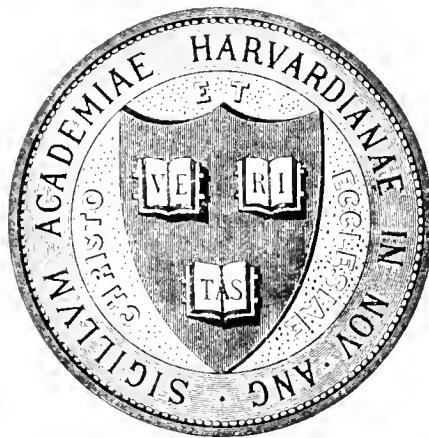


Thompson, E. E. The birds that we see.

(1893)

A-T [Thompson,  
E. E.]  
1893

HARVARD UNIVERSITY.



LIBRARY

OF THE

MUSEUM OF COMPARATIVE ZOOLOGY

58, 71

BEQUEST OF

WILLIAM BREWSTER

*58, 71*

55,741.

## EGOTISM.

*By E. S. Martin.*

WITHOUT him still this whirling earth  
Might spin its course around the sun,  
And death still dog the heels of birth,  
And life be lived, and duty done.

Without him let the rapt earth decree  
What doom its twin rotations earn;  
Whither or whence, are naught to me,  
Save as his being they concern.

Comets may crash, or inner fire  
Burn out and leave an arid crust,  
Or earth may lose Cohesion's tire,  
And melt to planetary dust.

It's naught to me if he's not here,  
I'll not lament, nor even sigh;  
I shall not feel the jar, nor fear,  
For I am he, and he is I.



The Crow Army—Advance Guard, Column, and Rear.

## THE BIRDS THAT WE SEE.

*By Ernest E. Thompson.*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR.

ON a bright morning in the month of May two friends went walking in the diversified region that forms the outer suburbs of one of our great Eastern cities. One was a trained naturalist, the other was not, and, in consequence of a trifling discussion, it was agreed to note carefully, during the rest of the morning, whatever birds each might observe, with a view to comparison at the end of their walk.

The naturalist saw over sixty different kinds, the other saw but seven. One saw something new at each fresh turn of the path, the other found but little of interest and nothing to keep his thoughts from wandering back to the usual daily worries that he had sal-

lied forth expressly to escape. I think it is Ruskin who says, "Ten men can think for one that can speak, and ten men can speak for one that can see." Children have in perfection this wonderful power of seeing, and it is only by continued neglect and suppression, that, as we grow older, we succeed in depriving ourselves of this precious gift. Afterward, the power is regained only by hard study and continued practice, and the artist who sees colors, and the naturalist who sees living objects, have merely succeeded in recovering the perceptive powers of their childhood, with the addition of names for the things seen. They have succeeded also, in conferring on themselves one of the greatest and most elevating of pleasures, something whose delights, and even existence, are unknown to the class represented by that worn-out Roman debauchee who vainly offered a fortune for a new sensation.

The seven birds seen by the "blind man," shall I call him? were, the common black crow, the lawn-frequenting robin, the ubiquitous English sparrow, some swallows flitting about the barns, a woodpecker on an old apple tree, a singing thrush, and a hawk sailing high above the elms. But since each of the last four names represents several different birds, our untrained observer cannot claim to have definitely seen more than three. This, compared with sixty odd, is a poor showing, but these figures fairly represent the two extremes of the power to observe; and though a long training was necessary to perfect the equipment of our naturalist, it will be found that almost anyone may quickly acquire the skill to see and know at least twenty or twenty-five of the common birds that were observed that morning. Let us also go over the ground, trusting that if our observations do not quite allow us to claim sixty birds, we shall at least get beyond the seven of the inferior observer.

The common crow is a bird that few can mistake. Its great size, black color, and loud voice claim attention everywhere, while its high intelligence, and the almost military organization of its tribe, show a brain development unsurpassed in any of our birds.

The mere fact that so conspicuous a bird continues to dwell and multiply throughout our highly cultivated country, in spite of guns, traps, poisons, and unremitting, relentless persecution, is the highest possible proof of its fitness for the great struggle. The crow was originally a woodland bird, but has suited itself readily to the mixed country that Eastern America now affords, and is probably as numerous as ever.

In primitive days, when all Eastern America was a great forest, and all the central region a great plain, the distribution of birds was somewhat different from what it is now. For we know that the artificial destruction of forest, and extension of the open country toward the Atlantic, have resulted in the eastward spread of many prairie birds, such as the shorelark and the bobolink, and a corresponding retreat of such purely forest birds as the pileated and ivory-billed woodpeckers. But there are several which, like the crow, were originally forest birds, and yet have not in any sense retreated from their changed, ancestral domain, but are found to this day in every part of their former haunts which still retain a portion of their woodland shelter.

One of these, the blue jay, escaped altogether the observation of the "blind man," yet was quite as interesting to the naturalist as the semi-civilized and highly intelligent crow. He heard it that morning, long before seeing it; the loud cry of "*jay, jay*," announced its name to all the world, before the bright blue flash across the opening in the grove, showed just where this cousin of the crow was foraging.

In the days of the early pioneers the cries of the jay received more than passing notice, for they gave the hunters a general idea of what was astir in the woods, and whether it was owl, fox, lynx, or prowling Indian he could not escape the watchful blue jay, which failed not to publish the news for him that had ears to hear. Of course, it was not easy to tell from the jay's cry, precisely what foe had alarmed him, but the skilful hunter could often do so, and he learned, at least, to be on the alert whenever he heard the blue jay's warning.



Blue Jay.

