

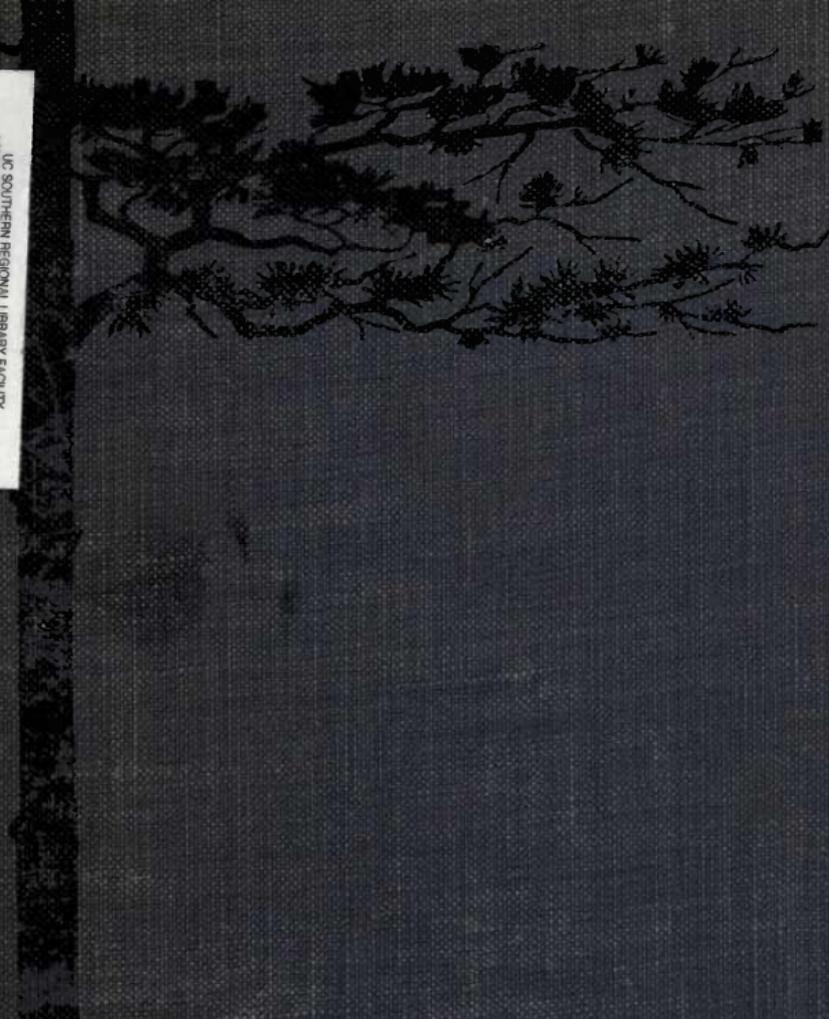
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WILD LIFE SERIES OF
GRADED NATURE READERS

BEYOND THE
PASTURE BARS
BY DALLAS LORE SHARP





192

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BEYOND THE PASTURE BARS



"Beyond the Pasture Bars"

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BEYOND THE PASTURE BARS

BY

DALLAS LORE SHARP

Author of "Wild Life Near Home,"
"A Watcher in the Woods."

26468

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
BRUCE HORSFALL



NEW YORK
THE CENTURY CO.
1914

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NEW YORK

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TO
MY BIG BROTHER JOE
WHO USED TO "LET" ME GO WITH HIM
INTO THE WOODS

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BEYOND THE PASTURE BARS

BEYOND THE PASTURE BARS

CHAPTER I

26468

BEYOND THE PASTURE BARS



Robin

MY pasture bars are real cedar rails that slide through old-fashioned cedar posts at the distant corner of my small pasture. Whichever way I go from the house I come to a pair of pasture bars that need only to be lowered, and I am in the woods, or the wide hilly fields. It is through these pasture bars and into these woods and fields that you are now to go with me.

I want to show you a hundred things! But we shall not have time for so many. Yet there are more than a hundred wild birds and animals liv-

ing just beyond the bars, to say nothing of the



Folk in scales

insects and flowers. *Inside* the pasture bars, here on the few acres of my small farm, living on my land with me, are almost a hundred wild neighbors!

I counted them up the other day and found seventy-five different species. There were thirty-six different kinds of birds, the feathered folk; fourteen kinds of folk in fur; ten in scales; ten in bare skins; and five in shells—and I can doubtless find enough others of all these sorts to make a round hundred when I know just who all my wild neighbors are.

And besides these birds and beasts, here are the white-faced hornets with their wonderful paper house in the apple tree; the black and red ants with their great mound on the hillside; the wasps with their adobe huts on the rafters in the barn; the spiders with their hunting nets; the bees at work for me in the hives back near the



Folk in bare skins



Folk in fur



Folk in shells

woods; the moths and butterflies, the orchestra of crickets and grasshoppers; the beetles and bugs! What a world of wild folk lives with me on both sides of the pasture bars!

But you cannot come to know them all in one summer, nor in one book. The best thing that this book can do, perhaps, is to let down the bars for you; or, better than that, to tell you to jump them, and then to show you, if it can, how to see and to hear and to know the wild things you will find in the fields just beyond those bars.

Now *your* pasture bars may be some iron gate, swinging into an old city cemetery, or into a fine city park, where there are more policemen than any other kind of wild animals, and where you cannot pick the flowers, or climb the trees, or even run across the grass.

Of course you cannot pick the flowers in a city park; there would not be enough to go round. But you can sit quietly down upon a bench and watch—the birds in the trees, the squirrels on the grass, the bees and insects among the flowers. And in some parks you can do what I cannot do here in the country—you can see live bears, lions, wolves and other great beasts from the wildest parts of the world.

Another thing you can do just as well in the city park as in the country pasture—you can learn how to sit still, look sharp, hear accurately, and to ask of everything that comes along an interesting question. In short, you can learn in a city park the simple necessary lessons of wood craft, and the names and habits, as well, of a number of the common animals, birds, trees, insects and flowers.

Indeed, a city park in the spring time, when the birds are migrating, is one of the *best* of places to study and name them. One of my friends by going morning after morning into Lincoln Park, Chicago, saw and named 145 different species of birds. And he says in his book, "Wild Birds in City Parks," "During the migrations of the birds city dwellers have one of the keenest delights of country life brought to their very doors, because many birds, migrating largely at night, are attracted by the lights of the city and stop off in their long journey to feed, so that a city park often contains a greater variety of feathered visitors than an equal area in the country."

So iron gate or cedar rails, it is possible for every one of us to find some spot where the sky is overhead, and the grass is under our feet, and



Squirrel

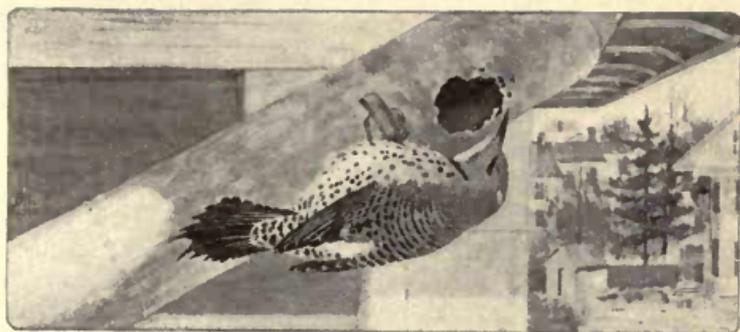
where, among the trees and bushes, robin and squirrel and bumble-bee, along with a host of other wild things, are living, and are ready enough to be watched.

(He is a true lover of the out of doors who loves the patch of sky over his head, the wind in the trees along his daily path, and the little lives that share the sunshine and rain with him no matter where the rain and sunshine fall.)



Bumble-bee

THE CRAZY FLICKER



CHAPTER II

THE CRAZY FLICKER

IT was a bright spring morning, just the kind of a morning to make a flicker go crazy, or a boy or a girl go crazy, for that matter. The sun was shining, the maples were blooming, the black birds were gurgling, the bees were humming, the farmers were plowing, and everything, everywhere was singing or laughing or capering with the joy of the fresh spring day.

As for me, I was going down the old zig-zag lane in the fields doing all three things at once—capering, laughing, singing; while the crooked worm-fence, zig-zagging down each side of the lane, seemed singing, laughing and capering with me till it was in danger of shaking its riders off.

Surely somebody besides the flicker was crazy, or was going crazy!

Just then old Yarup, the flicker, swung over my head and galloped on across the fields toward a large haybarn that had lately been built in a near-by field. I was going over to the barn also, but was still some distance away, when Yarup landed on the ridge-pole, threw up his head yelling "*wick-wick-wick*," then fell to on that ridge-pole with his bill as if he intended to split the roof into kindling wood.

"*Woop!*" he seemed to say, leaping straight up into the air at the sound of the hollow boom from within the empty barn. "*Woop! hear the bang!*" and, clean out of his wits, he came down on the ridge-pole yelling "*Kei-yer! Kei-yer!*" at all the countryside for a mile around, then started again to splitting kindling as if the world had to be set on fire.

No, it was not to set the world on fire, but to wake the world up, that he was pounding. As if the whole spring world was not wide awake already! It was not kindling wood, but *noise* that that crazy flicker was making—rattling, banging, wanging noise! And he was making it just for the fun of making it, yelling to hear himself yell,

and hammering to hear himself hammer till the big barn boomed and rumbled like a mighty bass drum.

It is quite likely, however, that he was doing it to show off, to attract the attention of Miss Yarup or High-hole, or Flicker, or whatever name she goes by in your dead trees and telegraph poles (she has thirty-six different names, has this flicker!). I am sure that it was partly for *her* sake, that he was making the racket; for it was high time he had a family and a house under way.

I think the thought of a family (flickers always have enormous families!) must suddenly have come to him as he hammered on the roof, for all at once he darted off, and around to the end of the barn, where he caught hold of the straight-up-and-down boards and, bracing himself with his spine-pointed tail, began to drill a hole.

How it sounded! Never before had he struck anything with such a ring to it. What a glorious hole for a nest there must be in there! Why, if the brood should happen to come twenty strong (which was not past hoping for), each young flicker could have a bed and a room all to himself—a condition of affairs altogether unheard of, up to this time, in flickerdom.

How he managed to hang on to those smooth, perpendicular boards, even though propped by his sharp-pointed tail feathers, I could not see. There was nothing but flat wall to hold to. Yet there he clung, securely, and so firmly braced that he was using his chisel-edged beak as a small, but powerful, electric drill to bore through the new inch-thick boards.



What a glorious hole for a nest there must be in there!

I wish I could have seen the expression on his face and read his thoughts when he got through and found himself inside an empty barn. He must have been the most amazed and mystified bird in the region, if he was sane enough to think at all. Instead of a neat, snug cavity sufficient to turn round in, he had bored into an empty hay-loft. Perhaps an English sparrow would not have been daunted at the prospect of filling up a *haymow* with a nest, but the flicker was.

Or else he was not house-hunting, after all, but simply a crazy flicker, crazy over holes. For now his madness showed itself. Out he came, hopped sidewise across a few boards, tapped, listened, and began a new hole. This, of course, opened into the same mammoth cave. What of it? Not where the hole opened, but the boring of it; that was the thing. So, hopping along to another seam, he must have gone through again. And not three times only. Day after day either he or the other flickers in the neighborhood kept boring away, until soon the barn became riddled with holes as if it had been used as a target for cannon practice, shot through and through.

Crazy over holes! At least that is the way it looked to me. It looked even worse than that to

my neighbor who owned the barn. He did not build the barn for holes. He built it for hay. And I think he thought the one *sane* thing that flickers could make was *pot-pie!*

And I think that some city neighbors of mine thought so too, when another crazy flicker took to boring holes into their rain-pipes.

Now it is a very natural thing for a woodpecker to peck holes in wood (the flicker belongs to the woodpecker family, you know)—natural I should say for him to peck holes into dead and hollow trees; but quite unreasonable to drill holes into big barns. Still barns are made of trees, are built of wood, and are hollow, so that boring into barns may not be very unnatural or very crazy after all. But to bore into galvanized iron rain-pipes—that is the work of stark madness; and no one can blame the people who owned the rain-pipes for thinking so.

What it was that drove this particular flicker crazy I cannot say, unless, perhaps, it was *noise*. Certainly drumming for hours on a rain-pipe is enough to drive anything crazy; and this flicker for hours every morning banged the sounding pipes as if it were the Judgment-Day and he was trying to wake the dead!



He found himself inside an empty barn

He did wake up everybody for a block around. Nobody had seen a flicker in the neighborhood since last October when suddenly the early March morning was startled by a thunderous *rat-ta-tat-ta-tat* inside of a big galvanized-iron chimney! The people in their beds below jumped as if the roof were falling in. The workmen hurrying along the quiet streets halted to gaze around in wonder. There was nothing to be seen. When *rat-ta-tat-ta-tat*—the rattling, ringing roll again, and up out of the chimney popped a flicker, having a very fit of fun over this new drum!

Then across the way, on the top of a neighboring house, he spied another, larger drum, and galloped over there. It was a big ventilator. He hit it, and it boomed. Catching his toes around an iron hoop that circled it, he began to beat a roll to wake the town.

The mystery is that his bill did not fly into splinters. But it did not. The sound, however, went to his head. He got mad with the noise, crazier and crazier over galvanized iron, until he went to boring holes into the rain-pipe.

At the first it was love, doubtless, that ailed him; he was drumming up a bride. But that soon changed. He forgot all about brides, and

fell in love with drumming. Nor is he the first male bird I have known thus in love. In the island park at Detroit, Michigan, I knew a red-headed woodpecker to serenade himself long after mating season—up, in fact, to September, the time I left the park woods. He would get inside the zinc ventilator of the clubhouse and make the island ring.

But let us get back to those rain-pipes. It was several days after his arrival before the people knew the damage this crazy flicker was doing. At first they had looked upon him as a harmless, ardent lover who preferred to serenade his lady upon a sounding iron chimney rather than to twang a dead limb for his guitar. They were amused. Everybody loves a lover—until he begins to bore holes into rain-pipes.

And that is what this lover soon began to do. Instead of a lover the bird was a lunatic, for what was seen one morning but that bird high up under the corner of the roof, clutching a small bracket in the side of the house, and drilling a hole through the rain-pipe!

