. I see where squirrels (apparently) have eaten and stripped the spruce cones. I distinguished where the earth was cast out in cutting ditches through this swamp long ago, and this earth is covered and concealed with a thick growth of cup and cockscomb lichens. In this light-lying earth, in one place, I see where some creature some time ago has pawed out much comb of some kind of bee (probably for the honey?), making a hole as big as my head, and this torn comb lies about.

Returning through Harrington's land, I see, methinks, two gentlemen plowing a field, as if to try an agricultural experiment, — for, it being cold and windy, both plowman and driver have their coats on, — but when I get closer, I hear the driver speak in a peculiarly sharp and petulant manner to the plowman as they are turning the land furrow, and I know at once that they belong to those two races which are so slow to amalgamate. Thus my little idyl is disturbed.

I see a partridge on the ground under a white oak by Tarbell's black birches, looking just like a snag.

This is the second time I have seen them in such a place. Are they not after acorns?

In the large Tommy Wheeler field, *Ranunculus bulbosus* in full bloom!

I hear again the soft rippling of the Assabet under those black birches, which Tappan once remarked on. It is not so steep a fall as to be hoarse.

The hardy tree sparrow has taken the place of the chipping and song sparrow, so much like the former that most do not know it is another. His faint lisping chip will keep our spirits up till another spring.

I observed this afternoon how some bullocks had a little sportiveness forced upon them. They were running down a steep declivity to water, when, feeling themselves unusually impelled by gravity downward, they took the hint even as boys do, flourished round gratuitously, tossing their hind quarters into the air and shaking their heads at each other, but what increases the ludicrousness of it to me is the fact that such capers are never accompanied by a smile. Who does not believe that their step is less elastic, their movement more awkward, for their long domesticity?

Nov. 21.¹ P. M. — Up Assabet.

Paddling along, a little above the Hemlocks, I hear, I think, a boy whistling upon the bank above me, but immediately perceive that it is the whistle of the locomotive a mile off in that direction. I perceived that it was distant, and therefore the locomotive, the moment that the key was changed from a very high

¹ Dates between Nov. 17th and 21st doubtful, a day or two.

to a low one. Was it because distant sounds are commonly on a low key?

Just above the grape-hung birches, my attention was drawn to a singular-looking dry leaf or parcel of leaves on the shore about a rod off. Then I thought it might be the dry and yellowed skeleton of a bird with all its ribs; then the shell of a turtle, or possibly some large dry oak leaves peculiarly curved and cut; and then, all at once, I saw that it was a woodcock, perfectly still, with its head drawn in, standing on its great pink feet. I had, apparently, noticed only the yellowish-brown portions of the plumage, referring the dark-brown to the shore behind it. May it not be that the yellowish-brown markings of the bird correspond somewhat to its skeleton? At any rate with my eye steadily on it from a point within a rod, I did not for a considerable time suspect it to be a living creature. Examining the shore after it had flown with a whistling flight, I saw that there was a clear space of mud between the water and the edge of ice-crystals about two inches wide, melted so far by the lapse of the water, and all along the edge of the ice, for a rod or two at least, there was a hole where it had thrust its bill down, probing, every half-inch, frequently closer. Some animal life must be collected at that depth just in that narrow space, savory morsels for this bird.

I was paddling along slowly, on the lookout for what was to be seen, when my attention was caught by a strange-looking leaf or bunch of leaves on the shore, close to the water's edge, a rod distant. I thought to

myself, I may as well investigate that, and so pushed slowly toward it, my eyes resting on it all the while. It then looked like a small shipwrecked hulk and, strange to say, like the bare skeleton of a fowl that has been picked and turned yellowish, resting on its breast-bone, the color of a withered black or red oak leaf. Again I thought it must be such a leaf or cluster of leaves peculiarly curved and cut or torn on the upper edges.

The chubby bird dashed away zigzag, carrying its long tongue-case carefully before it, over the witch-hazel bushes. This is its walk, — the portion of the shore, the narrow strip, still kept open and unfrozen between the water's edge and the ice. The sportsman might discover its neighborhood by these probings.

Nov. 23. Monday. P. M. — To Gowing's Swamp.

