

## The Rockwood Review.

### NATURAL HISTORY NOTES.

#### HATCHLEY.

##### MEMORANDA.

December 19th, 1896.—It is perhaps to be regretted that a number of our young men are so fond of gun practice, as to be prone to seek their principal holiday pastime in killing or attempting to kill all the wild animal life that still haunts our woods, and semi-wild areas and banks of streams; and there seems some reason to fear that as this decimating process goes on, such places will be deprived in time of their principal charm to the peripatetic philosopher or naturalist.

The Ruffed Grouse, Quail, Meadow Larks, Bluejays, etc., have in this district, during the autumn just now passed, been much thinned off by the class of amusement seekers referred to above, and the interesting gray Squirrel and the Mink are now rarely met with in the haunts where some years ago those quadrupeds were of frequent occurrence.

Just lately a youth of our acquaintance brought down by the use of his Winchester a very large (extraordinarily so, it is said) and patriarchal specimen of white-necked or Eagle Owl. The presence of *Strix*, who had quietly perched amid the dark branches of a lofty pine tree, was discovered by the "cawing" of a bevy of crows, who were doing their best to render the emotions of their big-eyed visitor as uncomfortable as possible. The wild rabbits, ruffed grouse and also a number of poultry resorts may have cause of rejoicing at the removal of this savage visitor, whose activities are of the malign stripe indicated by the phrase, "he cometh as a thief in the black darkness of the night."

Two of my personal friends who as they were wood cutting in the bush near here, the day before yes-

terday, aroused by chance a wild gray Rabbit from his temporary hiding place. As the rodent bounded away in quest of a new and safe retreat, a large Goshawk, with immense force and adroitness, pounced down from a branch of a tree, and grasped Bunny by the shoulders, with a ferocious and sanguinary stroke of talons, and the distressed outcries of the bleeding and struggling rabbit were sympathetically responded to, by the wild screams of a pair of large pileated Woodpeckers which happened to be near, but which had not been previously noticed by the woodcutters. The birds' sympathy or symphony was on this occasion of no benefit to the dying rabbit—just relieved from the fierce clutch of its winged destroyer by the coming up of the woodmen. The snow marks along the rabbit's swift line of retreat, were bordered by the wide spreading imprints of the big hawk's fluttering wings, showing the barbarous resolve of the raptore to retain its prey. When picked up, the bunny had "given up the ghost," but instead of its corporal part finding a last resting place in the maw of the hawk, destiny determined the final page of its history to have a tangible connection with the woodman's supper table.

The instinct of sympathy shown by wild creatures is a fit subject for contemplation and wonder. The screams of the two big *Picadæ* just referred to were said to be almost human in their energy and painful impressiveness, and a friend, whose name one need not here mention, relates that on the occasion—now several years ago—of his shooting a pileated woodpecker, the piercing lamentations of its dissociated mate, seemed notes of such inconsolable sorrow, that the conscience smitten gunner mentally resolved NEVER, NEVER "to do it again."

At the beginning of the past