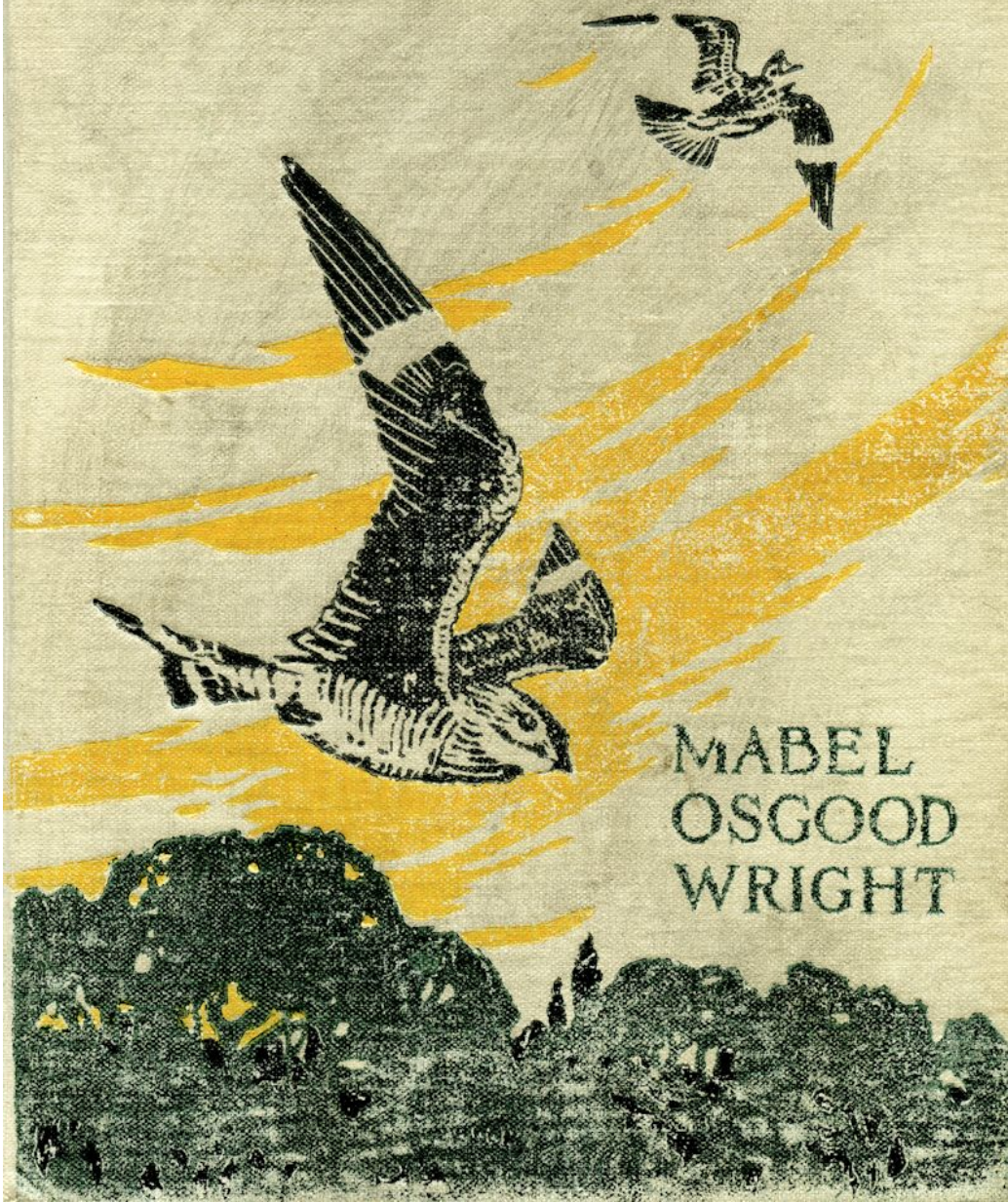


GRAY LADY AND THE BIRDS



MABEL
OSGOOD
WRIGHT

*** A Distributed Proofreaders Canada eBook ***

This eBook is made available at no cost and with very few restrictions. These restrictions apply only if (1) you make a change in the eBook (other than alteration for different display devices), or (2) you are making commercial use of the eBook. If either of these conditions applies, please contact a <https://www.fadedpage.com> administrator before proceeding. Thousands more FREE eBooks are available at <https://www.fadedpage.com>.

This work is in the Canadian public domain, but may be under copyright in some countries. If you live outside Canada, check your country's copyright laws. **IF THE BOOK IS UNDER COPYRIGHT IN YOUR COUNTRY, DO NOT DOWNLOAD OR REDISTRIBUTE THIS FILE.**

Title: Gray Lady and the Birds

Date of first publication: 1907

Author: Mabel Osgood Wright (1859-1934)

Date first posted: Nov. 21, 2019

Date last updated: Nov. 21, 2019

Faded Page eBook #20191140

This eBook was produced by: Mardi Desjardins & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at <https://www.pgdpCanada.net>

GRAY LADY AND THE BIRDS



THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
NEW YORK • BOSTON • CHICAGO
ATLANTA • SAN FRANCISCO

MACMILLAN & CO., LIMITED
LONDON • BOMBAY • CALCUTTA
MELBOURNE

THE MACMILLAN CO. OF CANADA, LTD.
TORONTO



BALTIMORE ORIOLE

(UPPER FIGURE, MALE; LOWER FIGURE, FEMALE)

Order—PASSERES

Family—ICTERIDÆ

Genus—ICTERUS

Species—GALBULA

GRAY LADY AND THE BIRDS

STORIES OF THE BIRD YEAR
FOR HOME AND SCHOOL

BY

MABEL OSGOOD WRIGHT

PRESIDENT AUDUBON SOCIETY, STATE OF CONNECTICUT
AUTHOR OF "CITIZEN BIRD," "TOMMY ANNE," ETC.

*TWELVE COLOURED PLATES AND THIRTY-SIX FULL-PAGE
ILLUSTRATIONS IN HALF-TONE*

New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1914

All rights reserved

COPYRIGHT, 1907,
BY THE MACMILLAN COMPANY.

Set up and electrotyped. Published November, 1907. Reprinted
March, 1909; April, 1910; April, 1914.

Norwood Press
J. S. Cushing Co.—Berwick & Smith Co.
Norwood, Mass., U.S.A.

To

WILLIAM DUTCHER

PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION

OF AUDUBON SOCIETIES

IN RECOGNITION OF HIS UNSELFISH DEVOTION

TO THE CAUSE OF

AMERICAN BIRD PROTECTION



FEEDING THE ORPHANS

TO THE CHILDREN

GREETING!

Oh, sweet is the whitethroat's lay,
As the banners of dawn unfold!
The lovable, quarrelsome wrens all day
Peep and prattle and scold:
Skulks a blue jay hiding his grain;
Blinks an owl with the crows in train—
Courtship merry and combat vain
The eyes of the wise behold.

* * * * *

And Nature spreads wide her book,
In a temple fair and free,—
To all who may listen she cries, "Come, look!
Come and learn at my knee.
Watch the change of the finch's vest,
Note how the highhole carves his nest,—
Come with light foot and loving breast,
And bury your ills with me!"

—DORA READ GOODALE.

BE SURE THAT YOU SEE ARIGHT!

The preservation of the useful and beautiful animal and bird-life of the country depends largely upon creating in the young an interest in the life of the woods and fields.

If the child mind is fed with stories that are false to nature, the children will go to the haunts of the animal only to meet disappointment. The result will be disbelief, and the death of interest. The men who misinterpret nature and replace fact with fiction, undo the work of those who in the love of nature interpret it aright.

—THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

RECOGNITION

The author desires to thank Mr. William Dutcher for permission to reproduce the Drawings of Birds prepared under his supervision for the Educational Leaflets of the National Association of Audubon Societies; Mr. Frank M. Chapman for the quotation of material that has appeared in *Bird-Lore*, also for photographs from his negatives; the American Museum of Natural History of New York City for photographs of its groups representing Bird-Life at Cobbs Island, Virginia, and Birds of the St. Joaquin Valley; to Dr. T. S. Roberts, Dr. C. F. Hodge, R. H. Beebe, and E. van Alterna, for use of valuable photographs; Houghton, Mifflin & Co. for their courtesy in allowing quotations from the poems of Celia Thaxter, Maurice Thompson, Frank Bolles, Lowell, and others; Charles Scribner's Sons for like permission to use the poems of G. P. Lathrop and Henry van Dyke.

Also to Dr. Henry van Dyke, Edmund C. Stedman, Edith M. Thomas, Oliver Herford, Dora Reed Goodale, George Parsons Lathrop, Dr. Garrett Newkirk, Faith C. Lee, Ella Gilbert Ives, Florence A. Van Zant, Lynn Tew Sprague, Richard Burton, W. B. Blake, and others for the use of their poems, etc.

TO THE GROWN-UP—LEND A HAND!

The training of the eye to correct seeing is one of the great advantages of bird study to the average child, quite aside from the value of the information gained, for this accurate gauge of the eye will always be a benefit in whatever calling may be followed, adding alike to the pleasure and profit of life.

In every town or country village there is some one who takes more than passing interest in the life outdoors, who has a keener eye and more responsive ear than his neighbour, coupled with a heart that has a bit of Eden still lodged in it, so that it keeps tender and yearning toward the simple, direct affections of life, as expressed in childhood and the lives of the timid wild brotherhood, whether of foot or wing. Are you one of these? If so, do you not realize that from your very make-up you draw more freely from nature's bounty than do your neighbours, and are you not bound to share your pleasure with them? Not alone because it is pleasure, but that through the knowledge that comes with all real joy, the wild bird or beast may be more fully understood, and therefore protected. All the more is this just and right, because we ourselves in our advancement are the main cause of their need of this protection, for as man increases, possesses, builds, and overflows the earth, so do these "kindred of the wild" dwindle and silently disappear.

The lesser beasts keep more aloof than do the birds. These still gather freely in our gardens, fields, and woods if we permit, and if we offer food and shelter, many quickly become responsive.

Will not you who enjoy this friendship share it with others to whom it is perhaps entirely unknown and unguessed, and to whom even the names of birds, beyond a familiar few such as Hawk, Owl, Robin, and Sparrow, are an unknown language?

The bird lectures are many, but there are those who cannot reach them. The bird protective societies are tireless, but the ground must be prepared for the message they send forth, and there is no better way for doing this than by the influence of a personality working quietly and unconsciously that infects all with whom it comes in contact with its wholesome enthusiasm.

If you are a parent or teacher, well and good; your field is ready at hand. If not, you may still become the equivalent of both in your community even

though you lack some of Gray Lady's attributes and resources.

If you have the right faculty and books at hand, you do not need my aid; but if the work of holding youth is as yet an untried experiment, tuck this little volume into the corner of your school desk, the magazine rack, or your work-basket at home, for rainy days or the between times when lack of occupation breeds mischief.

Much that is told in the following pages was thought out, in another form, especially for the use of teachers of the rural schools of Connecticut, but it is applicable to the needs of children in any of the eastern states, and whether the knowledge passes from the school to the home or the home to the school, the process is the same. The walk between the rural school and home along bushy lanes and tree-bordered highways, however, is an important link in the chain.

For children so placed the birds and every possible motive for wanting to know them lie at hand, but for this very reason the public library wherein the books to answer questions may be found is perhaps many miles away and it is not possible for every school or home to own the necessary bird books or charts.

It must not for a moment be thought that any attempt is made to say anything new or add to the information given in the many excellent and complete books now in circulation, but merely to condense in a simple form things that have been said. Not detailed descriptions and tabulated facts—for these repel the beginner and seem but the spelling-book or multiplication table in a new form—but to record the doings of some children who were eager to know; together with a few hints upon the migrations, winter feeding, and protection of some of our common birds, and the stories of their lives, that may lead both teacher and pupil to more detailed study when opportunity offers.

When a strange child comes to school, the first desire of his mates is to know his name and nationality, from whence he came, where he lives, whether he is merely a visitor or to be a permanent resident in the community. All this must be weighed and well considered before the newcomer is admitted to the friendship of his mates, and it may be that there will be some prejudices against him that the teacher must either remove by explanation or overcome by reason and example.

It is very much the same with a bird. After being attracted to him and fixing upon his name as an individual his identity should be still further established by finding to what family he belongs and then later on placing this family in one of the great orders of the bird world. These two last should not be dwelt upon, however, until the identity as an individual is established,

but in the end it will help to keep the name in the memory to know the kinship of families as well.

There are many little points of comparison, of scientific but not general value that cannot be seen unless the dead bird is held in the hand, and then only a wise man, perhaps, would be able to point them out. It is with the living bird, on the wing or in its nest in the bushes, that we are concerned; not with the poor little dead thing with its limp neck and bloody, ruffled feathers.

We should not learn enough from such a bird to in any way make up for taking its life; it would be both wasteful and against the law. So we must be content to believe what the Wise Men say, who must study the dead birds in order to preserve the scientific knowledge of their structure and keep them in public museums, that they may teach the world how wonderful a thing bird-life is, and show us that we must do all we can to protect it. For the Wise Men know very well that—

You cannot with a scalpel find the poet's soul,
Nor yet the wild bird's song!

M. O. W.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	I	
GRAY LADY APPEARS		1
	II	
A RAINY DAY—The school at Foxes Corners at the beginning of the fall term.		9
	III	
GRAY LADY AT SCHOOL—The bird. What is it? To whom does it belong? The bird year—The migrations, the moulting, etc.		18
	IV	
THE ORCHARD PARTY—The children’s luncheon and the bird’s lunch-counter. Gray Lady makes a plan.		38
	V	
REASONS WHY—Why birds need protection. The uses of birds. What they do for us and what we should do for them—housing, feeding, etc.		51
	VI	
FEATHERS AND HATS—Egrets and Ostrich plumes—The wrong and the right of it.		67
	VII	
THE KIND HEARTS’ CLUB—The work that kept the Fingers busy so that the Ears might listen.		81
	VIII	
THE PROCESSION PASSES—The fall journey—Five Swallows and a changeling.		89
	IX	
TWO BIRDS THAT CAME BACK—The Tame Crow and		102

the English Starling.

X

SOME MISCHIEF-MAKERS—The American Crow, Blue Jay, and Purple Grackle. [114](#)

XI

THE FLIGHT OF THE BIRD—The wonders of flight. Some new facts about the migrations of birds. [136](#)

XII

SOME SUSPICIOUS CHARACTERS—Hawks and Owls—Two sides of the question. [154](#)

XIII

TREE-TRUNK BIRDS—The Woodpeckers—Sapsucker, Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, etc. [175](#)

XIV

FOUR NOTABLES—Game-birds at home—The Ruffed Grouse, Bob-white, Woodcock, and the Wood Duck. [197](#)

XV

GAME-BIRDS?—The plea of the Meadowlark, Mourning Dove, Sandpiper, Plovers, and Bobolink, the Masquerader. "SPARE US, PLEASE! WE ARE TOO SMALL FOR FOOD." [217](#)

XVI

TREASURE-TROVE AT THE SHORE—The Herring or Harbour Gull. [229](#)

XVII

THE BIRDS' CHRISTMAS TREE—The preparation and a [242](#)

surprise. The Winter Wren, Tree-sparrow, Golden-crowned Kinglet, and Crossbills.

XVIII

HOW THEY SPENT THEIR MONEY—The result of the Xmas sale and the Letter Carrier's horse. [254](#)

XIX

BEHIND THE BARS—American birds that have been prisoners.—The Mockingbird, Cardinal, Nonpareil, and Indigo-bird. [270](#)

XX

MIDWINTER BIRDS—Cedar-Bird, Redpoll, Junco, Shrike, Whitethroat, Chickadee, etc. [293](#)

XXI

JACOB HUGHES' OPINION OF CATS—The trail in the snow and the bandits that lived in the barn. [303](#)

XXII

FEBRUARY, "THE LONG-SHORT MONTH"—Stories and poems of the Bluebird, Song Sparrow, and Robin. [310](#)

XXIII

MARCH—Red-wing, Kingfisher, and Phœbe. [333](#)

XXIV

THE TIDE HAS TURNED—Wild Geese, Nest-Building, Vesper-Sparrow, Purple Finch, Chippy, Whip-poor-will, Towhee, Ovenbird, House Wren, Thrasher, Catbird, Wood Thrush, Veery, Nighthawk, Chimney Swift, etc. [355](#)

XXV

BIRD AND ARBOUR DAY AT FOXES CORNERS—In doors [385](#)
and out—Working and talking.

XXVI

SOME BIRDS THAT COME IN MAY—In apple-blossom [403](#)
time look for the brightly coloured birds—Oriole,
Tanager, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo-bird,
Yellowthroat, Chat, Humming-bird, Redstart, etc.

XXVII

FLAG DAY—Gray Lady receives and gives a surprise. [431](#)

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

COLOURED PLATES

	<i><u>Frontispiece</u></i>
	FACING PAGE
BALTIMORE ORIOLE	
SCARLET TANAGER	<u>34</u>
BLUE JAY	<u>129</u>
WOOD DUCK	<u>214</u>
KILLDEER	<u>224</u>
INDIGO BUNTING	<u>280</u>
CARDINAL	<u>286</u>
BLUEBIRD	<u>314</u>
RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD	<u>334</u>
BELTED KINGFISHER	<u>340</u>
AMERICAN GOLDFINCH	<u>422</u>
ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK	<u>426</u>

FULL-PAGE HALF-TONES

FEEDING THE ORPHANS	<u>vi</u>
CHICKADEE	<u>26</u>
SNOWY HERON	<u>66</u>
CLIPPING OSTRICH PLUMES	<u>74</u>
PURPLE MARTIN	<u>96</u>
BIRD-HOUSES AND NESTING-BOXES	<u>106</u>
TERNs AND SKIMMERS ON THE WING	<u>142</u>
GOLDEN PLOVER	<u>148</u>
THE WINGS IN FLIGHT	<u>152</u>
RED-SHOULDERED HAWK	<u>154</u>
SCREECH OWL	<u>158</u>
BARN OWL	<u>166</u>
SHORT-EARED OWL	<u>168</u>
MARSH HAWK	<u>170</u>
SPARROW HAWK	<u>174</u>

WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH	<u>178</u>
FLICKER	<u>190</u>
DOWNY WOODPECKER	<u>194</u>
RUFFED GROUSE	<u>198</u>
JUST OUT	<u>200</u>
DOMESTICATED BOB-WHITE CALLING	<u>202</u>
GROUSE SHOWING RUFF AND TAIL	<u>206</u>
WOODCOCK ON NEST	<u>212</u>
MEADOWLARK	<u>218</u>
MOURNING DOVES	<u>220</u>
SPOTTED SANDPIPER	<u>222</u>
LEAST SANDPIPER	<u>224</u>
HERRING GULLS	<u>232</u>
TREE-SPARROW	<u>248</u>
SHELTER FOR BIRD FOOD	<u>250</u>
ROBIN	<u>326</u>
NIGHTHAWKS	<u>370</u>
CHIMNEY SWIFT RESTING	<u>374</u>
WOOD THRUSH AND NEST	<u>378</u>
CATBIRD ON NEST	<u>384</u>
YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO	<u>404</u>
RED-EYED VIREO ON NEST	<u>406</u>

GRAY LADY AND THE BIRDS

I

GRAY LADY APPEARS

Sarah Barnes hurried up the hill road so fast that by the time she reached the short bit of lane that turned in at her own gate she was quite out of breath, and oh, so warm! Fanning vigorously with her sun-hat did not help her much, for its wide rim had a rent in it, made by Jack, the family puppy, so that when she reached the steps of the porch, she sank down in a heap, only having breath enough to exclaim, "Oh, grandma, what *do* you think?"

Old lady Barnes with a sigh dropped the checked shirt that she was patching into the big work-basket that rested on the bench beside her. This basket was already overflowing with other garments for both boys and girls, that needed everything in the way of repair from a button to a knee patch, or even to a whole sleeve, for with a slim purse and six children to keep covered neither Grandma Barnes' work-basket nor her fingers knew many empty moments.

Taking off her spectacles and rubbing her eyes, as if to see the news as well as to hear it, she said: "Don't tell me Tommy has got hurt in that reaping-machine, down at Weatherby's. I told your pa he was too young to handle such a job!"

"No, Tommy's all right—they were gathering in the last stack as I came by."

"Lammy *hasn't* gone in swimming again down to the crick with the Connor boys?"

"Nope, he's stopped behind at the Centre to tend store for Mr. Sims, 'cause his horse got loose in Deacon Mason's orchard and ate himself into the colic!"

"Billy hasn't fell off the fish-market roof, has he? Your pa took him there this mornin' to help hand up shingles, though 'twas against my wishes."

"No, grandma, Billy's all right, too," said Sarah, who had recovered her breath by this time and was beginning to laugh. "What makes you always think worry? Pa is all right, and Mary and Ruth are helping the minister's wife get the hall ready for the cake sale, and I'm here, so you see there's nothing the matter with *us*."

“Think worry!” exclaimed grandma, now settling her glasses again and preparing to hear the news comfortably so long as neither her son nor his children, to whom she was both grandmother and mother, were in danger, “wait until your only son’s wife dies and leaves you to keep track of six children, with as mixed tempers and complexions as ducks, chickens, and turkeys all in one brood, and I guess you’ll think worry too. But why don’t you fetch out your news?—Not but what you are all good and promising enough in your way,” she added hastily, lest she should be found belittling her own flesh and blood, which she considered next to breaking the whole ten commandments.

“Well, granny,” began Sarah, bringing out her words slowly, and satisfied that the old lady’s expectations were sufficiently raised and that she would have an attentive listener, “the General Wentworth place is open and they’re putting new fences all around the back of it, and a lovely Gray Lady and a little girl with golden hair have come to live there. They have been there since spring too, and I didn’t know it. The girl is as old as me, but she’s smaller, for she isn’t strong and sits in a wheel-chair, and they’ve asked me to come in again.”

Off came the glasses, and the old hands that folded them away in their case trembled with excitement. “The General Wentworth place open after all these years, since his only daughter Elizabeth married her cousin John, whom we all expected to die a bachelor, and then he fell into poor health! You don’t remember him, Sarah Barnes, ’cause you wasn’t born, but he was a mighty strange fellow, handsome and likely; he wouldn’t be a soldier as his uncle wished, but he was great for readin’ books, and he used to wander all over the country here watching birds and things and drawin’ pictures of them. I heard John died a couple of years ago away in foreign parts,—it can’t be Elizabeth that’s come back,—she wouldn’t be a gray-haired old woman, as you say. I knew her when she was a girl. She was full of life and rode a pony everywhere; her father used to bring her over to our mill, and many a ginger cooky of my baking has she ate. No, it can’t be little Miss Elizabeth,—it’s more likely some one that has hired or bought the place and goin’ to upset and change it all.”

“I didn’t say the lady was old, grandma; she has lots of soft, silvery, wavy hair with big gray eyes to match, and such a pretty colour in her cheeks, and her dress was soft and fluffy too and the colour as if purple and white violets and silver popple leaves were all mixed together,” said Sarah, moving her hands before her, a little way she had when talking, as if in describing what she had seen she was touching the real object, for Sarah, though only a little girl from a bare hillside farm and taught at the school below at Foxes Corners, had a keen eye for colour and loved beautiful

things, so that ugliness or unkindness of any sort really hurt her if she could have explained her feelings.

“My Gray Lady’s first name is Elizabeth, though, and she knows you and your molasses cakes,” continued Sarah, after a moment’s pause, “for she said, ‘When you go home say to your grandmother that Elizabeth who rode the black pony sends her love, and that she will go to see her soon, and that she hopes that she will give the little Elizabeth some of the cookies of which she has often heard.’ Elizabeth is the little girl, but I’m going to call her Goldilocks, because the name matches her hair and she looks as if she was meant to—

“ ‘Sit on a cushion and sew a fine seam
And feast upon strawberries, sugar, and cream.’ ”

“Elizabeth Wentworth and her daughter back here and I never knew it!” cried Grandma Barnes, rising as if to take immediate action. “Your Aunt Jane might well say, as she did on her last visit, that this hill farm is as far out o’ the world as livin’ in a lighthouse that had no stairs or boat to it, and the only way to get anywhere was to take a dive and swim. But see here, Sarah Barnes, how did you come to meet the General’s folks? It’s near a mile from the road up from the Centre to their front gate; mebbe you ran across them in the village, and if so, how came you to speak?”

Sarah opened her lips to answer and then stammered and grew red under her grandmother’s keen gaze. “I didn’t pass their gate and I didn’t meet them in the village. I was—I was just taking a bunch of field flowers, that I got along the road, up to the cemetery to mother, and then when I go there, I usually take some to the General’s mound too, ’cause nobody took anything, except a little flag Memorial Day, and it’s usually all faded by now. This year, though, the lot was planted with flowers, and I was wondering why. I was sittin’ there watching a gray squirrel that lives in one of the old cannons that stand at the plot corners. You see the squirrel knows me because I’ve taken him nuts two winters whenever we’ve gone to Pine Hill coasting, and he comes up real close. To-day when he came up, I only had some cracker crumbs in my pocket, but he acted real pleased to see me, and I was so busy talking to him that I didn’t hear anybody coming up until somebody said, ‘Who is this little girl that brings flowers to an old soldier’s grave, and has a squirrel for a friend?’ ”

“A nice way of wasting your time, I must say, of a week-day afternoon, and so much to be done at home,” broke in Mrs. Barnes, rather crossly.

But Sarah, not minding the interruption, continued: “Then I jumped up, and there was Gray Lady and Goldilocks sitting in a nice big straw chair,

like those on Judge Jones' porch, only it had wheels and a handle behind like a baby wagon, and a fattish woman with a pleasant face was pushing it."

"Well, what happened next?" asked grandma. "I wonder she didn't tell you not to trespass and feed animals in a cemetery!"

"Oh, no, she liked it, and we got acquainted right away. She asked me what put it in my head to bring the flowers, and told her that it was because nobody else did and that I loved the General because my mother told me that though he lived through a lot of battles, he got the wound that made him die long after, in trying to get back a little black child that had been sold away from its mother, for it's an awful thing to take children away from their mothers, and only God should do it, and I know He must be always sorry when He has to. And I said I knew how it hurt because He took my mother away from me.

"Goldilocks said she wished that she had a tame squirrel down in her garden, and I said there were plenty of squirrels there, and she could begin to tame 'em as soon as food gets scarce. Then she asked how I knew, and then it all came out that Dave and Tommy Todd, Mary, and I often take a cross-cut through the General's orchard, when we go over to Aunt Jane's. Then they asked me to walk down home with them.

"There was a new high fence all round the orchard, with a gate by the old house in the corner that has the big stone chimney, where the Swallows live, so we can't cut across any more, and before I thought, I said so; but Gray Lady said, 'I think, Sarah, it will be quite as pleasant for you to come in at the front gate, and go out at the back, as to crawl through a hole in the brush like a fox or a woodchuck,' and I guess it will, for she doesn't want us to stop coming.

"Then I asked her if the house had lovely pictures in it and birds with real eyes sitting on perches, and more books than the Sunday-school library, and she laughed and asked who told me that, and I said it was Jake Gorham that went up there to set new glass in the roof light after the hail-storm last summer."

"Sarah Barnes! such gall as to make free and talk to General Wentworth's daughter like that! I just wonder what she thinks of you!"

"She didn't tell me, grandma; but, oh, what do you suppose, she said that if I came down some afternoon, she'd show me all the pictures and then I could tell Goldilocks how to begin to make friends with the squirrels, and that she would show me their tree with a lunch-counter on it for birds, where there is something for every kind to eat. Do you suppose she will ask me for this Saturday, grandma, and may I wear my pink lawn, if it stays warm? My Sunday dress for fall shows where the hem was let down."

“She may and then again mayhap ’twill be the last you’ll ever hear of it. Come to think of it, in those days my ginger cookies were mixed with butter instead of lard, and they had currants in them. I guess I’ll risk it to make a batch to-morrow, lest Mrs. John should come up—that is if I finish all this mending, for there is only one more Saturday and Labor Day, and then school opens, and all you girls and boys will be making excuses for shirking your chores. Five o’clock already! Sarah Barnes, do you go straight out and feed the chickens and then rinse those milk-pans,—that comes first before all the fine talk of seein’ pictures and making pies and cakes for birds.”

Sarah went slowly toward the barnyard and fed the greedy fowls in an absent-minded sort of way, all the while looking across the field where the birds were beginning to gather in flocks, wishing she knew them all by name and thinking of Gray Lady and Goldilocks. Would they remember the invitation or would she never perhaps see them again? School would soon begin, and that meant no spare time until after four, and it is so often rainy on Saturday.

Rain did not wait for Saturday this time, for a heavy drizzle set in that night, and Sarah went to sleep wondering exactly what a bird lunch-counter was and what became of it when it rained.

Then school began, and her new friend made no sign, and Sarah began to wonder if her meeting with Gray Lady had been one of the dreams she so often had when she sat on the orchard fence in June watching the bobolinks fly over the clover and waiting for things to happen.

II

A RAINY DAY

It was the first Friday of the fall term and there were only fifteen scholars at the weather-beaten shingled schoolhouse at Foxes Corners. The usual number in winter was twenty-five, but some of the older pupils did not return until late in October, for these boys and girls helped their fathers and mothers either about the farm work or in the house, and as this school district was located in pretty rolling hill country, with woods and a river close by, city people came to board at the farm-houses and often did not go away until they had seen the leaves redden and fall.

Miss Wilde, the teacher, was very glad to begin with only fifteen scholars. She was not very strong; the children were always restless during the first month after their vacation. Then, too, it is more difficult for a teacher to interest scholars that range from five to fifteen than where she has children all of an age.

Miss Wilde was very patient, for she loved outdoors and liberty herself, and she knew just how hard it was in these first shut-in days for the children to look out the open windows and see the broad fields stretching out to the woods, and hear the water rushing over the dam at Hull's Mill, and then take any interest in bounding the Philippine Islands and remembering why they are of special value to the United States.

Tommy Todd was what is usually called the "bad boy" of the school. He was thirteen, keen-witted and restless. He learned his lessons quickly, and then when Miss Wilde was hearing the little ones drone out their "twice one is two," "twice two is four," he often sat idle in his seat devising mischief that he sometimes put in motion before school was over.

Then there were some days when it seemed as if Tommy would leave his desk and fly out of the window in spite of himself. Poor Miss Wilde had been obliged to make him change desks twice already. From his first place he could look at a pasture, where a family of woodchucks had their burrows, and he had caused several stampedes, not only among the boys, but girls also, by calling out: "Hi! there goes a buster! I bet its hide's worth more'n a quarter! Now Jones' yaller dog is after him! Hi! there! good work! he's headin' of it off! Gee, Hog's reared and give him a bite! There they go round the hill! If the hole back t'other side I stuffed Saturday's got loosed out, I bet

on the hog!" (Ground-hog being the familiar name for the woodchuck in this region.)

Order being restored, Tommy was moved to the east side of the room. Here the view was downhill over the lowlands, ending at a great corn-field that belonged to Tommy's grandfather. The corn was yellow in the ear, but still standing. A flock of crows that had a roost in the swampy millwoods knew all about this corn-field and considered it as their own property, for had they not superintended its planting, helped thin out the seed lest it should grow too thick, and croaked and quavered directions to old man Todd and his horses every time they ploughed and hoed? Now, guided by a careful old leader who sat on a dead sycamore top and gave warning (for all crow flocks have such a chief), they were beginning to attack the ripened ears, the scarecrows placed at intervals that had been of some use in the early season having now lost the little influence they possessed and fallen into limp heaps, like unfortunate tramps asleep by the wayside.

So every time the crows came over, Tommy would stretch up in his seat and finally slip out of it entirely and, hanging half out of the window, shake his fist at them, all the time uttering dire threats of what he would do if he only had his father's shot-gun.

For these reasons, Friday morning saw him seated in the middle of the room with the older girls and sharing the double desk with Sarah Barnes. Now Sarah thought that Tommy was the cleverest boy she had ever seen, and Sarah had visited in Centre Village in Hattertown, and Bridgeton, been twice to the Oldtown County Fair, and would have gone to New York once with her Aunt Jane if measles had not prevented; so that her friends thought, for thirteen, she was quite a travelled lady.

Tommy also considered her favourably and had been heard to say that she was not bad for a girl; yet, to be put in the middle seats with the girls he considered an insult to his years, and he was sulky and brooded mischief all the morning.

In reality Tommy was not a bad boy in any way. What he wanted was plenty of occupation for his mind and body to work at. Miss Wilde knew this and tried to give him as many little things to do as possible. It was Tommy who had charge of the new cage rat-trap of shiny copper wire, in which it was hoped the field rats might be caught, that, as soon as cool weather came, gnawed their way in through the loose floor boards and sometimes destroyed the books, and, as Sarah Barnes declared (whose duty it was to keep the wells filled), drank the ink. Tommy also kept the water-pail full and tended the big wood-stove in winter; but none of these tasks seemed to touch the restless spot and he could think out more puzzling questions in a day than the whole school board could have answered in a

week, and then, as Sarah Barnes once said, "Tommy Todd's questions never seem to stay answered."

Miss Wilde had taught, at first, in the school of a large town where there were plenty of pictures and maps on the walls, and charts of different kinds and reference books for the children to use, and where people who loved children would often drop in and tell them about birds and flowers or their journeys to interesting places. She had taken the country school because the doctor thought it would be better for her health, and oh, how she wished that she could have brought some of the pictures and books with her, or that some of the summer boarders who stayed until almost winter would come in and talk to her pupils. She told the children stories or read to them on Friday afternoons. She also knew that there were some travelling libraries of books that she might borrow that the children could have themselves, but reading is a habit; the children needed to be interested first. So it came about that, when the second year of her school life on the hillside began, Miss Wilde felt rather discouraged.

On this particular rainy Friday she was feeling worried about her mother, who boarded at the Centre Village and with whom she spent every weekend, going down with the mail-carrier on his return trip Friday evening and usually walking back on Sunday afternoon if no one chanced to be driving that way. Mrs. Wilde had been ill the Sunday before and Miss Wilde had not heard a word all the week. Everything had gone awry that morning, and when the last child had filed out for the dinner-hour and gone splish-splashing up the muddy road, before straightening out the room as usual, Miss Wilde sat down at the desk, her head in her hands, and two big tears splashed down on the inky blotting-paper before her. Presently she wiped her eyes, opened all the windows that the rain did not enter, took her box of luncheon from her desk, and walked slowly down the side aisle to the little porch, which also acted as the cloak-room, the place where she usually ate her luncheon when it was too cool or wet to go outdoors.

As she passed Tommy Todd's desk she thought she heard a noise, and glanced sideways, half expecting to see him crouching under it, bent upon some prank. No one was there, and still there was a scratching sound in that vicinity. Opening the desk lid, Miss Wilde gave a scream, for inside was the new trap and inside the trap two wicked-looking old rats whose whiskers had evidently grown gray with experience.

"I wonder what he would have done with them if I had not found him out?" she said to herself, as she lifted the cage, by hooking the crook of her umbrella into the handle on the top, and carrying it with the greatest care, put it into the empty wood-box in the porch. Then she seated herself on the bench by the outer door and unstrapped her box. But it evidently was not

intended that the poor teacher should lunch that day, for suddenly the door flew open and the weather-beaten face of Joel Hanks, the carrier who had the forenoon mail-route, peered anxiously in.

“You here, Miss Wilde?” he called anxiously. “I’m glad yer hain’t gone up to the house for your nooning, cause I clean fergot when I come by up, but yer Ma’s feelin’ extra poorly and uneasy, and she thought mebbe you could come back along with me instead of waiting till night. I’m goin’ to eat over to Todd’s and I can stop back for you close to one if you can arrange to go.”

“Oh, I wish I had known it before the children went to dinner,” she cried, clasping her hands together nervously and dropping the box, out of which her lunch rolled to the floor, amid the damp that had been made by wet coats, overshoes, and dripping umbrellas. “As it is, when the children come back, I cannot send them right home again, for some have a long walk. If it wasn’t for Tommy Todd, I could leave Sarah Barnes for monitor; but there are those rats, and the school board does not like me to shorten hours so soon after vacation. It’s too late for me to go over for Mrs. Bradford, or I know that she would help me by coming as she did several times last spring.”

“Sorry I couldn’t stop this morning, but I come by the lower road. Wall, mebbe you’ll think out some way and I’ll stop back a bit a’ter one,” Joel said cheerfully, going back to his covered cart and chirping to his wise old horse, who, though he was gaunt and had only one good eye, knew every letter-box on the route and solemnly zig-zagged across the road from one to the other on his way up to Foxes Corners, but as surely passed them by without notice on the return trip.

Miss Wilde had barely swept away the scattered lunch through the open door when again she heard wheels, and looking up saw that which made her stand stock-still in surprise, broom in hand,—a trim, glass-windowed depot wagon, such as she had seldom seen out of Bridgeton, drawn by a handsome pair of gray horses, whose long, flowing tails were neatly braided and fastened up from the mud with leather bands, instead of being cruelly docked short as sometimes happens. The driver, a pleasant-looking, rosy-cheeked man, was well protected by coat and boot of rubber; but before Miss Wilde could more than glance at the outfit the door opened and a lady stepped lightly out, reaching the school porch so quickly that she had no need of an umbrella.

Spying Miss Wilde, she said in a voice clear as a bell, and yet so well modulated and sweet that no one who heard her speak ever forgot its sound—“Are you the teacher here?”

“Yes.”

“And your name?”

“Rosamond Wilde,” replied the astonished girl, hastily hanging up the broom, unconsciously leading the way into the stuffy schoolroom and placing the best chair by the side of her desk, as she did when the minister, Dr. Gibbs, from Centre Village, who was president of the school board, came to hold a spelling-match.

“Thank you,” said the silvery voice, as its owner took the proffered seat, turning so that she could look out of the window.

“I have heard from Dr. Gibbs that you sometimes use part of Friday afternoon for telling the children stories, or reading something that may amuse as well as teach them, and I thought that perhaps, as the board does not object, you might sometimes be willing to have me come in and talk to them. I am very fond of children, and have one little girl of my own, so that I know very well what they enjoy. I’ve travelled for several years, and I have a great many interesting pictures I could show them. Then, too, I have always loved birds and flowers, and with my father I used to tramp about and learned to know all those of this neighbourhood. I well remember that when I was a child and studied at home, rainy Friday afternoons were always pleasant, because mother, my cousins, and I had fancy-work or some other sewing and stories; so I thought to-day perhaps would be a good time for a beginning.”

If the sky had opened and an angel come directly to her aid, Miss Wilde could not have been more overcome. She pulled herself together and began to frame a polite answer, when looking at the guest, who had thrown off her light raincoat, she caught the sympathetic glance that shot from a lovely pair of gray eyes with black lashes, and saw that the fluffy gray hair belonged to a really young woman, but a little older than herself. Forgetting that a teacher is supposed never to lose control of herself, before she realized that she had said a word she had told this friend in need about her school, Tommy Todd, her mother’s sickness, and all.

In less time than it takes to tell of it, the coachman had been told to go down to the blacksmith’s shop and wait under cover until three o’clock, and Miss Wilde was helped to make her preparation for leaving.

When the children came trooping back, they found the door between cloak-room and schoolroom closed, and teacher waiting for them in the outer room with very rosy cheeks and a happier expression than her face usually wore.

Tommy Todd looked relieved, for, he reasoned, if teacher knew there were two rats in his desk, she would not have looked pleased. In a few words Miss Wilde explained the happenings, cautioned them to be very good, and saying, “Right, left, right, left,” was about to open the door for the

children to march in, when Sarah Barnes asked, “Teacher, what is her name, so we can call her by it?” Then teacher realized that she didn’t know. But as the door opened Sarah said, in a very loud whisper, as whispers are apt to sound louder than the natural voice, “Why, it’s my Gray Lady!” and so in truth it was.

Teacher watched them until they took their seats, and then gently closed the door behind her. For a moment no one spoke. Tommy Todd peeped cautiously into his desk to be sure the rats were safe, and found to his dismay that they were gone. Inwardly he hoped they wouldn’t get loose, for Gray Lady didn’t look as if she would like rats, which showed that after only one glance he wished to please her, while at the same time the name by which they first knew her became fixed in the mind of every child.

III

GRAY LADY AT SCHOOL

The silence inside the school continued a full minute, that seemed like an hour, and the dripping of the rain from the gutter was so plain that Sarah found herself counting the drops—"One—two—three—four—splash!"

Fifteen pairs of eyes were fastened upon the newcomer, and, as she caught the various questions in them, the colour in her cheeks deepened. Suddenly she recognized her little friend whom she had met on the hillside the week before. "Sarah Barnes," said Gray Lady, "will you not tell me the names of your schoolmates and introduce me to them? It is always so much more pleasant when we are looking at people, places, or things to know what they are called."

Then Sarah, delighted at being remembered when she had begun to be quite sure that all her hopes were in vain, guided by an inborn instinct of politeness that told her it would not be civil to stand at her desk and call out the various names, marched solemnly up to the teacher's desk and, beginning in the front row with her own little sister Mary, repeated the fifteen names in full, with the greatest care and distinctness, and each child, not knowing what else to do, bobbed up and answered, "Present," the same as if teacher had been calling the roll. When Sarah had finished, she was quite out of breath, for some of the names were very long; the last, that of the one little Slav in the school, Zella Francesca Mowraliski, being also hard to pronounce.

"Thank you," said Gray Lady; "I think that I can remember the first names at least. But now that you have presented your friends to me, won't you kindly present me to them? You know who I am and where I live, do you not?"

"Of course I do!" cried Sarah, glad to be in smooth water again. "You are Goldilocks' mother, Gray Lady, and you are our General's daughter and you live in his house!" Then, realizing that she had given play to her own fancy rather than stated the facts expected, she fled to her desk and hid her face behind its lid.

No reproof followed her as she expected, but instead the pleasant voice again said: "Thank you, Sarah; I like the name you have given me better than my very own, and if you all know where to find the General's house, you know where to find me," and when Sarah, gaining courage, looked up

again, she saw, what the others did not notice, that the gray eyes were brimming, though there was a smile on her lips.

“Now, children, what would you like to hear about this afternoon? Miss Wilde told me that she had intended giving you a spelling review and writing exercise of some kind, but that we might finish the day as we choose. Shall I read you a story, or would you like to ask questions and talk best?—one at a time, of course!”

“Talk—you talk,” shouted a vigorous chorus.

“By the way, Tommy Todd,” said Gray Lady, “why do you sit in the middle with the girls instead of on the outer row with the boys, where there is more room?”

Tommy, placed between Sarah Barnes and his own sister, started half up in his seat and looked all round the room as if seeking a way of escape, and finding none, dropped his gaze to his desk and sat mute with a very red face.

The question was repeated—still no answer. A hand flew up. “I know,” piped the voice of one of the little ones in front; “it’s ’cause Tommy can’t keep his eyes inside the winder if he’s by it; he’s always spying out at ground-hogs and crows and askin’ teacher questions about the birds setting on the wires, so he don’t mind his books and teacher don’t know the answers to all he asks, an’ it gives her the headache!”

“Well, Tommy,” said Gray Lady, who had learned that at least one of the children before her cared for out-of-doors, which was precisely what she wanted to know, “as long as this is a sort of holiday, suppose you take that empty seat by the east window and tell us what you see. You may open the window and the others on that side also, for I think the rain is over; yes, the clouds are breaking away.”

How fresh and sweet the air was that rushed into the close room! Tommy stuck his head out and took a great breath as he looked down over the corn-fields,—his enemies the crows were not there.

“There isn’t much to see now, it’s too wet yet,” he said; “but pretty soon there will be, for most birds and things get hungry right after a rain!”

“Olit—olite—olite—che-wiss-ch-wiss-war,” sang a little bird in a low bush by the roadside.

“What bird is that,” asked Gray Lady; “do any of you know?”

“It’s just the usually little brown bird that stays around here most all the time, but I love the tune it sings,” said Sarah Barnes. “Teacher says it’s some kind of a sparrow.”

“It is a Song Sparrow,” said Gray Lady, “and you are right in saying it stays with us almost all the year.”

“Now,” called Tommy, “the birds are beginning to come out; some Barn Swallows are flying over the low meadow and there’s a lot of ’em, and

another kind strung along the wires on the turnpike. They always sit close and act that way all this month and some fly away, and 'long the first part of next month, when the corn's all husked, they'll be gone! Please, ma'am, why do some birds never go away, and some do, and what makes 'em come back?" Then Tommy began one of the volley of questions that Miss Wilde so dreaded.

"Yes, an' please, ma'am," asked Dave, "why are some birds that mate together such different colours?" "An' what becomes of Bobolinks after Fourth of July?" asked another. "An' what makes birds have so many kind of feet?" queried a third.

Then questions flew so thick and fast that Gray Lady could not even hear herself think, and presently, when every one had laughed at the confusion, order was restored.

"I asked you a moment ago what you would like to hear about. I think I know. You would like to hear about birds! Are there any other boys here besides Tommy and Dave who care about birds?" asked Gray Lady, who wished to have each child feel that he or she had a part in what was going on.

"I know about birds' eggs!" cried Bobby Bates, a boy who, from being undersized, looked much younger than he really was; "I've got a pint fruit-jar of robins' eggs."

"But I've got a quart jar of mixed eggs," said Dave, "and they're mostly little ones, Wrens and Chippy birds and such like, so's I've really got more'n Bobby!" he added boastfully.

Gray Lady opened her lips to speak sharply and her eyes flashed, for nest-robbing was one of the things she most detested. Then she remembered that perhaps these children had not only never even dreamed that there was any harm in it, but had never heard of the laws that wise people had made to protect the eggs of wild birds, as well as the birds themselves, from harm. So she hesitated a moment while she thought how she might best make the matter understood.

"Why do you like to collect eggs?" she asked. "Because they are pretty?"

"Yes'm, partly," drawled Dave, "and then to see how many I can get in a spring."

"But do you never think how you worry the mother birds by stealing their eggs, and how many more birds there would be if you let the eggs hatch out? What the rhyme says is true,—

“The blue eggs in the Robin’s nest
Will soon have beak and wings and breast,
And flutter and fly away!”

Only think, if all those robins’ eggs of yours, Bobby, and all your little eggs, Dave, should suddenly turn into birds and fly about the room, how many there would be! But now they will never have wings and swell their throats to sing to us and use their beaks to eat up insects that make the apples wormy and curl up the leaves of the great shade trees.”

“Robins don’t do any good; they just spoil our berries and grapes; dad says so, and he shoots ’em whenever he can, and he likes me to take the eggs,” said Dave, stubbornly, while Sarah Barnes exclaimed, “Yes, an’ *my* father says he ought to be ashamed of himself!” almost out loud.

“I know that Robins sometimes eat fruit,” said Gray Lady, firmly, “but they do so much more good by destroying bugs that the Wise Men say that neither they nor their eggs shall be taken or destroyed, and what they say is now a law. So that it is not for any one to do as he pleases in the matter. To kill song-birds or destroy their eggs is as much breaking the law as if you stole a man’s horse or cow, for these birds are not yours; they belong to the state in which you live.”

Bobby and Dave looked surprised, but Tommy and Sarah nodded to one another, as much as to say, “We knew that, didn’t we?”

“Some day, if you are clever with your lessons so that Miss Wilde can spare the time for it, I will tell you all about the reasons for these laws, and what the wild birds do for us, and what we should do for them. But first you must learn to know the names of some of the birds that live and visit hereabout, as I am now learning yours, and make friends of some of them as I hope to make friends of you.”

“Yes, yes, oh, yes!”

“You can’t make friends of birds; they won’t let you,” said Dave Drake, who was a sickly, lanky boy of fourteen with a whining voice; “they always fly away. That is, I mean tree birds, not chickens nor pigeons.”

“Chickens aren’t birds, they’re only young hens,” put in Eliza Clausen, with an expression of withering contempt. She was one of the big fourteen-year-old girls, and not being a good scholar was apt to use opposition in the place of information.

“We can make friends of at least some birds,” said Gray Lady, “if we are kind to them. When we have human visitors come to stay with us, what do we do for them?”

“We let them sleep in the best bedroom, and we get out the best china and have awful good things to eat, and give ’em a good time,” said Ruth

Barnes, all in one breath.

“Yes, and we should do much the same with our bird friends. They do not need to have a bedroom prepared; they can generally find that for themselves, though even this is sometimes necessary in bad weather; but they often need food, and in order that they should have what Ruth calls ‘a good time,’ we must let them alone and not interfere with their comings and goings.

“Go softly to the west window and look out,” continued Gray Lady, raising a finger to caution silence, for from her seat on the little platform she could see over the children’s heads and out both door and windows, “and see the hungry visitors that a little food has brought to the very door.”

The children tiptoed to one side of the room, and there, lo and behold, was a great Blue Jay, a Robin, a Downy Woodpecker with his clean black-and-white-striped coat and red neck bow, and a saucy Chickadee, with his jaunty black cap and white tie, all feasting on the broken bits of Miss Wilde’s ham sandwich, while a pair of Robins were industriously picking the fruit from a remnant of huckleberry pie. Unfortunately, before the children had taken more than a good look, the door banged to and the birds flew away, the Woodpecker giving his wild sort of laugh, the Robins crying, “Quick! quick!” in great alarm, while the Jay and Chickadee told their own names plainly as they flew.

“As we have agreed to talk and ask questions, I will ask the first one,” said Gray Lady, as they all settled down, feeling very good-natured and eager to listen.

“Eliza said a few minutes ago that a chicken isn’t a bird. Now a chicken is a bird, though of course all birds are not chickens.

The Bird

“Who can tell me exactly what a bird is? You all may think you know, but can you put it in words?”

“A bird isn’t a plant; it is an animal,” said Tommy Todd.

“Yes, but a cat is an animal, and a snake, and a horse; and we are animals ourselves.”

“A bird is a flying animal,” returned Sarah.

“Very true, but so is a bat, and, as you know, a bat has fur and looks very like a mouse, and a bird does not.

“Ah, you give it up. Very well, listen and remember. *A bird is the only animal which has feathers!* With his hollow bones filled with buoyant, warm air, and covered with these strong pinions, he rows through the air, as we row a boat through the water with the oars, balancing himself with these

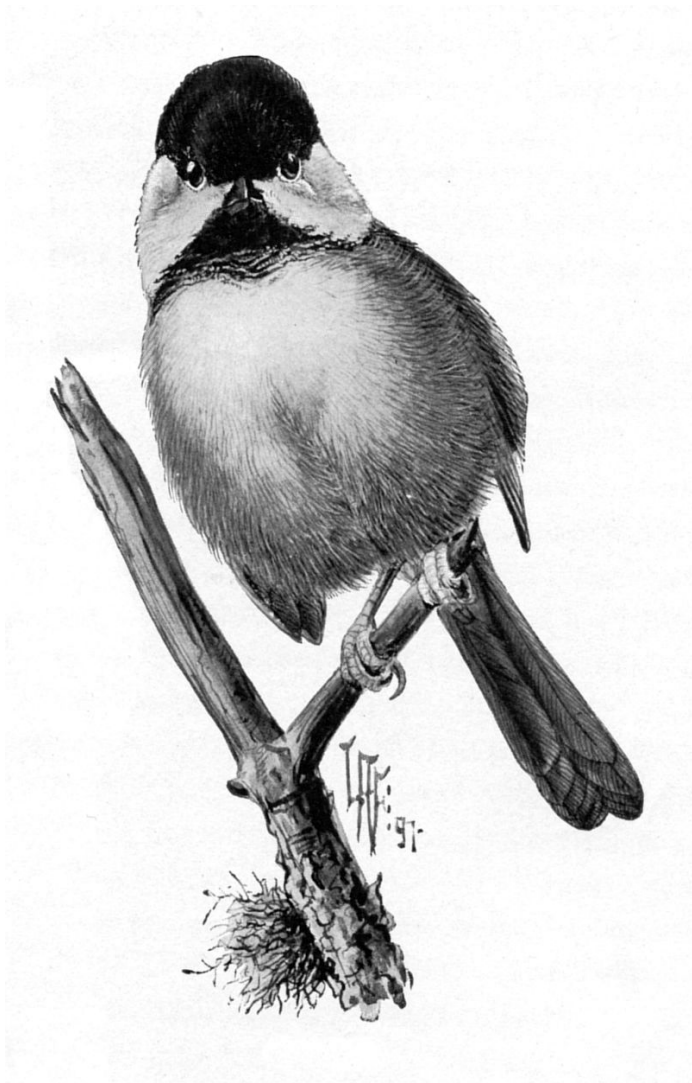
wings, also steering himself with them and with his tail made of stiff feathers and shaped to his particular need, while with small feathers laid close, overlapping each other like shingles, and bedded on an under-coat of down, he is clothed and protected from heat, cold, and wet.

“The eye of the bird is different from ours, for it magnifies and makes objects appear much larger to it than they do to us. Also, while with other animals each group has practically the same kind of feet or beaks, birds have these two features built on widely different plans, so that when you have learned to know the common birds by name and are really studying bird-life, you will find that you must be guided to the orders in which they belong often by their beaks and feet.

“Barnyard Ducks, as you know, have webbed toes for swimming, and flat bills to aid them in shovelling their natural food from the mud.

“Birds of prey, like the Hawks and Owls, have strong hooked beaks and powerful talons or claws, for seizing and tearing the small animals upon which they feed.

“The Woodpeckers (all but one) have two front and two hind toes; these help them grasp the tree bark firmly as they rest, while they have strong-cutting, chisel-like beaks, which they also use for tapping or drumming their rolling love-songs.



CHICKADEE

“While the insect-eating song-birds have more or less slender bills and four toes, three in front and one behind, for perching crosswise on small branches, the seed-eating songsters, such as Sparrows, have similar feet, but short, stout, cone-shaped bills for cracking seeds and small nuts.

“By this you can see that in spite of the fact that all birds wear feathers, and have wings, a tail, beak, and a pair of legs, they may still be very different from each other.

“A Turkey Gobbler doesn’t look much like a Robin, nor a Goose like a Swallow, yet they are all four birds! They all four bring forth their young

from eggs; but the little Turkeys and Goslings are covered with feathers when they peep out of the shell and are able to walk, while the young Robins and Swallows are at first blind, naked, and helpless; so here again you can see that there is something special to be learned about every bird that flies or swims.”

“Chickadee-dee-dee! Can’t you tell them something about me?” said this dear little bird, flitting about one of the open windows and clinging upside down to the blind slats that were bare of paint, like either a Woodpecker, or, as Tommy Todd remarked, “the man in the circus.”

“The little bird peeping in the window and calling his name reminds me of a pretty poem about him,” said Gray Lady. “I will repeat it to you and write it on the board so that you can copy it in your books, and then some of you may like to learn it to surprise Miss Wilde on another rainy Friday.”

A LITTLE MINISTER

I know a little minister who has a big degree;
Just like a long-tailed kite he flies his D.D.D.D.D.
His pulpit is old-fashioned, though made out of growing pine;
His great-grandfather preached in it, in days of Auld lang syne.

Sometimes this little minister forgets his parson’s airs:
I saw him turn a somersault right on the pulpit stairs;
And once, in his old meeting-house, he flew into the steeple,
And rang a merry chime of bells, to call the feathered people.

He has a tiny helpmeet, too, who wears a gown and cap,
And is so very wide-awake, she seldom takes a nap.
She preaches, also, sermonettes, with headlets one, two, three,
In singing monosyllables beginning each with D.

But O her little minister, she does almost adore:
I’ve heard her call her sweet D.D. full twenty times or more.
And his pet polysyllable—why, did you hear it never?
He calls her Phe-be B, so dear, I’d listen on forever.

Now if there is a Bright Eyes small who'd like to go with me,
And on his cautious tiptoes ten, creep softly to a tree,
I'll coax this little minister to quit his leafy perch,
And show this little boy or girl the way to go to church;

And where his cosy parsonage is hidden in the trees,
And how in summer it is full of little D.D.D.'s.
And if Bright Eyes will prick his ears, he'll hear the titmice say,
"Good morning," which, in Chickadese is always "Day, day, day."

—ELLA GILBERT IVES.

"Now that I have answered my own question, there was another that one of you asked, or rather a pair of questions. Why do some birds go away in autumn, and why do they come back? It is very important to know the answers to these, if we want to really understand about the lives of birds and the trials and dangers they undergo.

The Bird Year and the Migration

"People who think of birds at all know that they are not equally plentiful at all times of the year, but that they have their seasons of coming and disappearing, as the flowers have, though not for exactly the same reason.

"We are accustomed to see the plants send up shoots through the bare ground every spring, unfold their leaves and blossoms, and, finally, after perfecting seed, wither away again at the touch of frost.

"Of these plants, as well as some large trees, a few are more hardy than others, like the ground-pine, laurel, and wintergreen, and are able to hold their leaves through very cold weather, and we call them evergreens.

"You notice that the birds appear in spring even before the pussy-willows bud out, and that every morning when you wake, the music outside the window and down among the alders on the meadow border is growing louder, until by the time the apple trees are in bloom there seems to be a bird for every tree, bush, and tuft of sedgegrass.

"By the time the timothy is cut and rye harvested, you do not hear so great a variety of song. The Robin, Song Sparrow, House Wren, and Meadowlark are still in good voice, and an occasional Catbird, but the Bobolink has dropped out, and the Brown Thrasher no longer tells the farmer how to plant his corn: 'Drop it, drop it, cover it up, hoe it, hoe it;' and very wise he is, too, for the corn is all planted.

"Later still, when the stacked cornstalks fill the fields with their wigwams, like Indian encampments, the pumpkins are gathered in golden

heaps, and the smoke of burning leaves and brush pervades the air, you hear very few bird songs, for many birds have either dropped silently out of sight or collected in huge flocks, like the Swallow, swept by, and disappeared in the clouds, while others, like the Purple Grackle or Common Crow-Blackbird,—walk over the stubble and cover the trees, making such a creaking, crackling noise that one would surely think that their wings as well as voices were rusty and needed oiling.

“What has become of the birds? Where do they go when they disappear?”

“Being warm-blooded animals they cannot dive into the mud and hide, like fishes, or crawl into cracks of tree bark and wrap themselves up in cocoons, like insects. Neither do they drop their feathers and die away as tender plants drop their leaves and disappear.

“People once believed that Swallows dived through the water into the mud, where they rolled themselves into balls and slept all winter. They thought this because Swallows are seen in early autumn in flocks about ponds and marshes, where they feed upon the insects that abound in such places. People thought that as Swallows were last seen in these places before they disappeared they must have gone under the water; but this was merely guessing, which is a very dangerous thing to do when trying to find out the plans that Nature makes for her great family.

“Later yet, when the snow begins to fall, there is little or no bird music, only the hoot of an Owl, the shrill cry of the Hawks, the ‘quank, quank’ of the Nuthatch, that runs up and down the tree-trunks like a mouse in gray-and-white feathers, the jeer of the Jay, and the soft voice of the Chickadee that, as you have just heard, tells you his name so prettily as he peers at you from beneath his little black cap.

“But the Catbird, Wren, Bobolink, Oriole, the Cuckoo that helped clear the tent caterpillars from the orchard, the Chat that puzzled the dogs by whistling like their master, the beautiful Barn Swallow, with the swift wings, that had his plaster nest in the hayloft, the Phœbe that built in the cowshed, and the dainty Humming-bird that haunted the honeysuckle on the porch and hummed an ancient spinning-song to us with his wings,—where are they all?”

“And why is it that while those have disappeared, some few birds still remain with us in spite of cold and snow?”

THE FLIGHT OF THE BIRDS

Whither away, Robin,
Whither away?
Is it through envy of the maple leaf,
Whose blushes mock the crimson of thy breast,
Thou wilt not stay?
The summer days were long, yet all too brief
The happy season thou hast been our guest.
Whither away?

Wither away, Bluebird,
Whither away?
The blast is chill, yet in the upper sky
Thou still canst find the colour of thy wing,
The hue of May.
Warbler, why speed thy southern flight? Ah, why,
Thou, too, whose song first told us of the spring,
Whither away?

Whither away, Swallow,
Whither away?
Canst thou no longer tarry in the North,
Here where our roof so well hath screened thy nest?
Not one short day?
Wilt thou—as if thou human wert—go forth
And wander far from them who love thee best?
Whither away?

—EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN.

The Fall Migration

“If you watch the birds, you will soon notice that some eat only animal food, in the shape of various bugs, worms, and lice, while others eat seeds of various weeds, and grasses, and also berries. There are many birds that, like ourselves, eat a little of everything, both animal and vegetable.

“For instance, the Swallows live on insects of the air, except sometimes in the autumn flocking they feed for a short time on bayberries. The Phœbe is an insect eater; also the Catbird, though he is fond of strawberries and cherries for dessert. You saw just now that the Chickadee, Woodpecker, and Jay preferred the meat from the sandwich and the Robins the berries from the pie, though the Jay also likes nuts and seeds.

“You know that when frost comes, the air-flying insects are killed, and the gnats, mosquitoes, and flies that have worried the horses and cattle disappear. For this reason the birds that depend upon these bugs must follow their food supply, and move off farther southward where frost has not yet come.

“This is the reason why so many birds who feed on winged insects leave us in early autumn, before it is cold enough to make them uncomfortable; they must follow their food.

“There are other birds that, when they no longer have nestlings to feed, can pick up a living from berries and seeds, like the Robin, or live the greater part of the season upon seeds, like the Sparrows. These birds are not driven away by the first frost, but many stay about until the weather is uncomfortably cold, and some few remain all winter, like the Meadowlarks, Nuthatches, Jays, and Woodpeckers, who, having stout beaks, can dig out grubs and insects from among the roots of grass and from tough tree bark; but these too must move on if ice coats the trees or snow buries their ground feeding-places.

“As a great many birds spend the nesting season north of New England, they pass by on their way southward, and, if the feeding is good, stay with us sometimes several weeks, so that the flocks of Robins seen here in October are likely to be those that nested in the north, while our own birds are gradually drifting down to the extreme south, where they winter.

“This great southward journey of the birds, that begins as early as August and lasts at some seasons, if the winter is open, almost until Christmas, is called the fall migration, and when it is over, the birds remaining with us are classed as Winter Residents.

“There is another thing to be seen at this time of year, and if you have not already noticed it, watch and you will see that many of the birds that wore bright feathers in May and June have changed their gay coats for duller feathers.

The Moulting

“After the nesting season is over, and a pair of birds have raised one, two, and, as with the Wrens, sometimes three broods, the feathers of the parents become worn and broken, and not fit for winter covering, nor are the wing quills strong enough for the fall flight.

“At this time, when the young birds are able to care for themselves, the pairs no longer keep alone together, but, leaving their nesting-haunts, travel about either in a family party or in larger friendly flocks, and, although some birds, like the Song Sparrow and Meadowlark, sing throughout the season,

the general morning chorus and the nesting season end together, in early or middle July.

“It is quite difficult to name the birds when young and old travel in flocks, for when a male is bright-coloured and the female dull, the first coat of the young is often such a mixture of both that it is easily mistaken for a wholly different and strange bird.

“In August or September almost all of our birds change their spring feathers. This is called moulting. And the brightly coloured birds often drop their wedding finery for dull-coloured travelling cloaks, so that they may not be seen when they fly southward through the falling leaves.

“After this season Father Tanager, of the scarlet wedding coat with black sleeves, appears in yellowish-green, like his wife, and the little Tanagers sometimes have mixed green, yellow, and red garments, for all the world like patchwork bedquilts pieced without regard to pattern.



SCARLET TANAGER

1. ADULT MALE., 2. ADULT MALE, CHANGING TO WINTER PLUMAGE., 3. ADULT FEMALE.

Order—PASSERES Family—TANAGRIDÆ
Genus—FIRANGA Species—ERYTHROMELAS

“The jolly Bobolink, also, who in May was the prize singer of the meadows, and disported in a coat of black, white, and buff, now wears dull brown stripes, and, having forgotten his song, he mixes with the young of the year and becomes merely the Reed Bird of the gunners. But in early

spring he will change again, and, before the nesting time, reappear among us with every black feather polished free from rusty edges and glistening as of old.

“When Father Tanager comes back, he is brave and red again, though it takes little Tommy Tanager two moultings to grow an equally red coat.

“Even with the more quietly marked birds their colours are less distinct after the summer moult, so that what is known as the bird’s perfect or typical plumage is in many species that of the nesting season alone.”

“I didn’t think that there was so much to know about birds; they seem to have ways of doing things just like people. I’d love to know all about them every Friday, but I suppose that’s too nice to happen,” said Sarah Barnes, as Gray Lady paused and moved her chair back from the bright light that was now shining through the door directly in her face, for the clouds had rolled away down behind the hills, leaving one of the clear, bright, early September afternoons when the sun lends its colour to the field of early goldenrod, until sunset seems to reach to one’s very feet.

“No, it isn’t *too* nice to happen,” said Gray Lady, laughing; “but it would certainly be very pleasant for me, also, if Miss Wilde could give you to me for an hour or so every other Friday, then perhaps some other day you could come to the General’s house and return my call, and see all the birds and pictures and books that belonged to my Goldilocks’ father. How would you like that?”

“Bully!” cried Tommy Todd, “and there’s more kinds of birds in the General’s old orchard than anywhere else hereabout. I haven’t ever taken any eggs from there,” he added hastily, “only jest peeked and watched, an’ once I got a three-story nest from there, along late in the fall when the birds were done with it. If I brought it along, ma’am, could you tell me what sort of a bird it belongs to? I can’t find out!” he added eagerly.

“Yes, I think I can tell you,” Gray Lady answered, “and I’m very glad if you know about my orchard and its tenants, because very likely you may be able to introduce me to some that I do not know.

“Now, children, before next week is over I will see Miss Wilde and tell her my plans, but one thing I will tell you now—I have a little daughter Elizabeth, whom Sarah Barnes calls Goldilocks. She is twelve years old, but because of an accident her back is not strong, and instead of running about as you do she has had to be wheeled about in a chair. I have taken her to the best doctors, and they say that she is getting well slowly, and that now all that she needs is to live out-of-doors and be with children of her own age, who will be kind and gentle to her, yet treat her as one of themselves. She cannot bear to hear of anything being killed or hurt, and she has been loved so well all her life that she loves everything in return.

“Will you come to the General’s house and help Goldilocks to grow strong and forget all the pain she has suffered?”

“Yes, *ma’am*,” came the reply as with one voice.

Sarah Barnes had the honour of taking Gray Lady’s hand as she went to the carriage, and Tommy Todd closed the door without any one giving him a hint.

Then, before closing the schoolhouse for the night, his special duty, he began a hunt for the rat-trap, which he soon found in the wood-box, but instead of taking the rats home as usual for Mike, his father’s terrier, to “have fun” with, he drowned them as quickly as possible in the brook that ran below the hill, for he thought to himself as they were things that must be killed Goldilocks would think this the kindest way.

IV

THE ORCHARD PARTY

Not only did Miss Wilde hear every detail of Gray Lady's visit from her scholars, but the middle of the following week she received a letter from Gray Lady herself as well as one from the president of the school board.

Gray Lady wrote that if she could succeed in interesting the children of the school at Foxes Corners in the birds and little animals about, then she meant to arrange another season so that the other four schools in the scattered district might have the same opportunity. For this reason she had asked and obtained leave of the school committee to have two Friday afternoons of each month given to the purpose. She also promised to send some bird books and pictures to the school and a large wall map of North America, so that after the children had learned to know a bird by sight and name they might trace its journeys the year through, and thus realize to what perils it is exposed.

Then followed the most interesting part of the letter to Miss Wilde and her children, and this is what it said:—

“It is all very well to show children pictures and read them stories about the birds and tell them that it is their duty to be kind to them, but I wish them also to see and judge for themselves and learn to love their bird neighbours because they can't help themselves. This is best done outdoors and under the trees, and there is no such charming place to meet the birds and be introduced to them as in an old apple orchard such as ours.

“Of course at this season birds are growing fewer every day, but this makes it all the easier to name those that remain, with less chance of confusion than in spring.

“I propose to have an Orchard Party next Saturday, and I should be happy to have you bring as many of your pupils as possible to spend the day here. We will have luncheon in the orchard and the children will find there many bird-homes that the tenants have left, that will show them that man is not the only housebuilder and thoughtful parent.

“If there are any children who do not care to come, pray do not force them in any way, but if possible let me know by Friday

morning how many I may expect.”

It was Wednesday when Miss Wilde told the children of the invitation, just before she rang the bell for noon recess. Then she asked all those who wished to go to the Orchard Party to stand up, and instantly thirteen of the fifteen present were on their feet, the two exceptions being Eliza and Dave.

Miss Wilde of course noticed this. However, she said nothing about it, knowing that with these two discontented ones the reason would be told before long and that very plainly. But when they returned from dinner she gave each one a sheet of clean paper and told them to write answers either of acceptance or regret, as they felt inclined, to Gray Lady, first writing a short note upon the blackboard herself so that they might see how to begin and end, and where to put the date, because some children who can spell separate words do not know how to put them together so as to express clearly and concisely what they wish to say in a note.

Soon thirteen pens were scratching away industriously, while Eliza and Dave fingered theirs, fidgeted with the paper, and wriggled in their seats as if uncertain what to say or whether they would write at all.

Finally the teacher said, “If any one of you is needed at home on Saturday or cannot for any other reason go to the party, you may write that, but each child must send a reply; and be very careful, for I shall send the notes as they are written without corrections.”

Sarah Barnes was deputed to collect the papers, and after school was dismissed Miss Wilde glanced over the notes before enclosing them in one large envelope. Eliza’s read:—

“I would like to go to the party but my ma says to look at birds is silly and that when folks looks much at birds they get afraid to trim their hats with them, and my ma and me has birds on our Sunday hats and they look tastie, and we don’t want to get afraid so there’s no use in my going to the party ’xcept to eat the lunch, which wouldn’t be fare.”

Miss Wilde’s first impulse was to leave out this curiously worded and badly spelled letter; then, as she read it a second time she smiled and said to herself, “Who knows but what this note will give Gray Lady a good idea of the other side of the question and of the objections she will meet?”

Dave’s note was no more agreeable, though expressed rather more clearly:—

“I’d like to go up to your house, but when I told father bout the other day and you wanting us not to get birds’ eggs, he says he knows what some people want, and next thing will be to get me to sign that I won’t go trappin or shootin nothin, and spoiling my fun, and birds are only knuisances, except the kinds we can eat.”

This note also went with the others, but by Friday morning the two children, who had heard nothing talked of for two days but the party, began to wish that they were going, Eliza especially, for her mother said that morning, “You weren’t smart to refuse; you could have had a peep inside the General’s house, maybe, and I don’t believe she’d dassed said a word about birds on hats, with one of the company wearing ’em!”

On Friday afternoon, when Miss Wilde asked the children to meet her at the hedge half a mile above the schoolhouse at ten o’clock the following morning, so that they might take a short cut across the fields, she noticed that Eliza and Dave hung behind the others, who as usual raced off in different directions toward home, and then Eliza, who was walking beside her, mumbled something about “wishing she hadn’t refused and supposing that it was too late now,” etc.

“Of course, it is not very polite to change one’s mind about an invitation,” said the teacher, “but Gray Lady wrote me last night that if you and Dave should feel differently about wishing to come, I might bring you, but that after to-morrow it would be too late.”

At ten o’clock this bright September morning Gray Lady came out on the porch of the big white house, with the row of columns in front, that was known the country-side over as “the General’s.” There was a wide lawn in front of the house and on either side, arched by old elms, the leaves of which were now turning yellow, but there had been no frost and the flowers in the buds were still bright.

Back of the house was a flower garden, with grape and rose arbours on either side, under which chairs and little tables were placed invitingly. Beyond this garden was a maze of fruit bushes and the young orchard, and beyond this the old orchard, now running half wild, stretched downhill toward the river woods.

A lovelier place could not have been planned for either children or birds, or the people who love both, nor a more perfect place for all three to live together in peace and comfort.

Goldilocks was already out, and her faithful Ann Hughes was pushing her chair to and fro, for when one is eager and impatient it is very hard to have to sit still. Goldilocks was growing stronger every day and could walk

a few yards all alone, but it tired her, and her mother thought the excitement of seeing so many children would be enough for one day.

Presently a head, with a cap on it, bobbed up over the last hump in the road below the house, and then another with a ribbon-trimmed hat upon it, the pair belonging to Tommy Todd and Sarah Barnes, who led the procession; and in a few minutes more the entire group had reached the porch and Sarah Barnes was repeating their names to Goldilocks. The five boys rather hung back, but that was to be expected of them.

As a little later Gray Lady led the way down to the garden, she turned to Ann and gave her some directions for the house and was going to push the chair herself when Tommy Todd came forward and seized the handle, saying earnestly, "I can do that first-rate. When dad fell out of the haymow and broke his leg, I used to tote him all round the farm, and never bumped him a bit,—only in ploughed land and off roads you've got to go jest so easy." And to illustrate he raised the front wheels of the chair and bearing on the handles lowered them again as they left the garden path for the rough grass-grown track that led to the orchard. Goldilocks looked up and smiled at him, and then at Sarah and Miss Wilde, who walked one on each side, neither of the four dreaming at that moment how much happier their lives would be because they had met.

"Why, the bars are gone and there is a brand new gate!" exclaimed Sarah Barnes, as they reached the opening in the stone fence that had been spanned by rough-hewn bars ever since she could remember. There, between strong cedar posts, hung a rustic gate, and above it was a double arch of the same material, into which the word BIRDLAND was interwoven in small sticks of the same wood.

"That is a surprise that Jacob Hughes made for to-day, for this is my birthday party, you see, and some day mother is going to have a flagpole for Birdland with an eagle on top. Jacob is Ann's brother," she continued by way of explanation. "He used to be a sailor once, but now he's come to live with us always. He is a carpenter, too, and he can whittle almost anything with his knife, and he makes the most beautiful bird-houses. I should really like to live in one myself—that is, of course, if I were a bird!"

"If you were a bird you'd be a bluebird, I guess," said Sarah Barnes, as she glanced at the deep blue sailor suit, with the crimson shield in front, that Goldilocks wore.

