

**SQUIRRELS AND OTHER  
FUR-BEARERS**



*RED FOX*

**SQUIRRELS  
AND OTHER  
FUR-BEARERS**

**BY**

**JOHN BURROUGHS**

*with ILLUSTRATIONS*

**YESTERDAY'S CLASSICS  
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## SQUIRRELS

WALKING through the early October woods one day, I came upon a place where the ground was thickly strewn with very large unopened chestnut burrs. On examination I found that every burr had been cut square off with about an inch of the stem adhering, and not one had been left on the tree. It was not accident, then, but design. Whose design? A squirrel's. The fruit was the finest I had ever seen in the woods, and some wise squirrel had marked it for his own. The burrs were ripe, and had just begun to divide. The squirrel that had taken all these pains had evidently reasoned with himself thus: "Now, these are extremely fine chestnuts, and I want them; if I wait till the burrs open on the tree, the crows and jays will be sure to carry off a great many of the nuts before they fall; then, after the wind has rattled out what remain, there are the mice, the chipmunks, the red squirrels, the raccoons, the grouse, to say nothing of the boys and the pigs, to come in for their share; so I will forestall events a little: I will cut off the burrs when they have matured, and a few days of this dry October weather will cause every one of them to open on the ground; I shall be on hand in the nick of time to gather up my nuts." The

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squirrel, of course, had to take the chances of a prowler like myself coming along, but he had fairly stolen a march on his neighbors. As I proceeded to collect and open the burrs, I was half prepared to hear an audible protest from the trees about, for I constantly fancied myself watched by shy but jealous eyes. It is an interesting inquiry how the squirrel knew the burrs would open if left to lie on the ground a few days. Perhaps he did not know, but thought the experiment worth trying.

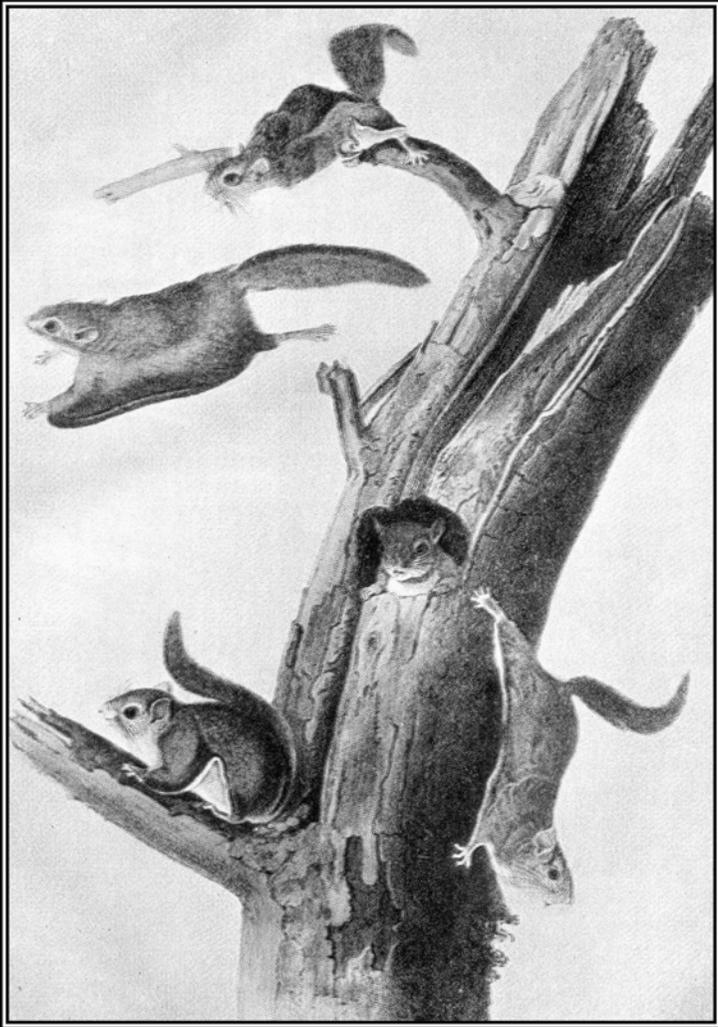
One reason, doubtless, why squirrels are so bold and reckless in leaping through the trees is that, if they miss their hold and fall, they sustain no injury. Every species of tree-squirrel seems to be capable of a sort of rudimentary flying,—at least of making itself into a parachute, so as to ease or break a fall or a leap from a great height. The so-called flying squirrel does this the most perfectly. It opens its furry vestments, leaps into the air, and sails down the steep incline from the top of the one tree to the foot of the next as lightly as a bird. But other squirrels know the same trick, only their coat-skirts are not so broad. One day my dog treed a red squirrel in a tall hickory that stood in a meadow on the side of a steep hill. To see what the squirrel would do when closely pressed, I climbed the tree. As I drew near he took refuge in the topmost branch, and then, as I came on, he boldly leaped into the air, spread himself out upon it, and, with a quick, tremulous motion of his tail and legs, descended quite slowly and landed upon the ground thirty feet below me, apparently none the worse for the leap, for he ran

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with great speed and eluding the dog took refuge in another tree.

