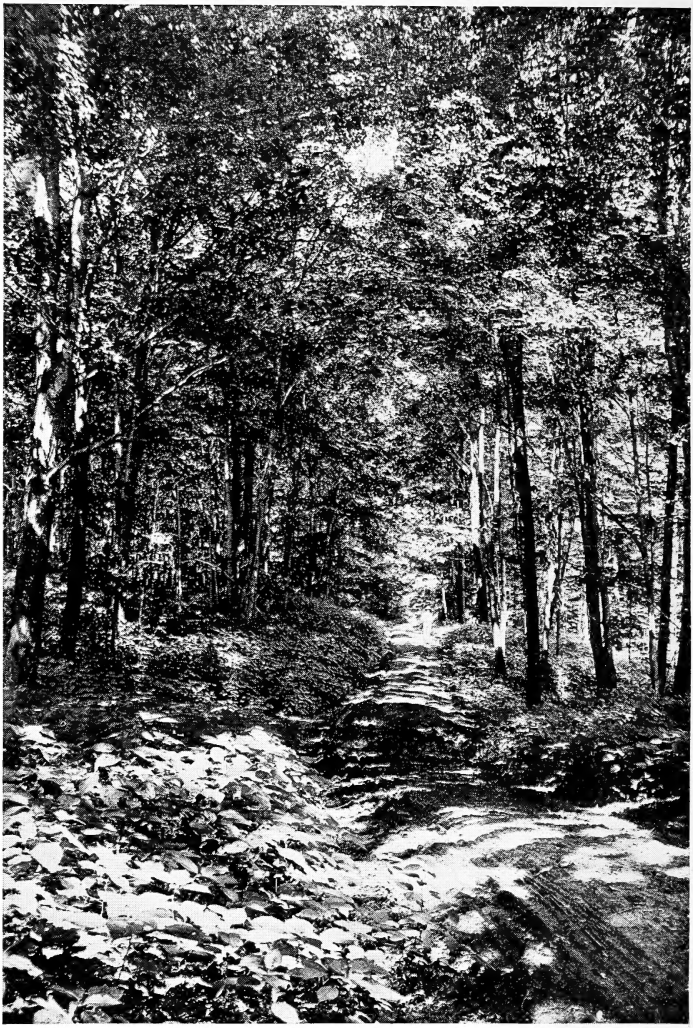
Bird Paradise

John Bartlett Wicks



THRUSH RAVINE

BIRD PARADISE

AN INTIMATE ACCOUNT
OF A LIFELONG FRIENDSHIP
WITH BIRD PARISHIONERS

By
JOHN BARTLETT WICKS

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In memory of my boyhood home,
and of those who lived and died there,
and lived again,
I dedicate this book
to the ever gracious spirit of the lines:

"How dear to my heart
Are the scenes of my childhood
When fond recollection
Presents them to view.
The orchard, the meadow,
The deep tangled wildwood,
And every loved spot
That my infancy knew."

Illustrations

Introduction

YEARS of close and cordial friendship yield all the cardinal elements of true life. The experience of youth, and mature age,—the ripening of advancing years—in short, the friendship of the entire life, appears in the pages of this book. The daily intercourse,—life living with life—the citizens of nature walking hand in hand with man. Surely the story of such a fellowship must be replete with thought and things of vital interest to every soul. The name of the book "Bird Paradise" is suggested in the very nature and shaping of the story itself. The wooded tract on the eastern slope of the old farm has long borne the name of Bird Paradise. It is an ideal home of the birds. The life of its many residents appears in these pages, just as that life is passed in the daily experience of the creatures, each page the shaping of an incident complete in itself. The varied nature of the incidents recorded is of the varied nature of the real experience of true life. The key to it all is in the

incidents themselves—the living of the daily life. The outlook of it all is surely heavenward—the windows of its "House Beautiful" being open toward the light, day and night.

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THE migration of birds yet holds many secrets, and I conclude will for many years to come. Just why they migrate in many cases is yet a mystery. One of the best reasons that I know contrasts nicely with the action of the human brother. The bird is free from all care and can spend the winter in the South without neglecting a single duty. Why should he not take one of the many trains offered him and hie away to warmth and ease? He can do it by easy journeying if he so chooses. An hour's travel every day will bring him easily to the haven where he would be, and the haven is bright with sunshine and replete with food. On the simple ground of change of scenery the bird is fully justified, or change of food, or greater supply. Any of these will do as a reason. So, too, the claim of a milder climate has place, easily rivaled by the strong inducement of plenty of good company. In fact, I hardly know of any good reason for

the bird to refuse the winter outing in the South. It does not, however, have the character of a holiday outing as much as I should think it would. The romping and the playing are in it, and the feasting also, as well as entire freedom from care, but the singing, cheery and bright, is unknown. Why they should drop the song entirely goes unexplained. There they are silent, save a sort of monotonous chirp. Happier fellows, however, are not to be met with anywhere. To and fro they go, eating and drinking, careless, almost entirely, of everything else.

The migration of birds, common as the years are common, is crowded with mysteries and wonders. We know something of them, here and there an item, but most of it is a sealed book to us. Why they migrate is a question with a variety of answers and perhaps most of them have some place in the reply. Some birds change location doubtless in order to secure their necessary food. Others make the long journey as instinct prompts, knowing nothing of the reason for the impulse. Still others journey, I believe, as people travel, for the enjoyment of the thing. Some journey slowly and are weeks in making the passage. Others accomplish the flight in a single journey, like the Labrador plover, which

leaves Newfoundland and, keeping well out from the coast, passes to the tropics without making a single stop. Some birds fly in the night, others in the daytime. Some winter just on the edge of the snow line, others near the Gulf. Others in far-off South America. I have often heard their call in the night-time as they were passing over and have seen the flocks dropping down to the ground in the early morning light. In their flight northward the same rules govern as in the passage to the South. With some birds as with geese and ducks the migratory instinct seems to be a gift to the flock, the single bird being unable to use it. We often see birds of the migratory species remaining at the North through the winter. Someway they fall out of the regular line and seem unable to pick it up again. As Artemus Ward would say, "There is a good deal of human nature in birds."

The best authority I can command makes the assertion that nearly 400,000 species of creatures have been discovered and classified in this world of ours. Think of it, think of the number, then of the creatures—each by itself—and the longest life vouchsafed to man in the realm of time affords

but partial acquaintance with a small portion of the great host. The largest we see only in part, and the smallest we do not see at all, only with the aid of the most powerful glass. Care for them all, watchful care—the kind that knows where they all are; just what they are doing—the "open hand," which fills all things living with plenteousness. Ah! the nearer vision of the wondrous scenes. Only the infinite gathers all the wheat in this boundless field. I glance from this sheet to the window-pane at my side, and there I note a minute speck, moving briskly over the hard service. Nothing but the black mote, visible to the naked eye. I put my glass over the object and the transformation reveals the perfect creature after its kind. Unlike the work of man, the more I magnify the creature the more wonderful it becomes. Bright colors appear, and the texture of all I see glows with a radiance that is surely born from above. As I gaze, the insect moves from my sight into the great world space—an aeroplane most perfect. The thought quickly has place, "the world about us—a great school—the 'university of universities.'" Knowledge free as the air we breathe, the student always graduating, but always a student.

Our fields have worn very gracefully the garments of early spring. How bright the green has been, and what a variety of shades appear all along the hillside. Just now the dandelion is changing the color rapidly. How curiously the golden blossoms are distributed. In a field just beyond the cemetery they appear in groups, each a household by itself. Farther along on the hillside they seem to have place throughout the entire field with no particular difference in the distribution. In the old pasture at the swamp-side they are given a formation like the well-ordered ranks of a great army. I half fancy that I can easily point out the headquarters as well as the other principal places in the camp of the great host. Far down the Waterville road I catch glimpses of the blossoms forming a broad, beautiful selvage at the roadside extending to the point where the hill hides the view. But what a pure gold the color is—surely it is a standard that lacks nothing. The texture of the blossom rivals the color in beauty of shape and finish. The entire disk of yellow is made up of hundreds of minute flowers, each perfect after its kind. I frequently put one under my glass, getting a vision that always seems new. The

natural eye sees but a small part of what each blossom contains. I find often that a tribe of minute insects occupy the flower, making it their home. Sometimes there will be several of these tribes dwelling in the same blossom. Curious how active these little fellows are. They go in and out, between the minor blossoms, and seem to have plenty of room—a palace of gold surely. How clearly the heart of this common flower is given expression in Lowell's familiar lines:

"My childhood's earliest thoughts are linked with thee,
The sight of thee calls back the robins' song,
Who, from the dark old tree
Beside the door sang clearly all day long,
And I secure in childish piety,
Listened as I heard an angel sing
With news from heaven which he could bring
Fresh every day to my untainted ears,
When birds and flowers, and I were happy peers."

From some points on our hill I can see with my field-glass twenty and more teams plowing. Such an outlook savors altogether of the spring time. There is something in the steady movement of the teams that is a picture of sturdy strength, while the bearing of the plowman uplifts the banner of one who rules. How easy

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it all seems when seen from a distance. It is one of the instances where a certain kind of enchantment becomes the offspring of distance. As I see it from my far-off point of view the idea of any effort on the part of the team or driver is wholly eliminated. As a matter of fact, the occupation is a kind of service that is far up on the list of man's wide field of duties. On a bright day, with the scene spread out before me, I cannot very well connect it with the idea of service and duty at all. It seems more like a great privilege—a sort of deciphering of wonderful things in a great temple of wonders. The furrows roll into their places and I fancy the hearing ear gathers of sounds that are the earth's shouts of joy. Why not? More and more I get the idea that the earth itself is a sort of force, alive in more senses than I know. Why should it not cry out with joy when its brother man extends the hand of cheery help? While I write the sower is sowing the seed in the great field opposite my study window. Here again the machine is doing its work, and here again I entertain the notion that the happy, mellow earth opens its heart to receive the gift. Something there calls for its own, and as surely as the call is made its own is responding cheerily

to the call. Life finds life, and the husbandman is ever at the point where the two great seas meet. Right well he may rejoice, as a student in the school of schools.

Occasionally I catch sight of a small flock of shore or horned larks. They are common along the New England seashore in the winter, scattering out into the country, as the fancy seizes them. Two little tufts of feathers give them the appearance of wearing a pair of horns—thus securing one of their names. The other name is readily reached from the fact that the seashore is their favorite haunt. Unlike most other small birds, they walk through the grass as they are feeding. In manners they resemble somewhat the other members of the family, giving vent to their feelings in a breezy way. I understand that they extend their journeying over quite a portion of our north country, frequently passing well down into the Carolinas. I sometimes come upon their nests in the spring and I think they are the earliest housekeepers among our smaller birds. In the realm of song they are not proficient. Of course they have their common call note, and in the breeding season, a succession of

notes that might be termed a song. The nest is put into a little cavity in the ground, being constructed of grass and moss. When I come upon them suddenly in the field they have a way of throwing themselves into the air, whirling upward as though shot from some strong bow. Audubon says that they have the practice of soaring and singing in the air, like the English lark, but I have never seen them.

A family of bluebirds have made me a visit of at least a week's duration. They do their own cooking, provide their own lodging, in short, are no expense to the parson in the slightest degree. The young fellows look plump, and are so. Their new coats fit them without a wrinkle, but their voices are way off from the usual cheery song of the race. At first I thought some new bird had appeared, but investigation revealed the fact that it was the old, old story, and bluebird's way of telling it. There is something quite interesting in these family outfits, especially as they draw on to the point of separating for the rest of life's journey. There doesn't seem to be any particular sentiment in their action, and they go apart as a sort of matter of course; in

fact, it sometimes appears as though they really enjoyed it. How is it that so much affection apparently can be felt for a time, and then all disappear, as with a turn of the hand? To-day strong, to-morrow nothing. In brief, now ready to die in the defense of the child, but soon forgetting that the child ever was. Verily life's paradoxes are many and varied.

I hear the drumming of the partridge from the coverts of the swamp. It is a spring sound, and I sometimes think it is the fellow's way of doing his singing. Once in my boyhood I saw the bird in the act itself. As he went along the log upon which he was moving, he brought his wings together in front of him, making the hollow sound which we give the name of drumming. I enjoy watching these birds. They have an independent way of doing things which renders them quite attractive. In their leisure moments they do some playing, but I fancy it does not come quite natural to them. Of all our native birds there is none that excels the partridge in shyness. He is ever on the watch. How he can get in a stroke of anything else is a problem. Occasionally one comes into my lawn trees, but

I conclude from his actions that he has been seriously disturbed in his native haunts, or he would not be seen so far from home. An event of my boyhood reads: "To-day, in the old cedar swamp, I came upon a family of partridges that were only a few days from the nest. There was a commotion in the camp, and in less than a minute the young fellows all disappeared among the leaves. With the help of my spaniel dog I found them all—fifteen in number. After a few minutes I gave them their freedom again, greatly to the delight of the parent birds."

A pair of bluebirds spent a good part of a day investigating a cavity in one of my apple trees this week. They went in and out, talked the matter over, apparently a dozen times, and I suppose reached the conclusion that the place was not suited for their purpose, as I have seen nothing of them since. The gentility of good breeding appears in all that the bluebird says and does. I never have known him to speak harshly or behave unkindly. If other birds take his coat he is pretty certain to let them have his cloak also. His song is always keyed to a gentle quaver that overflows with peace and good will.

I have seen him give up on the demand of others until he had nothing left for himself. Not a word of complaint did he utter; on the contrary he seemed more and more the embodiment of the very spirit of patient, genial good nature. As he does no striking, of course, he never strikes back. If, as Burroughs says, "the bluebird is the bird of nature, being earth brown below, and sky blue above," he is certainly most heavenly through the pure white within. The old saying that "it takes two to make a quarrel" is illustrated nicely in this bird's behavior. He goes about owning in fee simple everything, just happy in the ownership, and yet never proclaims his rights in any way only by letting the other fellow have them all. Ah! what grace there is in this one bird of all the birds. He is a preacher of righteousness that needeth not to be ashamed. The parson gives him the right hand of fellowship as one sent by the Master in whom there is indeed no guile.

Sitting in my porch last evening I noticed, when it had become quite dark, not only my pair of bats on duty but several chimney swifts circling about with them, the entire company intent on securing a sumptuous supper. They continued

the exercise until I could only see them as they passed from the shadow of the trees into the lighter open space. The whole procedure was exactly what I should expect from the bats but I never before had seen the swifts up so late. It occurred to me that flies of a particularly luscious sort were making a short stop on our hilltop and the swifts had to keep awake late in the evening in order to get their share. There seemed to be a sort of fellowship between the creatures which argued well for the characters of both. I could hear the bills of the birds snap as the flies passed their portals but my bat friends gave no sound. One of the toothsome viands that the bat enjoys is the common mosquito. I encourage this taste in the creatures, feeling that it is a good thing for the bats and really a commendable use to which the insects can be put. It may be that the swift has a relish for the best groomed mosquitoes. If it be so his indulgence of it to the utmost is fully approved by the parson.

I notice that the ants are busy with household duties very similar to those now occupying the attention of the thrifty housewives in our hill country. Among the busiest of these active citizens I class those which bear the name of mound

builders. In the old pastures near the swamp the little mounds of these tireless workers may be seen scattered over quite an extent of ground. Two or three of these curious houses have been erected in my orchard and I saw last evening that one which I have known many years, located in the farther part of the cemetery, had been given a new story this spring. Somewhere in the ground below, the work of excavation had gone on, the earth being brought up by the ants in small particles and added to the stature of the house. Fifteen or twenty doors were wide open and hundreds of the dwellers were going and coming every moment. I used what diplomacy I was possessed of in trying to fellowship with my diminutive neighbors, but they were too busy to make much response to my effort. I half suspect that they work night and day when they have anything to do and I am pretty sure they always have something to do. Why not a school of industry right under my eye ever proclaiming "to him who works as well as waits all things come."

A friend brought me this morning a curiosity in the construction of birds' nests. He found

it on a beam in the barn where a robin had been in the habit of putting its summer cottage. There were three complete nests built in a row and joined together strongly with stalks of dried grass. I am at a loss just how to account for such a novelty. A pair of robins frequently rear two broods in one season, but I have not known them to add still another. In those cases where I have known two broods reared the second nest was a new one in another place. I never have known them to use a nest the second time. If the nests were separate and only placed side by side without being joined together firmly I should conclude that they were built by the same pair of birds—a nest yearly for three years. But here they are with the foundation of dried grass extending under the three, making them in that particular virtually one nest. The theory that three pairs of birds joined in the construction of the nests is not tenable from the fact that in a venture of this nature the parties cannot agree well enough to make such a common plan a real success. I am quite disposed to regard the venture as that of a single pair of robins who took a "long look ahead," planning their house scheme so that three households were successfully reared in one season. It certainly has the merit

of being a real time-saver and perhaps at times robin needs to practice economy in that direction.

I hear occasionally the plaintive note of the wood pewee. It has little in mere sound to recommend it, but I conclude it carries the heart of the would-be singer, therefore is always valuable. Pewee belongs to the family of the flycatchers—none of them so far as I know noted as the possessor of beauty of person. Sometimes with the birds there is lack of personal attraction that is nicely compensated in great beauty of song, but nothing of the kind appears with pewee. His voice, though clear, is keyed so sharply that it avoids everything musical. Two notes comprise the venture and the very close of the refrain is its best feature. Pewee and his young family are all voracious feeders. All kinds of small insects are viands at his feasting, and his feasting occupies his attention every moment through the day. I notice he has a special fondness for the mosquito and in their season cheerfully appropriates multitudes of them every day. While nearly all writers agree that this bird is a migrant—spending his winters in the South, I often hear his call in the winter and frequently see him flitting

among the trees. Just what he finds of appetizing food in the cold weather I do not know. I conclude, however, from what I have seen, that the grubs and insects under the bark of the trees furnish him with an abundant supply. I see him sometimes enjoying the friendship of the woodpeckers, so I conclude he is more socially inclined than some other members of his family.

The birds are now well entered upon their long vacation season. I fancy a real change in character marks their demeanor from this time on until the housekeeping season returns again. The young fellows, as a rule, dress in suits of their own, though in some cases, as with the bobolinks, the entire race adopt a common raiment. In some instances, notably with the blue jays, the children of the family are attired in a manner entirely their own. A year passes before they don their regular suits. Just how the plumage is shaped and reshaped, sometimes appearing in the guise of one color, then another—no mistake made in any case—is no small mystery. The bobolinks are now gathered in flocks and in a few days will be on their way southward. I can easily see how the annual journey southward is one of large ad-

vantage, but how it should begin as early as it does with the bobolinks and swallows is certainly a puzzling thing. Plenty of food here, and good weather, "why not stay?" is all answered by the going, and the going seems to be all the answer there is. Go and come at will seems to be the law governing the birds' migration very largely.

The killdeer plover has taken his flight to the Sunny South. The other members of his large family are keeping him company—a merry party wherever they are. With the killdeers, as with the other birds, the season has favored the growth and safety of their young. Years ago we had in the spring and fall flights what was known as the field or golden plover. They came to us from the North at the time of wheat sowing, and usually spent a month or more in our hill country. They were sought as a table delicacy, and by some were considered more appetizing than the wild pigeon. I saw them on the plains of Oklahoma in great flocks, where they spent most of the winter. On some of our long journeys we found them quite an addition to our daily cuisine. All the plovers are bright stirring birds, seemingly ever on the

move. In their migratory flight I think they outdo almost all other birds. Far up in the Arctic regions they build their nests and rear their young. Once on the wing for the South they seem to think that the journey is incomplete unless they push far down to distant Patagonia. Not all the species make this record, but some of them do and seem to be none the worse for the extended journey. The song of the plovers is nothing more than a call note uttered mostly in flight. As a scavenger among the grubs and insects they are very helpful to the farmer, and their cheery way of making the most of life recommends them highly.

A friend sends me a clipping from the New York *Times* bearing the date of March 8th. It is an item of news from Montclair, New Jersey, concerning the birds. It announces that almost all over the mountain top in Montclair to-day could be seen robins and bluebirds in abundance. "To-day," it says, "the robins are taking possession of their old nests and putting them in order for spring." My friend who sends me the paragraph thinks the last item must be a dream. Very likely, however, the snow in that locality

has gone and usually the birds come trooping in as soon as it has melted away, especially if the weather be warm and sunny. The species named in the article push northward about March 1st, keeping pace with the disappearance of the snow. In 1857 many of them reached us in February, both February and March being open warm months. Some of the robins nested and were caught in the great April snow-storms—learning when too late that the birds with the best intentions cannot force the season. Large numbers of the robins when they migrate stop for the winter just south of the snow line of latitude. Some go farther, even extending their journey to the shores of the Gulf. All of them, however, turn their steps northward about the first of February—ready, if all things are favorable, to occupy the summer home. A week of sunny weather now would bring them to us in large numbers. There seems to be no instinctive guidance concerning the proper time for the birds to inaugurate their summer housekeeping.

The junco sparrows are now guests of ours from the far North. What travelers they are and how little they show the wear and care of extensive

journeying. Some of these fellows that greet me so cheerily have roamed over the continent far within the Arctic regions. Of course I get nothing from them concerning their trip, and still, perhaps, the case hardly warrants so strong a statement. There is no experience lost. Wherever its lines fall it leaves its mark and a little observance reveals the fact. The junco of extensive travel is a larger bird than the plodder that has never been outside its own dooryard. Whether he realizes it or not he has gathered from the wider fields and the harvest a new feather in his cap. I like to see him wear it; yes, even when his small head seems to be a little turned by the experience. I never have heard the fellow's song, but read that it is a pleasant sparrow warble. They will stay about here a few days then take their trolley line for the South, returning in the spring happy and careless apparently as the day is long.

A killdeer passed over the rectory last evening moving on rapid wing. At every stroke of the wings he gave his peculiar cry, moving apparently without effort. A pair of killdeers nest near the swamp, and I hear their sharp call

every day. Of all the birds, this fellow seems the most nervous. Sitting still is no part of his experience, and he has shown me how he does it. I hear him sometimes in the night ; probably an owl or a fox is the cause of the wakefulness and hurried call. In the spring lot on the old farm, a family of killdeer were on duty every season. Driving the cows home at milking time was sure to be delayed somewhat by attention given to the young killdeer. The tip-up is a sort of first cousin to the killdeer and I sometimes think it a trifle more nervous. His practice of tilting his little body every time he utters his brief note gives him his name. I have often watched these water birds where there was a clean stretch of hard sand, and the ease and swiftness with which they run over it is not excelled by any other bird.

The little kinglets from the far North looked in upon me this week. What bright, active fellows they are and how easily they accomplish their purposes as they go to and fro in the wide pastures of the trees. The pair that made me a visit said nothing about the particular places that they had visited during the summer, neither did they

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make any statement concerning the place where they expected to spend the winter. When they push their flight northward I have the notion that they find their way well up to the precincts of the pole. They are chary singers and are not given to any extra amount of talking. As I see them they are usually in company with the warblers and are so like the company they are in that it is sometimes quite difficult to tell them apart. I am told that they sometimes nest in northern New York but I have the notion that most of their nesting is far up in the wilds of Canada. The descriptions that I have of their nests are curious, the strangest being the fact that they frequently put two layers of eggs in the same nest. Just how they manage to hatch such a number deponent saith not. Next month my visitors will go on their way, finally reaching the wilds of South America. Back they come in the spring, repeating the journey year after year. What witnesses they are to the settled order and stability of all the ways of bird life.

I have seen a few members of the junco sparrow family during the past week. What bright little fellows they are and what activity they show

as they go to and fro in the trees and hedgerows. They are socially inclined, for I rarely see them unless they are in company with not only their own kind, but with the members of other sparrow species. That slate-colored coat of theirs reflects the sunbeams handsomely, while the genial manners of the species mark them as creatures of good breeding. A little later they will hie away to the South, turning their backs on snow and cold. When I want the best of bird manners I am sure of finding them among the juncos.

At this point in writing these notes I glance from the window and there a few feet away is a red squirrel busy with duties which he takes great pleasure in discharging at this season of the year. Evidently he had his eye on part of an apple that lay temptingly on the ground a few feet from the foot of the tree. It was a real lesson in squirrel athletics to see him whirling down the trunk of the tree and returning in the same manner. The morsel he secured was conveyed to an old summer nest of his, far up among the branches. There at his leisure he made a feast that he gave every evidence of enjoying with real zest. I suppose the pair that dwell on my eminent domain have a supply of food laid up that will serve them nicely for at least two winters.

Two species of the kinglet family—the golden crowned and the ruby crowned—visit us twice during the year. They nest far to the northward and look in upon us in the spring and fall as they journey on the annual migration. I sometimes think that they rank next to the humming-bird in smallness of size. I have never seen their nest, though I am told that they sometimes breed in northern New York. The nest is described as quite bulky for the size of the bird. One writer speaks of one he saw as being nicely constructed and containing a large number of eggs, placed in two layers, one above the other. How the incubation under such conditions can be carried out is something of a problem. When they visit us in the fall they are usually in company with the warblers, and it is difficult to tell them apart as they pass to and fro in the trees. I think I have seen them here in the winter, and doubtless some of them tarry in our hill country during the cold weather. The greater number, however, journey far down to the genial weather of the torrid zone. Their song is scarcely more than a call note, repeated several times in a bright, cheery way. When I pass in review the species of birds that rank in size and habits with these active kinglets,

I get a new revelation of the diversity of gifts, all in the house of the same spirit. The birds are interpreters of the abundant life, and the book of their scripture speaks with full voice of the goodness of the common Father.

I passed yesterday a brook that flows from the hillside—a full, cheery stream in the first step it takes. I lingered a little while to give greeting to one of the children of the fields and groves that always seems to me a living thing. Did you ever shake hands with a brook?—a real hearty, whole-souled hand-shake? If there be a sacrament of life in the great church of nature I am sure it is found in the brook, as it is discovered nowhere else. This particular stream rippled away for a hundred yards, then crossed the road, and just ambled off through a pasture that seemed made especially for it. The channel in the field was shallow, too shallow for the water that would flow in its bed. How easily the brooklet met the new conditions. Like a good general in a strange land it threw out skirmishers upon both flanks, and I noticed that in their advance they covered the entire ground clear to the base of the hills on each side. The grass in

the wide channel was a bright green, and as the water flowed along it seemed to play with the spears of grass as though they were living creatures. I half fancied that the gurgling sounds I heard were the commands issued to the rippling cohorts, and I noticed that they were obeyed implicitly. Below where I stood the scattered waters joined their forces and I heard that peculiar sound of the wandering streamlet that always seems to me one of the sweetest sounds in the great Temple of Nature. From where I stood I could see the channel for quite a distance, but the story it told came from the heart of the brook wandering far beyond my sight—all of it the perfect gentleness of a waitress in the halls of the "great king." I parted with the vision, the words of the wise man giving form to the lesson, "The well-spring of wisdom, as a flowing brook."

It is not often that a member of the hawk family visits my lawn. It is only occasionally that I see them in the village. This week, however, was the hawk's opportunity, and he improved it after the spirit of his tribe. I heard the robins and smaller birds sounding their loud warning cries and knew that some serious trouble

was being experienced. Going down to the garden I soon discovered the cause of the commotion. A sparrow hawk had captured one of the smaller birds and was so busy dissecting his prize that he did not see me until I was quite near him. I felt no enmity toward the fellow, as I knew he was simply providing food for his breakfast. I do not see him when I think he is really hunting for the sport of the thing. It may be that there are times when he makes a pastime of securing his meals. He certainly moves with a celerity and skill that might well awaken a feeling of real pride over the possession and use of such a gift. I have seen him when he took great risks; in fact, all of the hawk family will, at times, incur great danger in carrying out their plans. On the old farm the visits of these birds was a daily occurrence through the summer. All sorts of devices were used to prevent their depredations. I remember well thinking in my boy way that the hawk was really not to be blamed for being a hawk and using his powers as it was intended he should use them.

My flicker tenants are present at the summer trysting place in full season. A whir of wings

followed by a loud call was the first knowledge I had of their presence. They went up and down the bird ways of the village park and made merry in the lawns and orchards. I had the notion that they were trying to tell our people where they had spent the winter, and of the new life it had put into their keeping. I have seen the fellows in the South and they carry about with them the same rollicking spirit that marks their demeanor here at the North. Flicker seems to be true to his flicker nature wherever he may be. Work and play with him are golden opportunities for being cheery and stout hearted and he improves to the utmost all that is offered him in this way. I noticed that the pair who made me the visit so early in the season called at the flicker home in the maple front of the church. The English sparrows vacated the premises at the first warning. Someway they have a wholesome fear of flicker and never dispute his title to any of the things in mother nature's house. From what I see I judge that flicker repairs his old home each spring—papers and paints as it were—using it for several years. One of my favorite pastimes is watching the workmen when they are constructing a new house. The stout bill is all the tool they have,

and they use it with wonderful power and skill. Some one has said "that without humor there can be no genius." By that rule flicker ranks high as a bird genius. He is all alive with abundant humor.

