

Stories of Birds

NATURE SERIES

SELECTED AUTHORS

Stories of Birds

Selected Authors

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Table of Contents

Mother Nature's Children 1

How the Birds Cradle their Babies 3

How Babies are Cradled in Clay and Wood 12

How the Birds Tend their Babies 16

How Mother Nature Sets the Table for Birds 24

How Mother Nature Clothes the Birds 32

How Birds Learn to Fly 39

How Men and Birds Lay Up Food 44

Our Feathered Friends 53

Introduction 55

The Message of a Mocking Bird 60

Some People We Like to Know 63

Civilized Birds 67

How Birds Dress 71

How Madam Bird Combs Her Hair 76

What Birds Carry in their Pockets 80

Child Birds 85

How Baby Birds are Fed 90

At Meal-Time 95

Seed-Eaters and Meat-Eaters 100

Some Birds with a Bad Name 104

Before Breakfast 109

Our Birds' Restaurant. — Meals at all Hours 114

Umbrellas and Other Things 119

Cradle Making **125**
Our Screech Owl **130**
Birds at Work and Play **135**
Some Other Birds at Work **140**
A Pet Humming-Bird **147**
How We Took the Humming-Birds' Pictures **151**
Our Robin Redbreast **159**
More About Our Robin **164**
Going to Bed and Getting Up **170**
Mrs. Towhee Proposes a Garden Party **176**
At the Garden Party **181**
Our Bird Hospital **188**
A Splendid Collection **191**

True Bird Stories **195**

Preface **196**
In the Bird Room **197**
The Bird Room 199
The Gold Finches 202
The Goldfinch's Fright 205
The Bird That Would Not Be Free 208
The Busy Blue Jay 212
The Droll Tanager 219
The Goldfinch's Devotion 222
A Madcap Thrush 225
The Baby Robin 231

The Goldfinch's Fun 239
The Comical Chewink 246
Polly's Pranks 253
Polly's Outing 259
The Golden Goose 265
The Saucy Oriole 271
Antics in the Bird Room 278
Blizzards 281
Three Sparrows that Live in a House 289
Doctor Dot 294

Birds Out of Doors 301

My First Bird 303
The Thrushes Who Lived in the City 307
Barn Swallows in a Frolic 311
How the Dog Interfered 315
Upper and Lower Story in the Bird World 318
The Lost Baby 321
How the Crow Baby was Punished 325
A Jay's Table Manners 327
Friendly Wild Robins 329
The Droll Mockingbird 332
A Sociable Baby Dove 337
The Ducklings Who Would Not Give Up 340
Birds and Dolls 343

Bird Poems 345

Selections from

Mother Nature's Children

by Allen Walton Gould

How the Birds Cradle their Babies



That baby in the picture ought to be a happy little child. She has been playing with the pet lamb that you see lying in front of the cradle, and with the dog who is rubbing his head against the cradle to show how much he loves his little playmate. And she had such fun watching that mother hen feed her three cunning little chickens. But when she grew tired of play and wanted to sleep, she did not have to lie down on the hard ground. She found a cradle ready for her. Where do you suppose she got that

little rocking cot, with a soft bed in it to lie on and a cover at the head to keep the wind and light from her while she slept? Of course she could not have made it herself. Someone else must have made it for her. I think it was her father who made it for her, or got someone else to make it. And it must have been her mother who made the soft bedding for the baby. You can see the father and mother both looking so lovingly at their sleeping baby. But why do you suppose they took the trouble to make such a cradle for the child? They cannot speak in the picture, but I think if they could speak they would tell you that they did it because they loved her. If you ask your own father and mother why they made your little bed for you, I am sure they will say it was because of love for you.

But birds, and other creatures too, all make cradles for their young, and even the plants cradle their babies in beautiful flowers. They cannot tell us in words why they do it, any more than the parents in the picture can; but we cannot help thinking that it is because of their love for their little ones. The same Great Love seems to be in us all, — in man and birds and insects and plants, — coaxing us to make cradles for the children because we love them.

The next image shows the cradle the humming-bird makes for her baby. You see it is no bigger than half an egg-shell, and the one in the picture has two eggs in it about the size of peas. It was made by those two beautiful birds that sit on the rosebush beside it. Mr. Humming-bird and his little wife live in Mexico and build their nests in the

gardens there. How do you suppose they manage to make such a dainty little cradle for their tiny babies?

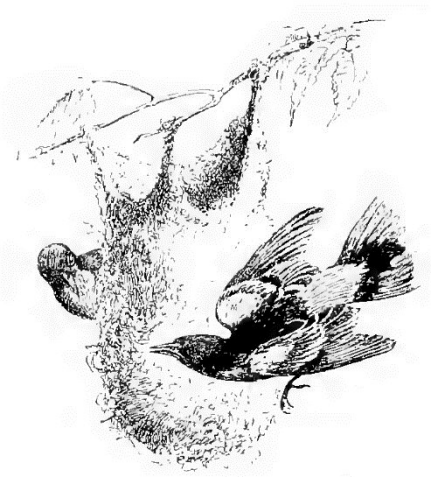


If you and I could steal softly to their rosebush when they were at work, we should see first one bird and then the other come with a mouthful of spider's webs mixed with the downy fibers that grow on seeds like the soft white threads that float the dandelion seeds. Each bird would put the down on the bush where the nest was to be, and would tie it fast to the branch by winding the spider's web about it.

Soon the mother bird would seat herself on the pile of fibers, and by turning round and round on it she would press it and round it into the circular bottom of a little nest. Then the husband would bring her more downy fibers and spider's webs as fast as he could find them, and she would work them into the side of the nest in the same way. But the white down of the nest could be seen a long way off, so that you could find the nest easily if the down were left uncovered. So the wise little birds gather bits of gray lichen or thin moss, such as you find on the tree trunks or rocks, and put them all over the outside of the

nest, and make it look just the same color as the bush on which it rests, to hide it from us. In a week they finish their work, and then in a day or two you would find two little eggs, and a couple weeks later you would see two of the tiniest little birdies you ever saw

The next picture shows you the oriole's nest. It looks like a bag, and it is really a bag; but it has one great advantage, — the babies cannot fall out of it. I suppose that is what Mr. and Mrs. Oriole thought when they decided to make such a nest as the one in the picture, for it is exactly like a bag with the three corners fastened to the branches of the tree. Their dear little babies will be safe enough in it. But how could birds weave such a nest as this? Perhaps you have seen the oriole picking up strings and long grasses about the orchards or lawns in the spring and flying away with them. He takes one of the longest and strongest and winds one end of it around a branch of the tree he has chosen for his nursery. Then he winds the other end of the strand about another branch close by, leaving a loop hanging down as long as he wishes the nest to lie.



Then his mate brings another strand and makes a loop with it, just as Mr. Oriole did with his, so that two loops are now hanging down. They do this again and again, till they think they have loops enough for their bag. Then they begin to weave in between the strands finer material, like down or tow. Usually one of the birds stays inside, weaving and picking and pressing the down and tow into shape, while the other brings it from the fields or forest.

As you may imagine, they are very glad to get anything that they can use in making this cradle. One nest was made almost entirely of tow furnished by a man who loved birds, and the oriole was so delighted to have such a gift that he would burst into song with his mouth full of tow. He could not wait to express his thanks till he came back for more. But they do not always wait for people to give them the strings they want. One eager pair were making their nest not far from a house where a woman sat sewing by an open window. She left the room for a moment, and when she came back she could not find the measuring tape or the skein of silk she had been using. The birds had flown into the window and carried them off and woven them into their nest.

I will tell you the story of something that befell a Mrs. Oriole who did this. She and husband were a very happy pair. They had first met each other in an orchard in the beautiful month of May. Two or three brightly colored songsters of the Oriole family had been trying to win this young lady bird as their wife. Each one of them had sung

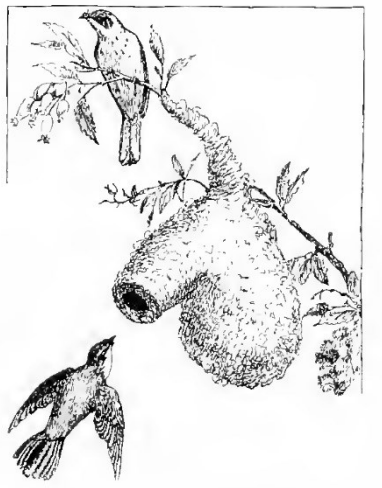
his sweetest to her and looked his finest and behaved his best, in order to persuade her to choose him. But when she saw Mr. Oriole and heard him sing to her, she fell in love with him at once. And when she had chosen him, you should have seen how fond he was of her, — singing to her, bringing her the daintiest bits of food he could find, talking to her in the sweetest little ripple of cooings, and doing everything he could for her.

After a day or two they went house-hunting for a tree to hang their cradle in. They flew from one tree to another for several days, till at last they found a graceful elm where there were two drooping branches close together and high up out of the reach of cats and bad boys. Then they set to work at once weaving their little cradle. Early in the morning, before you and I were awake, they were flying over the fields and through the forests to find the bits of fiber they needed.

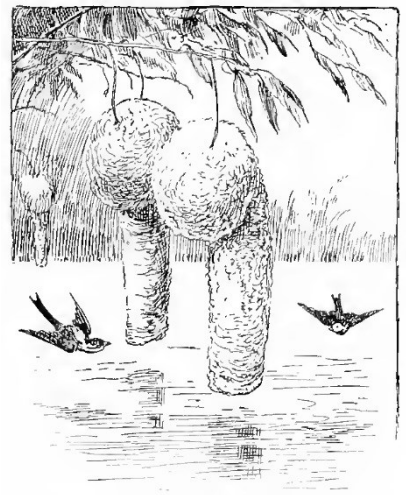
They had been working for four days early and late, and in a day or two more they would have finished the nest, when Mrs. Oriole happened to spy a skein of thread hanging by an open window. She thought that this would be just what she wanted and would save her many a long search. So she darted into the window, caught the thread in her mouth, and flew quickly to the nest. There she found her husband hard at work weaving in a horsehair he had found in a pasture. He was delighted with the thread, and they both set to work to weave it in and out through the sides of the nest.

But it was so long that it got into a snarl, and as they were trying to straighten it out Mrs. Oriole somehow got both her tiny feet caught in one of the knots. Her husband tried his best to help her and picked at the knot, but he could not untie it. He could only moan with her, and she would have lost her life if some kind man had not happened to hear them and cut the string for them.

Mr. and Mrs. Titmouse make a cradle that is safer even than the bag of the Orioles; for these ingenious little birds have covered the nest all over at the top and made a round passageway at the side, like the neck of a bottle or flask, tipped to one side, as you see in the picture. These bright little cradle makers are foreign relatives of our own Chickadees. They live in Europe, and are called Titmice, because they are so small. But small as they are, they have found out how to make a nest that keeps the sun and wind and rain from the babies they love so well.



But the Weaver birds of Africa have made something still better. They have hung their nests upside down, with the entrance at the very bottom, like a decanter wrong side up. They have a safe little cot for their babies at the large part of the nest, with a high side to keep them from falling out. When they build their hanging nests, one of the birds stays inside and the other outside. The outside bird pushes a strip of grass through the strands, and the bird within pushes it back in another place; and so they weave the strip out and in till their baby's cradle is finished. They only stop now and then for a frolic, chasing each other merrily through the trees with many a gentle twitter and loving caress.



They like play as much as you do. But these loving pairs never quarrel. Each seems to think that the other is just right. The nearest approach to a quarrel that I have heard of in Birdland was where one bird refused to bring any more stuff to weave into the nest till his little mate had taken a romp with him. He even picked at the nest roguishly, as if he would tear it down. His mate came out of the nest and gave him a little love-pat with her bill, and

then darted off through the trees for just a minute's sport with him. At the end of the minute they were back at work as hard as ever, making a cradle for their dear little babies.

He prayeth well who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast;
He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all. — Coleridge.

How Babies are Cradled in Clay and Wood

This picture shows swallows here in France. But our swallows here in America build just the same sort of a nest that you see here, and sing the same sweet little twittering song. About the only difference between the French swallows and those in America is that our Mr. Swallow sits on the eggs sometimes and lets Mrs. Swallow have an hour or two off, while his French cousin lets Madame Swallow do all of the sitting herself, though he is very faithful in getting her food as long as she has to stay on the nest.



And how do they build this nest? They are very sociable little birds and like to have their nest close to their neighbor's nest, so where you find one nest you will generally find a lot more nearby. They are fond of men too, as well as of birds, and so they have left the woods and fields, and chosen sheds and barns for their nesting places. Away up north in British America some men built a rough shed for a temporary blacksmith shop far away from any other buildings. Almost before it was finished two swallows came flying into it as if they were delighted to find civilized beings like themselves. And they went to work at once building their nest right over the anvil within a few feet of the heads of the workmen.

In the town where I lived in my boyhood there was one barn that used to lie lined under the eaves with dozens of swallows' nests, while there were a hundred other barns all around without a single swallow's nest. The birds had all built in this one place to be together. And I used to watch them as they happily swept back and forth, building their nests on beautiful spring mornings. But I know now that they were at work long before I was up. It takes a great deal of labor to make such a large nest when a swallow's bill is all they have to work with.

In the first place the birds have to pick out the right place for the nest. It must be sheltered so that the rain will not wash it down, and it must be shaded so that their little ones will not be too warm. Birds often start a nest in the wrong place and then give it up and try in another place.

But when they find the right spot they must be careful to get the right sort of clay to make the cradle with, or it will come tumbling down to the ground.

Then they must mix the clay with a little sand and work it over till it is moist and soft. When they have got a little ball of it just right they bring it in their mouth and pack it down on the spot where the bottom of the nest is to be. They start five or six inches below the top of the nest and put on a small layer of little balls against the boards of the barn and then another larger layer above it, with some fine grass or hairs placed in between to make the clay stick better.

You can see in the picture the different layers and the grass and hair hanging down. A layer or two is pretty good work for one day. So that it will take them a week to finish it, even if the weather is fair and no accidents happen. But they do not easily give up, even when accidents do happen. A pair once built a nest under a veranda where a wire bell-rope ran. The bell was not rung very often, but whenever it was rung it pulled the growing nest down. When it had fallen twice the birds rebuilt it in such a way as to leave an open passageway through that part of the nest where the wire was.

When they have finished the clay sides, they get fine soft grass or other fibers and fill it nearly to the top. Then they put in a lining of downy feathers for their little babies to lie on. You can see some of the feathers at the top of the

nest, and you can make out three baby heads peeping out of the nest to greet their mother, who has just come to bring them something to eat.

I have gone the whole round of creation: I saw and I spoke;
I, a work of God's hand for that purpose, received in my brain
And pronounced on the rest of his handiwork, returned him again
His creation's approval or censure: I spoke as I saw.
I report as a man may of God's work — all's love, yet all's law.

Browning

How the Birds Tend their Babies

"A Kiss First" is what the German artist, Meyer Von Bremen, calls this beautiful picture of his. The little baby has just waked from his sleep in his cradle and he is hungry. His mother has an apple for him in her hand, but she says he must give her a kiss first before he can get the apple. I don't suppose she would starve him even if he should not give her the kiss, for she cared for him long before he could pay her by even a kiss. She has fed him and washed him and clothed him, not for the sake of kisses, but just



because she loved him, and she would go on caring for him as long as he needed her care.

And the mothers among the birds show the same unselfish, loving care for their children. You must have often seen how watchful the hen mother is of her little brood. She keeps them close to her by day, and under her wings at night. She takes them about with her to get their food, and scratches up the ground to help them find it. One mother hen was found one day on the other side of a deep stream with all her chickens about her, and at night she was found back in the yard with her brood. Her owner wondered how she managed to get her babies across the water, and so he watched her the next day. She went down to the edge of the water, and sitting down, clucked to her chickens. They all came up to her, and one of them — the bravest, perhaps — jumped on her back. Then she got up carefully and spread her wings, and actually flew over the water with her baby on her back. When she had alighted on the other side and he had jumped off to the ground, she left him and flew back to the rest of the little flock and took another in the same way; and so she went on till she had carried them all over. Was not that a pretty good mother?

But she is as brave as she is thoughtful. If you try to take one of her baby chicks, she will fly at you and try to strike and peck you. She will fight anything that seems to threaten harm to her loved ones. She will fight a hawk and drive him away, though she would run away herself if she

did not love her little ones so much. It is her love that makes her brave.

The bravest are the tenderest,
The loving are the daring.

But the most thoughtful bird mother that I know of was a goose which Franklin tells us about. He says that this goose had made her nest in the kitchen of the farmhouse, and that she was the only one of the fowls that came in there to nest. But after she had been sitting on her eggs a few days, she was seen to leave them and go out of the room and waddle slowly to the yard where the rest of the geese were. There she went up to a younger goose and after some quacking, she turned and walked back and the other goose came with her. She came into the kitchen, followed shyly by the other goose, who had never been in the room before. Then the older one went up to the nest, but lay down on the ground beside it while the younger one climbed into the nest and sat down on the eggs. In a short time the mother goose was dead, while the other remained and hatched the eggs and brought up the brood. The mothers love was strong even in death; and when she felt that she could not live, she made up her mind that her babies should live, if she could get anyone to take her place.

But when the little ones come out of the eggs, the birds are busier than ever. I wonder if you know how many times a bird mother feeds her babies during the day. Of

course she has her husband to help her, but even then she is kept very, very busy. I sat for five minutes in a boat under a cliff swallow's nest this summer, and the parents came twice in that time to feed their little ones. They flew in so swiftly and stopped so short a time and went darting off again in such a hurry that I really pitied them, if they had to keep it up all day long. And men who have watched birds all day say that they are just as busy from before sunrise till the sun sets again. If the mamma and papa birds come every three minutes, that would be twenty times an hour and three hundred times a day. Your mamma and papa would be pretty tired if they had to feed you three hundred times a day. To be sure, there are three or four birds in every nest, so that would be only about one hundred times for each birdie. But even that would be a good many meals a day.



You see in the picture of the tailor bird two little open mouths waiting for the worm their mother has found and brought to them. She and her husband had to spend

a great deal of time in making that fine nest. In the first place they hunted up the strands of cotton fiber that grow on the plants, and twisted them into a string with a knot at the end. Then they held the edges of two leaves together and made a hole through the leaves with their sharp bills and pushed the strand through at the same time. You see how nicely they have done it, both in the front and the back of the nest. Then they had to find a lot more of the soft vegetable fibers for the birdies to lie on. You can see them sticking over the edge of the nest. When they have done all that and have hatched out those two baby birds, then their hardest work really begins, for they must hunt near and far to find nice food to fill those two hungry mouths.

But I suppose they like to do it because they love their babies, just as a human mother likes to feed her baby even if she has to work hard to do it. The birds will keep on feeding their little ones even if you are cruel enough to take the baby birds from the nest and shut them up in a cage. Imagine seeing two blackbirds, of the kind that live in Europe, trying to put food through the bars of the cage that shuts their babies in. The father and mother have built their nest in the garden, and after their babies were nearly ready to fly, the owner of the garden thought he would capture the little ones and tame them. Mr. and Mrs. Blackbird were frantic when they saw the man come to their nest. They flew at his face and tried to drive him away, but he was too strong for them. He took their four

little babies and shut them up in that cruel iron cage, where they cried piteously. The father and the mother tried in vain to free their captive children by throwing themselves against the iron wires. When they found that the wires would not break, they flew off sadly, and the man thought they had deserted their babies, but they had not. They had only gone to get some food, and they tried to reach their babies through the bars of their prison. But they could not care for their babies very well through the wires, and in spite of all that they could do to help them, the little creatures drooped, and in a day or two their cruel jailer found them lying dead in the bottom of the cage. It was over in France that this sad event happened. But here in America a man did the same thing to some young birds. But when their parents came and fed them, they sat down beside the cage and wailed in such a heart-broken way that the man was touched at last, and he opened the cage to let the little ones out. And you should have seen what a glad family they were.

But the birds do more than feed their little ones, as you will see from the next picture.

When the bough breaks the cradle will fall
And down will come baby, cradle, and all,

is the way the rhyme goes, but you will see from this picture that this is not the way things go in Birdland. Mr. and Mrs. Goldfinch — the European cousins of our goldfinches — do not intend to have their cradle and their

little ones fall to the ground, even though the branch that holds the nest does break. They thought they had picked out a good tree for their home. They spent several days looking everywhere. It was their first experience in making a nest, and so it was not easy for them to find just what they wanted. So Mr. Goldfinch suggested to his wife that, while she was resting, he should go by himself and search farther than they had gone before. In a short time he found what seemed the very tree wanted. He hurried off to bring his mate, and they came flying back together. Then the little lady perched on the spot her husband pointed out to her, turned around in it to take its measure, looked at the leaves above it to see whether they would keep the rain and sun away from her and her little ones, and then flew around the tree to see what her neighbors were like. All the time they kept up a constant murmur of pleasant twitterings, as they talked it over.



Everything seemed just right, and they set about making their nest at once. When it was finished, the little lady bird sat brooding over the eggs for nearly a fortnight,

while her bright husband sang sweetly to her from a neighboring bough, when he was not hunting through the town and country to find food for her. And at night he sat perched on the branch beside the nest, whispering words of love to her, no doubt. But when the little babies came out of the shells you should have seen how proud and busy they both were. But they found, as their babies grew heavier day by day, that the branch settled lower and lower. It was a terrible day when they discovered that the bough was actually breaking. But Mr. Goldfinch loved his children very much, and as he was a brave, ingenious bird, he determined to tie the sinking branch to another stronger one not far away. And you see him in the picture pulling the strong branch up to the nest while Mrs. Goldfinch is tying it to the nest with fibers. And so the cradle did not fall.

I know not where his islands lift
Their fronded palms in air,
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond his loving care.
Whittier

How Mother Nature Sets the Table for Birds

I do not believe that this little girl's mother is in the room, for if she were, she would not let her little daughter feed the cat on the table and out of the same spoon she herself uses. The mother would say that she set the table for her own family, but not for cats and dogs to eat from. She will give the cat and the dog something to eat after she and her family have finished their dinner. But if she allowed cats and dogs to help themselves first, it is very likely that there wouldn't be anything left for her and her family. Certainly there would not, if she let all the cats and dogs in town eat



first. And if every mother let all the cats and dogs in the world help themselves first, there would not be any food left for boys and girls, and men and women anywhere, and they would die of hunger, and this world would be filled full of cats and dogs instead of men and women and dear little girls and boys. And that would be very bad, wouldn't it?

So you see we have to set the table for ourselves and keep the cats and dogs away till we have eaten what we need. Then we can give them what we have left and set their table on the floor, as it were. But who sets the table for all the creatures which do not live in our homes and share our food, like the squirrels in the woods, and the birds and the butterflies in the air, and the fish in the water? You know we buy our food at the meat market and the grocery store, or if we live on farms, we raise it by planting seeds in the ground, or feeding poultry and cattle to use on our own tables. But where are the meat markets and the grocery stores of the birds and fish and insects? And where are their farms? And who plants them and cultivates them? I suppose there are at least a thousand times as many other creatures in this world as there are men and women and boys and girls, and so there ought to be a thousand times as many stores and farms to furnish them with food, and a thousand times as many tables set morning, noon, and night. Just think what a lot of housekeeping must be done by somebody!

For a week or two this summer I was where I saw some of this housekeeping done. I lived where I could almost step from the door of my room to the top of a cliff overlooking long stretches of quiet water. On the face of the cliff, right under my feet, were dozens of swallows' nests; and whenever I went to the top of the cliff I used to see the swallows sweeping swiftly back and forth over the still water. What do you think they were doing? They were catching flying insects. I could not see anything but swallows from the top of the cliff, but as soon as I went down to the edge of the water I was surrounded by a perfect cloud of hungry mosquitoes, eager to eat me up. And the birds were eating those mosquitoes up. That was their breakfast and dinner and supper. That quiet water was the table set for them. It was sending up out of its depths a stream of dragon flies, mosquitoes, and other winged insects. And all that the birds needed to get their food were wings swift enough to overtake the insects, and mouths opening wide enough to take them in, so that they could scoop up insect after insect, till each bird packed hundreds away in his mouth. If you could catch one of the swallows when he has been taking his dinner in this way and open his mouth, you would find a round, solid mass of insects in the back of his mouth, something like a marble in size and shape. That is his share of the dinner set on this watery table, and he had to earn it by hard work.

Now I will tell you of another family of birds at dinner — the woodpeckers. On this same cliff from which I

watched the swallows, there was a pine grove; and sometimes I would sit down on the carpet of the pine needles for half an hour. As soon as I got quietly seated, I would hear a knocking, as if somebody wanted to come into my pine room; and looking in the direction of the sound I would see a greenish bird climbing rapidly up and down one of the pine trees, and stopping every second or two to give a few knocks with his sharp bill upon the trunk or branches of the tree. When he had gone over one tree he would fly to another, till he had visited sometimes a dozen in as many minutes. That was the Green Woodpecker getting his dinner. The pine grove was his dining-room, and not his alone, but the dining-room of all the green woodpeckers in the forest. For nine came, one after another, within half an hour the first time I went there.

They have a sort of pine table for their dinner. Instead of its being flying food spread over the water, it is creeping food hid away in the wormholes of the trees; and the birds must have a pretty sharp bill to get it out. They use their heads and bills as a sort of pickaxe to pick the bark off, and drill a hole into the hard wood where the worm is. And if they cannot quite reach the worm with their bill, they have a long tongue to thrust into the hole and stick fast to the worm and draw it out. This ivory-billed bird is so large and strong that he will sometimes knock an old tree trunk all to pieces to get out the worms.

They are hammering and chiseling all day long, hunting for food. You will see one of them strike a tree, and then listen with his head tipped over on one side. If he hears a worm stirring inside the tree, he chisels straight into it and gets it. But if he hears nothing he hops to another hole and strikes and listens once more. And so he works from morning to night, finding his table set for him as the swallow does, but finding that he must earn his food before he can get it.



But the hummingbird has a nicer table than either the swallow or the woodpecker, for his table is set on flowers and in them. You see from the picture that his bill is long and slender, and just fitted to reach into the flowers to the very bottom; and he has a dainty little tongue that he can thrust out beyond the end even of his long bill. He darts from flower to flower, pushing his slim beak into each and sweeping off the tiny insects that live inside of the flowers; and along with the insects he takes a sip of the honey that is found deep in the flower. So he has something to drink as well as to eat, and he seems to like the honey best. A gentleman

tells us how he caught one of these beautiful birds one day and how it pretended to be dead. He says: "It lay on my open palm motionless for some minutes, during which time I watched it in breathless curiosity. I saw it gradually open its bright little eyes to peep whether the way was clear, and then close them slowly as it caught my eye upon it." But when a mixture of sugar, honey, and water was brought and "a drop was touched upon the point of its bill, it came to life very suddenly; and in a moment it was on its legs, drinking with eagerness of the refreshing draught from a silver tea spoon." It was so fond of the drink that it would come from any part of either room and alight upon the cup containing it. It came back after it was allowed to fly away, and even a year later returned with its mate to get some more of the sweet drink. It liked to have its table set for it without the trouble of going to so many flowers.

