

tempt to escape. One individual of the party is stationed at each of these, and in such an opening I found myself on that bright morning, alone, in the midst of these hushed and pathless forests, lurking, I almost thought like a murderer, with my loaded piece, till the defenceless flying creature should spring upon his death. The silence around me was perfectly delightful. I could hear nothing—not even the warbling of a bird—not the murmuring of a rill, for the stream by my side instead of brawling and bubbling over its channel, had spread itself out into unbroken transparency. Across its bank, and accidentally answering the purposes of a bridge, a fallen tree was lying. Sometimes a playful fish leaped up from the brook, or glistened near the surface, as it turned its silver side to the sun; and sometimes a leaf, loosened from its branch, fell, and floated slowly to the ground in silence. I was thinking how many millions of my fellow creatures drop off even thus in the shadowy places of life, and go down to the churchyard with as little notice or interruption to the general business and joy and beauty of nature, when the barking and yelping of the hounds came faintly through the distance, then nearer and nearer till the whole chorus swelled on the breeze, and rung through the quiet wood, breaking strangely in upon its impressive stillness with discordant sounds of riot and death. You cannot conceive, unless you have experienced a similar moment, the almost painful eagerness and anxiety with which I watched to behold the victim appear through the trees. I heard a rustling among the dried leaves, and with desperate speed, and the whole bloody pack close at her heels, a large doe broke from the thicket, and passed near the place where I stood. Fleet as the wind she was springing by when I gave a low whistle; on a sudden she stopped, and the fatal ball lodged in her shoulder; another and another stretched her on the ground. She was a most lovely and feminine creature. Nothing could exceed the grace, cleanliness, and beauty of her form and limbs. The dark and silky brown of her back, the snowy whiteness of her neck, throat, and chest, and the almost human intelligence of her face, struck me with a strange feeling, of which they, more familiar with the sight, can form no idea. I confess, however unmanly it may have been, that a momentary horror ran through my frame as the lids, with their long lashes, fell over those large, dark, and beautiful eyes; while the swarthy huntsmen, with rough grasp and merry jokes, bound together her slender, tapering limbs, and one drew his long glittering knife across her throat.—  
*Dreams and Reveries of a Quiet Man.*