Among the water birds that spend the summers in our hill country killdeer ranks with the first. He comes northward quite early and I conclude from his actions passes several weeks in real bird-pastime before he takes up the regular business of housekeeping. His entire song is measured by the one word, which has become his name, killdeer. Curious how he uses it when on the wing. He flies rapidly and at almost every stroke of the wings the note is uttered shrill and clear. The bird gives one the impression, like the blue jay, that it is very much in love with its song. In the marshy ground just east of the village there are several places where killdeer nests. The nest is hardly more than a slight cavity in the ground, though it is sometimes partially lined with a few spears of dried grass. The little stretches of sandy beach that are found here and there in the marsh are favorite runways for the killdeer. I have watched them at times when I thought every bird was full of the spirit

of real gaming. The good sense of the company seemed to be the real umpire of the game, and the charge carried the idea with it that it was honest oversight. The suit worn by these birds is attractive in appearance and while not conspicuous for color is every way becoming in finish and neatness. No harm ensues to the farmers' crops in any of the acts of killdeer so far as I know. On the contrary, he is an all around good fellow, doing good service at every turn.

In the village cemetery a colony of red ants preëmpted a claim some years ago and by an industrious course of their kind of work reared a mansion that could be seen from all parts of the ground. Last spring it became necessary to remove the mound. It was done by simply leveling it with the surface of the yard. It was a great surprise to the red-coated citizens of the borough. I saw them running to and fro, evidently taking observations as to the best method of repairing damages. The result appears in a deposit of fine earth over a space measured by the extent of the original home—perhaps a quarter of an inch in thickness. What workers they are! When destruction came upon their house scattering the entire structure to the winds

not a moment was spent bemoaning the mishap. At least so it all appeared. With the finishing of the leveling process came the uprising of every creature in the band. Hardly an hour passed ere the old order was restored and the bands of workers were on duty in every direction. The strokes of the levelers opened to the light the inner chambers of the dwelling. The first work was to put new doors to all these places. I estimated that on the space of three feet square there were two or three thousand workers. In a few days the first new roof was in place. This was soon followed by another, and I suppose if they were left undisturbed this would go on through the years to the house restored. All done without one word of protest. What instructors the ants are !

Merry-hearted I have written before concerning the flicker and every year I have the truth of the statement reaffirmed. The pair that have located in one of my maple trees are the busiest, merriest creatures that I meet with anywhere. The first gleam of light in the morning kindles the fire of flicker's daily life. I hear him hurrying through the lawn trees uttering his loud

calls. When I appear on the scene I fancy that the pair vie together in giving me a cheery greeting. I take it as a morning salutation and I am sure it does me good. Such an amount of talking as they do at the door of their house is not rivaled by any other bird. If free-spirited discussion contributes to the well-being of the flicker home, then these birds are greatly blessed. Some of their talks convey the idea that they do not always fully agree on the shape and finish of the house they are building. The disagreements, however, do not seem to interfere particularly with the progress of the work. I noticed this evening that when the rain came on both birds managed to find cover in the cavity they had made.

I was reading recently of the fact that a few of the old-time passenger pigeons were still left far up in the wilds of British Columbia and that a brief time more would entirely exterminate the species. It seems impossible that a bird which was found in every part of our country in such immense numbers should have reached the end of its career. We well remember when the spring and fall flights of these birds fairly darkened the air. In 1840 the fall flight menaced the wheat

fields with utter destruction. The parson, then a mere boy, recalls the fact of being placed in a part of the wheat field on the old farm while the workmen were engaged in another portion. His business was to frighten away the pigeons which came down upon the stacks of wheat in immense numbers. What a rushing sound the great flocks made in passing! Thousands were killed by the hunters, and thousands more caught in nets, being kept and fattened for future use. It was a common saying when the beechnuts were plentiful, "The woods are full of pigeons." I have seen the ground covered with the great flocks—thousands being under the eye. Curious how these birds nested. Multitudes of nests were put near together, the limbs sometimes breaking under the weight. I was told of their roosting places when I was in Oklahoma, where they assembled night after night in vast numbers. Wild animals of many kinds preyed upon them and the hunters came from every direction, securing great quantities of the birds.

Crossing the fields this morning I came upon a large flock of meadow-larks. There were fifty and more birds in the flock and every one seemed

to be bubbling over with lark fun. When I first saw them about half the company was occupying the branches of a large elm tree, the other members of the party being on the ground on all sides of the tree. They seemed to be jollying each other, after the manner of men, the jokes flying back and forth thick and fast. Of course I had no way by which I could be sure as to just what they were doing, but to all appearance it seemed to be an occasion of sport pure and simple. I found myself wondering whether I had not lost much of what the birds say and do by not being around early enough in the morning. My interview with the larks was just as day was breaking, about five o'clock in the morning. On the principle that the early bird secures the worm, I had gotten into the fields by moonlight, hoping to secure a fine basket of mushrooms. The growth in the fungus world had not taken place as I anticipated, so I improved the occasion by interviewing the birds. I cherished the notion that the flock I saw might have been on the wing most of the night and had just dropped down in the old pasture to take breakfast. After a little I noticed they all scattered over the field, each intent upon securing what he could to break the morning fast.

There are mornings and mornings in the dispensation of our hill country weather. Each season of the passing year gives a message all its own. Curious that the observer usually concludes that the pageant of the present is superior to all that has preceded it. One of the distinguishing marks of personal growth is the vision broader and richer in each passing moment. This very week the day was ushered in three separate times, not a discordant note in the entire scene. From my garden outlook the Oriskany Valley, for miles in extent, wore a beautiful veil of pure white. Here and there the church tower or the tall tree stood uncovered in the great temple. When the sun looked out from the eastern sky its beams of light played along the slope of the hills, riding glad and free over the highways of the great fog bank, every one of them really "the ransomed of the Lord." In the fulness of the day the open sacrament of heaven appeared, every breath of the scene "the given of the Lord's life, radiant with the glory that never fades."

A family of flickers are making daily visits to my lawn. They come usually in the afternoon

and spend an hour or two in a manner peculiar to this bird. As they come from the direction of Burritt's hill I conclude that their early home was in that locality. I don't know that the altitude has anything to do with a bird's welfare, but certainly the elevation of 1,650 feet makes an ideal place to begin the journey of life. It is quite a lesson in bird coasting to watch the flickers as they come down from the hill. They move in broad curves, gliding down to the village with the greatest ease. I notice they seem to have a preference for the large apple tree in my front yard. When the six birds are duly gathered in the old tree the fun begins. They glide around the great trunk, up and down, like boys at play. I know of no other bird that indulges in bird humor as the flickers do. If I understand it at all it ripples, innocent and clear, very much as it does with human beings. The old birds range about the lawn, uncovering many a dainty morsel for the hungry youngsters. While they are at play they use a sort of subdued chuckle that seems the very embodiment of cheery sport. I notice that the other birds show great deference to the flickers. From what I have seen I judge that the flicker is a peaceable fellow, but is ready to resent with vigor any tres-

passing upon his rights by other birds. I extend the right hand of fellowship to them always, being well assured that they rank among the well-bred gentlemen of my feathered friends.

Curious that the bird, which at one time was more plentiful here than all the other species put together, should have been completely exterminated. The wild or passenger pigeon, as it is sometimes called, has entirely disappeared. I say entirely, but I read that a few of them still exist in the wilds of British America. The last that I saw was in 1882, in the forests of southern Oklahoma. Sixty years ago this bird was so common throughout the settled portions of our country that at times the growing crops were greatly injured by their depredations. I recall the time when they flocked here in vast numbers —the spring and fall flights lasting for several days. At times the immense flocks could be seen in every direction—sometimes darkening the sun as they passed. Wild pigeons, cooked in different ways, formed the staple food of most of our families for the time being. Many were netted, and kept in some convenient outhouse, where they were fattened and used through the season.

I have seen in the spring of the year the ground in Bird Paradise literally covered with the birds feeding. They were searching for the sprouting beechnuts and my father's common expression concerning their numbers was, "There are acres of them there." One of our boyish pastimes was startling the host by a sudden loud noise. What a roar of wings followed, and what multitudes of birds rushed to and fro, apparently wild with fright.

The flickers are busy with their peculiar kind of nest building. One of the maples on my lawn furnishes a large dead limb, which they examine with the greatest care. Several years ago they excavated a home there, and a family of sprightly young birds graduated in due time from the cozy spot. Every year since they gather there in April, five or six of them, and spend a number of days, talking and flying about, evidently greatly in earnest. Sometimes it results in a pair of them occupying the old mansion for the season. At other times the result of the conclave is the abandonment of the locality by all the birds. Yesterday six of the fellows spent the entire day going to and fro, busy every moment. From my

study window, I could see the parties, rushing hither and thither, calling out to each other, and by turns examining the old maple. How easily they balanced along in their peculiar way, coming down from the Burritt grove. Then such scurrying through the trees, around and up the trunks, in and out of the old nesting place—hour after hour of it. What a flicker day it was and how the birds seemed to enjoy every moment. Toward night I saw them rushing away to the grove, apparently as far from a decision as to whom should occupy the old homestead as when they first took the matter up in the morning. Judging from what has occurred in previous years, they will require four or five more days of conference before the final decision is reached.

Birds, like human beings, have curious freaks. A large gray woodpecker spent the entire day recently drumming on one of the maple trees directly in front of my study window. Just what he meant by it I could not learn. The tree is perfectly sound, to all appearance, and the fellow did not seem to secure anything in the way of food. Occasionally he would pound away in a sort of ecstasy, as though the work itself was the

Tanager Hollow

merriest kind of fun ; then he would patrol the limbs, far out to the small twigs, and I half fancied that his manner said several times, "Didn't I do that well?" The robins and blackbirds were not at all pleased with the fellow's operations. They looked him over several times and sat as near to him as they dared, but did not venture to interfere with any of his plans. I rather enjoy seeing both the blackbird and robin nonplussed now and then. I don't know that they learn anything by it, but there is a sort of "quid-pro-quo" in the stroke that looks wholesome. I noticed that the woodpecker paid no attention to any of the spectators, but kept strictly to his own business, though I have not been able, as yet, to find out just what that was.

The first accents of the morning song of the birds are now heard about half-past three. "Early to bed and early to rise" is the reading of the entire bird record. The robins seem to be the pioneers in the great waking up. What an awakening it is and what a song follows! All along the line of longitude flashes the first rays of light. The choir seems to be waiting for them. From among the apple blossoms of my orchard

there is the response of half a dozen species of birds. It ripples away down into the meadow below like the wandering murmur of the brook. I can hear the members of the great choir joining in the refrain until thirty and more different species are greeting the sun, "rejoicing to run its course." Curious that this offering of the birds is never twice alike. Curious, too, that there are no discords. The choirs that are trained in the great temple of nature sing out of the heart, and heart singing is sure of its footing always. A favorite nook of mine when all nature is clapping its hands together is down by the old cemetery where I get the music of both the field and wood birds. I like to fancy the entire scene as a great offering of real worship—a multitude of ways and forms, every one in its proper place, and all looking up. No contention among the birds about the way of getting into the Father's house or of the way of getting to His heart when they are once in the house. Their offering in some ways is my offering in them. It takes the parson to the gates wide open, where the morning stars still sing together, and will forever.

I have just seen a bird known in the books as the brown creeper. He has many of the habits

of the woodpecker as well as an appearance in color of plumage very similar. The fellow has a way of locating his nest in a crevice that often is not very secure. His song is a pleasant warble that is not easy to put into words. The worm-eating warbler is a bird of about the same size as the creeper, and is very similar in its habits. It is easy to confound the two if we have only a distant view of them. Sitting in my friend's house in Holland Patent last week, I heard the call note of the brown creeper. Turning to the window, there the little fellow was on the trunk of a tree not more than six feet from where I was sitting. His movements were not very rapid, and he did not seem in the least disturbed by his proximity to the human brother. His spring attire, neat and clean, gave him a very attractive appearance, while his gentle manners recommended him as a bird well worth knowing. How easily he traversed the trunk of the old tree. Round and round he went, working his way up to the branches—a model of diligence and easy familiarity. His first cousin, the worm-eating warbler, is quicker in his movements and wears a little brighter dress. I never have seen the fellow's nest, but am told that he places it on the ground, in general appearance much like that of

the oven bird. The song has a domestic flavor like that of the tree sparrow, and is certainly a credit to the singer. I give them the full freedom of my small city, knowing that they can be trusted anywhere in its streets and houses.

Occasionally I see the kingfisher watching the gateways of our ponds and creeks. What an active, contented sportsman he is. Like other sportsmen, he fails now and then to strike the quarry, but it in no way dampens his ardor. Fishing with him is a business and he follows it with zeal whether the returns be large or small. I have seen them put forth large effort to capture our common brook trout, but never with much success. Fish of slower movement are the game he seeks and usually secures. I hear his voice sometimes, but never with anything of a musical nature in the utterance. A hollow tree furnishes them with an excellent nesting place, but when none is convenient they bore a hole deep into the bank, making a very safe retreat for their young. I am told that when they secure a large fish they prepare it for eating by pounding it against the trunk of a tree until it is reduced to pulp. I never see them taking any pastime so conclude

they use their business in such a manner that it serves as a sort of vacation. If the streams keep open kingfisher stays North well into the winter. When he journeys South, however, he usually pushes on to South America—returning with the first real softening of the spring days. This bird's shape and attire give him very little that is attractive to look upon. Bright colors and beauty of attire are both denied him. He gives no sign, however, that he is cognizant of the fact, passing, as he does, a very cheery sort of life.

A pair of flickers were having a merry time on my lawn this morning. They seemed to have lost their shyness in good part and allowed me to come quite near them. They were intent on securing a breakfast, still they had time to indulge in some real flicker jollying. I watched them for some time, and while I did not understand all they said, I caught a part of it. No way that I know of that uncovers life anywhere only by living it. To know what the flicker says one must be what he says. This pair certainly said "Good-morning," in their way. I don't know that they inquired after the parson's health, and yet some of their movements seemed to in-

dicate it. The thing, however, in their manner that gave me the most satisfaction was the air of true freedom with which they bore themselves. The field and the grove, air and water, sunlight and darkness, the flicker spirit and all bird spirit seem to say, "They are all mine—not a thing in the wide house of my home that is aught else but mine." Free born, free livers, free in every sense that exalts true character. A long line of illustrious ancestors appears in my visitors, and I extend to them my heartiest fellowship.

The recent warm weather opened a wide door in the fields and groves. Not that any of the inhabitants therein really awakened from their sleep, though possibly some of them might have done so. But the door was opened and the opportunity given to all the residents to say something if the mood was on. I watched the dancing sunbeams on one of the clear days and surely their movements were indicative of a lease of new life. The winds gathered their legions and when they had once gotten down to their special work there were no echoes left to slumber in field or grove. Sometimes I half fancy that the echoes are living things. Anyway the rollicking winds

awaken them and I don't know how anything can sleep and awake without being alive. I saw some small insects tossing up and down outside my study window and very likely the warm sunbeams had quickened them into life as they lay dormant in the thick mat of grass. What a multitude of little fellows are tucked away in the great carpet of grass and how nicely they are preserved. Someway they die and at the same time live. The entire surface of the ground with the covering of grass forms Nature's vast refrigerator. For the needs of a great host of creatures this kind of food is always ready for use. The crows revel in the feast and I judge never fail to partake when the opportunity offers. Dining out is without any question the real forte of most of our birds.

One of my real favorites among the field birds is the meadow-lark. He has a way of living bird life that recommends him highly. His arrival from the South in the spring is a sort of challenge to his fellow birds, inciting them to new endeavor in the affairs of life. Their song is given shape in a sort of ringing cheer that seems to give the stirring greeting of the meadows

themselves. Their method of flight is breezy, like their song, and I notice that in graduating their families from the home nest they push matters in real lark fashion. Very little skill is shown in arranging the summer cottage. Some small depression in the surface of the meadow is selected and given a lining of dried grass. Both parent birds join in the nest building and both, I think, share in the process of incubation. When once the young fellows appear, the old birds show a kind of nervous activity quite out of keeping with their ordinary life. Almost every moment food is brought to the hungry brood and no amount, however large, seems to appease in the slightest degree the insatiable appetites. Among all our birds the young larks seem to take up the journey of life with a kind of "go-as-you-please" character that is most interesting. They have a practice of using the hillside as a sort of coasting place, making merry in the exercise like a party of children. Great-hearted, genial fellows they are, lovable in every sense of the word.

When preparing these notes I glanced from my study window and there in the lawn trees were a

number of small birds that I knew from their actions belonged to the warbler family. They were the first I had seen of the migrants from the North. I took my glass and looked them over and I soon learned that the brown creeper was there and the worm-eating warbler. The young of two or three other species were present also, but I did not see any of the old birds. The warblers are all born acrobats. Of them it can be truly said that as they pass through the trees their movements are all of the go-as-you-please character. Occasionally they tumble through the limbs, as though they had lost their balance, but nothing of that kind ever appears, I am sure. Even as I write the little fellows are doing this very thing and the show of pastime which accompanies it determines its meaning. I cannot withhold the questions: "Just where in the wide North did you spend the summer? How far north of the Arctic circle did you locate your home? Did you in your farthest flight see just where the Pole is, or just where it ought to be?" The answers I get very likely throw light somewhere, but not on the way of the inquirer. Not yet does the vernacular of the birds find an interpreter in the counsels of men. Right here I notice a larger bird among the warblers. I am

quite sure it is a member of the sparrow family, but it passes out to the field before I have a fair view of his trim form. Very soon the sparrows from the North will appear, adding not a little to the attractions of our bird world.

Most of our birds have now graduated their young, leaving the old birds free to roam far and wide for the next ten months. Adjourning the housekeeping adjourns the song also, no more singing until they come on for the season's work next spring. As a rule the vacation time is the occasion for "breaking forth into singing," but it is not so with the birds. They have no use for music only when they are putting both hands to toil with all their might. I remember seeing many of our song birds wintering in Oklahoma, each having his own special chirp with him, but not a particle of song. It is a marvel how the fellows pick it up so easily when they have been without it so long. The great singers of the human family need to be in daily practice, and a silence of ten months would almost destroy voice and all use of it. Not so, however, with the birds. They pick up the thread right where they dropped it and go right on as though they

had been in full practice every day. I notice that the class of birds that have simply the call note keep that practically unchanged throughout the year.

Every morning I have as a most interesting guest a large and uncommonly intelligent flicker. He sounds his note once or twice from a distance, then swings along to the orchard, making his best bow from the large tree at the garden gate. I give him most cordial greeting and wish I had command of the flicker tongue. But what is command? I certainly know some good things that he speaks. They come to me freighted with a friendliness that I can understand and do greatly enjoy. The large table of my lawn is always spread and flicker—like the other birds—sits right down to his morning meal without waiting for any special invitation. I notice that his manner of taking his meals is all his own. He puts his long bill right through the table spread, down into the soft mold an inch or more. Just what he gets or just how it is cooked I have no means of knowing. That he smacks his lips over the delicate morsels I can attest; also that his appetite is always first-class. One

day he brought one of his children with him—his oldest son, I fancied—and such a time as he had in giving the boy a few lessons in flicker housekeeping. I found time to take in the scene and do a little hand-clapping over the young fellow's success. Sometimes when I am watching one of these family scenes I feel that a little wholesome correction would do the youngster good, and greatly relieve the mind of the parent bird, but they get on with little or no discipline and get on well. My visitor spends an hour or more with me usually, then hies away to the grove on Burritt's Hill, where I presume the other members of his family await his coming.

Sunday was a full day, rain falling steadily almost without intermission from sun to sun. The thirsty earth drank it with avidity and the plants and trees clapped their hands with joy. The birds seemed to share in the general outburst of praise. Some of the songs were all the better for the rain. The next morning dawned bright and fair, all cheery with new life. I was out early and more than half fancied that garden, lawn and birds were unusually jubilant with praise. I put my ear to the service of catching

the sounds that the old brown earth was emitting. The response was all aglow with life. Every rootlet, part and creature was alert with that genial flow of life which never palls on the taste. The birds caught the key-note of the refrain and I found it not a little difficult to put in a stroke of work where all was festal to the eye and ear. One robin, I am quite sure, continued his song for a full hour, and the English sparrows rivaled him in time if not in music. The meadow birds in the fields beyond the cemetery joined as one in saluting the morning, and even the crows seemed to have a little more cheer in their solemn notes. Someway the morning was so fresh and fair and everything was so in keeping with the new day that I was somewhat averse to even removing the weeds. Each was a temple not made with hands and to destroy such a structure is not an easy task. On such a morning they stand as perfected praise, and who can wantonly put a jarring note into such an anthem?

I notice that the toads are now on duty in larger numbers. I have a notion that some of them were late in coming out of their winter quarters.

Just how they tell when to wake up I have no means of knowing. Very likely all they have to do with it is simply to obey the summons when it comes. Curious that I rarely see two dwelling together in the same house and very rarely meet two of the same size. The venerable fellows, large in body as well as in number of years, I see occasionally. One resides under the woodbine near the barn door, and has all the appearance of having numbered a score of years. He is chary of speech, and when he uses his voice he gives forth a guttural sound that seems without meaning. His success as a fly catcher is pronounced. No one would ever imagine that the fellow could make a quick movement by his general appearance. The moment, however, he sits down—or rather sits up—to one of his daily meals he appears in a new rôle altogether. He takes his dinner on the wing, and does it with a skill and grace that becomes him handsomely. Sometimes I get the idea that when he once begins to eat he has no conception when to stop. So far as I know he has but very little to do besides eating. If he has any regular work by which he earns his daily bread he never has given me an inkling of what it is. The little house roofed with leaves, just a few feet square,

is the whole world to him, and so far as I can see it is all he cares for. Toad character has some things to recommend, but on the whole is not very attractive.

I have noticed several robins lately that seemed in a half-dazed mood. In each case I have found the bird near the mountain ash tree where it had been feasting on the berries. Can it be that the overeating of the bright red fruit produces a kind of intoxication? Or was it an effect of a different character? The way in which the birds eat these berries savors of a sort of infatuation. When they are ripe a large flock is on duty every moment of the day eating with scarcely a particle of intermission. I do not know of any other creature that uses them for food. The variety of food used by birds covers a wide range. I have no knowledge of seeds or insects that are unused. Unlike the animals, the birds provide no supply for the winter months. Their facilities for moving from place to place are such that a store of food is unnecessary. Even those who remain at the North through the winter find sufficient to supply all their wants without any thought for the morrow. What a great full storehouse the

bird commissary is! Wherever the fellow stops on his flight there the storehouse is and there the food is all prepared for his use. "They toil not, neither do they spin," but the feast is ever spread for them and they are always ready for it.

I hear occasionally the whistling flight of the woodcock. Just at the northern gate of the old swamp seems to be a favorite spot for their daily gatherings. As they depend largely on the sense of touch in selecting their food they can do much of their hunting for it in the night. I often see in the soft mud where they have been busy probing for worms and grubs. The long bill is the member used in the search. The end is keenly sensitive and the kind of food is determined easily by the sense of touch. In my boyhood we often saw the fellows early in the morning winging their way to the corn-fields, where they procured a part of their food. The nestlings, like the young of the partridge, find their way out of the nest very soon after they are hatched. The families are usually large, taxing the parent birds heavily in caring for them. The woodcock uses two or three call notes, sometimes uttering them in succession after the pattern of a song. The

nest is not much more than a slight cavity in the ground, given perhaps a thin lining of dried grass. Like the other members of the snipe family the woodcock is an active stirring bird. During his waking hours he keeps busy most of the time hunting for food for himself and his hungry brood. The young woodcock never seems to reach the point in taking food when he acts as though he had eaten enough. They are cunning little fellows and soon learn to secure food for themselves. I think the sportsmen have done but little in the way of hunting these birds in our hill country. Hence, it is not so difficult to interview them as it is in many places where they make their home.

The morning after the rain the robins seemed to be unusually lively. The air was cool and the clouds heavy and dark—not just the conditions wherein I have found the birds stirring early or actively. As I looked out through the mists I could see a dozen or more of my red-breasted friends thoroughly excited and evidently in a state of war that to all appearances meant death in the last ditch. At first nothing was discovered which gave the least indication what

the uproar was about or whether the combatants were really arranged on two distinct sides. At times two birds would contend vigorously, the others looking on quietly or running nervously about, then the entire company would rush together screaming loudly and striking most vigorously with bills and wings. They rolled themselves into a ball of feathers so tightly packed that they seemed one solid mass. For several minutes the battle went on, no one apparently hurt and nothing really gained by any of the contestants. Finally a truce was agreed upon. But the bone of contention, what was it? I could not uncover it and I doubt if the birds knew what it was. It was a case of the army marching up the hill and down again. No one hurt.

The greater surprise that I received on the occasion was the perfect command the students had over that in which they had known no real experience. When called to tell what they knew, each one made an almost perfect success of the effort. "Flicker on the Wing" was the subject of all the orations of the day. Alpha responded to his name, with light step and an apparent confidence in himself that fully betokened real

success. The first sentence he muttered was a bold assertion of winged thought that carried him bodily nearly over to the little red schoolhouse. Think of it, a complete novice in every sense of the word, touching all he was doing, and yet doing it with the utmost ease—utterance in word and gesture—bird elocution at its best. Number two followed, but put his first stroke in the direction of the rising sun. Away he soared, astonishing the whole audience, but himself more than all. When he finally paused he found that his zeal had carried him to the front door of my neighbor's cottage. Time was given him to continue when all seemed favorable in his judgment, which he did, with renewed success. Number three came from the door of the tree temple—announced with the loud calls of the entire faculty. With just the semblance of a bow he threw himself into his part, completing the first sentence far down in the park. He spent an hour or more in that locality, shouting and clapping his hands in true flicker fashion.

The bobolinks seem to be out in a little more than full numbers in the meadows beyond my garden. This morning they appeared to be hold-

ing a sort of convention—all singing and talking at the same time. I could not make out just what they were saying, but I was quite sure they were doing it well. There is nothing slow about the song of the bobolink. It goes with a rush, a great outpouring of notes that are no sooner poured out than they begin to pour again, the stream rippling and hurrying all day long. I fancy at times they reach out a hand for a little praise from the human brother. This very morning one came from the field to where I was at work in the garden. He circled about, singing as only the bobolink can sing—the same song over and over, but new every time. He took a high seat—there are no low seats among birds—on the old apple tree, and such a concert as he put in motion is never known anywhere else. A song fellow joined him soon, and for five minutes all the gardening that I did was keeping both ears open to a hymn that is America from start to finish. For aught the parson knows these fellows have been trilling their songs for hundreds of years. How much evolution there has been in getting where they are I have no means of knowing. They have certainly got there, and I have a notion there is nothing new to be added to the song. What preachers of righteousness they are and

Fox Run

how cleanly they hold the truth. There is no heresy among the bobolinks.

I notice that the song of the thrushes is shading off quite perceptibly. Like the other song birds they have had their carnival of music and are now passing to the monotonous chirp which will mark their demeanor for the next ten months. How do they ever pick up the song again? Surely the skill with which they do it is one of the wonderful things in mother nature's great house. My thrush parishioners journey far away to their Southern home. They dwell there for months, but never once trill their wonderful song. Journeying northward in the spring and lo, the old song appears—not a note missing, not a strain lost. Young and old alike come to the housekeeping of a brief two months simply bubbling over with song. Why it is so I cannot tell—the fact is patent, but its best telling abounds in mystery. There is no other place that the thrush gives me quite so much as he does in the glades of Bird Paradise. When the song rises from the lower part of the glen and comes wandering up the defile I fancy it gathers something from everything as it passes. By the time it reaches me

it has levied tribute upon trees and brook, shrubs and flowers—all the wealth of the gorge. It has multiplied itself a hundred times, and I bow to the wizard bird that fills me with the inspiration of the song of songs.

On the Sauquoit road, half a mile from our village, is the crossing between the two swamps. Logs are found here which tradition says were put in place by a division of Sullivan's army during his celebrated march through the Iroquois country. Among the willows at the roadside a pair of catbirds build their nest every season. To look at, the same birds, the same nest, the same song make up the household and its work each year. The catbird gets his name from one of the calls he uses, which sounds at a little distance like the mewing of a half-grown kitten. Their success in nest construction is only a partial one, although it serves all the needs of the birds. As a singer the catbird ranks high. His penchant for trilling the songs of other birds is well known. He gives what seem to be almost the precise notes of several of his fellow birds. I wonder sometimes whether it be a song adopted by the bird or his own in a special manner, none of it bor-

rowed. The movement of the catbird bears the stamp of a sly, shrewd character, though I know of nothing standing against him that is not to his credit. As I see him he is nearly always gliding around among the willows, so much so that he might appropriately take the name of willow bird. I have seen the catbird several times in the hedges and thickets in Utica. Like some other of our wood birds he is becoming more cosmopolitan in his habits every year.

