

bureau at Botzen, a short, stout figure clad in black broadcloth stood widely and firmly planted in the doorway; a fat, round, smooth face flashed a look of grim triumph upon the dismounting Governor, and Saitoutetplus stood confessed. The Chatelaine greeted him with all the cordiality of an old friend; Aurelia declared that had she but understood with whom the appointment had been made

she would have tried harder to bear up through their hasty, headlong flight; and the Governor, with a complicated smile, which was crowded with too many elements to allow much room for that of sincerity, expressed himself overjoyed that after all these perils, and delays, and accidents, and endeavors, a relenting fortune had permitted him to meet his dear colleague at last.

(To be continued.)

Henry B. Fuller.



GLIMPSSES OF WILD LIFE.

I.



ANY glimpse of the wild and savage in nature, especially after long confinement indoors or in town, always gives a little fillip to my mind. Thus, when in my walk from the city the other day I paused, after a half-

hour, in a thick clump of red cedars crowning a little hill that arose amid a marshy and bushy bit of landscape, and found myself in the banqueting-hall of a hawk, something more than my natural-history tastes stirred within me.

No hawk was there then, but the marks of his nightly presence were very obvious. The branch of a cedar about fifteen feet from the ground was his perch. It was worn smooth, with a feather or two adhering to it. The ground beneath was covered with large pellets and wads of mouse-hair; the leaves were white with his droppings, while the dried entrails of his victims clung here and there to the bushes. The bird evidently came here nightly to devour and digest its prey. This was its den, its retreat; all about lay its feeding-grounds. It revealed to me a new trait in the hawk — its local attachments and habits; that it, too, had a home, and did not wander about like a vagabond. It had its domain, which it no doubt assiduously cultivated. Here it came to dine and meditate, and a most attractive spot it had chosen, a kind of pillared cave amid the cedars. It was such a spot as the pedestrian would be sure to direct his steps to, and, having reached it, would be equally sure to tarry and eat his own lunch there.

The winged creatures are probably quite as local as the four-footed. Sitting one night on a broad, gently rising hill, to see the darkness close in upon the landscape, my attention was

attracted by a marsh-hawk industriously working the fields about me. Time after time he made the circuit, varying but little in his course each time; dropping into the grass here and there, beating low over the bogs and bushes, and then disappearing in the distance. This was his domain, his preserve, and doubtless he had his favorite perch not far off.

All our permanent residents among the birds, both large and small, are comparatively limited in their ranges. The crow is nearly as local as the woodchuck. He goes farther from home in quest of food, but his territory is well defined, both winter and summer. His place of roosting remains the same year after year. Once, while spending a few days at a mountain lake nearly surrounded by deep woods, my attention was attracted each night, just at sundown, by an osprey that always came from the same direction, dipped into the lake as he passed over it for a sip of its pure water, and disappeared in the woods beyond. The routine of his life was probably as marked as that of any of ours. He fished the waters of the Delaware all day, probably never going beyond a certain limit, and returned each night at sundown, as punctual as a day-laborer, to his retreat in the forest. The sip of water, too, from the lake he never failed to take.

All the facts we possess in regard to the habits of the song-birds in this respect point to the conclusion that the same individuals return to the same localities year after year, to nest and to rear their young. I am convinced that the same woodpecker occupies the same cavity in a tree winter after winter, and drums upon the same dry limb spring after spring. I like to think of all these creatures as capable of local attachments, and not insensible to the sentiment of home.

But I set out to give some glimpses of the wild life which one gets about the farm. Not

of a startling nature are they, certainly, but very welcome for all that. The domestic animals require their lick of salt every week or so, and the farmer, I think, is equally glad to get a taste now and then of the wild life that has so nearly disappeared from the older and more thickly settled parts of the country.