"I'd rather be a big owl," said Tommy Todd, "and sit up in a tree in the woods and call out 'Woo-oo-oo' when people go by in the dark and scare 'em." And he gave such a good imitation of an owl's hoot that Bruce, the Collie dog, who always either walked or sat beside Goldilocks' chair, began to bark and circle wildly about, nose in air.

“I’m very sure I shouldn’t care to be an owl, for then I should have to eat meadow-mice and moles, and swallow them, fur and all, and that would taste so mussy,” said Goldilocks.

So it came about that all the children were in very good humour when they entered Birdland on Goldilocks’ birthday, and Gray Lady smiled happily as she looked at the group with her precious daughter in the midst and thought that her experiment had begun with a happy omen.

Though many of the apples that grew on the trees of the old orchard would not have taken prizes at the country fair, they looked very tempting to the youngsters,—Baldwins, Spitzenburghs, and russets of two sorts, the green and the golden, were still on the trees, but there were great heaps of earlier varieties on the ground, and Jacob and another man were busy sorting them over.

Reading in the children’s eager faces what they would like to do, Gray Lady said, “You may run off now and have all the apples you want, and an hour for playing ‘hide-and-seek,’ ‘red lion,’ or ‘Indians,’ in all the orchard and meadows and woodland yonder, and then when you hear a horn blow come back and you will find us over in the corner where the table and seats are placed.” Then, seeing that some of the girls had brought wraps or jackets with them, and also that the Sunday-best hats that they wore would be in the way of romping, Gray Lady told them to hang them on the tree nearest where she and Miss Wilde were seated.

At first Sarah and Tommy were not going with the others, but Goldilocks insisted that they should leave her in a gap where the rows of trees formed a long lane through which she could see across the meadows to the woods.

These two children were quite at home in this neighbourhood, for had there not been a particular gap in the old fence through which they had taken a “short cut” down to the village ever since they could remember?

“I wonder if Goldilocks knows that Quail nest in this brush and scratch around here like chickens,” said Tommy, as they left the orchard for the meadow.

“Yes, and you got that three-story nest of yours last fall in the bough-apple tree,” said Sarah.

Eliza and Dave soon forgot all about their reasons for having at first refused to go to the party, and when they heard the horn tooting it seemed so soon that they could hardly believe that it was noon and luncheon time. And such a luncheon as it was! Around the trunk of the largest tree in the orchard, four tables were so placed that when covered they looked like one big table, with the tree growing through the centre.

The white cloth was bordered with russet and gold beech leaves, bleached ferns, and the deep red leaves of maples and oaks; grapes and

oranges were piled high in baskets made of hollowed-out watermelons. Hard-boiled eggs were arranged in nests built of narrow, dainty sandwiches, little iced cakes rested upon plates of braided corn-husks, and Goldilocks' birthday cake, with its twelve candles, was ornamented with little doves made of white sugar. When, last and best of all, the ice-cream appeared, without which no party is complete, it was in the form of a large white hen with a very red comb, while from beneath her peeped ice-cream eggs of many colours, chocolate-brown, pistachio-green, lemon-yellow, and strawberry-red, the nest being woven of spun sugar that so closely resembled fine straw that it was not until the children had tasted it that they were convinced that it really was candy.

Country children are usually very silent when on their good behaviour, but such ice-cream had never been heard of either at Foxes Corners, the Centre, or the near-by manufacturing town, and muffled "ohs" and "ahs" of satisfaction would break out until, Miss Wilde having given no rebuking glance, a perfect babble of enthusiasm arose that lasted until the meal was ended.

"Why, what *is* that?" asked Ruth Banks, glancing as she spoke toward a very old tree that, having partly blown over, was resting on four of its branches that served as legs and made it appear like some strange goblin animal. On the upper side of this fallen tree, built around an upright branch, was a platform made of old wood with the bark on, and on the different sections of this were peanuts, shelled corn, pounded up dog crackers and buckwheat, while on a series of blunt spikes driven into the branch, were some lumps of suet and bits of bacon rind. As Ruth spoke a little black-and-white bird, with short tail and legs, was picking vigorously at the suet, using his stout bill with the quick sharp blows of a hammer.

"That? Oh—" said Goldilocks, "that is another birthday surprise that mother and Jake made for me. That is, mother planned it, and Jake did the work. It is a birds' lunch-counter, and this winter we are going to keep all the different kinds of food on it that the birds like, so that they need never leave us because they are hungry."

"There's lots of things all around now that they can eat," said Tommy Todd.

"Yes, of course, but we want them to become accustomed to the table, to know where the food is before they need it and think about going away, and wild birds are always suspicious of new things," said Gray Lady.

There was one more feature of the luncheon, but, as it was something that could not be put upon the table, it was hung in the tree overhead. This thing looked like a great bunch of gayly coloured autumn leaves tied tight

together, and from it hung a number of red strings, as many in fact as there were people at the party.

Gray Lady explained that each child in turn was to pull a string and, as they held back as if in doubt as to the result, she herself pulled the first cord and out dropped from the ball a long motto in yellow-fringed paper that, on being unrolled, contained beside the snapper a little paper roll on which was printed, "I am Mazulm, the Night Owl," and when Gray Lady carefully unfolded the paper it proved to be a cap with strings, shaped like an owl's head, which seemed to the children to wink its yellow tinsel eyes as Gray Lady placed it upon her fluffy hair.

Then everybody pulled a string, and soon there hopped about a startling array of birds with human legs and arms, for every one entered fully into the fun of the thing, even quiet Miss Wilde wearing her Blue Jay cap and calling the bird's note with good effect.

"Now run about and see all that you can before playtime is over, and we go into the study for our first bird lesson," said Gray Lady.

"I wish we could have a lunch-counter for birds at our school," said Sarah, "but we haven't any near-by tree."

"Perhaps you may be able to have one—a tree is not always necessary. I have several ideas for lunch-counters in my scrap-book," said Gray Lady.

As the children walked along, some swung their hats by the elastics in rhythm with their steps. The elastic of Eliza Clausen's hat was new and strong and all of a sudden it gave a snap, and the hat flew into Goldilocks' lap. She had stretched out her hand to return it to its owner when she glanced at the hat, and her whole face changed and the smile faded from her lips. "Oh, Eliza!" she exclaimed appealingly, "you don't know that those feathers on your hat are wings of dear, lovely Barn Swallows, or you wouldn't wear it, would you?"

"'Course I do," said Eliza, taken off her guard and at heart now provoked and ashamed at having her hat seen, "and I've got lots more kinds at home. Ma's got feathers on her hat, too—tasty feathers. Miss Barker from New York that boarded with us gave 'em to her; they cost a lot and stick right up in a nice stiff long bunch. They're called regrets, and they don't grow round here, but they're ever so stylish." And Eliza held her nose in the air with a sniff of scorn, a vulgar travesty that the pounding of her heart belied.

"I don't think those stiff regret feathers in your mother's hat are stylish," said Sarah Barnes, quickly taking up the cudgels; "I think they look like fish bones!" Then Eliza began to cry, and both Goldilocks and Sarah looked distressed.

Gray Lady hesitated a moment and then said, “Eliza, dear, I’m sorry that this has happened just now. It is not generally a good plan for us to criticise one another’s clothing or habits, but there are times when it is necessary. Sooner or later I should have told you the reasons why people who stop to think and have kind hearts are no longer willing to wear the feathers of wild birds, and I’m sure that presently, when you stop and think, you will see that it is so.”

Then they all walked very quietly up to the library that had belonged to Goldilocks’ father, and when they were seated and had time to look about they saw that the walls above the book-cases were covered by pictures of birds in their natural colours.

On the table at one end of the room were piled some books, and by this Gray Lady seated herself, her scrap-book by her elbow,—a book, by the way, with which, before another season, they were to become as well acquainted as with their friend herself.

Tommy Todd could not take his eyes from a picture of a tall white bird, with long neck and legs and a graceful sweep of slender feathers that drooped from its back over the tail. Holding up his hand, which at school always means that you wish to ask a question, Tommy said, “Please, what is that bird’s name? There’s a big, dark, gray one, shaped something like it, that I’ve seen by the mill-pond, but it’s not half so pretty. I’ve never seen one like this, here.”

“That bird,” said Gray Lady, “is the Snowy Heron, Egret, or *Regret Bird*, as Eliza called it a few minutes ago, and I think that you will agree that the name is a very suitable one when I tell you the bird’s story.”

V REASONS WHY

When the children had satisfied their curiosity by looking about the room at the pictures and stuffed birds in cases as much as they wished and were comfortably seated, Gray Lady drew a chair into the midst of the group and began to talk, not a bit like a teacher in school, but as if she had dropped in among them to have a little chat.

“When one has looked at something from one side all one’s life it is hard to realize that there is another,” she said, smiling brightly at Eliza and Dave, who chanced to be sitting together and who looked not only unhappy but very sullen.

“I have always happened to be with people who love everything that lives and grows. They have always been kind to birds because it never occurred to them to be otherwise. In watching them and learning their ways, they also learned that these winged beings had another value beside that of beauty of colour and song, that by fulfilling their destiny and eating many destructive bugs and animals they not only earn their own livelihood but help keep us all alive by protecting the farmers’ crops.

“Thus, when I went down to the school at Foxes Corners, I took it too much for granted that you all cared for birds and would naturally wish to protect them. I thought that all I had to do was to try to tell you interesting stories that would help you to remember the names and habits of the various birds. But Eliza’s hat, and a little note that I received from one of the boys which showed that he and his family considered all birds that are not good to eat as worse than useless, show me that some of you look at birds from another side. Those that do certainly have a right to, as a lawyer would say, have the case argued before them so that they may see for themselves why they are on the wrong side of the tree.

“The birds were on the earth before man came, and in those far-back times they were able to look after and protect themselves, because the warfare they waged was only with animals often less intelligent than themselves. Do you remember the beautiful allegory of the creation of this earth written in Genesis which is also written and proven in the records the geologists find buried in the earth, and quarry from the rocks themselves?

“When man came, in order that he might live comfortably and safely, many of his improvements brought death to his feathered friends. Take, for

example, two objects that you all know,—the lighthouse at the end of the bar by the harbour head, and the telegraph and telephone wires that follow the highway near your schoolhouse. Men have need of both these things, and yet, in their travels on dark nights, thousands of birds, by flying toward the bright tower light that seems to promise them safety, or coming against the innumerable wires, are dashed to death.

“Of all the mounted birds that you see in the cases there, not one was deliberately killed by my husband, but they were picked up and sent to him by various lighthouse keepers along the coast who knew his interest and that he would gladly pay them for their trouble. By and by, when we come to the stories of the flight of some of those birds, you will be amazed to see what frail little things have ventured miles away in their travels; even tiny Humming-birds came to my husband in this way. This danger grows greater every day because of the many tall buildings in the cities that are almost always located by rivers, for to follow these waterways seems to be the birds’ favourite way of travelling.

THE USES OF BIRDS

What the Birds do for us

“Perhaps even those of you who love birds have never thought very much about their ways of life. You are so accustomed to seeing them fly about, and to hearing them sing, that you do not realize what a strange, unnatural, silent thing springtime would be if the birds should all suddenly disappear.

“Yes, indeed, the world would be sad and lonely without these beautiful winged voices. But something even more dreadful would happen should they leave us: the people of the world would be in danger of starving, because the birds would not be here to feed on the myriad worms and insects that eat the wheat and corn and fruits upon which we, together with other animals, depend for food.

“The insects gnawing at the roots of the pasture grasses would destroy both the summer grazing for the cattle and the hay for winter fodder; if worms destroyed the forests, there would be no trees for firewood, and also the lack of shade would make the sources of our rivers dry up and we should soon suffer for water.

“Girls and boys might never think of this, but the Wise Men who live in Washington, and form the association known as the Biological Survey, as well as those of the Departments of Agriculture in each state, thought of this long ago.

“They have worked hard and proved the truth of this whole matter, and now know exactly upon what each kind of bird feeds; and laws are everywhere being made to protect the useful birds from people who are either so stupid or so vicious that they think a bird is something to be shot or stoned, and that the robbing of nests of eggs is a clever thing to do.

“Any child who stops to think must realize one thing: As almost all birds live on animal food during the nesting season, and feed their young with it, and many kinds eat it all the year, it follows that the more birds we have the fewer bugs there will be.

“Also those birds who feed on seeds and wild fruits destroy in the winter season quantities of weed seeds that would spring up and choke the crops, while they sow the seeds of wild fruits and berries, because the pits in these seeds, being hard, are dropped undigested.

“‘But,’ says some one, ‘the Robins and Catbirds came in our garden and bit the ripe side of the strawberries and cherries that father was growing for market, and we had to shoot them to make them stay away.’

“This is all true: some birds will steal a few berries, but for this mischief they do good all the rest of the long season; so pray ask your father to put only powder, a ‘blank cartridge,’ as it is called, in the gun, that it may give the birds warning to keep off, but not kill them; and let him save all the bullets and shot for the Coward Crow, himself a nest robber, the Great Horned Owl, the Hen and Chicken Hawks, and the English Sparrow.

“In the short stories that I am going to read or tell you of the birds, I will try to speak of the chief food of each, so that you may put a good mark beside its name in your memory, and try to realize that these birds, beautiful as many are, still have a deeper claim upon you. I wish you to see that they, as well as you, are citizens of this great Republic and do their part for the public good, which, next to the care and love of home, should be the chief ambition of us all, men or women.

“The wise men know this and they have made laws to protect the birds and other animals from cruelty and destruction, just as they have made laws to protect all other citizens. Listen to what your state forbids you to do,—to the laws that if you break you must and should be punished:—

WARNING! WHAT THE LAW OF YOUR STATE SAYS ABOUT SONG-BIRDS

“*No person shall kill, catch, or have in possession, living or dead, at any time, any wild bird other than a game-bird, nor any part thereof, except the English Sparrow, Crow, Great Horned Owl, or the Hawks, other than the Osprey or Fish Hawk. No person shall take, destroy, or disturb, or have in*

possession the nest or eggs of any wild bird, and the sale of these birds or shipment out of the state is forbidden.

Hunting or shooting on Sunday is forbidden.

“It is *unlawful* to kill Fish Hawks, Eagles, Gulls, Terns, Loons, Divers, Grebes, Doves, Wild Pigeons, Yellowhammers, Meadowlarks, or Herons at any time. (These are not game-birds in the reading of the law.)

“We are living in the state of Connecticut, but this is the substance of the law concerning the taking of eggs or birds other than game-birds (except when the Wise Men need them for Museums and have special permission) in the greater number of states.

“Tommy Todd, will you kindly go to the coloured map hanging on the door yonder and point out as I read, those few states that allow the killing of song-birds. This will be much easier than for you to learn the names of those wise states that, like our own, give citizen birds full protection.

“The east and middle west stand solid for protection, so you must begin on the Canadian boundary with North Dakota, then follow Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Indian Territory, a bad blot in the centre of the map, but perhaps some day soon, if all the school children there learn about the birds, they will beg their fathers and uncles who go to the legislature to make laws to protect their birds also. For if they wait until they themselves grow up, some kinds of birds may have gone forever and it will be too late.

“Fortunately, you see, there are states next that form a sort of bird bridge of refuge; and then comes New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, Idaho, and Montana, without good laws; but fortunately for the coast birds, Washington, Oregon, and California are on our side, and it is the duty of every boy and girl as well as every man and woman to learn the laws of the state where they live, and keep them.

CRUELTY TO WILD ANIMALS

“There are many children of foreign birth who perhaps would not break the laws of this country if they knew of them, but do so innocently because they either do not know, or do not speak English well enough to understand them fully, and think that in this country, where they have so much liberty, they are free to do as they like about everything.

“There are also Americans, I am sorry to say, as well as foreign-born, who have a heartless streak in them, and first show it by cruelty to helpless, harmless animals. This should be stopped, as much for their good as future citizens as for the welfare of the wild animals themselves, for the child who will kill or torture a dumb beast has the germs of murder in him that may later, in a fit of passion, break out toward a fellow-being.

“What do you think of boys—yes, and girls, for I saw one last spring—who would spend an afternoon in stoning the hanging nest of an Oriole until the nestlings, dying, stopped their pitiful cries and fell to the ground in the rags of their wonderful home, while their parents circled about in agony? Sad to say, these were American-born children, too, who live not far from Foxes Corners, who very well knew right from wrong.

“When children have this evil mind, the laws of the state must be used to cleanse,—just as the law may enter the house and do away with contagious disease. Cruelty is often as infectious as sickness; and it is, in fact, a sickness of the mind. It is quite as necessary sometimes that the heart should go to school and be taught kindness as that we should learn to read.

HOW WE CAN PROTECT BIRDS

“We can help birds simply by not hurting them and leaving them as free as possible to live out their joyous lives; but we can do much more if we will leave some little bushy nooks about the farm or garden, where they may nest in private, place food in convenient places during the long, cold winter months for those birds that remain with us, and *make it a rule never to raise more kittens than we need* to keep barn and house free of rats or than we can feed and care for.

“Silly people, who shirk responsibility, often say, ‘Oh, I couldn’t think of drowning a kitten,’ and yet they will let dozens of them grow up unfed and uncared for, or leave a litter by the roadside, until in many places a breed of gaunt, half-wild cats roam about destroying the eggs and young of song-birds, game-birds, and domestic fowls alike.

“A nice, comfortable house or barn cat is one thing, but the savage outcast is quite another, and should no more be let live than a weasel or a skunk.

HOUSING AND FEEDING

“When places become thickly settled, and villages grow into towns and towns into cities, one of the first things that troubles the father and mother of a family is to find house-room, a suitable place to live, that shall be healthful for the children, and yet not be too far from the father’s work, and many and many a family have had to move to inconvenient places because such a home could not be found near by.

“Strange as it may at first seem, our little fellow-citizens, the birds, have this same trouble.

“In an open, half-wooded farming country there are plenty of nesting haunts, and running brooks and ponds for the birds who need water by their homestead. But presently perhaps a railway comes by; the land is bought up and the woods cut down for railway ties, the brush is cleared from old pastures and they are turned into house-lots. Old orchards, like ours here, are done away with, and everything is ‘cleaned up.’

“This is as it should be, and a sign of progress; but where are the birds that Nature has told to nest in tree hollows, like the Bluebird, Chickadee, the Tree Swallow, Downy and Hairy Woodpecker, and the jolly Yellowhammer, to find homes?

“You will often hear people say, ‘It is too bad the Bluebirds are dying out;’ but if somewhere about the place you will fasten a hollow log or a square bird-box with a single round opening in it to a high fence-post or to a pole set up on purpose, you will soon see that the Bluebirds have not died out, but that they have been discouraged in their house-hunting.

“It is a mistake to make bird-houses too large, or to have many rooms in them, unless you are hoping to attract Purple Martins, who like to live in colonies. Birds like a whole building to themselves quite as well as people, and they do not like people to come too close and peep in at their windows and doors, either.

“Autumn and winter are the best seasons for making and placing bird-boxes; it gives time for them to become ‘weathered’ before nesting time, and birds are apt to be suspicious of anything that looks too new and fine, and I have a plan that I think you will like by which you boys can not only make bird-houses for your own yards and farms, but make them to sell to others as well.

“It is also a kind act for those who live on farms to leave a few stacks of cornstalks or a sheaf of rye standing in a fence corner as a shelter for the game-birds, who are often driven by cold to burrow in the snow for cover, and, frequently, when the crust freezes above them, die of starvation.

“Doing this is wise as well as kind, for it helps to keep alive and increase these valuable food-birds, and makes better sport for the farmers in the time when the law says they may go a-hunting.

“Of course, in every country school even, there are children who do not live on farms, but these can club together and do what they can to feed and shelter the birds that come about the schoolhouse. You have all seen Goldilocks’ lunch-table for feeding the winter birds, and though Sarah Barnes would like to have such a one down at the school, others perhaps may think it foolish.

“As you already know, some birds eat insects and others seed foods, or, to put it another way, some birds prefer meat and some bread; so if you wish

to suit all kinds you must feed them with sandwiches, made of both bread and meat.

“‘Sandwiches for birds!—how foolish!’ I hear some one say. Stop and think a moment, and you will see that it is merely a way of expression, a figure of speech, as it is called.

“Give the birds the material, crumbs, cracked corn, hayloft sweepings, bits of fat bacon, suet, or bones that have some rags of meat attached, and they will make their own sandwiches, each one to its taste.

“If this food is merely scattered upon the ground, it will attract mice, rats, and other rodents, but if a regular lunch-counter is prepared for the food you will find that the birds will appreciate the courtesy, become liberal customers, and run up a long bill; this, however, they will pay with music when spring comes.

A SUGGESTION FOR THE LUNCH-COUNTER

“Almost every school has a flagpole, and, while some are fastened to the building itself, like the one at Foxes Corners, many stand free and are planted in the yard. However, there is one old tree at your school and I will ask Jacob to build you a lunch-counter, if you will promise to see that it is kept well filled with provisions.

“This is the way it should be made: Around the pole a square or circular shelf about eight inches wide can be fastened, four feet from the ground, and edged with a strip of beading, barrel hoops, or the like. A dozen tenpenny nails should be driven on the outside edge at intervals, like the spokes to a wheel, and the whole neatly painted to match the pole.

“Then each week we will ask Miss Wilde to appoint a child as *Bird Steward*, his or her duties being to collect the scraps after the noon dinner-hour and place them neatly on the counter, the crusts and crumbs on the shelf and the meat to be hung on the spikes.

“Nothing will come amiss—pine cones, beechnuts, the shells of hard-boiled eggs broken fine, apple cores, half-cleaned nuts; and if the children will tell their parents of the counter, they will often put an extra scrap or so in the dinner pail to help the feast. Or the fortunate children whose fathers keep the market, the grocery store, or the mill, may be able to obtain enough of the wastage to leave an extra supply on Friday, so that the pensioners need not go hungry over Sunday.

“All the while the flag will wave gayly above little Citizen Bird, as under its protection he feeds upon his human brothers’ bounty.

“Here is the story of one of these lunch-counters that proved a success. It was written to encourage others, and I will read it so that you may know that

bird lunch-counters belong to real and not to fairy-tales.”

AN ADIRONDACK LUNCH-COUNTER

In the Adirondacks in March, 1900, the snow fell over four feet deep, and wild birds were driven from the deep woods to seek for food near the habitation of man. It occurred to me that a lunch-counter with "meals at all hours" might suit the convenience of some of the visitors to my orchard, so I fixed a plank out in front of the house, nailed pieces of raw and cooked meat to it, sprinkled bread-crumbs and seeds around, and awaited results.

The first caller was a Chickadee. He tasted the meat, seemed to enjoy it, and went off for his mate. They did not seem in the least afraid when I stood on the veranda and watched them, and after a time paid but little attention to the noises in the house; but only one would eat at a time. The other one seemed to keep watch. I set my camera and secured a picture of one alone. While focussing for the meat one Chickadee came and commenced eating in front of the camera, and a second later its mate perched on my hand as I turned the focussing screw.

I saw the Chickadees tear off pieces of meat and suet and hide them in the woodpile. This they did repeatedly, and later in the day would come back and eat them if the lunch-counter was empty.

My observation in this respect is confirmed by a lumber-man, who noticed that when eating his lunch, back in the woods, the Chickadees were very friendly and would carry off scraps of meat and hide them, coming back for more, time and time again.

The next day another pair of Chickadees and a pair of White-breasted Nuthatches came. The Nuthatches had a presumptuous way of taking possession, and came first one and then both together. The Chickadees flew back and forth in an impatient manner, but every time they went near the meat the Nuthatches would fly or hop toward them, uttering what sounded to me like a nasal, French *no, no, no*, and the Chickadees would retire to await their turn when the Nuthatches were away.

The news of the free lunch must have travelled as rapidly in the bird world as gossip in a country town usually does, for before long a beautiful male Hairy Woodpecker made his appearance, and came regularly night and morning for a number of days. Hunger made him bold, and he would allow me to walk to within a few feet of him when changing plates in the camera. It was interesting to note his position on the plank. When he was eating, his tail was braced to steady his body. He did not stand on his feet, except when I attracted his attention by tapping on the window, but when eating put his feet out in front of him in a most peculiar manner. This position enabled him to draw his head far back and gave more power to the stroke of his bill, and shows that Woodpeckers are not adapted for board-walking.

Of course, the smaller Downy Woodpeckers were around; they always are in the orchard toward spring. I also had a flock of Redpolls come a number of times after a little bare spot of ground began to show, but, although they ate seeds I put on the ground, they would not come up on the lunch-counter and did not stay very long. Beautiful Pine Grosbeaks came, too, but they preferred picking up the seeds they found under the maple trees. The American Goldfinches, in their Quaker winter dresses, called, but the seeds on some weeds in the garden just peeping above the snow pleased them better than a more elaborate lunch, and saying “per-chic-o-ree” they would leave.—F. A. VAN SANT, Jay, N.Y., in *Bird Lore*.

“Now, while you move about and rest yourselves a few moments, I will ask Dave and Tommy to bring that picture of the great white bird from the easel and place it by the table here, while I look in this portfolio for another to put with it. See—here is a bird that is much taller than the men beside it and wears bunches of plumes on tail and wings. These two birds represent the wrong and right side of feather wearing!

“What are their real names? The Snowy Heron and the Ostrich, both birds of warm climate. I’m always glad when children wish to know the *real* names of birds and try to remember them. No one can become actually a friend of a person or an animal whose name is merely general. Has Miss Wilde ever read you a little poem there is about the pleasure of learning *real* names? No? I will repeat it and perhaps she will let you learn it next Friday.”

MATILDA ANN

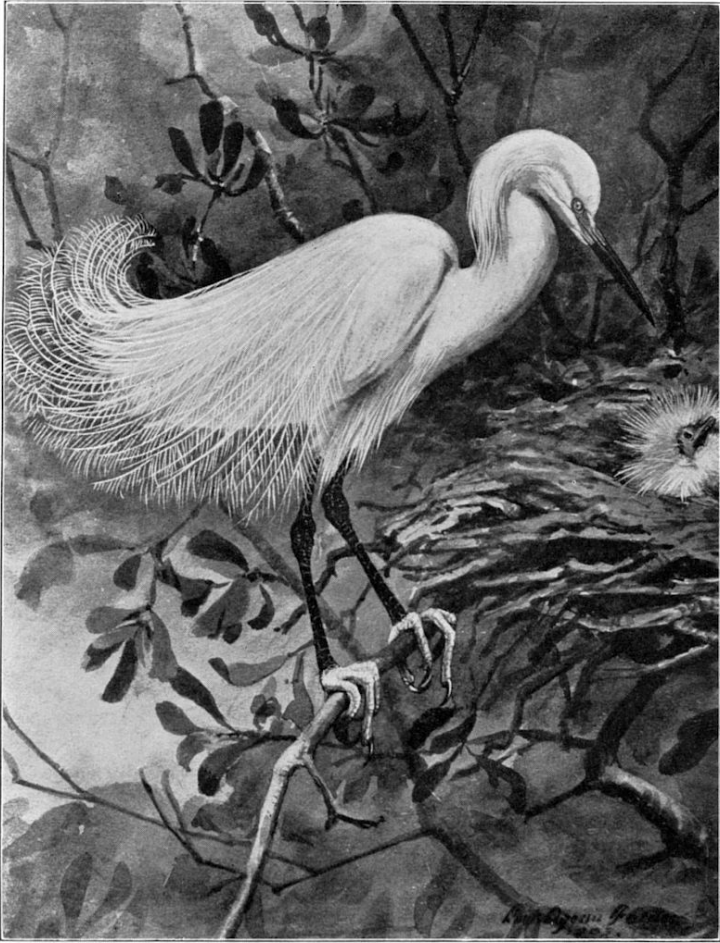
I knew a charming little girl,
Who’d say, “Oh, see that flower!”
Whenever in the garden
Or woods she spent an hour.
And sometimes she would listen,
And say, “Oh, hear that bird!”
Whenever in the forest
Its clear, sweet note was heard.

But then I knew another—
Much wiser, don't you think?
Who never called a bird a "bird";
But said "the bobolink"
Or "oriole" or "robin"
Or "wren," as it might be;
She called them all by their first names,
So intimate was she.

And in the woods or garden
She never picked a "flower";
But "anemones," "hepaticas,"
Or "pansies," by the hour.
Both little girls loved birds and flowers,
But one love was the best:
I need not point the moral;
I'm sure you see the rest.

For would it not be very queer,
If when, perhaps, you came,
Your parents had not thought worth while
To give you any name?
I think you would be quite upset,
And feel your brain a-whirl,
If you were not "Matilda Ann,"
But just "a little girl"!

—ALICE W. ROLLINS, in the *Independent*.



SNOWY HERON

VI FEATHERS AND HATS

The White Heron

“Perhaps the boys may not be interested in hearing about feathers and hats,” said Gray Lady, “but the two birds whose pictures you see here are very interesting in themselves; and it is well that both boys and girls should realize all the different reasons why some kinds of birds have been growing fewer and fewer, until it is necessary to take active measures for their protection.

“Boys have robbed nests and thoughtless men have shot and caged song-birds, and have often killed many more food-birds than they could eat, merely for what they call the ‘sport’ of killing.

“Girls who seldom rob nests, unless they are following the examples of their brothers, and women who would shrink from touching firearms or killing a bird, will still, as far as the law allows and sometimes further, wear birds’ feathers on their hats.

“Not many years ago we often saw whole birds, such as Humming-birds, Swallows,—like those on Eliza’s hat,—Bluebirds, and many of the pretty little warblers used as hat trimming. To-day, this is against the law in all of the really civilized of the United States, and any one offering the feathers of these birds for sale may be arrested and fined.”

“Please, is it any harm to wear roosters’ feathers or Guinea hens’ and ducks’ wings?” asked Ruth Banks. “’Cause I’ve got two real nice duck wings and a lovely spangled rooster tail—home-made ducks, you know, that we hatch under hens,” she added.

“No, it is no harm to use the feathers of domestic fowls, or other food-birds,” said Gray Lady; “only, unless we have raised the fowls from which they come ourselves, it is not easy to be sure about the matter, unless the feathers are left in their natural colours. They may tell you in a shop that the wing or breast you see is made of dyed chicken or pigeon feathers. You must take their word that this is so, and many times they may have been misled in the matter themselves.

“Birds’ feathers, it cannot be denied, are very beautiful and ornamental, but to my mind it is very bad taste to wear anything dead merely for

ornament,—furs, of course, keep the wearer warm as well,—but I myself do not care for any hat trimming that can only be had by taking life.

“There is one kind of feather,—the Heron or Egret plume,—that I am not only sorry, but ashamed, to say is still in use, because it comes from birds that live in other countries, and these birds we cannot yet protect. Not only must these birds be killed to obtain the coveted plumes, but the killing is done in a brutal way, and at a time of year—the nesting season—when, according to the wise law of nature, every bird should be cherished and its privacy respected.

“Look at this great White Heron in the picture beside me here. He measures two feet from the tip of his bill up over his head to his tail, though you cannot really see the tail as he is pictured on account of the beautiful sweeping cloak of fine feathers that cover it. This bird has yellow eyes and feet, beak and legs partly yellow and partly black, but is everywhere else white of an almost dazzling brilliancy.

“Many birds wear more beautiful and highly coloured feathers in the nesting season than at any other. These Herons, both male and female, are pure white all the year through, but as the nesting season approaches a change comes,—a number of slender plumes grow out from between the shoulders and curve gracefully over the tail, forming a complete mantle, and it is these feathers that are sought by the professional plume hunters to be made into the feathery tufts sold as egrets, though the word *Eliza* used by a slip of the tongue, *regrets*, I think much more suitable, for surely any one with a warm woman’s heart would *regret* ever having worn them if she realized how they are obtained.”

“Miss Barker gave my mother hers,” put in Eliza, “ ’cause she’d just found out where they came from and dassn’t wear it to church ’cause her minister belongs to a society that wouldn’t like it. She didn’t tell us why, though; she only said regrets was counted stylish in N’ York.”

“Yes,” said Gray Lady, “that is all the idea some people, who think themselves very clever, have of honour. To give away a feather that one cannot wear, for fear of what some one will say, is like giving stolen goods to some one who does not know that they are stolen.

“Not many years ago this Snowy Heron and his cousin, the American Egret, almost twice his size, might be found everywhere in the swampy groves of temperate and tropical America, from New Jersey across to Minnesota and Oregon, and as far south as Patagonia in South America. Within a few years I have seen one or two in autumn in the marshes back of our bay below, for like many birds they wander about after the nesting season. Their food consists of small fish,—shrimps, water-beetles, etc.,—so that they never make their homes far from moist places. Now, in this country

at least, the race is nearly gone, and it will be only by the strictest laws and most complete protection that it will be possible for the tribe to increase. To regain its old footing cannot be hoped for.

“The beginning of the tragedy came by woman’s love of finery, and only by her resolutely giving it up can the trouble be ended.

“Through some happening it was discovered that this mantle of feathers could be made into ornaments for hats and hair that were not only widely sought, but brought a high price. This was enough; bands of hunters were organized to search the swamps for the Herons and obtain the plumes *when they were in the best condition*. How it was to be done did not matter, and indeed it has taken the world many years to realize the horror of it all.

“These Herons breed in colonies. The nest, a stoutly built, slightly hollowed platform of small sticks, reeds, etc., is placed either in a tree or tall bush, care being always taken to keep it safely above the water-line. As the birds are very sociable, a single bush or tree would often contain many nests.

“When the nesting season was well under way and the feather cloaks in their first perfection, through the lagoons and sluggish waterways came noiseless flat-bottomed boats, low on the water, and poled by the guiding Indian or half-breed. Astern sat the plume hunters, guns at rest and eyes eagerly scanning the foliage above their heads. ‘Ah! here is a rookery at last!’ (rookery being the name given to colonies of many birds beside the Rook). The parent birds are sailing gracefully to and fro, their long legs trailing behind, while they feed the newly hatched nestlings. For with the most crafty calculation the plume hunters wait for the time when the birds are hatched because they know that the parents are then less likely to take alarm and fly beyond reach.

“The boat is stopped by the guide, who grasps an overhanging branch close to where an opening in the under-brush gives a good view of the colony.

“Bang! bang! Bodies crashing through the branches and pitiful cries of alarm mingle for several minutes, as the confused birds rise, remember their young, and return to die! When the smoke has lifted, the hunters clear the ground of the dead and dying and piling them in the boat begin to tear off that portion of the back, the ‘scalp,’ that holds the precious plumes. If all the birds were dead, the horror would be less, but time is precious; there are other rookeries to be visited that day, and so the still breathing and fluttering birds are also torn and mutilated.

“Then the boat glides on, leaving death behind. Yes, but not the silence that usually goes with death, for there in a hundred nests are the clamouring

hungry broods that will die slowly of hunger, or be victims of snakes or birds of prey,—the happier ending of the two.

“After a day’s work the plume hunters find ground dry enough for a camp, where they pass the night, and at dawn they again glide forth on their ghastly errand.

“Sometimes storm, pestilence, and famine may nearly exterminate a species of bird or beast, but Nature in some way, if she still needs the type, always manages to restore and undo her own mischief; but, as a lover of these birds has said, ‘When man comes, slaughters, and exterminates, Nature does not restore!’ It is only the men and women who have done the evil that may be allowed to undo it, and sometimes it is too late.

“Now you see why no one should wear egret plumes, the feathers of the bird that has been called ‘The Bonnet Martyr.’ Girls and boys, whoever you may be, who hear or read this story of the vanishing Snowy Heron, be courageous, and wherever or whenever you see one of these regret plumes ask the wearer if she knows how it was obtained and tell her its story, for whether the bird who bore it lived in this or another country the manner of taking is the same.

“There have been foolish stories told of raising these birds in captivity and gathering the plumes after they are shed. This is not true. They would, when shed naturally, be worn and useless, and the egret will always be what one of the Wise Men has called it, the ‘White Badge of Cruelty.’”

“Now, Tommy Todd,” said Gray Lady, “you may take down the Heron and put the other picture in its place. The bird in it is not graceful and beautiful like the Heron; in fact, it looks more like some sort of a camel than a bird, but its story is much more cheerful. Its feathers may be worn by every one, for it is not necessary to kill or hurt the bird in order to get them. Some of you have guessed its name already, I am sure.

The Ostrich

“Ostriches live in warm countries as well as Herons, but here the comparison begins and ends, for the Ostrich loves the open sandy desert and was originally found wild in Africa, Arabia, and also in Persia. The Ostrich, the largest bird now alive, is most peculiar both in appearance and habits. Standing sometimes eight feet in height, it has a long, almost bare neck, and small stupid-looking head; its wings are so small that it cannot fly, but its strong legs, ending in two-toed feet, give it the power of running as fast as a horse, and it can kick like a horse also, with this difference,—an Ostrich

kicks forward so if you wish to be perfectly safe you must stand *behind* it! At the base of the wings and tail grow tufts of long and substantial feathers, the wing tufts being the longer and best. In truth, but for the fact of the feathers that cover its body, no one would guess that it was a bird, and even with these it looks like some strange beast that has put on a borrowed coat to go, perhaps, to the great Elephant Dance that little Toomai saw once upon a time in the Jungle, about which Rudyard Kipling tells so well that sometimes we wake up in the morning and really believe that we ourselves have ridden to the dance upon the great Elephant instead of Toomai.

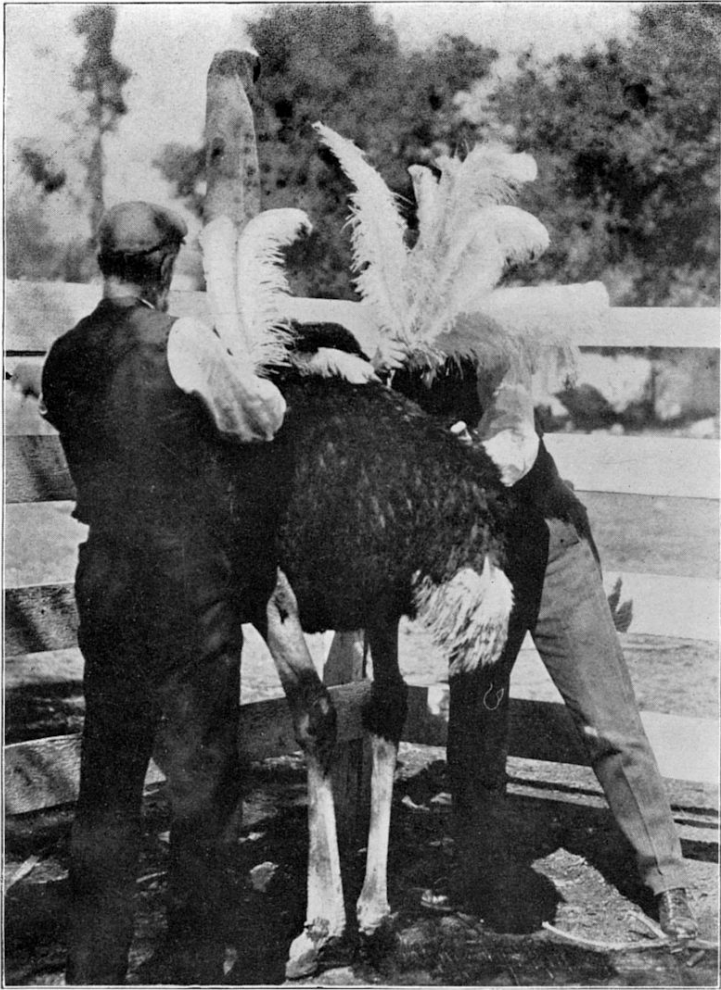
“In wild life birds have always been hunted for their plumage as well as for food. It is thought that the savage at first killed solely for food, and then used the hides of beasts and feathers of birds for clothing and decoration as an afterthought, some of the royal garments of kings and chiefs of tribes being woven of countless rare feathers.

“When man as we know him, white or civilized man as he is called, explored wild countries, he introduced two things that wrought great harm to wild creatures and savages alike,—the money-trading instinct and strong drink. In order to buy this drink, which always proved his ruin, the savage looked about for something to offer in exchange, and what was there for him but to kill beast or bird and offer some part of it in trade?

“In this way the elephants’ tusks, of which ivory is made, rare furs, alligator hides, and Ostrich eggs and plumes, as well as rough uncut gems, became known to the people of Europe.

“The savages hunted the wild Ostrich with bow and arrows that were sometimes poisoned, and the bird being killed, of course, yielded but one crop of feathers.

“As the Ostrich cannot fly and is a very stupid bird, living in open deserts where there were few places to hide, it was very easily destroyed—its only means of escape being to outrun its pursuers, who were on foot. But presently when firearms were used to hunt him, the Ostrich seemed as utterly doomed as the White Heron.



CLIPPING OSTRICH PLUMES

“But the day came when men who realized the great demand there was for these feathers and the profit to be made by selling them, tried the experiment of raising the birds in captivity, just as we do our barnyard fowl, treating them kindly, and feeding them well, so that they might yield not only one but many crops of plumes, because they knew that the Ostrich is not only long-lived but, like the smaller birds, changes its feathers every year.

“The Ostrich was a difficult bird to catch and tame when full grown, for at that time they weigh several hundred pounds and their habit of kicking has to be remembered, the same as with a wild horse. So the plan was tried

of collecting the eggs and hatching them out, and even this was not as easy as it seems.

“Though Ostriches are so foolish that, when chased, they will often stand still and hide their heads in the sand, evidently thinking that if they cannot see their pursuers, they themselves cannot be seen, they make devoted parents. And this plan was so successful that Ostriches are now raised like domestic fowls, not only in Africa but in this country, where the birds were introduced in 1882, and there are now many successful Ostrich farms in Arizona, California, and Florida, where alfalfa can be raised all the year, for this is the best food for them.

“The breeding habits of the Ostrich in captivity are different from those of the wild birds of the desert who live half a dozen hens to a family like our barnyard fowls. The nest is merely a hollow in the sand a foot or so deep, and several broad, made by the pressure of the great breast-bone and sides. Eggs are laid, one every other day, until a ‘clutch’ of a dozen or more has accumulated, and these must be kept warm for nearly a month and a half before the chicks will be hatched.

“When you realize that one of these eggs would make an omelet as large as two dozen and a half hens’ eggs, and weighs three or four pounds, so that the omelet would feed an entire family, you will understand that it takes both patience on the part of the parents and a great deal of heat to hatch these eggs. Sometimes the owners prefer to hatch the eggs in an incubator.

“You have some of you seen a Robin stand up in the nest and shuffle her feet; when she does this she is turning her eggs, and the great Ostrich eggs are also turned every day. When domesticated, the mother Ostrich tends the eggs during the daylight hours, but the father takes her place in the later afternoon and remains until morning. This is evidently the result of the instinct for colour protection. The gray female shows the least plainly in daylight on the sand, while the black-and-white male can scarcely be seen at night. In fact, the domesticated bird is a creature of such regular habits that, according to reliable accounts, the male takes his place on the nest promptly at 5 P.M. and does not move until 9 A.M. This account does not say whether Mrs. O. lets her husband have an evening out once in a while to go to his club or lodge, but perhaps, as he has the rest of the year to himself, he does not expect a vacation in the important nesting season. But one thing is known to be true, that Ostriches are very devoted to each other and that the pairs when once mated remain together for life, an attribute of many birds, especially the very long-lived species. It is said that the wild Ostrich lives to be 100 years old. This may be true, for Ostriches who have been captives 40 years are still alive and healthy. In the deserts Ostriches are supposed to be able to go without water for days at a time, but in captivity they drink freely

every day. This either proves that the habits alter very much, or else, that those who reported their wild life did not see correctly.

“When the young Ostriches are hatched, they are about the size of a Plymouth Rock hen and are mottled and fuzzy. They grow very rapidly, so that at nine months old the bird will be nearly six feet tall, and after this the plumes are plucked at intervals of nine months; the feathers do not reach perfection, however, until the third year, and the birds do not reach maturity and mate until they are four years old,—and a fine male Ostrich of six or seven years of age is worth \$1000 and will yield from \$50 to \$80 worth of feathers yearly.

“When a little over a year old, the mottled plumage that the young birds wear slowly changes, the female becomes a dusky gray, and the male glossy black, though they both grow long white wing-plumes. By this you may learn that all the gayly coloured plumes that you see are dyed, and even those that remain black or white go through many processes of cleansing and curling before they are sold in the shops.”

“How do they get the feathers off?” asked Sarah Barnes; “do they wait until they moult or pull ’em like they do geese?—only that hurts some ’cause the geese squawk something dreadful.”

“I’m glad that you asked that question,” said Gray Lady, “because it is one of the special points about Ostrich feathers that should be made known to every one. If they waited for the feathers to be shed, they would be worn and broken. You all know how very shabby the long tail-feathers of a rooster become before the summer moulting time. When Ostriches were first raised in confinement, their owners used to pluck out the plumes. But they soon found that not only was this troublesome, for the pain of it made the birds struggle, but the next crop of feathers suffered in consequence. Nature has reasons for everything she plans and there is evidently some substance in the butt of the old quill that, by keeping the skin soft and open, prepares the way for the new one that is to follow and causes it to be of better quality.

“Now the plumes are clipped off, and later on the stubs, which are then dry, come out easily. The feathers of these birds are much fuller and finer than those that came from the wild Ostriches.

“The picture shows an Ostrich in the little three-cornered pen with the men holding up the tufts and preparing to snip off the feathers. The pen is made in this shape so that there will be standing-room for the men, but not room enough for the Ostrich to turn round and kick forward. A hood shaped like a stocking is drawn over his head, and he is perfectly quiet, for he feels no pain and no blood is drawn.

“Now you can judge for yourselves that Ostrich feathers may be safely worn by every one who likes beautiful things, for certainly there are no

feathers so graceful as a sweeping Ostrich plume with the ends slightly curled.

“In addition to the fact that the growing and taking of these feathers is perfectly humane, their use encourages a large industry which gives employment to many people here in *our own country*.”

“I wish my ma had an Ostrich plume in her Sunday hat instead of that mean egret,” sighed Eliza Clausen, half to herself. “I can take the smaller wings out of mine and leave the ribbon, but the feather’s the whole topknot of ma’s.”

Softly as Eliza had spoken, her words could be heard in the silence that came when the reader closed her scrap-book.

“Bravo! bravo! little girl,” said Gray Lady, smiling so brightly that Eliza forgot to be embarrassed. “You see that your mother was right when she said, ‘When people get to hearing about birds they stop caring to wear them in their hats,’ even though she did not mean it quite in this way. Very few people would wear the cruel kind of feathers if they only understood. I will give you a pretty little Ostrich tuft to take to your mother in exchange for the egret, when you explain to her about it, and I’m sure Anne can find something among Goldilocks’ boxes to replace your Swallow’s wings.”

Eliza’s eyes sparkled, and all signs of resentment left her face.

“But,” asked Gray Lady, “what will you do with the poor little wings and the egret? You surely will not give them to any one else.”

“No, ma’am, I’ll have a funeral, and bury them down in the meadow, where my kitten is that fell in the water barrel and sister’s canary!”

Then all the children laughed, including Eliza herself, and Gray Lady joined.

“School is over for this afternoon,” said Gray Lady, “but before you go we must arrange for our next meeting. I, myself, belong to the Humane Society. How would you like to organize a little school society of your own to help one another remember to be kind to everything that lives, and also to see and learn all you can about our little brothers of the air, whose life and happiness depends as much upon our mercy as our food and shade, beautiful flowers, and luscious fruit depend upon their industry?”

“Let us call it ‘The Kind Hearts’ Club.’ Who will join it? Goldilocks and Jacob Hughes are the first two members—how many more are there here? Oh! Tommy Todd! one hand is enough to raise, unless you expect to work for two people!”

VII

THE KIND HEARTS' CLUB

“While you were playing hide-and-seek in the orchard this morning, Miss Wilde and I had a long talk about the Friday afternoons at school,” said Gray Lady, “and what do you suppose? She has given every other Friday afternoon to us, to you and to me, not only that we may all learn about birds and animals and how to be kind to them, but other things as well.”

“That will be lovely!” exclaimed Sarah Barnes, but suddenly her face clouded and she added; “that will only be twice a month, though, and if, when it comes winter, it’s such bad weather that school has to be closed up of a Friday, then it would be once a month, and that would be *very* long to wait!”

“Ah! but you have not heard all of the plan yet,” said Gray Lady. “Two Fridays of each month I will go to your school, and two Saturday mornings in every month you are to come to my house, that is, if you wish to,—of course you are not *obliged* to come. And it will only be a very bad snow-storm, deeper than horses’ legs are long, that will keep me away from Foxes Corners, for did not you and I become friends on a very dreary, rainy afternoon?”

“On the Friday afternoon at school I will either tell or read you stories of the birds of the particular season, and I shall give you every chance to ask questions and tell anything that you have noticed about birds or such little wild beasts as we have hereabouts, for you know it is a very one-sided sort of meeting where one person does all the talking.

“I may be a sober-minded Gray Lady, but I very well know how tiresome it is to sit still for a couple of hours, even if one is listening to something interesting. I think that one can hear so very much better if the fingers are busy. So, with Ann Hughes’ help, I am going to give the girls some plain, useful sewing to do, patchwork, gingham cooking-aprons, and the like. This plain sewing will be Friday work. On the Saturday mornings that you come to me you shall have something more interesting to work upon,—that is, as many of you as prove that they know a little about handling a needle. You shall learn to dress dolls and make any number of pretty things besides.”

“I haven’t got any thimble,” said little Clara Hinks, called “Clary” for short, in a quavering voice. “Grandma is going to give me a real silver one

when I'm eight, but that won't be until next spring, and now I have to borrow my big sister Livvie's when I sew my patchwork, and it's too big, and it wiggles, and the needle often goes sideways into my finger. Besides, she wouldn't let me bring it to school, 'cause it's got her 'nitals inside a heart on one side of it, and George Parsons gave it to her, an' anyways she's using it all the time, 'cause she's sewing her weddin' things terrible fast."

Gray Lady had great difficulty to keep from laughing outright at this burst of confidence, but she never hurt any one's feelings, and her lips merely curved into a quizzical smile, as she said, "What Clara says about her thimble reminds me to tell you that Ann has a large work-box with plain thimbles of all sizes, scissors, needles, and thread. This I used last winter in the city in teaching some little girls to sew, who were about your ages. I will lend you these things, and then later on, if you do well, you will have a chance to earn work-boxes of your own."

"Have we boys got to sew, too?" asked Tommy Todd, with a very mischievous expression on his freckled face; "'cause I know how to sew buttons on my overalls, and I can do it tighter'n ma can, so's they don't yank off for ever so long!"

"No, I had thought of something quite different for you boys, though it would not be amiss for you all to know how to take a few stitches for yourselves, for you are all liable at some time in your lives to travel in far-away places, and even when you go down to the shore and camp out in summer, buttons will come off and stitches rip.

"It seemed to me that hammers and saws and chisels and nails and jack-knives would be more interesting to you boys than dolls and patchwork!" As Gray Lady pronounced the names of the tools slowly, so that she might watch the effect of her words, she saw five pairs of eyes sparkle, and when the magic word "jack-knives" was reached, they were leaning forward so eagerly that Dave slipped quite off his chair and for a moment knelt on the floor at Gray Lady's feet.

"But what could we do with all those carpenters' tools down at school?" asked Dave, when he had regained his chair and the laugh at his downfall had subsided. "Dad says it's a wonder Foxes Corners' schoolhouse don't fall down every time teacher bangs on the desk to call 'tention,—we couldn't hammer things up there."

"No, that is very true," said Gray Lady, "but the tools are to be used at the 'General's house' on Saturdays, and the jack-knives at school on Fridays! I see that you cannot guess this part of the plan, so I will not tease you by making you wait as I had first intended.

"As you may remember, Goldilocks told you this morning that Jacob Hughes, who now lives with us since he has left the sea, and keeps

everything in repair about the place, besides being a good carpenter can whittle almost anything that can be made from wood with a knife.

“In the attic of this house are two large rooms. One of these Jacob is fitting up for a playroom for my little daughter, now that she will soon be able to enjoy it. The other room was the workroom where her father had his tools and workbench when he was a lad like you, for the General had him taught the use of all the tools and he used to make bird-houses and boats and garden seats and even chairs and such things for the house. He grew to be so skilful that he learned to carve them beautifully.

“Since he went away to his father and mother in heaven no one has used the room; but it is not right to let things be useless when others need them, and now Jacob is putting that room in order also. Then for half of the time on Saturday morning he will take you up there, teach you the use of the tools, and show you how to make bird-houses and many other things, while on the Friday afternoons, when the girls are sewing, he will bring some pieces of soft wood to school, and something that he has carved as a model, and each boy must strive to make the best copy that he can!”

“That’ll be bully!” cried Tommy Todd, adding, “and I think it is just fine of you to let us use those tools that belonged to—to—” And here Tommy faltered for the right word.

“To my husband,” said Gray Lady, very gently, and the children saw the little mist that veiled her eyes, and understood better than words could tell them why gray hair framed the face that was still young and why there were no gay colours in her dress,—in short, it came to them why their Gray Lady earned her name, and yet was never sad nor wished to sadden others.

“S’pose we haven’t all got jack-knives—that is, ones that’ll cut?” piped little Jared Hill, blushing red at having dared to speak. He was the smallest boy in the school and lived with his grandparents, who, though well-to-do, evidently believed it sinful to spend money for anything but food and clothing, for the only Christmas presents Jared ever had were those from the Sunday-school tree, and though he was seven years old he had never owned a knife.

“If I lend the girls thimbles and scissors, I must, of course, lend the boys jack-knives, and give them an equal chance of earning them for their very own!” And from that moment Jared Hill firmly believed that angels and good fairies had fluffy gray hair and wore shimmering gray garments that smelled of fresh violets, like Gray Lady.

“Let me see,” said she, glancing at a little calendar in a silver frame that stood upon her desk, “two weeks from to-day will be the 27th; then you come here again. I should like every boy who can, to bring some bits of old weathered wood with him. Either a few mossy shingles, the hollow branch

of a tree, a bundle of bark,—anything, in short, that will make the bird-houses that you build look natural to the birds, who dislike new boards and fresh paint so much that they will not use such houses until they are old and weathered.”

Again Gray Lady consulted her calendar. “There will be eight Saturday meetings before the Christmas holidays, and we must all be very industrious so as to be ready for our fair.”

“Where? what?” cried Sarah Barnes and three or four other girls together, for to these children on this remote hillside the word “fair” meant visions of the County Agricultural Fair, and this stood for the very gayest of times that they knew.

“A little fair of our own to be held in Goldilocks’ playroom and the workroom where the ‘Kind Hearts’ Club’ will offer its friends bird-houses, dolls, button-bags, cooking-aprons, and home-made cake and candy. Then, with the money thus earned, the Club will have a little fund for its winter work, and each member will, of course, have a vote as to how the money is to be spent.”

Gray Lady opened a small drawer in her desk, and took from it two packages of picture cards. The picture on the cards of the first pack was of a little boy releasing a rabbit that had been caught in a trap. The picture of the other cards was of a little girl standing in a doorway, and scattering grain sweepings to the hungry birds on the snow-covered ground.

“Now, who wishes to join the ‘Kind Hearts’ Club’? We must have some members before we can elect our officers and begin. The promise you make is very simple.” On the cards they read only these words: “I promise to be kind to every living thing.” Under this was a place to write the name of the member.

“How can we always tell what it is kind to do? Some folks think different ways,” asked Eliza Clausen, the hat feathers still fresh in her mind.

“Our hearts must tell us that, Eliza,” said Gray Lady, very gently. “We cannot carry rules about with us, but, if we have kind hearts always in our breasts, we shall not make mistakes. And even if our hearts do not feel for others in the beginning, they may be taught by example, just as our heads may learn from books. That is what I wish our Kind Hearts’ Club to stand for—to be a reminder that there is nothing better to work for in this world than that our hearts may be kind and true to ourselves, each other, and to God’s dumb animals that he has given for our service and has trusted to our mercy, for this is true worship and doing His will.”

Each one of the children present signed silently and Gray Lady copied the names in a book, but let the children keep the cards, both as a reminder and to show their parents.

Miss Wilde came forward at this moment and she and their hostess explained the manner of electing officers. Before they trooped out on to the lawn, even then reluctant to go, Goldilocks had been made president, Miss Wilde, vice-president, Sarah Barnes, treasurer, and Tommy Todd, who wrote a very clear, round hand, secretary, Dave, Jared Hill, and the two Shelton boys, a committee to collect old wood, and Eliza Clausen, Ruth Banks, and Mary Barnes, a committee to collect odd patterns for patchwork, something in which the older country folks showed great ingenuity and took no little pride.

“Oh my, do look at the Swallows—there’s hundreds of them on the wires,” said Tommy, as Goldilocks was wheeled out on to the front walk to tell the party “Good-by,” her mother following.

“I wish I knew what really truly becomes of them,” said Sarah Barnes; “father says nobody knows, though some people say that they go down in pond mud and bury themselves all winter like frogs, and though you see them last right by water, I don’t believe it’s likely, do you, Gray Lady? Though at the end they disappear all of a sudden.”

“It is not only unlikely, but impossible. I think next Friday we will begin our real lessons with these fleet-winged birds of passage that are passing now every day and night.”

After the good-bys were said again and again, the children scattered down the road, talking all together, very much like a twittering flock of Swallows themselves, and like the birds they were neither still nor silent until darkness fell. Miss Wilde followed, smiling and happy, for she had found a friend who not only did not belittle her work in the hillside school, but showed her undreamed-of possibilities in it.

VIII

THE PROCESSION PASSES

Time—September 20th. Place—The School at Foxes Corners.

These are the stories that Gray Lady told or read from her scrap-book between September and Flag Day. She allowed them to be copied at Miss Wilde's request for the pleasure of the other children in the township.

THE SWALLOWS

Five Swallows and a Changeling

“I wonder if there is a child living in the real country who does not know a Swallow by sight the moment its eyes rest upon the bird? I think not, and a great many people who are only in the country at midsummer and in early autumn also know the Swallows, even though they cannot tell the different kinds apart, for during the nesting time, as well as the flocking period that follows, Swallows are conspicuous birds of the air and leaders of the birds that might be grouped as “The Fleetwings.” For not only do Swallows get their food while on the wing, now pursuing it through the upper air if the day is fair, now sweeping low over meadow, pond, and river if the clouds hang heavy and insect life keeps near to the ground, but during the flocking season, when the separate families join in the community life that they live through the winter, the Swallows are constantly on the wing.

“The day that we had the orchard party you all noticed the Swallows flying over the pond between the orchard and river woods, sometimes alighting so close together on the bushes as to be as thick as the leaves, and then again stringing along the telegraph wires, above the highway, some heading one way and some another until, evidently at a signal, they flew off again and disappeared in the distance, until they seemed but a cloud of smoke.

“We agreed, I think, some time ago, that it is much better to learn the real names of people, animals, and flowers than to simply give general names. It is more definite to say, “I saw a Swallow” flying over the moor or meadow, than to say, “I saw a bird” flying over the meadow; but it would be more interesting still if we tell the name of the particular kind of Swallow that was seen, for among the many kinds that exist at least five are quite common, according to the part of the United States in which one lives.

“Can any of you tell me the names of these Swallows, how they differ in plumage, and where they live? I can see by Dave’s face that he knows something about them and I think Sarah Barnes does also, while as for Tommy Todd, both hands are up in spite of jack-knife and the windmill he is making and he can hardly wait for me to stop.

“Now, Tommy, how many kinds of Swallows do you know?”

“Three!” he replied promptly. “Barn Swallows, and Chimney Swallows, and Dirt Swallows!”

“I have heard of Barn and Chimney Swallows, but never of a Dirt Swallow. Please describe it to me,” said Gray Lady, looking interested.

Tommy hesitated for a minute, for it is one thing to know a bird by sight, but quite another to carry a correct picture of it in your mind’s eye and then put it into words.

“A Dirt Swallow is pretty small and a kind of a dirty colour on top and a stripe across his chest, the rest white, and his tail hasn’t sharp points, and he isn’t blue and shiny like a Barn Swallow. He doesn’t build a nice nest like the others, but bores a hole right into a dirt bank, ever so far in, like a Kingfisher does, just like he was a ground-hog, and puts feathers in at the end for a nest. That’s why we call ’em Dirt Swallows. There’s a bank above Uncle Hill’s gravel-pit that’s full of the holes, and another bank full right at Farm’s End above the sand beach where we camped a week last summer. The way I found out about the holes was by diggin’ down a piece back of the edge of the bank, for sometimes they bore as much as four feet. The eggs are real white, not spotted like Barn Swallows’, ’cause we found a couple of bad ones, that hadn’t hatched, among the feathers.” Here Tommy paused for breath, his face all aglow with eagerness.

“That,” said Gray Lady, “is a very good and clear description of the Bank Swallow, which is the English name that the Wise Men have given the little bird that you call the Dirt Swallow. As the bird always burrows its nesting-hole in a bank and never in field earth or the flat ground as a woodchuck does, Bank Swallow is decidedly the better name.”

Meanwhile Tommy had glanced hastily out of the window to where birds were constantly leaving and settling on the long-distance telephone wires that strung together the long poles that walked by the door, and up the hillside, striding across lots where they chose, regardless of the road. Slipping from his seat to the window, he took a second look and then said in a harsh whisper, as if afraid that the birds would hear him and take fright, “Gray Lady, there’s Bank Swallows mixed in with the Barn Swallows on the wires, and I’m sure there’s another kind besides, with a shiny back and all white in the breast. Wouldn’t you please come out and look? If we go around

the schoolhouse, they won't notice us from the other side, but we can see them."

Gray Lady gave a signal and the girls and boys dropped the sewing and whittling quickly on their desks and, following her lead, stole out on tiptoe, one after the other, like the little pickaninnies when they sing, "The bogey man'll ketch yer if yer doant watch out!"

There, to be sure, were the Swallows, hundreds of them, all twittering cheerfully and none of them sitting still even though they were perching, but pluming themselves, and stretching their wings, the feathers of which they seemed to comb with a peculiar backward movement of one claw.

As Gray Lady scanned the rows she saw brilliant Barn Swallows in little groups alternating with the sober-cloaked Bank Swallows, and then half a dozen each of two other species that were not so familiar.

"Bring me the opera-glasses from the little bag that is with my hat and gloves," she said softly to Sarah Barnes. Then, motioning the children to keep still, she crossed the road to a point where, the sunlight falling behind her, she could look up at the wires without becoming dazzled, but as she did so the entire flock left the wires, and wheeling went down over the corn-field toward the reeds and low woods that bordered the mill-pond.

"You were quite right, Tommy," said Gray Lady, as they still stood looking at the wires in the hope that the birds might return; "there were not only three but four kinds of Swallows in that flock. The birds with the slightly forked tails, beautiful shining steel-blue and green cloaks, and satiny white underparts are Tree Swallows that do not nest near here, but stop with us on their spring and fall journeys, and the others that you did not notice, because in the distance they look somewhat like Barn Swallows, except that they lack the forked tail, are Cliff or Eaves Swallows, as they are called in this part of the country, where they are rather uncommon.

"Now we will go in and I will ask Tommy Todd, who writes very clearly, to put on the board the names of these four Swallows, and the particular thing about them that will help you to tell them apart.

"No, I am afraid that they are not coming back," said Gray Lady, after they had waited a couple of minutes more, "and they may all leave us suddenly any day now, though the Barn Swallow often stays into October and the White-Breasted almost to November."

A wagon loaded with rye straw and drawn by a yoke of oxen came creaking up the hill and paused on the level place in front of the school. The teamster was Jared Hill's grandfather,—the man who did not believe in play or playthings. As his far-sight was rather poor, he did not notice that the lady with the children was not Miss Wilde.

“Wal, teacher,” he called, as he leaned against his load, and tried in vain to discover the object at which the group was gazing, “what’s up thet there pole, a possum or a runaway hand-organ monkey, or mebber it’s the balloon got loose from Newbury Fair grounds?”

“No, nothing so unusual as that; we have been watching the flocking of the Swallows,” said Gray Lady, her silvery voice sounding clearly even in these deaf ears.

“Swallers!—out er school watchin’ Swallers?” exclaimed old Mr. Hill, taking the long straw that he was chewing from between his teeth in questioning amazement. “Shucks! what’s Swallers good fer, anyhow? Gee—haw, Cain! Shish, Abel! We’d best move on; I reckon this isn’t any place fer folks with something to do!” And thus addressing his oxen, the load went slowly on.

With the mischievous twinkle still lingering in her eyes, Gray Lady asked Tommy Todd to go to the blackboard as soon as the children settled down to their work again, and this is what he wrote at Gray Lady’s dictation:

BARN SWALLOW. You will know it by its glistening steel-blue and chestnut feathers and *forked tail*. Builds mud nests in barns and outbuildings. Comes in middle April; leaves in September and early October. Nests all through North America up to Arctic regions. Winters in tropics as far south as Brazil.

TREE SWALLOW. Glistening cloak—*pure white breast*. Nests in hollow trees or, lacking these, in bird-boxes. Comes in April; leaves in October. Nests in places up to Alaska and Labrador and winters in our southern states south to the tropics.

BANK SWALLOW. *Dull brown cloak with band across chest*. Nests in deep horizontal holes in banks. Comes in April; leaves in September and October. Nests like White Breast up to Alaska and Labrador. Winters in the tropics. The smallest Swallow.

CLIFF OR EAVES SWALLOW. *Pure white band on forehead*. Otherwise brightly coloured with steel-blue, chestnut, gray, rusty, and white. Where there are no rocky cliffs for its nesting colonies, they build under the eaves of barns, etc. Nests in North America to Arctic regions. Winters in the tropics.

“Here you have a short description of four Swallows we have seen this afternoon,” said Gray Lady, as Tommy came to the end of the board and only finished by squeezing up the letters. “There is another Swallow, the big cousin of these, called the Purple Martin, with shiny bluish black cloak and

light underparts. This beautiful Martin has a soft, musical voice, and is very sociable and affectionate, and even in spring, when the birds have mated, they still like to live in colonies and are very good neighbours among themselves. They were once plentiful and nested in tree holes or houses made purposely for them, but, since the English Sparrow has come, it has pushed its way into their homes and turned them out, so now they are rare, and perhaps you children may never have seen one.

“There was always a high post with a Martin box holding a couple of dozen families up at ‘the General’s’ as far back as I first remember, but during our absence no one watched to keep the Sparrows out, the Martins left, and the house went to decay. Jacob has made a new house, and we will not set it up until next Saturday, so that you can see how it is divided—a room for each family and too high from the ground for cats to reach. We shall keep the house covered with a cloth all winter, so that the Sparrows cannot move in before the Martins return, and in this way we may coax them to come back again and live with us. Then, who knows, perhaps some one of the Kind Hearts’ Club may have patience and take the trouble to build a house and then Purple Martins may become plentiful in Fair Meadow township.

“You heard what Farmer Hill asked a few minutes ago,—‘What’s Swallers good fer, anyhow?’ I want you all to be able to answer this question whenever you hear it asked.

“In the first place Swallows do no manner of harm; they neither eat fruits nor useful berries, nor do they disturb the nests and eggs of other birds. They are beautiful objects in the air, and their laughing twitter when on the wing is a sound that we should miss as much as many real bird songs.

“‘These are pleasant qualities,’ some may say, ‘but not exactly useful.’ Listen! As these Swallows are Fleetwings and always birds of the air, so they are sky sweepers, living upon flying insects that few other birds may take, and the large amount of these that they consume is almost beyond belief; so watch when they come back next spring on their return as they fly over the cattle in the pasture, or over the pond surface teeming with insect life. If they do nothing else, they earn their living one and all by *mosquito-killing*, and the Wise Men of to-day know that the sting of one sort of mosquito is not merely an annoyance, but that it pushes the germ of malaria and other bad diseases straight into the blood.



THE PURPLE MARTIN

“Not only are Swallows harmless and useful in the places where they nest, but are equally useful in all their journeyings through the south. Some birds, like the Bobolink, are both useful and harmless where they nest, but do harm as they travel, for when the Bobolink leaves for the south he goes into the rice-fields, eating the rice grains in late summer and plucking up the young rice in the spring. This, of course, gives him a bad name in the rice-growing regions through which he passes.

“But the Swallow only destroys the evil insects as it journeys through the south, and yet in spite of this, cruel, or at best thoughtless, people kill them for the mere sport of killing, for no white man could pretend to eat Swallow pie, and the great flocks are tempting marks for ‘sportsmen’ of this class. Then, too, the noise made at the places where these birds roost, especially the Martins, has served as an excuse for shooting them in numbers.

“If the people in the southern states would only fully understand that Swallows destroy the boll-weevil that damages the cotton in the pod, they surely would not allow a feather of these little workers to be injured.

“How I wish we could have a Kind Hearts’ Club in every district school in the south, so that the children there might help us to protect the birds during the time that they are beyond our reach.”

Gray Lady paused and turned the leaves of her scrap-book, as if she was searching for something. “Ah! here it is!” she said at last, half to herself. “The Wise Men at Washington who find out for us all the facts about the useful birds have been writing about these Swallows, and say that everything should be done not only to protect them but in every way to aid their increase by providing homes for them. Let us hear what more they say about these five that I have just described to you.”

TREE SWALLOW. The Tree Swallow, as is well known, has been persecuted by the English Sparrow until it has entirely abandoned many districts where formerly it abounded. An energetic war on the English Sparrow, and the careful protection of the Swallow domiciles, in a few years would result in a complete change of the situation, so far as this, one of the most beneficial of the Swallow tribe, is concerned.

BARN SWALLOW. The Barn Swallow formerly was abundant throughout the northern states, especially in New England. The tightly built modern barn, however, no longer invites the presence of the Barn Swallow by affording it friendly shelter, and the birds are becoming scarcer and scarcer. To provide openings in modern barns, and to encourage the presence in them of colonies by providing convenient nesting sites are easy and effective methods by which this beautiful species may be greatly increased in numbers. This bird also requires protection from the English Sparrow, which in one foray has been known to kill the young and destroy the eggs of a large colony.

BANK SWALLOW. The well known Bank Swallow, as its name implies, nests in sand-banks in holes of its own digging. Some farmers in the northern states take special pains to protect their colonies of Bank Swallows from the marauding of the prowling cat. Some even take pains to excavate suitable banks on their farms and devote them to the exclusive use of the Swallows. Gravel and sand-banks are so numerous throughout the north, especially in New England, that at trifling expense the number of colonies of Bank Swallows may be vastly increased, to the

advantage of every farmer north and south, and to that of every nature lover as well.

CLIFF SWALLOW. The curious pouch-shaped mud structures of the Cliff Swallow, attached under eaves or to the face of cliffs, are a sight familiar enough in the northern and western states, but in the cotton states, save Texas alone, they are wanting, the bird that makes them being exclusively a migrant. The English Sparrow persecutes also the Cliff Swallow; hence, in the north, the bird is much less common than formerly. In Germany the presence of Swallows around houses is so much desired that artificial nests made of clay or other material are put up in order to attract birds by saving them the labour of constructing their own domiciles. No doubt our own Cliff Swallows would be quick to respond to a similar offer of ready-made dwellings, rent free, and in this way the range of this extremely useful species might be materially increased. The Cliff Swallow is one of the most indefatigable insect destroyers extant, and every motive of patriotism and humanity should prompt communities among which they live to protect and foster them in every possible way.

PURPLE MARTIN. This, the largest and in many respects the most beautiful of all our Swallow tribe, is the most local and the least numerous. In New England and, perhaps, in most of the northern states generally, this fine bird is steadily diminishing in numbers. The English Sparrow often takes possession of its boxes, ruthlessly kills the young Martins or throws out the eggs, and usually succeeds in routing the colony and appropriating the boxes. When measures are not taken to abate the Sparrow nuisance in the immediate vicinity of Martin colonies, the usual result is that the Martins are forced to abandon their houses. The habit of putting up houses for the accommodation of Martin colonies is not as common in the north as it formerly was, and to this indifference to the Martins' presence, to persecution by the Sparrow, and to losses due to the prevalence of cold storms during the nesting season, no doubt, is due the present scarcity of the bird.

From the standpoint of the farmer and the fruit grower, perhaps, no birds more useful than the Swallows exist. They have been described as the light cavalry of the avian army. Specially adapted for flight and unexcelled in aerial evolutions, they have few rivals in the art of capturing insects in mid-air. They eat nothing of value to man except a few predaceous wasps and bugs,

and, in return for their services in destroying vast numbers of noxious insects, ask only for harbourage and protection. It is to the fact that they capture their prey on the wing that their peculiar value to the cotton grower is due. Orioles do royal service in catching weevils on the bolls; and Blackbirds, Wrens, Flycatchers, and others contribute to the good work; but when Swallows are migrating over the cotton-fields they find the weevils flying in the open and wage active war against them.

—H. W. HENSHAW, B.B.S., in *Value of Swallows as Insect Destroyers*.

“That Wise Man didn’t say anything about Chimney Swallows, and, please, Gray Lady, you left them out, too,” said Sarah Barnes, the moment the scrap-book closed, “and I know they catch lots of flying bugs.”

“Ah, Sarah!” exclaimed Gray Lady, laughing, “I did not precisely forget, but I was waiting for some one of you to ask the question. The bird that is called the Chimney Swallow even exceeds the others in being forever on the wing and never perching or ‘sitting down,’ as Sarah calls it, and it is a brave insect destroyer. In fact, it never perches even for one moment, but when it does rest makes a sort of bracket of its sharply pointed tail-feathers and rests against a tree or inside the chimney, somewhat as a Woodpecker does when resting on an upright tree-trunk. The Woodpeckers, however, have very strong feet, and the feet of the Chimney Swallow are very weak. But here comes the funny part—this chimney bird isn’t a Swallow, and the Swallows would call him a changeling. He is a Swift, first cousin to the tiny Humming-bird and the mysterious Night Hawk and Whip-poor-Will, so we must leave his story until we come to that of the family where he belongs, for after we have learned the names of individual birds, it is well to know their family and kin. You cannot always tell by the plumage of birds if they are related. Louise Stone, Fannie White, and Esther Gray here are cousins, and all live in one house, but as their last names are different, and they do not look alike, a stranger would have to be told, for he could not guess that they belong to one household.

