BIRD-DOM

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OSTRICH TACTICS.

Big Bird That Displayed as Much Cunning as an Apache Indian.

A well known hunter and taxidermist tells this story of personal experience in South Africa; it goes far beyond dispelling a slander that has long clouded the fair name of the ostrich:

Arriving at one of the monster hills of the white ant, I climbed upon it and raised my observation glasses to my eyes for a careful survey of the region. My first glance showed me, arising from the dead level of the plain beyond, two objects, each having the form of a capital S. These I knew were the heads and necks of two ostriches. Though I believed they had sighted me, I remained immovable until their necks were suddenly drawn down to the level of the tops of the bushes which screened their bodies. Then I knew for a certainty that they were aware of my presence and would make a quick retreat.

"Without losing an instant's time I ran to the spot where the birds had been standing and found their tracks. These I followed as far as they were distinguishable and then took a course

—A building some 12 by 30 feet is being erected near the Boston & Maine

—Work at Angus & Sykes' box-shop is suspended this week while repairs and improvements are being made.

—Charles W. Marshall and family left Amherst Saturday for Rockport, where they will spend the summer.

—Henry S. Allen of Chicopee and Hartwell Brainard, have been at John L. Brainard's on High St. for a few days.

—Making hay between the showers is an exciting game of chance but the farmers do not altogether approve of it.

—Work on the new dinning-hall at the Agricultural college has been seriously interfered with by the continuous heavy rains.

THE WAYS OF BIRDS.

In an unusual and interesting article on bird life in the *Outlook's* magazine number for July Mr. W. E. D. Scott, curator of Ornithology at Princeton, talks about the ease with which relations may be established between man and birds. Among other things he says:

Birds out-of-doors in the struggle for existence pretty well appreciate that, as a rule, bad things happen when boys and men are around, and they are fearful and on their guard. In places where

G. R. ELDER.

For Sale by

is ample to furnish requisite heat, and the control of fire is easy and complete. I am able to bake on short notice at any hour in the day, which I had not been able to do hitherto without kindling a new fire. The heat indicator pleases us much."

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"Without losing an instant's time I ran to the spot where the birds had been standing and found their tracks. These I followed as far as they were distinguishable and then took a course which I believed the birds would naturally follow. No sooner had I reached the top of the ravine than I saw one of the ostriches climbing the side hill. Estimating the distance, I took sight and fired. The ball passed immediately between his legs and struck in the sand of the side hill behind him.

"In an instant the bird darted away like an arrow in the direction of a small clump of bushes in the center of an open space. That he would pause behind this bush and then finally emerge on the other side seemed certain, and I aimed to catch him as he made a fresh start from behind the thorn. He flew over the sand at a terrific rate and reached the bushes. Then I waited fully five minutes for him to emerge from his hiding, with my rifle ready sighted so that I could pull the trigger the second he reappeared, but finally went forward to rout him out. When I reached the clump of bushes, an examination of the sand showed that the crafty old bird had shifted his course at a right angle, making the turn so suddenly that his feet had plowed up the sand for a distance of several inches. This wary tact had placed the bushes between the bird and myself, and he had made his way to new cover while I was innocently waiting for him on the other side of the ambush. An Apache Indian could not have executed this maneuver more cleverly, and I smiled at myself for having ever been foolish enough to believe the traditional story of how the silly ostrich buries his head in the sand and believes that he is thereby concealed."—Philadelphia Post.

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In an unusual and interesting article on bird life in the *Outlook's* magazine number for July Mr. W. E. D. Scott, curator of Ornithology at Princeton, talks about the ease with which relations may be established between man and birds. Among other things he says:

Birds out-of-doors in the struggle for existence pretty well appreciate that, as a rule, bad things happen when boys and men are around, and they are fearful and on their guard. In places where birds have not been molested by man, as in deserts, on the islands of the Pacific, and in parts of Arizona where I have been, birds have no fear. In the latter place I remember going to a bird's nest, and, wishing to see the eggs, I had to gently lift the bird off, found out what I wished, and put her back. She did not appear to be disturbed or alarmed by this. Nor do I think that there was anything peculiar and special in my attitude; this bird had never been disturbed by man, and felt no fear; there was nothing occult about it, nor was it because of any peculiar influence which I possessed or exercised. I observed a few simple rules—that is, I did not make a noise or move rapidly, but that is all. For instance, in Central Park, New York, I have seen a policeman, after a few instructions, stand still, holding something in his fingers which birds like, and I have seen a titmouse fly and take it, simple because people there had established such a relation; the man had no special power; he was only a big, burly policeman, who was not particularly in sympathy with nature. He simply put himself into the right atttitude towards bird-life, and it responded.

It is easy to establish the right relationship with birds. I remember once an elm-tree blew down in front of our home in which there was a nest of young flickers. I did not wish to bring them into the house, as I did not care to have my birds hear their notes, and so put them into an old bird-cage and left them outside. We fed them with the regular bird food, and they grew up all right. They became so tame that when the door was left open they flew out and went all about, but always came back to the cage, and when the house-door opened and any one appeared they fairly yelled with delight and begged to be fed.

'Tis far better to love and be poor, than be rich with an empty heart.—*Lewis Morris.*

It is ever true that he who does nothing for others does nothing for himself. —*Goethe.*

To ease another's heartache is to forget one's own.—*Abraham Lincoln.*

You never lift up a life without being yourself lifted up.—*Emerson.*

BIRD-DOM

BY

LEANDER S. KEYSER

THE thrush that carols at the dawn of day
From the green steeples of the piny wood;
The oriole in the elm; the noisy jay,
Jargoning like a foreigner at his food;
The bluebird balancing on some topmost spray,
Flooding with melody the neighborhood;
Linnet and meadow-lark, and all the throng
That dwell in nests, and have the gift of song.

— LONGFELLOW.

BOSTON
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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO MY GENIAL FRIEND

AMOS R. WELLS

AS A TOKEN OF ESTEEM AND IN MEMORY OF MANY A JAUNT TO THE HOMES OF THE BIRDS. THE DELIGHTS OF OUR LITERARY FELLOWSHIP SHALL REMAIN A PLEASANT SECRET BETWEEN US

E. H. Ward
35249 51

THINK me not unkind and rude
That I walk in grove and glen;
I go to the god of the wood
To fetch his word to men.

Tax not my sloth that I
Fold my arms beside the brook;
Each cloud that floated in the sky
Writes a letter in my book.

Chide me not, laborious band,
For the idle flowers I brought;
Every aster in my hand
Goes home laden with a thought.

There was never mystery
But 'tis figured in the flowers;
Was never secret history
But birds tell it in the bowers.

— EMERSON.

NOTE.

Nearly all the papers in this collection have appeared from time to time in various periodicals of the country, and I acknowledge with pleasure the uniform courtesy of editors and publishers in permitting me to reprint. It is but right to say that in revising these papers I have added many new observations. The following is a list of the periodicals in which one or more of the articles have been printed: *Outing*, *Belford's Magazine*, *The Congregationalist*, *The Advance*, *The Interior*, *Golden Rule*, *The Illustrated Christian Weekly*, *The Churchman*, *Youth's Companion*, *Young People's Weekly and Morning Star*.

The Author.

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CONTENTS.

BIRD-DOM.

THE ALERT EYE.

"WHAT do you call that bird?"

I looked up at my companion in surprise. Could he really be in earnest in asking the question, or did he only mean to chaff me and test my knowledge of bird life? For I had just been telling him of my studies in ornithology. But the nonplussed expression on his face showed that he actually did not know the name of the bird, and so I answered, avoiding a patronizing tone:

"That, sir, is the red-headed woodpecker."

"Oh! is that so?"

We were walking along one of the suburban streets of the town in which I live, when one of these familiar woodpeckers flew across the road before us, and alighting on the trunk of a tree near at hand, began his upward march in characteristic fashion. Although I am always interested in the

gambols of the birds, at that moment my thoughts were engrossed in fixing the mental attitude of my friend toward nature.

What had he been doing with his eyes all the while? He was what we are pleased to call an educated man; that is, he had a diploma from the college whose grounds we were then approaching, and had, after completing the classical course, spent three more years in taking a special course of professional training. During all these years the red-headed woodpeckers had been drumming their resonant tattoos on the trees of the campus, uttering their rollicksome cries, playing their odd pranks of tilting and poising in the air, and rearing their crimson-pated families; and yet my companion had never observed them — at least, not sufficiently to learn even their common name! Verily here was a case of a man who, having eyes, saw not, and having ears, heard not. It is not the blind eye only that does not see. Many a man who prides himself on his acute organs of vision, is practically blind as far as many of the interesting facts of nature are concerned. To me it is simply marvelous that any man should be able to study so many books, some of them brimming over with pastoral poetry and delicate appreciations of

out-door life, and yet be so indifferent to the enchanting section of the natural world before his very eyes. An engaging book on nature at once overcomes my physical inertia, and quickly sends me with wide-open eyes across the fields. There are students who will sit in a darkened room and read Milton's "L'Allegro" in a kind of mental ecstasy; but for my part, such a perusal makes every fiber tingle with a desire to fly to the wild-wood or the meadow. Truly, we are not all cast in the same mould.

We cannot, I admit, all be specialists in natural history or any of its numerous branches, else where would be our laborers, our law-makers, our classicists, our philosophers, our theologians? Candor compels me to say that the friend of whom I have spoken was a man of no mean abilities. In some lines of study he was an acute thinker, and in many respects a most excellent and useful citizen. I am only expressing surprise that a student of such wide culture and such a generous spirit should care so little for nature. When she throngs us so; when, as Whittier says, —

> "Her many hands reach out to us,
> Her many tongues are garrulous,"

ought we not to reserve at least one apartment in our hearts for her to dwell in without a rival? Does it seem right — I speak now from an ethical point of view — to allow other things to crowd her wholly out of our affection? Were she but a small fragment of the universe, the case would be far different; but do not her vastness and ubiquity prove that she occupies a large place in the Creator's thought? Outside of the thickly tenanted portions of our great cities you find more of her, if I may so speak, than of anything else. In quantity (and I should also say in attractiveness) she far excels all the vast accumulations of art. It is with something like a thrill of triumph that I make the declaration: The country is larger than the city.

And even in the great metropolis art has not been able wholly to eliminate nature. Here and there are touches of her gentle fingers to remind us of the vast domain where she reigns almost without a rival, and adorns her possessions at her own sweet will. To my mind these quiet, unobtrusive boudoirs of nature in the midst of the toil and turmoil of metropolitan life, are like the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

As before intimated, nature is lavish of her so-

licitations, beckoning us on every hand to become her guests and delve into her secrets. Does not this fact point unmistakably to the place she ought to occupy in our hearts? It is possible that this mode of reasoning may prove too much for our purpose; but certainly nature's bountifulness is a fact of no small significance. Yet it occurs not infrequently that those who live nearest to her and have easiest access to her great treasuries of knowledge, know and care very little about her, wandering through her realm with glazed eyes and unkindled hearts. More than once have I said to the toil-worn farmer, after rambling over his premises: "Well, sir, I see the tufted titmice have found a pleasant dwelling-place in your woods yonder on the hill-side."

"What kind of animals are they?" he would ask.

"Oh! they are birds, sir — those little lead-colored birds that wear a jaunty crest on their heads and a reddish stripe on their sides."

"I never noticed them; didn't know there were such birds on these premises."

Of course, out of regard for his feelings, I have had to repress the exclamation of surprise that has risen to my lips. One does not like to intimate

even by a look or an inflection of the voice that one's acquaintances are culpably ignorant, and so one often resorts to a little strategy, if not hypocritical pretense, to disguise one's real feelings. But such moralizing is scarcely to the point. I am glad to say that not all our husbandmen are so untutored in nature's lore; for I have gleaned many an odd and interesting scrap of information on bird-life from intelligent farmers, and have found them acute observers, even when they knew nothing about systematic ornithology. A little time spent in the study of some department of natural history by our agricultural friends, would certainly enrich their lives, relieving them of humdrum and helping to keep them from becoming narrow and sordid. Every man, I maintain, should have some useful recreative study which he may pursue at odd times. It is an old saying, I know, but true nevertheless, that "all work and no play make Jack a dull boy," and we might with propriety add, make his father a duller man. It is a law of ethics that the play-spirit is inherent in every one of us, whether we be young or old, and no man ought to ignore it; it is one of God's voices in human nature.

In the last analysis it is the alert mind that

makes the alert eye. All of us see those things that we are interested in. Why did not the man who has just emerged from the woods, see a single bird or hear a single note of bird minstrelsy? Because his mind was otherwise occupied. And so the nuthatch called *Henk-a, henk-a*, the titmouse chirped its *Chick-a-da-da*, and the brown creeper lisped its piercing *Ts-e-e-e, ts-e-e-e*, but the man's dull ear caught no welcoming salute, and his lack-luster eye saw no transit of pinions across his path. There are many persons whose minds need to be awakened to an appreciation of nature, and that is one of the purposes of this unpretending volume. If the hearts of the young could be stirred to a love of nature, and their minds aroused to study her, much would be done toward solving some of the perplexing social problems of the day.

Closely akin to the unseeing eye is the unbelieving mind; at all events, the kinship is sufficiently close to justify a brief notice in a paper that does not pretend to be a philosophic discussion. Here and there you will find persons who are always skeptical of the statements of the naturalist, especially if he describes some occurrence unheard-of before, or not found in "the books;" and usually the ground for their demur is that they themselves

have not been eye-witnesses of the facts. Having gone stupidly through life with unrewarded vision, they cannot believe that others have seen so many interesting things that they themselves have failed to see. And let me ask, *en passant*, Is not that the secret of a great deal of the skepticism of the times?

In his delightful book, "Outings at Odd Times," Charles C. Abbott tells us that an ornithologist once wrote to him, "Some of your birds in New Jersey have strange ways." Mr. Abbott rightly resents the innuendo so evident in the sentence, and replies with some vigor that "birds in New Jersey," as elsewhere, are "wide-awake, cunning, quick to scent danger, and wise enough to suit themselves to their surroundings." I do not call in question a single statement made by this alert and careful observer of bird deportment, because — I say it modestly, I hope — I have myself seen many quaint and unheard-of pranks in my study of the "feathered republic."

I have also encountered the skeptic, as has every chronicler of nature's doings. For example: I was once telling an acquaintance, with no small degree of animation, about the cunning artifices of several crested chickadees, as described to me by a relative

whose veracity I have no reason to doubt, when, as I concluded, my interlocutor turned upon me with the startling inquiry: "Do you believe that story?" How I controlled my rising impulse of anger I do not know. Why should my friends invent an ornithological fiction, and then palm it off on me for the truth? The real gist of the inquiry was that the doubter himself had never witnessed the wise tricks of the titmouse — indeed, he would not have known a titmouse if he had seen one — and so it was a foregone conclusion that no one else had.

On more than one occasion have persons said to me, with a very skeptical intonation in their voice, "Did you really see all the birds you mentioned in your article — all in one day?" or, "Did you really hear that medley of bird song?" And they manage to throw a volume of doubt into the word *really*. As well might they ask, "Are you really telling the truth?" Such expressions of doubt are, to say the least, not very complimentary. But, after all, the real question is, How shall we observers of nature convey information to others if our testimony is not to be accepted by non-observers? It is, therefore, in the interest of natural history that we solicit the confidence of our readers.

As far as the statements contained in this little contribution to bird lore are concerned, I am tempted to borrow a quotation from Sir Walter Scott, who said, somewhat forcefully, though I admit not very poetically :

> " Better had they ne'er been born,
> Who read to doubt, or read to scorn."

Of course, I do not mean to say that the couplet has reference to the observations recorded in this humble book. Still, I do go so far as to say that, if I must err, I prefer to err on the side of faith rather than on the side of unbelief. I am aware that Shakespeare declares that " modest doubt is called the beacon of the wise," but I am convinced that he thought it was miscalled so.

The foregoing has not been said to forefend criticism, for that would be childish, especially when criticism might prove an excellent mental and moral discipline to the author ; but it is said to ward off skepticism, which can profit neither the reader nor the author, and might lead to an estrangement that the latter would regret exceedingly. To be serious, the author has tried to describe truthfully every observation he has made,

and has sought rather to understate than overstate where there was room for doubt. If at any time he has ventured to advance a theory, he has guarded against thrusting it forward as an established fact.

One word more. On a bright day of early spring I was walking along a country road with a number of friends, among them a somewhat crusty and gruff-spoken old farmer. There were bobolink concerts in the clover fields to right and left. These delightful vocalists would dart up from the grass, burst into an ecstasy of song that made the air quiver, circle about in graceful flight, and then airily descend, sending back a parting shaft of melody after they had sunk into the sea of fragrant clover. How could a bird lover repress his excitement! I called attention to the bird songs, asking the company to pause a moment and listen.

"Have you ever heard richer melody?" I inquired.

"Well, what's the use of it, anyhow?" broke out the farmer, who, it seems, was a thoroughgoing utilitarian.

This was too much. I turned upon him and delivered him a homily on the spot. If he soon forgets it, it will be no fault of mine. Why has

the Creator given the bobolink such a tuneful throat, if it was for no significant purpose? Not only as an outlet for the bird's exuberant feelings, but also for man's æsthetic delight, was this feathered songster so richly gifted with vocal sweetness. Besides, a proper reverence for the Creator ought to prevent us from casting contempt upon any part of his handiwork. With what infinite skill has he made the feather of a bird! That which has engaged his attention should not be thought unworthy of ours. And this is said in this place, not in the interest of religion, but in the interest of science.

A LESSON IN BIRD STUDY.

THIS paper has been prepared for junior students of ornithology and not for seniors, and for that reason it has been written in a plain, direct style. I wish to say to the boys and girls and young people who may read this book, that, even after I became a man, I should have been grateful to the writer who had given me such a lesson in bird study as I purpose giving you. "How shall we begin?" and, "What are the tools necessary for carrying on our researches?" These are questions which every tyro will ask, and I shall surely do him a service by answering them.

Before I begin, however, I shall take occasion to throw out a word or two of caution. Do not use a gun; then there will be no danger of shooting either yourself or the birds. Perhaps it is right to kill the English sparrows, for I believe they do more harm than good; but it is wanton to shoot our useful and beautiful native birds which fill the air with song. Every one of them, no matter how

small, destroys thousands of noxious insects that would soon play havoc with our vegetation if allowed to live. Do not think, either, that because you are a bird-student you must have a mounted collection of birds, or that you must catch them for cages. They are far more interesting in the bush and on the wing than in confinement, and sing much more gayly. What active boy or girl would like to be cooped up in a room on a bright day of spring? Well, the birds enjoy out-door life as much as the boys and girls do. It is a good thing to remember and heed the Golden Rule in our treatment of the living creatures around us.

In the study of birds you cannot succeed very well without an opera-glass. A good one is a little expensive, it is true, but it would be better to spend money in that way than for trifles. Such a glass will enable you to see the markings of a bird at a distance, whereas if you use only the naked eye you cannot get near enough to identify many shy birds. Some of the rarest and most beautiful species have the provoking habit of haunting the tops of tall trees, or remaining just far enough away from the observer to make their identification impossible without a glass. Besides,

you will often see a bird at a distance which looks like a new specimen, but by fixing your glass upon it you will perhaps find that it is an old acquaintance, and thus you will be saved many a useless step.

Of course, your outfit would not be complete without a good bird-manual — that is, a book which gives brief but accurate descriptions of all the birds in your neighborhood. The first treatise of the kind I ever tried to use was Stearns' "New England Bird Life"; in many respects an excellent work; but as I had never lived in New England, I did not find it wholly satisfactory. In some way, I cannot now remember how, I learned of Dr. J. M. Wheaton's "Report on the Birds of Ohio," which I bought in paper covers for one dollar and then had bound in leather for the same amount, and now I seldom take a stroll to pursue my favorite study, without putting this volume into my book-bag, which is flung over my shoulder. Whenever I espy a bird that I do not know, I get all his markings by ogling him with my glass, and then look up the description of him in my manual. At first you will become sadly confused in trying to use a key, because there are so many birds described which you have never seen nor even heard

of; but by and by, if you are patient, you will be able to "bring order out of chaos," and will find it quite easy to identify new species.

It would be well to write to some one who is likely to know about such things, inquiring if there is a work published on the birds of your State. If there is none, I would recommend Coues' "Key to North American Birds" [latest edition]. The only objection to it is that it is almost too large and heavy to carry with you in your rambles; but it is the best work with which I am acquainted for the beginner. It gives plain and accurate descriptions of all the birds of North America, and contains cuts of many of them, which will often enable you to recognize a new specimen at sight.

In the papers that follow you will find that I have made frequent reference to Robert Ridgway's "Manual of North American Birds;" a work that I use constantly and that is thoroughly reliable. However, for the beginner it is not so good. The plates are practically useless for purposes of identification, although quite valuable for those interested in the anatomy of birds. Then, the method of classification, or rather the arrangement of the various orders, families, genera, and species, is so

complicated that it will not be readily understood by young persons.

For the encouragement of the beginner I will describe my first attempt to use a manual out of doors. I had gone to a pleasant grove that skirted a broad, rippling river in the northern part of one of our Middle States. My experience doubtless tallies with that of every novice. It was a bright day in spring, and there were perhaps a dozen species of birds which I did not know, flitting about me and making the grove vocal with song. You will not wonder that I was almost thrown into despair when I confess frankly that I could not at that time have told the song-sparrow and the grass-finch apart, although they are among our most familiar birds. Opening my hand-book at the proper place, I tried to identify a small bird, which I thought must be a sparrow, hopping about on the grass before me; but what was my surprise to find descriptions of over a dozen species of the sparrow family, while I scarcely knew one of them! I read one description after another, but most of them seemed so much alike and there were so many confusing details, that for the life of me I could not identify a single specimen before me. I need not say that I went home very blue and disheartened.

That experience has been duplicated many times since that first excursion, and even now there are times when I become sadly confused, especially when there are a dozen species of warblers in their autumnal plumage glancing about in the bushes and tree-tops.

Before you start out on your first excursion to study the birds in a systematic way, look over your key to see how our citizens in feathers have been classified by ornithologists. There is usually a table somewhere in the book giving an outline of the higher groups. Observe that the bird-world has been divided into various orders, such as the divers, the swimmers, the shore birds, the birds of prey, the perchers, and so on. Then these orders have been subdivided into families, and the families into species. You need not commit the long Latin names, unless you prefer, but familiarize yourself with the common names, and study the special features of each group, so that you will not be all at sea when you meet new birds.

If you live near the sea coast or lake shore, you will want to get some idea of the shore birds from your key. But if you desire to study the birds of the fields and woods, you should give special attention to the perchers, woodpeckers, birds of prey, etc.

Do not become discouraged if you fail at first and cannot identify the birds you see; the rare pleasure of finding new specimens and identifying them, as you gain facility in the use of your manual, will be ample reward for all your toil.

Familiarize yourself as rapidly as possible with the distinguishing features of each division and subdivision, so that when you encounter a specie you have never seen before, you will know in what part of your manual to look for the description. If you should see a wood thrush for the first time, you should know enough about the various classes of birds not to look for it among the flycatchers or warblers. A little attention to this matter will save you a great deal of time and annoyance.

Permit me to say here, lest I be misunderstood, that I do not think a manual ought to be pored over and committed to memory in a routine way, before any field work is done. After a general idea of the classification of the birds has been acquired, go out and study them in their native haunts. In acquiring a language the student fixes the tables of declension and conjugation more firmly in mind by constant drill in translation; so in acquiring bird-lore. When I went to the district school, we used a series of readers which taught us

a great deal about natural history, including the birds; but we studied them merely in a mechanical way, and never once thought of walking out to the fields and woods to make a practical use of the book-knowledge we had gained. The consequence was that in a short while we had forgotten almost everything we had learned.

While I urge upon the student to be much out of doors, I still feel that it is well for him to become as familiar as possible with his manual, studying the descriptions of all the species within the radius of his observations, even though he may not as yet have seen many of them. When he does meet them his previous study will be useful and save trouble. Some months ago I saw my first red-breasted nuthatch — a bird that is only a migrant and a rare one in my locality. The moment my eye fell upon it I recognized it, because I had so often read the description of this species in my hand-book that its size, color, habits, etc., were firmly fixed in my mind. In the same way I at once identified the fox-sparrow, the tree-sparrow, the tufted titmouse, the purple finch, the yellow-rumped warbler, and many others.

How grateful I should have been a number of years ago for a sample lesson on bird identification!

Perhaps some of my readers would appreciate such an exercise.

Suppose you are desirous of studying the sparrows of your locality, but on consulting your key you become perplexed by the details, and scarcely know where or how to begin. Instead of trying to learn all the minutiæ at once, it is better to seize upon several of the more striking peculiarities of each species, as designated in your hand-book, and hold them firmly in mind.

The sparrows are, as a rule, plain-colored birds, the colors being arranged in stripes on the upper parts and often on the lower. The English sparrow is an obnoxious fellow, I know, differing in that respect from our native sparrows; but he affords an example of the general appearance of all the members of this interesting group. Now observe what your key says about the various species of the sparrow household. There are the song-sparrow and the grass-finch — they are of nearly the same size, and both have striped breasts; but the song-sparrow has a dark blotch on the center of his chest, and a dark brown stripe on each side of his throat, while the grass-finch has two white lateral tail-feathers, which can be plainly seen when the bird takes to wing.