Garfield, who was working in what was Moore's Swamp, tells me that he sometimes digs up frogs in the winter, when ditching in springy places, one at a time. He is very much troubled by the short-tailed meadow mouse in that meadow. They live under the stumps, and gnaw his potatoes in the fall. He thought that his little dog, a terrier, had killed a bushel of them the past year.

At the back of Gowing's hillside, just west of his swamp, in the midst of shrub oaks and other dry up-land trees, the ground slopes regularly on all sides to a deep round hollow, perhaps fifteen feet lower than the lowest side and thirty feet in diameter at the bot-

tom. The bottom is rather wet and covered with sphagnum, and many stiff and dead-looking button-bushes stand in it, while all around a dense high hedge of high blueberry curves over it. So sudden a change there will be in the vegetation with a change of soil. Many such a dimple with its peculiar vegetations have I seen in a dry wood-lot. The *Vaccinium corymbosum* and paniced andromeda in a dense hedge, in a circular or oval or other curved form, surrounding and slanting over it so as almost to conceal it; and in the same manner the blueberry, etc., will grow around and overhang the largest ponds.

Walked through Gowing's Swamp from west to east. You may say it is divided into three parts, — first, the thin woody; second, the coarse bushy or gray; and third, the fine bushy or brown.

First: The trees are larch, white birch, red maple, spruce, white pine, etc.

Second: The coarse bushy part, or blueberry thicket, consists of high blueberry, paniced andromeda, *Ame-lanchier Canadensis* var. *oblongifolia*, swamp-pink, choke-berry, *Viburnum nudum*, rhodora, (and probably prinus, holly, etc., etc., not distinguishable easily now), but chiefly the first two. Much of the blueberry being dead gives it a very gray as well as scraggy aspect. It is a very bad thicket to break through, yet there are commonly thinner places, or often opens, by which you may wind your way about the denser clumps. Small specimens of the trees are mingled with these and also some water andromeda and lamb-kill.

Third: There are the smooth brown and wetter spaces where the water andromeda chiefly prevails, together with purplish lambkill about the sides of them, and hairy huckleberry; but in the midst and wettest part the narrow revolute and glaucous (beneath) leaves of the *Andromeda Polifolia* and *Kalmia glauca* are seen, and in the sphagnum the *Vaccinium Oxy-coccus*. In one of the latter portions occurs that open pool.

Sphagnum is found everywhere in the swamp.

First, there is the dark wooded part; second, the scraggy gray blueberry thicket; third, the rich brown water andromeda spaces.

The high blueberry delights singularly in these localities. You distinguish it by its gray spreading mass; its light-gray bark, rather roughened; its thickish shoots, often crimson; and its plump, roundish red buds. Think of its wreaths and canopies of cool blue fruit in August, thick as the stars in the Milky Way! The paniced andromeda is upright, light-gray, with a rather smoother bark, more slender twigs, and small, sharp red buds lying close to the twig. The blueberry is particularly hard to break through, it is so spreading and scraggy, but a hare can double swiftly enough beneath it. The ground of sphagnum is now thickly strewn with the leaves of these shrubs.

The water andromeda makes a still more uniformly dense thicket, which must be nearly impervious to some animals; but as man lifts his head high above it, [he] finds but little difficulty in making his way through

it, though it sometimes comes up to his middle, and if his eye scans its surface it makes an impression of smoothness and denseness, — its rich brown, wholesome surface, even as grass or moss.

Ascending the high land on the south, I looked down over the large open space with its *navel* pool in the centre. This green stagnant pool, rayed with the tracks or trails of musquash and making but a feeble watery impression, reminded me of portions of the map of the moon.

This swamp appears not to have had any natural outlet, though an artificial one has been dug. The same is perhaps the case with the C. Miles Swamp. And is it so with Beck Stow's? These three are the only places where I have found the *Andromeda Polifolia*. The *Kalmia glauca* in Gowing's, C. Miles's, and Holden's swamps. The latter has no outlet of any kind.

I am interested in those plants, like paniced andromeda, shrub oak, etc., for which no use that I know has been discovered. The paniced andromeda, instead of the date tree, might be my coat-of-arms.

