

OUR WILD CREATURES.—I. THE FOX.

By A NATURALIST.



FAMILIAR as the fox is by name to all of us, probably not one in fifty has seen him in a state of nature. Fox-hunting apart, he has attracted more notice from the moralist than the naturalist. A most classic animal we may consider him, for he has served to point the moral and adorn the tales of some of our greatest writers. Old Æsop, Goethe, and Froude have immortalised his distinguishing characteristics. Why should his manner of satisfying his natural appetites be more severely dealt with than that of any other beast of prey? In Japan the country folks believe him to be animated by the devil. How pathetically he says in the cat's pilgrimage, when charged with his old crime of stealing the crow's dinner, "Don't say stole, cat, it is not pretty. Obtained by superior ability."

As a rule he gives the haunts of men a wide berth, and there is good cause for his secluded habits, for every man's hand is against him. Not without reason; he takes heavy toll whenever he has the chance; he loves to feed on those domestic creatures which man has reared and fattened for his own eating; and he prowls round those confined close premises where the poor birds are so penned in that they have

no chance of escape, such as have their wilder relatives of the woods and fields. If the fox-hunters' mantle of protection had not been thrown over him he would have been exterminated long ago. As it is, large sums of money are spent in keeping up the fine hunting establishments of the United Kingdom. After all, the chase is a first-class riding-school for those men and women who can afford it. A good stout dog fox will take them across a line of country that brings all their courage and coolness into exercise, if they would follow to be in at the death. A thick blackthorn hedge, called a "bullfinch," with a post and rail, is not an object to bungle at. Awkward and difficult though it is, and dangerous too, numbers of ladies follow our national sport. We hear the comment, "over like a bird," as some fair rider clears one of these formidable barriers; and many a gentleman thinks there is no pleasanter task than handing to his lady love her well-won trophy, the fox's brush, to hang at her saddle bow when she has been in at the death.

Give Reynard his due, he has courage, speed, and wit enough pretty often to baffle hunters and hounds, though he is a master of arts and of cunning.

On the crest of one of the Surrey hills a long stretch of common land runs for miles—broken ground, timbered with beech, oak and fir. The undergrowth consists of holly, hazel, furze and heath. The rabbits flourish here, and the fox lives in clover, for he feeds on them to his heart's content. If you can get there in the very early morning you may see him slipping home. Once I met him face to face, to his utter astonishment as well as my own; he slipped under a fence just as I got to it. I stood quite still; so did he, and for some seconds he looked at me with his ears cocked

forward. Then he very leisurely moved off. I learned in the evening the reason of his slow movements; he had paid a visit to a small farm near, had killed one of the flock, and filled himself so full of lamb that he could hardly run.

A short distance from one of the lonely roads that run through this waste is a large hazel copse. Not nut-bushes, but trees are there, with stems straight enough for fishing-rods—ten, twelve, and fifteen feet in height. Here the finest nuts grow in profusion, ripen, and fall for the squirrels, dormice, and nuthatches to feast on. For no one goes a-nutting there, except by stealth, and under pains and penalties; because in the centre of that nut-tree copse Reynard has his home.

Once in my wanderings I came on the spot accidentally, but I took care not to linger, for on one of the chalk stones near the entrance lay some feathers from the breast of a cock pheasant. Another glance, a hasty one, showed me the mark of one of the fox's pads; then I moved quietly but quickly from the place. St. Reynard had his woodland cell there. The farmer hears his short yelping bark, and the wild scream of his vixen mate as she answers him. He mutters to himself, and looks longingly at the double barrel over the fireplace. Murderous thoughts are in his heart, but he dares not execute them; justifiable revenge he would take if he might, but his landlord is a staunch fox-hunter of the old school, and he must stay his hand.

The Italians have a proverb, "No fox so cunning but the furrier has him at last." A fine fox-skin, with mask, pads, and brush complete, makes a nice ornament to throw over a lady's chair or couch, or to use as a foot-rug. It is to the different foxes of North America and Asia that we are indebted for some of our most costly furs. The black and the silver fox trimmings are employed much in ladies' dress; the red skins are used in various manufactures, and are not so valuable. Reynard does not part with his fur coat easily anywhere, but in the cold northern regions both hunter and hunted frequently perish, owing to the rigour of the climate.

KATHLEEN'S "HANDFUL."

By the Author of "The Atelier du Lys," "In the Olden Time," "A Little Stepdaughter," etc., etc.

CHAPTER III.



O the children, at all events, the next morning was a delightful one, full of running about and importance,

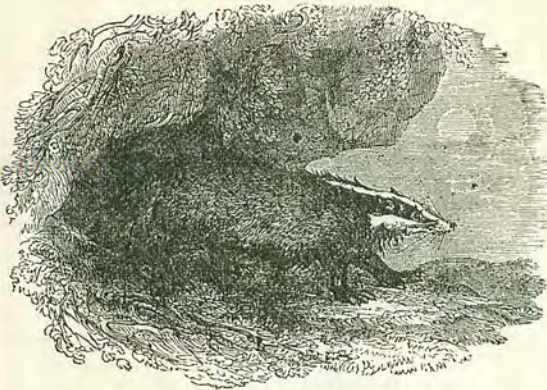
as they helped Kathleen to move their possessions from the rooms which they had hitherto occupied into two much smaller ones, and as the bedroom was at the top of the house and the parlour at the bottom, the journeys to be made were numerous.

It must be admitted that among Kathleen's excellences was not the talent of arranging rooms to advantage. They had still pretty things enough to set off the dingy little rooms to advantage, but, notwithstanding her quick Irish sensibility to outward impressions, she could not see how to do it. Many a time had she wondered at Mrs. O'Kelly's gift for giving a home air to whatever place they drifted into, and they had drifted a good deal during the three years following her second marriage—now in Ireland, now in England. After that Captain O'Kelly went to South America, in happy certainty that he should make a fortune, and soon send for his family, and meanwhile they lived in a cheap part of Cornwall, full of hope, at first as undoubting as his, for he had a knack of

inspiring even those who knew him best with his own confidence in his schemes. It was only very slowly that this hope began to fail, costing who can tell what pangs, as it did, to the daughter who passionately loved him, and yet could neither esteem him nor believe him worthy of esteem from others; and to the wife, who was not only devoted to him, but who knew with tardy remorse that she had put the fortune of her children into his hands. "He loves them as if they were born his own," she had gladly told herself; and indeed Captain O'Kelly was exceedingly fond of his little stepdaughters, but as he had already spent every penny of Kathleen's which he could touch, there was small security in that. Letters came, brimful of hope, then more rarely; at last not at all. They did not

OUR WILD CREATURES.—II. THE BADGER.

By A NATURALIST.



THE moon shines brightly on the sides of the steep chalk hill, which is covered in places by thick undergrowth. Masses of great trees, many of them in the last state of decay, throw their shadows on them also, the giant limbs looking weird in the fitful gleams of moonlight that flicker and play, now here now there, on the trunks and branches. These have grown and reached perfection; gone to decay and mouldered into touchwood for centuries. The rich leaf-mould, many feet in depth, beneath them, is all that remains to tell of a past race of forest giants. At the bottom, where the trees have been hurled to the ground by the fierce winds that tear at times through the long valleys which run from the coast line, the badger has his home; and a fitting one it is for him, suiting him admirably in all its surroundings. Like himself, it has an ancient look. The great blocks of chalk upheaved by the fall of the trees are cracked and seamed by the frost and rain, laced and interlaced by the creeping fibres of woodland vegetation.

One opening, under a chalk block some tons in weight, is the entrance to his home and fortress. At the edge of wild disorder a stripe of the most velvety green turf runs, dented here and there into little chalky hollows.

There, in the season, the tall foxgloves rear their beautiful heads, and the moth-mullein raises its spike of yellow flowers, which are said to relieve sufferers from hay fever when in their vicinity. Now, however, the spot is bare, and looks lonesome, for a sprinkling of snow has fallen. Lonely and weird though it is, there is something on the move, for a twig snaps under some foot, and we hear the faint sound of feet. Very faint it is; in fact we can only detect it by placing our ear on the ground. Presently a gleam of light shows; it comes from a lantern. It is the keeper and his

assistants coming to get the old grey friar out; but they will have their trouble in vain, for the old fellow has moved his quarters to the opposite hill, which faces south.

So much the better. I only wish we could see his quaint, bear-like form, and his waddling trot or shambling oftener than we do. He is a persecuted creature now. The time, however, we trust, is not far distant when our native animals will receive protection—those at least which are, comparatively speaking, harmless.

His fur is used for various purposes. Artists are indebted to him for their "softeners"; also artistic decorators for their most valuable softening tools, especially when they are imitating the marks and graining of woods and marbles.

In the highlands of Scotland, where his hold has been for ages, and where game preservers have not improved him off the earth, and he is still to be found in numbers, the country folks value him highly. The philabegs or pouches worn in front of the kilts are made from the skin of the brock. It may not be generally known that badger hams are delicious eating, but it is so. Bear hams I know from experience to be good, and the bear and the badger are alike in the matter of feeding; in a great degree also in their habits.

I know him best in his home at the foot of one of the South Down hills. There is a long strip of coarse grass and moss, a quarter of a mile wide and more than a mile in length, a valley between two hills that are heavily timbered with oak and ash. Over this belt of mossy grass the purple emperor, prince of British butterflies, floats and dashes as he crosses from the topmost twigs of one belt of oaks to another. Here, too, the emperor moth is found, and here the badger has his abiding place.

When the harvest moon floods the valley with light, he will leave his home and wander over this green stripe which had once been broken up by the plough, but to no purpose, and so had become wild again. Here wild-flowers cover the surface as their time comes round. It is a perfect paradise for wild creatures. The humble bees and moss bees make their homes in the mossy surface—a rare treat for our old friend in his grey, black and white coat, who scratches them out with his digging claws, or roots them up with his nose like a pig. No matter whether it be honey, grubs, or comb, all goes down; and when the bees swarm round him his thick fur protects him: he takes no more notice of them than if they were so many flies.

Wild-fruit roots, any small deer that comes in his way, all good things he enjoys. The consequence is he grows enormously fat; he is a creature of contented mind, and in no small degree a philosopher, never hurrying when there is no occasion for it. Peaceable, too, and willing at all times to act up to the principle of "Let be for let be;" but once rouse him, let him think that danger is near, and a transformation takes place. No more waddling; he is off with a rush. If any foe obstruct his path, he will find that a more determined antagonist, taking his size into consideration, does not exist. Once, and only once, I had the pleasure of seeing mother badger and her young family of hopefuls at their gambols, rolling and tumbling about. Gravely the old animal sat in the midst of them, and I thought it was one of the quaintest sights I had ever seen.

VARIETIES.

AN UNEXPECTED VOYAGE.—A frigate returning from a cruise early in this century came off Plymouth, and the captain invited a few friends to dine on board, promising them a sail, as it was a fine day. They went and enjoyed it much, but as they were tacking to return to port, a cutter came up with an order from Government for the captain to sail instantly to the West Indies, with some sealed packets for the Admiral on that station. There was nothing to be done, therefore, but to take his company with him, and give them such a view of the West Indies as they neither expected nor desired.

FOOLISH CONTESTS.—Contest not a point merely because you are in the right and another in the wrong. Out of such contests spring dissensions and enmity.—*Bentham.*

REBUKING ONESELF.—When anyone composes speeches with a view to shame her neighbours, she should speak them to a looking-glass.

ACCUMULATING INFORMATION.—"Block-heads," says Sir Walter Scott, "can never find out how folks cleverer than themselves came by their information. They never know what is done at dressing-time, and meal-time even, or in how few minutes they can get at the sense of many pages."

THE CUNNING WIDOW.—A widow, occupying a large house in a fashionable quarter in London, was pressed by her creditors, and to get out of her difficulties she fell on the following plan. She sent for a wealthy solicitor—a bachelor—to make her will, and by it she disposed of between fifty and sixty thousand (imaginary) pounds. The solicitor proposed soon afterwards, was accepted, and found himself the happy husband of a penniless adventuress.

A GREAT DESCENT.—Some people are fond of bragging about their ancestors and their great descent, when in fact their great descent is just what is the matter with them.

