

ASTONISHING FEAT OF A HOUSE SPIDER.

It would seem that there is no living thing so obnoxious as not to find admirers. What creatures so repulsive as rats and spiders? Yet the *London Quarterly* finds some things beautiful and even loveable in the former, and Dr. Asa Fitch, in *Harpers Monthly* labors to show that the latter "delicate little objects" are worthy of esteem and admiration. He denies that their bites are fatal to any insect, and extols their agility, cunning, adroitness, sagacity and heroism, as worthy of all praise.

In support of these views he tells us the following curious story, concerning a heroic spider who captured a snake. The affair came off last summer, in the store of Charles Cook, in Havana, Chemung County, New York, and is attested by the Hon. A. B. Dickinson, of Corning; "who himself witnessed the phenomenon, as did more than a hundred others."

An ordinary looking spider of a dark color, its body not larger than that of a common house fly had taken up its residence it appears, on the under side of a shelf beneath the counter of Mr. Cook's store. What may we suppose was the consternation and surprise of this little animal on discovering a snake about a foot long, selecting for its abode the floor underneath, only two or three spans distant from its nest.

It was a common silk snake, which, perhaps, had been brought into the store unseen, in a quantity of sawdust, with which the floor had been recently "carpeted." The spider was well aware no doubt, that it would inevitably fall a prey to this horrid monster, the first time it would incautiously venture within its reach. We should expect that to avoid such a frightful doom, it would forsake its present abode, and seek a more secure retreat elsewhere. But it is not improbable that a brood of its eggs or its young was secreted near the spot, which the parent foresaw would fall a prey to this monster if they were abandoned by their natural guardian and protector. We can conceive of no other motive which should have induced the spider so pertinaciously to remain and defend that particular spot, at the imminent risk of her own life, when she could so easily have escaped and established herself in some secure corner elsewhere.

But how, we may well ask, was it possible for such a weak, tender little creature, to combat such a powerful mail clad giant? What power had she to do anything that would subject the monster to even the slightest inconvenience or molestation? Her ordinary resort, that of fettering and binding her victim by throwing her threads of cobweb around it, it is plain, would be of no more avail here than the cords upon the limbs of the unshorn Samson. Aware that her accustomed mode of the attack was useless, how did she acquire the knowledge and sagacity requisite for devising another—adapted so exactly to the case in hand—one depending upon the structure and habits of the serpent to aid in rendering it successful?

How was she able to perceive that it was in her power to wind a loop of her threads around the creatures throat—a loop of sufficient strength to hold him securely, notwithstanding his struggles and writhings, until, by her tackle-like-power, she could gradually hoist him up from the floor, thus literally "hanging him by the neck until he was dead!" For this was the feat which this adroit little heroine actually performed—a feat beside which all the fabled exploits of Hercules in overpowering lions and serpents and dragons, sink into utter insignificance.

And who can say that in the planning and execution of this stupendous achievement, there was not forethought, reasoning, a careful weighing of all the difficulties and dangers and a clear perception in the mind of this little creature, that she possessed the ability to accomplish what she undertook; in short an exercise of faculties of a much higher order than the mere instinct which is commonly supposed to guide and govern these lower animals in their movements.

By what artifice the spider was able in the first of its attack to accomplish what it did we can only conjecture, as its work was not discovered until the most difficult and daring part of its feat had been performed. When first seen, it had placed a loop around the head of the serpent, from the top of which a single thread was carried upward, and attached to the under side of the shelf, whereby the head of the serpent was drawn up about two inches from the floor. The snake was moving around and around incessantly in a circle as large as its tether would allow—wholly unable to get its head down to the floor, or to withdraw it from the noose; while the little heroic spider, exulting no doubt in the success of its exploit, which was now sure beyond peradventure, was ever and anon passing down to the loop and up to the shelf, adding thereby an additional strand