

Serpent Fascination.

Business led me to cross the Chilhowee mountain, in Tennessee, on the 27th of June, 1857. When near Montdole Springs, two birds were noticed at a couple of rods' distance from the road, which were acting in a manner new and strange to me. They were in an open space, near the stump of a fallen tree, but did not take flight at my approach as under ordinary circumstances they would have done. On reaching a point opposite to them it was noticed that they were the brown mocking-bird, or thrush, and that a very large black snake lay coiled at the side of the stump. On seeing me it suddenly began to uncoil itself and move off as if to make its escape; the birds, at the same time, pausing a moment in their movements. But before it had stretched itself to more than half its length they were again in motion, and flew at it in the most energetic manner.—Instantly the snake once more whirled itself into coil in its former position. The male bird then commenced to run and skip with great activity, in a semicircle, the serpent being in the center, and gradually closed in until within a foot or two of its coils, when, with a sudden dart forward, the bird thrust its head toward that of the snake, and in the same instant, threw itself, alighting on the ground at the distance of about ten feet. Before the male had closed this feat the female had commenced a similar set of actions. All the movements of the birds were made with extended wings, as if ready to fly in a moment. By the time the female had thrown itself back from the snake, the male was in position again, repeating the same movement as the first. In the meantime my horse had carried me some four or five rods into a thicket of bushes, whither my hand had guided him, and where I dismounted and secured him. All this took place in a minute or two; and as only an indistinct view had been gained of the action of the birds in passing, a favorable position for observation was taken, so that all that occurred could be noted. The first movement of the male bird, in thrusting its head forward into close contact with the snake, impressed me with the conviction that a case of the so-called fascination was enacting before me, and I determined to observe it in a philosophical manner.

It was half past one o'clock p. m. The birds were still eager at work when I turned my eye upon them after the interruption of hitching my horse. They were panting, as if greatly exhausted by long exertion, but manifested not the least disposition to remit their efforts. If not fascinated, they were at least so earnestly enlisted in the affair on hand as to disregard everything else around them. The snake lay in its coil, with head erect and thrown back, so as to be in the best possible position to strike and seize the birds as they advanced. The many convolutions of its lengthened body moved in graceful curves as its glittering head followed their motions. Its eyes sparkled in the sunlight, like the polished diamond, while its movements gave to its ever shifting scales the brilliant hues of the rainbow. Again and again, as the birds approached, it would strike at them with open mouth, exhibiting a malignity of disposition that portended death to them had they been seized in its jaws.

A few minutes sufficed to show that a battle and not a scene of fascination was presented before me. The birds, at each approach, struck the snake with their beaks, or with their talons, when, generally, but not always, it darted forward at them, only to find that it was aiming at a movable target. This can be easily explained. The snake in striking could never project itself more than about two thirds of its length, but its defense was made with determined courage. Its position by the stump protected it in the rear, so that the birds could only approach it in the front. They were as adroit in their attacks as it was resolute in its defense. In attempting to seize them it could not curve to either side after starting, so as to follow their motion, but invariably shot forward in a straight line to the point they occupied when it made its spring. The birds in advancing to the attack by a circular movement were certain of being away from the spot at which it aimed, and when its teeth smacked together where it expected its prey, it had nothing in its grasp.

The warfare lasted, after I reached the spot, about twenty-five minutes by the watch. Once or twice during the contest the reptile made a movement to escape up the hillside, but the birds, as at its first attempt, immediately brought it into position again. At last, seeming to despair of success in securing a dinner in that locality, it darted off down the hill toward a grove of trees and bushes, nor turned to the right or left. The birds swept after it pecking, scratching, and striking it with their wings, as if inspired with the consciousness that victory was theirs.

At this moment I rushed forward, and, after some difficulty, killed the snake and cut it open. There was not a particle of food from one end to the other of the intestinal canal. It must therefore have been hungry; and if it possessed the faculty of charming it would undoubtedly have employed its powers on such a delicacy as these birds.

When the dissection of the snake was finished the birds were not to be seen. It was the season when their young were in their nest; and doubtless the conflict which had just terminated had been waged for the protection of their offspring. Less active birds, venturing as close as they did to their enemy, must have been captured.

Remaining most of the summer in the mountains of North Carolina, frequent opportunities were afforded of inquiring of hunters and others what they knew about birds being charmed by serpents. All believed in the theory of fascination, and several had witnessed encounters such as I have described; but none had ever seen the snake seize the bird. They had looked on until the bird, as they supposed, was attempting to thrust its head under the influence of the charm, into the serpent's mouth, when they rushed forward and killed the serpent to save the bird from destruction. In all the inquiries made no instance has been related where there was any more evidence of fascination than in the one observed by myself. In all cases however, there was a singular uniformity in the descriptions of the manner in which the birds fluttered around the snakes. So nearly did their accounts correspond with what I had witnessed that I was convinced of the truthfulness of their statements.—*American Monthly.*

Half Married.