ON GETTING ONE'S OWN WAY.—Young people who have been habitually gratified in all their desires, will not only more indulge in capricious desires, but will infallibly take it more amiss when the feelings or happiness of others require that they should be thwarted than those who have been practically trained to the habit of subduing and restraining them, and consequently will in general sacrifice the happiness of others to their own selfish indulgence.—*Lord Jeffrey.*

SLANDER AND FLATTERY.—"He that slanders me," says Cowper the poet, "paints me blacker than I am, and he that flatters me, whiter; they both daub me, and when I look into the glass of conscience I see myself disguised by both."

SADDLING THE HORSE.—An Irishman having occasion to saddle a horse, put the saddle on the wrong way, when on being told of his error he remarked, "How do you know which way I am going to ride?"

of another, and *vice versa*. On the writer's environment of time and place will largely depend the direction of his genius. There is no absolute standard of right and wrong in art; she justifies herself by her own deeds, as the natural world does by what it brings forth. The point we aim at is, to discover, not what ought to be, but what is, and to grasp this clearly we must distinguish between what our subject of observation is in itself, and what it is in relation to literature generally, as the scientist cannot deal with an animal as an individual, but as a member of a family, species, and genus.

In the same way all details of form must be not only investigated but carefully classified as such. For instance, the drama and the story have much in common; but certain characteristics distinguish them from each other in the work of the best writers. To follow the conception rightly, we must recognise the limitations of the form into which it is thrown. In a certain sense, art is proportion—the fault of one form is the excellence of another. Poetry and prose, romance and classic tragedy, history and novel, each has to be judged by its own aim; but bear in mind that what that aim precisely should be, is to be determined not from without but from within. It will be proved in each case by its success, and not by a fixed canon of criticism.

Springing from the question of form is that of workmanship. To interpret justly, we must perceive the difficulties which each form by its peculiar nature imposes on the writer, corresponding to what in the plastic arts is called "the law of the material." These difficulties may be overcome by certain means which constitute the highest beauty. If we do not study the form, we miss the enjoyment

of the execution that conceals difficulties with that apparent ease which is a sign of power, or we miss the simplicity which recognises calmly and humbly its lack of perfect facility, and acknowledges difficulties instead of overcoming them. And such beauty or power or simplicity are in themselves details which our interpretation must place in their right relation to the rest.

All these various points make up the art effects of a literary work, and as such throw light upon the thought contained in it. But they only mislead and confuse if they be mistaken for what constitutes the individuality, the life of the work. That life is the imaginative element, which, whatever may be the art form that contains it, a Scotch ballad or a Greek tragedy, the "Pilgrim's Progress" or a modern novel, holds the mirror up to nature and reveals the unseen truth of things.

If in one sense art be proportion, in another sense art is design, and here we reach our last law of interpretation: that conception of a literary work will be the truest which reveals in the highest degree design. As the man of science finds reason the groundwork of his operations, and reason the last result of his chain of cause and effect, laying bare purpose in all things, so the interpreter of the literary world, subjecting each detail to analysis, will find in each a purpose, and his best result will be that conception which reveals the most complicated and most symmetrical design in the whole mass. For this purpose or design exists in all works of imagination, whether the author knew it or not. It is beside the question to ask whether all the deep significance which his creation has for us was consciously intended by him or not. Whatever we find in it, we are justified in taking out of it. A product of literature, as of all art, is a

living organism, not a piece of dead mechanism. Such a product is the sum of all its qualities and attributes, including its effect upon us. The author sends out the child of his brain into the mental world, and from that moment it lives a life of its own, which he cannot foresee or control, yet for which his instinct has provided. The greater the worker, the more intricate and complete the design of his work, though its perfect symmetry may look like simplicity to the superficial. Goethe, Shakespeare, Scott, each had certain things to say, and each said them in his own way. It is quite possible that our analysis may produce results in laying bare a sign which they never consciously intended, and yet these results are not wrong or imaginary. These great men "wrought better than they knew." In all high imaginations there is an involuntary, inevitable element, the unconscious conforming to the Higher Truth. Analysis, coming after, discovers this, but does not invent it, interprets but does not add the deeper significance.

As Ruskin tells us: "Neither Pindar, nor Æschylus, nor Hesiod, nor Homer, nor any of the greatest poets or teachers of any nation or time, ever spoke but with intentional reservation; nay, beyond this, there is often a meaning which they themselves cannot interpret—which it may be for ages long after them to interpret—in what they said, so far as it recorded true imaginative vision. For all the greatest myths have been seen by the men who tell them, involuntarily and passively—seen by them with as great distinctness (and in some respects, though not in all, under conditions as far beyond the control of their will) as a dream sent to any of us by night when we dream clearest."

CAROL.

OUR WILD CREATURES.—III. THE WILD CAT.

By A NATURALIST.

THE wild cat was common enough in England when vast tracts of forest, moor, and fen existed. Its name was used as a term of reproach and insult, and formed a peg on which to hang some of our trite sayings, such as "What can you get from a cat but the skin?" "No more to be trusted than a wild cat." "Fierce as a wild cat," and other expressions of the like sort.

When he was captured, the principal use his fur was put to was to trim the garments of the ladies in the various nunneries at that time scattered over our land.

As population increased these great tracts of wild land got cleared, and to some extent cultivated; the numbers of creatures became diminished, but still their various furs formed a great part of the clothing of the rustics. Even now in out-of-the-way districts you will see many a fine vest and cap of beautiful velvety moleskin.

The wild cat was a cruel foe to those who first attempted to bring the forest under cultivation. He has well been named the British tiger, and he would come in the night-time and kill the poultry and lambs of those who had invaded his domain.

Picture to yourselves a creature twice the size of any domestic cat, brindled grey in colour with dark stripes, and a short bushy tail something like a fox's, but marked with dark rings.

Forty years bring great changes. I can remember spots which were shunned by all

who were not compelled to go to them; places that had evil names given to them, and with good reason—long belts of thick woods that sloped down to dreary marshes and the seashore, I mean, which could only be traversed in those days by very few.

A grey old church stood on the edge of those great woods, and once on each Sunday a small congregation might be seen coming from different directions to worship there. Sometimes I have made one of it, and a quaint affair that service was: the feathered songsters in the trees outside far surpassed the singers who led the psalms and the chants within.

Although this was not a game-preserving district, there were plenty of hares, rabbits, and wild fowl to furnish food for the many cats that had run wild in the woods for years, and had so nearly gone back to the original type of wild cat, that only competent judges could tell them apart. They had the same colour, markings, thick fur, and short, bushy tails, and had become as unlike the common domestic cat as the true leopard is unlike the snow leopard of Thibet.

The study of nature in the marsh-lands, where as a boy I roamed through the thick woods and treacherous swamps, and along the wild seashore, was a sealed book to most of the people. Simple, earnest folks though they were, they had few books; the Bible formed the whole literature of most of the readers. Amongst us were the descendants of French and Dutch families, who had come

over through stress of religious faith; Protestants, who were as outlaws in their own country. These, or rather their descendants, had intermarried with our native marsh-dwellers; they had retained their strong faith, which was naturally often tinged with superstition. "Signs" and "the powers of evil" were vivid realities to them.

The unearthly yells of those fierce cats as they answered each other from their dark places of refuge, or from the topmost limb of some tree; the flitting Jack-o'-Lanterns or will-o'-the-wisp—spontaneous combustion of the foul gas in the rotten swamps; the cry of heron or bittern, coming over, carried on the breeze, mingled with the wild clang of the fowl—all had at times terrors and messages of ill omen peculiar to themselves.

One of my old friends, a born naturalist, captured one of the wild, fierce cats without injuring it. With gentleness and patient perseverance he succeeded in taming it at last, so that it purred on one's knee as contentedly as the tamest of animals. A true British tiger it was at first: three months passed before he dared give the creature liberty.

The wild cat has now been driven up to the rocks and hillsides of Scotland. There he was until lately in danger of extirpation; happily a new class of naturalists has arisen, such as prefer to watch the wild creatures and their habits without killing them. Even the wild cat may become fairly numerous again in its native haunts.

man of nine-and-twenty, with the long, pale face, which so soon grew singularly haggard, and the foreign accent which clung to him? There is this to be said in excuse for his defects, that from childhood he had been a prisoner, a fugitive, and an exile, but he was wofully unlike his mother. He was, according to an excellent authority, "thoroughly common-place." He was jealous, grasping, both of money and of power, and hostile to the new dawn of learning which Margaret was striving, with womanly enthusiasm, to foster. He himself was not an unlearned man, for he had availed himself of the lagging hours of his captivity to master Latin, as well as to study the old legends of his ancestor, Arthur Pendragon.

The only point in which mother and son resembled each other, was that while he was undoubtedly a brave soldier, he was also a lover and promoter of peace. At the same time he was a dutiful and affectionate son, showing the Lady Margaret great outward reverence, and yet, as Bacon adds significantly, "not listening to her." But doubtless the mother in her saw the best of him whom she styled "my own swete and most dear kyng, and all my worldly joye," "my good herte," signing herself his "faithful, true bedeswoman and humble modyr." And she was on the friendliest terms with her meek and generous daughter-in-law, Elizabeth of York.

We must consider Margaret once more, in her noble public services, her enterprising attempts to drain Bedford Level; her great grants to numerous churches; her liberal benefits both to Oxford and Cambridge; and, above all, her magnificent endowments of St.

John's and Christ Church, Cambridge. In the building and establishing of the last she took great interest, reserving apartments for herself in the college, where she should come to inspect its progress. It was on such an occasion, that looking from a window, and seeing the dean call a faulty scholar to correction, she chimed in with her "*Lentè, lentè*" (gently, gently), "as accounting it better to mitigate his punishment than to procure his pardon. Mercy and justice making the best medley to offenders," ends Fuller, with his quaint sententiousness. Her zeal for the deliverance of the Holy Land from the infidel was so great that she was known to say in her age, "if the Cristen princes wold have warred upon the enemyes of his fayth, she wold be glad yet to go follow the hoste, and help to wash theyre clothes, for the love of Jhesu."

Margaret survived her promising grandson Prince Arthur, her good daughter-in-law, the queen, and Margaret's own worthy husband, created Earl of Derby, who died in 1504. The couple are said to have been like-minded in this, that while living in the world they "entered on religion;" that is, took the vows of a religious life. This is given as the reason why Margaret, who in the lifetime of her husband could not have been a nun, is nevertheless frequently represented in a nun's habit and veil. In the portraits and medallions which survive of her, she appears with fine strong features, which might have been beautiful in youth, and must have been full of dignity and benignity in age. She was sixty-three when Thomas Earl of Derby died, and it was in the same year that the last specimen

of her authorship appeared in a translation of the fourth book of an "Imitation of Christ," from a treatise similar in design to that of Thomas à Kempis. She had yet to sustain another severe loss in the death of her beloved son, King Henry, in his fifty-third year, when she was sixty-eight years of age. She lived a few months longer, during which she acted, in some respects, as guardian to her young grandson Henry VIII. Then, in 1509, we have the last piteous pathetic scene as described by Bishop Fisher in her funeral sermon. He laments over "these merciful and liberal hands that had to endure the most painful cramps—so grievously vexing her, and compelling her to cry, 'Oh, blessed Jesu! succour me.' It was a matter of great pity. Like a spear, it pierced the hearts of all true servants that were about her, and made them cry also of Jesu, for help and succour, with great abundance of tears. . . . But specially when they saw death so haste upon her, and that she must needs depart from them, and they should lose so gentle a mistress and so tender a lady. Then they wept marvellously; wept her ladies and kinswomen, to whom she was full kind; wept her poor gentlewomen, whom she had loved so tenderly before; wept her chamberers to whom she was full dear; wept her chaplains and other faithful servants."

Thus passed away, fitly bemoaned, the noblest life we know of in that generation. All that was mortal of her lies buried under a costly monument in her son's splendid chapel in Westminster Abbey.

SARAH TYTLER.

OUR WILD CREATURES.—IV. THE OTTER IN WINTER.

By A NATURALIST.

THE otter is far more numerous in this country than the general public suppose. His most cautious and retiring disposition is a great protection to him. His fur is very beautiful, and some of the foreign otters' skins are costly to a degree, especially those of the sea otters, or kalans of the Northern Pacific.

