

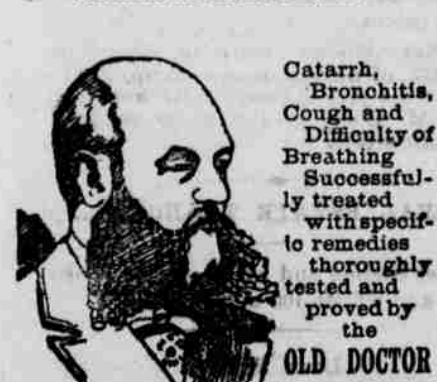


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A VENETIAN WALL FLOWER.

Floating along a quiet Venetian street, An old, old woman, laid upon the shelf, I felt how much life's bitter morsel she sowed, And foolishly kept thinking of myself.

While vanquished day its sunset banner furled, I pondered o'er forgotten hopes and fears, And thought perhaps too hardly of the world, For patience does not always grow with years.

High on the right there towered an old stone wall, Gay with a century's discarded growth, Where wall flowers held their gaily festival, Some red, some yellow, and some tinged with both.

From out the crumbling stones with flowers arrayed, A little window could my converse command, And o'er the sill smiled a Venetian maid, And leaped her pensive head upon her hand.

Her softy fustian hair as dark as night, Her features lighted by a thoughtful smile, She turned her splendid eyes to left and right, And hummed an old Venetian air the while.

Her brilliant cheeks and red lips just apart, Lit by the low sun's slowly dying flame, She sat so still she seemed a work of art, With old gray stone and wall flowers for a frame.

She saw me, and she seemed to know my power Of grief and loneliness and selfish woe, And with a sudden impulse plucked a flower, And tossed it to me as I passed below.

The breeze had died away. The blossom dropped, Fluttered and waivered; it was falling wide; A tiny zephyr caught it up, then stopped, And brought the flower directly to my side.

I foolishly waved my poor old wrinkled hand; Her pretty features lighted up at this; She said some words I could not understand, And laughed and threw me down a little band.

And then somehow this dark world grew more bright, And I could see with dim eyes strangely clear How grim old time can smile in swiftest flight, And sadder fate forget to be severe.

I love to think that you remember, too, Sweet girl so far away across the sea, And while I wave this grateful hand to you, Perhaps you throw another kiss to me.

—Robert Beverly Hale in Youth's Companion.

THE QUAIL.

I was about 10 years of age when what I am about to relate occurred.

It was in summer time. In those days I lived with my father on a farm in southern Russia. Around us for a distance of many versts the steppe extended in every direction.

No forest, no stream, could be found in the neighboring country; only shallow ravines, covered by brushwood and looking like immense green snakes, here and there made their way through the otherwise unbroken surface of the plains. Tiny rivulets flowed at the bottom of these ravines. In places to which well beaten footpaths generally led you could see, very near the top of the bank, small springs of limpid water, like tears, issue from the ground, and on their edges in the damp clay the tracks of numberless birds and other small animals. Man and beast alike need fresh, pure water.

My father was passionately fond of hunting. Every moment he could spare from his work—provided the weather was fine—would see him take down his rifle, strap his pouch to his waist, whistle for his old dog Tresor and start to hunt quail or partridge. Here he thought little of fit only, he would say with an air of contempt, to make a hunter run. These and snipes which came in the autumn were all the game found in the neighborhood.

But quails and partridges were quite numerous, especially the latter. In following the banks of the ravines you would encounter at every step little hollows in the dry ground where they love to squat. Old Tresor would then come to a sudden stop, his tail wagging furiously and his forehead gathering in wrinkles, while my father, pale with excitement, would cautiously raise the hammer of his gun.

At times, to my great joy, I would be permitted to accompany him. I used to tuck the legs of my trousers into the tops of my boots, hang my little flask over my shoulders, and so equipped would imagine myself a true sportsman. Though perspiration might cover me from head to foot and gravel and dust enter my shoes, I never felt the least fatigued and never in a single instance allowed myself to drop behind. At each report of the gun and as soon as the bird fell I bounded forward with joyous shout—I felt so happy. The wounded quail might struggle, flap its wings, sometimes on the ground, at other times in Tresor's mouth, its blood flow—I only became enthusiastic; I never felt the least sentiment of pity.