Nearly all our birds are now here. Another week will bring the cuckoo, which completes the list. I notice that the bobolinks and orioles seem to be on duty in unusual numbers. I hear their songs everywhere in the trees and fields, full and cheery as they should be in the day-dawn of the spring time. Curious, and ever more curious, to me is their method of dropping the song when the nesting season is over, leaving it entirely unused for three-quarters of the year, then picking it up, every note in place, and as musical as though they had been daily practicing all the time. Someway in this particular they have gotten well ahead of the human brother. Curious, too, that among the birds the gentlemen do all the singing. The

ladies of the house have a cold note or two, but no song. It occurs to me that it would be an admirable scheme if the females could put the song into shape and use it through the long vacation. But it is not for me to regulate their matters. Among their own affairs their knowledge of what is best for them is far in advance of any that the parson has, and their wisdom is to use the best they can command.

Bobolinks reached us on the 12th of May. Here and there the bird had been seen two or three days before, but the full company did not appear until the 12th. I was out in my garden early, just in time to welcome the advance guard as they alighted from their aerial trolley car. Their salutation to the parson was given in song, every one apparently doing his best in making the greeting. What an outburst of rattling notes the song is! I wonder how the fellow ever gets it into shape twice alike. But he does, and it certainly, in some respects, has no rival among bird songs. I notice that the bird's location when singing has something to do with the finish of the song. When he sends forth the music on the wing he often puts in a note or two that do

not appear at other times. After he has settled down in the grass he frequently indulges in a chuckle that gives the song a very pleasant variation. From the cozy perch in the top of an old apple tree there is really a little apple blossom melody indulged in that one can easily imagine is the carol of the tree itself as it bursts into bloom. When the females arrive at the Northern home the song sparkles with new life. In fact the cheery fellow seems to meet each new turn of life with a new turn of bobolink speech that fits the case exactly. No bird of my acquaintance has more to say than bobolink or can say it any better.

During my stroll I came upon a family of bluebirds—two old birds and four young ones in the family. When I first saw them they were seated on the telephone wires, and I fancied a mild lecture was being given by the mother of the household. No other lecture is ever given by bluebird. If he knows how to employ his tongue in scolding or raillery, he never has given the parson any sign of it. Whether he turns away wrath or not I do not know, but this is true of him: he never deals in any reply but the soft answer.

The young fellows of this family were active and evidently were fast learning the mysteries of bird life. I have a notion that the families of this species of birds remain together longer than those of their fellow birds. The number that I usually see together are about the measure of a single household. I am a little at a loss to determine just what this bird uses for food. I rarely ever see him using anything—in fact it is the only bird that seems to get on without a large commissary. The family I saw kept company with me, for quite a distance, then balanced away to the far side of the adjacent pasture. What a mellow richness there is in their song. It is as Burroughs says, "purity in its completest sense." He says also that it is the bird of nature, being in color "sky blue above, and earth brown below," adding, "that his appearance in the spring denotes that the war between sky and earth is ended, in him the celestial and terrestrial striking hands and becoming fast friends."

I hear the call of the bobolink from high in the air. The flocks are passing daily and the wonder is where so many come from. They are all of one color—a sort of olive green—and seem to be

animated by the common spirit of getting somewhere just as soon as possible. Why they should start on their Southern journey so early in the season is a secret which they keep to themselves. Food is abundant and the weather pleasant, still at such a time every season they get upon the wing for their extensive travels. I have a notion that they take their time in the passage, being several days reaching their first stopping place in Pennsylvania. Of course they have no idea of what is in store for them as they gather the fruits of their extensive trip. Living on the choicest viands of the land they soon become candidates for the epicure's table. I like the cheery way with which the bobolinks say their "good-bye." Vacation with the birds means a long season of rollicking life with hardly a flaw in the entire round of festivities.

Several of the robins' nests in my lawn trees now shelter the young birds. I notice that with the advent of the little fellows the care and concern of the old birds is greatly increased. It is astonishing what an amount of food a nest of young birds will consume in one day. Their capacity for food seems to be unlimited. They feast all day long, and then wear the air of hungry crea-

tures. I never have known them to refuse food. If there were any regular meals then it could be truly said of them that their eating between meals fills every particle of space from feast to feast. "All the time at it," was what a friend of mine said when the process of feeding for the first time was brought to his attention. "Is it a leaf in the book of nature which we have not yet quite understood or are the birds blundering workmen —building less wisely than they know?" The answer seems to take this form: These denizens of the air eat, drink, sleep and be merry, escaping all sickness, ignoring all doctors, and dying of old age if they have half a chance. One thing can be said of the food that it rarely ever is of the kind that pampers the appetite. Earthworms, which constitute the daily bread of the young robins, so far as I know, are not a rich viand. Possibly the more they eat of these wriggling fellows, the more they want. If adopting their style of eating involves the necessity of adopting their kind of food, why of course none of us would care to dine with the robins.

I saw this morning the largest flock of crow blackbirds, or grackle, that I have seen in many

years. They located in the large maples just north of the church, and spent several minutes in a sort of conclave which was lively, and which possibly the birds understood. I was curious to know the number of black fellows in the party and counted them off until the record read 135. Their free and easy way of doing things was most noticeable. I could not discover that the presiding officer, if there was one, had the least authority in the assembly. They all talked at the same time and apparently understood one another. The language they used is one of the primitive tongues that I suppose has been in vogue without any perceptible change for hundreds of years. The smooth flowing song that followed seemed unusually full of the softer notes. I suppose the concert was a succession of set pieces, with their accompanying encores, prima donnas having to do with them, and stars also of the other sex. I watched them for some little time, thinking, perhaps, there might be a clue uncovered somewhere by which I could divine the real object that called so many of the dusky fellows together. I fancied half a dozen good reasons for their action, but had no way of determining whether any one of them had the slightest application to the case in hand. Off

they all went finally to the swamp, where I heard them still later in the day telling their blackbird story with the same fervor as when I first saw them early in the day.

At five o'clock this morning I stood in my orchard and yielded a listening ear to the concert of the birds. The singers were everywhere, on all sides of the place where I was standing. The air was clear and warm, and the sun just lifting its broad face above the horizon. I was curious to know how many of the different species were lifting their voices in common on the occasion. I jotted down the names, and here they are: Robins, grackle, flickers, orioles, hawks, red-headed woodpeckers, marsh sparrows, crows, starlings, warblers, swallows, meadow-larks, pewees, tree sparrows, vireos, English sparrows, wrens, vesper sparrow, bobolinks, purple-crowned sparrows, chimney-swifts, twenty-one in all—a very fair showing for such an early hour, and a very fair concert. Curious how this morning festival of song is rendered daily, and the listener of even the most critical taste never detects any discord in the performance! The fact is, there are no discords in

nature! When discord enters, nature steps out. The birds lift up their voices together, and, someway, they all seem to harmonize—no break in the great anthem from first to last. While something of this festival can be enjoyed in the city and larger villages, the beauty and the glory of it are only found in the open country. To get its inspiration as often as possible is a duty that glows with the privilege of new life.

All of the first and second quotas of spring birds are now here. The advanced guard consists of robins, bluebirds, blackbirds and sparrows. Next come the larks, flickers and two or three species of the sparrows. Then follow the wood birds, red-headed woodpeckers, swallows, orioles, bobolinks, and last of all the cuckoo. How the fellows shape their coming to suit the weather and the supply of food is outside of my knowledge. Just now all that are here are getting their full amount of regular food, and seem to be entirely at home. Curious how they appear to be entirely at home anywhere that they happen to be. True, they form attachments for certain localities, and find their way there with a sagacity that is simply wonderful. Still in

their yearly wanderings they give each locality where they tarry enough of their attention, so that it really appears as though they regarded it with a homelike feeling. All the Northern birds that I saw wintering in Oklahoma seemed entirely contented and happy. I apprehend that when they are once entered upon their vacation any place where they are is the spot where they like to be. Plenty of good food, with fairly comfortable quarters, gives most of our birds a homelike feeling.

All the members of the swallow family seem to be masters of the science and beauty of flight. Each species illustrates movements that it has in common with all the others, and each excels in some special grace. The eave swallow is particularly graceful in some of its upward curves—a trait of character gradually attained, doubtless, from the long practice of moving in that manner, as they leave their nests under the eaves of the barn. A colony of these fellows practice a very pleasant kind of social bird life. The nests are placed on some slight projection, sheltered by the overhanging roof, and are very good examples of the skill of birds having for their

material the mud of the roadside. They seem to be quite firm and with thorough repairing are used year after year. Some of them have passageways like the neck of a bottle, and frequently at each opening may be seen the heads of the parent birds quietly surveying the outside world. The young of the swallow family must be adepts in the use of their wings, for I never have seen them tumbling about half fledged. I fancy they keep close within the home nest until they are quite fully grown, then flight is a sort of second nature to them. I have no way of computing the number of insects a swallow secures as he goes to and fro through the day, but it must be a large number. I hear the little bills snap sharply, and know that each stroke is the full end of a fly's career. Multiplying swallows are carrying large destruction into the crowded ranks of the great fly host.

Among my parishioners none ranks higher in my regard than the wide-awake flicker. His doing, I am sure, is always up to the full mark of the Scriptural injunction, "With all his might." Six years ago a pair of them located their summer home in one of my lawn maples.

They had some difficulties to surmount in getting their house in order, and for a time I was quite doubtful about their success in the enterprise. The youngsters graduated in due time, and I concluded that some of them would occupy the old homestead every season. In a certain way they have. Each spring they come to the old place, and for several days hold a sort of bird carnival. I get the notion each time that it is a kind of house-warming given by the pair that have just set up housekeeping in the old home. Each time, however, I have been mistaken. Since that first season there has been the annual gathering at the old hearthstone, any amount of flicker fun and talk but no family life has come from it. As I write this I glance from my study window, and there the birds are busy with their regular spring orgies. I say orgies, for the word seems to express exactly what they are doing. Half an hour ago they came balancing down from Burritt's Hill, six of them in all, and their rollicking call has been the very pulse beat of the village air ever since. They dart about among the trees apparently as full of fun as a party of boys. Up the trunks of the maples they scramble, chasing each other around the great limbs, ever on the move. If they have looked in at the old

home once they have a dozen times. About the only language they use is the word flicker, pronounced with a great variety of inflections.

Only one place that I know of about here where the eave swallow nests. Under the eaves of the barn on the old Osborn place near Daytonville I counted forty nests last year. In my boyhood they made their homes every year on several different farms in this locality. The largest number I ever saw in any one place was at the barn of Harvey Head on the Cassville road. I have forgotten the number of nests he used to report but I remember the swallows were about the building in great numbers. Mr. Head gave them large welcome and they repaid it in the destruction of thousands of insects. Barns, as they are now built, furnish but little opportunity for the swallow to place his nest securely. The flight of this bird is true to all the traditions of his large family. His movement is easy and graceful and from anything I can discover may be continued almost indefinitely without any apparent weariness. The nests are curious pockets built of mud with short necks through which the bird reaches the inner parts of the house. Some

writers classify this and the cliff or bank swallow as one species. As they pass in flight there seems to be no perceptible difference in shape or color. The song is a slight twitter usually given when on the wing.

I received a curious invitation from my flicker friends last week—at least, so it seemed to me. On Friday morning the town crier of this small city went to and fro in my lawn trees proclaiming most vigorously some event of great importance. I went out to the church steps and was hardly more than nicely fixed in my favorite seat when the whole matter was made clear. It was commencement week in the flicker university and the faculty and entire body of students were ready to give the parson special welcome to all the exercises. They did give the welcome and I accepted the greeting with both hands and all my heart. The day was ideal and I soon got the notion that the entire affair was of great moment to all concerned. The whole school of flickers were graduating—each valedictorian of his class. The great maple front of the church, long years in building, was the temple of their lifelong instruction. What to say and do on the great

occasion was all nicely pictured out by the two professors—faculty of the institution. The lawn of the rectory and church was the broad stage whereon the entire exercises were conducted. Just what was said as the students were called to take their parts I could not quite divine. The outcome, however, was the key to all that followed. The four students, each in his turn, stepped boldly out and in the "born anew" of the moment went cheerily forward to the first full sweep of flicker life.

The bobolink trills his song now only occasionally. Its bubbling over joy has sensibly changed into a kind of bird music that has a good many slow and heavy notes. Curious that when the fellow's work and care are put aside the best part of him should go with them. I wonder if there be any scheme that could be put into operation whereby we might preserve not only this bird's song, but the songs of all birds, through the vacation season. We need a Burbank to work in this direction, and it may not be a fruitless venture. The bird uses his short note or chirp the whole year through, and why should he not use his song? I often ask myself

the questions, From what source did the bobolink derive his song, and how does he keep the delicious medley in shape so handsomely? It rattles off a thousand times or more during the song season with never a note seemingly missing. I have tried again and again to reduce the refrain to a word form but never have made any large success of the effort. About the first of August the song ceases altogether. A month is then given to a kind of wild, free bird play. Then comes the first stroke of migration, ending with a change of name to Pennsylvania reed bird. About the last of September he wings his way still farther southward, again receiving a new name, that of rice bird. In December he reaches the shores of the Gulf, and a little later floats across to the wilds of South America where he spends the remaining winter months.

One of our bright colored wood songsters bears the name of indigo bird, or woodfinch. Another name he sometimes receives is that of blue-finch. He is also called the indigo bunting. He finds his way to the Northern home about the middle of May, and while he is not a great singer he adds a very pleasing melody to the forest

choir. He belongs to the large sparrow family and the keen instincts of his race help him wonderfully in running the gauntlet of his many enemies. They are not very plentiful, for I rarely ever see more than a single pair in any one season. I find them often in company with the rose-breasted grosbeak, so I conclude they are fast friends. A favorite resort for this bird is a clearing near the wood, partly grown up with bushes. I notice that his perch for singing is some small tree in the clearing, where, seated on the topmost bough, he trills a song that ranks well with those of his fellow birds. I never have known any blemishes on his character. On the contrary he has a very clean record. Of course he meets with the vicissitudes that all bright colored birds meet with. His brilliant hue betrays his hiding place, and I suppose that is one reason why his family numbers so few members. In my boyhood they frequently came into the orchard of the old homestead, and we saw several pair each season. The dense wood, however, is the fellow's place of greater safety and he rarely ventures beyond its bounds.

This week brought the birds in full numbers. I have already seen five or six different species.

The weather has not been perfect, but it seems to make no difference with the birds. They go about with their usual spirit, apparently as content with the storm as with the sunshine. Of the early comers the robin is the most active. Just how he keeps up his natural motion all day long is a problem to the parson. He does it, however, and for anything I can see "brings back at eve, immaculate, the manners of the morn." I have been wondering a little how much truth there is in the saying that the male birds are the first to arrive in the Northern haunts. I am quite sure that the two sexes appeared here together this year. Perhaps it is an off year, or it may be that the birds are off. Why should they not be, now and then? They have a right to make mistakes, and very likely make them. As I write half a dozen birds are rollicking on my lawn, giving every sign of being perfectly happy. The earthworms seem to be ready for them, also the nicely prepared insects that have lain all winter in the grass. What a table is ready for them and how they partake of its bounty, never in the slightest degree acting as though they were not sure of their next meal. Robin faith has a good deal of that character which secures the "Be it unto you even as thou wilt."

A red squirrel invaded the precincts of one of my robin homes and no doubt got some new ideas touching robin hospitality. I was sitting on the porch at the time and my first knowledge of the adventure was a great fluttering noise in one of the maples. Almost immediately this was followed by Mr. Squirrel's advent, every movement he made fairly crowded with hurry. Two robins were waiting upon him and they attended to all the details of the matter with scrupulous care. As he tumbled from the tree and struck the ground one of the birds struck him. He rolled over two or three times, then tried the tree again. Here both robins met him and for a few moments the mixture of birds and squirrel was much closer than the four-footed fellow had any taste for. This time he sprang far out on to the lawn and made his way rapidly to his home in one of the large trees on the opposite side of the church. I rather enjoyed squirrel's discomfiture for I know he has ruined more than one bird home in my lawn trees this season.

Among my bird visitors this week was an entire family of orioles. They came into the lawn

maples very quietly, but they were no sooner seated in the easy chairs of the branches than they began to call loudly for the daily bread. The old birds responded quickly to the call and the more they responded the more there was of the call. Orioles are true to their kind in giving place to hunger that never seems to be appeased. Bird hunger is a commodity that is always kept in store and is always storing up the more—never by any manner of means crying out enough. I was hardly aware of orioles' value as a farm helper, until I saw their work in supplying this family with food. The old birds were busy every moment, and I should conclude used in their feasting almost every kind of bug, grub and insect that we have in our lawns and gardens. I was quite willing to contribute every squash bug I had to the feast, and the orioles were quite willing to take them. They caught many insects on the wing, in fact levied on all the small creatures in the trees or on the ground and kept it up steadily during the hour they stayed with me. The pleasant song of the bird had been laid aside, old and young using the same call note. Another week and the family life will cease, not to be known again until an entire year has passed.

Warbler Retreat

I conclude from what I see at the present time that there are at least a dozen or fifteen robins' nests in process of construction here in our village. There is no lack of material and certainly the business is being prosecuted with commendable zeal. Mud and dry grass are the materials used, and surely when one considers the character of the things put into the building it is quite apparent that robin makes a large success of the work. The heavy winds that we have had this season have interfered somewhat seriously with the birds' building projects. I found on my lawn last week a nest nearly completed. It had been blown from the swinging limb, the owner losing both time and work in the accident. Someway the fellows tide over an experience of this character without any serious loss. In a week's time doubtless the wreck of the accident will all be cleared away and a new house put into place. I have seen the English sparrow play a very shrewd trick upon the robin when he is busy with his nest building. The other day the mother bird had just filled her bill with a tuft of dried grass when a sparrow flew and snatched it away, leaving robin an astonished and apparently disgusted bird. I have seen the sparrows snatch food in

the same way, robin submitting to the indignity with no appearance of protest.

My woodchuck parishioners have passed their quiet winter and are now taking up the duties of the rapidly advancing spring. What a curious scheme it is that this little animal employs to tide over the winter's storm and cold. Last fall all the woodchuck residents of my parish folded their hands and went to sleep in their burrows, no eating or drinking known by them until within the last week. I have known them to pass to the long sleep when the weather was warm and pleasant and food plentiful. Then I have known them to put aside the sleep in February, when the frost and cold were everywhere in our Northland. Once I was passing in the ravine near the Bartlett woods in February. The snow had drifted in until the bank on the west side was some twelve or fifteen feet deep. A woodchuck had dug through the snow and when I looked into the burrow he was sitting on the threshold of his earth cabin, evidently in a great quandary as to what was best for him to do next. I kept a little watch of the fellow and I found as the days passed he got along very com-

fortably. Of course his supply of food was limited but he found enough to keep the fires of life burning brightly, and so far as I could see, passed the hours of his somewhat narrow life quite pleasantly. A little later in the season a family of youngsters gladdened by their presence the rustic home. I found not a little recreation in watching them as they passed through the different stages of woodchuck life. Curious that in their small world they are beset with enemies on every side. Hawks and foxes are on the watch for them, and I am told, though I have never seen it, that the old male members of the tribe appropriate them in a cannibal way. "The price of liberty, even among the animals, is eternal vigilance."

My toad parishioners interview me now almost daily. When I find them in the grass they seem in a pleasant mood and, so far as I understand, say pleasant things. When my hoe or spade breaks into their snug winter quarters, giving them an unceremonious tumble out into the light, they wink some and blink some, and I am quite sure express themselves in as forcible a manner as the toad ever employs. I notice that they seem in fine heart as the spring opens.

Wonderful how they pass through the winter months and apparently make some healthy growth. I never have been able to discover the slightest indication that they enjoy social converse with their fellows. All my toad tenants live a hermit life, and they secure the character which that kind of living gives. They have a taste for the flies and bugs which infest a garden, and I encourage all their forays into my small realm.

It is surprising how expert they are in catching flies. It is about the only quick motion they make, and the only member they use in performing the feat is their long, flexible tongue. Let the fly pass within striking distance and the stroke comes—a flash of red, which surely reaches the game every time. In a stage ranch in Oklahoma I saw the feat performed by a large toad again and again. I was sitting in the old cabin partaking of a frugal lunch when this huge toad came out of his lair and showed me how he secured his lunch. The flies were present in full force—clouds of them. All the fellow had to do was to keep his tongue flashing—a fly, and I sometimes thought two, secured every time. He spent what seemed to him a very agreeable half hour, and it was a revelation to the parson,—the

number of flies one toad can devour in a single meal.

Occasionally I go down to the meadow and deep tangled wildwood just as the last doors of day are closing for the night. The process of closing the doors is always interesting, and I never have known two of these occasions just exactly alike. Last evening I tarried a few minutes just beyond the confines of "God's Acre," the halo of darkness clothing all things in its restful sphere. So many friends have hung away the worn garments of time in the little wardrobe near the church that I love to tarry there, renewing life in the sacred influences of "Auld Lang Syne." How delightful at such a place and time to have a little bevy of vesper sparrows shape a requiem of the day that seemed to be a real foretaste of "standing ever in the light." Vespers' song holds some things that are common to all the sparrows. But just as clearly it is guardian of many strains that no other bird commands. It was fully dark when this experience came to me, and at least five of the birds were opening their hearts in the song. Without the slightest stroke of effort the song came to me clothed in the mantle of praise. The voice of the meadow, the wider voice of the stars,

the wondrous harmony of all space, ah, the sparrows, out of their simple, pure, gracious hearts, shaped it all into a vision—day born of night—the night of the silent city where I stood, passing surely to the Master's broad, open day of "Come again." The song ceased, darkness had its place, and I came home from the scene, heart all aglow with the blessed inspiration of sparrow's sermon on the mount.

In some ways the thrush is the bird of prominence among our wood songsters. He comes and goes in a quiet way, in fact so quiet that I never have been able to discover him in the act itself. The thrush corner in Bird Paradise is tenantless or it is given a resident and no one but the bird itself knows when or how. Last week I knocked at the door of the corner named above, and my friend was there. A day or two before he was not there and no sign of his coming was visible anywhere. I suppose that if I had been there early in the morning, I might have seen the birds arriving by the night train on their elevated road. The thrush usually appears when the leaves are about half out. This year, however, he has been a little ahead of time. The marvel is that he ar-

rives or leaves his Northern haunts anywhere near the right time. Someway, however, he does it and makes little or no mistake. I understand that they pass the winter well down in the Gulf states, getting entirely away from the snow and cold. I never have known one to stay here through the winter, as some of our other birds occasionally do. I conclude from this fact that the fellow has no resources in case he is left stranded in his Northern home. Even in the summer he seems at times in a sort of quandary as to what is the best thing for him to do.

Whoever writes, or attempts to write, the story of the bobolink will find a task on his hands that never can be quite all told. I have known the fellow nearly seventy years and each successive season he has brought something new to be recorded. This year he postponed his coming a little later than usual, but it was all the same to the rollicking fellow. He came with the genuine bobolink flourish of trumpets, not a note missing in his cheery song. It may have been that his trolley line was a little out of order or something may have miscarried in his calculations, for he arrived in our hill country fully an hour after

daylight. The regular hour as I have observed him year after year is just at break of day. The call is sounded from high in the air, and a few minutes later I see the fellows dropping down a sort of mythical stairway, swaying back and forth as they descend. After their long flight—perhaps through the entire night—I look for weariness, but nothing of the kind appears. They seem as fresh as though the night had been spent in sleep rather than in flight. I have a notion that the flight of birds is restful to them rather than a burden. It is native air and native effort, both stimulating—rarely ever a task.

It is but seldom that the flicker comes into my lawn and makes himself entirely at home. When he does, he recommends himself as one of my most interesting bird parishioners. The other day I noticed that there was considerable excitement among the robins. They flew to and fro, giving their loud sharp cry, and seemed possessed of the idea that their homes were invaded by some enemy. I looked around for the cause of the extra excitement, and finally discovered that a flicker had come in upon the lawn and was busy satisfying what appeared to be a pretty large appetite. He had selected a place only a few feet

from my study window and I had an excellent opportunity of viewing the entire process at close range. The long bill was thrust down into the ground and kept in constant motion. I soon saw that he depended upon the sense of touch in securing his food. Evidently any resident of the earth mansion that he came into contact with furnished one of the viands of the feast. While he was busy at his meal, one of the robins flew full tilt against him, but without diverting flicker's attention in the slightest degree from the special object he had in view. I doubt if the attacks of other birds have any effect on flicker's course. The even tenor of his way is about where he keeps, but what may happen. I never see him long at a time without his showing that he has a real and large sense of humor. At least, so his way of doing seems to me. I think he knows that he is always welcome to my small domain.

Last evening I was quite sure I heard the spring note of one of the early birds among the frogs. It came up from the marsh beyond the cemetery, and was most decidedly a genuine call of the season. What a curious way the frogs have of launching the boat in which they sail the sea of

life. In fact, I know of no forward movement anywhere that is anything else but curious. Three families of the frogs—counting the toads as one—begin their career in the shifting house of the water. I can understand the process of getting the eggs into the liquid incubator, but how hatching is brought about with all certainty lies wholly out of my sphere of knowledge. I am quite sure every egg hatches and occasionally I get the notion that some of them hatch twice. Stranger, however, than all else are the transformations that take place ere the young fellows graduate as full-fledged adults in their respective clans. Not the slightest resemblance exists in form between the young and old of these curious creatures. But somebody cares for them and they come safely through all their perils and trials. Once or twice I have met with the young toads, when they were moving from the watery home. Hundreds were in the throng, all of them eager to get somewhere on the solid land. I give them hearty welcome to my lawn and garden, knowing that their work among the insects is of large value to tillers of the soil.

Years ago, one of our most common birds bore the name of cow-bunting. They belonged to the

blackbird family and secured their full name through a habit they had of gathering in small flocks around the cows in the pasture. The object of their friendship for the cows was the increased opportunity it gave them of securing their accustomed food. I have seen them often on the old farm seated on the cows' backs—the animals evidently enjoying their bird guests' company. Among our many birds the cow-buntings are the only species that take no part in rearing their young. They build no nests, never pair like other birds, have no nuptial song, in short, so live that they throw aside everything that savors of the domestic life. I am sure such a course gives a peculiar kind of character that has but little in it that is attractive. Just how these fellows moored their craft at such an anchorage I do not know. Neither do I know how extensively it is practiced. I never have seen a nest built by the cow-bunting, but I have seen their eggs deposited in the nests of other birds, always, I believe, in those of smaller size, a scheme that shows some little sign of thoughtfulness. I am told that the yellow warbler on finding the egg deposited in its nest will build a new bottom, thus defeating the cowbird's plan. Some one states that he has seen two of these

guards interposed in the same nest. If it be not reason, what is it?

I do not recall a year when the wealth of robin life was so pronounced as it is this spring. They have come in large numbers and almost as soon as they arrive they take up the duties of house-keeping. Some writers say that the male birds arrive first, the females following in three or four days. This year, however, the birds seemed to have been paired when they came. I suppose that when the spring quota of birds is large it is good evidence that all, or nearly all, of the birds reared in this section last year have come back to the old haunts. Sometimes all the birds of a locality perish one way and another during the winter migration. It usually takes three or four years to restore the loss. Just here I notice from my study window a pair of red-breasted fellows putting grass and mud into place, shaping one of their summer cottages. Both birds work at it and both seem equally skilful. When they are nest building I have a notion that they spend but little time seeking the daily bread. It is all there in the brown earth, suited exactly to their taste, but they seem to have no time or inclination to

seek it. A little later in the season, however, they balance the books completely, scarcely doing anything else but eat.

The dwellers on my small domain show many traits of character that seem closely allied with those of human nature. Each species of birds conducts its affairs as though the title to the entire lawn and garden was vested in that single species. Of course such a condition is sure to provoke somebody and that somebody is sure to resent all such provoking. The battle spirit, I notice, is fanned into a brighter flame just after the young birds have left the nest. This morning a mother robin was putting forth large effort to secure a miller that had strayed upon the lawn. Catching insects on the wing is not robin's forte and yet he acts sometimes as though he was not at all conscious of the fact. After quite a little time of strenuous effort he managed to secure the prize. While he was busy I noticed an English sparrow equally busy in watching him. Hardly had the first motion in the way of dissecting the creature been made ere the sparrow by a sudden movement snatched the prize and darted away with it. Robin was too much

astonished to do anything but submit to the affront with what grace he could command. The English sparrow is given to these shrewd methods of replenishing his larder and, of course, the other birds do not love to have it so.