Otter hunting is a very exciting sport, and of late years ladies have taken part in it; as the sport is carried on on foot, it affords a great deal of wholesome exercise and excitement. All sport pursued in a proper manner is beneficial to the health and spirits; and it affords to many sights of the creatures in their native haunts, which they could not otherwise get. Because a wild creature is hunted, it does not follow that it is inevitably caught and killed; far from it.

He makes a nice pet when domesticated, and will follow his master or mistress about like a dog. He can even be trained to fish for his owners. Those remarkable people, the Chinese, have made use of him in that way, and of that feathered fisher, the cormorant, from a date that is not recorded.

In summer the otter has rare times, and, unless the winter is a severe one, he has nothing to trouble him; but if he is hard pressed for something to eat, woe betide anything in the shape of rabbit, fowl, moorhen, or other small deer that he comes across. As a rule, fish and frogs form his principal food; eels he has a special liking for; but his diet, like that of other creatures, varies according to the seasons.

Let me give you a picture of him from the life. Deep snow has fallen, and sharp frost set in afterwards. The river for long distances is covered with ice from bank to bank, with the exception of a few places where the sharp-running trout streams from the moors empty themselves into it. Here, owing to the

run, and it may be from a warmer temperature of the water, ice has not formed. The flags and reed stems, brittle with frost and broken down by the snow, have been deserted by all the creatures that sought food and shelter amongst them in the warmer weather. The coot, moorhen, and water-rail have gone; for starvation would be their fate if they lingered here. That wary bird, the water-rail, a brown, gliding streak in the lush herbage during the summer, is at his wits' end now; you may see him wandering in aimless fashion over the snow toward the open water of the trout stream. Not even a snipe is to be put up from the water meadows, for they are ice-bound.

We have been roaming along the banks of the river for some three or four miles without seeing more than one or two rabbits and some wood pigeons, so, for a change, we take the trout stream. From its source to where it empties itself into the river, it is a succession of shallows and long deep reaches of water between banks. The aspect here is southern, so if there is any life about it we may expect to see some now. And we are not disappointed, for in a basin-like pool there is a little grebe or dabchick fishing for minnows. It is a pleasant sight to see the little fellow dip under and come up again with a fish in his bill. But my foot has slipped, and he has heard and seen us. Under the bank and roots out of sight he is in a moment. Scape-scape, and a snipe springs from the mouth of a meadow drain that falls into the stream, and makes for the moor. He will not stay there long; as we proceed we see him coming back again, high over head, and he pitches behind us. We do not expect to fall in with a king-fisher; his haunt is farther up the stream, which here is a long, narrow pool, six or eight feet in depth. About the middle of it a great

ash had been blown down, for the water had washed all the earth from its roots. The tree has been cut up and carried away some time; but the hollow remains, making a bay of some size. The water has melted the snow which was close to the water's edge, but nowhere else. On the patch that is left something is resting; more than that, footprints are all about it. That tail, the remains of a meal, is certainly the tail of a trout; and of a good one too. This is the track or seal of the otter. No three-parts grown cub this, for the seals are large; at least, large for this locality. They do not reach the size here that I have known them to do in other streams and rivers. Perhaps we may get a glimpse of the fellow. I know every crook, bend, and hole well, where fur, fish, or feather could hide. The woodcutters have left long stakes to be used for hoop-making and other purposes; one of these, about fourteen feet in length, we take the liberty of borrowing. I fancy from the general look of things that he will not have moved far from where he has just fed.

We begin our disturbing operations by bringing the end of the pole whack on to a sheet of thin ice that has formed in a hollow close to us. Then we root and rattle under the bank, enough to bring it down. A few more good pokes and heaves, and out he shoots like a flash, a little to one side of us. He rushes the shallow, dives under some ice at the head of the pool, and is gone. It is only in exceptional cases that you can see him full and fair.

One of my friends, an accomplished angler, was trout fishing. He was wading at the time, and standing in a pool close under the bank. The head of a fine otter almost touched his knees as he rose from one of his dives. Perfect quiet will make you acquainted with most creatures, however wild they may be.

OUR WILD CREATURES.—V. THE MARTEN.

By A NATURALIST.

THE marten, pine marten, sweet marten, or marten cat, as he is variously called, according to the locality in which he is found, is now a very rare animal in England. In point of fact he has been almost exterminated. Not so very many years ago he was to be found in the forests that spread over the greater part of Sussex. A marten was killed there to my knowledge some time back.

So common was he in the olden time that his skin furnished the principal fur worn by ladies of rank; a very beautiful one it is too, when properly prepared. Nearly all that is in use now comes from the Continent, where the marten holds his own, and is likely to do, in spite of traps and trappers. He thrives there, like the wolf, because the vast tracts of forest are still, comparatively speaking, thinly populated; food is there in plenty, and he makes it his special study to exact toll from all small deer. Hares, rabbits, squirrels contribute to the furnishing of his larder, and for game birds he has a violent affection. Capercaillie, black grouse, hazel hen, and willow grouse, all in turn come into his death grip. On the ground, or in the trees, it is all the same to him. Lady marten frequently rears her beautiful kittens in the nest of some large bird of prey that has left it of its own accord, or has had notice to quit.

The general appearance of the marten is that of a small, low-legged fox, and the fur is of a rich warm brown hue. He is remarkably active and very strong. When he has his home near gardens he will eat and enjoy fruit. If let alone he would still increase and do well with us in England, but, being such a foe to game, he gets little quarter given him. When he makes his home on the ground it is under rocks or cairns of stone. In the Highlands of Scotland he is still to be found, in larger or smaller numbers, according to the district and the population. In the so-called deer forests he holds his own well. In some cases he has been very wisely protected, for he kills the Alpine hares, or blue hares, as they are generally called, which turn white in winter, and which have increased to such an extent, since orders were given for the destruction of all animals and birds of prey, as to become a perfect nuisance in the deer forests. For the

same reason the eagle has had the mantle of protection thrown over him.

Unless the tod-hunter, as the fox-shooter is called, routs him out with his fierce pack of dogs, of all sorts and conditions, or the lonely shepherd puts his swift collies on to him, because he has the credit of killing lambs, there is not much to disturb the marten. From his cairn of huge stones he peers out and watches the stags and hinds as they graze on the green strip of land beside the rocky burn. He has seen them many times before, and knows well that, if he shows himself, sharp hoofs will cut him down and trample on him, for some of the hinds have calves at foot. Both stags and hinds strike with amazing force and precision with their fore-feet; and the sharp edges of the hoofs cut like a knife.

The marten is wise, and confines himself chiefly to blue hares, grouse, and ptarmigan. That wary bird, the black cock or black grouse, gets into his clutches sometimes, through the bird's own vanity. A rare bird to show himself off is the full-plumaged black cock. Spring and summer are the seasons when he comes to grief, for then he bubbles and croons, with his tail spread over his back, and wings drooped, to his heart's content, and to the admiration of the grey hens all gathered round him. The wattle or comb over his eyes shows vividly out; his eyes are half-closed, and the white patches on the wings are plainly shown as he struts and jumps about. He mounts on some dead pine roots to give more effect to the crooning and bubbling expression of his love song; a flash of brown shoots up, and has him by the throat; it is the marten. The black cock's music has had charms for him as well as for the grey hens that have taken their hurried departure.

Destroyer of the feathered race though he is, there is one of them that even he must hold in dread. Keepers of the deer forest and the Highland foresters have stated, and also proved their statement, that the golden eagle will pounce on and kill the marten; in fact, that it is his favourite prey whenever he can get it. In captivity the golden eagle will also kill and eat any cat that comes within reach of his chain when he is on perch.

The marten in a captive state is a very pleasant-looking creature. I remember a fine pair for whom some large limbs of trees were placed in their house, over which they frisked and bounded with the ease and gracefulness of squirrels.

The skin of the marten has one very good quality, independently of its beauty, and that is sweetness—hence its name of sweet marten. Other members of the same family have a most abominable odour, which prevents their fur from being used. The smell can be got rid of, but the process is a long one.

To the small farmer in some lonely Scottish glen or mountain strath, the marten is a plague, and a very destructive one to boot. He will enter the sheiling, and murder the small but valuable stock of poultry, with all the ferociousness of his tribe. Still they have been tamed, the whole of the tribe, but they are not to be depended on. Ladies have brought up weasels from the nest—weasel kittens—and sometimes all has gone well; but I have known accidents happen of a very unpleasant nature. At times their natural thirst for blood will come back without any warning.

The love for living creatures as pets has increased of late to a great extent, and more is known now about the animals and birds of our native land than has ever been known before. What was often said to me in my childhood rings in my ears still: "A place for everything, and everything in its place." It is an old saw, but a wise one. From the marten downwards, his whole tribe in their own place act as natural police, and keep within due bounds other creatures that otherwise would seriously inconvenience man himself. The very creatures he protects—game of all kinds, for instance—would, if not killed, become a pest to those who cultivate the land. I can remember vast tracts of land, at one time uncultivated, where the whole tribe we allude to—the marten alone excepted—had free range, and no harm was done by them there; since these tracts have been cultivated the animals have been cleared out, the order of things has changed, and the natural police of that once wild country have passed away.

"MARCH VIOLETS."

From the German of the Tyrolese poet, Hermann von Gilm (Born 1813, died 1864).

SOME violets of deepest blue
Lay on a grave in evening dew;
A little maid knelt at its head,
And clasped her tiny hands and said—

At night, ye flowers, to mother say
What father does below by day:
That I have learnt to knit, and love
And kisses send to her above.

* * * * *

Once didst thou say, and even now I hear,
That poetry and songs to thee are dear;
Then must thou in the violets delight—
For lo! are they not poems writ by God,
With His own hand, upon the verdant sod,
In the pure blue of His celestial light?

* * * * *

One day I asked the violets
How do ye pass the night?
Ye, doubtless, go to sleep awhile
Till dawns the morning light.

Then from a thousand throats they said—
We never need to sleep,
The stars above us tell us things,
And open ears we keep.

We love each other, oh—so much!
We part not night nor day;
We violets are also stars,
And violets are they.

We then come forth—we then appear,
When shine the stars so bright;
And if we ever weep at all,
We do it in the night.

And if a violet e'er fades,
It's life is not in vain;
God kindles many thousand lights
To shine for it again.

We love each other, oh—so much!
We part not night nor day;
We violets are also stars,
And violets are they.

JOHN KELLY.

OUR WILD CREATURES.—VI. HARES AND RABBITS.

By A NATURALIST.

IN most of the quaint sayings that have been handed down from generation to generation, there is at any rate a foundation of truth, but they are specially true when they relate to the tricks and habits of birds and animals. We say, "As mad as a March hare," because it is in March that the hare is liveliest; he frolics about then, goes hither and thither, and enjoys his life most heartily. Although he is one of the commonest objects in the game-dealers' shops, perhaps few who look at him as he hangs abjectly there, have seen and studied the beautiful creature in his haunts, which are many.

On the edge of the wood and on the bleak hillside he has his seat or form. In the fields of standing corn, or when the last load has been carried, on the fallows, or crouched in the stubbles, you will find the merry-hearted brown hare. On the wild marshes, too, separated from the lonely beach where the curlews wail and the ring-dotterels pipe. By the sea wall of our North Kent marshlands he thrives and multiplies, growing large there.

"Timid as any hare" is a term of reproach which he does not merit, for in his own way he is a most courageous creature; his speed is proverbial; add to this his swimming and his boxing, to say nothing of his feats as a jumper, and few could say with truth and justice that he was behind other creatures in gifts and gallantry. If a couple of hares fall out, they settle the matter by sitting up and punching each other in the most scientific manner imaginable. The poet Cowper, as most of us are aware, kept some hares as pets, and they defended themselves or showed their displeasure in that way.

As an article of food he is, of course, in great request, sought for by those who are without a licence to hunt him, as well as by those who have one, so he need be wary and watchful.

He varies in size and weight, according to local surroundings. The marshland hares and those found in southern park lands, where the herbage is rich, are much larger than those that have their living to get in less favourable localities. His wild enemies are the fox and the stoat, but they do not catch him very often. Sometimes the fox will chase him in the open, but he must be sharp set to do it. Man is his chief foe, and in one form or another all manner of devices are employed for his destruction. Hares are certainly not so numerous as they once were, even in the

most favourable places. Farmers complain of the damage done to the crops by them; there is some reason in their grumblings; but that is only when the creatures have been preserved by artificial means for coursing purposes.