Last winter a couple of bears, an old one and a young one, passed through our neighborhood. Their tracks were seen upon the snow in the woods, and the news created great excitement among the Nimrods. It was like the commotion in the water along shore after a steamer had passed. The bears were probably safely in the Catskills by the time the hunters got dogs and guns ready and set forth. Country people are as eager to accept any rumor of a strange and dangerous creature in the woods as they are to believe in a ghost-story. They want it to be true; it gives them something to think about and talk about. It is to their minds like strong drink to their palates. It gives a new interest to the woods, as the ghost-story gives a new interest to the old house.

A few years ago the belief became current in our neighborhood that a dangerous wild animal lurked in the woods about, now here, now there. It had been seen in the dusk. Some big dogs had encountered it in the night, and one of them was nearly killed. Then a calf and a sheep were reported killed and partly devoured. Women and children became afraid to go through the woods, and men avoided them after sundown. One day as I passed an Irishman's shanty that stood in an opening in the woods, his wife came out with a pail, and begged leave to accompany me as far as the spring, which lay beside the road some distance into the woods. She was afraid to go alone for water on account of the "wild baste." Then, to cap the climax of wild rumors, a horse was killed. One of my neighbors, an intelligent man and a good observer, went up to see the horse. He reported that a great gash had been eaten in the top of the horse's neck, that its back was bitten and scratched, and that he was convinced it was the work of some wild animal like a panther, which had landed upon the horse's back and fairly devoured it alive. The horse had run up and down the field trying to escape, and finally, in its desperation, had plunged headlong off a high stone wall by the barn and been killed. I was compelled to accept his story, but I pooh-poohed the conclusions. It was impossible that we should have a panther in the midst of us, or, if we had, that it would attack and kill a horse. But how eagerly the people believed it! It tasted good. It tasted good to me too, but I could not believe it. It soon turned out that the horse was killed by another horse, a vicious beast that had fits of murderous hatred toward its kind. The sheep

and calf were probably not killed at all, and the big dogs had had a fight among themselves. So the panther legend faded out, and our woods became as tame and humdrum as before. We cannot get up anything exciting that will hold, and have to make the most of such small deer as coons, foxes, and woodchucks. Glimpses of these and of the birds are all I have to report.

II.

THE day on which I have any adventure with a wild creature, no matter how trivial, has a little different flavor from the rest; as when, one morning in early summer, I put my head out of the back window and returned the challenge of a quail that sent forth his clear call from a fence-rail one hundred yards away. Instantly he came sailing over the field of raspberries straight toward me. When about fifteen yards away he dropped into the cover and repeated his challenge. I responded, when in an instant he was almost within reach of me. He alighted under the window, and looked quickly around for his rival. How his eyes shone, how his form dilated, how dapper and polished and brisk he looked! He turned his eye up to me and seemed to say, "Is it you, then, who are mocking me?" and ran quickly around the corner of the house. Here he lingered some time amid the rose-bushes, half persuaded that the call, which I still repeated, came from his rival. Ah, I thought, if with his mate and young he would only make my field his home! The call of the quail is a country sound that is becoming all too infrequent.

So fond am I of seeing nature reassert herself that I even found some compensation in the loss of my chickens that bright November night when some wild creature, coon or fox, swept two of them out of the evergreens, and their squawking as they were hurried across the lawn called me from my bed to shout good-by after them. It gave a new interest to the hen-roost, this sudden incursion of wild nature. I feel bound to caution the boys about disturbing the wild rabbits that in summer breed in my currant-patch, and in autumn seek refuge under my study floor. The occasional glimpses I get of them about the lawn in the dusk, their cotton tails twinkling in the dimness, afford me a genuine pleasure. I have seen the time when I would go a good way to shoot a partridge, but I would not have killed, if I could, the one that started out of the vines that cover my rustic porch, as I approached that side of the house one autumn morning. How much of the woods, and of the untamable spirit of wild nature, she brought to my very door! It was tonic and exhilarating to see her whirl away toward the vineyard. I also owe a moment's pleasure to

the gray squirrel that, finding my summer-house in the line of his travels one summer day, ran through it and almost over my feet as I sat idling with a book.