He was hammering like a tinsmith, and already, when discovered, had cut a hole half as big as one's fist. He had not tried to drill be-

fore; he had been happy merely hammering. Something, however, either the size, or shape, or ring of the pipe, suggested "holes" to his wild wits, and right through the pipe he had gone.

It was not grubs that he was after. Maybe somewhere in his mad head was the remote notion of a nest. Where, however, could he have found a mate as crazy as himself—crazy enough to have built in such a place? Young Mrs. Flicker is an exceedingly spoony bride; love in a cottage is just to her liking; but I have yet to see one who would go to the length of a rain-pipe.

The crazy bird was finally scared away, leaving several indignant citizens behind, who heartily wished they had taken the law into their own hands when the bird began to show his tendency to attack galvanized iron and tin.



THE WILD GEESE



CHAPTER III

THE WILD GEESE

IF you have always lived in a large city, then doubtless you have never heard the honkers. They pass over the cities, as they pass over the country, but the noise of the city, even at dead of night, would prevent your hearing the *honk, honk, honk* as the flock of wild geese steers its way under the stars and clouds high over the city roofs.

Sometime you must hear them going over. Some starry night in November you may be crossing a wide pasture field alone when all is silent about you. The frosts have hushed the grasshoppers and crickets and katydids, the field birds have gone south, the rattling farm wagons on the distant roads have all passed by, the wind is down, and the fields all around are still.

Suddenly, out of the dark, faraway blue toward the polar star, sounds a faint clanging, clamorous sound as of several persons shouting, as of sev-

eral bells ringing in confusion, growing louder, clearer, more ringing, clanging, clangorous, until down from the stars overhead falls the round trumpet call of *honk honk honk honk*, as the flock with measured wing tread, speeds along its starlit highway from the arctic toward the tropic zone.

You stand in your tracks, your face turned toward the stars, your breath held, your eyes unseeing, your ears straining to catch the thrilling message that seems calling from star to star.

Out of the north it comes, and you hear the cry of the north—the howl of winds, the crash of floes, the thunder of splitting icebergs; then on into the south it goes, this thrilling call, and you hear the voice of the south—the whisper of winds among the reeds, the lap of waves on the shore, the song of birds, the hum of bees, the breathing of the jessamin and orange blossoms.

The strange cloud-call comes and goes and leaves you listening to two worlds, the boreal world and the tropic world. The call comes and goes and leaves you with a wild, wild thrill in your heart, and a wild, wild desire for something—for wings, it seems, so that you too may cross the cloudy highway that swings through the stars around the world.

You hear them going south in the fall. Then you may hear them going north in the spring. For the wild geese, like so many other birds that breed in the north, are *migratory*; that is they go south at the approach of cold weather and north again when warm weather comes on.

In February the Canada geese are scattered along the margins of our southern lakes and rivers, already preparing for their flight northward to Canada, Labrador, and Alaska. Early spring finds them back in their northern breeding-haunts with nests well under way. Then, by September, the long return flight begins, the flocks passing over the Middle States for a month or more, but all reaching the warm shores of the South by the time our northern waters are closed with ice.

The journey in the spring is a honeymoon trip; in the fall it is a family excursion. The wild geese mate for life. Nothing of the turkey gobbler's jealousy and viciousness is shown by the wild gander; the female goose does not steal away from her mate to make her nest. She and he are "engaged" before the long spring flight begins. They sail away in company with other like lovers to wed and go off together as soon as they reach the northern nesting-meadows.

Housekeeping for the geese is a particularly serious business. The gander takes his full share of the trouble. He never shirks nor leaves his mate. Day and night he stands on duty, guarding the mother and the nest—with his life if need be—against all enemies. He even helps hatch the eggs, which is being faithful indeed.

The nest is a collection of driftweed and sticks lined with down, and placed, usually, on the ground in a marsh or meadow. Occasionally it is upon a stump, or even up in some old fish-hawk's nest on the top of a tree.

As soon as the goslings hatch they take to the water, and then life for goose and gander grows tangled fast with trouble.

I once watched a pair of geese in captivity, as they were led about by their one small gosling—their only one left out of a brood of seven. From sunrise to nightfall their anxious day was spent trying to keep up with Master Gosling. He went whither he would; and they side by side waddled along behind, cautioning, chiding and complaining. So hurried were they that there was no time to snatch a blade of grass or a billful of water, as the troublesome infant straddled up and down his backyard world.

It is well along in August before the young are able to fly. All this time the parents have cared for them. They will continue to keep them to-



Housekeeping for the geese is a particularly serious business

gether as a family during the southern flight and on until the next spring.

No phase of the life of these great birds is so

pleasing as the thought of this family life—gander, goose, and goslings a united family even while mingling with others as part of some large flock. Every wedge of wild geese that flies trumpeting overhead in the autumn is either a family, or a neighborhood of families, led by some strong old gander.

The great event in the goose calendar is this autumn flight. The life of all the rest of the year seems to be a getting ready for this. They must fly south in order to find food and to escape the deadly cold, but they must take the flight because of its own sake now, for it has become a fever in their bones.

For weeks previous to the departure, restlessness and strange desires possess the birds. It is the flight-fever, the fever for a flight a mile high, for a thousand miles, past the snowy landscapes to a new green world!

The love of it is far more than the desire for food. Next to the need of mate and offspring is the need for this flight. It is not a desire of the flesh, but of the spirit. Food does not fail in the farm-yard; yet the tame Canada geese, when the nights grow crisp and the wild flocks go honking over, will scream and run and flap their

crippled wings with the same wild longing to fly away—high and far and long into the air.

It is little that most of us in the middle states know of the wild geese besides this passing. But who has not seen the wonderful wedge, like a harrow moving across the sky, or the long file, like a strange many-oared racing shell, swimming the clouds? Who has not heard the thrilling trumpet-call out of the star-depths of the silent autumn night?

Yes, even in the heart of a vast city I have awakened at the cloud-echoed cry, far off, weird, and haunting.

High and swift as they move, their flight is still a long and dangerous one. For the bird is flesh and such speed rapidly exhausts him. His wings must rest. The flier must have food. And awaiting him on the earth is a line of enemies as long and as continuous as his journey.

Fogs obscure the way; storms hinder; noises confuse; and often, most dangerous of all, across the brittle, bracing air of the course blows a thick, warm wind that sends the whole flock reeling and sagging exhausted to the earth. Hundreds of geese one day, overcome by a sudden heat-wave, dropped upon a small pond back of my home, and

when the village turned out to the slaughter, the poor things even scattered to the neighboring fields, too weak and heavy to rise higher than the tree-tops.

There is not a single event in all the year of the fields that I would not sooner forego than the sight and sound of the flying geese. How it takes hold of the imagination! There is no vividder passage in all of Audubon than his description of the flight:

“As each successive night the hoar-frosts cover the country, and the streams are closed over by the ice, the family joins that in their neighborhood, which is also joined by others. At length they espy the advance of a snow-storm, when the ganders with one accord sound the order for their departure.

“After many wide circlings, the flock has risen high in the thin air, and an hour or more is spent in teaching the young the order in which they are to move. But now the host has been marshaled, and off it starts. The old males advance in front, the females follow, the young come in succession according to their strength, the weakest forming the rear. Should one feel fatigued, his position is changed in the ranks, and he assumes a place

in the wake of another, who cleaves the air before him; perhaps the parent bird flies for a while by his side to encourage him."

What meaning, and yet what mystery, that line of winging geese has for us when we remember all of this!

I want you to hear them going over this fall, and again and again as the autumns come and go. Then I want you to learn by heart the whole of this beautiful poem by William Cullen Bryant, so that every time you hear the honking of the wild geese you can repeat these lines:

TO A WATERFOWL

Whither, midst falling dew,
While glow the heavens with the last steps of day,
Far, through their rosy depths, dost thou pursue
Thy solitary way?

Vainly the fowler's eye
Might mark thy distant flight to do thee wrong,
As, darkly seen against the crimson sky,
Thy figure floats along.

Seek'st thou the plashy brink
Of weedy lake or marge of river wide,
Or where the rocking billows rise and sink
On the chafed ocean-side?

There is a Power whose care
Teaches thy way along that pathless coast—
The desert and illimitable air—
Lone wandering, but not lost.

All day thy wings have fanned,
At that far height, the cold, thin atmosphere,
Yet stoop not, weary, to the welcome land,
Though the dark night is near.

And soon that toil shall end;
Soon shalt thou find a summer home, and rest,
And scream among thy fellows; reeds shall bend,
Soon, o'er thy sheltered nest.

Thou 'rt gone, the abyss of heaven
Hath swallowed up thy form; yet on my heart
Deeply has sunk the lesson thou hast given,
And shall not soon depart.

He who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone,
Will lead my steps aright.

THE WOOD-PUSSY

CHAPTER IV

THE WOOD-PUSSY

LATE one afternoon I was reading by the side of a little ravine on an island in Casco Bay. The sharp, rocky walls of the ravine were shaded by scrub trees and overhung with dewberry vines. The tide was ebbing, and presently the faint swash of the waves on the rocky shore was broken by a stir among the dried leaves far down below me.

Creeping cautiously to the edge, I looked down, and there, in a little door-yard of their own, I saw a family of seven young skunks.

They were about three weeks old, and were playing some kind of a rough-and-tumble game, just like kittens. Funny little bunches of black and white they were, with sharp-pointed noses, beady black eyes, and very large tails. Their color was jet black, except for white tips to their tails, and a pure white mark beginning on the tops of their heads and dividing down their sides like the letter V.

Not one of them had seen that I was watching them, and so their play went on. I said they were playing like kittens. No, not like kittens, but like little stuffed Teddy bears, or wabby little lambs on straw legs or wooden legs. Only the baby skunks did not seem to have legs at all, so sawed-off and stubby were they, so fat and round were their little humpty-dumpty bodies. They fell over the brier-vines; they fell over the stones; they fell over each other; they fell over their paws; they fell over their very shadows it seemed. Their only way of getting up was by tumbling down; and if they wanted to go to this spot or that their surest, quickest way was just to upset and tumble there.

But it was real play, as real play as your prisoners' base or duck-on-davy. Yet it differed from your play because it was silent. Suppose you all go out at recess and try a game of hocky or wood-tag without making a single sound. With lips shut, and on your toes, try to scurry about, your eyes keen to watch for something that is going to gobble you up; your ears keen to hear him coming. Suddenly some one holds up a warning finger, and instantly you dive in the schoolhouse or "freeze" in your tracks. Do you think you could do it?

Think of having to play without any noise!



There . . . was a family of seven young skunks

Why, it would be almost as bad as trying to breathe without breathing, would it not? Yet that is the way wild animals have been taught to play—on their soft little tip-toes, mouths shut, but eyes and ears wide open, and every muscle ready instantly for a dive into their holes.

And that is the way these baby skunks were playing. There was a faint stirring of dead leaves, and now and then a faint little *hiss* of anger. And once, when one of the little roly-pollies got a bump that hurt him, he got *very* angry, and there was a fuss in a twinkling.

He stamped his fore feet, showed his little milk teeth, humped up his back and turned both ends of his tiny body, like a pinched wasp, toward every one of his brothers that came near him. They all knew what that peculiar twist to both ends of his body meant, and kept their distance. I knew what it meant too. These young things had already learned their lesson of self-defense. A three-weeks-old baby skunk could hold his own against anything.

I lay so long watching them that by and by the dusk began to deepen in the ravine. Night was at hand. I must be going, and was about to draw back, so as not to frighten them, when, slowly out



They all followed her

from beneath a point of the ledge came a long black snout, and then the mother of the family—old Mrs. Wood-Pussy.

I did not budge. Out she came, and passing the children by without so much as a sniff, made off around a rock. But if she did not look at them, they did not apparently look at her. Had she been a fox her babies would have had her by the tail right off, and she would have had to nip them sharply to make them behave; but the old skunk crawled out and made off without a word or sign to her family or from them.

But they all followed her, and tagging along one after another, they made off down the ravine for their suppers of mice, and grubs, sweet corn or—chickens! I hope it was not chickens. For the skunk is one of our best mousers, killing great numbers of mice in the fields and woods; he is also a great destroyer of harmful insects. But he will eat chicken if he finds it. Anybody will, in fact. So I hope it was not toward one of the chicken coops on the island that the family were going, for they ought not to be killed; they do much more good than harm.

I don't know where they went before morning, for darkness had come, and I could not follow

them. Perhaps they climbed out of their ravine and wandered up through the dark to the doorway under my bedroom window; for during the night the sea wind came in with a pungent breath that was not brought from the gulf stream; a breath that told me the wood-pussy was roaming abroad over the island and had passed beneath my open window.

A HOUSE OF MANY DOORS



CHAPTER V

A HOUSE OF MANY DOORS

WILL you look carefully at the little picture on this page to see if you can make out fish-hawks, “crow”-blackbirds and an English sparrow—two English sparrows? This picture is of a fish-hawk’s nest in whose rough, uneven walls were a whole colony of smaller nests.

I know of a large tenement house in the city of Boston, where people of thirteen different nationalities are living. The ends of the earth gathered together under one roof! There were not so many kinds of jabbering tongues in the whole of the ancient city of Babel, I am sure.

Every great city nowadays is a whole small world; and every great city tenement house is a whole smaller world. The whole world is trying

to get into every large city, though there simply seems not enough room even with crowding.

That is not so of the wide open country. There is plenty of room in the country—for every bird to have a nest tree all to himself, you would think. Yet here is the picture of a fish-hawk's nest down along the shores of Delaware Bay, in which live, besides the fish-hawks, a small community of crow-blackbirds, and two families of English sparrows.

Now it happens that this nest tree of the fish-hawks is the only tree close around that particular spot, but there are other trees in sight, a whole forest in fact. It is not because there is no room in the neighborhood that the blackbirds and sparrows have moved in with the fish-hawks.

Moreover, this huge nest of the hawks, planted firmly upon the very top of a tall oak that stands almost alone on the edge of a vast salt-marsh, is not the natural nesting-place for blackbirds and sparrows. This marsh-land is the range of the hawks. They are at home here. The blackbirds and sparrows, for some reason, have broken away from the inland. The blackbirds have nested here, to my knowledge, for thirteen years; the sparrows discovered the great nest only a year ago.

The walls of the nest are as big around as a hogshead and as rough as the protruding ends of corn-stalks, dead limbs, and small cord-wood can make them. It is around in the crevices of these jagged walls that the blackbirds and sparrows lodge their nests.