“It is three o’clock already, and I see that Tommy and Dave have quite finished their windmills and Ruth’s apron is waiting for the pocket, so in spite of Farmer Hill’s remarks about ‘not working,’ every one has something to show for this Friday afternoon.

“Before we go, let me see if you can tell the ‘*Things to remember*’ about the five swallows.

“Sarah—the Barn Swallow?”

“Shiny, steel-blue back and forked tail.”

“Dave—the Bank Swallow?”

“Dusty cloak fastened across the front.”

“Ruth—the Tree Swallow?”

“White satin breast.”

“Roger—the Eaves Swallow?”

“White on its forehead and all over mixed colours.”

“And the Purple Martin? Who knows it?”

“It’s the biggest of all and doesn’t fly quite so sudden. I’ve seen ’em up at Grandpa Miles’s in New York State,” said little Clary Hinks, and then blushing because she had dared to speak.

“Next week in the playroom!” said Gray Lady, smiling over her shoulder at them as they filed out the door to the time beaten by Tommy’s drum.

IX

TWO BIRDS THAT CAME BACK

(BIRDLAND, September 27th.)

The rain had poured steadily all Thursday and Friday, until Friday evening, and the wind blew so hard that many a little window-pane in the older farm-houses fell in with a crash and the owner, jumping up quickly to snatch the lamp out of the draught, would exclaim, "I do declare, we haven't had sech a genuine old-fashioned line-storm for years!"

The "line" being the short for equinox, the imaginary line crossing the sun's path over which, on March 21st, old Sol is supposed to step from winter into spring. Again, on September 21st, he steps from summer into autumn, takes off his summer hat, with its crown of burning rays, and tells his wife to ask North Star for the key to the iceberg, where his winter flannels are kept in cold storage, so that they may be ready for any emergency. The fact that these storms seldom come upon the days when they are due, simply proves that the solar system prefers to measure time to suit itself.

A little before dawn, on Saturday morning, the rain stopped; the heavy clouds in the east broke up into bars of blue steel, through which the sun peered cautiously, as if uncertain whether or not to break them away. Then, suddenly deciding that it would, it signalled to the clear, cool, northwest wind to blow and chase away the vapours that made the clouds too heavy.

By the time Tommy Todd's father came in, carrying two milk-pails, Tommy following with a third, there was promise of a fine crisp autumn day, and Grandpa Todd, who had decided a week before, on his eightieth birthday, that he would give up milking, at least for the winter, came into the well-porch, and scanning the sky carefully, with an air of authority, said: "To-night we'll have hard frost if the wind drops. We'd better get in those cheese pumpkins jest as soon's they're dried off. Robins and Blackbirds flockin' powerful strong, and old Chief Crow has brung his flock clear down to the ten-acre lot already."

Old Chief was the name that Grandpa Todd had given to a particularly wise bird, whom he insisted was twenty-five years old at the least, who was master of the roost in the cedar woods and, by his wise guidance, kept his flock the largest in the township, in spite of all the efforts of the farmers, hired men, and boys in the vicinity to drive them out.

There, also, on the slope south of the house, were fully half a hundred Robins pluming themselves, shaking their feathers out to dry, and acting in every way like travellers pausing on a journey, rather than residents going out for a stroll.

Tommy had paused to look at them, balancing the pail carefully as he did so, and then the sight of the birds reminded him that it was the day to go up to “the General’s,” and he hurried in to eat his breakfast and finish the Saturday morning “chores” that he always did for his mother. Then he went to the shed to look over the collection of bits of old wood that he had both begged and gathered far and near for the making of bird-houses.

A neighbour, who was re-covering his cowshed roof with galvanized iron, had let Tommy pick up as many mossy shingles as he could carry, and some of these were really beautiful with tufts of gray lichens, some with bright red tips, blending with mosses of many soft shades of green.

Tommy selected from the assortment as large a bundle as he could carry, and, after cording it securely, went to the house to tidy up, for Gray Lady had asked the children of the Kind Hearts’ Club to come at nine o’clock this first Saturday, for it would take them some time to look at the play and work rooms before settling down to doll-dressing and bird-house making. As he crossed the kitchen, his mother, who was kneading bread, pointed a floury finger toward a garment that hung over the back of a chair. Tommy picked it up, and then his usual boyish indifference, which he kept up at home even when he was pleased, broke down and he gave an exclamation of delight, for there was a new carpenter’s apron with a pocket for nails in front, the whole being made of substantial blue jean, precisely like the one worn by Jacob Hughes himself.

Gray Lady had asked as many of the boys as owned overalls to bring them. Tommy’s were very old and had many patches, besides being smeared with paint, and he hated to have dainty Goldilocks see them, so it seemed to the boy that his mother must have seen straight into his mind (as mothers have a way of doing) and read what he most needed.

Slipping his head through the yoke and fastening the waist-band in place, Tommy suddenly grabbed his mother, flour, bread, and all, in a rough embrace, and then clattered up the backstairs, laughing at the two white hand-marks that she had printed on his shoulder in her surprise.

Up at “the General’s” house Gray Lady, Goldilocks, Ann, and Jacob Hughes were as busy as possible making preparations for the first regular meeting of the Club. To the children, the whole performance in anticipation seemed like the most delightful sort of play, but every one who thinks will

realize how much pains Gray Lady was taking to have everything in order for the children's first view of the place. After this, like the wise friend that she was, she had planned that the children themselves would in turn take out the work, put it away, and clear up threads or shavings as the case might be.

The playroom was on the southeast corner of the attic, and had three dormer-windows with wide seats underneath. Being an attic, the windows were set rather high in the slanting room, but, if one stood on the wooden seats, there was a beautiful view toward the river valley on the south, while the east window looked down over the orchard, and it seemed as if one might almost step out and walk upon the tree-tops.

On the chimney side was a small-sized cooking-stove, and between this and the chimney-corner ran shelves with a cupboard beneath, whereon and in a set of blue-and-white dishes and various pots and pans were ranged. At either end of the room was a stout table surrounded by chairs, one being a kitchen table with a drawer, and the other a plain dining table with a polished top, suitable for playing games, or holding books or work. It was upon this table that the work-boxes and dolls were ranged, twelve in all, and by each a little pile of clothes, all cut and ready-basted, the whole being covered by a cloth. Gray Lady and Ann had agreed between themselves that lessons in sewing had better come first and garment-cutting follow later on.

All the garments were to be made to put on and take off like real clothes, and though they were very simple, each doll when dressed would personate a different character, for there was clothing for a baby doll, a schoolgirl, a young lady, a trained nurse, little Red Riding-Hood, and so on.

The workshop faced north and east, and was on the opposite side of the stairs. This was of the same shape as the playroom, but a small wood-stove, that could be used for heating glue-pots, and to keep the room from freezing in winter, took the place of the cooking-stove, and there was a long workbench, with vise, lathe, and mitre-box attachment under two of the windows where the best light fell. Across one side of the room, various tools were hung in racks, while at the end opposite the windows was tacked a great sheet of paper upon which many styles of bird homes were pictured. Below this was a space painted black like a school blackboard, and upon this Jacob had redrawn in rough chalk several of the pictures to a working-scale.

Gray Lady and Goldilocks were already upstairs when the party arrived, for though Goldilocks could walk very nicely when on a level, going up and down stairs was a matter that took time.



Fig. 1.

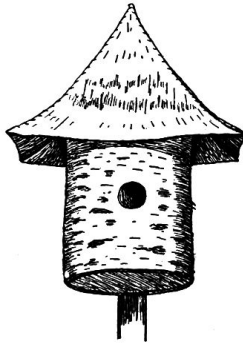


Fig. 2.

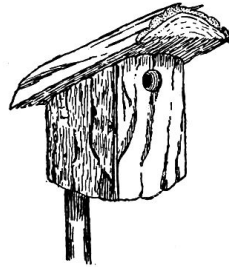


Fig. 3.

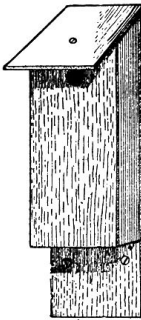


Fig. 4.

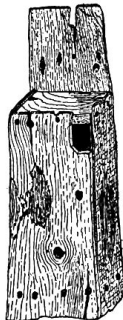


Fig. 5.



Fig. 6.

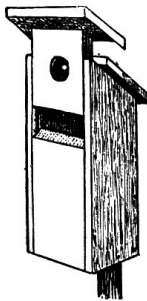


Fig. 7.

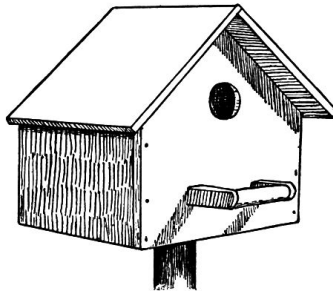


Fig. 8.

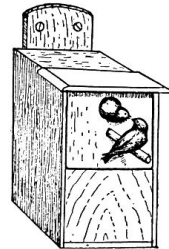


Fig. 9.

BIRD-HOUSES AND NESTING-BOXES. Fig. 1. hollow-limb nesting-box; Fig. 2, birch-bark bird-house; Fig. 3, slab bird-box; Fig. 4, cat-proof box; Fig. 5, old-shingle box; Fig. 6, chestnut-bark nesting-box; Figs. 7 and 9, boxes with slide fronts; Fig. 8, house for Tree Swallow.

From *Useful Birds and their Protection* by G. H. FORBUSH.

Tramp, tramp, came the feet up the stairs to the second hall, with the rhythm of a marching regiment. Then there was a pause and evidently some discussion, for, as Gray Lady went forward and opened the door at the head

of the attic stairs, she heard Sarah Barnes' voice say, "Why, it's a big Crow and a little one; but how did they come in here? Don't touch him, Tommy, he'll bite you. Crows bite like everything when they get mad."

Then Tommy's voice said, "The big one's a Crow, sure enough, but the little one couldn't be any more'n mice's little rats. It's one of those queer new birds that had nests down in the Methodist Church steeple last spring; I went up with Eb Holcomb one day when he was fixing the bell-rope and I saw them, but nobody 'round here knows what they're called—unless Gray Lady may."

Looking down, Gray Lady saw the odd pair in question and said to Goldilocks, "Your two pets have managed to get in and are trapped between the top and bottom of the stairs. Whistle for them, dearie, for the children are waiting to come up."

Goldilocks gave two very good imitations of the quavering call of a Crow, and then, using a little oddly shaped silver whistle that hung about her neck on a ribbon, gave a series of melodious whistles, when, to the surprise and delight of the children below, Crow and Starling (for this was the name of the smaller bird) immediately turned about and went upstairs, the Crow hopping and flopping, for one of its wings was deformed, and the Starling, as soon as it had room enough for a start, flying straight and true. When the children followed, they found the Crow perched on the back of Goldilocks' chair and the Starling flitting about the open rafters until he found a perch that suited him upon a hook that had once held a hammock, where he seemed quite at home. The Crow, however, was anxious and uneasy when he saw the children trooping up, and flopping from the chair-bar with a sidewise motion, he scuttled across to the stove, under which he disappeared, occasionally peering out with his head on one side like a very inquisitive human being.

"I don't wonder that you look astonished," said Gray Lady, "at seeing birds in this house that are apparently captive, but the truth is that they will not go away, and come back through every open window. So, as we have not the heart to drive them away, we let them live here in the playroom and about the barns, where they find plenty to eat, and at any moment they wish to go, freedom is close at hand for the taking."

"But what made them come to begin with?" asked Dave. "Crows are mostly the scariest things going."

"Jacob found the Crow up in the cedar woods in May," said Goldilocks. "All the others were able to fly and take care of themselves, but this one stayed in the low bushes and its parents were feeding it. One morning, when Jacob was up there cutting cedar posts for the gate he made to Birdland, he heard a great commotion; the old Crows and the young ones were cawing

and screaming and flying about in distress, while crouching in the bushes, and just ready to spring upon the Crow, was a big half-wild cat. It used to belong to the people up at the lumber camp, but when they went away they left it, and all last winter and spring it has lived by hunting.”

“I know about that cat,” said Tommy. “The Selectmen have offered five dollars’ reward for it, and it kills more chickens, even big roosters, than all the Hawks this side of Bald Hill.”

“After Jacob had driven the cat away,” continued Goldilocks, “he picked up the young Crow to try to find out why it had not flown away like its brothers. At first it was afraid and fought and pecked his fingers, but by and by it let him handle it, and he found that one wing was twisted, so that it was of no use. The point where the long quill feathers grow was turned under, Jake said, just the way it is in a roast chicken, and it must have happened when the bird was little and had no feathers, because those on that point of the wing were stunted and twisted where they had tried to grow after it was hurt. Jake straightened the wing as well as he could, and clipped the feathers on the other one so that he shouldn’t be so lopsided. The wing is stiff and doesn’t work rightly yet, but Jake thinks that after next summer’s moult the feathers may come in better; meanwhile I’ve called him Jim, because that is the usual name for tame crows.

“Jim likes to live about here and he does such a lot of funny things. Why, the other day, out in the arbour, he dropped the little afternoon-tea sugar-tongs into the cream jug and took all the lumps of sugar in the bowl and hid them in the empty robin’s nest overhead, and we should never have dreamed that he had done it if Anne hadn’t come in with fresh cakes and startled him so that he dropped the last lump. He moves very quickly, for he can fly a little and he uses his wings and beak to help him climb, something like a parrot. Jacob has put him over in the woods by the Crow’s roost, time and time again, but he always comes hopping back.”

Sarah Barnes was going to ask what else the Crow had done, when the Starling flew across the room and out through one of the windows that was opened from the top.

“He’s gone!” she cried; “I’m dreadfully sorry, ’cause I wanted to look at him so’s I’d know Starlings if I see them again. Please, how did you get him? His wings seem very strong, and he flew as straight as anything.”

“Larry has only gone out for a little fly,” laughed Goldilocks; “he will be back before long, and if the window should happen to be closed, he will rap on the glass with his beak. No, his wings are well and strong, and he is perfectly able to go away to his friends in the church tower, for it was from one of those nests, that Tommy saw up between the slats, that he fell.

“Eben brought him up for mother to see, because a good many people down at the Centre Village had been watching these strange birds, and wanted to know their name and where they came from. He was too little to be turned out all alone, and Eben said that the nest had been upset and the others that fell out were dead, so, as he ate soaked dog-biscuit (because you know that there’s meat in it that makes up for bugs to young birds), I thought I would bring him up and then let him go; but you see the joke is that he won’t go, and he acts as much afraid of being out-of-doors after dark as a usual wild bird would if you put him in a cage.”

“Who brought Starlings here, and do they belong to the same family as Blackbirds? They look a lot like them, only they’ve got shorter tails,” said Tommy Todd.

“I think I have a description of the bird, as well as the date of his coming, in the scrap-book,” said Gray Lady, “for he is an English bird and the only one of its family in this country, so you can see why they may be lonely, and like to flock in company with the Blackbirds.

THE COMMON STARLING: *Sturnus magnus*.

Length: 8.5 inches.

Male and Female: Black plumage shot with metallic green and blue lights. In full plumage upper feathers edged with buff, giving a speckled appearance, which disappears as the feathers are worn down, leaving the winter plumage plain and dull. Yellow bill in summer; in winter, brown.

Note: A sharp flock-call and a clear, rather musical, two-syllable, falling whistle.

Nest: Behind blinds in unoccupied buildings, in vine-covered nooks in church towers; also in bushes.

Eggs: 4-7, greenish blue.

This bird is a foreigner, imported to New York City some fourteen years ago, some people are beginning to fear not too wisely, for the birds are rather quarrelsome, and, being larger than the English Sparrow, though not so hardy, are able to wage war upon birds like Robins, and seize the nesting-places of natives.

The first birds, less than a hundred in number, were set free in Central Park, New York City. Now these have increased to numerous flocks that in Connecticut have gone as far east as New Haven, and here in Fairfield and several villages near by are

acclimated and quite at home, though the bitter and lasting cold of the winter of 1903-1904 thinned them out considerably.

Whether they prove a nuisance or not, they are very noticeable birds, looking to the first sight, as they walk sedately across a field, like Grackles with ruffled plumage. A second glance will show that this is but the effect of the buff specks that tip all the upper feathers, while the distinct yellow bill at once spells Starling!

In England they may be seen on the great open plains following the sheep as they feed, very much as the Cowbird follows our cattle, and in that country are very beneficial as insect destroyers.

“They are birds that will feed at the lunch-counter in winter, for their food supply is cut off by snow, and, as strangers, they have not yet the resources of the Crows and Jays, neither are they as hardy.

“Boys, Jacob is ready for you in the workroom, and he may keep you till quarter-past ten. I do not think that you will really accomplish much to-day, except to choose the kind of house you wish to make, and plan out your work. Then you may all take a fifteen-minutes’ recess in the orchard before you come up for the bird lesson.”

“What birds are you going to tell about to-day? I hope that they won’t be hat birds and Martyrs,” said Eliza Clausen, with a sigh.

“No, not ‘hat birds’ this morning, although there are plenty more of them, and always will be so long as people insist upon wearing the feathers in their hats. I had not quite decided what birds to take up next, but the recess in the orchard gives me a new idea. Instead of taking the birds in any set order, when you come in you shall tell me what birds you have noticed this morning. By this means we shall be able to take the birds as they come with the seasons, and they will never grow tiresome. Then, too, if, between times, you see any birds that you cannot name, or about which you wish to know, remember to tell me, and we will try to learn something about the bird while it is fresh in your memory.

“Now,” as the boys went to the workroom, “the girl members of the Kind Hearts’ Club will please thread needles and begin. If any one of you has sticky fingers, Ann will show you where to wash them, because the very beginning of good sewing lies in clean hands, for they mean nice white thread and bright, shining needles.”

When the cover was lifted from the table, and the girls saw the dolls, and the little stack of clothes, they exclaimed in delight,—even those like Katie Lee, who really did not belong at school, for she had stopped playing with

dolls and was ready for the eighth grade. Only, unfortunately, there was no eighth grade class at Foxes Corners, and as it was too far for them to walk to the Centre every day, they stayed on at school, and Miss Wilde helped them as far as her time allowed so that they might make up the required lessons at home.

ENGLISH STARLING

Here's to the stranger, so lately a ranger,
Who came from far over seas;—
Whatever the weather, still in high feather,
At top of the windy trees!

Here's to the darling,—brave English Starling,
Stays the long winter through;
He would not leave us, would not bereave us,—
Not he, though our own birds do!

Cold weather pinches—flown are the finches,
Thrushes and warblers too!
Here's to the darling, here's to the Starling,—
English Starling true!

—EDITH M. THOMAS, in *Bird-Lore*.

X

SOME MISCHIEF-MAKERS

Crows and Jays, Starlings and Grackles

The children came back very promptly after the mid-morning recess, considering the attraction offered outside. Though cheeks and all available pockets fairly bulged with apples, they had sufficient appetite to enjoy the crisp cookies, plates of which were set at intervals on the plain-topped table in the playroom, together with pitchers of milk or a delicious drink of Ann's invention compounded of oranges and lemons and sweetened with honey.

Gray Lady breakfasted at eight, but she knew very well that most of the folk of the Hill Country had their first meal at six, except perhaps in the dead of winter, so that a bit of luncheon between that time and noon was what Goldilocks called "a comfy necessity."

"Now tell me what birds you saw this morning, and what they were doing," said Gray Lady, as soon as the children had settled down. "Sarah Barnes, you may begin."

"We didn't see anything new, that is nothing much; but, oh, such a lot of common birds in flocks, Crows and Blue Jays and Blackbirds; why, there were enough Blackbirds to make it dark for a minute when they picked up and flew over the tumble-down old house over there in the corner. Of course, those birds aren't very interesting, 'cause we all know about them, and I guess even Zella, who hasn't lived here long, can tell a Crow or a Jay and Blackbird when she sees one."

"Yes, ma'am, Lady, I know him Crow," cried Zella, in delight at having some information to impart, "for my papa he plant corn seed in the lot. Crows they come push it out vit de nose and eat him. Then my papa and my brudder shoot bang! bang! but they not get him, 'cause him too wise. My Grossmutter say von time Crows was people, bad thief people, and they was made in birds to shame dem, but dey made bad thief birds, too, and dey kept wise like dey was people yet, so dey is hard catching. Den papa he made of ole clothes a man, and sat him the fence on, and the Crows dey comes on trees near away, and dey looks so at the mans and dey laughs together, but dey not come no more very near yet."

"Yes; I see that Zella knows and sees the Crow as almost every one who owns a bit of land sees and knows him, but there are sides to these birds that

are so common hereabouts that perhaps you do not know, for I did not at your age, and it is only of late years that the wise men have been trying to find good points in some birds that have been always called bad. What they have discovered goes to prove what an unfortunate thing it is for any one, bird or person, to get a bad name.”

“My Grandma says a bad name sticks just like fly-paper,” said Ruth Barnes, eagerly, “ ’cause even if you can peel it off you, it always somehow feels as if it was there.”

At this every one laughed, because almost every child at one time or another had been through some sort of an experience with sticky fly-paper, and little Bobbie chuckled so long that Gray Lady asked him what he knew about fly-paper, and thus drew forth the explanation that his father had sat on a sheet of fly-paper in the dark best parlor one Sunday morning when he was waiting for the family to get ready to drive to church, and nobody noticed until he, being a deacon, got up *to pass the plate!*

“What were the Crows and Jays and Blackbirds in the orchard doing, Tommy; did you notice?” asked Gray Lady, as she arranged some papers between the leaves of her scrap-book.

“The Jays were hanging around your lunch-counter in the old apple tree, that is, most of them; some seemed to be bringing acorns or some sort of big seeds from the river-woods way, and taking them into the attic of the old Swallow Chimney house. I never saw so many Jays at once; I counted sixteen of them,” said Tommy.

“The Crows and Grackles were walking on the ground, some in the grass meadow, and some in the open ploughed field, and they were all searching about as if they had lost something, and they kept picking and eating all the time.”

“Were they eating corn that had dropped, or rye?” asked Gray Lady.

“Oh, no, there wasn’t any corn there, and the rye isn’t sown yet. They were eating bugs and things like that, I guess,” said Tommy, to whom a new idea had come as he spoke.

“That is precisely what I hoped that one of you would see for yourself—the fact that both of these birds eat many things besides corn and grain.

“By the way, what kind of Blackbirds were they?—for we have three sorts that are very common here. The Red-winged, those with red shoulders that come in such numbers about the swampy meadows early in spring. The Cowbird of the pastures who is smaller than the Red-wing, with a brown head, neck, and breast, the rest of him being gloomy black, with what Goldilocks calls all the ‘soap-bubble colours’ glistening over it, though the Wise Men call this ‘iridescence.’

“Then there is the Crow-Blackbird or Purple Grackle, the largest of the three, who is quite a foot in length from tail-tip to point of beak. This Blackbird has glistening jet feathers, with all the beautiful rainbow colours on his back and wings, that almost form bars of metallic hue, and he is a really beautiful bird that we should certainly appreciate better if it were not so common. Now, of course, it is one step on the way to bird knowledge if you can say surely this is a Blackbird, but it is necessary to go on then and say *which* Blackbird.”

“They were the Purple Grackle kind,” said Tommy, immediately, “for they were bigger than Cowbirds, and they had handsome shiny feathers, and they did just creak and grackle like everything while they walked around.”

“Very good,” said Gray Lady; “now I think that there are several things that you do not know about these birds, whom it is perfectly safe to call ‘mischief-makers’ and undesirable garden friends, though our best knowledge will not allow us to condemn them altogether as criminals, as was once the custom.”

At this moment Jim Crow, who had been on an excursion first to the room, then, by way of the branches of an overhanging sugar-maple, quite down to the orchard lunch-counter and back, had crept in at the window unobserved, walked across the floor to the work-table, about which the girls sat, and, going under it, was concealed by the cloth. At this moment Eliza Clausen dropped her thimble. It rolled under the table, and as she stooped to get it she was just in time to see Jim seize it in his beak and half fly, half scramble to the back of Goldilocks’ chair, with his prize held fast.

“Oh, my thimble! Jim’ll swallow it!” she wailed, and the boys, with one impulse, started in pursuit. They could not have done a worse thing, for, seeing himself cornered, Jim’s hiding instinct came to his aid, and sidling along to the unceiled side of the attic, he quickly dropped the thimble between the studs, and you could hear it rattle down to the next story. Then he took refuge behind his mistress’ chair, from which he peeped inquisitively, with the sidewise look peculiar to Crows, so that it was impossible not to laugh at his quizzical expression.

“Do not worry about the thimble, Eliza,” said Gray Lady, “for those you are wearing for the sewing lessons are not prize thimbles, but merely penny affairs. This gives you a chance to see some of the little bits of mischief that a tame young Crow can do in his first season, so that you can imagine what a wild, old, wise, leader Crow can plot and plan in other ways. You all know the Crow, or rather, to be exact, the American Crow, for there is the Fish Crow and a southern relation, the Florida Crow, and in all there are twenty-five different kinds in North America alone. This Common Crow is very

plentiful here, as he is in almost all parts of the United States, where he makes his home from the Mexican border up to the fur countries.

“But do you know that this Crow is cousin to the Blue Jay?”

“How funny! What makes them cousins?—for they don’t look a bit alike, and they’re not the same colour or anything,” said Sarah, Tommy, and Dave, almost together.

“Yes, that is true, but colour and feathers have nothing to do with bird relationship any more than coloured hair has to do with human families, and you can see that here among yourselves. The Baltimore Oriole, Meadowlark, Bobolink, and Purple Grackle all belong in one family, and yet how unlike they seem. It is the construction of the bird’s body and its habits and traits that serve the Wise Men as guides to their grouping, and in these traits the two are much alike, for Mr. Chapman, who knows all about these birds, whether as museum specimens, where he can study their bones, or as wild birds in the trees, where he watches them day in and day out, says, ‘Our Crows and Jays inhabit wooded regions, and, although they shift about to a limited extent, they are resident throughout the year, except at the northern limits of their range. They are omnivorous feeders, taking fruits, seeds, insects, eggs, nestlings, etc. Crows and Jays exhibit marked traits of character and are possessed of unusual intelligence. Some scientists place them at the top of the tree of bird-life, and if their mental development be taken into consideration they have undoubted claim to high rank.’

“You see, also, that here is a Wise Man who believes that birds have intelligence that implies thinking, and this is different from the mere inherited instinct that teaches animals how to obtain food, self-protection, etc. There are people who believe that they are the only wise animals, and deny that birds and beasts can think; while there are others who try to make these birds and beasts think on the same lines as ourselves rather than in their own way. Both these are wrong; both are like blind men that lead others into a ditch and leave them there. The only way for you and me to do is to watch out for ourselves, look carefully, and be very sure that we see what is, and not merely what we would like to see.

“Now I will tell you what I, myself, have seen and know, and what others, whose word is guaranteed by the Wise Men, have seen concerning Crows and Jays. When I was a child, twenty-five years ago, riding my pony, I wandered all over the country-side with my father, and I knew every Crow roost and Hawk’s nest for miles, and for many years after I watched their comings and goings. Late last winter, when I came back to the dear home to live, I went out to the nearest of the old Crow roosts in the cedar woods yonder across the river (you can see the tree-tops plainly from this window), and, in spite of time and changes, a flock of Crows was still there.

“To be sure, the flock was smaller, and there were fewer Cedars, many having been turned into fence and gate posts. But the Crows, big, black, solemn things as they are, seemed to give me a welcome.

“The life of the Crow is dull if judged, perhaps, from the standpoint of the birds that make long journeys, such as the Swallows, Humming-birds, and the Night Hawk (that isn’t a Hawk at all), who nest in the far North and go back to spend the winter in Central or South America.

“Yet all we stay-at-home people know how much can happen even here in Fair Meadows township, and, if we extend our territory from salt water, or the southeast, to the hickory woods beyond the Grist-Mill on the northwest, there is room enough for happenings that would make an exciting life for any pair of Crows. For in considering Crows, we must take the life of a pair, one of their good traits being their personal and race fidelity, and when they mate, it is usually for life.

“It is middle autumn now; what are the Crows doing? All through August and early fall they have been feeding good on grasshoppers, caterpillars, locusts, and cutworms. This flock that roost in the cedar woods are doing that which occupies most of a bird’s time in season and out, working for a living, and in doing this they are searching the grass meadows and ploughed fields for insects of every sort and description.

“Their time of mischief is over for the year. The corn is cut and stacked; they may if they please tear the husks from the cobs and then reach the corn, but they are not fond of tough, dry corn, though, of course, they eat it when really hungry. But just now there is plenty to be gleaned from the field, and when the winter hungry time comes, the good corn will be stored safe in the granaries.

“Every night, before sunset, the Crows of the flock leave the various feeding-places in twos and threes, and flap across country in a leisurely fashion toward the roost, where they spend their nights all the year except during the nesting season. They return thus in little parties, if there is no cause for fear, but should a man with a gun, a large Owl, or other suspicious object appear, either the Crow on the watch, for there is always one of these who guards the destiny of the flock, gives a signal by a sharp quavering Ca-ca-w or, if this seems too rash, the leader will simply take to wing and slip away silently, and, no matter how quietly the leader slips away, the rest of the flock know it and rise at once. How do they know this?”

“Maybe they smell, just as our rabbit hounds do when they start out after things that no one else sees or knows about,” said Tommy Todd.

“No, birds are not guided by scent as animals are,” said Gray Lady; “scent is held to the ground by moisture; it would be difficult to follow when it is blown about by air. Birds are led by their sight, which is many times

keener than that of man or the lower animals. Then, too, they have another sense more fully developed than other animals, and that is what is called the 'sense of direction.' Knowing the spot to which they would go, they are able to reach it in the quickest, most direct manner, so that 'as the Crow flies' has come to mean the most direct way of reaching a place.

"When morning comes they leave the roost, and, breaking up into parties, begin the search for food again. As the supply near home gives out, they go farther and farther afield, sometimes going down to the shore, where they pick up clams, mussels, and any scraps of sea-food that they can find.

"After the corn has been taken in, they find scattered kernels of that and other grain left in the field, but at the first snowfall hard times set in for the Crow. He cannot search the bark crevices for insects like the small tree-trunk birds with slender bills; people do not welcome him to their farm-yards and scatter grain for him, or leave him free to glean, as they do the other winter birds. It is at this time, when the hand of man is turned against him, that the Crow really works in man's interest by catching meadow-mice and many other small destructive animals.

"At this time, the Crow eats frozen apples, poison-ivy berries, acorns, beech and chestnuts, and the like. But now he grows poor and thin and his voice is querulous, and from November to March the Crow is put to it for a living. 'Poor as a Crow' is an apt saying.

THE CROW

Then it is a distant cawing,
Growing louder—coming nearer,
Tells of crows returning inland
From their winter on the marshes.

Iridescent is their plumage,
Loud their voices, bold their clamour.
In the pools and shallows wading,
Or in overflowing meadows
Searching for the waste of winter—
Scraps and berries freed by thawing.
Weird their notes and hoarse their croaking
Silent only when the night comes.

—FRANK BOLLES.

“With the thawing out of the ground in spring, the Crow begins to view the world differently. The search for insects still continues, and the corn now gleaned is more palatable, for it has been well soaked, and though a corn-eater by nature, the Crow does not like his too hard and dry.

“The flock life of the roost now ends. Every Jack chooses his Jill, and mingled with the harsh warning cries of the older birds are sounds that sometimes have a suggestion that their makers are trying to sing. The funniest thing in birdland is to see a Crow or a Purple Grackle making love, standing on tiptoe on a branch, raising their wings by jerks, like pump-handles that are stiff, while the sounds they make stick in the throat in a manner that suggests Crow croup.

“Once in a long time, however, I have heard a Crow begin with a high Caw, and then followed a series of soft, almost musical, notes, though without tune or finish, but this is the exception. But what, in his courting days, a Crow lacks in song, he makes up by wonderful feats of flight. For his size, the Crow is always a graceful bird on the wing. When he flaps slowly up against the wind, there is nothing laboured in his motions, but in the spring, in company with a desired mate, his swift dives into the air, wheels to right and left, circlings often finished by a series of somersaults across the sky, are really marvellous.

“Now the pair of Crows that we will call Jack and Jill, to save time, leave the cedar woods and begin hunting for a nesting-site. At first they looked through the hickory woods for an old Hawk’s nest for a foundation upon which to build, but this year there were two Red-tailed Hawks already in possession, and so they hurried away as quickly as possible, for Hawks do not like Crows, and tell them so very plainly.

“Next day they spied the great white pine back of Farmer Boardman’s barn. They liked the looks of the tree, for it had a bunch of closely knit branches near the top, and the neighbourhood in all respects promised good feeding, but before they had carried more than a few coarse sticks and put them in place, the farmer’s man saw them, and not only fired his gun at them to drive them away, but climbed the tree and threw the sticks away in order to be sure that they should not rest there.

“What did Jack and Jill do next? They came flying over here. The place was attractive, and it was easy to slip from the pine woods to the hickories, then across to the orchard, and up to the spruce trees outside the window here. Goldilocks was too ill to come up into the playroom then, and so the windows on this side of the attic were shut.

“The nest-building began in earnest, both birds working at it. First, a foundation of stout sticks, some of them being half-dead twigs from these

same spruces; then, old weed stalks and vine tendrils, mixed with corn husks, until a heap was collected that would fill a half-bushel basket.

“This was the outside of the house; the nursery itself was hollowed in the centre of the moss and was about a foot across and quite deep. This hollow was well lined and soft; it had in it moss, soft grasses, and some horsehair. In due time the nest was finished and held six very handsome eggs, dull green with purplish brown markings, two being more thickly spattered with them than the other four. At this time I began to take an interest in the household affairs of Jack and Jill Crow.”

“How could you?—can you climb trees?” asked Eliza Clausen, evidently much surprised.

“No, I couldn’t climb as far as this Crow’s nest, Eliza, though I could have once,” laughed Gray Lady. “Stand up on that seat by the corner window and look straight down into the spruce with a crooked top and tell me what you see.”

Eliza jumped up on the seat, and, after gazing a minute, cried, “Why, it’s a big ’normous nest, and I can see every stick as plain as print.”

“Take this opera-glass, hold it to your eyes and move the screw to and fro until everything is very clear, and then tell me what you see,” said Gray Lady.

It took Eliza some time to manage the glass, but when she at last succeeded she cried, “Oh, I can see the moss and the grass and the hair; it comes as near as if I could touch it.” And one after another the children learned to adjust the focus and look, and it was the first, but not the last, time that glasses would open a new world to them.

“It was a little less than three weeks that the birds sat upon the eggs, sharing the work between them, before the little birds were hatched. Such ugly, queer little things as they were, both blind and featherless. In three weeks more they were well grown and able to fly, but their tails were still shorter than their parents’, and they were inclined to return to the nest on the slightest alarm.

“About this time Jacob Hughes told me that either Crows or Hawks were taking little chickens early every morning, for they could not get them during the daytime without being seen.

“I looked at the runs for the little chicks and saw that they stood in the open, not close to woods where Crows and Hawks could spy them out and sneak up or dash down according to their habits.

“I well knew the bad name that Crows and Hawks have among poultry-raisers, so Jacob roofed the chicken-runs with wire, for, even if he had seen Crows there, I would not allow shooting on the place during the nesting season.

“Still the chickens disappeared, and for several nights Jacob sat up and watched, and what do you suppose—cats and weasels were the guilty ones, not the Hawks and Crows!

“But late in May the Crows prepared to raise their second brood, mending their old nest, and Jacob said, ‘Something is robbing the nests in the orchard; I think surely it is the Crows and Jays, for when they come around all the song-birds chase them and say right out as plain as possible, “They’re thieves—they’re thieves!”’ So I watched from behind the blinds yonder, and in every spot where I could see into the tree-tops and be unobserved—and then I knew it was true that the Crows and Jays were detestable cannibals.

“One single morning I saw the Crow take three robin’s eggs and bring a tiny little robin squab to his mate on the nest, and one day, as a Crow flew high over my head, I thought I saw something strange in its beak, and clapped my hands sharply, when—what do you think? A poor little half-dead Wood Thrush, big enough to have its eyes open and some feathers, dropped almost on my upturned face, and thus the Crow was caught in the very act of killing. So, then, I said to myself, we can put tar on the seed-corn and protect our young chickens with wire, but we cannot make up for the death of young nestlings and the loss of eggs. I will not have the Crows shot, because they do good in the far meadows and hayfields, but the lonely woods, where few small birds nest, is the place for them. I shall see that they never again build in my garden orchard or woods, and if every one will do this, the danger to song-birds will be less, and in the winter, when they come about, there are no nestlings to be eaten.

“It was not long after that, owing to the evidence of my own eyes, I was obliged to say the same thing to the Blue Jay.

“The Wise Men say that, take it all in all, the Crow should have a chance, and that part of his faults come from our own shiftlessness. This is true, but if he feeds upon song-birds the Crow must go.

The Blue Jay

“That the Blue Jay is a handsome fellow goes without saying, as well as that he has plenty of assurance and is somewhat of a bully. We may imagine that he knows that his uniform of blue, gray, and white, with black bands and markings, is very becoming, and if any one of you should tell me that he had seen a Jay admiring his reflection in a pond or little pool, I should be ready to believe him. Certain it is that not one of our birds, not even the glowing Scarlet Tanager, presents a more neat and military appearance.



BLUE JAY

Order—PASSERES Family—CORVIDÆ
Genus—CYANOCITTA Species—CRISTATA

“The only awkward thing about the Blue Jay is his flight. Although alert and agile in slipping through the trees, when he takes to wing his progress seems laboured, as if either his body was too heavy for his wings, or that the wings were stiff.

“Like the Crow, his cousin, this Jay belongs to all north-eastern America, making its home from Florida to Newfoundland, and, like the Crow, we have some members of its family with us in New England all the winter, when it is certainly a pleasure to see them flying through the bare trees or gathering food on the pure white snow.

“The Jay does not annoy the farmer by pulling corn, nor trouble the chicken yard; for eight or nine months he earns an honest living, largely of vegetable food and harmful insects, snails, tree frogs, mice, small fish, and lizards, but in the breeding season, alas! he is a nest robber, and here in my own garden and orchard I have seen him this summer dodging and trying to avoid the angry birds that were pursuing him.

“Twice I heard nestling Robins twittering as they do when their parents come with food, but, like the wolf disguised as Red Riding-Hood’s Grandmother, it was a Jay who came to the nest and seized a squab, as my eyes saw and the cries of the parent birds told.

“Then I said to Jacob, ‘We will not let the Jays build in Birdland; they must be outcasts and go out and live in the far-away woods with the Crows, where there are few small birds.’

“How can we keep them out, you ask? It does take a little time and patience, to be sure, but if we watch when they begin to build and take away the sticks, you may be very sure that they will take the hint and go elsewhere, for they are quick-witted birds. So, perhaps, in time they would learn, at least in some regions, to inhabit places where mice and other harmful rodents and bugs are more plentiful than song-birds.

“Then in the winter we of the Kind Hearts’ Club can make up for this seeming unkindness, and pay them for the real good they do by feeding them through the hungry time, when nuts, berries, and even frozen apples are not to be found.”

“What is a Blue Jay’s nest like? I don’t think I’ve ever seen one,” asked Tommy Todd.

“It is not very easy to find, for they usually build rather high up, in a place where the limb is crotched and has many small branches. The nest itself is well made of fibres and roots, and is usually quite cleverly hidden, and the eggs are dull green, very thickly spotted.

“Aside from the Jay’s unaccountable cannibal habit of egg and squab hunting, he has many good qualities, both as a parent and a friend to those of his own kind, and though his call is harsh, and, like the creaking of the Grackles, a reminder of coming frosts and bare trees, in spring he has some pretty melodious notes and another call totally different from the harsh jay, jay. This cry is like the resonant striking of two bits of metal, a clink without exactly the ring that a bell has,—yet I call it the ‘bell note,’ though perhaps the double sound produced by hammer and anvil is a better comparison.

“In the fall, however, the Jay’s voice is certainly harsh, and not only lacks anything like musical quality, but is so harsh that when there are many about the noise is really annoying. The poet Lathrop describes the change so well that I will read it to you.

O JAY!

O Jay!
Blue Jay!
What are you trying to say?
I remember, in the spring
You pretended you could sing;
But your voice is now still queerer,
And as yet you've come no nearer
To a song.
In fact, to sum the matter,
I never heard a flatter
Failure than your doleful clatter.
Don't you think it's wrong?
It was sweet to hear your note,
I'll not deny,
When April set pale clouds afloat
O'er the blue tides of sky.
And 'mid the wind's triumphant drums
You in your white and azure coat,
A herald proud, came forth to cry,
"The royal summer comes!"

* * * * *

Sometimes your piping is delicious,
And then again it's simply vicious;
Though on the whole the varying jangle
Weaves round me an entrancing tangle
Of memories grave or joyous:
Things to weep or laugh at;
Love that lived at a hint, or
Days so sweet they'd cloy us.
Nights I have spent with friends:—
Glistening groves of winter,
And the sound of vanished feet
That walked by the ripening wheat:

Such mixed-up things your voice recalls,
With its peculiar quirks and falls.

Well, I'll admit

There's merit in a voice that's truthful;
Yours is not honey sweet nor youthful,
But querulously fit.
And if we cannot sing, we'll say
Something to the purpose, Jay!

—GEORGE PARSONS LATHROP.

“The Blue Jay makes as good a forest watchman as the Crow. Steal along ever so quietly, and if he chances to spy you, good-by to seclusion; his cry of alarm rouses every bird within ear-shot. But it is in their family life the Jays show to the best advantage, for they will stay by the nest and fight to the death, if necessary, while big cousin Crow, though he makes a precious racket, takes good care to keep himself well out of harm's way.

“One trait belongs to this bird that I have never seen recorded of any other, though, of course, it may be common to all, and that is the care of the aged.

“To care for the young, even among people, is an instinct as strong as self-protection. To care for the aged implies a good heart and a certain amount of unselfishness. This story is written down by Major Bendire, in his book on the *Life Histories of American Birds*. He lived much with the birds, and saw so truly that the Wise Men believe what he records.

Mr. Firth to Major Bendire,—

I made some observations last summer on the habits of the Blue Jay, which certainly show a degree of sympathy and kindness worthy of imitation of animals of a higher order. Last August (1887), on an old farm in Jefferson County, Wisconsin, my attention was attracted by the notes of a Blue Jay, not the ordinary cry, but a series of regular calls, followed by answers from a neighbouring tree. There was something so peculiarly like a communication of thought about the sound that I went to the place, and saw an old Blue Jay perched on a fence some distance from the tree where there were others.

On my nearing the bird, the calls from the others became more frequent and loud, changing from a low, pleasant communicative

tone to shrill alarm. Thinking that he was injured in some way, I went up to him and found that at least he was partially blind. The eyes were blurred and dim, the beautiful blue feathers were faded; in fact, the general appearance of the bird was so different as to be seen at a glance; the claws were worn, the bill dulled, and the wings and tail ragged. Every feature suggested old age and feebleness. Yet he was watched and cared for as tenderly as ever a growing bird in the nest.

No sooner had I caught him than there were at least a dozen Jays close at hand whose sympathy and interest were manifest as clearly as could be with words.

After a thorough examination I let him go, when he flew in the direction of the sound of the others, but did not succeed in alighting among the smaller branches of the tree, and finally settled on a large limb near the ground. I saw him, after that, every day for a week, and never did his companions desert him, some one of them being always near and warning him of danger, when he would fly toward the sound of their voices.

They guided him regularly to a spring near by, where I saw him bathe daily, always, however, with some of his companions close by.

They not only watched and guided him, but they fed him. I had noticed, some days before, Jays carrying food and thought it strange at that season, as there were no young to feed, but found afterwards, to my surprise and pleasure, that the poor, blind bird was being fed by those he could no longer see.

“So you see the Jay, with all his bad tricks and nest-robbing, has his good points, and we will not shoot him, but hint very strongly, if necessary, that he had better nest away from the temptation that garden and orchards offer in the shape of eggs and fresh meat.”

As Gray Lady ended, a great commotion arose in the neighbourhood of the orchard. Jays screamed and Crows cawed, as if, Goldilocks said, they knew that they were being talked about, and didn't like it.

Gray Lady opened one of the windows and looked out. Below stood Jacob, waving his hat to attract attention, saying through his hands, “There are some Screech Owls on a branch of the old willow back of the orchard, and the other birds have found it out. The Crows are mixing in and there's a great how-de-do. I thought maybe you would all like to see them, only I couldn't go up for fear they might shift away.”

Of course they wished to see, and it was quite remarkable how fifteen usually noisy children managed to tiptoe through the orchard and avoid sticks and dry leaves.

THE WISE OLD CROW

Not all the people know
The wisdom of the Crow:
As they see him come and go,
 With verdict brief,
 They say, "You thief!"
And wish him only woe.

That he's selfish we admit,
But he has a lot of grit,
And on favour not a bit
 Does he depend;
 Without a friend,
He must live by mother-wit.

The Crow is rather shy,
With a very watchful eye
For danger coming nigh,
 And any one
 Who bears a gun
He's pretty sure to spy.

The clever farmer's plan
Is to make a sort of ban,
By stuffing clothes with bran,
 Topped with a tile
 Of ancient style,
—A funny old scarecrow man.

The Crow looks on with scorn,
And early in the morn
Pulls up the farmer's corn:
 He laughs at that,
 The queer old hat,
Of the scarecrow man forlorn.

—GARRETT NEWKIRK, in *Bird-Lore*.

XI

THE FLIGHT OF THE BIRD

How do Birds find their Way?^[1]

(Told at Foxes Corners School)

“I was telling Grand’ther about how far away the birds go in the winter, and how they fly against the lighthouses and get killed,” said Tommy Todd, “and he said I couldn’t tell him anything about their going away and coming back, ’cause he’d seen that going on, boy and man, these seventy years. Grand’ther knows how the same kind of birds come back to the place every spring, ’cause he says there were Phœbe Birds had a nest on the end beam of the cowshed over where the last cow stands,—way back when he was learning to milk. Then when that old shed blew down, and they built a new one like it, back the birds came, and they are coming yet; first nest over Black Bess, and second nest way out over the box-pen where the little calves live.

“What Grand’ther wants to know is how they find the way to go so far, and how they know where to stop and find something to eat, and if they get hungry, ’cause he says nobody seems to know just what they do between times, and what people do tell seems like Jack-and-the-Beanstalk fairy-stories, and he said maybe you had some book that told about it so’s you could explain.”

Gray Lady smiled in a half-puzzled way, as Tommy spoke, for the questions that the children asked often gave her as much cause for study and wonder as the stories that she told them. She was finding out that there were three or four members of the Kind Hearts’ Club who had been seeing correctly and trying to think out things for themselves before they had a chance to ask questions, or had any books to consult.

“Your grandfather’s question cannot be answered in a few words,” she said, “neither is there any one book that tells everything about these wonderful journeys, because, as yet, not the very wisest of the Wise Men know it all, though they wait and watch, and every spring and fall many of them are scattered through the country upon the course of the flying birds to watch them as they pass.

“All the information that they collect is printed and kept as evidence of what is known, a little here and a little there, until we hope some day that the history will be complete, when it will be one of the most wonderful stories in the world, for even the little we know sounds like a fairy-tale.

“Of course,” continued Gray Lady, “I know very little from my own sight, but I will tell you what I have learned of the Wise Men, who believe it to be the truth. I had intended telling you about Owls and Hawks to-day, as I promised you last week, when we saw the Screech Owl up in the orchard, but that story can wait until the next time you visit Birdland, for the Owls are still about; there are pictures of them in the library, and others that are stuffed and mounted in the glass case in the hall.

“All that we need, or that can help us with the story of the bird on its travels, is that large map of North and South America, for this will be a geography, as well as a bird, lesson.

(A fine map of the western hemisphere having been the first thing that Gray Lady had given Miss Wilde for the use of the school at Foxes Corners, the little old one being out of date and indistinct.)

“Clary, you may take charge of the pointer to-day and sit here by me, for this will be a rather long lesson, and you will need help with the binding of your iron-holder, for I’m afraid if you draw the stitches so very tight it will pucker and not lie flat and smooth like the model that Ann Hughes made.

“And what work has Jacob given you boys for your penknives to do?”

“Wooden spoons out of white wood,” answered Dave, “big strong ones such as’ll beat up cake and apple-sauce, and, when they’re shaped, we are to smooth them down fine with sandpaper. I’m going to give mine to my mother; she broke hers yesterday, the handle snapped right in two. She says the bought spoons are sawn out crossgrain, any which way. There was an old man who used to come down from the charcoal camp with wooden spoons and butter-scoops and hickory baskets, and he sold lots of ’em all through the town, but he died last winter.”

“Then surely wooden spoons and butter-scoops will be very good things for the Kind Hearts’ Club to make for its Christmas sale, and we shall be interfering with nobody, for that is one of the things that we must remember when we are working for charity, not to make articles for sale that shall interfere with others who make them to get an honest living, for that sort of thing is a species of robbery in disguise.

“What becomes of the birds that are with us in summer? Where and how do they spend the winter? By what roadways do they travel to their winter haunts? Do they prefer to journey by land or by water, and how do they find the way?”

“We need not think that we, or anybody else of our day, are the first to ask these questions, for it is many hundreds of years since they first began to puzzle thinking people. At first, lacking any real knowledge of the simplest facts of nature, and not having as yet trained the eye to correct seeing, the people did as the ignorant do to this day,—they imagined fabulous reasons. The more impossible and wonderful or unnatural, the better, for it takes a trained mind oftentimes to realize that the most natural way is the best, and that the simplest way is the most natural.

“It was in these far-back times that the foolish idea was started that the Swallows dived into the mud and there spent the winter, like the frogs.

“Another stranger idea was that small birds crossed large bodies of water as passengers on the backs of large birds, such as Cranes, Ducks, and Geese, for people did not know enough of the structure of birds to realize that the machinery of the tiny Humming-bird is as fit for flying long distances as that of the biggest birds that grow. Ideas like this have been believed until a comparatively short time ago, and it is only within the last fifty years that there has been much real progress toward the truth of it all. And this is the way it has been brought about. In our country the band of Wise Men at Washington, forming the United States Biological Survey, have for twenty years been gathering facts about the migration of birds. This body has sent out naturalists to travel through the North American continent from Guatemala to the Arctic Circle, to meet with other scientific men on their way, and keep careful notes of what they see, so that reports are had in the spring and fall each year from hundreds of observers.

“These reports give the date upon which each particular kind (or species, as they call it) of bird is seen, when it becomes plenty, and when it moves on again. The lighthouse keepers also give much information by noting the times at which they find the birds that are dashed to death against the lanterns in the tower. In short, the Wise Men have more material at hand than ever before from which to shape the story that day by day increases in wonder.

Causes of the Migrations

“It is more than two thousand years since the wonders of bird travel have been noted; and while the distances and routes of travel are better known,

we cannot yet give a positive answer to the question, ‘Why do birds migrate?’ ”

“Please, Gray Lady,” said Sarah Barnes, “I thought you said it was because in fall the insect food begins to freeze and give out, and they go south after it and in spring they want to go back home.”

“Yes, Sarah, that is one of the reasons, and yet birds start off oftentimes when food is still plenty, and every naturalist knows of the rush of the waterfowl northward so early every spring that they are often turned back by storms and have to retrace their flight, and they have all seen that Robins, Bluebirds, and Swallows, following too closely in the wake of the waterfowl, sometimes lose hundreds out of their flocks by cold and starvation.

“If the fall journey is caused by lack of food, why does it begin when food is most plenty? At some of the Florida lighthouses the Wise Men have seen that the southward trip with some birds begins between the first and middle of July, at the time when the crop of insects and ripe seeds and berries is at its height. So the best answer that can be made is that ages ago, when the migrations began, they were connected with a food supply that changed more suddenly than at the present time, and that, even when the direct motive is lost, the habit remains fixed.”

“That’s it; that’s a bully reason!” cried Tommy Todd, excitedly. “They’ve got the notion that they’re going travelling just so often and they can’t calculate the time right and so they get ready too soon; likely they haven’t got very good heads for planning. That’s the reason, Pop says, that every fall, when Ma and Aunt Hannah go up to Kent to visit Grandma Tuck, they are all ready on the stoop by half-past seven, when there’s never been a train from here to there before ’leven. If they were birds, they’d probably fly off as soon as it was light, and get to Grandma’s for breakfast, when they’d written on a picture postal, with tea-cups and a cat on it, that she might expect them for supper.”

When the laugh at Tommy’s comparison had subsided, Gray Lady said, “Your idea is by no means a foolish one, and it may be that a boy like you, who watches and thinks, will some day piece the facts together that will finally settle the question.”

How do Birds find their Way?

“How do the birds find their way over the hundreds or thousands of miles between the winter and summer homes? Sight is probably the chief guide of those who fly by day, and it is known that these day travellers seldom make the long single flights that are so common with the birds that journey at night. Sight, undoubtedly, also guides them, to a large extent, in

the night journeys, when the moon is bright. Migrating birds fly high, so that one can hardly hear their faint twittering. But if the sky is obscured and the clouds hang low, the flocks keep nearer to the earth, and their calls are more distinctly heard; while on very dark nights, the vibration of their wings can be heard close overhead.



TERNs AND SKIMMERS ON THE WING

(Summer Bird-Life, Cobbs Island, Va. Am. Museum Nat. Hist., N.Y.)

“Notwithstanding this, something besides sight guides these travellers in the upper air. (Here is a route for you to trace on the map.) In Alaska, a few years ago, members of the Biological Survey on the Harriman expedition went by steamer from the island of Unalaska to Bogoslof Island, a distance of about sixty miles. A dense fog had shut out every object beyond a hundred yards. When the steamer was halfway across, flocks of Murres, returning to Bogoslof after long quests for food, began to break through the fog wall astern, fly side by side with the vessels, and disappear in the mists ahead. By chart and compass, the ship was heading straight for the island; but its course was no more exact than that taken by the birds. The power which carried them unerringly home over the ocean wastes, whatever its nature, may be called ‘a sense of direction.’ We recognize in ourselves the possession of some such sense, though imperfect and easily at fault.

Doubtless a similar, but vastly more acute, sense enabled the Murres, flying from home and circling wide over the water, to keep in mind the direction of their nests and return to them without the aid of sight. It is probable that this faculty is exercised during migration.

“Reports from lighthouses in southern Florida show that birds leave Cuba on cloudy nights when they cannot possibly see the Florida shores, and safely reach their destination, provided no change occurs in the weather. But if meantime the wind changes or a storm arises to throw them out of their reckoning, they become bewildered, lose their way, and fly toward the lighthouse beacon. Unless killed by striking the lantern, they hover near or alight on the balcony, to continue their flight when morning breaks, or, the storm ceasing, a clear sky allows them once more to determine the proper course.

“Birds flying over the Gulf of Mexico to Louisiana, even if they ascended to the height of five miles, would still be unable to see a third of the way across. Nevertheless this trip is successfully made twice each year by countless thousands of the warblers of the Mississippi Valley.

“Probably there are many short zigzags from one favoured feeding-spot to another, but the general course between the summer and winter homes is as straight as the birds can find without missing the usual stopping-places.

Accidents during Migration

“Migration is a season full of peril for myriads of winged travellers, especially for those that cross large bodies of water. Some of the shore-birds, such as Plover and Curlew, which take long ocean voyages, can rest on the waves if overtaken by storms, but woe to the luckless warbler whose feathers once became water-soaked,—a grave in the ocean or a burial in the sand of the beach is the inevitable result. Nor are such accidents infrequent. A few years ago on Lake Michigan a storm during spring migration piled many birds along the shore.

“If such a disaster could occur on a lake less than a hundred miles wide, how much greater might it not be during a flight across the Gulf of Mexico. Such a catastrophe was once witnessed from the deck of a vessel, thirty miles off the mouth of the Mississippi River. Large numbers of migrating birds, mostly warblers, had accomplished nine-tenths of their long flight, and were nearing land, when they were caught by a ‘norther’ with which most of them were unable to contend, and, falling into the Gulf, were drowned by hundreds.

“Then, as I have told you before, birds are peculiarly liable to destruction by striking high objects. A new tower in a city kills many before

the survivors learn to avoid it. The Washington Monument has caused the death of many little migrants; and though the number of its victims has decreased of late years, yet on a single morning in the spring of 1902 nearly 150 lifeless bodies were strewn around its base.

“Bright lights attract birds from great distances. While the torch in the Bartholdi Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor was kept lighted, the sacrifice of life it caused was enormous, even reaching a maximum of 700 birds in a month. A flashing light frightens birds away, and a red light is avoided by them as if it were a danger signal, but a steady white light looming out of mist or darkness seems to act like a magnet and draws the wanderers to destruction. Coming from any direction, they veer around to the leeward side, and then, flying against the wind, dash themselves against the pitiless glass.

Distance of Migration

“The length of the migration journey varies enormously. Some birds do not migrate at all. Many a Cardinal, Carolina Wren, and Bob-white rounds out its whole contented life within ten miles of its birthplace. Other birds, for instance, the Pine Warbler and the Black-headed Grosbeak, do not venture in winter south of the breeding range, so that with them fall migration is only a withdrawal from the northern and a concentration in the southern part of the summer home—the Warbler in about a fourth and the Grosbeak in less than an eighth of the summer area.

“The next variation is illustrated by the Robin, which occurs as a species in the middle districts of the United States throughout the year, in Canada only in summer, and along the Gulf of Mexico only in winter. Probably no individual Robin is a continuous resident in any section; but the Robin that nests, let us say, in southern Missouri will spend the winter near the Gulf, while his hardy Canada-bred cousin will be the winter tenant of the abandoned summer home of the southern bird.

“Most migrants entirely change their abode twice a year, and some of them travel immense distances. Of the land-birds, the common eastern Night Hawk seems to deserve the first place among those whose winter homes are widely distant from their breeding-grounds. Alaska and Patagonia, separated by 115 degrees of latitude, are the extremes of the summer and winter homes of the bird, and each spring many a Night Hawk travels the 5000 miles that lie between. But some of the shore-birds are still more inveterate voyagers. These cover from 6000 to 8000 miles each way, and appear to make travelling their chief occupation.

Routes of Migration

“Birds often seem eccentric in choice of route, and many land-birds do not take the shortest line. The fifty species from New England that winter in South America, instead of making the direct trip over the Atlantic, involving a flight of 2000 miles, take a slightly longer route which follows the coast of Florida, and passes thence, by island or mainland, to South America. What would seem, at first sight, to be a natural and convenient migratory highway extends from Florida through the Bahamas or Cuba to Haiti, Porto Rico, and the Lesser Antilles, and thence to South America.

The Bobolink Route

“Chief among these dauntless voyagers is the Bobolink, fresh from despoiling the Carolina rice-fields, waxed fat from his gormandizing, and so surcharged with energy that the 500-mile flight to South America on the way to the waving pampas of southern Brazil seems a small hardship. Indeed, many Bobolinks appear to scorn the Jamaican resting-point and to compass in a single flight the 700 miles from Cuba to South America. With the Bobolink is an incongruous company of travelling companions—a Vireo, a King Bird, and a Night Hawk that summer in Florida; the queer Chuck-will’s-widow of the Gulf States; the two New England Cuckoos; the trim Alice’s Thrush from Quebec; the cosmopolitan Bank Swallow from frozen Labrador, and the Black-poll Warbler from far-off Alaska. But the Bobolinks so far outnumber all the rest of the motley crew that the passage across the Caribbean Sea from Cuba to South America may with propriety be called the ‘Bobolink route.’ Occasionally a mellow-voiced Wood Thrush joins the assemblage, or a green-gold Tanager, which will prepare in its winter home its next summer livery of flaming scarlet. But the ‘Bobolink route,’ as a whole, is not popular with other birds, and the many that traverse it are but a fraction of the thousands of North American birds that spend the winter holiday in South America.

“Have you patience to follow the history of the flight of one bird? The longest migration route is taken by some of the wading-birds, especially the American Golden Plover, the Eskimo Curlew, and the Turnstone. The journey of the Plover, in itself like a fable, is wonderful enough to be told in detail.

“In the first week of June, they arrive at their breeding-grounds in the bleak, wind-swept ‘barren grounds’ above the Arctic Circle, far beyond the

tree line. Some even venture 1000 miles farther north (Greely found them at latitude 81 degrees). While the lakes are still ice-bound, they hurriedly fashion shabby little nests in the moss only a few inches above the frozen ground. By August, they have hastened to Labrador, where, in company with Curlews and Turnstones, they enjoy a feast. Growing over the rocks and treeless slopes of this inhospitable coast is a kind of heather, the crowberry, bearing in profusion a juicy black fruit. The extravagant fondness shown for the berry by the birds, among which the Curlew, owing to its greater numbers, is most conspicuous, causes it to be known to the natives as the 'curlewberry.' The whole body of the Curlew becomes so saturated with the dark-purple juice that birds whose flesh was still stained with the colour have been shot 1000 miles south of Labrador.



GOLDEN PLOVER

“After a few weeks of such feasting, the Plovers become excessively fat, and ready for their great flight. They have reared their young under the midnight sun, and now they seek the southern hemisphere. After gaining the coast of Nova Scotia, they strike straight out to sea, and take a direct course for the easternmost islands of the West Indies. Eighteen hundred miles of ocean waste lie between the last land of Nova Scotia and the first of the Antilles, and yet 600 more to the eastern mainland of South America, their objective point. The only land along the route is the Bermuda Islands, 800

miles from Nova Scotia. In fair weather, the birds fly past the Bermudas without stopping; indeed, they are often seen by vessels 400 miles or more east of these islands.

“When they sight the first land of the Antilles, the flocks often do not pause, but keep on to the larger islands and sometimes even to the mainland of South America. Sometimes a storm drives them off the main track, when they seek the nearest land, appearing not infrequently at Cape Cod and Long Island.

“A few short stops may be made in the main flight, for the Plover swims lightly, and easily, and has been seen resting on the surface of the ocean; and shore-birds have been found busily feeding 500 miles south of Bermuda and 1000 miles east of Florida, in the Atlantic, in that area known as the Sargasso Sea, where thousands of square miles of seaweed teem with marine life.

“Though feathered balls of fat when they leave Labrador and still plump when they pass the Bermudas, the Plovers alight lean and hungry in the Antilles. Only the first, though the hardest, half of the journey is over. How many days it has occupied may never be known. Most migrants either fly at night and rest in the day or vice versa, but the Plover flies both night and day.

“After a short stop of three or four weeks in the Antilles and on the north-eastern coast of South America, the flocks disappear, and later their arrival is noted at the same time in southern Brazil and the whole prairie region of Argentina and Patagonia. Here they remain from September to March (the summer of the southern hemisphere), free from the responsibilities of the northern summer they have left. The native birds of Argentina are at the time engrossed in family cares; but, *remember this well, no wayfarer from the north nests in the south; he has a second summer free from care!*

“After a six months’ vacation the Plovers resume the serious affairs of life and start back toward the Arctic zone, but not by the same course. Their full northward route is a problem still unsolved. They disappear from Argentina and shun the whole Atlantic coast from Brazil to Labrador. In March they appear in Guatemala and Texas; April finds their long lines trailing across the prairies of the Mississippi valleys; the first of May sees them crossing our northern boundary; and by the first week in June they reappear at their breeding-grounds in the frozen North. What a journey! Eight thousand miles of latitude separates the extremes of their course, and 3000 miles of longitude constitutes the shorter diameter, and all for the sake of spending ten weeks on an Arctic coast! Do you realize this endurance when you see birds passing that window?

“As to the fatigue of the bird from travel, this is now thought to be very slight, as bird flocks that have crossed great bodies of water do not stop to rest, but usually continue many miles inland. It is, undoubtedly, accident or illness that sometimes causes birds to stop for rest on the rigging of vessels or offshore islands.

The Unknown

“Interest in bird migration goes back to a far distant period. Marvellous tales of the spring and fall movements of birds were spun by early observers, yet hardly less incredible are the ascertained facts. Much remains to be learned, and it may be of interest to note a few of the mysteries which still occupy attention. Even the daily flight of a bird is a wonderful thing apart from the endurance required in the long migrations. Though the wings of birds are built on very much the same plan, few species use them in precisely the same manner; while on a windy day the wings assume a dozen different positions in as many seconds, and to watch the flight of a sea-bird, as it rises and trims itself to the wind and then shapes its course, is to be awe-struck by this mysterious power of flight.

“Snap shot pictures of birds on the wing will show you this better than many words. Some birds, like the Hawks and Eagles, can sustain themselves in the air for hours, sailing against the wind without any visible motion of the wings. Others fly both by swift beating and sailing, like the Terns in one of these pictures.

“In short, the differences are so great that the Wise Men can often identify a bird by the sharp outline of its shadow in flight.

“This power of flight has been a subject of wonder for many thousand years; we think and we speculate, but no one has yet learned the secret in its fulness.

“‘The way of an eagle in the air! This is too wonderful for me!’ is an expression of this feeling of mystery, recorded in the book of Proverbs. One thing seems quite certain, however—if man ever succeeds in conquering the air and sailing through it, it will not be by the power of any invention of his own, but because he has at least in some degree mastered the knowledge of the flight of the bird and adapted it to his own use.

“The Chimney Swift, that you all know as the Chimney Swallow, is one of the most abundant and best-known birds of the eastern part of the United States. With troops of fledglings, catching their winged prey as they go, and lodging by night in some tall chimney, the flocks drift slowly south, joining with other bands until, on the northern coast of the Gulf of Mexico, they

become an innumerable host. Then they disappear. Did they drop into the water and hibernate in the mud, as was believed of old, their obliteration could not be more complete. In the last week in March a joyful twittering far overhead announces their return to the Gulf coast, but the intervening five months is still the Swifts' secret.



THE WINGS IN FLIGHT

(Birds of the San Joaquin Valley, Cal. Am. Museum Nat. Hist., N.Y.)

“The mouse-coloured Bank Swallows, that we saw here in flocks a few weeks ago, are almost cosmopolitan, and enliven even the shores of the Arctic Ocean with their graceful aerial evolutions. Those that nest in Labrador allow a scant two months for building a nest and raising a brood, and by the first of August are headed southward. Six weeks later they are swarming in the vicinity of Chesapeake Bay, and then they, too, pass out of the range of our knowledge. In April they appear in northern South America, moving north, but not a hint do they give of how they came there. The rest of the species, those that nest to the south or west, may be traced farther south, but they, too, fail to give any clew as to where they spend the five winter months.

“Which one of the Wise Men can tell us? No one. Look out the window now; there are two Night Hawks, first flying high and then dropping suddenly through the air. Is it not hard to realize that, while you are going to and fro every day between your homes and school, and by and by having to

dig paths through the snow in order to get there, those two slender birds will have flown 5000 miles to find a new summer, and will be having a vacation absolutely free from family cares?”

[1] Condensed and adapted from *Some New Facts about the Migration of Birds*, by Wells W. Cooke, United States Biological Survey.

XII

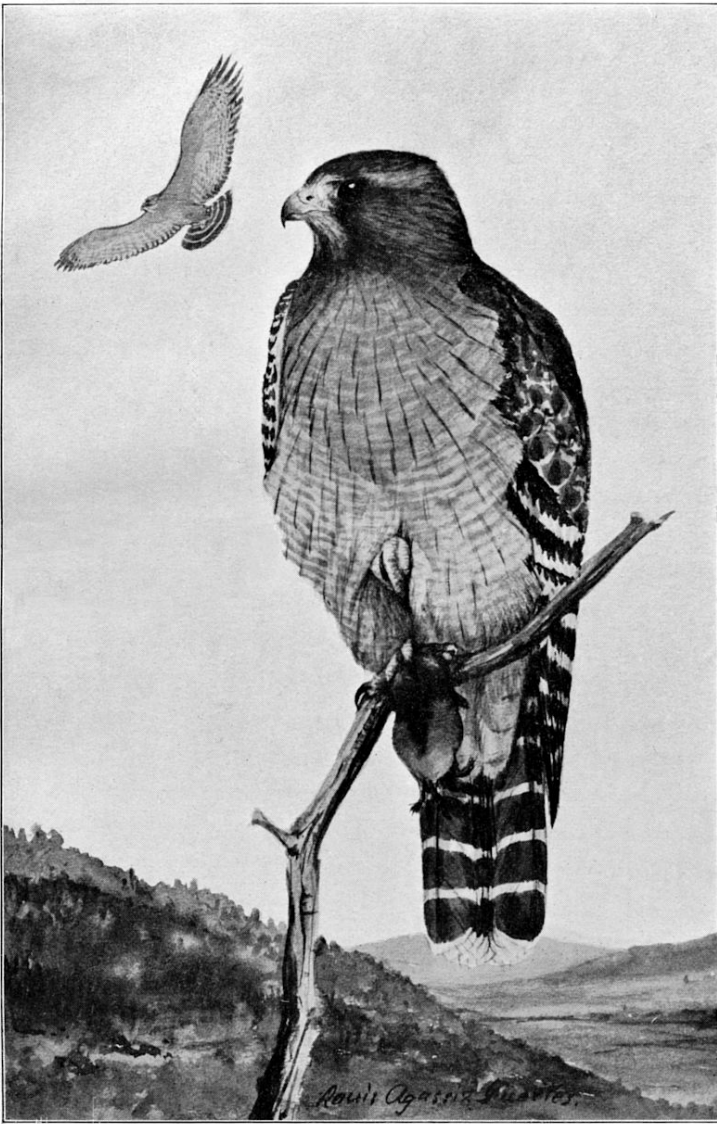
SOME SUSPICIOUS CHARACTERS

Owls and Hawks

Frost had come. Real frost, with black, nipping fingers. White frost, at its first appearance, is a decorator who casts a silver spell upon the meadows, turning them into shimmering lakes and touching the ripe leaves until each one becomes a banner of scarlet, gold, or russet.

Chrysanthemums and tufts of self-sown pansies, huddling in warm nooks, were the only flowers left about the farm-houses or in Gray Lady's garden, and both of these would hold their own until Thanksgiving Day gave praise for the year's growth and bade growing things sleep the long sleep of winter.

Birdland showed the change less than either the hickory or the river woods, for the old orchard held its leaves as apple trees usually do, and the belt of spruces and pines, that ran from the north side of it quite up to the house, made a cheerful green barrier and wind-break as well; but the Swallows and Night Hawks were no longer skimming the air, and high above, a pair of Red-shouldered Hawks were sailing majestically, occasionally giving their cry Kee-o—Kee-o!



RED-SHOULDERED HAWK

Jacob had finished the Martin house the week previous, and a stout smooth pole like a flagstaff had been planted, not in Birdland itself but on a slight rise in the ground that overlooked both the barns and the orchard. The setting up of the house itself had been reserved for this special Saturday, so that the children might take part in the ceremony.

The top of the pole, on which there were fastened crosspieces to make a foundation for the house, was thirty feet above the ground. In this pole stout

spikes were driven at intervals. This not only would prevent cats from climbing up to the house, but made a sort of ladder by which a man or boy could go up and pull out the nesting material of English sparrows if they tried to take possession. For, if we are to keep the useful insect-eating birds about our houses, we must try our best to keep this Sparrow from living amongst us.

Hard as it seems, he must be classed with animals that the kindest heart knows must be destroyed. But no one wishes to hurt nestlings, so the best way to do is to prevent the old birds from building in the haunts of the useful song-birds, and then in winter, when the old Sparrows gather in flocks about the barnyard, have some grown man, with good judgment and aim, shoot them. Children should never be let do this for amusement, for it is not well to allow a painful necessity to become a sport.

Tommy Todd was quite late on this Saturday morning, so that it was thought that he was not coming, and when he did arrive he found the others gathered about the pole,—Dave, who had a steady head for climbing, having been allowed to go up with Jacob, after the house had been raised with a block and falls, to hold hammer and nails while it was securely fastened to the braces.

They were all so busy that it was not until Jacob and Dave had come down, that Gray Lady noticed the box that Tommy had brought and which stood beside him, the slats on top telling that it contained some live thing.

As she turned to ask Tommy what he had brought, Goldilocks came down the path in her chair, for though she could walk quite well by this time, she was obliged to be very careful, and Ann would not allow her to be on her feet for more than an hour or two each day.

“The little Owls are back again and all sitting in a row on a branch of the old russet beyond the lunch-counter. There is a hollow in the trunk of the tree that I never noticed before, and do you know, mother, I shouldn’t be surprised if the nest had been in there, so, perhaps, if we have something that they like on the lunch-counter, they’ll come back next year.”

“Come back? Aren’t you going to shoot them before they get away?” asked Dave. “Because they might not come back.”

“We don’t want them to come back to be shot, but to make more nests and live here,” said Goldilocks.

“Live! why, folks *always* shoot Owls and Hawks! They are very bad things, though I guess Hawks are the worst; anyhow, there’s more of ’em. Just look at those big Hen-hawks flying up yonder now; maybe you’d like them to come and live in the orchard. If they did, they’d eat the lunch off’n your counter, other birds and all.”

Gray Lady, seeing by the expression of Dave's face that he could not quite understand any other view of the matter, said: "Yes, Dave, you are right; people usually shoot Hawks and Owls on sight—and have been doing so for years. In fact, my own husband used to shoot them as a matter of course, and he was one who never killed a song-bird and who greatly preferred to hear the Grouse drumming in the forest, the Woodcock singing and dancing in the spring woods (yes, they both dance and sing and I will tell you of them some day), and Bob-white telling his name from the fence-rail, than to have them come on the table ever so deliciously cooked.

"But within the last ten or fifteen years the Wise Men have found out a great deal more about these Owls and Hawks—or Birds of Prey, as they are called, and they know exactly what the work of these birds is in the great plan of nature. Many of the facts they tell us of we can see for ourselves if we have the patience to watch. Before the country was settled by white men, and became what we call 'civilized,' all of these birds of prey had their place, but even now many of them are not only not hurtful to us, but of distinct benefit. The difficulty is that we do not stop to sift the facts and separate the good from the bad. To the farmer, and particularly the poultry-raiser, the cry of Hawk brings him out, quick as a flash, shot-gun in hand.