A recent American traveler in Mexico gives a still more striking instance of this power of squirrels partially to neutralize the force of gravity when leaping or falling through the air. Some boys had caught a Mexican black squirrel, nearly as large as a cat. It had escaped from them once, and, when pursued, had taken a leap of sixty feet, from the top of a pine-tree down upon the roof of a house, without injury. This feat had led the grandmother of one of the boys to declare that the squirrel was bewitched, and the boys proposed to put the matter to further test by throwing the squirrel down a precipice six hundred feet high. Our traveler interfered, to see that the squirrel had fair play. The prisoner was conveyed in a pillow-slip to the edge of the cliff, and the slip opened, so that he might have his choice, whether to remain a captive or to take the leap. He looked down the awful abyss, and then back and sidewise—his eyes glistening, his form crouching. Seeing no escape in any other direction, “he took a flying leap into space, and fluttered rather than fell into the abyss below. His legs began to work like those of a swimming poodle-dog, but quicker and quicker, while his tail, slightly elevated, spread out like a feather fan. A rabbit of the same weight would have made the trip in about twelve seconds; the squirrel protracted it for more than half a minute,” and “landed on a ledge of limestone, where we could see him plainly squat on his hind

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*FLYING SQUIRREL*

## *SQUIRRELS*

legs and smooth his ruffled fur, after which he made for the creek with a flourish of his tail, took a good drink, and scampered away into the willow thicket.”

The story at first blush seems incredible, but I have no doubt our red squirrel would have made the leap safely; then why not the great black squirrel, since its parachute would be proportionately large?

The tails of the squirrels are broad and long and flat, not short and small like those of gophers, chipmunks, woodchucks, and other ground rodents, and when they leap or fall through the air the tail is arched and rapidly vibrates. A squirrel's tail, therefore, is something more than ornament, something more than a flag; it not only aids him in flying, but it serves as a cloak, which he wraps about him when he sleeps.

In making the flying leap I have described the animals' legs are widely extended, their bodies broadened and flattened, the tail stiffened and slightly curved, and a curious tremulous motion runs through all. It is very obvious that a deliberate attempt is made to present the broadest surface possible to the air, and I think a red squirrel might leap from almost any height to the ground without serious injury. Our flying squirrel is in no proper sense a flyer. On the ground he is more helpless than a chipmunk, because less agile. He can only sail or slide down a steep incline from the top of one tree to the foot of another. The flying squirrel is active only at night; hence its large, soft eyes, its soft fur, and its gentle, shrinking ways. It is the gentlest and

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most harmless of our rodents. A pair of them for two or three successive years had their nest behind the blinds of an upper window of a large, unoccupied country-house near me. You could stand in the room inside and observe the happy family through the window pane against which their nest pressed. There on the window sill lay a pile of large, shining chestnuts, which they were evidently holding against a time of scarcity, as the pile did not diminish while I observed them. The nest was composed of cotton and wool which they filched from a bed in one of the chambers, and it was always a mystery how they got into the room to obtain it. There seemed to be no other avenue but the chimney flue.

Red and gray squirrels are more or less active all winter, though very shy, and, I am inclined to think, partially nocturnal in their habits. Here a gray one has just passed,—came down that tree and went up this; there he dug for a beechnut, and left the burr on the snow. How did he know where to dig? During an unusually severe winter I have known him to make long journeys to a barn, in a remote field, where wheat was stored. How did he know there was wheat there? In attempting to return, the adventurous creature was frequently run down and caught in the deep snow.

