

intent on the capture of my flies by the wary trout. While my eyes were directed to the water, a dark, swift-moving shadow passed over that part of the river near which I stood. Startled, I looked up, and the moment I lifted my head, a loud, wild scream was uttered by a heron then passing over me; .. was within about four yards of me, and its flight had been so easy, and it so silent, that I was perfectly unconscious of its vicinity till I heard the scream it gave. — On being so unexpectedly disturbed in its flight, it raised itself as quickly as possible to a considerable height in the air, and pursued its journey towards the shores of Larne lough, whither it had been bound.

## LITERARY DEPARTMENT.

### THE RATTLESNAKE HUNTER.

BY J. G. WHITTIER.

During a delightful excursion in the vicinity of the Green Mountains, a few years since, I had the good fortune to meet with a singular character, known in many parts of Vermont as the Rattlesnake Hunter. It was a warm, clear day of sunshine, in the middle of June, that I saw him for the first time, while engaged in a mineralogical ramble amongst the hills. His head was bald, and his forehead was deeply marked with the strong lines of care and age. His form was wasted and meagre, and, but for the fiery vigor of his eye he might have been incapacitated by age and infirmity for even a slight exertion. Yet he hurried over the rude ledges of rocks with a quick and almost youthful tread; and seemed earnestly searching among the crevices and loose crags and stunted bushes around him. At once he started suddenly, drew himself back with a sort of shuddering recoil, and then smote fiercely with his staff upon the rock before him. Another and another blow, and he lifted the lithe and crushed form of a large rattlesnake upon the end of his rod.

The old man's eye glistened, but his lip trembled, as he looked upon his yet writhing victim. "Another of the accursed race!"

he muttered between his clenched teeth, apparently unconscious of my presence.

I was now satisfied that the person before me was none other than the famous rattlesnake hunter. He was known throughout the neighborhood as an outcast and a wanderer, obtaining a miserable subsistence from the casual charities of the people around him. His time was mostly spent among the rocks and rude hills where his only object seemed to be the hunting out and destroying of the dreadful *crotalus horridus*, or rattlesnake. I immediately determined to satisfy my curiosity, which had been strangely excited by the remarkable appearance and the behaviour of the stranger. For this purpose I approached him.

"Are there many of these reptiles in this vicinity?" I enquired, pointing to the serpent.

"They are getting to be scarce," said the old man, lifting his slouched hat, and wiping his bald brow; "I have known the time when you could hardly stir ten rods from your door in this part of the state without hearing their low, quick rattle at your side, or seeing their many colored bodies coiling up in your path. But as I said before, they are getting to be scarce. The infernal race will get to be extinct in a few years; and thank God, I have myself been a considerable cause of their extermination."

"You must, of course, know the nature of these creatures perfectly well," said I. "Do you believe in their fascination?"

The old man's countenance fell. There was a visible struggle of feeling within him; for his lip quivered, and he dashed his brown hand suddenly across his eyes, as if to conceal a tear. But quickly recovering himself, he answered, in the low, deep voice of one about to reveal some horrible secret:

"I believe in the rattlesnake's power of fascination as firmly as in my own existence."

"Surely," said I, "you do not believe that they have power over human beings,"

"I do—I know it be so!" and the old man trembled when he spoke. "You are a stranger