I notice that during the dry weather the little red ants that bore holes and build houses in the hard trodden path are on duty, apparently, night and day. I see them everywhere and I conclude that almost any place where they can find footing in the hard earth will furnish them with the requisites of what they call home. Passing along the streets of New Hartford last week, I saw in the hard path the little circles of red earth in the centre of which appeared the open door with the stream of ants going in and out. Later in the day, in the city of Utica, I saw the little fellows on duty—putting the doors of their mansions into the seams of the great flagging stones. Hundreds of them are trodden on and killed every day, but someway they keep their numbers good. Of course in the city their supply of food is much greater than in the country, and in the main their home under the large stones is a safe and roomy one. I am at a loss in determining how these minute creatures can work their way

down into the hard earth, building houses there that to them are abodes of light and cheer. The old adage "many hands make light work" tells a part of the story, and "always at it" tells another part, but the task seems larger than the genius of the workmen can compass. Still, they do compass it and in so doing write out one of the parson's great object lessons: "Being and doing at one's best is getting there in the first movement at the beginning and in all the movements that follow on to the end, and there is no end."

The dry weather has been quite a burden to many of my lawn tenants. Some of them are furnished with means of defense which they use freely. The earthworms laugh at the drought. The hot and dry vie together and the surface of the ground yields to their influence until there is not a particle of moisture left in at least a foot of the earth. The worms simply retire to the cool rooms of their castle a little farther down, and wait in comfort for the return of better days. What a house it is that these fellows build! Chambers everywhere, down five or six feet from the surface of the ground. There are no other plowmen like them. Our best workers stir and

pulverize the earth eighteen or twenty inches deep; these fellows multiply that depth three or four times. I suppose they work night and day at their task. But is it a task? I never have seen anything on their part that seems to indicate it. If it be work then it is play also, and the spirit of such a combination is the very laughter of living. Sufficient unto the day is everything that belongs rightfully to the day is a prominent article in the earthworm's creed.

Nearly every day I make the acquaintance of some creature in my lawn or garden that I have not met before. This morning as I was interviewing the potato-bugs, a member of the beetle family came from somewhere, saying in his mild mannered way that he was a tenant of my small domain and would enjoy being a little better acquainted with the proprietor. Of course I assured him that I knew of no reason why he should not have place in my inheritance and not only place, but daily bread and all the protection that such a home provided. He certainly carried with him the attitude of a listener, though I discovered no full assurance that he understood the real meaning of the welcome. To the natural vision there is nothing very attractive in

these creatures, but when I put him under my glass he passed to a beauty of person everyway attractive. Curious how the work of the Divine artist becomes more and more beautiful the closer we come to the secrets of its being. Each new revelation entrances the beholder and also gives sign of larger mysteries lying farther on. I love the realm of mystery, not that the realm of knowledge is without its satisfaction but the condition "seen and unseen" is the very order of being. In it my joy of living gets all its own —in short, lives, dies, lives again. The creatures that journey with me, how little I know of what they hold as their own. But much, or little, it is mine in being theirs and theirs in being mine.

I do not recall a season when the fireflies have been so plentiful as they have been during the past week. Usually they appear for a short time in low, wet places in comparatively small numbers. This year they are to be seen in every direction, making some of the evenings quite brilliant. What a curious furnishing it is. In a certain direction it aids the insect, but at the same time reveals him to his enemies. How full life is of these contradictions, and how true the

passage of Browning reads, "All our best interests are on the dangerous edge of things." Firefly has good command of his lantern. Easily he flashes the light, and just as easily commands the darkness. I half fancy, sometimes, that he makes use of his extra furnishing to guide him in his flight. Then, again, I get the notion that the fellows are having a sort of Fourth of July, or Old Home Week celebration. Each one lights a bonfire and carries it around with him. If there is any shouting I do not catch the accents. About all I get of the gathering is the fireworks, and these last a good part of the night. I rather enjoy looking out in the night and seeing these fellows going to and fro with their lanterns. They seem to be saying, "Sleep on, parson, get a good rest, we will look after matters outside," and so far I have found their vigil most efficient.

A sparrow-hawk ventured into my orchard this week and not only failed to secure any prize, but met with several strokes of adversity that evidently he had not counted upon. From all I could gather I conclude that he made a vigorous attempt to bag one of the little chip sparrows that was housekeeping in the corner apple tree.

I heard the commotion and soon discovered that the fellow had not only missed his aim but was made the mark of all the birds in this part of the village. When I saw him he was rushing hither and thither, a dozen birds and more helping him to move with unusual celerity. Their methods of attack varied. The robins flew full tilt against him while the sparrows gave loose rein to their voices, but keeping at a respectful distance from their active enemy. The swallows were the most venturesome. Some of the chimney species went far up into the air, dropping down upon the hawk much to the fellow's discomfort. After a few moments the hawk found his bearings, and went rapidly off to the swamp —no doubt glad to escape even though the feast he had anticipated lacked its principal viand. I know full well that the hawk is shaping his course aright when he levies on his fellow birds, making them contribute all that they are to satisfy his needs, but at the same time I have a decided feeling of pleasure when he fails to carry out his plans.

Nearly all young swallows are now on the wing. I notice frequently a family of the fellows sitting quietly on the telephone wires, the children busy

learning the many duties of outdoor swallow life. I have seen the old birds occasionally feed the youngsters as they flew by. Like all other young birds they are more conscious of hunger the first week of outdoor life than they are of anything else. What a perfect movement the swallow uses as he passes to and fro on the wing. I never tire of watching them and the one I see last is the one I fancy is excelling all others. The young of the barn and eave swallows I never have known to tumble from the nest until they were ready to use their wings nicely. The children of the chimney swallow have quite a different experience. It is not an unusual thing with them to end their first journey from the home nest at the bottom of the chimney. With them, however, it is not a serious matter. They easily clamber up the sides of the chimney and soon emerge from the top none the worse for the first trip into the region below. Next month they all start on their long journey to the far South, giving us no more of their company until another spring.

I notice that the killdeers are gathering in small flocks. Their annual housekeeping has had its day and the wider community life has taken its place. Curious how easily the home life is set

aside and the new introduced. The children of the family roam far and wide, apparently entirely divorced from all home ties. One would very naturally conclude that they would grow stronger with the passing of the days. There is every indication during the helpless days of the young birds that the relations of the family are steadily increasing in strength. This continues until the nestlings are equipped to care for themselves. That point reached all home relations are sundered as with a single stroke. In fact, it seems to set aside with all species of birds very largely the real affection that appears so strong during the nesting season. The flocks that are now gathering will increase in size until they enter upon the flight southward next month. We saw the different species of plover passing the winter on the plains of Oklahoma. Among them the killdeer had place as a stirring and attractive member. Sometimes when we were out on our long journeys we levied on these flocks for a portion of our supply of food and found it a most appetizing addition to the sometimes scanty stock.

Occasionally I hear a call from high in the air, telling of a company of water-fowl passing on their way northward. Geese and ducks are both now

on the wing and I hardly know which can make its call heard the greatest distance. The ducks I think are quite apt to do more talking than the geese, though both are pretty sure to be heard most of the time. Two or three times in my boyhood I was present when a party of travelers were lost in a dense fog. Once it was in the early morning, before it was hardly light enough to discern objects very clearly. I heard the rush of wings, and the loud calls, the entire flock tossing about in the old orchard, apparently wild with fright. In and out among the trees they went, some of them almost fanning me with their wings. For several minutes they wandered back and forth from the pasture to the orchard, a really ludicrous sight. Finally the sun broke through the fog, giving the fellows the cue to where they were, and what they needed to do. The leader took his place, the others quickly following his example, and the entire flock was soon on its way none the worse for the misadventure of a few minutes. In my boyhood the fall and spring migrations of the ducks and geese were large, great flocks passing, sometimes, for several days in succession. Frequently they stopped for an hour or two on our ponds and streams, giving the local sportsmen a chance to bag a goodly number.

Our water birds seem to be all here. How quietly the creatures come and go in their migrations. Someway I think this class of birds move in their accustomed places with the least appearance of display of all our feathered friends. About all I know of their leaving us is that they are gone, and when they return in the spring to their Northern haunts when I first see them they are fully domiciled, no signs perceptible of their ever having been away. Down at the swamp side I hear the whistle of the woodcock, the sharper notes of the snipes, the loud call of the killdeer, and the softer strains of the little tip-up. I interview them and each has his own story to tell and he tells it well. Mr. Woodcock, the largest bird of the family, I usually see on the wing, though frequently I find him busy in a marshy place, securing his daily bread. He has a scheme of thrusting his long bill down into the soft mold and by the sense of touch uncovering his food. He must secure a large supply, for he always has the appearance of a well-kept bird. The snipe has many of the woodcock's habits and is a good second to many of his ways. The killdeer comes out into the open fields, and is quite a master of rapid flight. I saw a small flock this week pass-

ing high in the air—uttering frequently their loud clear call. Perhaps the most interesting of all our water birds is the little sandpiper. From his frequent use of the word tip-up, we have given him that as his local name. In two or three places in the swamp there are sandy places where the tip-ups enjoy what I should term their many games. They are expert in these games, I am sure, and frequently an encore of mine closes a contest that looks like a great neighborhood gathering.

I noticed that the robins engaged in nest building about as soon as they arrived in their Northern home. Mud, one of the principal materials for the nest, they find now in abundance. Dried grass also abounds, but perhaps the chief reason for the unusual haste lies in the fact that the season is a little late. Then, too, they really have nothing else to do. So far as I can see they have, on their arrival, settled all the preliminaries of housekeeping, and of course the house after that is the first thing needed. I have no particular admiration for the robin as a house builder. I suppose he does the best he knows, and that is as high as the imperfect ever reaches. Just now I

notice that the song sparrow is busy shaping a mansion which is really a work of art. On the swinging branch of one of my evergreens the foundation of the house is laid. What a marvelous cup it is! But the adorning of the inner walls is the marvel of this bird palace. The long fine hairs are woven in until it seems like a fairy home, born some way out of the very heart of nature. It is not at all strange that the author of it all should secure thereby the name of hair bird. Among the songs of our early birds I fancy there is no other that ranks quite as high as that of our chippy friend. I am quite apt to regard it as No. 1 among the sparrow melodies.

My neighbor tells me that a pair of hen-hawks have put their nest in a large tree in the Birmingham swamp. Just how they keep their incubator warm enough in this cool weather to hatch the hawk chickens is a problem with the parson. The nest is loosely constructed and even though the old birds alternate in keeping the house warm it would seem as though the venture would be a failure. In my boyhood the swamp covered many acres of land east of the village. Several of the hawks' nests were built there every season. Part

of the boys' regular pastime was climbing the great trees for an interview with the hawk household. Several times we tried the experiment of domesticating one of the young birds, but never with any great success. Even when we had graduated the bird as a real member of the farm family he never became very domestic in his behavior. The young crow repaid us for all the trouble we had with him in living such a humorous, jolly life that his presence was always quite enjoyable. The hawk never seemed to be quite at home in a domestic state. He was built for the wild and he seemed to know it, and I remember we were quite well satisfied when he took wing and sailed away.

One of my bird parishioners that interests me without being very attractive is the little flycatcher. He has some of the traits of his race and some that are peculiarly his own. One of his habits keeps him before the public every moment of his waking time. Several times a minute he expresses his feelings in a metallic voice that once heard is not easily forgotten. His raiment is plain, no bright colors being allowed. His form is that borne by his family, beauty having not been considered when he was given being.

GROSBEAK GLEN

After the housekeeping duties have once been assumed the male bird seems to consider it an important part of his duty to scold vigorously every other bird that comes within range of his voice. I have noticed that the oriole seems to give the little fellow a stir-up that rouses all his ire. Let the notes of the bright-colored bird sound through my lawn, and flycatcher makes reply that lacks nothing in sharpness. The other birds as a rule pay no attention to the little fellow, none of them apparently taking him seriously. Curious how the way one is considered by his fellows makes itself felt in the character. My little friend, protesting with all his might, grows red in the face as no one pays the slightest attention to what he is doing. He keeps the fires burning, however, and grows into a stout complainer that hasn't a particle of influence with anybody. His work among the flies is the saving clause in his record. His appetite seems to crave anything in the shape of an insect, hundreds passing his way daily. Unlike many other species of birds, I have never known but one pair to nest in a given locality the same season.

On Tuesday morning I saw the first oriole of the season. His hearty whistle from the maples

in the churchyard told of his presence, and a little later his full song given in the old apple tree close to the rectory rehearsed the whole story. How fresh and bright his new suit appeared, and how his whistle seemed to give a stir-up to all the bird life that came under its influence. My little flycatcher had an attack of rage instantly. Such scolding as he indulged in seems to be an accomplishment all his own. Oriole paid no attention to the tirade, but went about his regular business in a matter-of-fact way which insured its being well done. No other bird rivals him in nest building. He seems to have a real genius for this kind of architecture, and expresses it in the deed with wonderful skill. How deftly he hangs the structure to the swaying limbs, and when once secured, with what rare finish he weaves and shapes his mansion. No other nest quite like it, and none that shelters the little brood in greater safety. Three or four of these oriole houses are built in our village every season.

When the time came for the last member of the class to appear on the stage, he seemed a little dazed by the unusual performances of his fellows. He clambered up to the door of the

flicker temple, took a long view of the outside world, then retreated to the remotest corner of the place. The second attempt was more successful. He stepped boldly out, and after balancing a few moments on a near-by limb, went forward without a moment's hesitation. How nicely he met all the calls of the moment. Out over the lawn, right toward the rectory, his flight of flicker oratory lifted him to the broad porch. Here he took his stand and after surveying his surroundings for a moment there came a clear, ringing shout of victory. Without any question his effort bore off the prize of the day. The happy faculty of the institution seemed to so consider it and the hand-shaking which followed was fully up to the commencement standard. The entire afternoon was given up to a reception that was every way first-class. Feasting, speeches, songs, calls, dancing in the broad house of the summer air, how merrily each flicker took his part. When the day was measured, the sentiment of the entire assemblage gave voice, in a most resonant "well done." The next day the halls of the bird university were silent, nothing more of flicker education to be known there until the advent of a new class in the coming year.

Most of the bobolinks have left us and are journeying toward the South. I saw a flock this morning high in the air gaily pushing on their way. The monotonous chirp was all the sound they uttered and that they kept up while they were within hearing. The male birds have dropped their distinctive coloring, and the entire tribe appears in its common, sober brown dress. What an experience they will have from this time on to next spring! Perfectly free to go and come at will, plenty of food always at their command, nothing to do but live and enjoy life, it would seem that they might rank with the happiest of the happy. In a measure they do, but the vicissitudes of life company with them wherever they go. After they leave the North they lose largely all legal protection. When they reach the rice fields of the South they become real pests to the farmers of that section and in self-defense the farmers are obliged to wage war upon them. Thousands are killed and used for food. About the first of January they come to the waters of the Gulf. Here they tarry for a little time, then launch out for their ultimate destination in South America. Here they spend a few weeks on the great plains—entirely

removed from all sights and sounds of civilization. Just how they know when to start northward again I have not discovered, but they do know, and as surely as May comes the bobolinks appear fully equipped for the summer's campaign.

The courage of the little sparrow-hawk is hardly excelled by any member of his large family. The other morning I was busy in my garden when suddenly a great commotion in the orchard attracted my attention. Thirty or forty birds of all species were participants in the uproar, the noise increasing until I felt quite sure all birddom was celebrating a real Fourth of July. Just at this juncture I discovered a little sparrow-hawk, dashing out into the field beyond the garden. I saw he carried an extra burden, and a little later found that he had picked up one of the young robins on my lawn. The birds pursued him, making his course anything but pleasant. He dropped down on the farther end of the garden, but found that his troubles had only just begun. The attacking party grew more and more excited. They tumbled over the hawk almost in a body. Again he tried to escape by flight, but the birds kept with him, and the last I saw

of the party they were far over by the swamp, where, no doubt, Mr. Hawk finally escaped with his prize. I felt like interfering but concluded on the whole to let the birds manage their own affairs. "Is there a place where the creatures will live, without preying upon one another?"

The great seams of deep ravines opening down the slope, each holding a rippling brook, and each a stroke among the hills, made when the "morning stars first sang together," ah! how they seem to call to each other across the broad slope, "The hand that made us is divine." The great hemlocks on their rugged sides are the green pastures of the wood, all the year through, and when the winter gale searches their high places, the harp of the forest yields its richest notes. But what shall we say of the life that nestles everywhere in these broad aisles? On the trees and in the trees, under the leaves, just at the surface of the ground, and deep down in the earth, life in a myriad forms revels and goes forward. All the new experiences are so much new life, and all the new life is the old transfigured. "Paradise regained" starts with paradise, and moves on to paradise,—all of it that

blessed "hath" to which all is given. Bird Paradise, as I see it, at any time, at all times, is the "house beautiful" always building, never built.

I conclude, from what I see and hear, that at least two families of the large hen-hawks have nested in the cedar swamp east of the village. I hear their clear calls every pleasant day and usually see them soaring high in the air. I have thought that this species of hawk was gradually lessening in numbers, but this year, and last also, there appears to be a setting of the tide in the opposite direction. They have some virtues, though they are not well pronounced. Hawk virtue savors of the quarry from whence it is hewn and needs considerable pruning before it can be given much of a place among the good things of time. The old birds seem to live a sort of solitary life. Their predatory habits alienate them from all friendship with other birds. I like the way this bird defends his home castle. Unlike other birds he makes no noise about it. His blows come first, and they are hearty and vigorous. I remember an occasion when I was watching a nest of them in the old swamp years ago.

A party of crows were foraging on the upland just beyond. Something disturbed them and they came lumbering into the swamp in their heavy way. One of them dropped down into the very tree where the nest was, nearly into the nest itself. He had no sooner struck the spot than the father of the callow brood struck him. He tumbled over and kept tumbling over, the hawk rendering all the assistance he could. The sounds the discomfited crow uttered are nowhere written in the vernacular of Croker's tongue. The order of his going had no stay in it until he was well out of the woods. The entire flock took their departure with him, the hawk remaining master of the field.

Passing near the Bailey swamp I discovered a marsh-hawk, evidently preparing his midday meal. Somewhere in the marsh he had picked up a savory morsel and when I saw him he was seated on a limb dissecting and eating his prize. Among our many species of hawks this fellow that dwells in the marshy places is in many respects the most interesting. He has many of the characteristics of his large family, though in the main he seems of a more genial temperament

than most of his fellows. His cupboard which includes the entire swamp where he dwells is always well filled with a great variety of food. From what I have seen I conclude that among the smaller creatures that live there he classes them all as welcome parts of his daily bread. This hawk is quite apt to take excursions in the night, being closely allied in some of its habits with the common barn-owl. It puts its nest on the ground or in a tussock of grass, taking care to select a location well surrounded by water. I enjoy the easy movements of the marsh-hawk as he goes to and fro over his watery domain. The other day I was watching one that seemed to be out for a little pastime when suddenly he stopped and dropped down to the bog and when he arose again bore a large frog in his talons. I have seen once or twice a party of crows invade the precincts of this hawk's summer home. Their coming to the place is the signal for the most vigorous action on the part of the hawk, the crows tumbling over each other in their eagerness.

I heard the call of the cuckoo this week. He is the last comer of all our birds and does not seem to have a friend outside of his own house-

hold among the entire host of birds. He always goes neatly dressed, and glides around among the trees very much like the catbird. We have two species, known as the black billed and the yellow billed cuckoos. In general appearance they are so much alike that one cannot tell the difference only by close inspection. From what I see of these birds I conclude that they are fully entitled to the dislike of their fellow birds. Their sly, gliding movements are a very fair index of their character. Audubon gives them a name that is not at all to their credit. He says they not only lay their eggs in the nests of other birds but they suck their eggs and kill the young. I never have seen them engaged in these vandal acts, but from what I know of their habits I am prepared to believe that they are fully competent to show some bad behavior. Their call is broken and abrupt—a sort of breaking forth of the heat in sound. In my boyhood a pair of them nested in the large barberry bush on the old farm every year. I remember we gave them what fellowship we could, but they acted as though they cared little for it. I notice that with birds, as well as with men, the stroke of the will, made large enough, shapes all the character. Cuckoo wills the hurt of his fellows, and soon finds

his hand against every man and every man's hand against him.

Of all the smaller birds that visit my lawn the small flycatcher seems to be the most demonstrative in asserting his presence and proclaiming his wants. He has a metallic voice that he uses without much intermission, during all his waking moments. He seems to regard himself as one of the magnates of the bird world. Other birds, however, accord him very doubtful prominence. His appearance is the signal for a sort of indifference on the part of his fellow birds that is quite noticeable. Just as soon as a pair of these flycatchers establish their summer home the male bird is organized into a vigilance committee that leaves no stone unturned in doing his entire duty. The tone of his metallic voice is gauged to a key and manner of the genuine scold. The presence of any other bird opens the flood-gates of the fellow's feelings and the protest that follows is belligerent in every particular. The oriole seems to be his special dislike, so much so that I have a notion that the brilliant-colored fellow has in some way vented his spleen on his smaller brother. Of course the robins and blackbirds receive their

share of the flycatcher's attention, but it is not quite so sharp-edged as that which he bestows upon the oriole. How the diminutive body bears the stroke of his abrupt call all day long without being utterly worn out is a problem. In the realm of our innumerable flies the flycatcher does himself honor and performs a work that cannot be overvalued. I have a notion that the fellow's eye can detect a fly that is too minute for the human sight to discover. I have watched them many times and was quite sure from the snapping of the bill that the flies were passing in goodly numbers, though I was not able to see any of them. As a scavenger of the air our small friend shows a redeeming trait that goes far in restoring him to the good graces of the parson.

Tuesday was a very perfect spring day. Its warmth and beauty lured the parson to a long walk far afield. The first sign of creature life that I saw were myriads of small flies that seemed to have just entered upon the journey of life. There were many species and all intensely active. I had the notion that once well out in the fields I should get entirely clear of the common house-fly, but the fact was that I only

seemed to get a little more right where he was. Curious that the fellow seemed glad to see me when I had no shadow of friendly greeting for him. The minute fellows that I could only see as the sunlight was reflected from their wings were in such numbers all along the swamp side that it could be truly said they filled the air. What a feasting place for the flycatchers who will be with us a little later. At the brook side I stopped for a time to hear the song it sings when the spring storms swell the volume of its waters. I had seen it a thousand times before, but this morning it was practically a new brook. The sun's rays played with the ripples, shaping a variety of shadows—every one seemingly alive. In one place the long spears of sedge grass swayed from side to side like living creatures. Their shadows on the gravel of the channel gave them the appearance of gems of "purest ray serene." Just at the crossing in the old roadway I sat for a little time, and to my astonishment and delight the water spiders made their appearance. There were a pair of them to look at, the same fellows I used to see there in my boyhood. How easily they walked over the surface of the water. I half fancied that they were moved by the desire to show the parson how

easily they could pass and repass on the shifting element under their feet. Rising to go, my shadow was thrown across the brook and instantly the spiders dropped to the bottom and disappeared among the stones.

I notice that the hawks of different species seem to enjoy the swamp scenery better than that of any other locality in our hill country; at least their action seems to warrant that conclusion. Yesterday I saw a pair leisurely tossing about over the marsh just east of the village. They belonged to the species known as marsh-hawks, in some respects the most interesting of the large hawk family. How easily and gracefully they move to and fro on their broad wings. It certainly looked like an hour of pastime, though there was every indication that they had an eye for business. Quite a variety of food was presented for their choice and they improved the opportunity offered to the best of their ability. I am quite sure they picked up some frogs and in one instance a field-mouse was added to the menu for the day. I fancy the hawks really enjoy their hunting expeditions. Success quickens the blood in hawks as well as in men. Especially so when the effort is stimulated by hunger.

In the bird it may not be less than a virtue and in the man ranks the same if it be rightly used.

A fine specimen of a male bobolink came into my lawn this week and stayed some little time. During part of the visit he was quite close to the porch and seemed really disposed to make the parson understand that he meant to be especially friendly. I do not recall an instance where a member of this family put himself into such familiar relations with the human brother. If he had his song with him he did not use it, neither did he open his mouth to say anything of why he was making such an unusual visit. From all that he did not say, however, I received the impression that the fellow had been grossly misused. Very likely a hawk or some wandering fox had visited his home and he only was left to tell the story of wreck and ruin. What tragedies there are in bird life! Every day they occur and it is only a few of the large number that we ever hear of. After an hour or two the fellow went his way, carrying with him my warmest sympathy, though I know it was very doubtful if he knew what it meant. This certainly is always true, that true sympathy extended always

does the sympathizer good whatever the effect may be on the one that it is intended to reach.

I am now receiving visits from the warblers who have spent the summer in the far North. The little worm eating warbler was the first to pay his respects to the parson, and he did it handsomely, as all his family do. I saw him first gliding up one of the long limbs of the larches. How easily he threaded his way, just as much at home on the under side of the limb as on the upper. Evidently it was his dinner hour, the feast not limited in the least by time or quantity. Curious how birds keep so well, eating almost without intermission during the day. I see by the books that this warbler is given the range as far north as southern New York. I wonder if the books are correct. The birds I see answer to the description of the warbler in every particular and I see them only in the fall and spring. I never have seen their nests but am told they are built on the ground and resemble very closely that of the oven bird. It speaks in audible tones very seldom and at its best uses but little that is very musical. My visitor stayed an hour or two and I should think

managed to secure several score of grubs in that time.

Passing near the swamp thicket this morning I was greeted cheerily by the song of the thrush. It came out of the coverts so smoothly and sweetly that one wondered how such a place could yield such music. It was the stirring trill of Mr. Thrush at his very best. What a song it is and how it commands the attention of all the denizens of the wood. I noticed that when it was given utterance the other singers were silent. Very likely the clear ripple of the notes was so bright and entrancing that no others could be given a moment's thought. Usually the singing of one of these birds is answered by another from some point near by. I waited for the response and half fancied at times that it was in the air, but none was made. The lack of response, however, had no perceptible effect upon the singer. He went on and seemed entirely satisfied in having the parson for a listener. The nest, no doubt, was hidden away in the thicket, the young being now nearly ready to shift for themselves. It has occurred to me that if the young birds could only shape and use the song of the species it would add much to the attractiveness of our groves. We

have four species that are common here—all of them fine singers.

I saw on my recent journey south quite a number of hawks, large and small. They were far enough south to escape the snow, and seemed entirely at home. One large hen-hawk was engaged in the pastime of soaring high in the air. It was a bright, clear day, and the fellow appeared to be enjoying every moment of his outing. Not far from him were two or three turkey-buzzards—first-class rivals of the hawks in the art of soaring. With clear fields and warm weather I could readily understand that the condition of my old acquaintances was greatly improved over their winter condition at the North. But I could not help propounding the question, "Will these bare fields yield the fellows any large supply of food?" The thick grass carpet which we have at the North is not seen at the South. With us this carpet furnishes the favorite resort for innumerable bugs, grubs and mice. The hawks know this fact and rely upon the supply for the main part of their food. Of course in the winter the doors of this great cupboard are all tightly shut. In the South they are all wide

open, so far as the place itself is concerned, but the carpet being entirely absent, there is no cover for creatures of any kind. Doubtless there are other retreats for the fellows, but I have the notion that the fields of the South are not the prolific home of the smaller creatures such as I have named above. I noticed a small sparrow-hawk prospecting in the immediate vicinity of several negro cabins. He dropped down into one of the yards, and I thought secured a luckless sparrow. As we passed down the river from Wilmington I noticed a small conference of the buzzards gathered about some dead creature that the receding tide had left above the water line. Two or three hawks and as many crows took their departure when the buzzards came upon the scene. A large amount of food is furnished every day from the river and ocean. The keen sight of all the birds named above is simply wonderful. They quickly discover the dead as well as the living animals, and are certainly adepts in appropriating the delicious viands offered them.

In my boyhood several species of owls were common here. The great hollow trees of the wood furnished them with homes entirely to their

liking. The trees are all gone and most of the owls also. I occasionally see the small screech-owl, but rarely any other. As a boy I well remember hearing the calls of the larger owls in the great ravine of Bird Paradise. They often gave them in the daytime and we sometimes saw the staid fellows in the great openings of the trees. At one time a family of owls dwelt in the old farm wood, that indulged in unusual hoots and calls. Occasionally they would give a sound like the tolling of a bell, especially solemn on the evening of a calm summer day. I half fancied that the fellows were holding some sort of service, and that the bell sounding was a call to the gathering. Another fancy of mine was that the great horned owl was a sort of father and all around adviser among the birds of the wood. A slight increase of knowledge, however, dissipated all such crude ideas and left the owl barren of any particularly ornamental or useful traits of character. One thing, however, the owls made most familiar: they were lovers of the dark, and we were early taught that with such belonged the deeds that are evil.