Very often it helped him in the pursuit of game, occasionally it did him essential service, though, perhaps, as often, he found himself betrayed by this ever busy marplot.

The ordinary note of the blue jay is the "jay, jay," above described, but this sound is used in so many different ways and with such a variety of intonations that it answers for a score of expressions. When calling to his mate he utters a sort of song, suggesting the words "sirrootel, sirrootel." It is a soft,



musical refrain, and seems not to come from the same throat as the louder "jay, jay."

But his talent for mimicry is so great that it is impossible to catalogue all his notes, original and adopted. On one occasion, I had climbed to a blue jay's nest, without once seeing the owner. I did not hear even the usual harsh threatening, but I did hear, over my head, the loud screaming of the red-tailed hawk, and became aware that immediately over the tree, the screamer was sailing to and fro. At length, a nearer approach and a better view enabled me to discover that this screaming redtail was none other than the blue

jay himself, trying to frighten me from his nest, by simulating the voice and action of a bird that he himself held in mortal dread.

In each of these instances the first sign of the bird's presence was its note, and in most cases it will be found that the ear, rather than the eye, was the guide of our naturalist. Before entering the low woods whence the blue jay came, there fell upon his ready ear a low, simple song like "cheedle, cheedle, chickadee, dee, dee, dee," and again a little bird appeared, announcing his own name. Out of the evergreen covert he darted, chasing his merry companions or flitting about among the low thickets and scrambling along the branches, heels up, or head up, with equal indifference. This is the bright, pert, little chickadee, the commonest of the tomtits that live in the colder parts of the great forest, and the one of all others, that, *via* the nursery rhyme, is forcing his way upward into our serious literature.

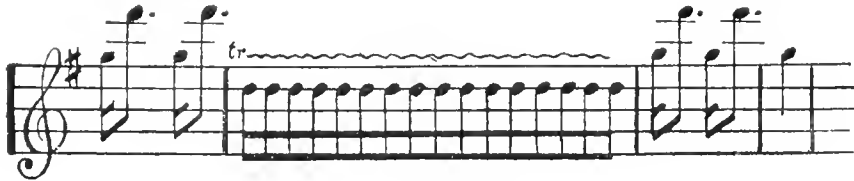
"Chickadee dee, chickadee dee," he sings again and again, as he clambers about close at hand, with a confidence that has won for him the friendship of the children everywhere. Not a boy in the rustic homes about but knows this merry note of the black-capped bird, yet scarcely one suspects that the



The Chickadee and his Song.

same bird is also the author of the sweet little refrain which we hear in the spring-time whenever some ambitious chickadee would fain prove himself a very nightingale to the one that he loves best.

The pathway we have, in imagination, followed with the naturalist leads into



that this is the familiar kingfisher, the ancient proprietor of the fry-swarming rivers, and the pirate of the modern fish-ponds. See the silver wampum necklace that Manabozho conferred on him, at the beginning, as the token of

they are nearly akin, and in this resemblance may lie the explanation of a sad tragedy that has several times happened. In each case the circumstantial evidence was the same. The weather-beaten remains of a goldfinch were found tightly held in the clutches of a bur-cluster, and it was



Chewink and his Song.



clear that the poor bird had been seeking for food when he made the mistake that allowed a myriad bur-hooks to entangle themselves in his feathers and hold him, till he died of hunger and weakness.

On following the pathway from the stream, and over the bare pasture-

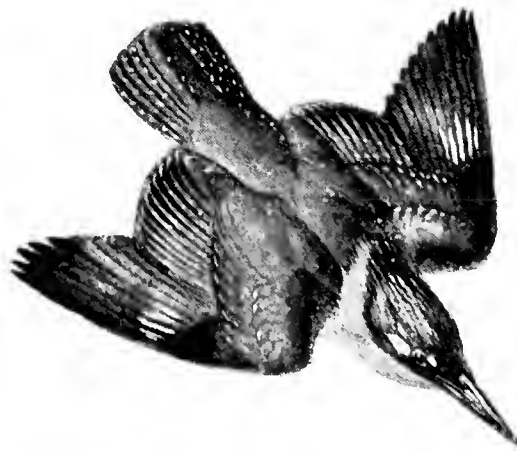
land, or the roadway over the hills, one is sure to see, ere long, a little streaky brown sparrow that runs, mouse-like, along the path, keeping ahead of the traveller by making short flights of but a few yards whenever it finds itself too closely approached.

Each time it flits, it exposes the pure white of the outer tail-feathers, and this mark, with the foregoing descrip-

tion, is enough to identify, as the vesper sparrow, the little bird that imagines he is leading the stranger over the hill.

Leaving the thickets and crossing the "no man's land" of rank burdocks and thistles, the goldfinch or wild canary is seen, perched on a thistle-top, or bounding off through the air, uttering a twitter at each undulation of his flight. He will be known by his small size and rich yellow plumage with black crown, wings, and tail. "Thistle bird" [p. 764] is another name that he bears, on account of his fondness for thistle-seeds as food, and thistle-down for the lining of his nest; indeed, it is said that the reason he nests quite late in the summer, instead of in the spring, is that the thistle-tops may have time to ripen and provide him with the down that he prefers for the completion of his dainty little home.

We have just seen the burdock and the thistle growing together as they often do. Their flowers are much alike, for



Kingfisher.

tion, is enough to identify, as the vesper sparrow, the little bird that imagines he is leading the stranger over the hill.



Wild Canary or Thistle Bird—Male and Female.

He is much like his cousin, the song sparrow, but is readily distinguishable by the above characteristics. His name was given him on account of his habit of singing chiefly in the evening after sundown.