Smaller than these birds are the chipping and wood-sparrows, which are often confounded by the beginner. Their lower parts are grayish white and unstriped. They look much alike, but the wood-sparrow is of a more reddish cast than the chippy, and the white stripes on the head are not so sharply defined. Besides, chippy's bill is black, while his little sylvan cousin's is flesh-colored. The grass-hopper sparrow is still smaller and darker. The tree-sparrow, which is not quite as large as the grass-finch, has an obscure dusky spot in the center of his chest, by which you may always distinguish him from other members of the family. You will at once recognize the white-throated and white-crowned sparrows; their markings are somewhat alike on the top of the head, but the white-crown has no white throat, and his general color is a fine dark ash, while the white-throat is more brownish. Larger than any of these is the fox-sparrow, a splendid bird, with a network of reddish brown stripes on his entire lower parts.

Remember that there are many minor points of difference among these species, but I have purposely described only the broader and more conspicuous distinguishing traits. In like manner you may study each group of the entire bird system.

But when shall we begin the study? Begin now. "Now is the accepted time" in bird study as well as in matters of religion. It may be in the midst of winter, but if you will go to the woods, you will find a few hardy birds which have not been driven South by the rigors of the climate, and you can take the first step in your researches by studying them. If there are not so many species, you will not be so likely to become confused. I remember when I thought it scarcely worth while to go to the woods to study natural history in the winter time, especially on stormy days; but I have greatly modified my opinions on that point. Some of the most delightful hours I have ever spent in the haunts of the birds have been when the wind howled dismally through the bare forest trees and the snow lay a foot deep upon the ground.

In identifying the birds you will find a clear day most favorable. If you keep the sun to your back, the blue sky forms an excellent background for bringing out plainly the markings of the plumage, while a clouded sky is rather too light, and therefore blurs the colors of the birds and blinds the eyes of the observer. However, if I wanted to study the inhabitants of the air, I should not stop for inclement weather.

DIFFICULTIES OF BIRD STUDY.

No vocation can be pursued without annoyances of some kind. Even our recreations cannot be taken wholly on flowery beds of ease, and I doubt if we should appreciate them if they cost us no effort. I would not paint the study of ornithology all roseate; for that would not be quite honest; and perhaps some reader, spurred for the moment to begin a quest for bird-lore, might find himself disheartened on encountering the obstacles, and might declare that bird study is not what it has been represented by enthusiasts. It is true, the barriers that nature has raised about every department of scientific inquiry are not insuperable, when the student is determined to overcome them; but they do exist, and must be recognized.

First, then, the study of birds requires time and effort. A dull, lazy person will not make a good ornithologist. To use a trite comparison, the mountain will not come to Mohammed, but Mohammed must go to the mountain. So the student

must go to the homes and haunts of the birds, if he would know about them, and this will render many long and wearisome tramps necessary. He must not become discouraged because his limbs grow weary, and his stomach often cries for reinforcement.

Nor can he select only the pleasant, sunny slopes, the dry upland fields, or the shady groves for rambling grounds, but must thread his way through bush and brake, across lowland and marsh, and never mind wetting his feet or soiling his clothes.

By the way, do not don a broadcloth suit when you take an outing, for, if you do, you will either miss the birds or go to church the next Sunday in a tatterdemalion's toilet. You will see the force of this counsel when you remember that often the most delightful members of the bird community choose the tangled copse or the boggy marsh for a dwelling place.

Often, too, while his neighbors are wrapped in their morning slumbers, the naturalist must break the fetters of refreshing sleep, bestir himself with a strong will, and hurry out of town before the gray dawn breaks, if he wants to feel the thrill and transport of the matin concerts. Never are the

lyres of the birds so finely strung, or the strings so delicately touched, as during the space between daybreak and sunrise. Our feathered minstrels get out of their leafy beds early, so as to salute the sun with song. Not to speak in a patronizing tone, I have often pitied those dull people who were snoozing away the glorious morning hours, while I was enjoying the out-door voluntaries, all free of charge. It is our own Lowell who says so sweetly:

> "No price is set on the lavish summer;
> June may be had by the poorest comer."

And that is true, save that one must pay the cost of a little effort if one would make the fair earth's possessions one's own.

If we want Nature to confide her secrets to us, we must go in quest of them to her out-of-the-way haunts; we must treat her as if we were in earnest, and not in a cold, perfunctory spirit, and then she will lay her heart open to us. Her language to every student at every step is, "I will yet for this be inquired of."

The talisman of Emerson's "forest seer" that won for him so many of nature's secrets, was alert-

ness, industry, persistence; and hence the poet could say of him:

> "What others did at distance hear,
> And guessed within the thicket's gloom,
> Was shown to this philosopher,
> And at his bidding seemed to come."

First attempts at using a "manual" or "key" are always attended with difficulty, for there seems to be no end to the families, genera, species, and even sub-species; and frequently the descriptions are so nearly alike that one becomes sadly confused, even with the bird in plain sight before one. There, for example, are the hermit thrush, the wood thrush, the olive-backed thrush, the gray-cheeked thrush, and the veery thrush. What a time I have had trying to fix their places in the bird category! After reading one description, I would exclaim, "That's the bird, no doubt about it!" But to make certainty doubly sure, I would read the next description, and then find that I was less confident, until, by the time I had read four or five descriptions, my mind would be in a perfect jumble. And then there are the warblers, a numerous fraternity of small, insect-eating birds, many of them only migrants in the Middle States. How

is one ever to discriminate among such an army? In my own State there are to be found at least thirty-seven species of the *Sylvicolidæ*, either as residents or migrants, many of them looking so much alike that confusion is inevitable. Add to this the fact that their autumn garb is often different from their spring costume, and also that many of them are extremely shy, concealing themselves in thickets, or remaining in the tops of the tallest trees, and you will see that bird lore is acquired at the cost of a good deal of patience, persistence, and — I had almost said — sweetness of temper.

Many birds display an expertness in finding hiding-places that amounts to a fine art. You perhaps catch a glimpse of a little bird in the bushes, and there is a flash of color that sets your pulses fluttering; but before you can fix him with your glass, he has flitted behind a thick clump of tanglewood, and though you plunge in after him, getting your feet wet and your hands and face scratched by the briers, he still eludes you, affording only momentary glimpses of himself, until, at last, if the pursuit becomes too hot, he chips sharply, flirts his tail, and then flies across the river, flinging back at you a saucy gird of bird talk. It does no good to scold or coax, to stamp your foot, or use your

arts of persuasion; the bird is incorrigible; he is too much for you.

As I was taking an autumn tramp along the Mad River, in Ohio, I heard a remarkable chattering and scolding in a thick tangle of weeds and vines at the foot of the cliffs. I was sure of a "find"; but in spite of all my beating about, stealthy approaches, coaxing and hoaxing, I could not get my eye on that bird; for no sooner had I struggled to the place where I last heard him, than his petulant chatter came up from another hiding-place. Patience became exhausted at last, and I went home in a dejected frame of mind. What could the feathered tantalizer have been? I have read many descriptions of that tricksy spirit, the yellow-breasted chat, and have been looking for him ever since I began my out-door studies; but he still remains a stranger to me. What would I not have given to know that the bird I had been pursuing was the far-famed chat!*

Some writers advise shooting the birds for purposes of identification; but suppose all of us who love them — and I hope the number of their ad-

*Subsequent investigations force me to make the humiliating confession that the bird of which I here speak was a familiar species and not the chat. I am glad to say that, since the foregoing was written, I have not only found the chat, but have also had the pleasure of studying his habits in a favorite marsh not far from my present home.

mirers will be vastly increased — should take to slaughtering them, what a war of extermination it would be! With Audubon and Wilson it was different, as it is with those taxidermists who furnish mounted specimens for museums of natural history; but for every student to turn into a butcher would be wanton and wicked. One day I got a friend, who is rather expert with the gun, to accompany me in a long ornithological jaunt, when, I am ashamed to say, we killed several birds (and shot at more!) concerning whose identity I had been in doubt; but it seemed so murderous, so bloody a work, that I resolved never to do so again, if I could be forgiven for that offense. Why, the birds are among my dearest and most intimate friends; how can I be so hard-hearted as to rob them of life? So I advise that the money spent for guns and cartridges be spent in visiting some good college, or a large city, where an extensive collection of mounted birds may be studied at leisure. In that way you will be able to clear up ornithological points without resort to bloodshed.

The explorer for birds will often be parched with thirst, almost overcome with heat, pelted with rain, stung by mosquitoes, pestered by gnats, frightened by snakes, adorned with Spanish needles

and "stick-tights," perhaps poisoned with ivy, and bitten by frost or winter winds; but, on the whole, the delights of scientific research so far exceed the difficulties that the naturalist of the true guild willingly swallows the bitter for the sake of the sweet.

FIRST MEETINGS.

To every person there come moments of supreme delight, when some cherished hope has been realized, but to few do these epochs come oftener than to the enthusiastic student of bird life. Let him provide himself with a good opera-glass, hie to the woodlands, the fields, the hedges, and especially to the banks of a stream or the shores of a lake, and give himself up to the luxury of forming new acquaintances. Should he be a neophyte in bird-lore and choose a day in the early springtime for his excursion, he may find more new species than he can well introduce himself to; he may become sadly perplexed, and even disgusted with himself, if not with the birds. It will not require a long time to discover how little he knows. Such a discovery, however, may not be without value as a moral discipline.

I have often felt amused at my own ignorance — I prefer to call it simplicity — when I began to study the birds in earnest. I did not know even

the song-sparrow when I saw him or heard his trill, nor could I distinguish him from his cousin of the upland pastures, the grass-finch. It was a long time before I learned to tell the chipping sparrow and the bush sparrow apart. When I first saw the little summer warbler, I supposed he must be a goldfinch that had lost the black feathers of his wings and crown; and that exquisite arboreal tilter, the redstart, threw me into a perfect tumult for several days, before I could fix his place in my descriptive catalogue; and I was in ecstasy when at last I discovered his identity. I do not make these personal confessions to be laughed at by the expert ornithologist, but for the encouragement of the beginner, who may be tempted to relinquish his study when he sees the vastness and complexity of the field.

First meetings with birds are like first meetings with valued and congenial friends; they are never forgotten. How often we say to our dear ones, "Do you remember our first meeting?" Never shall I forget the thrill of pleasure I felt one lovely spring day, when I made the acquaintance of one of my favorite woodland songsters. It was still early in the season, before the leaves had sprung, and I was tramping along the banks of the St.

Joseph River, in Northern Indiana, when, coming to a deep, wooded hollow, I espied a flock of birds perched quietly on the branches of some oak saplings. Approaching stealthily, I turned my glass upon them, and caught the gleam of a carmine blotch on their chests, worn like a shield, and I realized with a thrill of delight that I had at last found the rose-breasted grossbeak, descriptions of which I had so often read. The large conical beak, the white of belly and rump, the black of back and head, and the striped appearance of wings and tail, put at rest every doubt. Had these birds been the inmates of a deaf and dumb asylum, they could not have been more mute than they were that day, sitting quietly on their perches, refusing to utter a note, and merely turning their heads now and then to look down at me with a sort of contemptuous air. "Who are you? and what do you want here?" they seemed to say.

But this first encounter with the rose-breast proved more than merely "a chance acquaintance." A few weeks later, as I was again strolling along the river, I heard a clear, joyous bird song, having a very human intonation. "It must be a robin," I said to myself, and was about to pass on, when it struck me that there was a peculiar re-

sonance in the tones that was not characteristic of that bird's song, and so I turned aside to reconnoitre. My delight can be imagined when I descried my friend with the carmine shield, perched on a small tree, singing away as cheerily as you please. And what a hearty, full-toned song it was, with an irresistible wizardry all its own! His large, horny beak seemed to impart a peculiar sonorousness to his tones, which rang through the vale in a rich variety of blended recitative and circumflex movements, now loud and clear, and now soft and modulated. There was also an air of absent-mindedness about his song, such as one notices in the minstrelsy of the white-throated sparrow and the Baltimore oriole. During the summer I saw and heard many of these birds, and found several of their nests.

My first meeting with the Blackburnian warbler, by many considered the most attractive of the family, was on a fall day. Glancing up into the willows, I caught a gleam of black and brilliant orange, the latter blazing in the sunshine like flame. How the bird prevented his plumage from being set on fire was more than I could understand. Several females, scarcely less beautiful, flitted about with their gorgeously arrayed hus-

bands. These birds were not wary and bent on concealment, like so many other members of the family. Indeed, I have reason to believe that they were fully conscious of their attractions; for they let themselves drop to the lower branches, so that I could inspect them closely as they disported their plumes at such angles in the sunshine as to produce the most brilliant effect. Natty little dandies that they were!

According to Mr. Ridgway, these tiny bird-sprites are sometimes seen in Greenland during the summer. I should like to see one perched on an iceberg on a sunshiny day.

Flitting before me in the tangle of vines, brambles and bushes on the steep bank of the river before referred to, I saw, one day of early spring, a bevy of little feathered strangers, whom (I use *whom* because birds seem so much like people) I quickly identified as the black and yellow, the black-throat blue, and the black-throated green warblers — making quite a brilliant galaxy. Since that day I have often met these pleasant acquaintances, but at every new meeting I still feel something of the thrill I felt at my first introduction to them. They did not tarry long in that latitude, but, cheerily bidding us good-by, winged their flight

to their summer habitats in Northern Michigan and along the shores of Hudson's Bay.

I wish you could have been with me one lovely spring day as I drove along a pleasant country road. Seeing a strange little bird hopping about in the grass of an orchard, I handed the lines to my companion, leaped from the carriage and vaulting over the rail fence, soon got the feathered fairy within the field of my glass. A beautiful bird it was; back, slaty blue, streaked with black; breast and sides, black; throat and belly, pure white; central crown patch, sides of breast, and — now that he lifts his wings — rump, gleaming yellow. I exclaimed at once, "A yellow-rumped warbler!" a bird of fine mien and blithe bearing, and one that I had been wanting to see for many months. He is called the myrtle warbler by Ridgway: *Dendroica coronata*. On the twenty-fifth of October I met another chance acquaintance. A rather plump, short-billed bird was greedily devouring dogwood berries in the tree above me, scaling off the pulp, and dropping the pits; but the sun shone on him at such an angle that I could not decide as to his color, though his form and mien proclaimed him a new bird to me. Presently, much to my regret, he flew away, but I rushed after him through

brier and brake; and when I reached an open space, what should I see before me, perched on a tall bush, but a rosy-hued bird, preening his feathers as quietly as if he had never been frightened in his life! My pulses were all a-flutter. I had made the acquaintance of the purple finch. And there by his side sat his little wife marked with brown and white stripes. You may guess my first exclamation when I got home!

BIRDS ON THE WING.

Every student should learn to identify the birds on the wing as well as "in the bush." The flight of these citizens of the air is a most interesting study, and will amply repay all the attention given to it. Even the most careless observer cannot have failed to notice that birds of different species do not behave in the same way while propelling themselves through the air. Some spread out their wings and sail gracefully overhead, like the hawks and buzzards, while others keep their pinions in constant motion; some sweep onward with long, leisurely wing-strokes, and others beat the air very rapidly.

But let us speak more specifically of the flight of various families and species. There are the woodpeckers. Observe that redhead beating across the clover field to the distant woodland. He goes by plunges and not with uniform velocity. Now he presses his wings close to his sides as he darts forward like an arrow, then he quickly spreads his

wings to give himself a new impulse; and this process he repeats until he nears the end of his airy voyage, when he describes a graceful upward curve and flings himself bodily against the bole of a tree. One might almost say — and I think Maurice Thompson has hinted as much — that the redhead gallops through the air rather than sails.

The hairy and downy woodpeckers fly in the same way; so does the flicker, although my observation has been that his separate plunges, or flight-impulses, are not so well accentuated as those of his redheaded relatives. He seems to keep his wings spread out more continuously. While I am speaking of the flight of the golden-wing, I wish to add that I have often watched him descending from the tops of the tall trees to the fence or the ground, and I do not know that I have ever witnessed a more graceful performance even among my winged acquaintances. He sweeps down in a gentle curve, moving by longer or shorter impulses of flight, his handsome figure and mottled plumage making a beautiful picture to the eye. It is the very poetry of flight. Would that all had the gift of "coming down" so gracefully! In this respect birds are our peers; they are quite expert at performing this feat of descension, if not condescension.

Quite different is the flight of the familiar blue jays, which seem to make hard work of it, keeping their wings in constant motion, as if their lives depended on their continuous efforts. And they do not seem to make very swift progress either, although their flight is more rapid and less labored than is apparent at a distance.

The robin is quite swift on the wing, especially for short flights. For longer efforts, while he moves more rapidly than the blue jay, his passage through the air would not be considered graceful. Yet I have often been surprised, not to say alarmed, at the recklessness of his plunges through the thickest parts of the woods, expecting every moment to see him dash his brains out against an obstruction; but, somehow, he contrives to steer his feathered bark safely through the most intricate tangles.

The like may be said of the little snowbird, which displays wonderful skill in dodging branches and trees, as he dashes like plumed lightning through the woods. But for woodcraft dexterity of this kind the redstart carries the palm. How often have I seen two male redstarts pursuing each other around and around through the dense weft of branches and twigs with a swiftness that the

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eye cannot always follow, threading the foliage with black and gold like shuttles gone wild! And yet they will soon emerge without the loss of a feather, and alighting on perches not far apart, hurl their scorn at each other in loud, explosive trills.

Have you noticed that our native sparrows, although some of them are quite expert on the wing for short distances, seldom indulge in long flights? There is quite a difference between the short, zigzag plunges and starts of the song sparrow and the long, swift passages of the English sparrows from the house to the woods and back again. The fox sparrow, the grass-finch, the bush sparrow and the grasshopper sparrow only fly far enough, as a rule, to find refuge from a real or imaginary enemy. One would suppose that birds which are not more inured to long-continued efforts would become greatly wearied during their semi-annual migrations. It is probable, however, that they do not at any time make long journeys, but flit at easy stages from one feeding place to another until their destination is reached.

Much as most people despise the English sparrow, all of us must concede that he is agile on the wing. (Why might not one coin a word and say

that he is a dexterous wingster?) One winter day, when the wind was blowing a gale from the west, I saw one of these aliens tacking in the storm. He wanted to move at right angles with the current of the wind, and how did he go about it? He lifted himself lightly into the air, thrusting his head into the very teeth of the wind at an acute angle with the current, and then darted swiftly away, moving sidewise, in easy, undulatory flight, veering very little from the course he had marked out for himself.

Few birds are more agile on the wing than the swifts and swallows. They spend a large part of their time tilting in the air, catching insects as they wheel on in their swift course. How many miles do you suppose they fling behind them in a single day? Doubtless you have often watched the cliff swallows as they perform their feats of scaling in the air. How gracefully they glide, now sweeping down a sheer declivity, now mounting upward in an almost vertical line, now poising a moment as if resting on the wings of nothing, and anon making another swift plunge that causes one's head to swim! The swifts move their wings in short, quick strokes, while the strokes of the swallows are longer and made more leisurely.

There is a wide difference between the evolutions of these birds and those of the little goldfinch, which, as some one has said, festoons the airs with graceful loops of flight. Listen to his lightsome song as he rocks himself on the buoyant ether. "*Pe-chick-o-pee, pe-chick-o-pee,*" he carols, which may be freely translated into, "Bless me, this is pleasant, riding on the wind!" What other bird would ever think of converting the atmosphere into a portable rocking-chair? One day a friend with whom I was walking, after watching a goldfinch sweeping overhead, exclaimed that its manner of flight reminded him of riding on a switch-back, and it seemed to me that the simile was quite apt.

The wing-feats of the brown thrasher, the catbird, the thrushes, the towhee-bunting and the wrens consist mostly of short, fluttering spurts of flight, while the kinglets and warblers flit fairy-like among the branches of bushes and trees. No one can have failed to notice the rapid wing-strokes of the meadow larks as they dart across the fields or balance themselves in mid-air. Tell me why the titlark dashes like forked lightning across the sky, giving you the impression that he must have lost his way in the trackless ocean of air.

Whether men shall ever succeed in constructing

air-ships that can be successfully operated is an open question; but long before such inventions were even dreamed of by the human mind the Creator had solved the problem by making our feathered aërial navigators. How do birds propel themselves through their native element? It will be seen that they are wonderfully adapted to that purpose. Many of my older readers may already understand the philosophy of bird flight, as far as it has been explained by scientists; but for younger readers and others not informed on the subject, I will say a few words in regard to it.

Of course the best fliers are very light and buoyant, their bodies being quite small compared with the bulk of their feathers. This causes them to float with little effort on the air. In proportion to their weight they present a large surface to the up-buoying atmosphere. Their wings serve as oars to beat the air with, and also increase the amount of resistance to the atmosphere, while their tails answer the purpose of a keel with which to steer their feathered craft. Then, by turning their heads from side to side and variously inclining their wings, they help to guide themselves.

But how do they contrive to elevate and lower themselves so deftly and easily? That may be

readily explained. Within the bird's body, connected with the lungs, are at least nine small air-sacs. These air-sacs, which are wonderful anatomical contrivances, are also connected by air passages in the best fliers, with many of the bones, which are hollow. When the bird wishes to rise he inhales the air into his lungs, whence it rushes into the air-sacs located in various parts of the body, and thence into the cavities of the bones. In this way every hollow space becomes quickly filled with the light, expanding air, making the plumed tilter more and more buoyant. Of course the bird must mount upward like an inflated balloon, especially if slightly assisted by the wings. When he wishes to descend, he simply reverses the process; that is, by contracting the proper muscles, he exhales the air from his body, and down he glides gently and lightly, or swiftly, as he chooses. By his outspread wings he holds himself safely in check, so that he does not dash himself to pieces on the ground. How wonderful is the law of adaptation!

MY WOODLAND.

"Thus, without theft, I reap another's field;
Thus, without tilth, I house a wondrous yield,
And heap my heart with quintuple crops concealed."

SIDNEY LANIER.

THE sense of ownership does not always belong most palpably to those who possess. In a very important respect, many persons who own the most really own the least. They have nothing but a mercenary tenure of the property they call theirs. Legally speaking, I have no title-deed to a single rood of ground on the face of the earth, but by virtue of that higher spiritual law announced by the apostle, "All things are yours," I am the happy possessor of about eighty acres of woodland. If I may use a paradox, I believe I own it more than the owner himself does. As one who loves nature, and who knows every nook and angle, every secluded haunt flecked with the sunshine that filters through the over-arching branches, every green, shaded hollow, and every pond where the feathered and

furred tenants of the place come to drink and bathe — I certainly have a preëmption claim upon this timber-tract. For, while I sometimes meet a man with a gun on his shoulder, or the legal owner prowling about in search of trespassers, I am the only person, so far as I know, who haunts the retreat for pure love of it and its natural resources.

But I do not believe that the feeling of ownership is only on my side. At least, I wonder sometimes if the woodland itself does not feel that I belong to it, "such mutual recognition, vaguely sweet, there is between us." It seems to fold its arms about me, whisper its secrets into my ear, and with a mute caress of special fondness, say: "I am thine, and thou art mine." Sometimes in the early spring time, when I thread my way along its winding paths, it seems to entreat me thus: "Pluck this anemone, and wear it on your heart, and may its white petals be the symbol of our love for each other."

In my rambles a feeling of profound pity sometimes comes over me — pity for those unhappy beings who are cooped up in the crowded city, living in the narrow rectangle of four walls, and who do not own such a woodland. While I am a little

jealous of my woodland, I am unselfish enough to wish that every one could take his aching head and bruised heart to such a tender nurse. God speed the time when the bans may be announced for the marriage of every son and daughter of Adam to some lovely spot in nature's green domain!

It is delicious — this sense of exclusive possession. How often as I have hurried across the fields to my wildwood, to get away from the bustle and din and worry of the city, have I felt as Emerson must have felt when he wrote his poem beginning with the line: "Good-by, proud world, I'm going home!" Listen as he sings of the sequestered haunt for which his heart was sighing:

"A secret nook in a pleasant land,
Whose groves the frolic fairies planned;
Where arches green, the livelong day,
Echo the blackbird's roundelay,
And vulgar feet have never trod —
A spot that is sacred to thought and God.

"Oh, when I am safe in my sylvan home,
I tread on the pride of Greece and Rome;
I laugh at the lore and pride of man,
At the sophist schools and the learnéd clan,
For what are they all, in their high conceit,
When man in the bush with God may meet."

I fear some of my readers may think, from what has been said, that my woodland is an exceptionally beautiful and romantic spot; but that is not the case. To many eyes it would seem a very ordinary tract of timber. There are no rocky glens or grottoes, no sequestered dingles, no purling brooks, no dark, solitary gorges, to lend variety to the haunt. For the most part it is a level area, with here and there a slight dip or basin, where ponds are formed in wet weather and where the birds often come to drink and bathe. A large part of the woodland is covered with a thick growth of underbrush, from which the saplings and tall trees lift their stems, as if growing from a deep soil of verdure that breaks forth again in emerald on the swaying branches lifted to the sky. A slightly human aspect is given to the place by several grass-grown and leaf-strewn wagon roads, seldom used, that wind through the thickets, in many spots beneath archways of foliage and between colonnades of tree-trunks. A few paths worn by some four-footed animals wind through the tangle-wood, and render one's progress somewhat less difficult.