"But if he will only realize that for every chicken or pigeon one of these Hawks destroys, it in all probability takes fifty rats, field-mice, short-tailed meadow-mice, weasels, and red squirrels, he will see that he owes the Hawk a debt of gratitude; for it is easier by far to protect a poultry-yard from conspicuous things that fly above—like Hawks and Owls—than to keep out the things that crawl and creep.

"Now, before we go down to the orchard to see Goldilocks' little Screech Owls, let us see what Tommy Todd has in this box."

"It's only a Screech Owl that I found up in the pigeon-coop this morning, but it's such a different colour from the gray ones we have here, that I brought it up for you to see if it was a rare kind. I daren't take it out because it claws and bites so." And Tommy took away the cloth that partly covered the box, and there sat the bird with open, yellow-rimmed eyes, with which he seemed to see with difficulty.

The Owl was no taller than a Robin, but his large, round head and thickset body made him appear to be a much larger bird. He had two ear tufts (or horns) of feathers, a strong, curved beak, and powerful toes, lightly feathered, ending in the hooked talons that mark the birds of prey, that is, birds that prey, or feed, upon forms of animal life other than defenceless insects, worms, etc. Its feathers were a bright rusty red colour, streaked with black; its underparts being more or less white, mixed with red and black.

“The Owls in the orchard are like this one, only they are all gray and black,” said Goldilocks, after taking a long look.

“Perhaps this is the father bird; you told us that if one bird is a gayer colour than the other, it is generally the father,” said Sarah Barnes.

“Yes, that is often the case, as I am glad to find that you remember, but not with the Screech Owl, the most common of American Owls, and one that is known under many names—Mottled Owl, Gray Owl, and Red Owl.



SCREECH OWL

“There may be some gray birds and some red ones in the same brood, but this does not depend upon sex, season, or age. The strange difference is called by a long name, ‘dichromatism’ or two-colour phase, and this is one of the things for which the Wise Men can give no positive reason; so it is

another question like those about the flight and travels of the birds for one of you to find out in future.

“Bring the box up to the orchard, Tommy, and, after we have seen the gray Screech Owls, you can open the door and put the box in the tree and see what will happen.”

Before they reached the gate of Birdland, they heard a commotion inside; Jays were screaming in a great state of rage and alarm, and, as they drew nearer, another sound blended with the screaming, a hissing sound like “shay—shay—shay,” and the snapping of beaks.

“The Jays have found the Owls out, and they’re hopping mad,” said Jacob, who was standing in the shelter of a tree-trunk, enjoying the scene. “The Jays daren’t really touch the Owls, only jeer, and the Owls only snap their beaks and hiss in return because they don’t like to fly out in bright light; all you get back by the fence and watch out.”

The children did as Jacob suggested and Tommy put his box on top of the wall and, at a signal from Gray Lady, unfastened the slats. At first the little Red Owl stretched his neck and snapped his beak; then, as he heard the voices of the Jays, he backed into the corner of the box and drew himself up thin and long, so that he did not look like the same bird that had been so plump and fluffy a few seconds before.

“That’s just the way he did this morning when I found him in the pigeon-house,” said Tommy; “in the dark he didn’t look a bit like a bird, but more like a corn-cob on end.

“There! look there, Gray Lady.” And Tommy pointed at a tree behind that in which the five Owls were roosting. “There is another Owl all by itself that the Jays haven’t found out, and it’s all drawn up thin just like my red one.” And, following the direction of his finger, the Owl was plainly to be seen, but so rigid and motionless that it might have been a moss-covered branch stump.

“We would better go in now,” said Gray Lady, after they had watched for a few moments. “The Owls are beginning to notice us, and I do not wish them to be driven away until I have had a chance to photograph them. Leave the box there, Tommy; with all this noise your Owl cannot be expected to come out before night.”

“But if they are good birds, what was the red one doing in Tommy’s pigeon-house?” asked Dave.

“Probably looking for mice or other vermin, or perhaps shelter,” said Gray Lady, “for though they sometimes eat large game, mice or smaller animals are easier food for a tribe of Owls that sometimes grow only six inches high and never to a foot in length. I will tell you a way to convince yourselves and make sure of what Owls feed upon without killing the

Owls,” said Gray Lady, as, on their way up to the play and work rooms, they went into the library to look at some of the mounted birds in one of the cases.

“As Owls usually swallow their food whole, they take in bones, fur, feathers, etc., that they cannot digest; these portions are made up into little pellets called ‘Owl balls,’ and these are spit up before the real process of digestion is begun, and if you search under the trees where owls roost, you may often find these pellets for yourselves.”

“Maybe that is what these things are that I’ve found, for ever so many days, below the porch of the pigeon-house,” said Tommy, pulling a bunch of paper from his pocket; “I guess the Red Owl meant to live there this winter.” He spread out the paper before Gray Lady, who was now sitting at the table turning over the pages of a large book in red covers. It was a reference book, in two volumes, that she often used to look up stories of the birds about which the children asked. The name of the book was *Life Histories of North American Birds*, and they were written and collected by Major Bendire, who was both one of the Wise Men and an officer in our army. Putting in a mark at the page where Screech Owl began, she closed the book and looked at the contents of the paper.

“Yes, Tommy,” she said presently, “these are not only Owl balls, but there is the fur and bones of a mouse in each.” And deftly separating the wads with the point of a pair of scissors and taking out a tiny skull, she motioned the children to look at it through a reading-glass, each one in turn.

“Does the Screech Owl live everywhere in the United States?” asked Dave, after he and Tommy had picked out enough of the tiny bones from the fur to piece out the entire skeleton of a mouse.

“This same species of Screech Owl that we have here is found all through the eastern part of North America, but there is a Screech Owl, of some sort, to be found in the other parts of the country; thus, there is a Florida Screech Owl; one for California; another for the Rocky Mountains; one for Mexico, and one for Puget Sound, besides several others, and, of them all, the Rocky Mountain Owl is said to be the handsomest.

“We have several other owls that live hereabouts and do good work by killing rats, mice, snakes, lizards, etc. Of course, they also eat some birds, but they are so valuable to the farmer that he can ill spare them, and if he cannot, neither can we. Do you realize that it is really the farmer that holds the life of the country in his hand? What good would money and houses and clothes do us if we had no food?—and it is the farmer who, by carrying out the workings of nature, makes food possible.

“These birds of prey divide time between them, the Hawk works by day and the Owls at night and in the early dawn; thus, ‘Nature, in her wisdom,

puts a continuous check upon the four-footed vermin of the ground.’

“Our little Screech Owls love old orchards and the hollow trees to be found there, and they are well suited to be guardians of the fruit trees. In hard winters, mice and rabbits will often eat the bark of young peach, pear, plum, and apple trees in such a way as to ruin them. Who can keep a constant watch upon them by day and night so well as the Hawks and Owls?—and if they do take an occasional chicken or pigeon, these are more easily replaced than fruit trees.

“Then, too, our little Screech Owl is a destroyer of cutworms, those dreadful worms that do their work by night. For this alone, should the farmer call this Owl his friend, and let him nest in any little hollow under the barn eaves, or in the old willow or sycamore, as he chooses. That is, if the few sticks and feathers that line the hollow can be called a nest.

“The courtship of the Owl begins late in March, for Owls, living, as they do, permanently in their homes, nest early; the Great Horned Owl, of deservedly savage reputation, beginning in February, and the round-faced Barred Owl in March. I have only seen the young Owls on their first coming from the nest—queer, fuzzy little balls, awkward in flight and noisy, who perch on a branch like a row of clothes-pins all day, and then spend their nights being fed, and in awkward attempts at learning to fly. Once, in my girlhood, I kept an Owl with a sprained wing in an outdoor cage for a couple of months, and he grew quite tame and was very clever and clean apparently, from the evidence of spilled water, taking a bath in his pan every night and keeping his feathers in good condition.

“Major Bendire tells of the courtship of these songless birds in a way that proves that where voice is lacking, gesture takes the place of speech, as with Grackles and Crows. ‘The female was perched in a dark, leafy tree, apparently oblivious of the presence of her mate, who made frantic efforts to attract her attention through a series of bowings, wing-raising, and snapping of the beak. These antics were continued for some time, varied by hops from branch to branch near her, accompanied by that forlorn, almost despairing, wink peculiar to this bird. Once or twice I thought that I detected sounds of inward groanings as he, beside himself at lack of success, sat in utter dejection. At last the lady lowered her haughty head, looked at and approached him.’

“The young Owls when first hatched are blind and featherless, and are so ravenous that not only do their parents feed them at night but also put away enough food in the nest to last through the day as well, so you can easily see how useful a family of these Owls would be the neighbourhood of any farm.

THE SCREECH OWL'S VALENTINE

A Screech Owl once set out to find
 A comely mate of his own kind;
Through wooded haunts and shadows dense
 He pressed his search with diligence;
 As a reward
 He soon espied
 A feathered figure,
 Golden-eyed.

“Good-night! my lady owl,” said he;
 “Will you accept my company?”
He bowed and snapped, and hopped about,
 He wildly screamed, then looked devout.
 But no word came,
 His heart to cheer,
 From lady owl,
 That perched so near.

The suitor thought her hearing dull,
 And for her felt quite sorrowful.
Again by frantic efforts he
 Did try to woo her from her tree;
 “Pray, loveliest owl,
 The forest's pride,
 Descend and be
 My beauteous bride.

“A wedding feast of mice we’ll keep,
When cats and gunners are asleep;
We’ll sail like shadows cast at noon,
Each night will be a honeymoon.”
To this she answered
Not one breath;
But sat unmoved
And still as death.

Said he, “I guess that she’s the kind
That people in museums find;
Some taxidermist by his skill
Has stuffed the bird, she sits so still.
Ah me! that eyes
Once made to see
Should naught
But ghostly spectres be.”

At this she dropped her haughty head
And cried, “I’m neither stuffed nor dead.
Oh! weird and melancholy owl,
Thou rival of the wolf’s dread howl,
Since fate so planned,
I’ll not decline
To be for life
Your valentine.”

—FLORENCE A. VAN SANT, in *Bird-Lore*.

“Are any of these other Owls here useful?” asked Sarah, who had been looking at the birds in the glass case while Gray Lady talked. “This great big one with feather horns looks as if he could eat a little lamb or a big rooster if he tried.”

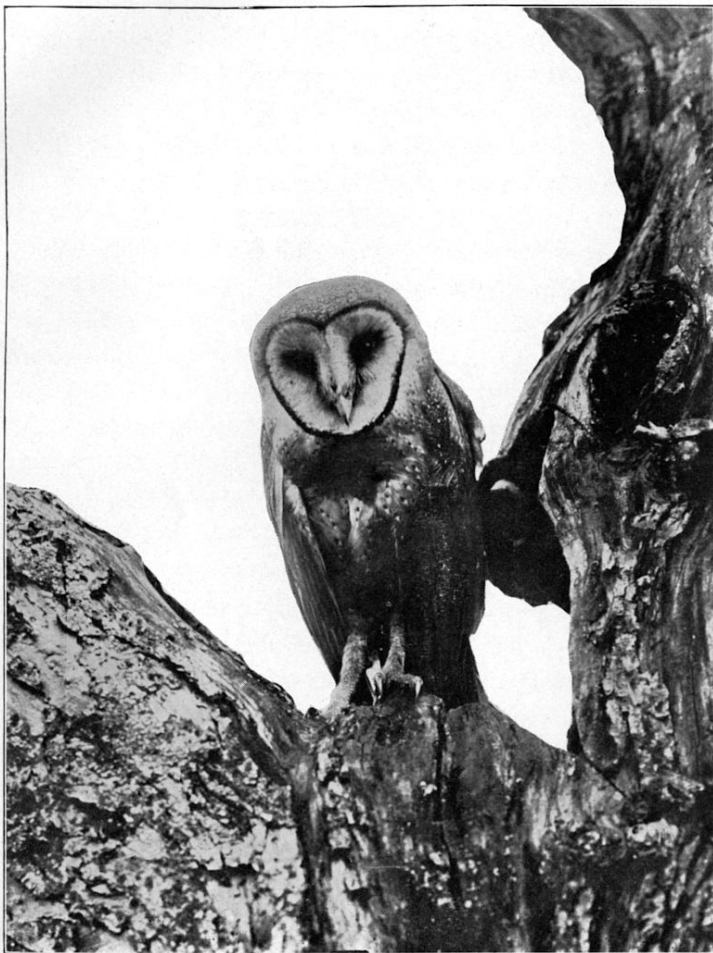
“That is the Great Horned Owl,” said Gray Lady, “and fortunately he is very uncommon here in New England, for he is a cruel and wasteful bird, unsociable and sulky, killing chickens, and even turkeys and geese, and often merely eating the head of its victim and then killing again; it is the worst of all the birds of prey, and no excuse can be found for its behaviour.

“The Barred Owl on the shelf beside the Great Horned, though having a smooth head, is sometimes mistaken for the fierce Owl and shot for its sins. Aside from sometimes killing birds, it is a useful Owl, eating mice, rabbits,

red squirrels, etc. This is a remote, lonely sort of an Owl, with a dismal hoot, as one man described it: 'Hoo-ooo-ooo-ho-ho-ho-too-too-to-to!' sometimes interspersed by a laugh and then a wail. I disturbed a young bird once, causing one of its parents great uneasiness. It is impossible to describe all the notes uttered by it at this time; they were rendered in a subdued muttering and complaining strain, parts of which sounded exactly like 'old-fool, old-fool, don't do it, don't do it!'

"There are two other owls that are very useful; one is found all through the United States, and the other is a more southern species, found usually south of New England. The first is the Short-eared or Marsh Owl, and the other is the Barn Owl.

"All Owls, in a way, look very much alike, in spite of difference in colour and size. They have round, feathered heads, which they are obliged to turn around when they wish to look, as their eyes are so fixed in their sockets that they cannot roll them as other birds and animals do; some have feather horns and some do not. They all have talons, either covered by scales or feathers, with which they seize their food, which they swallow whole. But between the Barn Owl and his kin, the Horned, Hoot, and Screech Owls, there is a striking contrast.



BARN OWL

“Look at those two in the case; they have round faces and circles of feathers about the eyes. The Barn Owl has a heart-shaped face-disk, about which the head-feathers cluster, making the bird look like a funny old lady in a cap. This is the Owl that is usually described in poetry—the Church Tower Owl, the Monkey-faced Owl, etc.

“While you look at this bird listen to some of the things that the Wise Men say of it.

“The Barn Owl, strictly speaking, makes no nest. If occupying a natural cavity of a tree, the eggs are placed on the rubbish that may have accumulated at the bottom; if in a bank, they are laid on the bare ground and among the pellets of fur and small bones ejected by the parents. Frequently, quite a lot of such material is found in their burrows, the eggs lying on, and

among, the refuse. Incubation usually commences with the first egg laid, and lasts about three weeks. The eggs are almost invariably found in different stages of development, and downy young may be found in the same nest with fresh eggs. Both sexes assist in incubation. One of the best methods of studying the food habits of Owls is to gather the pellets which they disgorge. These consist of the undigested refuse of their food, hair, bones, feathers, etc. Sometimes enormous quantities of this refuse are found in the nesting-place of the Barn Owl, one recorded instance being two or three cubic feet. When the tired farmer is buried deep in slumber, and nature is repairing the waste of wearied muscles, this night-flying bird commences its beneficial work, which ceases only at the rising of the sun. All that has been written regarding the food of the Barn Owl shows it to be of inestimable value to agriculture. Major Bendire says: 'Looked at from an economic standpoint, it would be difficult to point out a more useful bird than this Owl, and it deserves the fullest protection; but, as is too often the case, man, who should be its best friend, is generally the worst enemy it has to contend with, and it is ruthlessly destroyed by him, partly on account of its odd appearance and finely coloured plumage, but oftener from the erroneous belief that it destroys the farmer's poultry.'

"In the West, the food of the Barn Owl consists very largely of pouched gophers, a specially destructive mammal, also ground-squirrels, rabbits, and insects. In the southern states large numbers of cotton rats are destroyed, a fact which should be appreciated by every planter.

"So you see, children, that those farmers who live within the range of the Barn Owl can not only safely let it nest under their roofs, but give the barn mice into its keeping, for it will do more good and less harm than the usual prowling cat.

"The Short-eared Owl is unlike his brethren in that his nest, lined with a few feathers or grass, is in a hollow in the ground or in a bunch of tall weeds or grasses. He is also what is called a cosmopolitan Owl, which means that he is equally at home in all parts of the country, and, during the migrations and in the winter, these Owls sometimes live in flocks of one hundred or more, which, considering the usual solitary habits of Owls, is something to remember particularly.



SHORT-EARED OWL

“As its nest is in moist, grassy meadows, so also does it spend much of its time in the open, shunning the deep woods beloved of other Owls, while it flies freely by day, except in the brightest weather. On cloudy days it flies low over the meadows, in which it searches carefully for its food. On the wing, it is easy and graceful, its flight being more like that of a Hawk than the heavy swoop of the Owl. Its wings are long in proportion to its body, which makes it appear very large when in flight.

“The Short-eared Owls delight in carrying their food to a hayrick or some such object, where they eat it at leisure. This same food of the Short-eared Owl, in itself, is a letter of recommendation,—for it consists of meadow-mice, gophers, and shrews (that are such a nuisance in the West), grasshoppers, insects, and occasionally a bird,—so that, like the Barn Owl

and the Long-eared or Cat Owl, his brother, this bird deserves full protection.

“Another cause has done many an owl to death,—not his ‘fatal gift of beauty,’ that has made so many birds become bonnet martyrs, but the fact that the Owl looks so wise that he was supposed to be the favourite bird of Minerva, the goddess of wisdom. For this reason, people like to have stuffed Owls in their libraries to sit and look wise on a bookcase top.

“Thus many of the birds that have escaped the farmers have been shot by collectors for the taxidermists or bird-store folk. Now the Wise Men are making laws which will, we hope, protect the useful birds of prey from this fate as they do the beautiful songsters; but it is not enough to make laws, it is the business of each one of us to see that they are carried out.

“I have a very amusing poem about an Owl in my scrap-book. When you have read it, you may guess, if you can, to which Owl the author refers.”

THE EARLY OWL

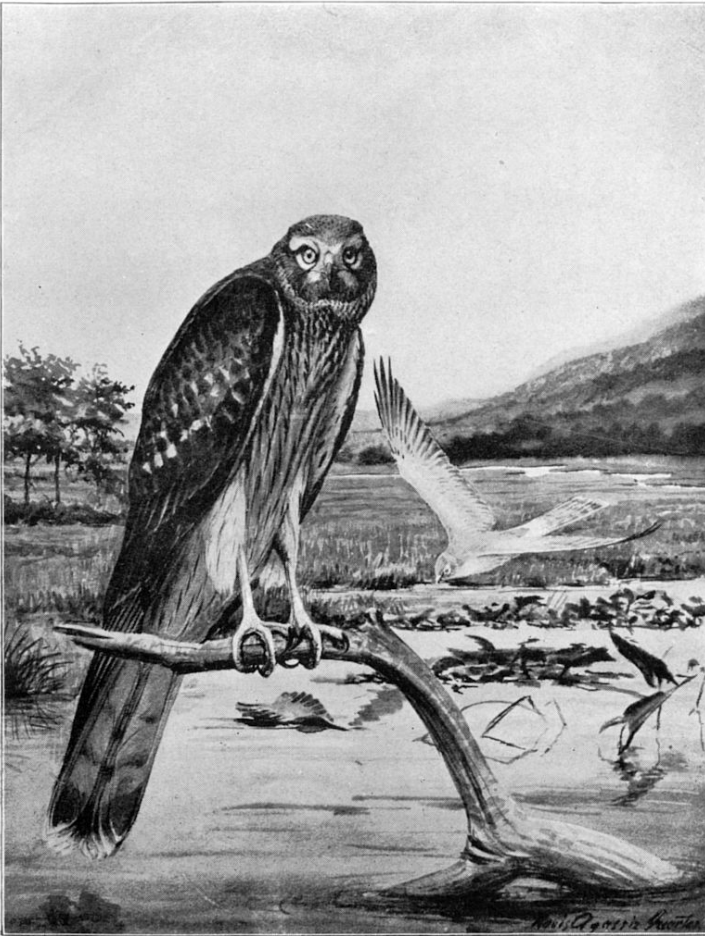
An Owl once lived in a hollow tree,
And he was as wise as wise could be.
The branch of learning he didn't know
Could scarce on the tree of knowledge grow;
He knew the tree from branch to root,
And an Owl like that can afford to hoot.

And he hooted until, alas! one day
He chanced to hear in a casual way
An insignificant little bird
Make use of a term he had never heard.
He was flying to bed in the dawning light,
When he heard her singing with all her might:
“Hurray! hurray! for the early worm!”
“Dear me,” said the Owl, “what a singular term!
I would look it up if it weren't so late.
I must rise at dusk to investigate.
Early to bed and early to rise
Makes an Owl healthy, and stealthy, and wise!”

So he slept like an honest Owl all day,
And rose in the early twilight gray,
And went to work in the dusky light
To look for the early worm at night.
He searched the country for miles around,
But the early worm was not to be found;
So he went to bed in the dawning light
And looked for the “worm” again next night.
And again and again, and again and again,
He sought and he sought, but all in vain,
Till he must have looked for a year and a day
For the early worm in the twilight gray.

At last in despair he gave up the search,
And was heard to remark as he sat on his perch,
By the side of his nest in the hollow tree:
“The thing is as plain as the night to me—
Nothing can shake my conviction firm;
There’s no such thing as the early worm.”

—OLIVER HERFORD.



MARSH HAWK

“I can’t tell exactly which it was,” said Tommy Todd, when he was through laughing; “but I know which it wasn’t—it wasn’t the Short-eared Owl, for he doesn’t get up to breakfast at night, and so if he had looked for the early worm he would have found him.”

THREE USEFUL HAWKS

The Marsh Hawk, Harrier, Blue Hawk.

Length: 17-19 inches; female averaging two inches longer.

Male: Above, bluish gray; below, white mottled with brown; wings brownish, long, and pointed; tail long; upper tail-coverts

white.

The Marsh Hawk is the most harmless and beneficial of its family; it feeds upon reptiles, locusts, grasshoppers, and small mammals, and never disturbs domestic poultry.

In this locality it is more plentiful in the bogs near fresh ponds, and in the vicinity of rivers, than in the salt-marshes.

It is the summer-day Hawk, and the species most frequently seen in the warmest months. It flies by night as well as day, however, and is often a companion of the Screech Owl in its nocturnal rambles.

The Red-shouldered Hawk

Length: 18-19 inches. Also miscalled "Hen-hawk." The Sharp-shinned Hawk and Cooper's Hawk are the real "Hen-hawks."

Male: Grayish brown above; feathers edged with rusty brown; wings barred black and white; "shoulder" rusty red; tail black, and barred and tipped with slate; black streaks on throat; underparts buff.

One of the large Hawks; to be distinguished by a rust-red shoulder patch; is the most common of the long, broad-winged Buzzard Hawks that are seen flying in circles in the days of autumn and early spring. It kills field-mice and other gnawers.

The American Sparrow Hawk

Length: 10 inches.

Male: Reddish back barred with black; reddish tail, with black band and white tip; head with reddish spot on crown, slaty blue, as are also wings, the latter having white bars; a black mark back and front of ear; underparts varying from cream to buff.

A very handsome bird, though somewhat of a cannibal; the Wise Men wish him protected for the following reasons:—

"When in doubt regarding the identity of a small Hawk, give the benefit of the doubt to the Hawk, and refrain from killing it, for you may thus spare a valuable bird, belonging to a species that during every twelve months renders service to the agricultural industry of the country that is far beyond

computation, but if measured in dollars and cents would reach to very high figures.

“This appeal for protection of the Sparrow Hawks, and the statements as to their value, would be worthless if they could not be supported by *facts*.”

“Dr. Fisher summarizes as follows: ‘The subject of this Hawk is one of great interest, and, considered in its economic bearings, is one that should be carefully studied. The Sparrow Hawk is almost exclusively insectivorous, except when insect food is difficult to obtain. In localities where grasshoppers and crickets are abundant, these Hawks congregate, often in moderate-sized flocks, and gorge themselves continuously. Rarely do they touch any other form of food until, either by advancing season or other natural causes, the grasshopper crop is so lessened that their hunger cannot be appeased without undue exertion. Then other kinds of insects and other forms of life contribute to their fare, and beetles, spiders, mice, shrews, small snakes, lizards, or even birds may be required to bring up the balance.

“ ‘In some places in the West and South, telegraph poles pass for miles through treeless plains and savannas. For lack of better perches, the Sparrow Hawks often use these poles for resting-places, from which they make short trips to pick up a grasshopper or mouse, which they carry back to their perch. At times, when grasshoppers are abundant, such a line of poles is pretty well occupied by these Hawks. In the vicinity of Washington, D.C., remarkable as it may appear to those who have not interested themselves specially in the matter, it is the exception not to find grasshoppers or crickets in the stomachs of the Sparrow hawks, even when killed during the months of January and February, unless the ground is covered with snow. It is wonderful how the birds can discover the half-concealed, semi-dormant insects, which in colour so closely resemble the ground or dry grass. Whether they are attracted by a slight movement, or distinguish the form of their prey as it sits motionless, is difficult to prove, but, in any case, the acuteness of their vision is of a character which we are unable to appreciate.

“ ‘In the spring, when new ground or meadow is broken by the plough, they often become very tame if not molested. They fly down, even alighting under the very horses, for an instant, in their endeavour to capture an unearthed mouse or insect.’ ”

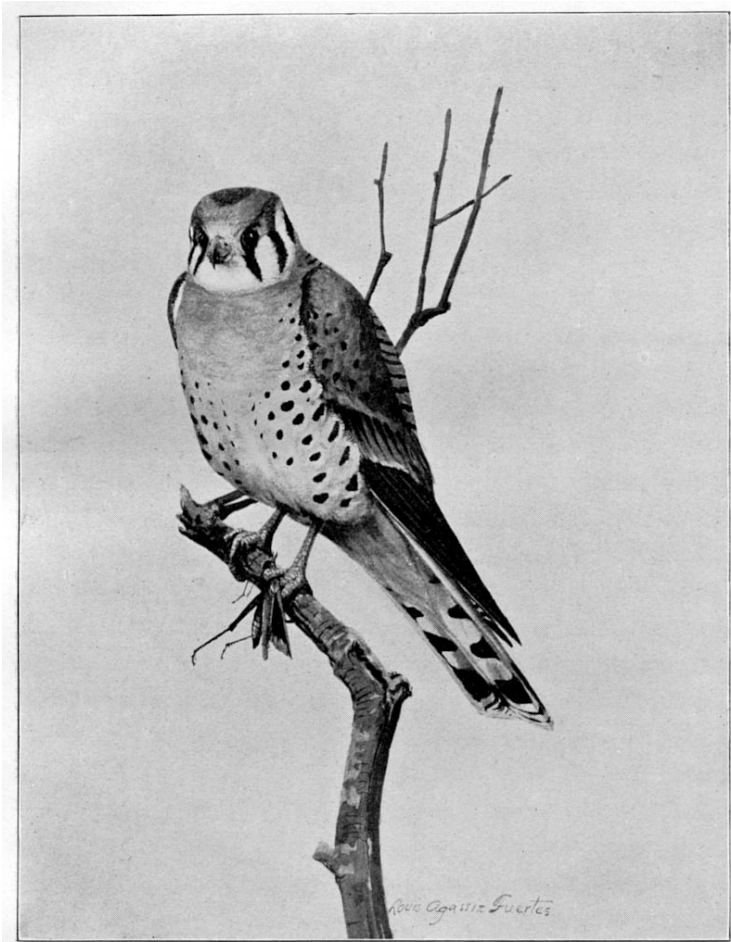
“Aren’t there any *bad* Hawks, then?” asked little Bobby, incredulously, for to him the cry of “Hawk!” and the sight of the hired man with the gun came together.

“Yes, Bobby, plenty of them, even hereabouts; the Sharp-shinned and the Chicken or Cooper’s Hawk, both of them flash out of the sky and pounce cruelly on both game- and song-birds. And, let me tell you all something, though I do not wish to kill any birds needlessly, yet I would not let any of

these Hawks, useful or otherwise, nest or feed near Birdland, and I should have Jacob frighten them away with blank cartridges, because the very sight of them terrifies the beautiful song-birds that we love, and that trust us and confide in our protection.

“The little Screech Owls may play about if they will, but neither Crows, Jays, Hawks, nor English Sparrows can ever be welcome garden guests.”

Something to remember about Hawks and Owls.—*The female is always larger than the male!*



SPARROW HAWK

XIII

TREE-TRUNK BIRDS

Woodpeckers—Nuthatches and the Brown Creepers

By the time November came in but few birds were to be seen about the schoolhouse at Foxes Corners. For until Gray Lady came, no one had taken an interest either in the appearance of the schoolbuilding itself or the ragged bit of ground upon which it stood. Now four sugar-maples had been transplanted from the near-by woods, and set where they would shade the windows in the warm days of early summer and fall and yet not interfere with winter sunshine; and Gray Lady had promised that by spring there should be some benches along the north fence, where there was shade from the white birches in the wood-lot beyond. That is, she had promised the wood for the benches and Jacob's aid in their planning; for the rest, the boys were to do the work themselves, for after Thanksgiving four or five large boys would come to school,—Tommy Todd's brother Everett, who was sixteen, and the two Judds, his cousins,—Walter, also sixteen, and Irving, fourteen,—being among them.

All of these boys knew something about the handling of tools, and, if they chose to join the Kind Hearts' Club, would be valuable allies. Sometimes, however, big boys, even though they are not cruel, laugh at such societies, and so Gray Lady had made up her mind to let them ask to come to the class in the workroom as if it was a privilege they desired rather than as a favour to herself.

One bit of carpentry she asked Jacob to undertake, that no time should be lost, and that was the bird lunch-counter for the school grounds. As the flagpole was fastened to the schoolhouse, Jacob had utilized the gnarled stump of a half-dead wild-apple tree, the bark of which was seamed and scarred by the initials cut on it by many generations of scholars. Above the platform, to hold the crumbs and grain, he had fastened, between the two remaining branches, a slanting roof made of some old mossy shingles, and at the edge of this he had stuck half a dozen crooked spikes to hold bacon rind or suet or anything, like chicken bones, that might be left from the dinner-pails, as many of the children, owing to distance from home, always brought their lunch to school during the winter and spring terms.

This lunch-counter was in place when Gray Lady went to the school the first Friday afternoon in November, and she brought an additional surprise

with her,—two pictures or charts that could be unrolled and hung on the wall like the great map.^[2] Each of these charts held the pictures of some twenty-five birds done in colours and of natural size, and with each there was a little book telling about the birds.

The charts were to be lent to the five other schools in the township in turn, but the children at Foxes Corners were so delighted with them that they resolved that the first money that the Kind Hearts' Club earned should go to buy other pairs of the charts, so that they could not only have some for their very own, but that the other schools, who had no Gray Lady for their fairy god-mother, could have them also.

After the first few weeks, Gray Lady found that it would be best, on the Fridays when she visited the school, simply to read to the children stories of the birds that they had either seen at Birdland or that they already knew by sight, from various books and magazines; as she had at her house so many books, pictures of birds, and the mounted birds themselves, that it was much easier for them to name unknown birds there than at school.

“The singing-birds have all gone,” said Sarah Barnes, the second Saturday of November, as she went to work upon the last piece of her doll's outfit—the cloak for the Red Riding-Hood that she was dressing.

“We still have a Song Sparrow down in the meadow,” said Goldilocks, “and there are plenty of Bluebirds and Robins about, and Grackles and Cowbirds, but the Song Sparrow is the only one that pretends to sing a nice little song.”

“I guess we'll have to go ahead to the spring birds or there won't be anything to learn about until they come back,” chimed in Eliza Clausen, who was at work on a doll baby, and as her fingers were long and slender, she succeeded in hemming the fine lawn, of which the dress was made, very nicely.

“No birds?” said Gray Lady, raising her eyebrows. “Open the window nearest you, Sarah, and do both you and Eliza look out and listen.”

“I don't see anything, and I only hear different kinds of squeaks,” said Eliza.

“I hear the squeaks,” said Sarah, “but I see a gray bird out here on the roof, with black on top of his head and white underneath, and he's got a long beak and a short tail. Why, he's just stuffed something that he had in his beak in between the shingles. Now he's crying 'quank-quank' and flying toward the orchard.”

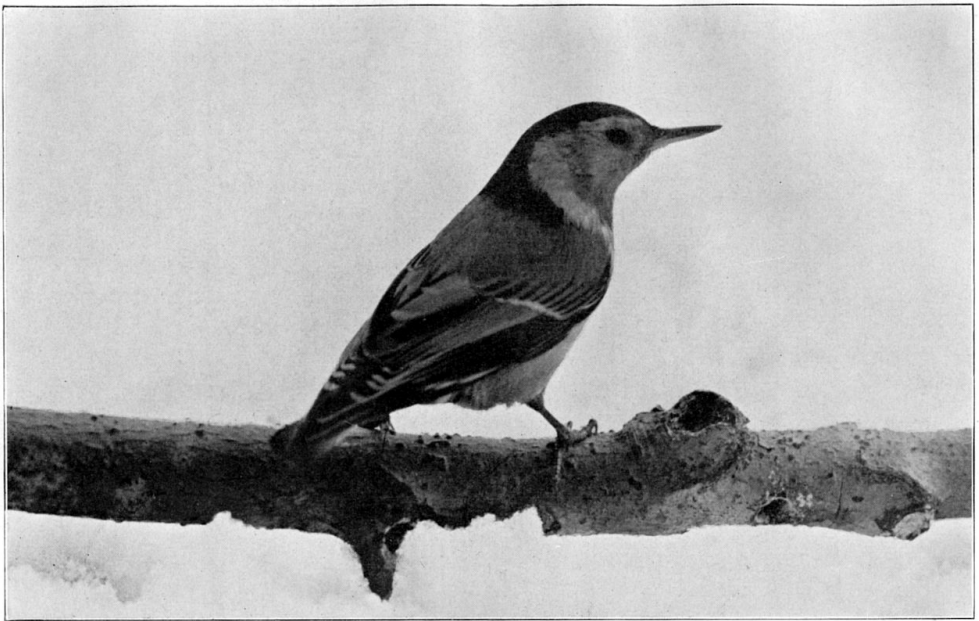
“That,” said Gray Lady, “is the White-breasted Nuthatch, one of our best winter friends, for though he summers with us, like the Chickadee and the

Woodpeckers, it is not until the other birds have gone, and the trees are bare of leaves, that we really seem to see and appreciate him.

“This Nuthatch is one of the tree-trunk birds that you will learn to know so well, before winter is over, that you will never forget them; for, though they have no song to speak of, their cleverness and the good they do when other birds have gone more than make up for lack of music.”

“What do you mean by tree-trunk birds?” asked Clary; “I thought that birds liked leafy branches the best.”

“Most birds do prefer the leafy branches,” said Gray Lady; “that is why I call this little group, who do not, ‘tree-trunk birds,’ for all their little lives are spent so close to the heart of the wood that they seem almost to be parts of the tree.”



R. H. Beebe, Photo.

WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH

“These birds not only make their nests in the wood itself by hollowing out partly decayed places in branch and trunk, but they gain the greater part of their food by searching the cracks in the tree bark for insects that live there, and which other birds, that spend their lives among the leafy twigs, cannot find.

“This quarrying food from the bark makes it possible for them to stay about the vicinity of their nesting-haunts all winter; for many forms of insect life winter in the bark crevices of forest as well as fruit trees where the eggs

hatch out, and the larvae undergo transformation early in the season and begin to do mischief before the migrant birds return.

“If it were not for sleet storms, that cover the tree with a coating of ice for days at a time, these hardy, sociable little birds would be sure of a good living in a neighbourhood like this, with many orchards and strips of woodland. But when ice puts a lock on the pantry doors, what can the poor birds do?”

“Owing to their frail structure and warm blood, they require more constant fuel to keep the life-fire alive than the four-footed animals, so that when hunger and cold travel hand in hand, they have to make a brave fight for life. For generations this freezing up has happened to them, and so, by experience, they have learned when food is plenty to try and save it up.

“The Nuthatch, that Sarah has just seen stowing something away under the shingles, is living very well at present. In spite of hard frost, wild food is plentiful; then, too, the lunch-counter is amply supplied with suet. The birds do not really need help as yet, but we put the food there so that they may know where to find it when hard times come.”

“I should think the lunch-counter, with lots of easy food, would make the birds lazy so’s they wouldn’t work for a living,” said Dave. “Pop says, feeding tramps everywhere only makes more folks turn tramp, so now he can’t get anybody to work at haying or wood-cutting for food and fair pay.”

“Ah, but that shows the difference between wild birds and what is called ‘civilized’ man,” said Gray Lady. “The Nuthatches do not sit still and gorge themselves, but are busy providing for the future. Yesterday, I saw one of these same birds packing away little bits of suet in a crevice under the roof of the side porch, and another using the thatch on the summer-house for a larder. So it would seem that they distribute the food in different places. If one cupboard is frozen up, one of the others may be in the sun.

“A pair of Nuthatches found that the cornice of the main roof, under the tin gutter, was in poor shape, and kindly called my attention to it by boring into the wood and nesting in the space within. Five little birds were hatched, and I believe that the party of seven, that are so tame and come about the house so freely, are the birds hatched in the cornice and their parents.”

“I shouldn’t think that you would like them to make holes in the house,” said Tommy, “for the water might get in and do lots of harm, just the same as Woodpeckers that make holes in the trees and spoil them.”

“That is where people make a mistake about these tree-trunk birds that bore holes, and think that they are mischievous and destructive, whereas they never pierce bark unless an insect lurks beneath, and when they bore a nest-hole in a tree, it is the same as saying to its owner, ‘See, this wood is dead; I am making use of what is otherwise useless to you and I will pay you

rent by protecting your other trees from harm. If you watch well, you will see how many hairy caterpillars, birch-lice, and wood-boring beetles I will kill in the year.' ”

“The gutter is all mended and painted now, so the Nuthatches can't nest there next season, and I guess they will be very sorry,” said Clary, who had taken her turn at looking out the window.

“Yes, the cornice has been mended, but Jacob has hollowed out a bit of hickory branch with the bark on it, and has fastened it firmly under the cornice with screws, so that when the birds look up their home in spring, they will find a new one so close to the old place that I hope they will move into it. In fact, those pictures in the workroom, of bird-homes made of hollowed-out logs, were designed especially to attract these tree-trunk birds and their little companions, the Chickadees, who, though they search the twigs for food, love the trunk also, and nest in a wood hollow like the Woodpeckers, themselves.”

“He's come back again, but he hasn't brought suet this time; it's some kind of a big seed that won't stay in the shingle crack, so he's pounding it in,” said Sarah, looking over Clary's shoulder and dropping her sewing, so interested was she in the movements of the bird. “There, he's going away and walking down the roof head first; I don't see why he doesn't slip and fall, the same as I did once when I tried to walk down the back stairs on my hands and knees head first, 'cause brother dared me.”

Gray Lady hurried to the window in time to see the Nuthatch give a final pound to the object that was wedged between the shingles. With her opera-glasses, she discovered that it was the empty shell of a beechnut.

“This little bird has been kind enough to write the meaning of its singular name here on the roof, evidently for the benefit of the Kind Hearts' Club, for I have been expecting that some of you would ask from what the term 'Nuthatch' came.”

“I thought it was a funny name, but then lots of birds' names seem queer, until you hear about them,” said Eliza Clausen.

“This bird is very fond of nuts,” continued Gray Lady, “not the very hard ones like butternuts, but the smaller acorns, chestnuts, and especially the little three-cornered beechnuts, with the sweet meat. Having no teeth to crack them like a squirrel, and not being able to use his beak for a nutcracker, he wedges the nut fast and then uses his sharp, strong bill for a hatchet and hatches the nut open; by this he has earned his name, 'Nuthatch.’

“There is another name that Goldilocks once gave him that is quite as good, and that would remind you of him wherever you hear it,—the

‘Upside-down’ bird!—for what other bird that you know can climb about as he does?”

“Woodpeckers do,” cried Tommy and Dave, together.

“Yes, and there’s another bird, little and brown and striped, that’s only here in winter and goes up and down all over the tree-trunks. I saw one this morning when I was coming up,” said Sarah, “and I guess Chickadees can go upside down, too, for I saw one hanging on to a fir cone yesterday, and it was head down.”

Gray Lady laughed. “You all doubtless *think* that all these other birds climb like the Nuthatch, but this is a case of wrong seeing, which is simply another form of not really paying attention; for not one of them walks upside down in the same way. Hear what one of our poets says of this:—

TO A NUTHATCH

Shrewd little hunter of woods all gray,
Whom I meet on my walk of a winter day,
You’re busy inspecting each cranny and hole
In the ragged bark of yon hickory bole;
You, intent on your task, and I, on the law
Of your wonderful head and gymnastic claw!

The Woodpecker well may despair of this feat—
Only the fly with you can compete.
So much is clear; but I fain would know
How you can so reckless and fearless go,
Head upward, head downward, all one to you,
Zenith and nadir the same to your view.

—EDITH M. THOMAS, in *Bird-Lore*.

Even the woodpeckers, supplied, as they are, with a reversed toe and a stiff, supporting tail, cannot compete with the Nuthatches in descending head first. The Woodpecker, in going down the trunk, finds itself in the same predicament as the bear,—its climbing tools work only one way. It is dependent on its stiff tail for support, and so must needs hop down backwards. The Creeper is still more hidebound in its habits, and its motto seems to be “Excelsior.” It begins at the foot of its ladder, and climbs

ever upwards. But the climbing ability of the Nuthatch is unlimited. It circles round the branches, or moves up, down, and around the trunks, apparently oblivious to the law of gravitation. Its readiness in descending topsyturvy is due, in part, to the fact that, as the quills of its tail are not stiff enough to afford support, it is obliged to depend upon its legs and feet. As it has on each foot three toes in front and only one behind, it reverses the position of one foot in going head downward, throwing it out sidewise and backward, so that the three long claws on the three front toes grip the bark and keep the bird from falling forward. The other foot is thrown forward, and thus, with feet far apart, the "little gymnast has a wide base beneath him." The Nuthatch not only straddles in going down the tree, but spreads its legs widely in going around the trunk, but bird artists generally seem to have overlooked this habit. The slightly upturned bill of the Nuthatch, and its habit of hanging upside down, give it an advantage when in the act of prying off scales of bark, under which many noxious insects are secreted.

—E. H. FORBUSH.

"The little, brown-striped bird that Sarah saw this morning, that somewhat resembles a Wren, is the Brown Creeper, for it creeps like a veritable feathered mouse. Though it is a true tree-trunk bird, in that it lives and nests as close to the heart of wood as possible, it has a slender needle-like bill for picking out insects; but it cannot bore wood with it, so it has to be content to make its home between the wood and the bark.

"This bird comes to us in middle New England only as a winter visitor, and well does it pay its way by eating grubs and insect eggs. It does not seem very shy, hereabouts, but in the nesting time it loves deep, silent forests and the cedar swamps of the North, and it is only in these places that its strange, sweet song may be heard, which is something that I have never heard successfully imitated or put into syllables, but Mr. Brewster, who is one of the Wise Men who knows, says it is like the soft sigh of the wind among the pine boughs.

"It is in these deep woods, also, that it nests. Discovering a tree where the bark is loose and yet does not strip off too easily, this little Creeper finds a nook of the right size, which he lines with soft bark, moss, or bits of wood so thoroughly decayed that it is like sponge, and in this bed are laid six or eight pretty little lavender eggs with brown spots wreathed about the larger end.

“When the Creeper comes to us, he has evidently forgotten home and family cares as well as his beautiful song, for he only favours us with a very scratchy squeak, as if a file at work on a wire and a couple of crossed tree branches were striving to see which could sing the better. But he is as busy as busy can be, and acts as if he were practising for a race in climbing the stairs of a lighthouse tower.

“At the bottom of the tree, he starts and goes up and around without a pause until he is two-thirds of the way up and the more frequent branches bother him. Then he stops a moment to rest, bracketing himself against the tree by the sharp point of his tail-feathers, which arrangement he possesses in common with the Chimney Swift and the Woodpeckers. Next, without warning, he flits with a backward tilt either to the base of another tree, or to the same one, and again begins to climb; so for him the Stair-climber would be a good name.

“He, also, when the trees are ice-plated, will come gladly to the lunch-counter, I know, for as a girl, long before I left home, this Creeper used to feed upon the scraps that I put upon my window-ledge; for, though people here have been feeding birds in winter this long while, it has only been since the Wise Men have told us of the particular needs of each bird family that we have been able to do it intelligently, and to the best advantage.

“There are some verses in my scrap-book about this tree-trunk bird, also, and it seems as if our poets were very fond of these songless birds who inspire them as much by their friendliness as the others do by melody. I hope that a couple of you will learn this to recite at Christmas. As there are four verses, each can learn two, and then alternate in repeating them.

THE LITTLE BROWN CREEPER

“Although I’m a bird, I give you my word
That seldom you’ll know me to fly;
For I have a notion about locomotion,
The little Brown Creeper am I,
Dear little Brown Creeper am I.

“Beginning below, I search as I go
The trunk and the limbs of a tree,
For a fly or a slug, a beetle or bug;
They’re better than candy for me,
Far better than candy for me.

“When people are nigh I’m apt to be shy,
And say to myself, ‘I will hide,’
Continue my creeping, but carefully keeping
Away on the opposite side,
Well around on the opposite side.

“Yet sometimes I peek while I play hide-and-peek
If you’re nice I shall wish to see you;
I’ll make a faint sound and come quite around
And creep like a mouse in full view,
Very much like a mouse to your view.”

—GARRETT NEWKIRK, in *Bird-Lore*.

“I guess I know what the other tree-trunk birds are, Gray Lady; they’re Woodpeckers,” said little Bobby, who seemed to have grown taller and broader ever since the day that Jacob had put a jack-knife in his hand and taught him to carve a wooden spoon, and he felt himself to be a full-fledged boy.

“Some Woodpeckers are pretty bad, though, ’cause grandpa caught a whole bunch of ’em early last spring sucking the juice out of the apple trees in the young orchard, and Uncle Bill, over the mountain, said they did the same to his sugar-maples. I saw what they did, myself, and you can see, too, if you stop up at our house some time when you are passing, for the marks are there,—little round holes, all in rows so as they make squares like the peppery holey plasters grandma wears for a lame back. They were awfully pretty birds, too—all red on the head and neck, and black and white speckled on top, and yellow underneath, and black across the front. I had a good chance to see it, ’cause grandpop was hoppin’ mad and tried to shoot them, and he did get one of the prettiest of them all. Some of them that were on the apple tree didn’t have so many colours in their feathers.”

“Perhaps those were females,” said Sarah Barnes.

“Yes, the paler ones are the females and lack the red throat and sometimes the red head-feathers, also,” said Gray Lady, “for this bird is called the Sapsucker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, because it has, as Bobby has

told us, the bad habit of not only boring into trees for insects, but sucking the sap as well, and when a number of them are found together, of course, they are likely to do harm. Still, to my mind, the very worst that they do is to give a bad name to the family of the most industrious insect-eating birds that we have.

“Even though this Sapsucker takes enough sap to have earned his title, he keeps up the family record as an insect eater, for he has a form of the pointed tongue with hooked bristles on the end, like all Woodpeckers, and this weapon acts both as a spear and trap to catch insects. Then, too, the Sapsucker is not a permanent resident, like many of his family, but nests early in the most northerly states and travels about during a great part of the year. As he can only suck sap during the growing season, and eats insects the year around, besides many wild berries—such as those of poison ivy, dogwood, etc.—that are of no use to us, I think he should be forgiven his sip of fresh spring sap, except where, as in the case of Bobby’s grandfather, he is caught in the act of hurting valuable trees.

THE SAPSUCKER

A bacchant for sweets is the Sapsucker free!
“The spring is here, and I’m thirsty!” quoth he:
“There’s good drink, and plenty stored up in this cave;
’Tis ready to broach!” quoth the Sapsucker brave.

A bacchant for sweets! “ ’Tis nectar I seek!”
And he raps on the tree with his sharp-whetted beak;
And he drinks, in the wild March wind and the sun,
The coveted drops, as they start and run.

He girdles the maple round and round—
’Tis heart-blood he drinks at each sweet wound;
And his bacchanal song is the tap-tap-tap,
That brings from the bark the clear-flowing sap.

—EDITH M. THOMAS, in *Bird-Lore*.

“How many kinds of Woodpeckers are there around here?” asked Eliza Clausen. “I didn’t know there was but one, the great big one, thick like a Pigeon, all speckled black and brown on top, with a red spot on his head and

a big white spot over his tail. We had two down at our farm this summer, and they lived in a hole in the old wild cherry, and they laid real nice white eggs, just as white as our Leghorns.”

“How’d you know they had white eggs?” asked Clary. “You can’t see into a Woodpecker’s hole.”

“No; I could reach in, though. I didn’t keep the egg, and only looked at it, and one of the old birds bit me something fierce. They’re real plucky birds, anyway, whatever they are called, for nobody seems to give them the same name. Mother says they are Pigeon Woodpeckers, and Dad calls them Yallerhammers, and both names fit pretty well.”

“There are half a dozen Woodpeckers to be found here, but the one that Eliza has described and the little black-and-white streaked Downy Woodpecker are the most familiar as well as the most useful of them all. As to Eliza’s Pigeon Woodpecker or Yellowhammer, the poor bird is weighed down by over thirty popular names,—Northern Flicker, Golden-winged Woodpecker, Wake-up, Gaffer, and Partridge Woodpecker being among them, though the Wise Men who settle these things for us have decided to call him merely ‘the Flicker.’

“In spite of the fact that, owing to his size and plumpness, the Flicker has been until recently allowed to be shot as a game-bird, he is our commonest Woodpecker, and spring would not be the same in this woodland region if we did not hear the roll of the drum, as he beats on a branch, that announces the coming of the feathered procession of migrants.

“Then, too, it is such a jolly bird, it calls out ‘wick, wick, wick,’ as soon as the ponds are free of ice, and this call he changes to ‘wicker-wicker’ as soon as the courting begins; at this time the birds show to the best advantage. The rival birds are perfectly friendly, but ‘they play curious antics, each trying to outdo the other in the display of his golden beauty, that he may thus attract and hold the attention of the female. There is no fighting, but, in its place, an exhibition of all the airs and graces that rival dandies can muster. Their extravagant, comical gestures, rapidly changing attitudes, and exuberant cries, all seem laughable to the onlooker, but evidently give pleasure to the birds.’—FORBUSH.



FLICKER

“The Flicker spends more time on the ground, itself, than the others of its family; and it has a slightly curved beak, but its tongue is very long, and the fine points on the end are set backward like the barbs of a fish-hook. Its most valuable work is as an ant-eater, and as one of the Wise Men says: ‘This bird is more of an ant-eater than a Woodpecker. It may be seen in fields and open spaces, in woods and orchards, where it strikes its long bill into ant-hills, and then thrusts out its still longer tongue coated with sticky saliva and licks up the out-rushing ants by the dozen. Many kinds of ants are decidedly harmful, as they attend, protect, and help to spread plant-root, or bark-lice, which are among the greatest enemies of garden plants, also shrubs and trees. These lice the ants keep as cows to nourish their young with green, sappy milk. Ants also infest houses and destroy timber.’

“Some people complain that the Flicker bores holes in the attics of houses, and also under eaves when searching for nesting-places, and also for winter shelter. This is true, doubtless, but as the Nuthatch told me that my cornice was decayed and needed mending, so the working of a Flicker about any building should be a warning to the owner to look and see if repairs are not needed.

“Our neighbour, Mr. Burwood, the florist, on the next hill, who, in spite of the fact that he must keep his eyes indoors on the splendid carnations and roses he grows, still has a glance or two to spare for the birds, told me, not long ago, this story of a Flicker. It was in early spring, and he was thinking of turning the water into a great covered tank, mounted on high trestles, that supplies water for the houses, that had been empty all winter; in fact, he had given the men orders so to do. Early in the morning he heard a vigorous tapping high up in the air, and tried in vain to locate it. The next morning, the same sound came, when he traced it to a Flicker, hammering away at one of the stout oaken staves of which the tank was made.

“Thinking that the bird was trying an impossible task, he continued about his work, but, after the hammering had continued for several days, his suspicions were aroused, the tank was examined, and two holes were found, drilled entirely through the stave, which, in spite of appearances, was unsound and would, probably, have given out without warning at some inconvenient season when repairs would have cut off the water supply.

“Always deal kindly with the Flicker, and never make the mistake of confusing it with the Sapsucker; look for the *white spot on the rump* and the *yellow wing-linings*, and you will know it, and, though the young of the year lack these marks at first, they have no yellow upon their breasts that can excuse you for making a mistake.

MR. FLICKER WRITES A LETTER

People:

Tell me where you scare up
Names for me like “Flicker,” “Yarup,”
“High-hole,” “Yucker,” “Yellowhammer”—
None of these are in my grammar—
“Piquebois jaune” (Woodpick yellow),
So the Creoles name a fellow.
Others call me “Golden-wings,”
“Clape,” and twenty other things
That I never half remember,
Any summer till September.

Many names and frequent mention
Show that I receive attention,
And the honour that is due me;
But if you would interview me
Call me any name you please,
I’m “at home” among the trees.
Yet I never cease my labours
To receive my nearest neighbours,
And ’twill be your best enjoyment
Just to view me at employment.

I’m the friend of every sower,
Useful to the orchard grower,
Helping many a plant and tree
From its enemies to free—
They are always food for me.
And I like dessert in reason,
Just a bit of fruit in season,
But my *delicacy* is *ants*,
Stump or hill inhabitants;
Thrusting in my sticky tongue,
So I take them, old and young.

Surely, we have found the best
Place wherein to make our nest
Tunnel bored within a tree,
Smooth and clean as it can be,
Smallest at the door,
Curving wider toward the floor,
Every year we make a new one,
Freshly bore another true one;
Other birds, you understand,
Use our old ones, second-hand—
Occupying free of rent,
They are very well content.

To my wife I quite defer,
I am most polite to her,
Bowling while I say, “kee-cher.”
Eggs we number five to nine,
Pearly white with finish fine.
On our nest we sit by turns,
So each one a living earns;
Though I think I sit the better,
When she wishes to, I let 'er!

FLICKER.

—GARRETT NEWKIRK, in *Bird-Lore*.

“Then, last and least in size, but chief in importance among the tree-trunk birds, come the little Downy Woodpeckers, only as big as the Tree-sparrow or Winter Chippy, as it is called, plump, all neatly patterned in black and white, a scarlet band on the back of the neck, while Mrs. Downy and the children lack even this bit of colour. You cannot mistake this Woodpecker for any other, for his big brother the Hairy Woodpecker, who has somewhat similar markings, is almost as big as a Robin, besides being a more timid bird of the woods that does not come about houses like the confiding and cheerful Downy. The Hairy Woodpecker has a more harsh and screaming call-note than the clear, sharp cry of the Downy. In watching birds, you should remember to keep the ears open and trained to hearing as well as the eye to seeing, as a bird that keeps too far away for the sight may oftentimes be recognized by its note.



F. M. Chapman, Photo.

DOWNY WOODPECKER

“The Downy’s life is spent in the tree-trunks and hollow limbs, where he merely chisels his doorway large enough, but with not a bit to spare, and the hole within is nicely finished with a few soft chips by way of a bed for the eggs; nice white eggs like all the Woodpeckers, and this would seem to prove that thrifty Nature, knowing that the eggs would be hidden in the dark nesting-hole, did not think it necessary to decorate them for their better protection as she does the eggs laid in open nests.

“To name the injurious insects, moths, and caterpillars our little Downy eats would require a long list, but, as he is a lover of orchards in spring and summer, we may mention the apple-tree borer as one against whom he wages war, and here, by his delicate sense of touch, he locates the larvæ of the codling-moth. ‘Every stroke with which he knocks at the door of an insect’s retreat sounds the crack of doom. He pierces the bark with his beak, then with his barbed tongue drags forth an insect, and moves on to tap a last summons on the door of the next in line.’

“Boring beetles, bark beetles, weevils, caterpillars, ants, and plant-lice, the imagoes of night-moths, as well as the eggs of many insects, are also on his bill of fare. Sometimes he has been accused of boring holes for sap-

sucking, but this is disproven; where a hole exists it is because insect prey, in one of its many forms, hide beneath.

“Fortunately, we have many families of the little Downy in the old orchard, and the fact that they are good patrons of Goldilocks’ lunch-counter does not seem to make them relax their vigilance about the apple trees, so that I wonder if it may not be their care, together with the other tree-trunk birds, to which we owe the keeping of the trees, during the ten long years they have been neglected by man. For, though the trees in Birdland are old, gnarled, and vine-draped, yet they are neither worm-eaten nor unsightly, but merely picturesque, and from the birds’ point of view cosy and homelike.

“Now, boys, back into the workroom, and if any one of you has not made a house for a tree-trunk bird, I am sure that he will begin one to-day.”

[2] These fine charts may be purchased from the Audubon Society, State of Massachusetts.

XIV

FOUR NOTABLES

Grouse, Quail, Woodcock, and the Wood Duck

The Saturday before Thanksgiving Tommy Todd came trudging up the road toward "the General's," with an extremely contented expression on a face that was usually more than cheerful, while he kept turning his head to admire something that he carried in his right hand, twisting and swinging it as he walked. The something was a beautiful male Ruffed Grouse, or Partridge, as it is commonly called, in all the bravery of its glossy neck-ruff and tail that when spread looks like that of a miniature Wild Turkey.

Together with the Grouse was a pair of Quail in rich, brown autumn coats and snowy throats that excel those of the White-throated Sparrow itself. Tommy's father and his elder brother Joe, the Fair Meadows blacksmith, had taken two "days off," and gone a-hunting up to the upland brush-country beyond the river woods, and these birds, a part of the result, were a gift for Gray Lady and Goldilocks. Not only were the birds in fine condition, but they were nicely tied together with some sprays of trailing ground-pine and a little tuft of pungent wintergreen with its coral berries.

Gray Lady took the birds, and as she thanked Tommy for them, glanced toward Goldilocks, who sat in the library window watching for the children to come. When the young girl saw the birds, she gave an exclamation, half of pleasure at their plumage, half of sorrow that they were dead, for to keep everything alive and as happy as possible was her inherent nature. But she knew that these were game- or "chicken-birds," as she had once called them when a mere baby, whose fate was to be eaten, and that Tommy's father had only followed a legitimate desire for outdoor life and its sports when he had tramped more than thirty miles for the hunting. So she merely said, as she smoothed the beautifully shaded feathers, "I wish the Kind Hearts' Club could do something to make game-birds have a *very* comfortable, good time, the part of the year when they are not hunted; do you think we could, mother? For I don't think that this shy kind of bird will come to the lunch-counter, and I've been wondering lately what they find to eat in such cold winters as the last. Miss Wilde has told me that for weeks last winter the snow was so deep that in going, from where she lived, a mile to school, she never even saw a fence top, so if game-birds 'feed chiefly on the ground

after the manner of barnyard fowls, roosting in low trees and bushes,' as one of my books says, I do not see why they do not freeze and starve."

"That's what Pop and Grand'ther and Joe were talking about last night," said Tommy; "they said that they travelled over miles of stubble-fields and brush-lots where there used to be lots of birds, and now, in spite of the laws in our place that are down on pot-hunters and won't let game be sold or carried away, and our having a keen county warden, the birds seem to be melting away just the same."



Dr. C. K. Hodge, Photo.

RUFFED GROUSE

“What did your father think was the reason?” asked Gray Lady, for she remembered as a young girl that the General used to say, “Get a farmer interested in a subject enough to make him really think, and you cannot get better advice.”

“Pop said all these new stiff-edged stone roads that are pushing out the dirt and grass lanes may be mighty fine for automobiles and all the other dust-raisers, but they’re poor trash for horses’ feet and game-birds, ’cause the brush along the old roads both sides of the fences made good cover and kept the snow, when it drifted, sort of loose, so that the birds could get in and out to look for food. But when everything is trimmed smooth, the snow lies flat and hard and crusty, and the birds can’t get under to grub for food, and if they’re under and it freezes on top of ’em, they can’t get out.

“Grand’ther said that was so, but he reckoned there wasn’t so much for the game-birds to eat, anyhow, because folks that used to raise just so many acres of rye and wheat and oats and buckwheat had mostly given it up and put their land down to meadows for hay, because that is the only crop that there is a sure market for everywhere. Then Grand’ther said that, between freezing and starving, and what was left being shot down close, it’s a wonder there’s any Grouse left, or Bob-whites either.”

“There, Goldilocks, you have your answer as to what the Kind Hearts’ Club can do to make these food-birds comfortable during the ten months of the year (in this state, Connecticut), when they may roam without fear of hunting by honest sportsmen. The dishonest hunters and pot-hunters, who do not care for law and order, we must watch and bring to justice, just as we do any other class of criminals.

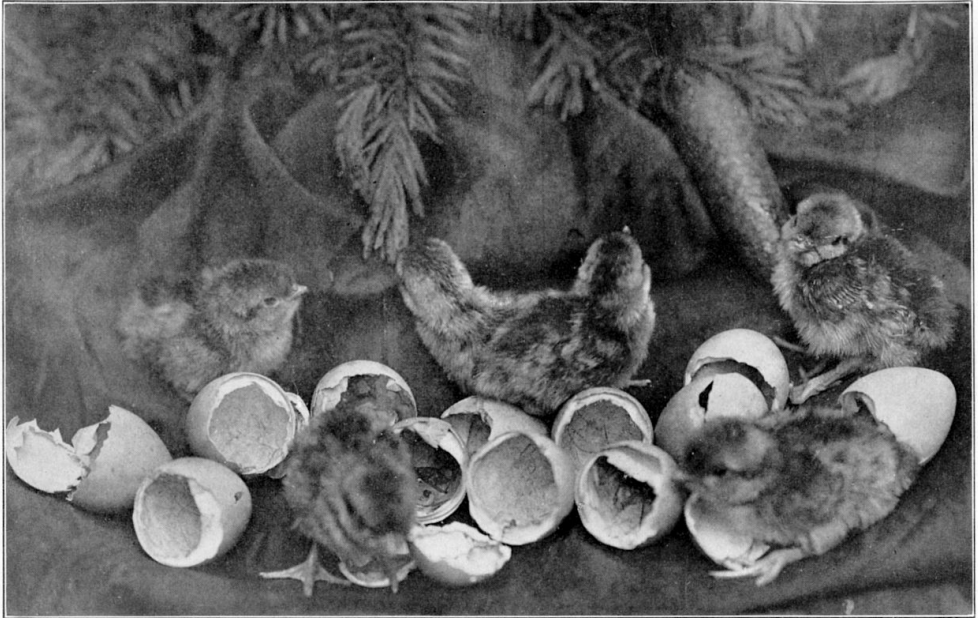
“Some very good people are extremely careless about this, and would arrest a hungry man for stealing a bottle of milk from a doorstep, and yet even buy game from poachers whom they knew had taken it against the law; doing this is a far more serious offence, for one of our Wise Men has said that wild birds are not the property of the individual, but of the Commonwealth.”

“I wish these birds need never be shot; don’t you?” said Sarah Barnes. “They are much prettier than some song-birds, and I’m sure that Bob-white’s call is just as pleasant to hear as a song.”

“Yes, Sarah, I should like to protect the game-birds also, unless in cases where people, living away from places where other food can be had, are really hungry. But there are two sides to this question, and the Kind Hearts’ Club must always try to look at both, so as to be sure that in being just to one, the other may not be misjudged. All over the country there are hundreds of men who, for nearly all the year, are tied to desks in offices, and their heads are weary and their bodies cramped. The love of hunting is born in

man, probably an inheritance from his ancestors, who hunted for their living, just as the bird inherits the instincts of migration from its parents and performs the journeys even when there is no need.

“This love of hunting leads the men out into the woods for a few weeks, or even days, each year, and, besides the hunting, they meet Nature face to face, and, whether they know it or not, come back better able to take up the work of life, which is a harder struggle as the world gets older and older.



Dr. C. K. Hodge, Photo.

JUST OUT
(Chicks of Domesticated Ruffed Grouse)

“Some people may not agree with me, but I had a good warm-hearted father, who gave his life in the cause of humanity; yet he loved fair hunting, and Goldilocks’ father did, also. So I think that the Kind Hearts’ Club will not only be doing the game-bird a service, but man also, if it can make and carry out a plan to feed and shelter these birds, even in the space of Fair Meadows township.

“I have been talking this over with some men who know the haunts of these birds, and next month, if the big boys join us, I will tell you my plan; for it will need sturdy fellows to carry it out, though you can all help.”

“Where do the Grouse nest, in bushes or on the ground?” asked Dave; “I’ve never seen one, though I’ve found a Woodcock’s nest, and touched the bird on it, she was so tame.”

“They make their nest on the ground, Dave,” said Gray Lady; “not much of a nest, merely a few leaves scratched together in a tree hollow. Now we have these real birds here (for later I know that Tommy will let me share them with Miss Wilde’s mother, who has been so ill, and her appetite needs tempting), let us spend the morning with the game-birds; Dave shall tell us of his Woodcock’s nest, and I have many little bits in the scrap-book about the others, besides remembrances of my own.

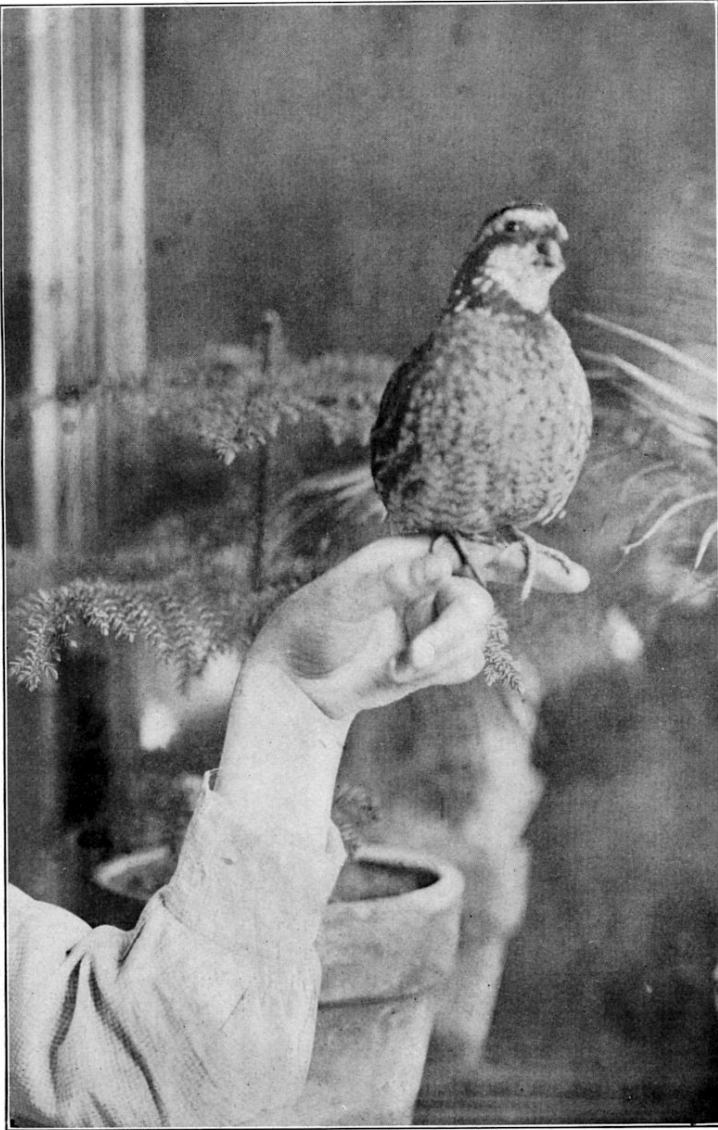
“Children, can you realize that when I was a girl of twelve, I could stand of a May morn, by the old orchard bars, where the Birdland gate is now, and hear twenty or thirty Bob-whites calling all the way across the fields and brush-lots, until the Ridge shut off the sound?”

BOB-WHITE

“I own the country hereabout,” says Bob-white;
“At early morn I gayly shout, ‘I’m Bob-white!’
From stubble-field and stake-rail fence
You hear me call without offence,
‘I’m Bob-white! Bob-white!’
Sometimes I think I’ll nevermore say Bob-white;
It often gives me quite away, does Bob-white;
And mate and I, and our young brood,
When separate, wandering through the wood,
Are killed by sportsmen I invite
By my clear voice—‘Bob-white! Bob-white!’
Still, don’t you find I’m out of sight
While I am saying ‘Bob-white, Bob-white?’”

—CHARLES C. MARBLE.

“They rested in the orchard bushes and the edge of brush-lots, so that I was as sure of seeing broods of little Quail as of our own little barnyard chicks. In the autumn they seemed to know about the hunting as soon as a gun was fired in the distance; then they grew shy, but by Christmas the survivors, and they were many, would come about the hay-barns for food as familiarly as the tree-trunk birds come to the lunch-counter, and I have seen them eating cracked corn with the fowls in the barnyard.



Dr. C. K. Hodge, Photo.

DOMESTICATED BOB-WHITE CALLING

“Not only is Bob-white a beautiful object in the landscape, when he sits on a fence top overlooking the fields, but his voice is a delight to the ear, when he either tells his own name, or gives the beseeching ‘covey call,’ in autumn, to gather his scattered flock for the night. Then, on the more useful or material side of the question, not only is his flesh good for food, but, all through the year, he is one of the farmer’s good friends, gleaning, day in and

day out, besides the waste grain that he loves, weed seeds, harmful beetles, such as the cucumber beetle, potato and squash bugs, leaf beetles, the dreaded weevils, and the click beetles, that are wire worms in a further stage of their development.

“Ah me, but poor Bob-white, as he calls himself (bringing out the words with peculiar jerks of the head), works for his living, and when you think of the dangers he braves from foxes and snakes, rats and weasels, birds of prey with wings, and the two-legged birds of prey,—the poachers,—does it not seem that where his tribe is growing swiftly less, he should not only be fed and sheltered, but, for a term of years, there should be no open season, until this fertile and vigorous bird should again increase and be able to hold its own against even fair hunting? If the Quail needs this protection, doubly so does the Ruffed Grouse, who is larger and can with greater difficulty conceal himself.

PARTRIDGES

(Ruffed Grouse)

Under the alders, along the brooks,
Under the hemlocks, along the hill,
Spreading their plumage with furtive looks,
Daintily pecking the leaves at will;
Whir! and they float from the startled sight—
And the forest is silent, the air is still.

Crushing the leaves 'neath our careless feet,
Snapping the twigs with a heavy tread,
Dreamy October is late and sweet,
And stooping we gather a blossom dead;
Boom! and our heart has a thunderous beat
As the gray apparition flits overhead.

—ALONZO TEALL WORDEN.

“I will read you his story, written by a Wise Man of Massachusetts who knows the game-birds from all sides.”

“The Ruffed Grouse, the ‘King of American game-birds,’ was abundant in all our woods, and was often seen in fields and orchards, until its numbers were decimated by the gunner and the survivors driven to the cover of the pines. The characteristic startling roar of its wings, with which it starts away when flushed from the ground, and its habit of drumming on a log, have been often described. The speed with which the wings are beaten in drumming makes it impossible for the human eye to follow them and make sure whether they strike anything or not. Naturalists, after long discussion, had come to believe that the so-called ‘drumming,’ of the Ruffed Grouse was caused by the bird beating the air with its wings, as described by Mr. William Brewster; but now comes Dr. C. F. Hodge and reopens the controversy by exhibiting a series of photographs, which seem to show that the bird, in drumming, strikes the contour feathers of the body. Strange as it may seem, there are many people who often take outings in the country, yet have never heard the drumming of this bird. This tattoo is most common in late winter and early spring, but may be heard occasionally in summer and not uncommonly in fall. While sounded oftenest during the day, it may fall on the ear at any hour of the night. In making it, the bird usually stands very erect on a hollow log or stump, with head held high and ruffs erected and spread, and, raising its wings, strikes downward and forward. The sound produced is a muffled boom or thump. It begins with a few slow beats, growing gradually quicker, and ends in a rolling, accelerated tattoo. It has a ventriloquial property. Sometimes, when one is very close to the bird, the drumming seems almost soundless; at other times it sounds much louder at a distance, as if, through some principle of acoustics, it were most distinctly audible at a certain radius from the bird. It is the bird’s best expression of its abounding vigour and virility, and signifies that the drummer is ready for love or war.

“The female alone understands the task of incubation and the care of the young. Once, however, when I came upon a young brood, the agonized cry of the distressed mother attracted a fine cock bird. He raised all his feathers and, with ruffs and tail spread, strutted up to within a rod of my position, seemingly almost as much concerned as the female, but not coming quite so near. The hen sometimes struts forward toward the intruder in a similar manner, when surprised while with her young. She can raise her ruffs and strut exactly like the cock.

“The Grouse has so many enemies that it seems remarkable how it can escape them, nesting as it does on the ground. Instances are on record, however, where birds, that probably have been much persecuted, have learned to deposit their eggs in old nests of Hawks or Crows, in tall trees. Whenever the mother bird leaves the nest, the eggs are easily seen, and, while she sits, it would seem impossible for her whereabouts to remain a secret to the keen-scented prowlers of the woods. But her colours blend so perfectly with those of the dead leaves on the forest floor, and she sits so closely, and remains so motionless among the shadows, that she escapes the sharp-eyed Hawk. She gives out so little scent that the dog, skunk, or fox passes quite near, unnoticing.