There seems an active competition among the birds to bring themselves and their music prominently before the public. One or two, as the robin and shorelark, gain their point by singing earlier than the others; one or two, like the vireo and the indigo bird, by singing in the heat of the day, when other birds are silent; and one or two achieve it by their power, brilliancy, or indefatigability; while our little vesper sparrow is said to have had the same end in view when he made his soft sweet carol the vesper-song of the uplands.

But there, again, is the blue jay's alarm note: he is a thief himself, and yet his righteous indignation is unequalled when another thief is

discovered in search of plunder. He was the first to see the great red-tailed hawk that, with hungry eyes came sailing over the trees; he gave the alarm, but took good care to keep himself well under cover, leaving the battle to another bird smaller than himself. But this smaller bird never hesitates: out of his home in the orchard, straight toward the pirate he soars, loudly twittering his war-cry, and displaying the warrior plume of flame-colored feather in his head, upward, till high above both trees and hawk, he mounts, then swoops down on him in fierce anger, darting about, swooping and fluttering, striking downward between the great pinions of the hawk, till the latter is so tormented, mentally, rather than bodily, that he hurries away from the neighborhood, and the victo-



Vesper Sparrow and Nest.



rious kingbird, having pursued him a quarter of a mile or more, leaves him and returns to his own nest, and, perhaps, barely in time to save it from the shameless blue jay, who was himself the first to cry, "Stop thief!"

Every farmer knows the kingbird, or bee-martin. In color he is dark slate above, becoming black on the tail and head; a band across the tip of his tail

the breaking up of the great woods these edge lands have been enormously extended, and there has been a corresponding increase in their characteristic feathered tribes. Among these are the common jenny wren, known at once by his diminutive size and short tail carried at right angles to his back [p. 766]; the gorgeous orange and black oriole; the plain, dull-colored peewee or phœbe,



The Kingbird Going to Meet the Hawk.

and all below is pure white. But his crest—the flame-colored badge—is lost, hidden beneath the other feathers, when he returns from his foray; it is visible only when erect, as in the excitement of combat, or when pirouetting in the air to win the admiration of his queen.

We are among the orchard-birds now, and are struck at once by their great number, variety, and tameness. The changes made by the progress of settlement in America resulted, as we have seen, in the Eastward extension of prairie lands with their characteristic birds; caused also a great multiplication of what may be called woodland edges or half-wooded country. Wherever there was a break in the ancient forest, its edges were tenanted by their own peculiar species of birds, and in

sitting on the house-gable or on a dead branch, moving his tail up and down, catching insects, or reiterating his own name, "*phæbe, phæbe*;" the happy little chipping sparrow [p. 766], a dull little bird, with a bright little nest and eggs, known at once by its being a very small sparrow, having a black bill, a chestnut cap, and no streaks on its breast; the yellow warbler, known also as the willow-wren, a slender little creature, entirely yellow; and several kinds of swallows.

But the Baltimore oriole [p. 767] deserves a longer notice; he is a prince in a house of princes. The family to which he belongs is composed of birds remarkable either for plumage, note, nest, eggs, or habit. Each can claim something curious and original; but the Baltimore shines in everyone of these particulars, for in

plumage, song, and nest alike, he is an especially remarkable bird. When the Earl of Baltimore became the lord of Maryland, his followers quickly noticed the correspondence between his heraldic livery of orange and black and the orange and black of the splendid bird that so abounded in the new estates, so that, very naturally, the name "Baltimore bird" was suggested, and has been borne ever since.

His nest is one of the most wonderful examples of bird-weaving in existence. It is made of separate threads, strings, horsehair, or strips of bark, closely interwoven into a sort of sack, and so firmly knit together that it will bear a weight of twenty or thirty pounds. In the Southern parts of this bird's range, the nest is suspended from two or three terminal twigs for protection from numerous enemies, such as snakes, opossums, and the like; it is also made six or seven inches in depth to prevent the eggs being thrown out by the high winds. But in the colder North, where tree-climbing foes are rare, it is hung, not at the extremities of the branches, but in a cluster of twigs that affords shelter. It is much shallower than when exposed to the wind, but is very thickly woven, and lined with soft, warm materials. The oriole's loud, fife-like notes ringing from the high tree-tops in the morning are an ample refu-

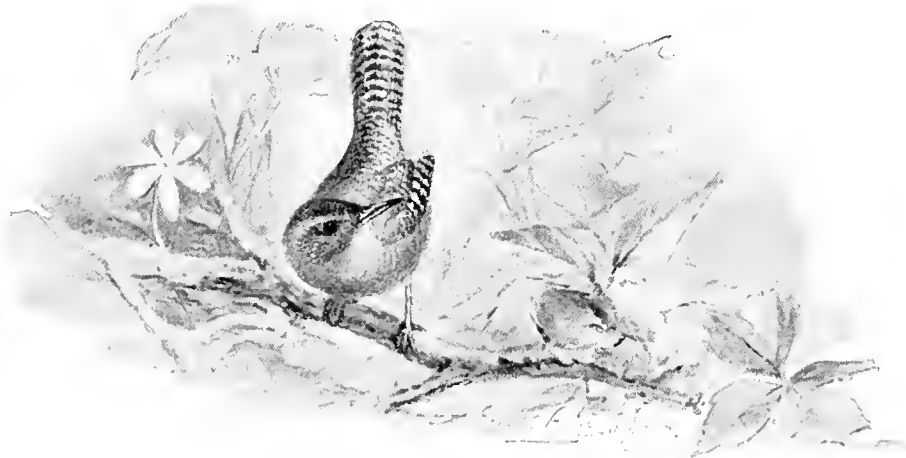


Chipping Sparrow.

tation of the old theory that melody and bright plumage have never been bestowed on the same bird.

