

and gave her most melancholy forebodings of evil times. "Depend upon it, children," she said to her long-eared family, "no good will come to us from this establishment. Where man is, there comes always trouble for us poor rabbis."

The old chesnut-tree, that grew on the edge of the woodland ravine, drew a great sigh which shook all his leaves, and expressed it as his conviction that no good would ever come of it,—a conviction that at once struck to the heart of every chesnut-burr. The squirrels talked together of the dreadful state of things that would ensue. "Why!" said old Father Gray, "it's evident that Nature made the nuts for us; but one of these great human creatures will carry off and gormandize upon what would keep a hundred poor families of squirrels in comfort." Old Ground-mole said it did not require very sharp eyes to see into the future, and it would just end in bringing down the price of real estate in the whole vicinity, so that every decent-minded and respectable quadruped would be obliged to move away;—for his part, he was ready to sell out for anything he could get. The bluebirds and bobolinks, it is true, took more cheerful views of matters; but then, as old Mrs. Ground-mole observed, they were a flighty set,—half their time careering and dissipating in the Southern States,—and could not be expected to have that patriotic attachment to their native soil that those had, who had grubbed in it from their earliest days.

"This race of man," said the old chestnut-tree "is never ceasing in its restless warfare on Nature. In our forest solitudes, hitherto, how peacefully, how quietly, how regularly, has everything gone on! Not a flower has missed its appointed time of blossoming, or failed to perfect its fruit. No matter how hard has been the winter, how loud the winds have roared, and how high the snow-banks have been piled, all has come right again in spring. Not the least root has lost itself under the snows, so as not to be ready with its fresh leaves and blossoms when the sun returns to melt the frosty chains of winter. We have storms sometimes that threaten to shake everything to pieces,—the thunder roars, the lightning flashes, and the winds howl and beat; but, when all is past, everything comes out better and brighter than before,—not a bird is killed, not the frailest flower destroyed. But man comes, and in one day he will make a desolation that centuries cannot repair. Ignorant boor that he is, and all incapable of appreciating the

glorious works of Nature, it seems to be his glory to be able to destroy in a few hours what it was the work of ages to produce. The noble oak, that has been cut away to build this contemptible human dwelling, had a life older and wiser than that of any man in this country. That tree has seen generations of men come and go. It was a fresh young tree when Shakespeare was born; it was hardly a middle-aged tree when he died; it was growing here when the first ship brought the white men to our shores, and hundreds and hundreds of those whom they call bravest, wisest, strongest,—warriors, statesmen, orators, and poets,—have been born, have grown up, lived, and died, while yet it has outlived them all. It has seen more wisdom than the best of them; but two or three hours of brutal strength sufficed to lay it low. Which of these dolts could make a tree? I'd like to see them do anything like it. How noisy and clumsy are all their movements,—chopping, pounding, rasping, hammering! And, after all, what do they build? In the forest we do everything so quietly. A tree would be ashamed of itself that could not get its growth without making such a noise and dust and fuss. Our life is the perfection of good manners. For my part, I feel degraded at the mere presence of these human beings; but, alas! I am old;—a hollow place at my heart warns me of the progress of decay, and probably it will be seized upon by these rapacious creatures as an excuse for laying me as low as my noble green brother."

In spite of all this disquiet about it, the little cottage grew and was finished. The walls were covered with pretty paper, the floors carpeted with pretty carpets; and, in fact, when it was all arranged, and the garden walks laid out, and beds of flowers planted around, it began to be confessed, even among the most critical, that it was not after all so bad a thing as was feared.

A black ant went in one day and made a tour of exploration up and down, over chairs and tables, up the ceilings and down again, and, coming out, wrote an article for the Cricket's Gazette, in which he described the new abode as a veritable palace. Several butterflies fluttered in and sailed about and were wonderfully delighted, and then a bumble-bee and two or three honey-bees, who expressed themselves well pleased with the house, but more especially enchanted with the garden. In fact, when it was found that the proprietors were very fond of the rural solitudes of Nature, and had come out there for the purpose of enjoy-