The cry of the hare when caught is very startling, almost human. The keepers make for the spot at once if they hear it at night, for they are quite certain poaching is going on.

There are three varieties of hares, the difference being the result of food or climate—our common hare, the Irish hare, and the Scotch or Alpine hare, which turns white, like the ptarmigan, in winter.

I know them all, but from the marked difference in weight and form shown by some of our own English hares, according to the county they have come from, I should not be prepared to give a decided opinion on the vexed question of species or varieties.

Like most game animals, he has been the innocent cause of much trouble; on that subject we will not touch. One thing is certain, if laws had not been made for the protection of our native wild creatures, they would have been exterminated long ago. The hare is one of our most interesting sylvan creatures; he has his wits about him, and, as I said before, he needs them all. The young come into the world with their eyes open, and begin to dot about after their parents very quickly.

The well-known wild rabbit can be found in all localities suitable to him—any wild spot that can give enough nourishment for a furze bush will keep a rabbit. He is a playful creature, now here, now there; suddenly coming to a dead stop, sitting up and listening, and looking round, then just as suddenly starting off to play again. The same conditions that affect the hare affect the rabbit—locality and food.

In some places they are not much better than vermin, not worth the shooting or trapping for food; in other more favoured parts they are eagerly sought for, and fetch a good price in the market; in fact, from some estates the rabbits alone bring large sums of money to the owners. There are large links and warrens on or close to the seashore, where the rabbits dot along and eat the seaweed to such an extent as to spoil them as marketable commodities.

In spite of many enemies, the rabbit flourishes if he can only once get a settlement. First on the list of his foes is man, who kills him for food by thousands; next come foxes, badgers,

otters, stoats, weasels, and polecats. With these may be included all our birds of prey, from the eagle to the brown owl.

In the Australian colonies, where he has been introduced, the rabbit has increased to such an extent as to become a perfect pest; many, and as yet unsuccessful, means have been employed for his destruction.

The rabbit does not sit in a form like the hare, but burrows in the ground, making long and intricate tunnelling in all directions. Chalk hills or sandy heaths, hedgerows or copse tangle, all suit him when he has been allowed to rest for a few years. On a large estate, small farms have been ruined, or rather the farmers have, from the crops being eaten up by them; this took place before the rabbits were in such demand as a food supply.

The skins are quite an article of value, and yet some years ago you might have had a cart-load of them at the rate of three for a shilling—from some estates at least. But that is a thing of the past when people did not care to eat them; they are now eagerly sought for.

The most deadly of all the rabbit's foes is the stoat, which will hunt him like a dog; no matter how he turns and winds about, his pursuer is sure to come on him, and kill him at last.

As pets, wild rabbits are most amusing; one that I owned before he could see plainly—for they are born with their eyes closed—was brought up on new milk till his teeth came. He quite made one of the family, and would jump on our knees, if we were sitting down, and play all manner of tricks to attract notice. No matter where one went, he would follow, unless measures were taken to prevent him. It was his affectionate disposition that caused me at last to part with him; for not wanting his company, one day when I was going out I left him in one of our rooms with food and other comforts. On my return, after having been absent for about three hours, I found he had nearly gnawed through the bottom part of a door; in a very short time he would have been able to get out, to go and see where his friend had got to.

On and about the wealds of Surrey and Sussex, fourteen to sixteen years ago, on some estates rabbits were bred in the warrens for their skins alone. They were wild ones; the rustics said that they were called silver-grey rabbits, and that cloaks were made from their skins for the ladies.

NOTICES OF NEW MUSIC.

JOSEPH WILLIAMS.

Night Hymn at Sea. Vocal duet; by Goring Thomas. We have not many compositions specially written for mezzo-sopranos and baritones, and on this account alone the above duet would be welcome, but it is, in addition, the work of a true musician, and a setting of fine words by Mrs. Hemans.

Operatic Pieces for Violin and Piano. By Henry Farmer.—No. 10 is before us, containing a selection of themes from Balfe's "Siege of Rochelle." It is gratifying to notice that nearly all the operas in this series are by native composers. Small as this recognition of British music is, it is better than the studied neglect and apathy which, until lately, have prevailed in our country.

Aus der Jugendzeit (Youthful Days). By Theodor Kirchner.—A collection of ten little pieces for the youthful pianist, full of good exercise in rhythm and style, and containing simple forms of true music. This is as it should be; why should children be supposed to be content with blatant rubbish?

Impromptu for Piano. By Hamilton Robinson.—A capital, melodious study in arpeggios, with an evident admiration for Chopin underlying it all. We can recommend it as an excellent teaching piece.

CURWEN AND SONS.

The Child Pianist. Grade II. By Mrs. J. Spencer Curwen.—We have already referred to this excellent course of combined theory and practice for children. Grade II. quite

comes up to the standard of the first grade, and the two make a most excellent system of elementary musical education. A guide for the teacher, full of useful hints, accompanies each part.

The Children's Sacred Wreath. Twelve sacred songs, by different writers. Set to music by Mary Carmichael.—This forms the third shilling volume of the Kindergarten Series, and is as valuable a contribution as the first number, already recommended to our young ones and their instructors.

Pianoforte Album of pieces. By the celebrated Russian composer, Tschaikowsky.—A capital album, forming No. 1895 of the Litoff collection. You will find pieces of varying difficulty.

such patterns as are likely to be of constant use in making and remaking at home, and is careful to give new hygienic patterns for children as well as adults, so that the readers of *THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER* may be aware of the best methods of dressing themselves. The following in hygienic under-clothing have already been given—Combination (drawers and chemise), princess petticoat (under-bodice and petticoat), divided skirt, under-bodice instead of stays, pyjama (night-dress combination). Also housemaid's or plain skirt, polonaise with waterfall back, Bernhardt mantle, dressing jacket, Princess of

Wales jacket and waistcoat (for tailor-made gown), mantelette with stole ends, Norfolk blouse with pleats, ditto with yoke; blouse polonaise, princess dress (or dressing-gown), Louis XI. bodice with long fronts, Bernhardt mantle with pleated front, plain dress-bodice suitable for cotton or woollen materials; Garibaldi blouse with loose front, new skirt pattern with rounded back, bathing dress, new polonaise, winter bodice with full sleeves, Irish wrap or shawl cloak, blanket dressing gown, emancipation suit, dress drawers, corselet bodice with full front, spring mantle, polonaise with pointed fronts, Directoire

jacket-bodice, striped tight-fitting tennis or walking jacket, honeycombed Garibaldi skirt, new American bodice instead of stays, new Corday skirt with pleats, new jacket-bodice with waistcoat, princess dress, jacket and waistcoat, "Little Lord Fauntleroy" suit, braided bodice and revers, Directoire jacket with folded front, Empire bodice, men's pyjama, a mantle without sleeves, a plain gored princess chemise, Breton jacket and waistcoat, four-in-hand cape, jacket for out or indoor wear, skirt with two breadths, Senorita jacket, walking gaiter, tailor-made bodice, new cape, and seamless bodice or polonaise.

OUR WILD CREATURES.—VII. MOLES AND HEDGEHOGS.

By A NATURALIST.



THE HEDGEHOG.

"BLIND as a mole," folks say, but it is a very unsuitable and unfair comparison. The mole can see very well indeed, in his own peculiar fashion. His eyes are certainly small; larger eyes would not be of any service to him, for his mode of life is very peculiar. Indeed, the mole is altogether a living wonder, and, for his size, he is the strongest creature in existence; we might also call him the prince of excavators.

Our space will not permit me to give any detailed account of his wonderful underground labours, nor of the dwelling which he shares with his family; I will only speak here of his life above ground, and the good he does to man, who, however, kills him as a foe, as he does other creatures that are in reality his friends.

The tunnels made by the mole act as drainage in wet pasture lands, and the hillocks of finest earth which he throws up make lands so much more fertile, that the finest feed for cattle is produced. Sheep, in particular, thrive well in pasture that is full of old mole hills; for the very best herbage grows on them.

On the velvet-like lawn of a country mansion his hills are not viewed with favour. He generally forfeits his life when he raises them there. His true place is in the fields, but he is almost everywhere more or less—in the woods, by the hedgerow, in the garden, and in the marshes. It would be an impossible task to try to form any idea of the number of worms and insects that the mole devours; this little gentleman in the velvet coat has a most ferocious appetite. Whatever, in fact, he does, he does it with all his might. He can swim finely; his forefeet, which are very powerful, make rare paddles for sending him along. When he leaves his underground labours for a while in order to take a run in the bright sunshine, he never creeps about. I have seen him and his companions dash along like rats. Before they came fully in sight I have fancied that some of those long-

tailed gentry were "making tracks" at their best pace.

As a rule he takes the side of the road; but I have seen him sometimes, when he has taken it into his head to explore in the hedgerow, poking and twisting his nose about in all directions, now and again holding up his head to sniff, then running on as before.

If a nest of young robins but newly hatched should lie in his way, I would not give much for their little lives, or for those of the young of the willow wrens. All small birds which build on the ground run the risk of losing their young by their becoming a prey to the mole. I have picked him up at times cautiously by the back, for he bites

in a most fierce manner, and wriggles about desperately in his attempts to escape.

Anyone that is familiar, through much observation, with the mole's method of working, can tell from his movements when the weather is about to change.

He has feathered enemies amongst birds of prey that watch the hills as he throws them up, and grip him when they can. His coat is always beautiful; no matter when or where he may have been working, not a speck of dirt ever shows on it; although I have captured him in the act of heaving up wet clay soil, I have never seen him look anything but clean.

The general public know little about him beyond the fact that he lives underground and does damage—so they say—to the farmers, who have him caught in traps.

The hedgehog, urchin, or hedgepig, as he is variously called, has also had a bad name given to him without deserving it. Two accusations against him I will mention: sucking milk from cows and robbing orchards. Our poor little English porcupine is not reduced to such straits as were the Roman twins, and he is a less dangerous foe to orchards than the schoolboy is, though, like his great namesake, the pig, he will eat almost anything that comes in his way. I often renew my acquaintance with him, both in his waking and in his sleeping hours. All through the long winter months he sleeps, rolled up in a ball, in dead leaves and grass, under some hedge bank, or in the shelter of an old wall. A good time for watching his little "tricks and manners" is on warm nights in spring and summer. Many a time have I noted him, as he feeds by night, running hither and thither, poking about, scratching, and gently whining to himself; he has even come and examined my shoes, sniffing and whining as he did so, whilst I stood perfectly still, so as not to alarm the little fellow, in order that I might watch him the better. When I did move, he did not roll himself up in a ball; he simply jogged on his way.

The hedgehog must do a great amount of

good, for this reason: insects and small reptiles form a part of his diet, so he grubs up a great many wild plants, some of which he eats; others he disturbs, that he may get at those insects which shelter at their roots. Sometimes, it is true, he visits a garden, where he will eat a few beans or nibble the tops of other things, but the harm done is very small. Fallen fruit he will eat, when he can get it, and why not? It would probably otherwise lie and rot. Yet for these little crimes he is cruelly trapped. When this happens he justifies his name, and the poor little creature squeaks most pitifully. He is on the black list of the gamekeeper, who shows him no mercy at all. For my part I am very favourably disposed towards him; he is, on the whole, a benefactor to man, if a prickly one.

A quaint looking little animal he is, too, and one that never puts himself in the way if he can help it.

It is a well-known fact that those insects which are most injurious to man's labours in the garden and the field do their work at night, including grubs, larvae, and the rest. Now small reptiles feed on insects, as a rule, so that the hedgehog through their means does double duty, for he lives on both. It is small wonder if he is caught in a trap when it is set with some dainty morsel. If dog or cat wandered where he does in search of their food they would get caught too, with the same bait. However, it is only when he wanders near houses and gardens that he gets into trouble; away from them he can live unmolested, and bring up his family in the snugest home he can make for them.

Many of you have read Mrs. Ewing's charming book, "Brothers of Pity," where Father Hedgehog relates the adventures of himself, his wife, and his seven urchins, and tells of the gipsy folk in their wood. Few have described country scenes more lovingly than she did. And Miss Mitford's sketch of old Isaac Bint, the mole-catcher, ought not to be forgotten, that "tall, lean, gloomy personage, who was the wise man of the village, and the oracle of the village inn."

