

CHAPTER XIII

THERE was tragedy in the woods to-day.

High up in the pine-trees, flying excitedly to and fro, crows were cawing angrily and beating the leaves till something fell with a sickening thud at my feet. It was a beautiful bird—a red-throated throistle, broken winged and bleeding—a pitiful sight. Oh! the agony in that bright eye so quickly glazing, the faintly pulsing heart, the quivering limbs! I could not bear its prolonged suffering. There was a big stone close by—I hated to do it—I shut my eyes—and ended its agony. God forgive me; but I did it in compassion, not in wantonness. The carrion crows fought more fiercely, enraged at being despoiled of their prey; the little birds hid away in the thicket and quenched their song, fearful of becoming victims of their enemies' wrath. A rusty brown squirrel with a bushy tail scuttled across the path and disappeared into a deep hole, leading, no doubt, to some elaborate subterranean passage impregnable alike to human or winged marauders.

It is cold to-day—so cold that we are glad