The water also is filled with food for the birds. In the picture of the pelicans you can see the tail of a fish sticking out of the mouth of the further one, and you can see what a big bag the bird has under her chin. That is her fish basket and holds almost a pailful of water. When



the pelican is hungry she goes flying out from the land and hovers over the water till she sees a fish. Then she sweeps down from the air into the water with her great mouth wide open and scoops up the fish, or a dozen of them if she can find as many together. When she has caught enough she goes flying home again with her fish basket well filled and sits down on the shore and dresses her feathers, as you see one of them doing in the picture. But as soon as she has digested her meal she has to go fishing again for another meal. So you see she earns her food as much as the other birds do.

There are birds that get their food out of the ground as well as out of the water. You must have often seen the hens scratching up the earth and picking bits of something from it. Sometimes you will see the robins on the lawn, especially in the early morning, pulling and tugging at something in the ground. If you watch one of them closely enough, you will see him, after a hard pull, pick up an angleworm and fly off with it wriggling in his beak. Someone who watched a pair of robins that had a nest in sight says that they brought three thousand earthworms during the time they lived in their nest.

Finally I'll tell you about the bobolink, whose bright colors and gay song make him such a delight to us all. You will see him swinging on a thistle or any other weed strong enough to bear him, and eating the seeds and caroling his merry song. He finds his table spread with the seeds of the grasses and thistles and dandelions, and all the other

weeds. It almost seems as if the weeds planned to furnish the birds with seeds, for each weed, like a thistle or dandelion, produces hundreds of seeds. One of those seeds is enough to start a new thistle or dandelion, and the other ninety and nine can be eaten by the birds. And all over the earth plants and trees are thus making seeds each year and setting the table for the birds.

So you see that the birds find their table set everywhere — in the air, in the water, in the earth, in the wood of the trees, and in the seeds of the weeds. All the birds have to do is to get the food thus spread for them.

Doubt not, so long as earth has bread,
Thou first and foremost shalt be fed;
The providence that is most large
Takes hearts like thine in special charge,
Helps who for their own need are strong,
And the sky doats on cheerful song.

Emerson, The Titmouse.

How Mother Nature Clothes the Birds

You can all see what that little girl is doing in the picture. She is playing with one of those dear little kittens,



while the other one is eating milk out of the saucer on the ground. But can you see what the mother is doing? It looks as if she were sewing, doesn't it? If you look at the picture closely, I think you will see what it is she is sewing. It is a little jacket. So I suppose she has a little boy somewhere, — perhaps at school, — and she is making him a coat, or mending it for him. That sweet little girl has on a dress that her mother has probably made for her. If you look through the open door at the right of the picture,

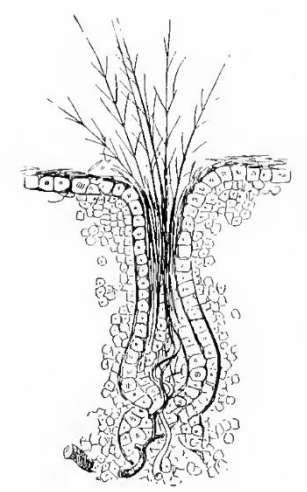
you will see a tiny baby sleeping in a cradle, and I am sure that the baby's dresses were also made by her mother, who loves her too dearly to let anyone else do it for her.

So you see what a busy woman this mother must be, making and mending the clothes for all the little ones, and perhaps as many more bigger ones that we know nothing about. I shouldn't wonder if she had to sit up at night after the children were abed and asleep to keep them warmly and neatly clothed. But what would she do if she had to make and mend the clothes of all the people in the world, big and little? And what would she do if, besides that, she had to make and mend all the clothing for all the birds and all the cattle and all the fish and all the insects and all the plants? Do you suppose she could manage to do all that? I don't believe she could, even if she sat up all night long every night in the year. And yet somebody is making and mending the clothes for all these countless crowds of creatures all the time, and giving them new suits of clothes every year, and sometimes two or three times a year. Who do you suppose this good mother is? And how do you suppose she manages to clothe her family? Let us see how she does with the birds.

If you should feel a live bird's body, you would find that it felt a great deal warmer than your hand or your face. And it is really warmer than any other living thing. You know it goes flying through the air, so that a cool breeze is blowing upon it all the time. Therefore it needs very warm clothing to prevent it from getting cold. It has just the

clothing it needs in its feathers. You know how warm feathers are and the Ptarmigan in his summer suit seems covered all over with dark-colored feathers. In winter he has a still thicker coat of white feathers to match the white snow. How does he get his clothes? How does he change them with the changing seasons of the year?

Next spring, when the mother hen has her tiny chickens, if you will look at them closely when they are only a day or two old, you will find that they do not seem to have feathers like their mother, but are covered over with soft down, more like hair than feathers. That soft down is their baby clothes, and they get it before they leave their shells, so that they are born with their baby clothes on. It grows out of their skin, just as our finger nails grow out of our skin at the end of the fingers. In the picture of the feather growing you see it coming through the cells of the skin something as the blades of grass come up through the grains of sand. The soft downy points that are to form the sides of the feather come up first, as you see in the picture, and the feathers come out later. In the next



picture of the wing of the bird you can see the feathers full-grown. You will notice how far the quills go down into the skin, something as the stalks of some plants go down into the earth. And when a bird like the ptarmigan changes its summer clothes for a thicker winter suit, the new feather grows up right in the same place where the old ones are and pushes them out, so that they fall off and you find them on the ground sometimes. That change of dress is what is called "molting," and it takes place so rapidly that in a few weeks a bird will change all its feathers and have a new suit, though the old feathers do not all come out at once, because the poor bird would be likely to freeze to death if they did.



So you see how the birds get their clothing. The bird mothers do not have to sit up nights making and mending the clothes of their little ones, because the clothing grows out of the skin of the birds, as the plants grow out of the earth. But the plants grow from seeds in the ground; and who do you suppose sowed the seeds for the feathers, and waked them up and taught them how to grow? Whoever it is that does it must be very, very busy, for you know what

countless numbers of birds there are, all having new suits of clothes every year to take the place of the old suits that get worn and torn.

But though the birds have their clothing grow for them, yet they have to take care of it for themselves. If you have ever watched canary birds, you must have noticed how often they have to fix their feathers — "preen" them, as it is called — by smoothing them out with the bill. Birds have to comb their feathers more carefully than you do your hair. For, if you let your hair go, so that it got snarled, I suppose you would not die, though you would not feel so comfortable, nor look as well as you do now. But if a bird should let his feathers become tangled and wet and dirty, he would probably die in a very short time, because his clothes would not keep him warm any longer. For the feathers are warm because they are not packed close together but are loose and have places filled with air between them. By raising the feathers and making those places larger the feathers become still warmer. If you notice a canary bird when he is asleep, you will see that his body seems much larger than when he is awake. That is because he lifts up his feathers and so makes them warmer when he goes to bed, as we put on more clothes at night. And he tucks his head under the bedclothes, too. In winter you will notice that the sparrows seem puffed out larger. They have really put on their thicker coats by raising their feathers. But the birds could not do this unless they kept their feathers clean. So they have to be always washing

them and brushing them and laying them down straight, because they cannot take them off and wash them and iron them once a week.

When a bird goes into the water, as so many birds do, he has to be still more careful of his clothes or he will get them wet through and so die of cold. All water-birds have an oil-can, or oil-gland, as it is called, located down among the tail feathers. When the bird has smoothed out his feathers, he reaches his head down to the oil-gland and gets a nip of oil in his bill and oils the feathers, so that the water will have hard work to get into them. It makes a sort of oilcloth of the feathers, so that the water runs off a duck's back instead of soaking in and wetting the duck. The pelican oils its feathers with his bill. He has been fishing for his dinner and had to dive into the water to catch the fish, but as soon as he has come out on the shore he begins to work on his feathers. It takes him about all the time to get his meals and fix his feathers.

The baby birds cannot manage their feathers so well as their mother can, and so the mother sometimes carries the little ones on her back when they get tired and wet, as the crested Grebe does. The land birds, like our domestic fowls, have so little oil on their feathers that they would get wet through very quickly. The little chickens sometimes die when they are out in a cold rain, and even the grown up hens do not like to go into the water. I remember reading once of a swan that carried a hen on her back, as the grebe carries her little ones. The swan and the

hen had each hatched out some little ducklings at the same time, and the two broods used to go around together, the hen scratching for them on land and the swan looking after them when they took to the water. But the hen seemed very much troubled when the ducklings were on the water where she could not look after them. So one day the swan came swimming up to the shore and took the hen upon her back and carried her out among the little brood, so that she could watch over them without wetting her feathers.

This scrap of valor just for play
Fronts the north-wind in waistcoat gray.

Emerson, The Titmouse.

How Birds Learn to Fly

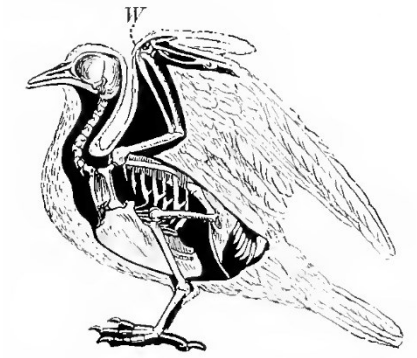
This hungry fox saw these birds resting on the shore of the lake, so he crept up to them as silently as he could, and then he suddenly sprang upon them. He thought he had surely caught one of them. But he only caught the bird's feathers, which you can still see in his mouth. The bird



herself instantly spread her large, strong wings and went flying away through the air with her mates, as you can see them doing at the right of the picture. Their wings have saved them from this hungry animal. And the wings of birds can carry them over wide lakes and oceans, and even over mountains, hundreds and hundreds of miles, and

very rapidly, too, for some of the birds can fly two or three times as fast as a railroad train goes.

You can see some of those light, yet long and strong feathers in the picture of the bird's wing. That is really the bird's arm, and the feathers are growing out of the skin of the arm. In the picture of the dove in three parts you can see the bones of the arm raised above the dove's body. The black part of this picture shows you the dove's body, and the lighter part outside is the feathers, while the lighter part inside is the bones.



If you look carefully at the dove's wing, you will notice that the wrist — marked "W" — is just above the dove's head, and the hand, which is also covered with long feathers, is folded back. When the hand and arm are straightened out, the long, wide feathers are spread out into the air like an open fan, and make a long wing, with the edge of the feathers lying over one another. If you watch your canary bird when he stretches his wings, you will see how long he can make them.

But perhaps the finest thing that Mother Nature taught her feathered children to do with their wings was to fly away to the sunny south when the cold winter came

in the northern lands. When the summer leaves have fallen and the sky is dark with storm clouds, the swallows know that the winter is at hand. So they gather in great flocks, sweeping through the air or perching on the trees or buildings, and chattering in their cheerful, excited way, as if they were all talking at once about their trip. In a day or two they have all gone, and while we are shivering in the winter's cold, where do you suppose they are? Mother Nature has guided them to the southern countries, a thousand miles away.

When the spring returns she will lead them back again, so that they will escape the parching heat of the southern summer, as well as the freezing cold of the northern winter. This long flight they must have learned about little by little, like everything else. At first when winter came, they flew only a few miles south to find better food and warmer air, and then when spring came they flew back north to their old homes again. But they found the food and climate so much better by going south in winter and north in summer, that they flew farther and farther each year, till now they will go over wide oceans even, and high mountains, each spring and fall, and nothing can keep them from starting, when the time comes. Only their little ones will sometimes hold them hack.

A man in England one fall noticed one pair of swallows linger about their nest long after all the rest had flown away. So he climbed up and looked into the nest to see what kept them. And there he found one of their children

with its foot caught fast in a hair of the nest, so that it could not get away. He thought he would leave it there to see how long the parents would stay and feed it, and so he left it till Christmas. But it grew so cold then that he took pity on the birds and cut the hair. Then all three went flying away from the cold north to the sunny south, changing winter for summer, as the other birds had already done. Perhaps they pitied the human beings they left behind them in the cold country. It may be that they thought that they were themselves the most favored of all Mother Nature's children. Certainly they seem the happiest — so happy, indeed, that their gladness overflows in the flood of song that comes rippling from their tiny breasts. I suppose their joy comes from the fact that they have dared to do the boldest and hardest thing that they could see to do. Mother Nature urged them to go higher and higher — out of the water and out of the mud; up from the ground to the trees, and up from the trees to the sky itself. They took every upward step they could see to take, and grew safer and happier with each new step.

But I think human beings have taken a higher and nobler step even than flying. When we choose to think about this world of ours and try to help make it better, we tried to do a bolder deed than flying with feathered wings. We tried to fly with our brains, to send our thoughts back to the past and learn how this world was made, so that we might understand it, and be able to make it better in the future. We have tried to send our thoughts flying to the

moon and the sun and the stars, in order to understand them. That is a far higher flight than any bird has dared. So we ought to be as happy as the birds, if we are only willing to take all the new and higher steps that we see ought to be taken with our brain — to try to help the whole world to live nobler and purer and more loving lives.

Here sits he, shaping wings to fly.

Tennyson

How Men and Birds Lay Up Food

"The Forester's Daughter" is the name of this picture. The young lady's father is the "Forester" — the man who takes care of the lands of a German nobleman. So she lives



in the country, where she can have birds for her pets. When the ground is all covered with snow, so that the birds could not find anything to eat, she gives them food. She has her apron full of something that they like very much, so that they fly right up to her and even alight on her shoulder to get it. What do you suppose it is, and where did she get it? Perhaps it is corn, or wheat, or some other grain, and I imagine that her father has a lot of it stored up in his barn or his granary. He knew that when winter came and covered the ground with snow, he and his family would want the grain for food. So he planted the grain in the spring, and when it was ripe he harvested it and stored it

up in a building he had made for it. Wherever men are civilized they lay up food in summer for the winter time, so that they may not starve. Here in Chicago we have a lot of "grain elevators," as they are called, which have been built to hold the millions of bushels of grain that the farmers raise on their farms. This grain is loaded on the cars and drawn to the elevator, and then carried up by machinery from the car to the top of the building, more than a hundred feet from the ground. From there it is poured into the great bins or rooms of the elevator, till we want it to eat, when it is drawn out of the bottom of the bins and sent to the mills to be ground into flour.

But men did not learn to make such great storehouses as these elevators all at once. They made smaller buildings first. They used to spread the stalks with the heads of grain upon the ground and drive the cattle over them to tread the grain out of the husks. Then they would toss it in the air, to let the wind blow away the straw and chaff. They did not have any threshing machines as we do now, and so they had to do it that way. When it was clean enough they put it into that box-like thing which is really a round brick building with a hole in the top to put the grain in, and another hole at the bottom to take it out, very much like one of our elevators, only a great deal smaller. The Egyptians used to have a lot of these round brick granaries built together, and fill them at harvest time and then draw out the grain, little by little, as they needed it to eat.

But before men had learned to make bricks, even, they used to store up food. To keep it safe they used to cut down tree trunks with their stone axes and drive them into the bottom of shallow lakes and build rough houses on the top of these piles, out of the reach of the waves and of animals and men on the shore. That is the way they lived in Venezuela a few years ago, and that is the way they lived in Switzerland a great many centuries ago, long before history began; only they did not have any white cloth to wear in those early times. We can still find their piles in the bottom of the Swiss lakes, and among the piles we can rake up the stone knives and stone hatchets that they used then. In some places we can find a bushel or two of grain, some nuts, and some apples cut up and dried. These things are burnt by fire, showing that the pile houses of these early men caught fire and burnt down, and the food they had gathered for the winter fell through the burnt floor into the lake, where it has lain for thousands of years. In some of the caves where men lived even before they learned how to build pile dwellings, we find little heaps of grain and dried fruit tucked away in some nook to use in the winter and then forgotten and left untouched all these ages.

So you see how men learned to lay up food, first a few handfuls of dried berries in a cave, then a few bushels of grain and nuts in a pile house, and then a few hundred bushels of wheat in the brick granaries of Egypt, till now we have millions of bushels stored up in our elevators here

in Chicago alone. No one need starve to death in winter now, as the Indians did in the story of Hiawatha, and as they must have done still more before they learned to plant corn for food. They thought that Hiawatha had given them the corn. You remember how sad his heart was because his people had nothing to eat but birds and beasts and berries and fish. For the snow and ice prevented the poor Indians from getting this food in winter. So Hiawatha prayed the gods to give his people something that they could eat even in winter, and Mondamin, the God of the Indian Corn, came down and wrestled with Hiawatha, and suffered himself to be slain. But before his death he told Hiawatha to bury him and he would rise again and grow into a beautiful plant with seeds for the people to eat, no matter how much snow and ice there might be.

And victorious Hiawatha
Made the grave as he commanded,
Stripped the garments from Mondamin,
Stripped his tattered plumage from him,
Laid him in the earth, and made it
Soft and loose and light above him;
Kept it clean from weeds and insects.
Till at length a small green feather
From the earth shot slowly upward,
Then another and another.
And before the summer ended
Stood the maize in all its beauty,

With its shining robes about it,
And its long, soft, yellow tresses;
And in rapture Hiawatha
Cried aloud, "It is Mondamin!
Yes, the friend of man, Mondamin!"

But some god has given us not only corn, but also wheat and rice and a dozen other foods that we can gather and store up in our great storehouses, so that all can be fed. If any one lacks food anywhere, as the people of India did a few years ago, we draw out the grain from our granaries and load it on a ship and send it to them. By learning to lay up food we can help each other better than ever before.

The birds, too, have learned to lay up food, but they have learned to fly so well that they do not often need to do it. When winter comes with its snow and ice they fly away to the south, where they find plenty of food.

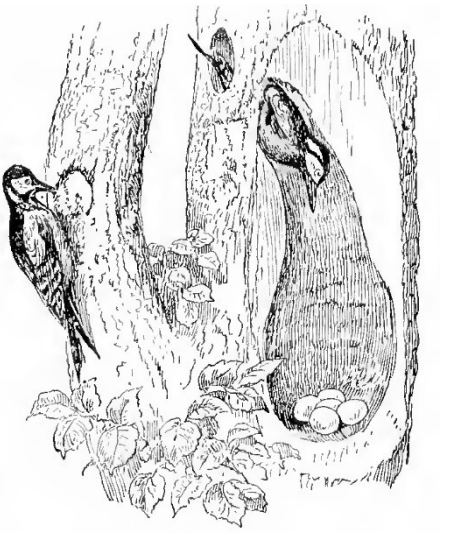
Far over purple seas
They wait, in sunny ease,
The balmy southern breeze
To bring them to their northern homes once more.

But even the birds sometimes store up food for the future. I remember how puzzled I was once by finding an acorn sticking in a little hole made in the bark of an oak tree trunk in Michigan, something as you see it in the picture of the California woodpecker found on the next page. Only the tree trunk was straight up and down. The hole exactly fitted the acorn, yet it had not been made by a knife or an auger. It looked as if it had been made by a

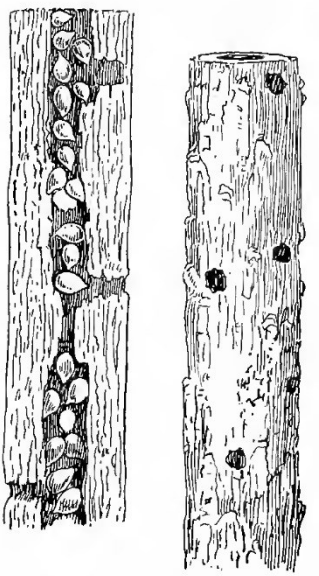
woodpecker. But if it had I could not understand how the acorn could have been pushed tightly into the hole so that only the cup end stuck out. But I have learned since that the hole had been made by a woodpecker, and that he had brought the acorn and hammered it in, that he might get it for food whenever he needed it. Our red-headed woodpeckers do not do it very often, but the California



woodpecker stores up ever so many acorns this way, just filling the bark of oak and pine trees with nuts in the fall. And sometimes they try to store them up in the boards of houses. A man in California let the birds use the end of his house for this purpose, and they sometimes made the holes in the boards so deep that when they tried to eat the nuts they lost one now and then by its dropping through into the house. But on the ground outside he found only the empty shells they had thrown away after eating the meat.



I suppose the woodpeckers store up food more than other birds because they have such a sharp, strong bill to cut into the wood with. You see in the picture of their nest how well they dig right into the middle of the tree and make a large hole for their eggs. One of them is going into the nest and the other is just beginning to make a nest. You might think they would dig out such a place as this for the nuts; but the mice and squirrels could get at them if they did. So they stick them into the bark one by one, or else they find a hollow, reed-like plant, so hard that the mice and squirrels cannot nibble it, and put them in there till they want them. In the picture of the woodpeckers' storehouse



you see the hollow stalk that these birds use in Mexico. On the right hand it is shown with the holes the birds make to put the acorns in, while on the left it is cut open so you can see the acorns in it. In the autumn, when the acorns are ripe, the birds find these plants and drill holes in them and bring acorns and drop them into the holes till the plant is full, as you see it on the left. Then, as winter comes and there is no other food, the birds come and thrust their sharp bills into the hole at the bottom and draw the nuts out one by one, sticking each one in a hole in the hark of a tree to eat it. A Swiss student saw some of these birds getting and eating the acorns this way in the spring at a place where they must have brought the nuts thirty miles, because the nearest oak trees were as far away as that.

So you see the birds have found out how to make elevators for nuts and to bring the acorns from their farms miles away and store them up till they need them, just as men do. I suppose the same wisdom that taught us taught them also.

Sow love, and taste its fruitage pure;
Sow peace, and reap its harvest bright;
Sow sunbeams on the rock and moor,
And find a harvest-home of light.

Bonar

Our Feathered Friends

By

Elizabeth Grinnell and Joseph Grinnell

Introduction

This volume really needs little by way of introduction. No one can mistake the evident love for our feathered friends, the kindly assistance that has been given them, and the success of the authors in imparting to others much of that pleasure which they have undoubtedly derived from their studies.

The same recreation lies within the power of all who through inattention and thoughtlessness neglect the almost priceless relief from daily burdens afforded by such pursuits. Everyone can learn something of the ways and doings of our little friends, even though he may never write a book or put a pen to paper concerning them.

Knowledge thus acquired is not wasted; it elevates the mind and trains the senses, so that in after life the habits of observing and noting frequently become of great use, and are never a detriment.

Our authors have set forth the wanton destruction of bird life consequent upon the use of feathers and parts of birds to ornament hats. They have in no way misstated; for tens of thousands of birds are annually offered on the altar of fashion to gratify a cruel and barbarous survival of savage adornment. Yet the male friend of the lady who

wears upon her head a gorgeous array of mutilated, misshapen, and dyed bird skins may have done something to assist in a similar destruction of bird life. As a boy perhaps he wantonly deprived some bird of her eggs; and later, when possessed of a gun, he may have shown little discretion or thought when depriving the nestling of a mother or father who alone could feed and protect it. And as a man, too often it may be, he has allowed savage instincts to dominate his acts instead of the knowledge derived from experience and thought.

It lies within the power of many who will read these pages to assist in the distribution of evidence and in the enlightenment of others, to the end that the useless slaughter of birds and the destruction of their eggs may be prevented, or at least greatly mitigated.

Within a few years past efforts have been made to have one day a year in the schools set aside to study and consider the ways and interests of our feathered friends. The matter is of national importance, and deserves the interest that has been taken in it; but without the hearty cooperation of teachers and their efforts to interest and instruct their charges, there is little likelihood of accomplishing the end desired.

Each farmer or occupier of a tract of land has it within his power to set aside some portion of otherwise non-usable land to afford shelter and concealment for many birds, and to protect those useful species that select and

require special locations in which to rear their young. The presence of birds in a locality lends a charm to the landscape which nothing else can lend. An abundance of useful and attractive species may be encouraged to remain and breed if heed is paid to their requirements, and efforts to disturb them in their orderly pursuits be prevented. With slight care such species as are not a detriment or nuisance can be assisted, and thus the value of birds as a feature of the landscape, as insect destroyers, and as vocalists can be more and more demonstrated and appreciated.

There is a book, large and bulky, yet within the reach of every one; little work is required to handle it, for its pages are always open, and it is written in the universal language. It costs nothing to read many chapters, yet, as in all good things, a little patience and some experience will assist greatly in acquiring a fair understanding of its contents. In this great Book of Nature will be found much concerning that rich and varied division of animal life to which has been given the name of Birds, and its relation to the welfare and enjoyment of humanity.

Certain helps have been invented by the experiences and intelligence of man to assist those who through inattention, unfavorable environment, or otherwise, have been unable to acquire that knowledge of this book essential to a correct understanding of their relation to animated nature.

Such a help is this little volume, which it is hoped may prove useful and instructive to many whose knowledge of bird life is small, and also be well worth a reading by those whose more extended opportunities have permitted a wider knowledge of ornithology.

WILLIAM PALMER.

National Museum,

Washington, D.C.

Seek the children, little book:
Bid them love the bird's retreat,
By the brook and woodland nook,
In the garden, in the street,
In the tree above the shed,
Underneath the old barn eaves,
In their bed high overhead,
Where their crazy-quilts are leaves.

Bid them find their secrets out,
How to understand their words.
Play the scout in woods about.
Listen slyly for the birds.
Hark! I hear a child-bird say,
Piping softly in the dell,
"You may stay and see us play,
If you only love us well."

Pasadena, Cal.

Our Feathered Friends

Chapter I

The Message of a Mocking Bird

It was in the year 1877, before any of the children who read this book were born. We were living on one of the great reservations in the Indian Territory. Someone knocked at the door. When the door was opened, there stood a little Indian girl, her head all covered up in a bright shawl. She was shy, as Indian girls were before they had seen many white people. Very timidly she drew her hand from under her shawl and gave to us a baby mocking-bird. Then she turned and ran down the prairie toward her buffalo-skin lodge not far away.

We understood. The little girl's name was Kitty-ka-tat. She had been to our house often. She knew that we liked pets of all kinds, and birds most of all, so she had captured this one for us by a kind of snare or trap. Of course we kept it, for we did not know where its nest was. We allowed it to use the whole house for a cage. It ate wherever we ate, and slept at night on the curtain pole above the window.

But the perch it liked best by day was the top of its master's head. As soon as this gentleman came in and sat down in the rocking-chair and put on his skullcap, the bird would fly to his shoulder. Sometimes it would take a nip at his ear or his hair. Then it would give a hop and a flutter, and land in the middle of the black skullcap, where it would sit for an hour if no one disturbed it. It liked to take crumbs from our hands, or bits of apple from our lips, standing on our shoulders. It bathed every day in a large pan of water placed in the middle of the carpet. Then, too wet to fly farther, it would flutter all dripping to a low stool, where it would dry its clothes after the wash. If a door chanced to be left open, the bird would fly to the top of it and preen its feathers and look about at us below in a very pretty way. So you see the little thing really washed and dried and ironed its clothes.