His home is in the trunk of some old birch or maple, with an entrance far up amid the branches. In the spring he builds himself a summer-house of small leafy twigs in the top of a neighboring beech, where the young are reared and much of the time

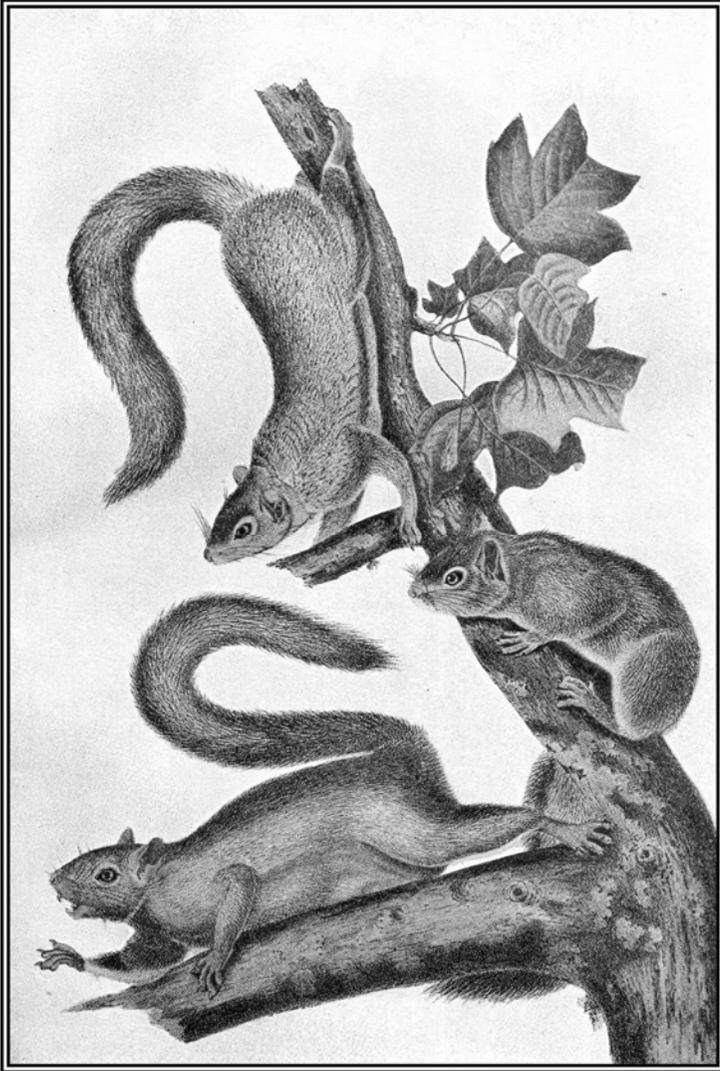
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passed. But the safer retreat in the maple is not abandoned, and both old and young resort thither in the fall, or when danger threatens. Whether this temporary residence amid the branches is for elegance or pleasure, or for sanitary reasons or domestic convenience, the naturalist has forgotten to mention.

The elegant creature, so cleanly in its habits, so graceful in its carriage, so nimble and daring in its movements, excites feelings of admiration akin to those awakened by the birds and the fairer forms of nature. His passage through the trees is almost a flight. Indeed, the flying squirrel has little or no advantage over him, and in speed and nimbleness cannot compare with him at all. If he miss his footing and fall, he is sure to catch on the next branch; if the connection be broken, he leaps recklessly for the nearest spray or limb, and secures his hold, even if it be by the aid of his teeth.

His career of frolic and festivity begins in the fall, after the birds have left us and the holiday spirit of nature has commenced to subside. How much his presence adds to the pleasure of a saunter in the still October woods. You step lightly across the threshold of the forest, and sit down upon the first log or rock to await the signals. It is so still that the ear suddenly seems to have acquired new powers, and there is no movement to confuse the eye. Presently you hear the rustling of a branch, and see it sway or spring as the squirrel leaps from or to it; or else you hear a disturbance in the dry leaves, and

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*GRAY SQUIRREL*

## *SQUIRRELS*

mark one running upon the ground. He has probably seen the intruder, and, not liking his stealthy movements, desires to avoid a nearer acquaintance. Now he mounts a stump to see if the way is clear, then pauses a moment at the foot of a tree to take his bearings, his tail as he skims along undulating behind him, and adding to the easy grace and dignity of his movements. Or else you are first advised of his proximity by the dropping of a false nut, or the fragments of the shucks rattling upon the leaves. Or, again, after contemplating you a while unobserved, and making up his mind that you are not dangerous, he strikes an attitude on a branch, and commences to quack and bark, with an accompanying movement of his tail. Late in the afternoon, when the same stillness reigns, the same scenes are repeated. There is a black variety, quite rare, but mating freely with the gray, from which it seems to be distinguished only in color.

