

**THE HISTORY OF ONE
DAY OUT OF
SEVENTEEN THOUSAND**

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The History of One Day Out of Seventeen Thousand by Judge Nutting & Caroline S. King

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JUDGE NUTTING & CAROLINE S. KING

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JUDGE NUTTING.

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THE OLD PILL-LOCK GUN

And How I Killed my First Partridge.



I WAS a farmer's boy and lived on the old farm where I was born. This old homestead, the dearest spot in all the world to me, was about midway between Lake Ontario and Oneida Lake. A swift running spring-brook, called "South Branch of Little Salmon," formed the southern boundary of the farm for the distance of a hundred rods or more. Our house stood upon a hill, and the farm of over a hundred acres took in not only the hill but the interval land commencing at the foot and stretching southward to the creek above named. The farther bank of that beautiful stream was

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father's south line for a long distance. This interval we called the "Flat." It was a beautiful piece of land, easy of tillage and exceedingly fertile.

When I was a boy ten years of age, October, 1850, this part of the town of West Monroe was comparatively a new country. The original forests still covered a large part of that section. Indeed, my father's farm was surrounded with woods. Several small farms, and two as large as father's, were in the same clearing, but you could stand on the hill near our house and look about you to every point of the compass and your vision would meet the large trees of maple, birch, beech and hemlock which had been there for centuries. On a clear day this was a beautiful landscape; woods all about you, with here and there a neighbor's house, barn and apple orchard in sight; and at one point, away southward, you could plainly see the glistening waters of the "South Branch."

We lived in a large, wood-colored house, with two wings. It had a big chimney, which was so placed as to accommodate the whole house. This chimney reached far above the highest point of the roof. At the top the flue was as large as the head of a big barrel. It reached to the kitchen, where there was an immense fire-place. It reached to the square room, or parlor, where there was a smaller fire-place, and it reached to the guest's bedroom where there was a still smaller fire-place. So, in fact,

this chimney had a large base and in it were the three fire-places.

The old kitchen was the place for fun in winter time. Sometimes when the weather was cold and stormy we would trim the kitchen fire-place with evergreens. These would not last long, but would make the great blazing fire look very nice for a time. When the wind howled and the snow filled the air at night we would put a huge, round, solid beech, birch or maple log in the fire-place for a "back-log." This would be a foot and a half through and seven or eight feet long. You should have seen the fire we could build with such a log for a starter. We would pile on the hard wood chips and splinters, pieces of birch bark and sometimes pine knots. The fire would reach far up the chimney and would roar and crackle at a great rate. The whole kitchen, to the farthest corner, would be thoroughly warmed and lighted by it.

The kitchen was very large, and had a big, square post, painted red, standing in the center. The games and pranks we played about this old post, at these times, still linger in my memory like the aroma of flowers.

I commenced this story, however, to tell you about the "Old Pill-lock Gun," and the first partridge I ever killed.

My father had two guns at this time. One was a

single-barrelled fowling piece, which would weigh about six pounds and a half. Its stock was old, and did not fit very well. It had a round, bronzed barrel, and it was a curious fire-arm, you may be sure. It would shoot like the mischief, when properly loaded, however. Father had killed many a fine bag of game with it in days gone by.

The old "Pill-lock" was the most striking and curious thing about this gun. The cylinder that went into the barrel at the breech, was like that of any muzzle-loading gun, except, perhaps, it was a trifle larger. In the place of the nipple, which, in a cap lock, receives the percussion cap, there was a hole in the top of the cylinder. The lock and hammer were like those in an ordinary gun, except that the hammer was pointed at the end, and the point fitted into the hole in the cylinder. The firing percussion was in the shape of a pill, about the size of the small, round sugar pills, used by doctors to cure sick people, and these pills were black, and were kept and carried in a goose quill. When the gun was loaded, we were careful to see that the powder, which had been put in the gun, came in sight in the hole in the cylinder, and then we took one of the little black pills from the goose quill, and put it in the hole so that it would rest on the bottom, where the point of the hammer would strike it, and create the fire that reached the powder in the gun, and explode the charge.

There was another gun, which was called the "smooth bore." It had a shorter and thicker barrel, and had once been a rifle. It had been bored out, and would now shoot either shot or a large ball. This gun had a better stock, which reached clear to the muzzle. It was fitted with a cap lock, and was considered, by all who had ever seen it shoot, a first-class gun.

The two guns hung in the kitchen, side by side, on wooden hooks, which had been made by father, from crooked branches of a tree, and nailed to the ceiling. These two guns were loaded, as a rule, the year 'round.

Father knew, very well, how to care for a gun, and how to shoot both rifle and shot-gun. He had moved to the old farm when it, and the surrounding country, were covered with forests. The woods were then full of bears, deer, wolves and other animals, and he had learned to handle a gun, and shoot, as well from necessity as pleasure. Father was a young man then, and now his hair and beard had begun to turn gray. It was, even now, a very dangerous thing for a hawk to attempt to make a dinner of our chickens when father was about. Nine times out of ten the hawk would pay the penalty of his daring with his life.

The deer and bears had been driven away and killed off, and father's love for hunting had to be satisfied by capturing smaller game. He loved to hunt partridges

when the fall came on and the farm work had been finished. When the potatoes had been dug and put away in the cellar; when the apples had been carefully picked and barrelled for winter; when the corn had been husked and piled in a great yellow heap in the crib, and when the wood for winter had been housed, then it was that the old hunting fever came on and the partridge, woodcock and squirrel had to hide carefully or they were gone.

For two or three years in the fall, father had let me go with him on these hunting trips. I had not been allowed to carry a gun, though I fairly ached to do so. When I first commenced to go on these hunting trips, I was so small that father some times helped me over large logs, piles of brush and muddy places. I had fired the old pill-lock gun a few times to scare the crows from the corn or at a flock of pigeons passing over, but I had as yet only learned the a, b, c of gun lore. With my limited experience and few years, I was on this October morning to have a gun fully loaded and was to commence hunting in earnest. Father had told me this while caring for the chores that very morning. When breakfast time came and we all sat about the table, I found that my appetite had failed; the excitement, caused by the expected hunt, had taken away the desire for food. My father had noticed this and said, "Young man, you must eat a good breakfast so that you will be strong for the tramp," and in obedience I managed to follow the advice.