

sharp, peculiar bark of a dog; there was a scratching at the door, some one opened it and in ran Spot. The dog was known "far and wide" by reputation, but here he was also known in person; and, as he crossed the kitchen to his master, there were few who were not curious to ascertain what pressing, important errand had brought him thus importunate in manner. Mr. Purdee sat close to where Tom stood, and Spot went straight to him and took him by the coat.

Tom noticed the dog's entrance and peculiar gestures, and fully satisfied that something was amiss, he at once closed his address. He whispered to Mr. Purdee, who at once left the room, and in the porch found Wyatt and Jim Snarr.

"Is it you that sent Spot," he asked.

"No," said Wyatt, "we found we were very late, and were standing listening, when he came up smelt at my hand, before I saw him, barked, and scratched at the door for admission, and was in before I knew what to do."

"I'm afraid something has happened, come along with me," said Mr. Purdee, "he would not come for me this way unless there was something amiss."

The three men followed Spot at a rapid pace. He kept trotting along a little ahead, occasionally whining but never abating his speed, straight down to the foot bridge. Arrived there he barked!

*(To be Continued.)*

## FERNS.

BY CANADENSIS

While I write Winter still contends with Spring, and now patchedly evinces the reluctance of King Frost to relax his despotic rule. But to the lover of nature and her floral gifts, there is already ample inducement to wander in the woods and search for treasures amid the remains of last years vegetation. I have little respect for one who cannot admire the beauties of the wild flowers of the forest and the field. Yet mayhap this is a bold saying;—when I recollect how many there are who have no soul, in these days of scraping and grinding, for

any higher object than may be comprised in dollars and cents. For in good sooth there must be a goodly number amongst us, who, if their claims to reverence depend upon their love for the simplest and finest works of nature, are far outside the pale of consideration. To that large crowd I have on this occasion nothing to say; but to the smaller—shall I say the more select?—circle, where natural beauty is appreciated, a little chat about a few of my own personal friends may not be unreasonable, and be assured these last will not object. They know me too well, for during a long and intimate acquaintance of more than a quarter of a century I have never spoken of them but with praise.

I know few, if any, more pleasurable ways of whiling away a leisure hour, than by roaming in the early spring through the bye places and wild recesses of the country, to note the first forerunners of the summer vegetation. To me there is a wondrous claim in the tiny floweret that, piercing the snow, raises its little head towards the light and expands its bright petals as the banner of returning spring. And in all the woods of southern Canada these heralds are many and beautiful; too many indeed for me to notice now, and too beautiful to be imperfectly enumerated. For there is a family of another kind living in our wilds which carries with it perhaps even more of interest, and about which I would in affection write. I say of interest,—for as I grope about amongst the withered leaves, and in the tangled moss and root fibres that fill up the holes and recesses of some decaying tree that has fallen long since in death, can I forget the history of that little fern which is just beginning to unfold its fronds to the genial air of May? how it is the descendant of a tribe that lived upon the earth ages before man was first created; when a heavy, hot, still air enwrapt the world; when the garden bee first flitted through the luxuriant foliage, and when giant calamities and wondrous tree ferns lived and grew, to fall and be changed into the coal fields that were destined at that distant day to bring comfort and opulence to the busy races of the pres-