The red squirrel is more common and less dignified than the gray, and oftener guilty of petty larceny about the barns and grain-fields. He is most abundant in mixed oak, chestnut, and hemlock woods, from which he makes excursions to the fields and orchards, spinning along the tops of the fences, which afford not only convenient lines of communication, but a safe retreat if danger threatens. He loves to linger about the orchard; and, sitting upright on the topmost stone in the wall, or on the tallest stake in the fence, chipping up an apple for the seeds, his tail conforming to the curve of his back, his paws shifting and turning the apple, he is a

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pretty sight, and his bright, pert appearance atones for all the mischief he does. At home, in the woods, he is very frolicsome and loquacious. The appearance of anything unusual, if, after contemplating it a moment, he concludes it not dangerous, excites his unbounded mirth and ridicule, and he snickers and chatters, hardly able to contain himself; now darting up the trunk of a tree and squealing in derision, then hopping into position on a limb and dancing to the music of his own cackle, and all for your special benefit.

There is something very human in this apparent mirth and mockery of the squirrels. It seems to be a sort of ironical laughter, and implies self-conscious pride and exultation in the laughter. "What a ridiculous thing you are, to be sure!" he seems to say; "how clumsy and awkward, and what a poor show for a tail! Look at me, look at me!"—and he capers about in his best style. Again, he would seem to tease you and provoke your attention; then suddenly assumes a tone of good-natured, childlike defiance and derision. That pretty little imp, the chipmunk, will sit on the stone above his den and defy you, as plainly as if he said so, to catch him before he can get into his hole if you can.

A hard winter affects the chipmunks very little; they are snug and warm in their burrows in the ground and under the rocks, with a bountiful store of nuts or grain. I have heard of nearly a half-bushel of chestnuts being taken from a single den. They usually hole up in November, and do not come out again till March or April, unless the winter is very

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open and mild. Gray squirrels, when they have been partly domesticated in parks and groves near dwellings, are said to hide their nuts here and there upon the ground, and in winter to dig them up from beneath the snow, always hitting the spot accurately.

The red squirrel lays up no stores like the provident chipmunk, but scours about for food in all weathers, feeding upon the seeds in the cones of the hemlock that still cling to the tree, upon sumac-bobs, and the seeds of frozen apples. I have seen the ground under a wild apple-tree that stood near the woods completely covered with the "chonkings" of the frozen apples, the work of the squirrels in getting at the seeds; not an apple had been left, and apparently not a seed had been lost. But the squirrels in this particular locality evidently got pretty hard up before spring, for they developed a new source of food-supply. A young bushy-topped sugar-maple, about forty feet high, standing beside a stone fence near the woods, was attacked, and more than half denuded of its bark. The object of the squirrels seemed to be to get at the soft, white, mucilaginous substance (cambium layer) between the bark and the wood. The ground was covered with fragments of the bark, and the white, naked stems and branches had been scraped by fine teeth. When the sap starts in the early spring, the squirrels add this to their scanty supplies. They perforate the bark of the branches of the maples with their chisel-like teeth, and suck the sweet liquid as it slowly oozes out. It is not much as food, but evidently it helps.

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I have said the red squirrel does not lay by a store of food for winter use, like the chipmunk and the wood-mice; yet in the fall he sometimes hoards in a tentative, temporary kind of way. I have seen his savings—butternuts and black walnuts—stuck here and there in saplings and trees near his nest; sometimes carefully inserted in the upright fork of a limb or twig. One day, late in November, I counted a dozen or more black walnuts put away in this manner in a little grove of locusts, chestnuts, and maples by the roadside, and could but smile at the wise forethought of the rascally squirrel. His supplies were probably safer that way than if more elaborately hidden. They were well distributed; his eggs were not all in one basket, and he could go away from home without any fear that his storehouse would be broken into in his absence. The next week, when I passed that way, the nuts were all gone but two. I saw the squirrel that doubtless laid claim to them, on each occasion.

There is one thing the red squirrel knows unerringly that I do not (there are probably several other things); that is, on which side of the butternut the meat lies. He always gnaws through the shell so as to strike the kernel broadside, and thus easily extract it; while to my eyes there is no external mark or indication, in the form or appearance of the nut, as there is in the hickory-nut, by which I can tell whether the edge or the side of the meat is toward me. But examine any number of nuts that the squirrels have rifled, and, as a rule, you will find they always drill through the shell at the one spot where

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the meat will be most exposed. Occasionally one makes a mistake, but not often. It stands them in hand to know, and they do know. Doubtless, if butternuts were a main source of my food, and I were compelled to gnaw into them, I should learn, too, on which side my bread was buttered.