In the same family with the wonderful Baltimore is the cowbird [p. 768], a species that affords a complete contrast to the famed oriole in almost every respect. The cowbird is abundant everywhere in the Eastern States. It is doubtless one of those that have increased with deforesting, for it is a bird of the meadows and plains. Its name is derived from its habit of frequenting cow-pastures, where it may be seen following the grazing kine to feed on the flies which swarm about them. In color the males are glossy black with brown heads, the females dull, brownish gray; in size it is similar to the oriole, that is, about eight inches in length. But the most interesting part of its history is its breeding habit.

The cowbird, like the European cuckoo, never pairs, builds a nest, or hatches its own young. The flocks that frequent cow-pastures are composed of males and females that consort together promiscuously, and the female, when the time comes, leaves her companions and sets out alone to find the nest of some small



Common Wren.

bird in which she lays the egg, and then leaves it entirely to the care of the unwilling, and often unwitting, foster-parents. As a rule this means the destruction of the bird's own brood, for the young cowbird, being hatched sooner than the true offspring, monopolizes

two of our common orchard-birds that have discovered methods of outwitting this immoral and lawless vagabond. The catbird [p. 768], one of these, may, generally, be found in the dark hedge or thicket at the bottom of the orchard. That scolding, whistling, chirping sere-



Pair of Baltimore Orioles—Nest and Song.

all attentions, and the other young, if hatched at all, die of unavoidable neglect.

Nearly all small birds that make an open nest near the ground are habitually imposed on by the cowbird, and whether or not they detect the fraud, they generally carry out faithfully the unsought task. But there are, at least,

made, intermixed with peculiar, kitten-like mewings, is the song of the bird we are seeking, and is also the obvious explanation of the bird's name. In appearance the catbird is of a dull slaty color, with a black cap and tail, and just under the base of the tail a chestnut patch. Its beak and form are slender, and its size about that of a robin,

that is, nine inches in length. Its nest is usually built of dark rootlets; thus we have a dark bird building, in a gloomy thicket, a black nest, to contain the brightest blue-green eggs that ever were laid. Their exquisite pale peacock color is without equal among the eggs of our Eastern birds; and, in this, without doubt, lies partly the reason why the catbird is not to be imposed on by the cowbird. The egg of the latter is freckled with pale brownish spots, and contrasts strongly with the eggs of the former bird, so that the intruder is at once recognized, and the catbird, whose maternal instincts are of a high order, summarily ejects the embryo vagabond, and complacently proceeds with her own duties.

Not so, however, that animated flake of gold, the yellow warbler, or, as he is called in many localities, "willow-wren." He is a slender little bird, about five inches long; that is, an inch shorter than an English sparrow and much slimmer than that sturdy little invader. At first sight he seems to be all of a golden-yellow color, but a closer inspection, which he readily allows, shows that his back is tinged with olive and his breast streaked with chestnut. This gay little creature usually leads a merry life among the ornamental shrubs



Cowbird.

of the lawn, and fearlessly builds his dainty cradle of down close to the window, and flits merrily through the lilacs, or sings his simple warble again and again, and seems absolutely happy with

his mate and his nest, until, on an evil day, his new-made home is discovered by the prying eye of that ogre, the cowbird, who quickly shifts, from herself



Catbird.

to the warbler, the responsibility of her next offspring. The woe of the warblers on discovering the foundling egg is exceedingly touching. They are not duped any more than are the catbirds, they know quite well what it means; but not having the strength to eject the intruding egg, they usually resign themselves to their lot and attempt to rear the stranger with their own family, for with these birds to desert their nest is out of the question. But it not unfrequently happens that the hasty cowbird deposits her egg before the warbler has begun to lay, and then the bright little builders, on recovering from the first disagreeable shock of surprise, have avoided the apparent alternatives of deserting their nest or rearing the stranger, by building a new story to the nest, thereby relegating the intrusive egg to decay in the cellar. One instance is on record where

this occurred twice in the same nest, so that it was one of three stories; in each of the lower ones a cowbird's egg was being addled, and in the topmost the true brood of the quick-witted warblers was successfully hatched and reared.

The cowbird and the oriole belong to the Icteridæ, a family of birds which, though not large in our region, shows among its members a remarkable diversity of character and plumage. In it also are the meadow lark, the bobolink, the grackle, and the redwing; birds, which, though nearly akin, have almost nothing in common in habits or outward appearance. The grackle [p. 770] is one that we may discover before leaving the orchard; he is commonly seen displaying his gorgeous plumage on the lawn, or squealing from the top of a spruce-tree. He is a handsome fellow, about a foot in length, and although at first and distant view he is a *blackbird* simply, he is really a very bird of paradise, for his whole body is glossed with a resplendent bronze green, and his head and neck are lovely with the purples and blues of the peacock. He is a showy, impudent bird, a combination of magpie, blue jay, and crow, and though he is a nest-robber at times, and a field-robber always, his fine appearance furnishes excuse enough for his continued existence. He would not be a true member of his family if he did not affect some oddity of nesting habit, and he alone, of our Eastern starlings, is found building in a hollow tree, or an abandoned woodpecker's hole. The eggs are very remarkable; their pale bluish shell is sparsely covered with the

most curious drawings in blackish-brown; the subjects are of every kind, —dogs, cats, stars, men, parrots, weasels, snakes, insects, fish, letters, signs, and symbols may be seen sharply silhouetted on these extraordinary eggs, and if the bird had been a European one we would long ago have had endless legends about them, and numberless weird potencies ascribed to the cabalistic signs and outlines they present.

