

# Hunting by Mitchell Brook (NH) on a Brisk Fall Day

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There is a road that runs

    Along the bottom of a hill.

A rugged carpet of withering grass spears

That poke between the fallen leaves,

Three ragged columns weaving through the stately wood,

Properly paced by leaf-filled ruts –

Once ordered by an iron-rimmed old wheel.

Wholly stone walls of grey flank either side

To keep the road from foraging abandoned fields,

Fields mostly forest but for scattered clearings,

    And savage orchards.

The oaks are red; the maples yellow.

I'm hunting.

The dog ahead trots testingly with twitching nose.

Leaves rustle restlessly under feet;

The wind brushes a ruddy face on me.

I stop.

An old mill pond!

Beyond, half-standing, a tired mill

Mirrored by water – cool...clear...deep.

No ducks.

The morning's late, and I've been up since five.

The wall invites me to some apple and cheddar.

I sit.

There's a depression hiding behind the wall –

I almost had missed it.

Only 'bout two feet deep.

Some smaller squares rise up inside,

Quite dominated by some brambly bushes, rotted boards.

The farmer's house?

One room is filled by an old pine.

I kick away some dirt and leaves.

Foundation granite stones...

Who has lived here?

Who built the house, the mill,  
the endless lines of grey?

Crockery shards, a rusted stove.

How did he live?

Did he have many sons?

Did he too walk the road to hunt?

Picked up a piece of porcelain.

Was he happy?

Another leaf falls to fill the hollow,  
Spinning a happy dance to its duty.

Who knows of him?

Who'll know of me?

I put the fragment into my pocket;

The dog sniffs at the stove.

"Thanks, sir, for letting me hunt on your property."

The ducks fly up;

I follow.