To the appreciative rambler this sylvan retreat is by no means commonplace; it is nothing less

than a naturalist's elysium. In the dim cathedral light of the "wildwood privacies," the birds find many a quiet boudoir in which to hold their trysts, or solemn conclaves, or tell the old-new story of love, build their nests, and rear their children; while in the "leafy galleries" of the trees and saplings they find perches from which to chant their voluntaries. How often I have loitered along the fringe of the woods or in its "braided dusks," and listened while

> "The little birds sang as if it were
> The one day of summer in all the year."

Thus far I have spoken chiefly of the eastern part of this woodland tract. Westward, beyond the railroad and a wagon highway, there stretches a broad belt of timber for fully half a mile if not more, which differs somewhat in character from the portion already described; that is, it is almost wholly clear of underbrush, while the tall oaks, hickories and other trees stand so close together in most places, that their branches interlock overhead. Near the western extremity there is a shady hollow that zigzags through the whole width of the woods, and then joins another hollow at the south, forming a green glade by the timber's bor-

der, through which a spring-fed brook loiters and sings. Sometimes I ramble in this part of the woods and sometimes in the other, as I list, feeling that there is no area in which I am not a welcome guest.

Yes, I always feel at home in this retreat, the sense of strangeness having long since worn away. I have cultivated the acquaintance not only of the woodland itself, so that it seems like a personal friend, but also of the live creatures that dwell here; and pleasant companions they have been. There are rabbits, chipmunks, red and gray squirrels here in abundance, for they are protected by law; but I have given my attention chiefly to the birds. In some parts of the woodland I seldom find a bird, and others seem to be avoided by them entirely. Why this is so I cannot explain. Much as I have questioned my winged associates, not one of them has taken me into his confidence on this point.

However, there are other sections of the woods that are favorite haunts for the birds. For instance, at the edge of a thick tanglewood, where nearly all the tall trees and saplings have been cut down, but where there is a dense growth of bushes and briers, feathered creatures of some kind may

always be found, summer and winter, rain or shine. It would be strange if in a place like this one did not find many rare species. It may seem very conceited to say so, but I have almost concluded that a bird that cannot be found here is scarcely worth finding. I am tempted to call it a bird microcosm, and be done. How many times as I have strolled through this rambling ground the unexpected has happened! I cannot forbear making special mention of two or three of these experiences, which memory holds so pleasantly in leash.

One day in early spring I had a glorious surprise. Approaching this spot, I was suddenly brought to a standstill by hearing a bird-song that drifted sweetly to my ears from the copse. It was new to me. Oh, what a blithe, liquid melody it was! The tones were full, clear and bubbling. Such a ringing note of gladness ran through them that the sunshine seemed to grow brighter, the leaves of the bushes and trees fluttered merrily as if they had been caught in the lyrical spell, and the whole woodland appeared to be in league with Echo's tricksy voices.

With quickened footsteps and fluttering pulses I pushed my way into the bushy inclosure. There

was the little minstrel — the winged Orpheus — perched on a sapling and not sufficiently startled by my presence to cease his song. I soon got all his markings with my opera glass, and had the pleasure of studying him in his singing attitudes. He turned out to be Kirtland's warbler. I feel greatly elated over this discovery, for all the books declare that he is a rare bird, and not one of the many works on ornithology that I have studied, so much as refers to his song. Besides, I have been a diligent reader of those charming writers, Bradford Torrey, John Burroughs, Maurice Thompson, Charles C. Abbott and Olive Thorne Miller, but I do not think that one of them even mentions this bird. If any other observer has heard his cheerful lay, he seems to have kept the secret to himself so far as the world of popular readers is concerned.*

* At the time I was really not aware that I had made so rare a discovery. More than one letter from expert ornithologists has reached me, congratulating me on having seen Kirtland's warbler, and especially on having heard his song. Even at the risk of appearing egotistical, I will quote from a letter written me by Bradford Torrey after he had read the foregoing, which was first published in the *Illustrated Christian Weekly*. He says: "I would give all my old boots, and all my new ones, for a good look at a Kirtland's warbler. But I don't expect to have my wish granted — in this life, at all events. I congratulate you on a great piece of good fortune. Now if you could find it breeding! That would be an addition to science, wouldn't it?"

It would be worth one's while to explore the whole American continent to find this rare and beautiful warbler's nest. Mr. Ridgway in his manual says that its summer residence is not known. A very courteous personal

In the same part of this woodland I found a pair of purple finches one autumn day; while in the spring one male and three females remained in a dogwood sapling just long enough for me to make sure of their identity, and then darted into the woods, where I was unable to find them with all my "beating the bush." A beautiful little green, black-capped, fly-catching warbler gladdened my eyes as he flitted in the blackberry thicket one day in May.

There is another place in these woods where my search for birds is invariably rewarded; it is right in the sylvan depths, where two grass-grown roads intersect, close to a small wet-weather pond. Here in the winter time I always meet my woodland intimates, the snow-birds, the tree-sparrows, the crested titmice, the white-breasted nuthatches, and the hairy and downy woodpeckers. In the little pond near by, the snow-birds were in the habit of

letter from an intelligent writer in Chicago runs as follows: "I have recently read with pleasure your article entitled 'My Woodland.' . . . I was much interested in your statement that another specimen of the rare Kirtland's warbler had come to light, and that you had been so fortunate as to hear his song, a fact that I have never seen recorded before. Your observation of this warbler, and particularly a description of his song, certainly should be recorded in some magazine devoted to ornithology. . . . In Vol. IV. of *The Auk*, Mr. Purdie gives an account of nine specimens of Kirtland's warbler to that date (July, 1879), and I do not think any other record has been made up to the date of your observations." Surely the reader will pardon my vanity in publishing these excerpts.

taking a cold bath last winter, even when there was a thin coating of ice on it, except around the margin. It made me shiver to see them paddling in the icy water.

A few days ago — it was the fifteenth of September — I had become almost discouraged, for I had been prowling about for a long time in the woods without finding any new or rare birds; but I decided at last to visit this spot, hoping fortune would favor my quest. And she did. I had not come within five rods of the place before I heard the familiar "How-do-you-do?" of the chickadees and nuthatches, mingling with the varied chipping of a platoon of warblers. They had taken the bushes and saplings by storm, and beautiful indeed was the sight as they flitted and twinkled amid the foliage, their brilliant hues catching the sunlight and flashing it back to the eye.

The following is a list of the warblers I saw in that covey: the blue yellow-back, the blue golden-wing, the magnolia, the Tennessee, the black-throated green, the Connecticut, the green black-cap, the redstart and the black and white creeper, besides several other species that baffled all my efforts to keep them in the field of my glass long enough to identify them. A red-eyed vireo seemed to find

the warblers congenial company, for he remained with them wherever they went. All these birds had donned their autumn toilets, some of them so different from the apparel they wear on their spring migrations. The student must learn the markings of the birds for both seasons, as well as the plumage of the young.

On the same day I had a bit of experience which might have been an adventure — but it wasn't. Earlier in the day I had heard some one shooting in the woods, and was surprised at the boldness of the hunter, for in many places boards had been put up bearing the announcement: "No shooting allowed on these premises." The rule, I had understood, was rigidly enforced. Once I caught sight of the trespasser carrying a gun on his shoulder, and hurried away, determined to put as great a lineal distance between him and myself as possible, lest I should be mistaken for a law-breaker.

The hours sped, and I was ogling my flock of warblers, when I caught sight of a man approaching me along the meandering path. I felt intuitively that he was the owner of the woodland (the legal owner, I mean) on the lookout for trespassers. I greeted him with as much urbanity as I could command. He scarcely returned my salutation, but

asked sharply: "Are you the fellow that's been doin' this shootin' in these woods?" Fancy him calling an ornithologist a "fellow!"

I suppose I blushed, not only "to the roots of my hair," as they say in novels, but also to the top of my scalp. Of course I made my negative assurance quite positive. "No, sir," I said, "I never use a gun; never!" I felt, however, that an explanation of my presence was due him, and so I continued, blushing still more vividly: "I — I am in the habit of studying the birds and writing them up for the papers; but I never shoot anything." He looked suspiciously at the opera glass in my hand, and then at the book-bag dangling at my side; but at last his inspection seemed to satisfy him that I had told the truth. After expressing, in somewhat caustic terms, his opinion of the man who was shooting his squirrels, he left me to study my birds in peace. Thus it will be seen that even a harmless ornithologist might have an adventure that would not be quite to his taste — he might be ordered out of his own woodland.

A SPARROW QUARTETTE.

HAVING on several occasions, in the company of friends, attempted a eulogy on our native sparrows, I have invariably been compelled to stop suddenly and explain that I did not mean that interloper from across the sea, the English sparrow. It was the look of scorn on the faces of my auditors that made the parenthesis necessary. Many persons seem scarcely aware that we have native birds of the sparrow family; nor do they know what charming songsters they are, differing vastly, both in manners and qualities of voice, from the British import. One day while talking with a friend in his study, I suddenly sprang to my feet and exclaimed:

"Oh! listen to the songs of those sparrows. How delightful!"

My friend lives on the outskirts of a country town.

"Sparrows!" he echoed, sarcastically. "Those sparrows are the biggest nuisances in the country."

"You are thinking of the English sparrow, sir," I responded, just a trifle sharply; "I refer to the American song-sparrow; hark!"

At that moment the melodious trill of one of those minstrels was wafted through the open door, with a sweet, far-away cadence all its own, and when I indicated to my companion that this was the song to which I referred, there was a marked change in his tone, as he said:

"Oh, *that?* Yes, that is very pretty."

I was strongly tempted to deliver him a homily then and there on our native sparrows, but concluded that perhaps a paper on the subject might find a larger and more appreciative audience.

Only four of these birds will form the subject of our present study, and they make a quartette that we Americans need not be ashamed of. We begin with that blithe and familiar little friend in plumes, the chipping sparrow. He may be readily identified by his chestnut cap, with its frontlet of black and its grayish-white band on either side, giving him a cavalier appearance. A blackish line runs through the eye and back over the ear. His breast and under parts are a pale ash, unmarked; his back is streaked with black, bay and brown, and he has two whitish wing-bars. To guard the young

bird student against error, I will add that the breasts of the young birds are striped quite extensively with dusky and brown.

Have you heard the song of the chippy? It is a very simple jingle, and can scarcely be called a song. On a bright, sunshiny day in spring, he may be seen perched on the ridge of a roof, or an outer or upper limb of a tree, trilling away industriously for an hour at a time if not disturbed. The ditty reminds one of the peal of a string of small brass bells, and though not precisely musical, it has a dreamy, far-off melody about it that brings haunting memories of one's boyhood days, when one played on the grassy slopes or along the willow-fringed brook. I have heard that monotonous trill at night, coming from the maples along the street, and have no doubt that the bird sings in his dreams, so replete is his budget of notes.

The chipping sparrow is a brave little warrior, often attacking birds of greater size when they insult him or intrude on his domains. A friend tells me about a battle he witnessed between a chippy and an English sparrow. For a long time the contest went on, and it was doubtful how it would end; but at last the British combatant received a stinging blow that struck terror to his

heart and caused him to beat a hasty retreat, leaving chippy in possession of the field. It was laughable, my friend says, to watch the little fellow plume himself on his victory, looking up at the spectator of the melée with a mute appeal for applause.

Chippy has a little sylvan cousin to whom we must next pay our respects. The two birds may be easily confounded by the inaccurate observer, but the careful one will soon detect the marks of difference. While the crown of the bush-sparrow is of a chestnut cast, like that of the chippy, there is no black on the forehead or through the eye, while the whitish superciliary bands are not so definitely marked, but seem to be merged imperceptibly into the brown above. The bush-sparrow is also of a more reddish cast than his little relative, and his bill is pale reddish instead of black.

Mr. Burroughs calls this bird the wood or bush-sparrow, although it is called the field-sparrow in all the ornithological manuals with which I am acquainted, and it is well to remember this difference in nomenclature when the student begins the work of identification.

The song of this little wood nymph is a fine, pensive strain, very sweet and pleasing, beginning with

two, sometimes three prolonged notes, followed by a rapid trill. It may be represented fairly by the following combination: *Fe-e-e, fe-e-e, fa-fe-e-e, fe-fe-fe!* dying out in a cadence. In the middle of the day, when most birds are mute, this fine, silvery run may be heard at the edge of a woodland, chiming, if I may so speak, with the bright sunshine itself, of which it seems to form a part. Usually there is an interval of silence between the separate runs, but one day while strolling along the borders of a wood, I was pleasantly surprised to hear one of these little minstrels, in a transport of musical excitement, repeat his song three or four times in one continuous strain and in an unusually gay and sprightly tone. His song reminds one of the peal of a string of silver bells.

We have only to step out from the edge of the woods to the adjoining clover-field to form the acquaintance of another member of the sparrow family, whose exquisite solos will soon attract the attention of every bird-lover. Perhaps you will first hear his canticle wafted to you from the grass beyond the fence, while he himself remains invisible, like some shy elf; but he soon appears, selecting a perch on a stump or a fence-stake in full view, and then, throwing back his head, prying

open his mandibles, and distending his throat almost to bursting, he salutes you with his most elaborate lyrical effort.

He is commonly known as the grass-finch or vesper-sparrow, though called by Mr. Burroughs and Maurice Thompson the field-sparrow. He is larger than his little relatives just described, and if you are in doubt as to his identity, step close to him, and as he darts in a zigzag course down into the grass or to a more distant stake, notice the white lateral feathers of his tail, which he opens and closes like a fan. But you must learn to recognize him without driving him from his song-perch. By the aid of an opera glass you may obtain a good view of his breast, which is white, slightly tinged with buff, and thickly marked with dusky streaks, gathering quite profusely at the center, though not into a blotch, as in the case of another sparrow soon to be described. Then, too, there is often an arch or curve about the throat and neck, and a flatness about the head, that will enable one at once to identify him, just as one knows a familiar horse at a distance by some peculiarity of contour or mien.

This bird is also called the bay-winged bunting, on account of the reddish stripe that tips his wing-

coverts. He makes his home in upland pasture-fields, where he sings his matins and vespers and mid-day madrigals, often in company with the meadow-larks, bobolinks, and black-throated buntings. I should represent the song thus: *K-e-o-o-o, k-e-e-e, ke-ke-ke!* The second syllable pitched very high and swelling into a crescendo with a sort of swinging movement. I cannot describe the pleasure I have derived during the spring and summer from the songs of this bird, which were wafted to me every morning from the clover-field beyond the commons, in the rear of my house; they were so sadly sweet and sweetly sad.

Birds, like people, exercise some choice in their habitats. Leaving the upland fields and making our way to the meadow, the marsh, or the creek bottom, we no longer find the grass-finch, but are more than compensated by meeting another sparrow, whose voice has more compass and whose songs are more varied and sprightly, if not sweeter in intonation. I am free to say that the song-sparrow is my favorite of the household to which he belongs, not only because of the richness of his song, but also because of the constancy and fidelity with which he pursues his vocation as a vocal artist. "What's the use of having a profession if

you don't follow it?" I hear him say, as he bursts into a splendid trill that echoes across the intervale and wakens every brownie and water-witch of the lowlands.

While many other birds are chary, and even parsimonious, of their songs, this sparrow gives us the benefit of his voice at almost all seasons of the year. I have often listened to him in February, and of course during the months of spring, and also in August, September, October, November, December and January, thus completing the circlet of the months of the year. In the autumn there is often a softness and a pensiveness about his trills and cadences not to be heard at other times, as if he were sorry that winter, with its storms and cold weather, were so near at hand, or as if he were calling back memories of the blossoming spring.

What variety and versatility there are in his vocal efforts in the song season! What resonance of tone! The poets have sung the praises of the skylark, the nightingale, the cuckoo, and the mocking-bird; who will write an ode worthy of the varied trills and quavers and ecstatic outbursts of the song-sparrow? At this very moment, as I sit writing on a grassy slope beneath the trees, I

catch the rhythmic notes of a half-dozen of these minstrels coming up from the marsh below, no two of them singing the same tune; and I realize that I have been entangled in the filigree of rich melody, a delighted captive. There! I have just caught a new variation, one that I have never heard before, though I have listened to these birds by the hour and through many seasons.

To show you how rich and varied the trills of the song-sparrow are, I should like to conduct you to a certain haunt I know in Northern Indiana on the banks of a clear and beautiful river. It is a spot where I have tried to untangle more than one mesh of song from a dozen musical throats when the sparrow orchestra was in full blast. Listen! do you hear those soft, subdued notes coming up from the willows? The opening syllables might be represented in this wise: *C-o-o-y, c-o-y, coy!* followed by a rapid run in nearly, if not quite, the same key, the entire song having a slightly gurgling intonation, like music filtered through a network of spray. It is very mournful, and makes one think of the strains of Orpheus playing on his lyre to his lost love, Eurydice. What bird can it be? On a nearer approach we espy a song-sparrow in the bushes, and if we remain quiet, we may hear

him repeat his threnody. But now that he has been discovered he flits to a higher perch, throws back his head, and makes a supreme vocal effort, and lo! the song is changed, having become a rich, resonant roundelay that almost wakes the sylvan echoes. Presently he turns about and treats us to another variation, which may be represented thus: *Ch-e-e, ch-e-e, che-we-e-e, che-we, che-we, che-we!* dying out in a cadence of exquisite sweetness. He has at least a dozen different tunes in his song-quiver.

I have made note of quite a number of these variations, but do not feel that I have exhausted his treasury of song. Sometimes his roundel opens with a trill, followed by several long notes, and closes with another trill; at other times there is one long syllable, succeeded by a protracted trill; often there are two long notes at the beginning, then a cluster of short, staccato notes in the same key, as near as I can tell, followed by a perfect spray of music in a different key altogether. The longer notes are sometimes pure, clear, and resonant, and anon they become a fine, ecstatic, quivering outburst, as if the musician had broken a string of his harp. One day I heard one of these birds singing on the ridge of a barn roof, and,

strangely enough, he closed every trill with a rising inflection, just as a speaker who gets into a sing-song habit, often closes every sentence with an upward slide.

Could the four vocalists described in this paper be heard singing simultaneously — the chippy on a dead twig, the bush-sparrow at the border of the woodland, the grass-finch from a fence-stake, and the song-sparrow on a tall bush in the bottom — no loyal American would have cause to blush for the choral of the sparrow quartette.

LYRISTS OF A SUBURB.

UNTIL some attention has been paid to the matter, one would scarcely believe how many birds may be seen and studied to advantage in the suburbs of a town. It has been my happy lot to live in such a suburb for several years, with a stretch of commons back of the house, several clover-fields not far away, and a large oak-grove within half a block. My feathered fellow-tenants have been a perennial source of delight to me. How they have sung and prattled, pouring liquid melody from their warm hearts! It is for the purpose of inciting others to a most delightful study — one that many persons can pursue at their very doors — that I shall briefly sketch some of my observations on bird-ways in this suburb.

It is needless to say that the English sparrows thrive here, making their usual tumult, and putting on their big, patronizing airs, as they do everywhere; yet they have not crowded out all our pleasant native birds. One may still sit in

one's back yard of an evening, and watch the chimney-swifts circling overhead, sometimes at so great a height that they seem like mere specks slipping across the sky. Now they glide with outstretched wings, apparently without the movement of a feather or a muscle; and now they propel themselves forward with short, quick strokes. It is not difficult to tell the swifts from the swallows and house-martins when you see them on the wing, for the wing-strokes of the swifts are much shorter and more rapid than those of the other birds.

The swallows, by the way, are genuine athletes in the air — regular acrobats. Though the movement of their wings is rather leisurely, their flight is exceedingly rapid; and it is thrilling to watch them, especially about a steep cliff, hurling themselves down from some height with the most reckless disregard of danger, as if they meant to dash out their brains on the rocks below; and then, just when you think the fatal moment has come, they describe a sharp but graceful curve, and glide away unhurt. Oh, how they wheel, and mount, and plunge, and circle, and poise, "aslant with the hill and a-curve with the vale!" Several very interesting chapters on swifts and swallows may

be found in Charles C. Abbott's well-known book, "A Naturalist's Rambles about Home."

It was in February, during several days of mild weather, that I first heard the loud *Peto, peto, peto!* of the tufted titmouse or chickadee, repeated somewhat rapidly, with the accent on the first syllable. Early in the spring these birds seem to seek human associations; for then they were to be seen and heard in the maples about the house, coming within a few feet of the door; but later they became more retiring in their habits, seeking homes in out-of-the-way places, where, in company with the nuthatches and black-capped chickadees, they reared their young and broke the silence of the solitudes. Yet when you go to their haunts, they do not seem to be shy. At least, one day as I sat reading in a green, shady hollow, a half-dozen of these birds flitted about in the bushes and trees only a few feet from me, ringing the changes on their monotonous *Dā, dā, dā!* and seemingly disposed to be very friendly.

Do you know this little dandy in plumes? He wears a coat of a leaden gray color, and a whitish vest, while his sides are striped with rusty brown. But you will recognize him at once when you see the tuft on his crown, cocked up in a jaunty fashion,

and having a narrow frontlet of black. When once you have seen him there is no other bird for which you will mistake him. He is a real coxcomb, though a pleasant and agreeable one, differing in that respect from human dandies. Then he has quite a variety of notes and phrases in which to express his thoughts; but the most stirring of them is his clarion call in early spring; for it seems as if he were trying to rouse the grass and flowers and insects from their winter slumbers; and he will succeed, too, by and by.

There are several interesting migrants that may be studied in these suburbs. One bright, sunshiny day in April, as I sat writing in my study, my ear caught the clear, continuous, and rather pensive notes of a bird's song. In an instant I had sprung from my chair, seized my opera glass, and rushed out into the front yard. With pulses throbbing, I looked up into the maple-tree whence the song came, and saw a beautiful bird perched on a twig. It was a white-crowned sparrow. I could scarcely repress a cry of delight, for the moment a bird-lover discovers a new specimen, or hears a new song, he has a sensation of rare and exciting joy. The bird itself was not new to me; for I had seen it at least twice in Northern Indiana where I had

formerly lived, but had never before heard its song. The notes are very sweet, and have been translated by some one into the old song, "*O dear, dear, what can the matter be?*"

My bird warbled awhile in the tree, and then fluttered down upon the grass in front of me, so that I could distinctly note his snow-white crown, banded with black on the forehead and sides of the head. The arrangement on the nape is very beautiful; for there the white stripes of the crown and those on the sides of the head run together, and the back bands curve around and almost meet each other. The general color of the bird, aside from the parts described, is a fine dark ash, relieved by two white bars on the wings, and some other markings on the back and tail.

Although this was the first time I had heard the minstrelsy of this bird, it was not the last. Experiences in bird study are very apt to be duplicated. If you see or hear a bird once, you are sure to see or hear him again in course of time; and not unfrequently does it occur that birds which are very rare before you make their acquaintance, apparently become quite abundant after that event. However, I do not think that the difference lies in the birds, but in the observer, whose interest has

been awakened and whose eye has become alert after a first meeting with a feathered friend. But this is a digression; I have merely interlarded these remarks for the encouragement of the tyro, and must now return to my subject, the white-crowned sparrows.

In May of the next year a bevy of these sweet-voiced lyrists visited my suburb and remained fully two weeks, until I began to hope they would become permanent residents. In this I was disappointed, but while here they favored me with many a delightful chorus. After hearing them so frequently, I am prepared to add a few observations to those already made, on their minstrelsy. The opening notes are prolonged and very sweet, clear, bell-like and somewhat sad, and might be represented thus: "*O-o-o-h*, *d-e-a-r*, *d-e-a-r*," uttered with a peculiar swinging movement, hard to describe. After the opening syllables the song becomes accelerated and might be called a trill, often gathering momentum toward the close and ending with an emphatic repetition of the last syllable, thus: "*What-can-the-matter-be-be-be?*" The lay is admirable in technique, and I hope some trained musician will sometime represent it on the musical scale.

A New England writer on birds requested me, some time ago, to describe the song of the white-crowned sparrow for his benefit, as he had never heard it. He added, further, that some of the books declare it to be much like the song of the white-throated sparrow, so that the two can scarcely be distinguished. No careful student would ever confound the lyrical performances of the two birds. They are different in tone, expression, and arrangement of the syllables. The song of the white-throat is a quaver or tremolo from beginning to end, while the notes of the white-crown are throughout firm and clear. The latter part of the white-throat's lay is a sort of triple triad, which Dr. Wheaton represents thus: "*A-body, á-body, á-body.*" There is nothing of the kind in the lay of the white-crown, whose closing trill is less striking and characteristic.

If I were compelled to say which of these songsters should be awarded the palm, I should be somewhat nonplussed, but think I should render the verdict as follows: If the closing trill of the white-crown's song were as melodious as the opening syllables, he would, I think, distance his rival; but since he does not end as well as he begins, the impression left by his carol is not quite so pleasing as that

made by the white-throat, and hence the latter should wear the laurels.