I am by no means certain that all is harmonious in this queer colony. There was no appearance of discord—none but the presence of the sparrows. The blackbirds and hawks might get on peaceably together; but what saint among the birds could live peaceably with an English sparrow?

Neither am I sure why these small birds choose to live thus with the hawks. They are both independent birds, not hangers-on at all; so it cannot be the mere convenience of a ready-made nesting-site. That could be had anywhere; besides, naturally, neither grackles (another name for these crow-blackbirds) nor sparrows would fly far away into a marsh in looking for a place to build. It cannot be that they come for the bits of fish left after the young hawks have eaten. They are not particularly fond of fish, and there would not be crumbs enough to make their coming worth while, anyway.

I believe the blackbirds are like the tenement people: they enjoy living in a tenement. There are extraordinary social advantages in a big, round hawk's nest—fine chances for company and gossip.

At least I hope it is for friendly interest and good-fellowship. I can believe that the hawks enjoy the cheerful clatter of the garrulous crow-blacks and perhaps even the small impertinences of the sparrows. And on their side, the crow-blacks and sparrows feel a certain protection, perhaps, in the presence of the hawks, and may, who knows, appreciate the friendship of such high and mighty folk.

Quite as interesting and unusual a show of friendship, at least of friendliness, was seen recently by bird-lovers on a telephone-pole in a thickly settled town not far from my home.

There were poles in plenty sticking up all over the surrounding country; but passing by all of these, a pair of flickers, a pair of chickadees, and a pair of red-headed woodpeckers selected the same pole for their nests, prepared their holes, hatched and brought up their large, noisy families together, without a single quarrel so far as the curious public knew. And they did all this with



Tall black cormorants, great foam-white gulls

persons coming from far and near to stare at them through opera-glasses; for the red-headed woodpeckers were the only pair with such heads reported that season anywhere around.

Some day the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the Bible says, which, of course, is much more of a wonder than what I saw one summer on the great bird rocks in the Pacific ocean just off the coast of Oregon. But there on the Three Arch-Rocks I saw murrees and cormorants, and puffins and guillemots, and stormy petrels, and gulls living in colonies, tens of thousands of them, crowded together on the bare rocks just as tight as they could squeeze.

No city tenement was ever crowded with dwellers as was each of these three huge rocks. It seemed to me that there must have been a hundred thousand pairs of birds housekeeping on each of those rocks—houses of a hundred thousand doors.

But the most interesting thing about the crowded life in these vast tenements was the living, side by side, up on the bare wind-swept summit, of the cormorants and gulls, sworn enemies. Sworn enemies, I say, yet both kinds of colonies were thriving. Nevertheless, let the mother or

father cormorant leave the nest of babies unprotected for one instant and down swoops the baby-eating gull and gobbles them up.

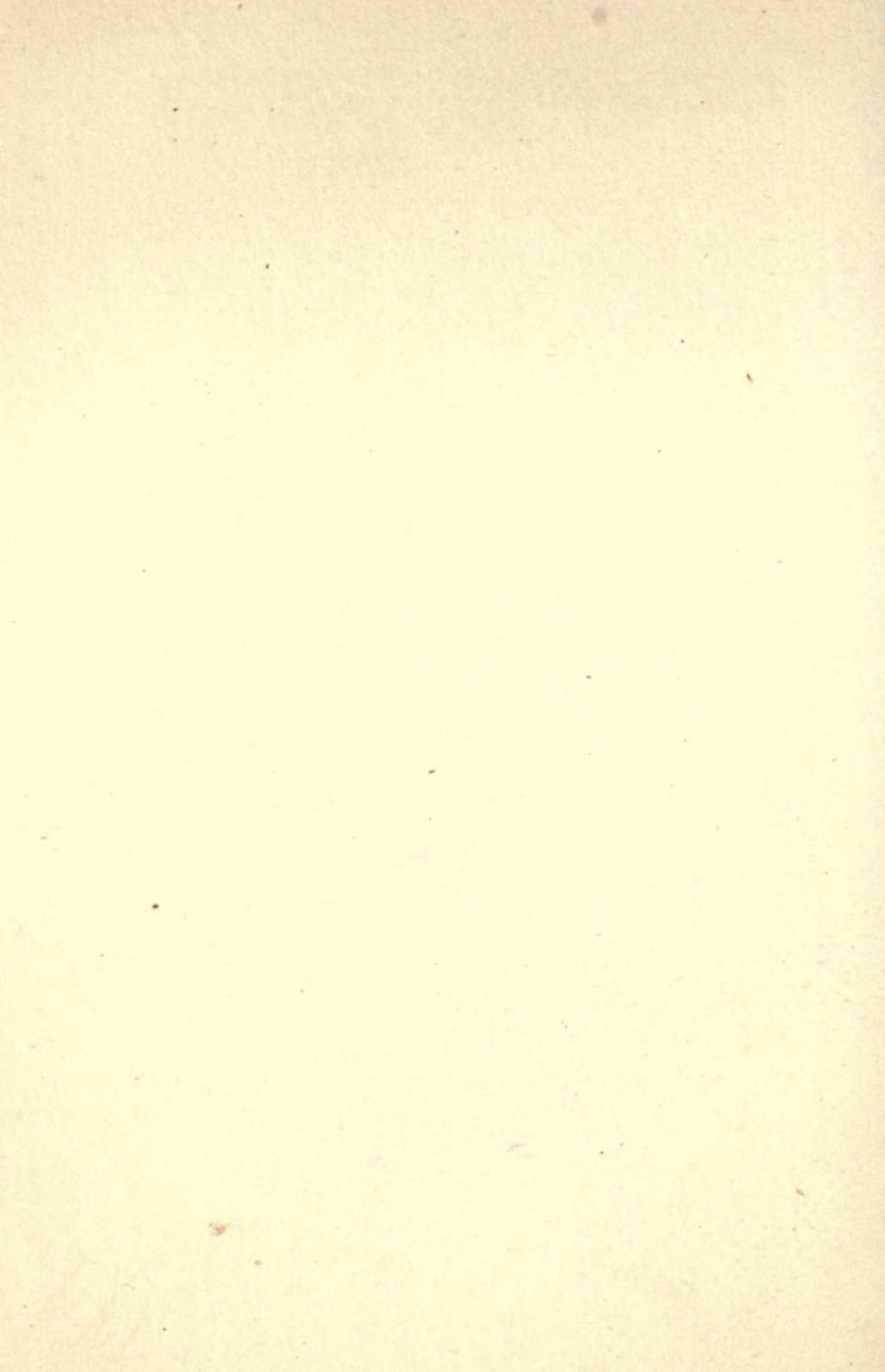
Yes, gobbles them, swallows them whole. Then would you not say it was strange to see a cormorant's nest full of growing babies, and two feet away on the same shelf of rock, a gull's nest full of growing babies, especially with the old gulls watching every minute to pounce upon the young cormorants? Strange enough.

But the old cormorants never give the greedy gulls a chance to pounce upon their babies. For, when one cormorant goes off to sea for fish, the mate is standing by to spread its wings over its young to protect them from their enemy. They are never for an instant left uncovered.

So here are their nests, side by side, as close as plates on a dinner table; and here the birds multiply and people the rocks—tall black cormorants, great foam-white gulls—so eternally watchful are the parent cormorants.

A baby cormorant is never out of its father's or mother's arms—not until it is too big for the gobbling gulls to swallow.

WILD LIFE IN THE FARM-YARD





CHAPTER VI

WILD LIFE IN THE FARM-YARD.

I WANT you to visit a farm where there are turkeys and geese and guineas. If you live in New York City or in Chicago you may not be able to do so for some time. Then take a trip to the market or to the zoölogical gardens. But most of you live close enough to the country, so that you could easily find a farmer who would invite you out to see his prize gobbler and his great hissing gander.

However, I shall not wait to *send* you; for I am going to *take* you—now—out to an old farm that I loved as a boy, where there are turkeys and

geese and guineas and pigs and pigeons, cows and horses and mules, cats and dogs, chickens and bees and sheep, and a hornets' nest and a nest of flying squirrels in the same old grindstone apple-tree, and a pair of barn owls in the old wagon house, and—I don't know what else; for there was everything on the old farm when I was a boy, and I suppose we shall find everything there yet.

I want you to see the turkeys. I want you to follow an old hen turkey to her stolen nest. I want you to watch the old gobbler turkey take his family to bed—to roost, I mean. For unless you are a boy, and are living in the wild portions of Georgia and the southeastern states, you may never see a wild turkey. For that reason I want you to watch this tame turkey, because he is almost as wild as a wild turkey in everything except his fear of you. He has been tamed, we know, since the year 1526, yet not one of his wild habits has been changed.

So it is with the house cat. We have tamed the house cat, but we have not changed the wild, night-prowling hunter in him. You have to smooth a cat the right way, or the *wild* cat in him will scratch and bite you. Have you never seen his tail twitch, his eyes blaze, his claws work as

he has crouched watching at a rat's hole, or crawled stealthily upon a bird in the meadow grass?

So, if you will watch, you shall see a real wild turkey in the tamest old gobbler on the farm.

Watch him go to roost. Watch him get *ready* to go to roost, I should say, for a turkey seems to begin to think of roosting about noon-time, especially in the winter; and it takes him from about noon till night to make up his mind that he really must go to roost.

He comes along under the apple-tree of a December afternoon and looks up at the leafless limbs where he has been roosting since summer. He stretches his long neck, lays his little brainless head over on one side, then over on the other. He takes a good *long* look at the limb. Then bobs his head—one-two-three-four-five-six-seven-eight-nine-*ten* times, or perhaps twenty-two or -three times, and takes a still *longer* look at the limb, saying to himself—*quint, quint, quint, quint!* which means: “*I think I ’ll go to roost! I think I ’ll go to roost!*” He *thinks* he will, but he has n’t made up his mind quite.

Then he stretches his long neck again, lays his little witless head on the side again, bobs and bobs, looks and looks and looks, says *quint, quint, quint, quint*—"I *think* I 'll go to roost," but is just as undecided as ever.

He does the performance over and over again and would never go to roost if the darkness did not come and compel him. He would stand under that tree stretching, turning, looking, bobbing, "quinting," *thinking*, until he thought his head off, saying all the while—

One for the money; two for the show;
Three to get ready; and four to—*get ready to go!*

But after a while, along toward dusk (and awfully suddenly!)—*flop! gobble! splutter! whoop!*—and there he is, up on the limb, safe! Really safe! But it was an exceedingly close call.

And this is the very way the wild turkey acts. The naturalists who had a chance to study the great flocks of wild turkeys years ago describe these same absurd actions. This lack of snap and decision is not something the tame turkey has learned in the farm-yard. The fact is he does not seem to have learned anything during his 350 years in the barn-yard, nor does he seem to have

forgotten anything that he knew as a wild turkey in the woods, except his fear of man.

Late in October the wild turkeys of a given neighborhood would get together in flocks of from ten to a hundred and travel on foot through the rich bottom-lands in search of food. In these journeys the males would go ahead, apart from the females, and lead the way. The hens, each conducting her family in a more or less separate group, came straggling leisurely along in the rear. As they advanced, they would meet other flocks, thus swelling their numbers.

After a time they were sure to come to a river—a dreadful thing, for, like the river of the old song, it was a river *to cross*. Up and down the banks would stalk the gobblers, stretching their necks out over the water and making believe to start, as they do when going to roost in the apple-trees.

All day long, all the next day, all the third day, if the river was wide, they would strut and cluck along the shore, making up their minds.

The ridiculous creatures have wings; they can fly; but they are afraid! After all these days, however, the whole flock has mounted the tallest

trees along the bank. One of the gobblers has come forward as leader in the emergency. Suddenly, from his perch, he utters a single cluck,—the signal for the start,—and every turkey sails into the air. There is a great flapping—and the terrible river is crossed.

A few weak members fall on the way over, but not to drown. Drawing their wings close in against their sides, and spreading their round fan-like tails to the breeze, they strike out as if born to swim, and come quickly to land.



The tame turkey-hen is notorious for stealing her nest

The tame turkey-hen is notorious for stealing her nest. The wild hen steals hers—not to plague her owner, of course, as is the common belief about the domestic turkey, but to get away from the gobbler, who, in order to prolong the honeymoon, will break the eggs as fast as they are laid. He has just enough brains to be sentimental, jealous, and boundlessly fond of himself. His wives, too, are foolish enough to worship him, until—there is an egg in the nest. That event makes them wise. They understand this strutting coxcomb, and quietly turning their backs on him, leave him to parade alone.

There are crows, also, and buzzards from whom the wild turkey hen must hide the eggs. Nor dare she forget her own danger while sitting, for there are foxes, owls, and prowling lynxes ready enough to pounce upon her. On the farm there are still many of these enemies besides the worst of them all, the farmer himself.

For a nest the wild hen, like the tame turkey of the pasture, scratches a slight depression in the ground, usually under a thick bush, sometimes in a hollow log, and there lays from twelve to twenty eggs, which are somewhat smaller and more elongated than the tame turkey's, but of the

same color: dull cream, sprinkled with reddish dots.

I have often hunted for stolen turkey nests, and hunted in vain, because the cautious mother had covered her eggs when leaving them. This is one of the wild habits that has persisted. The wild hen, as the hatching approaches, will not trust even this precaution, however, but remains without food and drink upon the nest until the chicks can be led off. She can scarcely be driven from the nest, often allowing herself to be captured first.

Mother-love burns fierce in her. Such helpless things are her chicks! She hears them peeping in the shell and breaks it to help them out. She preens and dries them and keeps them close under her for days.

Not for a week after they are hatched does she allow them out in a rain. If, after that, they get a cold wetting, the wild mother, it is said, will feed the buds of the spice-bush to her brood, as our grandmothers used to administer mint tea to us.

The tame hen does seem to have lost something of this wild-mother skill, doubtless because for many generations she has been entirely freed of the larger part of the responsibility.

I never knew a tame mother turkey to doctor her infants for vermin. But the wild hen will. The woods are full of ticks and detestable vermin as deadly as cold rains. When her brood begins to lag and pine, the wild mother knows, and leading them to some old ant-hill, she gives them a sousing dust-bath. The vermin hate the odor of the ant-scented dust, and after a series of these baths disappear.

This is wise; and if this report be true, then the wild turkey is as wise and far-seeing a mother as the woods contain. One observer even tells of three hens that stole off together and fixed up a nest between themselves. Each put in her eggs—forty-two in all—and each took turns guarding, so that the nest was never left alone.