The halcyon days for the minute insects are mostly measured in the fall of the year. The

sunny, dry afternoons they enjoy in the true insect manner. The little gossamer spider is among the most interesting of the great host. I was over at the old farm the other day and strolled down to the hillside near Bird Paradise. At first I thought the little fellows were not on duty. A little later, however, the company assembled and surely I never saw it larger. Out from the fence and bushes the silver threads streamed with a minute spider at the end of each one. There were thousands in sight from where I stood, and every fence and bush in our hill country was presenting the same scene. The threads and the insects can only be seen when the sun's rays are reflected by them. Curious how the thread is spun from the little body—the creature letting it buoy him up as the spinning goes on. Curious, too, how it can all be wound up again and used over and over. Down at the swamp side I lingered, hoping to see another friend of my boyhood days, and sure enough there the fellow was, seemingly the same I saw sixty years ago. The little pool of water enticed the boy again, and there on the surface of the water was the happy boatman, just as I saw him in my boyhood,—the water-spider, walking over the water as easily as some of his kin walk over the smooth surface of the wall. I take

the old seat and watch the little creature. It goes to and fro, sinking to the bottom at will, a veritable wizard of navigation. Master of his craft in his appointed sphere, lacking nothing, so I sit at his feet sure that I am listening to one of nature's great preachers.

The growth of the present season, I think, I have never seen equaled. My garden apparently has not lost a moment since it entered upon the race last spring. I find it necessary to visit it several times a day in order to keep abreast of its forward march. At times I fancy there is a well-ordered contest between the different vegetables. Those that revel in vines seem to have the advantage. A squash vine has pushed its way so vigorously that it is already twenty-five feet on its march and the end is not yet. Here and there it has camped, leaving a memento of the stay in a squash of no mean proportions. The wise heads of the place are the lettuce and cabbage. If they nod at all it is when I am looking the other way. Just now the early potatoes are proving their worth in the test that is the proof of the pudding. What delicious balls of fluffy white they present when they are bringing,

as they do, the best bow the garden can make. But the variety of leaves that appear in the different growths is a sort of school that I enjoy attending. Each has its own way of telling what it is, and each is fashioned after a pattern "seen in the mount." Why not a revelation—every leaf, every vegetable, all the growth of things unseen? Why not a school replete with law and gospel?

I have seen it stated that the rose-breasted grosbeak, whenever the opportunity offers, feasts upon the potato-bugs. How true the statement is I do not know, but if the fact be as stated it does seem as though the fellow's taste had gotten largely astray. Of course I have no real conception of the flavor of this species of bug. It may be of a luscious character and no doubt the bird so regards it. The potato-bugs are scarce this year and as a matter of fact so are the grosbeaks. Like other birds, the fellow may go where he finds his favorite food abundant. By the way, what a curious package of life the potato-bug is. I know of but one attractive thing in his make-up. He wears a suit that shows a stroke of color all right. Otherwise he seems like a soft

pulpy lump of matter that never is quite so happy as when gorging himself on a stalk of a potato vine. Grosbeak may show some defect of relish by using the fellow for food, but if he does it is about the only defect I know in the bird. Among our wood birds he ranks high in both song and appearance. The nest he constructs, while not first-class, serves his purpose handsomely. The song is a warble that feels its course along the aisles of the wood in a way most attractive. In fact it is one of the delightful songs among the wood melodies. I think they extend the season of song longer than any other of our wood birds.

I saw near the swamp last week a bright crimson colored fly. It was perhaps half larger than the common house-fly, and appeared to be just entered upon the life of the spring season. What a singular provision it is that graduates the fly in full dress, thoroughly furnished for all the good work that he seems ready to engage in. This fellow was just a little dazed by the glamor of the new world upon which he had so recently entered. He would climb a spear of grass and, balancing himself at the top, spread and shake

his wings as though he were testing his new capacities before he ventured to use them. With the glass I readily saw that his new suit was ornamented with a variety of colors, though he seemed quite unconscious of the fact. I saw, all about, where the crows had been, and congratulated Mr. Fly on his good fortune of being hatched a little too late for their early visit. I looked about for the fellow's native place, but did not discover it unless a little cavity at the base of a decayed stump was the spot. I saw several other species of flies—all of them accompanied by a retinue of their fellows, but this one paddled his own canoe without fear or favor of any of his kind. After a brief space of balancing and warming he set the entire machine of his powers in motion. To his evident surprise all went well with him and the last I saw of his retreating form he was well out over the marsh—gaining new confidence with every stroke of his wings. I could but moralize something like this: Here is an exposition older than any man has devised. He who made it all keeps it open and keeps it in order right through the ages. On every side are things and creatures, millions of them, each one a marvel of construction and beauty, in almost every respect. What else is it

but a Jamestown of wonders, its myriad doors ever wide open to him who lingers there with eyes to see and ears to hear?

I notice in my garden a great number of small toads. The little fellows do not look large enough to take care of themselves, but they seem to get along very well. A few days ago they left their home in the water and came out upon the land. I have seen them making the venture in companies of a hundred or more, all intent on finding a location that they can regard as home. What a curious instinct it is which leads them out of the water home and establishes them in the snuggery on the land. Who would imagine that the curious thing hatched in the water would ever become a toad? The name tadpole or pollywog seems to represent the newcomer very nicely. "Pretty much all head and tail" was what the boy said when he first saw one of the fellows. For weeks they swim about in the water, furnishing food for the fish and many water birds. When the time arrives the great change occurs. The tail disappears, the legs are put in place and a new spirit takes possession of the fellow. He hies away to a new world and in a sense drops all the knowledge that his experience in the water

house has given him. I suppose their food is the minute flies which are found in the grass in immense numbers. If the weather be warm, as it is this season, most any place in the lawn or garden will serve as an abiding spot. They grow quite rapidly for the first season, but I conclude are several years in obtaining their growth. It is a tradition in our hill country that they live to a great age and doubtless the idea is in the main correct. From what I see I infer that the crows make the young toad a favorite article of food. It is a little difficult to understand how such a creature can be a very savory morsel. The toad's work in the garden catching flies commends him highly. He is a first-class helper in securing good vegetables.

Among the diligent workers that dwell in the fastnesses of my lawn, I should give high rank to the burying beetles. Their right to the name is secured by a skill and diligence as workers that are quite remarkable. Frequently on the old farm in my boyhood we would come upon the fellows pushing one of their ventures that meant food for the entire tribe for weeks to come. How they find the dead creature that they bury so nicely is an unsolved problem with the parson.

I have known the pioneer of the band to appear in a very few minutes after a young chicken had died. In a short time others would arrive—all bringing their burying tools with them, and all getting right to work just as soon as they arrived. Little by little they remove the dirt from under the body, letting it down gradually until it is well below the surface of the ground. Then they tumble the particles of earth on the upper side until the treasure is entirely covered. The time of the task may take many days, but when done it is certainly well done. The food which one creature repels is the favorite article of diet with another. The beetles enjoy with keen relish the food that is only made savory to them by corruption. The eggs are deposited where the larvæ as soon as hatched can feed upon the buried body. The beetle to the ordinary vision seems quite devoid of beauty, but when I put him under my magnifying glass a new creature appears. "He hath made all things beautiful in his time" is verified completely when we see things, "not through a glass darkly, but face to face."

The other morning I discovered a piece of meat dropped by some one at the side of the road. A

single blue fly was investigating the prize, not another of his fellows being in sight. Returning about two hours later I found the single fly multiplied by at least two hundred. Where did they all come from and how did they learn of the feast spread for them? I think their system of conveying news must be wonderfully efficient. But the number assembled on the occasion noted above was simply astonishing. They must have been dwellers in the grass of the field near by and doubtless the company I saw was only a corporal's guard of the vast number on duty in the wide country. They may do harm as our wise men tell us, and certainly they are not very agreeable companions, but there is the other side of the matter. The things they feed upon are of that character which would be injurious in many ways if they were not removed. The fly is a scavenger of large value, and until we have a better system of preventing his increase we shall need him for the good he does.

If what the toad now says corresponds with what he does then it conveys the single idea of winter quarters. Under the clinging vines at the side of the barn a venerable specimen of this

ancient family has passed the summer. He makes his presence known by certain utterances that surely have nothing pleasing in sound, and so far as my knowledge extends are not freighted with valuable meaning. Mr. Toad doubtless is more fully informed and in his own way enjoys his special knowledge. I notice the fellow makes full preparation for the winter some time before the chilly blasts are exerting their influence. I frequently find them nicely tucked away a foot or more down from the surface of the ground, early in October. It occurs to me that as the fellow is situated with nothing special to do, it is a nice arrangement if he can fold his hands and set the long winter sleep in motion. The secret of when to begin, however, belongs to the toad and will, I judge, for all the coming years. I know of no creature that counts the full grown toad as a special viand at its feasts. The young fellow is used, but the old fellow never! Early in the spring the toad puts its eggs into the incubator furnished by the pond, and I have the notion that all the eggs hatch. The parent's form does not appear in the young toad. A few weeks spent in the water, however, graduates the entire family in full toad dress, ready for the summer campaign. Half of them, I judge, fall a prey to hawks and

crows during the first summer. In fact only a few, comparatively, reach the full adult size.

The dry warm weather does not quite suit the toad citizens of our hill country. They prefer more moisture and I judge are not over fond of the heated term. I have not seen a member of the family for several weeks. The last one I met was stopping under one of my large cabbages, and seemed a good deal annoyed when I lifted the great leaves and looked in upon the house and its household of one. Of course, he had no opportunity to be other than quiet and peaceful, living alone as he did. From some significant signs which I saw, I concluded the fellow was arranging to don a new suit of clothes. Curious how the toad divests himself of the entire suit that he has worn for months. Just how he does it, I do not know. I see the old put off and the new put on and there my knowledge halts, and I fancy the toad's does also. Throwing aside the old skin and putting on a new one is exactly what is done. A few days in the new raiment gets everything into shape, so that the fellow feels entirely at home. The single suit serves for twelve months, and someway the wearer easily keeps it whole and clean all that time.

Crossing the field near the swamp last week I interviewed several of my friends who make their home in that locality. I passed by the birds for the time being and shook hands especially with a number of friends much smaller in bodily size but none the less dear to one who is in close touch with the children of the common household. A red fly, somewhat larger than the common house-fly, first attracted my attention and managed one way and another to keep it for some little time. Insects of different colors I had seen before, but I did not recall one dressed wholly in bright red. The fellow seemed to be enjoying his surroundings, though they were somewhat tame to the real lover of nature. I got the notion that he had just added to his equipment the pair of wings with which he was furnished, for he appeared to be feeling of them most of the time more as a plaything than a member to be put to actual use. He would run lightly up the spear of grass and balancing nicely on the top spread his wings and wave them. Then he would vary the movement, each new venture no doubt giving him larger confidence in the wider life upon which he had evidently just entered. Finally he pushed his way down

into the dried grass apparently quite well satisfied with all the experience the day had put into his keeping.

Dry weather is not conducive to what the toad regards as his best welfare. I am not sure that protracted wet weather suits him much better. Enough dampness, however, to remove all danger of drought is quite to his liking. How far he journeys during the night hours I have no means of knowing, but I conclude from what I have seen of his habits that most of his movements are made after dark. Occasionally the gruff voice of one of the veteran fellows comes to me from the thick grass of the orchard and I can hardly divest myself of the idea that Mr. Toad is more surprised at the sound than anybody else. Some six or seven of the venerables are quartered on my small domain and are not by any means the least interesting of my many tenants. Just here my neighbor's little girl comes in with a box and removing the cover shows me a small toad which she found this morning in their ash barrel. The little fellow is lighter colored than most toads are and the girl thought it might be a different kind from those we usually see. I

told her to put him somewhere that he could get the benefit of the sun's rays, and he would soon show a different color. How nice it is when a girl of ten years can get near to these creatures of God. It shapes valuable character for the battle of life.

Nearly every day I meet with a number of the humming-bird family. Sometimes their manner conveys the idea of a casual call—no particular stroke of friendship in it. Then they will give such a cordial greeting that I am quite sure it means the best kind of bird fellowship. Sitting on the porch this morning, enjoying the sun's "coming forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber," I heard a slight humming sound. Glancing around I saw a little ruby throat standing on his rapidly moving wings not three feet from me. How nicely he balanced there and what else was the meaning of the visit but the heartiest kind of a cheery June greeting. He moved two or three times while he stayed, but how he did it was all a mystery to me. I could see the little head turn, then the body flash to another bird station several feet away, but there was no appearance of effort, nothing to indicate that the

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creature used a particle of strength in making the movement. He gave me a few moments of his time, then darted away, his flight apparently vieing with the sunbeam in the compassing of distance. Think of it, the flight of this little fellow, recording one hundred miles an hour. How does he command it, and how can he stop when once passing at that rate of speed?

All through the summer a pair of bats have taken their evening pastime in the open reaches of my lawn. Lately the young fellows have joined in the outing so that five or six take their evening meal and mingle socially, if that be possible, with these curious creatures. I have not been able to discover their summer cottage, but I am quite sure that it is located somewhere in the attic of the old church. The bats are lovers of darkness, but I have no knowledge that their deeds are evil. Their time for work and play is the early hours of the evening. During the day and most of the hours of the night I rarely see them. They move a little heavily on the wing and seem to soon weary of their flight. The young fellows must of necessity come short in the daily bread, still they seem to thrive fairly

well. I was watching them for some time last evening and really found myself quite enlisted in the work claiming their attention. Small flies and mosquitoes are the main supply of food, but I judge other creatures form no inconsiderable part of the daily portion. Their work in decimating the ranks of the mosquitoes gives them place among our best toilers in the great vineyard. The only sound I ever hear from them is a faint tremor of squeak like the soft cadence of a rusty door hinge.

I noticed several new birds in my lawn trees this week. The vireos and warblers have arrived from the South and are busy locating their summer homes. The warbling vireo is the most interesting of the birds bearing the name. His song allies him closely with the warblers. In fact, it is part and parcel with them. The energy with which this bird repeats his song through the summer is remarkable. His principal rival is the yellow warbler, and the two make themselves heard every minute of the day. Both have the faculty of keeping up a sort of perpetual motion and both make full use of the faculty. I fancy sometimes that the fellows are

engaged in a spirited rivalry, each eager to outdo the other. After I have watched them a few minutes I find myself wondering how bodies that are turning in every direction, never still a moment, can carry with them level heads. The full interpretation of it all is in the deed itself. So far as I can see they are never at fault for a moment. Year in and year out they keep up their rapid pace and seem to be never in the least at fault. In the game of bird athletics they have no superior.

The scarlet tanager family seems to be increasing in numbers. I hear of several being seen in the orchards of our hill country. In my boyhood they came out into the trees about the house every season, but for a number of years I have not seen one only in the wood, and only a few there. His name of fire bird is most appropriate, for his appearance in the forest is that of a gleam of fire among the green leaves. The male bird wears the brilliant colors and does all the singing. The song of the tanager is a pleasing succession of notes, readily distinguished among the wood birds. The female and the young birds wear suits of sober colors, otherwise they would all fall

a prey to their many enemies. In nest building this bird can scarcely be deemed much of a success. Of course, they know what they want, and, I suppose, secure it in the structure they build. What seems to us a defect may, after all, be an excellence that the bird recognizes in full. I am quite sure that these birds are profiting by the law which protects them in most of the states. A few years more and they will become as common as in the olden days.

Just here I heard the song of the yellow warbler —the first of the season. Glancing from the window I saw a pair of the little fellows exploring the tree directly in front. They were busy securing what food they could and at the same time intent on locating their summer cottage. The female seemed the most in earnest in the matter, and I thought occasionally read a rather sharp lecture to her companion. The warbler family is a large one—some thirty and more species. They are the perpetual motion contingent among our great army of birds. Most of them I am sure have no knowledge of what it means to sit still for a moment in the daytime, at least I never have seen them making any attempt in that direction.

The yellow warbler is the only one of the large family that spends much time outside the wood. As nest builders they are quite skilful, decorating the inner part with the taste of a real artist. The song of this bird is sounded at all hours of the day. Most of our song birds are quiet in the heat of the summer's day—not so the yellow warbler. Once in motion in the morning the song is in motion, and it is kept up three or four times a minute all day long. I sometimes fancy the song a sort of expression of the summer's heat, sounding morning, noon and night as it does, through the hot season. Be that as it may, however, it has a very cheery rendering and I conclude cannot be given too often.

Several times in the last few days the smallest of my bird parishioners has interviewed me evidently with the very best of intentions. His last visit was on a recent afternoon as I was sitting on the porch enjoying the perfect June day. My first intimation that I was the recipient of a call was a low buzzing sound, hardly more than that made by the common fly. Glancing up I saw a little humming-bird standing on his wings scarcely three feet away. I say standing on his

wings, and that was what he was doing and doing it nicely. He moved a little up and down, but remained several seconds in very nearly the same place. Ah, what bird gems these little fellows are! Songless as they are they make up in other ways for any lack there may be in the element of music. My visitor turned around, two or three times while he stayed, as though he would impress me with a clear idea of his matchless suit and of his matchless way of wearing it. Then the movement of the bird so quickly done that I could hardly follow it with the eye! How can this small creature command the strength to flash from point to point annihilating distance at the rate of a hundred miles an hour? When the time came to close the interview my little friend darted away, moving his small craft more rapidly than is possible with any other bird. Years ago our hill country was visited annually by five or six species of these small birds. Now only one species is seen at the North, the little ruby-throat. I am told that there are over 400 species of the humming-bird. They are essentially dwellers in the tropics, some of them having a very brilliant plumage. Somewhere in my lawn trees I am quite sure a nest is located, but just where I have not yet learned.

Five or six species of the warblers nest in our hill country. They are all lively fellows, and some way practice a kind of friendship that is most enjoyable. Occasionally I take a free and easy saunter through the aisles of Bird Paradise. While there I am quite apt to be a "boy again," just for the fun of a real, old-time frolic. The other day I went far down the ravine, and when down lay down on the bed of leaves, and without an effort on my part passed into the cozy rooms of the "house beautiful," that cheery temple of genuine, whole-souled boyhood. The great canopy of rustling leaves, woven in the wondrous loom of life, the same as in the years agone, and darting hither and thither, were the warblers—each one I thought shouting an "all hail" to the boy far below. I wondered at the readiness with which they went to and fro in the highways of Bird Paradise. Work and pleasure were combined in all their movements, in fact, they really appeared as though they were doing their best in entertaining their old-time guest. Somehow a single member of this large family came a little nearer to me than any of the others. Earlier in the season I had interviewed the little redstart, who had put his nest in a small tree, a few feet from

the brook. I was almost sure that this was the same bird, at least, I counted him the same. To my delight he gave every indication that he knew me. His warble was of the fellowship sort, and every move he made was an epic of the days of "Auld Lang Syne." What a sermon the little fellow preached. Just a fine "send off" for the parson, who was treasuring notes for a real sermon.

During our heated term I have listened with the keenest pleasure to the voice of the frogs. There is a sort of mouth-watering tone in the call of one of the large frogs on a hot evening that is most refreshing. Quite a little distance from the rectory lies a small pond. In the evening, sitting on my porch, I hear the gurgling strain of the dwellers there and half fancy that it is a breath of cooling influence from some grotto of the wood. I strolled down to the pond the other day and interviewed the residents there. I am quite sure hearing them from a distance is more satisfactory than a close inspection. A frog pond in the summer is not even one remove from what is commonly known as a mud-hole. There may be frogs that enjoy the clear water and

gravelly bottom of the flowing brook, but those I am acquainted with are altogether careless about dwelling in a clean house. Still, I am quite willing to grant that cleanliness with the frogs may be many removes lower in the scale than would suit his human brothers. At the time of my visit I found the venerable citizens of the place sitting in state, each on his own hassock of grass—all looking wise, as only frogs can. I gave the frogs the credit of saying just what I would have said if I had been in their place. In other words, if I had been a frog, as I was a man, I should certainly have said, "Cool, cool, comfortable, comfortable." Then, that ker-chug with which the fellows took the water, what a world of comfort there is in it and how it all suits the frog perfectly.

Each season of the year I take a long stroll in Bird Paradise. To each season belongs its own expression of paradise life. Just the other day I made my bow there, and I am sure the homage paid by the parson was fraught with large good. I don't know that I ever go into this "house beautiful" without seeing and feeling something new, and I am not quite sure that I ever get into

this house by the same door that I used before. My favorite way of approach is over the high point of ground on the south side of the old Wicks farm. Here I get a broad view, which puts me into the best possible condition to enter paradise. Then, too, sacred memories throng every foot of the old farm, all closely associated with some revered kinsman, each an "open door" in paradise. By the time I set foot in the temple of the woods, mind and heart are both ready to see the "king in his beauty," and he is always there in his beauty. The robes of summer, which the trees put on and wear so handsomely, had all been taken off, folded and put away in the great open cupboard of the place.

A stroll in the aisles of Bird Paradise lately was full of autumn sights and sounds. The day was rich in the mellowness of the year and all the wide reaches of the grove were radiant in the quiet beauty of the season. A family of oven birds saluted me, though it was done by protest rather than in the mood of hearty welcome. It was late in the season for the household to be in company together. Something had deferred the annual housecleaning, but for all I could see it

was fully as successful as that done in the regular season. Old and young birds did all their talking in the common tongue of a single call note. Just below them on the hillside a red squirrel chattered in response to the birds, and near him, searching a decayed log, I saw a worm-eating warbler.

This morning I saw a wandering skunk crossing my lawn. It was light enough so that I could see the prowler and keep entirely out of his way. These fellows have their place and I am quite content to let them have it. I notice that they are scavengers of real value. Grubs and worms of various kinds make up their regular diet. With their long claws they search the lawn, uncovering many a luscious morsel. I am told that they are invaluable helpers in the hop field. Their means of defense has a great deal of strength to recommend it, and I know of very few creatures that are willing to contend with it. On the old farm the skunk levied tribute on the poultry yard, to some extent, every year. His sluggish nature is well known, but his chief reputation rests upon the facility with which he can poison the air of an entire neighborhood. I

never have known him to show any marked traits of virtue. If he deals in them at all he does it largely out of sight. His place in the economy of life is a little difficult to discover, and the same is true of some individuals of the homo genus.

My woodpecker friends are now visiting me daily. Several species are represented and all seem glad to get back to the autumn round of pastimes. Only the smaller birds winter at the North. The larger ones, the ones best able, apparently, to endure the rigor of the climate, all hie away to the South. Flicker and redhead, the two birds that I should choose as just the ones to remain at the North, are among the earliest of our fall birds to migrate. Either of these birds would seem to be the ideal one to meet bravely the snow and cold. The large gray woodpecker, just a little smaller than the redhead, is a stirring, vigorous fellow, but he has no inclination to stem the tides of one of our Northern winters. Sapsucker, nuthatch, chickadee and one or two other species—little fellows all of them—stay with us and not only stay but really seem to enjoy keenly our coldest weather.

It may be that one reason of their sojourning with us is the abundant supply of food provided for them. I notice that they find food everywhere in the trees. Every particle of bark on the trunk and limbs seemingly hides a grub or insect. The table is always set and the food is always prepared. Free lunch, twelve baskets and more of fragments always left. The larger birds I presume would find it difficult to subsist at the North during the coldest weather. I saw yesterday a fine specimen of the downy woodpecker, one of the handsomest of the tribe. It was a sharp cold morning and the birds generally were not very lively, but downy showed no sign that the weather had anything to do with his welfare. He went his way merrily, putting a new note of brightness into the parson's daily life.

One of the birds that comes to us every fall from the North bears the name of the golden-crowned kinglet. The ruby-crowned kinglet is first cousin to the above named and usually appears in company with it. Both birds are diminutive fellows, but make up in activity what they lack in size. From what I see of them I judge

that their winter's supply of food is obtained the same as the woodpecker's. In fact, when they reach this section they seem to be feasting most of the time. What their song is I do not know. Their call note, which they use during the vacation season, has very little that is musical in it. It is hardly more than the softest note of the common cricket. The kinglets are usually in company with the warblers and are like them in their habits. I am told they sometimes nest in Northern New York, but never have seen them in the breeding season. Occasionally they linger in this section through the winter, but as a rule they journey southward to the vicinity of the Gulf. The stirring way in which they do things insures their welcome almost anywhere. Talkers and doers with all their might is a bird introduction that savors of our feathered friends at their best.

Some of the smaller animals seem to have no other place that they enjoy quite so well as the habitations of men. Conspicuous among these fellows is the brown rat. I am told that he does a great and good work as a scavenger, and very likely he does, but his careless way of doing it seems to entail upon somebody else an endless

amount of the scavenger business. A pair of the fellows set up housekeeping in my cellar last fall. In one week they explored every part of it and made some outside journeys also. They sampled potatoes, cabbages, beets, and in fact they levied tribute upon about everything there, but the stroke they put in largest was among the apples. In three days' time, before I suspected what was going on, they literally chewed up the top layer in several crates, just simply to get at the seeds. Of course I could see from the rat's standpoint that he was doing nothing worthy of death. His business was to get what he wanted to eat and get it in his own way. I freely granted all that, but just at this juncture the parson's business came in, interposing serious obstacles in the way of the depredators. Chewing being their forte they were allowed to practice it freely. Returns from the scheme so far are most encouraging to everybody but the rats. Their condition, however, is such that they do not complain.

The wisest looking of our many birds seems to know almost the least. To look wise is no large evidence of being wise. Owls certainly carry about with them the Solon countenance, and just

as certainly the weakness of the novice in the affairs of every-day life. Born and reared in darkness, all their training received under the cloud, it is not at all strange that they look what they are not. In active life, however, they exhibit some traits of fair common sense. That trick of flying with scarcely a tremor of noise they practice to perfection. Using their eyes freely, not only in the twilight but in the dark, without the least particle of injury to the sight, is another device which they employ daily; keeping almost entirely out of touch with light and the things of light is one of their largest virtues. Holding little intercourse with their own kith and kin, and for that matter with all other kith and kin. They go on their way songless, in fact, less almost all the bright, cheery things of life. No wonder that owl character gets into the limbos, plays a losing game from first to last. No wonder that the off-flavor in its make-up enlarges steadily, no wonder that they shut all the doors in their house which scarcely needs a door. "Why should not such a fellow's vernacular become simply a hoot?" I have every reason to believe, however, that the owl is one of the creatures of which it is written, "And God saw it was good." The parson greets him as a member of the great family born from

above, even if he finds no little difficulty in tracing his lineage upward. The feat is also a difficult one in other directions.

It occurred to the parson that Monday morning would be an ideal time for a large mushroom harvest. Wind and weather seemed favorable, and the inclination of the hunter set strongly in the mushroom direction. With the first stroke of light I found myself in the field, but did not find the mushrooms. Wandering through the tall weeds, in the dim light, I became conscious that another fellow was wandering there also. Just what it was I could not make out until we both came out into an open space in the pasture. Then I discovered that my companion was a large and well-mannered skunk. I stopped and the skunk stopped. I said nothing, so did the skunk. It occurred to me that ten feet was not quite as far from the fellow as I would really like to be. Still, as he made no belligerent demonstrations, I did not quite like the idea of beating a retreat immediately. So I found myself doing the other thing, shaking hands metaphorically, of course, with my companion. I noted his suit of black, nicely striped with white, the great bushy tail, and the eyes, wary and watchful. I had heard a

great deal of the power of man in looking wild animals straight in the eye, and I rather wanted to try the scheme. So I looked, and the skunk looked. All at once he pushed that look of his a little nearer the parson. His advance was met by the parson's advance, but rearward. The look squarely in the eye was in the skunk's favor. The scheme worked, but not quite as I expected. After all, I said—a crumb of comfort in the saying—why shouldn't the skunk win in the contest? It was his home domain.

In the changes that have taken place in our hill country I notice the practical disappearance of the night-hawk. In my boyhood sixty years ago they were a common bird in this section. Frequently in the fall of the year they would appear just at night in large flocks passing until long after dark. They have many characteristics in common with the whippoorwill, being sometimes mistaken for that bird. A call note or two comprises their entire song. A sound they make in flying has a harsh, whistling stroke peculiar to this bird alone. It is now thought that it is produced by the action of the air in the open mouth of the bird. Curious that this species of bird should ignore nest building almost altogether.

Any smooth, hard surface in the fields or on the roofs of houses will serve the purpose, the eggs being shaped so that they will not roll about. Its name of hawk is a misnomer, there being nothing of the hawk nature in the bird's make-up. Their food is taken on the wing—consisting almost entirely of insects. We saw them in large numbers on the great plains of Oklahoma, that latitude being their winter home. I noticed that the whippoorwills and night-hawks were quite close friends during their stay in the South. Curious how their habits changed as they sought the new home in the South. There we saw them on the ground searching for food. I do not remember that I ever saw them doing this at the Northern home. Their record reads "good fellows wherever they are."