I cannot forbear adding one simple incident while I am speaking of the white-crowned sparrows. One day in May I was returning from the woods across a clover field, when a covey of eight or ten of these birds ran before me on the ground or scurried along the rail fence. Their immaculate white crowns gleamed like jewels as they caught the bright rays of the sun and flung them shimmering to my eye. A clump of downy headed dandelion stalks came in the way of the flock of feathered pedestrians, and it was amusing to see the hungry birds seize them, bend down the flexile stems, scatter the down like snow-flakes upon the grass, and then hungrily devour the seeds. It was one of the daintiest phases of bird deportment I have ever witnessed — a picture that would have delighted an artist or a poet.

I wish you could have seen and heard several lark finches (lark sparrows, Mr. Ridgway calls them) that were to be found for a week or two in the spring along the fences of a wheat-field beyond the commons. How curiously variegated their heads are with chestnut, black and white, giving them quite a striking and picturesque appearance!

If the bird stands facing you, you will notice a small black spot on the chest. In some places it is called the road-bird. Its song is exceedingly pleasing, now lifted high and clear, now falling as if the soloist were exhausted, and anon rising with renewed vigor. Heard once, it cannot be forgotten.

In a paper published in one of our popular magazines, John Burroughs expresses some disappointment with the minstrelsy of this finch, intimating that his vocal powers have been rated too high by writers on bird life in our Middle States. It is possible that he expected too much of the bird, but I am inclined to think that he did not hear it at its best. I have myself heard it sing in a low, squeaking voice that was not very pleasing, I admit, although it seemed to point in the direction of exquisite reserves of talent and vocal skill. But one evening as I was returning in the gloaming from a tramp through the woods, I heard this bird singing a superlatively rich roundelay. At first it rose on the air from a stump in the corn-field, causing me to pause in rapture, and then the blithe musician flew to the rail fence of the lane which I was pursuing, alighting not more than two rods away, and again broke into song.

It was a sweet, continuous warble, and not intermittent like the trills of most of the sparrows; the voice was full, clear and flexible; the notes varied, several strains being much like certain runs of the brown thrasher's song, but of decidedly finer quality; while the whole carol was admirable in execution and theme-like in character. The musician's voice was equally clear and mellifluent whether he struck notes high or low in the scale. Moreover, he seemed to sing in a sort of ecstasy. To this day — many months later — those mellifluous strains ring in my ear, bringing that twilight scene vividly to mind.

It is surprising how many birds may be seen here, each of which deserves a chapter, though most of them can be given only a casual mention. Here the little goldfinch may be heard in the maples before the house, vying with the canaries in their cages, and then darting away in his graceful, undulatory flight, twittering at every forward plunge, "*I can beat you singing; I can beat you singing.*" That tricksy spirit, the blue jay, calls in the trees; the crow blackbird utter his harsh "*Chack, chack!*" as he flies overhead; the Baltimore oriole, though rarer than one likes, flutes occasionally in the grove; the robin carols on the house-

top when "the dappled dawn doth rise," long before his human rivals think, or even dream, of stirring from their morning slumbers; all day long one hears the loud, defiant rhapsody of the indigo bird. The stentorian call of the yellow-winged woodpecker, or flicker, echoes over the fields; or one sees him beating across the commons to a dead tree at the edge of the woodland, where he is training a brood of young "high-holders" in the way that they should go — or rather, fly. The ubiquitous red-headed woodpecker thrums on a tree, or plays a tune on the ridge of a slate roof. A few catbirds are mysteriously silent, and the brown thrush does not feel at liberty to do his best. For a couple of months in the spring the meadow larks give concerts on the commons and in the more distant clover field; and then, after a month or more of silence, may again be heard fluting cheerfully late in September. Bluebirds complain, chipping sparrows and field sparrows trill, song sparrows and grass-finches chant, golden-crowned kinglets *Tsip!* and a killdeer plover screams beside a pond near by.

Beyond the commons before referred to, there is a large field in which clover, timothy and "white-top" attain a rank growth during the summer, and

along the fences of which golden-rod and harebells bloom. This field, commonplace as it may seem, contains many specimens of interest to the lover of birds, several of which deserve more than a mere passing notice. You would be amused with that delightfully disagreeable musician, the black-throated bunting, which may be easily recognized by his yellow breast and the large black patch on his throat, and especially by his harsh, clanging notes. By the way, this bird is called "Dickcissel" in Ridgway's "Manual." The word has no special meaning, and gives but a faint idea of the song of the bird, and yet there is a dash about it that seems to fit this quaint, nervous vocalist to perfection; and the man who first suggested it ought to be awarded a silver medal. Dickcissel is a persistent singer, having an overplus of Yankee stick-to-itive-ness. "*Chick, chick, che-che-che!*" he rasps over and over again, with now and then a little variation, until you think his throat must be torn to shreds. Now he perches on a low tree, now on a fence stake, and now on the top of a weed. If an opinion were worth anything, I should say that he carries a small iron chain in his windpipe, and rings it so constantly for the sake of the tickling sensation. So anxious is he to maintain his repu-

tation as a songster that he often repeats his notes on the wing, unable to wait until he reaches a perch. Why, I even heard that song coming across the commons at ten o'clock one moonlight night.

Going out to the clover-fields in June, I give my ears to the birds, and watch them as they perform their feats of scaling in the air. Among the many notes I detect a fine trill running like a golden thread through the weft of the other music; and although the little flutist is nowhere to be seen, I know from previous acquaintance that he is the yellow-winged or grasshopper sparrow, one of the smallest of the numerous family to which he belongs. He is so shy in the breeding season that it is almost impossible to get near enough to identify him even with an opera-glass, and I have often lost my patience in hunting for him. Sometimes he sits on a weed so far away that you can just discern a dark, tiny bird-form; yet you may know it is he by his sharp, fine *Tsééé!* occasionally prolonged into a ditty of considerable beauty. Later in the season, however, you may get near enough to see his black crown, with its yellowish median line; and perhaps you may make out to discover the yellow edgings of his wings.

One of my most delightful companions of this clover-field has been the bobolink, which at his first coming and for two months afterward made the welkin ring with its rich, metallic melody. Nothing can be more delightful than to listen to the male bobolinks, which are the musicians, as they mount up into the air, poise for a few moments without change of position, burst into song, and then sweep slowly and sometimes in a spiral course down into the grass again, the notes melting away in a cadence as the birds reach the ground. When a half-dozen of these birds are singing their overtures simultaneously in different parts of the field, the air seems to quiver and dance and gambol with the vibrant melody.

Once more I yield to the temptation to quote from Mr. Lowell, whose "Under the Willows" is so buoyant with the joyfulness of nature, especially of nature in June. After speaking of the early spring song of the bluebird, he breaks out in this manner:

"But now, O rapture! sunshine winged and voiced,
. . . . . .
Gladness of woods, skies, waters, all in one,
The bobolink has come, and, like the soul
Of the sweet season vocal in a bird,
Gurgles in ecstasy we know not what,
Save *June! Dear June! Now God be praised for June.*"

Dear Poet! (pardon the apostrophe) if there is anything "so rare as a day in June," it is the melody of the bobolink in that pearl month of the year which,

> "From some southern ambush in the sky,
> With one great gush of blossoms storms the world."

A SWEET-VOICED WREN.

Almost everybody recognizes a wren at sight, on account of certain family traits that cannot be mistaken and that distinguish him from all other birds. A part, if not all, of the plumage of the wrens is more or less thickly barred; they have a quaint habit of flirting their tails when you approach them, and there is something peculiar about their trim figures, in spite of minor differences among the various species, that at once betrays their identity. But few persons are aware that there are so many different kinds of wrens. The wren family on this continent alone comprises six genera and thirty-three species. Comparatively few of them, however, are to be found in a single locality.

You will find a great deal said in popular works on ornithology about the Carolina wren, the house wren, and the winter wren; but the little feathered companion of which I am about to tell you is seldom mentioned. He is called Bewick's wren,

or the long-tailed house wren, and I find him one of the most delightful tenants of the suburbs in which I live, his quaint, agreeable manners and liquid notes having greatly endeared him to me.

Those charming writers on birds, Charles C. Abbott, John Burroughs and Bradford Torrey do not so much as refer to him, as far as I have read their works, while Mr. Ridgway says that he is rare and local east of the Alleghanies and north of forty degrees north latitude. But here in Central Ohio he flourishes, being almost as much a part of many a homestead as the domestic fowls themselves. No other species, except the Carolina wren, is so abundant here, while the house wren is never seen ;* the winter wren is only a migrant, and Parkman's wren seldom makes himself visible or audible.

I wish every lover of the feathered kingdom could hear the song of this little wren ; it is such a glad, sweet melody — one might almost say, "a vocal caress." One day in early spring, as I stepped out into my back lot, a wavering trill drifted to me across the commons from the fence of the

*Since this was in type I have found a house wren in an old orchard about a mile and a half from my home. He was, however, like the winter wren, only a migrant.

clover-field beyond, causing me to spring up alert and listen for a repetition of the melodious strain. What could it be? At first I thought it must be a variation of the song-sparrow's canticle, new to me, but it struck me that the tones were not so full and resonant, and that there was more inflection and blending of the notes. Rushing into the house for my opera glass, I hurried across the greensward. The nearer I approached him the more was I convinced that the minstrel had qualities of voice not possessed by the song-sparrow; it was a voice of different timbre. The song was new to me; for I had been living here only a few months at the time.

Presently I espied the blithe little vocalist on a fence stake. There he stood with his tail bent downward in true wren fashion, puffing out his throat as he poured forth his delicious roundel, until I got too close to suit his fancy, when up went his tail, which he switched from side to side in a sort of curve, instead of backward and forward as some other wrens do, and then he scudded down among the rails. Here he crept in and out among the crevices, now coming forth a moment to take a peep at me, and then darting back again into a hiding-place. I have learned to know him by the

queer sidewise flourish of his tail, which is quite long for so small a bird, and apparently a little unwieldy.

But his song! It is exquisite. He seems to say: "*Sw-e-e-t, sw-e-e-t, very, v-e-e-r-y sw-e-e-t!*" You must remember, however, that no two syllables are uttered in the same way; each consists of several different notes on the musical staff, run together with a sweet, melodious slur. The opening notes are clear and dulcet, delivered with a kind of swinging movement difficult to describe, while in the middle and toward the close of the song there are several strains that grow more enchanting the oftener you hear them. Withal, it is a joyful little lay; the bird is evidently no pessimist.

There may be other wrens whose voices have more volume, but I doubt whether there is one in whose song you will hear more real melody. The vocal performances of the Carolina wren, varied as they are, seem quite harsh in comparison. Bewick's wren is also an early riser. Sometimes in the half-wakeful, half-dreamful hours of the morning his matin song floats into my window, running like a thread of gold through the chirping of the sparrows, the sighing of the bluebirds, and the carols of the robins.

More than once has he led me a chase among the houses of my neighbors, flitting from tree to tree, or from post to post, until I was ashamed to continue my pursuit further lest my sanity should be called in question. First, he would sing his ditty in a maple near my residence; but if I approached, he would dart in a zigzag course across the street, and when I hurried after, he was gone again, and then I would hear him warbling beyond a cluster of houses: "*H-e-e-r-r-e I am! H-e-e-r-e, h-e-e-r-e, sir!*" The blithe little tantalizer! Out of pure admiration of his cunning ways, I have often felt that I ought to catch him and give him a vigorous love-tap.

In the lyrical season he sang a great deal, and I never tired of his roundels; but, what is more, he did not desert me in midsummer when so many birds are silent. Quite frequently he would break into song on the sultriest days, and in my judgment his lay was as bright and gleeful as ever. My notes, taken last year, say that on the eleventh of September my little friend gave me a pleasant reminder of the fair springtime when he was so lavish of his melody.

It is surprising that a bird so shy should choose a nesting place so near the dwellings of man. Still,

that is precisely what he does. I have not found his nest in these suburbs, for one does not like to go prowling too much about one's neighbors' dwellings, but there was, during the last summer, a wren nursery somewhere in the neighborhood, perhaps in a box, or a hollow stump, or a fence post; for I frequently heard the alarm call of the parent birds across the way, which meant that some one had come too near their homestead for their comfort.

Close to a house on the borders of a woodland that I often haunt, I found another pair of these birds, but was here also unable to discover their nest. However, in one of my strolls I formed the acquaintance of the young birds, in company with their elders, after they had left the nursery. None of them seemed to be very shy that day, but flitted about in a brush-heap, looking up at me as if I were an object of curiosity, not in the least dangerous. The bantlings looked so handsome in their new, barred suits, which were of a slightly duller cast than those of the old birds, that I could not help calling them "little darlings" to their faces! I noticed that even the juvenile birds had already fallen into the habit of brandishing their long, unwieldy tails, just as their ancestors have been doing for I know not how long before them.

TANGLES OF BIRD-SONG.

Go out to the haunts of the birds on a bright morning of May or June, and listen; you will be surprised at the number and variety of the strains that fall simultaneously on your ear, and I doubt whether you will be able to resist the wondrous enchantment of the birds' choral. If the ear is not trained, it will catch only a jumble of musical notes, without rhythm, or unity, or system, nor will the hearer be able to differentiate (to use a scientific term now in vogue) the various trills and quavers and carols that greet him; but the trained ear detects every thread woven into the fabric of melody, tracing it to the particular bird-throat from which it unwinds, and catching not only the major but also the minor strains; the gossamer trill of the grasshopper sparrow as well as the ecstatic outburst of the bobolink; the sad tune of the wood sparrow and the glad medley of brown thrush.

It is indeed a rare treat to listen to the early

bird orchestra, and try to catch the higher harmony of it all. Many times have I been caught — a willing captive — in the meshes of an outdoor concert.

Memory fondly lingers about a delightful experience of this kind which I had one June morning in Northern Indiana. Before daylight I had risen, and leaving behind me the city wrapped in slumber, I made my way across the dewy fields to the broad, clear river, whose wooded banks a large number of birds had chosen for their summer home.

My objective point was a well-timbered spot between the river bank and a steep declivity about eight rods back from the stream. Here and there were dense thickets of underbrush, growing up about the bases of the beeches, maples, elms and sycamores, while the more open spaces were covered with a carpet of soft, green sod. The steep acclivity, which was thickly overgrown with small oak-trees, curved around to meet the river above and below, thus inclosing a regular bird bower, as I well knew from many previous excursions.

When I reached the place, the sun was just peeping over the eastern woods, glittering in the

dewdrops, and gilding earth and sky with glory. In the words of Bryant, it was a day —

> "In flowery June,
> When brooks send up a cheerful tune,
> And groves a joyful sound."

No sooner had the sun risen than the birds began their matin concert. Some of my readers my be disposed to doubt the fidelity of my description; but I assure them that I am rather understating than overstating the facts. With pencil in hand, I lent my ear to the woodland orchestra, trying to get a clear impression of each lyrist's peculiar strain, and roughly jotting it down in my notebook. To a bird lover it was Paradise.

Let me call the bead-roll of that winged choir. In the top of a tall elm the brown thrush led the chorus with his varied, well-accentuated mimicry; below, in the bushes, a cat-bird vied with the superior vocalist in the tree-top, falling very little behind; a song sparrow trilled his soft love-notes in the willows, while another minstrel of the same species disported himself on a tall bush, and sang a pæan worthy of his royal vocal powers; two male indigo birds chased each other pell-mell, in and out, hither and yon, among the thick branches

and foliage, until I feared they would dash themselves to pieces, and then, alighting on separate perches not far apart, they hurled their defiance at each other in loud and not unmusical bursts of song; a red-start flashed his coat of black and gold in the trees, breaking out at intervals in a lively trill; not far away a summer warbler added his quota to the general chorus; several vireos performed in recitative among the branches of a willow; the sad minor of a black-capped chickadee lent sweetness to the symphony; the fluting of a Baltimore oriole could be heard, imparting a cheeriness and a feeling of good-fellowship; a sandpiper "teetered" and complained; a killdeer plover flew across the river, uttering his shrill cry; while last, though not least, a robin, from a tree-top on the high acclivity, rang out his *allegro*, "*Cheerily, cheer up! cheer up!*" until it woke the sylvan echoes.

It was a tumult (I had almost said a chaos) of bird music, only it seemed to me that a law of harmony ran through it all, which a musician might have caught and represented by some system of notation. Surely, so I thought, it was a fabric woven according to some well-ordered plan.

Another such morning comes back to my mind,

although the music was somewhat different in character. I think that was also in June. At an early hour I was wending my way along the winding banks of a creek, when, just beyond a railroad bridge, in a loop of the stream, I found a low, wet, boggy stretch, overgrown with weeds, willows and other bushes, while farther back on the slope there was a grove of small oak-trees. This place turned out to be a sparrows' elysium, and these birds were having their jubilee when I arrived on the scene. They were, of course, the song sparrows, those indomitable minstrels. Almost every voice in that choral was a sparrow voice, but the music was scarcely less enchanting than that of the concert previously described, and I am sure it was almost as full-toned, though not as varied. On every bush, on every weed-stalk, and even on the tufts of sod raised by the winter's frosts, these birds seemed to find a perch from which to sing their roundels, making the air fairly dance with musical transport, and bringing from me a shout of delight that would not be hushed. Could I have recalled the lines I might have exclaimed with Pope:

> "Hear how the birds, on every blooming spray,
> With joyous music wake the dawning day."

It must not be thought that this concert lacked variety. Some of the songs were loud and joyous, others soft and plaintive. One minstrel sang a song of triumph, another a love song, another a dirge, and still another a lullaby. Besides, there was every variety of inflection, of trill and quaver, of clear note and broken spray, of sharp *staccato* and blended *legato*. Only two other birds took part in the concert; the black-throated bunting, which rang in his harsh notes like a trombone accompaniment, and the warbling vireo, whose almost human tones ran sweetly through it all. A morning like this opens a man's senses to the beauties of nature, and makes him a better man ever after.

No songster with which I am acquainted has a larger répertoire of notes than the brown thrush. While he seems to sing with diffidence on the outskirts of the city, though he may rear a brood in the hawthorns near by, yet in his more sequestered haunts he is lavish of his music, making the woodlands echo from morning till night. One May day I took a long ramble along the cliffy banks of a river in Central Ohio, and at last reached a grassy slope, where hawthorns grew here and there in clumps. The broad stretch of lowland below was green with fresh grass and sparsely timbered with

large trees. What a tangle of music! Brown thrushes to right of me, brown thrushes to left of me, brown thrushes in front of me, volleyed and thundered — in a lyrical way, of course. The "throstle's wild, summer-swung tune" it was. There must have been ten or a dozen performers in that thrush oratorio. They seemed to be in a perfect frenzy, trilling and quavering, and making all kinds of vocal display. I do not believe they mimicked, but performed their own compositions.

It was a good opportunity to study the different qualities of thrush voice. There was one songster especially, perched on a thorn-tree beyond a little hollow, whose tones were of excellent *timbre;* loud, flexible, sweet and liquid, ringing above the general symphony. While all the birds seemed to be in good tune, many grades of excellence could be discerned. Like a sweet, far-away accompaniment, the song of a thrush was wafted to me from a thicket beyond the brow of the hill. Several cardinal grossbeaks whistled on their flutes, a lark finch or two sung cheerily, while, interlaced in the general network of song, I could hear the swinging *whit-ti-te*, *whit-ti-te*, *whit-ti-te* of the Maryland yellow-throat coming up from the copse at the edge of a marsh.

But why did not the rose-breasted grossbeak in the hickory-tree join in the chorus? Why did he maintain such a sullen silence, when we know that he has very superior vocal talents? Was it because he was too proud, and regarded the whole performance as a crude hubbub of sound, in which it would have been absurd for him to take part? He certainly put on a very wise and patronizing air throughout it all.

By reference to my note-book I find that I was caught in another mesh of bird song and bird prattle on the thirteenth of April, 1890, while sitting beneath the trees at the border of the woods of which I have so often spoken.

"Listen to the woodland chorus," my notes run; "the turtle doves are cooing their soft, far-away lays; the blue jays are trilling in their explosive way or calling plaintively; the robins — how many I cannot tell — are carolling in a transport; the tufted titmice are sounding their bugles; the measured roundelays of the wood sparrows fall sweetly on the ear; the stentorian reveille of the golden-winged woodpeckers is heard, mingling with their affectionate chattering in the trees; a chewink sings in a brush-heap; the sweet quaver of the white-throated sparrows runs like a thread of silver

through the weft of song; Carolina wrens are having a vocal revel; cardinal grossbeaks and meadow-larks are fluting; the nuthatches furnish the alto for the anthem; a song sparrow plays several variations on his harp, and a brown thrush breaks forth in so rich a strain that he must be awarded the palm in the winged orchestra."

SONGS OUT OF SEASON.

MUCH has been written concerning the minstrelsy of our American birds during the song season, which includes the three spring months and a part of July. It is not so well known, however, that many birds fall into the lyrical mood at other seasons of the year. I have been giving the subject of "songs out of season" much attention, and wish to present to my readers the results of my study. Let us begin with the robin, whose carols are familiar sounds in the spring. It is not, however, an uncommon occurrence to hear him singing a soft, far-away roundel in August, as I did on the thirty-first of that month, when almost all other birds were silent. Of course it lacks the vigor of his early spring pæans, being only a sort of fractional aftermath of song. In September and October I frequently heard the redbreast carolling to keep himself in tune for the next spring, and my notes inform me that on the third of November — a clear, cold day — a robin was singing a sprightly lay before the sun had risen.

These birds are such irrepressible singers that I expected to be able to record a carol for every month in the year, but was disappointed in this hope, for not a robin was to be seen after the middle of November, until some time in January; and even when they reappeared there seemed to be no music in their throats, at other times so tuneful.

On October 29 I had a surprise which I believe deserves a somewhat minute description. For several weeks I had been watching the fox sparrows along the bushy fringe of the woods and in a marsh not far off; but as they are only migrants I had little hope of hearing their song, at least in the autumn. On the day referred to, while sauntering along the border of the woods, I flushed one of these birds in the briers. It darted in its graceful, thrush-like flight back of me to a sapling, choosing a perch where I could not see it on account of the intervening bushes. I had resumed my walk, for the fox sparrow was a bird well-known to me, when I was suddenly brought to a halt by a new style of bird melody. What could it be? I was instantly on the alert, and started back to investigate. The notes came from the precise spot whither the fox sparrow had flown a few moments before.

As I approached the music ceased, and presently the fox sparrow flew from the sapling and disappeared in the brier thicket to my left. As there were other birds flitting about, I could not be sure which songster was the author of this strange lyrical performance. Presently he alighted on a blackberry stalk in full view, his reddish-striped breast showing plainly, and while I leveled my glass upon him he burst into song, producing the identical notes that had startled me so agreeably a few minutes before. There could be no mistake, for I plainly saw the movement of his mandibles and the heaving of his bosom as he enunciated the notes. It was a real discovery for a bird lover.

Whether the song was similar to the one he sings at his summer home in Labrador, British America and Alaska I am unable to say, and I therefore reproduce the notes phonetically as accurately as I can, so that readers who live in those northern lands may have an opportunity of making comparison: *Há-deert-dé-dé-dêê-d-hā-āh!* The syllables were rather distinct, several of them staccato, and the whole song enunciated in a kind of recitative. While the lyrical effort was pleasing and novel, it could not have been called "exquisitely sweet," as this bird's summer song is said to be.

The next autumn I heard one of these birds deliver his recitative in a chestnut grove in Northeastern Ohio. In the spring of 1890 the woods were vocal with their songs, albeit a writer on the birds of this State asserts that they do not sing on their migratory tour to their Northern homes. In another paper I have endeavored to characterize their spring melody.

A frequent and cheering sound in the woods during January and February was the resonant whistle of the cardinal grossbeak. This was all the more remarkable when collated with the fact tha his song was not heard once during the succeedin winter. True, he and his mate were absent from November to February, but even when they returned, all their music seemed to be locked up in their throats.

The conduct of the meadow-larks was somewhat quaint. Early in the spring, while the weather was still chill and frosty, they gave free concerts on the commons back of the house and in the adjoining clover field, continuing them through May and June and a part of July. Then they were silent for a while, probably through the moulting season; but in September they resumed their fluting with more vigor than before, keeping

up such an incessant *pot-pourri* of shrill sounds that one's ears fairly tingled. Sometimes three or four of them would cluster together and engage in a musical tournament, making the welkin ring. These performances continued until the latter part of October or first of November, when they suddenly ceased and the birds disappeared.

It is not an uncommon occurrence to hear the loud *Bish-yer, bish-yer!* of the great Carolina wren in November and December, although the spring is his favorite season of song. The month of December was exceptionally warm even for this latitude, a fact that was favorable to my investigations, and I was surprised and delighted at the number of songs I heard. On the eleventh of the month — a clear, bright day — as I stood at the border of the woods the sweet, sad minor whistle of the black-capped chickadee fell on my ear, sounding from the sylvan depths like the lament of some love-lorn sprite whose heart had been broken by the defection of a fickle suitor. Again on the nineteenth those pensive notes were heard: *Wh-e-e-e, wh-e-e-phit; wh-e-e-e, wh-e-e-phit!* so sad and far-away that the tears almost started to my eyes.