Fresh slender shoots of the *Viburnum nudum* make very good withes, I find.

Austin Bacon told me that the worst swamp he ever found was not in Vermont or up country where he had surveyed, but in Newton (?), where he surveyed for a road once. The water was about two feet deep, and you jumped from tussock to tussock; these generally tipped over with you into the water.

There is a strong and warm southwest wind, which brings the frost out of the ground, — more than I thought was in it, — making the surface wet.

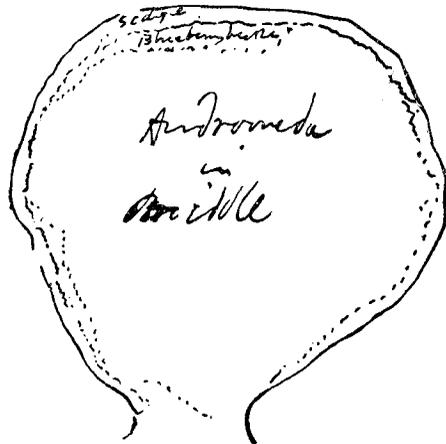
Walking along the top of Gowing's hill wood-lot, I see from time to time large ant-hills amid the young oaks. Often their tops have been disturbed and flattened, by some creature apparently. Some may be deserted. The sedge-grass has sprung up long and thick about the sides of these mounds, though there may be none amid the oaks around. The working of the ants keeps clear a little space amid the bushes.

In the evening heavy rain and some thunder and lightning, and rain in the night.

Nov. 24. P. M. — To Andromeda Ponds.

Cold Thanksgiving weather again, the pools freezing. The first or northernmost Andromeda Pond, considering the main portion north of the isthmus, is surrounded, except at the isthmus, by dry hills, twenty-five to forty [feet] high perhaps, covered with young oaks. Its interior, or far the greater part of the whole, is filled with a uniformly dense and level bed of brown andromeda, in which I detect nothing else from the hills except some white cotton-grass waving over it. Between the andromeda and the hills, there is a border, from one to two rods wide, of coarse and now yellowish sedge all the way round, except, of course, at the isthmus, and part of the way, just within the edge of the andromeda, mixed with it, a second inner border of gray bushes, chiefly, I suppose, blueberry,

etc., with a few small birches, maples, pines, etc. As I remember, it lies *somewhat* thus:—



The southerly continuation of this and the other two ponds are much more wet,—have open water and less andromeda, much more sedge in proportion. Why does the sedge grow thus around the andromeda in a regular ring next the hill? I think it is because it is more wet there. It would be open water there all the way round if it were not for the sedge, but I could walk through the andromeda if I could get to it. Why should it be more wet there? I do not know, unless the springs are at the base of the hills. The sedge can evidently bear more water than the andromeda, and the andromeda than the blueberry bushes, etc. Perhaps the sedge prepares the ground for the andromeda sometimes, furnishing a base and support for it. I see the latter, as it were, making its way out thinly into the

sedge here and there. Perhaps the sedge once covered the whole or greater part. The sphagnum, *apparently*, having some slight solid core to grow around, like an andromeda or blueberry stem, builds itself up a foot or more and may make a soil for noble plants thus.

On the dry hillside next the water, there is another belt, *i. e.* of lambkill, pretty dense, running apparently quite round the pond a rod or more in width. Probably it occurs very far off, or high, thinly, but here it is a thick growth and has relation to the swamp.

According to this, then, you have clear open water, but shallow; then, in course of time, a shallow lake with much sedge standing in it; then, after a while, a dense andromeda bed with blueberry bushes and perhaps a wet border of sedge (as here at present); and finally, a maple swamp.

Spruce and larch appear to flourish very well at the same time with the andromeda.

Looking toward the sun, the andromeda in front of me is a very warm red brown and on either side of me, a pale silvery brown; looking from the sun, a uniform pale brown.

Perhaps the *Andromeda Polifolia* and *Kalmia glauca* prefer stagnant water.

These andromeda swamps charmed me more than twenty years ago,—I knew not why,—and I called them “a moccasin-print.”

The *Fringilla hyemalis* appear to be flitting about in a more lively manner on account of the cold. They go off with a twitter from the low weeds and bushes. Nowadays birds are so rare I am wont to mistake them

at first for a leaf or mote [?] blown off from the trees or bushes.