Just as I was ready to pen these notes I glanced from my study window, and on the limb of the fir tree, not fifteen feet from where I was sitting, one of our medium sized hawks was standing, holding securely an English sparrow which he had just caught. He went deliberately to work preparing his prize for breakfast. For twenty minutes and more the fellow kept his perch, taking his meal as deliberately as though he were

concealed in the depths of the wood. I never before had seen a hawk of this species at this season of the year or so near the house. The feasting was not an attractive scene, neither was the capture and killing in keeping with perfect peace and quiet in the kingdom of nature. No doubt many persons would be perfectly willing that the English sparrows fall into the talons of the hawks as rapidly as possible. I am not in favor of depriving the bird of any species of its natural food. Now and then the sparrow is serving its country best, perhaps, as an offering to appease the hunger of a fellow bird, and very likely a somewhat diversified diet is better for the hawk ; at any rate, the order in nature is the one to observe, whether we are quite satisfied with its working or not.

I discovered this morning in my orchard a little tree sparrow. He was sitting in the tree, a pretty sharp northwest wind ruffling his feathers. To my surprise he trilled a part of his summer song. It sounded strangely so late in the season, and yet seemed most delightful. I watched the fellow a few moments, thinking perhaps he would betray the secret of his wandering and singing so long after the usual time, but nothing came of it,

except another section of the song. Doubtless the first effort was the begetting of the second, both cheery and bright as heart could wish. Usually late in the fall the sparrows go in troops, several species appearing in the same flock. This fellow, however, was alone, not another bird of any kind in his company. His cheery way of being alone was the attractive thing in his manner. I half suspected from his behavior that he had sojourned in my orchard for the express purpose of visiting the old place where the summer breezes rocked his cradle last June. I conjectured this because he acted very much as the parson does when he tarries within the precincts of the old home farm. Curious how we measure others by ourselves, and yet who shall say that it is other than well-balanced measurement? Some of my best moments are passed in those reminiscent reveries under the roof tree of the old home, and I enjoy keenly seeing others as I see myself. Sparrow went his way, off into the great "void immense," but his visit so bright and cheery left a large blessing behind him.

There is some change taking place in the habits of our birds. On a recent morning as I was doing a little pleasant work in the garden I heard the

full song of the vesper sparrow, and soon after a bluebird caught the spirit of the occasion and poured forth the gentle note which he knows so well how to do. Bird songs in October are so uncommon that I scarcely recall a like departure from the regular order in all my years. I do not know of even the shadow of a reason why it cannot be every year. I cannot uncover any reason why they should not take the song with them to their Southern home, and use it freely through the winter. But nothing of the kind appears. I have seen and known them all in their Southern home and beyond a simple call note they indulge in nothing that can by any means be construed as musical. The morning that I heard them was a bright, clear morning—a real song among the days of song. The music of the hour no doubt loosened the bird tongues to a refrain that was compelled almost against the will of the singer. I am quite sure that such compulsion will not do any harm. On the contrary it may be that it is the opening of a new day—a forward march on the part of the birds to whole years of song. Strange is it that the speech of our feathered friends should shape itself in a single mold, never departing from it in the way of improvement through the years.

One of the interesting dwellers in our fields is the grass frog. They make their appearance in the month of September, at least that is the season in which I am pretty sure to interview them. Crossing the field the other day I was given the opportunity to shake hands with several of them and found real pleasure in making the best of the occasion. The largest of the company was full grown, and when I put him to the test he easily compassed five or six feet in one jump. His bright green coat was trimmed in frog fashion, and when the sunbeams held him in their embrace the fellow shone almost lamp-like in the thick dried grass. No other creature is less offensive in appearance or manners. The eyes were almost brilliant and I fancied that the fellow was really proud of his personal appearance. He verified an old saying, that no one could tell which way or how far a frog would jump by his looks. The smallest one I saw was a youth just launched on the sea of life. His experience in caring for himself was certainly limited and yet he made a real success of the venture. Alone in the great world he surely was, but nothing in his manner showed the least sign of any hesitation about assuming all the duties of life. In the

evening I heard a member of this family making the corridors of my orchard resound with the notes of the frog song. It was a cheerful effort, and not entirely lacking in the element of music.

The season moves steadily forward to the ripeness and fulness of the fall. Notwithstanding the drought, almost all the growth of field and garden has matured perfectly. The ripening of the year has come early and come in large measure. What volumes of life are crowded into one perfect vegetable of any kind. Months of growth are there. A dozen different agents have given all the assistance in their power. Subtle currents of many kinds have poured into the being of plant and fruit all their best, and the result is that wondrous creation that in every stage of its process is, "He spake, and it was done." In the ordinary year there is the ordinary return—ripeness gauged to a standard that is far below the royal one. "The King in His beauty" is what we all want to see, and not only see, but be the very thing we see. Garden, farm, business,—anything that our hands find to do has its larger value in the hands perfected in the doing. In the perfect season, the imperfect work may

give a marvelous return, but the height to climb, —the mark to hit, is the imperfect season so ordered that it shall give the perfect return. Why is it not the secret of life's best endeavor? Why is it not the servant's place, in the image of Him who called man into being and gave him the world to conquer, yea, recreate? In the light of such a thought my vegetables are instructors in righteousness of no mean stature. They simply bid the parson to strike hands with the life that thrills in plant and tree, keeping the clasp firm and strong, until the two are one—life below is perfected in the life above.

Occasionally I see a small flock of the golden plovers. In olden time they came to us in the fall of the year in large numbers—now we rarely see them. Far up in the arctic regions they do all their housekeeping, coming to us in September and October. The range of their flight I am told is the entire extent of North and South America. Some writers aver that the autumn journey of a portion of this bird host is down the Atlantic coast—the entire distance to South America being compassed in a single flight. I recall an instance when we were taking one of

our long missionary journeys in Oklahoma that the golden plover furnished us with most of our food. The two Indian men that were with me tried the scheme of securing a few of the birds. Their success was the small return of securing the single bird at a time. In the lesson which I put into their keeping a single discharge of the fowling-piece was the measure of a dozen birds. Most delicious they were, roasted slowly by the camp-fire. I fancy that there is not a voyager in the plover host that has not looked in upon the North Pole and all its surroundings. The flight of the plovers—all the species—is hardly excelled in grace and beauty by any other bird. Think of the strength required, in three or four thousand miles of passage, where there is no stop for rest or food! With such facilities for traveling there is no place in the extent of this world that lies beyond their reach. Cooks and Pearys every bird of the entire host!

In my long stroll this morning I saw the tracks of mice, skunks, rabbits, foxes and squirrels. In the great ravine I saw where the dogs had followed Mr. Fox into his quarry den. I heard the calls of crows, blue jays, woodpeckers, chickadees,

robins and bluebirds. The song of all songs that I heard came from the brook as it rippled down the gorge. What a gentle murmur it is, and how it seems to absorb and make its own all other sounds. I stood where I could look down into the glen, the brook dancing along a hundred feet below me. How wild and weird it all appeared. I saw again the boy of sixty years ago —the old boy in the new boy, and the new in the old, and someway the vision seemed the most rosy of anything I saw in my long walk. I found that part of the fun of seeing one boy was seeing several others, all intent upon doing the wood in true boy style. I knew the voices. The peals of laughter that echoed through the wood were all known to the man or boy. The great trees seemed to greet the boys with an old time "All hail." What an hour it was and how much it held. It was a sort of drawing aside of the great curtain that after all only slightly veils the home of homes. A great sacrament it seemed, with its inward and spiritual grace, the grace at its best, the revelation of life as the Master unfolds it in the Father's house.

What a variety of pranks our wild creatures indulge in! My attention was attracted this

morning by the cones falling from the spruce trees. It was perfectly still, no wind blowing. I soon discovered that a red squirrel was loosening them one by one, and apparently enjoying the entire effort as a real pastime. I counted nineteen cones that came rattling down in about as many minutes. Just a stroke or two of bunny's hatchet and the work was done, and I rather think from what I see that those remaining on the tree will come down before night. Up to this time nothing has been done with the cones and I am quite sure that the squirrel has finished his work with them. Was it play on the squirrel's part or did he have some other motive? The other day I saw a flock of English sparrows romping through my lawn trees with no apparent object but that of play. They scurried hither and thither, even taking short flights out into the park and the village orchards. I took it all as real pastime on their part, though it may have had some other object. In my boyhood on the old farm I have known the different wild creatures to have their games, or what looked like them. Sometimes two or three different species would join together, making a kind of fun "fast and furious." Meadow-larks and flickers quite frequently join their forces and I have seen them

Squirrel Home

enjoying what looked like bird coasting. The hill sloping down to the western gate of Bird Paradise was a favorite place for their gatherings. Sometimes they would spend hours there, all passing peaceful and pleasant. There are more things in the world of birds than our knowledge has yet dreamed of.

During the past week the weather has opened some of its treasures to those who care to add such wealth to their possessions. Very gently the south wind went to sleep as the curtains of night were put in place. The night journeyed on until the stroke of twelve. Then a new order of things was given the entire freedom of our broad hill country. The northwest took charge of the wind and almost at the first stroke made a perfect success of the venture. There were two or three rushes, followed by as many roars, and the echoes everywhere were awake and doing. The commotion was such that I ventured to look out upon the scene. Snowflakes filled the air. The wind jollied them and kept them in motion. There seemed to be an understanding between the two that the occasion was to be made the carnival of the season. The morning broke and

the storm sang a new song, under the inspiration of the cheery sunbeams. All day long the breezes had sway, and I felt sure that there was no weak spot in their efforts. Someway I fancied that the friction of such ardent endeavor would send the mercury toward the stars. On the contrary it gave the atmosphere a chill that was measured exactly by the cipher mark. Not a sign anywhere that really looked like the least expenditure of effort. The winds ran their course, the cold kept pace with them, all of it, the beginning and continuing, that is sure to seek and get its own. Ah, my brothers, the winds and cold and storm! The story of the day, rich in the ministry of "Sky Pilots" that guide their airy craft safely, let the danger be what it may.

My flock of English sparrows seems to increase in numbers. Very likely the young fellows that are now on the wing account in good part for the increase. I could certainly get on nicely with the flock reduced at least one-half. In fact they might all be away for a day or two and things at the rectory go on prosperously. Still the little fellows have a place, and in that place make up a part of my household that I should not like to

spare permanently. I rather enjoy their energetic, offhand way of using an enemy. Only last week a red squirrel looked in upon my lawn, thinking, perhaps, to enjoy its quiet for a little time undisturbed. Never did a squirrel reckon more completely without his host. The sparrows discovered him and in less time than it takes me to tell it hustled him off toward the swamp, every part of his small body sore with the blows he received. I am quite sure some of the habits of the sparrows are changing. I see them using more insects and worms this season than any season before. The one lame thing about them is their song. It seems to be the same shaky apology for bird song that it was when I first heard it. They appear to have no realizing sense that it lacks anything. At least they go on using it as though it were the song of songs among the birds. Ah, such broad gleams of human nature as appear among the birds! The day of creature life declares it and I suppose always will.

When the storm was at its height I heard the calls of the crows mingled with those of the blue jays—all somewhat chilly like the temperature of the air. I noticed that the crows put forth no

effort to make headway against the storm. They were content to keep well within the shelter of the woods and hills through the entire day. When one did venture from the coverts the wind tossed him to and fro with the greatest ease. I am sure there is no other sight in the wide house of nature more comical than the crow when the great winds are upsetting all his plans. I have a notion that the humor of the experience helps warm the entire flock. Does the sharp cold weather give a new lustre to the glossy suits of the black fellows? I fancy that it does; at least so it appears to me. Perhaps on a day of wind and storm there are great compensations which the crow knows and enjoys. I have tried a number of times to look in upon them when they were shut in to one of their forest fastnesses, but never with a very large measure of success. Some of them are always on guard and the approach of a stranger is sure to be heralded to the entire company. The blue jay has several marked characteristics that give him close kinship with the crow. Neither does any migrating that we know about. Both have voices that are wholly free from all musical tones. So far as I know they have no friendships with other birds. Perhaps their relation to other birds is best expressed

by the Ishmaelite condition, "Hand against every man." Living such a life is sure to outlive all that is princely in real being. Curious, these birds, a long way from the fellowship that is perfect, and still my friends. Ah, there is a twang to that that fits the human bow exactly.

Friday night was given to a snow carnival that threw a great coverlid at least a foot in thickness over all the fields. It came without a particle of wind, a revelation of Mother Nature's handiwork not often seen. The trees held the crystals in great quivering masses, while over the roofs of the buildings it was curled and festooned like a living creature. I heard the gentle breathing of the storm at times through the night, and was somewhat prepared for the morning's revelation. With the coming of the sun the storm died away, leaving the earth clothed in its great mantle of white. An hour later the wind looked out from its western fastness and followed the look with a bound that fairly filled the snow particles with new life. The trees shook down their fleecy mantle and everywhere over the fields the chariots of snow were driven with a free hand. Here and there the drifts were shaped, no two of them

telling the same story. Just beyond Roost Cottage the wind carried the snow particles and so dropped them that they lay in a great pile of almost perfect shaping. Back of the schoolhouse and sheds the frolicking snow was given a resting place that grew into a lone parapet, its crest ten feet from the ground. Down in the field in full sight from my study window I notice a long line of drifts that show the curves and moldings of most styles of architecture. How does the wind in its careless way throw the snow together, shaping so many beautiful things? All my life I have seen and known of the work, but someway do not fathom the mystery much more than I did at first. "Fulfilling somebody's will"—long ago that was a discovery made by man, and the parson hears and heeds.

The advent of the snow has been a revelation to the foxes. I am not sure that they like the snow and cold ; still, as far as I can see, that is the impression they give me. While the ground is bare I rarely see one of them, and when I do he seems to be away from home. To be seen as well as to see seems to be an important element in Mr. Fox's character, and the broad snow carpet

brings him into large prominence as he goes blithely on his way. One of his favorite strolls is along the slope of Simmons' Hill. If nothing is hurrying him he will take abundance of time and the trail he leaves behind is a very clear index of a quiet spirit. When the hounds are sounding their horn—even though it be some distance away—the movements of the fox betoken a condition of mind filled with alarm. I rather like to see the fellow illustrating both conditions. Someway I get something out of each condition that gives one a clearer vision of the creature so wild and alert. Not much occurs anywhere in their vicinity that they are not conscious of. I have seen them when the faint squeak of a mouse arrested their attention and set every faculty of their being on the alert. What hunters they are! I know of no other wild animal that can hear and see so much as the fox. And when once his attention is aroused he is almost sure to secure the quarry that comes into the range of his knowledge. Many things in the character of the fox I like, still I do not want him too friendly.

In the thick fog this morning a company of crows became wholly lost. I heard the flapping

of their wings and a little later their loud calls. Looking out I saw the party trying to find their way out to the daily feeding grounds. Their method of getting on was lumbering and heavy, and for a time seemed not much more than moving heavily in rather of a contracted circle. They came down quite close to the ground, dodging here and there among the trees, evidently entirely lost. Some of their movements were most ludicrous, especially the appearance of surprise when their best endeavor only brought them around to the place they started from a few minutes before. I put in a few shouts accompanied by clapping of hands. It was an element in the day's experience which apparently they had not calculated upon. It made the parson a sort of storm centre in the flock of dusky fellows, and such a hustling as followed the shouts was an exhibition of crow movement where none stayed upon the order of his going. In two or three minutes the entire flock had scattered out in every direction, and I could hear them talking the matter over, no doubt laying blame upon the parson for his rude interference with their well-laid plans. I found some consolation in the fact that the crows in the same situation would have emulated my action to the very letter. No other creature in

the range of my knowledge enjoys a real joke any more than a crow.

Occasionally I hear of one of the little grebes being seen in our hill country. The fellows are active and in some ways interesting, but why they should with their equipment seek the snow-covered fields is a mystery. On the wing or in the water they find their way quickly and are more or less graceful in all their movements. But when they attempt to practice walking they show in every movement the ungainly efforts of the novice. I suppose that we are sometimes favored with their visits, through the agency of a great storm. I am told that the heavy winds—finding them on the wing near the coast—drives them far inland before they can effect a landing. Under such conditions, they seem to lose all realizing sense of where they are or of where they desire to go. A few years since, a large number of these birds were given a shipwreck of this character, hundreds of the creatures appearing in Central New York. Most of them perished, only a very few being able to get back again to the old home. Being water birds they depend upon the brooks and open ponds for their

food, all of which in our severe cold weather are virtually closed to them. The grebe is furnished with two local names—dipper and dabchick. They nest far to the north, and I am told the nest is most singular among the many curious nests of birds. One writer says: "Imagine a little floating island of mud anchored securely to a marshy bank. Place in the centre, nearly level with the surface of the water, a handful of grass and leaves and you have the nest of the dabchick. Frequently the water, as it is moved by the wind, sways the nest back and forth and ofttimes the eggs rest in the water. All the same, however, to the grebe. The work of incubation goes on—the little family in due time graduating to the broad freedom of their watery home. Of course they have many enemies and the young are constantly exposed to their ravages, but enough escape of the annual brood to keep the number good."

There seems to be an extra number of English sparrows spending the winter in our place. I am not sure that the extra number is massed in one flock as has been common heretofore. I see them everywhere in the village and every day on duty apparently with all their might. Their

winter supply of food is somewhat circumscribed, but like many other species of birds they can get on for several days very well with a limited amount of food. From the parson's standpoint it would be a nice thing for them to migrate and spend the winter in the South. We could spare them here at the North and the outing I think would do them good. I should miss their games, if they are games, and there is a certain kind of cheerfulness about them even when they engage in their battles that is nice to contemplate. If the fellows are ever conscious of the many changes of weather in our inclement season they rarely ever show it. Heat and cold seem to affect them about alike and both are greeted cheerily so far as I can see. Really there is some good in the English sparrow.

With the advent of the snow-bunting we may count our winter as fully launched. I have heard the calls of these birds several times, but as yet have not seen any of them. True to their usual practice they first people the air several hundred feet above the fields below. I have a notion that the fellows spend three or four days on the wing when they first arrive in our section. I hear them passing sometimes in the night, giving out

the same call they do in the daytime. I hear them, too, several days before I see them—pretty good evidence that they have very little intercourse with sublunary things when they first reach their winter haunts. Of all our birds it seems to me that bunting has the best right to bear the name of snowbird of any that I know. His color, song and habits all tend snowward, and I know of no other creature that gets quite so near to the heart of the cold driving storm. When bunting gets his wings into close touch with the wings of the storm both storm and bird seem to delight in the fellowship. One of my free gramophones has place in my "house beautiful" when bunting and storm join as one in a carnival of song. Someway the songs are all old and just as clearly all new. No repetitions ever, naught in the entertainment they give but the blessed unison of voices that never pall upon the eager taste of "the ear that hears."

I have seen this week a small flock of yellow-birds. They came into the field near the rectory and really seemed to act as though they were just home from a foreign land. I have the notion that birds, like human beings, have times of

genuine homesickness. While they live after a manner that makes every place home, there are places that stand first on the heights of their regard. I interviewed the flock I saw but elicited nothing touching their whereabouts since the nesting season closed. From what I have seen I conclude that they took a trip well up into Canada. They had nothing really to do, that is from my standpoint, and a journey would pass the time for them and perhaps help fit them for the varied experiences of the winter season. Of all our small birds the yellowbird is the last one that I should expect would remain at the North during the cold weather. His size and his clean bird character would seem to fit him perfectly for a sojourn in the sunny South. I have seen a bird there that resembled our yellowbird closely, but I could not ascertain to just what species he belonged. Of course if he found his way southward in the winter we should lose his cheery presence—a change in our cold season that we would be loth to have occur. The little fellow uses a very pleasant call note in the winter and in all his actions is everywhere as bright and lively as he appears in the summer. A little later they will gather in large flocks, ranging over the fields among the merriest of our winter birds.

It is a curious fact that nearly all of our winter birds rank below the average as singers. They have little to put aside when they drop all the songs they use. I have recently seen an article where the writer speaks very highly of the blue jay as a singer. He kept one in a cage for a number of years and of course had an excellent opportunity to learn all the musical facts the bird could furnish him. I have heard their sharp calls and some of the softer notes, of which the writer speaks, but nothing that I could term a real bird song. The little chickadee uses his song throughout the year and it is most attractive, though brief. None of the woodpeckers, so far as I know, use anything that could possibly be rightfully entitled a song. Burroughs speaks of the rattling noise they make high up on some dead dry limb as a sort of apology for a song and possibly his surmise may be correct. Snow-bunting trills a few notes as he passes high up in the air, but his real song he reserves for the nesting season later in the spring. Yellowbird follows the same rule, using in the winter only a brief call note. If the matter were left to me to decide, I should certainly have some of the regular song dispensed in the midst of the frost and

cold. Still, if my knowledge were to decide the question, I can readily understand that the whole scheme might read "failure, from first to last."

Occasionally during the winter I hear the call of the owls from out of the darkness—weird speech of the night. If there be any bird of our many species whose language appears to be entirely appropriate to the occasion then it seems to me the owl is that bird. He has no conception, I am sure, of anything that could be called a song. The most attractive sound he makes is a little more than a gruff outburst of muffled syllables that are most honored by being forgotten as soon as possible. If the owl knows about his place among the creatures, knows how he has lived and is living, then one would suppose that his vision would be heavily freighted with discouragement. I cannot see in all the years I have known him that he has made a single particle of improvement in any direction. His walk and talk, his living by night and by day, his entire endeavor in being an owl all seem to be exactly the same they were sixty years ago. It would seem that threescore years ought to show some improvement if any had been made. Be

that as it may, there he is, wrestling with the owl problems of life, and it may be, solving more of them than we think. I have thought sometimes that if there was some way by which I could record the fellow's adventures as he goes about in the dark it would be a book well worth perusing. I judge from the little I know of his life during the winter that there are days when he has no knowledge of anything that he could term his daily bread. Possibly when the snow is deep and the cupboard bare he may journey southward, but if he does we have no knowledge of it. Some day we may know him better.

One of our most interesting small birds bears the name of nuthatch. There are two species—the white and the red-breasted. Six inches will fully measure the length of the bird, but his activity is so great that I sometimes think him much longer. The white-breasted species is the most common and can be easily distinguished by the color of its plumage and by its peculiar call. The back is a lightish blue, and the breast white. The song is an incessant repeating of the sound "guank." The range of the little fellow is over most of North America. He knows nothing of

migration, being a common resident the year through. Holes in the trees or posts furnish them with nesting places, which they line with feathers and fine grass. A pair have nested in this vicinity this season and I have seen them almost every day. There is a sort of domestic flavor to their song that renders it attractive and the movements of the little fellows in the trees are always interesting. I know of no other bird that can assume so many different attitudes in the same length of time. I sometimes think their favorite position is the reverse order of the head downward. One writer states that he has seen them when asleep in this posture. In my boyhood this species of birds was a citizen of the woods almost wholly. Now, however, they are common in the lawn trees and orchards. I know of nothing that is harmful that can be attributed to them. They are favorites with all bird lovers.

A neighbor of mine, out of the wealth of a kind heart, sets a winter table for the birds. It is spread on the back porch of her house and is patronized by quite a large number of happy guests. I notice in the company woodpeckers, chickadees, sparrows, blue jays and occasionally

at night, I suppose an owl drops in, being the only feaster at that hour of the day. The birds that visit the place seem on peaceable terms with one another, which is not always the case, when they meet in the summer. They use their call notes freely, which is about all the song most of them have. The woodpeckers are not very talkative in the winter, though they appear lively and happy hearted. The chickadees are sprightly and use their entire song more freely, if possible, than in the summer. What cheery little fellows they are. The very tone of their voices is most attractive. Of course the English sparrow is on active duty wherever he finds anything to eat. His capacity for food is not excelled by that of any other bird. No other bird more talkative, and I half conjecture that no other bird really says less. For noise that reaches far and is high keyed, the blue jay furnishes a supply that is simply unrivaled among the feathered songsters. I think he enjoys using his voice and startling all birddom with the sharp, piercing sound.

I hear that my crow friends are gathering in their winter haunts. Someway their wireless telegraphy has given them the news that has

brought them, almost to a crow, into the old places. I cannot conceive of any advantages which the weather just now extends to them. I don't know that the weather really enters into the problem they have to solve very much. So far as I can see they go to and fro pretty much oblivious to everything else but something to eat. I see them going to their night's rest among the hemlocks in the old Addington woods—mercury dropping far below zero during the night. From every point of view that man commands the bedchamber of the crow on such a night is about as cheerless as one can imagine. I have heard them from the old farm giving expression to some of their feelings and while the utterance was not particularly cheering, it had very little in it that one would regard as a protest against any of the surroundings. Once, I remember, the entire flock came rushing out of their bedchamber in the middle of the night and after circling around for a time went off to a new place of rest on Frankfort Hill. We saw nothing of the cause of the disturbance, but conjectured that some prowling owl dropped in upon them, levying tribute for an early breakfast. The crow, I fancy, is not the custodian of a great deal of courage, at least he rarely uses the article even if he possesses it.

A friend writes me that he sets a table for his bird visitors supplied with bones and suet. He states that he has seen the downy woodpecker eat his fill then take a piece and carry it to an oak tree forty yards away and secure it in the shaggy bark. It is an instance of provision for the rainy day not common to any great extent with the birds and not common, in that particular way, with many of our animals. I have seen it with different species, but varied in the manner of doing so that no two acts appear to have much in common. A friend of mine, who resides near the large wood just west of the village of Clayville, described the action of downy woodpecker that really showed what had all the appearance of a process of reasoning. He came out of the wood, took his place on a maple tree that stood near my friend's house and after tapping it with his sharp bill in a dozen places flew away. The maple sap trickled down the rough trunk and the flies soon congregated in large numbers. Downy returned and feasted on the flies, his previous work apparently preparing the way for the feast. The shrike will sometimes store a small amount of food, but I know of no bird that will provide to any great extent for the future. Most of the

birds that stay with us during the winter have their food provided for them to such an extent that enforced fasting with them is rare. When their supply of food is shortened through stress of weather they can easily find their way to an abundant store all ready for use.

One of my winter pleasures is a stroll along the swamp side. When the weather is right and the walking in keeping with it there is a very gracious return of pleasure, nicely distributed over every foot of the way. The other morning I bent my steps in that direction, and although the weather was not perfect nor the walking very satisfactory, still I managed to gather some real treasure during the hour. The evergreens wore the coats which give them their names, and I fancied their winter salutation had more life in it than the best that the summer gives. I rapped at the doors of the muskrat houses, but gathered no response. A flock of blue jays came out of the thickets near the hillside, and I am quite sure I never met them when they had more to say. Blue jay talk has the merit of abundant sound, but farther than that I am not prepared to pronounce upon its excellence. My cheery friends,

the chickadees, seemed to keep step with me during the entire walk in the vicinity of the swamp. I am sure I understand them, and am quite sure that they understand me. Half a dozen crows gave voice from the hilltop of the old farm and as I caught their hoarse accents, I easily reached the conclusion, "a good second to the rattling volleys of talk fired by the blue jays." Returning homeward, I saw where Mr. Fox had stepped lightly over the snow, his footsteps telling out the character of the merry-hearted fellow that made them.

The woodpeckers are getting on their winter dress and manners. They have some trials in common, but each species is quite original after its kind. They are all peaceful fellows, in the main, though none of them will submit quietly to any extended abuse. Yellowhammer is only half measured in the woodpecker family; still he honors handsomely the distinguishing traits of his race. Among the smaller birds he has size and strength, so that he has little to fear from his smaller companions. His activity insures safety from the birds of prey, so that on the whole he can behave in a natural manner. There is no

merrier bird, no bird that outdoes him in romping, rollicking fun. When he speaks his language is full of a sort of "hurrah boys" that wakes the echoes on every side. His playfulness is proverbial; in fact, all his work seems to be done in a playful manner. His eminent domain includes all the domain there is, and no citizen of his broad realm is ever other than a freeman, in thought, word and deed. His way of building his house or of training his children seems to secure the young birds from the trials and perils that most of the other species meet. I never have seen the young flickers tumbling around on the ground half fledged. Probably they have some experience of that kind but it has not come under my observation. In short, yellowhammer goes and comes, works and plays, and no other bird illustrates more completely than he the riches of hearty, whole-souled, merry bird life.

Occasionally I see a woodpecker this winter, but so seldom that it hardly seems like one of our old time cold seasons. From what I see in the woods I judge that they are not present anywhere about here in their usual numbers. Possibly they are adopting the customs of other birds and are

taking a trip to the sunny South. If I were a woodpecker, as I am an observer, I think I should hie away to the soft air and open fields of the summer clime. But woodpecker no doubt knows his own business and adopts the best scheme possible for his welfare. There is something in a true character, practically oblivious to the changing moods of the weather, that is more or less inspiring. Our winter birds appear to present this kind of character, and what is more noticeable, to rejoice in it. In the great ravine on the north side of Bird Paradise I find the woodpeckers usually when they are scarce everywhere else. The place has all the conditions of a winter resort for the fellows and they improve their opportunity. I have not been there this winter, and it may be that the dearth of birds is in vogue there as elsewhere. Two of the gray woodpeckers and three or four sapsuckers make up the count in my lawn trees so far this season.