The bugle call of the tufted titmouse in early spring is one of the most stirring sounds of the

season and passes for the song of that bird, and there is a certain clarion-like music about it. Although it is seldom repeated, except in the spring, I have heard it more than once in November, December and January, piped in soft, almost dulcet tones.

Have other students of the bird kingdom heard the song of the white-throated sparrow in the autumn? It is a rare sound, yet I heard it one day in October while strolling through the woods. This matchless songster seems to carry an Æolian harp in his throat. Like a wavering line of light it comes up from the tanglewood. The movement is deliberate at first, then becomes more and more accelerated, and dies away in a cadence exquisitely sweet.

However, no bird has afforded me so much delight in this special line of investigation as the song sparrow; not because he sings more sweetly than many other minstrels, but because of his indefatigable industry. I have heard him singing with great vigor as early as February, during a few days of warm weather, and of course every one who pays the slightest attention to birds has been delighted with his madrigals and lullabies in March, April, June and July. Yet he does not then lay

aside his harp. All through the month of August he plays upon it *con spirito*. When September comes he still sings, though his notes lack their previous vigor. On October 10 he had changed his tune from the lively trill of spring and midsummer to a low, twittering warble. In November I was frequently greeted with that warble as I strolled along the margin of a pool on the commons. On December 9 one of these birds trilled in a clear, resonant tone. On the 13th it was the low, sweet warble again. On the 19th he regaled me again with his lively minstrelsy.

Have you ever heard this indomitable musician singing a Christmas carol? I have the pleasure of recording such a piece of good fortune. Christmas morning was rather cold, but the sky was cloudless, and as I strolled out to the pond my ears caught the jubilant "Glory to God in the highest" of my favorite lyrist — a fact of which I feel a little proud, and I think justly.

Two weeks of January had passed and the weather was growing colder, and yet I had not heard the song of my sparrow, though a friend told me he had heard a bird singing on the morning of the fifth. That did not satisfy me; I wanted to hear it myself. At last, on the sixteenth, as I was

crossing the bridge that spans the creek on the other side of the town — presto! I was almost lifted from my feet by the loud, clear ring of my songster's trill coming up from the bushes that fringed the cliff. Feathery flakes of snow were flying in the cold, gusty wind, though at intervals the sun broke through a rift in the clouds. It was thrilling to an ornithologist to hear a bird song on a raw, midwinter day like that. Thus the song sparrow clasped the circlet of the months with his silvery trills.

[NOTE. — This paper was published in the February number of Outing, 1891, and presents some of the results of my studies during the year 1889-90. A few of my conclusions have been slightly modified by subsequent researches, and during the last season, 1890-91, I have discovered many more interesting facts about bird-life in winter, many of which have been described in other chapters. My study of the minstrelsy of that peerless triller, the song sparrow, has been especially satisfactory to myself since "Songs out of Season" was written.]

A TINY TILTER.

WHAT need is there to people the woods with fairies, nymphs, dryads, and other fanciful beings, when we may find so many real creatures that are quite as interesting and beautiful? Even at the risk of making this monograph "top-heavy," as my boys would say, and thus marring its symmetry, I cannot refrain from quoting a passage from Sidney Lanier, whose sentiment I am half-inclined to endorse:

> "Much time is run, and man hath changed his ways,
> Since Nature, in the antique fable-days,
> Was hid from man's true love by proxy fays,
> False fauns and rascal gods that stole her praise.
> The nymphs, cold creatures of man's colder brain,
> Chilled Nature's streams till man's warm heart was fain
> Never to lave its love in them again."

Fairy stories have their use. All of us like to read them when they are well conceived and well told; but they should never lead us for a moment to think that our woodlands are so sparsely in-

habited that we must employ the imagination to make them inviting. Just look at the army of warblers and kinglets, real jewels in feathers, bright-hued blossoms of the bird world, more beautiful than anything the fancy could conjure up, be it never so inventive. It is not of the warblers and kinglets, however, that I wish to tell you, but of another little bird — a genuine Tom Thumb in plumes — the blue-gray gnat-catcher. He is a trifle larger than the ruby-throated humming-bird, and has a lithe, slender body, a long tail for so small a bird, and a slim bill somewhat curved toward the tip. Thus, you see, he is built after the right pattern for playing pranks among the branches of the trees and catching gnats and flies on the wing.

But let me describe his markings, so that you may be able to identify him the next time you take a stroll to the woods, if you happen to meet him. Unlike the kinglets, which belong to the same family, he has no flashy colors in his toilet, for he does not believe in wearing jewelry. A clear grayish blue colors the upper parts, becoming deeper blue on the top of the head and paler on the rump. If you look at him sharply, you will see a narrow black band extending across his fore-

head and back over the eyes, like the frontlet of a boy's cap. A ring runs around the eye; his lower parts are whitish; the outer tail-feathers are white, while the central ones are black.

Having introduced you to this Liliputian in feathers, I am ready to tell you something about his habits. Never shall I forget the bright June day on which I formed his acquaintance. I was sauntering through a pleasant woodland that sloped up from the banks of a broad river, studying the birds, as usual, when I heard a little lisping mew above me in the oak saplings. On looking up, I espied two small birds flitting about uneasily, and I knew at once that I had at last found the blue-gray gnat-catcher, for which I had been on the lookout for so long a time, having often read the descriptions of him in my bird manuals.

But what was the cause of the pair's agitation? I peered up into the trees a while, watching their movements with intense interest, when lo! one of them flitted into the cup of what looked like a moss-covered knot in the fork of a branch and the main stem of a sapling. There the bird sat as cosy as you please, turning her head now and then to glance down at me. Suddenly it dawned upon my mind that I had not only discovered a bird that

was new to me, but also his homestead. The nest was about twenty feet from the ground, and bore so close a resemblance to the bark of the tree, that I never should have found it, had not the artless tell-tales themselves betrayed their secret.

A bird lover cannot rest content until he has seen the inside of a nest, and so I resolved to climb that sapling, although it was quite slender and free of branches for at least fifteen feet from the ground. It was hard work, and the feat was not very gracefully performed, I suppose; but I could not stop for looks, and so at length I scrambled up to the nest. Oh, how the birds *tsipped*, and cried, and scolded, and dashed at me, coming within a few feet of my head, so that I could feel the wind of their fluttering wings! No doubt they thought a huge bugaboo was about to play havoc with their cottage in the tree.

It was a dainty structure, neatly and compactly built of downy material, fine, wiry grass and horse hair, the cup being quite deep and lined with feathers, and the walls high, ornamented with lichens, contracted and deftly turned at the rim. I forget how many eggs it contained; three, I think, and they looked like gems studding the bottom of the nest. Their ground-color was a delicate

bluish-white tint, speckled with chestnut. Did I do wrong in yielding to the temptation to take one of them between my finger and thumb, just to see how pretty it was and how smooth it felt? I think no harm was done, for no sooner had I reached the ground than the female was again on the nest.

These birds are a charming sight as they trip, fairylike, from twig to twig, pose in various attitudes, dart out into the air with expanded tail, seize a winged insect, clicking their mandibles viciously, and then flit gracefully back to a spray. I have often seen them hanging to the under side of a leaf, hunting for tidbits, so light and airy are they. Every movement is the poetry of grace. They are, with scarcely an exception, the most dexterous tilters of the woods. Sometimes when the insect they are pursuing is very agile, they have quite a wing-contest before it is secured, but they seldom fail to bear the trophy away in triumph.

Their little lisp has been called "a miniature imitation of the catbird's well-known note." Early in the spring, before most other migrants have arrived from the South, I have found these hardy creatures in the trees that skirt the river, singing

their sweet, prolonged little warble, which might almost be called a gossamer ditty.

Think what a long voyage they have to make through the air over land and sea from their winter homes in Mexico, Guatemala, Cuba and the Bahama Islands!

A JOLLY RED-HEAD.

One of the most interesting birds of my acquaintance is the red-headed woodpecker. In Ohio he is the most abundant species of the woodpecker family, the flicker coming next in point of numbers. You may see him almost everywhere; in the city as well as in the country; in the lowlands and meadows, if there are a few trees, as well as in the uplands; in the open spaces and in the dense woods, and wherever found, he is the same jolly, companionable fellow. I suppose every boy knows this bird, which, as Mr. Burroughs prettily says, "festoons the woods" with red, white and blue-black. He may be readily identified by his crimson head and neck, making him look as if he had plunged up to his shoulders into a keg of red paint.

Like all other woodpeckers, he is a hewer of timber, chiselling out a parlor — or rather, perhaps, a nursery — in a dead limb or tree-trunk, where he rears his young and trains them in the way they

should go. I have known him to drill his nest in a fence-stake, while the telegraph poles along the railroad, although they must be hard and tough, often afford him a nesting-place, and it is amusing to see him bolt from his cavity whenever a train dashes along.

It is to be regretted that our bird has not a more musical voice, and yet his well-known *G-r-r-u-k*, *g-r-r-u-k* and *g-u-r-r-l*, *g-u-r-r-l* and *kt-r-r*, *kt-r-r* are by no means disagreeable, but are suggestive of the good-nature and buoyancy of spirit that animate his bosom. If he is not much of a vocalist, he still seems to be a lover of music. Listen to him as he plays a tune on that shell-bark hickory-tree, or beats his tattoo on the slate roof. He evidently engages in this exercise, in part at least, for the sake of the musical effect, else why should he drum on the roof where no insects are to be found, or upon an old tin pan that he has discovered out on the commons?

There has been some dispute as to how he produces this quick succession of raps, several writers contending that he does it by rapidly striking together his mandibles. This cannot be the true explanation, for I have often watched him at his rehearsals, and have always noticed that the sound

varies according to the object upon which he hammers. For instance, if it is a large hollow tree, the sound is coarse and resonant, as one would expect. If he beats upon a piece of partly loosened bark, his tune is sharp and penetrating. On a tin or slate roof the sound is precisely what it would be if you or I should pound rapidly upon the same object with a similar instrument. But how can he beat so fast with his bill? Just as a drummer boy deftly taps his snare drum so rapidly that you cannnot count the strokes, and almost think that his drumsticks must be small boards rounded at the end.

Of all the woodpeckers that I have studied, the red-head is the most expert on the wing. Of course, he follows the fashion of the family when he flies, going in a kind of gallop from one perch to another. But other woodpeckers seem to regard flying as a serious business, and are therefore on the wing only as much as is necessary to secure food and escape from their foes. Not so with our crimson-headed acrobat, who often performs the most amazing feats of scaling in the air out of pure exuberance of spirits. He must have some valve of escape for his rollicksome nature, and so he frequently hurls himself out into the air as if

shot from a cannon, performs some exploit, such as poising, whirling, darting straight upward, and almost turning a somersault, and then circles gracefully back to his upright floor of bark, crying exultingly, "*G-r-r-e-e-l, g-r-r-e-e-l!*" which being interpreted means, "Wasn't that a clever trick?" Often, it is true, he makes a dash for an insect, just as the wood-pewee or the great crested fly-catcher does; but I am inclined to think that many of his feats are performed for pure love of frolic.

I have watched a dozen or more of these birds engaging in their wing-exercises in a favorite woodland, which might have been called their gymnasium. They had selected a certain tree for a point of departure, and with loud chattering would dash away after one another, describe a graceful circle, and then plunge back into the tree. At times their cries seemed to be half-angry. Still, the whole performance seemed so jolly that it reminded me of a company of children playing "base" or "black-man." These birds certainly have some sense of humor, and enjoy a romp as much as the most playful school-boys.

One of their favorite pastimes is playing "hide-and-seek" about the trunks of trees. It is amus-

ing to see two of them peep at each other a moment around the bole of a tree, and then jerk their heads back, precisely as you have seen children do in playing "peek-a-boo." Besides they often play "catch" or "tag," dashing pell-mell after each other among the trees, until you wonder they do not dash themselves to atoms. Few birds are more expert dodgers.

A pair of bluebirds had a nest in a box near my house last spring. They seemed to be greatly vexed by the presence of a red-head which was in the habit of coasting on the maples along the street. They would make a quick dash at him, but the "artful dodger" would often slip dexterously around to the other side of the tree out of harm's way. Sometimes, however, he would stand his ground, and present his long spear of a bill to his enemies as they flung themselves at him, and thus keep them at a safe distance; for no bluebird would care to impale himself on the end of a lance like that. Still, the woodpecker would occasionally lose a feather by failing to be quick enough to evade the swift assaults of his enemies. I do not know whether he sometimes makes a raid on other birds' nests or not; I hope not; but I have noticed that robins and bluebirds have a mortal

hatred of him, especially when he comes into the neighborhood of their nests.

Speaking of bluebirds in connection with the red-head, reminds me of a curious freak of bird-behavior that I observed one day in July. I was strolling along the banks of a small creek, when I saw a male bluebird sitting on a limb of an apple-tree, while only a few feet away, a red-head was busy at work in a cavity of the trunk (which he had evidently himself drilled), throwing out the chips at a lively rate, and at intervals peeping from the hole to see if the coast was clear. I drove both birds away, and then watched them at some distance. In a few minutes the bluebird was again at his post, while his companion had gone back into the cavity to ply his trade of carpentry as before.

What did it mean? Was the bluebird playing the rôle of sentinel for the red-head? Or was the woodpecker hewing out a home for the bluebird by way of accommodation? Or was the bluebird only biding his time until the cavity should be done, when he intended to drive the busy toiler away, and occupy the nest himself? I have never been able to come to a decision in the matter.

One of the most curious antics I have ever seen

the red-head perform is his taking a shower-bath. How does he do it? you ask. During a light rain I sometimes see him clinging lengthwise of a small limb, spread out his wings until the feathers are separated as much as possible, and then flap them slowly back and forth, as you frequently swing your arms when you want to expand your chest. In this way the clean, refreshing drops percolate his plumage and renovate it of all accumulations of dust. Very often have I seen him go through this quaint performance, and always during a light shower, so that I feel justified in the conclusion that he is, on such occasions, taking a shower-bath. Ah! that is the reason the handsome fellow's tri-colored suit, in spite of his rather dusty occupation of hewing out cavities in trees, always looks so tidy. You cannot see a fleck on his white vest or vermilion collar or blue-black "cutaway."

From youth to old age our bird is a cunning, tricksy spirit. Ah! yes, there is the red-head, junior — but hold! his head is black instead of crimson; so that we may say without contradiction of terms that he is a black-headed red-head. He is a quaint lad. I have seen him clinging to the feathers of the parent bird, like a child hanging to his mother's skirts, and screaming for some-

thing to eat, and I must say that the trick is superlatively funny; all the more so because of its decidedly *human* air.

Even when Master Red-head has grown as large as his mother he will often run after her and shriek for his dinner. But when his stomach is full of tidbits, he and his playmates have rare sport tobogganing (though they always perfer to go uphill instead of down) on the trunks of trees, playing hide-and-seek, and flying race. There are many other things that might be said about this clever bird. He deserves an ode all to himself, and in some respects might claim it as justly as the skylark or the nightingale.

[NOTE. — I take pleasure in acknowledging the courtesy of the editors of the Youth's Companion in publishing this paper, at my request, in time to be included in this volume.]

A RED-THROATED RED-HEAD.

In my collection of mounted birds, comprising a number of rare and beautiful specimens, there is none that I prize more highly than the yellow-bellied woodpecker. As I write, I have set him before me on my desk, and will describe his markings so that you may recognize him at a glance if you happen to meet him in one of your rambles to the woods.

His whole crown is crimson, bordered all around by black. A large carmine patch on his throat makes him look just a little frightful; as if he had been murdered, and the blood was streaming out and staining his feathers. In the specimen before me the red throat-patch is slightly flaked with white. Across his breast he wears a bib (as Olive Thorne Miller would say) of blue-black. The rest of his under parts are soiled with pale yellow, from which he gets his name. The sides are speckled and striped with blackish, gray and buff. Above he is beautifully mottled with black and

white, the black predominating on the wings and tail, and the white on the neck, back and rump. Two white strips, one above and the other below the eye, extend along the side of the head, while a black band stretches back through the eye and down the sides of the neck. Much of the white of the upper parts is tinged with yellow.

It will be seen from the foregoing description that this bird makes quite a variegated toilet, and I must say that he presents a handsome appearance as he clings to the bole of a tree, or hurls himself through the woods with outspread wings and tail, his mottled plumage flashing gayly in the sun. To me he has been a source of infinite delight.

He evidently has some sense of humor. Of course he is a great deal like a child in his choice of amusements, but his very artlessness gives his behavior an especial charm. Besides, I have been as much of a boy as he. How often have I played "peek-a-boo" with him in the woods! He will fly to a tree-trunk near the place where I am standing, and when he is sure that I have seen him, he flits to the other side of his curved arboreal wall, where he remains for a while, bending his head at intervals beyond the margin of his

hiding-place to peep at me, and then jerking it back. All the while a gleam of laughter seems to shine in his eye, as if he were enjoying the game of "bo-peep." The tricksy fellow! How much I should like to wring his neck, just a little, out of pure admiration of his cunning ways!

Although he seeks the deep seclusion of the forest in the main, seldom deigning to come to the city, yet when you visit him in his haunts he seems to be more sociably disposed than any of his kinsmen. He does not resent your intrusion, as the golden-winged and red-bellied woodpeckers do, but rather courts than shuns your society. In the spring I seldom take a stroll in the woods without receiving a courteous greeting from one or two and sometimes a half-dozen of these woodpeckers, which whirl about me, connecting the trees with graceful festoons of flight. I am sure they talk to me, expressing their pleasure at my presence, and asking me innumerable questions about my business, the book I hold in my hand, and the notes I am jotting down; but I am too stupid to learn the woodpecker dialect, as I should, to hold intelligent converse with them.

One day dwells with special distinctness in my memory; it seems a pleasant arbor in my ornitho-

logical experiences. It was the fifth of April, and the sun shone brightly through the fretwork of overarching branches. Two yellow-bellied woodpeckers were chasing each other about in the woods. They were a beautiful sight as they went sliding up the trunks of the trees, their variegated figures sharply outlined against the gray bark. Around and around, now about the stem of a sapling, now from tree to tree, they raced and pursued each other, making the sylvan spot glance and twinkle with black and white. It was not a quarrel at all; only a frolic; for the moment they would lose sight of each other, one would cry: "*Wh-e-e-r-r, wh-e-e-r-r?*" and the other would respond: "*H-e-r-r-e-ah! h-e-r-r-e-ah!*" Then when they had found each other, they would exclaim in low, caressing tones: "*W-e-e-k-ah! w-e-e-k-ah!*" Sometimes they uttered a loud call somewhat like the cry of the kingfisher, though not so shrill and terrifying. For an hour I sat watching them playing their pranks.

Like all other woodpeckers, the yellow-bellied beats his tattoo on the bark of a tree, or a hollow limb. I have imagined that his drumming is much coarser than that of his fellows, who help him to fill the woods with their ra-ta-ta. At all events, I

have often tested my skill in guessing that it was he who was producing the resounding noise I heard, and have been correct every time. Perhaps he has a stouter drum-stick than his fellow-craftsmen, or chooses a larger piece of bark for a drum-head.

As before stated, he usually is found in the depths of the woods; but sometimes he comes to the suburbs of the town, and even goes coasting on the maple directly in front of the house. When doing so, he seems to be as much at home as in his native wildwood. Indeed, I do not know a bird that seems to be more devoid of self-consciousness, and hence more natural in his deportment.

In some respects he differs from other woodpeckers. Mr. Ridgway calls him a "sapsucker," and does not apply the name woodpecker to him at all. A favorite author says that he "lacks the long, extensile tongue, which enables the other woodpeckers to probe the winding galleries of wood-eating larvæ, and is known to feed largely on the green inner bark of trees. In some localities he is said to destroy many trees by stripping off the bark." However, if he sometimes does damage of this kind, his visits are of great benefit to orchards and groves, where he devours large num-

bers of worms which bore into the trees, and would be extremely destructive if permitted to thrive.

These birds breed from the northern parts of the United States northward, and are therefore, only migrants in the latitude where I have been studying them. But they do not seem to be in a hurry to reach their northern summer resort. They must have tarried here fully six weeks in the spring, and I had almost concluded that they meant to take up their abode with us ; but one day about the middle of May when I sauntered out to the woods, I found that all of them had gone. Really the parting was a sad one to me, but I hope some other lover of the " feathered republic of the groves" has found them just as companionable in their breeding haunts as they have been here.

BRILLIANTS IN PLUMES.

We sometimes see pictures of birds which cause us to wonder whether there really are such lavishly colored creatures in the world of feathers, especially in the neighborhood in which we live, or whether they are only freaks of the artist's fancy. The pictures may be purely imaginative, as far as the figures of the birds and the arrangement of the colors are concerned; but it would puzzle any artist to conceive a bird more brilliantly and diversely hued than some of the warblers. It is not straining a metaphor to say that they are indeed gems in feathers; yet their colors are so rich and so exquisitely arranged that they can by no means be called tawdry. One never thinks of their being overdressed.

The warblers comprise a large family of small birds, some of them quite tiny, and all of them exceedingly supple in movement. Many of them can be identified only by the most careful and patient effort, such a genius have they for eluding

the observer by ensconcing themselves in thickets and tall trees. For a good many years I have been trying to acquire bird-lore, and pride myself a little on my skill in identifying new species; but I must confess that several species of warblers have often outwitted me. They gave me glimpses of their shining plumes as they flashed into view for a moment and then plunged headlong into the copse, hiding themselves so effectually as to make it impossible for me to find them with all my beating and peering about. It is provoking, too, to see small birds flitting about in the tops of tall trees, trilling their defiance at you, but never dropping low enough to give you a chance to distinguish their markings, although you ogle them with an opera glass by the hour.

But there are many warblers that are not so shy. They come out of the thicket into plain view, perhaps to identify the observer, thus giving him an opportunity to return the compliment. I am unable to say how many of these feathered marvels I have seen here, but the number has been astonishingly large.

The student of bird-life is constantly meeting with delightful surprises. One day in May I was pursuing my favorite out-door study — ornithology,

of course — in a green, sparsely-wooded hollow, when I chanced to come to the foot of what was once a sand or gravel bank, but which is now overgrown in most places with saplings, bushes, briers and vines. It curves around in a semicircle, somewhat irregular in outline, the radius being scarcely more than ten or twelve yards. Standing in the level area below, I saw at least fourteen species of bright-hued birds, most of them warblers, and was able to note their markings with little difficulty. I do not mean to say that all of them appeared in sight at the same moment, but within half an hour, or perhaps less, I observed every member of this brilliant galaxy. To say that I was excited, elated, thrilled, is to put the fact very mildly. If I ever wished myself an artist I did during that half-hour. That sylvan scene, studded here and there with bright jewels in feathers, would be worthy the efforts of a genius. They shifted about before me like the changing colors of a kaleidoscope.

One of the warblers that flitted in the bushes at the right and then flew to a sapling, was the male redstart, a real woodland exquisite. Nothing could be more neat and natty than his lustrous black suit, with its flame-colored patches on the

breast, wings and tail. What a picture he makes as he dashes in and out amid the foliage, the orange-red adornments scintillating in the sun! No warbler is more dexterous on the wing than this little gymnast, who has some of the qualities of the flycatchers. Now he plunges in among the thick branches and leaves after a worm, and the next instant darts out like a flash and catches a gnat or fly in mid-air, with more skill and gracefulness than a bee martin or a wood pewee.

He chooses for his habitat thick woodlands, where he sings, when in the lyrical mood, from morning till night. His vocal effort consists of an explosive little trill, not very melodious, but quite cheerful, which may be represented by the syllables: *Tswee-a, tswee-a, tswe-tswe-tswe-tswe-tswe!* Sometimes, as he dashes about recklessly and at a break-neck speed amongst the trees, he snaps viciously with his mandibles. I am of the opinion that this occurs, at least in most instances, when he is in pursuit of his rival, who has been trying to steal the affections of his lady love.

And I don't blame him for becoming jealous; Miss Redstart is a charming little creature, almost as handsome as her lover. Her colors are more modest, the lustrous black becoming grayish-olive,

and the flame color plain yellow; but her manners are so graceful and her looks so sweet and innocent, one does not wonder that a duel is sometimes fought on her account. Ladies in the human world not half so handsome have caused bitter feuds among male competitors for their hands.

A still more strikingly colored bird is the black-throated green warbler, a perfect chorus of hues. Imagine, if you can, a lithe, feathered sprite, about five inches in length, his back and crown a bright yellow-olive, his forehead, a superciliary stripe, and the sides of the head a rich yellow, while a dark olive line runs back through the eye; then his entire throat and breast are jet black, and his sides streaked with the same; his dusky wings have two white bars and his outer tail feathers are edged with white. He is elegant beyond compare, a perfect brilliant in the bird world. I wish some artist with a deft brush would paint him for my readers in all his variegated splendor. Surely nature in this instance is lavish of her tints.

