

**A Stolen Life.**

BY CLARA J. DENTON.

Yes, mamma, yes; do take it off!  
 It's eyes so coldly stare;  
 A pretty bird so still and dead  
 Indeed, I cannot wear.

For every time I bend my head  
 I see one soft blue wing,  
 Which brings me thoughts of trees and  
 flowers,  
 And birds that sweetly sing.

I'm angry then, because my bird  
 Was not allowed to fly  
 And sing and swing on waving trees  
 Beneath the summer sky.

Yes, yes; I know it cost so much.  
 Five dollars, did you say?  
 If I were rich I'd give twice that  
 To see it fly away.

But, mamma, though your purse is filled  
 With coins that brightly shine,  
 They'll not bring back the stolen life  
 To this poor bird of mine.

That women's hearts are kind and good  
 I hear most people say,  
 And yet they'll have these dear birds killed  
 To make themselves look gay.

I'm sorry I'm a little girl.  
 Were I a woman grown  
 I would not buy dead birds, but pay  
 To have them let alone.

**"MISCHICHA KUNIS."**

BY THE REV. O. GERMAN.

So important a personage as the coyote of the prairies, must occupy a prominent place in the back-ground of a picture of the Great Plains. The name is probably of a Mexican origin, and means "the hill-dog."

"The coyote is a wolf—a wolf about two-thirds the size of that which haunts forests, and the pages of story books. He has a long, lean body; legs a trifle short, but sinewy and active; a head more foxy than wolfish, for the nose is long and pointed; the yellow eyes are set in spectacle-frames of black eyelids, and the hanging, tan-trimmed ears may be erected, giving a well merited air of alertness to their wearer; a tail, straight as a pointer's, also fox-like, for it is bushy beyond the ordinary lupine type, and shaggy, large-maned, wind-ruffled, dust-gathering coat of dingy white, suffused with tawny brown, or often decidedly brindled.

A shade in the stubble, a ghost by the wall,  
 Now leaping, now limping, now riaking a fall;  
 Lop-eared and large-jointed, but was always  
 A thoroughly vagabond outcast in gray.

The prairie wolf is the *genus loci* of the plains. No Indian mythology would be complete without him. His neighbours, be they near or far, have no love for him, and he fully reciprocates in kind; "an Ishmaelite of the desert; a consort of rattlesnake and vulture; . . . a bush-whacker upon the flanks of buffalo armies; the pariah of his own race, and despised by mankind."

The trapper pays little attention to him when there is better game to be found. He therefore holds his own, and something more. He will gain the race against the fleeter rival, and

eludes those enemies whose strength is greater than his own; his "cunning and intelligence" are proverbial, and in this respect he ranks but little below Sir Reynard, or the wolverine. He was long ago domesticated by the Indian, and is probably the ancestor of many, if not most, of the present race of "Indian dogs."

"Our coyote is a true Westerner;" for though often in dire need of the necessaries of life, he still assumes an independent air, and meets every failure with the watchword of him who has once sighted the Rocky Mountains, "there is no such word as fail." It was from his attachment to the prairies, North and South, in fact wherever the buffalo was found, that he received his distinctive name, the "prairie wolf."

It is probably "less from choice than necessity that in the States and the North-West he dwells chiefly on the plains," for in Mexico and Central America he seeks his food more often in forests than elsewhere, yet keeps his characteristic cunning and cowardice, becoming there a wild dog of the jungle, as, in the North he is the hound of the plains.

This gentleman usually seeks to evict some unhappy hare, prairie-dog, or badger; but when he fails to find such a dwelling, "ready to his hand," he digs a dry burrow for himself, or looks for a den among the loose rocks.

In this seclusion, "far from the haunts of men," is his young family of from five to eight puppies brought forth, in the late spring, when all danger from the cold of winter is past. During the period before and after this important event, the old dog coyote works his hardest and most systematically. He is more than usually zealous and sagacious in turning and driving his victims "as near as possible to his home, knowing that otherwise his mate and her weaklings will be unable to partake of the feast."

The coyote knows well the pinch of famine, especially in winter. The main object of his life seems to be the satisfying of a hunger which is always craving, and to this end all his cunning, impudence, and audacity are mainly directed. Nothing comes amiss. Though by no means the swiftest-footed quadruped upon the plains, he runs down the deer, the pronghorn, and others, tiring them out by trickery, and then overpowering them by force of numbers. It was formerly his custom to follow in the wake of the large buffalo herds, and gather the chance fragments left for him by his Brahmans—the white wolves—whose chief employment was the running down and worrying of decrepit and aged stragglers.

A very animated description is given by a recent writer of a "wolf hunt," which used to take place yearly in the West.