When the little urchins make their first appearance in the world, they are very different from their parents in appearance; their spines resemble hair, but these very soon harden, and they begin to look like their elders. There is not the least danger of the hedgehogs being exterminated at present, in spite of traditional superstition which has handed down his name in connection with the bat, the toad, and the owl, all which inoffensive creatures are still in ill odour, although the spread of literature and better education has done much to set the public right as to the true use and position of these. All the creatures that come out by night, though they do man good services by their destruction of his worst enemies, are looked upon by the rustic population as uncanny.

milliners declare that they long to see the bonnet *entirely discarded* for old ladies, for a well-made hat suits them far better.

I see that there is a revival of that old colour called "magenta," which, with a darker shade called "solferino," were both named after the two battles fought in Lombardy by the Austrians. Both were the first products of the "aniline dye" process, and are about as unnatural as colours could be. But as yet we only see magenta in combination with other colours, not alone. The dress materials most used are tweed and serge, and a light make of summer homespun. The colours are grey, fawn, and stone, in pale shades, generally crossed with faint cross-bars of dark shades, making, more or less, fine plaids. The larger plaids are generally cut on the cross, and the bodice follows this example. The skirts that are cut plain are often hemmed up on the outside, and have four, or even five, rows of machine-stitching round them, or perhaps they are bordered like one of our illustrations, with several rows of velvet ribbon or braid.

There is some trouble in making one of these perfectly plain skirts hang well, and I forget whether I have mentioned that the fronts of the hem are sometimes padded. A piece of alpaca, or lining, about half a yard long, and a quarter of a yard deep, has a layer of wadding laid on it, and is then folded in two, and tacked inside the hem, just in the front, where it adds the least substance to the hem, and also very materially saves the front of the boot, or that of the stocking, which often becomes very thin.

Sashes are much worn, but are no longer at the back, only they are so at the side, and are sometimes tied round the waist and behind in large bows. The sash may be worn with a pointed bodice by being folded in the centre, sewn on to the point in front, passed round the waist, and tied in large loops at the back, but the ends are not necessarily long.

The paper pattern for the month is that of the illustration—"Bodice gathered in front and fastened under the arm." It is composed of two collars, one sleeve, two fronts, cuff, three back pieces—in all nine pieces. The under or lining fronts button down the middle, and the full or gathered part at the side under the arm. The bodice will be worn in cotton, woollen, or silk, and there is no doubt that it will be one of the fashions of the early autumn and winter.

All paper patterns are of medium size, viz., thirty-six inches round the chest, with no turnings allowed, and only one size is prepared for sale. They may be had of "The Lady Dressmaker," care of Mr. H. G. Davis, 73, Ludgate Hill, E.C., price 1s. each; if tacked in place, 6d. extra. The addresses should be fully given. Postal notes should be crossed, but not filled up with any name. Patterns already issued may always be obtained. As the object aimed at is use, not fashion, "The Lady Dressmaker" selects such patterns as are likely to be of constant use in making and remaking at home, and is careful to give new hygienic patterns for children as well as adults, so that the readers of THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER may be aware of the best methods of dressing them-

selves. The following in hygienic under-clothing have already been given—Combination (drawers and chemise), princess petticoat (under-bodice and petticoat), divided skirt, under bodice instead of stays, pyjama (night-dress combination). Also housemaid's or plain skirt, polonaise with waterfall back, Bernhardt mantle, dressing jacket, Princess of Wales jacket and waistcoat (for tailor-made gown), mantelette with stole ends, Norfolk blouse with pleats, ditto with yoke; blouse polonaise, princess dress (or dressing-gown), Louis XI. bodice with long fronts, Bernhardt mantle with pleated front, plain dress-bodice suitable for cotton or woollen materials; Garibaldi blouse with loose front, new skirt pattern with rounded back, bathing dress, new polonaise, winter bodice with full sleeves, Irish wrap or shawl cloak, blanket dressing gown, emancipation suit, dress drawers, corselet bodice with full front, spring mantle, polonaise with pointed fronts, Directoire jacket-bodice, striped tight-fitting tennis or walking jacket, honeycombed Garibaldi skirt, new American bodice instead of stays, new Corday skirt with pleats, new jacket-bodice with waistcoat, princess dress, jacket and waistcoat, "Little Lord Fauntleroy" suit, braided bodice and revers, Directoire jacket with folded front, Empire bodice, men's pyjama, a mantle without sleeves, a plain gored princess chemise, Breton jacket and waistcoat, four-in-hand cape, jacket for out or in-door wear, skirt with two breadths, Senorita jacket, walking gaiter, tailor-made bodice, new cape, seamless bodice or polonaise, and bodice gathered in front and fastened under the arm.



OUR WILD CREATURES.—VIII. RATS AND MICE.

By A NATURALIST.

By those competent to form an opinion, the brown rat is supposed to have been introduced into England from Persia and the East Indies about the year 1730, through ships trading between those countries and our own. The only rat known up to that time was the—comparatively speaking—harmless black rat, which has now become very scarce amongst us. The brown rat is a much fiercer and stronger animal, and the gentler species has been driven out, and, in fact, almost exterminated by him. He is a most ferocious and destructive creature, full of cunning and rich in resources. He can burrow in the most intricate manner, climb up anything, from a wall to a tree; is a good swimmer and diver, and will kill and eat any creature weaker than himself, whether it be furred or feathered. Three parts of the mischief laid to the door of different creatures, supposed to be very predaceous in their habits, is done by the thieving and murderous brown rat.

Having summed up his bad qualities, let us give him credit for two very good ones—perseverance and courage. Taking his size into consideration, there is no creature more fierce when at bay than he is.*

* In the Sandwich Islands the rats are very numerous and very large. More than once I have had a lively encounter with one in a bedroom when keeping watch at night; and twice I killed my rat with a walking-stick, although in cold blood I was usually frightened of them. They were as large and as lively as kittens some months old.—J. A. OWEN.

The water rat, or water vole, is a very gentle creature; he always seems to me an otter in miniature. He is a vegetable feeder, and none of the misdeeds of the brown rat can be laid to his charge. There is a black variety, which I have seen in the Surrey brooks, not quite so large as the ordinary water vole. Voles are playful creatures; I have spent many an hour in watching them at their little games. If you chance to come across him sitting on the leaf of a water-lily, holding one of the seed pods in his forepaws, and contentedly munching away, you will agree with me that he is a quaint little water sprite. No harm can be ascribed to him beyond the holes and runs he makes in the banks.

First on our list of mice is the large-headed, short-tailed field mouse, the dog mouse of the rustics. He is the largest of his family, and when full grown he is the size of a young rat. Being also a vegetable feeder, he can do any amount of mischief in the gardens of country houses near the woods. Last summer I saw a fine bed of white verbenas, where the trusses of bloom had all been clean cut off; some fine pansy blossoms had also been broken. The mischief was attributed to hares that were supposed to have wandered into the garden from the adjoining wood; but quite accidentally one day the mice were seen to climb up the flower stems, bite off the blooms, and carry them away to their holes. Traps were set, and in the course of two days twenty of

them were caught. They are the favourite food of owls, and on that account alone those useful and beautiful birds ought to be protected.

The long-tailed wood mouse is a beautiful little creature, fawn coloured above and white below; he is a denizen of the woods, as his name implies, very harmless; as is also that diminutive member of his tribe, the harvest mouse, which has been so graphically described by the faithful naturalist, White, of Selborne.

The nest of this small mouse may be found during harvest-time, suspended on some growing beanstalk or even a thistle, or perhaps on some stems of wheat where these grow close together. The wind often makes it rock to and fro, but the clever animal closes up the opening to her nest so carefully, in order to prevent her young from being shaken out, that it is not easy to find any entrance. The whole fabric might be rolled about like a ball, without doing any damage to it or its occupants.

Last, we have the red meadow mouse. All these varieties live in the meadows, the hedges, and the woods, but if they can get at the fruit and vegetables of a garden, they will enjoy almost everything—wall fruit, plums, pears, and choice flowers. They seem to know exactly when all these have arrived at perfection, and will then come in numbers from the woods and meadows to take their share of good things.

Then there are the shrews, those long-nosed, long-tailed, quaint-looking creatures which are principally insect feeders. The common shrew is frequently found dead on some path, without anything to show how it came by its death. An unknown disease sweeps these creatures off at stated seasons. Superstition has fixed upon this small, harmless creature, and placed its dread ban upon it. Even now, in our enlightened age, cattle and other creatures are believed by some of our country-folk to be shrew struck, and their remedy for this is to bore a hole with an auger in some ash tree, catch a poor little shrew, and put him in it alive, and then carefully stop up the hole. If you remonstrate with the rustic and ask him how he can do anything so barbarous, he will look at you with an air of superior pity, and say, "Ah, you doan't know!"

It is done in obedience to a certain traditional folklore that has been handed down by many generations. Some of their customs are even more hurtful than this.

The oared shrew is larger than the last mentioned, and it is very little known. In general appearance it resembles the water shrew, which has its home in any tiny rill or stream whose banks are capable of giving shelter to it. It is a most expert swimmer and diver; many a time have I watched it searching for its food at the bottom of the rill or brook. It looks as if it were covered with quicksilver, as it nimbly pokes its little snout about, now here and now there, among the dead leaves and little pebbles. This silvery appearance is caused by the air bubbles that cling to its fur. The movements are most interesting and amusing, especially when he propels himself nimbly along the surface with his snout turned up, nosing everything that comes in his way. When a couple are at play, chasing one another about, no prettier sight, as a bit of aquatic life, could be wished for.

Last of all we have the common mouse of our dwellings, that little bright-eyed thief, a

mixture of shyness and impudence, which small as he is, often taxes the patience and temper of the thrifty housewife to the utmost. Apart from its mischievous and predatory habits, he really is a *very pretty creature*, full of fun and antics. He has no friends, for men, women, boys, and the whole army of animals and birds destroy him. If he does take toll from labours not his own, the tables are turned on him most surely; and sooner or later he becomes food for others. No creature that is in the least carnivorous lets a vulgar little mouse escape him if he can help it.

Ratskins are in great request for making gloves. In Paris the sewers are periodically visited by men in order to catch the rats for this purpose. I have now in my possession a ratskin which is nearly a foot long and eleven inches wide. At the time of the Commune the people not only sought the rats on account of their skins, but they were thankful to have them to augment their small stock of provisions.

REPORT OF THE ORIGINAL STORY COMPETITION.



It has interested us to compare the results of our last three literary competitions: "The Essays on a Shakesperian Heroine," "Confessions," and the Original Stories, that include a scene represented pictorially

in the November part of last year. Of the three tasks the last has appealed to the greatest number of girls, has been undertaken with the most enthusiasm, and has been attended on the whole with the best results.

Broadly speaking, this competition has been a success—the general level of excellence reached being higher than we had expected; and yet, on concluding our first examination of the great pile of MSS., we became aware of a feeling of disappointment that our second examination greatly strengthened.

Nearly nine hundred stories were sent, four hundred and fifty of which were labelled "Fair" after the first perusal. There was no ridiculous story, no joke, no paper of which the writer should be ashamed. Rudimentary laws of grammar were respected by the majority of the competitors; absurdly improbable incidents were almost conspicuous by their rarity; mistakes in spelling were only to be found in the stories of the youngest girls; and the handwriting of at least five hundred of the competitors was good.

This is an excellent result, pointing as it does not only to the satisfactory education so many girls receive nowadays, but to the care and industry, and above all to the seriousness with which our girls have approached the task we set them. Many critics have affirmed that the style of women writers, bad as it is to-day, will probably be worse to-morrow—a gloomy foreboding not to be realised if the stories sent us are representative of the initial efforts of the future authors.

On the other hand, it is a disappointment to have to state that not one story displays unusual ability, conspicuous invention, minuteness of observation, or any of the qualities that are born in a writer, and justify her in attempting to instruct and amuse the world. A respectable level is reached by many of our competitors, but not one of them has given us an original work of art. Of course it is difficult to write a short story, to write anything

that is "new," and no doubt it is largely owing to the fact that so many girls show that they possess sufficient knowledge of construction to write a good story, that has made their comparative failure the more noticeable. For many of the competitors possess a fair literary equipment, so to speak, and have read a great deal, and of these it cannot be said that they have not the words wherewith to express their meaning. Some girls may object that they had not fair play, owing to their being obliged to write up to a picture, and that a good and original conception could not be carried out, because it did not include such a scene as that represented in the picture. We condole with these, but are bound to say that the nine hundred stories show the picture to be one that admits of a remarkable number of interpretations, and that those competitors who were determined not to hamper themselves further than to feel the obligation of bringing together a woman and a girl, who have little or nothing to do with the story, have not been successful.