In marked contrast with the gorgeous array of colors in this bird, are the plain black and white of the creeping warbler. The colors are arranged in stripes or bars everywhere except on the belly. I first saw him gliding up and down the bole of a

sapling on the sandbank, and it seemed to me that he was almost as handsome in his striped suit as his highly colored congener just described. He has one decided advantage over other warblers, for not only can he flit nimbly from twig to twig, but can also creep on the trunk of a tree, upward, downward or laterally as suits his whim, and do it as skillfully as the nuthatch himself. He has a fine, rather loud little trill, which he repeats again and again, as he hunts for tidbits among the branches.

Rivalling the black-throated green warbler for brilliancy of plumage, is the black and yellow warbler, now called more frequently the magnolia warbler. Look at him flashing into sight and making his bow. His crown is ash, bordered below back of the eye with white, which is also the color of the wing-bars and under tail coverts. His back is black, the feathers skirted with olive. Notice his yellow rump; also the rich yellow of his under parts, the breast and sides streaked with black, crowding together on the chest and cutting off the gamboge yellow of the throat.

He is one of our most abundant migrants, singing as he pursues his pilgrimage to the north in the pleasant springtime. His trill is scarcely as

loud and explosive as the redstart's. He breeds from Northern New England, New York and Michigan to the regions about Hudson's Bay, where he and his blithe little mate build their nests in spruce and hemlock and rear their young.

There is something so exquisite and picturesque about the chestnut-sided warbler, trilling in the saplings before me, that I am half-disposed to award him the palm as the most dainty birdlet — if I may coin such a word — on my sandbank. You may always know him by the chestnut chain that extends along the sides of his body from neck to flank. But he is otherwise curiously marked. His crown is pure yellow, bordered with white, which is again enclosed in black. An irregular black crescent partly circles the eye, the lower horn curving downward and connecting with the chestnut chain before spoken of. His back is streaked with black and pale yellow, and there is also a yellowish blotch on the wing. In spite of the elaborateness of my description, I fear I have not pictured him as vividly as he deserves, the party-hued little darling. To be appreciated he must be seen. His song is much like that of the magnolia warbler.

The Connecticut warbler is less flashy than the

other birds named, but still quite beautiful with his olive-green back, ashy head, throat and breast, and yellow under parts. Still more plainly attired is the Tennessee warbler, a tiny bird, trying to conceal himself in the clump of bushes at the right. However, the golden-crowned thrush, or oven bird, walking about so deliberately on the ground, could scarcely be called plain, although his plumage is not brilliant. You may always know him by his orange-brown or orange-rufous crown, bordered on each side by a black stripe, which runs back to the nape.

His back is olive-green, and his white under parts are thickly streaked with dusky or black. His song once heard in the depths of a woodland will never be forgotten, it is so loud and startling, as it breaks suddenly upon the silence. When you hear a bird rapidly repeating the notes, *Te-cha, te-cha, te-cha!* with the accent on the second syllable, you may rest assured that you have heard the oven bird. He gets his name from the peculiar form of his nest, which is indeed a curiosity in bird architecture.

Similar to him in some respects, though more mezzo-tinted, is the water wagtail, walking about on the ground, and "teetering" like a sandpiper.

In the hollow to the right I find another gem, the blue golden-winged warbler, whose general color is slaty blue, relieved by a yellow crown, yellow wing-bars, a black throat and a dark stripe through the eye.

Besides the warblers described, I espy a cat-bird trying to screen himself in the thicket before me, where he is building a nest; in the trees of the adjoining hollow I catch glimpses of a Baltimore and an orchard oriole; while an indigo bird in my rear hurls out his loud, defiant cluster of notes, which echo down the vale. Many other warblers, some of them just as superb in color as those to which we have paid our respects, have been seen in the woods near by; but a sufficient number have been described to prove that bright-hued birds are not to be seen in highly colored paintings only, but in very fact as well, and that no one need go to distant climes to find gems in feathers.

Not only are they beautiful of plumage, but there are rare days in May when they fill the woods with their "anvil chorus." While there may not be a great deal of melody in the voice of a single songster, yet when a score of them are trilling at once in the trees and bushes, in various runs and quavers, the combined effect is enrapturing, mak-

ing one dream over again all the old myths of the sirens and sybils. I doubt if either Orpheus or Ulysses would have been able to pass the fabled isles if a company of warblers had been the enchanting musicians.

One of a speculative turn of mind cannot help wondering why nature studs her most sequestered nooks with these rare and beautiful brilliants. Why does she not bejewel the trees of our cities and public highways with such gorgeous creatures to delight the common eye? It would seem that the most stolid and prosaic persons would feel a thrill of æsthetic pleasure at sight of them. Perhaps Emerson, in his lines to the recluse Rhodora, gives the most plausible answer to this inquiry; at all events it is a poetical conception:

> "Rhodora! if the sages ask thee why
> This charm is wasted on the marsh and sky,
> Tell them, dear, that if eyes were made for seeing,
> Then beauty is its own excuse for being."

No doubt other reasons might be assigned for nature's oft-time unobtrusive moods and manners, but there is something peculiarly tranquilizing in resting content in the poet's conclusion; for, say

what you will, the mind does grow weary of this ever-grinding effort to find the "moral uses" of things, and we often long merely to glide on the smooth current of life without so much as dipping an oar, or asking why or whence or whither the current is bearing us.

DOTS IN FEATHERS.

In the bird manuals and keys they are mostly called kinglets, although they used to be called wrens. Only two species visit this locality, the ruby-crowned and the golden-crowned. They are very dainty little creatures, about four inches in length, and flit and poise in the woods as gracefully as fairies at play. They are not quite as lithe in form as most of the smaller wood warblers, being what you would call more "chuffy," though they are almost, if not quite, as active and alert as they.

Let us first make our obeisance to the golden-crowned kinglet. A royal little personage he is in very fact, with his bright yellow coronal and golden gem set in the center, gleaming so brilliantly in the sunshine. On each side and in front of the yellow crown-patch is a black stripe, which separates it from the white line above the eye and on the forehead. His general color, except the parts named, is olive-green or olive-gray, brighter

toward the rear and duller toward the head. Observe, too, that he wears two white bars across each wing.

There are times in the spring and autumn when these dainty birds take possession of the woods, flitting about gaily in every bush and tree in search of insects, and filling the air with their fine gossamer notes, which may be represented by the syllable *z-e-e-e*, or *ts-e-e-e*. Sometimes they may be heard, if not seen, in the tops of the tallest trees; but as far as I have observed them, they prefer the bushes and saplings, and even descend occasionally to the ground, where they dance about on the leaves in search of food. Like all small birds, they are expert tilters, and can easily balance on a spray or leaf, often clinging to the lower side; and more than once I have seen them poise on the wing like a humming-bird, while they gathered nits or gnats from the foliage. Yet, agile as they are, they sometimes miss their footing, or a twig snaps beneath their weight, and it is amusing to see them flutter and wheel to recover their balance. Accidents, you know, will happen in the best of families, even in the family of the kinglets.

How surprising that such tiny creatures should be so hardy! One would think that if a snow-

storm should get them in its grip it would press the life out of their slight forms. But such is not the fact, for they linger here in the fall long after their more tender and delicate relatives in plumes have hied away to the "Sunny South." During a snow-storm in November, I walked out to a deep ravine in Northeastern Ohio, and found a bevy of my little golden-crowned friends flitting about in the trees as cheerful as you please. They seemed to say, "The snow doesn't hurt us: no, indeed! It's good for our health, sir."

The foregoing was written in November, 1890. I may briefly sum up the results of my study of this bird during the following winter. Although the weather was rather severe, he remained in the woods until the first of February, and seemed to be very happy even when the wind was howling through the bare branches and the snow flying in the cold gusts. Rainy days, when not too cold, seemed to put him in a cheerful mood. He donned his little water-proof suit, tilted, *tseeped*, gathered nits and buds, and only stopped at intervals to shake the drops from his plumage. Strange to say, however, when the weather became mild during the first week in February, he left my woodland for other regions. But where did he go? Did he hie

to more northern latitudes where there was winter in reality and not merely in name? It is an open question.

Much as I have associated with these birds, I have never had the good fortune to find a nest, for they breed farther north than this latitude; mostly in the extreme northern part of the United States and northward, though sometimes as far south as Massachusetts. A writer on ornithology says that their nests are "a ball-like mass of green moss, four inches or more in diameter, attached to the extremity of the branch of a pine or fir-tree, lined with hair and soft feathers." Sometimes the nests are pendant, at other times only partly so, and one nest was found in Massachusetts which was fastened to twigs above and supported by branches below. The birds are quaint little geniuses, and do not seem to follow any fixed rule in their house-building.

But it is high time to introduce you to the other member of the family — the ruby-crowned kinglet. It is a little difficult to distinguish between the young of these two species, and perhaps only the expert ornithologist is able to do so in every instance. However, after the first year there is no difficulty; the ruby-crowned has no black or yellow

about his head, his general color is more greenish than that of the golden-crowned, and to my eyes his form is not quite so well-proportioned, being a little over-heavy in front.

Then you must look for a minium-red or ruby patch in the center of his crown. But hold! It is said by some ornithologists that our kinglet must be two years old before he dares to put this vermilion ornament upon his head. Perhaps he does not become of age until then. I wonder whether that is the age at which citizens of the kinglet republic are allowed to vote?

I wish you could hear the saucy and varied little song of the ruby-crown. Not only in the spring have I heard it, but also in the autumn, as, for example, on the seventeenth and twentieth of October. "*Ching, ching, ching-a-lang, cha-cha-cha-cha!*" he warbles, looking at you as if he expected an outburst of applause.

I cannot tell you how much I like this Tom Thumb in pinions. Many, many times I have stood in the woods beneath the overarching bushes, where the shadows were deep, and held converse with him, while he hopped about only a few feet away. No bird has a more knowing and intelligent eye. He seems to know that I would not harm

him for the world, and that there is no risk in being confiding. And then he seems to be so inquisitive —a genuine Paul Pry in feathers. I sometimes fancy that I can descry a diminutive interrogation point dangling from every one of his eyelashes.

THE PRANKS OF THE TUFTED TITMOUSE.

A RARE little genius, I had almost said, a mountebank in feathers, is the tufted titmouse, *alias* chickadee, *alias* winter-king. His rather proud bearing, his tall, pointed cap with its frontlet of black, and the reddish brown stripe on the side of his body, all combine to give him a distinct military air, so that one is almost tempted to dub him captain in addition to the other descriptive titles by which he is known in the Middle States. His crest is a striking part of his toilet, sitting jauntily on his graceful head and looking like a miniature pyramid. He has also donned a whitish vest and a leaden-gray coat. Thus it will be seen that he wears the "golden mean" between the colors of the Union and the Confederate soldier's regimentals, so as not to appear sectional in his sentiments, I suppose. All he needs to make him an out-and-out captain are a pair of epaulettes and a display of brass buttons.

Among all my acquaintances in feathers there are none whose friendship I prize more highly than that of this crested tenant of the woods; and since our intimacy began, years ago, he has never been guilty of a single act of indecorum that would tend in the least to alienate my affections from him.

I have called him "a mountebank in feathers." That may, at first blush, seem to contain a sly suggestion, or even a serious disparagement of the bird; but I assure you I mean no detraction whatever. I have simply yielded to that common caprice or impulse of human nature which often leads us to give uncouth and even apparently malignant names to the persons and objects we love the most, when we really mean the precise opposite.

Still, to be frank, our bird has some of the manners of the mountebank. He often tries to attract your attention to himself by his loud alarm calls, when there is nothing whatever to frighten him, and then, when he thinks you are watching him, he begins to poise and tilt among the branches like a trapeze performer in a circus. Oh! how agile he is. To play pranks on a horizontal perch is too commonplace an exploit for his exuberant spirits, and so he amuses you by clinging to the vertical stem of a bush or sapling, hurling himself from

side to side, or by creeping up a tree trunk like a nuthatch, while one of his favorite accomplishments is to hold himself back downward to the under side of a twig and peck away industriously at some rare delicacy that he has found; then he will perhaps let himself drop, and wheeling around, dexterously alight upon a branch below him or upon the leaf-strewn ground.

Apparently a great many of these athletic performances are indulged in for the sake of display, for he frequently looks up at you with twinkling eyes and a *tsip* of inquiry, as if he said: "There! wasn't that a clever trick? Beat it if you can!" His feats are often surprising, and he presents a handsome picture as he flings his rather roly-poly, but graceful little form into various striking attitudes.

Gymnast that he is, he sometimes misses his footing, or the twig upon which he leaps breaks beneath his weight, and then there follows a ludicrous scramble for another foothold. When I laugh aloud at his mishaps, he looks at me with comical seriousness out of his dark, globular eyes, and scolds *Tsip, tsip-a-tāt-tāt!* but all the while his birdship is as much amused as I am, only he will not "let on."

"What are you laughing at-at-at?" he cries. "I see nothing to laugh at-at-at!" But I know he is himself all the while laughing in his sleeve, the sly little rogue-rogue-rogue.

Have you ever heard his loud, clarion spring song or whistle, which sounds so much like a reveille as it wakes the echoes of the woodland? *Peto, peto, peto!* — repeated quite rapidly, with the accent on the first syllable — it rings from the tree-tops, announcing to all the forces of nature that it is time to awake from their winter slumbers, paint the woods and fields with green, and fill the air with song. I sometimes hear that call in the autumn and winter, when it is less vigorous and stirring, having a pensive strain running through it. I suppose the bird has his moods of sadness like the rest of us, but I do not believe he will ever turn pessimist.

While I am speaking of his vocal performances, I may as well describe his various alarm calls. The first hint you will have of his presence as you enter the woods will be an exceedingly fine, almost gossamer, *tseep* or *tsip*. My observation has been that he is almost always, if not always, heard before he allows himself to be seen, thus reversing the advice that is so often given to little people.

If you continue to approach his hiding-place, which is not difficult to find, he will perhaps begin to scold or chaff by saying, *Tsip, peerr, peerr, peerr!* and then if you do what he commands — that is, if you peer — he will at length break out into a vociferous protest against your intrusion, as he hops and tilts nervously among the branches. *Tsick, tsick-a-tāt, tsick-a-tāt-tāt-tāt!* he cries, sometimes omitting the *tsick*, at other times the *tāt*. It must be remembered that the first part of this familiar call of the chickadee is pitched on a very high key, while the latter part — that is, the *tāt* or *dā* — strikes an alto note much lower in the scale.

While he is never a very musical bird, like many of his fellow-tenants of the woods, the thrushes, robins and some of the sparrows, yet I have several times listened to him with rare delight as he warbled a ditty, half-sad and half-glad, while flitting nimbly from twig to twig. The fact is, he has so large a repertory of notes that one can never be certain that one has heard all the sounds he is capable of producing.

A great deal of his time is spent in securing a livelihood, as is the case with most of his human relatives, and he finds quite an extensive larder in the woods. I often see him catching an insect on

the wing, or extracting a worm or larva from a crevice in the bark, or picking nits from the under side of a leaf like a warbler or a kinglet. Of course he eats insects, but he is also in part a vegetarian. More than once have I seen him pick a dogwood berry from its stem, deftly scale off the carmine pulp, and then, taking the "pit" in his claws, hold it on a limb, crack it and then bore out the kernel, which he eats with a relish. Beneath the dogwood-trees I often find the ground strewn with the shells of these broken pits.

One day while watching a chickadee nibbling at a tidbit that he held in his claws, I became extremely curious to know what it was. A way to find out soon opened. Suddenly the morsel slipped from his grasp and fell to the ground, the bird darting after it in a twinkle. At the same moment I made a spring for the spot — it was only a few feet away — and frightened him off before he could get his eye on his lost luncheon. It turned out to be a grain of corn, partly nibbled off at the end, which the little thief had pilfered from my neighbor's corn-field.

On another occasion I saw one of these birds making a meal on some viand that he seemed to think very good. My curiosity got the better of

my kindness of heart. I made a sudden leap and uttered a loud shout, causing Master Titmouse to let his dinner drop and dash wildly away. This time I found that he had been feasting on an acorn, which he had partly eaten. A bird student must be forgiven such wanton pranks in the interest of science, even if a chickadee does lose his dinner occasionally. Still, I was half conscience-smitten on account of the ungracious deed, and so I placed the acorn on top of the leaves in plain sight, to give the hungry bird a chance to return and finish his repast after I had left the place.

Seldom does one see a prettier picture than this bird presents when he lays back his crest so cunningly and plunges his head into the heaps of brown leaves that strew the ground, while he hunts for a nut or an insect. And then he sometimes picks up a leaf with his strong mandibles, giving it a vigorous toss that sends it flying several feet away. Everything he does seems cunning on account of his pert, conceited air.

I must make haste to say a word about the nesting habits of the chickadees. They usually begin early in April to find nesting places, choosing as a site for their nurseries the deserted holes of woodpeckers, or natural cavities in trees and stubs.

It is said that they will nest in boxes placed in the woods for that purpose, although I have never tried the experiment. The females are such close sitters, so determined to protect their eggs or young from danger, that they often have to be lifted from the nest before the eggs can be secured.

Most of my observations have been made in a large tract of woods, in the thick brambles and bushes of which these birds find a covert both in summer and winter, converting many a shady, well-protected nook into a real bird's boudoir; but some of my friends who live in the country and who have a warm love for the birds, have, at my request, furnished me an interesting account of the habits of the little "winter-kings," as they call them, that find a dwelling place about the house and outbuildings. The birds become quite tame and familiar because of the kind treament they receive.

One little bird came into the kitchen through the window that was let down from the top, and built her nest in the comb-case hanging beneath the clock. She first filled up most of the case with coarse grass and then began to line it with fine grass, when a meddlesome cat drove her away. She would enter the room without fear while the women of the household were at work there.

Next the little builder went to the bake-oven, and found an old paint keg with an ear of corn and some nails in it, where she wove "a very nice nest," as my friend says, into which she laid four eggs; and then the cat again interfered with her brood rearing. Not yet disheartened, the persistent little architect sought a cosey hiding-place behind a shutter of the parlor window where a slat had been broken out. This space was first filled with coarse grass and leaves, and then, as before, the inside was lined with fine, fibrous material. "Susan," says my correspondent, "would often sit and watch the bird building her neat domicile, and when the inside was somewhat filled up, the little toiler would creep into the cavity, flutter about awhile until it became nicely rounded, and then hie away for more building material. After the main part of the nest had been finished, the bird attached a neck to one side, making the entire structure about six inches long. The orifice of the neck was just large enough to admit the bird. Here she finally succeeded in hatching four nestlings."

Another nest was built in an old paper-holder in an out-building, and another in a crock in my informant's smith-shop. "One of these birds," he continues, "came down through a hole into my

gun-shop and made her nest on a shelf among some bottles near the place I was working, hatching and rearing a brood. They always build a long or deep nest, with a neck three or four inches in length for an entrance. They are easily petted if fed on screenings and nuts, coming daily for their meals to the window-sill or any other feeding place."

My obliging correspondent has also furnished me with a description of a quaint trick of one of these acute little geniuses in plumes. This incident took place in the house of one of their neighbors. The bird entered the house by the broken sash of an upstairs window, and then flew down the stairway into the kitchen, and thence into the sitting-room where the mistress had placed some cracked nuts on a bureau. Somehow he had espied them, and now began eating until his hunger was appeased, chirping familiarly all the while, and then taking a kernel in his beak, he flew to the kitchen, up the stairway, and out into the open air by way of the broken sash. And, strange to say, this cunning trick was repeated day after day until a prowling cat caught the bird.

The tufted tit deserves a sonnet all to himself, but as I am not a poet, but a plain writer of prose, I cannot ring his praises in verse. However, in

lieu of a poetical tribute, I have thought out a little fable, of which he is the hero, although I fear it will never take rank with the celebrated fictions of Æsop or La Fontaine. It might be entitled "Reasoning in a Circle."

One day, while sauntering in my favorite woodland, I exclaimed, somewhat querulously: "What are the dogwood berries good for, any way? If they were wholesome and sweet like the cherries, or even the black-haws, one might readily discover their use; but as it is, I cannot see that they serve any good purpose whatever."

The words were scarcely out of my mouth before a tufted titmouse sprang up into the dogwood-tree before me, and seizing one of the crimson berries between his mandibles, leisurely scaled off the pulp, with many a chip and wink, and then taking the "pit" in his claws and holding it firmly upon a limb, proceeded to bore out the kernel, which he ate with a hearty relish. I felt rebuked at once for my petulant fault-finding. "Now do you see what these berries are good for?" he demanded, blinking at me in his pert way. "They are intended to give sustenance to the birds."

"Ah, I see! but of what use are the birds?" I queried, nothing loath to keep up the dialogue.

"Well, well! I'm surprised at your stupidity," chattered Master Chickadee, flitting to another twig. "You ought to know that the birds destroy many noxious insects that, if permitted to live, would do damage to the grain, fruit and forests."

"Very true," I replied; "but I have still another question to ask, and if you can answer that, you are wiser than all the philosophers put together. Why were the insects made?"

"Why — well! *Chick — chick — chick-a-da-da! chick-a-da-da!*" he cackled and sputtered, tilting perilously on a spray, and then turning a somersault to cover his confusion, for the query had evidently puzzled him for a moment or two; but he quickly recovered himself, and looking at me, his large, roguish eyes a-twinkle, answered without a quaver in his tones: "The insects, sir, were made for the birds to feed on."

"You are a second Solon!" I broke out in admiration. "I agree with you. No matter how you reason, you circle back to your original starting-point. The end of creation is found in the birds! Would that we could all be as well satisfied with the lot that has been appointed us as you seem to be, Master Chickadee."

BIRDS ABOUT THE HOUSE.

MANY young persons, and older ones too, are discontented with their homelife, because they imagine that they have seen everything worth seeing in their neighborhood. They have therefore come to regard it as humdrum, tame and commonplace. If they could but travel and visit new scenes, climb the mountains or roam about Old World ruins, they fancy their happiness would be complete. My friend, if you cannot afford to travel, there is no need to feel dissatisfied. There are plenty of interesting things around your own home to occupy your time, especially if you live in the country or in the suburbs of a town, if you will only study them. There are the plants, the rocks, the insects, and the birds. They will afford constant opportunity for research and recreation. Why should not young people give attention to the study of these natural objects, instead of frittering away their time in useless repining or building castles in the air? Of course, I do not

want to take to preaching, but he is a poor writer, indeed, who cannot sometimes point a moral, and he must be a poor reader who cannot occasionally endure one.

I remember that I had myself intended one spring to take a trip of a few hundred miles for a little special study and relaxation, but when the time came to go, there were so many interesting things to investigate in my own neighborhood that I could not get the consent of my mind to leave them, and I have reason to be glad that I remained at home. Had I gone on that journey, I should have missed some very interesting incidents of the bird-life right about my own home. These I shall try to describe.

First, I must tell you about a very sociably disposed pair of robins which built their nest on the balustrade of my veranda, where I watched them with rare delight. After the site had been chosen, the nest was soon built, and four bluish-green eggs were deposited in it. Some accident must have befallen the male bird, for he never put in his appearance after incubation began, and I cannot believe that he would have left all the household cares to his wife if he had been able to help her. Yet I may be mistaken in my estimate of his char-

acter. It is just possible that he had found a retreat that was out of the reach of danger, where his manners and attire may have answered to Mr. Aldrich's description:

> "Firm-seated on his green bough, prancing high,
> Gay in his top-boots, reaching to the knee,
> And his fresh uniform's resplendent dye —
> My jaunty colonel of artillery!"

If so, he did not display a very soldier-like spirit in leaving his spouse to brave all the dangers that beset robindom in brood-rearing time.

The mother bird had her hands full, so to speak. It taxed her energies to the utmost to keep the nestlings warm and supplied with food during the cold, raw days of early spring. In fact she had to be on the jump almost all the time. After bringing them what she regarded an ample meal of worms or insects, she would settle down comfortably on the nest for a little rest from her toil; but in a few minutes one of the children would set up a cry for more rations, and the faithful mother would dart off to the neighboring garden or field for a new supply.

Knowing she had an irksome task before her, we decided to help her, by digging angle-worms in the

garden and putting them in the alley beneath the nest. It was surprising how quickly she would espy them squirming about. She would at once make a plunge for them, and having seized one in her bill, would beat it on the hard ground until it was dead, and then carry it to her nestlings. When the young birds had become well fledged, their cradle would scarcely hold them, and they jostled one another quite roughly. At last, one morning, when I stepped out of the door, I found that they had spread their wings and left the home of their childhood. On the ground I discovered one too weak yet to fly, and having caught him, lifted him to a limb out of the reach of prowling cats.

When the birds had no further use for the nest, I took it down for examination. It was so firmly glued to the railing by the adhesive mortar used, that it required an effort to wrench it loose. Besides, it was tied quite skillfully with cord to the vines that creep about the balusters, the strings being held firmly in the solid clay near the rim of the nest. A substantial cup, lined with soft grass fibers, had been made of stiff mortar, into which and about which there was an inartistic fabric woven of various materials, grass and root fibers,

three kinds of strings, strips of cloth used in tying up grapevines, shavings from a neighbor's shop, a piece of cornstalk, a small quantity of cotton, bits of paper evidently from my study, straw, thread and horsehair. The bird certainly was a practical architect, and built her house for use and not for beauty.