“The Grouse does not naturally fear man; more than once, in the wilderness of the northwest, a single bird has walked up to within a few feet of me. They will sit on limbs just above one’s head, almost within reach, and regard one curiously, but without much alarm. Usually, in Massachusetts, when a human being comes near the nest, the mother bird whirs loudly away. She has well learned the fear of man; but, in a place where no shooting was permitted, a large gang of men were cutting under-brush, while a Partridge, sitting there, remained quietly on her nest as the men worked noisily all about her. Another bird, that nested beside a woods road, along which I walked daily, at first would fly before I had come within a rod of her; but later she became confiding enough to sit on her nest while six persons passed close beside her. Evidently the bird’s facility in concealing her nest consists in sitting close and keeping her eggs well covered. Her apparent faith in her invisibility is overcome only by her fear of man or her dread of the fox. When the fox is seen approaching directly toward her, she bristles up and flies at him, in the attempt to frighten him with the sudden roar of her wings and the impetuosity of her attack; but Reynard, although at first taken aback, cannot always be deceived by such tricks; and the poor bird, in her anxiety to defend her nest, only betrays its whereabouts. Probably, however, the fox rarely finds her nest, unless he happens to blunder directly into it.



Dr. C. K. Hodge, Photo.

GROUSE, SHOWING RUFF AND TAIL

“During the fall the Grouse keep together in small flocks. Sometimes a dozen birds may be found around some favourite grape-vine or apple tree, but they are usually so harried and scattered by gunners that toward winter the old birds may sometimes be found alone.

“As winter approaches, this hardy bird puts on its ‘snow-shoes,’ which consist of a fringe of horny processes or pectinations that grow out along each toe, and help to distribute the weight of the bird over a larger surface, and so allow it to walk over snows into which a bird not so provided would sink deeply. Its digestion must resemble that of the famous Ostrich, as broken twigs and dry leaves are ground up in its mill. It is a hard winter that will starve the Grouse. A pair spent many winter nights in a little cave in the rocky walls of an old quarry. Sumacs grew there and many rank weeds. The birds lived well on sumac berries, weed seeds, and buds.

“Sometimes, but perhaps rarely, these birds are imprisoned under the snow by the icy crust which forms in cold weather

following a rain, but usually they are vigorous enough to find a way out, somewhere. The Grouse is perfectly at home beneath the snow; it will dive into it to escape a Hawk, and can move rapidly about beneath the surface and burst out again in rapid flight at some unexpected place.

“The Ruffed Grouse is a bird of the woodland, and though useful in the woods, it sometimes does some injury in the orchard, by removing too many buds from a single tree. In winter and early spring, when other food is buried by the snow, and hard to obtain, the Grouse lives largely on the buds and green twigs of trees; but, as spring advances, insects form a considerable part of the food. The young feed very largely on insects, including many very destructive species.”

—E. H. FORBUSH, in *Useful Birds and Their Protection*.

THE RUFFED GROUSE

When the pallid sun has vanished
Under Osceola's ledges,
When the lengthening shadows mingle
In a sombre sea of twilight,
From the hemlocks in the hollow
Swift emerging comes the Partridge;
Not a sound betrays her starting,
Not a sound betrays her lighting
In the birches by the wayside,
In her favoured place for budding.
When the twilight turns to darkness,
When the fox's bark is sounding,
From her buds the Partridge hastens,
Seeks the soft snow by the hazels,
Burrows in its sheltering masses,
Burrows where no Owl can find her.

—FRANK BOLLES.

“You all know the path that runs by the grist-mill and up through the river woods. In spring, I could almost count upon seeing a Grouse or two

when I took that walk, and very early, of September and October mornings, I have seen the Woodcock probing, with their long, sensitive, pointed bills, with which they can feel like fingers, in the muddy ground back of the river woods for the worms, and such like, upon which they feed. It was my father, himself, who took me one evening, even though it was bedtime, to these same woods to hear the Woodcock's courting dance and song."

"I didn't know any game-birds could sing," said Tommy.

"They are not classed with song-birds, and yet in courting time, most birds have some sort of musical speech in addition to their call-notes; you know that even Crows sometimes succeed in singing. But this love-song varies with the individual bird more than it does with the birds that are real vocalists.

"The Woodcock feed chiefly at dawn and twilight, and it is easy to tell where they have been by the little holes in the mud left by the bill. This spring night father took me to the wood edge, and drew me to him, to keep me still while we waited—for what? I was soon to know.

"Presently a half-musical cry came out of the gathering darkness, and was repeated and echoed by several others. Then a rush, as if a bird had flung himself into the air and opened his wings at the same time; next, a whirring sound as the bird circled skyward and vanished, his notes falling behind him, but before I realized what was going on, the bird dropped straight as a Hawk, balanced on his toes, gave a low, musical cry, and began again; for thus it is that the Woodcock tries to please and win his mate.

THE WOODCOCK'S WOOING

Peent, -peent, -peent, -peent,
From the thick grass on the hill;
Peent, -peent, -peent, -peent,
At eve when the world is still.

Then a sudden whistle of whirring wings,—
A rush to the upper air,—
And a rain of maddening music falls
From the whole sky,—everywhere!

—WINIFRED BALLARD BLAKE in *Bird-Lore*.

“Dave, please tell us about the bird that you saw on the nest,” said Gray Lady, “and how you came to find it.”

“Half a dozen of us went out to hunt for May-flowers (Trailing Arbutus) one Wednesday along the first part of April last year. Miss Wilde thought Zella had measles, and school was closed two days, but doctor found it was only a cold and eating too much sausage meat and sweet pickles, and so they broke out, and he gave her rhubarb.” (Dave, having been asked to tell all about it, was bound to omit no detail.)

“The others of our crowd stayed along by the path that runs through the wood, where you saw the birds dance, because there are black snakes through the brush there that begin to crawl out to sun in April, and the girls were scared of them.

“I went on ahead a little piece, and turned up a side hill where there was an old rail fence that divides our woods from the Cobbs’ piece. Right in front of me I found a bully patch of May-flowers, and I sat down and began cutting them with my knife (‘cause they have wiry sort of stems) and made them in a nice even bunch, when something ahead sort of made me keep my eyes glued to it. It was under the slant of the lowest fence rail. I thought it was a striped snake curled up round, at first, because I felt eyes were looking at me, though it was too dark to see them, at first. Did you ever have that feeling, Gray Lady?”

“Yes, I have had it, Dave, and I know what a strange sensation it is. The last time I had it I felt no better when I saw the eyes; in fact, little cold shivers went all over, for I was far away from here, and the eyes were those of a rattlesnake that was coiled up, amid the stones of a ledge, where I was gathering some rare wild flowers.”

“Oh, what *did* you do?” cried all the children, together.

“I backed away as fast as I could, keeping my eyes upon the snake, until I was at a safe distance, where he could not spring at me, and then I very foolishly ran! What did you do, Dave?”

“I crept up nearer until I got a good look, and then I saw that it was a bird. It was sitting ever so still, with its head well down on its shoulders and its long beak close to its breast. It had queer, big eyes set up on top of its head, and round like a frog’s, not like any other bird that I know of.”

“The eyes of the Woodcock and its cousins, the Snipe, are set in this way, so that, when they are boring in the mud for food, they can keep watch behind them as well as in front,” said Gray Lady.

“First, I thought the bird was dead, it kept so still,” continued Dave, “but I could see its breast raised a little with its breathing.”

“If it had been dead, its eyes would have been closed,” said Gray Lady. “It is one of the many mysterious and unaccountable facts about a bird, that

it is the only animal that closes its own eyes when death touches it.”

“It wasn’t afraid, so I thought that I would just smooth its feathers,” said Dave. “I did, and it didn’t fly, only just puffed up a little, so I thought I would lift it very carefully to see if there were any eggs under it, and there were four nice, sort of round, light, brown eggs, the colour that our Plymouth Rocks lay, only mottled. But the bird didn’t like to be lifted, and she sort of growled inside, the way a hen does, so I set her down and went away.”

“That was a very pleasant experience of yours, Dave, and shows how tame game-birds will become if they are kindly treated. This Woodcock has an advantage over the Grouse and Bob-white, his cousin, because it travels South in winter and constantly shifts its feeding-places, but it suffers from other dangers: it is hunted in all the states through which it passes, and the eggs are large enough to be very attractive, not only to foxes and all the gnawing creatures of the woods, but to people as well. If that nest and eggs had been seen by one of those foreign-born poachers who come here thinking that everything they find out-of-doors, and they can pocket, belongs to them, the poor Woodcock would have lost her entire brood and perhaps her own life as well.



E. Van Alterna, Photo.

WOODCOCK ON NEST

“These three land-birds, together with a number of wild ducks, that live some on fresh and some near salt water, travelling North and South according to season, are the legitimate game-birds of the country. Of the wild ducks, the most of these breed in the far North, and are hunted in their migrations. If this hunting is done fairly, as the law prescribes, and the birds are not chased and shot at from moving boats, or with repeating guns, or when startled from their sleep with flashing lights, they seem able to hold their own. Humanity, however, demands that they should not be hunted on their spring journeys on the way to their nesting-haunts and when they may have already chosen mates.

“One Duck there is, however, of exquisite plumage, gentle disposition, and quiet, domestic habits, nesting about inland ponds and streams, in the inhabited parts of the United States, from Florida up to Hudson Bay, that is in danger of swift extinction if the protection given song-birds is not extended to it. This is the Wood Duck, called in Latin ‘*Aix Sponsa*’—‘Bridal Duck’—from the fact that the beauty of his plumage was fit for a bridal garment.

“Look at that bird, mounted on a mossy stump, in that case by the window. When I was a girl, I have seen a half-dozen pairs in the pond above the grist-mill, and I knew as surely where I could always find a pair nesting as where I could find a Robin or Song Sparrow, but now it is fast becoming a bird of the past, only to be seen in pictures. Why is this? The reasons are many, and some, such as the settlement of the country, and the draining of ponds and waterways, and the cutting down of river brush, cannot be helped.

“The Wood Duck nests in a tree hole, and, when the young are able to leave the nest, the parents hold them in their bills and carry them to the ground in somewhat the way in which cats remove their kittens from place to place. Consequently, if the lumber is cleared, and no suitable trees are left, what is this Duck to do? He cannot take to the chimneys as the Swifts have. Still, this Duck, whose beauty alone is a sufficient and patriotic reason for saving him to his country, might adapt his nesting to other conditions if it could be protected as the Grouse, Quail, and Woodcock are in New England, or, better yet, not be hunted in any way for a number of years, so that the Wood Ducks, wherever located, should have, a chance to increase once more and reestablish themselves.



National Association of Audubon Societies

WOOD DUCK

Order—ANSERES Family—ANATIDÆ
Genus—AIX Species—SPONSA

“For, when we come to look closely at the matter, there is really no fair hunting, for the killing inventions of man—the magazine guns, etc.—are on the increase, while the power of poor game-birds to protect themselves lessens both on land and water. Think of it, in some states there are no laws to protect this bird, even in summer, and, as Wood Ducks are fond of their nesting-places, and are very unsuspecting birds, it often happens that an entire family is killed the moment the young are large enough to furnish the pitiful thing, in this case, that is called ‘sport.’

“As it happens, the woods on this side of the river from above the pond to the sawmill belong to the General’s farm, and, Tommy and Dave, the water right on the other side belongs to your fathers.

“Will you not ask them if they will help me to protect their birds, if I can get half a dozen pairs from one of the Wise Men who is trying to reestablish them in their old haunts?

“The Grouse and Quail are growing friendly again under protection, and I am in hopes that we may have a drummer, as well as a fifer and his family, in the orchard and near-by woods next spring.

“There are many hollow willows near the upper pond like the ones in which the Wood Ducks used to nest. If these are left, the ducks will soon become attached to them, and, if they escape peril elsewhere, for this Duck’s greatest danger is in the vicinity of home, then we shall all have a chance, possibly, some day to see a sight that ever the Wise Men argue about,—the parent Duck bringing her young from the tree hole to take their first swim!”

The boys promised to ask the question, and Tommy reported at the schoolhouse, the next Friday, that “grandpa thinks it would be just bully to have Wood Ducks again, and he’ll sit round the pond, with a shot-gun, all he’s able, to keep folks away. He says he’s seen the old ones yank the young, one by one, right out of the nest by the wing, and set ’em on the ground, and when they were all down, lead ’em to the water. And once, when the tree was close over the pond, the old bird flew down and set ’em right on the water. He says weasels and water-rats and snakes and snapping-turtles help kill off the ducklings, because until they get big enough to fly they’ve got no way of lighting-out.” All of which goes to prove that Tommy Todd had inherited some of his keenness of eye in “watching out” for the doings of wild things.

“There are others that are classed with game-birds that will surely everywhere be stricken from the list some day, and put with those birds that we wish to cherish at all seasons, and for whom there should be no hunting, either fair or foul.

“These birds, even though a couple of them are cousins to the Woodcock, are so small of body (their long wing in flight giving a deceptive idea of their size) that their flesh is of no account, save to either the starving, who are bound by no laws, or the glutton seeking for an article of food to whet a jaded palate, like the old emperors of Rome who ate nightingale’s tongues, forsooth! We do not wish to breed or encourage such barbarians in our America. At the same time, these birds have great value in their insect-eating capacity.”

“Pop says they always used to shoot Meadowlarks when he was a boy, and up to not very long ago,” said Tommy, “and Yellowhammers and Pigeons and Doves and Robins, too, but now nobody dares, except on the sly. Anyway, the Wild Pigeons grandfather tells of are all gone, and I’ve only seen a couple of Doves this year.”

“The birds you speak of are now protected by law, here in Connecticut,” said Gray Lady, “though in some states they are not, but the game-birds I mean are the little Killdeer Plover, and the Upland and other small Plovers, together with the Sandpipers, both of fresh and salt water.”

XV GAME-BIRDS?

*The plea of the Meadowlark, Mourning Dove, Sandpiper, Plovers, and
Bobolink, the Masquerader*

“SPARE US, PLEASE! WE ARE TOO SMALL FOR FOOD.”

“You, children, who live with green fields about you, all know the Meadowlark by sight and sound, even if you never have had the curiosity to learn its name. It is the bird seen walking in old fields and lowlands. In size it is a little larger than a Robin, with a rather flat head and long, stout bill, its back speckled and streaked with brown and black, and a beautiful yellow throat and breast crossed by a crescent of black. When the bird is on the ground, if you came behind it, at a distance, you might think it a Flicker, but the moment it takes to the air with a whirring flight, the white feathers at the outside of the tail show plainly, and name it Meadowlark, just as the white rump names the Flicker.

“Then, you know its voice, that sometimes drops from a tree, sometimes rises from the grass, that Mr. Burroughs says calls, ‘Spring o’ the year—Spring o’ the year.’ The notes are clear as a flute, and, beautiful as our Meadowlark’s song is, that of his brother, the Prairie Lark, is still more melodious, and I shall never forget the first spring morning that I heard it from the border of one of those endless grain-fields that roll on to meet the sky like a glistening green sea with its waters stirred by the breeze.

“The Meadowlark is certainly a thing of beauty, but, at the same time, its greater service to man is its usefulness; not as a bit of meat, no matter how plump it may grow, but as the untiring guardian of the fields, where it spends its life and makes its nest home in a grass tussock. For this bird, of the eastern United States, is with us here in Southern New England, and southward, all the year, and those flocks that migrate do not leave until late fall, and are back again by the middle of March, while the Prairie Lark covers the western part of the country, as permanent warden of the meadow and hayfields. All the year they keep at work; from March to December insect food is the chief part of the diet; insects that are the farmer’s bane,—grasshoppers, cutworms, sow-bugs, ticks, weevils, plant-lice, and the click-beetle (the grown-up wire worm) being but a few of them. The remaining

months, December, January, and February, insects failing, waste grain is eaten, and weed seeds, as pigeon grass, rag and smart weed, and black mustard.



MEADOWLARK

“Happily for us, this beautiful bird is protected in all the New England and Middle States, but, if we have friends who live in Florida, North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana and Tennessee, Missouri and Idaho, where the Larks are only considered as food, let us beg them to tell every one of this and the Prairie Lark’s merits, so that they may be placed on the list of the protected. And when you hear any one say that the Meadowlark is by rights a game-bird, say as politely as may be, but very firmly, ‘No; it is *not!* At least, not in staunch, common-sensed New England!’

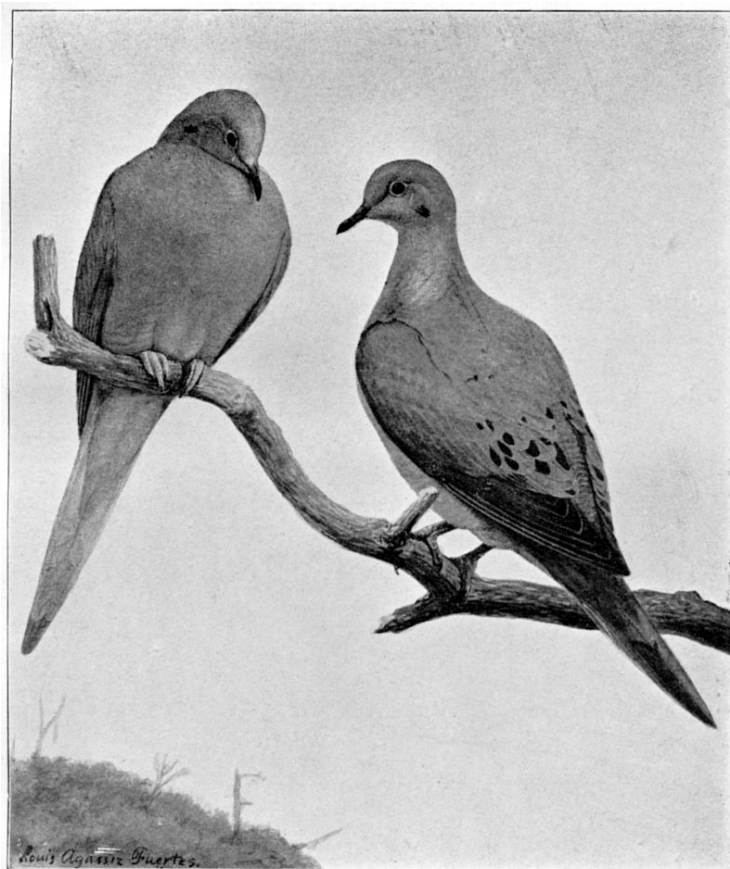
The Mourning Dove

“Soft of plumage, gentle, and almost sad of voice is the Mourning Dove, the grayish brown bird with metallic lustres, whose name is taken from its plaintive accents. Its comings and goings are silent, and, in spite of its size, for it is as large as the Meadowlark, if it was not for its cooing, heard early in the morning, we should seldom know of its presence, for its flight is noiseless, and it chooses trees in secluded places for the little loose bunch of sticks that forms its nest.

“Formerly, this Dove, together with its cousin, the Passenger Pigeon, were everywhere to be found, while the Passenger Pigeon, a bird of fine flesh, was so plentiful as to be almost a staple article of food, and wagons loaded with birds were peddled through city streets. With the wastefulness of a people coming to a new and liberal country, the birds were often shot down in their roosts, from pure wantonness, and left to decay upon the ground, so that now the Passenger Pigeon and the wild buffalo have gone to the happy animal-country, where there is no hunting, together,—two valuable animals practically extinct,—and North America is the poorer for its thoughtlessness.

“With this warning before us, the Kind Hearts’, of which there are plenty everywhere, whether they are banded into clubs or not, should strive to have this gentle, harmless life protected.

“‘Why?’ says the farmer, in the states that refuse protection. ‘Maybe it doesn’t do any harm, but what good can it do that can make up to me for not eating it?’ To such a man say this: The Mourning Dove is a consumer of evil weeds, and its presence in flocks will lessen his labour and give his hoe arm a rest; that the crop of a dove, examined by the Department of Agriculture in Washington, was found to hold 9200 seeds of noxious weeds! *Not to have these weeds grow* would give the farmer, or his boy, time for a half holiday, wherein to go clamming or berry picking!



MOURNING DOVES

“Now we have some little birds whose names are still on the list of food- or game-birds, and I should like to see them wiped from it forever, or, at least, until they are once more plentiful in their haunts. These are the two cousins of the Woodcock,—Sandpipers, the Spotted and the Least, and two Plovers, also water-loving birds, the Killdeer and the Upland Plover.

“Most of you children, at some part of the season, go down to the shore of the bay yonder, perhaps it may be when your fathers gather seaweed in the spring and fall, in late summer for the snapper fishing, or all through the autumn and early winter for long-necked clams. Some of you, I know, like Tommy and Dave, have camped out there for several weeks. Have you not noticed the little prints of birds’ feet just above the edge of tide-water? Or have you not seen the little birds themselves, no bigger than Sparrows, with streaked, brown-gray backs and soft white feathers underneath, running to

and fro, balancing when they feed, as if making a courtesy, all the while whispering softly among themselves?

“Or, again, others slightly larger, with ash and brown backs, and underparts spotted with round, black marks like a thrush, white spotted wings, and the outer tail-feathers white barred, showing in flight?

“These two gracious, confiding little birds are the Least and the Spotted Sandpiper. Their small size should keep them off the food list, for what are their dead bodies but a single mouthful? And what are they alive? Things of joy and mystery combined. For what is a more perfect picture of grace and happiness than these birds with a background of sand, seaweed, and shells, and all the sparkling water before?

“Of a gray day, their pleasant prattle is shut down by the fog, and sounds strange and mysterious, and when they spread their pointed wings, and vanish into the mist, that seems to pick them up as it rolls in, the picture is complete.

“The Least Sandpiper, the smallest of his tribe, is found in greater numbers on our beach than the Spotted. He comes to us in the migrations, as he nests only in the far North. I can remember, when as a girl I was fond of swimming in the bay until late in autumn, that a flock of these little birds flew over me so close that I could feel the beating of their wings. His use is to give interest to the landscape, and his plea for life his harmless littleness, his confidence, and his obedience in filling the place in nature which the great Plan has given him. Perhaps you may have heard the poem that he inspired in the heart of one woman, who lived on a sea-girt island, and, oftentimes, had only the birds for company; even if you have heard it, the verses are among those of which we never tire.

THE SANDPIPER

Across the narrow beach we flit,
One little Sandpiper and I;
And fast I gather, bit by bit,
The scattered driftwood, bleached and dry.
The wild waves reach their hands for it,
The wild wind raves, the tide runs high,
As up and down the beach we flit,—
One little Sandpiper and I.

Above our heads the sullen clouds
Scud black and swift across the sky;
Like silent ghosts in misty shrouds
Stand out the white lighthouses high.
Almost as far as eye can reach
I see the close-reefed vessels fly,
As fast we flit along the beach,—
One little Sandpiper and I.

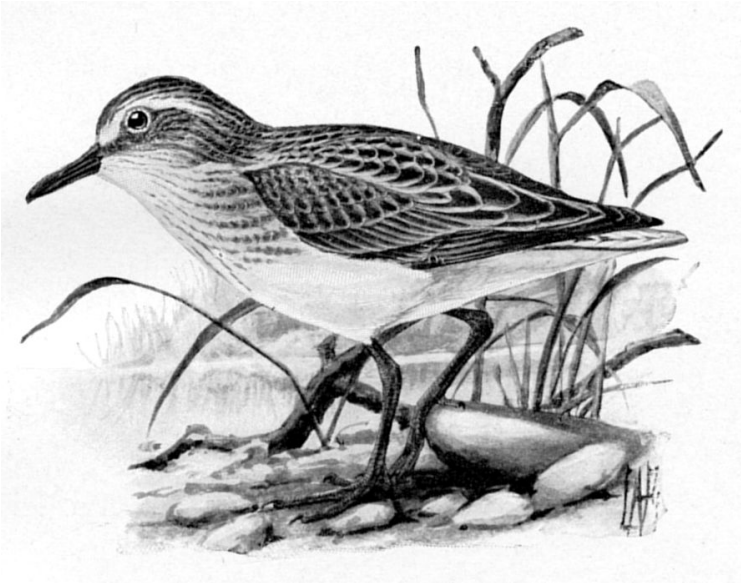
I watch him as he skims along,
Uttering his sweet and mournful cry;
He starts not at my fitful song,
Or flash of fluttering drapery.
He has no thought of any wrong;
He scans me with a fearless eye.
Staunch friends are we, well tried and strong,
The little Sandpiper and I.

Comrade, where wilt thou be to-night,
When the loosed storm breaks furiously?
My driftwood fire will burn so bright!
To what warm shelter canst thou fly?
I do not fear for thee, though wroth
The tempest rushes through the sky;
For are we not God's children both,
Thou, little Sandpiper, and I?

—CELIA THAXTER.



SPOTTED SANDPIPER



LEAST SANDPIPER

“The spotted Sandpiper, in my girlhood, was here, with us, a familiar bird of moist meadows and pond edges, and every season I used to see them

stepping about the stones in the little brook that flows through the river woods, across the meadow above the orchard. They frequently nested there, also, and I have often seen the buff, chocolate, spotted eggs. I have seen the birds wading in the stream quite up to their bodies, sometimes dragging their legs after them as children do in play; they can also swim, when they wish to cross a stream without taking to wing, and it is said, when hard pressed or wounded, can dive deep and swim, or rather, fly under water very swiftly, for they use the wings as the Loon does. Teeter and Tip-up are two of its common names, because it seems to be always balancing in order not to tumble over. If you startle it, it gives a frightened cry like 'peet-weet-weet,' as it rises, but soon drops again.

"This bird has a list of good deeds as an insect eater to plead for its removal from the list of game-birds. Birds consume the most insects in the nesting season when the quick-growing young require constant feeding, and, as it breeds all over North America as far as Hudson Bay, you can see that the Spotted Sandpiper's field of usefulness is very wide, and wherever he goes, following the sun as he does throughout the seasons, his value, aside from his dainty beauty, does not lie in the morsel of food he would make for those short sighted enough to shoot him, but in the insects of all sorts, including grasshoppers and locusts, he kills in the simple process of getting a living.

"Another bird of the moist meadows of rivers and salt creeks is the Killdeer or Little Ring-necked Plover. It is about the size of the Spotted Sandpiper, equally beautiful, and with a certain dignity all its own. We always used to have them in the river meadows, but, since my return this year, I have not seen a single one.

"I have found the curious, creamy, pear-shaped eggs, with brown spots, in a grassy hollow, with no other bed than the turf itself. Strange eggs they are, seemingly so much too large for their owners, and an apparently careless arrangement to leave them with no protecting nest. But the shape of the egg prevents accident, for, if disturbed, they simply turn round and round on the pointed end, but do not roll away.



National Association of Audubon Societies

KILLDEER

Order—LIMICOLÆ Family—CHARADRIIDÆ
Genus—ÆGIALITIS Species—VOCIFERA

“The young chicks are the prettiest little creatures; even when first hatched, they are well covered with down, and have strong, useful legs, with which they can follow their parents all day long until their pinions have developed to let them fly. It is a peculiarity of the game-bird that, like our domestic poultry, the chick comes from the egg open-eyed, well covered, and able, in a measure, to care for itself from the moment that it is hatched. The song-birds, birds of prey, and others are hatched blind and naked, and require several weeks’ time before they are fit for independent life.

“No prettier scene of young bird-life can be drawn than that of Mother Killdeer, walking through the dewy meadows, with stately gait, followed by her four chicks, now brooding them with a warning cry, if the shadow of a hawk appears; now turning over leaves and bits of dead wood in search of their insect food. When danger is near, the young squat, and the blending of their colours with those of the ground gives them the benefit of what is known as ‘colour protection,’ a wise plan of Heart of Nature for the benefit of the weaker species. If threatened danger does not pass by, then the old birds become aggressive, and sometimes fly at the intruder, be he man or animal. The peculiar call of the bird, ‘Killdee-Killde-e-e-Killdeer,’ has given it its name, though it has several other cries when brooding and protecting its young.

“The desire to protect this charming bird, that the National Association of the Audubon Societies is endeavouring to have made a law, state by state, is, after all, nothing new. Listen to what Audubon himself wrote about the Killdeer, beginning with the nesting time: ‘At this period the parents, who sit alternately on the eggs, never leaving them to the heat of the sun, are extremely clamorous at the sight of an enemy. The female droops her wings, emits her plaintive notes, and endeavours, by every means she can devise, to draw you from her nest or young. The male dashes over you in the air and vociferates all the remonstrances of an angry parent whose family is endangered. If you cannot find pity for the poor birds at such a time, you may take up their eggs and see their distress, but if you be at all so tender hearted as I would wish you to be, it will be quite unnecessary for me to recommend mercy.’

“So, children of the Kind Hearts’ Club, ask all those you meet to help put the little Killdeer upon the protected list; say that it is too small to be counted as food, and, in addition, whisper to every farmer you meet (and farmers north, south, east, and west should be interested, for the bird inhabits the whole of temperate North America), ‘The Killdeer is an insect eater, taking grasshoppers, crickets, beetles, boll weevils, and the dreaded Rocky Mountain locust.’ If this is not enough, add that the Kind Hearts wish to protect all these gentle little birds, that are out of place on the list of food-birds, and we all know that when a kind heart *wishes* to do a thing, it usually finds the way!”

“Somebody told Dad at the last Farmers’ Institute that the Reed birds, that the big boys go gunning for down in the marsh meadows along in August, are changed Bobolinks,” said Tommy, “and that we mustn’t shoot them any more, because Bobolinks are singing-birds, and I just guess they are. My! can’t they sing, and fly right up at the same time, as if going so fast shook the song out of them, and they couldn’t help it!”

Gray Lady laughed at Tommy's description, which was certainly very true, and expressed in vigorous boy language.

"Yes, Tommy, the black-white-and-buff Bobolink of May, after the midsummer moult, becomes a dull, brown-striped bird like his wife, and, shedding his lovely voice and glowing feathers together, he keeps only a call note. In this masquerade he leads a double, and somewhat vagabond, life, travelling by slow degrees toward his winter home and then back again in the spring, all the while eating many things which the owners do not wish him to have, one being rice,—rice in the ear and the sprouting rice in spring.

"Let others do as they must, but we, who have no rice to be hurt, insist that this bit of ardent, flying melody shall receive the treatment that his music deserves, and be taken forever off the list of semigame-birds. What if this singer of the opera does choose to don a sober travelling cloak and journey silently? The musician is only waiting for the pink blossoms to come on the apple trees, and the grass to grow long enough to sway to the wind, to again let his music float from the one and give his nest to the care of the other, where no human eye, at least, may spy it. If we destroy Robert of Lincoln, called Bobolink for short, we kill not one but many qualities and songs. Did you never hear the rhyme of his merry family?"

THE O'LINCOLN FAMILY

A flock of merry singing-birds were sporting in a grove;
Some were warbling cheerily and some were making love.
There were Bobolincon, Wadolincon, Winterseeble, Conquedle,—
A livelier set were never led by tabor, pipe, or fiddle:—
Crying "Whew, shew, Wadolincon; see, see, Bobolincon
Down among the tickle tops, hiding in the buttercups;
I know the saucy chap; I see his shining cap
Bobbing there in the clover,—see, see, see!"

Up flies Bobolincon perching on an apple tree;
Startled by his rival's song, quickened by his raillery.
Soon he spies the rogue afloat, curvetting in the air,
And merrily he turns about and warns him to beware!
“ 'Tis you that would a-wooing go, down among the rushes O!
Wait a week, till flowers are cheery; wait a week ere you marry,
Be sure of a house wherein to tarry;
Wadolinck, Whiskodink, Tom Denny, wait, wait, wait!”

Every one's a funny fellow; every one's a little mellow;
Follow, follow, follow, follow, o'er the hill and in the hollow.
Merrily, merrily, there they hie; now they rise and now they fly;
They cross and turn, and in and out, down the middle, and wheel about,
With a “Phew, shew, Wadolincon; listen to me, Bobolincon!
Happy's the wooing that's speedily doing, that's speedily doing,
That's merry and over with the bloom of the clover;
Bobolincon, Wadolincon, Winterseeble, follow, follow me!”

O what a happy life they lead, over hill and in the mead!
How they sing and how they play! See, that fly away, away!
Now they gambol o'er the clearing—off again, and then appearing;
Poised aloft on quivering wing, now they soar and now they sing,
“We must all be merry and moving, we all must be happy and loving;
For when the midsummer has come and the grain has ripened its ear,
The haymakers scatter our young and we mourn for the rest of the year;
Then, Bobolincon, Wadolincon, Winterseeble, haste, haste away!”

—WILSON FLAGG, in *Birds and Seasons in New England*.

XVI TREASURE-TROVE AT THE SHORE

The Herring or Harbour Gull

The autumn had been clear and fine, and the hillside farmers of Fair Meadows township had their out-of-door work well in hand by Thanksgiving. The fall-sown rye was well up, and the fields that were to lie fallow and be sweetened by the frost were ploughed and in good shape. Ice-cutting, on the chain of large ponds that lay in the valley between the hills north of the river woods, was an important industry of the region, so that every one was anxious to have the ice form clear and firm before snowfall. As yet, however, there had been no signs of either, except the thin ice with which Black Frost always covers the roof, gutters, water-pails, and shallow pools when he prowls round in the early morning, as if merely to let the good folks know of his presence, and to prepare them for his gentler mediating brother, Snow.

The day after Thanksgiving the wind began to blow, not in mere passing gusts, but steadily and systematically. Then, too, it came from a strange quarter for that season—the extreme southeast. This was the wind to drive the sea into the bay and force the water high on shore. Such winds, at this season, piled the elastic brown seaweed in long lines high above tide-water, and many a farmer, and market-gardener, as he ate his supper, laid plans to drive down to the beach next morning, with a double team, and secure a full load of the weed for covering his strawberry or asparagus beds.

Before morning, however, a driving rain set in that lasted for two days and kept everybody house-bound. The roadways ran water like rivers, and, by the time the storm lessened at sunset Sunday evening, there was barely a leaf left on the apple trees of the Birdland orchard, and Goldilocks was well-nigh heartbroken over the state of the lunch-counter, for, in spite of the protecting roof, the broken biscuits turned to paste, the suet hung in rags, and as for the kernels of cracked corn and the buckwheat, they had swelled as if they thought it was a spring rain and it was their duty to grow. So that Goldilocks was worried lest some Juncos and Goldfinches that made a hearty meal upon the grains, in spite of the rain, should suffer from a fit of indigestion.

Early Monday morning, when he returned to milk, the hired man at Tommy Todd's, who had been spending the night with his brother at one of the little huts four miles below on the shore road, brought word that the great storm had, as he expressed it, "heaved" the deep-water oyster-beds that extended out through the bay and that in addition to the seaweed, the beach was completely covered with fine large oysters, bushels and bushels of them.

How the news spread, nobody knew, but by half-past eight every available team within a mile of Foxes Corners school was "hooked up" and entire families were hurrying toward the beach in every sort of vehicle, to gather up this unexpected treasure-trove of the sea.

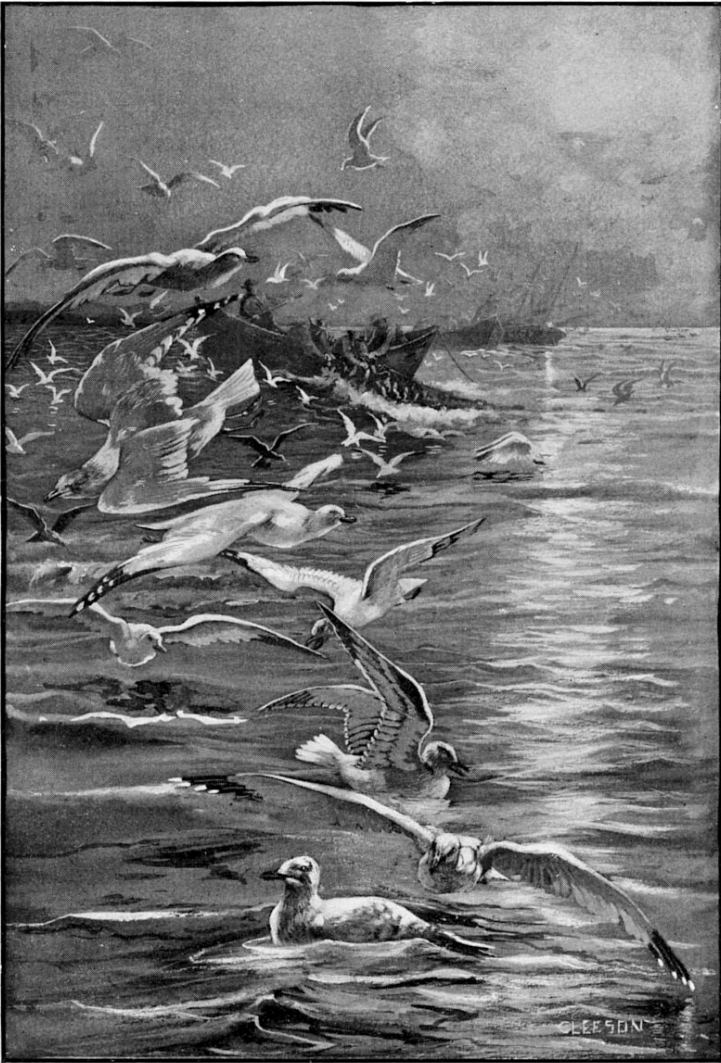
The parents seemed to have entirely forgotten that school began at nine, and it was not to be expected that the children should remind them. And, truth be told, when Jared Barnes gathered his flock, grandma included, into the hay wagon, Sarah and Ruth, conscientious as they usually were about their lessons, entirely forgot the day of the week, so eager were they for the fray; for the prospect, not only of oysters to roast and stew, but of oysters to pickle and keep, was too great a temptation to resist.

Miss Wilde, who arrived at the schoolhouse rather earlier than usual, found the door locked, and no fire in the stove. It was Dave's week to tend the fire, and, as Miss Wilde stood in the open doorway pondering on the matter, one of the most exacting of the school committee men came bumping along in a lumber cart. Pulling up his horses so suddenly that a neighbour who was with him tipped backward off the seat, he called to the astonished teacher: "You had best close up and go home; you won't have any pupils to-day. Or else come down, and hold school on the shore! The rest of the committee will probably meet together in a few minutes, and we'll vote to extend Thanksgiving holidays over to-day." So saying, he cracked his whip and rattled downhill, leaving Miss Wilde to wonder if he was losing his mind, or the world was turning topsyturvy, or if she was still asleep, for it was beginning to be hard to wake up as the mornings shortened.

Miss Wilde locked the door and started to walk toward Eliza Clausen's house, that being the nearest place where she could possibly find out what was happening. As she reached the cross-road that met the turnpike a little above the school, she heard the sharp trot of hoofs, and, turning in that direction, saw Jacob Hughes driving the depot rockaway, Goldilocks being beside him and Gray Lady seated behind. Goldilocks waved her hand on seeing Miss Wilde, and in another minute "teacher" was seated beside Gray Lady, and not only knew of the avalanche of oysters, but was herself on the way to the shore with her friends, who were going, not for the sake of the

oysters, but to enjoy what was sure to be a picturesque scene, with the shell-strewn beach, the sharp bluff on the left, and the long sand-bar, with its lighthouse on the right, for a setting. Nor were they disappointed.

For once tell-tale news did not exaggerate, and, though there were many cut and scratched fingers from the sharp shells, before noon there was no one who had not gathered all the oysters he could carry. The more thrifty among the men also began to gather the seaweed into heaps safe from the incoming tide, so that they might be sure of finding it the next day, while the women and children gathered driftwood and, making fireplaces of a few stones, heated the coffee they had brought. For, though the sun was now shining clear, and the wind had dropped to a little breeze that scarcely moved the surface of the tide pools, there was a growing keenness in the air that named the month "December," and promised the wind would be in the northwest by night.



HERRING GULLS

In spite of the unusual human picture before them, that which interested Gray Lady, Miss Wilde, and Goldilocks the most were the Gulls that covered the bare sand-bar, waded in the shallow pools, and clambered among the stones in search of food, which they picked out with their stout, hooked bills, then flew swiftly overhead toward the creek, across the salt meadows, with a shrill cry, such as the creaking windlass of a well gives when the rope plays out quickly and the bucket drops—"quake-wake-wake."

Further out, in the arm of the bar, where there was no current, and the water was deep and smooth, many Gulls were resting motionless as white

skiffs at anchor, or flying and diving for food in the wake of some boats that were evidently grappling to discover the extent of the damage to the oyster-beds.

“How many kinds of Gulls are there?” asked Goldilocks. “Three, I should think, unless the males and the females were different.”

“The Gulls here are all Herring, or, as the Wise Men now wish them called, ‘Harbour Gulls.’ The old birds have the pure white breasts and pearly gray, or what is sometimes called ‘Gull-blue,’ upper parts and the black-and-white wing-markings. The mixed and streaked ash, buff, and brown birds are the young of the year, while the black-and-white patched birds are not Gulls, but Old Squaw Ducks. These have spent the winter about the bay and bar ever since I can remember, and, strangely enough, both Gulls and Ducks seem to be no less in number than they were twenty years ago. That is probably because the Gulls are protected, and the Ducks’ flesh is so tough that even a hungry dog could hardly tear it apart. I hope your children are noticing these birds while they are gathering driftwood for the fires,” Gray Lady said to Miss Wilde. “It is very seldom that they come to the shore as late as this, or see the Gulls in such numbers. It seems to-day as though the storm must have driven all that belong to many miles of coast to take shelter in this bay.”

“Yes, they are looking,” said Goldilocks, “for Sarah and Tommy and Dave and Clary, who are all together by the nearest fire, are watching and pointing to the Gulls that are over by the boats, and I think that Bobby has found a dead Gull tangled in seaweed and he is showing it to the others.”

“Then I foresee that the Harbour Gull will be the bird of next Friday afternoon,” said Gray Lady, as they turned homeward, taking Miss Wilde with them for lunch, so that Gray Lady might talk over a new plan concerning the old farm-house in the corner of the orchard, with its great stone chimney where the Swifts loved to build.

As Gray Lady had expected, the next Friday afternoon, when she went to Foxes Corners schoolhouse, she was greeted by many enthusiastic accounts of the stolen holiday at the shore, but a perfect chorus of questions arose about the “big birds that fly and swim and yet aren’t quite like Ducks”; while Bobby proudly produced his treasured Gull, wrapped in a newspaper, at the same time assuring Gray Lady, as became a member of the Kind Hearts’ Club, that he hadn’t thrown a stone at it, or anything, and that it was “drowned dead in the seaweed.” All of which she already knew to be true.

“Why aren’t the Gulls there in the summer when we go down camping and clamming?” asked Tommy.

“Because,” said Gray Lady, “they do not like very warm weather, and nowadays at least, though they live all through North America, they do not nest on the Atlantic coast south of Maine. For this reason, we seldom see them between May and October, and that is the very time that you children and people in general visit the shore.”

“It must take a pretty big tree to hold a Gull’s nest,” said Dave, picking up the bird and weighing it in his hand; “it’s lots bigger than a Crow.”

“Yes; a Gull measures two feet in length (that is, from the tip of its beak over its back to the tail, which is the way the length of a bird is reckoned), and is quite three feet across the spread of its open wings, while the body of the Crow is five inches shorter and the wings only spread a little over two feet.

“You probably noticed, the other day, what very long, pointed wings the Gulls have. But though these Gulls do sometimes nest in fairly high trees and in bushes, it is not common, and their favourite place is on the gray shingle, and among the stones of rocky beaches well above tide-water, or else between tussocks of beach grass or sheltering pieces of driftwood.

“As a Gull’s chief food is gleaned from the sea, it must nest as close as possible to its source of supply. You can easily see that so large a bird could never be free from annoyance on our bathing beaches or offshore islands that are used as summer resorts; so, as people flocked to the shore, more and more, the places where Gulls might nest in comfort grew fewer and fewer, and they were driven to the remote islands like those off the Maine coast, Great Duck Island, No Man’s Land, and others, and it is at Great Duck Island that is to be found the largest colony of Gulls within the United States.

“But even here and on many lesser islands, with only lighthouses and their keepers for company, where there were no summer cottages or pleasure-seekers, until a few years ago, the Gulls were not safe, for they, like the White Herons of the South, were bonnet martyrs.”

“Bonnet martyrs!” exclaimed Eliza Clausen, jumping as if some one had stuck a pin in her. “I don’t think they would look one bit nice on hats; why, they are so big that there wouldn’t be any hat, but all bird.”

“You are quite right,” said Gray Lady, “but the whole Gull was not used. These beautiful white breast-feathers were made into turbans. Perhaps, on one side of these, a smaller cousin of the Gull, the Tern, or Sea Swallow, with its coral-red beak, would be perched by way of finish. Or else, soft bands made of the breast, and some of the handsomest wing quills were used for trimming.

“Not only were these feathers sold wholesale to the plume merchants and milliners, but people who went to the coast resorts would buy them of

the sailors simply because they were pretty, without giving a thought to the lives they cost, or of how desolate and lonely the shores would be when there were no more Gulls.

“There are comparatively few people, I earnestly believe, who would wear feathers for ornament if they realized the waste of life that the habit causes. It is largely because people do not stop to think, and they do not associate the happy living bird with the lifeless feathers in the milliner’s window. But now that the Wise Men—yes, and wise women, too—have explained the matter, the protection of these beautiful sea-birds is an established fact.

“This bird was called ‘Herring Gull,’ because by hovering over the schools of Herring where they swam, and diving to get them for food, they told the fishermen, who spend their lives upon the ocean on the lookout, where the fish were to be found. Now, though the Gulls still do this, they do better work, also, for they spend the time that they are away from their nesting-homes about the harbours of the large cities, making daily trips up the rivers and cleansing the water of refuse, upon which they feed. For this reason, ‘Harbour Gull’ seems to be a better name for them.

“They are very sociable birds at all times of the year, keeping in colonies even in the breeding season, a time when song- and other land-birds pair, and prefer to be alone. The nests, when on the ground or upon flat rocks, are built of grass, mosses, seaweed, and bits of soft driftwood formed into a shallow bowl. If the edges of this crumble or flatten while the birds are sitting, they use bunches of fresh grass or seaweed to keep it in repair, with the result that the nest is not only a very tasteful object, but it blends perfectly with its surroundings.

“The eggs are very interesting because no two seem to be of the same colour, being of every shade of blue and gray, from the colour of summer sky and sand to the tint of the many-coloured, water-soaked rocks themselves. The markings vary also in shape and size, and are in every shade of brown, through lilac and purple, to black. The parents are very devoted to their nests, and take turns in sitting, though the eggs are often left to the care of the sun on days when it is sufficiently warm. When the young are first hatched, though covered with down, they are very weak in the neck and helpless; but in the course of a few hours the little Gulls are strong enough to walk, and the instinct to hide at the approach of anything strange comes to them very suddenly, so that a Gull only three or four hours old will slip out of the nest and either hide beneath a few grass blades or flatten itself in the sand, where, owing to its spotted, colour-protective down, it is almost invisible, so well does Nature care for her children—provided that man does not interfere. When a Gull nests in a tree, however, the little birds, not

feeling the same necessity for hiding, do not try to leave the nest until the growth of their wings will let them fly.

“On the sea beaches squids and marine refuse are fed to the young Gulls, but where they have nested near fresh, instead of salt, water many insects gleaned from the fields are eaten.

“It was in the Gulls’ nesting season that the plunderers chose to go to their island haunts, steal the eggs, and kill the parent birds, whose devotion, like that of the White Heron, left the birds at the mercy of the plume hunters.

“At the end of summer the young, wearing their speckled suits, are able to join the old in flocks, and it is then that they scatter along the coast, some going from the northern borders down to the Great Lakes. In and about New York City they are one of the features of the winter scenery; they fly to and fro under the arches of the great bridge, and follow the ships the entire length of the harbour and out to sea. At night they bed down so close together that in places they make a continuous coverlid of feathers on the waters of the reservoirs and in the sheltered coves of the Hudson. From the banks of Riverside Park, any autumn or winter afternoon, so long as the channel is free from ice, they may be seen flying about as fearless as a flock of domestic Pigeons.”

“Here on our beach they are scary enough,” said Tommy. “Why, the other day I tried every way to creep up close to some of them, but I never could; they were always up and off, sometimes without saying a word, and sometimes screeching, ‘Yuka-yuka-yuka,’ enough to frighten any one. Pop says that, way back when he was a boy, and there weren’t any laws to prevent shooting anything except the game-birds out of season, that these birds were just as scary, so that the best shots used to go down on the bar and try to hit a Gull, not to eat, but for the sake of being called a good shot, because Gulls were harder to get than old leader Crows.”

“That is the very reason why Gulls alongshore are afraid now. For so many years they have served as targets for Duck hunters, and people who did not realize what they were destroying, that fear has become an instinct. Now in the nesting-haunts, where they are protected, they are gradually becoming more and more tame. About the harbours of cities and parks, where shooting has never been allowed for other reasons than bird protection, they fly about unconcernedly and exhibit little alarm.”

“Are Gulls any real use, except that they are nice to look at and watch fly?” asked Dave, presently, as Bobbie’s bird was being passed from desk to desk.

“Yes, the Harbour Gulls are useful in many ways, and would be more so if man would protect them fully everywhere, as they do in some countries and in some of the western parts of our own country; but, in general, they

have been so persistently hunted that they shun the land-bound fresh water, where they would help the farmers by feeding on large insects, and prefer the freedom of the open water.”

“The true Gull of the sea, the spirit of the salt, is a sort of feathered bell-buoy, and thus is of use to the sailors, as there is ample testimony to prove.

“In summer, in thick weather, the appearance of Gulls and Terns in numbers, or the sound of their clamorous voices, gives warning to the mariner that he is near the rocks on which they breed. Shore fishermen, enshrouded in fog, can tell the direction of the islands on which the birds live by watching their undeviating flight homeward with food for their young. The keen senses of sea-birds enable them to head direct for their nests, even in dense mist.

“Navigators approaching their home ports during the seasons of bird migration welcome the appearance of familiar birds from the land. . . .

“Sea-birds must be reckoned among the chief agencies which have made many rocky or sandy islands fit for human habitation. The service performed by birds in fertilizing, soil-building, and seed-sowing on many barren islands entitles our feathered friends to the gratitude of many a shipwrecked sailor, who must else have lost his life on barren, storm-beaten shores.”

—E. H. FORBUSH.

“Is mine a good grown-up Gull?” asked Bobbie, who had been waiting anxiously for its safe return to his hands, “because grandpa says if it is, he’ll take it over to town, and get it stuffed, and fixed up on a perch, to remember Oyster Day by; but I’ll bury it if you’d rather I would.”

“It is a fully grown bird, Bobbie,” said Gray Lady, “and it is wearing its winter dress. In summer the head and neck that are now streaked with gray would be a dazzling white, and as accident killed it, and wind and tide gave it to you, there is no reason why you may not keep it with a clear conscience.”

XVII

THE BIRDS' CHRISTMAS TREE

Preparation

The Christmas sale was over. It had been held in the play and work rooms the Saturday before Christmas, and was a great success. The dressed dolls, iron-holders, aprons, bird-houses, wooden spoons, racks for clothes, and little knickknacks had been ranged on the work-table and carpenter's bench, and all the people of the neighbouring towns, as well as from Fair Meadows village itself, had been asked to come and see. When they came and saw, they stayed to buy.

The bird-houses proved the greatest novelty, and Tommy Todd and Dave, their cheeks red with excitement, were kept busy taking orders for more, to be finished by May or June, one customer said. She, however, was very much amused when Tommy told her that if she expected to have birds in the house (it was a box for Tree Swallows) the first season, she must have the house in place before April, so that it might "be weathered a little, and the birds find it when they first came, and not think it was a trap put up to catch them."

Gray Lady donated some delicious cake of Ann's make, and hot chocolate, and while the visitors enjoyed it, they asked many questions about the bird class, the school at Foxes Corners, and the motives of the Kind Hearts' Club itself; for this name had been printed on the posters advertising the sale.

The result that concerned the public good was that other men and women resolved, even if they could not do it as thoroughly as Gray Lady, to supply the teachers in their various districts with charts and books, and before night settled down, Sarah Barnes, the treasurer of the Club, was hugging tight in her arms a small iron box, with a lock and key, wherein were fifty precious dollars, while orders that meant an equal sum before the close of the school year were being copied from a rather mussy paper into a blank-book, by Tommy Todd, the secretary, whose usually clear upright letters were made crooked by his excitement.

The next question was, How should the money be spent? Each child was asked to write his or her idea on a slip of paper and bring it to the birds'

Christmas festival that was to be held, as seemed fitting, in Birdland, the afternoon before Christmas, from two o'clock until four.

"Supposin' it's cold and snowy?—that's a long time to be outdoors," said Eliza Clausen, as she walked home between Sarah and Ruth Barnes.

"It may not be out-of-doors," said Sarah, looking very wise.

"Then it can't be in Birdland, as Gray Lady said," persisted Eliza, who, though she was less critical since she had come under the older woman's influence, could not resist once in a while, "hoping for the worst," as Gray Lady called borrowing trouble.

"Yes; the party can be indoors, and yet in Birdland," answered Sarah.

"Oh, you're trying to catch me with a riddle or something."

"If I am, I'll tell you the answer at the birds' Christmas tree next Tuesday," called Sarah, as she turned in at her own gate.

A two-inch fall of soft, clinging snow fell during the night before Christmas eve, so that the next morning "everything looked as pretty as the pictures on a calendar," as Sarah Barnes said, when she arrived at Gray Lady's door, bright and early, to help decorate the birds' tree.

Sarah did not enter the door, however, for she was joined on the porch by Goldilocks and Ann, and together they walked through the garden to Birdland.

Jacob Hughes had swept paths from the house in and out among the trees through the garden. In Birdland he had used the single-horse snow-plough to scrape a track running from the bird lunch-counter, about the edge of the orchard, and then through the centre down to the old farm-house of the Swallow Chimney, that stood in the lower corner facing on what had been a cross-road, but was now a pretty grass-grown lane, with the snow wreathing the bushes of black alder, with its red, glistening berries, giving out a real Christmas feeling.

What had happened to the old house of the Swallow Chimney, where the General's father had lived, but which had now remained closed for so many years, merely a storage-place for old furniture?

Smoke was coming from the great stone chimney, new shingles stained to look old replaced the broken ones, new paint glistened on the window-sashes, and the quaint old panes of glass, bearing the rainbow tints of years, shone like mirrors. The front door was painted dark green, and the spread-eagle knocker of brass was as bright as polishing could make it; while around the deep front porch was a little fence of cedar bushes in boxes, all garlanded with vines of coral, bittersweet berries.

Goldilocks and Sarah went to the front door of the old house, while Ann disappeared in the woodshed that joined the side porch and well-house.

The girls had not touched the knocker when the door flew open, and who should stand there but Miss Rose Wilde, while beyond her, sitting by the blazing log-fire in the long, low living-room, that had once been the kitchen, was her mother, looking better and younger than she had for at least ten years!

This was the secret. Gray Lady had repaired the old house and established the faithful little teacher and her mother in it, so that instead of mother and daughter only meeting once a week, or less often in winter, and each having a good bit of heartache between, they had a real home once more. What was also a bit of good luck, Mrs. Wilde's furniture, that had been stored away, was of the kind that seemed as if it had been made for the old homestead and had never been anywhere else.

Once inside, Rose Wilde led them into the kitchen, where everything was as neat as wax, and there, spread upon tables and half-covering the floor, were the decorations for the birds' Christmas tree.

Where was the tree itself? Where trees are the best and healthiest, out-of-doors back of the house, a stout, young spruce, some twenty odd feet high, growing in the orchard corner where no one had planted it, the child of one of the spruces near the great house,—a half-wild tree, sprung from the seed of a cone dropped by a Crossbill, perhaps, or left by a squirrel who was making a winter store-house in the attic of the farm-house.

The dainties for the tree were selected to suit all the various needs and appetites of the winter birds likely to come to the orchard.

Gray Lady, Goldilocks, Rose Wilde, and Ann had strung quantities of popcorn upon the chance of the Jays and Crows liking it. They had used strong thread, but had only strung the corn by the very edge, so that it would detach easily. There were lumps of suet, and marrow-bones, securely bound with wire, ears of red and yellow corn, bunches of unthreshed rye, wheat, and oats, little open boxes filled with beechnuts, and various wild berries. Last of all, something that Goldilocks had suggested, the heads of a couple of dozen sunflowers, filled with the ripe, nutritious seeds, for she had noticed that all the autumn the Goldfinches and various Sparrows had stayed about the beds where the composite flowers like asters, marigolds, cornflowers, zinnias, and sunflowers grew, and that also the wild sunflowers and black-eyed Susans of waste fields were always surrounded by birds.

Jacob Hughes had his ladders all ready, but it was no small task to keep him supplied with material, and there were many mishaps before all the articles were in place, but to Goldilocks' great joy, before Jacob had fairly finished and taken the ladder away, a Chickadee and a Goldfinch were both

clinging to the same sunflower head, and a little Downy Woodpecker had discovered one of the bones fastened to a branch and was revelling, “up to his neck,” as Sarah expressed it, in the marrow.

Underneath the tree a place had been cleared for the gifts Gray Lady had in store for what she called “the featherless two-legged birds of the Kind Hearts’ Club.”

After they had rested a few minutes, and were thoroughly warmed, Gray Lady, Rose Wilde, Goldilocks, and Sarah Barnes set out for a stroll through the orchard, and the lane that ran back of it, up to the farm-barns, to see what feathered guests were in the neighbourhood, the walk taking them past a great pile of unhewn wood and a tent-shaped brush-heap at the end of the lane.

Gray Lady used her opera-glasses, but the others trusted to their eyes alone. These are the birds they saw and named easily: A flock of Goldfinches in their dull winter coats feeding on weed seeds in the lane; their old friends the Chickadees, three Blue Jays, two Flickers, and several Downy Woodpeckers; Gray Lady thought possibly from their markings, a whole Downy family,—Mr., Mrs., and four children.

As they neared the woodpile Goldilocks stopped, her hand on Gray Lady’s sleeve and a finger raised in caution. “I do believe there is a Jenny Wren that has not gone away or is lost, it is such a little bit of a thing.”

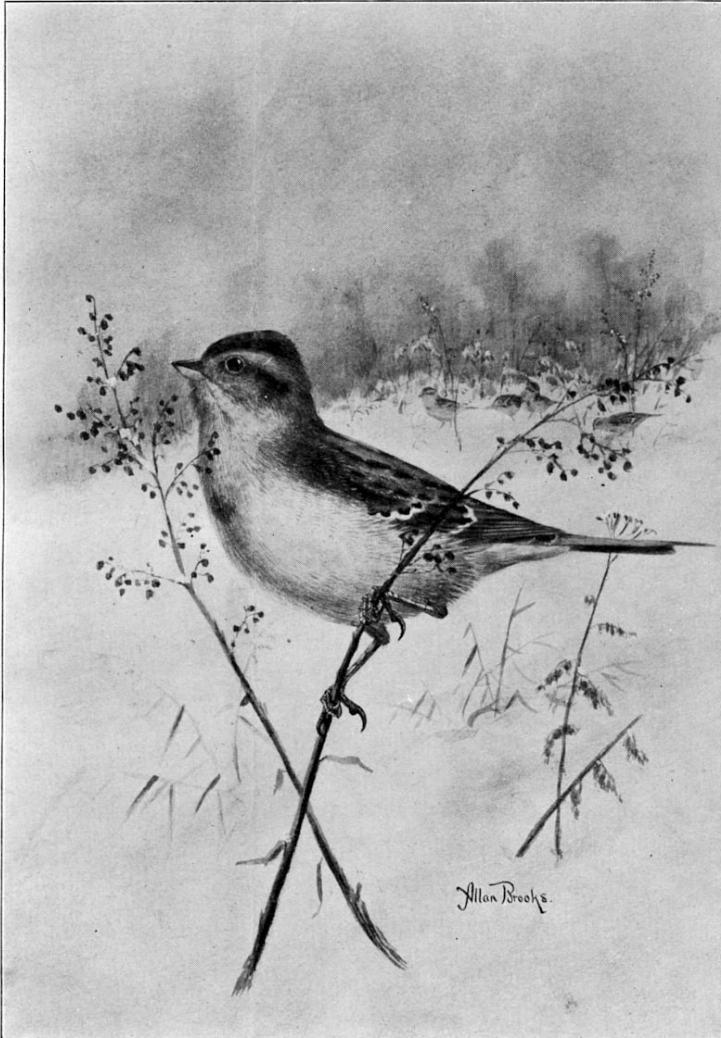
As they stood looking, the little, neat, brown bird, about four inches long, ran up and down among the logs like a mouse, then flew with a little short flapping of the wings to the bush, where it clung to a spray, bobbing to and fro, its comical bit of a tail pointing as close to its head as possible. Then it appeared to pick something very deliberately from the twigs and flew back again to the woodpile with a sharp, warning note.

“That is not a belated House Wren,” said Gray Lady, “but the Winter Wren, his cousin, who nests from the northern boundaries of the states northward, but comes down in winter to visit us in southern New England and travels as far south as Florida. A brave little fellow he is to weather storms and cold here, and one of our three smallest birds, the Golden-crowned Kinglet and the Humming-bird being the other two. In his nesting-haunts he has a beautiful song; I have never heard it, but one of his admirers who has says that it is ‘full of trills, runs, and grace notes, a tinkling, rippling roundelay.’”

A few minutes later it was Sarah’s turn to exclaim, as she pointed to a small, sparrow-like bird, perched on a giant stalk of seeded ragweed at the side of the lane. “It’s a Chippy or else a Song Sparrow,” she said, hesitatingly. “It’s bigger than a Chippy, and it’s got a spot on its breast like

the Song Sparrow, only it isn't as big. O dear me! I don't think that I shall ever be sure of telling Sparrows apart," she sighed.

"To be sure a bird *is* a Sparrow is a step in the right direction," said Gray Lady. "I have known some one older than you call me to see a big Sparrow which turned out to be a Wood Thrush. If you will remember one thing, it will help you in placing the smaller birds. Look at a bird's beak; if it is thick, short, and cone-shaped, the bird is most likely to be a Sparrow, for this family are all seed-eaters except in the nesting season, while insect-eating birds, of all families, have longer and more slender bills.



TREE-SPARROW

“As for this little fellow, it is another of our winter visitors, the *Treesparrow* or *Winter Chippy*, and there is probably quite a flock of his kin at this moment distributed over the wild fields below, doing the work of seed-destroying that the farmers have neglected; for, aside from the cheerful companionship of all these winter birds, the Sparrow tribe is working for us all winter as Weed Warriors,^[3] just as the tree-trunk birds are Tree Trappers, the birds who take insects while on the wing, Sky Sweepers, and the silent birds of prey, who sit in wait for the field-mice and other vermin, Wise Watchers.

“Ah, it is my turn now to make discoveries,” said Gray Lady, as they turned into the orchard at the end opposite the lunch-counter tree. “Keep very quiet, and look at the mossy branch of that half-dead tree to which some frozen apples still hang; what do you see, Goldilocks? Take my glasses and look carefully before you answer.”

“Where?” said Goldilocks; “yes; I see. One is a little, fluffy, greenish gray bird with a dirty white breast. Oh! he has a red stripe edged with yellow on top of his head! He moves so quickly that I can’t seem to see the whole of him with one look, though he is small. The other bird is a little bigger, and not so fat; he has a yellow spot on his head, and a brighter one over the tail, and a yellow spot on each side; he is striped gray and black all over, except some white on his wings and underneath. How he flits about, just like that bird that looked like a red-and-black butterfly that we saw last summer that you said was a Redstart.”

“You have very sharp eyes,” said her mother, “for you saw at once the identifying marks of two birds that were new to you. The merry fellow of the flaming crown is the Golden-crowned Kinglet, another sturdy winter visitor, who breeds in the North, and finds our climate quite warm enough for him if the food holds out; for he is a tree trapper, giving his attention, like the Chickadee, to the smaller branches and twigs too slender to bear the weight of the heavier tree-trunk birds.

“His companion is the Myrtle or Yellow-rumped Warbler, a hardy cousin of the Redstart and Summer Yellowbird that Sarah, perhaps, does not yet know by name, though she has doubtless seen them. When you have once seen the male bird, you will never forget him, because of the four yellow spots. These warblers are great insect eaters, but lacking these, they will eat berries, the bayberries being their favourite, and I believe that we have to thank the bayberry bushes, in the rocky hill pastures hereabouts, for the numbers of the Myrtle Warblers that stay all winter, myrtle being a common title for the bay, giving them their name.”



F. M. Chapman, Photo.

SHELTER FOR BIRD FOOD

At the garden end of Birdland, just inside the rustic gate, a flock of Juncos or Gray Snowbirds were feeding, plump, cheerful, and contented, and giving vent to their satisfaction in their pleasant “tchip, tchip, tchip” call. Those who only know one winter bird know the Junco, for he belongs to city parks, village yards, and remote farms alike, anywhere that a frugal meal of grain or weed seeds may be found, with a piazza vine or brush-heap or haystack to creep into for shelter. His flesh-pink bill, slate-coloured coat, and neat white vest, together with the *two conspicuous white tail-feathers*, tell his name to any one who wishes to know it.

The Junco is an autumn and winter visitor only, being away from May until late September, as he nests northward from New York and Connecticut.

When the flocks first return, you will be puzzled by many birds of the shape and build of Juncos, but who are wearing more or less striped clothes; these are the young of the year.

“Five new birds in one morning! I wish Tommy had been here,” said Sarah; “but perhaps he knows them already; Tommy knows a lot you can’t see because it’s down so deep.”

“You must find us a new bird, too, before we go in to lunch, Miss Wilde,” said Goldilocks.

“I have been looking at, not one, but a dozen, while you have been watching the Kinglet and Myrtle Warbler. Look over the gate-arch across toward the house. Do you see something moving among the bunches of ripe spruce cones?”

“I see birds moving, but I want to go nearer.” So the party managed, by walking quietly, to reach the trees where the birds were feeding without disturbing them in the least.

“There are two kinds of birds up there,” said Sarah, presently, for it was her turn to use the opera-glasses. “They are both rather red. One is darker than the other and has no white on him. The other is lighter red and has some white on the wings and tail. Why, Gray Lady! their beaks are out of joint at the end and don’t shut tight. I wonder what can have happened to the poor things. I thought at first they might be wild parrots.”

Gray Lady and Miss Wilde both laughed, Sarah’s concern for the birds was so real.

“You are right about the bills not closing at the tip, but it is not owing to an accident. Nature developed this bill so that the bird, who is a lover of evergreen forests, might be able to wrench open the cones, the only winter food that is oftentimes to be found.

“The bird belongs to the Finch and Sparrow family, though you would never guess it, and is called the ‘Crossbill.’ The plain red one is the Red-winged Crossbill, and the lighter-coloured one, with white markings, the White-winged Crossbill. Both birds nest north of New England, but travel about the country in little flocks, sometimes going as far south as Virginia and the Gulf States.”

“Listen, I think I can hear the crackling as they tear the scales from the cones,” said Goldilocks.

“Yes, and you can see those that they have dropped lying on the fresh snow under the trees,” added Sarah.

At that moment an old-fashioned dinner-bell sounded from the direction of the farm-house in the orchard. It was Mrs. Wilde letting them know that luncheon was ready, for Gray Lady, Goldilocks, and Sarah were to lunch at

“Swallow Chimney,” as Goldilocks had christened the restored home, by way of a house-warming.

As they left, the Crossbills, who had been climbing up and down, with all the adroitness of the Chickadees or the Upside-down birds themselves, suddenly took to wing, giving short, metallic-sounding cries, flew rapidly over the orchard, to alight—where do you suppose? On the birds’ Christmas tree. Here, after some inspection, they began to tear at the popcorn, their twisted beaks doing the work so well that they seemed fashioned for that purpose alone.

“Well,” said Goldilocks, her hands clasped in amazement, as they reached the farm-house, and saw what had happened, “I never knew anything *quite so quick* to happen outside of a story-book!”

[3] See *Citizen Bird*.

XVIII

HOW THEY SPENT THEIR MONEY

At two o'clock a procession of the pupils of Foxes Corners school filed through the hall at "the General's," wondering what new surprise was in store. The big boys, who would not begin school until the mid-winter term, had come under the strong persuasion of Tommy and Dave. They looked rather uneasy, however, as if they were not quite sure whether the performances that the younger boys considered "bully" might not be undignified for men of their age.

As the children went through the garden, Jim Crow lurched out of a bush and walked along after them with an air of great importance, as if he were the master of ceremonies. Larry, the Starling, was not particularly fond of cold weather, and kept inside the shelter of the south porch, making little excursions here and there, prompted by curiosity, and the desire to use his wings, which were now quite strong, as food was to be had from the dish that he and Jim shared, merely for the eating.

The lunch-counter was well patronized that afternoon, for, in addition to the birds that had been in the vicinity during the morning, several Bluebirds came, together with three Robins, who simply gorged themselves upon some dried currants that Goldilocks had put out as an extra dainty. Gray Lady was trying experiments with all sorts of odds and ends at the lunch-counter, that she might see exactly what sort of food was the most acceptable, and she was very much surprised to find that though wild birds, like human beings, can adapt themselves to circumstances, a great number have such a craving for animal food that it explained why Crows, Jays, and some others become nest-robbers in the midst of summer plenty.

After they had called upon Miss Wilde at Swallow Chimney, where Eliza Clausen discovered the meaning of Sarah Barnes' mysterious remarks about the party being held in the orchard, and yet being indoors, they went to see the birds' Christmas tree.

Since morning many things had been added to it that were not intended for birds. Bundles, strange of shape, wrapped in green tissue-paper tied up with red ribbon and little sprigs of southern holly, hung to the lower branches, while Jacob, dressed as Father Christmas, stood by armed with a hooked stick, with which he loosened the bundles and dropped them into the waiting hands.

As it was impossible to tell from the shape of the parcels what they contained, there was a good deal of pinching and squeezing done, but beyond the feeling of sharp corners that might belong to either books or boxes, nothing could be discovered.

“It is too cold for you to stand out here to open your parcels,” said Gray Lady. “Suppose you take them in the living-room at the cottage, and while the girls open theirs you boys come for a little walk with me, for I have some work planned particularly for the boys of the Kind Hearts’ Club.

“Oh, do not look worried, I shall not keep you more than half an hour,” she said, as she saw the boys were quite as curious about untying their parcels as the girls.

So, following her lead, they trudged off up the lane, past the barn and woodpile, to where the brush on either side narrowed it to a mere path. Then, where another lane crossed it, the way grew broader again, and while one side was screened by woods, from the other you could look out upon a stretch of waste meadows and fallow fields.

There was only enough snow to crunch underfoot, and as Gray Lady walked ahead, a sprig of holly fastened at the neck of her gray chinchilla collar, and another in the close fitting hat of the same fur, her arms buried to the elbows in a great muff, her eyes sparkling with pleasure, and a rosy spot on each cheek made by the keen air, the boys cast many glances of genuine admiration at her. The big boys, especially, felt that she understood the situation exactly, by taking them to walk without the girls, giving them her confidence, and planning something for them to do that would be different from girls’ work, or, at least, apart from it.

“Perhaps some of the others have told you,” Gray Lady said to the big boys as they walked, “that I am very anxious not only to feed the small tree birds, that they may stay with us in winter, but to try and help the Grouse and Quail, so that, instead of those that have escaped the dangers of the hunting season being driven out by hunger and cold, they shall live on and increase, and become again the friends to the farmers that they were in the old days.

“You big boys all know how much complaint there is of all kinds of new bugs and worms and blights that discourage the farmers and leave but little profit in their crops? As you learn to watch wild birds and their habits, and realize the way in which they work for their living the year round, you will see that it is largely the lack of these old residents, these birds who were here before man came, that allows all the new-fangled bugs to gain such headway.

“Now, while it is quite easy for all of us to have some sort of a lunch-counter, either on a window-ledge, tree-trunk, or shed roof,—anywhere, in

short, where cats will not venture,—feeding the larger game-birds is not such a simple matter, for until they thoroughly understand our motives, they will not come to us; we must take food to them.

“Birds that are hunted everywhere, for at least two months in a year, cannot be expected the day after the season closes to come boldly to our houses for food, as if they could consult a calendar, and say to one another, ‘To-day is December first, we may go and take a walk in the open road in safety.’

“Neither would they be safe, for there are always, I am sorry to say, cowards in every township who will set snares, and get by stealth what they dare not take openly. And, of the two, I think the snare a greater danger to the poor birds than the gun.”

“The trouble with feeding game-birds away from houses would be that, even if you knew their runs, and I think I know some pretty well, the feed would most likely blow away or be snowed under unless they ate it right away,” said Jack Todd, Tommy’s second eldest brother.

“Yes, that is one of the difficulties, but I think an idea that I have borrowed, and am trying now for myself, may partly solve the trouble. Look ahead of you, close to the rail fence. What do you see? No; don’t rush to the fence and trample the snow; keep on the lane side.”

“It’s some sort of a tent,” said Tommy; “I thought at first it was just a corn-stack with snow on it.”

“No; it isn’t a tent,” said Everett Judd, going closer; “it’s only bean poles stacked with the vines left hanging, two rows of them, so’s the snow won’t all drift in at one spot.”

“And what else?” asked Gray Lady. “Don’t you see cracked corn and mill sweepings scattered in between the poles? This is a feeding-station for our friends, the game-birds, if we can only make them understand that it is not a form of trap and does not hold a snare in disguise.”

Jack Todd, who had gone close to the tepee on one side, stepping on stones that he might avoid tracking the snow, and was examining the ground intently, suddenly cried out, “There *have* been mill sweepings here, because I can see some dust, but the grain is all gone, and I guess—no; I’m *sure*—there have been Grouse about, and they have fed here since snow fell, for there are tracks coming out from under the fence and going back the same way!”

“But how can you tell that they belong to Grouse?” asked Gray Lady, coming close to look at the prints and thinking in her excitement they might have been made by chickens.

“No, they are real Grouse tracks, for they’ve got their spiked snow-shoes on, and here’s the marks of the pricklers!” And Jack pointed to the footprints

of the brushed claws in triumph.