Some poets have said that writing poetry was for youths only, but not so. In that fervid and excitable season we only get the impulse which is to carry us onward in our future career. Ideals are then exhibited to us distinctly which all our lives after we may aim at but not attain. The mere vision is little compared with the steady corresponding endeavor thitherward. It would be vain for us to be looking ever into promised lands toward which in the meanwhile we were not steadily and earnestly travelling, whether the way led over a mountain-top or through a dusky valley. In youth, when we are most elastic and there is a spring to us, we merely receive an impulse in the proper direction. To suppose that this is equivalent to having travelled the road, or obeyed the impulse faithfully throughout a lifetime, is absurd. We are shown fair scenes in order that we may be tempted to inhabit them, and not simply tell what we have seen.

Nov. 25. P. M. — To Hubbard's Close and thence through woods to Goose Pond and Pine Hill.

A clear, cold, windy afternoon. The cat crackles with electricity when you stroke her, and the fur rises up to your touch.

This is November of the hardest kind, — bare frozen ground covered with pale-brown or straw-colored herbage, a strong, cold, cutting northwest wind which makes me seek to cover my ears, a perfectly clear and cloudless sky. The cattle in the fields have a cold,

shrunk, shaggy look, their hair standing out every way, as if with electricity, like the cat's. Ditches and pools are fast skimming over, and a few slate-colored snowbirds, with thick, shuffling twitter, and fine-chipping tree sparrows flit from bush to bush in the otherwise deserted pastures. This month taxes a walker's resources more than any. For my part, I should sooner think of going into quarters in November than in the winter. If you do feel any fire at this season out of doors, you may depend upon it, it is your own. It is but a short time, these afternoons, before the night cometh, in which no man can walk. If you delay to start till three o'clock, there will be hardly time left for a long and rich adventure, — to get fairly out of town. November Eat-heart, — is that the name of it? ¹ Not only the fingers cease to do their office, but there is often a benumbing of the faculties generally. You can hardly screw up your courage to take a walk when all is thus tightly locked or frozen up and so little is to be seen in field or wood. I am inclined to take to the swamps or woods as the warmest place, and the former are still the openest. Nature has herself become like the few fruits which she still affords, a very thick-shelled nut with a shrunk meat within. If I find anything to excite or warm my thoughts abroad, it is an agreeable disappointment, for I am obliged to go abroad willfully and against my inclinations at first. The prospect looks so barren, so many springs are frozen up, not a flower perchance and but few birds left, not a companion abroad in all these fields for me, I am slow to go forth. I seem to antici-

¹ [Channing, p. 107.]

pate a fruitless walk. I think to myself hesitatingly, Shall I go there, or there, or there? and cannot make up my mind to any route, all seem so unpromising, mere surface walking and fronting the cold wind, so that I have to force myself to it often and at random. But then I am often unexpectedly compensated, and the thinnest yellow light of November is more warming and exhilarating than any wine they tell of; and then the mite which November contributes becomes equal in value to the bounty of July. I may meet with something which interests me, and immediately it is as warm as in July, as if it were the south instead of the north-west wind that blowed.

I do not know if I am singular when I say that I believe there is no man with whom I can associate who will not, comparatively speaking, spoil my afternoon. That society or encounter may at last yield a fruit which I am not aware of, but I cannot help suspecting that I should have spent those hours more profitably alone.

Pools under the north sides of hills are frozen pretty thick. That cold one of Stow's is nearly an inch and a half thick. It is already dusty, though the ice is but a day or two old. That of Jarvis's, opposite Breed's, is also skimmed over thinly, but Goose Pond very little way as yet. The main crystals of this new ice remind me where massed together sometimes of spiny cactus leaves. Meeting each other, they inclose figures of a more or less triangular form rather than squarish. Sometimes many are closely parallel, half an inch apart, and in favorable lights you see a resemblance to large feathers. Sometimes those large spiny crystals ray

from a centre, star-like, somewhat like the folds of a garment taken up by a point. The plaited ice. Also you may say the waved ice, — still speaking of the first thin ice of the season.