As we leave the orchard we suddenly see in the bright sunlight the gorgeous plumage of the tanager [p. 771], the Pro-



Yellow Warblers and Nest.

metheus of Indian legends; the firebird, warbird, and blood-robin of the country folk. His rich scarlet livery, relieved by the jet black of his wings and tail, fairly blazes in the sunlight. In length he is about seven inches, that is, a little larger than a sparrow, and in habits rather tame, yet without having any special liking for the vicinity of

man ; indeed, he is somewhat out of place in an orchard, except at the migratory season. He is a true for-ester, and high on the topmost boughs

England say that the boys there translate the song into "*Bobolink, bobolink, Tom Denny, Tom Denny, come pay me the sixpence you've owed me more than*



Egg of Grakle.

of the tallest maples and beeches his soft whistle is to be heard throughout the early summer. His mate, by the way, is of dull olive green, without a trace of scarlet anywhere, and the young ones, at first, are like the mother, but the males gradually exchange the green for the brilliant scarlet of the race.

But none of our native birds has made for himself a greater name than the bobolink [p. 772], the mad harlequin of the meadows. Of course the children were the first to recognize his genius and introduce him to society. But he has since graduated from the nursery rhyme, and, like the chickadee, is now making his way in the literary world. If there is one of these birds in our meadows we shall not have long to wait before both seeing and hearing him.

A single note of his unparalleled song, or a single glimpse of his odd black-and-white livery, is sufficient to identify him a mile off, after once having made his acquaintance. See him yonder, skimming over the meadow with down-curved, vibratory wings, his plumage all jet black, except the white marks on his back, and the creamy patch on his nape. Hark to his bubbling, jingling, inexpressible music as he curvets and flutters in the air. Some of the older writers on the birds of New

*a year and a half ago. I paid you, I paid you. You didn't. I did. You didn't, you lie, you cheat, you cheat, you cheat!*" Then, as Nuttall, the man of bird-song adds: "However puerile this odd phrase may appear, it is quite amusing to find how near it approaches to the time and expression of the notes when pronounced in a hurried manner." It is indeed amusing, and, more than that, it is the only method of graphic description that is available, for musical notes and verbal definitions are equally powerless to reproduce this remarkable serenade.

Another style of descriptive effort has been very well attempted by Wilson Flagg, whose poem, "*The O'Lincon Family*," is full of the strange, jerky, bubbling music that characterizes the



The Grakle or Crow-blackbird.

birds he is describing. The first stanza is as follows :

“A flock of merry singing-birds were sporting  
in the grove,  
Some were warbling cheerily, and some were  
making love.  
There were Bobolincon, Wadolineon, Win-  
terseeble, Conquedle,  
A livelier set were never led by tabor, pipe,  
or fiddle :  
Crying, ‘Phew, shew, Wadolineon ; see, see,  
Bobolincon  
Down among the tickle-tops, hiding in the  
buttercups ;  
I know the saucy chap ; I see his shining cap  
Bobbing in the clover there,—see, see, see.’”

Of course the bobolink's chief name was suggested by his chief peculiarity, his song ; but another, skunk-blackbird, alludes to the skunk-like color and pattern of his dress, and in the others, meadow-wink, reed-bird, rice-bird, troopial, we have a brief summary of his habits, as a meadow-singer in June, a marsh resident in August, a rice-eater in September, and, in the winter, a bird that habitually flies in great troops or flocks.

In crossing toward the haunts of the bobolink we may spring the meadow lark [p. 772], another of the famed starlings. As he flies, he seems a large, thickset gray bird, with a short tail, edged with white, and a fashion of flapping and sailing by turns, as he moves straight away. He is as large as a quail, and so plump that many regard him as a game-bird. He has a trick of always presenting his back, so that he may be seen alive many times before discovering that his breast is of an intensely golden-yellow, with a beautiful black crescent in the middle. His loud whistle from the distant fence-post, whither he betakes himself, is like “*et sé dee ah*” oft-repeated at intervals.

But another starling now flies overhead at a considerable height, pure black he seems to be, and his note is a single shrill whistle. This is the redwing [p. 773]. Away over the meadow he flies, straight to the distant swamp, where cat-tails, willows, and water combine to make a sort of final refuge and moated castle of birds. Pure black he appeared as he flew, but, now, at home, on some willow-branch in sight of his brown-streaked mate, he shows a new

feature — the blazing scarlet patch of feathers on the bend of each wing, and as he amorously struts before his lady-love, he is at no little pains to display it to the best advantage.

The meadow lark builds its nest on the ground, and roofs it over with bent grass ; but the redwing, or soldier-blackbird, must, of course, have an entirely new manner of life, and, away out on the frog-pond, out of the reach of snapping-turtles and small boys, he selects a bunch of projecting twigs, and among them he suspends the neat, strongly woven basket that is the cradle of his brood.

His habits and notes, too, are entirely his own. With fluttering wings and tail he poses in front of his inamorata, swelling out and raising up his bright plumes until he appears to be enveloped in scarlet, and gurgles out a gut-



The Tanager—an Indian Legend

tural “*Look at me!*” with the accent on the *me*. But the earnest prayer and impressive attitude of the speaker seem alike thrown away on the female, who, with an incredible amount of unconcern, goes quietly about her business as though she were alone ; nevertheless, subsequent events would indicate that her apathy was entirely assumed, for in due course the nest is filled with the growing fledglings and her loving solicitude for their welfare abundantly attests the joy and pride she feels in her off-

spring. But the father, the gay and ardent lover, is, I fear, sadly lacking in such admirable emotions; there is yet to be written a dark and discreditable chapter in his life.