I am sure my power of digestion was improved that cold winter morning when, just as we were sitting down to breakfast about sunrise, a red fox loped along in front of the window, looking neither to the right nor to the left, and disappeared amid the currant-bushes. What of the wild and the cunning did he not bring! His graceful form and motion were in my mind's eye all day. When you have seen a fox loping along in that way you have seen the poetry there is in the canine tribe. It is to the eye what a flowing measure is to the mind, so easy, so buoyant; the furry creature drifting along like a large red thistle-down, or like a plume borne by the wind. It is something to remember with pleasure that a muskrat sought my door one December night when a cold wave was swooping down upon us. Was he seeking shelter, or had he lost his reckoning? The dogs cornered him in the very doorway, and set up a great hubbub. In the darkness, thinking it was a cat, I put my hand down to feel it. The creature skipped to the other corner of the doorway, hitting my hand with its cold, rope-like tail. Lighting a match, I had a glimpse of him sitting up on his haunches like a woodchuck, confronting his enemies. I rushed in for the lantern, with the hope of capturing him alive, but before I returned the dogs, growing bold, had finished him.

I have had but one call from a coon, that I am aware of, and I fear we did not treat him with due hospitality. He took up his quarters for the day in a Norway spruce, the branches of which nearly brushed the house. I had noticed that the dog was very curious about that tree all the forenoon. After dinner his curiosity culminated in repeated loud and confident barking. Then I began an investigation, expecting to find a strange cat, or at most a red squirrel. But a moment's scrutiny revealed his coonship. Then how to capture him became the problem. A long pole was procured, and I sought to dislodge him from his hold. The skill with which he maintained himself amid the branches excited our admiration. But after a time he dropped lightly to the ground, not in the least disconcerted, and at once on his guard against both man and beast. The dog was a coward, and dared not face him. When the coon's attention was diverted the dog would rush in; then one of us would attempt to seize the coon's tail, but he faced about so quickly, his black eyes gleaming, that the hand was timid about seizing him. But finally in his skirmishing with the dog I caught him by the tail, and bore him safely to an open flour-barrel, and he was our prisoner. Much amusement

my little boy and I anticipated with him. He partook of food that same day, and on the second day would eat the chestnuts in our presence. Never did he show the slightest fear of us or of anything, but he was unwearied in his efforts to regain his freedom. After a few days we put a strap upon his neck and kept him tethered by a chain. But in the night, by dint of some hocus-pocus, he got the chain unsnapped and made off, and is now, I trust, a patriarch of his tribe, wearing a leather necktie.

The skunk visits every farm sooner or later. One night I came near shaking hands with one on my very door-stone. I thought it was the cat, and put down my hand to stroke it, when the creature, probably appreciating my mistake, moved off up the bank, revealing to me the white stripe on its body and the kind of cat I had saluted. The skunk is not easily ruffled, and seems to employ excellent judgment in the use of its terrible weapon.

Several times I have had calls from woodchucks. One looked in at the open door of my study one day, and, after sniffing a while, and not liking the smell of such clover as I was compelled to nibble there, moved on to better pastures. Another one invaded the kitchen door while we were at dinner. The dogs promptly challenged him, and there was a lively scrimmage upon the door-stone. I thought the dogs were fighting, and rushed to part them. The incident broke in upon the drowsy summer noon, as did the appearance of the muskrat upon the frigid December night. The woodchuck episode that afforded us the most amusement occurred last summer. We were at work in a newly planted vineyard, when the man with the cultivator saw, a few yards in front of him, some large gray object that at first puzzled him. He approached it, and found it to be an old woodchuck with a young one in its mouth. She was carrying her kitten as does a cat, by the nape of the neck. Evidently she was moving her family to pastures new. As the man was in the line of her march, she stopped and considered what was to be done. He called to me, and I approached slowly. As the mother saw me closing in on her flank, she was suddenly seized with a panic, and, dropping her young, fled precipitately for the cover of a large pile of grape-posts some ten or twelve rods distant. We pursued hotly, and overhauled her as she was within one jump of the house of refuge. Taking her by the tail, I carried her back to her baby; but she heeded it not. It was only her own bacon now that she was solicitous about. The young one remained where it had been dropped, keeping up a brave, reassuring whistle that was in ludicrous contrast to its exposed and helpless condition. It was the smallest woodchuck I had ever seen, not