What wouldn't I have given to be able to fire a gun myself, to kill quails and partridges with my own hand! But my father had repeatedly explained to me that I was not to have a gun until I reached the age of 12, and that then I was to have a single barreled gun, and that I would be allowed to shoot larks only. Large numbers of these were found near our house; on sunny days you could see them by the dozens in the clear sky, mounting higher, ever higher, with chirps resembling the tinkling of little bells.

I looked upon them as my future spoil and aimed at them with a stick which I carried over my shoulder like a gun. It is very easy to get close to them when they hover with quivering wings perhaps five or six feet above the ground before suddenly plunging into the grass.

Sometimes, in the distance, on stubble fields or green prairie, bustards could be seen. "Ah," I would sigh, "to kill a big bird like that and then die."

I pointed them out to my father with my finger, but he would invariably answer that the bustard was a very shy bird, which would not permit anybody to get near it. Once, however, he attempted to steal upon a solitary bustard, thinking that it had been wounded perhaps and was lagging behind the rest of the flock. He ordered Tresor to keep behind him and bade me not to stir. Charging his gun with buckshot, he turned to the dog and exclaimed in a low voice, "Back, back!" Then, cowering as low as possible, he advanced cautiously upon the bustard.

Tresor would not crouch down, but assumed a gait something like that of a bandy legged person, wagging his tail and holding one of his lips between his teeth. I couldn't keep still any longer, and followed my father and Tresor, crawling carefully all the way. But the bustard wouldn't allow us to get within 300 yards; it started on a run first, then flapping its wings flew away. Tresor made a bound forward and stared at it. I, too, looked at it—with such a disappointed heart. Couldn't it have staid just a little longer! We should certainly have killed the bird.

One day I started with my father to go hunting. It was on the eve of St. Peter's day. At that season of the year the young partridges are still very small, and my father would not shoot any. He therefore entered a patch of oak trees situated on the edge of a ryefield, where you were always sure to find quail. As it was rather difficult to cut the grass in this piece of wood, it had been allowed to grow freely and had attained a great height. Myriads of flowers, vetch, clover, harebell, mouse ear and sweet william thrived there in abundance. Whenever I came to this spot with my sister or the maid-servant, I carried home whole armfuls, but when in the company of my father I did not think of picking flowers. I considered that occupation unbecoming a sportsman.

Suddenly Tresor came to a stop. My father made a signal to me to be cautious. Right in front of Tresor a hen quail rose and flew off. But she flew in a strange manner, turning and tumbling over and over again in the air, and then falling to the ground as if she had been wounded. Tresor made for her as fast as possible—a thing he never did when the bird flew in its usual manner.

My father could not take aim for fear of hitting the dog. Presently Tresor made a sudden dash, and before we knew it he had seized the quail and brought her to my father. My father took the bird from him and laid it on its back on the palm of his hand. I ran up to him.

"What's the matter?" I cried. "Is she wounded?"

"No," replied my father; "she must, however, have her nest with her little ones close by. She acted as if she were wounded so that the dog might think he could catch her easily."

"Why did she do so?"

"In order to divert the dog's attention from her little ones. After which, if she had succeeded, she would have flown away. But this time she missed her little game, and Tresor has caught her."

"Then she is not hit?" I inquired again.

"No—but she won't live—Tresor must have injured her with his teeth."

I stepped nearer to have a better look at the quail. She rested motionless on the palm of my father's hand. Her head was drooping and her black eye looked at me sideways. All at once a feeling of pity overcame me. It seemed to me as if the poor little bird regarded me and thought: "Why must I die? Why? Have I not done my duty? I tried to save my little ones, to draw the dog's attention away from them, and here I am a captive! Ah, me! Poor me! This is not just! No, no, it is not just!"

"Papa, perhaps she will not die," I cried, trying to caress the little bird's head.

My father answered:

"She'll die. Look! In another moment her legs will stiffen, her body will tremble and her eyes will close."

Indeed that's what did happen before long. When her eyes had closed, I began to cry.

"Well, what's the matter?" my father exclaimed almost laughingly.

"I pity her," I replied. "She did her duty, and she has been killed. It is not just!"

"She wanted to play a deceitful game," my father answered, "but Tresor was too smart for her."

"Bad dog!" I thought. (At that moment I even thought my father himself was not good.) There was nothing deceitful in her action. It was the love for her young that prompted her to do it. Because she was forced to dissemble in order to save her brood, it does not follow that Tresor had to seize her.

My father wanted to put the quail in his game bag, but I begged him to give her to me. I placed her in my two hands and warmed her with my breath, hoping to bring her back to life again, but she did not stir.