I notice a thimble-berry vine forming an arch four feet high, which has firmly rooted itself at the small end.

The roar of the wind in the trees over my head sounds as cold as the wind feels.

I come to what seems an old ditch a dozen feet long, in Hubbard's Close. It is skinned over, but I see where a spring wells up from its bottom under the ice. When I come to it, small *black-looking* fishes (?), four or five inches long, apparently trout, dart about it with incredible velocity, trying to escape or to bury themselves in the mud. It is some time before all have succeeded in burying themselves to their minds, but when I shake the bog they start again.

Ascending the hill on the east of the Close, I find, in the pine wood on its top, some fragments of a frozen white fungus or toadstool, which apparently a squirrel has eaten, for he has also dropped some at the base of a pine. These look almost exactly like asbestos, so white and stringy to the eye.

Methinks there has been more pine-sap than usual the past summer. I never saw a quarter part so much. It stands there withered in dense brown masses, six or eight inches high, partly covered with dead leaves. The tobacco-pipes are a darker brown.

You see here and there, under pitch pines, bits of gray bark which have fallen, reminding you very strongly of the scaly armor, perhaps, of fossil fishes or other

creatures. I see, under a large white pine, three quarts at least of scales in a heap, where a squirrel has sat on the instep of the tree and stripped the cones. Further in Ebby Hubbard's wood, I see a great two-storied mass of black spunk which has fallen.

I shiver about awhile on Pine Hill, waiting for the sun to set. Methinks the air is dusky soon after four these days. The landscape looks darker than at any season, — like arctic scenery. There is the sun a quarter of an hour high, shining on it through a perfectly clear sky, but to my eye it is singularly dark or dusky. And now the sun has disappeared, there is hardly less light for half a minute. I should not know when it was down, but by looking for [it] as I stand at this height.

Returning, I see a fox run across the road in the twilight from Potter's into Richardson's woods. He is on a canter, but I see the whitish tip of his tail. I feel a certain respect for him, because, though so large, he still maintains himself free and wild in our midst, and is so original so far as any resemblance to our race is concerned. Perhaps I like him better than his tame cousin the dog for it.

It is surprising how much, from the habit of regarding writing as an accomplishment, is wasted on form. A very little information or wit is mixed up with a great deal of conventionalism in the style of expressing it, as with a sort of preponderating paste or vehicle. Some life is not simply expressed, but a long-winded speech is made, with an occasional attempt to put a little life into it.

Nov. 26.¹ Speaking of those long, dry, barren hollows in the Richardson wood-lot with Ebby Hubbard, he says that the reason why no trees have sprung up in them is because the trees were very old when they were cut, and no sprouts came up from the stumps. Otherwise the lowest ground is the best-timbered. I have referred it to frost.

Rice tells me he remembers that Nathan Barrett's father used to stutter. He went round collecting the direct taxes soon after the Revolution, — on carriages, watches, dogs, etc., etc. It was perhaps a dollar on a dog. Coming to Captain Bent's, who kept tavern in Sudbury where Israel Rice lives, he collected his tax and then said, "I want you to may-ma-ma-make me a ha-ha-ha-ha-ha — to make me a ha-ha-ha — a *whole* mug o' flip."

Got my boat up this afternoon. (It is Thanksgiving Day.) One end had frozen in. I see that already some eager urchins have been able to try their skates on a short and narrow strip of ice by the riverside there.

Minott's is a small, square, one-storied and unpainted house, with a hipped roof and at least one dormer-window, a third the way up the south side of a long hill which is some fifty feet high and extends east and west. A traveller of taste may go straight through the village without being detained a moment by any dwelling, either the form or surroundings being objectionable, but very few go by this house without being agreeably impressed, and many are therefore led to inquire

¹ [The manuscript journal volume which begins here has "The Open Winter" on its first fly-leaf.]

who lives in it. Not that its form is so incomparable, nor even its weather-stained color, but chiefly, I think, because of its snug and picturesque position on the hillside, fairly lodged there, where all children like to be, and its perfect harmony with its surroundings and position. For if, preserving this form and color, it should be transplanted to the meadow below, nobody would notice it more than a schoolhouse which was lately of the same form. It is there because somebody was independent or bold enough to carry out the happy thought of placing it high on the hillside. It is the locality, not the architecture, that takes us captive. There is exactly such a site, only of course less room on either side, between this house and the next westward, but few if any, even of the admiring travellers, have thought of this as a house-lot, or would be bold enough to place a cottage there.