The cheeks of the red and gray squirrels are made without pockets, and whatever they transport is carried in the teeth. They are more or less active all winter, but October and November are their festal months. Invade some butternut or hickory grove on a frosty October morning, and hear the red squirrel beat the “juba” on a horizontal branch. It is a most lively jig, what the boys call a “regular break-down,” interspersed with the squeals and snickers and derisive laughter. The most noticeable peculiarity about the vocal part of it is the fact that it is a kind of duet. In other words, by some ventriloquial tricks, he appears to accompany himself, as if his voice split up, a part forming a low guttural sound, and a part a shrill nasal sound.

## THE CHIPMUNK

THE first chipmunk in March is as sure a token of the spring as the first bluebird or the first robin, and is quite as welcome. Some genial influence has found him out there in his burrow, deep under the ground, and waked him up, and enticed him forth into the light of day. The red squirrel has been more or less active all winter; his track has dotted the surface of every new-fallen snow throughout the season. But the chipmunk retired from view early in December, and has passed the rigorous months in his nest, beside his hoard of nuts, some feet underground, and hence, when he emerges in March, and is seen upon his little journeys along the fences, or perched upon a log or rock near his hole in the woods, it is another sign that spring is at hand. His store of nuts may or may not be all consumed; it is certain that he is no sluggard, to sleep away these first bright warm days.

Before the first crocus is out of the ground, you may look for the first chipmunk. When I hear the little downy woodpecker begin his spring drumming, then I know the chipmunk is due. He cannot sleep after that challenge of the woodpecker reaches his ear.

## THE CHIPMUNK

Apparently the first thing he does on coming forth, as soon as he is sure of himself, is to go courting. So far as I have observed, the love-making of the chipmunk occurs in March. A single female will attract all the males in the vicinity. One early March day I was at work for several hours near a stone fence, where a female had apparently taken up her quarters. What a train of suitors she had that day! how they hurried up and down, often giving each other a spiteful slap or bite as they passed. The young are born in May, four or five at a birth.

The chipmunk is quite a solitary creature; I have never known more than one to occupy the same den. Apparently no two can agree to live together. What a clean, pert, dapper, nervous little fellow he is! How fast his heart beats, as he stands on the wall by the roadside, and, with hands spread out upon his breast, regards you intently! A movement of your arm, and he darts into the wall with the saucy *chip-r-r*, which has the effect of slamming the door behind him.

On some still day in autumn, one of the nutty days, the woods will often be pervaded by an undertone of sound, produced by their multitudinous clucking, as they sit near their dens. It is one of the characteristic sounds of fall.

I was much amused one October in watching a chipmunk carry nuts and other food into his den. He had made a well-defined path from his door out through the weeds and dry leaves into the territory where his feeding-ground lay. The path was a

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crooked one; it dipped under weeds, under some large, loosely piled stones, under a pile of chestnut posts, and then followed the remains of an old wall. Going and coming, his motions were like clock-work. He always went by spurts and sudden sallies. He was never for one moment off his guard. He would appear at the mouth of his den, look quickly about, take a few leaps to a tussock of grass, pause a breath with one foot raised, slip quickly a few yards over some dry leaves, pause again by a stump beside a path, rush across the path to the pile of loose stones, go under the first and over the second, gain the pile of posts, make his way through that, survey his course a half moment from the other side of it, then dart on to some other cover, and presently beyond my range, where I think he gathered acorns, as there were no other nut-bearing trees than oaks near. In four or five minutes I would see him coming back, always keeping rigidly to the course he took going out, pausing at the same spots, darting over or under the same objects, clearing at a bound the same pile of leaves. There was no variation in his manner of proceeding all the time I observed him.

He was alert, cautious, and exceedingly methodical. He had found safety in a certain course, and he did not at any time deviate a hair's breadth from it. Something seemed to say to him all the time, "Beware, beware!" The nervous, impetuous ways of these creatures are no doubt the result of the life of fear which they lead.

*THE CHIPMUNK*



*CHIPMUNK*

## *SQUIRRELS AND OTHER FUR-BEARERS*

My chipmunk had no companion. He lived all by himself in true hermit fashion, as is usually the case with this squirrel. Provident creature that he is, one would think that he would long ago have discovered that heat, and therefore food, is economized by two or three nesting together.