Shipwrecks, deaths, wars, the discovery of hidden gold, and failures on the Stock Exchange usher in many of the stories, the vast majority of which have a sombre background. This, of course, was to be expected; the older figure in the picture being a soberly dressed lady, probably a widow, and the younger a girl with a somewhat sad expression of face. The latter is named Muriel by ninety-seven girls—a most remarkable fact of which we cannot find an explanation. The competitors, or rather the majority of them, consider neither of the ladies beautiful, but are unanimous in their praise of the disposition of the older one. The younger, though she does duty as heroine, is not so universal a favourite, though most of the competitors consider her to be "more than beautiful"—the praise refers to mental excellences, and does not include physical ones. There is, however, a consensus of opinion that both her character and her personal appearance are "interesting," a time-honoured attribute of a heroine. She is a woeful egoist, according to some of the stories; a pert and spoilt child, according to others; but three out of four of the competitors describe her as a good girl.

In about one-third of the stories the older lady is the bearer of sad tidings to the younger; in others they are discussing a painful occurrence, intelligence of which has

just reached them; in a few of the stories the lady is chiding the girl; and in the remainder, perhaps one-half, the girl is the object of a sad, curious, or joyful interest to the lady.

The plots vary greatly. Broadly speaking, those that are the simplest are the best. The scene represented in the picture is laid in every quarter of the globe—in Germany, in China, in Madagascar, and in Russia; but in most of the papers in a school or manor-house pleasantly situated in an English village or on the outskirts of a small town.

The pathos of the competitors is superior to their humour, and their descriptions of scenery more praiseworthy than their descriptions of character. The dialogue in many of the stories is very fairly good, but is sometimes difficult to follow, because the writers do not tell us who it is that is speaking.

FIRST PRIZE, value five guineas, awarded to Lucy C. Ewbank, St. John's, Ryde, 141 of Wight.

SECOND PRIZE, value three guineas, to La Baronne H. de Boerio, Dinan, France.

HONOURABLE MENTION.

E. H. Ashwin, Evesham, Worcestershire.
Stella E. Vernon Bailey, Clevedon, Somerset.
Susan Bailey, Stockport.
Edith H. Bomford, Atch Lench, Evesham.
Eleanor M. Bomford, Atch Lench, Evesham.
Mary A. Carrick, Brampton, Cumberland.
Bertha E. Cotton, Sandwich, Kent.
The Lady Beatrice Egerton, St. James's, London.
Edith H. Entwisle, Wakefield.
A. S. Falconer, Duns, N.B.
M. McEwan Falconer, Catterham Valley.
May Foxall, Tufnell Park, London.
Mary F. Gallagher, Glasgow.
Emily L. Gilloch, Pas de Calais, France.
Georgina Gwillim, Brackley, Northants.
Gertrude Hancot, New Malden, Surrey.
Ethel M. Harding, Padstow, Cornwall.
Florence C. Holdsworth, Hull.
Frances Hurrell, Maldon, Essex.
Frances M. James, Bedford.
Amy R. Marras, Fulham, London.
E. J. Martin, Littleport.
Lilie Mathews, Evesham.
Evangeline A. Ben Oliel, Jaffa, Palestine.
Margaret A. Rotherham, Crouch End, N.
Susie Troland, Coleraine, co. Derry, Ireland.
Amelia M. Workman, Penzance, Cornwall.

OUR WILD CREATURES.—IX. SQUIRRELS AND DORMICE.

By A NATURALIST.

THE common or red squirrel is one of the liveliest and most attractive of our wild creatures. He belongs to the wood, and although he makes very short excursions now and then into the pastures without, yet he never strays away far from a tree or trees. He will, however, cross a road, from one hedge to another, in order to get the hazel-nuts; or he may visit a meadow where trees are dotted about, to get some of the good things to be found there. And he will scratch truffles up, and make a meal of them. He is not always after beech-nuts when you see him busy under the beech-trees.

I have been watching the squirrel and his ways for some months lately, and have found him to be a very interesting little fellow. A very early riser he is; directly the sun is up he gets his breakfast. You may see whole families of squirrels in the course of a morning's stroll through the woods and plantations, where they are not molested. To a practised eye and ear, squirrels betray their whereabouts before they are actually visible. For one thing, you will see one or two scales of a fir-cone fall, which tells you the little animal is eating the seeds of it; or the tip of a bough will gently bend down and rise again. Or you may hear the tack, tack, tack of his claws sometimes on the bark of a tree. If he thinks you have no intention of coming nearer, after having spied you out with his bright, soft eyes, he will give one or two chuck, chucks, just to let his companions know that something strange is about.

We need not go any closer; we can see them well, as they sit there, father, mother, and three half-grown ones. I have a strong suspicion that they have just come from the cottage garden at the bottom of the plantation, for the whole roost are on the top of a larch-fir. They are in their summer dress, which is a thin one; their tails are only those of dormice. It is only in the winter months that the squirrel has a bushy tail and tips to his ears. This family has undoubtedly had a good feed from the garden, for they glide up and over the branches in the calm deliberate manner which tells of full stomachs and satisfied appetites.

For the sake of a little fun, we soon change all this by imitating the hoot and cry of the brown owl. It is effectual enough; there is a rush and a scolding chatter, the tack, tack of the claws on the bark, and away they go, their tails in a line with their bodies, fox-fashion; for the squirrel only holds his tail up over his

back when he is in a sitting position. If he chance to be hunting over wet grass, which is a frequent pursuit of his after a shower, his tail is held up a little, just sufficient to keep it from getting wet through, but not in the fashion it is when he is feeding or sitting up, enjoying himself in the bright sunshine.

He makes a twig cradle, or dray, as the country folk call it, in which to rear his young ones; it looks like some large bird's-nest. His family are well looked after, and it is one of the most interesting sights, for one who is fond of outdoor life, to see a family of young squirrels taking their first lessons in climbing and jumping. Here in England he is not persecuted to any great extent, and he can get plenty of food, especially in our southern counties. Squirrels were introduced into Scotland some years ago by various gentlemen; and there they have spread and multiplied in all directions, but have damaged the larch plantations by eating off the tender top shoots and peeling the bark to such an extent that they have been destroyed wholesale.

The squirrel is a provident creature, laying up stores for the winter, not only in one larder, but in several different ones; and he knows just where to go when he wants a meal. Choice fruit is one of the good things that he loves; I have frequently seen him come from the woods, and run up the trees on a gentleman's lawn, to wait there until the gardeners had gone to their meals. Then he would come down, and actually enter the greenhouses to steal the fruit. The squirrels did this at one time to such an extent that one of the men was told off to watch and shoot them. It is only when they pilfer in the gardens that they come to grief, however; but they have such an idea of quality and quantity that they will leave the hazel-nuts and steal filberts and cob-nuts; while such common fruit as apples and pears they will despise, if nectarines or peaches are to be procured.

In spite of these little peccadilloes, the squirrel is, on the whole, a general favourite, and by all he is considered to be one of the greatest ornaments of our woods. In the mountains of Colorado we have eaten him when no other flesh meat was to be procured. He tasted good, like something between a rabbit and a chicken; but I confess I felt as though I were committing a sin, and eating something that was akin to a human, as the rustics say.

That beautiful and gentle creature, the dor-

mouse, with his coat of fawn, and his soft, dark eyes, is, we are sorry to say, becoming comparatively speaking rare. Although a few years back I could have found a dozen of them, I cannot now find one in the same distance. The reason of this is that he is a creature of the hedgerows and bushes. Before the present system of farming was in vogue, the fields were smaller, and divided by fine old hedges, which furnished a home, and in fact a sanctuary, for our wild creatures. These hedges have been grubbed up; shelter and food have gone with them, and as a consequence the creatures also. So much influence over living things has this had, that even insect life has been affected by it, especially as regards the moths, and the various species of sphinxes in particular.

To return to our favourite, the innocent little dormouse. As you walk along the meadow, by the hedge-side, which is just beginning to show, by the slight change in its foliage and the undergrowth of hedge plants, that the summer is drawing to a close, you may hear a leaf rustle and see a twig or two move. On looking you may see the dormouse gliding along. If you frighten him he will jump, squirrel fashion, from twig to twig, and drop down among the roots; but we will stand perfectly still. He stops too; we can see him well as he sits up and looks wistfully round with those soft eyes of his. He looks like a little ball of fawn-coloured plush, and fancying there is nothing to hurt him, he begins to eat something that he had in his mouth when he was first startled. What dainty little forefeet, we might almost say hands, he has to hold his food up to his mouth with! He can use them deftly too. Whenever I see him I think of Oberon and his queen.

I have missed him from his well-loved haunts now for some time. It is long since I last saw his nest in the hedgerow, so cleverly made of dry grass blades, like a long-tailed tit's nest in shape, in which he sleeps, rolled up in a ball, the whole long winter through.

Like the squirrel, the dormouse provides for the colder months. The true lover of natural life grieves to miss a beautiful, harmless creature like the gentle dormouse; scientific farmings and the spread of bricks and mortar have done much to drive away this and other pretty wild things. The changes bring compensation, however, to many, if not to all of us.

"THE PRINCESS'S BOUQUET."

PERHAPS the readers of THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER may like to hear what happened at a large school in the South of England several years ago. The pupils, one hundred and fifty in number, were all daughters of clergymen, and lived in a fine house, surrounded by extensive grounds. It was a well-known institution—bishops visited, celebrated professors lectured; in short, it was considered a model school.

It was a lovely summer's day, and the pupils were all out in the gardens. Some were playing lawn tennis, some sauntering about the shady walks; others, more studious, were turning their playtime to account by learning all they could in the short time that remained, for the term was nearly ended. The examinations were in full swing, and in a few days the prizes would be distributed. A royal princess had promised to attend on that eventful

occasion, and to give the prizes to the happy recipients. You may imagine what excitement this caused, and how the girls talked!

"Do you know," cried one, "that the princess is to have a bouquet?"

"Yes, the girl who has the prize for good conduct is to present it," said another.

"What a pity! for Mary Chester is sure to get that prize, and she is so plain and awkward. If only Effie Durham could give the bouquet, she is so pretty and graceful."

"There is no chance of that. Mary Chester has the most marks for good conduct; and no wonder, she is such a prig. I can't bear a girl who has no fun in her."

"Hush! here she comes, walking with Mlle. Latour. How she can like that snuffy old French thing I can't imagine."

Just then a slim, fair-haired girl appeared

on one of the terraces, and ran quickly down the steps. "Effie, Effie!" resounded on all sides, as her companions went forward to meet her. She was evidently a favourite.

"Listen, girls, all of you!" she cried. "The prizes are to be given away on Thursday, and the princess has promised a scholarship for the first girl in the school."

All eyes were immediately turned towards Mary Chester. She was not brilliant, but she was industrious, and as all the marks were added together to fix the places, Mary retained hers by virtue of her good conduct and general application.

"It's no use trying for that. Nobody has a chance. Of course Mary Chester will get it," were the remarks muttered on all sides.

Mary heard them, and the blood rose under her dark skin; she opened her lips to speak,

and the rest of them may shed a few honest tears over me. Eh, Dolly?"

"How you do talk, Miss Dulcey!" said Dolly, who took it all literally. "Nobody could do without you."

The appearance of Weatherley turned the conversation to inquiries about Dauncey's departure.

"How did he bear up?" asked Flo, with clasped hands; she was always inclined to be dramatic, and would have liked to go on the stage—so she thought.

"He went off all right," replied the more matter-of-fact Weatherley.

Miss Dulcey laughed, and went in search of Belle. Mr. Burmester and

Dolly took their departure soon after, and Flo was left alone with Pearce the lawyer; for Weatherley also carried off his basket of flowers to Aunt Belle.