What special enemy caused this unique partnership the naturalist does not say. The three mothers built together, brooded together, and together guarded the nest. But how did those three mothers divide the babies?

I said I wanted you to visit a farm where there are turkeys. And you will have to if you would see the turkey at home. For, though I have traveled through the South, and been in the swamps and river “bottoms” there all along the Savan-

nah, with wild turkeys around me I have never seen a live one.

I was in a small steamboat on the Savannah River one night. We were tied up till morning along the river bank under the trees of the deep swamp. Twilight and the swamp silence had settled about us. The moon came up. A banjo had been twanging, but the breakdown was done, the shuffling feet quiet. The little cotton-boat had become a part of the moonlit silence and the river swamp.

Two or three roustabouts were lounging upon some rosin-barrels near by, under the spell of the round autumnal moon. There was frost in the air, and fragrant odors, but not a sound, not a cry or call of beast or bird, until, suddenly, breaking through the silence with a jarring eery echo, was heard the hoot of the great horned owl.

One of the roustabouts dropped quickly to the deck and held up his hand for silence. We all listened. And again came the uncanny *Whoo-hoo-hoo-whoohoo-you-oh-oh!*

“Dat ol’ King Owl,” whispered the darky. “Him ’s lookin’ fer turkey. Ol’ gobbler done gone hid, I reckon. Listen! Ol’ King Owl gwine make ol’ gobbler talk back.”

We listened, but there was no frightened "gobble" from the tree-tops. There were wild turkeys all around me in the swamp; but, though I sat up until the big southern moon rode high overhead, I heard no answer, no challenge to the echoing hoot of the great owl. The next day a colored boy brought aboard the boat a wild turkey which he had shot in the swamp; but I am still waiting to see and hear the great bronze bird alive in its native haunts.

A SONG OF THE WINTER WOODS

CHAPTER VII

A SONG OF THE WINTER WOODS

The oaks are green, the laurels gay,
The blithe birds sing the bright day long;
The pines are green and gay as they,
And full of murmuring song.

The oaks are bare, the laurels stark;
The birds to warmer lands have flown;
The pines are green and singing—Hark!
Their song makes sweeter moan.

For summer rich and winter lean,
O pine-tree, stalwart, straight and strong,
Give me the strength that keeps thee green,
The grace that gives thee song.

WERE you to ask me, "Which day in all the year is best for a trip to the woods?" I could only answer, "Any day, every day, summer or winter,—the day you *long* to go." For when you long to go, then there is usually a need for you to go; and no needy heart was ever turned by the woods empty away. But many a heart that knows and loves the summer woods, has never found joy in the winter woods, has never seen their glory, nor heard their song.

This is because seeing glories and hearing songs when the sky is dark and the birds are gone is somewhat difficult. It requires an eye and an ear for other things than mere *things*. The summer woods are full of things; there are things enough, indeed, in the winter woods, if one must have things, but what are the winter woods but an escape from things?

The wild bird does not beat at the bars of its cage because it wants to be free to find a certain seed, or fly to a certain spot, or meet a certain flock of its kind. No, it simply longs to be free—to be out of the narrow cage into the wide free sky on its buoyant wings. So you turn to the open woods and fields, not for this or that, but because you want to go—to be free for a day, to wander and range with the wide sky over you, with the natural earth beneath you, with the mighty forms of the trees about you, with the many voices, odors, shapes and vistas accompanying you and beckoning you on.

Now, when that feeling comes upon you, do not wait for a summer day; do not wait for a pleasant day. Go forth rain or shine, summer or winter, into the heart of the woods.

I have always lived where I could easily reach



The frozen winter fields

the deep woods; I have tramped afield the year around; but since my earliest boyhood it has been with a keener zest in winter than in summer.

And that is not because I was a boy. A live boy loves the woods; but so does a live girl. Give a live girl equal chance and she will love every thing that a live boy loves—the woods and the winter as though she were a boy.

No, I love the winter woods, because, to begin with, there is more wideness to the winter, more wildness too. Upland and lowland, field and wood-lot, creek and meadow are thrown wide open and all abandoned, all left to the wild things, to the wayward winds, and to your own wild, wayward feet.

Fields where corn and melons grew in summer, and where the farmer kept a suspicious eye upon you as you came near, are forsaken now. They are yours for the tramping. Their fences are no dividing line, no barrier, no warning. Do the winter winds mind fences? or the winter snows? or the wings of the winter owls? or the prowling feet of the winter mink? No more do the feet of a boy on the frozen winter fields.

What of it if all day long you hear no cry of bird, you see no sign of life—nothing but the

hard bare earth, or the endless stretch of snow? I have just returned from such a winter walk—of mile after mile through snow-laden woods, across snow-covered meadows, over snow-hung



Upland and lowland, field and wood-lot

ledges without seeing anything alive. Nor did I wish to see anything alive. For I was alive, warm, throbbing, abounding with life that faced the biting wind, that laughed at the bitter cold, that reached out toward the snowy miles with hunger for them.

Alive? Was I not alive? Were not the winds,

the cold, the trackless miles alive? Did they not pursue and fight me, showing their savage fangs on my trail as they have showed them on every human trail since human feet first dared to break a track into the wilderness?

Not even a chickadee was heard in the silence of the woods; I did not see a single animal track in the new snow. Was it then an empty, fruitless walk? No, for I went out to *feel* things, as well as to see things. I went out to meet the woods, to breast the winds, to dare the chill, to subdue the long hard distances of swamp and pasture. I went out just to be out, to be afield, to beat the hot blood into my feet on the frozen ground; to stand off the cold; to catch a breath, as I topped a hill, out of the very teeth of the biting wind.

I took no gun, because every creature out-of-doors was on my side in this fight against the cold. I took no dog; I wanted no companion; I must fight it out alone—alone against the wilderness out of doors, against the mighty forces of the North for the victory of life,—to defy, to live, to glow with the mighty joy of life!

There are other tempers, other moods of the winter woods that answer to feelings and

thoughts within us as the happier, softer summer never can. The thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts; solemn, serious thoughts very often, that find themselves at home in the silence and dim gray twilight of the winter woods. The leafless trees, the flattened, faded marsh, the wind-swept hills, how bare and simple and real they are! how natural and frank and honest! It is easy to see them whole, easy to understand them, easy to believe and love them.

Summer and winter I have tramped the woods. I have brought back many a happy observation, many a rare flower, many a partridge and fat 'possum, many a rabbit and muskrat. But none of these was the best that I got from my tramps. The best things I never carried home in my *hands*, but in my *heart*; and when my hands were empty, as often they were in the winter, my heart as often was full.

In the summer there would be so much to see, so much to carry home in my hands, that I often had no time to think of anything to put into my heart. But in the winter, what had I except my thoughts, those long, long thoughts? And where could I carry them but in my heart?

You ask me what they were? and what I did

with them? I answer, they were poems. Those rare best things brought home with me from the winter woods were poems; poems that I shall never be able to write; but poems, for all of that, which I shall forever feel.

I have tried, now and then, to write them down in words. But the words of a poem are not the important thing. I have set some of the words of those poems down here at the beginning and end of this chapter to show you that I really tried to write the poems. The words, I fear, are taken from the dictionary; but the poems, that is



The dim gray twilight of the winter

the thoughts, the emotions, I know, were found in the winter woods. The world is full of poets who cannot write; and the woods, the winter woods, are full of poems that you need never try to write.

It is now many years since these verses here at the end were written, and many, many years since they were first felt.

I remember the night very well. I was quite a small boy. The crows began to go over early that afternoon, long, long lines of them, into the thick pine trees at the head of Cubby Hollow. As the last stragglers of the flock passed, and the early twilight deepened, I followed the birds across the frozen fields to their roost in the dark pines.

Were there a hundred thousand crows in the roost? More, many more than a hundred thousand, I should say. The trees were black with them—so crowded with them, that as I crept softly over the mat of pine-needles on the ground I could reach into the smaller trees and touch the weary sleepers.

The moon came up; the wind rose; and over me in the tall trees swayed the muffled black forms.

They were only crows and pine trees. It was only a cold winter night. I was only a school-

boy. But I was more than a school-boy too. No boy is only a school-boy. Every boy is part poet. And any boy, creeping like a shadow over the silent carpet of those dark winter woods, could have heard—

The wild winds softly close the door;
A shadow steals across the floor;
And sweetly o'er the cradles pour
The balm of sleep.

And all is dark—the room and hall,
Except the sifted moonbeams fall
Between the rifted rafters tall
Into the gloom.

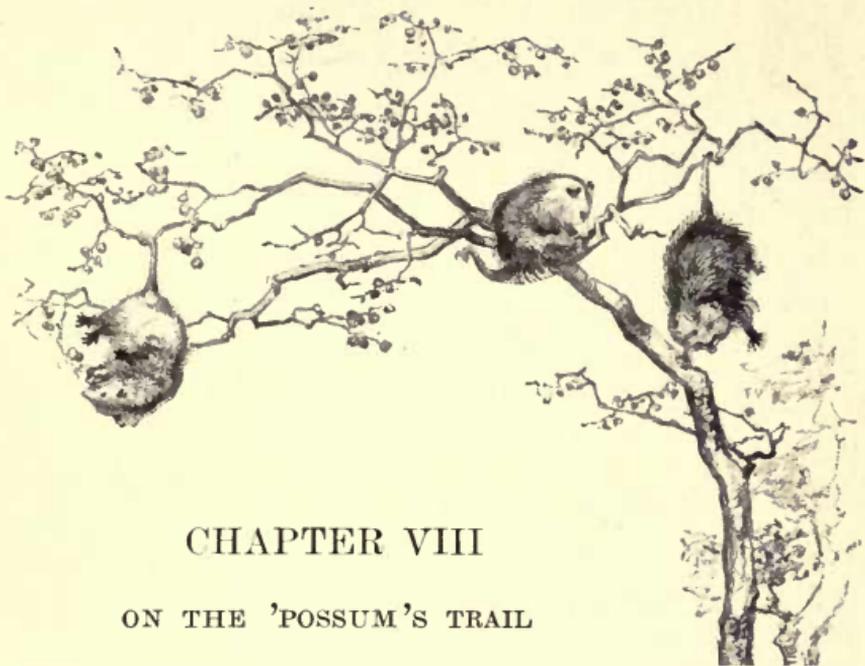
The house is hushed; the lamps burn low;
And moving figures come and go,
And touch the cradles—to and fro—
Within the room.

They sleep. They dream and dreaming sigh,
“Sleep on,” a murmur makes reply,
“The mother to her child is nigh—
The night is long.”

With head beneath a raven wing
They sleep—nor hear the wild gales sing;
They sleep—nor feel the tossed tree fling
Their cradle far.

So I shall nestle 'neath a wing
Where storms and stars together sing,
Where woods and worlds together swing—
When I shall sleep.

ON THE 'POSSUM'S TRAIL



CHAPTER VIII

ON THE 'POSSUM'S TRAIL

FROSTY weather and ripe persimmons had come, with Thanksgiving close at hand. Uncle Jethro and I were husking corn.

“What had you rather have for your Thanksgiving dinner, Uncle Jeth,” I asked, “a big turkey gobbler or a nice young fat gander?”

The old darky stopped short, dropped his ear of corn to the ground, and looked me over as if he meant to have me for a dinner.

“Gobbler! Gander!” That was what he said; but what he meant was: “Don’t you give me any gobbling old turkey! Don’t you bring me any hissing old gander! Your Uncle Jethro won’t

touch them. He won't eat anything on Thanksgiving Day but '*possum!*' No, he only said "Gobbler! Gander!" but he meant "'Possum."

I was humbly apologetic, and quick with my promise to bring Uncle Jethro a big, fat '*possum* for his Thanksgiving dinner, if there was one left in the woods of New Jersey.

We had finished husking the shock of corn and I had gone on ahead, broken the binding on the next shock and pushed it over, while Uncle Jethro was kicking the stray ears we had just husked into the pile.

As the stalks tumbled I looked down to see the mice run, when, to my astonishment, I saw, curled up in a bed of corn-blades, an enormous old '*possum*. He had taken this shock of cornstalks for his winter home, and had made his nest at its very center, snug and warm and weather-proof.

He had been sound asleep as the shock tumbled over, but as the glaring light burst upon him he half uncurled, yawned, and blinked, yet showed no sign of surprise or the least intention of getting up. It was very inconvenient to have one's house pulled down like this about one's ears, and would n't I be gentleman enough now to spare him at least his bed?

“Uncle Jeth!” I called, as calmly as I knew how. “Uncle Jeth, would you mind if I brought you that Thanksgiving 'possum to-day?”

“Mind, child, mind?” he chuckled. “Old Jethro shutting his door on Br'er 'Possum? Fetch him up, honey, fetch him up. Jethro will take him in.”

“Well, how will this one do?” I exclaimed, catching the 'possum, with a quick grab, by the tail and, as Uncle Jethro started toward me, lifting him up fairly under the old man's nose.

“De golden chariot am a-coming!” gasped Uncle Jethro, jumping back, his unbelieving eyes bulging half out of his head. “'Possum! You is de beatenes' boy, you is.”

No, I had not been hunting last night and hidden the 'possum here as a surprise. I had not played a joke upon Uncle Jethro, as he himself saw immediately on examining the creature's bed.

The great fat fellow had slept in that bed more than one night, and that within sight of the house, and directly along our beaten path to the woods. Fifty times, at least, the dog had passed this shock of corn, had run round it, had sniffed at it, doubtless, and gone on, while that 'possum slept peacefully inside.

But how did the 'possum manage it, right along the path and so near the house, where, except for this *accident* to his shock, he might have lived all winter! In this way, partly. This corn-shock that he had chosen, unlike any other in the field,



He climbed out on the slanting stake

stood close along an old worm-fence, and in such a position that one of the long cross-stakes, used for a post, slanted out over its top.

Now, if this 'possum had been a rabbit this long, slanting fence stake would not have helped him at all. A rabbit cannot walk the top rail of a fence, and climb out to the tip of a tall, slanting pole. But a 'possum can. A rabbit would have to creep *under* the shock from the bottom, going in on the ground. The 'possum, however, did not have to do that way. He walked the rider of the

fence, climbed out on the slanting stake, dropped to the top of the shock, and went straight down through the middle to his nest.