“This proves two points,” said Gray Lady, “that there are Grouse in the neighbourhood, and that they will take food if it is offered to them in the right way. I should like to put up a dozen of these feeding-stations, if you boys will help; you know the woods and brush-lots better than I do now, and you can select the places that will be suitable for these shelters and find what material there is close at hand of which they can be built.

“When this is done, I shall again have to depend upon you for keeping them supplied with food. If we find that the grain is eaten, I think that it should be renewed three times a week, so if six of you boys will volunteer for the service, two can go together, and it will only make one trip a week for each pair. If the snow is deep, you might possibly arrange to fit some boxes to your sleds to hold food, or, if the shelters are in rough ground, a bag fastened to the shoulders like a pedler’s pack might work well; for, in doing this work on a large scale, merely a pocketful of food will not suffice.”

“I will help,” said Jack Todd, after thinking a moment. “Me, too,” said Everett, and Irving Todd, together; then of course the others followed, Dave and Tommy anxious lest they should be left out, while Bobby and little Jared Hill, though too small to undertake to care for a station alone, were acceptable as companions for the big boys.

“We have the rest of this week, and all of next for a holiday,” said Jack Todd, “so suppose we take a tramp about the hill country on each side of the river valley to Centreville, that’s about five miles, and fetch axes with us. I know most of the people on the way, and, if we put the shelters somewhere near houses, we could distribute the food along, and they would let us keep it in one of the outbuildings, so that it would be handy in stormy weather. I’m pretty sure we can collect stuff enough as we go for the shelters. My uncle, who lives at Hilltop Farm, would give me corn-stacks for three or four. There’s a heap of slab-sides (the outside strip, with the bark, when a log is to be sawn into boards) left to go to pieces up by where the sawmill was last year; they will make fine wigwams, and there are plenty of cedars and birches, with brushy tops, for the rest. Then perhaps the folks along the line might be interested and rig a few up on their own account.”

“Thank you, Jack,” said Gray Lady, warmly; “you have caught the spirit of the idea and improved it already, for if we are to do the game-birds any real good, and establish the feeding plan permanently, the people all ‘along the line,’ as you call it, must be interested until not only Fair Meadows township, and the county, but all the counties in the state, are linked together in the work of restoration.

“Meanwhile, though, of course, everything that is done regularly is work, I really envy you boys some of the fun you will have in your winter tramps; sometimes you will be able to skate nearly all the way upon the river, and sometimes, if the snow is as deep as people are predicting, you may be able to go on snow-shoes.”

“Only I don’t think any of the fellows hereabouts own a pair of snow-shoes,” said Everett.

“Then they are the very things for Jacob to help you make if you come to any of our Saturday meetings,” said Gray Lady. “Jacob was born in Canada, and worked with fur trappers for several years, and though, perhaps, he may not be able to make them as well as when he was a young man, they would surely be better than nothing, and who knows but what one of the many things that the Kind Hearts will organize may be a Snow-shoe Club.”

Thus the big boys of Foxes Corner school found themselves interested and pledged in Gray Lady’s work without a suspicion of the “playing baby” of which they had such dread.

By the time Gray Lady and the boys returned to Swallow Chimney, the girls had opened their bundles, and besides little work-boxes, each with a silver thimble of the right size for the owner, and a pair of scissors that would “cut clean and not haggle,” as Eliza Clausen expressed it, there were books for all. Some were about birds, and others about flowers, trees, butterflies, and the real life out-of-doors that is more wonderful than any fairy-tale. Having disposed of their own presents, with many little shrieks of delight, the girls stood by, waiting for the boys to open their bundles. These were all long and flat, with a bunch in the centre, as if two objects of different shapes were fastened together.

Tommy succeeded in untying his first, skeining up the string so that he might have it for the re-wrapping. A strong, well-made knife, with two blades fell out, and under it was a hammer, a chisel, a half-inch auger, and a medium-sized cross-cut saw. Seeing Tommy’s gifts made the others pull open their packages hastily, with less regard for string and paper, to find that they also had the coveted tools.

“Now,” said Gray Lady, “you boys will be independent of your fathers’ tools when you take a bird-house home to finish, or wish to do a little bit of work for yourselves, as the girls will also be independent of their mothers’ work-boxes and thimbles; because, if the grown-up people are always having their tools borrowed or mislaid, they are apt to have a sort of grudge against both the work and the workers.”

Some of the boys looked at each other rather sheepishly, and wondered how Gray Lady knew that their fathers had said that “since the boys took to carpentering there hadn’t been a hammer or nail to be found nor a saw with the sign of an edge left on it.”

“By and by,” continued Gray Lady, “if you have the desire, you will all have a chance to earn other tools, and also make boxes in which to keep them.

“You may wonder why the Christmas tree bore no candy by way of fruit; that was because part of the fun for this afternoon will be making candy,—caramels, chocolate creams, nut taffy, and old-fashioned pulled molasses rope-candy,—so that, besides the making and tasting, you will all have something that you have made yourselves to give the people at home tomorrow, or put in their stockings if they are hung up. See! here are the boxes that Goldilocks has made to hold the candy!” There upon a tray were two dozen square boxes covered with green-and-white paper, and a row of red-paper hearts pasted across the top of each, with the words, “The Kind Hearts wish you a Merry Christmas,” printed in red.

“Did you make all those boxes yourself, Goldilocks?” asked Sarah Barnes, in amazement; “I don’t see how you could turn the corners so nice.”

“Not the boxes; you can buy them for very little at the factory. I covered them and put the hearts on, but Mother did the printing. It is easy enough if you take time. You see the two years that my feet wouldn’t go, I learned to make my fingers work for both.”

“The fire and pans, sugar, molasses, and nuts are all ready, but, before we become Miss Wilde’s guests and begin, for the candy-making and supper belong to her party, we must hold a short business meeting of the Kind Hearts’ Club, that we may decide how the Christmas money is to be spent.”

Gray Lady then sat down at the end of the room with Mrs. Wilde, while Goldilocks, the president, took her place at the head of the long table, with the vice-president, Miss Wilde, close at hand to prompt. Sarah, the treasurer, and Tommy, the secretary, were on opposite sides of the table facing each other, and all the others sat up very straight, wearing various expressions of importance that were quite amusing.

Goldilocks rapped on the table with her pencil, and said in a rather shaky voice, blushing rosy red as she spoke, “The meeting will please come to order and listen to the reading of the minutes of the last meeting.”

There had been but one previous meeting, that to arrange for the Christmas sale, and it had been informal, so that this was really the president’s first appearance in the chair, and, as she spoke, she kept her eyes fastened to the paper upon which Miss Wilde had written the order to be followed.

“Secretary will please read the minutes of the last meeting,” she said, after a pause.

The secretary looked around in a hunted sort of way, as if to find an open door through which he could escape, and, seeing none, got rather unsteadily upon his feet, opened the square blank-book that Gray Lady had given him for his records, fumbled with the pages, and then said, rather than read,—“We were all there. We all agreed to sell the things we’ve been making so as to get some money to feed birds, and buy things; and Gray Lady said we could do it in her house; the Saturday before Christmas was duly appointed, and Dave was to get the bills, to tell folks it was going to be printed down at the Chronicle Office, because it is his uncle runs it, and Gray Lady promised to give cakes and chocolate, in case folks were hungry.

“Respectfully submitted,

“THOMAS TODD, JR., Secretary, Amen!”

Gray Lady did not dare look at Miss Wilde during the reading of this report, but the children took it in perfect earnestness, and Goldilocks, having put the report to vote, as she had been told, proceeded to the next item before her and called, “Report of the secretary.”

Again Tommy fumbled, and, after looking in every page of the book but the ones that were written upon, suddenly burst forth,—“We had it, and we sold everything, besides some things we haven’t made yet. The people ate all there was, and took the other things home. It was a big cinch! Sarah Barnes has got the money in a box, and her father’s put it in the clock-case, except some of it that’s in dimes and nickels, and they’re in a bag in the dresser with the rye meal so’s no one’ll know. Gray Lady said that to-day we must each bring a paper, with written on it the way we wanted the money spent. We have. It was hard to write because some things we would like to have wouldn’t be nice to everybody all around, and that’s what it means to have a Kind Heart, grandma says.

“Yours truly,

“T. TODD.”

Action having been taken upon this, and the report accepted without a dissenting voice, the treasurer was called upon, and Sarah arose.

“The result of the sale of the Kind Hearts’ Club, which was held in the spacious residence of Mrs. Gray Lady Wentworth on Saturday, December 18th, was very gratifying to all concerned, and the proceeds, fifty dollars, are now in the hands of the treasurer awaiting the orders of this august body.

“Respectfully reported by
“SARAH BARNES.”

“How did you get yours together so slick and short, and full of nice words?” whispered Tommy to Sarah, across the table, his usual admiration for her now tinged with new respect.

“I didn’t,” she signalled back, not speaking audibly, but making the words with her lips. “I just told grandma how much money we had, and she worded it; they always talked reports that way at the missionary meetings and sewing societies when she was a girl, and she thinks folks are getting to be real slack talkers now.”

“A dis—cussion is now in order as to the spending of the money. Will Mr. Todd collect the papers and the vice-president kindly read them?” said Goldilocks, after looking at her paper again. And as Tommy passed a little box for the slips, Gray Lady came from the corner, so eager was she to hear what the children had in view.

Rose Wilde opened the papers, and the ideas on the first few, though good, presented nothing original: food for birds; books for the school; bird charts for the Bridgeton Hospital. Sarah’s paper suggested sleigh-rides and charts for the children in the Bridgeton Orphan Asylum, “because they don’t know any birds but English Sparrows.”

Tommy’s paper read:—“To fix the spring that used to come down Sugar Loaf Hill into a trough, before Bill Evans got mad with the Selectmen, and blocked it from coming through his pasture. There’s no water for drivers along the road above the Centre until you get to Beaver Brook, and that’s four miles, unless they get it from our well, which isn’t handy. My father could fix a big stone trough, ’cause he’s a mason, and birds and dogs and horses could drink. Birds need water to mix mud for their nests, too, especially Robins and Wood Thrushes. What is wanting, is to pipe the spring across Evans’ field,—his widow’d be pleased to have us; it’s her land. It’s two hundred feet, father says.”

“That is a very good, practical idea, Tommy,” said Gray Lady, earnestly; “we must consider this.”

Rose Wilde had now come to the last paper without discovering anything else of special novelty; this was written in little Clary’s stiff letters, and filled a whole sheet of paper.

“It isn’t for birds, it’s a blanket for Joel Hanks, the mail-man’s horse. It’s blind in one eye, and it’s a kind horse, and knows where all the boxes are. It’s got a cough now. Mr. Hanks was going to buy a new one (a blanket), and get shingles on that end of the barn where the horse stands, so’s the snow

won't drift in, but his wife got sick last summer, and had doctors and nurses, and that costs more money than a new horse, and a whole barn, my mother says. Mother says it isn't Joel's fault he's poor; he isn't slack, only some folks are marked for trouble. Last summer, lightning struck his haystack, and burned it and only his cornstalks were left. His horse is thin, too. Cornstalks aren't filling for uphill work, my father says, and the mail-route is all either up or down, and in winter downhill is slippery, and just as bad. A horse is a lovely animal, and useful; I would like us to help this horse. He isn't a bird, to be sure, but birds have feathers, and don't have to drag a wagon uphill, against the wind, with bent axles. It will take three bundles of shingles for that barn-end and three lights of window-glass."

There was silence for a moment, and Miss Wilde, looking at Gray Lady, while she waited for her to speak, saw tears in her eyes.

"Tommy's idea about the fountain is excellent, and I think we can build it before spring, but the blind old horse and his patient master cannot wait, and they both serve us, each and all, in fair weather and foul.

"How is it, children? Shall we set aside ten dollars for the bird food for the winter, and then buy Mr. Hanks a ton of good hay, a horse-blanket, the three bundles of shingles, and the window-glass? And do you think that you big boys could put on the shingles if Jacob Hughes helped you?"

"You can just bet we will!" cried Jack Todd, and the others nodded approval.

This matter also was put to vote, and then a committee appointed, consisting of Miss Wilde and Jack Todd, to purchase blanket, hay, etc., while to Clary fell the inexpressible bliss of stopping at Mr. Hanks' on her way home, telling him the news, and taking a blanket, warm but not new, that Gray Lady loaned until the new one could be had.

"Now for the candy!" shouted Tommy, whose spirits could keep in no longer.

"The meeting isn't adjourned, yet," said Goldilocks, reprovingly, clutching her paper and pounding on the table. "A motion is in order."

"I move that we adjourn," said Miss Wilde.

"Now somebody say, 'I second it,' " insisted Goldilocks.

"I second it," came a chorus. And any further remarks were lost in a shout that arose at the sight of Jim Crow, climbing along a shelf of the kitchen dresser, with one of the new pairs of scissors in his beak, that he had managed to take unobserved from nobody-knew-whose work-basket.

XIX

BEHIND THE BARS

Mockingbird, Cardinal, Indigo-bird, and Nonpareil

One gray Saturday in January, when the wind rushed through the trees, making the frozen branches clash with the sound of metal rather than wood, and it was too cold to snow, Tommy Todd came to the kitchen door at “the General’s” carrying a large and unwieldy bundle carefully wrapt in an old quilt.

The door was opened by Matilda, the old coloured woman, who had been “the General’s” cook in her youth, staying on as caretaker during the years when the house had been closed. “What you got dere, sonny? Sumpin’ live, ’cause I kin hear hit scratchin’. Don’t say yer bringin’ in a trap o’ rats, ’cause if dere’s anythink I mislike ’ticular, it is dem.”

“No, mammy; it isn’t rats, it’s a bird,” said Tommy, beginning to unwind the quilt which covered a long cage made of wood and stout wires. When he had succeeded in freeing it from the cover, which, being ragged, caught on the wires, he lifted the cage to the kitchen table, where the light came full upon it. There, hopping nervously to and fro between the perches, was a gray bird about the size of a Robin. Its wings and tail had a browner wash than the rest of its back, while some of its tail-feathers and its underparts were white, though now soiled and rather ragged from chafing against the bars. As it moved about, it whisked its tail to and fro, in very much the same way as our Catbirds and Brown Thrashers.

Matilda adjusted her big spectacles, grumbling as she did so, “Doan you know, chile, dat Missy doan like birds to be shet up in cages, and be prisoners, and sole away from home no mor’n de General would ’low folks to be shet from liberty an’ traded away? I ’spect she’ll be powerful mad when she sees dis yere. Whar yeh done git hit?” Then, as she drew near the cage and saw the bird plainly, which for a moment stopped its fluttering, she cried, “For de love ob Heaven, honey! it’s a Mocker, and my ole eyes ain’t seen one since de ole cabin hit burn down, and we was all scattered out’en, and left Lou’siana for to git Norf!

“My! but what birds dem Mockers were. I kin just year ’em now.” And Matilda seated herself by the table, pushed back her glasses, and closed her eyes.

“Winter wa’n’t well ober ’fore dey began to sing up, and come peepin’ around de cabins and in de road bushes lookin’ fer a nest-place. Sometimes dey put it in de thick bush ober top de swamp, but more times dey put it close in de rose vines, like as if dey t’ought snakes wouldn’t likely git ’em dere, ’cause snakes is as set to git Mockers as de ole one in de garden ob Eden was bound ter git Ebe.

“Dat nest, hit was kinder throwed together ob sticks, but de beddin’ in hit was good an soft, for de Mockers knew mighty well whar ter find ole cotton fluff to make a linin’. An’, while all this was doin’, how dey did sing! Day wasn’t long ’nough fer him, ’cause ’long towards noon his froat hit git dry and he’d go way down de orange grove an’ rest him jest a li’l bit, and den come out again an’ git nearer and nearer to de cabin, an’ when de sun hit role away to bed an’ de moon-up come, he’d git from de rose vine to de roof, an’ den up to de chimley edge an’ sing straight down at yer. Laws, honey, yer couldn’t never tell in daylight what birds was singin’, de real ones or him a-mockin’ ob dem. De Red Bird with de topknot, de Blue Jay, de li’l Wren wif de sassy tail, de Hangnest (Oriole), or de Blue Sparrow might all be singin’, for all I know’d, or hit might be only he a-mockin’ of ’em better than dey knew how demselves.

“But when hit come night, and eb’ry one was home at de quarters, an’ some was singin’, an’ some playin’ de banjo, an’ de smell from de orange groves risin’ up powerful on de wind, and sun-down t’ree four hours gone, den when we heard all dem birds a-singin’, we knew it was de Mocker, an’ sometimes he wouldn’t stop all the night until de light hit slip right from silber to gold, an’ den copper, an’ ’twas sun-up again; an’ in dose days most eb’ry one had a Mocker in a cage. But here I be runnin’ on ’bout de times when de Lord he let folks an’ wild birds both be bought an’ sold. Tell me, honey, whar ye done git him? Shore he neber was flyin’ round about up yere in de cold an’ snow—him what lubs de sun-up ’way down Lou’siana way.”

“I didn’t put him in a cage, Aunt Tilda,” said Tommy, earnestly; “it is this way. He belonged to old Ned that works of summers for my Uncle Eph over at Bridgeton, and then goes home every year down South at Christmas, to spend the cold weather. This year he has hurt his leg, and is sick and can’t go, and has to stay in Bridgeton Hospital. So, as he used to know ‘the General,’ and he’s heard that Gray Lady loves birds, he told me to bring his Mocker over here, and ask her if she’d keep it safe and feed it until real warm spring weather, and then hang the cage outside, and open the door, and let it fly away if it would. ’Cause he thinks somehow it would find the way home if it wants to.

“He fed it well, and cared for it, and never thought about its being unhappy in a cage until he had to go to the hospital, and be shut in, and

couldn't go home South, perhaps, any more. Then I guess he knew how his Mocker might feel, too. I think Gray Lady will keep him, even though it says on the Bird Law posters that *you mustn't keep a wild bird dead or alive or have its nest or eggs*. Because if Sheriff Blake arrested her, he knows old Ned and Gray Lady could explain it all so's she wouldn't be fined."

"What is it that Gray Lady can explain so that she need not be fined?" said a voice from the store-room on the other side of the entry way, and "sheself" walked in; "sheself" being Matilda's name for her mistress when she wished to use a term that she considered more dignified than the homely one of "Missy."

Then Tommy repeated his explanation, while Matilda stood looking at the Mockingbird and muttering to herself of the many happenings of her slave days, happy as well as sad, that the sight of him recalled.

"Of course I will keep the Mockingbird until spring," said Gray Lady, "and then I will hang the cage in the porch, open the door, but still keep it well supplied with food, so that he may come and go, and if his heart leads him back towards his southern birthplace, be sure that he will join the flock of some of his northern kindred and in their company reach home."

"Do we have any kind of Mockingbird up here?" asked Tommy, his eyes opening in wonder.

"Not real brothers of the Mockingbird, though he has half a dozen in the southwestern part of the country, but two first cousins, and half a dozen second cousins. Let us take the Mocker up to the playroom and hang his cage in the warm window by the chimney, where the sun will shine on him whenever the clouds let it peep through. Then I will tell you all who his cousins are, and about three other American birds that for many years were caught and kept prisoners in cages and sold out of their native land."

The children were all gathered upstairs by the time Gray Lady arrived, followed by Tommy, carrying the cage.

"I had a Robin in a cage, once, and a Catbird, and grandma and Aunt Mary always have Canaries. Why is it against the law to keep wild birds in cages? That Mockingbird doesn't seem to mind it a bit; now that he's smoothed down his feathers, and has begun to eat, he acts real happy," said Eliza Clausen, after they had looked at the newcomer and heard the story of his being sent to Gray Lady.

"There are two reasons why wild birds should never be kept in cages except for really scientific study, or to help them when they are exposed to cold, or are ill and maimed in some way. The first reason is that when Nature placed birds in certain localities provided with the best sorts of

beaks, feet, etc., to make them able to earn their living, it was done because there was work there for them to do that they could perform better than anything else. They were a part of the Great Plan for preventing insect life (which also has its uses) from increasing too much and doing damage. This is the practical way of considering birds for what the Wise Men call their 'economic value.' These birds may be able to hold their own against the birds of prey, that in the beginning were doubtless made to keep the smaller birds from becoming too numerous and upsetting the balance of the Plan, but when man came in, and not only destroyed them for some fancied damage to his crops, but took the young from the nest, or trapped the old birds, and sold them into captivity where they could no longer follow the creative law, to 'increase and multiply,' the danger became grave.

"The second reason, however, is one that our own kind hearts can understand the best, and that is the misery of the bird born wild when he feels himself a captive. If he outlives the first misery, and seems to become resigned, he may become content in a way, but he can never forget the liberty he has lost, nor can we, in any way, make up to him, by mere food and creature-comforts, the ecstasy of the wild life. The very fact that the healthful joy of flight and choice in mating is denied him is enough.

"I did not realize this when I was a girl, and I also kept cage birds like every one else; it was not because I was cruel, simply that I had never thought of the matter any more than my friends, until one day, being ill and shut in my room, like poor old Ned in the hospital, I watched the fluttering of a Painted Bunting or Nonpareil that my father had bought me.

"This bird is one of the southern Sparrows, in size no larger than a Chippy. Its plumage is tropical in its beauty, deep blue head and neck, red underparts, glistening green back, green-and-red wings, with a reddish tail; in short, a glittering opal copied in feathers. Its cage was roomy, and it had the best of food, and fresh water for bathing and drinking, while the shelf in the window, on which it stood, was filled with flowering plants, up through the branches of which it could look. But, oh, the expression of that bird's body! I watched its every motion; the head thrown backward, searching in vain for a loophole of escape between the bars, the quivering of its wings as the impulse for freedom, and the company of its kind, swept over it! Sometimes, late in the night, when I awoke and looked toward it, I could see that it was awake and its wings trembling with the thought of dawn that it could not fly to meet. Then I knew, even if it became cowed, and forgot its natural instincts so far as to be dumbly content as a prisoner, that the real life of the bird would be as dead as if a bullet had ended it, and though it was late winter, February, I felt that I must give it liberty.

“I told my father, and he sympathized with me as usual, listened to my story, and then, packing the cage safely, had it sent by special express to a family friend, who was wintering in Florida, with the request that she liberate the prisoner. For, as we could not get it to its winter haunt in the tropics, this seemed next best, and it would soon meet the flocks of its kin on the return trip.

“So the bird was freed, and once more felt the joy of being lifted on his wings whither he would go, and whatever loneliness he may have suffered after that, he had gained liberty, which is the right of the least of God’s creatures.

“Of the four American birds that were most commonly caged, the Mockingbird and Cardinal have always been the most popular, and this is what some of the writers have said about taking them into captivity.

The Mockingbird

“The Mockingbird ranges from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and from middle Illinois, Indiana, and Pennsylvania, southward to the Gulf of Mexico. Usually the bird-hunters take the young from the nest as soon as they open their beaks for food. These are sold in Southern cities by negro boys for from fifteen to twenty-five cents apiece. . . . Thousands of Mockingbirds find their way across the Atlantic.”—HENRY NEHRLING.

The Cardinal

“This is one of our most common cage-birds and is very generally known, not only in North America, but even in Europe, numbers of them having been carried over both to France and England, in which last country they are called ‘Virginia Nightingales.’ ”—ALEXANDER WILSON.

The Indigo-bird

“The combination of musical ability, lovely plumage, and its seed-eating qualities long since has made the Indigo Bunting in danger of extermination, through the fact of its being universally captured throughout the South and sold as a cage-bird, both for home use and for export.”

Painted Bunting or Nonpareil

“This splendid, gay, and docile bird, known to Americans as the Nonpareil (the unequalled), and to the French Louisianans as *le pape*, inhabits the woods of the low countries of the Southern states.

“For the sake of their song as well as beauty of plumage they are commonly domesticated in the houses of the French inhabitants of New Orleans and its vicinity. . . .

“They are commonly caught in trap-cages, to which they are sometimes allured by a stuffed bird, which they descend to attack; and they have been known to live in captivity for upwards of ten years.”—THOMAS NUTTALL.

“The Mockingbird, as you see, has sombre gray plumage like his cousin, the Catbird, that we all know so well that I think he should drop a name that belies his wonderful musical ability, and be called the ‘Northern Mockingbird.’ Even though the Mocker is caged, you can see the resemblance, in the way in which he twitches his tail, and first throws back his beak and then looks sideways, to our merry singer of the garden who often makes us think that half a dozen birds are perching in the drying-yard when he sits upon the top of a clothes-pole and lets his imagination float away with his voice.

“The Brown Thrasher, too, with the long, curved beak, brown back, and speckled breast, is also a first cousin and has the Mockingbird habit of mounting high up when he sings and looking straight up at the sky; while the Wrens, one and all, belong to this famous family group and come in, we may say, as second cousins, and like the Mockingbird, aside from the beauty of song, are very valuable insect eaters. The other three birds have the conical beak that stamps them as members of the family of Finches and Sparrows.

“Rich colour is the chief attribute that sets the Indigo Bunting apart from its kin of the tribe of Sparrows and Finches.

Indigo
Bunting

“Blue that is decided in tone, and not a bluish gray, is one of the rarest hues among the birds of temperate zones; for one may count the really blue birds of the eastern United States upon the fingers of one hand.

“This Bunting belongs to the tree-loving and tree-nesting part of his tribe, in company with the Grosbeaks, and the brilliant yellow American Goldfinch, whose black cap, wings, and tail-feathers only enhance his beauty. The Sparrows, of sober stripes, nest on or near the ground, and their plumage blends with brown grass, twigs, and the general earth-colouring,

illustrating very directly the theory of colour protection, while the birds of brilliant plumage invariably keep more closely to the trees.

“In size the Indigo Bunting ranks with the small Sparrows, coming in grade between the Field- and the Song Sparrows, and being only slightly larger than the Chippy. The female wears a modification of the Sparrow garb, the upper parts being ashy brown without stripes, the underparts grayish white, washed and very faintly streaked with dull brown, the wings and tail-feathers having some darker edges and markings.

“When it comes to painting the plumage of the male in words, the task becomes difficult; for to use simply the term indigo-blue is as inadequate as to say that a bit of water that looks blue while in shadow, is of the same colour when it ripples out into full sunlight and catches a dozen reflections from foliage and sky. A merely technical description would read: Front of head and chin rich indigo-blue, growing lighter and greener on back and underparts; wings dusky brown, with blue edges to coverts; tail-feathers also blue edged; bill and feet dark; general shape rounded and canary-like, resembling the Goldfinch.

“The last of May one of these Buntings came to a low bush, outside my window, and, after resting awhile, for the night before had been stormy, dropped to the closely cut turf to feed upon the crumbs left where the hounds had been munching their biscuits. I have never seen a more beautiful specimen, and the contrast with the vivid grass seemed to develop the colour of malachite that ran along one edge of the feathers, shifting as the bird moved like the sheen of changeable silk.

“The nest, in no wise typical, is a loose and rather careless structure of grass, twigs, horsehairs, roots, or bits of bark placed in a low, scrubby tree or bush at no great distance from the ground, and the eggs are a very pale blue or bluish white, and only three or four in number.



National Association of Audubon Societies

INDIGO BUNTING
(UPPER FIGURE, MALE; LOWER FIGURE, FEMALE)

Order—PASSERES Family—FRINGILLIDÆ
Genus—PASSERINA Species—CYANEA

“Being a seed-eater, it is undoubtedly this Bunting’s love of warmth that gives him so short a season with us: for he does not come to the New England states until the first week in May, and, after the August moult, when he dons the sober clothing of his mate, he begins to work southward by the

middle of September,—those from the most northerly portions of the breeding range, which extends northward to Minnesota and Nova Scotia, having passed by the tenth of October. He winters in Central America and southward.

“Although of the insect-eating fraternity of the conical beak, the Indigo Bunting consumes many noxious insects in the nesting season, when the rapid growth of the young demands animal food, no matter to what race they belong. Being an inhabitant of the overgrown edges of old pastures, or the brushy fences of clearings and pent roads, he is in a position where he can do a great deal of good. Mr. Forbush, in his valuable book on *Useful Birds and Their Protection*, credits the Indigo Bunting with being a consumer of the larvæ of the mischievous brown-tail moth; but whatever service it may do as an insect destroyer, its service the year through as a consumer of weed seeds, in common with the rest of its tribe, is beyond dispute.

“The voice of the Indigo Bunting is pretty rather than impressive, and varies much in individuals. It consists of a series of hurried, canary-like notes repeated constantly and rising in key, but, to my mind, never reaching the dignity of being called impressive song.

“Nuttall, one of the early American Wise Men, writes that, though usually shy, the Indigo-bird, during the season, is more frequently seen near habitations than in remote thickets: ‘Their favourite resort is the garden, where, from the topmost branch of some tall tree that commands the whole wide landscape, the male regularly pours out his lively chant and continues it for a considerable length of time. Nor is this song confined to the cool and animating dawn of morning, but it is renewed, and still more vigorous, during the noonday heat of summer. This lively strain is composed of a repetition of short notes, which, commencing loud and rapid, and then slowly falling, descend almost to a whisper, succeeded by a silence of almost half a minute, when the song is again continued as before.

“‘In the village of Cambridge (Massachusetts), I have seen one of these azure, almost celestial musicians, regularly chant to the inmates of a tall dwelling-house from the summit of the chimney or the tall fork of the lightning-rod. I have also heard a Canary repeat and imitate the low lispings trill of the Indigo-bird, whose warble, indeed, often resembles that of this species.’

“This combination of musical ability, lovely plumage, and its seed-eating qualities long since has made the Indigo Bunting in danger of extermination, through the fact of its being universally, throughout the South, captured and sold as a cage-bird, both for home use and for export. In that section the bird is called the ‘blue pop,’ a corruption of ‘bleu pape,’ or ‘pope,’ of the French.

“The Cardinal, called ‘Grosbeak’ from the thickness and size of its bill, is of course a very conspicuous bird wherever seen, and therefore has always been a mark for the ‘arrow of death,’ as Mr. Allen, who knows this bird in its native haunts, and its every mood, puts it. Some day when you are older you will read his story of it as it lives in the deep recesses of the evergreen woods, called *The Kentucky Cardinal*. For though this bird is found nesting as far north as Central Park, New York, and it has once or twice come to my garden here, and gone into Massachusetts even, in the fall roving-time, we must always associate him with a long outdoor season and sunny skies, as we do the Mockingbird.

The Cardinal

“If the Mocker suffered for his voice, the Cardinal was made a prisoner for his song and gorgeous colour combined, and though, as is bird law in such cases, the female is dull in colour, she has a very attractive song also, even in confinement. But I hope that these prison days are over. Whoever now confines the Cardinal is a law-breaker as well as a heart-breaker, and yet, but ten years ago, every bird-store window was aglow with the colour of the Cardinal’s mantle. I have here in the scrap-book a charming story that you will like to hear, of a Cardinal in Boston, made a temporary captive for its own preservation, and of its release when the right time came.”

THE CARDINAL AT THE HUB

His range being southern, Cardinal Grosbeak seldom travels through New England; and, to my knowledge, has never established a home and reared a family north of Connecticut until in the instance here recorded. Kentuckians claim him, and with some show of right, since James Lane Allen built his monument in imperishable prose. But, soon or late, all notables come to Boston, and among them may now be registered the “Kentucky Cardinal.”

Shy by nature, conspicuous in plumage, he shuns publicity; and avoiding the main lines of travel, he puts up at a quiet country house in a Boston suburb—Brookline.

Here, one October day in 1897, among the migrants stopping at this halfway house, appeared a distinguished guest, clad in red, with a black mask, a light red bill, and a striking crest; with him a bird so like him that they might have been called the two Dromios. After a few days the double passed on, and left our hero the only red-coat in the field. A White-throated Sparrow now arrived from the mountains, and a Damon-and-Pythias friendship sprang up between the birds. Having decided to winter at the North, they took lodgings in a spruce tree, and came regularly to the *table*

d'hôte on the porch. My lord Cardinal, being the more distinguished guest, met with particular favour, and soon became welcome at the homes of the neighbourhood. With truly catholic taste, he refused creature-comforts from none, but showed preference for his first abode.

It was March 5, 1898, when we kept our first appointment with the Cardinal. A light snow had fallen during the night, and the air was keen, without premonition of spring. It was a day for home-keeping birds, the earth larder being closed. The most delicate tact was required in presenting strangers. A loud, clear summons—the Cardinal's own whistle echoed by human lips—soon brought a response. Into the syringa bush near the porch flew, with a whir and a sharp *tsip*, a bird. How gorgeous he looked in the snow-laden shrub! For an instant the syringa blossoms loaded the air with fragrance as a dream of summer floated by. Then a call to the porch was met by several sallies and quick retreats, while the wary bird studied the newcomers. Reassuring tones from his gentle hostess, accompanied by the rattle of nuts and seeds, at last prevailed, and the Cardinal flew to the railing, and looked us over with keen, inquiring eye. Convinced that no hostilities were intended, he gave a long, trustful look into the face of his benefactress and flew to her feet.

A gray squirrel, frisking by, stopped at the lunch-counter and seized an "Educator" cracker.

The novel sensation of an uncaged bird within touch, where one might notice the lovely shading of his plumage as one notes a flower, was memorable; but a sweeter surprise was in store. As we left the house, having made obeisance to his eminence, the Cardinal, the bird flew into a spruce tree and saluted us with a melodious "Mizpah." Then, as if reading the longing of our hearts, he opened his bright bill, and a song came forth such as never before enraptured the air of a New England March,—a song so copious, so free, so full of heavenly hope, that it seemed as if forever obliterated were the "tragic memories of his race."

As March advanced, several changes in the Cardinal were noted by his ever-watchful friends. He made longer trips abroad, returning tired and hungry. The restlessness of the unsatisfied heart was plainly his. His long, sweet, interpolating whistle, variously rendering "Peace . . . peace . . . peace!" "Three cheers, three cheers," etc., to these sympathetic northern ears became "Louise, Louise, Louise!" Thenceforth he was Louis, the Cardinal, calling for his mate.

On March 26, a kind friend took pity on the lonely bachelor, and a caged bird, "Louise," was introduced to him. In the lovely dove-coloured bird, with faint washings of red, and the family mask and crest, the Cardinal at once recognized his kind. His joy was unbounded, and the acquaintance

progressed rapidly, a mutual understanding being plainly reached during the seventeen days of cage courtship. Louis brought food to Louise, and they had all things in common, except liberty.

April 12, in the early morning, the cage was taken out-of-doors, and Louise was set free. She was quick to embrace her chance, and flew into the neighbouring shrubbery. For six days she revelled in her new-found freedom, Louis, meanwhile, coming and going as of old, and often carrying away seeds from the house to share with his mate.

April 16, he lured her into the house, and after that they came often for food, flying fearlessly in at the window, and delighting their friends with their songs and charming ways. Louis invariably gave the choicest morsels to his mate, and the course of true love seemed to cross the adage; but, alas! Death was already adjusting an arrow for that shining mark.

April 25, Louise stayed in the house all day, going out at nightfall. Again the following day she remained indoors, Louis feeding her; but her excellent appetite disarmed suspicion, and it was thought that she had taken refuge from the cold and rain, especially as she spent the night within. The third morning, April 27, she died. An examination of her body showed three dreadful wounds.

Louis came twittering to the window, but was not let in until a day or two later, when a new bird, "Louisa," had been put in the cage. When he saw the familiar form, he evidently thought his lost love restored, for he burst into glorious song; but, soon discovering his mistake, he stopped short in his hallelujahs, and walked around the cage inspecting the occupant.



National Association of Audubon Societies

CARDINAL

UPPER FIGURE, FEMALE; LOWER FIGURE, MALE.

Louisa's admiration for the Cardinal was marked; but for some days he took little notice of her, and his friends began to fear that their second attempt at match-making would prove a failure. April 30, however, some responsive interest was shown, and the next day Louis brought to the cage a brown bug, half an inch long, and gave Louisa his first meat-offering.

The second wooing progressed rapidly, and May 7, when Louisa was set free, the pair flew away together with unrestrained delight. After three days of liberty, Louisa flew back to the house with her mate, and thenceforth was a frequent visitor.

May 21, Louisa was seen carrying straws, and on June 6 her nest was discovered low down in a dense evergreen thorn. Four speckled eggs lay in the nest. These were hatched June 9, the parent birds, meantime and afterward, going regularly to market, and keeping up social relations with their friends.

In nine days after their exit from the shell, the little Cardinals left the nest and faced life's sterner realities. A black cat was their worst foe, and more than once, during their youth, Louis flew to his devoted commissary and made known his anxiety. Each time, on following him to the nest, she found the black prowler, or one of his kind, watching for prey. On June 28, the black cat outwitted the allied forces, Señor Cardinal and his friends, and a little one was slain. The other three grew up, and enjoyed all the privileges of their parents, flying in at the window, and frequenting the bountiful porch.

July 25, Louisa disappeared from the scene, presumably on a southern trip, leaving the Cardinal sole protector, provider, and peacemaker for their lively and quarrelsome triplet. A fight is apparently as needful for the development of a young Cardinal as of an English schoolboy, possibly due in both cases to a meat diet.

Overfeeding was but temporary with our birds. On the 8th of August the migratory instinct prevailed over ease, indulgence, friendship, and the Cardinal with his brood left the house, where he had been so well entertained, to return no more. No more? Who shall say of any novel that it can have no sequel? Massachusetts may yet become the permanent home of the Kentucky Cardinal, the descendant to the third and fourth generation of Louis and his mate.

—ELLA GILBERT IVES, in *Bird-Lore*.

As Gray Lady read the story of the Cardinal, the children, between listening to it and being intent on their work, forgot the Mockingbird in the window, upon whom the rays of the sun, that had gradually managed to pierce the clouds, were resting.

As her mother finished and paused, Goldilocks, with a very slight gesture, directed their glance toward the window, where the Mockingbird, having completed his toilet and meal, perched, wings slightly raised and quivering, with half-closed eyes, murmuring a few broken snatches of song, half to himself and half as if in a dream, his head thrown back and, oh, such a human expression of longing in his attitude, that Gray Lady, without speaking, turned the leaves of her scrap-book slowly until she came to a place where the long line of prose shortened to verse, and then in a low but distinct voice she read:—

IN CAPTIVITY

You ask me why
I long to fly
Out from your palace to the dreamy woods,
And the summer solitude,
 Why I pine
 In this cage of mine;
 Why I fret,
 Why I set
All manner of querulous echoes fluttering forth
 From the cold North
And wandering southward with beseeching pain
 In every strain.
 Ask me not,
 Task me not
With such vain questions, but fling wide the door
And hinder me no more;
 Give back my wings to me,
And the wild current of my liberty.

* * * * *

Oh if you please
Give me release!
Open the gate
Of this cage of Fate
And let me mount the South wind and go down
 To Bay St. Louis town,
 Where the brown bees hum
In amber mists of pollen and perfume;
 And the roses gush a-bloom!

* * * * *

Fainter, fainter—so
My life-stream sinks—runs low.

Ah!

Oh!

Open the cage and let me go.
Floating, dreaming, revelling, dying, down
To my mate, my queen, my love
In the fragrant drowsy grove
Beyond the flowery closes of Bay St. Louis town.

It was very still for a moment, and something fell on Sarah Barnes' work that was bright, but it wasn't a needle! Then, looking across at the cage, but addressing Gray Lady, she said, "We've paid for the shingles, and the hay, and the horse-blanket, and a chest-protector, besides, for the horse to wear all the time, to keep the uphill wind off his lungs. We've bought the bags of sweepings for the feeding-places, and there's three dollars and eighty-five cents left.

"Couldn't the Kind Hearts' Club have a meeting *right away*, and vote to send Old Ned's Mocker back down South by express, *now*, before he, maybe, dies, so's he'd be there to meet spring, even if old Ned can't? Then he'd have time to look up a mate in case his old one has got tired of waiting for him," she added in a more cheerful tone.

Gray Lady said that, as all the members were present, a special meeting would be in order; and two days later the Mockingbird started for the southern home of one of Gray Lady's school friends, with a "special" tag on his well-wrapped cage and a bottle of extra food fastened outside.

Oh, the untold misery and waste of this caging and selling of free-born birds! It is only one grade less direct a slaughter than killing them to trim a bonnet. While the sufferings of the bonnet-bird end at once, with its life, those of the caged bird have only begun as the door closes behind him.

A few exceptional cases, where birds in care of those who are both able and willing to make their surroundings endurable, count as nothing against the general condemnation of the practice of caging birds born wild.

Those of us who have known, by experience, in caring for wounded or sick birds, exactly what incessant watchfulness is necessary to keep them alive, realize how impossible it is that this care should be given them by the average purchaser.

Birds born and reared in captivity, like the Canary, are the only ones that real humanity should keep behind bars. There is no more condemnable habit

than taking nestlings of any kind, and trying to rear them, unless disaster overtakes the parents.

Nominally, the traffic in caged wild birds has ceased; actually, it has not; nor will it until every bird-lover feels himself responsible for staying the hand that would rob the nest, whether it is that of the ignorant little pickaninny of the South, who climbs up the vine outside the window where you are wintering, and sees, in the four young Mockers, in the nest just under the sill, a prospective dollar; the child at home, who likes to experiment for a few days with pets, and then forgets them; or the wily dealer, who sells secretly what he dares not exhibit. No quarter to any class who make prisoners of the wild, outside of the zoölogical gardens or the few private outdoor aviaries, where the proper conditions exist.

Any free citizen prefers death to loss of liberty, and even the most material mind will, at least, allow this human quality to Citizen Bird, while it proves that he or she who either cages or buys the captive wholly lacks the spiritual quality.

Should we make prisoners of

“The ballad-singers and the Troubadours,
The street musicians of the heavenly city,
The birds, who make sweet music for us all
In our dark hours, as David did for Saul”?

XX

MIDWINTER BIRDS

WINTER COMRADES

Plume and go, ye summer folk
Fly from Winter's killing stroke,
Bluebird, Sparrow, Thrush, and Swallow,
Wild Geese from the marshes follow,
Wood-dove from the lonesome hollow
Rise and follow South—all follow!

Now I greet ye, hardy tribes,
Snowy Owl, and night-black Crow,
Starling with your wild halloo;
Blue Jay screaming like the wind,
In the tree-tops gaunt and thinned;
You in summer called "Bob-white"
(Voice of far-off fields' delight).

Now among the barnyard brood
Fearless, searching for your food;
Nuthatch, Snowbird, Chickadee,
Downy tapper on the tree;
And you twittering Goldfinch drove
(Masked in gray) that blithely rove
Where the herby pastures show
Tables set above the snow:

And ye other flocks that ramble,
Where the red hop trims the bramble,
Or the rowan-berry bright
And the scarlet haw invite—
Winter comrades, well betide ye,
Friendly trunk and hollow hide ye,
Hemlock branches interlace,
When the Northern Blast gives chase.

—EDITH M. THOMAS.

These were the hard days for birds and people both, days of sleet and ice, when the snow seemed to chill and bind the trees down, instead of winding lovely draperies about them as it did at first.

Toward the end of January the cedar-berries gave out, and the juicy blackberries of the honeysuckle, that clings to everything that will hold the vines, became watery and poor; most of the seed-stalks of weeds were beaten down, and it was “mighty poor picking for birds,” as Sarah Barnes expressed the matter.

The lunch-counter in Birdland received a fresh supply of food every morning, and yet, sometimes before dark, every grain had been eaten, and the generous lumps of suet picked to shreds. The feeding-stations for the game-birds all had visitors, and the boys, who kept them supplied, saw, in their walks, many winter birds that they never before knew came so near to the cultivated farmland.

Acting on the general idea of feeding and sheltering birds that now seemed to pervade the air of Fair Meadows township, many people scattered food on the roofs of their sheds, and made openings in their corn-stacks, or left a window of the hay-barn ajar, where birds might seek a shelter.

All through the month the resident winter birds were seen at intervals. Of course, there would be many days when no birds would appear, and it would seem as if they had all gone, but let the sun shine, and the least breath of wind blow from the southeast, and they would come out of the near-by shelter where they had been hiding.

The orchard lunch-counter was the one place where, at least, a single bird was always to be found, and, at times, as many as half a dozen different kinds would be seen feeding peaceably together.

Gray Lady kept a list of all the birds that the children reported, and sometimes it was quite a puzzle for her to name a bird, unknown to the discoverer, from the description that was brought of it. For to see the chief

points of a bird at a glance is difficult enough in itself, but to put them into exact words seemed sometimes impossible.

When Dave, on his return from a sleigh-ride to the shore, said that he'd seen a "big round-headed Owl sitting on a stump in the salt meadows, and it looked as if it had sat out all night in a snow-squall," Gray Lady knew at once that he had seen one of the Arctic or Snowy Owls that occasionally drift down from the North on a short visit, and that it was on the lookout for a meal of meadow-mice or other little gnawers.

But when Bobbie, who went to the same location, reported that he had seen "a flock of birds that were sort of Sparrows with a yellow breast, and a black mark on it, and long ears," it took a little time and many questions before she found that the birds were visiting Horned Larks, with pinkish brown backs, a black crescent on the breast, and a black bar across the forehead, that, extending around the sides of the head, forms two little tufts, or feather horns. For the rest, the throat and neck were dull yellow, and the underparts white streaked with black. These birds were little known. They only made flying visits, and gave merely a call-note, keeping their beautiful song, during which they soar in the air like the Sky-lark, for their nesting-haunts in the far North.

Gray Lady's ingenuity was taxed to its utmost, however, when one Saturday morning little Clary came to the playroom, her face aglow, and said that she had seen "a brown Blue Jay with a yellow tail and red wings; not just one, but a whole family."

For a moment Gray Lady was quite at a loss how to proceed; yellow tail and red wings were surely startling; then she saw that there must be some point about the bird that reminded the child of a Jay other than its colour.

"How did this bird look like a Jay, Clary?" she asked.

"In the head," came the prompt reply; "it had feathers on top that moved up and down, the way a Jay's does, and it was dark in the nose."

On thinking over the winter birds that had a crest of feathers that could be raised or lowered, she realized that the Cedar-bird had such a one, also a black beak, and a black eye-stripe that made it look "dark in the nose," but yellow tail and red wings it certainly did not have, merely a narrow yellow band on the tail and small, waxen, coral-red tips to some of the wing quills. However, taking half a dozen coloured pictures from one of the portfolios that she kept at hand to settle disputed points, she spread them in front of the little girl, who, without a moment's hesitation, picked out the Cedar-bird, or Cedar Waxwing, as it is properly called from its coral wings-tips.

These are the resident birds on the list that Gray Lady kept of those the children saw during that winter:—

Bob-white
Ruffed Grouse
Red-shouldered Hawk
Meadowlark
Long-eared Owl
Screech Owl
Downy Woodpecker
Robin
Bluebird
Song Sparrow
White-breasted Nuthatch
Red-tailed Hawk
Sharp-shinned Hawk
Barred Owl
Cedar Waxwing
Hairy Woodpecker
Flicker
Blue Jay
Crow
American Goldfinch
Chickadee
Herring Gull

This is a list of the visiting birds, that nest in the far North and drift southward, either in search of food or driven on the course of the storm clouds; and before February came, with its longer afternoons, the children could name them all, either from sight or from the pictures in Gray Lady's portfolio.

Horned Lark. (See above.)

Snowflake. A bird of the Sparrow tribe, winter plumage soft brown and white, colour of dead leaves and snow, black feet and bill. Comes in flocks to feed on weed seeds, especially of snowy winters.

Redpoll. Of the Sparrow tribe and the size of the Chippy. Dusky gray and brown, with long, pointed wings and short, forked tail. *Head, neck, and rump washed with crimson!* A canary-like call-note.

The Two Crossbills. (See page [252](#).)

Snowy Owl. (See page [295](#).)

Tree-sparrow. (See page [249](#).)

White-throated Sparrow. The most beautiful of all our Sparrows; a plump handsome bird. *White throat and crown stripes.* Back striped with black, bay, and whitish. Rump light olive-brown. Bay edgings to wings, and two white cross-bars; underparts gray. *Yellow spot before eye.* Female, crown brown, markings less distinct. Song, sweet and plaintive “Pee-a-peabody, peabody, peabody!”

Abundant migrant; also a winter resident from September to May.

Junco. (See page [250](#).)

Myrtle Warbler. (See page [250](#).)

Winter Wren. (See page [247](#).)

Golden-crowned Kinglet. (See page [249](#).)

Brown Creeper. (See page [184](#).)

Northern Shrike. A roving winter resident with Hawklike habits, Hawklike in flight: called “Butcher-bird,” from its meat-eating habits.

Length: 9-10.50 inches.

Male and Female: Powerful head, neck, and blackish beak with hooked point. Above bluish ash, lighter on the rump and shoulders. Wide black bar on each side of the head from the eye backward. Below, light gray with a brownish cast, broken on breast and sides by waved lines of darker gray. Wings and tail black, edged and tipped with white. Large white spot on wings, white tips and edges to outer quills of tail. Legs bluish black.

A call-note, and in its breeding-haunts a sweet, warbling song.

In common with all winter birds, its movements are guided by the food supply, and if severe cold and heavy snows drive away the small birds, and bury the mice upon which it feeds, the Shrike must necessarily rove.

Grasshoppers, beetles, other large insects, and field-mice are staple articles of its food in seasons when they are obtainable; in fact, next to insects, mice constitute the staple article of its diet; and protection should be accorded it on this account, even though we know the Shrike chiefly as the killer of small birds. The victims are caught by two methods: sneaking,—after the fashion of Crows,—and dropping upon them suddenly from a height, like the small Hawks. In the former case the Shrikes frequent clumps of bushes, either in open meadows or gardens, lure the little birds by imitating their call-notes, and then seize them as soon as they come within range. They often kill many more birds than they can possibly eat at a meal, and hang them on the spikes of a thorn or on the hooks of a cat-brier in some convenient spot, until they are needed, in the same manner as a butcher hangs his meat; and from this trait the name “Butcher-bird” was given them.

During some of these wintry days of meeting, questions and answers about the birds seen filled the time, and then Gray Lady read to them from some of her many books what people living in other places had said and thought of these same familiar birds. Besides the stories, she told them many things about the building of a bird, its bones, its feathers, the reasons why of the various kinds of feet and bills, the grouping of race, tribe, and family that both divide the bird world and at the same time bind it together; for she very well knew that when spring came with its procession of songsters, the children would be so eager to listen, see, follow, and learn the names of the living birds that they would not have patience to listen to the dry details.

THE SNOWBIRD

When the leaves are shed
And the branches bare,
When the snows are deep
And the flowers asleep,
And the autumn dead;
And the skies are o'er us bent
Gray and gloomy since she went,
And the sifting snow is drifting
Through the air;

Then mid snowdrifts white,
Though the trees are bare,
Comes the Snowbird bold
In the winter's cold.

Quick and round and bright,
Light he steps across the snow.
Cares he not for winds that blow,
Though the sifting snow be drifting
Through the air.

—DORA R. GOODALE.

ON HEARING A WINTER WREN SING IN WINTER

When wintry winds through woodlands blow
And naked tree-tops shake and shiver;
While all the paths were bound in snow,
And thick ice chains the merry river,

One little feathered denizen,
A plump and nut-brown winter wren,
Sings of springtime even there—
“Tsip-twis-ch-e-e-e cheerily-cheerily-dare”—
Who could listen and despair?

Charmed with the sweetness of his strain,
My heart found cheer in winter's bluster;
The leafless wood was fair again,
Its ice-gems sparkled with new lustre.

The tiny, trembling, tinkling throat
Poured forth despair's sure antidote,
No leafy June hears sweeter note—
"Tsip-twis-ch-e-e-e cheerily-cheerily-dare"—
The essence of unspoken prayer.

—LYNN TEW SPRAGUE, in *Bird-Lore*.

THE CHICKADEE

When piped a tiny voice hard by,
Gay and polite, a cheerful cry,
Chic-chickadee-dee! saucy note
Out of sound heart and merry throat,
As if it said, "Good day, good sir!
Fine afternoon, old passenger!
Happy to meet you in these places
Where January brings few faces."

—R. W. EMERSON.

These are a few of the many bits of verse and poems that Gray Lady read or recited to the children in these days, some of which they learned by heart. Once learned, she knew they would never be forgotten, but that years afterward, when they saw the birds that the lines described, the words and the days in the schoolhouse and playroom, and the faces of their companions, would all come back to them.

BIRD SONGS OF MEMORY

Oh, surpassing all expression by the rhythmic use of words,
Are the memories that gather of the singing of the birds:
When as a child I listened to the Whip-poor-will at dark,
And with the dawn awakened to the music of the Lark.

Then what a chorus wonderful when morning had begun,—
The very leaves, it seemed to me, were singing to the sun,
And calling on the world asleep to waken and behold
The king in glory coming forth along his path of gold.

The crimson-fronted Linnet sang above the river's edge,
The Finches in the evergreens, the Thrasher in the hedge;
Each one as if a dozen songs were chorused in his own,
And all the world were listening to him and him alone.

In gladness sang the Bobolink upon ascending wing,
With cheery voice the bird of blue, the pioneer of spring,
The Oriole upon the elm, with martial note and clear,
While Martins twittered gayly by the cottage window near.

Among the orchard trees were heard the Robin and the Wren,
And the army of the Blackbirds along the marshy fen;
The songster in the meadow and the Quail upon the wheat,
And the warbler's minor music made the symphony complete.

Beyond the tow'ring chimney'd walls that daily meet my eyes,
I hold a vision beautiful beneath the summer skies;
Within the city's grim confines, above the roaring street,
The Happy Birds of Memory are singing clear and sweet.

—GARRETT NEWKIRK.

XXI

JACOB HUGHES' OPINION OF CATS

One morning after a light snow-storm, followed by sparkling sunshine, Gray Lady took the younger children out for a walk through Birdland and the lane. Not but what even the younger children knew the way! But often as they had trodden it, there were many things that they noticed for the first time: the wonderful shapes of the snow crystals, the snow flowers that blossomed on the old weed stalks, the snow filling that brought many hidden nests into view, and all the other wonders that are so often wrought in the winter night, while we sleep soundly.

Tommy and Dave, who had walked on ahead, halted suddenly and picked up a handful of feathers from the snow and stood looking at them as Gray Lady came up.

“A bad Hawk or a Crow or Owl or something big has been here,” said Dave, with a quaver in his voice, “and it’s killed a banty rooster that looks just like mine, that is, this bunch of feathers does; but then, Goldilocks has banties, too, so perhaps it is one of hers,” and he held the feathers up.

Gray Lady took them; yes, they were banty feathers, and from a bird that had not been long dead, for the quill ends were still moist. Then she looked at the ground: “Something that did not fly has killed the bantam, and dragged its body along the ground, and it had feet with padded claws, look!” she said, and there was a blood-stained trail that skirted the bushes and then ran across the lane toward a hay-barn that now held only bedding and cornstalks.

“You children amuse yourselves here while Tommy, Dave, and I follow this up.”

Nothing could have been more simple than this following, as the footprints of the large cat, for that is what it was, showed plainly in the new snow, and, here and there, a few drops of blood also marked the way. Straight to the barn ran the trail, and then through a small door that had been left open at Gray Lady’s request, that birds might take shelter inside.

So they had, poor things, and so had the cat also. On the floor were other feathers of many kinds, among which Gray Lady recognized the white-spotted tail-feathers of a Robin, the pointed shafts of the Flicker, and gray-and-white down that might have come from a Junco’s breast; while half

hidden by loose cornstalks was the foot of a Grouse, also yellow legs that had belonged to a good-sized chicken.

The boys stood still in amazement, and Dave said, "I knew foxes and dogs carried things home or buried them, but I didn't know cats did unless they have kittens hidden. I wonder if there are kittens in the cornstalks, and if this cat stole all the chickens we've been losing every day almost along since fall? Because it couldn't be any kind of birds that stole them, they couldn't get in; and father said it lay between cats, rats, and weasels."

"We will soon find out," said Gray Lady. "Will you boys go down to the stable and ask Jacob to come up? I will watch here." As soon as they had gone, Gray Lady went into a corner and seated herself upon a box. Presently she heard a rustle among the cornstalks and out stalked a great tiger-striped cat, licking her whiskers. After snuffing the footsteps of the boys, she began to lash her tail to and fro, which in a cat means anger, and quite the reverse of the dog's sociable, "I'm glad to see you" tail-wag. Then, looking back at the hole in the corn stack through which she had come, she made a strange sound, half purr, half growl, that Gray Lady thought was evidently intended as a note of warning, and then the cat slunk off through the snow, keeping as close to the fence as possible and dropping her body low as she hurried away.

When Jacob came, he took a hayfork and began to shift the cornstalks from the corner to the empty floor opposite. The feathers, he said, had all been gathered during the two past weeks, for when he had last taken the wood-sled from the barn, no feathers were to be seen.

"Here they are!" he exclaimed, as the last stack was reached, but even as he spoke, six half-grown kittens, brindled like their parent, sprang in different directions, some going up on the beams and others diving into the hay, only one remaining, with arched back and flashing eyes, to hiss a protest at the disturbing of their comfortable home.

"What's the use of making bird laws and feeding birds and all that, and letting wild beasts like these multiply about the country?" said Jacob, resting on the handle of the fork. "*No, ma'am*, if I had my way, I'd get up a Kind Heart Club of men to help the birds and rid the township of homeless cats, red squirrels, and English Sparrows—yes, I would, *ma'am*!

"I have eyes and I use them, and I know cats are worse enemies to birds, counting wild birds and poultry together, than everything else that walks or flies humped together. Tame house cats are bad enough, for they'll kill for pleasure when they're not hungry. My sister over at Hill's farm says she's taken over fifty dead or half-dead birds away from her pet cat this summer, until it sickened her of the idea of keeping cats.

“But when it comes to the half-breeds that some folks let grow up because they’re too slack to kill ’em, it’s just a crime! Look at this piece of work here; the cat that has done all this is one of the outcasts of the lot down at the grist-mill. Cats are only half tamed at best; let them get a taste of hunting and back they go and are savages.

“They don’t belong to this country; we folks brought ’em, like we did English Sparrows, and we made a mistake, and we ought to undo it when we can. Transplanted animals, like pauper foreigners, always get the upper hand. Traps can catch up the rats and mice, only we’re too lazy to set them. Cats are no good, even for pets, for they’re tricky, and they aren’t healthy for children to have because they carry skin diseases and such in their fur. They claim that Jessie Lyons that died in Bridgeton ’long in the fall got the diphtheria from her cat’s trampin’ all over creation, and then her huggin’ it.

“If it’s right and proper to license dogs, and if one kills fowls or sheep, for the town to pay damages, then, say I, the least we can do is to license cats and hold the owners for their mischief.

“Next to cats I’m most put out with red squirrels and English Sparrows. The first are sneaks; they take eggs, little birds, and all. They make free with young gray squirrels, too, and don’t spare their next-door neighbours even, while Sparrows hustle and do much likewise, taking the nesting-places of Swallows and Bluebirds and Jenny Wrens, and fighting and wrastling with anything smaller than themselves, breaking up nests and pitching out young ones until I just can’t stand it! Now it’s woe to any of these three that comes across my path. Maybe some folks will say I’m cruel. Will those folks let mice and rats eat their groceries and not kill them? and by themselves rats and mice are decent, clean animals.

“Not they; and to us that love our tree birds, cats and red squirrels and English Sparrows are hateful as are rats and mice, and I warrant you’ll not think I’m going too far when I say it, ma’am!”

“No, Jacob, you are right, though I’m sorry to say so,” answered Gray Lady, still looking at the feathers. “The cat tribe is by nature cruel. All animals kill for food, but the cat tortures before she kills. I used to defend the keeping of pet cats until one that I had trusted bit me through the hand at a moment when I was petting her, without the slightest provocation. I never knew a dog to bite his master unprovoked—unless he was ill—and even if we love our cats, we should be unselfish, for birds are of value to the country at large and cats are not. Only, I insist upon this, that the killing, even of vermin, is a matter for the grown-up, and some one with authority should be appointed to do it. It should not be left to the young and irresponsible, just as the punishing of human criminals is not a matter for the people in general to decide and put in execution.

“Yes, boys,” Gray Lady continued, “I wish every one would feel responsible in this matter. No farmer will raise more poultry or calves or colts than he can feed and then turn them loose to either starve or prey upon his neighbours. Why, then, should he allow his cats to straggle about and kill the song-birds that even much money cannot buy or replace? But come, we must go on; the others will be wondering where we are.

“I want you all to look at something at the lane end,—that great beech tree with the gray streaked trunk. Do you see the sunbeams playing checkers on the bark, this side? Do you know what this means? I will tell you. It means that the tide of winter is turning toward spring, that February is here. We should not know it unless we looked at the day in the calendar. It is quite as cold as it has been all through the winter, but the days are growing longer, and now, once more, the sun slips by the barn in the morning and lies upon the beech trunk that has been in shadow all winter long.

“My father showed me this when I was a child; and whenever I grew tired of winter, the earth seemed dead, and it seemed as if spring would never come back, he would say, ‘Go up the lane and see if the sun’s message is written on the beech tree.’ So, while it is still winter here, down in the South the flocks of Robins and Song Sparrows and Bluebirds are reading the sun’s message, and, far away as spring seems, they are planning their return. Meanwhile we have the brave winter birds to keep us cheerful. See the flock of Juncos alighting yonder. They are as plump and freshly plumed as new arrivals in spring dress. This Snowbird is no sloven, he always wears a trim dress-suit.”

Better far, ah yes! than no bird
Is the ever-present snowbird;
Gayly tripping, dainty creature,
When the snow hides every feature;
Covers fences, field, and tree,
Clothes in white all things but thee.
Restless, twittering, trusty snowbird
Lighter heart than thine hath no bird.

—C. C. ABBOTT, *Snowbird*.

XXII

FEBRUARY, "THE LONG-SHORT MONTH"

Bluebird, Song Sparrow, Robin

"I wonder why February is so long, when it is the very shortest month in the year?" said Goldilocks one Saturday, as she and Miss Wilde were walking from Swallow Chimney, up through Birdland, to the big house for the bird class.

"I have often thought the same thing myself," answered Rose Wilde, "and I think it must be because, knowing that it is a short month, we think spring is hurrying to us because we are trying to hurry toward it. Spring, however, never hurries to return to New England, even when nature faces her this way she seems to take pleasure in walking backward!"

Miss Wilde and Goldilocks had become fast friends since the little teacher had come to live on the hill. With the interest Gray Lady had shown in the children and school, the dreary, lonely days had passed away, and she no longer looked pale and nervous, but was bright-eyed, with a lovely soft colour in her cheeks, so that, as Goldilocks told her one day, her name could be written in two ways, Rose Wilde, and Wild Rose, which, of course, made her blush with pleasure, and look all the more like that radiant June flower.

Goldilocks would have liked to go to school at Foxes Corners with the others, but the doctor shook his head and said something to her mother about "unwholesome stove heat, fresh air but not draughts," but Gray Lady smiled at Goldilocks with a mysterious sort of glance that always hid a surprise and said, "Be content to grow strong this winter and wait and see what will happen."

"Yes, but Miss Wilde may go to a better school next year, if she is well, for you know that Sarah Barnes' grandmother heard that she had two chances, one at the Bridgeton High School and one to teach the eighth grade at the Centre. Besides, the children I like best—Sarah, and Tommy, and Dave, and Eliza—won't be at Foxes Corners next year. If their parents can take turns in lending them a horse, they will have to go to the Centre School for the eighth grade, because no one can go from Foxes Corners straight into the High School, and they do *so* want to learn."

"Of course it is quite possible that Rose Wilde may go to another school, and we would not wish to keep her back, I'm sure, little daughter."

Something in Gray Lady's voice made Goldilocks look at her quickly.

"I can't guess what it is, motherkin, but I simply *know* that you have a secret and a plan in your head that I may not know until summer." Then Goldilocks smiled to herself, as she remembered that she also had, or rather was a part of, a secret of Miss Wilde's that her mother could not know until summer; and this secret had many things in it,—girls and boys, needles and thread and bits of coloured cloth, long walks into the far-away hemlock woods, axes, and many other things!

It was now the last week in February. Every one was on the lookout for the first spring migrants, and the children were beginning to bring news of birds that they had seen imperfectly and yet were sure were new arrivals from the South. It was impossible that most of these birds should have been in the vicinity, but the pictures on the charts, mixed with equal portions of imagination and hope, caused the children to *think* they saw the bird that they wished to be the first to report, rather than the one that was actually there.

Aside from the birds that are represented by a few individuals all the year the only newcomers to hope for are a few adventurous Blackbirds, the Purple Grackle, and the Red-wing, and they are not usually seen in any numbers before the beginning of March. There are three birds, however, that, unless the month is very stormy, may be expected at any time to show their fresh plumage and bring the latest news of travel to their stay-at-home brothers who have remained behind. These are the Bluebird, the Song Sparrow, and the Robin.

"We all know those. Even little brother Ebby knows *those* birds," said Clary, when Gray Lady proposed to spend the morning in the company of the most homelike and familiar birds of New England. "That is, Ebby knows the Bluebird and Robin, and the Song Sparrow if it is singing; but I do think Sparrows are dreadful hard to tell by sight. If a Song Sparrow doesn't sing, and turns his back so's I can't see the big spot and the little one on his breast, I don't always know him myself."

"I hope that we all know these three birds," said Gray Lady, "but, like old friends, we are even more glad to see them when they come than if they were the most brilliant of strangers. Old friends also may bring news, and as for birds, no one can ever be sure that there is nothing new to learn of them. And as for what we do know, it becomes fresh and new each spring with his return. One thing about this bird is worthy of notice, and that is the wonderful way in which Nature uses colour, both as an ornament and a protection to her children. The majority of the brightly coloured birds do not

arrive until there are at least a few leaves to screen them; the Oriole, Tanager, Rose-breast, and Indigo-bird perching on leafless branches. Yet the Bluebird and the Blue Jay, both of brilliant and striking plumage, are with us when the trees are entirely bare, and when evergreens are lacking they have only sky or earth for a background.

“What does this mean? Look out of the window, Sarah, as you are the nearest to it, and perhaps you will discover. Do you see two Bluebirds in the branches of the old Bell pear tree in the garden? No? Look again; they are in the top, where the blue sky shows through the smaller limbs.”

“No, ma’am; that is, I see something moving, but I can’t see any colour. Oh, yes! now I do; it was because the blue of their backs came right against the sky and matched it.”

“Yes,” said Gray Lady, “and the light underparts match the snow and the ruddy breast the fresh earth, so that the Bluebird’s beauty is his protection also; for as our dear old friend John Burroughs says, ‘When Nature made the Bluebird, she wished to gain for him the protection of both earth and sky, so she gave him the colour of one on his back and the other on his breast; yes, and we might also add a touch beneath of the snow that falls from sky to earth.’

“For the rest, who dares write of the Bluebird, thinking to add a fresher tint to his plumage, a new tone to his melodious voice, or a word of praise to his gentle life, that is as much a part of our human heritage and blended with our memories as any other attribute of home?

The Bluebird

“Not I, surely, for I know him too well, and each year feel myself more spellbound and mute by memories he awakens. Yet I would repeat his brief biography, lest there be any who, being absorbed by living inward, have not yet looked outward and upward to this poet of the sky and the earth and the fulness and goodness thereof.

“For the Bluebird was the first of all poets,—even before man had blazed a trail in the wilderness or set up the sign of his habitation and tamed his thoughts to wear harness and travel to measure. And so he came to inherit the earth before man, and this, our country, is all the Bluebird’s country, for at some time of the year he roves about it from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and from Mexico to Nova Scotia, though westward, after he passes the range of the Rocky Mountains, he wears a different dress and bears other longer names.

“In spite of the fact that our eastern Bluebird is a home-body, loving his nesting-haunt and returning to it year after year, he is an adventurous traveller. Ranging all over the eastern United States at some time in the

season, this bird has its nesting-haunts at the very edge of the Gulf States and upward, as far north as Manitoba and Nova Scotia.



National Association of Audubon Societies

UPPER FIGURES—CHESTNUT-BACKED BLUEBIRD

Order—PASSERES Family—TURDIDÆ

Genus—SIALIA Species—MEXICANA

SUBSPECIES—BAIRDI

LOWER FIGURES—BLUEBIRDS

Order—PASSERES Family—TURDIDÆ

“When the breeding season is over, the birds travel sometimes in family groups and sometimes in large flocks, moving southward little by little, according to season and food supply, some journeying as far as Mexico, others lingering through the middle and southern states. The Bluebirds that live in our orchards in summer are very unlikely to be those that we see in the same place in winter days. Next to breeding impulse, the migrating instinct seems to be the strongest factor in bird-life. When the life of the home is over, Nature whispers, ‘To wing, up and on!’ So a few of the Bluebirds who have nested in Massachusetts may be those who linger in New Jersey, while those whose breeding-haunts were in Nova Scotia drift downward to fill their places in Massachusetts. But the great mass of even those birds we call winter residents go to the more southern parts of their range every winter; those who do not being but a handful in comparison.

“Before more than the first notes of the spring have sounded in the distance, Bluebirds are to be seen by twos and threes about the edge of old orchards along open roads, where the skirting trees have crumbled or decaying knot-holes have left tempting nooks for the tree-trunk birds, with which the Bluebird may be classed. For, though he takes kindly to a bird-box, or a convenient hole in fence-post, telegraph pole, or outbuilding, a tree hole must have been his first home, and consequently he has a strong feeling in its favour.

“As with many other species of migrant birds, the male is the first to arrive; and he does not seem to be particularly interested in house-hunting until the arrival of the female, when the courtship begins without delay, and the delicate purling song, with the refrain, ‘Dear, dear, think of it, think of it,’ and the low two-syllabled answer of the female is heard in every orchard. The building of the nest is not an important function,—merely the gathering of a few wisps and straws, with some chance feathers for lining. It seems to be shared by both parents, as are the duties of hatching, and feeding the young. The eggs vary in number, six being the maximum, and they are not especially attractive, being of so pale a blue that it is better to call them bluish white. Two broods are usually raised each year, though three are said to be not uncommon; for Bluebirds are active during a long season, and, while the first nest is made before the middle of April, last year a brood left the box over my rose arbour September 12, though I do not know whether this was a belated or a prolonged family arrangement.

“As parents the Bluebirds are tireless, both in supplying the nest with insect food and attending to its sanitation; the wastage being taken away and dropped at a distance from the nest at almost unbelievably short intervals,

proving the wonderful rapidity of digestion and the immense amount of labour required to supply the mill inside the little speckled throats with grist.

“The young Bluebirds are spotted thickly on throat and back, after the manner of the throat of their cousin, the Robin; or rather, the back feathers are spotted, the breast-feathers having dusky edges, giving a speckled effect.

“The study of the graduations of plumage of almost any brightly coloured male bird, from its first clothing until the perfectly matured feather of its breeding season, is in itself a science and a subject about which there are many theories and differences of opinion by equally distinguished men.

“The food of the nestling Bluebird is insectivorous, or, rather, to be more exact, I should say animal; but the adult birds vary their diet at all seasons by eating berries and small fruits. In autumn and early winter cedar and honeysuckle berries, the grapelike cluster of fruit of the poison ivy, bittersweet and cat-brier berries, are all consumed according to their needs.

“Professor Beal, of the Department of Agriculture, writes, after a prolonged study, that 76 per cent of the Bluebird’s food ‘consists of insects and their allies, while the other 24 per cent is made up of various vegetable substances, found mostly in stomachs taken in winter. Beetles constitute 28 per cent of the whole food, grasshoppers 22 per cent, caterpillars 11 per cent, and various insects, including quite a number of spiders, comprise the remainder of the insect diet. All these are more or less harmful, except a few predaceous beetles, which amount to 8 per cent, but in view of the large consumption of grasshoppers and caterpillars, we can at least condone this offence, if such it may be called. The destruction of grasshoppers is very noticeable in the months of August and September, when these insects form more than 60 per cent of the diet.’

“It is not easy to tempt Bluebirds to an artificial feeding-place, such as I keep supplied with food for Juncoes, Chickadees, Woodpeckers, Nuthatches, Jays, etc.; yet it has been done, and they have been coaxed to nest close to houses and feed on window-sills like the Chickadees. In winter they will eat dried currants, and make their own selection from mill sweepings if scattered about the trees of their haunts. For, above all things, the Bluebird, though friendly, and seeking the borderland between the wild and the tame, never becomes familiar, and never does he lose the half-remote individuality that is one of his great charms. Though he lives with us, and gives no sign of pride of birth or race, he is not one of us, as the Song Sparrow, Chippy, or even the easily alarmed Robin. The poet’s mantle envelops him as the apple blossoms throw a rosy mist about his doorway, and it is best so.

BLUEBIRDS' GREETING

Over the mossy walls,
Above the slumbering fields,
Where yet the ground no vintage yields,
Save as the sunlight falls
In dreams of harvest yellow,
What voice remembered calls—
So bubbling fresh, so soft and mellow?

A darting, azure-feathered arrow
From some lithe sapling's low curve fleet
The Bluebird, springing light and narrow,
Sings in flight, with gurglings sweet.

—GEORGE P. LATHROP.

“We become attached to some birds for one reason, and to others for totally different qualities. We admire the Oriole and Tanager first through the eye, because of their rich colouring. The Robin we like because he is always with us, and he was probably the very first bird that we knew by name and we could watch from the moment the nest was built until the young left it; so he awakens the general interest first, and then the ear is won by his cheerful and sometimes remarkable song.

The Song
Sparrow

“The Catbird stirs one's curiosity. We wonder what he will say and do next; and when he throws back his head to sing, we never can tell whether a dreamy melody or a series of jeers will be the result. But the Song Sparrow we love for himself alone, from the very beginning of our acquaintance.

“In personal appearance he bears nearly all the markings of his characteristic family, but the few exceptions, if remembered, will tell you his name: his brown crown-feathers have a gray parting-line, *his wings have no white bars or yellow markings*, while the breast and sides are streaked; one large spot in the centre, with sometimes a smaller one close to it, tell the Song Sparrow's identity.