Pearce was an admirer of beauty as well as worth, so he made himself agreeable to Flo during the absence of her sister. She was by no means indifferent to the well-dressed and dapper little man's complimentary speeches, and for the moment forgot her anxieties, to indulge in polite banter, or, as it is pertinently expressed, in chaff. She was an adept in this superficial game, and threw herself into it without counting either gain or loss. They played at it for

some time, when Pearce interrupted it by saying, as he looked at his watch—

"The fact is, Miss Flora, I came over to ask your sister if I could be of any use in this emergency. I have an appointment at two. Would you mind asking Miss Dauncey if I could have a few minutes' conversation with her? I know how much engaged she must be; but it is important."

As Flo left the room Pearce muttered—

"She certainly is one of the most elegant and attractive girls I ever saw in my life."

(To be continued.)

OUR WILD CREATURES.—X. BATS.

By A NATURALIST.

IN different counties these go by various names; in some parts they are called "flutter-mice," in others "flittermice," and in the marshlands of Kent "flindermice." These names will at once suggest to those of you who study German "*Fledermaus*." In Shakespeare's time they seem to have been called "rearmice," for in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Queen Titania bids some of her fairies "war with rearmice for their leathern wings, to make my small elves coats."

Being essentially creatures of the night, little really is known about bats by the general public. If only they were allowed to rest in peace by those ignorant of them and their ways, it would be well. But instead of this they are killed, when the chance offers, as creatures of ill omen, and are universally in bad repute. That magnificent insect, the death's-head moth, shares the same fate. Here again the friend of man is destroyed by his crass ignorance, for the bats take the place of the swifts, the swallows, and the martens when these retire for the night; and so the destruction of the vast hosts of insects that would, if a check were not put on their increase, render life a misery, goes on day and night.

In England we have fourteen or fifteen species of bats; some of these may have flown over from the Continent, for they are very strong and swift on the wing. We have not sufficient space here to give all their names and their distinctive marks in form and colour, but will confine ourselves to mentioning the species that are most generally known—the mouse bat or common bat, that beautiful creature the long-eared bat, and the great bat. This last is rightly named, for he measures fourteen inches from tip to tip of its wings.

I have been fond of watching bats and their ways, and have even kept them as pets, so that I can speak about these curious and most useful creatures with some degree of authority.

The different species feed on different insects. I came to this conclusion from personal observation. All three varieties named are common in certain places in our Southern counties. You may see them all on the wing at the same time, flying at different heights; doubtless because the various sorts of insects fly at different levels. A very pungent odour proceeds from the bat, something like aromatic vinegar diluted; that is the only smell, at least, that I can compare it to. This sometimes betrays their whereabouts and leads to their destruction.

I was ranging the woods in Surrey one day in company with a woodman, when he sud-

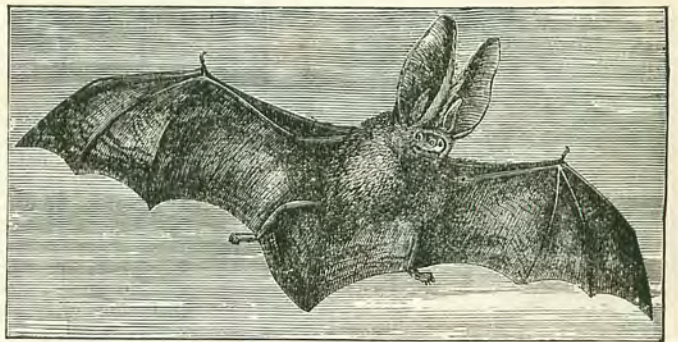
denly stopped as we were passing a hollow tree, placed his finger on the side of his nose, and said, "Bats!" He wasted no words, but quickly cutting a pliant switch, poked it into a hole in a dead limb, and in less than ten minutes fifteen great bats lay dead on the sward.

"They gits down the chimbleys, that's what them there varmint does, and eats the bacon. I allus settles them things when I comes across 'em." I made no comment, for the woodman's prejudices are strong and deeply rooted. Better educated people than they still regard bats as ominous visitors, and if one chances to fly into a house through an open window, they consider it as a warning of approaching sickness or death.

Twilight is the time for watching the bat on the hunt for his food. The soft, moist evening air is favourable to insect life. In the cold winter months he hibernates; a very wise arrangement, for in our cold climate there would be scanty provision of insects to feed on then.

The bat gives himself over to long, deep slumber, "his breathing becomes gradually slower than in ordinary sleep," Professor Owen has told us; "the pulsations of the heart diminish in force and frequency; the supply of stimulating arterial blood to the muscles and brain is progressively reduced; relaxation of the muscular fibres is converted into stiff inaction, and sleep sinks into stupor." . . . "Cold, senseless, motionless, and asphyxiated, its entry into death's chamber is prevented only by its being brought to his very door."

Whilst the hibernating animals lie in their winter torpor they are of course independent of supplies of food. I will close this little paper by telling you of a long-eared bat that I once kept as a pet. The little fellow was found behind some woodwork whilst some repairs were being carried on in a gentleman's country house; and, knowing my proclivities, one of the workmen brought him to me on the end of a piece of board, which was handled very cautiously. I let him run up my arm, upon which I was requested to take him home with me and tame him, as I was so fond of wild creatures. Taming creatures with me means giving them their liberty within certain bounds inside my home, and providing them



with food suitable for them; they have no unnecessary cramping or stint of anything. I placed the little fellow in a paper bag and carefully carried him home.

A most amusing little fellow he turned out to be. He flew all over the house, upstairs and downstairs. Sometimes he would settle on my beard, stop there as long as it pleased him, and then fly away somewhere else. The odd grimaces the creature would make as he hung, head downwards, from the fold of a curtain, were most extraordinary, his beady eyes fixed on me all the while. Sometimes he was not to be seen for a whole week, although my wife and I would hunt for him all over the house. Then he would suddenly make his appearance at tea-time, whirling round and round over our heads, settling down on myself, and performing other bat-like freaks. As I said, he was allowed to fly all over the house; but after a time we found it better to let him find a new home for himself—he became too much for us. After we were fast asleep he would turn up from neither of us knew where, and fly round and round our faces, brushing the tips of our noses with his wings. The first time this occurred we were fairly bewildered as to what it could be, until I made out my precious bat in the darkness. I got out of bed, captured him—which was no easy matter—and stowed him away in one of my coat-pockets; but he was gone before morning. At last these night visits became a perfect nuisance. Many an evening were the doors and windows opened in the hope that he would betake himself elsewhere, and sometimes we thought he had gone; but no, he liked his home too well, and always turned up again. After a time we could stand it no longer, and had to resort to stronger measures. He began his whirling antics round my head one evening as I sat alone, trying to read; at last I jumped up, closed all the doors excepting the outer one, and through that, out into the night, in most inhospitable style, I drove him forcibly. He never returned.

Would it be safe to destroy it? The perspiration rose on Mrs. Stanton's forehead as she asked herself this question. Suddenly, to her consternation, she heard voices close at hand in the garden.

It was Aldyth and Gladys. Whilst she had been searching the bureau the afternoon had worn away, and they had returned from their drive. Gladys was planning a tennis-ground, which she wished to persuade Aldyth to have made; but at any moment they might turn their steps towards the open window. In an agony of fear Mrs. Stanton thrust the will into her pocket. That receptacle was not large enough to hide it; she must hold the folds of her gown together if she would conceal the packet as she escaped to her room. But first there were the drawers to push back into their place and lock, and the bureau to close. Mrs. Stanton did it all in nervous haste with trembling hands. One drawer would not lock, and she left it open in her alarm, as she heard the girls' steps approaching. She had but time to close the bureau and sink into a chair, her right hand clutching her gown, ere the girls were at the window.

"Mamma! You here!" cried Aldyth, in surprise, as she glanced in at the window.

"Yes, dear; you may well be sur-

prised," said Mrs. Stanton, faintly; "but I—thought I should like to look through the rooms—and—and Mrs. Rogers gave me the keys—but—but—it has been too much for me."

"I am sure it has," said Aldyth, wondering to see how pale her mother was, and the tremulous way in which she spoke. "You should have waited till I could come with you. Why, your hand is quite cold. I cannot leave you again, if you do not take better care of yourself."

"No, do not leave me again," cried Mrs. Stanton, beginning to sob. "It is better for me to have you near. I get thinking of things when I am alone, and I cannot bear it."

"Do not cry, dear mamma. I am here—I will not leave you," said Aldyth, throwing her arms about her mother. "But you must not stay in this chill room. Come into the drawing-room."

"No, no; let me go to my own room," said Mrs. Stanton, rising, her right hand still holding the folds of her gown. Aldyth would have taken the hand to draw within her arm, but Mrs. Stanton wheeled hastily round. "The other side, please, dear; I want to hold up my dress with this hand."

Supported by Aldyth, she moved slowly from the room. Gladys did not immediately follow them. She had not betrayed any anxiety on her mother's

account. There was a satirical smile on her lips as she said to herself, glancing round the library—

"It was like mamma to make an inspection of the house when Aldyth was out of the way; but, I wonder, did she chance upon a skeleton anywhere that she was so upset?"

Mrs. Stanton, having gained her bedroom, seemed indisposed for further soothing, and only anxious to send Aldyth away.

"Leave me to myself now, dear," she said, sinking on to a couch in such a way that her pocket was hidden. "I only want quiet; I shall be better when I have rested awhile."

Aldyth did not reflect that her mother had been enjoying quiet all the afternoon. She, too, was glad to slip away to her own room. But no sooner had Aldyth left her than Mrs. Stanton rose from the sofa, and, having locked the door, found a travelling-desk which was fitted with a good patent lock. In this she placed the will, and having locked the desk, put the key away in a drawer, which she also locked; then, mounting on a chair, she pushed the desk out of sight on the top shelf of her wardrobe.

"Anyhow, I will do nothing in the matter till the mail brings me news," she said to herself.

(To be continued.)

OUR WILD CREATURES.—XI. POLECATS, STOATS, AND WEASELS.

By A NATURALIST.



and moorlands are under the supervision of foresters or keepers—he has become extinct; but he was common enough when I was a boy, and a great enemy of the small farmers about our marshlands of North Kent. He kills game and poultry of all kinds and ages; not even geese and turkeys are safe from him. Soon after sunset he sets forth on his deadly

errands; where a fox will kill one animal, the polecat will kill ten, carrying off the bodies of his victims to his haunt in some adjoining copse or wood. Frogs, mice, rats, birds, and fish may all be found in his larder, when his

home is in the wilds; but he preys on finer and more valuable creatures when he has his home near man and his belongings.

A dark-coloured ferret, commonly called a polecat ferret, is so much like him that if the two were placed side by side you would scarcely be able to tell the difference between them. The name founart is evidently a corruption of foul marten, given him on account of his offensive odour, which proceeds from a fatty substance secreted by a gland beneath the tail. The fur is mostly dark brown, nearly black in colour; it is of little value, and is sold under the name of fitch. He often makes his nest in an old rabbit burrow. To both rabbits and

hares he is a more ferocious enemy than the stoat.

The stoat, or ermine, is a bright, active creature, handsome too. He is smaller than the polecat, the body being scarcely ten inches long, apart from the tail, which is about four and a half inches long, and bushy at the tip. His upper part is brownish red, the under part creamy white. In spite of his small size, he is the Nimrod of the woodlands, and a most determined one. He is equally at home on the ground, in the trees, in the hedge, or in the water; and he hunts openly, making no secret of what he is about. If he crosses your path, he is not put out in the least, but will even stop for a second and look at you with his bright eyes, and then go on with his hunting. His victims are hares, rabbits, rats, mice, and birds; but his favourite prey is the common wild rabbit, which he hunts with the dash of a foxhound, killing quickly and neatly. Let me give you a sketch from the life.