"You waste your time," said my father. "You can't revive her. Don't you see how her head is drooping?" I tenderly raised her head by the bill, but as soon as I let go, it would fall back.

"Do you pity her so much?" asked my father again.

"Who will feed her young?" I replied. My father looked at me attentively,

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"Do you pity her so much?" asked my father again.

"Who will feed her young?" I replied. My father looked at me attentively,

"Don't worry about that," he said, "the male bird—the father—will feed them. But listen! There's Tresor pointing again! Perhaps it's the nest! It is."

In fact, among the stalks of some tall grass, two feet in front of Tresor's snout, I perceived four little quails nestled close together and with outstretched necks. They breathed so quickly I thought they were trembling all over. They had already little feathers, only their tails were still very short.

"Papa! papa!" I cried, "call back the dog; he'll kill them too."

My father recalled Tresor and prepared to sit down a little way off under a bush to eat some lunch. I remained close by the nest and refused to eat. I pulled from my pocket a white handkerchief upon which I placed the quail. "Look, poor orphans! There's your mother! There's your mother!" She has sacrificed herself for you. The young birds seemed to breathe more rapidly when I said it, and their little bodies seemed to tremble still more violently.

I went to where my father sat. "Will you make me a present of this quail?" I asked.

"If it gives you any pleasure, of course. But what are you going to do with her?"

"I am going to bury her."

"Bury her!"

"Yes, there; right close to the nest. Give me your knife so I can dig her a little grave."

"You expect the young to go and pray on the grave, I suppose?" suggested my father in astonishment.

"No," I replied, "but the thought pleases me. She belongs there, close to her nest."

Without adding another word my father looked for his knife and handed it to me. I set to work at once to dig the little hole. I pressed a kiss upon my quail's breast and placed her gently in her grave, and then I filled it with earth. I cut twosticks, and after removing the bark I made a cross by tying them together with some dry blades of grass, and this I placed upon the grave.

We started soon afterward to go home. At each step I turned to look back. The cross was white, and I could see it far off.

That night I had a dream. It seemed to me I was in heaven, and there, perched upon a tiny little cloud, I saw my quail—the very same quail I had buried in the morning; only she was all white, like the cross on her grave. Around her head a halo of gold spread its luster. No doubt, I thought, a reward for what she had suffered for the sake of her children.

Five or six days after I returned in company with my father to the grave. The cross had become a little more yellow, but had remained in its place. The nest, however, was empty; not a trace of the little ones was left. My father assured me that the male bird had carried them elsewhere. Indeed at that very moment, only a few steps from where we stood, the little male flew out of a bush, and my father forebore to fire at him—and I, I said to myself, "No, no; papa is not bad!"

Strange to say, from that day my love for hunting left me completely, and I never even thought of the gun which my father had promised me. Later, it is true, when I had become a man, I took to hunting, too, but I never was a true sportsman.

One day I was hunting with a friend of mine. We soon came upon some grouse. The mother bird rose, and we fired. She was wounded, but did not fall and got away with her young. I proposed following them.

"Let us remain here," my friend said. "We'll imitate their cry, and the whole flock will return before long."

My companion knew well how to imitate the call of these birds. We seated ourselves among the bushes, and my friend began his tactics. At first a young grouse answered, then another, and before long the mother herself, quite close to us, replied in a subdued and soft voice. I raised my head and saw her approach through the grass with all possible speed. Her breast was covered with blood. The instincts of a mother were prompting her. She evidently wished to divert our attention.

At that moment I seemed to myself a monster of cruelty. I rose and clapped my hands. The mother flew away, and the young at once became silent. My companion was furious. He looked at me like a madman.

"You have spoiled our entire sport," he said.

But from that day on to kill, to shed blood, became more and more painful to me.—Translated From the Russian of Ivan Turgeneff For the New York Tribune.

Love Philites.

A favorite plant with the old herbalists was satyrion, a name applied to several species of orchis. As far back as the days of the Roman empire it was commonly supposed that the roots of the satyrion supplied the satyrs with food and prompted them to commit those excesses for which they became proverbial. Kircher relates the case of a youth who, whenever he visited a certain corner of his garden, became so lovesick that he mentioned this strange circumstance to a friend. On examining the spot it was found to be overgrown with a species of satyrion, the odor of which alone had the effect of inspiring love.—Chambers' Journal.

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