One day in early spring, a chipmunk that lived near me met with a terrible adventure, the memory of which will probably be handed down through many generations of its family. I was sitting in the summer-house with Nig the cat upon my knee, when the chipmunk came out of its den a few feet away, and ran quickly to a pile of chestnut posts about twenty yards from where I sat. Nig saw it, and was off my lap upon the floor in an instant. I spoke sharply to the cat, when she sat down and folded her paws under her, and regarded the squirrel, as I thought, with only a dreamy kind of interest. I fancied she thought it a hopeless case there amid that pile of posts. "That is not your game, Nig," I said, "so spare yourself any anxiety." Just then I was called to the house, where I was detained about five minutes. As I returned I met Nig coming to the house with the chipmunk in her mouth. She had the air of one who had won a wager. She carried the chipmunk by the throat, and its body hung limp from her mouth. I quickly took the squirrel from her, and reproved her sharply. It lay in my hand as if dead, though I saw no marks of the cat's teeth upon it. Presently it gasped for its breath, then again and again. I saw that the cat had simply choked it. Quickly the film passed off its eyes, its heart began

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visibly to beat, and slowly the breathing became regular. I carried it back, and laid it down in the door of its den. In a moment it crawled or kicked itself in. In the afternoon I placed a handful of corn there, to express my sympathy, and as far as possible make amends for Nig's cruel treatment.

Not till four or five days had passed did my little neighbor emerge again from its den, and then only for a moment. That terrible black monster with the large green-yellow eyes,—it might be still lurking near. How the black monster had captured the alert and restless squirrel so quickly, under the circumstances, was a great mystery to me. Was not its eye as sharp as the cat's, and its movements as quick? Yet cats do have the secret of catching squirrels, and birds, and mice, but I have never yet had the luck to see it done.

It was not very long before the chipmunk was going to and from her den as usual, though the dread of the black monster seemed ever before her, and gave speed and extra alertness to all her movements. In early summer four young chipmunks emerged from the den, and ran freely about. There was nothing to disturb them, for, alas! Nig herself was now dead.

One summer day I watched a cat for nearly a half hour trying her arts upon a chipmunk that sat upon a pile of stone. Evidently her game was to stalk him. She had cleared half the distance, or about twelve feet, that separated the chipmunk from a dense Norway spruce, when I chanced to become a

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spectator of the little drama. There sat the cat crouched low on the grass, her big, yellow eyes fixed upon the chipmunk, and there sat the chipmunk at the mouth of his den, motionless, with his eyes fixed upon the cat. For a long time neither moved. "Will the cat bind him with her fatal spell?" I thought. Sometimes her head slowly lowered and her eyes seemed to dilate, and I fancied she was about to spring. But she did not. The distance was too great to be successfully cleared in one bound. Then the squirrel moved nervously, but kept his eye upon the enemy. Then the cat evidently grew tired and relaxed a little and looked behind her. Then she crouched again and riveted her gaze upon the squirrel. But the latter would not be hypnotized; he shifted his position a few times and finally quickly entered his den, when the cat soon slunk away.

In digging his hole it is evident that the chipmunk carries away the loose soil. Never a grain of it is seen in front of his door. Those pockets of his probably stand him in good stead on such occasions. Only in one instance have I seen a pile of earth before the entrance to a chipmunk's den, and that was where the builder had begun his house late in November, and was probably too much hurried to remove this ugly mark from before his door. I used to pass this place every morning in my walk, and my eye always fell upon that little pile of red, freshly-dug soil. A little later I used frequently to surprise the squirrel furnishing his house, carrying in dry leaves of the maple and plane tree. He would seize a large leaf and with both hands stuff it into his cheek

## THE CHIPMUNK

pockets, and then carry it into his den. I saw him on several different days occupied in this way. I trust he had secured his winter stores, though I am a little doubtful. He was hurriedly making himself a new home, and the cold of December was upon us while he was yet at work. It may be that he had moved the stores from his old quarters, wherever they were, and again it may be that he had been dispossessed of both his house and provender by some other chipmunk.

I have been told by a man who says he has seen what he avers, that the reason why we do not find a pile of fresh earth beside the hole of the chipmunk is this: In making his den the workman continues his course through the soil a foot or more under the surface for several yards, carrying out the earth in his cheek pouches and dumping it near the entrance. Then he comes to the surface and makes a new hole from beneath, which is, of course, many feet from the first hole. This latter is now closed up, and henceforth the new one alone is used. I have no doubt this is the true explanation.