“He is seldom seen feeding on the ground like the Chippy, but loves the shelter of low bushes, from which he gives his warning cry of ‘Dick-Dick!’ and then flies out with a jerking motion of the tail and, never going high into the air, perches on another bush. If he wishes to sing, he climbs from the dense lower branches to a spray well above the others, as if he needed plenty of air and light for the effort, and bubbles into song.

“As to the nest, well made of roots and bedded soft with fine grass and hairs, the Song Sparrow uses his own taste, as all birds do, and though the favourite place is within the crown of a small bush not far above the ground, or even in a grass tuft close to the earth itself, yet I have found them in very different places.

“Down in the garden a Song Sparrow once insisted on building, not only in a flower-bed, but among the stalks of perishable plants that would wither long before the young left the nest. To prevent disaster, we drove stakes on each side of the nest, fastened a fruit-box underneath, and a shelter overhead, so that, when the overhanging blossoms faded, the sun might not make broiled squabs of the little ones. This brood was raised successfully, but to our surprise the Sparrows began a second nest directly opposite the first in the brush of the line of sweet-peas. The location was chosen with more judgment, but in picking the pea blossoms I passed within a foot of the nest every morning during the whole time of building, hatching, and feeding of the young.

“This did not trouble the parents in the least; they seemed to know that I would neither hurt them nor intrude upon their privacy, by watching their movements too closely, and the father of the family repaid me by such music as I never before believed could come from the throat of even a Song Sparrow.

“At first I wondered why they should have chosen a garden border, when there were so many near-by bushes about the orchard edge, and tufted grasses and scrubs in a waste meadow over the way. For, familiar as the Song Sparrow is, and fearless, too, yet he is a reserved bird even among his kin, not even travelling in great flocks, and does not care, even when in the full spring ecstasy of song, to be very near another singer.

“Presently I discovered the reason. Song Sparrows love water, both for drinking and bathing: and, possibly from close association with it, these bubblings of the little wayside brooks have had an influence upon their song. This particular year was a time of severe drought; the near-by streams were dried up early in June, and the ‘birds’ bath,’ made of a hollowed-out log, and put in the shelter of some vines at the far end of the garden, was the nearest available water within half a mile. This trough was filled every night, and as the hollow sloped gently at one end, small birds could either walk in it to bathe, or perch on the edge to drink; and it was the sight of the first brood all bathing there, a few days after they left the nest, that made me sure that it was this little watering trough to which I owed their presence.

“Many other birds besides the Sparrows came as well, and Robins and Wood Thrushes, who use wet clay in the shaping of their nests, found it particularly useful. Now I have a stone basin for the water, because the old

wooden one was decayed on our return, but I'm sure the birds liked the mossy log the best, and Jacob Hughes is on the lookout for another."

Gray Lady paused and looked up quickly, as though a new idea had come to her; then, glancing at the older boys who had that morning been working on a large Martin house which had been ordered, and which made it certain that the wayside drinking-fountain would be built as soon as frost left the ground, she said, "This suggests something more to be made for the spring sale. I saw some fine oak and beech logs with the bark still on at the lumber camp last week. If you are willing to undertake hollowing them out, it will be a good investment for the Kind Hearts' Club to buy a half a dozen of them. When sawn into lengths of three feet, and the ends covered with bark securely nailed, as all the bark covering must be, to prevent splitting, the logs will be attractive both as drinking-troughs for the birds and as features of the gardens where they are placed, and I am sure that we shall have no difficulty in selling them. Many people would establish drinking-places for the birds if they had something suitable to hold the water, but tin pans glisten, heat quickly, and even earthenware dishes are slippery, while the hollow log, that soon mosses over, must seem to the wild bird like a natural bit of the woods. Only one thing must be remembered: the log must not be allowed to become dry at any season, or it will warp and split.

"It would be worth the trouble of keeping such a fountain filled, I am sure, if only to lure a single pair of Song Sparrows about the garden or yard. For this Sparrow is the only bird whose song I have heard in every month of the year. Not the full spring song, of course, though I have heard a very perfect melody in December; but in dreary winter, when the scatter-brained Robin has forgotten his alarm cry of 'Quick-Quick-Quick!' the dear little bird will find a warm spot in which to sun himself after a hard-earned meal of gleaned weed seeds,—for like all of his tribe he is a valiant Weed Warrior, working in the home-fields when other birds have followed the sun for richer fare,—and, after swelling his throat vainly for a few moments, begin to whisper a song, as if in a dream, that finally grows strong and clear.

"Yes, neither winter nor the darkness of night dishearten the Song Sparrow. Last season, in the darkest of summer nights, when some slight sound had awakened the feathered sleepers, I have heard a few subdued bars of his song from almost under my window, and I have thought, 'Yes, there you are, dear little companion, cheerful by day and night, in summer and in winter; how much we, who are called the "higher animals," have yet to learn from you.'

"Another thing of interest about the Song Sparrow: like the Bluebird, he belongs not alone to us of the East, but to the whole United States as well. To be sure, he changes his size, dress, and name slightly according to

location, as does the Bluebird; another proof of the adaptability of the bird to circumstances.

THE SONG SPARROW

By the road in early spring
Always hopefully you sing;
It may rain or it may snow,
Sun may shine or wind may blow,
Still your dainty strain we hear—
 “Cheer—Cheer—
 Never, never fear,
 May will soon be here.”
Darling little prophet that you are!

When at last the leaves are out
And wild flowers all about,
Songs of other birds are fraught
With the spirit that you taught.
Still you sing on, sweet and clear—
 “Hear—Hear—
 Happy, happy cheer,
 Singing all the year.”
Jocund little brother of the air.

—LYNN TEW SPRAGUE.

“Many birds that inhabit parts of the country having different climates vary thus in colour. In the hot, dry desert regions the bird will be found smaller and paler; in the cool, well-watered North, larger and of deeper hue.

“Bob-white comes under this law, and our birds in New England are larger and of more brilliant hue than their southern brothers.

“Now is a chance for you to look at the map. The Song Sparrow as we know him lives east of the Rockies. Start at the extreme northern portion of Alaska. Here is found the largest of the race, the Aleutian Song Sparrow. Next come down to the coast of British Columbia and Southern Alaska, where the rainfall is one hundred and twenty-five inches in a year, and you see the home of the Sooty Song Sparrow, the darkest in colour of all.

“If you then travel farther to the desert regions of Nevada and Arizona, where the rainfall is only six inches, you will find the palest of all, the Desert Song Sparrow; and, finally, on the border between Mexico and Central America, lives the Mexican Song Sparrow, the smallest of the tribe.

[4]

“So, wherever we wander our country over, we find this bird to be a reminder of home, which, after all, is the best thing that can happen to us, wherever we go or whatever we see; for the proof that journeys are healthful for body and mind lies in the joy with which, like the bird wanderers, we turn homeward at the end.

“You children may not think of this now. You may think, possibly, that home is dull and full of work, that the birds and flowers of other places are better. Wait a few years and see. Wait until you have been so far away that you could not get home, or have been filled with dread that a day was near when there would be no home there. Then return, and stand under the sky at evening, and listen to the voice of the Song Sparrow down in the alders, and you will not only know that God is very near, but that He is very good, and a part of your home itself.

THE SONG SPARROW

There is a bird I know so well,
It seems as if he must have sung
Beside my crib when I was young;
Before I knew the way to spell
The name of even the smallest bird,
His gentle, joyful song I heard.
Now see if you can tell, my dear,
What bird it is that every year,
Sings “Sweet-sweet-sweet, very merry cheer.”

He comes in March when winds are strong,
And snow returns to hide the earth;
But still he warms his heart with mirth,
And waits for May. He lingers long
While flowers fade; and every day
Repeats his small contented lay,
As if to say, we need not fear
The season's change, if love is here,
With "Sweet-sweet-sweet, very merry cheer."

He does not wear a Joseph's coat
Of many colours, smart and gay:
His suit is Quaker brown and gray,
With darker patches at his throat.
And yet of all the well-dressed throng
Not one can sing so brave a song.
It makes the pride of looks appear
A vain and foolish thing, to hear
His "Sweet-sweet-sweet, very merry cheer."

—HENRY VAN DYKE, from *The Builders and Other Poems*.

ROBIN REJOICE

Among the first of the spring,
The notes of the Robin ring;
With flute-like voice,
He calls, "Rejoice,
For I am coming to sing!"

To any one gloomy or sad,
He says, "Be glad! be glad!
Look on the bright side,
'Tis aye the right side;
The world is good, not bad."

At daybreak in June we hear
His melody, strong and clear:
 “Cheer up, be merry,
 I’ve found a cherry;
'Tis a glorious time of the year!”

—GARRETT NEWKIRK, in *Bird-Lore*.



ROBIN

“Our Robin is a big-bodied Thrush, whereas the Robin-redbreast, the Cock Robin of story, is more nearly akin in size and build to our Bluebird. If you want to see the family marks that yoke the Robin to his Thrush cousin, look carefully at the

The Robin

youngsters as they are leaving the nest, and you will see that instead of wearing plain brick-coloured breasts like the parents, they are striped like the Thrushes; this marking disappears after their first moult. As for Robin himself, you know him well, but can any of you tell exactly the colour of his clothing?"

Sarah and Tommy raised their hands at the same time, but as ladies come first, Sarah began: "He is gray on top, and red underneath, and he's got white spots outside of his wings."

"Very good, indeed," said Gray Lady; "but can you add anything to that, Tommy?"

"Yes, ma'am; he's black on top of his head, and he's got a white chin and eye spot and a yellow beak."

"Why, Tommy, that is really very good; I didn't know that any of you children had learned to look so carefully and remember."

"I saw all that yesterday," said Tommy, in a state of glee. "There came a flock of bran'-new fresh birds, and sat in the cedar bushes back of the barn, but they didn't find many berries, because the winter birds have eaten them. Ma gave me some old cake to crumble up, and I put some on the top of the stone fence, and some right on the shed, and this morning when I first looked out, a couple of them were out there eating it, and I got a good square look at them. They liked that cake because it had currants in it."

"So Tommy is the first to report a 'bran'-new' Robin flock," said Gray Lady. "Now that they have really come, will any of the others tell me what they know about Robins? Begin at Sarah's end of the table."

"Robins build mud nests before there are any leaves to hide them, and cats often get them when they are sitting," said Sarah; "and then by and by, when they build another nest, maybe they'll put it out on a branch that's weak, and when it storms and the nest gets wet and heavy, it falls down all of a lump. They seem to get along best when they come under the porch or get in a high up crotch."

"I like Robins," said Eliza, who sat next, "because they stay around and let you look at them; but I think that they aren't very clever birds, for instead of keeping quiet when anything comes near the nest, they holler like everything, so that you can tell just where it is. We had a nest in the grape-vine outside the kitchen window, and you couldn't believe what those little birds ate in one day. I had the mumps and had to stay inside, so I watched them. They ate all the time, that is, in turn, for the old birds seemed to know just which one had food last. Sometimes, if they had a little worm or a bug, they gave it all to one, but if it was one of those long, rubberneck earthworms, they would twist it and bite pieces off and ram one down each throat."

“My Ma said it made her dreadful tired to see how much those four little birds ate, and that if children were as hungry as that, nobody would have the patience to cook food and raise any. When they grew too big for the nest, they sort of fell out into the vine and stayed in that for a few days, and their father and mother fed them just the same. They couldn’t fly well at first, because their tails were so short that they upset.”

“You watched them quite carefully,” said Gray Lady, “but can you tell me what happened after they were able to fly?”

“Yes, ma’am, they acted real mean. They went right down in the cedar trees beyond the garden to sleep, and every morning before father or my brothers were up they went into the strawberry bed, and even before any were ripe, they bit the red side of the green ones and spoiled them. Father was pretty mad, because our land has run out for onions and we’ve got to raise berries for a few years—all kinds, raspberries, currants, blackberries—to even up.

“Father dassent shoot the Robins, ’cause of the law, and besides, we like ’em real well after berry time, so brother John he made a plan, and it worked splendid. He fixed up a nice little house like a chicken-coop and put it on a stump in the middle of the bed, and then he put our cat in the house. She was comfortable and had good eating and plenty of air, but of course she couldn’t get out, so she just sat there and growled and switched her tail at the birds, and they stayed away.”

Gray Lady laughed heartily at this scheme, which certainly was very ingenious.

“That was truly a new sort of scarecrow, and much better than firing off blank cartridges in the nesting season, when other birds might be frightened. However, it proves one thing without a doubt, that cats are the worst enemies that wild birds have to fear, and shows us how careful we should be about turning them out at large, outside of the cities where there are no birds, or keeping more than one under any circumstances.

“What I meant to ask was, do you know what the young Robins do after they leave the nest and the mother bird is perhaps busy with some younger brothers and sisters?

“The father birds choose some tall trees with plenty of leaves, or if evergreens are at hand, they prefer them, and go there in parties of from half a dozen to a hundred every night, leaving the mother birds to tend the nest. When the first brood is able to fly, they go with papa to this roost, where his warning ‘Quick! Quick!’ tells them of dangers they do not yet understand.

“Then, when the nesting is over, all the Robins unite in a flock, but wherever they go, or however far they range in the day, night sees them collected at some favourite roosting-place. I know about this habit very well,

because ever since I can remember these spruces outside the window have been used as roosts by many generations of Robins all through the season, except in the dead of winter, when they prefer to nestle into the heart of the young cedars.

“Of course it is not to be denied that Robin likes berries and eats them without asking leave or waiting for sugar and cream, but we must think of this: the farmers are of more importance than any other class of people, for they give the world food. Therefore, the bird laws are made for their benefit, even when at first it might seem otherwise.

“The Robin only troubles berries in June, July, and August, and grapes in September, while all the rest of the year he does valiant work as a gleaner of insects that cannot easily be destroyed by man,—many beetles that destroy foliage and their white grubs that eat the roots of hay, grass, and strawberry plants, grasshoppers, crickets, ants, moths, army-worms, and the larvæ of the owlet moths, better known as army-worms.

“So you can see that if the Robin helps the farmers in this way, the fruit grower should be willing to protect his crops in other ways than by shooting his friend and his children’s friend, the Robin.

“One other reason there is, also, why we of the North should protect the Robin at home; in many southern states he is a legal mark for all who wish to kill him. Not only is the Robin to be found in the markets, but shooting him merely for competition, to see who can bag the most, is a common form of—sport, I was going to say, but game of chance is better.

“Let the Kind Hearts of the North be kind to dear blundering brother Robin, that by the very force of example the hearts of others may be warmed to show mercy and their heads be given the intelligence to see that, in shooting the migrant Robins by the hundreds, the loss is to their country and themselves.”

“Look! Oh, look, Gray Lady!” cried little Clary, climbing to the window-seat; “here are some bright, fresh Robins lighting on the spruces. Let’s play they are some that roosted there last summer; or maybe were hatched right in the orchard, and that they are real glad to get home again.”

ROBIN’S MATE

Everybody praises Robin,
Singing early, singing late;
But who ever thinks of saying
A good word for Robin's mate?

Yet she's everything to Robin,
Silent partner though she be;
Source and theme and inspiration
Of each madrigal and glee.

For as she, with mute devotion,
Shapes and curves the plastic nest,
Fashioning a tiny cradle
With the pressure of her breast,

So the love in that soft bosom
Moulds his being as 'twere clay,
Prints upon his breast the music
Of his most impassioned lay.

And when next you praise the Robin,
Flinging wide with tuneful gate
To his eager brood of love-notes,
Don't forget the Robin's mate.

—ELIZA GILBERT IVES.

[4] See *Climatic Variations in Colour and Size of Song Sparrow*, F. M. Chapman.

XXIII MARCH

Red-wings and Pussy-willows

MARCH

March! March! March! They are coming
In troops to the tune of the wind;
Red-headed Woodpeckers drumming,
Gold-crested Thrushes behind.
Sparrows in brown jackets hopping
Past every gateway and door.
Finches with crimson caps stopping
Just where they stopped years before.

—LUCY LARCOM.

“How do the birds know when spring has come? How can they tell the difference between a warm day in December and a warm day in March when the ground is still snow covered? We ourselves might be puzzled to tell the difference if we had not kept record of the days and weeks by the almanac.

“But the birds know. The Red-wings, Grackles, and Cowbirds will not return for the warmest December sun, but let the sun of early March but blink, and they are up and away, oftentimes stealing a march on shy Pussy-willow herself.

“Unless the season is very stormy, as we have seen for ourselves this year, a few Robins, Bluebirds, and Blackbirds are added to the winter residents in February. These, however, belong to a sort of roving advance-guard; the real procession comes in March, the exact time depending upon the weather, for the insect-eating birds cannot stay if their larder of field and air is ice locked.

“So we may look for larger flocks of the birds that drifted along in February, and in addition to these the Woodcock, the Great Fox Sparrow as

big as the Hermit Thrush, Phœbe, Kingfisher, Mourning Dove, and Field Sparrow of the flesh-pink bill, rusty head and back, and buff breast, who sings his little strain, ‘cherwee-cher-wee-cherwee-iddle-iddle-iddle ee,’ as the sun goes down.

“The three birds that are the most noticeable in the latter part of March, that has made up its mind to go out like a lamb and let Pussy-willow wave in peace in moist pasture and the delicate blue-and-white hepaticas star the edges of dry woods, are the Red-winged Blackbirds, the Kingfishers, and the cheerful little Phœbe. All love the vicinity of water, but the Red-wing locates often in merely marshy ground, while the bird who is a fisherman by trade locates near a pond or stream of considerable size and the Phœbe comes to house or woodshed.

“‘Among all the birds that return to us in late March or April, which is the most striking and most compels attention?’ asked a bird-lover of a group of kindred spirits.

The Red-wing

“‘The Fox Sparrow,’ said one, who lived on the edge of a village where sheltered wild fields stretched uphill to the woodlands. ‘Every morning when I open my window I can hear them almost without listening.’



RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD
(UPPER FIGURE, MALE; LOWER FIGURE, FEMALE)

Order—PASSERES Family—ICTERIDÆ
Genus—AGELAIUS Species—PHŒNICEUS

“‘The Phœbe,’ said another, who was the owner of a pretty home, where many rambling sheds broke the way from cow-barn to pasture.

“‘The Whip-poor-will, but that does not come until late in the month,’ answered a third, a dweller in a remote colony of artists in a picturesque spot of cleared woodland, where the ground dropped quickly to a stream.

“‘No, the Woodcock,’ said her nearest neighbour, a man whose cottage was upon the upper edge of these same woods, where they were margined by moist meadows and soft bottom-lands,—a man who spent much time out-of-doors at dawn and twilight studying sky effects.

“‘And I think it’s Red-winged Blackbirds,’ cried the ten-year-old son of the latter; ‘for when I go out up back of the trout brook by the little path along the alders near the squashy place where the cat-tails grow in summer, you’ve just got to hear them. You can’t listen to them as you do to real singing-birds, for they make too much noise, and when you listen for a bird it’s got to be still, at least in the beginning. Sometimes they go it all together down in the bushes out of sight, then a few will walk out up to the dry Meadowlark’s field with Cowbirds, or maybe it’s their wives, and then one or two will lift up and shoot over the marsh back again, calling out just like juicy sky-rockets. Ah, they’re in it before the leaves come out to hide them even the least bit.’ And, in spite of difference of viewpoint, the group finally acknowledged that the boy was right.

“In point of colouring, the Red-wing is faultlessly plumed,—glossy black with epaulets of scarlet edged with gold, the uniform of a soldier,—and this, coupled with the three martial notes that serve him as a song, would make one expect to find in him all the manly and military virtues. But aside from the superficial matter of personal appearance, the Red-wing is lacking in many of the qualities that endear the feathered tribe to us and make us judge them, perhaps, too much by human standards.

“When Red-wings live in colonies it is often difficult to estimate the exact relationship existing between the members, though it is apparent that the sober brown-striped females outnumber the males; but in places where the birds are uncommon and only one or two male birds can be found, it is easily seen that the household of the male consists of from three to five nests, each presided over by a watchful female, and when danger arises, this feathered Mormon shows equal anxiety for each nest, and circles screaming about the general location. In colony life the males oftentimes act in concert as a general guard, being diverted oftentimes from the main issue, it must be confessed, to indulge in duels and pitched battles among themselves.

“The Red-wing belongs to a notable family,—that of the Blackbirds and Orioles,—and in spite of the structural resemblances that group them together, the differences of plumage, voice, and breeding habits are very great.

“The Cowbird, the Red-wing’s next of kin, even lacks the rich liquid call-note of the latter, and the lack of marital fidelity, on the part of the male, is met in a truly progressive spirit by the female, who, shirking all domestic responsibility, drops her eggs craftily in the nests of other and usually smaller birds, who cannot easily resent the imposition; though a strong proof

of the unconscious affinity of race lies in the fact that these young foundling Cowbirds invariably join the parent flocks in autumn instead of continuing with their foster-mothers.

“The Meadowlark, with the true spring song, who hides his nest in the dry grass of old fields, is also kin to the Red-wing, and the Bobolink, too, the vocal harlequin of the meadows and hillside pastures. The Orchard and Baltimore Orioles, also next of kin, are skilled musicians and model husbands.

“Still another plane is to be found in the Red-wing’s dismal cousins, the Grackles,—Purple, Rusty, Bronzed, and Boat-tailed,—all harsh of voice and furtive in action, as if a Crow fairy had been present at their creating and, endowing them with ready wits, had, at the same time, deprived them of all sense of humour and cast a shadow upon their happiness. For a Grackle is gloomy even during the absurd gyrations of his courtship, and when, in autumn, the great flocks settle on lawns and fields, and solemnly walk about, as they forage they seem like a party of feathered mutes waiting to attend the funeral of the year; and this trait somewhat tinctures the disposition of the Red-wing before and after the breeding season.

“The Red-wing in one of his many subspecific forms, and masquerading under many names,—Red-shouldered Blackbird, American Starling, and Swamp Blackbird,—lives in North America from Nova Scotia and the Great Slave Lake southward to Costa Rica. The Red-wing, as known to us of middle and eastern North America, breeds in all parts of its United States and Canadian range, though it is more numerous by far in the great prairies of the upper Mississippi Valley, with their countless back-water sloughs, than anywhere else. It is in regions of this sort that the great flocks turn both to the fall-sown grain, as well as that of the crop in the ear, causing the farmers the loss that puts a black mark against the Red-wings. Yet those that dwell east of this area, owing to the draining and ditching of their swampy haunts being in much reduced numbers, are comparatively harmless.

“During the winter months the Red-wings are distributed throughout the South, though stragglers may be occasionally seen in many parts of their summer range. Exactly why they begin the southward migration in September and end it with the falling of the leaves in late October, it is not easy to guess; for the food supply is not at an end, and they do not dread moderate cold, else why should they be in the front rank of spring migrants?

“The last of February will bring a few individuals of the advance-guard of males. In early March their calls are heard often before the ice has melted and the hylas found voice; yet in spite of this hurried return, the nesting season does not begin until the middle of May; and so for two months and more the flock life continues, and foraging, fighting, and general courting

serve to kill time until the remote marshes show enough green drapery to hide the nests.

“As a nest-builder the Red-wing shows much of the weaver’s skill of its Oriole cousins, though the material they work with is of coarser texture, being fastened firmly to low bushes or reeds and woven of grass and the split leaves of reeds and flags, all nicely lined with soft grasses and various vegetable fibres. Often, like that of the Marsh Wren, the nest will be suspended between three or four reeds, and so firmly knit that it resembles one of the four-legged work-baskets that belonged to the ‘mother’s room’ of our youth. The pale blue eggs of the Red-wing are particularly noticeable from the character of the markings that thickly cover the larger end, for they seem the work of a sharp scratching pen dipped in purplish black ink and held by an aimless human hand, rather than the distribution of natural pigment.

“An eater of grain though the Red-wing is, and a menace to the farmer in certain regions, Professor Beal concedes to him a liberal diet of weed seeds and animal food, itself injurious to vegetation. Dr. B. H. Warren, who has made a wide study of the food habits of this Blackbird, says: ‘The Red-wing destroys large numbers of cutworms. I have taken from the stomach of a single Swamp Blackbird as many as twenty-eight cutworms. In addition to the insects, etc., mentioned above, these birds also, during their residence with us, feed on earthworms, grasshoppers, crickets, plant-lice, and various larvæ, so destructive at times in field and garden. During the summer season fruits of the blackberry, raspberry, wild strawberry, and wild cherry are eaten to a more or less extent. The young, while under parental care, are fed exclusively on an insect diet.’

“Mr. Forbush also tells us that Kalm states in his *Travels in America*, that in 1749, ‘after a great destruction among the Crows and Blackbirds for a legal reward of three pence per dozen, the northern states experienced a complete loss of their grass and grain crops. The colonists were obliged to import hay from England to feed their cattle. The greatest losses from the ravages of the Rocky Mountain Locust were coincident with, or followed soon after, the destruction by the people of countless thousands of Blackbirds, Prairie Chickens, Quail, Upland Plover, Curlew, and other birds. This coincidence seems significant, at least. A farmer from Wisconsin informed me that, the Blackbirds in his vicinity having been killed off, the white grubs increased in number and destroyed the grass roots, so that he lost four hundred dollars from this cause.’

“These facts should make us of the East welcome rather than discourage the Red-wing; for this is one of the species of familiar birds that must become extinct in many localities, owing to the circumstance, so desirable in

itself, of reducing the waste marshlands, and though, later in the year, other birds replace him acceptably, March and April would seem lonely without the Red-wing, for then, as the child said, ‘you’ve just got to look at him.’

“The Kingfisher is certainly one of the most dashing birds that we have; without having the cruel and ferocious expression of some of the smaller Hawks, he has the swagger and dash of a feathered brigand.

**The
Kingfisher**



National Association of Audubon Societies

BELTED KINGFISHER

(UPPER FIGURE, FEMALE; LOWER FIGURE, MALE)

Order—COCCYGES Family—ALCEDINIDÆ
Genus—CERYLE Species—ALCYON

“His plumage is beautiful in texture and soft in colour; bluish gray that sometimes looks quite blue in the bright light; wings and tail-feathers

spotted with white, a white collar deep in front and narrow at the back, and a broad belt of the gray crossing the white breast and seeming to keep the gray mantle from slipping from his shoulders. The long head-feathers, also of the bluish gray, form a crest that the bird can raise at will and thus put on an expression of combined alertness and defiance.

“The Kingfisher’s plumage is more perfect than his form, his head, with its beak two inches in length, being out of proportion to his short tail, and his small, weak feet seeming too small to support a body more than a foot long.

“In disposition the Kingfisher seems to be rather remote and unfriendly; they never seem to travel in flocks, and even in the nesting season, the only time in which they associate in pairs, they seem to be quarrelling and wrangling, so very harsh are their notes. Hereabouts we have very few Kingfishers. Last summer a pair tunnelled a hole in the loamy bank of the river fifty feet below the grist-mill; for the Kingfisher does not build a tree nest, or, in fact, any nest, but, like the Bank Swallow, burrows sidewise into a bank of sufficiently stiff soil not to cave in for the depth of anywhere from three to fifteen feet. This burrow may be only a few feet below the surface, or if the bluff rises above the stream, the hole may be twenty feet from the top and close to high-water mark.

“Sometimes the hole runs straight, and then again it may have several turns before the nesting-chamber is reached, the turns probably being made to avoid stones or tough roots; though one^[5] careful observer, whose account of this bird is so novel and charming (I will read it to you from the scrap-book), thought for a time that these turns might be for the purpose of keeping light from the nesting-chamber.

“A hole in a bank seems a strange place in which to build a nest, but although one may know it to be the home of a Kingfisher, he little imagines the singular course of the passage leading to the room at the other end, and is hardly aware of the six long weeks of faithful care bestowed by the parent birds upon their eggs and family.

“Early in April we may hear the Kingfisher’s voice, sounding like a policeman’s rattle, as he patrols the stream, and we often see him leaving a favourite limb, where he has been keeping watch for some innocent minnow in the water below. Off he goes in his slaty blue coat, shaking his rattle and showing his top-heavy crest, his abnormal bill, and pure white collar.

“The mother bird, as usual with the sex, does most of the work at home. The hole is generally located high upon the bank, is somewhat less than four inches in diameter, and varies from at least five to eight feet in length. It

slightly ascends to the dark, mysterious den at the other end,—dark because the passage generally bends once or twice, thereby entirely excluding the light. The roof of the passage is vaulted from end to end, merging into a domed ceiling almost as shapely as that of the Pantheon. Such a home is built to stay, and if undisturbed would endure for years. Two little tracks are worn by the female's feet the full length of the tunnel as she passes in and out.

“The Kingfisher's knowledge of construction, her ingenious manner of hiding her eggs from molestation, and her constancy to her young arouse our interest and admiration. We must also appreciate the difficulty with which the digging is attended, the meeting of frequent stones to block the work, which, by the way, may be the cause of the change in direction of the hole, but which I was inclined to believe intentional until I found a perfectly straight passage, in which a brood was successfully raised.

“To get photographs of a series of the eggs and young was almost as difficult a task, I believe, as the Kingfisher had in making the hole. It was necessary to walk at least four miles and dig down to the back of the nest, through the bank above, and fill it in again four times, without deranging the nest or frightening away the parent birds. But we were well repaid for the trouble, for the pictures accurately record what could not be described.

“A photograph of the seven eggs was taken before they had even been touched, and numerous disjurgements of fish bones and scales show about the roomy apartment. The shapely domed ceiling, as well as the arch of the passage, is constructionally necessary for the safety of the occupants, the former being even more perfect than the pictures show. What is generally called instinct in birds has long since been to me a term used to explain what in reality is intelligence.

“Some writer has mentioned that as soon as the young Kingfishers are able, they wander about their little homes until they are able to fly, but evidently his experience was limited. My four pictures of the young birds were taken by lifting them out of their nests and placing them in a proper place to be photographed in the light, but the first two pictures were taken in the positions in which they were naturally found in the nest. The first, when they were about two days old, was obtained on the 21st of May, 1899, and the young were not only found wrapped together in the nest, but the moment they were put on the ground, one at a time, though their eyes were still sealed, they immediately covered one another with their wings and wide bills, making such a tight ball that when any one shifted a leg, the whole mass would move like a single bird. This is a most sensible method of keeping warm, since the mother bird's legs are so short that she could not stand over them, but, as they are protected from the wind and weather, they

have no need of her. Their appearance is comical in the extreme, and all out of proportion. This clinging to one another is apparently kept up for at least ten days, for a week later, when nine days old, they were found in exactly a similar position.

“When the young were first observed, they were absolutely naked, without the suggestion of a feather, and, unlike most young birds, showed no plumage of any kind until the regular final feathering, which was the same as that of the adult, began to appear. The growth of the birds was remarkably slow, and even when nine days old the feathers were just beginning to push through their tiny sheaths, but so distinctly showed their markings that I was able to distinguish the sexes by the colouring of the bands on the chest. They did not open their mouths in the usual manner for food, but tried to pick up small objects from the ground, and one got another by his foot, as the picture shows. I took two other photographs the same day, showing several birds searching on the ground with their bills, as if they were already used to this manner of feeding.

“When the birds were sixteen days old, they had begun to look like formidable Kingfishers, with more shapely bills and crests, but as yet they evidently knew no use for their wings. They showed little temper, though they appeared to be somewhat surprised at being disturbed.

“My next visit to the hole in the bank was when the birds were twenty-three days old, and, to ascertain whether they were still at home, I poked into the entrance of the hole a long, thin twig, which was quickly accepted by quite a strong bite. Taking the precaution to stop the hole with a good-sized stone, I proceeded to my digging for the last time on the top of the bank. This time I found the chamber had been moved, and I had some difficulty in locating it about a foot higher up and about the same distance to one side. The old birds had evidently discovered my imperfectly closed back door, and either mistrusted its security, or else a heavy rain had soaked down into the loosened earth and caused them to make alterations. They had completely closed up the old chamber and packed it tightly with earth and disgorged fish bones.

“The skill with which they met this emergency was of unusual interest, showing again the ingenuity and general intelligence which so often surprises us in the study of birds. Their home was kept perfectly clean by its constant caretaker. One of the full-grown birds, with every feather, as far as I could see, entirely developed, sat just long enough for me to photograph him, and then flew from the branch where I had placed him, down the stream, and out of sight, loudly chattering like an old bird. One more bird performed the same feat, but before I was able to get him on my plate. The

rest I left in the nest, and no doubt they were all in the open air that warm, sunny day, before nightfall.

“It happens that but few of us may look into a Kingfisher’s home as Mr. Baily did, but it is very pleasant to know where this dashing bird goes when, on securing a fish, instead of swallowing it, he seems to dive, drop into the water, and disappear, when in reality he is taking his prey home to the nest.

“We must be content to enjoy the Kingfisher as a feature in the landscape, as the centre of a picture of woods, pond, or river, to which he gives the needful touch of life. The river scenery of March is lifeless and dreary, for, if the snow has melted and the ice broken up, the bushes alongshore are beaten down by the storms of winter or partly submerged by the spring freshets. Here and there, in sunny spots on the low shore, we may see the purple-pointed hood and bright green leaves of the skunk-cabbage, but if a Kingfisher is perching on a dead branch overhanging the water, crest erect, gazing into the water and on the alert for a fish to pass, the scene at once becomes full of interest. Of course the Kingfisher, as his name implies, is above all a fisherman, and complaints come sometimes from those who are stocking ponds and rivers with fish, and who object to his taking his tithe, but when pressed by hunger through the sudden skimming of their hunting ponds with ice in early winter, he has been known to eat berries of many kinds, and in time of drought when streams run low or dry up entirely, the Kingfisher will feed upon beetles, grasshoppers, crickets, frogs, lizards, etc. But here in the East, at any rate, the bird is not plentiful enough to be a danger to the fishing industry.”

“I’ve seen a Kingfisher fishing in the salt-water creek that goes into the bay. We camped right there on the point last summer,” said Tommy. “He must have lived up the river somewhere, for he used to come down early in the morning, and stay about all day, and I suppose he must have got through feeding his children, for it was along in August. I never saw but one,—the male, I guess, because it didn’t have any brown on its breast like what there is in the picture of the female.

“It was great fun to watch him. One day the rest all went off fishing to Middle Ground Light, and I stayed at home because I’d cut my finger with a fish-hook, and it hurt a lot, and the Doctor made me keep it soaking in medicine, so I just lay in the sand under the shady side of the tent, only moving enough to keep out of the sun, and watched out.

“When the Kingfisher first came, the tide was just turned and beginning to rush out of the creek like everything. Mr. Fisherman sat on a tall post that we tie the boats up to at night. It was close to the water, not where the strong

current was, but a little to one side, where it was more still. He did pretty well for a while; the fish looked small, and he swallowed 'em without wriggling his throat so very much.

“One thing he did was very funny; he didn't dive right down from the post after the fish, but he took a little fly up first and then folded his wings to his sides and dropped right in beak first, same as we fellows do when we jump off the spring board dad rigged to a raft and then dive. I couldn't make out whether he always did it, or if it was because the post was too near the water.

“After a little, the water went down so that the post wasn't near enough to the water; then what did he do but shift over to the bowsprit of an old oyster boat that was wrecked and half buried in the sand, right in the bank just inside the creek; this gave him a fine perch right over the channel. When he saw that there was no one about, he sort of settled down, and looking at him so long made me lazy, and I guess I fell asleep and didn't see him dive, because the next thing I knew, there was the Kingfisher back on the perch, but he had an eel in his beak instead of a fish.

“Say, Gray Lady, did you ever try to hold an eel in your fingers, without rubbing wet sand on them first? Well, you should have seen that bird twist and flop about. It was only a little eel, not any bigger than a pencil, but, oh my!” And Tommy laughed heartily at the very memory of the fray.

“Kingfisher couldn't stick to the perch, so he dropped right on to a piece of the deck of the boat that wasn't buried, and began to beat the eel on the wood and dance about. The eel squirmed so, it didn't hit often, and it acted as if it had legs and was dancing too. When the fun began, the bird had the eel about in the middle, but it pulled away until one end was longer than the other, and that made it harder to hold.”

“Which was the head end, the one that hung down?” asked Eliza, who always insisted on precise details.

“I didn't know then,” said Tommy; “I couldn't see, and it didn't keep still long enough for me to ask!

“At last Kingfisher gave the eel a good bang, and it didn't squirm so much (then I knew the head must have been on the long piece because it wouldn't have hurt its tail), and the bird began to swallow and work his throat, just like when a snake begins to work a toad down. Once or twice he stopped, and I thought that he was going to choke and keel over. He didn't, though, but after it was all down, he looked real sorry and uncomfortable and his feathers laid down almost flat to his head, and he crouched there on the boat quite a while before he flew up creek and didn't fish any more that day.

“Maybe he’d never caught a salt-water eel before, and didn’t know how lively they are; you can’t measure them by mud eels out of still water any more’n you can match snakes with ground-worms.”

THE KINGFISHER

He laughs by the summer stream
Where the lilies nod and dream,
As through the sheen of water cool and clear
He sees the chub and sunfish cutting shear.

His are resplendent eyes;
His mien is kingliwise;
And down the March wind rides he like a king
With more than royal purple on his wing.

His palace is the brake
Where the rushes shine and shake;
His music is the murmur of the stream,
And the leaf-rustle where the lilies dream.

Such life as his would be
A more than heaven to me;
All sun, all bloom, all happy weather,
All joys bound in a sheaf together.

No wonder he laughs so loud!
No wonder he looks so proud!
There are great kings would give their royalty
To have one day of his felicity!

—MAURICE THOMPSON.

“The very name of Phœbe calls us from the Red-wing in the marsh meadows and the Kingfisher by the waterways and brings us home again. Not only within the home acres, but close to the house, barns, and woodshed, for has she not been living in and about them quite as long as we have, or even longer? There was a Phœbe who always built her first nest on the deep sill of the dormer-window

The Phœbe

of the store-closet, and her second in the bracket that supports the hood of the north window in the guest-room.

“She was not very tidy about her work of nest-building (it seems more natural to call the Phœbe *she* than *he*), but then, it must be very difficult to make a nest with a high foundation of crumbling moss and mud, with hairs and grass for a lining, without spilling some of the nesting material. My mother used to grumble about having the store-room window-sill remain in such a litter for so long, but she never disturbed the nest, even by brushing away the loose moss, and almost every day she would look through the window to see how the eggs or young were faring, and I thought it a great privilege to be allowed to go to the store-room and sit quite still inside the closed window and watch the Phœbe’s housekeeping.

“It was in this way that I first learned how the bird stands up in the nest and turns the white eggs over with its feet so that they may be evenly warmed through; how the young are fed and the droppings removed from the nest so that it need not become foul.

“In spite of great care and constant bathing, for Phœbe is very fond of a bath and was always a great patron of the log water-trough, the puddles that gathered in the gutter after rain, and upon occasion would dash into the bucket that always stood under the well-spout, the poor bird suffers greatly from insect parasites. The reason for this I cannot tell, unless it is that the foundation of the nest is so light and spongy on account of the moss, that the air does not pass through and the lice breed freely. One thing I remember, however, is that as soon as the birds had flown, mother always removed the empty nest and had its resting-place thoroughly cleansed.

“This is not so apt to happen when the bird chooses a fresh location and makes a new nest for a second brood, but upon the only occasion that the window-sill nest was used twice in a season, the lice crawled through the window-frame into the house, and of the second brood, only one lived to fly, and he was a miserable, emaciated little thing, so badly did the lice beset the young birds. After that, mother always gave them a hint that a new nest was best by making it impossible for them to use the old one.”

“I should think the Phœbes might have got mad and gone away for good,” said Sarah Barnes.

“No; they either understood that mother’s intentions were good, or else they appreciated the comfort and cleanliness of the new nest, for their children and grandchildren have occupied the two sites ever since, and this summer when I stood inside the store-room window showing the nest to Goldilocks, bird and nest were just the same as when my mother stood there by me.

“That is why the everyday birds that live about our homes are so precious and should be so carefully guarded. We never see them grow old, and so they help us to keep young in heart.

“Phœbe belongs to a very important family, that of the Flycatchers, songless birds with call-notes that are distinctive; these take their food upon the wing, diving from a perch into the air for it as the Kingfisher dives into the water for his. In this way the flycatchers are among the most valuable of the Sky Sweepers.

“Among Phœbe’s cousins you will find the *Kingbird*, who wears a slate-coloured coat and white vest, a crest on his head, and a white band on the end of his tail by which you may know him, as he sits on a fence rail, stump, or even on a tall mullen stalk and sallies out into the air, crying a shrill ‘Kyrie-Kyrie!’ The Great Crested Flycatcher, with an olive-brown coat, gray throat, and yellow belly, who builds in a tree hole well above the ground, and uses dried snake skins among his materials when he can get them, is another relative, and the largest of the family; while a third is the little Wood-pewee, of the dark olive-brown coat and two whitish wing-bars, who saddles his lichen-covered nest, as dainty as that of a Humming-bird high up on a limb, and calls his plaintive note, Pee-wee-pee-a-wee peer,’ through the aisles of the deep woods, as constantly as Phœbe lets her name be known in a more shrill and rasping voice to the barnyard flock.

“These and several other flycatchers do not come to us until May, but the Phœbe of all his tribes trusts his livelihood to the care of gusty March. Perhaps it is the early return that makes the Phœbe so friendly and causes it to choose either a site by the water or near a house. Insect life awakes much more quickly in gardens and about the farm-yards, or near open running water, than in the remote woods; for certain it is that no other member of the family is so easily domesticated.

“The Phœbe not only eats the earliest insects that appear, but it has peculiarly constructed eyes, like the Whip-poor-will and Night Hawk; it can catch its food until the end of twilight, so that it kills many bugs that hide all day. Among the hurtful insects that it catches are the click-beetle, brown-tail moth, canker-worm moth, and the elm beetle. As a berry-eater no one can find fault with it, as when late in a dry season it takes a little fruit, wild berries supply the need.

“All this should be a hint to us to leave a few nooks about the place for a pair of Phœbes to appropriate for a homestead; a little shelf under suitable shelter is all they ask, or, better yet, nail a few wide braces under the roof of a wagon, cattle, or wood shed, even if it does not need supporting. Then, before the first Robin or Chipping-sparrow awakes, when the first flush of light penetrates the darkness of night, you will have a home sentinel at hand

to cry, 'Phœbe! I see, all's well!' to the morning, and at evening she will blend her voice with the Whip-poor-will's in wishing you good night, for though Phœbe is early to come in the spring and early to rise in the morning, she goes late to bed and meets the bats in the sky during her evening excursions."

"Maybe Phœbes don't really sing, but they think they do," said Tommy, as Gray Lady looked in vain in her scrap-book for a poem that should do the bird justice and be catching in rhythm.

"Sometimes in May they get up on the roof or the telephone wire or something like that, and tumble somersaults into the air and cry 'phœbe-phœbe-phœbe-phœbe,' on and on and on and over again, like the Katydids and Katydidn'ts in the maples at night, only the Phœbe is so worked up she can only think of her own name."

"Then this verse of Lowell's at least is true," said Gray Lady, closing the scrap-book.

"Phœbe is all it has to say
In plaintive cadence o'er and o'er,
Like children that have lost their way
And know their names, but nothing more."

[5] *The Kingfishers' Home Life*, W. L. Baily in *Bird-Lore*.

XXIV
THE TIDE HAS TURNED

THE MASQUERADING CHICKADEE

I came to the woods in the dead of the year,
I saw the wing'd sprite thro' the green-brier peeping:
"Darling of Winter, you've nothing to fear,
Though the branches are bare and the cold earth is sleeping!"

With a *dee, dee, dee!* the sprite seemed to say,
"I'm friends with the Maytime as well as December,
And I'll meet you here on a fair-weather day;
Here, in the green-brier thicket,—remember!"

* * * * *

I came to the woods in the spring of the year,
And I followed a voice that was most entreating:
Phebe! Phebe! (and yet more near),
Phebe! Phebe! it kept repeating!

I gave up the search, when, not far away,
I saw the wing'd sprite thro' the green-brier peeping,
With a *Phebe! Phebe!* that seemed to say,
"I told you so! and my promise I'm keeping."

"You'll know me again, when you meet me here,
Whether you come in December or Maytime:
I've a *dee, dee, dee!* for the Winter's ear,
And a *Phebe! Phebe!* for Spring and Playtime!"

—EDITH M. THOMAS.

“When the Chickadee, who has persistently told us his name all winter, and has assured us also in the darkest weather that it was ‘day-day-day,’ changes his call for the flute-like spring song of ‘Phewe-Phe-wee,’ clear as the wind blowing through a reed, we know that at last the springtide has really turned. Chickadee occasionally gives this note in autumn as if in anticipation, but it is really a love-song of tender accent.

“Another spring sign comes to us in April, a sign to be seen. It comes out of a clear sky and has all the mystery about it that still shrouds the bird migrations. Spring and fall I see it, but it always fills me with awe. This morning I stood out in the open meadow below the orchard, looking at the sky to see if the clouds were going to break away, or if it was to be a day of April showers. To the southwest a curious fine black bar appeared high up against the clouds. Quickly it drew nearer, and I saw what seemed to be a great letter that moved rapidly and yet kept its shape printed on the sky,—a letter V coming toward me, point on. In another minute the line proved to be made of separate marks, then each mark developed a long neck and rapidly moving wings.”

Tommy Todd could stand it no longer; without giving the usual school “hand up” warning he cried out, “The V was Wild Geese, with the wise old gander that leads them for the point, and maybe if he wanted them to shift and change their way, he gave a big honk, honk, like the automobiles when they turn the sharp corner at the foot of our hill.

“We saw Wild Geese yesterday, grandpa and I; they were flying so low over the mill-pond that grandpa said maybe they had been resting somewhere. They do stop in fall sometimes, but in spring they generally go right over in a big hurry. This time I could see their feathers pretty well, black, gray, and light underneath, and a white mark around the neck as if it was tied up for a sore throat. Grandpa says he shot one once that was a yard long, but their necks looked all of that. How far away do they have to go before they can stop to nest, please, Gray Lady?”

“They nest only in our most northern states, and from there up through British America; but as the country is settled they have to shift their haunts very often, for you can well imagine that a colony, even in the nesting season, would have but little peace if hunters could reach it easily. These great birds on their journeys are one of the most thrilling sights that everyday people can see, for they travel the thousands of miles that separate their summer and winter homes, straight through the night as well as the day, without chart or compass, but with the same lack of fear and unflinching directness as a train would follow the rails upon the road-bed.

“We hear and read stories of Nature that are inventions, and could not have happened because they are not according to the plan of creation,—so the people who tell these instead of being clever are really very stupid,—but not one of these is as wonderful as the simple truth, or as awe-inspiring as the flight of Wild Geese that goes on before our sight year after year in the April sky, or that we know by their cries and the rush of wings is passing overhead in the gloom of a wild and stormy night.

WILD GEESE

A far, strange sound through the night,
A dauntless and resolute cry,
Clear in the tempest's despite,
 Ringing so wild and so high.

Darkness and tumult and dread,
 Rain and the battling of gales,
Yet cleaving the storm overhead,
 The wedge of the Wild Geese sails.

Pushing their perilous way,
 Buffeted, beaten, and vexed;
Steadfast by night and by day,
 Weary, but never perplexed;

Sure that the land of their hope
 Waits beyond tempest and dread,
Sure that the dark where they grope
 Shall glow with the morning red!

O birds in the wild, wild sky!
 Would I could so follow God's way
Through darkness, unquestioning why,
 With only one thought to obey!

—CELIA THAXTER.

NEST-BUILDING

“Though a few of our common birds, like the Robin, Bluebird, Woodcock, Crow, Grackle, and some of the Hawks and Owls, begin to nest in April, May and June are the real nesting months.

“When the spring migration is over, we call those birds who have decided to stay with us and build their homes Summer Residents, and it is from these that we must learn of the home life of birds.

“The visitors who stop awhile on their way to other places we may learn to call by name, but we can never really know them any more than we can a chance visitor who boards a few weeks in our vicinity.

“The nesting habits of birds and the manner in which they build their homes vary according to the necessity and skill of the species. (See *Citizen Bird*.)

“In their house-building you will find that the birds know almost as many trades as human beings, for among them are weavers, basket-makers, masons, and carpenters, as well as workers in felt, hair, and feathers.

“Many water-birds merely make a hollow in the sand or gather a few bits of grass together for a nest.

“The Grouse, Quail, and Woodcock scratch up a few leaves in a ground hollow or between stumps, for, like domestic fowl, they always nest on the ground and their colour, being dull, blends with it, and you may almost step on one of these birds when it is on its nest and never know it.

“The dull brown Sparrows build nests of grasses set in a low bush or between its roots, but the flaming Oriole weaves himself a snug hammock high out on a swaying elm bough, and the Scarlet Tanager builds high in an oak. The Blue Jay weaves small roots into a firm nest set well above reach, while the Bluebird lines a hollow in a tree or takes an abandoned Woodpecker’s hole for his house. The Woodpeckers chisel out homes in tree-trunks, and Robins and Cliff and Barn Swallows use more or less mud, and plaster the inside of their homes. If you watch carefully now when the birds are building, and associate the various nests with the birds that build them, in autumn, when the young have flown, you can collect many of these nests and study their beautiful workmanship. But pray keep your hands off them while they are in use, for it is not being either kind or polite to meddle.

“How do you think your mother would feel if somebody climbed in at the window and tumbled up your baby brother’s crib, perhaps spilling him out on the floor, or at least frightening him badly, in order to find out if he slept on a mattress or a feather bed, or if the crib itself was made of wood or metal?

“At the time of the spring migration the birds that have been living in flocks all winter put on fresh feathers, and court and separate into pairs just as people do when they marry and begin housekeeping. Naturally they feel

very happy, and have a great deal to say to each other, and this is what makes birds break into song when the spring comes to give them new life.

“Though some few females can sing, it is the males who make the beautiful music that we hear in the spring mornings. The female is too busy with her housekeeping to do more than answer, but her husband’s song cheers her while she is brooding, and he probably tells her how pretty her new feathers are, and how much he loves her, too.

“Among our gayly coloured birds, unlike people, it is the male who wears the brightest clothes. You have heard of this all through our fall and winter lessons, and you have seen the difference in pictures; now that the birds themselves have come, you will have a chance to see how well you remember, and if you can name the birds as they fly. The Scarlet Tanager and the Goldfinch both have plain greenish olive-coloured wives. The female Blue Jay is of a less bright hue than her mate, and the mate of the Rose-breasted Grosbeak wears a buff, brownish streaked vest.

“Why? Because, as the mother bird spends more time about the nest than the father, if she wore bright clothes she would attract too much attention, and cruel Hawks, squirrels, and thieving people would find it too easily; and Nature’s first thought is always of the care and protection of young life, whether of plant, bird, or beast.

“Almost all of our birds feed the young nestlings with animal food, even if they themselves are seed-eaters; for little birds must grow quickly, and you would hardly believe the number of worms and flying things it takes to turn one little Robin from the queer, helpless, featherless thing that it is when it hatches from the egg, into the clumsy, clamouring ball of feathers, with awkward wings and hardly a bit of tail to balance it, that it is when it leaves the nest.

“No human father and mother work harder to feed their children than do these feathered parents, who toil ceaselessly from sunrise until sunset to bring food, and share by turns the protection of the nest.

THE NEST

When oaken woods with buds are pink,
And new-come birds each morning sing,
When fickle May on summer's brink
Pauses, and knows not which to fling,
Whether fresh bud and bloom again,
Or hoar-frost silvering hill and plain,

Then from the honeysuckle gray
The Oriole with experienced quest
Twitches the fibrous bark away,
The cordage of his hammock-nest,
Cheering his labour with a note
Rich as the orange of his throat.

High o'er the loud and dusty road
The soft gray cup in safety swings,
To brim ere August with its load
Of downy breasts and throbbing wings,
O'er which the friendly elm tree heaves
An emerald roof with sculptured eaves.

Below, the noisy world drags by
In the old way, because it must;
The bride with heartbreak in her eye,
The mourner following hated dust;
Thy duty, winged flame of spring,
Is but to love, and fly, and sing.

O happy life, to soar and sway
Above the life by mortals led,
Singing the merry months away,
Master, not slave of daily bread,
And, when the autumn comes, to flee
Wherever sunshine beckons thee!

—JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

OUT OF THE SOUTH

A migrant song-bird I,
Out of the blue, between the sea and the sky,
Landward blown on bright, untiring wings;
 Out of the South I fly,
Urged by some vague, strange force of destiny,
To where the young wheat springs,

 And the maize begins to grow,
 And the clover fields to blow.
I have sought
In far wild groves below the tropic line
To lose old memories of this land of mine;
 I have fought
This vague, mysterious power that flings me forth
 Into the North;
But all in vain. When flutes of April blow,
The immemorial longing lures me, and I go.

—MAURICE THOMPSON.

WHAT TO EXPECT

“In April we may look for the coming of a score or more of different birds. How quickly they come and in what numbers depends upon the season. If it is mild, they come gradually; if stormy, by fits and starts, and sometimes in strangely mixed flocks.

“These belong to the first half of the month:—

The Great Blue Heron. Cousin to the white Egret; we always used to have a pair of them by the upper mill-pond.

The Purple Finch. A large sparrow with a beautiful voice; the fully grown male having a rosy flush to his feathers as if, it has been said, the juice of crimson berries had been squeezed over him.

The Vesper-sparrow. The wayside Sparrow of our afternoon walk that we have known as long as the Song Sparrow and Bluebird; famous for his clear, ringing song at twilight and dawn. Rather light in color, with *rust-red wing-markings and white outside tail-feathers* that show conspicuously as he flits along and tells his name.

THE VESPER-SPARROW

It comes from childhood land,
Where summer days are long
And summer eves are bland—
A lulling good-night song.

Upon a pasture stone,
Against the fading west,
A small bird sings alone,
Then dives and finds its nest.

The evening star has heard
And flutters into sight.
Oh, childhood's vesper bird,
My heart calls back good night.

—EDITH M. THOMAS.

The Chipping-sparrow. Our least Sparrow, who wears a little chestnut velvet cap, gray back, and black bill, and has a mild, innocent expression in keeping with his friendly ways. He puts his dainty hair-lined nest (from which he is sometimes called Hair-bird) in a near-by shrub or rose-bush in the garden, and then hops about the door, picking up almost invisible bits of food, calling “chip-chip-chip.” His courting song is a long trill that begins at dawn almost with the Phœbe, and the dear little bird often sings as he sits on the ground.

The Tree Swallow. This we saw last fall in the migration, and we may hope that it will take lodging in some of the new bird-boxes.

“In the second half of the month:—

The Barn Swallow.

Spotted Sandpiper.

Bank Swallow.

Purple Martin.

Whip-poor-will. One of the birds of the air that, together with its brother the Nighthawk and its cousins the Chimney Swift and Humming-bird, may well be called winged mysteries.

Towhee-Chewink, or Ground-robin, of the tribe of Sparrows and Finches, but, like the Cardinal, without stripes, and having a stout beak. Head, throat, back, and breast black; white belly and rust-red sides. Black tail with white outer feathers. A handsome, vigorous bird and a lover of bushes and thickets, where he scratches among the leaves. Call-note, "Tow-hee-tow-hee."

Black-and-white Warbler. This you will at first take to be a small Woodpecker from its black-and-white stripes and tree-creeping habits that remind one of the Brown Creeper of winter, but its slender bill names it a warbler; one of the "lispers," who, though they have musical names, whisper or lisp a few notes as if to themselves.

Ovenbird. Also a warbler, but, though it sings high among the trees, nests on the ground among the leaves, the nest being closed at the top and open on the sides like an oven. A shy bird with a *golden brown crown edged by a black line*. Plain olive above, white beneath, with thrush-like black streaks on breast and sides.

House Wren. Dear little Jenny Wren, of several nests and a large family, who lives in our bird-boxes, outbuildings, and garden trellises. Gowned in reddish brown, with fine black bars and a pert little tail that she jerks nervously as she flies. Johnny Wren is the singing partner, for Jenny has no voice left of a morning after she has spluttered and scolded her bird neighbours and attended to her housekeeping.

Brown Thrasher.

Catbird.

Wood Thrush.

Veery.—No matter how familiar with them we may be, we must always pause to look and listen when we meet one of this wonderful quartette of vocalists, whose voices belong with the gorgeously appalled singers of the opera; but the quiet plumage and demeanour of three of the four mark them for peaceful home life and seclusion.

WINGED MYSTERIES

“Four birds there are that live under one roof, so to speak, for they belong to one order divided into three different families. They are perfectly familiar to most of us who have lived in the real country, and yet they awaken our curiosity anew every season when they return. These birds are the Whip-poor-will, Chimney Swift, Nighthawk, and Humming-bird. The two first return to New England late in April; the two last during the first part of May, but it is better for us to take them all together now in April so as to be ready to recognize the first one that comes.

“The *Whip-poor-will* comes first. It is a bird of the woods; in size a little less than the Robin, but of a build peculiar to its own family, long and low, a contrast heightened by its short legs and its habit of sitting length-wise on a limb and close to it. In short, it does not perch, it ‘squats.’ Its general colour is black, white, and buff, much streaked and mottled. Its tail is *round*, half of the three outer feathers white, giving the effect of a white spot.

“All of you children of this wooded hill country know this bird that flies about the house and across the fields to the woods before dawn or soon after dark, making no more noise than the bats, until, stopping to rest, he mechanically jerks out his name, ‘Whip-poor-will-Whip-poor-will-Chuck!’ So lonely and mournful does the cry sound in the distance that many weird stories have been told about the bird. But when the call comes close at hand, it is more cheerful, though always startling.

“This bird builds no nest, but lays its pair of dull white eggs, so marked that they blend with the earth like lichens and mosses, on the bare ground, or at best among a few leaves. But rash as this seems, the protective colour that nature has given to the parents, eggs, and young serves to keep them as safe as many another bird in a well-woven tree nest.

“Then, too, aside from its picturesque qualities, the Whip-poor-will, as Mr. Forbush says of it, ‘is an animated insect trap. Its enormous mouth is surrounded by long bristles which form a wide fringe about a yawning cavity, and the bird flies rather low among the trees and over the undergrowth, snapping up nocturnal insects in flight. It is, perhaps, the greatest enemy of night-moths, but is quite as destructive to May beetles and other leaf-eating beetles.’

When the faintest flush of morning
Overtints the distant hill,
 If you waken, if you listen,
You may hear the Whip-poor-will.
Like an echo from the darkness,
 Strangely wild across the glen,
Sound the notes of his finale,
 And the woods are still again.

Soon upon the dreamy silence
 There will come a gentle trill,
Like the whisper of an organ,
 Or the murmur of a rill,
And then a burst of music,
 Swelling forth upon the air,
Till the melody of morning
 Seems to come from everywhere.
A Thrush, as if awakened by
 The parting voice of night,
Gives forth a joyous welcome to
 The coming of the light.

In early evening twilight
 Again the Wood Thrush sings,
Like a voice of inspiration
 With the melody of strings;
A song of joy ecstatic,
 And a vesper hymn of praise,
For the glory of the summer
 And the promise of the days.

* * * * *

And when his song is ended,
 And all the world grows still,
As if but just awakened,
 Calls again the Whip-poor-will.

—GARRETT NEWKIRK, in *Bird-Lore*.

“*The Nighthawk*, when perching, bears a general resemblance to the Whip-poor-will. The white band on its throat is wider, the tail is *not* round, and it has white band near the end. There is a white bar across the quills of the wings that in flight looks like a round white spot or a hole.

Nighthawk

“These four white patches, throat, wings, and tail tell you his name plainly, so when he is on the wing the Nighthawk should never be mistaken for a Whip-poor-will. Then, too, their habits are unlike. The Nighthawk does not belong to the night, neither is he a Hawk, which is a Bird of Prey with talons and a hooked beak. Early morning and late afternoon are his favourite times for hunting the sky for insects, for he also is one of our most valuable sky sweepers.

“Having no song, the cry of Skirk-skirk! given when on the wing, has a wild and eerie sound which is often followed by a booming noise of the quality that can be imitated by placing tissue-paper over a long, coarse comb and then blowing rapidly across it from one end to the other. This noise is made by the rush of the wind through the wing quills as the bird drops through the air after its winged food.

“The Nighthawk builds no nest, but lays its eggs on a bare rock in a field, amid the stones of rocky ground, on roofs even of city houses. Again does colour protection aid a bird, for the arrangements of its markings blend the Nighthawk with granite as perfectly as those of the Whip-poor-will conceal it in the woods.

“The Nighthawk, whose erratic flight makes it a target that piques the skill of a certain class of sportsmen, has frequently been shot at for prowess, the excuse being that it ‘wasn’t any good, anyway.’ Aside from the list of insects harmful to agriculture and domestic animals that it destroys, let us remember its crowning virtue, and cry ‘Hands off!’ It kills mosquitoes, and has thus earned the local name of Mosquito-hawk.

“It is hard to believe that any one should insist that the Nighthawk and the Whip-poor-will are one and the same bird, but such has been the case, and among intelligent people also, though the mistake has been definitely settled by one of the Wise Men.

A NIGHTHAWK INCIDENT

A discussion of the specific distinctness of the Whip-poor-will and Nighthawk, following an address to Connecticut agriculturists some years ago, led to my receipt, in July, 1900, of an invitation from a gentleman who was present, to come and see a bird then nesting on his farm that he believed

combined the characters of both the Whip-poor-will and Nighthawk; in short, was the bird to which both these names applied.



NIGHTHAWKS

Here was an opportunity to secure a much-desired photograph, and armed with the needed apparatus, as well as specimens of both the Nighthawk and Whip-poor-will, I boarded an early train for Stevenson, Connecticut, prepared to gain my point with bird as well as with man.

The latter accepted the specimens as incontrovertible facts, and readjusted his views as to the status of the birds they represented, and we may therefore at once turn our attention to the Nighthawk, who was waiting so patiently on a bit of granite out in the hayfields. The sun was setting when we reached the flat rock on which her eggs had been laid and young hatched,

and where she had last been seen; but a fragment of egg-shell was the only evidence that the bare-looking spot had once been a bird's home. The grass had lately been mowed, and there was no immediately surrounding cover in which the bird might have hidden. It is eloquent testimony of the value of her protective colouring, therefore, that we should almost have stepped on the bird, who had moved to a near-by flat rock as we approached the place in which we had expected to find her.

Far more convincing, however, was her faith in her own invisibility. Even the presence of a dog did not tempt her to flight, and when the camera was erected on its tripod within three feet of her body, squatting so closely to its rocky background, her only movement was occasioned by her rapid breathing.

There was other cause, however, besides the belief in her own inconspicuousness to hold her to the rock: one little downy chick nestled at her side, and with instinctive obedience was as motionless as its parent.

So they sat while picture after picture was made from various points of view, and still no movement, until the parent was lightly touched, when, starting quickly, she spread her long wings and sailed out over the fields. Perhaps she was startled, and deserted her young on the impulse of sudden fear. But in a few seconds she recovered herself, and circling, returned and spread herself out on the grass at my feet. Then followed the evolutions common to so many birds but wonderful in all. With surprising skill in mimicry, the bird fluttered painfully along, ever just beyond my reach, until it had led me a hundred feet or more from its young, and then, the feat evidently successful, it sailed away again, to perch first on a fence and later on a limb in characteristic (length-wise) Nighthawk attitude.

How are we to account for the development in so many birds of what is now a common habit? Ducks, Snipe, Grouse, Doves, some ground-nesting Sparrows and Warblers, and many other species also feign lameness, with the object of drawing a supposed enemy from the vicinity of their nest or young. Are we to believe that each individual who in this most reasonable manner opposes strategy to force, does so intelligently? Or are we to believe that the habit has been acquired through the agency of natural selection, and is now purely instinctive? Probably neither question can be answered until we know beyond question whether this mimetic or deceptive power is inherited.—FRANK M. CHAPMAN, in *Bird-Lore*.

“Now comes the *Chimney Swift*, universally called the Chimney Swallow; with small, compact body, only a little larger than a Bank Swallow, and long, strong wings, it dominates the air in which it lives and

feeds, and so little does it use its feet that it does not perch on them, but brackets itself against post, wall, or chimney, Woodpecker fashion, the sharp, pointed quills of its short tail acting as a brace.

“In colour the Chimney Swift is sooty gray, and as it darts about the sky it looks like a winged spruce cone, the wings being held further forward in flight than those of the average bird.

Chimney
Swift

“Like their cousins the Nighthawks, they feed chiefly in early morning and late afternoon, though in the nesting season this work continues all day. In the old wild days, like many another bird, this Swift built its basket nest of twigs and bird glue on the inside wall of hollow trees, but when man came, hollow trees went, and so, with the happy adaptability of Heart of Nature himself, the bird moved to the hollow chimneys of man’s own invention, and so, unwittingly, descended from his sky parlour and became the one real fireside bird that we have. And for this companionship he is willing to brave the risk of being smoked out and having sparks scorch his nest.

“Now that wide-mouthed stone chimneys are also disappearing, what remains for this Swift? We do not know, unless he changes his home to the open air and builds his bracket nests on outside walls.

“The Swift folds his wings and dives down the chimney to his nest silently as a bird cleaves the water, but when he rises, a roar of rapidly whirring wings marks the ascent, so that sometimes it annoys the people in whose rooms the chimney opens. Last summer, in the old orchard-house where Miss Wilde lives, we used to sit before the wide fireplace and listen to the Swifts twittering and whirling in and out of the chimney, and by looking up on a bright day their nests could be seen plainly. Once in a while an accident would happen, and Goldilocks will show you a beautiful bracket nest and five white eggs that became loosened after a storm and fell out on to the hearth.”

“But now that there is a fire all the time and a coal stove at Swallow Chimney, won’t the birds choke if they live there?” asked Sarah Barnes. “Grandma says they can stand wood smoke, but that coal-gas ‘spixiates’ ’em; ’cause we’ve never had any at our house since we’ve been burning coal.”

“I believe that your grandmother is right,” said Gray Lady, “and for this reason I have planned to have a new outside chimney for the cooking stove, so that the real ‘Swallow Chimney’ may be only used for the wood hearth fires, and so continue to be their home for as long as I live or the birds wish to rent it.



R. H. Beebe, Photo.

CHIMNEY SWIFT RESTING

TO A CHIMNEY SWIFT

Uncumbered neighbour of our race!
Thou only of thy clan
Hast made thy haunt and dwelling-place
Within the walls of man.

Thy haughty wing, which rides the storm,
Hath stooped to Earth's desires,
And round thy eery rises warm
The smoke of human fires.

Still didst thou come from lands afar
In childhood days as now,—
Yet alien as the planets are,
And elfin-strange art thou.

Thy little realm of quick delights,
Fierce instincts, untaught powers—
What unimagined days and nights
Cut off that realm from ours!

Thy soul is of the dawn of Earth,
And thine the secrets be
Of sentient being's far-off birth
And round-eyed infancy.

With thee, beneath our sheltering roof,
The starry Sphinx doth dwell,
Untamed, eternally aloof
And inaccessible!

—DORA READ GOODALE.

THE RUBY-THROATED HUMMING-BIRD

“The last and least of the four-winged mysteries is also the smallest of our birds, lacking a quarter of being four inches long. But it does not need size to proclaim its beauty any more than a glowing ruby or emerald; and indeed it wears both of these gems, the one on its throat and the other on its back. Its world is the garden where everything is brightest, its food nectar, and such little aphids as gather in it, and its home lashed by cobwebs to a slender branch, a fairy nest of plant, wool, and lichens, soft as feather down,

wherein lie two eggs, white and opaque and glistening like some fresh-water pearls.

“When on the wing it either darts about like a ray of feathered light, or else, poised before a deep-throated flower, remains apparently motionless, though its wings vibrate with the mechanical hum of a fly-wheel of perfect workmanship.

“In spite of the fact that Father Humming-bird takes himself to parts unknown and leaves his mate to tend both eggs and birds, the mother is neither put out nor discouraged, and makes a model parent, who gathers and swallows the food for her tiny offspring and then, by a pumping process called regurgitation, brings it up and, taking no chances of spilling a drop, literally rams it into the little throat! This bird is to me the greatest mystery of all. It comes and it goes, but how does it endure the stress of weather and travel? Many a moth outspans it in breadth of wings. If the flight of the Wild Goose is wonderful in its courage, what of the Humming-bird? Is Puck of Pook’s Hill still alive, and has he feathered playfellows?

THE HUMMING-BIRD

Is it a monster bee,
Or is it a midget bird,
Or yet an air-born mystery
That now yon marigold has stirred,
And now on vocal wing
To a neighbour bloom has whirred
In an aëry ecstasy, in a passion of pilfering?

Ah! ’tis the Humming-bird,
Rich-coated one,
Ruby-throated one,
That is not chosen for song,

But throws its whole rapt sprite
Into the secrets of flowers
The summer days along,
Into most odorous hours
It’s a murmurous sound of wings too swift for sight.

—RICHARD BURTON.

THE WOOD THRUSH

He has a coat of cinnamon brown,
The brightest on his head and crown,
A very low-cut vest of white
That shines like satin in the light,
And on his breast a hundred spots,
As if he wore a veil with dots;
With movement quick and full of grace,
The highbred manner of his race;
A very prince of birds is he
Whose form it is a joy to see.

And *music*—was there ever heard
A sweeter song from any bird?
Now clarion-like, so loud and clear,
Now like a whisper low and near,
And now, again, with rhythmic swells
And tinkling harmony of bells,
He seems to play accompaniment
Upon some harp-like instrument.

—GARRETT NEWKIRK, in *Bird-Lore*.

MOCKERS AND THRUSHES

“How many of you know the *Wood Thrush*, or, if you do not know his name, can recognize him by aid of these verses?”

“I know it,” answered little Clary; “I know his colour and the way his song tinkles, but up at our house we call him Wood Thrush Song Thrush. Why, Gray Lady, he doesn’t live in the woods; we haven’t any woods. He stays right around the garden and orchard, and last summer they made a nest in the crotch of a sugar-maple so low that I could see into it by standing on the fence. It looked just like Robin’s nest, and it had some rags woven into it, and the eggs are like the Robin’s, too.

“Mother said that I mustn’t watch too long, or they might not come back next year, but that if we didn’t bother them, they might come back, and the children, too, and bring their wives.

“This pair seemed real tame; they used to hop all round on the grass where the clothes dry, and they drank out of Roy’s dish. He’s a Collie dog, you know, and they don’t bother birds at all the way bird-dogs will sometimes.

“The Thrushes did eat some strawberries and currants, but mother said to credit those to company, for they pleased her when she sat sewing on the porch of afternoons more than all the company she ever had to tea, for they had to have sugar and cream on their berries, and left plates and spoons to wash up, and the Thrushes cleared up after themselves and gave a concert every night.

“You know, Gray Lady, it isn’t nice to have company and not give them any lunch, so mother says if you have nice garden birds, why should you expect more of them than of folks?”



E. Van Alterna, Photo.

WOOD THRUSH AND NEST

“Why, indeed,” said Gray Lady. “I will go and see your mother and ask her to come to Birdland. A mother in a community who thinks as she does is better than half a dozen bird wardens.”

“I know that bird, too,” said Dave, “but on the hill where I live he stays in the river woods and only comes out to the lane edge to get wild cherries and blackcaps and shadberries. We call it Wood Robin, ’cause it’s shaped like a Robin and runs on the ground like one, only it’s different in colour. Do you suppose they are the same bird? Or are there two that seem alike, like the Nighthawk and Whip-poor-will?”

“Wood Thrush, Song Thrush, Wood Robin, are all one; the shy bird of river woods or the lovely musician of gardens and home grounds, where they are protected and dogs reign instead of cats. This place is vocal with

them all through May, June, and well into July. Not only Birdland and the orchard, but the garden and trees on the lawn.

“One afternoon last June, when Goldilocks lay in her hammock under the spruces, four were singing where I could see all at once,—and oh, that song! As the bird sits in a tree-top with head thrown back and pours it forth,

‘the song of the Wood Thrush is one of the finest specimens of bird music that America can produce. Among all the bird songs I have ever heard, it is second only in quality to that of the Hermit Thrush. Its tones are solemn and serene. They seem to harmonize with the sounds of the forest, the whispering breeze, the purling water, or the falling of raindrops in the summer woods.’

—E. H. FORBUSH.

“This Thrush has a sharp alarm note, ‘Pit! Pit!’ and a sort of whistle that he seems to use as a signal. Fruit he does eat at times, but he has as long a list of evil insects to his credit as the Robin himself. Unfortunately, owing to his size and plumpness, southern vandals shoot him in the fall and winter. Fancy silencing his heavenly voice for a pitiful mouthful of meat.

“There is another Thrush that lives in your river woods, Dave, smaller than the Wood Thrushes, tawny of back, and a buffy breast with faint arrow-shaped spots upon it, the Wilson’s Thrush, or Veery. It has not so long and varied a song as either the Wood Thrush or the more northern Hermit Thrush, is really but an echo song, wonderfully pure and spiritual in quality. One of the Wise Men gives in syllables this ‘Ta-weel-ah-ta-weel-ah,’ pronounced in whispering head tones, and then repeated a third lower, ending with the twang of a stringed instrument.

“At evening and until quite late into the night these birds echo themselves and each other. It is not a song to hear amid laughter and talking, but for the heart that is alone, even if not lonely. To at least one of our poets, he who best interprets the song-life of birds, it rivals the famous English Nightingale.

“Aside from its musical value, the Veery, feeding as it does almost altogether on insects, has a practical side as a neighbour. It also has a most penetrating call-note, a ‘Whew! Whew!’ heard after the song is over, that is at once resentful, critical, and challenging, as if questioning your right to be in its woodland retreat in the nesting time, and condemning your persistence. Many people, who do not know the bird by sight, know both its echo song and its note of alarm and challenge.

THE INCREDULOUS VEERY

Two hunters chanced one day to meet
Near by a thicket wood;
They paused each other there to greet,
Both in a playful mood.
Said one, "I had to wade a stream,
Now, this you must not doubt,
And when I reached the other shore
My boots were full of trout."