It is seldom that a flock of wild geese is seen in our hill country. Last week a merry company of a hundred or more passed over on their way to their winter home. To the young people of the party every step of the way was a revelation. I

am told that the advanced guard of the migrating host consists entirely of young birds. Just how the wise ones know I am not informed, and I have my doubts about the statement holding all the truth. In my experience in Oklahoma I found that the old and young birds journeyed together. I am quite sure that the old birds are the leaders of each flock. What plodders they are. All the night through they go steadily on their way seemingly little wearied by the effort. During the day they spend considerable of the time on the ponds and along the streams. In my boyhood it was a common thing to find them in the marshes near the old swamps, and our sportsmen secured them easily. Occasionally I have seen the large cranes here in company with the geese, though I doubt if they care to associate very much with each other. One of the most sombre objects in the wide house of nature is a crane stalking around in the shallows of one of our hill ponds. Handsome with them must be what handsome does, for the vision of their persons never reveals it.

A long walk across the fields this morning had many wintry aspects, and yet it was nicely punc-

tuated with delightful spring touches. Robins and bluebirds were everywhere and every one seemed to have a song to sing. It was not entirely a concert conducted by the males, for many of the other sex were present and joined cheerily in the common refrain. Just how the fellows find food to satisfy them I cannot learn. There are bare spaces of ground, though most of the fields are still carpeted with snow. There is food tucked away in the grass, grubs and insects, and very likely they make use of this great cupboard freely. I notice that the bird life early in the spring is more spirited than at any other season of the year. Of course at that time they have a large amount of business on their hands, and it is business that they enjoy working at with all their might. Very nearly as soon as they arrive from the South they search through the trees for the right place to construct their summer cottage and if the weather is favorable they get right to work getting everything into shape. The early comers are none of them real adepts at nest building. Robin eschews all beauty in his work and bluebird makes little or no effort beyond the shaping of a house that serves all practical purposes. Each works out his own plan, and that meets all requirements in every case.

Curious how the mild weather interferes with some of the plans of our winter birds. Several species go into hiding somewhere when the south wind mellows the temperature of the air. I never see or hear the buntings only when the winds and snow are holding one of their stirring carnivals. The yellowbirds rarely interview me in mild weather. So, too, the wood birds are not apt to call on the parson except when they come on the wings of the snow and the cold. I like the kind of character which rises to meet the occasion, especially when the occasion in wind and storm has become more or less forbidding. Bunting's method of using a storm is an admirable one. He responds to its shouts and clamor in kind for kind. He sails with the wind any whither that the wind may please to take him. At such a time he trills his best song, as he also shows his greatest activity. What preachers the birds are. In fact, the fellows are living texts and the sermons, like the texts, are rich, I sometimes think, with the "alive and dead and alive again forevermore."

Where do the crows sojourn for several weeks in the fall? They disappear for a time, scarcely

one showing its dusky form during the time. The movement they make is not a necessity from lack of food, or stress of weather. It may have place through the desire for a greater variety of daily bread or it may be an outcome of the fellow's love of adventure. Why not a North Pole in the crow world and why not many a Cook and Peary vieing in the strife to discover all there is to discover? As I know the crow character, it has many curious traits and perhaps the love of adventure is not lacking in the list. I feel quite sure that there are times in the fellow's experience when he indulges in a kind of drollery that might well be termed North Pole humor. At any rate it seems to have very little warmth in it. I sometimes cherish the notion that the crow host is marshaled—especially in the winter season—by a leader that uses his authority according to a code of laws peculiar to the dusky army. Even among the smaller flocks there are indications that lead one to conclude that many of their movements are shaped by one in command. They never leave their movements unguarded. I have verified this repeatedly. Wherever a flock of crows has assembled some prominent outlook is occupied by their scouts. The approach of an enemy is announced by loud calls,

the tone of the call sounding the alarm. As a scavenger the crow ranks among the first. Almost everything is fish that comes to his net.

One of the Utica dailies describes the experience of a dog in a short interview with a company of English sparrows. When the ordeal was over the dog no doubt was a number of degrees wiser than he had ever been before. I have seen the same scheme put into operation by the sparrows on my lawn, only the animal disciplined was a squirrel. Last fall my attention was attracted by an unusual noise in the maples front of the church. A little investigation revealed the fact that a squirrel had fallen into the hands of a company of English sparrows and they were squaring accounts with him for some of his depredations on their nests earlier in the season. Every bird was shouting at the top of his bird voice, and wings and legs and feet were mixed in a mass completely hiding the squirrel. After the mêlée had lasted a few minutes the excited crowd rolled out of the tree like a ball. Down they went to the ground, the squirrel making frantic efforts to escape. He clambered up a tree and out to the old church

tower, every sparrow striking him hard and at the same time freeing his mind in the vehemence of sparrow speech. Through a crevice there the red fellow darted, escaping his persecutors by a most narrow chance. I am quite sure that a few minutes more of the sparrows' work would have ended Mr. Squirrel's career. I had little sympathy for him, knowing that he "was reaping as he had sown."

Occasionally the conditions on Paris Hill seem to be entirely favorable for a first-class storm. In some way last Sunday offered inducements that were freely accepted by the storm bureau, and in an incredibly short space of time were put to use that I have never seen excelled in our hill country. All day Saturday the skilled workmen were busy getting everything into shape for the carnival on Sunday. During the evening I could hear the legions gathering and I half fancied that the extra efforts of the wind were the stirring commands of the one in charge. A little after midnight the winds took full possession of the occasion. When the morning came the scene had put on a demeanor that invested it with a grandeur not often seen in our winter

storms. Without any question everything in the realm of storms was wide awake, and doing its large best to make the undertaking a perfect success. Two or three times during the day I found my way out into the path of the winds. On each occasion naught but sure anchorage kept the parson from drifting away on the swelling tide. I almost envied the buntings that were riding the wild steeds of the sky, not in the least endangered by their apparently reckless venture. I could see no reason why the rush of the great winds should have any stay short of destruction on every hand, but the reason was there. On the tablet of the trusting heart it reads "thus far and no farther." Absolute safety assured. Ah, the supremacy of that blessed truth clothes the storm in its robes of gracious beauty—every stroke of its hand a benediction of joy and love.

Birds have very little affection for red squirrels, and bunny bears the feathered brothers no abiding good will. I notice that the English sparrow takes particular delight in making the fellow's life a burden to him. Last week a flock of a hundred sparrows and more discovered a red

squirrel in my lawn trees. They gathered about him until he seemed the centre of a great ball of feathers. The contact was so close that the squirrel seemed perfectly bewildered. The ball of life went up and down the tree. Occasionally he would emerge from it and start off on his journey, but all in vain. The sphere of sparrows would roll over once or twice and the old order of things was reëstablished. The babel of sounds which the sparrows emitted gave my lawn prominence throughout the village. The conflict went on for several minutes, the squirrel slowly working his way toward the church as though he considered that a place of refuge. Finally he dropped into a half-concealed cavity in the trunk of the tree and his persecutors left him. I had no particular sympathy for him as I knew of his system of preying upon the eggs and young of the birds.

Each successive year I find more and more reason to believe that the broad shelf of wood and ravine, stretching along the eastern slope from our village, was properly named when it received the title of Bird Paradise. I never stroll there without finding something that seems a real part of a paradise of birds. Each season

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tells its own story, and tells it well. I listen to the story, and someway the last one told seems the best. Just now, the summing up of the year, in common parlance, reads, "A tale that is told." But a tale that is rightly told, when one reaches the last word, opens simply to something higher and more precious. The leaves that are all down from the trees tumble and rustle about, but have their higher mission of giving all their best to the new foliage that will come with the spring time. The trees, themselves bare and leafless, sway and bow in the winds, and every movement breathes through the wood the benediction of the ripeness and richness of the year.

I heard this morning the plaintive call of the wood pewee. I have heard it oftener this season than any previous winter that I remember. What a sort of weird, weary note it is. It sounds as one might imagine the bird to feel—all alone in the snow and cold. This fellow belongs to the fly-catcher family and in the summer feasts upon the flies, which it catches on the wing. What it uses in the winter for food I do not know, but fancy he makes a virtue of necessity and lives largely without eating. Curious that many mem-

bers of this species migrate, while a portion of them stay at the North. One would rather like to know how they divide the responsibility, giving each his duty to perform. In the domain of instinct, however, I can as readily understand how only a portion of those moved by it should obey its monitions as how all should. I apprehend the birds know little or nothing concerning it at heart. I get nothing from them but the simple facts.

A short visit from a little screech-owl one morning this week gave a sort of introduction to the day that rarely occurs in the parson's experience. The fellow's call came from the trees on the front lawn. It was hardly light enough to detect his form but the weird hooting was easily a thing of the night. Of all the owls this smallest of all is gifted with a voice and use of it that distinguishes him among all his tribe. I failed to detect him in the trees but caught his hooting over and over. What an uncanny sound it is and how it awakens the echoes of the dim morning light. A little later I heard him from the orchards east of the village and I conclude with the rising of the sun he went his way to the

coverts of the swamp. This smallest of the owl family is about the only representative of the race that we now have in our hill country. In my boyhood there were five or six different species. The cutting away of the forests, especially the large hollow trees, has effectually removed their lurking places so that most of them have journeyed to a more genial clime. I like the smaller fellow for his many traits that shine with the best of owl goodness. Of course he is not perfect, though he stands high in the ranks of birds of the night. Perhaps he does the best he can situated just as he is.

The bare branches swayed in the wind, celebrating the change by strains of new music. Boy-like, I put my feet down into the thick carpet of leaves and went a long distance, enjoying the rustle that resounded through the wood. Every little while I wakened some denizen of the place, that seemed to wonder what particular business the parson had disturbing the quiet of paradise. Just at the eastern outlook, a little bevy of chickadees gave greeting, and nothing else in the entire stroll was quite so cheery. The great hemlocks on the farther hillside bowed a

sombre welcome, and put the deeper tone into the music of the forest refrain. Seated on the edge of the ravine, I found special delight in tracing the brook as it wound along to the open field below. There were places where the sunlight filtered through the branches, turning the ripple of the stream into a pile of glittering jewels. But the carpet laid down so gently—woven so deftly—wide and long as all the wood—what a marvelous texture, and how easily it was fitted in all its parts. I could see great folds taken up and laid down again—no workman visible in all the change.

My little screech-owl has now become a regular visitor. Just at dusk one day he appeared earlier than common and seemed to be in an unusually merry mood. He came close to the house, under my study window, and appeared not in the least shy. Like the crows, he was getting most of his food from the grass. If he has intelligence he makes no showing of it in his appearance, and I conclude that his social development is not more pronounced than his triumphs of intellect. Occasionally he gets a return from that small horn of his that really has something musical in its

make-up. I half conjecture from his manner that he is as much surprised at the outcome as any one else. When the snow hides the ground and most of the small birds are gone I am quite sure my small friend suffers with hunger. At such times in my boyhood we used to find the fellow seeking refuge in the old farm barns. Like other birds, however, he can suffer hunger for a time without much apparent discomfort. I suppose he knows all about the hours of darkness, but no one else is the wiser for it. I do not know that his deeds are evil, but he is a real lover of the darkness. In my small domain half the time belongs to Mr. Owl pretty much alone and in his way he seems to enjoy it.

I had hardly thought that there were any fur-bearing animals left in our hill country to trap, but I am told that it is a business successfully prosecuted by a number of persons in our town. Living in Clayville is William White, who receives quite an annual income from the furs he secures by trapping. Mink and skunk are the principal animals that he traps, though there are some others that he obtains more or less frequently. Think of having a line of traps along

the streams and among the ponds that requires an entire night to visit. See the equipment in the time of deep snow for such a journey. Snow-shoes, lantern, bag to place the spoils in and plenty of real manly resolution to face storms and the various vicissitudes of such an excursion. I can understand how it offers some inducements to one who cares to be induced in a stirring manner. Alone in Mother Nature's great house—the storm raging, winds and snow playing hide-and-seek among the hills—the darkness dense and black on every side, why not a place to realize fully that the winds are the winds of God, and all the forces of nature playthings in His gracious hands? There are nuggets of pure gold in the realm of Nature that can only be picked up in such a manner. The trapper going out into the night may well consider himself the eye open to it all under the one, all-seeing eye. He holds in his keeping the key to the ten thousand mysteries all around him. To use the key is to unravel the mysteries, and the mysteries unraveled are open doors, every one of them in heaven.

I do not know that the chickadees intend any special amount of good to any one by their daily

visits to our village, but I do know that the visits confer good. Like their Master and ours, they go about doing good, and that is about the only method I know of getting good. The real test of our doing that which is good lies in the consciousness that the river of life is flowing unvexed through the rightful channels in our small domain. My chickadee friends may not know any such test, may not be conscious of conferring good upon anybody, but all the same they minister most graciously to the human brother and, so far as I know, never leave undone what they ought to do. The song they use is instinct with the "soul of wit," three or four notes measuring the entire refrain. On the other hand, the notes are of such a character that one never tires of their repetition. If I were to choose from all the bird songs the one charged with the most homelike notes, I should give the preference to the chickadee effort. I regard it as the finest antidote I know for homesickness. The little fellow goes to and fro, a perfect bird petition of "Give us this day our daily bread," and not only illustrates the prayer handsomely, but shows in his living the answer wondrously complete. When I want a first-class sermon from a first-class preacher I take my place in the great temple not

made with hands, chickadee himself the text, and the message—the entire discourse a living breath from the courts above.

On that one bright, clear morning of last week I noticed the birds were unusually lively. I saw them in my orchard and lawn tree and heard them from the trees in the park. Blue jay was prominent in sending out his call, not only in the frequent repetition but in its far-reaching power. Chickadee's mild-mannered speech was entirely in keeping with the bland character of the morning. Two or three crows flying over said their say, and while it did not fit in very perfectly with the cheery offering of the day it was no doubt the best they could do. A little company of nuthatches were busy in the maples near the church door, their soft voices blending nicely with the mild temperature of the morning. A downy woodpecker balanced in a friendly way on the limb a few feet from my study window as though he was an ambassador of peace from the great realm of the weather. Down in the pasture the goldfinches were breakfasting on the seeds of the weeds just at the fence side. I could hear their cheery call and occasionally see them flit-

ting from place to place. I said a real bird good-morning and followed it with my best greeting, cherishing the idea that somehow the birds knew what I meant.

I am quite sure that two or three families of fox parishioners reside in my large parish. I see the tracks they leave in the snow and occasionally I see one out for the daily walk. In the White Creek ravine west of the village is one of their favorite haunts. Another is located in the gorge at Bird Paradise, and still another in the Smith woods on the Utica road. I think they rather enjoy locating their dwelling place in or near a stone quarry. Someway they seem to know that such a place is a retreat for them where they are practically safe from harm. Just now with the thick blanket of snow I have a notion that with all the fellow's resources he carries about with him a feeling of hunger most of the time. When he does get out on one of his strolls he frequently passes along the slope of Simmons' Hill. His movements are free and easy, showing a native grace that is the very poetry of motion. His steady warfare upon many kinds of vermin makes him a valuable scavenger, but his forays on the

poultry yard pretty effectually hide all his virtues. I yield him the favor of seeing his good qualities first, which is one of the methods of fellowship that really conserves the good, both in the seen and the one who sees.

With what ease and dispatch our insects and some of the smaller animals get into winter quarters. With many of them there seems to be no preparation any further than simply to fold their hands where the winter stroke finds them. Just here on the window sill are two or three flies that I am quite sure have put on their winter suit and put it off several times already. The newly kindled fire warms up their nest, life is astir, and to all intents they are flies again, ready for any escapade of fly life. The fire dies down, the cold asserts itself, and my small friends are as inert and lifeless to all appearance as the piece of wood upon which they lie. So with the bats and the woodchucks in the main, though the larger animals always show some signs of life. It seems like a very handy way of doing things, and no doubt there are many beings in other walks of life that would be glad to adopt some such handy scheme. Rip Van Winkle had some experience

in the business, and while it served to tide over several hard places he did not in the end exactly like it. I apprehend that most of us, under such circumstances, would feel that we had lost something of value.

One of the old signs of the countryside reads, "When the field-mice improve the fall weather to put their homes in the hollow trees, then the winter to follow will be a severe one." I have known the sign to fail as often as otherwise, but then nearly all signs do that. Part of the lasting value of the ordinary sign is its failure to ratify the original outreach. What a curious life it is that the little field-mice present to us. Whether we can use them as prophets or not, the fact remains that they go to and fro in the wide fields always on duty, as they see and know the grace. Sometimes when I am crossing the fields I visit the large stone heaps, knowing well that my small friends harbor there and have something to say to me. Not long ago I turned over a half decayed rail, and in so doing uncovered the nest of a pair of these little fellows. It was the species that we term the jumping mouse. There were four or five young ones in the nest, and the way

they sought safety was most amusing. Each young fellow fastened his teeth firmly in the mother's side—holding on stoutly while she jumped rapidly away. At the sides of the stone piles I frequently find evidence that shows the ranks of these little creatures decimated by the tragedy of a night-time. A strolling fox or skunk, lying in wait, has taken his prize at the door of the fellow's humble dwelling, feasting upon it in sight and sound of the frightened household. Ah, how widely this condition of creature life reaches! Hardly a life in the wide domain of being that continues its existence but uses this means. To be requires something not to be, and who shall say that it is not the saving of all?

The chickadee always behaves well, but someway I think he is at his best in the winter. The little fellows take possession of my lawn trees—apparently just as happy in the snow and cold as when the flowers bloom. While they are socially inclined, I rarely ever see more than five or six in a flock. As architects, they rank with their near relatives, the woodpeckers. In the cold weather their snug homes in the trunk of the

tree defy the discomforts of the season. They are particularly well situated for light housekeeping. Their table is as extensive as all the trees in their reach. Bark table-spreads and the viands, just under the bark—always ready for use. Faultless table manners mark their demeanor, while they are taking their meals, and food-taking employs most of their waking time. When I visit the wood I am met at the door by the chickadees, and usually they accompany me during my entire stay. Easily I get the idea that they are extending a cordial welcome to the parson. The idea does me good and seems to do the birds good also. The ups and downs of life are nicely illustrated by the chickadee's movements. He appears the happiest when he is running down the tree. His athletics combine all the turns and twists that can be made by a living creature. Then that song of his! What can be cheerier—the very tone of it, domestic in every sense of the word! A piece of meat hung in the porch centres their attention during the winter, while furnishing them with a feast that they appreciate.

The Audubon calendar for 1908 bears on its first page a picture of a bevy of nuthatches that

seem to impart a summer air to what otherwise would be regarded as a winter scene. The two species—red and white breasted—are given in the sketch and if one of them should sound the peculiar call of the bird the picture would be complete. These birds bear a close resemblance to chickadees and sapsuckers and are easily mistaken for those birds. Their movements, while very similar to the ones above named, have some turns peculiar to the species. They seem to be the real acrobats of the bird host. No other bird gets up and down the trunk of the tree with the perfect ease of these fellows. Head downward is their favorite attitude and I am told they frequently sleep in this position. They are adepts at shaping their nests. In some half decayed branch they excavate a hole eight or ten inches deep. This they line with some soft material and after rearing their young make it their home for the remainder of the year. I scarcely ever see them in my lawn trees only in the winter. No other bird excels them in good-natured friendliness. I never see them quarreling with other birds and among themselves they pass the time in the fellowship of a household that is a unit in its common aims and work. On the old farm in my boyhood they were daily visitors during

the winter. These that I see now seem to be the same birds that I saw sixty years ago, and so far as their actions are concerned they are the same fellows.

A pair of nuthatches patrolled my lawn trees one day this week. The weather was not perfect, but it was not allowed to interfere in the slightest degree with the birds. They went about their business, which really looked like play, in the cheery fashion peculiar to their race. Up and down and all around they went, and I fancied there was not a square inch on the trees they did not look over. They would roll around at times, as though hung on a pivot, the little body balancing perfectly. They gave voice to their feelings, and no more domestic sound can be heard anywhere. With nuthatch, I am perfectly willing that he should keep the ripple of song he possesses, for it certainly ripples in a most delightful manner. What a great storehouse of food in common with the woodpecker these fellows have nicely provided for themselves. One who knows how perfectly, in the fall of the year, cans a hundred and more different varieties of meats, and all that nuthatch has to do

when hungry is to open a few of these cans and appropriate the contents. So far as I know, none of them ever spoil, or if they do, there is always enough left to supply every possible want. Commend me to nuthatch as a can opener. With that little bill of his he loosens the cover, and with a dexterous toss of the head throws it off, taking the contents apparently in the very act of opening. The know how of birds often seems to be the outcome of a sort of instinct that works with care and dispatch, even when entirely untrained.

The hill country brook has a character all its own. Then it has a phase of being which belongs wholly to the season through which it is passing. I never cross one of the old-timers without tarrying, if I have the time, to propound a few questions. It may sound a little curious to say that I talk to the brook and the brook talks to me. I am getting to the place where I feel, if I do not know, that there is nothing dumb in the wide domain of life but he that won't speak. The speech of the brook ripples with good things. It mingles all with laughter. It sings as it runs, and no other thing in nature

is more alive or more sure of a hearing. The winter stream, with its crystal ornaments, appeals to all the best in all other hearts. Those smooth stones in the channel, thrown together as they are, never seem irregular or out of place. Every sound of the stream murmurs with a winter tone and the deeper pools flash out to the waiting parson visions of victories where the water rejoices. Ah, how much there is that is good in the brook, that goes on forever!

A little nuthatch from the swamp interviewed me this week. He came in to my lawn trees without any particular ceremony, and I noticed seemed to regard the locality as a part at least of his home. One of the distinguishing characteristics of our birds is the manner in which they enjoy their privileges in Mother Nature's great house. All their movements indicate the ownership in fee simple of the entire domain around them. How easily they accomplish it all. They all own it together and all enjoy it together. "Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" in their own house and in their own way—their declaration of independence reads that way, and they behave that way. My visitor went about

his special business and attended to it with assiduous care, never once even intimating that he was anywhere else but at home. His soft note was full of a domestic flavor that was most pleasing. He stayed nearly all the forenoon, but the call did not seem very long, as he amused himself most of the time. I took care to inform him as best I could that he was always welcome.

Going quite early to the barn on a recent morning, I was saluted by the call of the little screech-owl. The fellow had dropped into one of the evergreens on the front lawn and was evidently desirous of surprising the parson with his curious medley of sounds. I went out to the tree and watched some little time, but failed to get sight of the fellow. He kept up his call until the sun looked over the eastern hill, and the night was gone. Then I conclude he made his way to the covers of the swamp just east of the village. This owl is the smallest of the several species known in our hill country, in fact, I think at the present he is our only regular owl resident. I sometimes hear his call in the night and I hardly know of any other sound made by birds that seems quite so uncanny. These little

fellows are great scavengers. Grubs, large insects, mice, frogs and toads are among the viands of their daily bread. I suppose they make use of some of the smaller birds when they come in their way. I saw on the plains of the southwest a little owl that seemed like an exact counterpart of our diminutive friend. Its home was with the prairie-dogs and it was known as the burrowing owl. I learned that it occupied the holes that the dogs had abandoned, living on good terms with its active neighbors. I heard its call and in some respects it resembled that of its Northern kinsman. Another difference was quite marked. Our Northern bird does all its active work in the night; the Southern bird is on duty through the day, hiding away in the darker rooms of its home during the night. I rather like the call of this bird of the night. It savors of life, even though its weirdness seems a little forbidding.

The chickadees have begun their annual visits to my lawn trees. They time their first coming to the ripeness of the season. Last week they appeared and I have heard or seen them every day since. I know of no other bird more domes-

tic in his tastes and the note he utters through the day savors quite fully of quiet home life. The young fellows begin the use of the note pretty soon after they get command of the art of flight. So far as I can tell the bird seems to trill his note of song mostly for the comfort which it secures to him. He goes on his way searching the trees for bugs and worms, telling out the gladness of his little heart almost at every turn he makes, and he seems to be turning all the time. Like his first cousins, the woodpeckers, he appears to care very little what position he is in, as he busies himself with his bird duties. It is a standing marvel to me the amount of food he manages to dispose of daily. Their regular hour for eating is all the time through the day. They begin with the day and frequently I discover them, eating and eating, as the sun goes down. It is simply wonderful how the birds eat as they do and avoid nearly, or quite, all sickness. Of course they can't eat between meals for they only have one meal a day. But continuous feasting, life apparently made up almost wholly of that, it would seem might throw good health to the winds, but nothing of the kind appears. On and on they go, healthy and happy. No use for doctors or medicine, no

aches or pains, no sighs or groans, nothing but free-hearted, joyous bird life. Verily the fellows seemed to have discovered the secret of living, and living well.

I feel quite sure that all of our birds at different seasons of the year take long journeys that might be considered of the nature of migration if not the thing itself. Those that remain North in the winter will at times disappear from their usual haunts, sometimes remaining away several weeks. Frequently those that journey early to the South, like the meadow-lark, will appear in the old places, sometimes tarrying through the winter. I never have seen any members of the species that reach South America in their annual migration returning North until the summer is well established. Frequently we see larks and robins here in mid-winter, and some entertain the idea that there are birds that remain North the entire season. It may be that they are correct in their conclusion. There are single birds that seem to lose the sense of migration, and in such a case they are obliged to tarry at the North, getting along very well if they can secure plenty of food. I am disposed to think that in

most cases where the birds are seen at the North in the winter, such as larks and robins, they have journeyed from the South—in some way reaching their summer resort entirely out of season. In all cases, however, there is no difficulty in the birds getting along very nicely if the food supply meets their wants. I notice that all birds endure the cold very well if there is plenty of food at their command.

One of my favorite winter birds is the pine grosbeak. His visits are irregular, sometimes two or three years passing without a single specimen of the species being seen in our hill country. The last I saw I think was three years ago this winter. The male bird wears a very handsome suit, part of it quite brilliant in its bright red color. They have no love for the sunny South, at least they never visit that favored region, but seem to be entirely satisfied with the cold and snowy Northwest. Their regard for the evergreen woods gives them a part of their name—the thickness of the bill yielding the latter portion. Their song, if the word can be rightly applied to it, is a sort of soft rambling warble broken by a few whistling notes. They are

socially inclined, for I never see them only in small flocks. Occasionally they appear in company with the crossbills—a bird that seems to possess some of their traits besides being a winter visitor to our hill country with the grosbeaks. In the nesting season they hie away to the dense forests of the far North, rarely ever breeding south of the Canada line. I judge that the time of their annual visits to our section is timed to meet with and enjoy the inspiration of the driving cold and snow. Certainly their action as I see them is of that cheery sort that makes the best of existing conditions. Let them be what they may, I am sure there are times when they pass days without much food except the scant supply which they manage to secure from the wide snow-fields. The buds of the forest trees are their principal reliance in the time of deep snow.

A few birds were on duty, but the summer songs were all among the things of the past. Far down the ravine a small company of crows talked together—occasionally sounding their trumpet hoarsely through the wood. Under the wide carpet of leaves I fancied I could hear the sub-

dued tones of the innumerable insects and worms safely housed for the winter. Down the glen the brook went its way, telling the same old story that it was telling in my boyhood sixty years ago. The great hemlocks, dark and solemn, did not seem a day older than when I first knew them. Several of them told me of the days long since passed and of the crows' nests to which we clambered with the keen delight of the hunter. The outlook on the eastern side, which I had seen hundreds of times, seemed new, as it does each successive time I see it. I cherish the notion that the birds and squirrels enjoy the beautiful view just at their door. It is their privilege to enjoy it and it does the parson good to think they do—anyway it does no harm to entertain the notion. Part of the way of understanding the birds and animals is by the way of misunderstanding. Browning says, "Through the path of mistakes we reach the highway of life," and if the principle be a good one I like to apply it broadly. I came out of the wood temple by its southern gate where, sitting on the old crooked fence, I mused of the facility with which Mother Nature cleans and readorns her great house. She commands the rains and frost, the winds and sunshine, puts them all to work and

lo! the transfiguration. Just a grand forward march from use to use, from beauty to beauty.

This morning, just at the break of day, I noticed the crows seemed to be in quite a quandary. There was a thick fog and they rocked about in it like ships on an unknown sea. Some of them dropped down into my orchard and tumbled over and over each other in trying to get their bearings again. A crow lost is as helpless a creature as one can well imagine. It seems to affect his powers of flight. The wings work but someway all in vain. I suppose the feeling that he is lost makes everything about him seem strange. These fellows that landed in my orchard didn't appear to have the least idea who the parson was. Their bowing and cawing was fully up to crow politeness, but not in the least intended to apply in that direction. When they finally got out of the dilemma and fairly on the wing I watched them out of sight, and soon after heard an uproar in my neighbor's orchard, a repetition probably of the twists and turns I had just witnessed. I am always interested in the idiosyncrasies of crow character. The don't-care, bubbling-over element in it is always at the front. Then the

ludicrous side of things seems to be on his vision always. The more he is frightened the more odd and whimsical he seems to be. His attitude after he has recovered from one of his great frights is the fellow at his best as a humorist. He struts about with a sort of self-assertive air, utterly scorning the idea that his equanimity has been in the least disturbed. Crow assurance has no modesty to recommend it.

