

AN INTERESTING FAMILY.

SUDDENLY the gavel of *Campephilus* sounded sharp and strong a quarter-mile away. A few measured raps, followed by a rattling drum-call, a space of silence rimmed with receding echoes, and then a trumpet-note, high, full, vigorous, almost startling, cut the air with a sort of broadsword sweep. Again the long-roll answered, from a point nearer me, by two or three hammer-like raps on the resonant branch of some dead cypress tree. The king and queen were coming to their palace. I had come as a visitor to this palace, with the hope of making the acquaintance I had so long desired, and not as an assassin. She was quite unaware of me, and so behaved naturally, her large gold-amber eyes glaring with that wild sincerity of expression seen in the eyes of but few savage things.

After a little while the male came bounding through the air, with that vigorous galloping flight common to all our woodpeckers, and lit on a fragmentary projection at the top of the stump. He showed larger than his mate, and his aspect was more fierce, almost savage. The green-black feathers near his shoulders, the snow-white lines down his neck, and the tall red crest on his head, all shone with great brilliancy, whilst his ivory beak gleamed like a dagger. He soon settled for me a question which had long been in my mind. With two or three light preliminary taps on a hard heartpine splinter, he proceeded to beat the regular woodpecker drum-call—that long rolling rattle made familiar to us all by the common red-head (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*) and our other smaller woodpeckers. This peculiar call is not, in my opinion, the result of elasticity or springiness in the wood upon which it is performed, but is effected by a rapid, spasmodic motion of the bird's head, imparted by a voluntary muscular action. I have seen the common red-head make a soundless call on a fence-stake where the decaying wood was scarcely hard enough to prevent the full entrance of his beak. His head went through the same rapid vibration, but no sound accompanied the performance. Still, it