One day when it was perched on the top of the hall door, as happy as could be, a gust of wind quickly blew the door shut, with a loud noise. The bird gave a sharp scream and flew to the window. We looked and saw a strange sight, — a mocking-bird without a tail.

The little bundle of feathers had been shut in at the top of the door when the wind closed it; and there sat poor birdie, a mere chunk of a darling, turning its head from side to side and looking sadly back at the place where its tail had once been.

We opened the door, and down fluttered every one of the beautiful feathers. Birdie eyed them with a puzzled look, canting its head, as though it were saying, "I don't understand it at all." Then it looked backward again in a very pitiful way. We couldn't help laughing, though we were so sorry for the bird. In a short time the feathers grew again, and the little fellow showed great care in preening them and placing them just as it thought they ought to grow.

After a while there came to be a little baby in the house, and the mocking-bird seemed to understand. Two grown-up people had been its only friends before, but it was never afraid of the stranger baby from the first time it saw him. It would fly from any perch to where the baby lay, and peep into the baby's face in the sweetest way, as if saying, "Glad to see you, little man." Then it would twitter a low song, which sounded very much as if it were singing, "Little one, when you grow up, be kind to the birds and love them."

"Be kind to the birds and love them" was the little mocking-bird's message, or so it seemed to us.

The baby and his mother never forgot the message of the mocking-bird. They have loved birds ever since. That is why they are writing this book about birds for the children.

Chapter II

Some People We Like to Know

We are always interested in our nearest neighbors. "Who lives in the next house?" we ask. "Are they pleasant persons to know?" and "How many children are there?"

These are questions one commonly asks. But we are not speaking just now of men and women and children who live near us on our street. We are speaking of people all about us in our yard, and in your yard perhaps, — little, winged, beautiful people, who make it so pleasant with song and chirp and flutter, — the birds.

We like to think of the birds as creatures better and more lovable than lizards and worms and other crawling things. We know a lady who calls them "Angels," because they have wings and seem to fly far off into heaven. No one ever jumps away from a bird, as some foolish people do from a snake or a mouse. Most snakes and mice are as harmless as birds, but they do not win their way to our hearts as the birds do.

The yard or field that has the most trees and shrubs in it will also have the most and the merriest birds. Very few birds choose to live on a desert. They like shade and grass

and flowers as well as we do, and fruit trees and berry bushes, and the sound of life and fun.

When we see a big tree chopped down, we think of the birds who will miss it. Watch them yourselves. See how they light on the fallen boughs, and peep sadly under the wilting leaves, and twitter about their loss. Birds are like ourselves; they like to live in the places that are familiar to them, because here they feel at home and safe. We sometimes think we can hear them singing, "My country, 'tis of thee, — of thee I sing."

Their "country" is our yard, and your yard, or the woods or the city streets and house roofs, and they love it. We should respect their rights and let them have their little "America" in peace. We can apply the Golden Rule as well to our treatment of the birds as to one another.

There are enemies which are very troublesome to the birds. Two or three hawks, some owls, and a few boys, delight in scaring or killing them. We have never seen a little girl harm a bird, and we know many boys, as well, who would not hurt a bird "on purpose." Their worst enemies are the cats.

These enemies do not come sailing over into the birds' country in ships, or marching up the coast in troops, carrying guns and beating drums and making a great noise. They are cowardly, sneaking enemies. They jump one at a time over hedges and fences, and they crawl under bushes barefoot, and dart across the street when no one is looking.

They are so still, gliding on their soft feet, that no one of the bird family can hear them coming. So whole nestfuls of baby birds are gone before their mothers know it.

Cats have learned that they are not welcome in our yard. If one of them slips in before we are up in the morning, the birds tell us by a sort of "shriek," and we hurry to help them. We have seen six or seven different kinds of birds crying at a cat and flying at him at one time. They even nip at his back, and dart up so quickly that the cat has no chance to spring at them. The orioles and mocking-birds are our best watchdogs, screaming with very angry voices at sight of a cat, and warning all the other birds in the yard to "look out."

We have read how wild beasts from the jungle prowl around the homes of India to snatch the children and carry them off. How careful the mothers must be, always watching for the cruel animals and dreading their quick spring!

The mother birds in our yard are like those human mothers in India. You have only to watch them when a cat comes prowling around to see how very much like human mothers they are. They scream and dart about in fright, and if you go near they will fly not from you, but toward the cat. They are asking you for help.

Birds near your house soon learn to know the family if everyone is kind to them, when they have once learned that you are their friend. They will allow you to call while

they are eating their meals, or to watch them while nest-building, although they may be almost within reach of your hand. They will even wait around the door for you to shake the tablecloth after dinner, or to throw out the contents of the crumb-pan, hopping about at your feet without a thought of fear.

We never can learn all there is to know about birds. We can know only a little about them if we study them all our lives.

There is a great professor in a California university who has been trying all his life to get acquainted with fishes, and yet he says he has much more to learn about them. Very little people, like birds and fishes and insects, can interest very great men, and we often see the greatest men the kindest to small creatures.

We speak of birds in this book as "people," because they seem very near to us. They are beings who think and plan and love, and who know what it is to be sorry or glad, just like ourselves.

Chapter III

Civilized Birds

In new parts of the country we do not find so many birds living near houses as we find in older towns. Where there is much wooded or uncultivated land for them to live and nest in, the birds prefer to stay at some distance from us. But after the fields are all ploughed, and the trees cut down, they become civilized and learn to love our gardens and barns and houses.

We speak of birds as "wild" or "civilized," just as we speak of the races of men. The birds in our yard are civilized. They will eat cooked food if we give it to them. They will bathe in a tub, if it is handy, as if it were a brook in the woods. They will nest in cozy nooks about the home in the vines and under the barn eaves, or in little houses which we build for them and set up on poles or in the arbors. They will follow the furrow which the plough makes, looking for worms, and will help themselves to our fruit without waiting for an invitation.

Many of them soon learn to prefer the barn-yard to the field, and will hop about with the chickens under the horse's feet. The sparrows and towhees come every day when the cow eats her pail of bran. They gather about

close to her head and watch for her to finish her meal, very much as you have seen one dog watch another dog at his bone. When the cow is done, the birds take possession of her pail and pick out every crumb she has left.

The blackbird is more civilized than most other birds. You are all acquainted with him, for we find him at home almost everywhere. Though he dresses differently in different parts of the country, he is always a blackbird. Where we live he has a white eye, like a tricky horse. He likes the company of sheep and cattle in our pastures and lanes.

We have seen these birds taking a free ride all over the fields, while the good-natured animals seemed to like it and did not try to shake them off. Once we laughed merrily when we saw a whole flock of blackbirds taking a ride "pig back," while the pigs rooted away in the ground, paying no attention to the birds on their backs.

Once when we were in Sitka, Alaska, a long way from home, we went out very early to watch the birds. We saw a great black raven on the back of a donkey that had been lying down all night on a bed of straw. The raven pecked the donkey's back and made him get up from his warm bed. Then the hungry bird made a breakfast of the insects that had crept under the donkey during the cold night to share his warmth. We were told that this raven was in the habit of getting his breakfast in this way.

In nesting time civilized birds are glad to get the odds and ends of strings and cotton which we give them. They chirp about it while they pull at the twine, as if they were saying, "What a blessing it is to live among civilized people, who give us strings and other things to make our cradles of."

They like to scratch in the hay and chaff for kernels of grain. When you see the birds about the barn- doors, or under the shed at the grain, watch them and notice that they do not really scratch, as at first sight they seem to do, but hop quickly on both feet with their toes spread far apart. They hop so fast that you can scarcely see their feet through the flying chaff.

It is hard to be quite certain whether a bird walks or hops when it is after its food on the ground. Some of them, like the sparrows and towhees, have a quick, jerky pace that looks like a very fast run.

Some birds never run or hop on their feet. The fly-catchers and humming-birds belong to this class. Yet these birds are not cripples. Their tiny legs are fitted only to hold them on the perch. If they wish to catch an insect the length of their bill away, they will fly to get it, just as if it were across the yard. Their wings are so strong and move so quickly that these birds do not need to walk or run. They sip their honey or snatch flies and spiders while on the wing.

All birds are alike in many habits, just as people all over the world have some ways in common. Yet there are some birds who are very different from all others. Indeed, there are so many things to know about them, that it is difficult to know just where to begin.

What kind of clothes do birds wear? What do they eat, and when is their meal-time, and how do they fly? How do they make their nurseries or nests, and how do they know just how large these ought to be? Do birds talk and laugh and play at games? What sort of a mother does a bird make, and what do the father birds think of the babies? Do birds have a childhood after their babyhood, and are they allowed by their parents to grow up idle and helpless? Will our wild birds grow tame and trustful if we love and pet them, and do they learn to prefer such food as we eat ourselves? In short, does it pay to cultivate the acquaintance of birds and to think of them as people?

We will talk about these things in this little book, and when we are done, perhaps you will wonder that you did not get up earlier and know more about the beautiful little winged people in your yard.

Chapter IV

How Birds Dress

In temperate climates like this birds do not dress in such bright colors as they do in hot countries. Their coats and gowns are plainer. There are few extremes in color here, as there are few extremes in heat or cold.

We can tell almost any race or class of people by their style of dress or lack of dress. We can name the trees and shrubs and vines by their foliage, which is really their dress; so we know the different kinds of birds by their plumage or dress.

Many birds resemble in color the haunts or places which they like the best. Desert birds are pale or gray, like the sand. Many of those in the tropics are dressed in gay colors, like the bright blossoms about them, while many birds in the cold north are white like the snow. By this we see that in all nature, and especially among the bird people, dress is of great importance.

Some of the larger and coarser birds have been accused of being very untidy about their dress. They do not seem to care how they look, and do not show their clothes off proudly as others do. But people who think this have not

observed them very closely. Birds like the hawks and vultures are really very neat and tidy.

Turkey buzzards look very ugly and rough at first glance, but their plumage is suited to their needs, and they take great pains to be clean.

You will notice that the buzzard has no feathers on his head and neck, and it is this lack of hat or bonnet that makes this bird look so odd and unlovely. But we must not be in a hurry to blame him for this, nor call him hard names because he does not happen to wear a collar or head-dress. There are some things which we do not understand unless we first ask questions or get better acquainted with people.

You see the buzzard, like the scavengers who clean up our dirty streets, is always at work on dead things and scraps of garbage which we do not want. We respect him for doing a very necessary sort of work. He must dress to suit his occupation, like other sensible people, though we cannot help wishing the buzzard had a suit of Sunday clothes.

He wears nothing on his head because he is obliged to reach far in beneath bones and thick skin in search of food. If he wore a head-dress, like his neighbors, it would get very foul and ill-smelling, and we should think him far more untidy than he is. As it is, he can slip his naked head into marrow bones and out again without much trouble, and not be afraid of spoiling his hat, as other birds would.

We would not care to be daily companions of the buzzard and the carrion crow, although they are useful and interesting birds. We would prefer to be in the company of better dressed and better bred people.

Most of the birds we know think a great deal about their dress. They work much of their time to keep it tidy and in good order. They mend their clothes, too, although they do not use a needle and thread. A little girl we know laughed heartily one day when we told her that the robin mends her dress when it is torn.

The little girl had only to watch and see that Mrs. and Miss Robin, and other birds as well, smooth out and fix up the torn and rumpled feathers till they look as good as new.

Different kinds of birds have different fashions, but these fashions never change. A bird today dresses exactly as its grandmother did, and the birds never seem to make fun of one another for being old- fashioned.

Once in a long while we find a solitary bird different in color from others of its kind. We have seen a white blue jay, and there is in our yard a brown towhee which has two white feathers in its wing. Such birds are very rare, as are people who have a spot of white hair on their heads when all the rest is dark; or albinos, that is, persons with pink eyes and very white skin, although they belong to a dark race.

Two suits of clothes a year are quite enough for most birds, while one suit is all that others can afford. But birds

are very careful of their clothes, although they never try to dress more gaily than their neighbors and friends. They only try to be clean, and so they set us a very good example.

Sit down on the grass under a tree, or on a seat in the park, and see the birds dress themselves. Every separate feather is cleaned and pulled and looked over, just as a woman cleans and stretches delicate lace and embroidery. See how the loose feathers are pulled out and dropped, like so many useless ravellings or worn threads. The bird watches the falling plume until it reaches the ground, canting her head to one side to see what becomes of her tatters, and then she goes on with her dressing.

Madam Bird manages very well to twist about and reach all of her clothes except her head-dress. Have you wondered how a bird can turn its head all around in a way that would cramp your own neck if you should try it? The neck of a bird is more flexible than yours; that is, it is furnished with more joints, so that the bird can turn its head readily and dress itself with ease.

A bird never changes the whole of its dress at once. Little by little the feathers drop out or are pulled away, so that they are not missed. If they should all come out in one day or one week, the bird would be helpless and unable to fly.

If you should attempt to smooth a bird's feathers without knowing how, you would very likely make her look very ragged. Naturalists, who know how because they

have practiced so much, can smooth and pull the feathers as well as the bird herself. They can pick up a hurt bird and by a few touches make her look respectable.

Chapter V

How Madam Bird Combs Her Hair

Madam Bird is not able to smooth her head-dress with her bill. What does she do about it? Why, she uses her foot, which serves also as her hand.

Birds are either-handed; that is, they can use the left hand or foot as well as the right. Some people think that a parrot is left-handed, because she always takes in her left hand the cracker or sugar which you offer to her. The next time you feed her, stop and see what you are doing. You are standing in front of the bird and offering her the cracker in your right hand. She is facing you, and of course takes the food with her left hand. Everybody gives her things in the same way, and she naturally uses her left hand, because we teach her to do so.

But wild birds are either handed. Watch and see how they comb their hair, first on one side and then on the other, scratching very fast, as if to get all the tangles out, but never crying, "Oh, don't!" when it pulls. We call the fine feathers "hair," because they grow on the bird's head as our hair does on our own.

See how Mrs. Bird lifts her crown and separates the soft feathers, and fixes her frizzes or bangs, if she wears

them. After she has combed her hair this way long enough, she smooths it down in good order with her hair dressing, as you will see later on.

Did you ever notice a bird wash its ears? That is enough to make you smile, but we assure you it does wash its ears and all around its mouth after its meals, and between meals as often as it is necessary.

Watch your tame canary; he is very much like wild birds in habits of neatness. See him stand on one foot and reach the other foot up quickly between the long feathers of his wing and dig away at his ears, just as if his mother had told him to "get ready for school."

We have laughed many a time to see him wash himself, he does it so deftly and cheerfully, as if it were the greatest fun in the world. Then, to get the corners of his mouth clean, he wipes them on his towel. His towel is his perch or any cross-bar in the cage. You may say he is "sharpening his bill," but he is really wiping his face. He has probably washed it in his bath a few minutes before.

Some birds wear their hair done up high on their heads like a "pug," — the "crest" as we call it, standing out like the twist of the fashion. Others, such as our mountain quail, prefer something like a Chinaman's queue or the revolutionary braids. Others still comb their hair down plain and neat like little Quakers.

But whichever way a bird dresses its head, it is always becoming and pretty. We have watched birds dressing

themselves, sitting or standing on the edge of the tub under the hydrant, or at the brook or puddle, and we have wondered if they were not looking at themselves in the water, flirting and twisting and turning about just like real people at a looking-glass.

Most birds wear short dresses or skirts in true walking style, while a few prefer the trail. But one thing we have noticed: they never allow the trail to drag in the dust or mud, not even the road-runner, whose train is sometimes twelve inches long.

A mocking-bird or a robin will let her train just touch the ground when she stretches up to look about her; but when she begins to walk again she lifts it. So you never see the tip of the longest tail one bit draggled, unless the bird is wounded or sick.

If you watch closely, you will learn to tell a male bird from a female bird by its dress. To be sure, his coat skirts are cut so much like the dress of his mate that we sometimes have to imagine a good deal to see any difference.

But, as a rule, you can tell the male or gentleman bird because he dresses so much more brightly than his mate, although we do not think he spends quite so much time as she in fixing and mending his clothes and in bathing. The lady bird works harder than her mate in going to market to get lumber and nails for her house or cradle, and so she soils her clothes more. Then she sits longer in the nest and

works harder in many ways, never once thinking about putting on an apron.

You must not think too hard of the gentleman birds for letting their mates do the most of the home work, for you remember that it is the male who must always be ready for his place in the orchestra at a moment's notice. He is obliged to make most of the music, and if he should neglect his duty he would probably lose his place and be put out of the choir.

A singer bird has no notes spread out before him, but must go over and over his part, until he knows it by heart with no one to prompt him.

You need not be surprised because we said a bird must get lumber and nails for her house or cradle. If she did not have lumber and nails, she could not do her work. Of course you never hear her pounding with a hammer, still she uses what may be called nails, as you shall see by and by.

I should not have to change my dress
Were I a bird in yonder tree,
And say, "Excuse me, if you please,"
When callers come to visit me.
But I would fly upon a bough.
And say, "My dear, come right up here."
And we would sit and swing and chat
Beneath the sky so blue and clear.

Chapter VI

What Birds Carry in their Pockets

Some birds wear on their heads plumes, or bright and showy hats. These they sometimes lift in true bird style. There is the ruby-crowned kinglet which one sees in the garden trees. When this little king lifts his hat, he shows what looks like a ruby crown or jewel on top of his head.

Other birds wear cocked hats, or tall silk hats with waving plumes. You can imagine almost anything you like in the dress of a bird, from his hat to his shoes. When a bird who wears a hat is surprised by another bird, or is angry, or when he wants to "show off" to his mate while paying his respects to her, he lifts the feathers on the top of his head; and this is what we call "lifting his hat."

Many of our merry little bird friends, both male and female, wear bonnets or hoods, which we think are tied closely under the chin. Others, like the woodpeckers, wear collars of lace. This lace is made of loose, filmy feathers, as different from the feathers of the breast or back as embroidery is different from closely woven cloth.

When a warm day comes, you will see the birds lift their wings and hold their feathers close, and pant with their bills open. How tired they look, and the song or

twitter which you hear is a weary one, as if they were saying, "The oldest inhabitant never saw so warm a day." In a cold snap the dress fluffs out, and the bird looks much larger than he did on the warm day. It seems as if he were saying, "See me make my wraps as big and thick as I can."

Many of the birds that sit up and fly about all the long cold night are more warmly clothed than most day birds, who tuck themselves into bed as soon as the sun sets. Examine the owls and see how warmly they dress. Many of them wear trousers of feathers, reaching to the knees or coming low down to the ankles. Often their feet are covered with feathers down to their sharp claws. Their necks, too, are all wrapped up with feathers, like comforters or woolen scarfs, so that only the bill may be seen.

It gets pretty cold in the middle of the night, and Mr. Owl knows how to wrap himself up. Besides, with these thick, soft feathers he can fly after his prey without making any noise.

A bird's shoes and stockings are strong and never seem to wear out. If they become worn, they are mended so quickly you never know the difference. The foot and leg are covered with scales, like the scales on a lizard.

Birds and lizards are much alike; in fact, they are a sort of cousin or distant relative, so that they dress alike in the matter of shoes and stockings. Only the lizard wears scales all over, while a bird wears them only for shoes and

stockings. The bird has found out that feathers are better for flying in the air, while the lizard, crawling as he always does, is perfectly happy with only scales for clothes.

All birds, big and little, wear warm, fleecy underclothes, better and softer than flannel. You can see bits of these underclothes at the bottoms of the knee trousers or dresses, or, if you happen to be holding a bird in your hand, you can part the outer clothes and see and feel the delicate down. Sometimes, when a bird ruffles his outer garments in washing himself, the soft warm underclothes are in plain sight.

Birds never use complexion powders; that, no doubt, would seem very vulgar to them. But they do use hair oil every day. They carry this mixture about with them in their pockets. By pockets we mean little pouches or sacks which always lie on the back, near the tail. Birds would not be quite dressed without their pockets, and they know where to find them without any trouble. We suppose this is because birds' pockets have always been in the same place.

If it looks like rain, the "hair oil," as we call it, is used more freely. Suppose the lady bird wishes to oil the back of her head and around her face. Of course she is not able to take up the bottle and pour the oil into her hand; but she squeezes a little out with her beak, as you would press a rubber bulb. Then she lays the oil on her back just above her wings.

To get the oil all about where she wishes to put it, she rubs her head against it, twisting and turning her neck, until all the feathers of her head are straight and shining.

When a shower comes, the water falls or slides down the bird's back and shoulders on the oil, never finding its wet way beneath to the underclothing. Birds are like those people who live in the cold and wet north. The Eskimo are said to rub their whole bodies with seal or fish oil to keep themselves from being wet.

Bird babies seldom have any clothing to begin life with. A few, such as the walkers and waders and most of the swimmers, like quail and sandpipers and ducks, are covered with thick down when they come out of their shell.

Many of the bird babies in our yard have hardly a trace of the finest down, while others have a little of it in patches, like tiny shirts or bibs. Birds which have no clothes are hatched in the warmest nests, and are close to the mother's breast almost all the time, until their clothes have time to grow. They do not have oil in their pockets until they have feathers to put it on.

A baby bird has such a wide mouth that he looks very odd. But then, you see, his mouth is wide on purpose, so that the parent birds can drop the food in quickly. If the parents had to hunt around to find six or eight little mouths, many a nice bug or worm would get away and the babies go hungry.

Look into a nest and see that four or five open bills are as much of the young birds as you can catch sight of above the edge of the nest. Each is trying to open his mouth a little wider than his brothers and sisters so that it can get the first mouthful. We have often wondered how the mother knows which bird to feed when she comes to the nest. We spent two or three days once to be quite sure that she fed all alike. She fed them in turn, even though she returned many times, not once giving the last one another bite until she had been all around. We do not know whether she counts them or calls them by name, but she makes no mistake in feeding them.

We saw a humming-bird mother one day stand on the head of one little baby birdling while she fed the other. Not all of her weight was on the bird, of course, but quite enough to make him keep out of her way while she fed his brother.

A baby bird gains nothing by teasing and coaxing; it must wait for its turn to come, no matter how hungry it happens to be. It is probably more greedy than hungry when it wants to get more than its share.

Chapter VII

Child Birds

During childhood, that is, during the first season, most birds look quite different from their parents. Many of them do not get the color or texture of grown-up birds for a year or more.

You can soon learn to tell which are the children among the birds by what they wear and by the way they talk. Their voices are childish and coaxing. They sometimes cry, and call in piping tones even after they have learned to fly to the highest tree, or to soar far into the blue sky, just to see how high they can go.

We have sometimes thought that bird children play at games of hide-and-seek among the bushes, and that they try to see which one of them can jump the farthest. Watch them for yourselves, and you will see such fun as will make you laugh.

Birds are like other children, they get hungry very often at their play. We have seen whole broods of young orioles following the old birds about and teasing for food long after the next nest of birdlings was hatched. These teasing children were as large as their parents, and might

better have been feeding their younger brothers and sisters.

Parent birds often drive their young away from them, and eat the food which they have caught themselves right before the children, as if to say, "Go, find some for yourselves."

In Southern California, where we live, in midsummer the yard seems full of young linnets coaxing from daylight till dark. All the limbs of the trees are alive with them. They stand in rows, with their mouths wide open, and we wonder how the old birds can take care of so many children at once. We see the birds teasing one another sometimes, as if they were saying, "Tommy dear," or, "Susy dear, please divide your lunch."

So we see that birds have a childhood as well as a babyhood, but it is very short, for they are soon taught to work hard and to be self-supporting.

A lazy young bird never gets on in the world. Parent birds are very kind but firm. It sounds as if they were sometimes scolding good-naturedly. We imagine them saying to their children, "We have shown you the seeds and the berries, now go to work. If you want food, help yourselves; for we have been to market for you long enough. Dress yourselves, too. See how you each have a bottle of oil. Now be neat and careful of your clothes, for it will be a long while before you get any more."

We have seen young birds make very awkward attempts at dressing themselves. Sitting in a tree, they try to imitate the old birds, fluttering and turning about, and rubbing their small heads on their shoulders, and falling off from the branch in their excitement.

It is this daily care of their clothes that makes birds so beautiful. It seems to us that they know very well that they will not be able to get a new suit very often, and that they must take good care of those clothes they have. We have never seen child birds smear their food over their faces and clothes, not even when they were eating bread and butter and stewed blackberries. It may seem funny to you that birds should eat bread and butter and stewed blackberries, as if they were cooks and housekeepers. But they really do, as you shall see by and by.

Little birds pay attention to what is said to them. They learn their lessons well, and they "say their pieces" like any child, and, like children, they seem to make mistakes at first. They do not take their dinner-pails and go long distances to school. They learn at home with their fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters.

The school-house is anywhere, in the yard or the woods or fields. If you take the trouble to listen and keep very quiet in midsummer, you will be able to see and hear these bird schools going on at a rate that will make you smile and think that birds are real people.

You can see the children in the nests or on the branches of trees, or even on the ground, learning musical notes, and the letters of their alphabet, and running the bird scale, just like any class in school. Every now and then you will see them skip out for a drink of water at the pump or brook. They may not hurry back at once, but stop to look at themselves in the water and to frolic about in the ferns and grass.

Birds have a very happy childhood. It will pay any child or grown person to spend a whole summer or autumn in studying them and their ways. This would be much better than wishing one could go somewhere, when one hasn't the money to go with, or being unhappy because one hasn't fine clothes and houses.

Young birds do not seem to be very much afraid of us. They only look a little surprised and try to hop a bit faster if we go too near them.

See how queer the tops of their heads look, with the baby down still sticking out in little tufts through the thicker feathers. Their lips, too, along the edges of the bill! —how yellow they are, as though they had just been eating new spring butter.

Those soft yellow lips will soon turn dark and hard from use, just as a real baby's feet lose their pink softness and grow callous when the child goes barefoot a while.

Altogether, bird children are very interesting, and one who loves them never gets tired of watching them. There

is something new and charming to learn every day. We wonder that there are any unhappy or cross or sulky people in the world, when they may have the birds to teach them better.

There is many a kind little boy who picks up a child bird and puts it in a high place out of reach of cats and naughty boys. These may be sure that the mother bird will find her young one, and you may hear her thanking you, if you listen. Besides, every time a boy is good to a child bird he has made his own childhood richer and happier.

O happy little bird-child, full of life and glee,
Won't you stay this summer in the yard with me?
You shall have some berries when the berries grow;
Berries don't hurt children — mother told me so.