Whew! cried a Veery perched in view
To hear if what they said were true. *Whew!*

The other's wit was now well whet.
Said he, "Let me narrate:
I bought three hundred traps and set
For fur both small and great;
Now, when next morning came, behold,
Each trap contained a skin;
And other disappointed game
Stood waiting to get in."

The astonished Veery whistled, *Whew!*
I hardly think that story true. *Whew!!!*

—FLORENCE A. VAN SANT, in *Bird-Lore*.

THE BROWN THRASHER

"Also called *Brown Thrush*, *Red Mavis*, *Planting Bird*. Brown of back, with his white throat and belly speckled with black arrow marks, a long, curved bill, and long, restless tail, whose thrashing gives the bird his name, this bird combines the markings of the Thrush with the general build of a true Mockingbird, while in varied and rich song it rivals the Catbird, its shorter song season, however, leaving its gray-backed neighbour in the lead.

“This spring Brown Thrasher came to the bushy end of the orchard the last of April, and scratched about in the leaves like a Grouse. In a few days I saw him in the back of the garden, where Jacob had a great pile of pea-brush. This the bird looked at favourably. Birds know how to get in and out of pea-brush, but cats are afraid of the sharp twigs.

“For a couple of weeks or more I heard him singing every day in the tree-tops, and I wondered where he would locate.

“Jacob, one morning, told me that he wished to use the pea-brush, but that a ‘pair of great brown birds that beat their tails and “sassed” him when he came near’ had built a nest of twigs in the back of the heap. ‘My friends, the Thrashers,’ said I, ‘will need that brush for a couple of months. Have you no more in the lot?’ Jacob had plenty with only the trouble of carting.

“Now hardy vines have grown over the brush and tangled into what Goldilocks calls a lovely ‘Thrashery’ that will last for several years.”

“I know them,” said Jack Todd; “they are mockers and jeerers for certain; when Dad and I plant the big south field with corn every spring, they come in the berry-bushes by the fence and tell us how to do it, and that if we’re smart and take their advice, we won’t cut the fence brush until they are done with nesting.

“But can’t they pick cherries to beat the band? Last summer I was up in the ox-heart tree and they came in the top and picked ’em off, just as they grew in pairs, and flew away with them as pleased and satisfied as if they were picking them for market and were a week ahead of the season. Dad was awfully down on them once, but one morning about two years ago he got up at daylight to try and get the cutworms that were spoiling his early cauliflowers, and there were Thrashers and Catbirds doing the work for him, watching out for the worms to move ground just as clever as a man could.

“As for the *Catbird* or *New England Mockingbird*, trim of shape, and shrewd of eye, what should we do without him? He is a graphophone in feathers, that gives us selections from all the popular bird songs of the day, with this addition—there is no mechanical twang to mar the melody, and when the repertoire is ended he improvises by the hour.

Catbird

“Ah, the merry, mischievous Mocker, all dressed in a parson’s suit of gray, with a solemn black cap on his head that is as full of tricks as his throat is of music.

“You say, ‘Yes, I know that he is a jolly musician, but my father says that he bites the best strawberries and cherries, and always on the ripest cheek!’

“Well, so he does *sometimes*; but his ancestors lived on that spot where your garden stands before yours did, and you have more ways of earning a

living than he has. Give him something else to eat. Plant a little wild fruit along your fences.

“Some people think that he likes to live in seclusion, but he doesn’t; he likes to be near people and perch on a clothes-pole to plume and sing. Yes, indeed, and he shall nest in the syringa nearest my garden, where he gets his fresh fruit for breakfast, and be the only thing with anything catlike about it on my premises!”

THE CATBIRD

He sits on a branch of yon blossoming bush,
This madcap cousin of Robin and Thrush,
And sings without ceasing the whole morning long
Now wild, now tender, the wayward song
That flows from his soft, gray, fluttering throat.
But often he stops in his sweetest note,
And, shaking a flower from the blossoming bough,
Drawls out, “Mi-ew, mi-ou!”



Dr. T. S. Roberts, Photo.

CATBIRD ON NEST

XXV

BIRD AND ARBOUR DAY AT FOXES CORNERS

It was the first Friday of May, the day that was set apart for Arbour and Bird Day in the schools. Gray Lady and Miss Wilde had thought of having the celebration in Birdland, but for a good reason decided to hold it in the schoolhouse.

The reason was this: One day after the schoolhouse had been put in order,—for Gray Lady had persuaded the town fathers to have the walls painted, and had then given a band of soft green burlap that covered the wall just above the chair board, and made a fine background against which pictures might be pinned and then changed at will,—little Clary said with a sigh, “I wish we could have a bird party here in school some day, so’s mother could *see* how we learn about the birds; it would be much realer than my telling her about it.”

So a very simple programme was arranged for the forenoon, and the parents invited. It is a great mistake to hold celebrations that are too long when it is spring, and the weather is so bright and the bird music so fine that people can learn much more by being out-of-doors than in poring over books.

The first part of the programme was under the charge of Jacob Hughes and the older boys. It consisted in the planting of some strong young sugar-maples to complete the row between the schoolhouse and the highway that had been begun last autumn. The holes had been dug the day previous, and Mr. Todd brought the trees from his grove in the hay-cart, with plenty of earth about their roots, and after they were set straight and true, the boys filled in the holes and tramped the earth down firmly. After this the little boys brought water, four pails being considered a sufficient drink for each tree.

Next, a dozen shrubs were planted in the eastern corner of the bit of ground where it rolled up toward the brush-lot and the earth was deep and good. They were varieties that would flower in May and June, before the closing of school. Syringa, Weigela, Yellow Forsythia, Purple and White Lilac, Snowballs, Spireas, Scarlet Flowering Quince, Strawberry Shrub, and Deutzia. Between this shrubbery a little strip along the north fence had been made into a long bed of about thirty feet, and the girls had been asked to collect enough hardy plants from about the farm gardens to fill it; for there is

little use in planting bedding or annual flowers in school yards, for these are later in starting and are killed by early frost.

The girls had been very successful in their task, and a goodly assortment of old-fashioned, hardy plants, that many a gardener would envy, was the result: Iris of several shades, Peonies, Sweet Williams, Larkspur, Foxgloves, Honesty, May Pinks, Lemon Lilies, Johnny-jumpers, and several good roots of Cinnamon and Damask Roses were among the collection, while Sarah Barnes' grandmother sent a basket of the roots of hardy button Chrysanthemums—pink, white, crimson, yellow, and tawny—that she said would hold out from October to Thanksgiving if they had “bushes between them and the north.” It was quite eleven o'clock when, the planting over and the benches that the boys had made during the winter set in place, the children, whose hands were washed under very difficult conditions, gathered in the school.

But those parents who cared to come had meanwhile had a chance to go into the little building, see the pictures, charts, and books on the shelf behind the desk, and chat with Miss Wilde in a friendly, informal way that was helpful to all concerned.

Goldilocks had been there all the morning, but when Gray Lady arrived she brought with her a friend of “the General's,” who was also a *Wise Man* in one of the chief agricultural colleges of the country, who had promised to talk to the children. Gray Lady herself was to read them some bird poetry, and Miss Wilde a little story of her own invention, while as a finale the children themselves were to recite some verses where ten familiar birds were represented each by a child who wore a cap and shoulder cape, cleverly made of crêpe paper, that would give a clew, at least, to the bird he or she represented.

These costumes had been made at the last Saturday meeting of the Kind Hearts' Club, in the playroom at “the General's,” and had caused no little fun, the idea of them having come from the caps in the mottoes at that orchard party, in September, eight months before, when the children first entered Birdland.

This is the poem that Gray Lady read. She had a voice that sang even in speaking, and as Goldilocks often said, “When mother reads bird poetry you don't hear the words, but the birds themselves.”

BIRDS IN SPRING

What time the rose of dawn is laid across the lips of night,
And all the drowsy little stars have fallen asleep in light,
'Tis then a wandering wind awakes, and runs from tree to tree,
And borrows words from all the birds to sound the reveille.

This is the carol the Robin throws
Over the edge of the valley;
Listen how boldly it flows,
Sally on sally:

*Tirra-lirra, down the river,
Laughing water all a-quiver.
Day is near, clear, clear.
Fish are breaking,
Time for waking.
Tup, tup, tup!
Do you hear? All clear.
Wake up!*

The phantom flood of dreams has ebbed and vanished with the dark,
And like a dove the heart forsakes the prison of the ark;
Now forth she fares through friendly woods and diamond-fields of dew,
While every voice cries out "Rejoice!" as if the world were new.

This is the ballad the Bluebird sings,
Unto his mate replying,
Shaking the tune from his wings
While he is flying:

*Surely, surely, surely,
Life is dear
Even here.
Blue above,
You to love,
Purely, purely, purely.*

There's wild azalea on the hill, and roses down the dell,
And just a spray of lilac still a-bloom beside the well;
The columbine adorns the rocks, the laurel buds grow pink,
Along the stream white arums gleam, and violets bend to drink.

This is the song of the Yellowthroat,
Fluttering gayly beside you;
Hear how each voluble note
Offers to guide you:

*Which way, sir?
I say, sir,
Let me teach you,
I beseech you!
Are you wishing
Jolly fishing?
This way, sir!
Let me teach you.*

Oh come, forget your foes and fears, and leave your cares behind,
And wander forth to try your luck, with cheerful, quiet mind;
For be your fortune great or small, you'll take what God may give,
And all the day your heart will say, "'Tis luck enough to live."

This is the song the Brown Thrush flings
Out of his thicket of roses;
Hark how it warbles and rings,
Mark how it closes:

*Luck, luck,
What luck?
Good enough for me!
I'm alive, you see.
Sun shining, no repining;
Never borrow idle sorrow;
Drop it! Cover it up!
Hold your cup!
Joy will fill it,
Don't spill it!
Steady, be ready,
Love your luck!*

—HENRY VAN DYKE, in *Bird-Lore*.

"I do declare!" exclaimed Tommy Todd's grandfather, speaking out loud, much to the boy's embarrassment. "I reckon I'll get out a pole and go a-

trout-fishing to-morrow dawn. I haven't thought of a yallerthroat, not since I used to go casting in the brook that ran through Ogden's meadows among the bush willows, and them birds kept hollerin' on ahead."

This is what the Wise Man told the children, standing in front of Miss Wilde's desk and speaking as if he knew them all by name.

THE BIRDS AND I

The springtime belongs to the birds and me. We own it. We know when the May-flowers and the buttercups bloom. We know when the first frogs peep. We watch the awakening of the woods. We are wet by the warm April showers. We go where we will, and we are companions. Every tree and brook and blade of grass is ours; and our hearts are full of song.

There are boys who kill the birds, and girls who want to catch them and put them in cages; and there are others who steal their eggs. The birds are not partners with them; they are only servants. Birds, like people, sing for their friends, not for their masters. I am sure that one cannot think much of the springtime and the flowers if his heart is always set upon killing or catching something. We are happy when we are free; and so are the birds.

The birds and I get acquainted all over again every spring. They have seen strange lands in the winter, and all the brooks and woods have been covered with snow. So we run and romp together, and find all the nooks and crannies which we had half forgotten since October. The birds remember the old places. The Wrens pull the sticks from the old hollow rail and seem to be wild with joy to see the place again. They must be the same Wrens that were here last year and the year before, for strangers could not make so much fuss over an old rail. The Bluebirds and Wrens look into every crack and corner for a place in which to build, and the Robins and Chipping-sparrows explore every tree in the old orchard.

If the birds want to live with us, we should encourage them. The first thing to do is to let them alone. Let them be as free from danger and fear as you or I. Take the hammer off the old gun, give pussy so much to eat that she will not care to hunt for birds, and keep away the boys who steal eggs and who carry sling-shots and throw stones. Plant trees and bushes about the borders of the place, and let some of them, at least, grow into tangles; then, even in the back yard, the wary Catbird may make its home.

For some kinds of birds we can build houses. You have been doing this all through the winter, I hear. Some of the many forms which can be used are shown in the pictures, but any ingenious boy can suggest a dozen other patterns. Although birds may not appreciate architecture, it is well to make the houses neat and tasty by taking pains to have the proportions right. The

floor space in each compartment should be not less than five by six inches, and six by six or six by eight may be better. By cutting the boards in multiples of these numbers, one can easily make a house with several compartments; for there are some birds, as Martins, Tree Swallows, and Pigeons that like to live in families or colonies. The size of the doorway is important. It should be just large enough to admit the bird. A larger opening not only looks bad, but it exposes the inhabitants to dangers of cats and other enemies. Birds which build in houses, aside from Doves and Pigeons, are Bluebirds, Wrens, Tree Swallows, Martins, and sometimes the Chickadee. For the Wren and Chickadee the opening should be an inch-and-a-half augur-hole, and for the others it should be two inches. Only one opening should be provided for each house or compartment. A perch or doorstep should be provided just below each door. It is here that the birds often stop to arrange their toilets; and when the mistress is busy with domestic affairs indoors, the male bird often sits outside and entertains her with the latest neighbourhood gossip. These houses should be placed on poles or on buildings in somewhat secluded places. Martins and Tree Swallows like to build their nests twenty-five feet or more above the ground, but the other birds usually prefer an elevation less than twelve feet. Newly made houses, and particularly newly painted ones, do not often attract the birds.

But if the birds and I are companions, I must know them more intimately. Merely building houses for them is not enough. I want to know live and happy birds, not dead ones. We are not to know them, then, by catching them, nor stuffing them, nor collecting their eggs. Persons who make a business of studying birds may shoot birds now and then, and collect their eggs. But these persons are scientists and they are grown-up people. They are trying to add to the sum of human knowledge, but we want to know birds just because we want to. But even scientists do not take specimens recklessly. They do not rob nests. They do not kill brooding birds. They do not make collections merely for the sake of making them; and even their collections are less valuable than a knowledge of the bird as it lives and flies and sings.

Boys and girls should not make collections of eggs, for these collections are mere curiosities, as collections of spools and marbles are. They may afford some entertainment, to be sure, but one can find amusement in harmless ways. Some people think that making collections makes one a naturalist, but it does not. The naturalist cares more for things as they really are in their own homes than for museum specimens. One does not love the birds when he steals their eggs and breaks up their homes; and he is

depriving the farmer of one of his best friends, for birds keep insects in check!

Stuffed birds do not sing and empty eggs do not hatch. Then let us go to the fields and watch the birds. Sit down on the soft grass and try to make out what the Robin is doing on yonder fence or why the Wren is bursting with song in the thicket. An opera-glass or spy-glass will bring them close to you. Try to find out not only what the colours and shapes and sizes are, but what their habits are. What does the bird eat? How much does it eat? Where is its nest? How many eggs does it lay? What colour are they? How long does the mother bird sit? Does the father bird care for her when she is sitting? For how long do the young birds remain in the nest? Who feeds them? What are they fed? Is there more than one brood in the season? Where do the birds go after breeding? Do they change their plumage? Are the mother birds and father birds unlike in size or colour? How many kinds of birds do you know?

These are some of the things which every boy or girl wants to know; and we can find out by watching the birds! There is no harm in visiting the nests, if one does it in the right way. I have visited hundreds of them and have kept many records of the number of eggs and the dates when they were laid, how long before they hatched, and when the birds flew away; and the birds took no offence at my inquisitiveness. These are some of the cautions to be observed: Watch only those nests which can be seen without climbing, for if you have to climb the tree, the birds will resent it. Make the visit when the birds are absent if possible; at least, never scare the bird from the nest. Do not touch the eggs or the nest. Make your visit very short. Make up your mind just what you want to see, then look in quickly and pass on. Do not go too often, once or twice a day will be sufficient. Do not take the other children with you, for you are then apt to stay too long and to offend the birds.

Now let us see how intimately you can become acquainted with some bird this summer.

—L. H. BAILEY.

This is the little story that Miss Wilde read them, and they were very anxious as to what schoolhouse and children she really meant, but she said that was a secret.

THE BIRDS AND THE TREES

It was May Day. Half a dozen birds had collected in an old apple tree, which stood in a pasture close by the road that passed the schoolhouse; some of them had not met for many months, consequently a wave of conversation rippled through the branches.

“You were in a great hurry, the last time I saw you,” said the little black-and-white Downy Woodpecker to the Brown Thrasher, who was pluming his long tail, exclaiming now and then because the feathers would not lie straight.

“Indeed! When? I do not remember. What was I doing?”

“It was the last of October; a cold storm was blowing up, and you were starting on your southern trip in such a haste that you did not hear me call ‘good-by’ from this same tree, where I was picking insect eggs that expected to hide safely in the bark all winter, only to hatch into all kinds of mischief in the spring. But I was too quick for them; my keen eyes spied them and my beak chiselled them out. Winter and summer I’m always at work, yet some house-people do not understand that I work for my living. They seem to think that a bird who does not sing is good for nothing but a target for them to shoot at.”

“That is true,” said the dust-coloured Phœbe, dashing out to swallow a May beetle, which stuck in her throat, causing her to choke and cough. “I can only call, yet I worked with the best for the farmer where I lodged last year. I made a nest on his cowshed rafters and laid two sets of lovely white eggs, but his boys stole them and that was all my thanks for a season’s toil.”

“Singing birds do not fare much better,” said the Thrasher. “I may say frankly that I have a fine voice and I can sing as many tunes as any wild bird, but children rob my nest, when they can find it, and house-people drive me from their gardens, thinking I’m stealing berries.”

“They treat me even worse,” said the Robin, bolting a cutworm he had brought from a piece of ploughed land. “In spring, when I lead the Bird Chorus night and morning, they rob my nest. In summer they drive me from the gardens, where I work peacefully, and in autumn, when I linger through the gloomy days, long after your travelling brothers have disappeared, they shoot me for pot-pie!”

“It is a shame!” blustered Jennie Wren. “Not that I suffer much myself, for I’m not good to eat, and I’m a most ticklish mark to shoot at. Though I lose some eggs, I usually give a piece of my mind to any one who disturbs me, and immediately go and lay another nest full. Yet I say it is a shame, the way we poor birds are treated, more like tramps than citizens, though we are citizens, every one of us who pays rent and works for the family.”

“Hear, hear!” croaked the Cuckoo, with the yellow bill. He is always hoarse, probably because he eats so many caterpillars that his throat is rough

with their hairs. "Something ought to be done, but can Jennie Wren tell us what it shall be?"

"I've noticed that most of the boys and girls who rob our nests and whose parents drive us from their gardens go every day to that square house down the road yonder," said Mrs. Wren. "Now if some bird with a fine voice that would *make* them listen could only fly in the window and sing a song, telling them how useful even the songless bird brothers are, they might treat us better and tell their parents about us when they go home."

"Well spoken," said the Robin; "but who would venture into that house with all those boys? There is one boy in there who, last year, killed my mate with a stone in a bean-shooter, and also shot my cousin, a Bluebird. Then the boy's sister cut off the wings of these dead brothers and wore them in her hat. I think it would be dangerous to go in that schoolhouse."

"The windows are open," said the Song Sparrow, who had listened in silence. "I hear the children singing, so they must be happy. I will go down and speak to them, for though I have no grand voice, they all know me and perhaps they will understand my homely wayside song."

So the Sparrow flew down the road, but as he paused in the lilac hedge before going in the window, he heard that the voices were singing about birds, telling of their music, beauty, and good deeds. While he hesitated in great wonder at the sounds, the children trooped out, the girls carrying pots of geraniums which they began to plant in some beds by the walk. Then two boys brought a fine young maple tree to set in the place of an old tree that had died. A woman with a bright, pleasant face came to the door to watch the children at their planting, saying to the boys, "This is Arbour Day, the day of planting trees, but pray remember that it is Bird Day also. You may dig a deep hole for your tree and water it well; but if you wish it to grow and flourish, beg the birds to help you. The old tree died because insects gnawed it, for you were rough and cruel, driving all the birds away from hereabouts and robbing their nests."

"Please, ma'am," said a little girl, "our orchard was full of spinning caterpillars last season and we had no apples. Then father read in a book the government sent him that Cuckoos would eat the caterpillars all up, so he let the Cuckoos stay, and this year the trees are nice and clean and all set full of buds!"

The Song Sparrow did not wait to hear any more, but flew back to his companions with the news.

"I shall put my nest under the lilac hedge to show the children that I trust them," said he, after the birds had recovered from their surprise.

“I will lodge in the bushes near the old apple tree,” said the Cuckoo; “it needs me sadly.”

“I will build over the schoolhouse door,” said the Phoebe; “there is a peafield near by that will need me to keep the weevils away.”

“I think I will take the nice little nook under the gable,” said Jennie Wren, “though I need not build for two weeks yet, and I have not even chosen my mate.”

“I shall go to the sill of that upper window where the blind is half closed,” said the Robin. “They have planted early cauliflowers in the great field and I must help the farmer catch the cutworms.”

“I will stay by also,” said the Woodpecker. “I know of a charming hole in an old telegraph pole and I can see to the bark of all the trees that shade the schoolhouse.”

Just then a gust of wind blew through the branches, reminding the birds that they must go to work, and May passed by whispering with Heart of Nature, her companion, about the work that must be done before June should come,—June, with her gown all embroidered with roses and a circle of young birds fluttering about her head for a hat.

“Dear Master,” May said, “why am I always hurried and always working? I do more than all other months. July basks in the sun and August sits with her hands folded while the people gather in her crops. Each year March quarrels with Winter and does no work; then April cries her eyes out over her task, leaving it dim and colourless. Even the willow wears only pale yellow wands until I touch them. The leaf buds only half unfold, and the birds hold aloof from the undraped trees; see, nothing thrives without me.” And May shook the branches of a cherry tree and it was powdered with white blossoms.

“Nothing grows by or for itself,” said Heart of Nature, tenderly. “The tree is for bird and the bird for the tree, while both working together are for the house-people if they will only understand me and use them wisely. Never complain of work, sweet daughter May. Be thankful that you have the quickening touch, for to work in my garden is to be happy.”

Then the Song Sparrow caught up the words and wove them in his song and carolled it in May’s ear as she swept up the hillside to set the red-bells chiming for a holiday.

These are the verses that the children recited. Goldilocks asked the question in the first line of each verse, and the child who represented the bird answered. Little Clary was the first,—the Chippy,—and as she said the

words she raised her arms and flapped them like wings; the parents all applauded with delight.

THE BIRDS AND THE HOURS

4 A.M.

Who is the bird of the early dawn?
The brown-capped Chippy, who from the lawn
Raises his wings and with rapture thrills,
While his simple ditty he softly trills.

5 A.M.

Who is the bird of the risen sun?
The Robin's chorus is well-nigh done
When Bobolink swings from the clover high,
And scatters his love-notes across the sky.

9 A.M.

Who is the bird of the calm forenoon?
The Catbird gay with his jeering tune,
Who scolds and mimics and waves his wings
And jerks his tail as he wildly sings.

Noon

Who is the bird of the middle day?
The green-winged, red-eyed Vireo gay,
Who talks and preaches, yet keeps an eye
On every stranger who passes by.

5 P.M.

Who is the bird of the afternoon?
The Wood Thrush shy, with his silvery tune
Of flute and zither and flageolet;
His rippling song you will never forget.

7 P.M.

Who is the bird of the coming night?
The tawny Veery, who out of sight
In cool dim green o'er the waterway
The lullaby echoes of sleeping day.

9 P.M.

Who is the bird that when all is still
Like a banshee calls? The Whip-poor-will;
Who greets the Nighthawk in upper air
Where they take their supper of insect fare.

Midnight

Who are the birds that at midnight's stroke
Play hide-and-seek in the half-dead oak?
And laugh and scream 'till the watch-dog howls?
The wise-looking, mouse-hunting young Screech Owls.

All in chorus

Good Night! Good Day!
Be kind to the birds and help repay
The songs they sing you the livelong day,
The bugs they gobble and put to flight—
Without birds, orchards would perish quite!
Good Day! Good Night!

—M. O. W.

Tommy and Dave, who represented the Screech Owls, followed up the last "good night" by a very realistic imitation of the mewing call-note and the cry of the little Screech Owl, that not only brought down the house, but caused the guests to go home in a state of laughing good humour.

XXVI

SOME BIRDS THAT COME IN MAY

In Apple-blossom Time look for Orioles and All the Brightly Coloured Birds.

“In May you must get up early and keep both eyes and ears wide open if you would name this month’s share of the birds. All that have not come must do so now or never, though sick and crippled birds may straggle along at any time.

“These are the birds you may expect during the month. Some you already know from both pictures and stories, and these will seem like old friends:—

Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Nighthawk
Humming-bird
Kingbird
Baltimore Oriole
Bobolink
Indigo-bird
Scarlet Tanager
Red-eyed Vireo
Yellow Warbler
Maryland Yellowthroat
Yellow-breasted Chat
Redstart
Veery
Rose-breasted Grosbeak

“Some cloudy morning early in the month, you will hear a new call. At first it may suggest the coo-oo-oo of the Mourning Dove, then the drumming of the Flicker, but after waiting for a moment you realize that it is neither. The first sound is like that made by clicking the tongue rapidly against the roof of the mouth; the second sounds like cow-cow-cow-cow-cow repeated in quick succession. By this you will know that the *Yellow-billed Cuckoo* has come.

“You will be disappointed when first you see the bird itself, for it does not in the least resemble the bird of the English poets, who lives in Cuckoo clocks and bobs out to tell the hours. Neither is it a lazy bird who refuses to build a nest and leaves its eggs to the care of others like the Cowbird.

Yellow-billed
Cuckoo

“This Yellow-billed Cuckoo is a slender bird cloaked in brownish gray, of a soft hue and with a light belly. The tail-feathers are tipped with white, so that, as you look at the bird from below, it shows large white spots. This Cuckoo takes its name because the lower part of its bill is yellow, but you will scarcely notice this when he is in the trees, where he spends the greater part of his time in searching for insects and caterpillars, which are his favourite food.



YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO

“The nest is a shallow, rather shiftless sort of an affair, and very often has so little lining that if the vine or bush in which it is placed tips a little, the pale blue eggs are in danger of rolling out. What the Cuckoos lack in housekeeping thrift they make up as destroyers of harmful insects, and here it has helped to keep the old orchard alive by tearing apart the nests of the tent-caterpillar and eating the inhabitants. These mischievous caterpillars used to be content to live in the wild cherry trees that line the roads and old

pastures. People cut these down in consequence, so after a time the caterpillar found that apple trees were quite as much to his taste and seized upon the orchards. Then comes Master Cuckoo, and wherever the tent worms are, there we find him also. So many has he been known to devour that one of the Wise Men, upon examining the stomach of a Cuckoo that had been killed, found it lined with a sort of felt made from the hairs of the caterpillars.

“So, if you hear the harsh call near by, be very glad; the sound may not please the ear, but the bird is a pleasure to the sight as he slips away silently through the trees to do work for us that we cannot do as well.

“The *Red-eyed Vireo*, excepting the Catbird, is the most talkative bird that we have; in fact, so fond is he of the sound of his own voice that he is rarely silent during the daylight hours. Then, too, his eloquence has a questioning and arguing quality that made Wilson Flagg give him the nickname of ‘The Preacher,’ by which he will always be known. ‘You see it—you know it—do you hear me? Do you believe it?’ he hears this voice say, and if you keep these words in your mind, you will recognize the bird the first time that you hear his song. You may hear the Vireo’s words twenty times for every peep that you may get of his person; not that he is at all shy, but he is restlessness in feathers, while unlike many talkers he both talks and works at the same time. Now he is at the end of a branch close to you, then on the opposite side of the tree, from whence he works his way to the very top, clearing the small limbs and twigs of insects as he goes.

Red-eyed
Vireo

“After trying in vain to see him, one day when you are not thinking of this or any other bird, you will pass a familiar tree, one of the apples, perhaps, whose branches nearly sweep the ground. Your eye in going idly over the leaves halts at an object that is partly suspended between the forked twigs of a branch almost under your eye. You look again; it is a nest, pocket-shaped, and fastened between the twigs as the heel of a stocking is held between knitting needles. The nest itself is finely woven of plant-down, soft bark, and perhaps a few shreds of paper.

“You step nearer; a little head with a long, curved beak rises slightly above the nest,—Madam is at home. An eye holds your own,—a red eye with a long, clear, white mark over it by way of an eyebrow. Then you notice the head wears a gray cap bordered with black. The bird perhaps breathes a little faster, and the prettily shaded olive-green back heaves and the wings twitch as if to make ready to fly, otherwise the bird does not budge, but simply sits and waits for you to go; this, if you are really one of the Kind Hearts, you will do very soon.

“True, you may come back the next day and the next, and from a comfortable distance watch the Vireo’s housekeeping and the progress of her brood, only please do not touch either the nest or its contents. After she has done with it and autumn comes, you may have it for your own and see for yourself how wonderfully it is made.

“All sorts of amusing bits of printing from newspapers have been found woven into these nests, and there is one in Goldilocks’ cabinet, that I will show you later, that says upon the shred of paper,—‘an eight-room flat,—electric light and ——— improvements,’ the missing words being concealed where the paper was woven under the plant fibres.



F. M. Chapman, Photo.

RED-EYED VIREO ON NEST

“There are several other Vireos with richer, more melodious voices that you will learn to name after you have made your first bowing and speaking acquaintances in Birdland. The Red-eyed, however, is the largest and most easily named of them all if you remember his love of preaching, his white eyebrow, and gray, black-edged cap. He will be with us all summer, leaving in early October with the last flocks of Barn Swallows.

RED-EYED VIREO

When overhead you hear a bird
Who talks, or rather, chatters,
Of all the latest woodland news,
And other trivial matters,
Who is so kind, so very kind,
She never can say no,
And so the nasty Cowbird
Drops an egg among her row
Of neat white eggs. Behold her then,
The Red-eyed Vireo!

—FAITH C. LEE, in *Bird-Lore*.

THREE LISPERS AND A VENTRILOQUIST

“When the trees are putting on their best and greenest leaves, many new sounds mingle with the hum of insects among the branches. You pause and look up in the confusing mass of fluttering green and sunbeams to find, if possible, the origin of these sounds.

The Redstart

“Many feathered shapes are fluttering about, some flying after the manner of birds, while others flit and move in the irregular fashion of butterflies, while the notes they utter, instead of being full-throated, have a sort of childish lisp.

“These birds belong to the tribe of *Warblers*; a few do really warble, but for the majority the *Lispers* would be a more appropriate title. Listen! there comes a little call now, as if the bird had kept his beak half closed, ‘Sweet-sweetie-sweazy!’ and a bird of light build and no larger than a Chippy flits backward from the twig where he was perching and alights on one below, following in his flight one of the insects of which he is a valiant destroyer, as he belongs really to both the order of Tree Trappers and Sky Sweepers.

“Now is your chance; he is at rest for a moment; look at him,—black of back, head, and breast, some salmon-red feathers on wings and tail, and the sides of breast rich, pure salmon, and the belly white. What a brave little uniform, almost the Oriole colours. One of the Wise Men who has met the Redstart in his winter home in Cuba says that there he is called ‘*Candelita*, the little torch that flashes in the gloomy depth of tropical forests.’

“There is nothing secluded about him, however, except the depths of shade where he feeds and weaves his nest, in texture much like the Vireo’s.

His mate is also a very dainty bird, but his flame colour and black is replaced by pale yellow and gray.

“The Redstart is a bird to know in May and June, though it does not leave until early in October.

The Summer Yellowbird

“From the apple trees or shrubs near the house comes a cheerful lispingsong that constantly declares that life up among the leaves is ‘Sweet-sweet-sweet-sweet-sweet-sweet,’ ending this remark by a warble full of melody. Then a little bird smaller than a Chippy flits out with a bit of green worm hanging from his beak and disappears in another tree. Brief as the glimpse is, you see that the bird is rich olive-yellow, with cinnamon streaks on the breast. If he pauses a moment, you will notice that the underparts are almost the colour of gold. This is the *Yellow Warbler* of many names,—*Wild Canary*, *Summer Yellowbird*, or simply *Yellowbird*; though this name is also commonly given to the seed-eating Goldfinch of the Sparrow tribe who wears a jaunty black cap, and stays with us all the year, while the Yellow Warbler goes southward before leaf-fall in September.

“The Yellow Warbler’s nest is one of the most beautiful and interesting bird-homes, and shares the fame of that of the Baltimore Oriole, Wood Pewee, Humming-bird, and Vireo. It is cup-shaped and deep, woven of fibres and plant-down, and is placed in the fork of a bush or in a fruit tree, where it is as firmly lashed by cords of vegetable fibre and cobwebs. The female is the builder and a very rapid workwoman. This nest is often used by the Cowbird, but little Mrs. Yellow Warbler is more clever than many other small birds and refuses to be imposed upon. She is evidently afraid to push out the alien egg, so she swiftly walls it in by building a second nest on top of the first. If this does not check the Cowbird, a third nest is sometimes added, like the one that Tommy brought me last fall, and there is a two-story nest in Goldilocks’ cabinet.

“This Warbler is not only beautiful to look at and pleasant to hear, but he is a very valuable tree trapper, for he eats the spinning cankerworms and also tent-caterpillars, pulling apart webs of the latter and using them ‘for cordage’ to bind the nest. He is also a destroyer of plant-lice and something of a flycatcher as well.

Maryland Yellowthroat

“Here is a merry bird that you cannot miss seeing or fail to name if you have eyes and ears. Olive on head and back, this bird certainly has a yellow

throat, also much yellow on tail, wings, and underparts, but if I had the naming of it I should call him the ‘Yellow, Black-masked Warbler,’ for he wears a narrow mask of black across his face, through which his keen eyes peer provokingly as he flits ahead calling for you to follow, ‘Follow me—follow me—follow!’ When you see the bird, of two points you may be sure at once; it is yellow, and it wears a black mask, but whether it is yellowest on back, throat, or breast will require a second look.

“This bird is here about the garden and lane from May to September, and last June we found its long, bulky nest, partly covered like an Indian cradle, in the bushes between the garden and orchard, but it usually is so clever at going into the bushes and then darting along close to the ground to its nest, that we had known of this nest for several days before we discovered that it belonged to Black Mask, for his wife, who kept the nearest to the nest, wears no mask, and we thought her some other kind of Warbler.

THE MARYLAND YELLOWTHROAT

While May bedecks the naked trees
With tassels and embroideries,
And many blue-eyed violets beam
Along the edges of the stream,

I hear a voice that seems to say,
Now near at hand, now far away,
“Witchery-witchery-witchery!”

* * * * *

An incantation so serene,
So innocent, befits the scene;
There’s magic in that small bird’s note.
See! there he flits—the Yellowthroat;
A living sunbeam, tipped with wings,
A spark of light that shines and sings,
“Witchery-witchery-witchery!”

“A whistle comes out of the bushes that line the wood lane perhaps when you are gathering the pink Wild Azalea. If you have a dog with you, he will get up and sniff about. The whistle is repeated, and you yourself think it is one of your companions who has rounded the turn calling you. No; then it is merely a Catbird mocking half a dozen other songsters and then jeering at them.

“By mere chance, glancing at a tree close above, you see a bird of good size with brilliant yellow throat, breast, and wing-linings, and a strong curved beak that appears almost hooked. Perching there is a Yellow-breasted Chat. He it is who is doing the mocking and jeering, but throws his voice in such a way that it seems to come from the opposite bushes. It is this power that gives him the name of ‘Ventriloquist.’ Being observed, he slips quickly out of sight, and then you notice the olive-green colour on his back. He has a song of his own as well as the power of imitating others and in the nesting season floats out upon the air, with spread wings and legs trailing behind, in a wild ecstasy of singing, looking to us humans very foolish, but is doubtless very fascinating to his mate on her nest hidden amid briars and bushes and thoroughly protected by vines.

Singers in Costume

“Among the birds many of the best vocalists are choir singers, as it were. We hear their voices first, and from hearing them desire to know and name the singers. The Thrushes belong to the first group. Others there are who come on the stage in brilliant costume; we see them first, then desire to hear them sing, and afterward remember them as pleasing both to eye and ear. These are the gentlemen of the Opera, and four of them made the garden and orchard their music-hall last summer and I do not doubt will do so again. In fact the Goldfinches have never left, but a flock in sober winter suits have fed at the lunch-counter on the sunflower heads and fluttered over the weed seeds in the fields all winter.

“The *Baltimore Oriole* is the first of the quartet to settle down to family life late in May. The *Rose-breast* follows him closely. But the *Tanager* waits for the heavy leafage of June to cover his brilliant colours while, for some reason not yet understood, the *American Goldfinch* keeps his bachelor freedom longer than any bird except the Cedar Waxwing. And though he wears his handsome yellow wedding-clothes from late April, he waits until he has feasted well on dandelion-down and the best grass seeds before he

ceases to rove and takes to a bush, high maple, or other tree, to locate his soft nest made of moss and grasses and lined with thistle-down.

THE BALTIMORE ORIOLE

How falls it, Oriole, thou hast come to fly
In tropic splendour through our northern sky?

At some glad moment was it Nature's choice
To dower a scrap of sunset with a voice?

Or did an orange tulip flaked with black,
In some forgotten ages back,

Yearning toward Heaven until its wish was heard,
Desire unspeakably to be a bird?

—EDGAR FAWCETT.

“The Baltimore Oriole should be first mentioned, for his voice is that of the bugler that heralds actual spring, the long-expected, long-delayed mellow period, distinct from the almanac spring, that, when it once comes to us of the middle and north country, is quickly absorbed by the ardour of summer herself. Also is this Oriole the gloriously illuminated initial letter wrought in ruddy gold and black pigments heading the chapter that records the season; and when we see him high in a tree against a light tracery of fresh foliage, we know in very truth that not only is winter over, that the treacherous snow-squalls of April are past, but that May is working day and night to complete the task allotted.

“For as the Indian waited for the blooming of the dogwood, *Cornus florida*, before planting his maize, so does the prudent gardener wait for the first call of the Oriole before she trusts her cellar-wintered geraniums and lemon balms once more to the care of Mother Earth.

“This Oriole has history blended with his name; for it is said that George Calvert, the first Lord Baltimore, tired and discouraged by many of the troubles of his Newfoundland colony, in visiting the Virginia settlement in 1628, explored the waters of the Chesapeake, where he found the shores and woods alive with birds, and conspicuous among them, vast flocks of Orioles.

These so pleased him that he took their colours for his own and they ever afterward bore his name—a fair exchange.

“The *Baltimore Oriole* comes of a party-coloured American family—*Icteridæ*—that to the eye of the uninitiated at least would appear to be a hybrid clan drawn from all quarters of the bird world. Yet it is typically American, even in this variety; for what other race would have the temerity to harbour the Bobolink, Orchard and Baltimore Orioles, Red-wing, Meadowlark, various Grackles, together with the vagrant Cowbird, in the branches of the same family tree?

“One of the many welcome facts concerning the Oriole is the ease with which he is identified; and I say *he* advisedly, for his more industrious half, who is the expert weaver of the pair, is much the more sombre of hue. In early May, or even as late as the middle of the month in backward seasons, you will hear a half-militant, half-complaining note from the high tree branches. As you go out to find its origin, it will be repeated, and then a flash of flame and black will shoot across the range of vision toward another tree, and the bird, chiding and complaining, begins a minute search along the smaller twigs for insects. This is the Oriole, *Icterus galbula*, as he first appears in full spring array,—his head, throat, and top of back and wings black, except a few margins and quills that are white edged. The breast and underparts, lower part of back, and lesser wing-coverts are orange flame, while his tail is partly black and partly orange.

“Two other tree-top birds that arrive at about the same time, one to remain and one to pass on, wear somewhat the same combination of red and black,—the Redstart and the Blackburnian Warbler. But, besides being much smaller birds, they both belong to the pretty tribe of Warblers that, with a few notable exceptions, such as the Chat and Water-thrushes, should be more properly called ‘lispers’ and not be confused with the clear-toned Oriole.

“Once the female Oriole arrives, usually several days after the male, his complaining call, ‘Will you? Will you really, truly?’ gradually lessens: and after a few weeks, when nest-building begins, it quite disappears, or rather, is appropriated by the songless female, who, while she weaves the nest, is encouraged by the clarion song of her mate. The plumage of the female is brown and gray blended with orange above, the head, back, and throat being mottled with black, while the underparts are a dull orange, with little of the flaming tints of the male.

“Though the Oriole exposes himself more freely to view than most of our highly coloured birds and in fact seems to regard his gift of beauty anything but seriously, he takes no chances, however, in the locating of his nest, which is not only from twenty feet above the ground upward, but is

suspended from a forked branch that is at once tough yet so slender that no marauding cat would dare venture to it. This pensile nest is diligently woven of grasses, twine, vegetable fibres, horsehair, bits of worsted, or anything manageable and varies much in size and shape, as if the matter of individual taste entered somewhat into the matter. It has been fairly well proven that location enters largely into this matter, and that nests in wild regions, where birds of prey, etc., abound, are smaller at the top and have a more decided neck than those in the trees of home lawns and orchard. Of the many nests that I have found and handled or else observed closely with a glass, the majority have been quite open at the top like the one pictured, and the only one with a narrow and funnel-like opening came from a wayside elm on the edge of a dense wood.

“The female seems to be weaver-in-chief, using both claw and bill, though I have seen the male carry her material. It is asserted that Orioles will weave gaily coloured worsteds into their nests. This I very much doubt, or if they do, I believe it is for lack of something more suitable. I have repeatedly fastened varicoloured bunches of soft linen twine, carpet-thread, flosses, and the like under the bark of trees frequented by Orioles, and with one exception, it has been the more sombre tints that were selected, though I am told that nests are found made of very bright colours.

“In the exceptional case a long thread of scarlet linen floss was taken and woven into the nest for about half its length, the remainder hanging down; but on resuming my watch the next day, I found that the weaver had left the half-finished task and crossed the lawn to another tree. Whether it was owing to the presence of red squirrels close by, or that the red thread had been a subject for domestic criticism and dissension, we may not know.

“Be this as it may, in spite of the bright hues of the parent birds and the hanging shape of the nest that is never concealed by a branch upon which it is saddled, like the home of so many birds, an Oriole’s nest is exceedingly difficult to locate unless one has noticed the trips to and fro in the building process; but once the half-dozen white, darkly etched and spotted eggs it contains hatch out, the vociferous youngsters at once call attention to the spot and make their whereabouts known, in spite of sky cradle and carefully adjusted leaf umbrellas.

“If their parents bring them food, they squeal (yes, that is the only word for it); if they are left alone, they do likewise. Their baby voices can be heard above the wind, and it is only either at night or during a heavy shower, when a parent would naturally be supposed to be upon the nest, that they are silent.

“As an adult, the Oriole lives on rather mixed diet and has a great love of honey; but of course as a parent he is, with his sharp beak, a great provider

of animal food for his home, and to his credit must be placed a vast number of injurious tree-top insects that escape the notice of less agile birds.

“Complaints are frequently heard of his propensity for opening pods and eating young peas, piercing the throats of trumpet-shaped flowers for the honey, and in the autumn, before the southward migration, siphoning grape and plum juice by means of this same slender, pointed bill.

“Personally, I have never lost peas through his appetite for green vegetables, though I have had the entire floral output of an old trumpet-vine riddled bud and blossom; and I have often stood and scolded them from under the boughs of a Spitzenburgh apple tree, amid the blossoms of which they were rummaging,—perhaps for insects, but also scattering the rosy blossoms right and left with torn and bruised petals. Powell, in *The Independent*, writes feelingly of this trait of the Oriole, thus:—

“‘An Oriole is like a golden shuttle in the foliage of the trees, but he is the incarnation of mischief. That is just the word for it. If there is anything possible to be destroyed, the Oriole likes to tear it up.

“‘He wastes a lot of string in building his nest. He is pulling off apple blossoms now, possibly eating a few petals. By and by he will pick holes in bushels of grapes, and in plum season he will let the wasps and hornets into the heart of every Golden Abundance plum on your favourite tree. . . . Yet the saucy scamp is so beautiful that he is tolerated—and he does kill an enormous lot of insects. There is a swinging nest just over there above the blackberry bushes. It is wonderfully woven and is a cradle as well as a house. I should like to have been brought up in such a homestead.’

“It seems as if the Oriole must be a descendant of one of the brilliant birds that inhabited North America in by-gone days of tropic heat and that has stayed on from a matter of hereditary association; for in the nesting season it is to be found from Florida and Texas up to New Brunswick and the Saskatchewan country and westward to the Rockies, beyond which this type is replaced by Bullock’s Oriole, of much similar colouring save that it has more orange on the sides of the head, and the white wing-patch is larger.

“But however much the Baltimore Oriole loves his native land, the climate and the exigencies of travel make his stay in it brief; for he does not appear until there is some protection of foliage and he starts southward toward his winter home in Central and South America often before a single leaf has fallen.

O Golden Robin! pipe again
That happy, hopeful, cheering strain!

A prisoner in my chamber, I
See neither grass, nor bough, nor sky;
Yet to my mind thy warblings bring,
In troops, all images of spring;
And every sense is satisfied
But what thy magic has supplied.
As by enchantment, now I see
On every bush and forest tree
The tender, downy leaf appear.—
The loveliest robe they wear.

The tulip and the hyacinth grace
The garden bed; each grassy place
With dandelions glowing bright,
Or king-cups, childhood's pure delight,
Invite the passer-by to tread
Upon the soft, elastic bed,
And pluck again the simple flowers
Which charmed so oft his younger hours.
The apple orchards all in bloom—
I seem to smell their rare perfume.
And thou, gay whistler! to whose song
These powers of magic art belong,
On top of lofty elm I see
Thy black and orange livery;
Forgive that word! a freeman bold,
Of choice thou wearest jet and gold,
And no man's livery dost bear,
Thou flying tulip! free as air!

Come, Golden Robin! once again
That magic, joy-inspiring strain!

—THOMAS HILL.

“Of all our North American birds, the Tanager is the most gorgeous and suggestive of the tropics. I do not understand how any one can fail to name him. He is unlike

The Scarlet
Tanager

any other. Entire body rich scarlet, wings and tail black; that is all that there is to remember about him in spring dress. In autumn he moults to a greenish yellow like his mate, but still keeps his black wings and tail.

“This bird is commonly thought to be rare, but that is because he loves groves of oaks, chestnuts, and beeches, and Nature has taught him to keep in high deep shade, that his colour, far richer than the Cardinals, may not make him a target for enemies, both feathered and human. But in the migrations he is often to be seen. Half a dozen were feeding at one time in the garden and about the lunch-counter this spring, and in May, whenever I drove about or went to Fair Meadows village, some one was sure to either ask me the name of the beautiful red birds that they had seen about the yard, or, if they knew the bird, tell how plentiful Tanagers had been this year.

“Protection has certainly helped this bird, and in some places it is said to be increasing; and as it is distinctly a bird of high trees, where its nest of loosely built sticks is placed, it is not so much affected by the modern plague of cats as either Robin, Song Sparrow, or the Thrushes. ‘The song resembles somewhat that of the Robin, but is shorter and less varied, with a little apparent hoarseness or harshness in the tone. Chi-chi-chi-char-ee, char-ee-chi represents it fairly well.’ It also has a sharp ‘Chip-churr!’ alarm note.

“The Robin, Grosbeak, and Tanager all have certain notes in common, so that when they all sing at once, it is often difficult to distinguish the individual songs.

“The Tanager is the guardian of the forest trees and their insect pests. As a caterpillar hunter, it is said ‘he has but few superiors.’ He finds the leaf-rolling caterpillar in its snug retreat and destroys myriads of weevils, click-beetles, and crane-flies. The Tanager also visits orchards, and in early spring, during the migrations, he braves danger and feeds in the furrows of ploughed land in the same way as the Grackles and Robins.

“The Tanagers are unique little specimens when they first leave the nest, for the male birds undergo as many changes of colour as Harlequin in the pantomime. After the down of nestlings, they wear the dull colour of the mother, and before they put on the full spring plumage, they go through a stage of patchwork such as you see in this picture in my portfolio. Then after being bright red all summer, they again go through the patchwork state before leaving in fall.

“The coming of cold weather evidently warns this Tanager to go, for being provided with a dull travelling cloak, he need no more fear being seen in the leafless trees than the Thrushes or Sparrows.

“*Thistle-bird*, *Lettuce-bird*, and *Yellowbird* are all names given to this friendly little Sparrow of the stout bill, black cap, tail, wings, and bright gamboge-yellow plumage, who

American
Goldfinch

lives with us all the year and is almost always seen in flocks. -----

In spring we find these birds and their more sober wives feeding on dandelion seeds. In early summer they glean grass seeds in the hayfields. In late summer and early autumn they flutter about the seeding thistle in company with the rich red butterflies, and after this, the male and female, garbed alike, then live wherever the wild composite flowers like asters, sunflowers, or garden marigolds and zinnias have gone to seed and in the great waste fields of weeds.

“At all times its flight is noticeable for its dip, followed by an upward jerk, and as they fly, they call ‘per-chic-o-ree-per-chic-o-ree’ (Chapman) in a jolly, gleeful manner.

“In May, June, and July they sing in a varied and canary-like manner from tree-tops and as they swing on stalks of grass, having quite powerful voices for their size, which is under five inches.

“A lover and close observer of these Goldfinches has written the summer life of a pair of these birds in so interesting a fashion that I will read it to you. Either the pair that she describes were very late in nesting, or it was their second brood.



GOLDFINCH

Order—PASSERES Family—FRINGILLIDÆ
Genus—ASTRAGALINUS Species—TRISTIS

A GOLDFINCH IDYL

Do you know of any far-away pasture where, in blueberry time, Sparrows play hide-and-seek in the bushes, and Finches are like little golden

balls tossed on the breeze? It was in such a field that my Goldfinch found the thistle-down for her soft couch—*her* couch, observe, for it was the dull mate in greenish olive that made the bed.

I was there when the maple twig was chosen for the nest—as good luck would have it—close by our cottage door and in plain sight from my window. The choice was announced by a shower of golden notes from the male bird and a responsive twitter from his mate. She began building at once, quickly outlining the nest with grasses and bark. Her approach was always heralded by a burst of song from her mate, who hovered near while she deftly wove the pretty fabric and then flew away with him to the base of supply.

It was August 2 when the nest began. I quote from my note-book:—

“August 3. I observed the work closely for an hour. The working partner made eighteen trips, the first eleven in twenty-two minutes, grass and thistle-down being brought; the last nine trips only down, more time being taken to weave it into the walls. The male warbled near by and twice flew into the tree and cheered his industrious mate with song.

“August 5. The home growing. The female tarries much longer at the nest, fashioning the lining.

“August 6. Both birds sing while flying to and from the nest.

“August 7. Nest completed. The mother bird has a little ‘song of the nest’—a very happy song. Think an egg was laid to-day.

“August 11. The male Goldfinch feeds his mate on the nest. Flies to her with a jubilant twitter, his mouth full of seeds. She eagerly takes from twelve to twenty morsels. They always meet and part with song. Once the brooding mate grew impatient, flew to the next tree to meet her provider, took eight or ten morsels, then flew with him to the nest and took twelve more. A generous commissary!

“August 17. Breakfast on the nest; twenty-three morsels from one mouthful. How is it possible for song to escape from that bill before the unloading? Yet it never fails.”

Here the record comes to an untimely stop, the reporter being suddenly called home. But the following year Nature’s serial opened at the same leaf.

Toward the last of July, a steady increase in Goldfinch music, and a subtle change in its meaning marked the approach of nesting time. Again I quote from my journal:—

“August 8. My careful search was rewarded by the discovery of a Goldfinch’s nest, barely outlined, in the rock maple near the former site, but on the road side of the tree. That my bird friends had returned to the old treestead I could not doubt, as they bore my scrutiny with unconcern. In six days the nest was completed. The builder flew to the brook and drank with

her mate, but rarely stayed away long enough for food supply; that was carried to her and received on the nest.

“August 18. An episode: a rival male flew to the home tree with the male Goldfinch, both singing delightfully and circling about the nest. The mate, much excited, several times flew from the nest and joined in the discussion. Two bouts between the males ended in the discomfiture of number two and the return of my Goldfinch with a victor’s song.

“August 20. The course of true love now ran smooth, and Goldfinch, sure of his intrenched affection, sang less volubly. The female, delicately sensitive of ear, apparently recognizes the voice of her mate and never fails to respond. Other Goldfinches flew by in song, calling and singing, but only one appealed to her.

“August 25 was a red-letter day in Goldfinch annals; then, and only then, I saw the male on the nest fed by his mate. The male then shares incubation? He certainly gave it a trial, but so far as my observation goes, found it too confining to be repeated.

“August 29. ‘Out to-day,’ as the newsboy cries—the female’s elevation on the nest determined that. Her eagerness now overcame caution, and she flew straight to the nest instead of in a roundabout course. Both parents fed the young.

“August 30. In a single trip the male Goldfinch brought forty morsels to the family, his mate eager to get her ‘thirds,’ but as soon as he had gone she slipped off the nest and fed the young. This method was pursued for three days.

“Sept. 1. The female very active at the nest, making toilets of young, reassuring them with tender syllables when a red squirrel ran up the tree with alarming sounds. I saw three open mouths. The brooding bird went for food and returned stealthily to the nest. The male came once, but brought nothing, and henceforth was an idle partner.

“Sept. 6. Young birds, having found their voices, announced meal time with joyous twitter. They were fed, on an average, once in forty-five minutes and were now forming cleanly habits, like young Swallows, voiding excrement over the rim of the nest.

“Sept. 8. The old bird no longer perching at the nest to feed her young, but on the branch, to lure them from their cradle. They shook their wings vigorously and preened their tiny feathers.

“Sept. 11. Young Finches ventured to the edge of the nest and peered curiously into the unknown.

“Sept. 11. An empty nest.”

—ELLA GILBERT IVES, in *Bird-Lore*.

“In spite of the rosy wing-linings and shield set above his white breast, the Rose-breasted Grosbeak is the least conspicuous of the Singers in Costume. The reason for this is, that unless you are either directly under or before him, the richly coloured breast may escape notice and only the dark back appear. Yet to one who knows birds, even the back will serve to name him, for no other familiar songster has so much black and white about him—black head and back, a white rump, black-and-white wings, and black-and-white tail.

The Rose-breasted Grosbeak



National Association of Audubon Societies

ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEEK

(UPPER FIGURE, MALE; LOWER FIGURE, FEMALE)

Order—PASSERES Family—FRINGILLIDÆ
Genus—ZAMELODIA Species—LUDOVICIANA

“This Grosbeak delights in young woodlands where the trees are small and well branched, and the big, rather loosely woven nest of weeds, twigs, and various wood fibres is seldom placed as high as even the Robin’s or Tanager’s, and yet, in spite of the fact that female birds are supposed to have dull feathers because they will be less seen when on the nest, I have seen a gorgeous male brooding the eggs in bright daylight, the nest being on a low sapling in a rather thickly wooded brush-lot.

“The Rose-breast is very useful as a killer of large beetles and insects, and from his prowess with the striped potato-beetle has been called locally the ‘Potato Bird’; but it is for its song that we love and prize him as one of the birds that to miss from the garden, means that one of the best features of the season has been lost.

“Listen to what Audubon said of this song, that great pioneer naturalist, whose pure nature and spiritual kinship with the birds never forsook him in hours of adversity.

“ ‘One year, in the month of August, I was trudging along the shores of the Mohawk River, when night overtook me. Being little acquainted with that part of the country, I resolved to camp where I was. The evening was calm and beautiful, the sky sparkled with stars, which were reflected by the smooth waters, and the deep shade of the rocks and trees of the opposite shore fell on the bosom of the stream, while gently from afar came on the ear the muttering sound of the cataract. My little fire was soon lighted under a rock, and, spreading out my scanty stock of provisions, I reclined on my grassy couch. As I looked around on the fading features of the beautiful landscape, my heart turned toward my distant home, where my friends were doubtless wishing me, as I wished them, a happy night and peaceful slumbers. Then were heard the barkings of the watch-dog and I tapped my faithful companion to prevent his answering them. The thoughts of my worldly mission then came over my mind, and having thanked the Creator of all for His never-failing mercy, I closed my eyes and was passing away into the world of dreaming existence, when suddenly there burst on my soul the serenade of the Rose-breasted Bird, so rich, so mellow, so loud in the stillness of the night, that sleep fled from my eyelids. Never did I enjoy music more: it thrilled through my heart and surrounded me with an atmosphere of bliss. One might easily have imagined that even the Owl, charmed by such delightful music, remained reverently silent. Long after the sounds ceased did I enjoy them, and when all had again become still, I stretched out my wearied limbs and gave myself up to the luxury of repose.’

“As a near-by garden neighbour, the Rose-breast, though shy by nature, may become as intimate as the Wood Thrush, and if you are near his

feeding-haunts you will notice, aside from his song, he has a way of talking when he feeds and that, with a little imagination, you can translate his words to suit yourself. I had once thought this an idea of my own, but this clipping in my scrap-book proves the contrary, and that others have made his notes into words.”

A TALKING ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK.

Early last summer, while standing on my back steps, I heard a cheerful voice say, “You’re a pretty bird. Where are you?” I supposed it to be the voice of a Parrot, but wondered how any Parrot could talk loud enough to be heard at that distance, for the houses on the street back of us are quite a way off.

Almost before I had done laughing, the voice came again, clear, musical, and strong—“You’re a pretty bird. Where are you?”

For several days I endured the suspense of waiting for time to investigate. Then I chased him up. There he was in the top of a walnut tree, his gorgeous attire telling me immediately that he was a Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

At the end of a week he varied his compliment to, “Pretty, pretty bird, where are you? Where are you?” with a kind of impatient jerk on the last “you.”

He and his mate stayed near us all last summer, and though I heard him talk a hundred times, yet he always brought a feeling of gladness and a laugh.

Our friend has come back again this spring. About May 1st I heard the same endearing compliment as before.

Several of my friends whom I have told about him have asked, “Does he say the words plainly? Do you mean that he really talks?” My reply is, “He says them just as plainly as a bird ever says anything, so plainly, that even now I laugh whenever I hear him.”

He is not very easily frightened, and sometimes talks quite a while when I am standing under the tree where he is.

—EMILY B. PELLET, Worcester, Mass., in *Bird-Lore*.

A SONG OF THE ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK

Hark! Hark!
From the elm tree's topmost spray,
As the sun's first spark
O'erleaps the dark

He sings to the dawning day.
Over and over and over, the thrilling strain:
Never more clear
On love-tuned ear
Burst forth love's charmed refrain.

Hark, hark, listen and hear!
The robin's whistle, the oriole's note,
Both are drowned
In the golden sound
That pours from the perfect throat.

Sing, spirit of might,
Bird of beauty and tune,—
Sable-winged as a summer's night,
With the red-rose breast as soft, as bright
As a rose-red dawn in June!

Sing, sing to the rippling light,
Sing to the paling moon!
Sing, sing, sing
Of a joy beyond our ken,
Till the burdens of manhood loose their hold,
And the heart grows young, and the Age of Gold
Rolls back on the souls of men.

—DORA READ GOODALE, in *Youth's Companion*.

XXVII

FLAG DAY

The Spring Sale of the work of the Kind Hearts' Club was held the Saturday after Arbour and Bird Day. People who had seen the bird-houses that their friends had bought at Christmas drove over from towns many miles away, while those who had been before came again and seemed perfectly fascinated by the birds' baths and drinking-troughs made from the hollowed logs.

The money thus being secure, the wayside drinking-fountain for man, beast, and bird was begun at once and before Memorial Day was completed and the water turned on, to Tommy's great pride.

Nor were the children obliged to spend all their pennies upon the work, for besides the actual money, they had earned something of more value—the confidence and co-operation of their own parents and of the neighbourhood.

At first the work that Gray Lady had begun at Foxes Corners school was thought to be merely a passing fancy or a matter of sentiment only, but day by day many of those who were not only indifferent, but perhaps aggressive, saw that common sense went hand in hand with the common humanity that the Kind Hearts' Club expressed.

Flag Day, that year falling upon a Friday, was to be the last regular bird lesson for the Foxes Corners school. Now that the planting season had come, and the summer vacation was near, the Friday afternoons were needed for making up back work on the part of those who had been absent and in preparing for examinations.

In some way it seemed to be an understood fact that Rose Wilde would go to Bridgeton to teach in the High School, and it was a subject about which her pupils were very unhappy.

There were to be some patriotic exercises at the school in the morning as usual; then Miss Wilde asked Gray Lady, who had been away for several days, if the children might not have their afternoon talk at Swallow Chimney instead of at the school, as the air in the low room was quite heavy and uncomfortable in the warm June afternoons.

Luncheon was hardly over on that day before Goldilocks began to show unusual signs of hurry. In answer to her mother's question as to what made her so restless, she replied, "I'm so afraid we may be late. I promised Miss

Wilde we would be over by half-past one,” and then stopped and looked confused.

“I do not see how we can be late when the class cannot begin by itself,” said Gray Lady, smiling, for she was well aware that there was something unusual in the air, but exactly what, she had purposely kept herself from guessing.

However, she did not aggravate Goldilocks by any unnecessary delay, and half-past one saw mother and daughter going through the garden toward the gate of Birdland. Goldilocks, for some mysterious reason, kept her eyes upon the ground, while it seemed to her as if her mother stopped an endlessly long time to admire every shrub and to gather a bunch of delicately pencilled pansies of lilac, mauve, and royal purple to fasten in the belt of her soft gray muslin gown.

As the pair came out from the shadow of the overhanging vines of the garden walk, a low murmur and the distinct words “here she comes” made Gray Lady pause and look toward the rustic gate of Birdland. As she did so, the gate opened, and inside she saw the school children drawn up in line on either side of the grass path that formed a natural aisle to the middle of the orchard, where several of the old trees had crumbled away, leaving an open space.

“We must walk right on,” whispered Goldilocks, clutching her mother’s hand and almost pulling her along. So, wishing every one good day right and left as she went, Gray Lady allowed herself to be led, the children closing in and following.

At first the bright light in the open space blinded Gray Lady, and then she saw that a tall flagpole was planted in the centre of the open,—a slender pole, flawless from bottom to top, polished and smooth as glass. On the top was perched a gilded eagle with wings wide-spread; in the halyards on the pole a loosely folded bundle was caught, and the end of the line was in the hands of Jack Todd.

Gray Lady stood quite still looking from one to the other, her breath coming fast. Then Jack jerked the line, and out of the bundle, fold on fold, fell a large flag; slowly it rose to the top of the pole and floated in the breeze, while at the little click of Miss Wilde’s tuning-fork twenty-five fresh young voices broke into song.

HYMN OF THE FLAG

(Dedicated to the Army and Navy)

North, South, East, and West
Rise and join your hands.
Native born and Brothers drawn
From many Fatherlands.

Rise ye Nation of the morn,
Land where Liberty was born;
Ye who fear no ruler's nod,
Ye who only kneel to God—
Rise—Salute your Flag!

Stars upon its azure throng,
Stars for states that stride along,
Stars of hope that make men strong.
Blood-red bars for battle done,
Steel-white stars for peace well won.
Rise—Salute this Flag!

North, South, East, and West
Bring your tribute then.
Gold ye have and grain enough
To feed earth's starving men.
Ye who tent on distant shores,
Ye whose name the ocean roars,
Ye who toil in mine and field,
Ye who pluck the cotton's yield,
Rise—Salute your flag!

North, South, East, and West
Rise and join your hands;
Native born and brothers drawn
From many Fatherlands.
One ye stand in common cause,
One to break oppression's laws,
One to open Freedom's gate,
One! Ye re-United States!
Rise—Salute your Flag!

Stars upon its azure throng,
Stars for states that stride along,
Stars of hope that make men strong.
 Blood-red bars for battles done,
 Steel-white stars for peace well won.
Rise—Salute this Flag!

The singing ceased, and Gray Lady stood with bent head, a smile upon her lips and tears in her eyes, for often when one is happiest, the two go together.

The words of the hymn had been written by a dear friend on one of the anniversaries of the day that the General gave his life for his flag's honour, and forgetting that Goldilocks knew, Gray Lady had thought that no one remembered the verses but herself.

Tommy and Sarah, to whom it had fallen to explain the occasion in a little speech of Miss Wilde's wording, stepped forward, then looked at each other and seemed struck dumb. Sarah found her tongue first and also her own wording for the speech; clasping her hands nervously, she began: "Last fall when we had the orchard party, you said 'some day Birdland must have a flagpole of its own,' so we thought we would all do it and Miss Wilde said, 'yes.' The big boys cut the pole in Haines' woods (he let them), and they shaped it out and polished it all themselves, and Jacob helped set it yesterday. We were awfully afraid you wouldn't go to New York so's they could do it without being seen.

"Miss Wilde fitted the music to the words, and Mrs. Wilde cut out the flag, and the rest of us all sewed on it, the little boys too. The stripes were easy, but some of the stars wiggled in the points, because it's hard turning sharp corners.

"We all bought the eagle, not in a store,—they cost too much,—but of the junk pedler, and it's been done over. It's a good strong one, better than they make nowadays, grandma says." Then, as Sarah realized that she had forgotten all the expressions of thanks for the happiness that had come to them at "the General's" which Miss Wilde had so carefully worded and drilled them to pronounce correctly, she gave a despairing look at their friend and, seeing something in her face that invited her, cast herself into Gray Lady's arms.

After the flag had been lowered, duly examined, and praised, and the crooked stars declared to be quite natural, because, as Goldilocks truthfully

remarked, “real stars twinkle and always look crooked, you know,” Gray Lady said: “Now that I know the beautiful surprise you had for me, I will tell you a little secret of my own. It is true, as rumour says, that Miss Wilde is going to leave Foxes Corners school at the term end, but *not* to go to Bridgeton.

“She is going to have a little school all of her own in the big room at Swallow Chimney, with Goldilocks and as many of you for pupils as wish to go to the High School by and by and are ready for the eighth grade. Yes, I have arranged it with the school committee, and it is perfectly satisfactory to them. Oh! children, do not smother me!”

Then Tommy Todd suddenly realized that he had not only thought of following Sarah’s example and hugging Gray Lady, but that he had actually done so!

THE END

INDEX

- Birds, Travels of, [136](#)-153.
Blackbird, Red-winged, [333](#)-340.
Bluebird, [313](#)-317.
Bobolink, [21](#), [34](#), [147](#), [226](#)-228, [403](#).
Bob-white (Quail), [145](#), [199](#)-202.
- Cardinal, [145](#), [277](#), [282](#)-288.
Catbird, [32](#), [366](#), [382](#), [383](#).
Chat, Yellow-breasted, [403](#), [411](#).
Chickadee, [25](#)-27, [181](#), [246](#), [355](#)-356.
Chippy, Winter, see Tree-Sparrow.
Cowbird, [333](#), [336](#).
Creeper, Brown, [184](#)-186.
Crossbill, Red-winged, [252](#).
Crossbill, White-winged, [252](#).
Crow, [10](#)-11, [107](#)-109, [114](#)-128.
Cuckoo, Yellow-billed, [403](#), [404](#).
Curlew, Eskimo, [148](#).
- Dove, Mourning, [219](#)-220.
Duck, Wood, [213](#)-215.
- Finch, Purple, [363](#).
Flicker, [189](#)-194.
- Goldfinch, American, [247](#), [422](#)-426.
Goose, Wild, [356](#)-358.
Grackle, Purple, [117](#), [337](#).
Grackle, Rusty, [337](#).
Grosbeak, Rose-breasted, [403](#), [426](#)-430.
Grouse, Ruffed (Partridge), [197](#)-199, [203](#)-208.
Gull, Herring or Harbour, [229](#), [232](#)-241.
- Hawks, [157](#), etc.
Hawk, American Sparrow, [172](#)-174.
Hawk, Harrier, [171](#).
Hawk, Marsh, [171](#).
Hawk, Red-shouldered, [154](#), [171](#).

Heron, Great Blue, [363](#).
Heron, Snowy Egret, [50](#), [65-72](#).
Humming-bird, Ruby-throated, [366](#), [375-376](#), [403](#).

Indigo-bird, [279-281](#), [403](#).

Jay, Blue, [25](#), [116](#), [128-135](#).
Junco, [250](#), [308](#).

Killdeer, [220](#), [223-225](#).
Kingbird, [403](#).
Kingfisher, [340-350](#).
Kinglet, Golden-crowned, [250](#), [251](#).

Lark, Horned, [297](#).

Martin, Purple, [95](#), [96](#), [99](#), [101](#), [365](#).
Meadowlark, [217-218](#), [337](#).
Migration of Birds, [136-153](#).
Mockingbird, [271-274](#), [277](#), [289](#), [290](#).
Murres, [143](#).

Nest-Building, [358](#).
Nighthawk, [147-153](#), [366](#), [369-372](#), [403](#).
Nonpareil, [276](#), [278](#).
Nuthatch, White-breasted, [178-180](#), [183](#).

Oriole, Baltimore, [403](#), [412-420](#).
Ostrich, [65](#), [73-79](#).
Ovenbird, [365](#).
Owls, [157](#), etc.
Owl, Barn, [166-167](#).
Owl, Barred, [163](#), [166](#).
Owl, Great Horned, [163](#), [165](#).
Owl, Gray, see Screech Owl.
Owl, Mottled, see Screech Owl.
Owl, Red, see Screech Owl.
Owl, Screech, [158-162](#).
Owl, Short-eared, [166-169](#).
Owl, Snowy, [295](#).

Partridge, see Ruffed Grouse.

Phœbe, [32](#), [335](#), [350](#)-354.

Plover, Upland, [220](#).

Plover, Golden, [148](#)-150.

Quail, see Bob-White.

Redpoll, [297](#).

Redstart, [249](#), [403](#), [408](#).

Robin, [23](#), [322](#), [326](#)-332.

Sandpiper, Least, [220](#)-222.

Sandpiper, Spotted, [220](#)-223, [365](#).

Sapsucker, Yellow-bellied, [188](#)-189.

Shrike, Northern, [298](#)-299.

Snowbird, Gray, see Junco.

Sparrow, Chipping, [364](#).

Sparrow, Fox, [334](#).

Sparrow, Song, [21](#), [318](#)-325.

Sparrow, Tree, [249](#).

Sparrow, Vesper, [363](#).

Sparrow, White-throated, [298](#).

Starling, English, [110](#)-113.

Swallows, [89](#).

Swallow, Bank, [91](#)-95, [98](#), [101](#), [365](#).

Swallow, Barn, [21](#), [91](#)-94, [98](#), [101](#), [365](#).

Swallow, Chimney, see Chimney Swift.

Swallow, Cliff, or Eave, [93](#), [95](#), [98](#)-99.

Swallow, Tree, [94](#), [98](#), [101](#), [364](#).

Swallow, White-breasted, [93](#).

Swift, Chimney, [90](#), [152](#), [366](#), [372](#)-375.

Tanager, Scarlet, [34](#), [403](#), [420](#)-422.

Thistle-bird, see Goldfinch.

Thrasher, Brown, [366](#), [381](#)-383.

Thrush, Golden-crowned, see Ovenbird.

Thrush, Wood, [366](#), [377](#)-379.

Thrush, Brown, see Thrasher.

Turnstone, [148](#).

Veery, [366](#), [380](#)-381, [403](#).

Vireo, Red-eyed, [403](#), [405](#)-407.

Wake-up, see Flicker.

Warbler, Black-and-white, [365](#).

Warbler, Myrtle, [250](#), [251](#).

Warbler, Yellow, [403](#).

Warbler, Yellow-rumped, see Myrtle Warbler.

Whip-poor-will, [335](#), [365](#)-367.

Wilson's Thrush, see Veery.

Woodcock, [201](#), [209](#)-212.

Woodpeckers, [187](#).

Woodpecker, Downy, [194](#)-196.

Woodpecker, Golden-winged, see Flicker.

Woodpecker, Partridge, see Flicker.

Woodpecker, Pigeon, see Flicker.

Wren, House, [366](#).

Wren, Winter, [248](#).

Yellowbird, Summer, [408](#)-409.

Yellowhammer, see Flicker.

Yellowthroat, Maryland, [403](#), [410](#).

OUT-DOOR BOOKS BY “BARBARA”

(MABEL OSGOOD WRIGHT)

Each, \$1.50

The Garden of a Commuter’s Wife

Recorded by the Gardener, with eight photogravure illustrations

“‘The Garden of a Commuter’s Wife’ is a legend which gives no hint of the wit and wisdom and graceful phrase within its covers. The Commuter’s charming woman writes of her suburban garden, her original servants, and various other incidents which come in the course of living in a thoroughly human way. She reminds one of Elizabeth of ‘German Garden’ fame in more ways than one, but being American she is broader, more versatile and humorous, if not also more poetic. It breathes an air of cheery companionship, of flowers, birds, all nature, and the warm affection of human friendship. Its philosophy is wholesome, unselfish, and kindly, and the Commuter’s Wife, who writes her own memoirs, is one we would be glad to number among our friends.”—*The Evening Post*, Chicago.

People of the Whirlpool

From the Experience Book of a Commuter’s Wife

With eight illustrations

“They who have read ‘The Garden of a Commuter’s Wife’ know what to expect in this, ‘The Experience Book’ of the same delightful Barbara; but to the uninitiated, who light upon the book without preconceived ‘notions’ of what it is, it will come with a double note of delight.”—*New York Times’ Saturday Review*.

“The whole book is delicious, with wise and kindly humor, its just perspectives of the true values of things, its clever pen pictures of people and customs, and its healthy optimism for the great world in general.”—*The Evening Telegraph*, Philadelphia.

The Garden, You and I

With a Frontispiece in Colors and Other Illustrations

“The garden and its flowers are the dominant interest, of course, but it is so managed that they shall serve as a setting for the human activities that engage a good share of the reader’s attention. There runs through the book that strong and hearty nature which is characteristic of all this author’s work. Before everything else, it is an outdoor book. It tells for the most part the tale of the open-air seasons.”—*Brooklyn Eagle*.

Transcriber’s Notes:

A few obvious typesetting errors have been corrected without note. Some illustrations have been moved slightly to keep paragraphs intact.

[The end of *Gray Lady and the Birds* by Mabel Osgood Wright]