A slight breeze is passing over the common, which is all ablaze with the golden blossoms of the furze; it is just strong enough to carry the light flecks of cloud along, and to gently move the tips of the tall bracken. Nothing is heard but the gentle tinkle of a sheep-bell as the bell wethers move from one thyme-covered old mole hillock to another. Now and again you may catch the chack-chack! of the little furze chat, and have a glimpse of his black head and rich chestnut breast as he flits from one furze-bush to another. Or you may hear the lark singing, but so high up is he, this beautiful sunny morning, that he looks a mere quivering dot as he rings round high overhead. Suddenly a cry of fear comes as we walk along one of the sandy sheep tracks, then another, louder than the last.

polecat, fitchet, or founart is next to the marten as regards size and strength; but there is this great difference between them—whilst the marten is all life and activity, the polecat is, comparatively speaking, slow, although he manages to make sure work of it when he is in pursuit of any creature he is capable of killing. In all cultivated spots—that is, where woods, copse growth, fields,

It is the stoat after a rabbit. Here it comes, right up the track we are following; dotting along in the most imbecile manner, squealing its loudest, for the creature is numbed with terror. Five minutes' good scamper would place him in safety, but he is incapable of the exertion. We stop on one side by a large holly-bush to see the finale. Here comes the stoat; he has lost sight of his prey, and sits up on his hind feet to look round and sniff about. Now he has got the scent, and away he goes, bounding as though his limbs were of india-rubber. In his eagerness he actually whimpers as he passes close to us; he knows he will soon close with his quarry, for the rabbit has taken to a bit of open sward. Now the chase is changed from scent to view, rabbit and stoat being only a few yards apart. Suddenly the poor rabbit squats and stops squealing. The stoat comes up with him, and the most extraordinary part of this strange chase begins. The stoat does not fix him at once, but jumps over him backwards and forwards, as he squats apparently mesmerised. All at once he makes a rush, bites poor bunny in a vital part, and all is over. Do not sup-

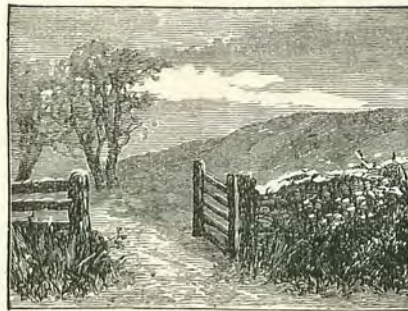
pose the rabbit was left on the sward many moments after the stoat had killed it; a stoat-killed rabbit makes too good a pie for us to do that.

I never weary of watching that Puck of the hedgerow, the weasel, for he surpasses the whole of his tribe in agility; he is blood-thirsty and destructive, too, like the whole of his tribe. His colour is the same as the stoat's, excepting that his tail always matches his upper parts. The smallest of his tribe, his body only measures about eight and a quarter inches in length, his tail two inches. At times weasels are very scarce. During the last year, 1889, I saw more of them than I had done for twenty years, and mice I know were less common, for I had actual difficulty in procuring enough—though I paid for them—to feed my pet owl. The weasel ought to be fostered as a friend to man, especially about rickyards and barns. The harm he might do would be more than compensated for by his good services, for he is a most determined mouse-killer. It is a fine sight to see the diminutive creature carrying a mouse almost as large as itself, retriever fashion, with all the

confidence imaginable. Small as he is, he is very strong, and continually on the move. As he runs along the hedge-side or by some old fence, so light is his step that the dead leaves are not turned over. *Lately one* came and deliberately inspected me as I stood perfectly still, watching some beautiful Admiral butterflies which were sunning their wings on the bramble-sprays.

Three times he left his mouse-hunting, and came up so close to me that I could have touched him with my stick; but I had no wish to frighten the small creature; it gave me pleasure to watch him. After he had seen enough of me he ran away again, as quietly as he had come up.

The weasel is a very careful and affectionate parent. If there is danger near, the mother will take her young in her mouth, just like a cat does, and place them in the first shelter that offers. She has often lost her life through her great affection for her young; but this occurs now only through accident or want of knowledge, for the weasel is being protected, and grace of sanctuary is given to a weasel mother.



"CHARLIE IS MY DARLING."

By ANNE BEALE, Author of "Seven Years for Rachel," "The Queen o' the May," etc.

CHAPTER XX.

ONLY A STATION-MASTER.

ALMOST to her surprise, Belle received a letter from her father, written the day after he reached Montreal. She had feared lest his procrastinating spirit might cause him to lose the mail. It was short, but, like himself, hopeful. It was as follows:

"Dear Belle,—I arrived here late last night, too late to write. I came at once to Mr. Stint's private residence, and his good wife insisted on my remaining the night. We can't approach the Canadians in hospitality. I found Charlie better than I expected, though very ill. He said my coming would cure him. God grant it may! Poor fellow, he was terribly overset, as you may suppose, and so was I; but I am pretty sure he will be all right again soon. I have seen people recover who looked much worse, though he is awfully thin and white. My presence here will finish up the business, and so far as can be seen at present Jabez Dauncey's fortune is ours. Not a bit of doubt of it; so you may give promissory notes, or borrow from Pearce, or do whatever seems best to get over present liabilities, certain of lots of money to clear off everything

before Christmas. That is to say, as soon as the lawyers can wind up the affairs here. They have no doubt as to my identity, but have still a few preliminaries to settle. You have had much anxiety, but it will be over soon. If only I could be sure about Charlie! But he is so much better than I expected to find him, that I think he will be well enough to return home with me when the 'next-of-kin' is quite finished up. Of course I shall not leave Montreal until all is concluded to a fraction. As to money, we can draw on Stint and Co. Charlie is not allowed to speak of business. It is feared that fatigue and over anxiety brought on the attack. But my opinion is—only here as at home nobody asks for it—that he might just as well talk over the affairs as ramble on continually about the children and poor Amy and all your trouble. One would think that you were the only person in the world who has to work. Tell Weatherley that he had better stick to us. Nobody knows how rich we shall be. Don't put down your damper, Miss Belle, for it is as good as settled. Let the squire keep his acres; we don't want 'em. But Charlie and Mr. Stint both want me, and I must end, with

much love to yourself, Flo, and the young fry, from Charlie and myself, and remain,

"Your affectionate father,
"CHARLES DAUNCEY."

Belle read and pondered over this letter before she communicated its contents to the rest of the family. She knew her father well, and mistrusted what he said about her brother. Still, she was thankful to the Almighty that he was still alive, and that there was hope. This great fortune seemed now so near them that she could no longer banish it from her thoughts; and the prospect of clearing off mortgages and debts and living without money anxieties was so delightful that for the moment she forgot all else, and began to form plans for the future. It was but for a moment, for fears soon dispelled the hopes. What would money or lands be worth if anything were to happen to her darling Charlie?

Flo and the children were in towering spirits over the letter, and when Dolly joined them at tea, by previous invitation, the house *echoed to their merriment*. Health and illimitable riches were coming to the Daunceys, and the young folk rejoiced accordingly.

would come out with a lie when it served her turn. Then there was Mabel; she told me the other day what a deadening effect it had on her own religious nature when she made companions of two girls who cared for nothing but their own pleasure, and always spoke of sacred things with disrespect. And I remember another instance: Jane was a studious girl, but turned her back on learning before she had been long acquainted with Amy and Ruth, whose only thought and only talk were about the right thing to wear, and who occupied all their spare time in altering their frocks, so as to be as near as possible in the fashion.

Try, girls, invariably to keep alongside only of those who can help you in doing what is right, and, above all things, shun the society of any whose talk is inclined to be low and vicious. "The conversation of such persons," remarks Seneca, "is very injurious; for even if it does no immediate harm, it leaves its seeds in the mind, and follows us when we have gone from the speakers—a plague sure to spring up in future resurrection."

We are influenced to an extent hardly to be credited by our surroundings and associates, and this is a pressing reason why we should have about us neither things nor people that will hinder our growing wiser and better. "I am a piece of all that I have met," says one writer, and we ought constantly to live

so that the pieces of which we are made up should each be as perfect as can be. Otherwise how can we expect to have a perfect whole? "Keep good company," is an old saying, "and you shall be of the number."

The mother of the famous George Herbert used to say that "as our bodies take a nourishment suitable to the meat on which we feed, so our souls do as insensibly take in vice by the example or conversation with wicked company." She therefore did her best to make home happy for her children, so that they might have no inducement to form acquaintances who might teach them that of which they were best ignorant. "Ignorance of vice," she would remark, "is the best preservation of virtue, and the very knowledge of wickedness is as tinder to inflame and kindle sin and to keep it burning."

We all want to be seen to the best advantage, and nothing sets us off so well as estimable company. A girl always looks brightest and best when the friends surrounding her are everything they should be. Even if she have many defects herself, she makes a good impression by being credited with some of the virtues of her companions. She may not be the rose, but she lives with roses, and their fragrance imparts a charm to her, and we love her for the graces which she reflects. A girl in bad company, expecting to be noticed for her best qualities, is about as ridiculous as

a violet surrounded by chickweed and groundsel and yet chuckling to itself at having its beauty displayed in the best style.

But, you say, we have often no choice; we must have bad company or none. Then have none. Better alone than in bad company. One of the most useful arts to acquire is that of entertaining oneself by oneself, an art which makes us very independent, and able, if suitable society does not present itself, to wait contentedly till it comes.

No girl of sense ever yet associated with the foolish, the wicked, the mean, or any others of the objectionable tribe, without leaving them depressed in spirits and angry with herself, fretting over the loss of time and opportunity. On the other hand, to mix in good company is both an encouragement and a solace. You feel that you have gained in health, vigour, and cheerfulness.

There is another important feature of contrast pointed out by a famous German philosopher. "Friendship," he says, "contracted with the wicked, decreases from hour to hour like the early shadow of the morning; but friendship formed with the virtuous will increase like the shadow of evening, till the sun of life shall set." Let all who wish their relationships to be permanent take note of it.

And so we come back to the point at which we began:—

BEWARE OF BAD COMPANY.

OUR WILD CREATURES.—XII. THE RED DEER.

By A NATURALIST.



THE red deer or common stag is the largest and most noble in appearance of our wild creatures. He once roamed freely over the whole of Eng^{land}, but at the present time he is only to be found in three districts in a really wild state, namely, a portion of Somerset, North Devon, and about Martindale Fell, Westmoreland. In the Highlands of Scotland, and one or two parts of Ireland, folks may still go "a hunting the wild deer."

is, however, one of our historical animals; he stands first on the list as a beast of the chase. Our invaders and conquerors, from the fierce Vikings to the Normans, all valued him highly and pursued him hotly.

In an ancient monastic chronicle it stands recorded of one of these that "he loved the wild red deer as his brothers," and passed laws for "the brown hares" to run free; in fact, a man's life or a woman's in those days

Quantities of the red deer are of course to be seen in parks or large enclosures of forest land, where, owing to the good feeding, they grow to a very large size, and carry fine antlers. These are semi-domesticated; but even here their wild nature shows itself strongly at times, so that it is dangerous to approach them too closely. One may often see the stags charge each other in desperate strife. In such encounters, their antlers becoming inextricably entangled, they have sometimes been found dead, locked, so to speak, in each other's embrace. The fallow deer is much smaller than the stag, and that species is more commonly kept in our English parks. Some authorities say that he was originally brought here from the coast of Barbary. The red deer

was of less value than that of a deer. Independently of the chase, in which ladies took a part, his flesh formed excellent food, haunches of venison and venison pasties were in great request, and his skin provided warm clothing. As a child I was much fascinated by the effigies in our old parish church of lord and lady, with the symbols of hunting about them. I used to puzzle over these, and bother the old sexton with my questions. One day I well remember the old man's impatience as he cried, "Drat that 'ere boy! What questions he do ask! He's wuss than a Philadelph' lawyer."

In Gilbert White's time herds of red deer roamed about Wolmer Forest. Queen Anne saw five hundred pass before her; the New Forest and Epping Forest held them; but crimes, such as deer-stealing and other matters connected with them, gave rise to so much trouble that the order was given for all to be caught or shot.

The stag drops his horns and renews them every year; the hind, as a rule, has only one in family, a pretty little creature, spotted with white, in defence of which she is very courageous, striking with her fore-feet at mountain fox, wild cat, or marten. That fierce king of the crags, the golden eagle, is a source of great anxiety to her in the wilds, for he will pounce on the fawn, lift it up in his talons, if it is not too large, and then drop it. The fall kills it instantly, and the fierce bird has his meal.

Colquhoun, St. John, and Stewart, the author of "Lays of the Deer Forest," have written volumes about the red deer.

The roe deer or roebuck, which was once common in this country, has now his last resting-place in the wilder parts of Scotland. It is distinguishable by its horns, which divide into three branches or "tynes." The female of the roe deer usually has two fawns at a birth. The venison is not so good as that of the red deer.