When nuts or grain are not to be had, these thrifty little creatures will find some substitute to help them over the winter. Two chipmunks near my study were occupied many days in carrying in cherry pits which they gathered beneath a large cherry-tree that stood ten or twelve rods away. As Nig was no longer about to molest them, they grew very fearless, and used to spin up and down the garden path to and from their source of supplies in a way quite unusual with these timid creatures. After they had

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got enough cherry pits, they gathered the seed of a sugar maple that stood near. Many of the keys remained upon the tree after the leaves had fallen, and these the squirrels harvested. They would run swiftly out upon the ends of the small branches, reach out for the maple keys, snip off the wings, and deftly slip the nut or samara into their cheek pockets. Day after day in late autumn, I used to see them thus occupied.

As I have said, I have no evidence that more than one chipmunk occupy the same den. One March morning after a light fall of snow I saw where one had come up out of his hole, which was in the side of our path to the vineyard, and after a moment's survey of the surroundings had started off on his travels. I followed the track to see where he had gone. He had passed through my woodpile, then under the beehives, then around the study and under some spruces and along the slope to the hole of a friend of his, about sixty yards from his own. Apparently he had gone in here, and then his friend had come forth with him, for there were two tracks leading from this doorway. I followed them to a third humble entrance, not far off, where the tracks were so numerous that I lost the trail. It was pleasing to see the evidence of their morning sociability written there upon the new snow.

One of the enemies of the chipmunk, as I discovered lately, is the weasel. I was sitting in the woods one autumn day when I heard a small cry, and a rustling amid the branches of a tree a few rods beyond me. Looking thither I saw a chipmunk fall

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through the air, and catch on a limb twenty or more feet from the ground. He appeared to have dropped from near the top of the tree.

He secured his hold upon the small branch that had luckily intercepted his fall, and sat perfectly still. In a moment more I saw a weasel—one of the smaller red varieties—come down the trunk of the tree, and begin exploring the branches on a level with the chipmunk.

I saw in a moment what had happened. The weasel had driven the squirrel from his retreat in the rocks and stones beneath, and had pressed him so closely that he had taken refuge in the top of a tree. But weasels can climb trees, too, and this one had tracked the frightened chipmunk to the topmost branch, where he had tried to seize him. Then the squirrel had, in horror, let go his hold, screamed, and fallen through the air, till he struck the branch as just described. Now his bloodthirsty enemy was looking for him again, apparently relying entirely upon his sense of smell to guide him to the game.

How did the weasel know the squirrel had not fallen clear to the ground? He certainly did know, for when he reached the same tier of branches he began exploring them. The chipmunk sat transfixed with fear, frozen with terror, not twelve feet away, and yet the weasel saw him not.

Round and round, up and down, he went on the branches, exploring them over and over. How he hurried, lest the trail get cold! How subtle and cruel

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and fiendish he looked! His snakelike movements, his tenacity, his speed!

He seemed baffled; he knew his game was near, but he could not strike the spot. The branch, upon the extreme end of which the squirrel sat, ran out and up from the tree seven or eight feet, and then, turning a sharp elbow, swept down and out at right angles with its first course.

The weasel would pause each time at this elbow and turn back. It seemed as if he knew that particular branch held his prey, and yet its crookedness each time threw him out. He would not give it up, but went over his course again and again.

One can fancy the feelings of the chipmunk, sitting there in plain view a few feet away, watching his deadly enemy hunting for the clue. How his little heart must have fairly stood still each time the fatal branch was struck! Probably as a last resort he would again have let go his hold and fallen to the ground, where he might have eluded his enemy a while longer.

In the course of five or six minutes the weasel gave over the search, and ran hurriedly down the tree to the ground. The chipmunk remained motionless for a long time; then he stirred a little as if hope were reviving. Then he looked nervously about him; then he had recovered himself so far as to change his position. Presently he began to move cautiously along the branch to the bole of the tree; then, after a few moments' delay, he plucked up

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courage to descend to the ground, where I hope no weasel has disturbed him since.

