

CHAPTER IV.

ALONE IN THE WORLD

FOR some days after this sudden flight into exile, the diminished family wandered wide, having no fixed lair and feeling very much adrift. In a curious outburst of bravado or revenge, or perhaps because she for the moment grew intolerant of her long self-restraint, the mother fox one violet sunset led her two young ones in fierce raid upon the barnyard of one of the remoter farms. It seemed a reckless piece of audacity; but the old fox knew there were no dogs at this farm save a single small and useless cur; and she knew, also, that the farmer was no adept with the gun.

All was peace about the little farmyard. The golden lilac light made wonderful the chip-strewn yard and the rough, weather-beaten roofs of cabin and barn and shed. The ducks were quacking and bobbing in the wet mud about the water-trough,