A few years since, a party of two young ladies and gentlemen visited Squire Curtis, at Greenland, apparently for the purpose of 'uniting two fond hearts in one.' The prospective groom appeared to be a young man of sanguine temperament, whose ruddy countenance and glowing eye denoted the near approach of the happy hour, when his fondest hopes were to be realized. He thrust a hand into each breeches pocket, placed his right foot firmly forward, and placing his hat jauntily on one side, gazed first at the Squire, then at his 'heart's delight,' as much as to say 'I've got her.'

The lady sat, the picture of health, with an expression of countenance that told the casual observer 'butter wouldn't melt' between her ruby lips. There could be seen a suspicious little dimple, however, at each corner of her mouth, that came and went with every leer of a pair of bright but mischievous looking eyes—sparkling with roguish restlessness—that told her lover 'he need not count his chickens before they were hatched.'

Now, we do not intend, in the absence of our young friend, Arthur Cannon, to report the dialogue phonographically; but we shall take a 'reporter's license' for detailing the following dialogue, which was commenced by the Squire, who approached the parties, and inquired in his blandest manner:

'What can I do for you, young friend?'

Groom. What can you do for us? Why a darned site. Can't lie, Sarry?'

Bride. Well—I reckon it—if all's willin'.

G. Willin'! Why, what's up? Ain't goin' to gin up now I hope? You don't mean to say I shan't get married?'

B. Oh, no, John, you've come to get married, and I wouldn't balk you.

G. Good as gold! There, Squire—there's a pattern

to begin with—(seizes her and planting a few that would rival Twitchell's pop beer)—puts on the harness like a dove. So now, Squire, gear up your fixins and crack your whip.'

Squire. (Rising.)—'Well, if you are in earnest, I can marry you.'

G. (Impatiently.)—'In airnest? of course we're in airnest. Don't p'laver so—go into it—rip out the sarvice—you know Solomon says, delays are dangerous, keep the feet dry and the head cool, and bid defiance to physicers.'

B. 'La! John, there's no use in being in such a hurry.'

G. 'Now, Sarry, don't say boo till it's over—let 'em drive. Go at it Squire—hurry up the cakes—moderate, but don't splurge—slow, but all fired sarlin. Wake snakes—won't Bets Bradford howl when she hears I'm married?'

The Squire proceeded slowly in the ceremony, keeping a watchful eye on the intended bride, whose mysterious manner excited a suspicion that a screw was loose somewhere. When, however, he came to the response of the groom, the solemn scene was disturbed by something like a stentorian yell.

G. 'Whoop! you'd better believe it! Of course I'll take 'er—who 'sputes it?—What did I come here for? May bet your life on that. Go on, Squire—now give her a haze.'

The Squire, in turn, performed the service which was to extort acquiescence to her lover's wishes; but instead of the precious words 'I will,' gushing up from the pure fountain of her maiden heart, a 'No!' blunted the services of Squire and groom.

G. 'Great shakin' agers! Sarry—what did you say?'

B. No! [The Squire looks perplexed, and Sarry, laughing outright, begins to move off.]

G. 'Stand your ground, Squire, hold 'er! Go on with the sarvice—drive it through, and clutch on t'other side—rivet 'er now!'

B. 'No you don't. You wanted to get married, and you are married—but I'm not married! So pay the Squire, and run home before your 'mamma knows you're out.' And away skipped the little jilt, convulsed with laughter.

G. 'Great Caesar, Squire, it's your fault. If you'd only put 'er right through, an' hadn't stopped to mince matters, I'd 'a had 'er.'

The groom left with rather a rueful countenance, and appeared to be lost in deep meditation, which was only disturbed by the merry peals of a levy of girls, who saluted him with boisterous laughter, a short distance from the Squire's; prominent among them, too, was Bessie Bradford. He is known as the young man who is *half married*.

"Domestic Receipts in Full."

BY JOSH BILLINGS.

Tew make watermelons the old fashioned way—steal them by moonlight, and eat them in the next lot.

Lobsters want tew be boiled whole till they are ded, pour ice cream over them, send for the doctor, eat them before going tew bed, tell yure friends the next day that ye have been threatened with an attack of the—rebels.

Tew to remove goose pimples—kill the goose.

Tew kure hams—bathe them in Hostett's bitters.

Tew bring up a child in the way he should go—travel that way yourself.

'I will not strike thee, bad man,' said a Quaker one day, 'but I will let this billet of wood fall on thee!' and at that precise moment the 'bad man' was floored by the weight of the walking-stick that the Quaker was known to carry.

In accordance with Circular No. 1. Medical Director's Office, 8th Army Corps, dated Baltimore, Md, Jan. 18th, 1865, the U. S. A. General Hospital, at Annapolis Junction, Md, will hereafter be designated as the 'Rulison' U. S. A. General Hospital, in honor of Surgeon WILLIAM H. RULISON, 9th N. Y. Cav., who fell by the hands of the enemy while in the performance of his duty at Smithfield, Va, August 29th, 1864.