We have seen how devoid of parental affection is the cowbird. We know that in the far South there are other blackbirds that leave the care of the eggs and young entirely to the females, and go off to lead a merry bachelor life as soon as incubation begins, and the redwing, it seems, is not altogether without the family taint, for I have, more than once, met with evidence that his love-fires languish sadly as the honeymoon wanes, and his devotion to his home duties succumbs entirely as soon as the joys of love are exchanged for its responsibilities. He becomes, in fact, prone to take his quiet departure in company of a merry host of similar delinquents, leaving his irreproachable wife to provide for the family as best

she can. But no trial is too great for her constancy, and in due time the little redwings are fully grown and fledged, and when strong enough on the wing they fly with her to rejoin their shameless father in the distant marshes.



Bobolink.

But the day is advancing. The familiar robin has ceased to sing, and is foraging on the lawn, stamping cunningly with his feet close to a worm-hole, then waiting quietly, with his head on one side, to see the effect, and so manoeuvring until, at length, the worm ventures out, but only to be seized, and, after a struggle, borne away to his young in the broad nest of mud and sticks that is saddled on the large apple-bough in the adjacent orchard.

The wood thrush [p. 774], high up in some shade-tree, pours out his liquid "*pee-rool-ya-ta-lee*," then rings his little silver bell, sings another bar, and again plays his own accompaniment, and all the while looks serenely down on you, beneath him in every sense of the word. With a fair glass you can see him clearly, about eight inches long, above of a bright cinnamon color, which is brightest on the head, and all below white, with large black spots. His nest is somewhat like that of the robin; in fact they are near relatives, and the latter seems proud of the connection, for he often calls



Meadow Lark.





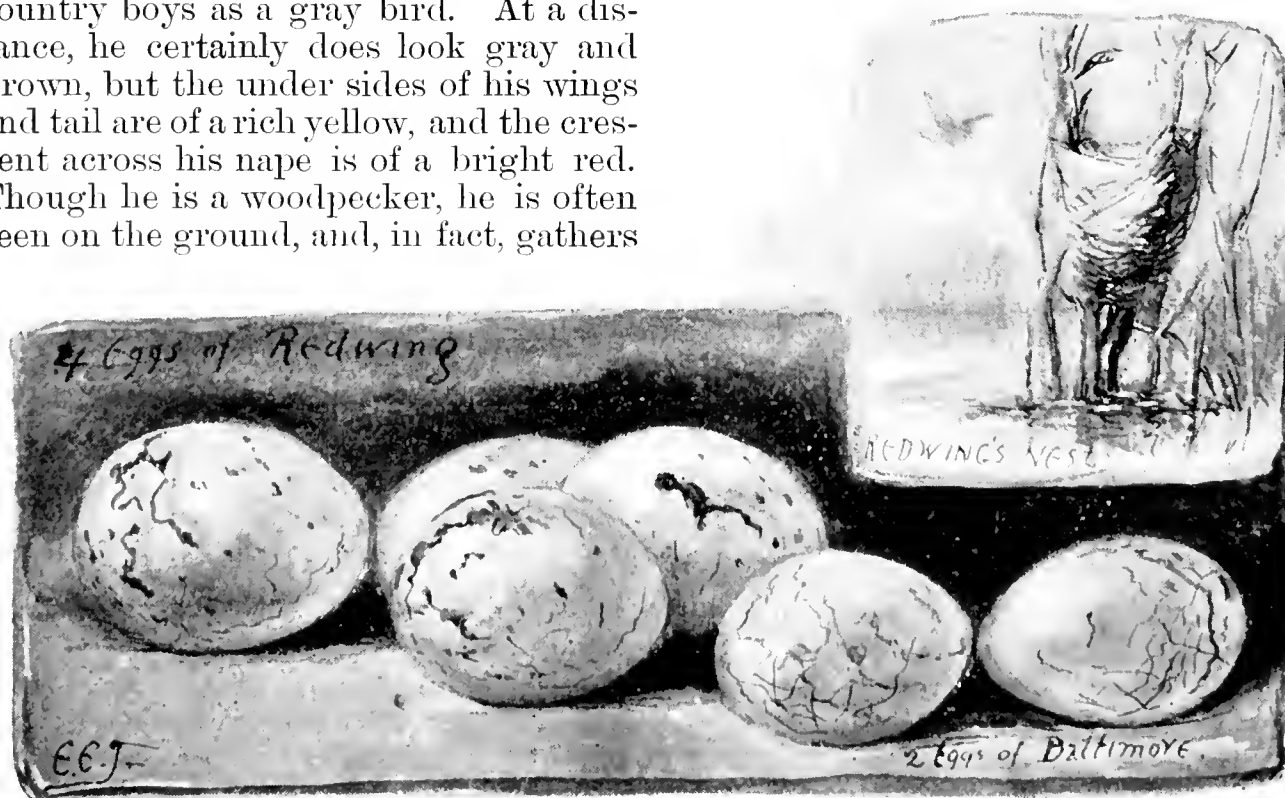
Redwinged Blackbird—Male and Female.

attention to it by fashioning parts of his song on the model furnished him by his cousin in the ermine vest.