One season a chipmunk had his den in the side of the terrace above my garden, and spent the mornings laying in a store of corn which he stole from a field ten or twelve rods away. In traversing about half this distance, the little poacher was exposed; the first cover on the way from his den was a large maple, where he always brought up and took a survey of the scene. I would see him spinning along toward the maple, then from it by an easy stage to the fence adjoining the corn; then back again with his booty. One morning I paused to watch him more at my leisure. He came up out of his retreat and cocked himself up to see what my motions meant. His forepaws were clasped to his breast precisely as if they had been hands, and the tips of the fingers thrust into his vest pockets. Having satisfied himself with reference to me, he sped on toward the tree. He had nearly reached it, when he turned tail and rushed for his hole with the greatest precipitation. As he neared it, I saw some bluish object in the air closing in upon him with the speed of an arrow, and, as he vanished within, a shrike brought up in front of the spot, and with spread wings and tail stood hovering a moment, and, looking in, then turned and went away. Apparently it was a narrow escape for the chipmunk, and, I venture to say, he stole no more corn that morning. The shrike is said to catch mice, but it is not known to attack squirrels. The bird certainly could not have strangled the chipmunk, and I am curious to know

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what would have been the result had he overtaken him. Probably it was only a kind of brag on his part—a bold dash where no risk was run. He simulated the hawk, the squirrel's real enemy, and no doubt enjoyed the joke.

The sylvan folk seem to know when you are on a peaceful mission, and are less afraid than usual. Did not that marmot to-day guess my errand did not concern him as he saw me approach there from his cover in the bushes? But, when he saw me pause and deliberately seat myself on the stone wall immediately over his hole, his confidence was much shaken. He apparently deliberated awhile, for I heard the leaves rustle as if he were making up his mind, when he suddenly broke cover and came for his hole full tilt. Any other animal would have taken to his heels and fled; but a woodchuck's heels do not amount to much for speed, and he feels his only safety is in his hole. On he came in the most obstinate and determined manner, and I dare say if I had sat down in his hole would have attacked me unhesitatingly. This I did not give him a chance to do, and he whipped into his den beneath me with a defiant snort. Farther on, a saucy chipmunk presumed upon my harmless character to an unwonted degree also. I had paused to bathe my hands and face in a little trout brook, and had set a tin cup, which I had partly filled with strawberries as I crossed the field, on a stone at my feet, when along came the chipmunk as confidently as if he knew precisely where he was going, and, perfectly

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oblivious of my presence, cocked himself up on the rim of the cup and proceeded to eat my choicest berries. I remained motionless and observed him. He had eaten but two when the thought seemed to occur to him that he might be doing better, and he began to fill his pockets. Two, four, six, eight of my berries quickly disappeared, and the cheeks of the little vagabond swelled. But all the time he kept eating, that not a moment might be lost. Then he hopped off the cup, and went skipping from stone to stone till the brook was passed, when he disappeared in the woods. In two or three minutes he was back again, and went to stuffing himself as before; then he disappeared a second time, and I imagined told a friend of his, for in a moment or two along came a bobtailed chipmunk, as if in search of something, and passed up, and down, and around, but did not quite hit the spot. Shortly, the first returned a third time, and had now grown a little fastidious, for he began to sort over my berries, and to bite into them, as if to taste their quality. He was not long in loading up, however, and in making off again. But I had now got tired of the joke, and my berries were appreciably diminishing, so I moved away. What was most curious about the proceeding was, that the little poacher took different directions each time, and returned from different ways. Was this to elude pursuit, or was he distributing the fruit to his friends and neighbors about, astonishing them with strawberries for lunch?

On another occasion I was much amused by three chipmunks, who seemed to be engaged in

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some kind of game. It looked very much as if they were playing tag. Round and round they would go, first one taking the lead, then another, all good-natured and gleeful as schoolboys. There is one thing about a chipmunk that is peculiar: he is never more than one jump from home. Make a dive at him anywhere and in he goes. He knows where the hole is, even when it is covered up with leaves. There is no doubt, also, that he has his own sense of humor and fun, as what squirrel has not? I have watched two red squirrels for a half hour coursing through the large trees by the roadside where branches interlocked, and engaged in a game of tag as obviously as two boys. As soon as the pursuer had come up with the pursued, and actually touched him, the palm was his, and away he would go, taxing his wits and his speed to the utmost to elude his fellow.

I have observed that any unusual disturbance in the woods, near where the chipmunk has his den, will cause him to shift his quarters. One October, for many successive days, I saw one carrying into his hole buckwheat which he had stolen from a nearby field. The hole was only a few rods from where we were getting out stone, and as our work progressed, and the racket and uproar increased, the chipmunk became alarmed. He ceased carrying in, and after much hesitating and darting about, and some prolonged absences, he began to carry out; he had determined to move; if the mountain fell, he, at least, would be away in time. So, by mouthfuls or cheekfuls, the grain was transferred to a new place. He did not make a "bee" to get it done, but carried it

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all himself, occupying several days and making a trip about every ten minutes.