Chapter VIII

How Baby Birds are Fed

Some of the baby birds are nurslings, like the lambs and colts. They are dependent upon what the parent birds first eat and digest. Others eat just what the old birds do from the start. Only you will notice that the mother bird pounds and bruises the food she gives to her young, tapping it on the edge of the nest or on a twig or the ground until it is soft enough for the birds to swallow without danger of scratching their tender throats.

Linnets, pigeons, humming-birds, and some of the finches, are nurslings. The food is prepared for them by the parent birds, and the young are fed by the old bird's bill. We imagine that the bill of the parent bird is the nursing-bottle. The old birds first eat food themselves, and then work it over in their crops into a sort of paste or milky fluid. Then, when the meal is all ready, they alight on the edge of the nest and feed the babies. We have seen humming-bird mothers feed the babies while poised on their wings above the nest.

Perhaps there are four or five finches all clamoring for breakfast, crying, and stretching their little necks up as high as possible. The old bird on the edge of the nest looks

at the open mouths of all her babies, and begins at the one she thinks is the hungriest. She puts the nursing-bottle, which is her bill, far down the throat of the nursling, clinging fast to the nest or twig with her toes, and moving her bill up and down, her own throat throbbing all the while.

We once saw a humming-bird feed one of her young ones and then fly away. During her absence the little birds changed places in the nest, turning completely around. When the mother came back to finish giving them their breakfast, she made no mistake, but fed the hungry one, though both had their bills wide open.

When the mother has fed one child as much as she thinks is its share, she turns to the next open mouth. In this way she nurses the whole cradleful, who seem never to be satisfied.

We have seen no "runts" or dwarf birds in a family, as are sometimes seen in a nest of pigs or puppies. The parent birds seem to understand, and to see that each baby has its proper share and not a crumb more. They do not love one better than another.

Some birds keep on nursing their young long after we think the lazy children are large enough to be looking out for themselves. It would be no better than they deserve if they had to go hungry sometimes. We think they often must get very hungry before they have learned to work for

their board. This is all right, for if the parents kept on supporting them, what useless creatures they would be!

We shall tell you after a while about our bird's restaurant. We have seen the young birds follow their mother to the table at this restaurant and stand coaxing for the crumbs. At first the mocking-bird mother picks up the food and puts it in the young- bird's mouth, and then she flies away. She has given it only a little, just to show the little bird where the food is and how to pick it up himself. There he will stand, looking at the cookie crumbs and teasing as loud as he can, but the mother will not come back. She sits in a tree near by watching to see how her bird child learns his first lesson at helping himself.

After a while, the young bird gets very hungry and begins pecking for the crumbs. At first he makes very awkward attempts at grabbing a crumb, but he succeeds at last and swallows the rest of his breakfast. We laugh, sitting in the shade watching him, and we think his mother is laughing too, in the tree above.

Those birds that do not nurse their young with liquid food are supposed to give them water as well as food, by bringing it to them in their beaks, though we have not seen them do so. Probably the babies are fed on soft worms and fruits until they have cut their first teeth.

How can the little things eat hard seeds and bones before they have any teeth? Does it make you smile and

wonder when we speak of baby birds cutting their teeth? Don't you suppose birds have teeth? Of course they have.

Every bird has a set of false teeth working out of sight. Birds never have the toothache, and they do not have to be brave and hold still while somebody pulls their teeth out. They can have a new set of teeth as often as they need them, without paying a good price to the dentist.

Look along the path and you will see these teeth, lying as thick as hail in some places. Little sharp stones, coarse gravel, and fine sand, — these are the bird's teeth. When a bird picks them up, he swallows them, and they go, without any trouble, right where they belong, down to a kind of pouch or pocket called the gizzard. This pocket is lined with very tough muscles. These muscles or rings look something like a fluting-iron or washboard, and as they move they set the teeth or little stones to rolling against the food in such a way that it is soon ground into bits, or rather into paste.

It takes a baby bird a long time to learn to pick up anything with its bill. It will peck and peck at the food without being able to touch it, as we have seen many birds do when brought up in a cage, and as the little mocking-birds do at the garden table.

Once we had some pet orioles, and before we noticed what he was doing, one of them made his bill look like a hawk's bill, all curved or crooked. He had pecked so hard at the food on the board floor of his cage that the hard taps

had bent his soft bill out of shape, and it remained so after the bird had grown up. We have seen a blue jay and a thrush and a towhee, each with his beak out of shape, twisted to one side or broken. This must have been done when they were little. Birds, like other people, must have the right start if they are to be beautiful when they are older.

Though young birds can see the food before them, they have to try a long while before they know exactly how to take hold of it. They make us think of real babies trying to pick up some toy with their fat little hands. A bird's bill at first is very soft, like a baby's bones. If you feel of it, you will see that to the touch it is like a piece of rubber.

The difficulty is really more with the bird's eyes than with his bill, for it seems that, although he sees the food which he wants to eat, he cannot measure the distance correctly until he has learned how to see straight and aim right.

"Let me look in your mouth, little bird;
How many white teeth have you?
No teeth? then how do you chew your food?
Be honest and tell me true."

"My teeth are all out of sight, little boy,
They are hard and white and firm; —
Out of sight, but they grind the seeds like a mill,
And the bug, and the nice fat worm."

Chapter IX
At Meal-Time

If we had twenty birds in a cage and had to hunt for all the food they could eat, the same as they would do if they were free, we should have a busy time of it, and very likely the birds would starve.

Birds have sharp eyes. Watch the finches and see how they hop from twig to twig, pecking at tiny things which we cannot even see. These birds seem to be near-sighted, finding their dinner right under their eyes. We could not possibly see anything so near our faces.

Then there are some of the birds who seem far-sighted, seeing food at a longer distance than we could, and darting for it as quick as a flash.

It is a fact that most birds are both near-sighted and far-sighted. Their eyes are both telescopes and microscopes. Watch Madam Mocker or Mrs. Robin. She will see a grasshopper on the other side of the lawn, or a daddy-long-legs taking a sun-bath at the far end of the picket fence. The grasshopper and the daddy haven't time to get up and be off before they are surprised by Madam Bird's sharp bill.

Birds, like other people, must work if they will eat, and so they go in search of the cupboard or the cellar, and it is sometimes hard work to find them. The cupboard is anywhere in a dry place, and the door is never locked. The

cellar is almost anywhere, too, where it is cool and damp, under the grass and chips and down in cracks between logs and boards. The food in the cellar is very unlike the food in the cupboard.

There are some insects that never see the light and cannot bear the sunshine. They are usually soft, tender things, and live where it is moist and cool. We call these the food in the bird's cellar. There are other insects that love the dry air, where it is warm, the bark of trees and the hot sand, and these we call the food in the bird's cupboard.

Birds spend nearly all their time in hunting for something to eat. Life seems to be one long picnic for them. They digest rapidly. Their food is found and picked up in very small quantities, excepting the food of the gourmands like the buzzards. These birds are certainly not very tidy or nice about their meals. They eat as much as they possibly can, and then sit about on the low fences, or even on the ground, too full and heavy to fly away.

Birds have sharp ears and can hear bugs and worms long before they can be seen. The woodpecker listens for the grubs with his ear close to the bark of the trees. But woodpeckers are not always after grubs when you see them running up and down a tree trunk and pecking holes in the bark. They like the inner skin of the bark for food, and the sap-suckers drink the sap of the tree.

Watch the robin or the mocking-bird on the lawn. You have been sprinkling that lawn for two weeks in

midsummer, just to make the grass nice and green. Perhaps you did not think that you were making it easy for the birds to get something to eat in a dry time. But you see that your sprinkling or watering has made the turf mellow and soft, so that the worms can crawl up to the surface more easily than if it were dry. And the birds are making the most of your kindness, as you see.

See how that little bird cants his head and listens. We imagine him holding up his hand and saying, "Don't move, please, nor do anything to scare this worm away. I hear it coming up to the top of the ground, and I am very hungry."

Once we saw a very funny sight. A mocking-bird in the yard had grown very tame and had nested close by, taking no pains to fly away from us. She soon came to know that we had something for her to eat when we called, "Come, Chickie," and she would fly close to us with eager eyes, not at all afraid.

Every night at sundown, which is the bird's supper-time, we went to the summer-house and turned over the empty flower-pots. Under these pots little black bugs were hiding, but more especially the saw-bugs, soft, gray, crawling things. The mocking-bird would follow us as fast as she could, picking up the bugs for her young. When she had a mouth full of the wriggling insects, she would go and feed them to her babies and come back again to the moist places under the pots, until every bug was captured.

Once there were more bugs under one pot than she could possibly carry at one time, and she was in great trouble to know what to do about it. She swallowed as many as she wanted herself, and then she began cramming her mouth full for the babies. The bugs looked so tempting, and there were so many, she did not like to lose any of them, and so she kept on picking them up. After her mouth was as full as it could hold, the bugs kept falling out at the sides of her bill, and she would pick them up again over and over without knowing it, until we scared her away by our laughing.

Some birds, as we have said, such as the owls, take their food whole. Of course, bones, hair, and feathers cannot be digested, so after a time they are thrown up in the shape of little balls, called "castings," and by examining them we can find out exactly what the bird has been eating.

Most of the birds we are acquainted with pick their food very carefully, and eat only that which will digest without trouble. You can see them hold it down with one foot, looking at it closely to be quite sure that it is really good to eat. They often pull it to shreds and swallow it in little bits. If it is a butterfly dinner, the wings are torn off and sent floating to the ground. If it is a grasshopper supper, the tough, wiry legs of the insect are thrown away, and only the rich, luscious breast and fat thighs are eaten.

In California we have the pepper tree, which is all covered with clusters of red berries. Under the thin, red

skin is a sweet, soft pulp which covers the seed. The pulp is all there is of the pepper berry which the birds can digest. But this is a very sweet morsel indeed, and tourist birds come a long distance to get it. Robin redbreasts come here in winter to eat our pepper berries, and then, of course, they disgorge the hard seeds, which they cannot possibly digest, just as the owls do the bones of their prey.

We think the mocking-birds have taught the robins to do this, and we have noticed the waxwings doing the same thing.

When the winter tourist birds make a raid on our yards, we can hear the tiny pepper seeds fall in a shower on our tin roofs, under the tall trees, and the door-steps will be covered. Sometimes the seeds come down so thick and fast that we can think of nothing but a hail-storm. The pepper berries ripen in mid-winter, and it is worth one's while to see a flock of robins and waxwings come into our yard. In a few days almost every pepper tree has been robbed, and nothing is left us but the brown seeds.

These, and other birds from the north who come to pay us a visit in winter, are tamer than they are at home. They seem to think that we are on our honor to be polite to strangers, and so we are.

If you watch closely, wherever you live, at some time in the year you will see visiting birds in your yard and you ought to be polite to them.

Chapter X

Seed-Eaters and Meat-Eaters

If we wish to keep one of the wild birds in a cage, we usually select one of the seed-eaters. These birds are gentle and are readily tamed. Our tame canaries are descended from the wild seed-eaters.

Seed-eating birds make us think of some nations of men who live on rice or fruit. Those who have been among these people tell us that they are gentle and kind and ready to learn.

Many birds are very fond of spiders. It is said that spiders are a kind of "bird medicine," and that some birds could not live without them. This seems rather hard for the spiders, but sometimes they pay the birds back. There is said to be a spider in a certain part of the world which is so large and strong that it eats birds. It lies in wait and catches small, weak birds as if they were so many flies. This seems very cruel, because we love the birds so much. But we might learn to love the spiders just as well, if we should get better acquainted with them.

When you are outdoors just after sundown, you will sometimes see a great many swifts and swallows in the air, darting around in great circles. They do not seem to be

going anywhere or doing anything in particular. But you will find that they really have something very important on hand. They are eating their late suppers.

There are tiny insects high up where the birds are flying, whole swarms of them, and these make a delicious supper for the hungry birds.

The finches, or wild canaries, as we call them in Southern California, are among our commonest birds. These birds shell plant-seeds before swallowing them, as one can see by watching flocks of them in the sunflower patches. We have thrown hard crumbs out to them in the yard, and they have been seen to crack these crumbs all to pieces, thinking of course that there must be a shell.

The birds do not crack or break their teeth or beaks, be the seeds ever so hard, as a child would be very likely to do on a walnut. Every bird carries a nut- cracker about with him wherever he goes. If a finch gets hold of a very tough, hard seed, he slips it far back in the beak, where the angle of the jaw gives better strength or force. He can then break it easily, as you would crack the hardest nut by placing it close to the hinge of the nutcracker.

If the seed is tender or brittle, the bird pushes it to the point of his beak with his tongue and presses on it. Out drops the seed-cover to the ground, leaving the meat in the bird's bill.

Our tame canary has an original way of preparing his food. We give him cookie or bread, and he breaks off bits

and carries them to his water dish, into which he drops them. After they have soaked a little while, he goes back and picks them out and eats them. Now his teeth are not at all poor, for he cracks his canary seeds without any trouble. We think he likes a little mush for a change, and so he makes it for himself.

One sometimes wonders why our garden birds do not store away food when it is plentiful, as squirrels do. There are ever so many nice hiding-places all about. Some wild birds do hide their food, thus "laying up something for a rainy day," which we think is about the right thing for birds and other people to do.

One reason why our civilized birds do not store their food is that a supply of one kind or another is almost always to be found. Besides, many of our birds travel about so much, always going where food is, that there is no need of storing it.

The seed-eaters do not travel much, as seeds may always be found, in winter as well as in summer. Birds that depend for food upon insect life must go in search of it as the seasons change.

One sometimes thinks the birds do little else but think about meal-time. A singer will sometimes "make believe" forget, while he sits on his swaying branch, pouring out his throat full of melody, as if he did not care if he never tasted food again. But suddenly, without a hint, there is a stop in the music that doesn't belong just there, and the bird darts

to the ground. He swallows a worm or a blue- jacketed fly, and then back he goes to his perch and his song, as if he had not been interrupted at all.

We do not think it is the worst fate in the world to be eaten by a bird and made into song and chirp and flutter. We owe a good deal to the insects, which the birds we love so much could not do without. We ought to think of this and not step on a bug or worm in the path.

Birds have so many enemies that they hardly ever die of old age. We ought to think of this, and do what we can to prolong their lives. There is hardly a spot on earth so desolate that birds are not found there.

Chapter XI

Some Birds with a Bad Name

A good name is what we all want in this world. We like to have people speak well of us behind our backs. There are a few birds which have a bad name. Sometimes they deserve what is said of them, and sometimes they are quite innocent. It is always well for us to find out for ourselves if what we hear about birds is quite true.

There is a king-bird or bee-martin. Farmers think him a very wicked little fellow, catching the bees on the wing and eating greedily whole swarms of them. Mr. Farmer has not yet found out everything about the bee-martin, or he would know that he eats a good many enemies of the bees, even if he does swallow a few of the bees themselves.

We once saw these birds around our beehive and felt certain that they were eating the bees. They would dart close to the hives, snapping their bills and looking very savage. But we were willing to watch a long while, that we might be certain if we were not mistaken, and we did just right.

There was some tall grass near the hives, and we noticed swarms of strange looking black-and-blue flies all over the grass. We saw these flies dart out to the front of

the hive and kill the bees faster than the birds could have done it.

Waiting a little longer, we found that the birds were on the watch for these flies, and it was these they were catching instead of the bees at that particular time.

A certain naturalist, who has spent a good deal of time trying to find out if the bee-birds do really kill bees, has told us a little secret, which is very interesting and may lead some other people to investigate the matter. He says that he has never found a worker-bee in the stomach of a bee-bird, though he has examined a great many of them. He has found only drones, which the worker bees are very glad to get rid of and often kill, because they are lazy and eat honey without gathering any for winter.

Perhaps one reason why the bee-bird prefers the drone to the worker is because the drones have no stings.

By all this you see that it pays us to take some trouble to find out all the good there is about anybody.

However, it cannot be denied that the king-birds do eat bees, when they can find nothing they like better. We have often wondered what they do with so many stings, and why they are not poisoned by them. We have not examined a king-bird's throat to find out this secret, but a friend of ours did look at the throat of a toad which persisted in eating his bees on warm summer evenings. This man found a good many stings on the side of the toad's throat, which had caught there when he swallowed

the bees. Stings are probably not poisonous to toads and bee-birds.

Hardly anybody speaks a good word for the butcher-bird or shrike. Yet this bird is not half so bad as most people think he is. It is true that he has been caught a few times in doing very naughty things, such as making a dinner on a small chicken, or on birds weaker than himself.

But his most common food consists of insects, especially Jerusalem crickets. This great yellow cricket is an inch or two inches long, and he looks as bad as he is reported to be, for he wears a suit of clothes with brown and yellow stripes, running around, instead of up and down in the usual way for stripes. This makes one think of a convict or a convict's suit of clothes.

Now the shrike, or butcher-bird, does us a great favor by making as many meals as he can of these great crickets. These crickets are the fellows that dig holes in our potatoes while they are in the ground and bite the roots off from our pansies and other plants. The butcher-bird also eats grasshoppers and beetles, and other enemies to our roots and grains. So we see that he is more our friend than our enemy.

This bird, which we have all learned to despise so much, could teach us a good lesson in his line of work, for he is a very merciful and kind butcher. He is in the habit of killing his victim quickly, and does not hang it up alive on a thorn, as some people think he does. He probably fastens

his dinner in that way that he may pull it to pieces easier and know where to find it when he is hungry again.

The English sparrow is another bird that has a bad name, and he deserves what is said of him more than some of the other birds. He is quarrelsome and selfish and very unlovable. But in spite of this we have sometimes put him to a good use, and have grown to look upon the little tyrant as quite capable of adding to the comfort of our families.

We gathered all the sparrows' eggs we could reach every morning, and cooked them. They were delicious. We felt that it was not wrong for us to take a good many of these eggs, for there were countless more.

We found that we could tempt the hen birds to lay their eggs close to the door, by placing hay above the sills and around the window corners, just as you would make a hen's nest for Mistress Biddy.

California farmers complain a good deal about the linnets. One man whom we know spent whole days in March killing the linnets, because he thought they were eating up his peach buds. In late summer we went over to see him, and what do you think he was doing? We found him pulling off half of the little peaches and throwing them on the ground.

"Good morning, sir," we said, stopping at the street along the edge of the field. "What are you doing?"

He looked up and answered, "Oh, I am thinning out the peaches. They are too thick on the boughs, and they

will grow larger if there are only half as many left. We always have to thin them out in this way before fall."

"But, sir," we said, "don't you think it would have saved you some trouble if you had let the linnets thin the peaches for you in the spring? They would have eaten more insects than peaches, too, and not have charged you a dollar for all their work."

The man looked surprised and scratched his head in a sorry sort of way. Then he said, "Why, I never thought of that. I was told that the linnets do a great deal of damage. I will get them to take care of my peach orchard next year. I am sorry I made such a mistake."

Chapter XII

Before Breakfast

"Ring the breakfast bell," cried Madam Towhee, "the sun is nearly up. Rap on your tree, Mr. Flicker, and wake up the linnets."

"You are late yourself, Mrs. Towhee," said Mrs. Linnet; "my children have had their breakfast already."

Mr. Flicker opened his sharp eyes and admired his sharp tail shafts. Then he peeped from behind his tree and called out, "Mr. Mocker kept me awake an hour in the night serenading young Mr. and Mrs. Sparrow. That is why I slept so late."

Mr. Mocker, in the top of his house, rang the breakfast bell. It sounded like the linnet and the towhee and the flicker and the robin all together. The mocker laughed, too, like a dozen birds, keeping his clapper going until the other people in the yard could scarcely hear their own voices.

Up jumped little Mrs. Humming-bird and snatched a dewdrop from the cup of a morning-glory on the trellis. "I prefer to drink distilled water," she said, wiping her mouth.

"I like to drink from the hydrant," said Madam Linnet. "Any water is good enough for me." Then she tilted herself on the top of the hydrant and swallowed three drops as they fell from the pipe.

"What makes you always turn a somersault on the top of the hydrant?" asked Mrs. Towhee. "It doesn't look polite to stoop over like that, and drink with your head down."

"I don't drink with my mouth on the edge of the cup, like some people I know," she said in reply to Mrs. Towhee. "Besides, it doesn't wet my face when the drops fall right into my mouth like this. I like to turn upside down, too; it is good exercise for the muscles. What's the use of a bird always being so proper?"

"Tut, tut!" said Mrs. Sparrow, "see how I drink." And she stood on the edge of the puddle under the hydrant, and laid her breast in the water, and drank, and drank, wetting her face and throat all over. "I'm not afraid of a wetting," she said.

"What's all this talk about drinking?" asked old Mr. Butcher-bird, coming down on the party with a swoop of his wings that scared all the other birds back to the trees. "Don't run away," he said kindly. "I've had my breakfast." Then he began to pull tatters of lizard meat out of his bill.

"Where do you suppose I got that lizard?" he asked of a goldfinch.

"I have no idea," she answered. "I never saw a lizard up in the morning so early as this. Lizards are 'sun birds' and don't like cold, wet grass."

"Ha, ha!" laughed the butcher. "I caught him yesterday asleep, and killed him, and pinned him on a thorn. I always get my breakfast ready overnight."

"I wish I had some wine to drink," observed Mr. Oriole, sadly. "The doctor says I ought to drink wine, I feel so weak."

"What do you know about wine?" asked old Mr. Warbler, hopping along where the birds were talking. "I tasted some wine once from a broken bottle at the back door of a dram-shop, and it made me so dizzy I couldn't fly. I had to stay on the shed roof all the morning, feeling so foolish, and expecting to be caught by a cat any minute. I wouldn't drink wine."

"I would, whole bottles of it," declared Mr. Oriole, laughing till he almost cried. Then all the frightened birds came back to the hydrant.

"Too bad! too bad!" cried the warbler, wiping his eyes. "Young man, you will be sorry. I wouldn't have anything to do with a doctor who advised a young man to drink wine because he felt weak. Better go out in the field to work."

"Ha, ha!" laughed the oriole again, amused at his own joke. "See me tap my wine bottles." Then he flew to the berry patch and sipped the red juice of the ripe raspberries,

until his mouth and downy moustache were all stained, the little winebibber.

"A pretty drinker you are," said the mocker; "give us a treat."

Then all the other birds fell to tapping the berry bottles, till a lady came out of the house and cried, "Shoo!" flirting her gingham apron at them and rattling her tin pail against the sunflower stalks in a way that made the birds know she was in earnest. Then the lady began filling her pail, while the birds watched her from behind the leaves.

"Keep still," said Mr. Robin; "she'll never see them all. There'll be plenty left. There are always more under the leaves. Let's go off to the strawberry bed."

So the birds flew off to the strawberry bed on the other side of the garden, and picked the ripe red side out of ever so many of the berries. Then a man came out of the house and cried, "Shoo!" just as the lady had done. But he did not begin to pick the berries. He stuck a great ugly scarecrow up in the middle of the strawberry bed, and laughed to himself as he thought how scared the birds would be when they saw it.

But the birds, sitting in the trees, laughed too, and wise old Mr. Mocker said, "He can't deceive us. We know a scarecrow from a man any day."

As soon as the man's back was turned, the birds came down and chattered in the scarecrow's face, and sat on the rim of his hat, and wiped their bills on his coat sleeve, and

made themselves very well acquainted with him. All the while the man in the house was saying to his daughter, "I guess those birds will let my strawberries alone now."

Chapter XIII

Our Birds' Restaurant. — Meals at all Hours

One day in the middle of winter someone suggested that we set up a "Birds' Restaurant" out on the lawn. It was such a funny idea that we had to laugh. After we were done laughing, we went to work, while the birds watched us, as they always do, expecting some surprise.

We set a rustic table under a tree by the summer-house. Then came the question, "What shall we put on it?" We imagined the birds all about were making remarks, and suggesting in an undertone, "Just what you eat, if you please." We remembered that the birds in our yard are civilized birds, and so of course we gave them civilized food.

If you are not well acquainted with the birds, we suppose you will be amused at our mention of bread and butter. But the birds make food a "matter of taste," like other people. They have learned to like the flavor of things they never dreamed of eating when they were wild, just as some races of men leave off eating raw flesh and eat cooked foods when they have been to school a while.

We rolled some cracker crumbs very fine. Then we crumbled a couple of seed cookies, and chopped some walnuts into bits. Then we put some stewed blackberries in a saucer, and a slice of bread and butter on a plate.

This seemed to us like a pretty "square meal" for February birds, and we stood back and smiled at the spread. Some people passing in the street smiled too, and asked if we were having "a picnic, such weather." And we were sure we heard the birds twittering. Of course chairs at our restaurant were out of the question, things were gotten up in such a hurry, owing to the "hard times" among the birds.

We stood behind a hedge and watched to see if company would come. We were not disappointed. First a pair of brown towhees hopped along and up to the edge of the table. They did not even look for chairs, but went straight for the blackberries, pecking away at the sweet morsels until they were all gone, and then looking as if they could have taken more.

"Now, Mrs. Towhee," we said, "you had better put up a few cans of blackberries for yourself next summer, if you think they are so nice." She made no answer, but looked as if she expected us to put up enough for ourselves and her too.

Then along came the sparrows. They took the bread and butter and cracker crumbs. They actually picked the butter from the bread, just as all children do who are very

fond of butter, feeling sure of another "spread" when that is gone. In less than an hour that table was cleared of every bit of food. The linnets took the walnuts and what was left of the cookies. Our birds' restaurant was a success. If we could have charged them the regular price for their meals, we should have made money at the business. But though we knew that they had pockets, we had never heard of their carrying money about with them, and so we said nothing about it.

All we ever received from our little guests by way of payment was song and twitter and pleasant company in the cold, sad part of the year, but we thought that was good pay.

We set the table over and over again during the cold spell, watching from the windows when it rained. The birds cared little if the crumbs were wet. Every winter since then we have remembered to do the same thing; and even in summer, especially in nesting time, we do not forget the restaurant.

We usually set the table at night, the last thing before going to bed, as some careful and busy housewives do, and you should hear and see the fun at sunrise. The table will be all covered with birds of every size and color living near, and they are as good-natured as can be. Food by the saucerful disappears in almost a twinkling, and the birds surround the empty board when they are done, tamer than ever, and asking in coaxing tones for "more."

There have come to be more birds in that corner of the yard than anywhere else, just as you see a street thronged at meal-time about a popular eating-house in the city. We have learned a great deal about the tastes of different birds. Some of them have a "sweet tooth" as truly as any child, for they always choose the cookies or gingerbread.

One day we thought we would see how far they really were civilized in the matter of diet, and so we laid a mutton bone on the table. It was a bone that had been cooked, and had just a suspicion of meat on it left from our own dinner.

Along came the birds, of course, for they were always watching us, canting their heads to get a good look at the strange object. "What do you suppose it is?" they seemed to be asking each other. "Do you think it is safe to taste?"

But they seemed to remember that we never played a joke on them when they were hungry, and in a little while a sparrow pecked daintily at the bone. After this they all fell to eating the meat as fast as they could.