On the lawn we may also see the flicker [p. 774], or golden-winged woodpecker, a large bird, which, though clad in very bright colors, is described by the country boys as a gray bird. At a distance, he certainly does look gray and brown, but the under sides of his wings and tail are of a rich yellow, and the crescent across his nape is of a bright red. Though he is a woodpecker, he is often seen on the ground, and, in fact, gathers

at least one-half of his food there. As he flies, one sees a large gray bird with a dim halo of yellow about it, and on the rump a blazing star of purest white. This is, of course, as he flies from one, if, by chance, he is coming toward the observer, the white star is replaced by the black moon which he wears on his breast. The flicker has a long array of names, many of them, like flicker, clape, wake-up, yarrup, etc., are derived from his notes, which are varied and sonorous; others, like, high-hole and high-holder, allude to his true woodpecker habit of boring a hole for his nest high up in some dead trunk. The Spaniards called him, "carpentero," and in the sense of worker in wood and house-provider for others, this is very apt, for at least a score of species stand ready to avail themselves of the commodious quarters excavated by the flicker, as soon as he sees fit to abandon it.

Again, passing through the orchard, we may espy the humble relative of the flicker, the little black and white woodpecker, or his brother, the hairy woodpecker, in search of his prey about the bark of the old apple-trees [p. 775]. While high in the air over all, and making their citadel about the outbuildings, are the four common swallows—the barn-swallow [p. 775], known, at once, by his pale chestnut breast and long forked tail; the cliff-swallow, recognizable by his





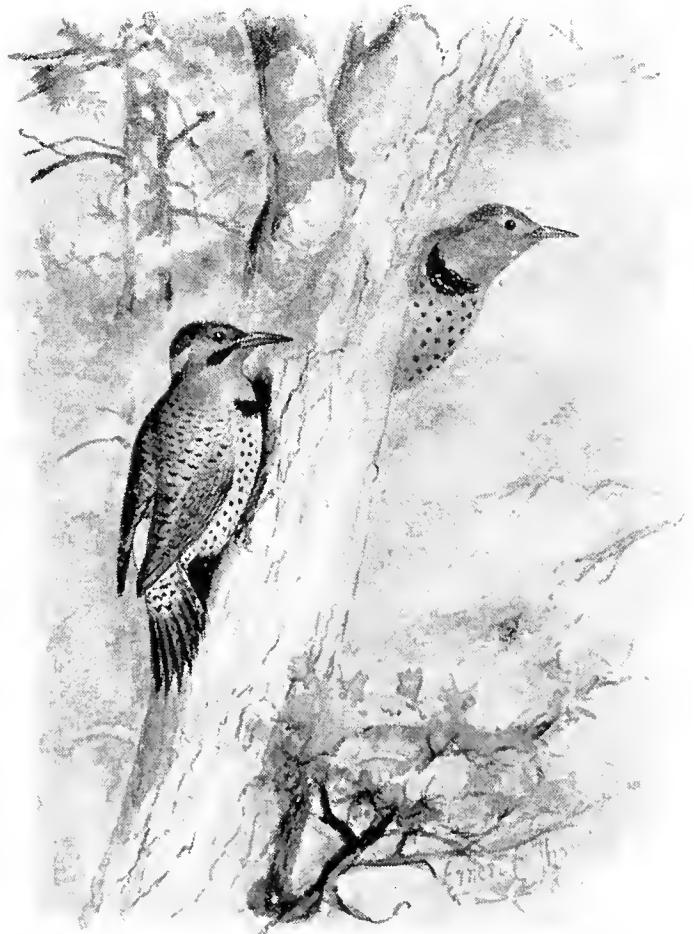
Wood Thrushes—Hop Vine.

short tail and white crescent on his forehead; the martin, known by his great size and black color, and the white-breasted or wood-swallow [p. 776], a delicate little bird of the size of a sparrow. The last is called tree-swallow in some regions, because it nests in hollow trees, and in others, the singing-swallow, because, more than any other of its tribe, it has a habit of singing sweetly as it sits in the sun on some convenient perch. The last two, with the bluebird and the English sparrow, are the principal candidates for the occupancy of the small bird-boxes put up against outbuildings and on poles, by those who wish to encourage the birds about their dwellings.

The first two of these swallows are noted for the remarkable mud nests which they make under the eaves of barns; the first usually selects a site inside the building, and it is with a view to giving them a convenient entrance, that farmers cut in the gables those holes, often of grotesque shapes, that frequently arouse the curiosity of passing citizens. The nest is made of pellets of mud

carefully kneaded at the water's edge, and stuck on in regular successive layers until the appointed cup-shape is complete, and, after a proper time for drying is allowed, the nest is finished with a lining of straw and feathers.

But the cliff-swallow carries the process of nest-building a step farther than this; he makes not a cup, but a decanter, not a mere bracket, but a complete globe, with an entrance-porch that is sometimes prolonged into a veritable spout. Both these birds nest in colonies, and, like swallows generally, are very partial to the buildings and neighborhood of man. In fact, the only one of this tribe that is indifferent to man is the little bank-swallow. It is found nesting in colonies along the banks of rivers, where they are steep enough to afford protection and soft enough to be bored into by the beak of this hard-working little



Flickers—Male and Female.



