

as it so often does. Our winter falcon, the fierce goshawk, that had been slashing the keen air with his strong wings, dashed through the pinery unperceived by the drowsy grouse and grappled her in his sharp crooked talons almost without stopping his flight, for there was no sign of resistance beyond a wing mark on the snow. Away he bore her, struggling and parting with her feathers, but all in vain; from those claws no bird had ever escaped. Let us consider the signs that tell the story. Had it been at night the partridge would have been roosting on a limb, and not sitting in a cavity in the snow. It happened when there was no wind, otherwise the feathers would have been blown far and wide, also the feathers would not have been thawed down into cavities without the bright sun at this winter temperature. The afternoon of the day before I came, exactly answers the conditions; the day before that was cloudy and squally.

If the hawk had not made a prize of her, there is evidence that a weasel might have feasted on her, for his tracks betrayed his presence the same afternoon on the very spot, where he smelled of almost every feather as if he could hardly believe the evidence of his eyes that so fresh a scent did not lead to a square meal for him thereabouts. Had he found the drowsy bird he would have crept unperceived upon her, greatly favored by his white coat; once within reach, by a single bound he would have her in jaws of immense strength for so small an animal; and while the scuffle would have been vigorous even to the bird flying away with him, still there could be but one ending to the contest, and that was death to the grouse. Any person may see that the stupidest partridge would be the one to fall a victim to the enemy; and thus the more clever individuals are continually preserved. It is equally true that the prizes will fall to the swiftest and most intelligent hawks and owls, provided that their eyes and ears are of the best. Only the choicest weasels will be able to secure meat enough to answer their purposes. The loss of an eye to a weasel or the slightest deafness to an owl would shorten his days.

In spite of all alarms, and occasional hardships, and continuous bloodshed, one is warranted in the belief that the beasts and birds find life fairly enjoyable. They do not know that it is ever to have an ending. No thought of death has ever disturbed them. The evils to come are not considered. Their fears are soon quieted, and with a fair share of food, life is doubtless worth living.

To go on with my walk: I followed the river,

now closed with ice a foot in thickness, half a mile to the hardwood hill where I took the shelter of a fringe of ancient hemlocks that had appropriated a narrow strip of ground at the junction of the hill and swamp that forms the margin of the river. I have taken my readers over this favorite bit of woods when the flowers were in bloom, and the mating birds were full of song, but now all has changed. There is no sound but the muffled roar of the wind as it takes the tree-tops, and the harsh crunching of the crust under foot that is hidden beneath the lighter snow. This is a locality where

owls find congenial quarters amid the sheltering branches of the hemlocks, and many times have I disturbed them as they dozed away the daylight in these dim retreats. Hidden by the tree-tops and high in the air a raven is wrestling with the keen stiff north wind and reports his presence by now and again crying *ou-u*, with a long-drawn accent on the second syllable, and varying it with a hoarse croak that has never been taken to mean any good

to mortal man. Hunger is driving this black speck across the sky in search of food; perhaps he knows where it can be found and has it in view from his lofty lookout. Among the farmers there are occasional deaths among their cattle, sheep, and horses, and the carcasses are dragged away to the woods or pastures where they become bonanzas for the ravens, especially in the cold season when there is but little more to be had. In the warm weather there are young birds and reptiles and frogs, and a chicken here and there, but the taint of decay is no objection in the raven's estimation.

At this point I turned homewards as I had no disposition to go faster than needful to keep myself warm; indeed it may be truly said that he who runs on these occasions will never read much of what