He came out the way he went in, too, never leaving his track on the ground near the corn-shock, nor his scent near by where a dog could find it. He may not have known that dogs cannot walk fences and climb poles. Perhaps not. But he knew two things, stupid as he looked: one was that a good and sure road home lay atop the rail fence; the other was that a pretty safe way to hang out one's latch-string is through one's *chimney*.

Yet perhaps this was only a happy blunder, and not real woods-wisdom at all. For it is hard to believe in the cunning of so much *fat*. One is not surprised at a coon's taking the safe road of the top rail; but that a sleepy, logy, fat, old 'possum should take so much care is a real surprise.

I am inclined to think it was a blunder. I think he happened to walk the fence, happened to climb the stake, and happened to tumble off into a soft spot. And if once, why not again? For let a notion get into a 'possum's head, and there it will stick. You can't get it out, nor get another notion in; there is n't room, I suppose.

Take the case of "Pinky," a little 'possum we once possessed, who had a notion that he wanted to be domesticated—wanted to be a tame 'possum.

Most wild animals stoutly resist all of our well-intentioned efforts to bring them up in dooryard ways, and take to the woods again at the first opportunity. I have tried one wild animal after another, but every one of them sooner or later escaped to the wilds—every one but Pinky. Pinky refused to stay in the woods when taken back there, because, forsooth, into the little think-hole in his head had got stuck the notion that he wanted to be a tame 'possum, and that notion could not be budged. He was going to be a tame 'possum whether anybody wanted him to be or not.

Pinky was one of a family of nine young 'possums that I caught several springs ago and carried home. In the course of a few weeks eight of them were adopted by my boy friends; but Pinky, because he was the runt, and looked very sorry and forlorn, was not chosen. He was left with me. I kept him and fed him milk,—his mother had choked to death on a fish-bone,—until he caught up to the size of the biggest mother-fed 'possum of his age in the woods. Then I took him

down to the old stump in the brier-patch where he was born, and left him to shift for himself.

Being thrown into a brier-patch, you remember, was exactly what tickled Br'er Rabbit half to death; and any one would have supposed that being put *gently* down in the middle of his home brier-patch would have tickled a little 'possum even more.

No, not this 'possum. Not Pinky. I went home and forgot him. But the next morning, when breakfast was preparing, whom should we see but Pinky, curled up in the feather cushion of the kitchen settee, sound asleep!

I could hardly believe my eyes.

He had found his way back during the night; had climbed in through the trough of the pump-



Pinky

box into the kitchen, and had gone to sleep like the rest of the family. He gaped and grinned and looked about him when awakened, altogether at home, and really surprised that morning had come so soon. He got down and took his saucer of milk under the stove as if nothing unusual had happened.

We had had a good many 'possums, crows, lizards, and the like; so, in spite of this winsome show of confidence and affection, Pinky was borne away once more to the briars.

That night he did not creep in by the pump-box trough. Nothing was seen of him in the morning and he passed quickly out of our minds. But he still kept his notion. Two or three days after this, as I was crossing the back yard, I stopped to pick up a large calabash-gourd that I had left on the woodpile. I had cut a round hole in the gourd somewhat larger than a silver dollar, intending to fasten the thing up for the bluebirds to nest in.

It ought to have been as light as so much air, almost, but instead it was heavy—the children had filled it with sand, I thought. I turned it over and looked into the hole, and lo! not sand, but Pinky!

Yes, there inside that gourd was Pinky, sound asleep, as usual. He wanted to be a *tame* 'possum, and he was going to be a tame 'possum, or know the reason why.

The notion had brought him back again. How he ever managed to squeeze through the opening of the gourd, I don't know; but there he was sweetly sleeping.

He no longer possessed the notion; the notion possessed him. And what happened finally? A sad thing, of course. A creature with such a head on his shoulders could not come to a fine and happy end.

I took Pinky back to the woods the third time, and the third time he returned, but blundered into a neighbor's yard, and—and a little later he was drawn up in a bucket of water from the bottom of that neighbor's well, still asleep, only—they could not wake him up—poor little Pinky!

Would Pinky ever have had wit enough, I wonder, to choose the fence-rail road and the chimney-top entrance? Yet the old fellow of the corn-shock that Uncle Jethro had for Thanksgiving is not the only 'possum I have known to take a roundabout way home for the sake of hiding his trail. One autumn I was fooled over and over,—

we were fooled, the dog and I,—until snow fell, and the whole trick was written out in signs that our stumbling wits could understand.

Around the rim of the steep wooded hillsides circling Lupton's Pond runs a rail fence, along which grow a number of old chestnut-oak trees with clusters of great stems from single spreading stumps that are particularly gone to holes.

Ordinarily, if I wanted a 'possum, about all I had to do was to climb the hill, prod around in the holes until I felt something soft that hissed, then reach in and pull the 'possum out.

This particular autumn the 'possums had all been pulled out, it seemed. One day five came forth from a single stump, which seemed to exhaust the hillside's crop for the season, so that I quite ceased looking into the stumps for more.

Several times the dog had started a trail in the woods at the head of the pond. He had gone up the hill to the rim, and halted, beating about, but was always fooled. What was it? At first I took it to be a coon; for there is no other creature in our woods so thoughtful of his steps. And a coon whose range is infested with dogs grows to be astonishingly careful and cunning.

This must be an old coon, said I. Now an old

coon in such a country as Lupton's Pond will never go straight home, nor take a beaten path. Out on the boundaries of his range he trots along without minding how he steps. The dogs may have fun with his trail there. He intends only that they shall not follow him clear home, that they shall not find his home-tree, nor even the vicinity of it.

So, as he enters his own home swamp his movements change. The dogs may be hard after him or not. If not close behind, he knows by long experience that they may be expected soon, and never so far forgets his precious skin as to leave a clue pointing directly toward home.

Instead he trots along some boundary fence, or right up the middle of a swamp stream, leaping over all the crossing logs, and coming out, likely, on the bank, which is on the side of the stream *away* from the nest-tree. Farther down he jumps back over the stream, runs hard toward a big gum tree, and from a dozen feet away takes a flying leap, catching the trunk up just out of reach of the keen-nosed dogs. On up he goes a little and leaps again, touching the ground ten feet out, thus leaving a gap, a blank, of twenty or more feet in his trail.

Stream and fence and tree have puzzled the dogs. But they still hold on and finally pick up the scent beyond the gum, only to run instantly into a greater blank in the trail. The coon has taken to another tree; up and out on the limbs of this to still another, and on, like a squirrel, from tree to tree for perhaps a hundred yards, until he comes to his own high hollow.

It was such a broken trail that I thought my dog must be following at Lupton's Pond. She could get no farther than the top of the slope. Over the fence, under the fence, and out far and wide she would go, but never a sniff of the lost scent.

Then came a light snow, and on the white page of the hillside in his own handwriting was the story of a large 'possum, who had been along the stream at the head of the pond, had gone up the hill to a fallen pine, out along this pine by way of the thick top to the fence-post, and on along the top rails.

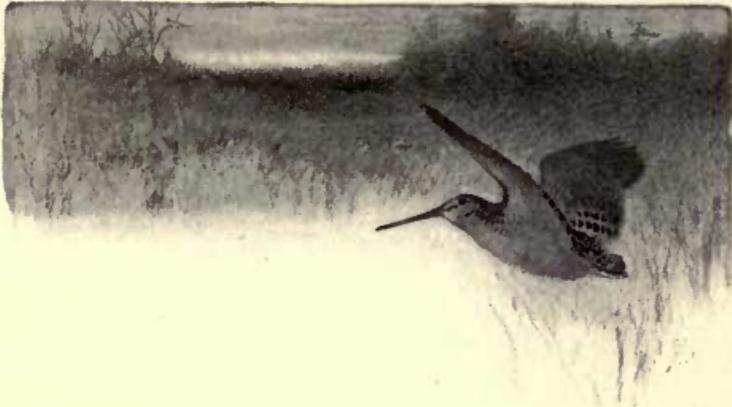
The writing was plain in the sticky snow, and so was the mystery of the broken trail. I hurried along the fence and saw ahead that a sagging post leaned in against one of the large chestnut-oaks. I knew that my 'possum was in that tree.

Sure enough, the snow was brushed from the post, there were signs of feet on the tree trunk, and down between the twin boles was the hole, smooth, clean, and 'possumy. The crafty old fellow had squeezed hard to get in and had left a hair or two on the rim of his entrance.

He was tremendously fat and tremendously sound asleep when I pulled him out. But for all his fat and sleepiness, he had been cunning enough to fool us for many a night with his fence-and tree-trunk trail.



THE DANCE IN THE ALDER SWALE



CHAPTER IX

THE DANCE IN THE ALDER SWALE

EARLY dusk of a cold March night was falling. The two red maple trees in the little alder swale beyond the pasture bars stood penciled on the gray sky. A robin had been singing, but now the deep winter hush had crept back over the gray fields.

Suddenly there was a hiss and a swift winnow of wings close above my head. I dodged. Past me, lined for the swale, with a quick, twisting flight as if fired from a rifle, sped a bird.

“He’s back!” I exclaimed. “He escaped!” And through my cold, rain-soaked world of wood and field and alder swale shot a new, wild thrill

of life. It was a woodcock that had nested for several seasons along a slender, alder-hidden stream about half a mile from my home.

I was not expecting him to come back this spring. When the gunning season had opened in July, at least a score of men knew that a single pair of woodcocks had nested along the stream; and up and down, over and over, one after another those men beat the swale, beat it by clump, by tussock, by square foot for the birds, and killed five. Four of these were the young of that summer; the fifth bird was one of the parents.

The swale turned brown that autumn, and soon lay silent and bleak. I could not pass it during the winter without a feeling of anger. It was a narrow strip of swampy ground, barely fifty feet across at its widest part, and bordered by a wooded hillside and by wide, tilled fields. But it was all the swamp, all the meadow that I had. And that this should be robbed of its life, that all my out-of-doors within walking distance of home should never again hold a woodcock's nest, was more than a grief. It made me angry.

I had been *robbed*. Twenty men against six woodcocks! And they had been eager to kill the *last* pair breeding in this last shrinking covert,

and thus destroy the *race* of woodcocks here forever.

The gunners had been eager—but one of the birds, by some miracle, had escaped. And there he went humming through the cold March dusk, and all my world seemed changed.

He would induce some young, unmated female woodcock on her way north to remain with him, I hoped, and there would yet be a woodcock home in the swale.

At first I feared lest this one might be a female and might be lured away. Then I feared that this one might be a migrant himself, who would halt only to feed that night and go on. But the next day I found him along the stream, and I knew by the way he got to cover that he was on familiar ground and meant to stay.

What a queer, comical-looking bird he is! If nature ever had any feeble-minded offspring, you would surely put Woodcock down for one. But he has his full share of good bird sense. He only *looks* foolish. The trouble with his looks is partly due to his nocturnal habits. Night does not seem the birds' natural wake-time, and those that turn it into day seem to take on some peculiar appearance—the owl his ridiculous show of wisdom, and

the woodcock his feeble-minded, foolish expression.

Yet it is neither foolishness with the woodcock nor wisdom with the owl, but merely beaks and eyes. With eyes to the front and a beak made for spectacles, the owl looks very wise indeed. The woodcock's eyes are at the rear and in the top of his head. If he wore glasses, they might rest on the back of his neck! And how would anybody look with spectacles upon the *back* of his neck?

This position for the bird's eyes, however, is a convenient one. He really needs to see out of the top of his head a part of the time. His food is largely angleworms. In order that he may catch these, nature provides him a three-inch probe for a bill. Then, for his safety and comfort when sounding with his probe in the mud for worms, nature puts his eyes up on the top of his head, just as a clam-digger rolls up his sleeves in order to keep them out of the mud. Only the woodcock's eyes have to stay up on the back of his head all the time, whereas the clam-digger can roll his sleeves down.

In the bare, damp spots among the alders and along the edge of the corn-field, soon after Woodcock arrived, I found his borings — groups of a

dozen or more holes where, in hunting worms, he had plunged his bill into the earth up to his eyes (up to the place where any other bird's eyes would be).

I had always wondered how, when he felt a worm, he could open his bill with it forced far down in stiff mud, for surely he does not thrust it down already open! Year after year I kept on wondering instead of trying to find out, until one day some one showed me that there was a curious flexible tip to the upper mandible which the bird could move independently of the rest of the beak, and thus could grasp the luckless worm, though deep in the mud.

We ought not to expect of a bird with such a beak anything like a song. How could a bird with a hooked beak or a flat beak or a long hinged beak sing? It is not for his singing that I should miss Woodcock in the swale, but for his *dancing*. No dance fires among the Indians' tepees, no barbecue among the colored people's cabins, no folk dance the world over was ever wilder or more frenzied than the dance of the woodcock among the alders, night after night in the early spring.

I said that Woodcock does not sing. He does harp, however, his own accompaniment—a weird

wing music, that sets you dancing, too, as no other bird music you ever heard.

It is dusk in the swale. I am sitting on the root of one of the red maples, now in misty garnet bloom, for it is May. A wavering line of piping hylas (the little tree frogs) marks the course of the stream. Scattered bird-calls come from the covert, and out of the deepening blue overhead falls a flock of notes, the *chinks* of migrant birds winging north.

Presently, in the grassy level across the stream, sounds a clear *peent! peent! peent!* I listen, half rising. *Peent! peent! peent!* slow and regular; then, bursting from cover with the rush of a sky rocket, spins the woodcock. Out against the gray horizon he sweeps, and round on the first turn of his soaring spiral. The hum of his wings fills the swale. Round and round, swifter and swifter, the hum rising shrill as he mounts two hundred—three hundred—four hundred feet into the dusky sky, and hangs—hangs a whirling blur in the blue, and drops—headlong, with a pitching, zigzag flight that has the velocity of a bullet, and whistling, as he falls, a low, pearly thrill of love that is smothered in the *whir-r-r-r* of his alighting wings.

It is all over, and I am standing, holding my breath at the strange performance. Then there sounds again that preparatory *peent! peent!* and I await the second burst: the looping spiral flight upward, the swift drop, and the clear, low whistle of love. And so the dance goes on as the darkness thickens, until only a winnow of wings whirls shrill toward the stars, and a sweet, pearly whistle ripples down through the gloom.