Without side fences or gravelled walks or flower-plats, that simple sloping bank before it is pleasanter than any front yard, though many a visitor — and many times the master — has slipped and fallen on the steep path. From its position and exposure, it has shelter and warmth and dryness and prospect. He overlooks the road, the meadow and brook, and houses beyond, to the distant woods. The spring comes earlier to that dooryard than to any, and summer lingers longest there.

Nov. 27. Mr. Wesson says that he has seen a striped squirrel eating a white-bellied mouse on a wall — had evidently caught [it]; also that the little dipper is not

a coot, — but he appears not to know a coot, and did not recognize the lobed feet when I drew them. Says the little dipper has a bill like a hen, and will not dive at the flash so as to escape, as he has proved.¹ Says that a loon can run but little way and very awkwardly, falling on its belly, and cannot rise from the ground. Makes a great noise running on the water before it rises.

Standing before Stacy's large glass windows this morning, I saw that they were gloriously ground by the frost. I never saw such beautiful feather and fir-like frosting. His windows are filled with fancy articles and toys for Christmas and New-Year's presents, but this delicate and graceful outside frosting surpassed them all infinitely. I saw countless



feathers with very distinct midribs and fine pinna. The half of a trunk seemed to rise in each case up along the sash, and these feathers branched off from it all the way, sometimes nearly horizontally. Other crystals looked like pine plumes the size of life. If glass could be ground to look like this, how glorious it would be!

You can tell which shopman has the hottest fire within by the frost being melted off. I was never so struck by the gracefulness of the curves in vegetation, and wonder that Ruskin does not refer to frostwork.

P. M. — Rode to the kiln and quarry by William Farrar's, Carlisle, and to gorge behind Melvin's.

The direction of the strata at this quarry is like that of Curly-pate and the Easterbrooks quarries, east-

¹ *Vide* Dec. 26, 1857.

northeast by west-southwest, though the latter are very nearly two miles southeast.

Was struck by the appearance of a small hickory near the wall, in the rocky ravine just above the trough. Its trunk was covered with loose scales unlike the hickories near it and as much as the shagbark; but probably it is a shaggy or scaly-barked variety of *Carya glabra*. It may be well to observe it next fall. The husk is not thick, like that of the shagbark, but quite thin, and splits into four only part way down. The shell is not white nor sharply four-angled like the other, but it is rather like a pignut.

The stratification trends there as at Curly-pate, or perhaps more north and south.

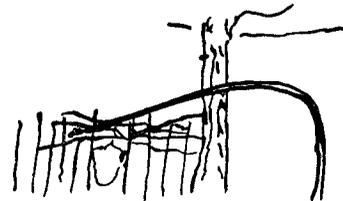
That trough placed on the side of the rocky valley to catch the trickling spring for the sake of the cattle, with a long slab cover to the trough that leads to it to fend off the feet of cattle that come to drink, is an agreeable object and in keeping with the circumstances, amid the hickories and perhaps ash trees. It reminds me of life sometimes in the pasture, — that other creatures than myself quench their thirst at this hillside.

I think that Ruskin is wrong about reflections in his "Elements of Drawing," page 181. He says the reflection is merely the substance "reversed" or "topsy-turvy," and adds, "Whatever you can see from the place in which you stand, of the solid objects so reversed under the water, you will see in the reflection, always in the true perspective of the solid objects so reversed."

Nov. 28. P. M. — Around Ebby Hubbard's woodlot.

On the hillside above his swamp, near the Ministerial land, I found myself walking in one of those shelf-like hillside paths made by Indians, hunters, cows, or what-not, and it was beset with fresh snares for partridges, this wise:

Upright twigs are stuck in the ground across the path, a foot or more in height and just close enough together to turn



a partridge aside, leaving a space about four inches wide in the middle, and some twigs are stretched across above to prevent the birds hopping over. Then a sapling about an inch in diameter or less is bent over, and the end caught under one of the twigs which has a notch or projection on one side, and a free-running noose, attached to the sapling, hangs in the opening and is kept spread by being hung on some very slight nicks in the two twigs. This seems to suppose the bird to be going one way only, but perhaps if it cannot escape one way it will turn and try to go back, and so spring the trap.