That was not the last bone that found its way to the birds' restaurant. Now we put the bones all about in the apple trees, or swing them on a string from the branches. It is great fun. If you can spare a large beef bone that has some marrow in it, just offer it to the birds in some quiet place. The first bird that gets to it will put his head in at the round tunnel in the middle of the bone, where the marrow is hidden, and you can come pretty near putting "salt on his tail" without his knowing what you are about.

You have all read that queer song Mother Goose made about the "blackbird pie." But that was a pleasant joke. The birds were never baked at all. They were put under the crust alive and well, just to surprise a great dinner party. It was only for ornament, as we put flowers in a vase and set them on the table. Shut up in the dark, in a great earthen pot, with just enough air for breathing coming in at the small holes pricked in the crust, it was no wonder the "birds began to sing" when the cover was lifted. Of course they all began to fly around the room, they were so glad to be free once more and to find that they were not "baked in a pie" at all.

It was a merry surprise for a great dinner party, and quite satisfactory, since there was plenty of food to eat besides blackbird pie. We never look at a field of blackbirds without thinking of the old rhyme and stopping to count the birds, just to see if there are exactly "twenty-four."

Here is a bit of rhyme in imitation of Mother Goose, which we fancy will fit very well when birds are bigger than boys and have pot-pie for dinner.

Sing a song o' sixpence;
A pocket full o' rye,
Four and twenty little boys
Baked in a pie.
When the pie was opened
The boys began to sing;
Wasn't that a dainty dish
To set before a king?

Chapter XIV

Umbrellas and Other Things

There is more fun than you can imagine in watching the birds in your yard for just one single day. If you are a sick child and cannot go to school, the day will never seem long when once you have begun to get acquainted with these dear little people. If you look a bird straight in the eye when you have a chance to hold one in your hand, you cannot hurt him if you have a bit of a kind heart in your jacket.

Birds' faces are sweet and happy and beautiful, even if they are covered with feathers. You will notice that they have different expressions at different times. But a bird's eye, whether it is black, or red, or white, will tell the story of its fear or happiness as plainly as your own. You may wonder how that can be, when there are no wrinkles to be seen about the face.

We have seen birds do a great many bright things, and we have seen them do stupid things as well. There are wide cracks in our woodshed, and the towhees go through these cracks to the inside in search of something to eat, or just out of curiosity.

When we open the shed door suddenly, the birds are in a great fright. They seem to have forgotten just where they came in, and they flutter about to all the cracks, trying to squeeze their way through, until they find the right one. They do this almost every day, never learning to count or to mark the crack in any way. This is very stupid of the towhees, and we laugh at their shrill squeaks, and their silly way of trying every hole without regard to their size.

These towhees are full of curiosity. There is a rabbit's cage in the yard, and the birds try all day to get in. Sometimes we leave the door ajar, and in they hop. Then what a time. Squealing and fluttering, they fly about as if they were scared nearly to death. We let them out again, and they will hop to a log nearby and preen themselves, and in five minutes they have forgotten what happened. Back they fly to the cage again, and are not satisfied till they find a way to get in.

They wait coaxingly about the door, as if they would give anything for a ticket of admission. Once a curious little towhee squeezed itself into the owl's cage, and we had hard work to get it out alive; and then what should the stupid little thing do but go straight for the canary's cage, hanging under a tree on the lawn. If we want to hold a towhee in our hands for any reason, we have but to set a cage on the grass with the door open, and in a few minutes we have the bird.

We are reminded of something about birds which John Webster wrote more than two hundred years ago. He must have been a bird lover. When speaking of a summer bird-cage in a garden, he observed, "The birds that are without, despair to get in; and the birds that are within, despair for fear they will never get out."

Did you ever stand at the window when it is raining and wonder what the birds do without umbrellas? Of course you have, but you are a little mistaken if you suppose they do not have umbrellas and parasols. Their umbrellas are all about, in the trees and fence corners and bushes, just where they are needed.

See the birds cuddle under a bunch of leaves during a smart shower. See them hunt for the shadiest places when the sun shines warm. Of course they do not carry their umbrellas about with them, tucked under their arms, but they fly quickly to places where they are sure the umbrellas are to be found.

Once in February a humming-bird built her frail little nest close to the path on the low limb of a tree in our yard. Now this eucalyptus tree was very nearly a hundred feet high, and we wondered that the bird built so near the ground, when she might have been so far above. We liked to fancy that she suspected we would not harm her, and that we might possibly help her some if she should happen to be in trouble. She was right, for we did help her in a way

we could not have done had she built her nest in the top of the tree.

A fierce hail storm came down from the mountains, and we knew the eggs would be destroyed if we did not protect them. There sat the tiny mother on her frail nest, the great drops of water running off from the point of her slender bill and down over her soft, small sides. We felt very sorry, but you know that just feeling sorry for those who are in trouble doesn't help them very much. So we went to the attic and found an old sunshade which we had put away under the rafters at the close of the summer. We thought it would be just the thing, and so it was.

We tied it to a twig just above the hummer's nest. The mother flew off just for a moment, but came right back. Then she looked at the black roof over the nest and settled down on her eggs quite satisfied, while we stood close by her, wet to the skin in the rain and sleet. It was a long storm, lasting until the eggs were hatched, but the mother was safe, and the baby birds were never wet at all. Since then we have looked all about the yard for humming-birds' nests just before a storm, that we might shelter them.

You have noticed that there are different birds about your yard at different times in the year. Birds are like other people, they like to travel and see the world. They like to visit their friends and get something to eat different from what they have at home.

But birds are very sensible people. They do not pack a valise or a great trunkful of clothes when they go on a long journey. They have one good travelling dress, and they keep that tidy. When they get to the end of their trip, they do not have to annoy their friends with baggage. Probably their visit is all the more welcome. And their visits are usually short. It seems as if they do not want to wear out their welcome.

Of course you have wondered how birds travel, never needing a street, or a railroad track, or a bicycle, or a boat. Perhaps the birds wonder, too, how it is that we never take a flight up into the blue sky, or rest ourselves in the trees, always keeping on the ground in the grass or dust, or in our houses. Perhaps they puzzle their tiny brains to know how it is that we can walk so far without getting tired, and how it is that we are obliged to climb a tree on all fours, like a bear or a squirrel, if we wish to get the nuts which are far up out of reach.

There is no telling what the birds think about us. The same Great One who made the birds with hollow bones and quills, and who filled many little cells of their bodies with air, so that the little creatures might be light of weight and buoyant to fly, also made us of heavier weight and greater strength of muscle.

The birds are not inventors, but man has invented the steam-engine, and the bicycle, and the sail-boat, so that we

have come as near flying as we possibly can without being birds.

Almost every boy tries to fly, and he thinks there is some secret about it which he can find out, if he is only patient enough. He gets up on a high fence, and he flaps his arms for wings, and he plays that he is going to fly to the next town. The birds, looking on, must laugh heartily.

Perhaps if the boy's body were boat-shaped, like a bird's body, and if his legs were put midway between the two ends of his body like a bird's legs, the boy would come nearer flying. But more than all, he would need a good strong pair of wings. We have never seen a boy yet who had wings of any sort.

Chapter XV

Cradle Making

There is a good deal said and written about the way birds build their houses. But, really, birds do not build houses. Their houses or dwellings are built for them by Mother Nature, and are the trees and the bushes, and the sheltering rocks and the caves, and the cornices of our own houses.

What birds really do build are their cradles, — little crib beds, sometimes with rockers and sometimes without.

Birds do not make the cradle first and put the rockers on afterwards, as a cabinet-maker would do. They first choose the best rockers in the market, and then make the cradle on top of the rockers. Sometimes they do a very queer thing; they find the rockers, and then build the cradle under them. Birds have ways of their own, and they are very good ways, as you shall see.

The rockers for a bird's cradle are of the branches of the sycamore, or apple or orange trees, or they are of twigs of the elm or cypress, or banana leaves. Any strong, firm twig or branch that will rock and tilt in the breeze, makes a good rocker of the old-fashioned sort.

"Rock-a-bye baby on the tree top,
When the wind blows the cradle will rock;
When the bough breaks the cradle will fall,
Down comes baby, cradle and all."

But it is a very hard wind that can break one of these rocker boughs or blow a bird's cradle out of its place. Sometimes a crib is blown out of the elbow of a tree, because the nest in the elbow is not fastened by string, as it is in a bough, but is just tucked in between the great branches.

Birds are very wise and select their boughs with great care. Lithe, yielding branches are just right for rockers, they will spring and swing so readily. Sometimes a young twig and a strong old twig, joined together, make a pair of bird rockers.

A cradle of this kind is very handy for the mother bird. The wind rocks the babies to sleep, and the leaves sing lullaby songs, while the mother blinks away on the nest or goes off in search of food.

Sometimes the mother herself sings the babies to sleep, sitting in the cradle with them. Some of the finches twitter a low musical song over their little ones, and we have often found their nests by hearing these soft, sweet notes. One must listen as well as look, to learn these pleasant secrets.

Some mother birds do not approve of rockers for their babies. These are very sensible mothers. They make their

cradles in the firm, still crotch of a tree, high up among the forked branches, or lower, right in the hollow trunk. Other birds choose the ground or low shrubs. Some cradles, like those of the oriole and titmouse, are curtained all around with beautiful lace fiber or lattice work. Other cribs have no curtains at all except drooping leaves and waving grass.

Those of us who can afford them have eider-down quilts on our beds. But these are rare and costly, and not many people have them. Birds do not have to think about the cost of anything. There must be downy quilts in every nursery. These crib blankets are always on hand. Sometimes they are soft gray or brown in color, and sometimes they are "crazy quilts." It all depends upon what sort of a breast the mother bird has.

At first thought one might fear that such a quilt might be too heavy. You see the old bird fly to the nest and settle quickly down above her young, as if she took her seat right on their frail little backs. She does not take the trouble to explain to you that her feet are below and between the young birds, and that she lifts her feathers gently. She is really a very fluffy "comfortable," soothing and warm, covering the delicate birds, or the still more delicate eggs.

Some birds, like the hummers, build their cradles of material which is just the color of the branch or the rockers upon which they rest. We have seen hummer's nests on orange trees covered on the outside with the black scales which are so frequent on these trees. We have seen them

on the sycamore trees all covered with the light yellow wool which grows on the backs of the sycamore leaves. The birds do this that the nests may look like a part of the branch on which they rest. In this way these shrewd little creatures hope to deceive the shrikes and owls and hawks and boys. It is not easy to find a nest that looks just like everything about it.

The ground owl is a queer bird. She does not select a swinging branch or a crotch of a tree for her babies; but she takes possession of a ground squirrel's hole and lays her eggs there. So you see it is rather a bed than a cradle. If you are in luck, you will find the nest of the ground owl in the ground from four to twenty feet away from the hole or doorway. It may not be more than a few inches under the surface of the ground, but it is hard to know just where to strike it.

When a merry schoolboy gets a spade and flings his jacket off and begins in good earnest to dig out a ground owl, take our word for it, he has a good piece of work on his hands. Ten to one he will dig till sundown, and go home tired and cross, with nothing to show for his pains. Mr. Owl, just an inch or two from the tip of the spade, is no doubt holding on to his sides with laughter, if owls ever do laugh in that way.

The nest of the ground owl is not much of an affair, only some coarse stuff lining the hollow at the end of this long hole. Mrs. Owl is lazy, and can leave her eggs in this

warm place a long time and be sure that they will not chill. She pays her rent to the squirrels by eating any little squirrels she can lay hands on.

Chapter XVI

Our Screech Owl

Speaking of owls reminds us of a pet screech owl which once happened to belong to us. One evening in midsummer we heard a thump against the screen in front of the fireplace, as if something rather soft had fallen down the chimney. Of course we hurried to see what it could be, and there was a small mouse, not at all hurt.

We caught it as soon as we could, and found that it was covered with soot from its long, dark journey. Then we began guessing how it happened to get into the chimney-top. There was no possible way for it to do this except by being carried there by some other creature. We at once suspected that an owl had caught the mouse and taken it to the top of the chimney to eat. Here the mouse had managed to escape, falling down the long, gloomy shaft. This was what we imagined, you know.

Next morning we were under the trees in the garden, when all the birds in another part of the yard commenced such a clatter that we ran to find out the cause. It was a funny sight and a droll sound. There were the mocking-birds, and the sparrows, and the linnets, and the finches, and the bush-tits, and, last and least, the tiny humming-

birds, each and all screaming at the top of their voices and hopping about in a certain tree.

We knew in a moment there must be an enemy there, and began to search for him. The birds were not afraid, but flew toward us, looking us in the face, while they screamed louder than before. By this we knew that we must be very near the enemy.

It did not take much hunting to find the cause of the uproar. On a low branch of the tree sat a screech owl, blinking away sleepily. He was not at all embarrassed by so many callers, nor frightened by their noise.

One of us reached up behind the bird and took hold of him around the legs and tail, grabbing him firmly, so that he could not bite or get away. Then we brought an unused robin's cage and put the owl in it. He began to spit at us, as a cat does when it is angry or frightened, and this excited the birds all the more. They followed us while we took the cage to the back door-steps, and then they took their places on the clothes-line and the pump and the bushes nearby, chirping and scolding in a bustling way that was quite laughable.

More birds came in from the neighboring yards, and the din they all made grew so great that we had to shut the owl in the woodshed. Then the birds seemed to hold a council to talk the trouble over, and to devise ways and means of getting rid of the enemy. At last they seemed to settle the matter, and went away. But we noticed a number

of linnets and a mocker in sight, as if they had been left in charge as spies, and spies they were in fact.

As soon as we took the cage out again and attempted to pet the owl and watch him, these spy birds gave a shrill call, when back came all the other birds. We carried the cage to the upper balcony, and the confusion was the same. At last we left it in the shed.

This owl had doubtless caught the mouse the night before and dropped it down our chimney, so we thought we would keep him a while, to teach him better than to be prowling around our house in the evening. His feathers were very soft and thick, as are the feathers of most owls. Being so soft, and able to fly without any noise, the owls can catch their game on the sly, while the hawks depend upon their swiftness for their food. It makes no difference, when a hawk is on the hunt, whether he makes a noise with his coarse feathers or not; he knows that he can be quick enough to catch his little victims, be they birds or mice.

Well, we kept that screech owl just as long as we wanted his company. He was not a beautiful or an interesting pet. In fact, he would not be petted at all. He did cease to spit and growl at us in a day or two, but he never seemed to return our good feeling or to place any trust in us. He slept or blinked all day, and when night came he was hungry. We taught him to take pieces of raw beef from the end of a long stick, not daring to give it to

him from our fingers. He seemed to enjoy this food. But what suited him best was mice.

We caught these mice in a trap in the grain bin, and gave them to the owl only when they were dead. As soon as the bird saw a mouse, he would snatch it quickly and growl at it and shake it, and stick his sharp claws through it, pinning it to the roost. It would take him a long while, sometimes two or three hours, to eat a whole mouse, but he never once let go of it with his claws. He would tear it to pieces, skin and all, and eat the shreds. He seemed to be obliged to rest after each mouthful, going to sleep between times, still clinging to what was left of his supper, and growling if we tried to take it away from him.

After a while he would disgorge or throw up the hard and hairy parts, and then he would take more of his food.

We did not care to keep this owl, and so one evening we let him fly away. He was seen in the yard many times that summer, and the birds always told us where he was, though they never made quite so much noise as at first. They grew used to having him around. He never lighted on so low a bough again, probably remembering how he had been taken the first time.

We did not care if he did choose to live in our yard, for we knew very well his lazy habit of sleeping all day. When he woke up at night we knew the little birds would all be in bed. He was welcome to the mice and the crickets and June bugs.

We are not fond of owls. It is dismal to hear their "too-hoo, too-hoo," as they try to sing. We are glad that they try, for even a poor song is better than no song at all. Owls cannot sing any better than turkeys. In fact, we prefer turkeys to owls for music. Don't you?

Chapter XVII

Birds at Work and Play

It sounds very strange to speak of a bird at play. But you can see that birds do play, if you will give yourself the pleasure of watching them. They run along under the hedges and fences at hide-and-seek. They will stop suddenly and scold at one another for not playing "fair"; and they actually play at leap-frog, hopping over one another's backs, never once using their hands.

Sometimes they play "tag" high up in the air, especially the humming-birds and others of swift wing. You can see them playing when they are so high that they look like bumble-bees. Then perhaps they fly out of sight in the blue of the sky. But the birds seem to do more work than play. It is as if they were saying,

"All play and no work
Makes a bird a mere shirk."

Most father birds help their mates in the cradle making, whenever they can get away for a few minutes from the orchestra. But the mother has the care of everything and does the most and the finest work. We have sometimes thought the mother would do better if left all

to herself, the fathers are so fussy and awkward at housekeeping.

Once, in the middle of winter, we saw a father linnet trying his best to coax his mate to build a nest on a little shelf on the upper balcony. He carried straws in his bill, and sat on the shelf, and coaxed his mate to his side, whispering to her, as if he were saying, "How nice this is," and urging her to "Go right to work." We guessed all that, you know, about their talking together, while we stood and watched them out of the window.

But the wise little mother bird just laughed provokingly and flew away. We thought she was laughing, for the father bird looked a little bit ashamed, and held his head down, though he still clung to his straw and remained for a while sitting on the little shelf. He might have known that was no time or place to build a cradle. It was midwinter, and besides the shelf was slippery.

It is common for a pair of birds to talk about housekeeping, or even to build, a long while before they need the nest. We have seen them hunting for the best spot and chatting about it, as if they were saying, "This will never do," or, "This will be just the right place when the time comes."

We have seen towhees and other birds picking up pieces of sticks and string in November, and carrying them about as if they did not know what to do with their treasures. We should think better of them if they would lay

the sticks and twine away in a safe place until they are ready to use them. They seem never to think of that, but drop the things wherever they happen to be.

Birds like to pull at twine even if they have no use for it. They pick at the ends of fibrous bark, as if they valued most highly what costs them the most trouble to get.

A lady we knew was in the habit of throwing out of the window the hairs which came out of her head when she used the comb and brash in the morning. These hairs were caught in a bush, and the birds discovered them. One day her son found a bird's nest near the window, all lined with the white hairs which once grew on his dear mother's head. You may be sure the son keeps that bird's nest among his treasures.

Birds are very fond of hairs of any sort for their nest linings. We have many times placed them within their reach and sight, and they will take them up. They also use chicken feathers, if they are close at hand, and bits of soft paper.

If you want to see something that will amuse you, fasten on a tree or log a piece of old rope that has a raveled end. Every day in nesting time the birds will tug at that raveled end of rope, turning somersaults in their hurry, and spending more time chasing one another away from it than in actual work.

When a bird begins to build her nest, she uses coarse materials first, just as a house builder uses beams and

timbers to begin with. The bird and the house builder save all the fine stuff for the last. Look closely at a nest when you find one. Pick up an old last year's nest that has blown down. This year's nests do not belong to you. See how there are, first, large sticks or weeds, or rolls of mud. Between the large sticks or weeds there are small, short ones. You can imagine that these pieces all together are nails and boards, and help to hold the whole nest together. Perhaps these may be all bound together with spiders' web or string, or even paper.

We have seen nests made of nothing but one kind of weed; usually a weed that has a strong smell, like wild sage or yarrow, is chosen. We think that the smell of these strong-scented weeds prevents lice or mites from invading the nest. Perhaps the force of habit or taste has led the bird to select this material. Probably her mother before her made the same sort of a nest, and so she thinks that is about the right thing to do.

Some birds, as the swallows, make mud houses, after the manner of the Mexicans. We often wonder if these people got their idea of house building from the birds.

Other birds use sticks and cement, as a man does brick and mortar. Some of the sea birds lay their eggs on a bare, flat rock. Even these do not roll off from the rock, for all eggs are oblong and cannot roll in a straight line. We have never seen a perfectly round egg. If you take an egg of any kind, as a hen's egg, and try to roll it down the floor or lawn,

you will see what we mean. Then try a perfectly round ball. You will see that it is better that birds' eggs are oblong or elliptical

The cactus wren makes her nest in the middle of a great barbed cactus in our mountain washes or desert places. The tiny Costa's humming-bird builds its frail nest in the prickly elbow of the low cactus that grows in California all over the barren lowlands. This is probably for safety. A snake could hardly reach a nest which was built in the middle of a cactus whose needles, or thorns, are sometimes an inch long.

Chapter XVIII

Some Other Birds at Work

Not many of the birds in our yard are quarrelsome. They seem to respect one another's rights, especially at nesting time. It is not so much our business to tell bad or unpleasant things about birds, as to tell what is pleasant and what will make you love them. That is why we spoke a good word for the shrikes and the hawks and the owls.

If a pair of birds have selected the limb of a tree upon which to build a cradle, they are not often driven from it by other birds. It seems to us that when a sparrow has put a piece of twine over a bough, it is as if she had written her name on it or got a deed for that particular bough.

If y0u should wish to tame a pair of birds that are building their nest where you may watch them, wait until the nest is finished or until the first egg is laid. Sometimes it is better to wait for the little birds. A bird will desert an unfinished nest if she suspects you are watching her. But she dislikes to throw away all of her labor, and will often lay her eggs and hatch her young while you are looking at her, rather than begin her nest all over again.

If you take just one egg from the nest of some birds, leaving all of the others, the parents will never go to it

again. There are other timid, delicate birds who will leave their nest if you just go up softly and peep into it. The parent birds may not be in sight, and you may think they will never know. But they have been in hiding and have seen you steal up, and they will desert the place and the nest. Only a few birds will do this, however, and these are mostly those which live far away, in a quiet dell or on a hill where people seldom go.

We feel quite sure that we can tame almost any home bird at nesting time. A goldfinch has just built her nest in an apple tree near our house. We have tamed the mother bird so that we can smooth her feathers on her neck and breast with our fingers while she is sitting on the nest. At first we took leaves in our hand and touched her with them. She did not care for the leaves; they were all about her in the tree. Gradually we dropped the leaves, until she was not afraid of our hands.

We wished to take a photograph of her, and did so one very warm day. She sat in the heat, with her wings lifted to let the air through, and her bill parted as if she were panting. The father bird comes to feed her on the nest, just as their young are fed, with his bill in hers. These finches are nurslings, you know, and are fed on prepared food.

The oriole is a very interesting bird with us. She chooses to hang her hammock or cradle beneath a festoon of thick leaves on a swaying bough, or from a drooping twig. Here she prefers a broad green banana leaf or the

great leaf of a fan palm. These leaves are good shelter from the sunshine.

The banana leaf is about five feet long, and doubles on its midrib like a book cover during the middle of the day. At night and early in the morning, when it is cool, the leaf opens better, and it is then that the bird works at her hammock. When the pouch is finished, the leaf is kept from doubling quite up and is like a sharp roof over the heads of the young and their mother. The banana leaf is constantly waving and trembling, even when there is scarcely a bit of breeze.

Another favorite place for an oriole to build her hammock is the underside of the fan-palm leaf. You will wonder how a bird can weave a thread in and out of a leaf, when she has no fingers or needles. We have watched an oriole do this many a time, and this is how it is done. She takes a thread in her beak and pushes it through the leaf from one side. Then she flies to the other side and pushes the same thread back through another opening in the leaf which she has made with her bill. Thus she weaves a kind of cloth pouch on the underside of the leaf, flying back and forth from the upper to the underside. The pouch or hammock is lined, and there the eggs are laid. You can see the mother's head sticking out from the nest, but if she knows you are watching, she will draw her head out of sight, so you will see nothing but the nest.

The thread most used by orioles here is the fiber which ravels from the edges of the palm leaves. Where such thread is not to be had, they use twine or string of any sort.

Young orioles meet with many dangers before they leave the hammock. Sometimes their feet get tangled in the thread or horsehairs of which the nest is partly made. When the little helpless things attempt to fly out, they are sometimes caught by the toes, and there they bang. We have rescued several which were caught this way.

It seems strange that a bird which can build so beautiful and fine a nest of threads does not know enough to pull the strings off from her baby's toes when it is caught in this way. They may do this sometimes, but we have never seen them do anything but fly about in a helpless way, chattering as orioles do.

Orioles keep no secrets to themselves. They are "tell-tales," and keep up a constant chat among themselves and at intruders. They are different in this respect from some other birds, who are as quiet as mice, never whispering a word as to where their nests are, and deceiving you, if they can, by limping away as if they were hurt. Such quiet birds will raise a nest full of birds and be off while you are wondering where they are.

We do not have chimney swifts in California; but we lived in New England once, and we recollect very well what a racket they used to make in the chimneys.

Sometimes the nests fell down into the fireplace, and then what a commotion!

Some swallows choose to build under the eaves, and in caves and tunnels, and on the underside of bridges, or in crevices of rocks. We have often wondered that a bird mother can tell her own nest among so many that look just alike. We have stood and watched the barn swallows, and felt sure that they count, "One, two, three, here's my nest." How else do you suppose that a mother can be sure that she has come to the right nest?

We have seen mother birds cry and call loudly, as if for help, when the babies have fallen out of the nest. If you pick up one birdling and place it back in the nest, the mother takes a quick glance at it, and then goes on calling as before. She will not stop until she sees every one of them safe back in the cradle. This makes us think that some birds do count.

In Tennessee, where we once lived, the cat-birds and brown thrushes used to build their nests in the porches and vines above the door. Sometimes we would take the young birds from the nest and keep them in the parlor for company, taming and feeding them, and allowing them to flutter about on the floor to amuse strangers. Perhaps we would have them in the house for an hour.

When we opened the door to take them home again, the old birds would be standing close by, like dogs whose masters are in the house. When they saw us, they would set

up such a scolding that we felt quite ashamed for having kidnapped their children even for so short a time. They grew used to our ways before the summer was over, and would soon let us take the young without so much ado.

Small birds, such as the goldfinches and humming-birds, use a good deal of spider's web in making their cradles. This is very soft, and when many strands are used together it is very strong. This web is used to hold the mosses and plants down in place. When you see the bushes and hedges all covered with web in a damp morning, think of the little bird house-builders. Watch, in some quiet corner out of sight of them, and you will see the mother humming-bird or goldfinch dart up to the glistening webs and examine them in turn, just as a lady who is out shopping examines the different goods in a store.

Madam Bird flies down to a small web, taking a bite at it with her slender bill, as if she were feeling of it with her fingers.

Then she flies off to another spider's counter of goods and pecks at another web. When she has found what suits her, she will take several bird yards of it home with her.

In the nest of our goldfinch in the apple tree, we see some spider web binding the grasses together, but the nest itself is lined with horsehairs. We have one bay horse and one black horse. In this nest lining there are hairs from the tails of both horses, woven round with great care in a

striped way, that looks as if the bird had thought about how it would look, the red and the black together.

Chapter XIX

A Pet Humming-Bird

Humming-bird mothers are very tender of their young and will seldom go out of sight of them. We have ourselves picked the mother from the nest and let her go, when she would immediately return to it.