much larger than a large rat. Its head and shoulders were so large in proportion to the body as to give it a comical look. It could not walk about yet, and had never before been above ground. Every moment or two it would whistle cheerily, as the old one does when safe in its den and the farm dog is fiercely baying outside. We took the youngster home, and my little boy was delighted over the prospect of a tame woodchuck. Not till the next day would it eat. Then, getting a taste of the milk, it clutched the spoon that held it with great eagerness, and sucked away like a little pig. We were all immensely diverted by it. It ate eagerly, grew rapidly, and was soon able to run about. As the old one had been killed, we became curious as to the fate of the rest of her family, for no doubt there were more. Had she moved them, or had we intercepted her on her first trip? We knew where the old den was, but not the new. So we would keep a lookout. Near the end of the week, on passing by the old den, there were three young ones creeping about a few feet from its mouth. They were starved out, and had come forth to see what could be found. We captured them all, and the young family was again united. How these poor half-famished creatures did lay hold of the spoon when they got a taste of the milk! One could not help laughing. Their little shining black paws were so handy and so smooth; they seemed as if incased in kid gloves. They thrived well upon milk, and then upon milk and clover. But after the novelty of the thing had worn off, the boy found he had encumbered himself with serious duties in assuming the position of foster-mother to this large family; so he gave them all away but one, the first one captured, which had outstripped all the others in growth. This soon became a very amusing pet, but it always protested when handled, and always objected to confinement. I should mention that the cat had a kitten about the age of the chuck, and as she had more milk than the kitten could dispose of, the chuck, when we first got him, was often placed in the nest with the kitten, and was regarded by the cat as tenderly as her own, and allowed to nurse freely. Thus a friendship sprang up between the kitten and the woodchuck, which lasted as long as the latter lived. They would play together precisely like two kittens; clinch and tumble about and roll upon the grass in a very amusing way. Finally the woodchuck took up his abode under the floor of the kitchen, and gradually relapsed into a half-wild state. He would permit no familiarities from any one save the kitten, but each day they would have a turn or two at their old games of rough-and-tumble. The chuck was now over half-grown, and procured his own living. One

day the dog, who had all along looked upon him with a jealous eye, encountered him too far from cover, and his career ended then and there.

In July the woodchuck was forgotten in our interest in a little gray rabbit which we found nearly famished. It was so small that it could sit in the hollow of one's hand. Some accident had probably befallen its mother. The tiny creature looked spiritless and forlorn. We had to force the milk into its mouth. But in a day or two it began to revive, and would lap the milk eagerly. Soon it took to grass and clover, and then to nibbling sweet apples and early pears. It grew rapidly, and was one of the softest and most harmless-looking pets I had ever seen. As my family was away for a month or more, the little rabbit was the only company I had, and it helped to beguile the time immensely. In coming in from the field or from my work, I seldom failed to bring it a handful of red clover blossoms, of which it became very fond. One day it fell slyly to licking my hand, and I discovered it wanted salt. I would then moisten my fingers, dip them into the salt, and offer them to the rabbit. How rapidly the delicate little tongue would play upon them, darting out to the right and left of the large front incisors, the slender paws being pressed against my hand as if to detain it! But the rabbit proved really untamable; its wild nature could not be overcome. In its large box-cage or prison, where it could see nothing but the tree above it, it was tame, and would at times frisk playfully about my hand and strike it gently with its fore feet; but the moment it was liberated in a room or let down in the grass with a string about its neck, all its wild nature came forth. In the room it would run and hide; in the open it would make desperate efforts to escape, and leap and bound as you drew in the string that held it. At night, too, it never failed to try to make its escape from the cage, and finally, when two thirds grown, succeeded, and we saw it no more.

III.