While waiting here in the twilight I see the last year's nest of a wood-thrush in the leafless top of a slender sapling. I have not heard Woodthrush yet this spring. What if he should not return to the strip of alder-bottom? Happily there is no immediate danger. Yet I should miss the wild love-dance of my woodcock almost as much as I should the serene love-song of the thrush. I should miss the woodcock himself even more. He is so sly at hiding, and so unexpected when he jumps up. There is a thrill in his break from cover like the thrill one feels in the strike and whirl of a trout. One jumps almost out of one's shoes. Fifty thrushes would fifty times sweeten the swale; my single pair of woodcocks would keep it all wild and untamed.

But they are going—gone already from the



Woodthrush

swale. The woodcock soon will be among the extinct birds. Like all birds, the woodcocks have many natural enemies; they are one of their own worst enemies in building so early that snows and frosts destroy the eggs, and in places where April freshets sweep them away. Yet in spite of all this, they would flourish were it not for the pot-hunter. They might be hunted during the weeks of the fall migration, as some states allow, and still flourish, but not in July, before the young are on the wing, as a few states still allow.

From everywhere over their wide range, between the Atlantic coast and the line of the Mississippi River, the woodcocks are disappearing. Once gone, they can never be restored, largely because of their peculiar food, which makes them migratory, and which cannot be supplied them as grain can be supplied to the quail and to other game birds. The dangers of their migrations, and those which beset their nesting-places, the fewness of their eggs, their limited and easily hunted haunts, are causes which are making rapidly toward the extinction of the woodcocks.

Already these noble birds have gone from my little alder swale. There has been no love-dance over the alders since those of my woodcock many

springs ago. The trees have been swept from the hillside, the little stream has shrunken, and rush and sedge are now cropped close by the cattle. But the birds were not driven away. They were shot! Has the new Federal law protecting migratory birds in all the states come soon enough to save Woodcock, I wonder?

CHICKAREE THE SCOLD



CHAPTER X

CHICKAREE THE SCOLD

CHICKAREE, the red squirrel, lives in every patch of woods all over the United States. Out in the Rocky Mountains he goes by another name, and he has a little darker color, but out there he has the same curiosity, the same saucy, blustery way of scolding you. You can change your name and change your coat, but you cannot so easily change yourself. Neither can chickaree.

You know him—if you know any of the wild people of the woods. *Wild* people, did I say? Why, chickaree is anything but wild. He will not let you pull his tail; but he will sit up on a limb over your head and make faces at you, jabber at you, jerk his own tail, and leaning over toward

you, tell you with all his peppery might to go straight back home, for your mother wants you.

Oh, he is the smallest whirlwind, the tiniest tempest, the biggest little somebody in all the knot-holes of the woods. He spills over with loud talk and conceit. But I like him, for all of that. And he likes me. He is interested in me every time he sees me. A gossiping gadabout, a busybody, a tiresome little scold, a robber of birds' nests (so I am told), a fighter, a nuisance (when he makes a nest in my cellar, as he did last winter), a thief, a—what shall I say more? Just this: that, in spite of all his faults, I like chickaree, and I don't want him put in jail or hanged—not unless he really does eat young birds and suck eggs.

They say he does. Did you ever see him? Now I have seen old birds flying at him as if afraid he might come near their nests, or as if he had robbed them before; but here are six or ten red squirrels in my yard and I have never caught one killing young birds. You must watch him yourself; and when you see him do it (not *hear* him, nor hear about him),—when you *see* him robbing a nest make him into pot-pie right off, then write me a letter telling me all about what you saw him do.

But "I would n't put it past him," as my Pennsylvania friends say. For he is such a fierce little monster and so greedy too!

Descending Mount Washington by way of the carriage-road, one day we stopped at a little stone bridge to eat our lunch, when chickaree came forth and ordered us on. He immediately smelled the lunch, however, and grew silent, creeping up within arm's-reach of us, watching how we ate. He showed no sign of fear, only curiosity, then wonder, then deep hunger. The smell of molasses cookies and Summit House rolls was new to him, new and gnawing. It made him hungry, so madly hungry that, when I turned and threw the lunch-box into the dry bed of the stream, he was into that box almost as soon as it landed.

His first bite was of bread and butter. Without pausing to chew it, he seized the slice, scurried off down a log, and disappeared in the forest. "Where is he taking it?" we asked. Not far away, for suddenly he popped over a rock, gave us a quick glance, and jumped back into the box again.

There were several cookies left in the box, together with some slices of bread, and nearly half a loaf of bread uncut.

Chickaree snatched another slice, ran down the bed of the stream, over a log, and out of sight. Then I saw a gleam of white bread in the dark, thick woods. I could not see chickaree, but I could follow him by the gleaming white slice—flash-flash-flash-round-and-round-and round, up a tall spruce tree, till I lost it in the tall top.

We were wondering if he would come back for another slice when, *pop!* he landed right in the middle of that box.

This time he got hold of the uncut half-loaf.

“Whew!” said he, “but this is the biggest chestnut I ever saw! Quick, or some other fellow may see it! It would kill me to share all of this great-big-little nut with anybody!” And he pitched upon it as if to gulp it down at a bite.

Of course he could not swallow it. Indeed, he did not mean to then and there. He meant to *hide* it! The greedy little pig!

Tilting the loaf up, he fixed his long teeth into the top crust, and by dint of backing and pulling got out of the gully and landed the loaf upon the top of a flat rock. Unable to raise his load clear, he got behind it to push. It was slow, hard work. Becoming more and more anxious, he forgot that he was on the top of a tall rock, and that

the rock, in the direction he was going, ended abruptly.

On he pushed across the rough, mossy surface, inch by inch, until, catching a good foothold, he gave a mighty shove and over they went, he and his loaf together, striking with a beautiful splash in a little pool of water below!

We took a bit of wicked pleasure in his fall, as we saw how he scrambled out unhurt. He came out, however, still holding to his loaf. But it was thoroughly soaked now; and as he dragged it up on shore the top crust came off, letting the loaf tumble back into the water. He ran away to hide the crust, then came back quickly to the pool.

It was fun to see him fish for that soaked piece of bread. What was the matter with it? He would catch it in his paws, take it in his mouth, scoop and pull and root, but each time he would get only crumbs. The provoking stuff had got bewitched! It would not come out. He could not get it out!

But Chickaree was not bewitched. He was angry—plain old-Adam anger. Up on the log he jumped, flipped his tail, clawed the bark, and, with a burst of wrath, gave the whole big mountain a furious scolding. It was the mountain's fault,

he railed. After one terrible minute he came back to us, coughing and husky and sore in his throat.

When he reached the box, how quickly his spirit changed! No April sky ever broke more suddenly into rainy sunshine than Chickaree on picking up one of the molasses cookies. He was surprised and delighted. Never had he tasted cookies before! Birch catkins and beechnuts! They were flat! Even the tender terminal buds of the pine would be tasteless now. And stale acorns! Dreadful!

All this we saw in his countenance as he took the first mouthful and bolted with the cooky. He bolted, but he stopped short for another bite. Then on he went, only to stop short for a third bite; started again, but came to a dead stop on the end of the log, and finished the cooky then and there.

I now went after him to see if I could find where he had hidden the bread. As I stepped upon the log, he turned and came down it toward me.

He drew near; walked over my foot and smelled of me. Cookies! Where? He sniffed and sniffed; then catching the odor of the cookies on the hand hanging at my side, he stood up to get a

bite, when the foolish hand twitched. That was enough. The hand had moved. He would not approach that hand again.

I went on in and found the two slices, but not the crust. One of the slices was high up in the top of a spruce, the other in some moss behind a stump.

Perhaps these were temporary hiding-places, chosen hurriedly, from which, later on, he would collect his bread to store in some secret hollow for the winter. I am not certain, however, that Chickaree has a barn or any winter storehouse. I have often found pignuts stored in old tree-hollows. Still they were always *shells* only, as if Chickaree had simply taken and eaten them there.

Yet, more than once I have caught Chickaree stuffing hollow rails with corn. Perhaps he intended to keep these stores against the winter. I suspect from what I know of Chickaree, that it was more mischief and itching for occupation than thought for his coming needs.

He never finished the stuffing. Long before the cavities were full the little scatterbrain would be off at some other active but useless task, leaving his stores to be found and devoured by the jays or the mice. Chickaree will never remember that the

second rail from the bottom, in the section between the stump and the sassafras-tree, holds a pint of golden corn.

All wild animals are mere children. They all love to put things into holes. They all must be busy—if with nothing else than their tails. But they rarely *work*.

I knew a chickaree, who lived in a little glen by the side of Thorn Mountain Cabin in the White Mountains, and who began in August, two months before the end of the harvest, to pick and store green birch catkins. You cannot store them when they are dead ripe, perhaps, for they may fall to pieces. As I watched him, however, I concluded he was doing the work just for the fun of it. He must do something; and this tree, full of little cones, looked to him just as a box of buttons looks to a baby.

He owned this great single birch at the head of the glen. He lived in it alone, and made war against all birds or beasts that came near.

I have seen him chase a junco up and down and across the top until the bird flew off. A flock of them settling among the branches drove him frantic. I, too, when I came near called down his wrath. But after a week of daily visits I was al-

lowed to stretch out upon the moss beneath the low, wide limbs and watch him store.

His morning task was to store about a pint of catkins from this yellow birch in a secret crib among the ferns of the glen. Up and down the tree he would race, a round trip every three minutes, loaded with a single catkin each time down. After storing about thirty he would take one to a certain bottom limb, and here, close up against the leaning tree trunk, safely hidden from overhead enemies, he would begin breakfast, scattering the winged seeds down in a thin, flaky shower upon me underneath as he ate the catkin. He always ate squatting close upon this same limb and backed hard up against the trunk. The ground below was snowed under with the scales which had fallen as he husked the seeds.

The red squirrels' beds are big, bulky nests, built mostly of cedar bark, stripped fine and matted into an irregular mass the size of a hat. The doorways open from the bottoms or sides, leaving the roofs without a crack and perfectly waterproof.

Sometimes an abandoned crow's nest is taken for the foundation. In this old nest a deep, soft bed of newly shredded bark is made, and a thatch

of the same material laid on above. Such a nest will not rock and sway when the winds are high, as the gray squirrel's often will; for the crows do not build out in the tips of the branches, but close up to the trunks. It is a warm, safe nest in the coldest of winter storms.

Chickaree is a good climber, running the tree-tops, scampering along their dizzy roads almost as fast as one can run on the ground beneath. It makes me hold my breath to see him skip along a slender limb, jump to a second, race out to its tip, and leap—clearing fifteen feet—to catch the very ends of another limb swaying fifty feet above in the air.

But the thing he can do best of all is scold! Let me go out on the hillside here, and one of the little wretches will climb a tree and warn me to go back to the house. He is instantly joined by several others, and together overhead they follow me, disputing every step with me, swaggering, growling, and pouring forth a torrent of threat and abuse until they are wheezy and out of breath.

It is bluster, most of it; they love to make a noise. If I drop down at the foot of a low-limbed pine, they gather round, for a look at me, close to. Once I remember that a chipmunk joined them.



He would take one
to a certain bot-
tom limb

Then came an inquisitive little chickadee, behind whom one of the squirrels, now only a bundle of curiosity, crept down within reach of me, flattened himself to the trunk, and began to talk to himself about me in little broken snorts, sniffs, coughs, and snickers, punctuating every snicker and cough and sniff and snort with quick, short jerks of his tail.

What did he say about me? Making fun of me, perhaps, because I could not climb trees and bite off pine-buds. I don't know. But I do know this, that, whatever he said, I enjoyed having him near me, for I am sure that he half enjoyed my being near him. And I like the hillside better for his sake. It would often be dull and silent if he were gone, for he is a sociable little scamp, if he is a big scold.

A LESSON IN NATURAL HISTORY



CHAPTER XI

A LESSON IN NATURAL HISTORY

WHEN I was a boy, well started in my "teens," I made the acquaintance of an old naturalist, John W. P. Jenks, who taught me a most interesting and most valuable lesson in natural history. I think you ought to have the lesson too, though it may be that you do not need it so much as I did.

The old naturalist, who was also a college professor, had given to the Institute, where I was going to school, a very large collection of mounted birds, shells, snakes—in short, a whole natural history museum. Now, it happened that I knew a little bit about birds, and how to mount them, so I was put to work naming them, and setting

them up in the glass show-cases of the Institute museum.

It was while I was doing this that the old naturalist came to visit the Institute in order to see how we were treating his birds and beasts.

I was greatly excited. I had read about great naturalists—Linnæus, and Gilbert White, Professor Agassiz, John James Audubon, Thoreau, and old Tom Edwards—but I had never seen one alive, much more, *spoken* with one. Great naturalists did not often come to southern New Jersey. Yet here was one under the same roof with me, and who would be coming in at the museum door any moment. I could hardly work for excitement.

For I had been told all about him, how he was the friend of Agassiz, how he had hunted birds and snakes all over the world, how he had been bitten by centipeds, and poisoned with the arsenic used in curing skins, how he had been the first white man to explore Lake Okechobee in Florida, and, most wonderful of all, how he had written a book! Yes, and I had a copy of that book and had read it through and through.

Of course I was excited, and happy, and, though I did not dare *say* it to myself, I felt also

very important. And you would have felt so too, if naturalists had always been the most interesting men in the world to you. Why, I had read the life of John James Audubon until I knew it by heart. There was a picture of Audubon in the "Life" I read that showed him with long hair to his shoulders, and a rolling shirt collar wide open at the throat, that seemed to me very fitting. So I asked mother to cut my shirt collars low—just like his; and I tried to let my hair grow long—just like his. Mother did very well with the collars; but I got on terribly with the hair; for it grew *up*, not *down*, and looked about as curly as a load of hay.

But I was a small boy in those days of collars and hair. I was fully three years older the morning when Professor Jenks, the naturalist, came into the Institute museum, with a strange, quick scuff and shuffle (due to paralysis caused by the arsenic used in curing the skins!) and shook me by the hand. If anything had been lacking in the great man it would have been made more than good by that shuffle—arsenic in his very bones!

He was a short, stout man, past seventy, with snow-white hair and beard, a keen, kindly face that made one think of Christmas, with a quick-

ness and energy to all his movements (including his shuffle) that seemed to set everything about him in motion.

Up and down among the glass cases we went, his voice full of the pleasure he felt at seeing his work once more established, his suggestions falling thick and fast as we passed from group to group, until, turning upon me suddenly, he said:

“Go out and get a bird. I must give you a lesson in mounting.”