If you see a humming-bird sitting on a twig napping, just clasp your hands behind you and go straight up to the bird. You can almost touch it with your face, but if you put out your hand the bird will dart away. A hummer will alight on the flowers you may be carrying, if you remain perfectly still. These birds seem to notice movement more than form.

Humming-birds, like many others, do not seem to notice a person if he is going toward them in a straight line. It is "sidewise" movement that frightens them.

We have known a humming-bird to "play 'possum," though we are told, by someone who ought to know, that it was really frightened almost to death.

This bird had come in at an open window for some flowers left on the sill. On leaving the room, by some mistake it flew up to the ceiling instead of going out at the

window. The ceiling was high, so we took a long broom and chased the bird, catching it on the wisp end and bringing it down. It did not stir, though we were sure we had not hurt it. We took it in our hands, and it lay on its back with its eyes shut, as if it were indeed dead. Then we carried it to the garden, feeling very sorry. Suddenly one black eye opened, and then the other, when, in a flash, the little bird was off.

One day in spring a certain professor whom we know, who is very fond of hunting toadstools, caught sight of what he felt sure was a rare one on the limb of a live oak tree. The heart of the professor beat with joy, for he would rather find a new kind of toadstool or lichen than a gold mine, and he put out his hand to pick this new one off. It moved, and he looked at it. It was a baby hummer, just fledged, and very delicate. It did not know enough to be afraid of him, and cuddled in his hand as if it were the nest.

He knew how much we like birds, and so the professor put the baby in his pocket basket and brought it home to us. The bird was unhurt and as free from fear as a real baby. Its face looked like a baby face, as the faces of all young birds look, innocent and sweet, and full of a helpless, not frightened, expression.

To feed this bird, which seemed hungry, we mixed some sugar and water. It would not open its bill, so we held the sweet in a spoon and dipped the beak into it. It tasted, and then put out its tongue and lapped some. This very

slender, thread-like tongue was long and black and very quick of movement.

Every hour we fed it with this sweetened water, and it came to know the spoon by sight and to look for it when we were coming. We moistened our lips with the syrup, and the little thing would move towards us, placing its bill on our lips and thrusting its dainty tongue all around in a way that was very amusing.

We did not know as much about humming-birds then as we have learned since, or we should have fed it as often as every fifteen minutes, and used honey in place of water.

It loved to perch on the edge of a wicker basket, whose rim was so easy to cling to. It would shimmer in the sunshine like a piece of silk, no larger than "a great big bumble-bee."

In a few days it could fly all about the room, but it could not fix its toes on or around anything, and would fall helpless to the floor or drop behind the pictures.

It was cold at night, though we covered it with warm things, and often we would warm it in our hands before morning. It needed the warmth of its mother's breast.

It learned to drink cold water, and to expect it after each meal of syrup, as if it wanted to rinse its mouth. It lapped up the water like a kitten, its queer, frail tongue looking like a bit of black thread in the clear water.

We tried to get it to take tiny spiders, which we hunted in the garden, but it refused, and did not live with us very long.

We think we ought to have given it a little milk to take the place of spiders, which it must have missed. We shall never try to have another pet so frail as this; these birds seem too delicate to touch. Our fingers are not light enough. We have a friend who kept a young hummer for three months, and they are said to live even longer than this when in captivity.

Of all our bird friends, we think the humming-bird the most wonderful and interesting. This perhaps is because it is the smallest and wisest of all the birds we know.

Chapter XX

How We Took the Humming-Birds' Pictures

There are seventeen or eighteen kinds of humming-birds in the United States. Here in Southern California we have five or six. The largest of these is the Anna's Humming-bird. It was called "Anna's Hummer" in honor of a lady of that name.

This bird measures about four inches from the tip of its beak to the end of its tail. The female is a mixture of gray and green underneath, with a shining green back. The male has a throat and head of changeable bright colors, which shimmer like some metallic substance as he turns about in the sunshine.

The bill of these birds is five-eighths of an inch long, and the tongue is much longer. With this long, extensible tongue it can suck the honey from the deepest flowers. It may be seen about the petunias and the honeysuckle and the nasturtiums. There is plenty of sweet at the end of these trumpet-like flowers which the bees cannot reach with their shorter tongues.



It was the Anna's Hummer which we photographed last year on purpose to put the pictures in this book, that those who do not have humming-birds nesting in their yards, or where they can study them, may see just how they look.

We have no snow storms here, but in their place are long, cold rain storms, with many days of bright, warm weather between. Flowers bloom all the time, and the humming-birds see no reason why they should not attend to their housekeeping. It is as if they thought, "Now this storm is over, we will build our cradles," never once thinking of the possibility of there coming another storm before the birdlings are out of the nest.

We were walking about in the yard one bright morning late in December, when a humming-bird poised herself above some pampas grass and stole a single tuft. This pampas grass sends up its long spikes of plumes in midsummer, and we always leave a few of them on purpose for the birds to get for their nests. They are very dusty and weather-beaten by winter, but that makes no difference, for the little separate tufts are good for crib beds.

When we saw the bird at the pampas grass, we knew that she was nesting, so we watched her. She flew to a low shrub near the path and left the tuft. Then she darted to a cypress hedge where there were plenty of spiders' webs. She gathered a bill full of this web and returned to the

shrub. In a moment she was off to the pampas grass again, and we stole up to look. Not three feet from the ground was the beginning of the smallest nest. As yet it was a mere filmy platform set where two twigs joined hands, beneath a cluster of bluish-green leaves.

The bird was shy and would not return while we were in sight, so we went away and waited, knowing that we must be very careful not to disturb her if we wished her to finish her nest.

Taming this little bird was the work of many days. At first we sat perfectly still on the door-steps, not ten feet away. She saw us even there, and would wait in the trees above for a long while before she was quite sure we would not harm her. In a day or two we could sit on the steps or move about, but not too near. Before the nest was as large as a walnut the bird allowed us to watch her a few feet away, provided we stood motionless. She was indeed a delicate creature, winding the web around and around, so that the pampas tufts should be thick and firm.

On New Year's Day the first tiny oblong white egg was laid. It was a gem, the size of a navy bean, in a nest-setting of silver-gray softness. We clapped our hands in delight at this beginning of what would be living rainbow tints. In four days its mate was laid by its side. These birds always lay just two eggs.

Every day the mother bird was adding more web and lichens and pampas tufts, turning about gently and rapidly to shape the nest around her.

We have never seen any birds except the hummers who add to their nests during incubation and after the young are hatched. On the twentieth day of January the first egg was hatched. We stole up to look, and there at the bottom of the small cradle was what looked like a tiny black grub, perfectly bare. We imagined the mother was very happy and thinking in her dear little heart how much the baby resembled its father.

The father, as is the custom of the males of these humming-birds, was away in the foothills sucking sweets from the mountain flowers, and leaving to his mate all the care of the household. It seems very selfish of him, but the mother bird may be very glad to be without him. What does a father humming-bird know about taking care of such tiny babies?

One day later than its mate the other egg was hatched, and there were a pair of black, bare grubs. They had no bills, except a tiny point in the middle of the mouth, which they kept open in a coaxing way. They could move nothing but their heads, and their eyes were shut tight. How carefully the mother fed them. Many a time, looking on at meal-time, we were tempted to caution the mother lest she thrust her bill a little too far down the small throats. She winked her black eye at us, while we stood with uplifted

finger, as much as to say, "Don't be afraid, I have nursed babies before."

As the birdlings grew, the nest had to be enlarged, and it took every minute of the mother's time to keep the household matters in order. In a few days down began to appear upon the birds, and then a shimmering green on the backs, like that of the mother's dress. Young male hummers do not get the bright head and throat until the first moult. When the birds were thus clothed, the mother did not seem to think it necessary to build the nest up about them any higher, so the birds were crowded out gradually as they grew, until they were obliged to sit on the edge, a pair of the sweetest twins one ever saw.

A storm came down from the mountains and surprised the faithful little mother, but she sheltered the babies as best she could until we came to the rescue with a gingham apron, which we pinned in place above the nest, making a complete shelter for all. We kept this apron in place for a week, or until the storm was over. People passing by must have thought us very queer housekeepers to spread our washing in the front yard, but we did not stop to explain.

By this time the bird had grown so trustful that we could do almost anything without scaring her. We fed the young with syrup on the ends of our fingers, while the mother looked on astonished. They would put out their fine thread-like tongues and look at us from their tiny black eyes, as if thanking us. Their bills had grown out until

they were quite respectable by the time the babies sat on the edge of the nest.

As soon as the mother became tame enough, we took the pictures, as you see them. While we stood at the nest, she would fly all about our faces and look at our ears and eyes, and buzz at our hair in a very funny way. Once we bent the twig from its place in the shrub, and held it close to our faces, and the mother fed the young, brushing our cheeks with her gauzy wings. Then we tied it back to its old place when the mother had flown away. She came back and flew in our faces, as if she expected to find the babies there. Not finding them with us, she went back to the shrub as if nothing had happened.

It was a wonderful thing to have this shy bird so trustful and willing to have her photograph taken.

The older of the two birds left the nest first, and we had hard work to get him to be still enough for the last sitting. The mother came down and sat between the two birds on the twig, and looked at the bird who wouldn't keep still, as if she were scolding him.

She seemed just like a real person taking her baby to the artist's to have his picture taken. Once two strange old hummers came when we were taking the pictures, and bothered us a good deal. They made our mother hummer nervous and cross, and she drove them away. It seemed to us that these birds wanted to have their picture taken too,

but we could not quite catch them, because they were not well enough acquainted with us and the camera.

One day the babies left the old battered nest and flew to the trees. The rim of the nest was torn and worn by the feet of the mother as she stood to feed the young. We noticed that for a few days after they were hatched she fed them every fifteen minutes, but as they grew stronger she gave them their food only once an hour, or at even longer intervals.

After they had flown, there came a hard storm, and we went out in the morning expecting to find the babies dead on the ground. But not so; there they sat in the sunshine above our heads, as safe as could be. They remained about in the yard for two or three weeks, when they disappeared, no doubt going to the foothills to join their father at sucking sweets and flitting among the vines.

Chapter XXI

Our Robin Redbreast

Almost every child knows the robin redbreast. He is a great favorite wherever he goes. We have him with us in Southern California only in winter time for a few weeks after the rains have come. When our ground is mellow with moisture, and the angle-worms have worked their way to the top, leaving little loose hillocks all about the yard, then we look out for a visit from the robins.

They come in companies great enough to fill the tree-tops, and their constant song reminds us of old times when we lived in the New England States.

Robins are "water birds" in a way, although they do not swim. They are perfectly at home in wet grass or foliage, and even in a rain storm. They never seem to have any use for umbrellas.

Once, while on a visit to some friends in the east, we found two baby robins which were blown from their nest in a storm. We fed them with bread soaked in milk, and fresh beef, and they thrived. We shut them in an empty room upstairs, and they soon learned to look for us and to know our step. They would fly to the crack of the doorway and squeal when they heard us coming. Before we dared

open the door, we had to push the birds away, for fear they would be caught and hurt.

When we were ready to start for our California home, we put the robins in a cage, taking as much food as we thought they would need on the journey. In a day or two the meat gave out, and they grew tired of bread and water. They coaxed constantly for beef, so we asked a porter on our car to get some for them.

By this time most of the passengers had become interested in our robins, and a gentleman offered to keep them in beef for the rest of the journey. He would go out once a day, when the train stopped long enough, and buy some beef. Our pets came to be quite an attraction in the car, and everybody was anxious to do something for the little travelers.

We took the birds to the dressing-room each day to clean the cage and to give them a bath. We washed them one at a time, in our hands, holding them under the gently flowing faucet. At first they objected, but they soon grew to like it.

During the first year they never sang a note, for their unmusical squeak could certainly not be called singing. The second spring we gave them a large cage in the yard, that they might make the acquaintance of other birds. In a short time an old mocking-bird came and gave them music lessons.

The teacher would twist his toes around the wires of the cage, in this way holding himself close to the birds. Then he would twitter softly, until the young birds had learned to respond and to twitter too.

When at last the robins did have a song, it was a mixture of robin and mocking-bird notes. They did not speak pure robin all that year.

After they were grown-up birds, the mocker who had taught them music took a great dislike to them. This was very strange, for he had been so fond of his little pupils, dropping berries down through the cage wires, and calling them all sorts of pet names in his own language. Now he would scold them and peck at them and scare them, until we were obliged to cover a part of the cage.

In a year or two the male robin got out of the cage and flew away. We could hear him far out of sight in the trees, but he would not come back, though we called to him in our kindest tones. He was out all night, and we supposed he was dead, as he was at the mercy of the mocking-birds.

What was our surprise early in the morning to find him on the hitching-post near the house, with his bill wide open, screaming for his breakfast. But he would not let us put our hands on him.

Then we thought of a plan to catch him, the same by which wild animals are sometimes caught. We scattered some crumbs from the post where he sat to the door of the cage, and Robin went to picking them up, of course, being

very hungry and not thinking about the consequences. He followed the trail of the crumbs until, before he knew it, he was safe within the cage and the door was shut.

Once again he got away from us, but we knew he would come back at meal-time, if the shrikes and the mockers did not find him. Birds which have lived for a while in a cage seem to be perfectly helpless when out at liberty, not knowing how to find food for themselves, and dying of hunger in the midst of plenty.

Sure enough, at supper time Robin came back, clamoring for his share. There was a soft, moist place in the garden where we were in the habit of digging worms for the robins at night. We took the cage and set it down by this place, with the door tied back.

We went to work with the spade, pretending not to notice the little runaway, who hopped close to us and screamed at his little innocent mate in the cage. We threw some worms in at the open door for the bird on the inside, who ate them, taking no notice of her companion on the outside.

Suddenly the outsider hopped to the hole where we were digging and tried to grab the worms before we had time to pick them up. But we cheated him, understanding his little game, and dodged past him with the coveted worms. He, standing on tiptoe, danced about in the funniest fashion, still trying to snatch the worms. All at once, taunting him with a good long worm, we threw it

past him into the cage. Away the bird ran after it, and the little fellow who loved so well to "play hookie" was caught once more.

Chapter XXII

More About Our Robin

When the robins were two years old, we noticed that they were picking up straws from the bottom of the cage, and so we "took the hint." We looked all about to find something that was the shape of a nest. We were tempted at first to put a little open-work basket in the cage, but Ave remembered an experience which we had some years before, and did not use the basket.

The experience was this. We hung a tiny basket in the canary's cage, and the birds made a thin nest in it and hatched their eggs. The male had been very active, helping his mate in all the ways he could think of, and he thought he would mend the nest one day. So he began to peck at the string through the meshes of the basket, reaching up from the bottom. We did not think he was doing any harm, till we noticed what looked like a bird's foot hanging down through the bottom of the basket. What was our astonishment to find that the old bird had pulled off the legs of the young birds, stupidly thinking that he was tugging at the twine.

Of course we did not put a basket in the robins' cage, but we found a round butter mould, which answered just

as well. The birds were very much pleased with the butter mould, and began carrying straw and mud which we gave to them, until they had quite a respectable robin's nest. We do not know whether wild robins would nest in a butter mould, if we should fasten it in the crotch of an apple tree or swing it from the branches, but it would be quite worth one's while to try, if one is living where there are wild robins.

One morning we found a blue egg in the nest. The birds were surprised. They hopped on the rim of the butter mould and looked at the egg and chirped at it, and then the male bird hopped in and sat down on it. We clapped our hands and called to the whole family to "come and see."

But what do you think that naughty bird did? Just as we were all feeling sure of his good sense, he jumped suddenly out of the nest and then back again. Then he began to scratch with both feet as fast as he could, till the egg went out of the nest and lay in fragments on the bottom of the cage. We expected to see his mate resent it, but she took no notice, going on pecking at a peach as if nothing had happened.

"It was an accident," we said, ready to excuse our pets. The days went by, and seven blue eggs shared the fate of the first one. The birds took turns at scratching them out of the nest, as if it were great fun. We felt badly, of course, and scolded them. But they only stared helplessly at us, and did not explain the secret about those eggs.

When the robins were three years old, the male began to be sick. He had "fits" or spasms of some sort, whirling around on the floor upon his back, where he would lie as if dead for a few minutes. Then he would jump up and begin eating, as well as ever.

These attacks grew less severe, and in a few days the bird got well. His mate had taken excellent care of him, begging him to eat something right in the middle of his fit, and flying about him just like a nervous little woman. When she had nursed him back to life and health, she was taken with the same disease and died in a short time. We asked a doctor what he thought it was, and he said he "guessed it was the grip."

The little widower did not pine away and die from grief; he was too sensible for that, and life was very pleasant to him. He took to singing with all his might as he had never sung before. For four hours in the early morning he never rested his bulging little red throat, not even to eat his breakfast. The old-fashioned robin notes, which he had made believe he never knew before, came bubbling out in a wild glee that made the neighborhood ring. People inquired all around to know where that robin was.

He was very fond of spiders, and when we took the broom in our hands he watched us closely. The large gray house spider was his favorite.

We think a good deal of these spiders, and were very sorry to give them to the robin, but we were afraid he

would die if he had none. In whichever room we were when we found one of these spiders, we had only to call out, "Here's a spider, Robby," and the bird would chirp his answer, hopping to the corner of the cage nearest the door. Here he would wait for us to give him the insect. If we found a bug or a worm, we had but to call out, "Quick, Robby," and he would dart nervously from side to side of his big cage in his eagerness not to keep us waiting. He would take berries from our mouths, many a time giving our lips a tweak as if he did it on purpose. Then he would stare at us with his black eye full of fun.

A Chinaman with a vegetable cart came to our house three times a week, and Robby grew to know him and his wagon. He knew the sound of the wagon before it was in sight. He was always afraid of strangers, but this Chinaman he loved and trusted. He would hop to his cage door to meet him, and open his bill for the strawberry which "John" never forgot in berry season.

He was fond of meat of any kind, taking it salted and cooked or raw. But he would never touch bird flesh of any sort, — chicken or quail or turkey, — though we many a time ran to the cage calling, "Quick, Robby," just to surprise him. He would look disgusted and turn his head away, as if to say, "No, thank you: I am not a cannibal." He would not taste of sugar, but was fond of gingerbread and cake.

During our long dry season of many months, Robby had a way of his own to keep cool and moist. His bath was an oblong china vegetable dish, which held water enough to cover him at full length.

When the days were warm and dry, and Robin somehow missed the rain which he had never seen in summer time, he would hop into the bath and sit or lie down. The water covered him up to his ears; and there he would sit for an hour at a time, blinking and dozing, as if he were a real water bird. He would take food from our hands, too lazy and contented to stir out of the water.

When the tourist robins came in winter, we imagined our pet would remember his mate and be anxious to join the birds. But he took no notice, caring not so much for the robins as for the brown towhees who had always kept him company at the back door.

Perhaps he thought his house was small, and if all "his folk" were intending to spend the winter with him he would be crowded "out of house and home." He was not hospitable to them, nor had he "rooms to rent." He not even answered them when the tourists chirped him a last good-bye and went away in early April, after they had eaten up all the pepper berries.

Well, the longest story has an end. When our robin was in his fifth year he died, and we buried him beside our little humming-bird under the fig tree. The bees in the orange

blossoms all about him sang him a dirge, and a royal mocking-bird caroled away with all his might.

Chapter XXIII

Going to Bed and Getting Up

As we told you before, birds do not live in houses or sleep in bedrooms; though in some parts of the country they build their cradles in little bird-houses and boxes or anything of the sort which you will give them. But here we have never succeeded in making any of them occupy a place which we have prepared for them, though we have made the prettiest little houses, and nailed boxes in cozy places. The western race of the house wren nests with us; so also does the bluebird. But these birds have not become civilized and prefer to stay in the mountains and far-off places.

Birds never call to one another to "Be sure to leave the window up for fresh air," and they do not try to get more than their share of the blankets, as some children do. Each bird carries his bedding about on his back, like a tramp, and he takes the first warm, sheltered nook he can find for his bed. Some birds appear to go to the same place to sleep every night. We suppose they feel more at home in one spot, if they have not been molested there. When we find a particular spot where we know the birds are in the habit

of sleeping or roosting, we are careful not to disturb the bush or tree.

Some birds sleep with their heads all covered up with the bed-clothes, as if they were afraid, like foolish children. Perhaps they like a warm night-cap, though we do not see how they need one with such a thick head of hair as they have. We call it "tucking their heads under their wings."

It is a queer fashion to stand or squat on one foot all night, instead of lying down like other people. We suppose they use one foot at a time, so that the other may be rested. You have noticed that anybody who must stand for a long while usually favors one limb or foot, holding it up a little at the knee joint, and after a time changing to the other. Try it yourself and see.

One very odd position in which some birds sleep is upright on the bark of a tree trunk, clinging to the wood with their toes, and propping themselves up with their strong, pointed tail-tips, as the flickers and some of their friends do.

Going-to-bed-time and getting-up-time are happy hours with the birds. About sundown you will hear them saying, "Just one more twitter," "One more worm, if you please," or, "One more flight to the highest tree."

While you are watching them in the soft twilight, there is a sudden hush and not a bird is in sight. If you have not been paying close attention, with your eyes wide open, it will be impossible for you to tell what has become of the

birds, they go to bed so quickly and silently. Not a sound will break the stillness, unless a merry mocking-bird wakes you out of your sleep.

These mocking-birds sing to us all night long at some parts of the year. You know these birds came by their name because they deserve it. They mock or mimic every bird they hear, including the hens and turkeys. We have wondered why they do not talk as well, but we have never known them to.

One mocker in our yard gives us the postman's whistle every afternoon an hour before it is due. Strangers rush to their gates, thinking their mail has come, while the mocker laughs at them from the tip- top branch of a eucalyptus tree, seventy or eighty feet above them.

If you have just come to California, you are likely to be waked up in the middle of the night by the sound of your pet chickens peeping, or the turkeys crying as if in distress, and you imagine all the fowls in the coops are being carried off.

Perhaps you will snatch a broom or an apron and run out quickly, sure of finding the marauder. From the top of his tree, safe out of your reach, that little rascal of a mocker will "peep" again, and then you will understand that it is only one of his jokes. Often they sing beautiful songs by the hour, and we lie awake to hear, laughing at the racket, or holding our breath to catch the last note of some wonderful melody.

Besides the mocking-bird you may hear the owl, though you cannot be quite sure that it is not the mocker again. In the dusk, when it is just light enough to see a little, you may catch a glimpse of the "Poor Will," darting about for his supper among the belated gnats and flies.

When this bird came to California he left off saying "Whip Poor Will," and so has but two notes. "Poor Will" is not whipped in this beautiful land.

One will have to get up very early to see the fun among the birds in the morning. A chirp in the twilight, the breakfast bell ringing from the throat of the first bird up, and then how astir are the trees and the bushes, and the whole yard or field! It is impossible for you to tell where the little songsters came from so suddenly, just as it was impossible for you to tell where they went to sleep the night before.

If there is a tub of water by the pump, the rim of it will soon be covered by the birds; or, better still, if there is a leaky hydrant, or a spring in the berry patch, or a puddle in the orchard, there you will see what is sure to make you laugh.

The swishing and the diving and the twittering and the dressing of the birds, and the flying particles of water like a shower bath, are enough to make you glad that there are birds alive.

Let lazy people lie in bed on a bright morning. They will never know what fun they miss, even though they may

read about it. It is better to see a fine thing for yourself than to depend upon what other people have to say about it. By the time ordinary people are up, the birds will have settled down to the business of the day. Their dresses and coats are brushed, and their hats and bonnets are on "straight."

The drip, drip, of the hydrant, or the babble of the brook do not tell what they saw an hour ago. The old sun, looking down steadily in your face, never hints at sights that made him smile so out of the corner of his eye when he first got up at call of the birds.

It is a very odd thing that the birds have to wake the sun every morning in California. Look about you early and see how it is where you live.

"Get up, old Sun! get up, old Sun!" they all scream at once, and they keep right on making as much noise as they can, until the lazy old fellow is fairly out of bed. Tell your friends, if they do not believe this, that they and old Sol himself had better take to getting up earlier in the morning.

That is a queer old proverb, "Early birds get the worms." You have all heard it, and it tells the truth.

Did you ever see the ground all covered with tiny little mounds of fresh earth in the morning when it is damp? Angle-worms do not like the sunshine; they will die if exposed to it. So they come up to the surface of the ground in the night, while we and the sun are asleep, just to get a bit of fresh air and to look around the world. If they do not

hurry back to their home in the ground, they will get surprised by the "early birds," who help themselves to all the worms they want.

That is a good proverb for the birds and the worms, but it has another meaning for us all. "Early birds get the worms" means "If you want to see pretty things, and hear fine music, and have a good time, you must get up early in the morning." So if you would see all the bird-fun in your yard, you must be up and out as soon as there is the least bit of light, or you will be too late.

Chapter XXIV

Mrs. Towhee Proposes a Garden Party

"Let's give a garden party," said Mrs. Towhee to Mrs. Phoebe; "it is lovely weather, and we haven't had a garden party for ever so long."

"Good! let's do it," answered Mrs. Phoebe. "You go and give out the invitations, while I get things ready."

"There is a new family up in the eucalyptus house," said Mrs. Towhee, calling her friend back. "They are little mites of people, almost as small as the Hummers. I wonder if it would be proper to invite them to our party. They are strangers here, and no one I have seen ever heard of them before. You know we ought to be careful about the new people we meet."

"Well, I don't know," the other said, smoothing her slate-colored breast. "Ask Mrs. Mocker; she knows everybody."

So they called to Mrs. Mocker. "Do you know that new family up in the great high house? They must be fine people to move into such a handsome place. The Oriole family have rented that house for years."

"Oh, I know them," Mrs. Mocker said; "they are Mr. and Mrs. Bush-tit from over in the mountains. They never lived in our city before. They belong to the great Tit family, and their name means a Tit-in-a-bush." Then Mrs. Mocker looked very knowing and put on airs, as she always does. She knows that she is acquainted with everybody, and she is proud of it.

Mrs. Towhee and Mrs. Phoebe nudged each other. Then they asked Mrs. Mocker if she would "introduce the new neighbors at the party."

Mrs. Mocker agreed to do this, and then Mrs. Towhee went away to invite all the people, and Mrs. Phoebe got the garden ready. She swung on all the bough-swings she could think of, to see if they were safe; and she hunted up all the nice nooks and corners to play hide-and-seek in; and she tested the food which was sent in to see if it was all right. Then she went upstairs into the top stories of the tree-houses and waved her hand to all her bird friends.

It was a busy day among the bird people. They washed themselves, and combed their frizzes, and cocked their hats, and trimmed their bonnets, and flirted their coat-tails, and fixed their best trails, and took especial pains to have their feet clean. They made their nails look neat, too; strange a bird should think of that. But birds are ladies and gentlemen, you know.