I saw one that was sprung with nothing in it, another whose slip-noose was blown or fallen one side, and another with a partridge still warm in it. It was a male bird hanging dead by the neck, just touching its toes to the ground. It had a collar or ruff about its neck, of large and conspicuous black feathers with a green reflection. This black is peculiar to the male, the female's being brown. Its feet, now clinched in its agony,

were the strangest-looking pale blue, with a fine fringe, of scales or the like, on each side of each toe. The small black feathers were centred with gray spots. The scapulars were darker brown, dashed with large clear pale-brown spots; the breast-feathers light with light-brown marks. The tail-feathers had each a broad black bar, except the middle one, which was more mixed or grayish there. The bands of the females are said to be more brown, as is their collar. There were a few droppings of the bird close by the snare in two instances. Were they dropped after it was caught? Or did they determine the locality of the snare?

These birds appear to run most along the sides of wooded banks around swamps. At least these paths and snares occur there oftenest. I often scare them up from amid or near hemlocks in the woods.

The general color of the bird is that of the ground and dry leaves on it at present. The bird hanging in the snare was very inconspicuous. I had gone close by it once without noticing it. Its wings are short and stout and look as if they were a little worn by striking the ground or bushes, or perhaps in drumming. I observed a bare bright-red or scarlet spot over each eye.

Spoke to Skinner about that wildcat which he says he heard a month ago in Ebbv Hubbard's woods. He was going down to Walden in the evening, to see if geese had not settled in it (with a companion), when they heard this sound, which his companion at first thought made by a coon, but S. said no, it was a wildcat. He says he has heard them often in the Adiron-

dack region, where he has purchased furs. He told him he would hear it again soon, and he did. Somewhat like the domestic cat, a low sort of growling and then a sudden quick-repeated caterwaul, or *yow yow yow*, or *yang yang yang*. He says they utter this from time to time when on the track of some prey.

Nov. 29. Sophia called on old lady Hayden yesterday, and she told her of somebody's twin infants of whom one died for want of air. The father, therefore, was advised to take the survivor with him each morning to the barn, and hold it up to the muzzle of each of the cattle in succession as they got up, that it might catch their first morning breath, and then lay it on the hay while he foddered them. He did so, and there never was a healthier child than this, three months afterward.

P. M. — To Assabet Bath and down bank.

This and yesterday remarkably warm days. In John Hosmer's low birch sprout-land, a few rods beyond Tortoise Hollow, or Valley, I find, on raking aside the withered leaves on the ground, one of those fuzzy caterpillars, black at each end and rust-colored in middle, curled up in a ring, — the same kind that I find on the ice and snow, frozen, in winter. I think that the river *might* rise so high as to wash this out of the withered grass and leaves here. Soon after I find another in a catbird's nest, nearly three feet from the ground, in a thorn, together [with] half a nestful of freshly nibbled acorn shells and a few hazelnut shells, the work, probably, of a mouse or a squirrel; but this

caterpillar was dead and apparently partly eaten. So I am still inclined to think that most of them are washed out of the meadows by the freshets. Several times before I have seen nests half filled with nutshells, and as the *Mus leucopus* adds to and after occupies old nests, am inclined to think that he does it. It may be a convenient deposit for him (or for a striped squirrel??), or else he likes it for concealment and protection against hawks, — in the midst of a thorn bush, before the leaves fall. I do not know, however, that the mouse has this habit of perching while it nibbles, as the squirrel has.