A sad tragedy occurred one day in the same spring. A boy's kite having lodged on the roof of the house, a loop of the cord hung over the eaves, held firmly above at each end. Somehow a robin got entangled in this cord, and was seen dangling by its neck and one foot, still struggling to get free. A ladder was quickly procured, while a member of the family rushed upstairs with a pole, hoping to break the cord through the window; but the poor bird wrenched its foot loose before it could be reached, causing the string to tighten about its neck, and thus it was literally hung before our eyes. Our neighbors and ourselves felt very sad over the tragedy, and the children solemnly buried the dead bird in the back yard. It seemed too bad that an innocent robin should have to be hung like a criminal.

Besides the robins, I have been much interested in a pair of bluebirds which took a fancy to my

neighbor's mail-box for a nesting-place. There is a sash in the door, through which the birds could see the spacious and pleasant room within — just the place for a house in which to live comfortably and rear a brood. But, much to their surprise, every time they flew down, expecting to gain admittance, that deceptive strip of glass intercepted them. Day after day they tried to solve the problem of getting into the inclosure, but were foiled in all their efforts. Finally, at my request, my neighbor put up a box on a pole near by. We thought the birds would like that as well as their first choice ; but it was, I think, fully two weeks before they deigned even to look at the substitute we had provided, and even after they had begun to build in it, they often flew down to the box which they had first selected, and tried to effect an entrance.

At last, however, the nest was complete, the eggs laid, and in two weeks the young birds were hatched. Then another disaster occurred. A small boy took it into his head one day to frighten the parent birds by shaking the box, and actually kept on with his thoughtless sport until he had jarred every nestling to the ground. This was done in my absence, and when I came home one little bird was dead. With a good deal of effort I

got the rest back into the nest, but I very much fear that not all of them survived the shock of their fall, for they were quite young at the time the misfortune occurred.

My bluebirds were destined to meet with still more reverses. Some days later I noticed that they were engaged in a hot contest with the English sparrows, but I did not at first suspect that the latter had any designs upon the home of the former. One day, however, the male bluebird stood on the board which formed the porch of his little house, chirping and flapping his wings in a very agitated way, while his mate sat on the ridge of the roof and seemed to be no less disturbed. The cause of the excitement was, as I soon discovered, that an English sparrow had at last succeeded in forcing his way into the box and was doubtless playing havoc with the nest and contents. This was the beginning of the end. The bluebirds lost heart, gave up the contest and went elsewhere.

Another incident occurred that summer which would have resulted tragically had it not been for the timely succor given the bird which met with the mishap. One day a member of the family was startled by a violent rapping and fluttering in the pipe of the sitting-room stove, which fortunately

had no fire in it. She called me at once, and I was downstairs in a moment. The fluttering continued. I quickly drew the joints of the pipe apart, and found a young crow blackbird amid the soot on the damper, which was just below the elbow and which happened to be turned flat, so that it prevented the bird from falling into the stove. My hand grasped the poor thing. It was trembling from fright, and looked appealingly at me. I feared that it had been hurt, but when I went to the door and opened my hand, it darted away like an arrow over the roofs of the houses to the adjacent grove.

We laughed at the incident, and wondered whether Master Grakle had mistaken himself for a chimney swift. Perhaps he had seen a swift drop lightly into the dark orifice, and thought he could do the same. Experience might prove a dear school even for a blackbird. The adventurous youngster had descended the chimney through two stories and a half, and then had found the stove-pipe leading off from it, and had floundered along, turning two elbows, until his progress had been stopped by the damper. It is doubtful if he ever afterward passed through a darker passage, unless he had a special predilection for dusting out chimneys and stove-pipes.

THE CUCKOO AND HER NEST.

"*Kook, kook, kook-kook-kook-kook!*"

Such is the far-away call that often comes from the woods in a kind of hollow, gurgling tone, almost any day in spring or summer. It is the song, if it can be called that, of the yellow-billed cuckoo, *alias* rain-crow, *alias* rain-dove, *alias* chow-chow. Owing to a certain perversity in human nature, the cuckoo is looked upon by many persons as a bird of ill-omen like the raven. And I see no reason why. If his quaint and somewhat plaintive call is really a prophecy of rain, it should be a welcome sound fully as often as an unwelcome one, for what is more refreshing than the summer shower when the earth is parched with drought?

Perhaps I am so partial to the birds that my judgment is blinded, but I cannot bring myself to feel disdain for any creature that has pinions. I even feel a kind of undercurrent of admiration for that nuisance in feathers, the English sparrow, on account of his pluck and energy, his saucy,

bantam air, and the ingenuity he displays in finding food and shelter. We have worse citizens in America (not in feathers) than this pert little foreigner, although I am by no means his champion.

Whimsical as it may seem, the cuckoo is one of my favorite birds, albeit he glides noiselessly and swings himself among the branches in a stealthy, serpent-like way that almost makes one's flesh creep until one has grown used to his manner. I remember that at first this furtive, uncanny habit made me think of the ghouls of which I had read, when a boy, in the Arabian Nights. But God has made him so, and why should you and I find fault?

During the summer of 1890 I had the pleasure of finding four nests of the cuckoo, the first I had ever seen. One day — the fifteenth of July it was — I was loitering in the more open space at one end of the woods, when my eye caught a dark object lodged in the tops of a tangled clump of blackberry bushes. A closer inspection revealed a bird sitting in the cup of her nest, stretching up her slender neck and head and long, curved beak, while her dark eyes looked inquiringly at me. It was a yellow-billed cuckoo ; I saw that at a glance. Yes, it was a " find," one that made my pulses throb, for I had long been wanting to see a cuckoo's domicile

with my own eyes, instead of through the eyes of the authors I had been reading.

At my approach the startled bird flew from her nest, but only after I had come quite near, and then she alighted in a sapling only a few feet away, expressing her agitated feelings by a low, appealing *quook, quook.*

The nest was about four feet and a half from the ground and was built of crooked twigs and sticks, some of them quite thick, laid across one another and so interlaced as to make the structure firm and substantial. It was lined with a few dry leaves, strips of fibrous bark, and blossoms from the wild grape-vine. A little log cabin it was in the brier thicket.

When I found it, it contained two eggs of a glaucous tint, unspotted. Four days later I again visited the spot. Two little bantlings lay on the soft, oval floor of the bird nursery and opened their mouths so wide that they looked like small carmine caves. They were, without exception, the queerest looking and ugliest young birds I have ever seen; as black as crows and sparsely decorated with long coarse bristles that looked stiff enough for the shoe maker's sewing. When they found, as they soon did, that I had brought no dinner for them, they

snapped their mouths shut, cuddled together in the bottom of the nest and fell asleep.

The mother was evidently sorely agitated, although she tried hard to appear calm. She sat quietly on a twig near at hand as long as she could, watching me with her dark, expanded eyes, occasionally giving vent to her distress by a low, guttural *quook*, *quook*, and then, unable to bear the suspense longer, she flitted to another perch and another, feeling, no doubt, that movement would help her to overcome her perturbation. Poor thing! Not for the world would I have harmed her two infants, so beautiful in her eyes, so homely in mine. But where was that much-needed personage, her husband? Oh, he (brave soldier) was skulking somewhere in the screening trees, helping his spouse to ward off her enemies, like the man who helped Betsy kill the bear.

Other duties interfered with my making another call on my newly formed acquaintances for a week or more, and when I did return, the nestlings had spread their untried pinions and hied away.

On the seventh of August I found another cuckoo's nest in the densest seclusion of the woods, built in the fork of a sapling about seven feet from the ground. This nest was constructed of the

same kind of materials as the one previously described, and cradled one egg and one callow youngster. It must be remembered that this bird has the quaint habit of beginning incubation as soon as an egg has been deposited, and for this reason young birds and comparatively fresh eggs are often found in the same nest. In this case the mother bird was sorely distressed, uttering her agitated guttural call and pecking nervously at her feathers to give vent to her overwrought feelings. I fancied I could almost hear her heart pounding against her soiled bosom.

I resolved to watch this sylvan homestead until the nestlings had grown and left it. So I carefully took the bearings of the place, and was sure I could readily find it again by means of a pile of rails near the green, meandering lane, serving as a guide-post. But, would you believe it? When I went to the woods the next evening I could not find that nest anywhere, although I beat about until dark and peered into every sapling within ten rods of what I thought was the site. Day after day I sought for it, but in vain. Were the woods bewitched, or was it the nest, or was it myself? At all events, I failed to watch the development of those homely bantlings in cuckoo wisdom and beauty.

Well, now for the sequel. One day, a month or two later, while threading my way through the woods, presto! I stumbled upon the nest, now deserted and lone, that had so long eluded my quest. Ignoramus that I was, I had mistaken the locality, and had been looking along the wrong lane all the while; and yet I had been pluming myself on my familiarity with every nook and niche of that woodland! Verily, "a haughty spirit goeth before a fall," and "he that exalteth himself shall be abashed."

Another cuckoo built her residence about twenty feet from the ground on the out-stretching limb of a half-grown tree near the cliffs of a loitering brook. The fourth of this nest quartette I found on the eleventh of August. It was lodged on the horizontal branch of a small oak-tree. The branch extended out over a path that wound through the grove, and along which a number of shopmen passed every morning and evening to and from their work. Here the gentle bird sat upon her nest, hatched her eggs and reared her brood, undisturbed by the pedestrians who pursued the pathway beneath her cottage.

That engaging writer, Bradford Torrey, has described in his unique style the behavior of a bird

which, as he quaintly phrases it, "pumps without water." The like may be said of the cuckoo, whose notes sound decidedly like the noise made by a suction pump that needs priming. Sometimes they are low and soft, at other times quite loud and startling. The notes seem to be produced far down in the throat, which can be seen dilating and contracting rapidly as the bird utters his call. Although it is not a musical sound, I love to hear it, and can heartily endorse the opening lines of Wordsworth's ode, written as a tribute to our bird's British cousin:

> "O blithe new-comer! I have heard,
> I hear thee and rejoice;
> O cuckoo! shall I call thee bird,
> Or but a wandering voice?"

As to this bird's habit of stealing her eggs into the nests of other birds and allowing them to raise her children for her, I will say nothing. Far be it from me to speak of the objectionable traits of any bird's character.

A WOODLAND COASTER.

One of the quaintest little birds of the woods is the brown creeper. He is as full of whims as a fickle schoolgirl, so that it is always difficult to predict what he will do next. I have called him a coaster, for he spends most of his time sliding on the trunks of trees and saplings, the difference between him and human coasters being that he always goes up-hill instead of down. Even the woodpeckers and nuthatches sometimes perch on a limb or twig, but it would be heterodox for a brown creeper to do so. With him it is creep, creep, creep all day long.

You may know him by his white or whitish vest and his brown coat, barred with dusky, white and tawny. His body is rather flat, as is the case with all birds that creep. He seems to be very warmly clad in his modest suit of brown; and he needs thick clothing, for he winters in this latitude, and early in the spring hies away to the far North.

It is a rare pleasure to watch him creeping by

short, quick jerks up the trees and branches, turning his head from side to side, as he peers into the crannies of the bark for the delicacies he relishes. On pleasant October days, when Indian summer reigns in the woods, I have often thrown myself flat on the leaf-carpeted ground and lazily, but admiringly, watched his antics. Beginning near the roots of a tree, he glides up and up, or slips around and around until he has reached the height he desires, and then — well, how do you suppose he descends to a lower perch? When the woodpeckers want to descend, they slide down backward; the nuthatches and creeping warblers race down head foremost, as easily and gracefully as the fly moves on a window-pane; but the brown creeper performs the feat in his own way, for he is an original little genius. Having reached the upper branches, he hurls himself out through the air in a sweeping, downward curve, and alights near the base of the same or another tree, when he again begins his upward march. Sometimes, however, when the distance is short, he will glide down sidewise, or with his body at an oblique angle with the tree-bole, but he never descends head downward. He no doubt thinks that would be an inelegant performance.

Like most of his companions in plumes, our creeper is quite an athlete. When he flings himself from his lofty perch near the tree-top, it seems as if he had been discharged from a gun, so swift is his flight. The eye catches only a flash of brown and white, and must be exceedingly swift and alert to follow him to the trunk he aims at for a target. How recklessly he flings himself! One wonders whether he really does take aim, or merely makes a blind dash toward the ground, alighting wherever he happens to strike. And then he pelts a tree with such force one cannot help wondering that he does not dash himself to pieces by the concussion. Still, I do not worry about him, for I long ago came to the conclusion that Master, or Mister (perhaps Miss or Mistress) Brown Creeper understands his (or her) business fully as well as I do mine, if not better.

As you thread your way through the tangle-wood, you will often hear the alarm-call of the creeper long before you see his form outlined against a tree-trunk. This call is a fine, tremulous, half-plaintive note, and may be represented thus, "*Z-e-e-e-m, z-e-e-e-m!*" When he darts to another perch, he frequently announces that fact by a quick, nervous little call, as if he had been

frightened away. It is quite difficult to distinguish his alarm-call from that of the golden-crowned kinglet. I may be in error, but it seems to me the kinglet omits the *m* in his call; that is, he says *z-e-e-e* instead of *z-e-e-e-m*.

In this latitude the creeper seldom displays his musical powers. Still, I have heard him warble a feeble little lay or whisper-song in the spring; but in his breeding haunts in the North it is said that his songs are sometimes "loud, powerful and surpassingly sweet," and at other times "more feeble and plaintive." These more elaborate vocal efforts, I am sorry to say, I have never had the good fortune to hear.

Mr. William Brewster, who has written so much on the birds of North America, has given an interesting account of the creeper's nesting and breeding habits in the western part of Maine. In every instance, he says, the nest was placed behind the partly-loosened bark of a balsam fir, although spruce, birch and elm stubs were more numerous. "Within the loose scale of bark," he continues, "was crammed a mass of twigs and other rubbish; upon this was placed the finer bark of various trees, with an intermixture of a little *usnea* moss and a number of spiders' cocoons." From five to

eight eggs are found in each nest. The ground color of the eggs is white or creamy-white, speckled with reddish-brown, chiefly around the larger end, often in the form of a wreath.

During the past winter (1890–91) the creeper has been one of the most cheerful companions of my loiterings in the woods. When the wind blew in biting gusts from the west, he found a warm and sheltered creeping-place on the eastern sides of the tree-trunks. Sometimes, however, when the wind caught his plumage at the right angle, and lifted his feathers, he looked like a little tatterdemalion as he slipped up his arboreal wall. One cannot help rejoicing at the advent of spring, because it brings so many birds back to their old haunts; but I am always loath to bid adieu to my delightful little friend of the mottled garb, for at that season he takes his leave for more northern latitudes.

A DAINTY WARBLER.

It was one of those perfect days of early spring, when the unflecked sky was a shining vault, and the air was as soft and balmy as a lover of out-door life could wish. I was driving with a friend along a pleasant country road which pursued the banks of a broad river. Suddenly I drew rein and brought the carriage to a halt. I had caught sight of a dainty little bird hopping about on the greensward of an old orchard, and I felt sure it must be a new specimen; one I had never seen before. With beating pulses I flung the lines to my companion, leaped from the carriage, and vaulted at a bound over the rail fence. (A bird student, by the way, soon becomes quite spry and athletic, however awkward he may be naturally.)

In a moment I had the bird in the field of my opera glass, and then exclaimed, with what delight you may imagine: "The myrtle warbler!" It was a bird for which I had been on the alert for a long time. I knew him at once, because I had

caught the gleam of his rich, yellow crown and rump — markings by which he may always be recognized in the spring. It was a moment of rare delight, as such moments always are to a lover of the birds. How beautiful he was! What an elaborate toilet he had made! And how proudly he stood craning up his neck and eying me as I drew near! He was more beautiful than any nymph that the ancient Greeks ever imagined.

In addition to the yellow of the rump and crown, there was a patch of gold on each side of his chest, giving him a knightly aspect. The rest of his lower parts were pure white, broadly striped on the breast and sides with black; his upper parts were slaty blue or bluish gray, becoming black on the sides of the head, except the white line above the eye; his back was streaked with black, and there were white markings on his wings and tail.

The specimen before me was a male, for his little spouse, wherever she was, would not have been clad so gorgeously, although she would have worn the same pattern as her brilliant lord. It is not considered "good form," I suppose, in bird social circles, for the little ladies to array themselves as gaudily as their husbands and lovers do. This, as

you know, is quite the reverse of the fashion in vogue among folks.

Not only does history repeat itself, as the old, threadbare adage runs, but ornithological experiences do the same. If you meet a bird once, no matter how long you may have been looking for him in vain, you are sure to meet him again, and perhaps very frequently. Such has been my experience with the yellow-rumped warbler, as this bird is often called. Every spring and autumn since my introduction to him long ago, I have had the pleasure of studying him and improving his acquaintance. Indeed, he has become one of my most familiar friends.

What a delightful day was the twenty-eighth of April, 1890, when for an hour I watched four of these attractive birds flitting about in the saplings at the border of a woodland, and threading the bare branches with their brilliant hues. They seemed almost like living jewels tilting gracefully on the twigs, if one can imagine such a thing. My notes say that the black of their chests was divided into two lobes by the immaculate white "choker" extending down from the throat.

This warbler quartette was beautiful to look upon, not only on account of the luster of their

plumage, but also on account of the light, airy grace with which they flitted about in the trees. A luckless insect came buzzing by, when one of the birds espied it and pounced upon it with a certainty of aim that seldom misses the mark, caught it deftly on the wing, and then whirled back to a perch to make a meal of it. I noticed a number of similar performances, and could hear the quick snapping of the birds' mandibles as they darted swiftly after their victims.

And then these birds favored me with music — a little concert all their own. To be frank, I have listened to better bird minstrelsy, but as it was the first time I had ever heard the vocal performances of the myrtle warblers, I was in an appreciative mood. Their lays were very fine, twittering warbles, or whisper-songs — one might almost say gossamer songs — considerably prolonged and quite varied, somewhat like the twittering midsummer ditty of the black-capped chickadee. This was the only song I have ever heard from the throats of these minstrels. However, Bradford Torrey heard a myrtle warbler singing a most exquisite song while descending Mount Willard one day in June, proving that our bird has more than one tune in his musical repertory. It was my

good fortune to hear a myrtle warbler's song on the twentieth of October. It was quite vigorous and cheerful, but a little hoarse and wheezy, and lacked the liquid quality of his spring song.

Many were the chases the myrtle warbler led me in the autumn, through the clover fields and across the boggy marshes, before I had learned to know him in his fall suit, which is so different from the gorgeous apparel he wears in the spring. Why he changes his toilet I do not know, unless it is to confuse us bird students, and that would not be very kind. Here he is on this October day with a dress of umber-brown, paler below, while his breast and sides are obscurely streaked with dusk. And then here are the young birds, which are dressed in still another suit, thickly streaked both above and below with dusk and gray, and having no yellow except on the rump.

This bird is more hardy than most of his kinsmen of the same family, for he often remains here until the last of October and the first of November, and sometimes does not leave for his winter home in the South until snow falls, which is long after all other warblers have gone; and then in the spring he is frequently back again by the fourth of March. He has other quaint ways, for while he

breeds mostly north of this latitude, he has been known to breed as far south as Jamaica. What his next whim will be it is impossible to predict.

It would not be difficult to pursue the study of ornithology, if all birds were as fearless and familiar as the yellow-rumped warbler. In the spring he usually remains in more out-of-the-way places, but in the autumn he comes to the suburbs of the city, and seems to be quite sociable. At this very moment, as I sit at my desk looking out of my study window — it is the sixteenth of October, and a raw, wet day — I see a bevy of these warblers fluttering about in the maples before the house, in company with the bluebirds and chipping sparrows, with which they seem to be on friendly terms. As they spread their wings and dart across the street, their yellow rumps flash like tiny bars of gold.

How often, as I walk along the streets on autumn days, I hear their hoarse little *Chep, chep, chep!* in the trees above me, as if the frosty nights and damp weather had given them a cold, which has settled in their throats. I cannot help stopping to ogle them, even at the risk of being laughed at by passers-by, who almost invariably stop to ogle me in turn, thinking perhaps that I have gone daft.

Or probably they suspect that I have found a roll of bank-notes somewhere in the trees. But no; I have discovered a myrtle warbler, and that is of far more consequence. To study one of these dainty creatures, made so beautiful by the Creator, is, I take it, a mark of sound sense rather than an indication of a weak mind; although I hope there is nothing boastful in that reflection.

A DECEMBER DAY WITH THE BIRDS.

THE winter of 1889–90 was extremely mild in the latitude of Central Ohio, where most of my observations have been made. By some delightful blunder nature had apparently thrust summer into the lap of winter. Or had winter fallen asleep and gone to dreaming of June? On those clear, balmy days, when the sky was an unflecked dome, I found it impossible to remain in my study; my thoughts would "brook no ceiling narrower than the blue;" and so I often sauntered to a favorite woodland, to watch the deportment of my "friends in plumes." One of these days, the eleventh of December, dwells pleasantly in my memory; and I shall try to describe it. For the sake of vividness I shall use the present tense.

Standing beneath the tall, bare trees, and breathing in that peculiar woodsy atmosphere that pervades the place, I am delighted with the antics of the little snowbirds, which have been the constant companions of my winter loiterings. Here they

are, dancing about on the ground, scratching up the leaves in quest of seeds, or else scudding among the bushes, displaying their white lateral tail feathers whenever they take wing. Their toilets of plain brown and white give them a comfortable appearance, as if they were dressed for warmth and not for show; while their beaks look like small white pyramids attached to the fore part of their cunning little heads. How dexterous these birds are on the wing! Sometimes they hurl themselves in their swift, reckless flight so near me that it is only by a deft, timely turn that they miss my head. I have dodged more than once to avoid being struck by them, when they made a dash at me as if they had been shot from a catapult. Really, my dear junco, I prefer not to be the second party to such a collision, as I am not quite sure of its effect upon my rather sensitive scalp.

All winter long these companionable birds have driven loneliness from the woods by their rapid, tremulous chirping; and sometimes, toward spring, they break into a tuneless ditty, which answers the purpose of woodland music very well before the brown thrushes and white-throated sparrows arrive from the South.

Threading my way deeper into the woods, I espy

two pleasant little friends in feathers, which have been leal to me during all the winter months; I refer to the tufted and black-capped chickadees or titmice. Of the former I have spoken at some length in another paper, and so will only allude to him here in comparison with his ebon-crested relative. He is quite a malapert, with his jaunty, cone-shaped crest pointing straight up. He expresses his sentiments in such a variety of ways that one can never be sure when one has heard all the notes in his vocal repertory. The two titmice have many traits in common, but the black-capped is cast in a finer mould; he is more dainty, demure and supple (and that is saying a great deal) than his tufted cousin, while his *chick-chick-a-dee-dee-dee* is less vociferous and evidently more sincere and expressive of real feeling.

I dislike to make the accusation — for I would not cast a stigma on the good name of even a bird — but I am afraid that the tufted titmouse's alarm-calls are often more or less affected; he is not half as much frightened at you as he pretends to be. All that ado in the sapling yonder is put on to attract your attention to his skill as a tilter; for, if you stand still and watch him, he begins to perform some of his most daring exploits.

It would be difficult, however, to speak in too laudatory a strain of that feathered sprite, the black-capped chickadee. What a perfect little gentleman he is, any way, even when he hangs head-downward from a twig, or turns a somersault in pursuit of an insect! How neat and winsome he looks with his black cap and necktie! Here he is before me now, flitting about in a brush-heap, pecking here and pecking there, peeping here and peeping there, until at last he leisurely draws the larva of an insect, white and fuzzy, from its nest beneath the bark of a limb, and then, after several attempts, swallows it, looking up at me with a courteous little nod, as much as to say: "It was good, sir; I should have been glad to share it with you, if I hadn't been so hungry myself!" Of course I reply with equal urbanity: "Thank you, Master Tomtit; you are quite welcome to all of it; I'm not in the least insectivorous in my tastes." I will not be outdone in good manners by a chickadee, no, indeed!

Then he makes a sudden plunge to a sapling close at hand, and alights "head downward, clinging to a spray," as Emerson says, and calls *chick-chick-a-dee-dee*, with a chuckle of exultation. He is such a dear little elf, so brave and so ingenu-

ous withal, that I feel disposed to join the poet in his lines: —

> "Henceforth I wear no stripe but thine;
> Ashes and jet all hues outshine.
> Why are not diamonds black and gray,
> To ape thy dare-devil array?"

Yet I must protest that the adjective "dare-devil" in the last line is not well chosen, even though Emerson be the poet.

Another winter resident of my woodland is the tree sparrow, which arrives in the autumn and remains until the latter part of April, when he departs for his summer resorts in Labrador and the regions about Hudson's Bay. The tree sparrows go in more or less compact flocks from one part of the woods to another like winged nomads, wherever their quest for food takes them. They feed from the ground and on the weeds in the neighboring fields and the dogwood berries that are so plentiful. Flitting about in the tanglewood, a covey of them often keep up a constant racket like the English sparrows, although their calls are pleasant and cheerful, and not disagreeable like those of the Britishers. These birds sing a sweet ditty in the spring before they leave, as a kind of

farewell hymn to the scenes that have become so dear to them. I had the good fortune to hear one of these low, sweet songs on the nineteenth of December, the only time I ever heard the tree sparrow sing,* and I have felt grateful to the obliging little minstrel ever since.

