

rout a peaceful neighbour out of his bed in this weather, and into such a state of things as this! But water does not wet the muskrat; his fur is charmed, and not a drop penetrates it. Where the ground is favourable, the muskrats do not build these mound-like nests, but⁵ burrow into the bank a long distance, and establish their winter-quarters there.

Shall we not say, then, in view of the above facts, that this little creature is weather-wise? The hitting of the mark twice might be mere good luck; but three¹⁰ bull's-eyes in succession is not a mere coincidence; it is a proof of skill. The muskrat is not found in the Old World, which is a little singular, as other rats so abound there, and as those slow-going English streams especially, with their grassy banks, are so well suited¹⁵ to him. The water-rat of Europe is smaller, but of similar nature and habits. The muskrat does not hibernate like some rodents, but is pretty active all winter. In December I noticed in my walk where they had made excursions of a few yards to an orchard²⁰ for frozen apples. One day, along a little stream, I saw a mink track amid those of the muskrat; following it up, I presently came to blood and other marks of strife upon the snow beside a stone wall. Looking in between the stones, I found the carcass of the luck-²⁵less rat, with its head and neck eaten away. The mink had made a meal of him.

II. CHEATING THE SQUIRRELS

For the largest and finest chestnuts I had last fall I was indebted to the grey squirrels. Walking through the early October woods one day, I came upon a place³⁰ where the ground was thickly strewn with very large unopened chestnut burs. On examination I found that every bur had been cut square off with about an inch of the stem adhering, and not one had been left