From where I sit in my study, the broad slope of Simmons' hillside is in full view. The carpet of snow covered it completely a few mornings ago, and the morning sunbeams were dancing over the crystals as though the dancers and crystals were one life. I fancy they are one, far beyond our knowledge. Just at the southern portal of the hill a hawk was floating upon his broad wings, apparently enjoying his house, all clean and white. Down near the old maple at the hill foot a pair of crows were lazily exploring the field, no doubt looking for a savory morsel to break their fast. What lumbering fellows they are, and yet they fill their crow places very nicely. I have yet to learn of a creature that is without place and use in the great economy of being. Crossing the hill a year or two ago I heard a harsh, loud scream.

Looking up I saw an eagle high in the air, moving toward the north. With what grace and strength he moved, denizen of the earth, and yet free to command and use his little ship of state. I watched him until he hung a mere speck far over toward Oneida Lake. Now and then one of these great birds strays into our hill country, but their visits are few and far between. The meadows of this hill are favorite resorts for the meadow-larks. I never pass there in the nesting months without hearing their song, and when the young fellows are leaving the nest I often get a view of the family training school, which is really a house of more than seven gables. I have a notion that the old Psalmist had something more than the mere physical structure of the hill in mind when he wrote: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help." Why not, all the life of the hill,—one common heart in it all.

Occasionally I see a flock of the goldfinches, all nicely transformed into real birds of the snow. What a genuine bird's life they lead the entire year through. At the height of the summer they build their nests and rear their families. Then they sing and give praise with the best member

they have. At that time they dress in brilliant colors and go about happy as the day is long. When the nesting season is over they all put on new suits. Curious that the females renew theirs in precisely the same sober color that distinguishes them in the opening of the season. Curious, too, that the males should wear the brighter colors. But stranger yet, the new suit of the male is precisely like that of the female. All the winter through they sport together, dressed in suits of olive green—the males shifting back to the summer suits when the spring opens. They are among the brightest of our winter birds. I see them frequently in a field, where the waving stalks of grass and weeds offer them an inviting feast. Their manner of taking it savors of the utmost freedom. The table is a wide one, and the guests go from seat to seat, uttering their winter call and feasting to their hearts' content. I am told that like the snow-buntings they frequently make their bed in the snow—the soft robe of crystals folding about their little forms giving abundant warmth and protection.

The winter story of the partridges is a book of the swamp fastnesses well worth perusing. If the

fellows are left to themselves they manage to fill up the pages of their daily life with some of the best of bird experience. There is no other bird of my acquaintance that carries about with him cleaner thought and action. I say thought. Surely what is it if it be not thought? I have watched them often when they were unaware of my presence and the movements they made betokened thought, or at least what we call thought in man. The process by which the old birds warn their young of approaching danger and the methods they take to lead the enemy in a counter direction all show a kind of reasoning that is near enough genuine to be the article itself. I think partridge loves the snow. His suit of winter clothing is every way admirable for the season. It is so woven that it keeps dry even in the days and nights of driving rain. Impervious to the cold and easily kept clean, though worn months without washing, he seems to be in perfect order for all kinds of weather. The buds on the trees supply him with food, while the pure white snow furnishes a warm cozy bed that is always ready for use. What a book such a house could issue if it had the means of publishing well in hand—rather, what a book it does issue, and how cheerily it reads to him who understands.

The weather certainly greeted us this year with the true Christmas greeting. Cold and crisp, with good sleighing, filled the record completely. The parson tested it somewhat with a short walk and found it perfect for the day. Enough snowflakes sifted down to mark the hours properly, and the breezes tossed them hither and thither in real Christmas style. We noticed that the fleecy clouds were having a real carnival. All day long, and far into the night they danced to lively tunes which the northwest winds played for them, and such feasting as winds and clouds enjoyed comes to them only now and then. I like to fancy that the keen, frosty air is a great Christmas cake prepared especially for the clouds and winds. Then the notion gets place with me that all the good things which contribute to a real winter's day find in each other the other self. It looks that way, and then it is only a step to the fancy that each workman in the great house is a sort of living creature. Why, sometimes I am quite sure I hear them saying with the Master, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" And how grandly they say it. Just a great magnificent song set to music that is surely heavenly. As I pen these words the winds are coming out of

the west ruddy with the cold, but so elated with it all that I find myself saying, "All the winds of the sky-fields clap their hands." Note this: There is no scrap of time in the wide realm of nature wasted. Every moment is saved, and every day is Christmas Day.

In the storm of snow the other morning I was quite sure that I caught the notes of snow-bunting's winter call. The wind was blowing a gale, cold, keen and biting, and the snowflakes filling the air—bunting's favorite weather. The sounds indicated that a small flock of the birds was riding on the wings of the wind, enjoying themselves as only snowbirds can. I was in hopes that they would drop down to the pastures below, but they had other plans more to their liking. I have no doubt but that the flock I heard had been on the wing all night long. While our hill residents were courting "balmy sleep" the buntings were courting the winds—greeting them as hale fellows well met. What an experience they passed through. From far away to the north they had taken their wonderful trolley the evening before and the long journey of hundreds of miles had been the merest pastime

to them. Someway they jolly not only themselves as they travel, but they give one the impression that they extend the same greeting to everything else that they meet. The great storm of wind and snow seems to give them the keenest delight. Their storm song has a crystal sound as though the snowflakes themselves were rendering the music of living creatures. In their long flights the buntings take but little food. I sometimes wonder if they have not outstripped us a little in mastering the calls of the fleshly temple. The temple is there and the calls, but the heart of the bunting turns to the winds and cold, finding its greatest delight in their stirring fellowship.

What a fine cold storage plant our birds and smaller animals have at their command during the winter season. I have been noting its excellencies and find that in number and quality they are not easily surpassed. The grass over the surface of all our fields is so woven together that in many places it forms a fine thick carpet. In the meshes of this covering grubs and insects innumerable find their winter home. The blasts of the north wind announce to the vast hosts that

the hour of their long slumber has arrived. Curious how the viands stored in this refrigerator all keep fresh by keeping alive, and the keeper of it all is cold and frost. But see the convenience of the whole matter. The feasters, crows and other birds, foxes and smaller animals, when hungry have simply to tarry right where they are—dining-table everywhere—and feast upon the greatest variety of food put before any body of feasters. The loaves and fishes of this vast world have not as yet been numbered by any one and the fragments are ever being gathered but never measured.

One of our smallest winter visitors is the redpoll linnet. Locally it bears the name of the little snowbird and in many respects is among the most interesting of our winter birds. When the time of housekeeping arrives he hies away to the shores of the Arctic Seas, so far away that I think very few have seen its nest or heard its nesting song. The musical effort it makes in its winter haunts is a sort of rambling lisp that one is quite willing should quickly reach its concluding note. Like the snow-bunting this bird seems the happiest when the cold and storm of

wind and snow are at their height. Their visits to this section are not made every year; in fact it is now several years since I have seen the little fellows. It is marvelous how such a small package of bird life goes to and fro in the snow and cold apparently perfectly oblivious to the biting sting of the weather. For months they romp and rollick through the snow country, perfectly satisfied with all their surroundings. Their food is easily obtained, as it consists largely of the weed seeds found in the hedgerows and old fields. In times of great depth of snow they use the buds of the trees—a repast that is always ready for them. Redpoll, like most of our winter birds, is socially inclined, though I think he prefers the gatherings made up of his own species. He wears a coat of a rich crimson color and is evidently quite satisfied with his brilliant personal appearance. We always extend to them a hearty welcome, for their coming is redolent with the best of bird cheer.

I heard the loud cries of the blue jays this morning. They had come up from the swamp and were having a little blue jay fun in my neighbor's orchard. They have visited the village

only two or three times this winter—something unusual in our hill country experience. When the weather is open they doubtless find plenty of food in the woods and swamps. The deep snow interferes somewhat with their food supply and sends them searching for it in the orchards and lawns of the village. Of course they bring their bugle with them, and are sure to use it if they have a shadow of a chance to do so. I like the note they use if I do not have too much of it. It certainly has more to recommend it in the winter than in the summer. Someway the snow-fields seem to soften the tone in a measure. Then the belligerent echo of the summer is absent also, which is certainly a great improvement. The jay throws down the gauntlet to all other birds. He is utterly careless regarding their rights. I sometimes fancy that he has the notion that the world was made especially for him. Some day, perhaps, in the forward march of evolution he may appear in a new character, and how his fellow birds will enjoy the coming of that day!

My first visit from the blue jays this winter occurred this week. Quite a number of them came up from the swamp and for a time the village

rang with their sharp voices. When I first saw them they were passing to and fro in the park, evidently enjoying their visit as a sort of Christmas carnival. There was some food hunting, in fact that is a large portion of the work of all our winter birds. I say work, but really their food is so arranged that about all they have to do is to go from tree to tree and simply pick it up. I rather enjoy watching them when feasting. Their table manners are perfect after their kind, and while they are not over-generous in sharing the viands with one another there is a certain kind of fellowship in what they do that savors of real brotherhood. I noticed that one of the birds made a careful inspection of the old nests that hung on the leafless trees. With his stout bill he tore them apart and scattered the pieces over the snow. From some of the movements that he made I inferred that he found some food there, which suited his taste. I studied their calls a little, hoping to decipher some of their meaning. For my pains I did not receive much more than I already possessed. They knew what they meant and used the knowledge no doubt to advantage. The faultless fit of their bright blue suits was most noticeable and their spotless appearance added not a little to the attractiveness of their

company. Blue jay in the winter is really a very attractive companion.

Quite a number of the inhabitants of our hill country have gone into winter quarters. From what I see I judge that the process is an easy one —simply going to sleep, having first found the right place. The insects perhaps—the greater portion of them—are always in the right place. The stroke of cold comes and the rubicon is crossed without any thought or even slightest sign of preparation. If the weather be favorable the little fellows may wake and sleep a dozen times during the winter without any particular harm ensuing. The earthworms have a sort of presentiment of what is coming and take refuge in the lower rooms of their large mansion. The ants and grubs, toads and frogs close the outside doors of their various houses and drop off to sleep with no thought troubling them as to when or how awakening may come. The woodchuck retires to the deepest part of his underground cottage and even before the cold and snow arrive has forgotten life and all its cares. Two or three times I remember seeing the bat in full position for the winter's campaign. One might readily think

that they would find a nook well out of sight of all earthly things, but nothing of the kind appeared in the instances that came to my knowledge. In the darker part of the old barn loft, the little hooks along the edges of the wings were fastened to the board or rafter, and thus suspended the little creature braved with perfect success the cold and frosts of winter. When to do it and how to do it they seem to understand perfectly.

The weather makes itself felt among the wild creatures, as it does among human beings. This I note, however, with the birds, that is not as common with the lords of creation as it ought to be. They seem to meet it all with a cheerful spirit, and if food be plentiful go on from day to day in a joyful manner. Even as I write a company of chickadees are passing to and fro in my lawn trees, and though the weather is cold and snowy there is not a bird other than bright and happy. Of course they are warmly clothed and have nothing else to do but eat, drink, and be merry, yet that does not always insure happiness. Sometimes the conditions appear perfect, and the creature's action exceedingly imperfect. But I see so little of this among the birds that I rarely

have occasion to note it down. My black cap friends have no knowledge, I believe, of any other manners but those that are recorded in the book of life. If behavior carries the birds safely within the house beautiful then chickadee has nothing to fear. Among the saints of the bird host these little fellows rank high; in fact I see no way they can be outranked. Their winter cottages are nicely located in the hollow of a sheltering tree, and in the cold season of the year they have few enemies to trouble them. Sometimes several of the little fellows occupy a single cottage—a stroke of wisdom that enhances the comfort of the common house wonderfully. In the thicker part of the old swamp these chickadee homes appear, and sometimes when I drop in upon them the entire village comes out to greet me.

I have watched a little lately expecting some winter visitors from the Arctic regions. One of the most lively and cordial of them all is the little pine siskin or pine-finch as it is sometimes called. They are not regular visitors to our locality, but I see them nearly every winter. As the name indicates they are lovers of the evergreens and spend most of their time in the pines

and larches. They use in their winter haunts a feeble call note, but of course like other birds save their song for the nesting season. They are about the size of the common goldfinch, and appear very much the same, as I see them. I have seen it stated that they sometimes build nests and rear their young in the winter. As most of their food is furnished by the pine and spruce cones they would have no difficulty in finding a supply for the young birds. Some writers state that they occasionally breed in the Adirondacks and Northern New England, but I have never seen their nest. I frequently see the siskins and goldfinches feeding together in the hedgerows, and as their winter dress is nearly the same in color they are easily confounded. They have the dipping flight of the goldfinch, and the few notes they use resemble those of that bird.

Our great flock of crows is now slowly forming. I notice that the regular annual movement of the host is asserting its power. Somewhere east of us the roosting place has evidently been selected and early every morning the black fellows wing their way to the wide pasture which I fancy extends a hundred miles and more westward. I

wonder if other great flocks have place in our Northern country. Of course there is room for them and doubtless they fill that room. The crow is a sort of nondescript among the birds. I have noticed that he is quite apt to do what we do not expect him to do. In fact that seems to be the upshot of most of his action with his fellows. To all appearance he enjoys a real sally of wit with the keenest zest. When he is off guard all his movements savor of a drollery that is most amusing. Nothing that he enjoys more than poking that long bill of his into the business of all his fellows and he is sure to do it if he has half a chance. I have watched them getting settled in their roosting place for the night. No minstrel show was ever more amusing. They are all end men, and I often feel that most of the noise they make is genuine laughter. No creature that I know is more given to the convivial than the crow. If matters are favorable he eats most of the time. The coverts of the grass are stored with his principal food and he enjoys it all with true crow gusto. How the fellow keeps the fires of life burning on some of our zero nights is a mystery to the parson. Think of that bedchamber on the bare limb of a great tree, the winds tossing the limb and ruffling Mr.

Crow's feathers all the night through! Manifestly the fellow is totally undisturbed by it all. He is the same old crow whether he sleeps or wakes, whether it be cold or warm. He acts as though he had fully learned how to make the best of things, let them be what they may. Why is not that alone quite a liberal education?

I saw this week a small flock of snow-buntings having one of their bird games in the very midst of the snow-storm. There was hardly sufficient stress of wind to meet the requirements of one of their games and yet they made full use of what was proffered them. They jollied the flakes of snow, whirling about among them as though they were all living creatures. Some of them went far up the stairway of the sky, even passing out of sight among the whirling flakes. Others went down to the old pasture back of the cemetery, where they partook of a real feast spread bounteously for them in one of the hedgerows there. I notice they vary their winter song to suit the occasion. When riding full speed on the wings of the wind they use a song that almost seems to be a part of the storm itself. When taking their food they shape the song into a very quiet re-

frain that can be heard only a short distance away, and on a pleasant day they trill a song in keeping with the day but not as loud and stirring as when the storm is raging. Happy fellows they all seem to be and most gladly we give them the right hand of fellowship.

I see the peculiar tracks of the skunk here and there in the soft snow. The singular character of this creature is very plainly pictured in the trail he leaves behind him. His movement is of the sluggish sort and the footprints are multiplied in number far beyond those of any other of our smaller animals. Last night one of these fellows walked around my barn two or three times. He took good care to examine every crevice he could find, and I noticed that where the fowls were snugly sleeping he made extra efforts to push his way into the enclosure. Of course, the fowls protested, the noise they made frightening the intruder away. I could see where he moved across the field, leaving a well-plowed furrow in the snow. This animal can hibernate at will. When he chooses he can snuggle down in some out-of-the-way place and pass days pretty much oblivious to

all things about him. Then when he chooses he can wake from sleep and take up the duties of his narrow life again. At times I more than half conjecture he is far from pleased with the path he is treading in the journey of time. The trappers make his way a thorny one, and every winter hundreds pay the penalty of wearing a coat that is of large value in the marts of human trade. In Oklahoma we had a species of the skunk family not much larger than the common brown rat. They had all the characteristics of the larger species except size, and frequently dwelt under the same roof with the human brother.

How the brooks rejoice in a real January thaw. Of course they are attractive even when chilled with the frost and cold. Their light is rarely ever so shadowed by the bushel that its beauties are completely hidden. But when zephyrs from the South play with the snow, setting the white crystals to dancing with an almost forgotten warmth, then the rippling laughter of innumerable rills is heard everywhere. Down through the fields they flow, wandering with a sort of jolly freedom that is most exhilarating. I stood by the

channel of White Creek the other day when the offering of the broad hillside was being received by the larger stream. From every side the little rivulets were bringing their treasure and pouring it without stint into the keeping of the main current. The scene was inspiring. Each rill sang its own song, the brook itself blending and harmonizing the many strains, making the occasion a concert long to be remembered. I turned away from it all with the feeling that Mother Nature had given me a large glimpse of some of the beautiful things in her great house.

For some reason there have been an unusual number of woodpeckers in our hill country this winter. I see them every day in my lawn trees, busy I suppose with the many duties that fall to their lot. As I see them they seem to have but one object really in life. To all appearances eating is the one great duty and privilege that they seek to honor with all their might. In a very marked manner somebody is saying to them every moment, "Dinner is served." And it is. The table set for them is by far the largest extension table I know. Wherever trees are standing there

the table is, and such a variety of viands as appear is scarcely known anywhere else. Man uses a very few of the different species of creatures for food, but my woodpecker parishioners appropriate countless numbers during the year, especially during the winter season. Many of them are smaller, I am sure, than the human eye can discern, and one might conclude that feasting on such minute particles of food would hardly ever enable the eater to really feel or say, "Enough." Curious that a part of this large family migrates, though most of the species remain here the entire year. Why they do and why they do not are of the secrets not yet uncovered to mortals.

With the coming of the snow I am sure to receive calls from the birds who linger with us through the winter. Many of the calls have for their incentive a business motive. But they come frequently when the social element is largely to the front. Their method of shaking hands is full of real bird spirit, and while what they say is somewhat obscure it has a cheery tone which I greatly enjoy. Among the smaller winter birds the chickadee certainly ranks very high. They seldom look in upon me in the summer—just why I

do not know—but in the winter they are almost daily visitors. What a clean domestic flavor marks their brief song. It comes down from the tree as though the heart of the tree was in it. In the wood they seem to regard themselves as custodians of the best hospitality the sylvan aisles afford. Very often when I visit Bird Paradise a little bevy of chickadees will meet me at the entrance and accompany my steps throughout the entire stroll. Their attitude is that of hospitality, and someway its greeting is warm-hearted, through and through.

The woodpeckers are now occupied with their daily winter rounds. I see them in my lawn trees busy with work which no doubt is of great moment to them. So far as I can tell from what I see these birds are fortunate in having no other occupation but that of picking up their daily bread. Every moment of their waking time is given to it, and the marvel is how those small bodies can compass so much. I sometimes get the notion that their daily menu is all comprised in two or three different dishes, and I wonder how the fellows can keep so sleek and cheerful on so spare a diet. But is it true that a few articles con-

stitute the sum total of their regular food? For aught we know there are hundreds of delectable things, all nicely prepared and put upon the table of the great tree restaurant. The bird can stroll about and select what he pleases—having new and fresh viands every meal. There are a dozen problems that trouble seriously the many mortals of the human family that never give a particle of unrest to our bird brethren. No defect in their cookery. Servant problem not a part of their history. Fashion, style, cook books, no use for them. Come and go, eat and sleep, romp and play, woodpecker life, and yet I suspect they are not quite satisfied with it. If I mistake not the aspiration to be what they are not is ever their quest, and who shall say how largely the quest is honorable?

The flocking together of the birds shows the working of the social instinct and I often fancy, especially in the winter, that the large gatherings further some scheme that seems of common interest to the entire species. Take the blue jay, for instance. Yesterday morning I heard their loud calls from Addington's orchard, fifteen or twenty of the blue-coated fellows vieing together in a concourse of blue jay calls that I do not re-

member to have seen excelled in all my knowledge of birds. I watched them for a while, but could not make out just what they were trying to do. The presiding officer, if there was one, had several assistants, and every member of the conclave had something to say, and I thought said it over several times. The orchard where I saw the party is a sort of favorite place with them, and I notice they are fond of gathering there very early in the morning. They can easily reach it from the swamp and, I apprehend, the acoustics of the place favor its selection with the jays. Contrary to their usual custom, they went directly back to the swamp, where I heard them a little later, telling over doubtless the story of the early morning. Their word vocabulary is small, a single expletive serving for winter use, but I fancy they vary the meaning of each call by some subtle shade of expression known only to the jays.

Wednesday morning of last week gave the most princely showing of nature life that has ever fallen to my lot to see. The night before the winter artist had been at work while men slept, putting a robe studded with splendid jewels over all the trees and fields in the great house. When

I first looked out upon the scene there was just enough light to show the sheen of white thrown broadcast everywhere. The crown was put in place just at sunrise. There were a few loose clouds in the eastern sky, enough to lift the sunbeams, as it were, giving each what seemed to be a new power. The white was given a glimmer like molten silver and with it colors appeared, violet, pink and yellow mingling and dancing among the crystals until the beauty of it all became so weird and grand that it fairly fascinated the eye that saw and felt its power. Ah, the magic influence of it all, just "speaking and it is done." Then what a gallery it is, vast, and free as it is vast. I wait where its shadows fall, and the faintest gleam of the faintest shadow is of the very tracery of life, jewels of the fadeless crown.

An extensive walk last week took me along the borders of the swamp and far afield in the open reaches beyond. It was a cool, foggy day and I did not expect to meet many of the inhabitants or fall in with any new adventures. I knocked at the doors of the ant-hills, but received no response. I noticed that all the gates of their mansions were closed tightly, and knew the resi-

dents were well entered upon the unbroken quiet of their long winter campaign. A brief conversation with the crows revealed the fact that they were rejoicing over the somewhat unusual supply of food they had in the desiccated grasshoppers stored nicely in the wide cupboard of the thick grass. I assured the fellows that I knew of no better use to which the grasshopper could be put. Just at the brook side, where the water ripples away to the valley below, I saw where the muskrats had preëmpted a claim and were busy putting up their winter cottages. Just beyond their cabins I saw in the light snow the trail Mr. Fox leaves behind him as he goes tripping along. Returning, I came upon a flock of yellowbirds feeding on the seeds that waved in the tall grass at the roadside. Their salutation to the parson was bright and cheery, a very proper conclusion with which to close a long stroll.

A pair of nuthatches have been over from the swamp this afternoon and given an hour or more to patrolling my lawn trees. They belong to the woodpecker family and although the smallest of this large household are in some respects the most attractive. I rarely see them in companies of more than two, but the two are social after a

very pleasant pattern. I know of no other bird that excels nuthatch in all the evidences of good breeding. I never have known him to utter a harsh note. His ways are ways of peace. Even his note of song, like the bluebird's, is so gauged that it always seems the offering of a good heart. But the most pronounced of his many virtues is the domestic air which accompanies all his actions. Someway he appears like a true lover of home, with all its family cares and pleasures. His salutation to his mate honors bird fellowship with some of its best greetings. The pair hunt and work and play together, never showing the least sign of disagreement. When I want a stroke of true bird manliness I turn to nuthatch, and so far he never has failed to fill the bill perfectly. Quite frequently, when I am strolling through the swamp, I knock at the fellow's door in one of the old trees of the place. How his little head pops out of the open door and how quickly he follows it with the active body! I know of no cozier home among the birds, especially in the winter months. The door of the home, like the hearts of its inmates, always stands wide open, and one of the parson's keen enjoyments is the greeting that follows a hearty pull of nuthatch's latch-string.

I saw yesterday a party of hunters wending their way to the swamp south of the village. A little later I heard the sharp report of their guns. No protest came from the partridges so far as I know, but the blue jays lifted up their voices and I fancied commanded quiet. If they did do anything of the kind they certainly failed in their effort, for I heard the shooting for an hour or more. What a stirring, forceful fellow the blue jay is! When I hear him from the thickets of the swamp he seems to be almost all scream. His call is a scream, and there is no vestige of anything but harshness in it. Living as a pirate back through the ages, so he has a voice matching his character, hard, sharp, and most forbidding. There is scarcely anything the jay says or does that I really enjoy. He wears his blue coat gracefully, but that is merely the husk of a kind of "full corn in the ear" which bird lovers care very little about harvesting.

A fine specimen of the hairy woodpecker made me a visit this week. I first saw him in the orchard, and one might readily infer from his actions that he had been engaged to clear the entire

place of insect pests. A little later he appeared in the lawn trees, still engaged in his favorite work. He seemed to know right where the grubs and flies harbored, and surely his method of securing them could not be excelled. I noticed that his winter suit was not only a perfect fit, but it was made of a material that sparkled in the sunlight in a most attractive way. This species is the largest of all that stop with us during the winter. I have a notion that he does some migratory work as the year passes. I miss them for a time during the cold season, and also for a time in the fall of the year. As they have nothing really to keep them in any one place, why should they not take a journey? In fact, everything favors it. Their larder is as extensive as the entire country, and it is always open to their feasting. Their roads are highways never blocked, and their trolley system furnishes a rapid, cheap and comparatively safe method of transportation. Equipped as they are, one can easily entertain the notion that journeying is their forte. At any rate, the jolly workers are "hale fellows well met" with the parson.

A downy woodpecker someway has become possessed with the idea that he should visit the

parson at least once daily. He comes into my lawn house unannounced, but all the same largely welcome. I rarely see him in company with any other bird, no, not even with one of his own species. What a faultlessly neat suit of clothes he wears, and how surprisingly spotless he keeps them, wearing them as he does night and day for more than half the year. Both the tailor and the laundress of this bird are adepts in their respective vocations. Occasionally he speaks a single word —an utterance that seems to fall from his tongue entirely unstudied. If he means anything by the effort I have not been able to divine what it is. His different positions at the table where he feasts so extensively box the compass completely every three minutes. If he captures the game he pursues, the particular angle of the bodily presence is a thing oblivious to his consciousness. All winter long this bird, or others like him, will look in upon my small domain nearly every day, bringing with them their own special life and cheer. They must know that their welcome is as large as I can make it.

The school children discovered a little screech-owl in the church sheds. In the olden days the

discovery would have been the occasion of a combined hunt, resulting, very likely, in the death of the owl. As it was there was some hunting done, and the little fellow took refuge in the rectory barn. The bird found a niche which his pursuers could not find and made good his escape. The boys assured me that they wanted to catch him, show him to me, then give him his freedom again. I approved of the motive and told the boys I would get my eye on the fellow during the winter. What bright little fellows these owls are! I see them quite often and hear them frequently in the night-time. They are not adepts in their musical efforts, and still I rather enjoy the weird notes that they manage to utter. It is curious that the counterpart of our screech-owl should be found only in the Southwest. There they live with the prairie-dogs, and at a little distance appear the same as our Northern bird. I do not think the dogs are fond of the owls' company, though they tolerate it with a very good grace. In the olden time the screech-owl and his first cousin, the barn-owl, were regular guests in the farm buildings. Some of them nested there every season, rendering a full equivalent for their comfortable quarters in catching rats and mice. They do some harm among the chickens when

they are small, but on the whole render a service in the destruction of vermin far greater than the injury they do.

The snow sifted down until it lay on the fields and lawns two or three inches deep. The morning song of the birds was omitted and the birds themselves seemed to be a little dazed by the unusual weather. I saw the robins later in the day looking around as though a condition of things had been introduced of which their counsels had taken no note. Most of the birds found their way to the shelter of the woods and swamps and some I suppose took the bird trolley for a warmer clime. How they keep in touch with things so nicely I have no means of knowing, but someway they do, and are able to make good use of their knowledge. It is rarely that I can persuade the robins to take any food that I prepare for them at such a time. If I do get it to them it has to be done in such a way as to awaken no suspicion that it is other than a perfectly natural table spread before Mr. Robin. I have a notion that most of our birds can get along nicely with any kind of weather if they have access to a plentiful supply of good food.

On the old farm the robins, bluebirds and sparrows would domicile in the big barns and in that manner tide over the cold storm handsomely. It may be that they can abstain from food for several days without any serious results following. I have known some species, notably the little grebe, to refuse all food for ten days without apparently suffering in the least. This may be one of the ways that "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb." The recent storm gave us the damp snow. It clung to the trees, clothing them in a mantle of fleecy white. The birds seemed to regard it as a special festival in their honor. They would fly into the trees scattering crystals and calling to one another like a company of boys at play. The sun came out a little later and every bush and tree flamed with fire that seemed to inspire the birds with new zeal.

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