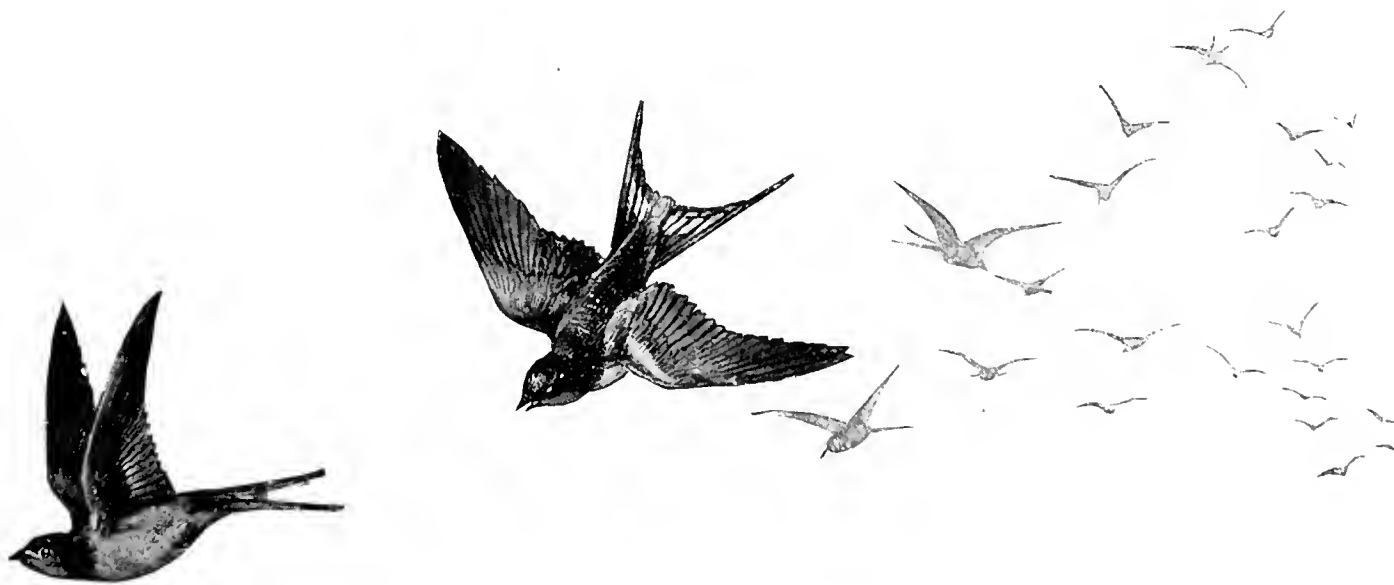
Pair of Hairy Woodpeckers—Sapsucker—Downy Woodpecker.

excavator. Each pair make their own nesting-hole, and at the end of the burrow, which is usually two or three feet long, is a little elevated chamber, in whose gloomy recesses the crystalline eggs are laid, and this little creature of sunlight is first ushered into the world.

Here we have enumerated some twen-

fail of being seen, and probably the voices of twice as many are heard; but the trained ear is necessary to distinguish many of the obscurer birds, and detect the fifty odd that may be within observation during a brief excursion through a diversified country.

In this short sketch we have omitted

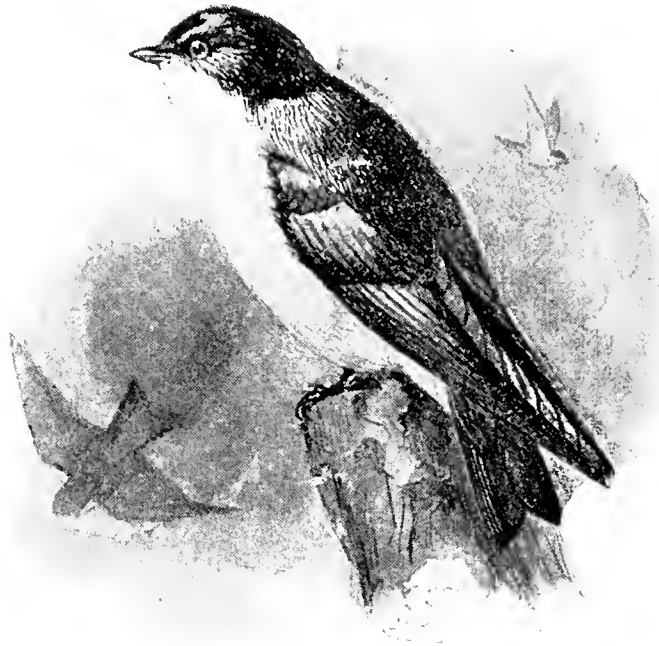


Barn-swallows.

ty-five birds that anyone may see on a fine May day in the temperate latitudes of the Eastern region. These cannot

many birds that merely flew past, and have left unnoticed many whose notes are the only signs by which their exist-

ence could be detected. But those who once learn a new bird will be surprised to find that, like a newly learned word, it will afterward be met with at almost every step, and they will then wonder how they could ever have been so blind as to have missed such a remarkably conspicuous feature of the landscape, or so deaf as not to have heard such a prominent voice in the choir of natural sounds that greet them on a spring morning.



The White-breasted or Wood-swallow.

## ENDYMION AND A PORTRAIT OF KEATS.

*By Edith M. Thomas.*

WHETHER, uplifting slow his dreamful head,  
 He leaves a couch the fragrant pine has strown,  
 Whether the dim, enchanted woods have known  
 The sleeper's unimperilled velvet tread;  
 Or whether, through some winding cavern led,  
 That like the shell rings drear with ocean's moan,  
 He wanders till the sea, wide, bright, and lone,  
 Beneath his visionary eye is spread—  
 Whether awake, or still by slumber bound,  
 Behold that shepherd with a world foregone,  
 To hoard the white rays of a mystic Dawn,  
 A listener to aerial silver sound,  
 With subtle moonlight smile devote, withdrawn!  
 Behold Endymion whom a Love unknown hath crowned!

Gaylord Bros.  
Makers  
Syracuse, N. Y.  
PAT. JAN. 21, 1908

Date Due

Dec 1908