Again I am struck by the singularly wholesome colors of the withered oak leaves, especially the shrub oak, so thick and firm and unworn, without speck or fret, clear reddish-brown (sometimes paler or yellowish brown), its whitish under sides contrasting with it in a very cheerful manner. So strong and cheerful, as if it rejoiced at the advent of winter, and exclaimed, "Winter, come on!" It exhibits the fashionable colors of the winter on the two sides of its leaves. It sets the fashions, colors good for bare ground or for snow, grateful to the eyes of rabbits and partridges. This is the extent of its gaudiness, red brown and misty white, and yet it is gay. The colors of the brightest flowers are not more agreeable to my eye. Then there is the now rich, dark brown of the black oak's large and somewhat curled leaf on sprouts, with its lighter, almost yellowish, brown under side. Then the salmonish hue of white oak leaves, with the under sides less distinctly lighter. Many, however, have quite faded already.

Going through a partly frozen meadow near the meadow [*sic*], scraping through the sweet-gale, I am pleasantly scented with its odoriferous fruit.

A week or so ago, as I learn, Miss Emeline Barnett told a little boy who boards with her, and who was playing with an open knife in his hand, that he must be careful not to fall down and cut himself with it, for once Mr. David Loring, when he was a little boy, fell down with a knife in his hand and cut his throat badly. It was soon reported, among the children at least, that little David Loring, the grandson of the former, had fallen down with a knife in his hand as he was going to school, and nearly cut his throat; next, that Mr. David Loring the grandfather (who lives in Framingham) had committed suicide, had cut his throat, was not dead, indeed, but was not expected to live; and in this form the story spread like wildfire over the town and county. Nobody expressed surprise. His oldest acquaintances and best friends, his legal adviser, all said, "Well, I can believe it." He was known by many to have been speculating in Western lands, which, owing to the hard times, was a failure, and he was depressed in consequence. Sally Cummings helped spread the news. Said there was no doubt of it, but there was Fay's wife (L.'s daughter) knew nothing of it yet, they were as merry as crickets over there. Others stated that Wetherbee, the expressman, had been over to Northboro, and learned that Mr. Loring had taken poison in Northboro. Mr. Rhodes was stated to have received a letter from Mr. Robbins of Framingham giving all the particulars. Mr. Wild, it

was said, had also got a letter from his son Silas in Framingham, to whom he had written, which confirmed the report. As Wild went down-town, he met Meeks the carpenter and inquired in a significant way if he got anything new. Meeks simply answered, "Well, David Loring won't eat another Thanksgiving dinner." A child at school wrote to her parents at Northboro, telling the news. Mrs. Loring's sister lives there, and it chanced that her husband committed suicide. They were, therefore, slow to communicate the news to her, but at length could not contain themselves longer and told it. The sister was terribly affected; wrote to her son (L.'s nephew) in Worcester, who immediately took the cars and went to Framingham and when he arrived there met his uncle just putting his family into the cars. He shook his hand very heartily indeed, looking, however, hard at his throat, but said not a word about his errand. Already doubts had arisen, people were careful how they spoke of it, the expressmen were mum, Adams and Wetherbee never said Loring. The Framingham expressman used the same room with Adams in Boston. A. simply asked, "Any news from Framingham this morning? Seen Loring lately?" and learned that all was well.

Nov. 30. A still, warm, cloudy, rain-threatening day.

Surveying the J. Richardson lot.

The air is full of geese. I saw five flocks within an hour, about 10 A. M., containing from thirty to fifty each, and afterward two more flocks, making in all

from two hundred and fifty to three hundred at least, all flying southwest over Goose and Walden Ponds. The former was apparently well named Goose Pond. You first hear a faint honking from one or two in the northeast and think there are but few wandering there, but, looking up, see forty or fifty coming on in a more or less broken harrow, wedging their way southwest. I suspect they honk more, at any rate they are more broken and alarmed, when passing over a village, and are seen falling into their ranks again, assuming the perfect harrow form. Hearing only one or two honking, even for the seventh time, you think there are but few till you see them. According to my calculation a thousand or fifteen hundred may have gone over Concord to-day. When they fly low and near, they look very black against the sky.¹

Northwest of Little Goose Pond, on the edge of Mrs. Bigelow's wood-lot, are several hornbeams (*Carpinus*). Looking into a cleft in one of them about three feet from the ground, which I thought might be the scar of a blazing, I found some broken kernels of corn, probably placed there by a crow or jay. This was about half a mile from a corn-field.

¹ I hear that one was killed by Lee in the Corner about this time.