

risen above Cornatzel, they clearly heard their mother's voice calling to them from the end of the stubble: "Pitpalac! pitpalac!" They flew quickly towards her and found her. She counted them; one was missing.

"Where is the eldest one?"

"We do not know--he flew off."

Then the heart-broken quail began to call loudly, and yet more loudly, listening on every side. A faint voice from the plantation answered: "Piu! piu!" When she found him, when she saw the broken wing, she knew his fate was sealed, but she hid her own grief in order not to discourage him.

From now on, sad days began for the poor fledgeling. He could scarcely move with his wing trailing behind him; with tearful eyes he watched his brothers learning to fly in the early morning and in the evening; at night when the others were asleep under his mother's wings, he would ask her anxiously:

"Mother, I shall get well, I shall be able to go with you, shan't I? And you will show me, too, the big cities and rivers and the sea, won't you?"

"Yes," answered the quail, forcing herself not to cry.

In this way the summer passed. Peasants came with ploughs to plough up the stubble, the quail and her children removed to a neighbouring field of maize; after a time men came to gather in the maize. They cut the straw and hoed up the ground, then the quails retired to the rough grass by the edge of the plantation.

The long, beautiful days gave place to short and gloomy ones, the weather began to grow foggy and the leaves of the plantation withered. In the evening, belated swallows could be seen flying low along the ground, sometimes other flocks of birds of passage passed and, in the stillness of the frosty nights, the cry of the cranes could be heard, all migrating in the same direction, towards the south.

A bitter struggle took place in the heart of the poor quail. She would fain have torn herself in two, that one half might go with her strong children who began to suffer from the cold as the autumn advanced, and the other half remain with the injured chick which clung to her so desperately. One day, without any warning, the north-east wind blew a dangerous blast, and that decided her. Better that one of the fledgelings should die than that all of them should--and without looking back lest her resolution should weaken, she soared away with the strong little birds, while the wounded one called piteously:

"Do not desert me! Do not desert me!"

He tried to rise after them, but could not, and remained on the same spot following them with his eyes until they were lost to sight on the southern horizon.

Three days later, the whole region was clothed in winter's white, cold garb. The violent snowstorm was followed by a calm as clear as crystal, accompanied by a severe frost.

On the edge of the plantation lay a young quail with a broken wing and stiff with cold. After a period of great suffering he had fallen into a pleasant state of semi-consciousness. Through his mind flashed fragments of things seen--the stubble-field, the leg of a boot with an ant crawling upon it, his mother's warm wings. He turned over from one side to the other and lay dead with his little claws pressed together as though in an act of devotion.