Continuing my stroll through the dim arcades, I am suddenly brought to a standstill; there comes to my ear from the remote sylvan depths one of the sweetest, saddest, most haunting bird notes of the wildwood — the minor whistle of the black-capped chickadee. Hear it as it pierces the solitude with javelins of sweetness: *Ph-e-e-e, ph-e-e-t; p-h-e-e-e, ph-e-e-e-t!* with a peculiar wavering intonation that defies the alphabet, and that must be heard to be appreciated. There is, moreover, a dulcet swing toward the close of the second syllable, which I cannot catch by any combination of letters, although I have often tried to do so.

How shall one characterize those haunting notes? They are a musical wail, a threnody of sweetness — I had almost said, the strain of a sentient lyre whose heart-strings have been broken by the stress

* This was true at the time it was written; but a year later in the same month I heard the enchanting lay of a tree sparrow, while on a delightful day of February I surprised a large covey of these sparrows giving a unique concert, which was beautiful indeed. Strange to say I did not hear a single tree-sparrow song after that day. These birds are evidently erratic songsters.

of some sorrow. One cannot help thinking of a wandering dryad seeking her lost love. The song recalls all the sad romances one has ever read, and perhaps several in which one was, one's self, the chief actor as well as the chief sufferer.

Those plaintive minor notes still lingering in my ears, I seek another part of the woods, beguiling the time as I saunter, by watching the gambols of the nuthatches as they go tobogganing up and down the trunks of the trees. It is surprising how many old friends I meet here. Presently I pull myself through the tangle of bushes, and find a seat on a half-decayed log in a somewhat open space, shut in on all sides by the thicket. The sunshine filters through the branches above me, making a filigree of light and shade on the leaf-strewn ground. My feathered companions become greatly excited over my presence; apparently they have never before seen a man sitting on a log in the woods, and are dumfounded. What a birds' drama is enacted before me!

First, the juncos, as the snowbirds are often called, dart into my retreat, and scurry around nervously, looking up at me with a bewilderment that cannot be expressed. A half-dozen tree sparrows alight in the bushes only a few yards away,

and eying me suspiciously, seem to ask, "What do you mean, sir, sitting here on a log?" The crested titmice and white-bellied nuthatches are quite upset, not knowing what to think of the spectacle before them. Two blue jays flurry about, and resent my presence with loud objurgations. A hairy woodpecker utters his demur in a shrill *ch-i-r-r*, and even the bluebirds sigh for sheer amazement. Attracted by the unusual commotion, a bevy of goldfinches sweep across the adjacent corn-field, looping the air with undulatory flight, and, alighting in the trees above me, exclaim, *Pe-chick-o-pee! pe-chick-o-pee!* in a tumult of wonder that cannot be otherwise expressed. A pair of cardinal grossbeaks in brilliant plumage dash up, and chip their protest in unequivocal accents; while, as if to make a climax, a Carolina wren hops about on the leaves, flirts his tail with an emphasis not to be mistaken, and scolds as only a wren can.

I must have presented a strange spectacle to my feathered spectators; perhaps they took me for a one-animal menagerie (I am not prepared to dispute their conclusion if they did), for all of them, as soon as they espied me, seemed to cry out: "Isn't it wonderful, wonderful, to see a man sitting on a log right here in the woods? How can he do

it? how can he do it?" I could not refrain from laughing aloud at the hubbub I had created; and this outburst of merriment seemed to reassure the birds somewhat, convincing them, I suppose, that I was human and harmless, after all. They soon quieted down and betook themselves to their banquet of buds, berries and insects, proving that there is a soothing power in a hearty peal of laughter. As other work demanded my attention, I hurried homeward, glad that I had been able to afford my woodland friends some innocent diversion, and thus add a little of the spice of life to their existence to keep it from becoming humdrum.

THE WOODS IN ERMINE.

"It is one of God's beautiful thoughts!"

Such was the exclamation that broke from my lips as I stood at the border of my favorite rambling-ground one winter day. The scene before me was more than lovely; it was sublime. The woods were clad in ermine, every branch and twig and spray bearing a gleaming cylinder of snow. Had the sun shone, the spectacle would have been resplendent with prismatic colors; but as it was, the dim forest light was soft and subdued, as if some gentle spirit were brooding over the woodland. It was a scene that would have inspired Lowell himself, who doubtless would have described it in verse:

> "Every pine and fir and hemlock
> Wore ermine too dear for an earl,
> And the poorest twig on the elm-tree
> Was ridged inch deep with pearl."

The thick network of branching bushes and sap-

lings was duplicated in porcelain, from which the tall trees lifted their brown trunks as if they had sprung out of a sea of Parian marble. It seemed almost like an absolution to plunge into that ocean of whiteness. As I stood in those wooded aisles, I felt that the place was indeed a Bethel, a natural temple where one might kneel and worship, scarcely needing any other chrism than that of the softly filtering snow.

Sometimes, by bending low, I could creep into a secluded boudoir beneath the bushes, where I stood completely engirded and over-arched by a filigree of crystal shafts. At some places the bushes bent low beneath their burdens, and one sapling had broken down entirely, and lay across my pathway, held to the ground in the embrace of the snow. In one place the wood-road I was pursuing was completely closed up by the interlocking branches on either side, so that I had to turn out of my way and creep around the crystalline obstruction. A slender sapling, that had not cast off its last summer's suit of leaves, was bending over until its top almost touched the ground, making a graceful arch of white and brown. Every tree and bush was, in fact, a vision of loveliness. I stood beneath a low but widely-

spreading dogwood sapling, with its thick mesh of branches and twigs, each curve and angle followed by its companion ridge of crystals, and the longer I studied the picture the more I was chained to the spot. Yes, it was one of God's beautiful thoughts, wrought out in snow and stem.

Although silent and snow-clad, the woods were not tenantless; no, indeed; and it would have been quite out of keeping with a bird-lover's nature to take such a ramble through the woods without noticing his plumed companions. Have I not for years held most delightful converse with the birds of this place, until each feathered denizen has become a familiar friend?

Before reaching the woods I was saluted by a bevy of tree sparrows hopping about on the rail fence of the lane. How cunning they were! It would seem, almost, that snow is their native element. They do not avoid it, as most other birds do, but seem to revel in it. When I flushed them they darted to the top rails, plunging fearlessly into the downy snow up to their little bodies, and standing there with up-stretched necks looking at the queer pedestrian stalking along in his tall rubber boots. Did not their dainty feet get cold? When I inquired about this from one of

them standing on the end of a rail where the snow had been blown away, he replied, in pantomime if not in word: "If one foot gets chilled I draw it up into the feathery pocket of my bosom and warm it, like this," and he accompanied the explanation by the action.

Stepping up to the fence and looking down among the weeds, I could see the dainty paths of these birds winding about in the snow. What hardy creatures they must be to make the cold snow their tramping ground! But nature, their loving mother, has seen to it, I suppose, that these winter residents are supplied with plenty of warm blood for the cold and stormy weather. How rhythmically Sir Edwin Arnold, in his poem, "The Light of the World," has described our Heavenly Father's care for the feathered tribes!

> "He told us not one bird
> Folds failing wings, and shuts bright eyes to die,
> But That which gave their stations to the stars,
> And marked the Seas their limits, and the Sun
> His shining road, signed soft decree for this,
> And did in pity plan kind consequence."

In the deep seclusion of the woods I found the tree sparrows holding a convocation in the tree-tops over some important matter, in company with

their relatives, the little snowbirds, which also delight in the snow. One of the snowbirds, overcome by curiosity, darted down into the bushes where I stood. He hopped about fearlessly upon the snow-covered twigs, as if he did not know they were cold. So happy were several of these snowbirds that they almost broke into song as they pursued one another about in the tree-tops. This was all the more remarkable because they had not sung at all during the pleasant weather that we had had earlier in the season.

White-breasted nuthatches were tobogganing up and down the tree-trunks, and several downy woodpeckers were drilling into the crevices of the bark for their afternoon lunch. But where were the crested titmice? I beat about the entire haunt and sought for them in all the "woodland privacies," but not a titmouse was to be seen. For several years I have prowled about in these woods, winter and summer, rain and shine, but never before had I failed to find these sociable birds at my elbow. It was queer. In December, when the weather was much colder than now, and the snow lay deeper on the ground, though it did not cling to the branches, I had found them here as cheery as birds could be. Only one way of explaining their

absence occurs to me. They are not fond of wading in snow, as the tree sparrows and juncos are, and yet they are perching birds; and so, when they saw, on the previous day, that every branch and twig would be robed in snow, they took to wing and went elsewhere. The golden-crowned kinglets and the goldfinches followed their example. The nuthatches and woodpeckers remained, because they could find plenty of bare roving ground on the eastern side of the tree-trunks.

During my midwinter tramp I witnessed one little bird-drama that I cannot forbear describing. I had stepped out of the woods into a swampy field which skirts it. Presently I heard the friendly call of a nuthatch in an oak-tree on the slope, and decided to look up my little interlocutor. As I approached the tree he called a halt, as if he meant to say, "Do not come so close as to disturb me; I am eating my dinner." As I stopped within a rod or so of the tree and looked up, I saw him clinging head-downward to the trunk, thrusting his long, slender beak into a cranny of the bark.

At first he was a little disconcerted by my presence, and did not know whether he should fly or not. He concluded to stay, however, although he could not work very steadily for a few moments,

for looking at me; but at length he was convinced, I suppose, that I was only a harmless bird-gazer, and so he set to work in good earnest, and soon became so absorbed that he paid no heed to his intensely interested spectator. There was a worm or larva imbedded in that cranny. How he did labor to secure it! He pecked and drilled and pried and thrust in his bill until I feared he would break it off.

But his efforts were at last rewarded. A passage was opened into the insect's winter hiding-place, and the bird drew him out piece-meal, for he would not yield to the sacrifice of himself in any other way. I could see the white fragments linger a moment between the nuthatch's mandibles, and then they glanced down his throat in a twinkle. One refractory piece slipped from his bill and would have fallen to the ground, but, quick as a flash, he sprang after and secured it before it had descended a half-foot. I do not know how long it took him to "finish" that poor worm; but at last it had all been stowed away in his stomach, and he flew off saying, "*Henk-a, henk-a, ha-a, ha-a, ha-a!*" Thus ended the comedy of the bird and tragedy of the worm.

A MIDWINTER WALK.

[THREE DAYS LATER.]

THE alert student of nature finds her versatile in her resources of surprise. On the fourteenth of January, 1891, three days after the tramp described in the last chapter, I met with several interesting experiences which prove this. Comfortably clad and shod with tall rubber boots, I trudged off through the melting snow. To my surprise I found the tufted titmice, which, it will be remembered, were not to be seen anywhere on my previous visit to this place, when the woods were clad in ermine. They were as gay and agile as ever, and almost broke into song.

My theory of their absence on the twelfth has been hinted at, but in the light of later discoveries, I wish to repeat it and confirm it more fully. These birds are no snow-waders like the juncos and tree sparrows — not they! They prefer a bare twig to perch on. Those birds that want to plod through banks of icy crystals may do so, but as for the

chickadees, they would beg to be excused. And so, when they foresaw the nature of the storm on the previous day, their instinct taught them that their perches would be covered with snow, and they, therefore, took wing for a more southern latitude, where the climate was more congenial to chickadee life. It was probably not necessary for them to make an aërial voyage of more than fifty or a hundred miles to escape the storm, or, at least, the more disagreeable part of it. Some one may suggest that they had only hidden themselves in some cosy shelter, and for that reason I did not find them. No, indeed! Nothing could be more unlikely. That would have been out of all keeping with chickadee activity. A titmouse never keeps quiet. A more voluble little bird does not infest the woods.

The next day was cold and windy, but during the night the weather moderated, and when morning came the sun shone warm and bright. Thus the branches of the trees and saplings were mostly divested of their snowy wardrobe, and again held out convenient perches for the birds to tilt on. Had they come back so soon from their journey to parts unknown? That is my hypothesis, at least, and I give it only for what it is worth as a

theory. They acted, too, as if they had been away from home and were glad to get back to the old place; for I never saw them more pert and cheerful. Why, they almost broke into song, and treated me to three or four variations obviously to display their vocal resources.

Another surprise awaited me in a more distant part of the woods. At my first visit I had also missed my little winter friend, the golden-crowned kinglet, but to-day he suddenly glanced into sight by the side of the wood-road I was pursuing, his amber crownpiece, with its ruby set in the center, gleaming in the sunlight. He behaved more like a nuthatch or a creeping warbler than a kinglet. He flew to the stems of the saplings and clung to them and even climbed them, and then actually darted to the trunk of a large oak-tree and ascended that a foot or two. Never had I seen Master Golden-Crown deport himself in this way. Presto! he dashed to the ground and hopped nimbly about in the deep snow, picking up here and there a delicacy that he seemed to relish. Who would not love this flitting jewel of the wild-wood?

Again I found the tree sparrows at the border of the woods, for, as a rule, they disdain shelter

even in the stormiest weather. How they love to wade in the snow! As before, I could trace their tracks among the weeds and briers, the prints of their tiny feet looking as dainty as the footprints of fairies.

A bird lover may be a kind of monomaniac, and may see beauty where others see only the most commonplace occurrences; many persons may even laugh condescendingly at some of his raptures; but however that may be, I stood in spell-bound admiration looking down at that intricate network of tiny tracks in the snow. So do our life-paths wind and intertwine. Are they so beautiful? I wonder.

At one place I traced a number of converging pathways to a little nook on the ground arched over with snow and a small, brambly bush, and having a floor of brown leaves. It was a snug little snow-house, and had the appearance of having been occupied by my feathered Esquimaux. At the other side of the woods, in a marshy inclosure, I found the delicate tracery of the snow-birds on the ermine-covered ground. I was particularly impressed with one of these delicate trails, which extended out from a brush-heap for perhaps a rod or more, and then circled back,

making a beautiful loop of bird's footprints on the snow. It was a rare picture.

On my way home I witnessed one more curious freak of bird deportment. This time a downy woodpecker was the actor. A unique little genius he is at all times, as he pecks and hammers and chisels and pries at the crannies of the tree-trunks. But that day he had a new trick. I noticed him clambering up the stem of an oak with a white worm between his long mandibles. I wondered why he didn't swallow it. Presently he wheeled about and deftly pushed the tidbit into a crevice of the bark, where he left it, and then hurled himself to another tree. Evidently he was not hungry, and so stowed the worm away in his larder for a future emergency.

TWO FRAGMENTS.

In the paper on "Songs out of Season" I have spoken of the autumn carols of the fox sparrows. Since that time I have learned that these were merely fragments of song, though quite suggestive of the higher style of music they are capable of producing in the lyrical season. On their return in the spring from their pilgrimage to the south they make the woods echo with their stirring minstrelsy. One of them begins his song on a sapling; soon another not far off responds, then another more remote takes up the refrain; and so the music swells until the woods ring with the gleeful antiphonal chorus.

There is something peculiarly *riant* and pleasing about the lyrical performances of the fox sparrows. Perhaps a trained musician would contend that our bird's voice needs cultivation and that his execution lacks skill and smoothness; but for some of us this very artlessness constitutes the principal charm of his song. At a distance one often catches

a number of loud, clear notes, emitted in a kind of recitative, with a deliciously human intonation; if you get close to the songster you will find that the pauses between the higher notes are filled up by a low ecstatic twitter, the production of which causes the bird to quiver from head to tail. On the fifth of April one of these birds surprised me by his loud, vigorous, theme-like carol, which I almost mistook at first for the song of the brown thrasher.

No careful bird student need be reminded that it is never safe to assert *ex cathedra* that he has heard every note in a bird's musical repertory; he finds himself constantly surprised by new displays of vocal talent. One day, while sauntering through the woods, I heard a melodious twittering in the bushes near me. The roundel, or whatever it may have been called, opened with a lisping *tsip,* much like that of the snowbird. Could it be that junco had at last broken into song? I must investigate. Peering about in the tangle of bushes, I soon descried the mysterious musician; it was our old friend, the fox sparrow, rehearsing a new song. He was industriously picking and scratching among the dry leaves, bobbing up and down in a ludicrous manner — as if he were dancing a jig — in quest of dainties, and all the while running over his

medley of notes and trills as a sort of accompaniment to his work. He is an interesting bird, and I should very much like to watch his antics at his summer home in Labrador and Alaska.

Surprises are always lying in wait for the diligent student of bird-life. One cold, blustering night in the latter part of March, while the wind howled about the house, driving the snow in blinding whirls, I really became anxious for my woodland friends, fearing they might not be able to find shelter from the fierce storm; and I resolved to go out early the next morning to see how they had fared during the night. No need whatever for anxiety. The birds seem to be able to take care of themselves. When morning came the storm had abated and the sky was clear, but the air was sharp with frost, the ground covered with two inches of snow, and a breastplate of ice lay on the ponds; and yet the sun had not risen — I was in the woods at "peep of dawn" — before the birds' matutinal concert began. I was compelled to engage in a good deal of muscular exercise to keep my fingers and toes from getting frost-bitten, so keen was the air; but to my surprise the cold did not dishearten the birds in the least. The fox sparrows were singing more gayly than I had yet

heard them, while the song-sparrows, bush-sparrows, robins, meadow larks, Carolina wrens, towhee buntings, cardinal grossbeaks, goldfinches, and bluebirds were all doing their "level best" to swell the morning chorus. I have seldom heard more birds singing at the same time.

Still another surprise was in store for me that morning. I noticed a couple of birds warbling in the trees above me, and although I ogled them for a long time with my opera glass, I could not identify them. They were perched too high to be seen plainly. They twittered away in a continuous strain, but the song was new to me, and for that reason I was all the more anxious to identify the songsters. The question was how to get them to drop to a lower perch. At length I began to leap about in a rather undignified way for a staid ornithologist, gesticulating wildly and yelling in a loud voice. Finally my ruse proved successful; the birds, convinced, I suppose, that an inmate of the county asylum had escaped, darted down into the adjoining cornfield. As they alighted I caught a flash of white in their tails. Could they be — but no, I must make sure; and so I scrambled over the rail fence and hurried after the fugitives. Yes, my presentiment had been correct; the feathered

sphinx was nothing more nor less than the common grass-finch or vesper sparrow, a bird with which I had been familiar for years. But the idea of a grass-finch warbling in a tree-top! And such an unheard-of warble! Had a backwoodsman begun a conversation in Hebrew I should have been scarcely more surprised.

However, the mystery, if there is any mystery about it, may be readily explained. The bird had recently arrived from the south, and, as I soon learned, was putting himself through a course of training for the spring and summer concerts in which he was soon to have so prominent a part. After identifying him I found it easy to detect the sad, dulcet opening notes of his true song, blending with the rather unmusical twitter of his "maiden" efforts. His rehearsals had not been in vain, for a few days later he was in full tune and his roundelays were indeed very sweet.

The next autumn I found that the grass-finches were again out of tune, singing a continuous, twittering warble instead of the sweet intermittent trills of the spring. Then it was not a rehearsal for the coming song festival, but rather a sort of aftermath of the festival that was past. At least, such was my theory.

GOOD-BY TO THE BIRDS.

To my mind no subject is of more thrilling interest than the migration of birds. What extensive travelers are some of these feathered cruisers of the air! Think of a dainty atom of a bird making an aërial voyage in the spring from Central America or Panama to Hudson's Bay and even to Greenland, and then back again in the fall! What a disproportion between the size of the bird and the distance traversed in its semi-annual trips!

Nor can one help thinking of the scenes that must pass before, or rather below, the eyes of these migrants as they pursue their journey day after day. Over the mountains they fly, across the deep valleys, the stretching plains, and the broad expanse of the great southern gulf. All of it is very wonderful, almost awe-inspiring, and one may be pardoned for pausing to speculate on the unerring instinct that guides their tiny crafts through the trackless oceans of air, to the same suburb, or woodland, or marsh they visited six months before.

However, it is not my purpose in this chapter to deal with the subject in a general way, but rather to record some of my observations on the southward procession of the birds in the autumn. The air is full of fluttering wings; I can almost feel the quick pulsations in my study, as I try to steal an hour for indoor work, when I really want to be out of doors "watching the procession." I could fully sympathize with the feeling of a charming writer on birds in Massachusetts when he wrote me last spring: "I can hardly remain indoors long enough to perform my daily stint;" and now that the autumnal procession is at its height, I feel an almost irresistible impulse every few minutes to make a dash for the woods. What if some rare bird should pass while I am sitting at my desk scrawling these lines! It would be an irreparable loss.

Early in the migrating season the southward-bound birds pass in single file, then in double file, then four and five abreast, and finally in regiments, companies and armies as numerous as the hosts with which Xerxes made his onslaught upon the Greeks. Sometimes a platoon of these feathered marchers take possession of the maples before the house. Often as I pass along the streets on these

autumn days, I hear their chirping in the trees above me, and cannot help stopping to ogle them awhile; which is generally the signal for a number of passers-by to pause and ogle me as if they were in doubt of my sanity.

The procession begins quite early in the season, sometimes by the latter part of July, if not before. The first migrant I noticed this year (1890) was a black-and-white creeping warbler, in a very tattered toilet, for he was moulting. This was in midsummer, and I have no doubt he was a scout sent out before the main body to reconnoiter. A week or so later several female redstarts and the blue-gray gnatcatcher were flitting gayly about in the trees at the border of my favorite woodland; they were evidently the vanguard of the cavalcade soon to follow. My notes inform me that on the twenty-second of August I saw a male redstart and several creeping warblers in full plumage, and also the Nashville warbler and the black-poll. On the twenty-eighth a magnolia warbler was added to the list, and before the middle of September the woods were literally swarming with warblers of many species, accompanied by a few red-eyed vireos. The fifteenth of September was an ideal day for a bird lover, for on that day, while loitering in the woods,

I saw the following warblers: the redstart, the magnolia, the blue yellow-back, the blue golden-wing, the Tennessee, the Connecticut, the green black-cap, the Canada flycatcher, the creeper, the black-throated blue, the bay-breasted and several others that remained unidentified.

Thus it will be seen that the warblers as a rule lead the van in the southward march, like a regiment of brilliantly arrayed militia, while the rear is brought up by the black-capped chickadees, the brown creepers, the kinglets, the white-throated sparrows, the winter wrens, the red-breasted nuthatches, the fox sparrows, the purple finches and many others. And as these birds from the north pass, the procession is joined by many of the birds that remain here during the summer; for now when I go to the woods I find that the brown thrashers, wood thrushes, orioles and catbirds are to be seen no more in their old haunts.

Many of these birds are gregarious, and hence move in vast brigades. On the fourth of November last year thousands of robins took possession of one end of my woodland and fairly made the air leap with their united sputterings and scoldings. Still, no birds seem to go in such large armies as the crow blackbirds, which fairly darken the air with

their ebon plumes as they wing their way athwart the sky, and the rustle of their pinions when they fly low, causes quite a loud rumble. I remember one day I thought a cyclone was descending upon me as I stepped out upon the street; but on looking up I saw that it was an immense flock of these blackbirds dashing over the house-tops to the neighboring grove.

Most birds are more or less gregarious during the migrating season, but very few species travel so compactly as the robins and blackbirds; in fact, most of them, like the snowbirds, tree sparrows and white-throats, infest the woods in scattered flocks. Now and then a solitary straggler pursues a lonely way, either by accident or from choice. For example, I have seen but one red-breasted nuthatch in this locality, yet he seemed to be as well content as if he were surrounded by hundreds of his kinsmen.

But the most wonderful feature of migration is the nocturnal flight of the birds. How often I have stood in my door-yard at night and listened to them calling to one another through the darkness as they cruised overhead! An inexplicable feeling of loneliness comes over me at such times when I think of these tiny voyagers traversing mile after mile

in the darkness, guided only by that wonderful faculty we call instinct.

Their night calls are quite varied. Sometimes they consist of a sad little *Tseep!* as if one weary bird were asking of another, "Are you there?" And then the reply from the right or left will come, "Here! here!" At other times the call is quite loud and nervous, giving one the impression that the bird has lost its way, or become separated from its companions. Frequently I hear a sharp, impatient cry, which seems to announce that a collision between two birds has taken place, causing one or both of them to break out petulantly, "Get out of my way!"

I often feel sure that I recognize the voices of the birds; sometimes the tones are like those of some of the warblers, then like the sharp *chip* of the cardinal grossbeak, or the loud cry of the kingfisher, and even the hoarse alarm-call of the "fly-up-the-creek," or green heron.

And thus they move on and on in ceaseless procession, these wonderful "birds of passage," pursuing their nocturnal pilgrimage, and I stand chained to the spot, listening to their calls, until the hour grows late, when I go reluctantly to my room, and lighting a lamp, read over again the sad

beautiful lines of Longfellow, who must have listened to these "Voices of the Night" as I have done so often.

"I hear the beat
Of their pinions fleet
As from the land of snow and sleet
They seek a southern lea.

"I hear the cry
Of their voices high
Falling dreamily through the sky,
But their forms I cannot see."

THE END.

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