"Is my gorget all right?" asked Mr. Hummer of Mr. Sparrow.

"I don't know what you mean by your gorget," said Mr. Sparrow.

"Why, it's this shining patch I always wear under my throat. Really it is a diamond scarf-pin which has always been in our family. It is an heirloom. Rather large, isn't it? but all the gentlemen in our family wear them, and that is what makes the fashion, you know." Then the vain young hummer turned his head all about in the sunshine to make his gorget shimmer.

"Oh, I see," said Mr. Sparrow. "How do you like my new garden hat? You see it is striped, — two black stripes and three white stripes. It is very costly, and I hope it will wear a whole year."

"Why, that is a beautiful hat," answered Mr. Hummer. "Do you suppose those new people up in the big house will come to our garden party?"

"Oh, I hope so," said Mr. Sparrow. "And there are some more new people here, tourists, just passing over the Southern-Pacific-free-to-all bird route. They have stop-over tickets, I understand, and I mean to ask Mrs. Mocker to invite them all. She likes to get acquainted with strangers for the chance of mocking them behind their backs. I can't help liking her, though."

"Tut, tut," said Mr. Sparrow, "it isn't right to gossip about one's neighbors." Then in a low tone he added, "If you don't know anything good to say about a person like Mrs. Mocker, it shows you do not know her very well."

Mr. Mocker heard what they were saying about his wife, and he fell to mimicking them in a low key till the gossipers all flew off.

Just then a red-shafted flicker called to his next neighbor, the humming-bird, with a loud, harsh cry which so frightened the little hummer that he dropped straight down from the bough he was sitting on, right into the lap of a rose that happened to be spreading her skirts below.

"You needn't be afraid of me," said the flicker, "that is my natural voice. I was going to tell you how I scared an old lady in the white house yonder. I flew up to the gable under the eaves and began hammering away with all my might on the house-side. You know my hard, stout bill is my hammer. It went 'rap, rap,' just like a man with a hatchet.

"Out came the old lady, and she looked all around the house, thinking to see a burglar, I suppose, and then she went back and locked the door. Soon I began to hammer again. She came out, and this time she looked straight at me and said, 'Shoo, you old bird!' Of course I flew away. All I wanted was to make a hole in the roof over the attic, so I could have a warm place to sleep in this winter."

"I don't think it was kind of you to scare an old lady," said the hummer, sitting still in the lap of the pink rose. "That is the same lady who left her pampas plumes standing in the yard when other people had cut theirs down, on purpose that my wife might have the feathers

and tufts to line her nest with. They are splendid to make a cradle of, they and the spider's web. It was that same old lady's daughter who put the umbrella over our nest in the rain storm.

"That young lady thinks she can catch me. I go and sit on a low bush and doze in the sunshine, showing off my gorget as well as I can, when along comes the young lady. I blink away, and she thinks I am fast asleep. As long as her hands are behind her I know I am safe, and I let her get close to me. But the minute she puts out her hand to catch me, I am off, and you ought to see how disappointed she looks."

"That is a very long story for such a small bird as you are," said Mr. Flicker to the hummer. "I could tell one twice as long."

Mr. Flicker was beginning his yarn all about how he scared some small boys just at sundown in a grove. He said he flew up quickly, and his flame-colored wing linings looked so much like fire that the boys ran away.

Just then Mr. Mocker set up such a noise, squalling like a chicken when it is caught, that the birds all flew away to their houses, all but the hummer. He wasn't afraid of a chicken, and he sat still in the lap of the sweet rose.

Chapter XXV

At the Garden Party

The morning dew was not off from the lilacs and the sweet calamus in the garden when the birds began to come to the party.

They came in pairs, and in groups, and in whole families. They were turning their heads this way and that, whispering and chatting and showing off their new spring suits, and looking shyly at the different kinds of food, like people at a picnic.

"Good morning," said old Mrs. Goldfinch to Mrs. Hummer. "I see you have a son almost as large as yourself. I do not understand how that can be so early in the season."

"Oh, I am very proud of my son," remarked Mrs. Hummer. "I have a daughter almost as large as my son. They are both very much like their father. I had good luck in raising them. It stormed once right into the nest, when they were very small and weak, but I kept mending the cradle as well as I could with thread which I bought of Mrs.

Spider. I brought both of my children to the party with me."

"Oh, I never take my children to a party," said Mrs. Goldfinch. "I leave them with their nurse."

Mrs. Goldfinch said this with a haughty air, which quite amused Mrs. Hummer. She knew very well that Mrs. Goldfinch kept no nurse, but took care of her children herself night and day. "Very likely the cats will get them to-day," Mrs. Hummer was thinking.

"Good morning," said Mrs. Warbler to Mrs. Cliff Swallow. "I did not know you had returned. Have you come to stay with us now?"

"Oh, yes; I have come to stay," answered Mrs. Cliff Swallow. "We have taken rooms under the barn eaves. We are just making a cradle for the young ones we hope to have by and by. We have had a hard time to get all the mud we wanted, and thought we should be obliged to give up nest-making for this year. There was a nice puddle in the road where we were at work; you know we like road mud best, because it is so fine and sticky. When school let out, the small boys threw stones at us, hoping to hit some of us, I suppose, and so we had to go down to the river to get our mud, and that wasn't half so good as the road mud."

"That is too bad," said Mrs. Warbler.

Mrs. Cliff Swallow went on to say, "We have just heard such a slander about our family. Mrs. Owl told us. She overheard it outside of a window in the evening.

Somebody has started the story that we swallows have fleas and other vermin in our nests, and on that account we ought not to be allowed to build around houses and barns. It is a dreadful story, and so false. I wonder how it started. I felt almost too ashamed to come to the party."

"Too bad; too bad," said Mrs. Warbler again. "I would not pay any attention to it. Folks will say unkind things about us all, if they happen to find just one of us in mischief. Of course all birds do have a few little mites or fleas in their houses, and they can't help that, any more than those great human people can help having house-flies and mosquitoes about them where they live.

"Now some folks think I pick holes in the window screens, just because I love to run over them, up and down and all around, after the flies. To be sure, I do stick my toes through the meshes to hold myself on, but what of that? I love to peep through the window at people eating breakfast in the morning when the flies are stiff with cold on the outside. I can catch my game easily then."

Just then the new birds came along, and all the rest stood in a row to be introduced by Mrs. Mocker. "Mr. and Mrs. Bush-tit," she said, "let me present you to all of your neighbors."

The strangers shook hands all around, and then the birds fell to asking Mr. and Mrs. Bush-tit questions in true Yankee style.

"Yes," they answered, "we are going to stay all this season. We are making a cradle in the eucalyptus house, which we have rented."

"Oh, I saw your cradle," said Mrs. Towhee; "it is such a queer one. It looks just like a bag with a little round hole in one side no bigger than a good-sized blackberry. What makes you build such a queer cradle as that?"

"That is the kind of a cradle all our family make. The little ones have to stay in until we boost them out, or until they are strong enough to climb out. It is very safe and warm. It is strong, too. We would not think of making such a cradle as you do, Mrs. Towhee. We felt very sorry one day when we found one of your babies dead on the ground, where it had fallen out of the nest when it was too weak to fly."

"Well, we are glad to see you, anyway," said Mrs. Towhee, wiping the tears out of her eyes. "Now make yourselves at home, and let your little Tits come over and play with our little Towhees."

Mr. and Mrs. Bush-tit bowed politely, and then along came Mr. Bluebird. "Why, how do you do?" he said. "What brought you here? I thought you lived up in the mountain with the other Bush-tits."

"What brought you here?" they answered, laughing in the sweetest way. And then they agreed that our yard is a very nice place, and they thought they would "bring their friends" often and picnic.

"We never have rented a house in this street," said Mr. Bluebird, "but we may do so someday. Do you think it would be safe to try to raise a family so near those great people?"

"We think so," said Mrs. Bush-tit, "but you ought to see them stand and stare at us. A big, kind-faced boy comes every day and writes in a note-book, looking straight into our house. Once he climbed up on a ladder and examined it. We were very much afraid, but he did us no harm. His eye was so blue and clear we could see ourselves in it. It looked just as if he couldn't hurt a bird.

"Then one day a lady came with the boy, and they both watched us and tried to make pictures of us, but we wouldn't keep still long enough. The lady is that boy's mother, and we heard her say, 'We'll tame these bush-tits someday, Jo, just as we did the humming- birds, and then we will write all about them for children to read."

Then Mr. Bluebird said, "Isn't it strange what queer things people do write about us? Sometimes they are right, and sometimes they are wrong. I wish some bird author would write a book about men and women and their queer ways. Wouldn't it be interesting?"

Then Madam Bush-tit laughed a merry little giggle that made Mr. Mocker look up in surprise, and he ran it over in an undertone before he should forget it.

Just then a yellow-breasted meadow lark caroled his sweet ditty on the tip-top of a pine tree. All the birds flew

to welcome him to the garden party, coaxing him to stay and offering him lemonade from the cup of an orange blossom. They all loved Mr. Meadow Lark.

"No, thank you," he said; "I must be off. I love the fields better than the door-yards, and the violets and the cream-cups look out for my drink. I just came a minute to say good morning."

A whole flock of wax-wings took possession of a pepper tree and began to throw the seeds down on the heads of the birds beneath. "Oh, excuse us," they said, "we are tourists, and this yard looked so inviting we stopped for a few moments. How much do you ask a dozen for these pepper berries? We do not have any in our country. They are good eating, we find, when one has learned how to manage them. You ought not to charge us a great price, for they are almost all seed. How much do you ask?"

All the birds laughed, and then Mr. Mocker imitated the wax-wings, calling out in a saucy tone, "How much do you ask? How much do you ask?" The wax-wings were offended and flew away, the bit of red wax on the tip of their wing feathers showing very plainly in the sunshine.

"As if we ever charge anybody anything for what they eat," said Mr. Warbler. "I'm hungry myself." Then Mrs. Towhee, who had really gotten up the garden party, called them to dinner.

All the birds helped themselves. The hummers dipped away down into the honey-pot of a morning- glory, and the

towhees and mockers ate worms and crickets in the damp grass; the warblers snatched gnats on the wing, and the bush-tits ran up and down on the tree boughs, in search of bugs so small nobody else could see them. Each bird took the sort of food it liked best, drinking at the hydrant and breaking the bottles of the raspberry vines.

Suddenly along came Mr. Butcher-bird. "Go away, go away," all the birds cried. "Nobody invited you to our garden party."

"But I am here," said Mr. Butcher, in an impudent manner. "I should like to have a taste of that fat young hummer."

Mrs. Hummer screamed, and down swooped the butcher. Everybody thought he was going to make a meal of the baby, when he surprised them by grabbing up a great Jerusalem cricket and darting off with it.

Mr. Butcher-bird thought it was a good joke, and he laughed loudly from the peach tree. But the birds were so scared that they all flew away, and so the garden party broke up.

Chapter XXVI

Our Bird Hospital

Cities have their hospitals for the sick and wounded. When an accident happens to a person in the street, or a man falls from a building, or is burned, or is hurt in any way, he is taken to the hospital, where the surgeon does what he can for him. Sometimes his life is saved by the surgeon's care and the kindness of trained nurses.

If a stranger in any city is taken sick, and has no friends to care for him, he is carried to the hospital, where he is nursed back to strength. If he has no money, he is quite welcome to all this.

A long while ago, when we first began to be interested in birds and to think of them as "people," like ourselves, we found it necessary to have a bird hospital.

Our native birds seldom meet with accidents unless they are killed outright; but the tourist birds are often found injured in some mysterious way, so that they cannot fly. We feel sorry for these strangers so far from home, and so we pick them up and carry them to our hospital.

We have several empty cages about, one being the big cage which used to be "Robby's" house. When Robin died,

we thought it was a pity to give his cage away or to have it doing no good to anybody.

So we called it our hospital. This hospital is "In memory of Robin," as hospitals are sometimes built in "memory" of great men, or with money which rich men have left for that purpose.

We do not remember how many birds have been taken to our hospital, but there have been a great many. We use the "smaller wards" — the little cages, you know — for little solitary birds.

The last patients which we had in the large hospital were two wax-wings which we found maimed in some way so that they could not fly. They could get along pretty well low on the ground, but we were afraid the cats would steal them, and so our hospital nurse took charge of them.

At first they were very wild and would scream when we touched them. But they tamed readily, and in a day or two would sit on our fingers and eat from our hands. We knew they were berry and insect eaters; but, as it was winter, and the insects scarce, we could think of nothing they would like but the pepper berries. They lived on these for a few days, but evidently wanted other food.

We tried angle-worms, but these did not suit. One morning at breakfast little Sister, the hospital nurse, was holding one of the wax-wings on her finger, when it began to snatch at the bread crumbs. It was as if the little bird had been used to home-made bread all its life.

We kept these two beautiful patients in our hospital until they were quite strong, and just before the last of the tourists went away they joined their friends and flew off as if nothing had happened. We thought we saw them in the trees once again, but were not certain, all wax-wings look so very much alike.

At first, when we let them out of the cage, they would run back and go in at the open door; but soon they heard their mates calling and joined them. We had their photographs taken just before they went away, as people have the pictures of their friends to "remember them by."

The birds who are at liberty are very attentive to the birds in the hospitals, and hop close to them, as if they were inquiring all about their troubles.

Besides these sick birds in the hospital, we have the "out patients," young birds which we feed and look after when they happen to fall out of the nests. They cry all about at nesting time, so that it is as much as one person can do to keep the cats away and see that nothing happens to them.

Boys in our neighborhood know how we love the birds, and often bring them to us if they are hurt, so that they may have the benefit of our hospital. This is better than to leave them where they happen to fall, for the cats and dogs to worry. There are many ways in which we can show our affection for these little people.

Chapter XXVII

A Splendid Collection

We could never finish a book if we told all there is to know about birds. So we shall have to close our story about these people, hoping that children who read it will love the birds better than they ever did before.

The birds will stay with you wherever you live, even if it is on a lonely island or a western prairie. There will be garden parties, and morning concerts, and evening serenades, and visiting birds will drop into your yards and stop awhile. Birds are just like other people; they like to take a meal with a neighbor now and then. It makes good feeling on both sides.

Anyone can have a fine collection of beautiful birds without going to the museums. Not dead, stuffed, songless creatures, who cannot say "Thank you" for a crumb, or warble you a melody in return for a home in your yard. You can have this splendid collection flying from tree to tree, and making cradles among the flowers, and giving a garden party every day in the year, even though the snow lies on the ground.

There are wise people who study birds all their lives, never killing the little things to put away in a drawer with

camphor balls. Such people come to love the birds very much, and to know their sweet, wise doings in a way that a person with a gun can never know them. Sick people can sit in the sunshine or in the shade and study the birds, and grow stronger as well as wiser.

There are some strange collections of birds to be found in milliners' shops. The milliners are not to blame for these, for if good and kind people did not want any out of their collection, they would not keep so many.

Sometime on your way home from school, if your mother is not wanting to see you early, look in at these show windows and see the collections we are speaking of. These birds are sold to foolish women and girls, and worn to church and everywhere else on hats and bonnets.

See how distressed the poor dead creatures seem to be, — how they are twisted all out of shape. They are made to squat or perch in positions that make them look as if they were in agony. Not one of them all has a natural, happy look, because the people who put them up to sell have never loved the birds nor studied their ways. All they care about is the money they can get for them.

You will notice that some of the birds in ladies' bonnets have been cut in two. Sometimes just the head and wings are to be seen. If these ladies stopped to see what they were doing, and to think of how ridiculous they look, they would never wear these ornaments, just like savages.

Many of the birds that are very rare and beautiful have been nearly or quite all killed for this fashion. Some of the most delicate plumes you see have been taken from the egret, or white heron, at nesting time. The mothers are shot or stoned to death very easily because they will not leave their young. It is said that many are left wounded and yet alive after the plumes have been stripped off. There is no one to care for the young which are left in their nests, and so they die of cold and hunger. All this suffering is just to satisfy the cruel pride of women and girls who must wear birds in their bonnets.

If boys would resolve never to kill a bird, even though they could get money by doing it; and if girls would resolve never to wear a bird or a bird's wing on their hats, our country would be more beautiful with song and color than it has ever been.

We sat in church the other day, and in front of us was a lady with nine bird's wings on her bonnet. She was a tender-hearted lady, and probably would not hurt a fly herself. Yet her pride had really caused the death and suffering of five birds, and possibly of fifteen or twenty birdlings. She did not stop to think. Will you, kind reader, stop to think?

True Bird Stories

From My Note-Books

By

Olive Thorne Miller

Preface

All the stories in this book are strictly true. Nearly all of them are my own observation, part of them studies of captives in my own Bird Room, and the rest of birds in the field.

A few of the incidents have already been related in my "grown-up" books and in various publications, but most of them are now published for the first time.

OLIVE THORNE MILLER.

Brooklyn, N. Y., 1903.

In the Bird Room

True Bird Stories

The Bird Room

When I began to be interested in birds, I lived in a city where not many beside English sparrows were to be seen. I wanted to know something about our common birds; moreover, I never looked into a bird store without longing to set every poor little captive free.

So I set up a Bird Room. Every fall, for several years, I went around to the bird stores in New York and Brooklyn, and bought all the stray American birds I could find. The dealers did not make a business of keeping our common birds, and now it is against the law to do so. They usually kept only such birds as canaries, parrots, and other regular cage birds; but occasionally they would have a robin or bluebird or oriole tucked off in a corner, and these birds were the ones I bought. In one store I would find a catbird moping on a high shelf, or in a dark back room; in another a bluebird scared half to death, and dumb in the midst of squawking parrots and singing canaries.

In this way I collected in my Bird Room eight or ten — usually — of our native birds, and always in pairs when I

could get them. I put each one in a big cage, and left the doors open all day; so that they had the freedom of a large room with three big windows and plenty of perches all about.

Then I gave almost the whole of my time to taking care of them, and studying their ways through the winter, and as soon as spring came, and birds began to come back from the south, I took my little captives, — those who were able to fly, and I thought could take care of themselves, — carried them out into the country or a big park, and set them free. Then the next fall I found a new set for my Bird Room, to be liberated again as soon as it was safe.

I took such good care of the birds, gave them so many things they liked, made them so comfortable, and let them have such good easy lives, that almost everyone was happy, and perfectly contented to stay with me through the winter, when times are sometimes hard for them out of doors. Then, when they began to get uneasy in the spring, I let them go — as I said.

I have explained thus carefully about my Bird Room because I do not approve of keeping wild birds in cages, and I never had one caught or caged for me, not even for study. Everyone I ever kept was set free as soon as it was safe for him.

It is no kindness to set a canary free, nor a bird that is injured, or has been kept for years, and so is unfitted to take care of himself. Canaries are born in cages, of caged

parents. They have been taken care of for generations, and have no knowledge how to get food or find shelter. Turning one out into the world is about like turning a two-year-old baby out to get its own living.

The only way to mitigate the hard lot of a canary is to make him so happy that he will not wish to be free. I could tell you many stories of canaries who had escaped, coming back and beating against a window to get into the only home they knew.

The Gold Finches

The way my Bird Room began was this: a friend gave me a pair of English goldfinches. They were little fellows, not so large as a canary, and brightly dressed, having red and yellow as well as brown and white in their plumage.

I bought a big cage for them, and named them Chip and Chipee, but I found they were not happy together. Chipee seemed to be afraid the good things would not last; so when she had eaten all she could, she would quietly sit down in the seed dish, so that Chip couldn't get any.

Then Chip, on his side, did not approve of her antics. She was fond of climbing all over the wires of the cage and hanging head down like a parrot. Chip appeared to think this improper, for he would rush at her and twitch one of her feathers. Then she would scold at him.

Sometimes Chipee did not want to hear Chip sing, and one day there was a droll scene in the cage. They had both had their bath and their breakfast, and Chip settled himself on his favorite perch and began to sing.

I noticed that Chipee, who was on the same perch, moved a little away from him, and puffed out her feathers as if she were going to sleep. Chip noticed it too, and

seemed to take it as a slight to his music, for he moved a little nearer to her, fixed his eyes on her, and began again.

She did not stir, and looked sound asleep. Then Chip became furious. He ruffled up his feathers, glared at her, and went up and jerked one of her feathers.

That roused her. She turned her head toward him and opened her mouth at him. Among birds this seems to be what "making a face" is among children. Chip didn't like it anyway, for he dropped to the floor.

In a moment he came back to the perch and began again. He sang a note or two, and then paused. Chipee gave one note which sounded like "Whit!" Chip went on a note or two more and stopped again. She said "Whit" again, a little louder.

Three or four times they did this, and then, as Chip did not stop, she suddenly flew at him with a harsh scold exactly as if she said, "Will you stop that noise!"

Chip was surprised and stopped for an instant, but quickly made up his mind that he would sing if he chose. He came close to her, stretched up till his head was far above hers, and sang as loud as he could, fairly shrieking, and holding out his wings ready to fight any minute, while Chipee scolded at the top of her voice all the time.

Of course I could not let them live together if they were not happy. So I bought a new cage, a small square gilt one, and moved Chip into it. Then both were happy.

Chip soon grew very tame, answering me with a cheery little note or two whenever I spoke to him. In his pretty gilt cage he lived ten or twelve years, most of the time in the midst of bigger cages and bigger birds, always cheerful and happy, and interested in every new bird who came to live with us. And he died peacefully of old age at last.

The Goldfinch's Fright

Soon after Chipee was settled in the cage by herself, she had a serious fright and fainted away.

It happened in this way. I had gone to bed and the room was dark, when I heard a little squeak that sounded like a mouse. I jumped up and lighted the gas. There was Chip safe, but uneasy, evidently frightened and disturbed. I turned to Chipee and found her all in a heap in one corner of the cage.

While I looked she repeated the squeak I had heard. I ran with the cage to the light, and saw that she had pushed herself halfway through the wires, and could not get out or in. I pried the wires apart and she flew out.

Wildly and blindly she dashed around the room, hitting the furniture and bumping against the wall, while I had to stay by the gas to keep her from flying into that.

At last she fell and I hurried to pick her up. She fluttered a moment, and then her head dropped, and she lay limp and apparently dead in my hand. I looked at her by the gas and thought she was certainly dead, and I put her on the bottom of her cage, expecting to bury her in the morning.

I had heard that birds sometimes faint as people do; so I laid her carefully on her breast and left her, turned out the gas, and went back to bed. In a few minutes I heard a little flutter, and then the rattle of a perch. I quickly lighted the gas again, and there stood Chipee as pert as ever.

The next morning I made a search to see what had startled her, and found that half her seed was eaten and the shells left in the cup, as she never left them. What creature except a bird would eat canary seed? I could not guess, but I resolved to watch — that is, listen.

That night I did so, and discovered that the thief was a mouse. He would run up the wire-gauze window screen and into the cage between the wires. I hung the cage in another place and set a trap for him with cheese, but this was a mouse with ideas; he scorned cheese, and insisted on birdseed. And the worst of it was, that he always managed to get to that cage, or to keep me awake all night with the noise he made trying.

At last I thought of a plan for the thief. I put Chipee into Chip's cage with him, which pleased her and made Chip very indignant. When I had seen them both settled for the night, two little feather balls at opposite ends of the highest perch, I arranged to receive the mouse. I took away the seed cups from the empty cage and placed instead a round trap, like a rat trap, with birdseed inside.

This was too much for the mouse. About eleven o'clock I heard a scramble and a rattle of wire, and I

jumped up and found my mouse a prisoner. That day Chipee returned to her own cage, and had no more visits from mice.

Chipee was a nervous little thing, however, and not very happy among bigger birds, so I gave her away to a friend who had no other birds, and there she became very tame and lived a long time.

The Bird That Would Not Be Free

Most people think that the best thing one can do for a caged bird is to set him at liberty. Almost always this is true; but there are cases, as I have said, in which the bird is happier to live in a house and be cared for.

If a bird is hurt and cannot fly well, he is better off where food and shelter are always provided. Also, if he was taken when very young, before he had been taught to care for himself, he would find it hard to provide for his own comfort. The case of canaries I have already spoken of.

But I want to tell you about a wild bluebird, who knew enough to appreciate the comforts of a home.

The bird was found in a store in a very bad condition, having been caught in a trap and beaten herself against the wires till her wing feathers were broken so that she could not fly. She was put into the cage of another bluebird, who had been so injured that he could never fly.

The stranger showed herself to be rather ill-mannered. She grabbed the best of everything, and drove the owner of the cage about as if it were hers and not his. In fact, she was so greedy that the mistress thought he would be very glad when she had gone. So as soon as she had moulted and had come out with new plumage and perfect wing



feathers, the cage door was opened and away flew Madame Blue and disappeared.

Then the bird who was left began to call to her. All day he called, till the mistress was very sorry for him, but there was no sign that the runaway heard.

The next day, twenty-four hours after she had been set free, one of the family found her back, and trying with all her might to squeeze into the cage between the wires, while her old cage mate was greatly excited, calling in the sweetest voice, welcoming her, and encouraging her to come in.

The cage door was opened for her and she flew right in, plainly delighted to get home. Then came the most lively chatting between the two. One could not help feeling that she was telling how uncomfortable she found it having to hunt up food and water, and how much nicer it was to have a whole family of people to wait on and care for one.

She ate and drank, and appeared as if she could not get enough, and was evidently perfectly happy. Open doors were no temptation to her.

Mind! I do not say that all caged birds are happy. Indeed, most of them are not, because few of them are well cared for. By that I mean not only supplied with fresh water and fresh food, with plenty of variety, but talked to, made much of, and loved. A bird can be made so happy and comfortable in a house that he will refuse freedom, but

to make him so he must have perfect confidence in, and even love for, the people he lives with.

The Busy Blue Jay

I

One of the most interesting birds who ever lived in my Bird Room was a blue jay named Jakie. He was full of business from morning till night, scarcely ever a moment still.

Poor little fellow! He had been stolen from the nest before he could fly, and reared in a house, long before he was given to me. Of course he could not be set free, for he did not know how to take care of himself.

Jays are very active birds, and being shut up in a room, my blue jay had to find things to do, to keep himself busy. If he had been allowed to grow up out of doors, he would have found plenty to do, planting acorns and nuts, nesting, and bringing up families.

Sometimes the things he did in the house were what we call mischief because they annoy us, such as hammering the woodwork to pieces, tearing bits out of the leaves of books, working holes in chair seats, or pounding a cardboard box to pieces. But how is a poor little bird to know what is mischief?

Many things which Jakie did were very funny. For instance, he made it his business to clear up the room. When he had more food than he could eat at the moment, he did not leave it around, but put it away carefully, — not in the garbage pail, for that was not in the room, but in some safe nook where it did not offend the eye. Sometimes it was behind the tray in his cage, or among the books on the shelf. The places he liked best were about me, — in the fold of a ruffle or the loop of a bow on my dress, and sometimes in the side of my slipper. The very choicest place of all was in my loosely bound hair. That of course I could not allow, and I had to keep very close watch of him for fear I might have a bit of bread or meat thrust among my locks. In his clearing up he always went carefully over the floor, picking up pins or any little thing he could find, and I often dropped burnt matches, buttons, and other small things to give him something to do. These he would pick up and put nicely away.