How completely the life of a bird revolves about its nest, its home! In the case of the wood-thrush, its life and joy seem to mount higher and higher as the nest prospers. The male becomes a fountain of melody; his happiness waxes day by day; he makes little triumphal tours about the neighborhood, and pours out his pride and gladness in the ears of all. How sweet, how well-bred, is his demonstration! But let any accident befall that precious nest, and what a sudden silence falls upon him! Last summer a pair of wood-thrushes built their nest within a few rods of my house, and when the enterprise was fairly launched and the

mother-bird was sitting upon her four blue eggs, the male was in the height of his song. How he poured forth his rich melody, never in the immediate vicinity of the nest, but always within easy hearing-distance! Every morning, as promptly as the morning came, between five and six, he would sing for half an hour from the top of a locust-tree that shaded my roof. I came to expect him as much as I expected my breakfast, and I was not disappointed till one morning I seemed to miss something. What was it? Oh, the thrush has not sung this morning. Something is the matter; and recollecting that yesterday I had seen a red squirrel in the trees not far from the nest, I at once inferred that the nest had been harried. Going to the spot, I found my fears were well grounded; every egg was gone. The joy of the thrush was laid low. No more songs from the tree-top, and no more songs from any point, till nearly a week had elapsed, when I heard him again under the hill, where the pair had started a new nest, cautiously tuning up, and apparently with his recent bitter experience still weighing upon him.

After a pair of birds have been broken up once or twice during the season, they become almost desperate, and will make great efforts to outwit their enemies. The past season my attention was attracted by a pair of brown thrashers. They first built their nest in a pasture-field under a low, scrubby apple-tree which the cattle had browsed down till it spread a thick, wide mass of thorny twigs only a few inches above the ground. Some blackberry briars had also grown there, so that the screen was perfect. My dog first started the bird, as I was passing by. By stooping low and peering intently I could make out the nest and eggs. Two or three times a week, as I passed by, I would pause to see how the nest was prospering. The mother-bird would keep her place, her yellow eyes never blinking. One morning as I looked into her tent I found the nest empty. Some night-prowler, probably a skunk or fox, or maybe a black snake or red squirrel by day, had plundered it. It would seem as if it was too well screened: it was in such a spot as any depredator would be apt to explore. "Surely,"

he would say, "this is a likely place for a nest." The birds then moved over the hill a hundred rods or more, much nearer the house, and in some rather open bushes tried again. But again they came to grief. Then, after some delay, the mother-bird made a bold stroke. She seemed to reason with herself thus: "Since I have fared so disastrously in seeking seclusion for my nest, I will now adopt the opposite tactics, and come out fairly in the open. What hides me hides my enemies: let us try greater publicity." So she came out and built her nest by a few small shoots that grew beside the path that divides the two vineyards, and where we passed to and fro many times daily. I discovered her by chance early in the morning as I proceeded to my work. She started up at my feet and flitted quickly along above the plowed ground, almost as red as the soil. I admired her audacity. Surely no prowler by night or day would suspect a nest in this open and exposed place. There was no cover by which they could approach, and no concealment anywhere. The nest was a hasty affair, as if the birds' patience at nest-building had been about exhausted. Presently an egg appeared, and then the next day another, and on the fourth day a third. No doubt the bird would have succeeded this time had not man interfered. In cultivating the vineyards the horse and cultivator had to pass over this very spot. Upon this the bird had not calculated. I determined to assist her. I called my man, and told him there was one spot in that vineyard, no bigger than his hand, where the horse's foot must not be allowed to fall, nor tooth of cultivator to touch. Then I showed him the nest, and charged him to avoid it. Probably if I had kept the secret to myself and let the bird run her own risk the nest would have escaped. But the result was that the man, in elaborately trying to avoid the nest, overdid the matter; the horse plunged, and set his foot squarely upon it. Such a little spot, the chances were few that the horse's foot would fall exactly there; and yet it did, and the birds' hopes were again dashed. The pair then disappeared from my vicinity, and I saw them no more.

John Burroughs.

