

## THE ROCKWOOD REVIEW

### LETTERS.

HATCHILEY,

July 15th, 1895.

Among the inconveniences of the long protracted drouth of the season in these parts, a destructive bush fire may be spoken of, as one of the most baneful results.

One of the neighboring farmers was in the month of May clearing for crop, a few acres of forest, and the log-fires, on one warm and breezy day, extended into the growing throng of trees adjoining the newly ferced in area, and raged with uncontrollable fury for a time, despite the strenuous efforts of many of the assembling residents of the district bordering on the 4 or 500 acres of forest reserve, whose destruction was thus threatened by the extending flames.

The area of forest invaded by this regrettable conflagration has been a rendezvous for many of the small wild quadrupeds of the region, and a sort of sylvan paradise retreat for summer bird warblers, since the surrounding parts of the district have been cleared and cultivated.

As may be imagined vast numbers of little creatures lost their lives, and were cremated by the furious flames and furnace-like heat, that prostrated and reduced to ashes many of the monarchs of the forest.

When the lurid flames crackled and consumed the green foliage, Cuckoos were seen flying in wild consternation from their nesting spots, and a mother ruffed Grouse was seen in agitated retreat towards cooler quarters, surrounded and followed by her numerous brood, that seemed to be only two or three days old; and in another spot a batch of thirteen well roasted eggs, of the same species of bird, were found after the fire had abated, these latter on examination showed evidence of being near the hatching

point when deserted by their protector. Wasps or hornets nests, and many of the occupants, shrivelled to ashes instantly at the onset of the flames; colonies of ants raced over the decaying stumps and logs, not knowing what to make of the consuming terror, but were speedily scorched into invisibility. A Woodchuck, by a hasty retreat over burning embers—in which proceeding his fore feet got badly burned—was overtaken and killed by a prowling terrier, a day or two after the subsidence of the fire, and a bystander, commenting on the crisped appearance of the rodent's toes, ejaculated that it was "a charity to kill the poor brute!" The frisky gyrations of the wild Rabbits, when uncommoded by the fiery sparks falling on their furry investiture, had a comic acrobatic air.

As was alluded to above, the burned over locality was the home and breeding retreat of many curious birds and quadrupeds, a large portion of its area being swampy, and its margins and borders were encumbered by a dense growth of shrubs and thorny vegetation, and almost every species of land bird known to Ontario Ornithologists could be seen or heard there in the appropriate season; and in such portions of the area as have been saved from the fiery devastation, the clamorous vociferations of the "Whippoorwills" are now being nightly renewed.

A rivulet meanders through the locality in the moister months of the year, and that part is the resort of Batrachians, whose piping is thereabout a leading feature or incident when the ice begins to melt in the last days of March. The bush fires, while being checked and limited for a number of days, would burst into activity on the occurrence of a brisk breeze, and on one such