"Such a *battue* was undertaken just before the spring thawing. Word would be sent out, instructing the

different villages concerned to select their captain, and furnish their quota of willing gunners in the ring that was to concentrate upon a point indicated by a tall flagstaff, far out on the prairie. These rings were sometimes twenty or thirty miles in diameter, and it took an early start and rapid travelling to close up in time. The captains, on horseback, ride back and forth, keeping the line in order, watchful that everything is driven before it. After marching a few miles the different parties begin to come in sight of one another, all converging toward the central point. Glimpses of fleeing game, very likely including deer, or a wolf or two, are seen, and a little later the line of the opposite side of the circle comes into view. Now all nerves are strung to the highest pitch. There is a fusillade as the thickening grouse soar up and backward over the line, or foxes and horses scud away from the shouting and yelling gunners. The captains, suddenly riding at top-speed to one side, shout, 'Close up! close up! the deer will break!' Before it can be well done, a small band, following their leader like sheep, dart toward a vacant space in the rank of men. Half the deer get away in safety, but a few fall under the ready rifles. Soon word is passed to stop firing, for the circle is becoming dangerously contracted. Already one man has a bullet in his leg, and a captain's horse has been shot under him. Thus, in silence, the ring concentrates toward the flagstaff, which stands on the edge of a bowl-like depression. As the rim is attained, what a sight greets the eyes of the eager circle! With lolling tongues, and staring eyes, a dozen tawny wolves are rushing up and down the shallow pit, seeking some chance of escape. But no mercy exists for the sneaking lamb-stealers. 'Give it to them!' comes the order, and a hundred rifles pour instant death among the corraled victims."

Nothing eatable escapes this omnivorous prowler. It is the arch-enemy of such small deer as prairie dogs and gophers, as well as of larger mammals, and, if no better food offers, it will revel in carrion of any sort. It resorts in great numbers to the vicinity of settlements where offal is sure to be found, and surrounds the hunter's camp at night. It has been known to follow for days in the trail of a traveller's party, and each morning, just after camp is broken, it rushes in to claim whatever eatable refuse may have been left behind. But it cannot always find a sufficiency of animal food. Particularly in the fall, it feeds extensively upon *tunas*, which are the juicy soft scarlet fruit of various species of the prickly pear, and in the winter upon berries of various sorts, particularly those of the juniper.

Extreme hunger will compel the prairie wolf to exhibit a baldness of which he is incapable under ordinary conditions. He has been known to come

repeatedly within pistol range of the camp fire, and hunters say they have known them to pull the boots, or leathern strap of a saddle, from under the head of a sleeping camper. A prime characteristic of the coyote is his wonderful voice, which differs so much from the well-known wolfish howl of other members of his race, as to give him the book-name *canis lotrans*, or barking wolf. "One must have spent an hour or two vainly trying to sleep," says Dr. Elliot Cawes, "before he is in a condition to appreciate the full force of the annoyance." It is a singular fact, that the howling of two or three wolves, gives an impression that a score are engaged. So many, so long drawn are the notes, and so uninterruptedly by one individual after another. A short, sharp bark is sounded, followed by several more in quick succession, this time growing faster, and the pitch higher, till they run together into a long-drawn lugubrious howl in the highest possible key. The same strain is taken up again and again by different members of the pack, while from a great distance the deep, melancholy baying of the wary *lobo* breaks in, till the very leaves of the trees seem quivering to the inharmonious sounds.

So much for and against our friend or enemy, as we may choose to regard him, the coyote. We quite often, in winter, see him from our own door, making his way across the lake, or perhaps venturing nearer in the hope of obtaining some cast-out morsel, that even an Indian dog will not eat. He becomes almost powerless in the loose, deep snow, and may be easily captured by a man on snow-shoes, or on horse-back.

At some future time I hope to send you an account of the Indian folk-lore regarding *Mis-chi-cha-kunis* and his rival in the far-off mythical age, *We-su-ka-chak*.

O. GERMAN.

White Fish Lake, N. W. T.

P.S. The quotations in the above article are taken from a most interesting account in the *Popular Science Monthly*, by Ernest Ingersoll.—O. G.

**SHOOTING HIS OWN HENS.**

A PERSON in a passion very frequently jumps at conclusions so suddenly as to jerk his own head off, as they say.

"I say, neighbour Snobs, if you don't keep your hens out of my garden, I will shoot them."

"Very well, Doolittle, shoot away; only if you kill any of my hens, throw them into my yard."

Crack went the fowling-piece morning after morning, and the large, fat hens were pitched into neighbour Snobs' yard. They cooked well. After a fortnight or more, Doolittle discovered that Snobs never had any hens, and that he had been shooting his own, they having broken out of his own coop.