Yes, things like this have happened often enough in *books*, but when before did a boy away down in the woods of southern New Jersey have the great man of his dreams appear suddenly before him, and coming instantly to his heart's one deep desire, send him out to get a bird for a lesson in mounting?

Strange things happen to boys and girls in books, I say. You have read about them. But do you know, stranger things than the things of books keep happening all the time to boys and girls outside of books, to boys and girls in the country, away in the heart of the woods; and to boys and girls in the city, away in the heart of the slums? This was surely a very strange thing to happen to me.

I hurried out into the grove for the bird, and was gone about fifteen minutes, when I returned, bringing a yellow-billed cuckoo. As I laid it before the old naturalist I ventured to say that it was the only *bad* bird I knew, except the cow-bird and the English sparrow.

The face of the old naturalist darkened with disapproval at sight of the bird and still more at my words.

“No! no!” he replied. “That’s one of the most useful birds we have. You should have brought an English sparrow.

“Notice now when I open the gizzard how this bird has befriended you. His gizzard will be lined—will be stuck full of caterpillar hairs, as full as a piece of plush with pile.”

And while he had been speaking the delicate skin had been removed without a drop of blood or a broken feather! And there before my wondering eyes was the gizzard, turned inside out, and stuck as full of caterpillar hairs as the caterpillar himself!

A “bad” bird? No, rather, as the old naturalist said, it is one of the most useful birds we have. It eats the hairy caterpillars that most other birds refuse; and in June when the canker worms

begin to infest the fruit trees the cuckoo comes into the orchard as if sent to save the fruit crop.

Watch him, how quietly and thoroughly he does his work. Well hidden among the branches, he cocks his head under this bunch of leaves, then under that; peeks here, then there, and when he sees the worm flutters up and picks it off, then



He eats caterpillars

lights upon another branch for another search, and so on until he has gone all over and cleaned up the tree.

He is a most useful bird, and also a most interesting bird, and one that you can easily learn to know. He is very slender—the slenderest of our

birds. When you see a drab or dark brownish bird, a little longer than the robin, and very slender for his length, put him down for a cuckoo. If his tail seems the longest part of him and seems likely to fall off as he flies; and if he flies with a loose, dangling, dawdling flight from tree to tree; and if he calls *ków, ków, ków, ków-ków-ków*, rapidly and loudly, then it is surely a cuckoo. The only bird that you might confuse him with *on the wing* is the brown thrasher; but the thrasher is a lighter brown, with a rounded, spotted breast, and flies with a sure, strong flight; whereas the cuckoo flutters and wavers uncertainly along like some huge moth.

And if you find his nest you will know that, too, from any other bird's, because it is the flimsiest criss-cross of sticks that you will ever see with *blue* eggs in it. The turtle dove's nest is a poor shift also, hardly fit to be called a nest, but it is better than the cuckoo's; besides it has two *white* eggs in it, not blue.

Some of the birds, the whippoorwill, the murre, and others lay their eggs on the bare ground or on the rocks, as the case may be, without a nest. The cuckoo, however, is a tree bird, and needs a nest, but builds the poorest nest I know. Still

this is better than the mean shift of the English cuckoo; for this cousin cuckoo of England not only builds *no* nest, but slips around and when nobody is looking, leaves its eggs in other birds' nests, and goes off care-free! It will do still worse: it will eat the eggs of the other bird; leave its own egg in the empty nest, and thus fool the foster mother, after robbing her, into hatching out and feeding a child that does not belong to her.

Our own cuckoo is not so bad as that, although his lazy nest looks as if he would like to be, or indeed, might be, if he did keep watch on his lazy, makeshift habits. And it is said, by those who may know, too, that our cuckoo steals other birds' eggs, and sometimes lays its own eggs in robins' and catbirds' nests.

Now our cow-bird (one of the blackbird family) does that, but I have never found our cuckoo at it. He may, sometimes; still I have never seen him; whereas I have often found him with his own nest and eggs—very strong evidence in his favor. We are all quick to see evil, and to remember ill. A bad name is hard to bury. I think our cuckoo suffers for the evil done by his cousin over seas; for surely it was of this foreign cuckoo that I was

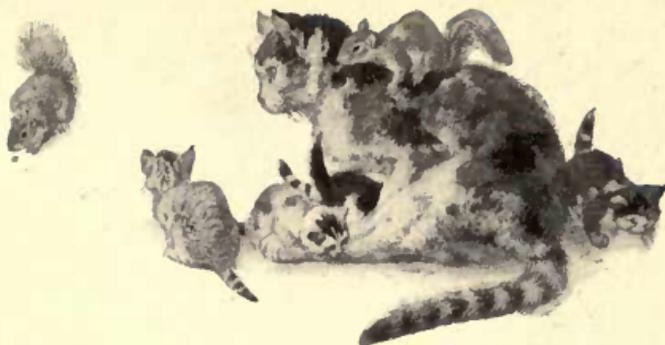
thinking when I shot the cuckoo for the old naturalist and called it a "bad" bird.

It is not a bad bird, but a good and useful and interesting, and, somehow, to me, a very mysterious bird. It is not a singer, yet I love to listen to its notes—its *tut-tut, tut-tut, tut-tut, tut-tut, cl-uck-cl-uck, ków, ków, ków, ków!* For loud as they are, they are strangely soft, floating notes that come from nowhere in particular. They seem to dangle and dawdle and wave and flutter through the air, just as the bird himself seems to on the wing. He is not the bird of early spring, as the English cuckoo is, so we do not write verses to him as the poets of England have done for hundreds of years. Our cuckoo is the bird of mid-summer, and his soft, spirit-like *ków, ków, ków*, sounding out on the hot, close days of July and August says *rain, rain, rain!* And so he is called the "rain-crow."

I have never known him to bring the rain with his call, as the tree-toad seems to bring it with his quavering voice. But I *have* known him to eat worms; and I *did* see the gizzard of the one I shot stuck full of caterpillar hairs; and I *do* know now that he is not a "bad" bird. And one thing more I know (I learned it that day in the lesson

with the old naturalist)—and it is this: the best way to learn about cuckoos is to watch them with your own eyes and listen to them with your own ears and to beware of hearsay.

CALICO AND THE KITTENS



CHAPTER XII

CALICO AND THE KITTENS

ONE spring day I found myself the sole help of two blind, naked infants—as near a real predicament as a man could well get. What did it matter that they had fur and long tails and paws? They were infants just the same; and any kind of an infant on the hands of a *man* is dreadful.

As I looked at the two little things in the grass, a feeling of helplessness quite overcame me. The way those baby squirrels squirmed and shivered and squeaked somehow made me squirm and shiver down to my very knees. I felt sick and foolish, for what was I to do with them? One thing I could *not* do, and that was kill them.

Both of their parents were dead. Their loose leaf-nest up in the white oak tree had been riddled with shot. I had climbed up and found them; I had brought them down; I must—feed them!

But how could I feed them? Nipples, quills, spoons—none of them would fit these mites of mouths. What a miserable mother I was! How poorly equipped my woodshed for foundlings! They were dying for lack of food; and as they pawed about and whimpered in my hands I devoutly wished the shot had mercifully ended their little lives too. And I must say that I was tempted to put them out of their misery at once.

But I started homeward with them. As I could see no other way I determined to rear those squirrels, if it could be done. As I went along I remembered—and it came to me with a shock—that one of my neighbor's cats had a new batch of kittens. They were only a few days old. Might not Calico, their mother, be induced to adopt the squirrels?

Nothing could be more absurd. The kittens were three times larger than the squirrels. Even had they been the same size, did I think the old three-colored cat could be fooled? that she might

not know a kitten of hers from some other mother's—squirrel? I was desperate indeed. Calico was a hunter. She had eaten more gray squirrels, perhaps, than I had ever seen. She would think I had been foraging for her—the mother of seven green kittens!—and would take my charges as titbits. Still I was determined to try.

My neighbor's kittens were enough and to spare. One of Calico's last year's family still waited a good home; and here were seven more to be cared for. Might not two of these be spirited away, far away; the two squirrels substituted, and the old cat be none the wiser?

I went home by way of my neighbor's, and found Calico in the basement curled up asleep with her babies. She roused and purred questioningly as we bent over the basket, and watched with concern, but with no anxiety, as two of her seven were lifted out and put inside a hat upon a table. She was perfectly used to having her kittens handled. True, strange things had happened to them. But that was long ago; and there had been so very many kittens! How could any one mother, and she only a cat mother, remember about them all? She trusted us—with an ear pricked and eyes watchful, however. But they

were safe inside the hat; and in a prideful, self-conscious mother way she began to wash the five. She had seen her kittens put into the hat, but now some one stood between her and the hat when the kittens were lifted out and the squirrels were put in their place. Calico did not see what was done. For a time she thought no more about the two missing babies; she was busy washing and showing the others. By and by it began to look as though she had forgotten that there were more than five. She could not count. But most mothers can *number* their children, even if they cannot count, and soon Calico began to fidget, looking up at the hat, which the hungry, motherless squirrels kept rocking. Then she leaped out upon the floor, purring, and bounded upon the table, going straight to the young squirrels.

There certainly was an expression of surprise and mystification on her face as she saw the change that had come over those kittens. They had shrunk in size and faded from two or three bright colors to a single pale pink! She looked again and sniffed them. Their odor had changed, too! She turned to the watchers about the table as if asking them to explain it all, but they said nothing. She hardly knew what to think. She

was half inclined to leave them and was turning to go back to the basket, when one of the squirrels whimpered—a genuine, universal baby whimper. That settled it. She was a mother, and whatever else these things in the hat might be, they were babies. That was enough, especially as she needed just this *much* baby here in the hat to make good what was lacking in the basket.

With a soft, caressing purr she stepped gently into the hat, took one of the squirrels by the neck, brought it to the edge of the table, and laid it down for a firmer hold; then sprang lightly to the floor. Over to the basket she walked and dropped it tenderly among her other babies. Then, having brought the remaining one and deposited that with the same mother-care, she got into the basket herself and curled down contentedly—her heart all whole.

And this is how strange a thing mother-love is! The performance was scarcely believable. Could she be so love-blind as not to see what they were and that she could eat them? But when she began to lick the little interlopers with her tongue, and cuddle them down to their dinner, as if they were her own genuine kittens, there could be no more fear of her eating them.

The squirrels do not know to this day that Calico is not their real mother. From the first they took her ~~mother's milk and mother's love~~ as rightfully and thanklessly as the kittens, growing, not like the kittens at all, but into the most normal of squirrels, round and fat and splendid-tailed.

Calico clearly recognized some difference between the two kinds of kittens, but *what* difference always puzzled her. She would clean up a kitten and comb it slick, then turn to one of the squirrels and wash it, but rarely, if ever, completing the work because of some strange un-catlike antic. As the squirrels grew older they also grew friskier, and soon took the washing as the signal for a frolic. As well try to wash a bubble. They were bundles of live springs, twisting out of her paws, dancing over her back, leaping, kicking, tumbling as she had never seen a kitten do in all her richly kittened experience.

I don't know why, but Calico was certainly fonder of these two freaks than of her own normal children. ~~Long after the latter were weaned she nursed and mothered the squirrels.~~ I have frequently seen them let into the kitchen when the old cat was there, and the moment they got through the door they would rush toward her,

dropping chestnuts or cookies by the way. She in turn would hurry to meet them with a little purr of greeting full of joy and affection. They were shamefully big for such doings. The kittens had quit it long ago. (Calico herself, after a while, came to feel the impropriety of nursing these two strapping young things, and in a weak, indulgent way tried to stop it. But the squirrels were persistent and would not go about their business at all with an ordinary cuff. She would put them off, run away from them, slap them, and make believe to bite; but not until she did bite, and sharply too, would they be off.)

All this seemed very strange and unnatural; yet a stranger thing happened one day, when Calico brought in to her family a full-grown gray squirrel which she had caught in the woods. She laid it down on the floor and called the kittens and squirrels to gather around. They came, and as the young squirrels sniffed at the dead one on the floor there was hardly a mark of difference in their appearance. It might have been one of Calico's own nurslings that lay there dead, so far as any one save Calico could see. And with her the difference, I think, was more of smell than of sight. But she knew her own; and though she

often found her two out among the trees of the yard, she never was mistaken, nor for an instant made as if to hurt them.

Yet they could not have been more entirely squirrel had their own squirrel mother nurtured them. Calico's milk and love went all to cat in her own kittens, and all to squirrel in these that she adopted. No single hair of theirs turned from its squirrel-gray to any one of Calico's three colors; no single squirrel trait became the least bit catlike.

Indeed, as soon as the squirrels could run about they forsook the clumsy-footed kittens under the stove and scampered up back of the hot-water tank, where they built a nest. Whenever Calico entered the kitchen purring, out would pop their heads, and down they would come, understanding the mother language as well as the kittens, and usually beating the kittens to the mother's side.

So far from teaching them to climb and build nests behind water-tanks, their foster-mother never got over her astonishment at it. All they needed from her, all they needed and would have received from their own squirrel mother, was nourishment and protection until their teeth and legs grew strong. Wits were born with them; ex-



She often found her two out among the trees

perience was sure to come to them; and with wits and experience there is nothing known among squirrels of their kind that these two would not learn for themselves.

And there was not much known to squirrels that these two did not know, apparently without even learning. As they grew in size they increased exceedingly in naughtiness, and were banished shortly from the kitchen to an ell or back woodshed. They celebrated this change in their fortunes by dropping some hickory nuts into a rubber boot hanging on the wall, and then gnawing a hole through the toe of the boot in order to extract the hidden nuts. Was it mischief that led them to gnaw through rather than go down the top? Or did something get stuffed into the top of the boot after the nuts were dropped in? And did the squirrels *remember* that the nuts were in there, or did they *smell* them through the rubber?

The squirrels took possession of the woodshed for the winter. Their first nest had been built behind the hot-water tank. They knew *how* to build without any teaching. But knowing *how* is not all there is to know about building; knowing *where* is very important, and this they had to learn.

Immediately on coming to the woodshed the squirrels began their winter nest, a big, bulky, newspaper affair, which they placed up in the northwest corner of the shed directly under the shingles. Here they slept till late in the fall. This was the shaded side, and the most exposed corner, of the whole house; but all went well until one night when the weather suddenly turned very cold. A strong wind blew from the northwest hard upon the squirrels' nest.

The next day there was great activity in the woodshed—a scampering of lively feet, that began early in the morning and continued far toward noon. The squirrels were moving. They gathered up their newspaper nest and carried it—diagonally—across the shed from the shaded northwest to the sunny southeast corner, where they rebuilt and slept snug throughout the winter.

Calico did not teach them this; neither would their own squirrel mother have taught them. They knew how, to begin with. They knew *where* after one night of experience, which in this case had to be a night of shivers.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHER AND PUPILS

CHAPTER I

BEYOND THE PASTURE BARS

What does the author try to suggest by this title?

Let each one of you keep account of the birds, beasts, insects and flowers that you can find in your door yard; or on your way to school; or on your farm; or in your park. With each thing, put down some description of it, the date you found it, and what it was doing—and everything else you discovered about it.

Page 4.

The ten folk in "bare skins" are: one eel, three newts or salamanders, and six frogs. Those in shells were one snail and four kinds of turtles.

Page 8.

"Wild Birds in City Parks" is by Herbert and Alice Walter; published by A. W. Mumfort, Chicago. It is an excellent bird guide, price 40 cents postpaid.

CHAPTER II

THE CRAZY FLICKER

Among the flicker's other thirty-five names are golden-shafted woodpecker; clape; and yellow-hammer.

Page 15.

Flickers always have enormous families: they lay from five to nine eggs, but the young so fill up the hole as they grow

that they stick out of the doorway often for sheer lack of room.

Now and then a great amount of harm may be done by flickers boring into roofs, ice houses, etc., but the good they do by destroying worms and grubs far outweighs their harm.

On page 32 of "A Watcher in the Woods" you will read how one used to hammer on the church during the Sunday worship as if to wake up the congregation.

You must hear the loud ringing cry of "Yarup" over the silent spring fields. Then later hide in the bushes and watch the love making of a pair of flickers in the top of some near-by tree. It is very funny.

CHAPTER III

THE WILD GEESE

The author has heard them passing in the dead of night over the very heart of Boston, and from the roof of houses near Boston Common has seen them many times in the day winging over high above the noise and smoke of the city.

Page 26.

Tropic Zone: the Canada geese do not go farther south for the winter than the Gulf States. Many winter in the Carolinas.

Men with guns are the worst enemies; but there are many others. Yesterday at the beach I picked up a herring gull lying dead on the sand. It had flown against a ship's mast at night, confused by the lantern in the rigging, and broken its neck. So it often happens to the geese.

Page 32.

Audubon: John James Audubon, the earliest and greatest of American naturalists and bird-lovers. A short life of him is found in "Famous Men of Science" by Sarah K. Bolton.

Page 33.

"*To a Waterfowl*": Learn by heart the whole beautiful poem. Bryant was born November 3d, 1794, in Cummington, Mass., died June 12th, 1878, in New York City. Learn also his other delightful bird poem "Robert of Lincoln." "To a Waterfowl" was perhaps written at the sight of a wild duck flying over; it serves as well for the wild geese.

Page 33.

"*Vainly the fowler's eye,*" that is the hunter's eye, "*might mark thy flight to do thee wrong.*" On March 4, 1913, Congress passed a law protecting all wild geese, swans, ducks, snipe, and other migratory birds, giving the Department of Agriculture at Washington power to fix seasons over all the country when these birds cannot be killed. It is one of the greatest laws ever passed for bird protection.

CHAPTER IV

THE WOOD-PUSSY

"*Wood-pussy*" is a polite "society" name for the skunk. The skunk is found pretty generally all over North America, and is especially abundant near great cities and towns. It is about the size of a big heavy cat, jet black with a V-shaped white stripe dividing from the back of the head down over the sides to its haunches. It has a large black and white tail. Its fur is valuable; the boys about my home get two or three dollars a skin for the best ones. They are tanned, dyed and re-named *Alaska Sable*. But this is a useful animal, especially to the farmer, and must be protected against the fur hunter. 1,310,185 skunk skins were sold in London in 1911 by *one* fur house. Five years more of this fearful slaughter and the skunk will be exterminated. Spare him!

Page 37.

Casco Bay is on the coast of Maine. Where?

CHAPTER V

A HOUSE OF MANY DOORS

Page 47.

Fish Hawk: osprey, a splendid bird, one of the few birds of prey that will build near the homes of men if unmolested. In Rhode Island its nests are sometimes placed upon platforms at the tops of tall poles erected for them in door yards. Its cry and flight when it is fishing give a touch of wildness to any scene.

Page 47.

"Crow" black-bird: the purple grackle; larger than the red shouldered and "cow" black-birds, but so nearly like the bronzed grackle that only trained observers can tell them apart. From Carolina downward and westward to the Mississippi Valley you have the Florida Grackle, and from Virginia to Texas the boat-tailed grackle. The purple grackles love city parks and tall trees about old country homes where they nest in colonies as the rooks do in England. You should read about them in Lowell's charming essay called "A Garden Acquaintance."

Page 47.

The English Sparrow: so named because it was introduced into this country from England. It is a street gamin, and a pest. Outside of my study window as I write there is a fight on between the sparrows and tree-swallows for possession of a bird house on the barn; and unless I take a hand in the fight the beautiful, useful swallows will be driven away.

Page 47.

City of Babel: look up an account of this famous city in the Bible, the 10th and 11th chapters of Genesis.

Page 49.

Cord-wood: trees cut into four-foot lengths to be cut later

in sticks for a stove. A cord of wood is four feet wide, four feet high and eight feet long.

Page 50.

Chickadees: the little black-capped, gray birds that live all winter with us and are known to every child who goes into the woods. They never come into city parks to stay. They are wood-birds.

Page 50.

Red-headed woodpeckers: relatives of the flicker, a little smaller; strikingly colored black and white and red. When on a tree the bird's red head, throat, neck and upper breast is its field mark; when on the wing the white of the wings is the mark.

Page 52.

Three-Arch Rocks: a wild bird reservation just off the coast of Oregon. See the author's account of it in the *Atlantic Monthly* for March, 1912.

Page 52.

Murres (pronounced mûrz): they look like so many penguins about the size of ducks crowding upon the rocks.

Page 52.

Cormorants, and puffins, and guillemots, and "stormy" petrels and gulls: all of these are sea birds; and are dwellers upon the Rocks. All of these birds, or their very near relatives, occur also on the Atlantic Coast, though here we have no northern coast reservation for them corresponding to Three-Arch Rocks. The petrel of these rocks is Keading's.

CHAPTER VI

WILD LIFE IN THE FARM-YARD

The especial object of this chapter and Chapter III is to show you how many wild animal and bird traits, habits, etc., you can readily see by watching the domestic animals—the hen

stealing her nest, the cat crouching in the grass, the honking of the geese, and the high roosting of the turkey.

Page 58.

Guineas: the wildest of domesticated birds. It was brought originally from Africa.

Page 58.

Hornets' nest: the white or bald-faced hornet that builds the big top-shaped paper nests in trees. You will often see them flying around the screen doors in summer or about the cows catching flies. They are among our best insect friends.

Page 58.

Flying-squirrels: now becoming very rare. They "fly" by leaping from some high limb and stretching out their legs between which is a web or "wing" of skin. They make excellent pets.

Pags 58.

Barn owls: so named because they love to nest in old barns and towers. Read about them in Gilbert White's *Natural History of Selborne*. They kill great numbers of rats and mice, but rarely or never kill a bird. Protect them if there is a pair of them in your neighborhood.

Page 58.

Grindstone apple-tree: so named from the shape and hardness of the apple. They are long "keepers."

Page 58.

Buzzards: the "turkey buzzard" so named because it looks very much like a turkey. See the account of them in "Wild Life Near Home."

Page 63.

Lynxes: the lynx is larger than the wild cat, but has somewhat similar habits. The one we know best is the Canada lynx or loup-cervier—lōō'-sâr'vyā'.

Page 64.

Spice bush: one of the earliest of spring flowers; a bush

six feet to twelve feet high with small yellow highly spiced flowers along its branches. Also called Benjamin bush, all-spice.

Page 66.

Roustabouts: name given to the deck hands and common colored workmen.

Page 66.

Rosin-barrels: rosin is made of the pitch of pine trees, it remains after the turpentine has been distilled and taken off.

CHAPTER VII

A SONG OF THE WINTER WOODS

This chapter explains itself. Don't fail to take a long tramp this winter, *alone*, if you can't get some one to go with you, into the woods and into the teeth of some wild, fierce storm. When you get home try to think what makes the memory of the walk so full of pleasure. You may not have *seen* any animal, nor *heard* anything but the wild wind, yet you are glad you had the tramp, because of your feelings. What are your feelings? Are they as real and worth while as facts and observations?

Page 79.

Cubby Hollow: a little pond near Bridgeton in New Jersey near where the author lived as a boy.

CHAPTER VIII

ON THE 'POSSUM'S TRAIL

The 'possum or opossum, is a *marsupial* or "pouched" animal, that is, having a skin pouch like the kangaroo on the abdomen in which it carries its young. It is the only one of the

marsupial family in North America and is hence of great interest to nature-lovers. See the author's account of the opossum's habits in "Wild Life Near Home," and of its ancestors in his volume called "Winter."

Page 83.

Uncle Jethro was an old darky slave who ran away from his master before the war and found a home with the author's grandfather.

Page 85.

Br'er possum means "Brother possum."

Page 89.

"*Being thrown into a brier-patch*," is from the story of the *Tar Baby* in the tales by Uncle Remus by Joel Chandler Harris.

Page 89.

Settee: the name for a long settle with a cushion upon it used in old-fashioned country homes.

Page 90.

Calabash-gourd: a large gourd the size of one's head that dries with a hard horny shell, much used for dippers and bird houses in the country.

Page 92.

Lupton's Pond: another pond near the boyhood home of the author.

Page 92.

Chestnut-oak: a large oak tree with bark and leaves much like the sweet chestnut's.

Page 92.

Trail: means the tracks or scent left by an animal's feet which the dogs follow.

Page 92.

Coon: a short spelling for raccoon, a wild animal of our woods, belonging to the bear family. See the author's story of one called *Mux* in "Roof and Meadow."

CHAPTER IX

THE DANCE IN THE ALDER SWAMP

Page 99.

Alder swale: a low wet clump of alder or patch of swampy grass and bushes.

Page 99.

Red maples: "red" because just coming into "red" or, better, garnet bloom. Maples are among the first of our trees to blossom and the first of all to scatter their ripened seeds on the summer air.

Page 99.

Twisting flight: a kind of zig-zag, rapid and whirling. A rifle's barrel is "rifled," that is, bored with spiral grooves which give a rotary motion to the speeding bullet.

Page 100.

Woodcock: this interesting and valuable bird is doomed to become extinct, it seems. We must do all we can to save it.

Page 100.

Tussock or hassock: a dense bunch of sedge or rushes.

Page 103.

Indian teepees: or tents of the Indians.

Page 103.

Barbecue: a whole roast ox.

CHAPTER X

CHICKAREE THE SCOLD

Chickaree: the common "red-squirrel," so called from its cry. He is said to destroy the eggs and young of birds, though I have never seen him do it, and I have a dozen nests of Chickaree here about the house—one in the cellar, one in the ice house, the others in the trees.

Page 117.

Pignuts: the common thick-shelled hickory nut.

Page 118.

Jays: the common blue jays.

Page 118.

Thorn mountain: one of the lesser White Mountains looking down upon the town of Jackson, N. H.

Page 118.

Birch catkins: the fruit of the yellow birch.

Page 118.

Junco: the little slate-colored "snow bird" of winter. It nests in the White Mountains and northward.

CHAPTER XI

A LESSON IN NATURAL HISTORY

Page 125.

John W. P. Jenks was a well known professor at Brown University, a friend of Agassiz, a great naturalist and museum-maker. The author lived with him in his rooms in the Natural History Museum at Brown University for the first three years of the author's college course.

Page 125.

Institute: The South Jersey Institute at Bridgeton, New Jersey, where the author prepared for college—and for life too, thanks to the great teacher of the Institute, Dr. H. K. Trask.

Page 126.

Linnaeus: a great Swedish botanist—the father of Botany. Read his life in "Famous Men of Science" by Sarah K. Bolton.

Page 126.

Agassiz the great Swiss naturalist of Harvard College. See "Famous Men of Science."

Page 126.

John James Audubon: See note to Chapter II.

Page 126.

Gilbert White: See note to Chapter VI on barn owls. His quaint book should be known to you all.

Page 126.

Thoreau: the Concord naturalist, author of "Walden" and other outdoor books which you will read sometime. He was born 1817, died 1872. Pronounced *Thó ro*.

Page 126.

Tam Edwards, an old Scotch naturalist whose life has been written in a book called "The Life of a Scotch Naturalist" by Samuel Smiles.

Page 126.

Centipedes: a poisonous "worm" though not a true worm. It is one of the arthropoda (jointed legged creatures) belonging to the class *myriapoda* (many footed) and to the family *chilopoda* (ki lóp o da) so called from its having many legs. Centiped means *hundred* footed, though of course it has not so many as that. It grows to be nearly a foot long in tropical countries; and its bite is very painful.

Page 126.

Okechobee: do you know what the land surrounding this lake is called, and why?

Page 126.

He had written a book: the book is called "A Popular Zoology."

Page 128.

A lesson in mounting: that is in "stuffing" birds and mounting them on their perches.

Page 129.

Yellow-billed cuckoo: the "rain-crow."

Page 129.

Cow-bird: you can tell them from other black-birds by

their *rusty* brown color and their habit of following the cattle about the pasture to feed on the insects—the only good thing they do apparently.

Page 131.

Turtle dove's nest: or morning dove's nest. You will know them by their likeness to the pigeon, and by the strange winnowing sound of their wings as they fly overhead.

Page 131.

Whippoorwill: every child of the country has heard this bird of the dark. See the author's story of this bird in "Wild Life Near Home."

Page 132.

Cat birds' nest: the cat bird is the slender long slate-colored bird of our summer thickets; so named because of its *meouw*, which sounds like the cat.

CHAPTER XII

CALICO AND THE KITTENS

Calico: so named because of her three colors. Three-colored cats are also called "tortoise shell." It is very interesting to note that most three-colored cats are females.

Note: We have read a great deal lately about wild mothers teaching their young to fly and swim and hunt and fight, but this story of Calico, which is true in all its essential points, would show that young squirrels need such parental instruction about as much as young human babies need their parents to teach them how to cry.



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