Pins, Jakie took lengthwise in his beak, and at first I thought he had swallowed them, till I saw him hunt up a proper place to hide them. The place he chose was between the leaves of a book. He would push a pin far in out of sight, and then go after another. A match he always tried to put in a crack, under the base-board, between the breadths of matting, or under my rockers. He first placed it, and then tried to hammer it in out of sight. He could seldom get it in far enough to suit him, and this worried him. Then he would take it out and try another place.

Once the blue jay found a good match, of the parlor match variety. He put it between the breadths of matting, and then began to pound on it as usual. Pretty soon he hit the unburnt end and it went off with a loud crack, as parlor matches do. Poor Jakie jumped two feet into the air, nearly frightened out of his wits; and I was frightened, too, for I feared he might set the house on fire.

Often when I got up from my chair a shower of the bird's playthings would fall from his various hiding-places about my dress, — nails, matches, shoe-buttons, bread-crumbs, and other things. Then he had to begin his work all over again.

Jakie liked a small ball or a marble. His game was to give it a hard peck and see it roll. If it rolled away from him, he ran after it and pecked again; but sometimes it rolled toward him, and then he bounded into the air as if he thought it would bite. And what was funny, he was always offended at this conduct of the ball, and went off sulky for a while.

He was a timid little fellow. Wind or storm outside the windows made him wild. He would fly around the room, squawking at the top of his voice; and the horrible tin horns the boys liked to blow at Thanksgiving and Christmas drove him frantic. Once I brought a Christmas tree into the room to please the birds, and all were delighted with it except my poor little blue jay, who was

much afraid of it. Think of the sadness of a bird being afraid of a tree!

II

Jakie had decided opinions about people who came into the room to see me, or to see the birds. At some persons he would squawk every moment. Others he saluted with a queer cry like "Ob-ble! ob-ble! ob-ble!" Once when a lady came in with a baby, he fixed his eyes on that infant with a savage look as if he would like to peck it, and jumped back and forth in his cage, panting, but perfectly silent.

Jakie was very devoted to me. He always greeted me with a low, sweet chatter, with wings quivering, and if he were out of the cage he would come on the back of my chair and touch my cheek or lips very gently with his beak, or offer me a bit of food if he had any; and to me alone, when no one else was near, he sang a low, exquisite song. I afterwards heard a similar song sung by a wild blue jay to his mate while she was sitting, and so I knew that my dear little captive had given me his sweetest — his love song.

One of Jakie's amusements was dancing across the back of a tall chair, taking funny little steps, coming down hard, "jouncing" his body, and whistling as loud as he could. He would keep up this funny performance as long as anybody would stand before him and pretend to dance too.



My jay was fond of a sensation. One of his dearest bits of fun was to drive the birds into a panic. This he did by flying furiously around the room, feathers rustling, and squawking as loud as he could. He usually managed to fly just over the head of each bird, and as he came like a catapult, everyone flew before him, so that in a minute the

room was full of birds flying madly about, trying to get out of his way. This gave him great pleasure.

Wild blue jays, too, like to stir up their neighbors. A friend told me of a small party of blue jays that she saw playing this kind of a joke on a flock of birds of several kinds, robins, cat-birds, thrashers, and others. These birds were gathering the cherries on the top branches of a big cherry-tree. The jays sat quietly on another tree till the cherry-eaters were very busy eating. Then suddenly the mischievous blue rogues would all rise together and fly at them, as my pet did at the birds in the room. It had the same effect on the wild birds; they all flew in a panic. Then the joking jays would return to their tree and wait till their victims forgot their fear and came straggling back to the cherries, when they repeated the fun.

Once a grasshopper got into the Bird Room, probably brought in clinging to some one's dress in the way grasshoppers do. Jakie was in his cage, but he noticed the stranger instantly, and I opened the door for him. He went at once to look at the grasshopper, and when it hopped he was so startled that he hopped too. Then he picked the insect up, but he did not know what to do with it, so he dropped it again. Again the grasshopper jumped directly up, and again the jay did the same. This they did over and over, till everyone was tired laughing at them. It looked as if they were trying to see who could jump the highest.

There was another bird in the room, however, who knew what grasshoppers were good for. He was an orchard oriole, and after looking on awhile, he came down and carried off the hopper to eat. The jay did not like to lose his plaything; he ran after the thief, and stood on the floor giving low cries and looking on while the oriole on a chair was eating the dead grasshopper. When the oriole happened to drop it, Jakie — who had got a new idea what to do with grasshoppers — snatched it up and carried it under a chair and finished it. I could tell many more stories about my bird, but I have told them before in one of my "grown-up" books, so I will not repeat them here.

The Droll Tanager

One of the drollest sights in bird-land is a scarlet tanager putting on his winter suit.

In summer he is dressed in brilliant scarlet with black trimmings, but when he gets his new suit, as all birds do in late summer, he changes his bright feathers for a modest yellow-olive, such as his mate wears all the year.

I wanted to see how the change was made, so one autumn I was pleased to find a lot of scarlet tanagers in a bird store.

Such a comical-looking party as they were! They looked as if dressed in "crazy patchwork," for their new yellowish feathers come in two or three at a time as the old red ones drop out, and on no two of the birds did they appear in the same way. One had entirely changed except a ring of the old scarlet around the neck; another wore his winter color in dabs and patches all over; a third had dressed his head in the new color while the rest of the plumage was still scarlet.

I bought one who had a broad line of red down the breast, which met another of the same color over the back. It looked like a red harness on a yellowish bird. He was a queer-looking fellow, and he acted as queer as he looked,

for he did not care to eat. He would stand on the edge of his food dish and look at the food without touching it. If he liked the look of it, he would taste it, but if it did not please his critical eye, he simply let it alone.

It would never do to have a bird who did not eat, so when the tanager scorned his bill of fare, I added grated carrot to the mockingbird food, and that he decided to eat. He liked raspberries, too, and when he refused to bathe, I coaxed him to go into the water by putting a raspberry in the dish, where he had to go in to get it.

What the bird wanted was live food, I knew, and I gave him meal worms, which pleased him so much that soon he grew tame enough to come on my desk for them. In fact, though he was shy, he was never afraid of me. He always came when I called him, and at last he told me what he liked best to eat.

Although we may not understand the language of our little fellow creatures (if they have one), we can easily understand their actions, and the way the tanager told me what he wanted to eat was this: I always opened the windows wide before I let the birds out of their cages in the morning, and one day a fly got into the room. I saw the tanager looking at it eagerly, as if he would like to catch it, so I opened his door. He flew out instantly, went after that fly as a dog will go for a rat, caught it, and ate it with great satisfaction.

I took the hint thus given. I hung some sticky fly-paper outside the kitchen door, where flies hang around, ready to come in if a door is left open. In a short time I had five or six of them caught, and I carried the paper with its buzzing prisoners up to the Bird Room.

The moment I went in holding up my prize, the tanager flew at me, and before I could lay it down, he picked every fly off, hovering like a hummingbird. After that I gave him his regular lunch of flies.

This queer fellow never liked to be looked at; especially he hated to have any one see him eat. When I offered him flies, they were too tempting to be declined, but when he was in his cage and wanted to eat, he would stretch up and look over at me on the other side of the room. If I happened to be looking that way, he would leave the food and sit down on his upper perch as if he had never thought of such a thing as eating.

So I made the tanager a private dining-room, by putting a lining of stiff paper around the corner of his cage where the food dishes were. This made him very happy, and it was funny to see him stretch up between mouthfuls and look over his screen to see if I were looking. If I happened to move, he would flit to the upper perch as if he had been caught in mischief.

The Goldfinch's Devotion

The first I noticed of the little goldfinch's devotion to the tanager was after he had been with me several months, when Chip took a fancy to sitting on the perch that ran out of the tanager' s cage.

Before that, the tanager had given up coming out, though his door stood open all the time. Birds who are not very active often do so. Having all their comforts inside the cage, and not caring to fly around, they sometimes have to be coaxed to come out.

The tanager seldom went outside his door, and Chip found his perch a comfortable place where the big birds in the room did not disturb him. After a while he moved his seat just inside the door, and then he was still more quiet, and the tanager did not object.

Unless Chip went too near the tanager on his upper perch, he was never noticed, and before long he made himself at home all over the cage, and took it upon himself to keep other birds out of it. Birds are as fond of calling on one another as some people, but no matter how big the bird who came to the tanager's door, Chip always met him with scolding and fluttering wings, and drove him away.

As he grew more familiar with the tanager, Chip began to talk to him, a little low chatter, such as he had talked to Chipee, with eyes fixed on his red neighbor.

Chip's fondness for the silent tanager continued to grow, and he wanted to get nearer to him, so he took to clinging to the cage wires outside, as near as he could get. It must have been hard to hold on there, but the little fellow left it only to eat and bathe. When the tanager hopped to the other end of the cage, Chip followed him outside, and when he went to eat, the little goldfinch went too — outside.

Once in a great while the tanager would go out of the cage, and then Chip was most anxious and troubled. He followed from perch to perch, and if he went into another bird's cage, Chip stood at the door and would not let anyone come in. If the tanager went to the floor, Chip was very uneasy, leaning far over and watching him, and when he flew up to a perch, giving a joyous call.

In the next cage to the tanager lived a robin, a big, fun-loving fellow, who took it upon himself to make the shy tanager go out into the room. The way he did it was to jump on the roof of the cage, coming down hard, right over the tanager's head. Of course the tanager hopped across to another perch, and the robin began a mad war dance across the roof, making the tanager fly wildly around till he slipped out at the door.

Chip did not approve of this way of treating his friend, and he set out to make the robin behave better. He flew at the big fellow, half a dozen times as big as himself, but the robin was not a bit scared.

Then I came to the rescue, and fastened a paper over the top of the cage. This usually keeps birds off, but the robin seemed to like it, for it made more noise. He pranced back and forth over it with delight; he lifted the handle of the cage and let it fall with a clatter; he tore off bits of the paper and dropped them into the cage, and was as naughty as he could be. All the while Chip was scolding and flying at him, trying to peck him, and doing his very best to protect his friend.

When spring came, the tanager woke up and showed an interest in things. He began to sing, he took soaking baths, and he spent much time at the window looking out on the trees as they put on their green spring coats.

Now, too, he began to be cross to Chip. He had never seemed to care for his little friend, he had only endured his attentions, but now he was really unkind to him, and poor Chip was very unhappy about it.

I waited only till it was warm enough to be safe to let the tanager out, and then I took him into the country away from English sparrows and set him free. Chip moped a little while, but there was always so much going on in the Bird Room that he soon found something else to interest him.

A Madcap Thrush

I

The most amusing bird I ever saw was an English blackbird. One who knows our American thrushes would never look for pranks and "show-off" performances in that dignified family. Yet this madcap was a thrush — the black thrush.

He had not been in the house ten minutes before he began to exhibit his accomplishments. First he looked the new cage over from top to bottom, tried every perch, tasted the food, flirted out a few drops of water, and then settled himself on the middle perch, fixed his eyes upon me, and prepared to sing.

I was charmed with his readiness; I held my breath! Now I should hear the famous English blackbird, whose praise is sung by the poets of Europe. I did. I heard him whistle out, loud and clear — a pure Yankee air!

Down fell my hopes, for if there is one thing I specially dislike, it is a bird trained to whistle like a boy, and I remembered with disgust that I had promised to entertain the bird all winter while his young master was abroad in search of health. I wondered if I was doomed to listen to that stupid tune for six months. It soon became plain that

I was — and worse, for he had forgotten or had never learned the end of the strain, and that lost chord he was forever seeking.

After I got over my first disappointment, I tried to help him out, for he really seemed much concerned about it; but I did not know the air, and he refused all my attempts to make an end to it.

He did not scorn my help. If I began, he would join in and make a duet of it, and if I stopped at the end of a few notes, he would take it up at that point and finish it. If I whistled it wrong to try him, he at once corrected me by repeating it as it should be.

All through the first evening till ten o'clock he sat on that middle perch and whistled his unfinished strain, and not one note of his own song did I hear.

The next day I was treated to a curious sight. The room where I sat at work was separated from his by portieres, and he did not see me, though I could look through a crack and see him. Hearing a queer, low song, I peeped at him, and there he was on the floor of his cage dancing a jig — I don't know what else to call it.

His eyes were fixed on the middle perch, two or three inches above his head, as if he were addressing someone on that spot, and he was jumping and tiptoeing around in the drollest way.

First he hopped back and forth with mincing steps, singing a whispering song all the while, and moving his

head from side to side. Then he sprang lightly to the lowest perch, just above the floor, instantly jumped down and scrambled across the floor, and then turned and bounded over the middle perch without touching it, as if he had suddenly gone mad. Such a figure as he was! The feathers on the top of his head stood up like a crest, his mouth was half open, his wings were held a little out, and his tail was spread open like a fan.

While I looked on at this queer performance, he seemed all at once to think of something.

He ran up the three perches to the top, and began his whistle. The show was over for that time.

II

But that was not the end of the thrush's performances. He amused himself every day with similar antics. Sometimes he began by flying madly back and forth between the two upper perches, with crest raised, tail spread, and wings open, then dropped to the floor and stood before his door, uttering low, strange sounds that I can't describe, looking through the wires as though he saw someone outside to whom he was talking, jerking his head, and wriggling his body in a droll way; and while I looked through the peep-hole, he jumped back to the upper perch and burst out with a loud "Chack! chack! chack!" — a regular blackbird call.

A few minutes later the fit seized him again; and down he went to the floor.

He pretended to snatch something from the gravel and fling it across the cage; then, pointing his beak to a particular spot on the bottom of the cage, he hopped around in a circle, his wings fluttering, his feathers puffed out, and all the time singing the sweetest notes, so low that I could hardly hear them.

With these antics he amused himself every day when he thought he was alone; but one evening, when the family were all out, he deliberately took it upon himself to entertain me. He began whistling his tune, and after two or three notes broke it off and ended with what sounded like talk. Then he took up the air where he had dropped it, and ended in a noise like a laugh. Again he resumed his air, and interrupted himself with a whistle like a call to a dog. A fourth time he started that whistle, got three or four notes farther, and ended with a sound like a kiss.

I pretended not to notice him, and he went on with the most comical performance I ever heard from a bird; every time beginning the air he had been taught, and bursting into something else. Beside the sounds I have spoken of, he made sometimes a tremolo of the last note, which was really delightful. Again, he gave a droll "Que! que!" then a "Wee-o!" and so on.

All the time the whistled part was loud and clear, and the funny additions were low, as if to himself.

It seemed as if he were trying to recite his lesson, but was so full of fun that he had to indulge in these little asides. It was the oddest and most laughable thing I ever saw. Taken with his serious-looking black coat and his very knowing eyes, it did seem a little uncanny, and as if he knew altogether too much for a bird. In fact, though he looked like a bird, he behaved like a monkey.

A serious trouble in the blackbird's life with me was that I would not let him spatter the wallpaper with the food and water he was always flinging about, as if that were the only use he had for them. Behind his cage I fastened up a sheet of stiff buff wrapping-paper, and to tear that to bits was the task he set himself. He was a faithful worker, I must admit. First he hammered the paper with his stout yellow beak till he picked a hole in it, and then with the same useful bill he seized the edge, and pulled and tugged till he tore it.

If he could get a piece off, he was happy. He took it into the cage, and visited upon that bit his hatred of the whole sheet. He beat it so rapidly that it sounded like the roll of a small drum; he flung it about, he scraped it on the floor, and never rested till it was reduced to scraps, or dropped out the cage.

When I put his house in order for the day, I always gave him a piece of fresh apple, wedged in between two wires, where I hoped it would stay for him to peck at; but the blackbird had other designs upon the apple. He wanted it

to play with. Faithfully he pushed and pulled and twisted till he got the piece out, and then took it down for a mad frolic. He would fling it from side to side, then snatch at it, and instantly spring up on the side of the cage and hold on to the wires, looking scared out of his wits, as if it had bitten him. Then he would go down and worry it again.

Sometimes, lifting one wing, he would pounce upon the bit of apple as if it were a savage enemy that must be destroyed, and in a second bound up on the middle perch as though he expected to be murdered instantly.

Through all these performances he kept up the sweet, low singing. Everything he did was in a jerky way, and I never could guess what would come next.

He appeared to rack his brain to think of new pranks, and if everything else failed, he would dash his gravel out over the carpet. I have even seen him thrust his naughty head between the wires and drop out a beakful of mockingbird food.

After this fashion he "carried on" all winter, and though I did not particularly enjoy him as a bird, as a clown in a cage, an entertainer for a dull hour, he was the funniest I ever saw in feathers.

The Baby Robin

I

Ever since I read somewhere a charming sketch of a tame robin named Bob, all robins have been Bob or Bobby to me, so when a baby of the family came into my Bird Room to spend the winter, his name was all ready for him. Bobby he became from that minute.

That he was a baby I knew partly by his youthful ways, and partly by the fact that he had not entirely put off the spotted bib which marks the infancy of the thrush. He was a knowing youngster, however; he had his own opinions, and never hesitated to speak his mind, though I could not always understand him.

The robin had no notion of losing his interest in life and the world around him because fate had decreed that he should live in a house. On the contrary, he seemed as much interested, and as eager to note the strange things that went on inside our walls, as we are to observe the manners of the foreign folk whose homes we visit.

The doings of the people thus suddenly become his neighbors he studied with curiosity; but one thing in his new world he was already familiar with, and that was the birds. He realized at once that he must make and keep his

place among them, and he proceeded to do this the moment he learned how to go in and out of his own particular apartment in that strange, new place.

He had some difficulty at first, because the door to his cage was rather low, — as cage doors are apt to be, — and he stood up so straight that he passed it forty times before he saw that there was a door, and that it was wide open. He had to stoop a little to go out.

The part of the room that the robin at once claimed as his own private promenade was across the tops of two large cages which stood side by side on a shelf, — one being his own, — and he made it part of his daily duty to see that no one trespassed upon it. Woe to the unlucky bluebird or oriole who dared set foot on that sacred spot! Down upon him instantly came Master Bobby with fury in his eye, so big and bustling in manner that no one was brave enough to stay and face him.

No one, did I say? I must except one — a little Baltimore oriole, who was ragged and tail-less, but so bold and saucy that I shall tell her story in another paper.

Another duty the robin took upon himself — to assist me in seeing that every bird in the room had his daily outing. Soon after the cage doors were opened in the morning Bobby looked around, and if he saw any of the feathered folk who lingered by the food-cup and did not take advantage of their privilege, he went at once to attend to it.

His manner of effecting this purpose was completely successful. He simply pounced upon the top of a cage, and carried on such pranks over the head of the bird within that he was glad to fly out and leave the cage to the enemy. The robin cared nothing for the cage, however; he merely wanted to drive its tenant out, and the moment that was done he went his way.

It may appear strange that, being a robin and consequently fond of the ground, Bobby did not lay claim to the floor of his new territory. He did desire to do so, but there was a slight difficulty in the way. Another claimant was ahead of him, and one who looked well able to maintain his ground — a blue jay. Against all others in the room the robin did defend the floor, always rushing up to see what was wanted when any bird ventured to alight on the matting.

The blue jay was too big to take liberties with, and he became an object of the greatest interest to the young robin. The jay was himself little more than a baby, who had lived with people from the nest, and was therefore quite used to a house. In fact, he knew no other home, and Bobby watched everything he did with a sort of admiring awe, as we have all seen a little boy watch the performances of a big boy.

II

When the blue jay was hopping about the floor, busy with his own affairs, which were always of the utmost importance, in his opinion, the robin often stood on a low table or chair, and looked at him, following every movement with deep concern. If the jay devoted himself to some particular thing, like hammering a nut, and went to the round of a chair to do it, his admirer came as near as he thought safe, on the floor, and observed the operation closely.

Sometimes, after looking on for a while, the robin, too, hunted about for a plaything, and brought a match, a pin, or a bit of nutshell that he picked up on the floor, and laid it before the jay, as if to challenge him to a frolic. Whatever was his intention, the jay was far too busy a personage to play; his life was full of serious duties, and he never accepted the invitation.

One thing the blue jay persisted in doing that was almost too much for Bobby to endure — that was taking his bath first. The two birds used the same broad, shallow dish on the floor; and when the jay got possession, the robin would dance around in a circle, running and hopping as near as he could without being spattered, quite frantic to go in. But his big rival was specially fond of a good soaking himself, and he often kept Bobby waiting some time.

When at last the way was open, Bobby rushed into the water, stepping upon the edge of the dish with one foot, as a human being would do, and taking his turn at a soak. On coming out he fanned himself nearly dry, hopping about the floor and beating violently sometimes one wing, sometimes both wings.

He had, too, a curious fancy for coming upon a small stand near me to dress his plumage. It was not at all a good place, for there was no perch to cling to while he twisted around to plume himself. But it was his choice, and he insisted on coming there, though when he tried to reach his tail feathers his feet slipped and he turned round and round like a kitten chasing its own tail, making a laughable show of himself.

The robin baby, like others of his age, was fond of play. A favorite game was to run across the two cages he considered his own, and, at the end, jump heavily on the paper cover of a smaller cage a foot away. Of course the first bounce sent the owner out in a hurry, and then Bobby ran and jumped till he was tired of it.

Another way he had of amusing himself was trying to pull out the ends of strings that hung loose where the matting was joined. One of these was always irresistible to the bird. He seized it in his beak, and pulled and tugged at it so hard that he was often jerked off his feet. The fact that he never got one out did not discourage him in the least; he was always ready to attack another when he found it.



A string was his great delight; he dragged it about, and worried it as he did a worm. It sometimes got him into trouble. On one occasion he found a long piece of thread,

and before I noticed him, had so tangled it around one leg and foot that he could not spread his toes, nor, of course, stand on that foot, and he was very much frightened. I could not catch him while he was out in the room without scaring him still more, and he worked at it himself a long time before he went into his cage. As soon as he did that, I caught him and cut off the thread with scissors, though it was so twisted around that I had to cut fifteen or twenty times before it came off.

Bobby showed the common-sense for which his family is noted, by submitting quietly, as soon as he understood that I was trying to help him, and letting that leg hang down, while the other was held up.

A newspaper on the floor always furnished the robin with much entertainment. After jerking it about, and lifting it to peer under the edge, he would pounce into the middle, peck a hole, and then seize the edge of the opening and tear the paper into strips. The tearing sound always startled him and sent him off, — as it does nearly every bird, — but the fun of doing it was so great that he always came back and did it again.

One trouble came into the life of my robin that for weeks made him very unhappy. It was a feather in one wing, of which the feathery part was missing — worn off, apparently. This he plainly considered a disgrace to any robin, — birds are very sensitive about the condition of their plumage, — and he determined to pull it out. He

worked at it many hours, but for some reason could not dislodge it; but he did succeed in making himself very miserable about it, and I was glad that spring and the time of his freedom was near.

As that magical season came on Bobby grew restless, and worked off his superfluous energy on his roommates. He chased the birds about; he made war on a shy tanager; he performed war dances on the cages; he tried to put an end to all quiet life.

In fact, he became so troublesome in my little colony that I was glad, on the first warm day, to take the robin — a baby no longer — out to the country and bid him farewell.

The Goldfinch's Fun

I

When I introduced to my room the English blackbird, some of whose pranks I have related, there hung on the opposite side of the bay-window a smaller cage, in which lived another foreigner — an English goldfinch.

This bird was quite old, and had almost ceased to sing. He had been for ten years in my house, and had seen forty or fifty feathered folk, of almost as many kinds, come and go. He was nearly as much interested in bird study as I was, and he watched and pondered over every stranger as if he meant to put him in a book.

When I opened the goldfinch's door, as usual, on the morning of the blackbird's arrival, he paid no attention to his beloved bath, but instantly flew over and alighted on the cage of the newcomer.

This did not please the gentleman in black. He stretched far up and saluted his visitor with a decided "Chack!" that the small bird understood, for he flew at once to a perch resting against the wires of the blackbird's cage, where he could stand three inches from the cage, see every movement of the strangely behaved newcomer, and yet be quite beyond his reach.

There he sat hour after hour, as much interested as if the whole performance were a show for his amusement. He seemed perfectly entranced; he would hardly leave his place for food or water, and for the first time I had trouble to get him into his cage at night.

And no wonder! If ever there was a clown in feathers, the blackbird was one. He took notice of his little observer, of course; he noticed everything, and though he generally preferred to chatter and sing and show off to the people about him, he did occasionally condescend to pay attention to the bird.

Sometimes he scolded him in a loud "Chack! chack! chack!" as if reproving him for his curiosity about his neighbors' affairs. Sometimes the goldfinch would sidle along an inch on the perch, as if he thought the queer black fellow might reach him; but he knew enough about cages to be sure that he was safe three inches away.

Again, the blackbird would come close to the wires on his side, and address his little audience of one in a low, talking tone. The goldfinch would reply, usually with a gentle scold. Upon this, the blackbird apparently resolved not to notice him. He went to the floor, turned his back, and interested himself in the gravel, or began one of his comical dances.

This proceeding the smaller bird looked upon with the closest attention, drawing nearer till he almost touched the wires. But when, in some of his frisking about, the

blackbird approached that side of the cage, the goldfinch dashed away as though he feared his strange neighbor might come through. Then the dancer hopped lightly to the upper perch, spread wide his tail, lifted it with a flourish, and let it fall gracefully back to place, expressing — as I translated it — satisfaction that he had put the starer to flight.

The goldfinch did not stay away long. He was unable to resist the fascinations of his droll neighbor. In a few moments he came back and began a low chatter, which he kept up most of the time. Many of the thrush's antics were for the benefit of this little spectator, as if to make believe that he didn't care if he did stand and stare at him.

Once he had a grand frolic over one of the goldfinch's feathers which happened to fall into the cage, while the owner paused a second to look down on him. He was moulting, and his feathers dropped easily. The moment it fell the blackbird pounced on it; and the way he "carried on" with it was funny to see, though the little fellow looked rather disturbed, as if he felt that a part of himself was being trifled with.

The blackbird literally wiped the floor with that feather; then he danced across the cage sidewise, appearing half afraid of it. Again, he beat it against a perch, flung it into the air and caught it before it fell, and at last tossed it into a corner as if it were unworthy his notice.

Soon after, he began to perform around the end of a perch as though it were a hobgoblin of the most frightful sort, opening his mouth wide, raising and fluttering his wings, swaying his head from side to side, and glaring at it as though he would eat it in half a minute.

II

The one thing that aroused the blackbird to genuine fury was seeing his rival bathe. His own bath was the principal event of the day in his opinion, and he was so violent in his splashings that it was necessary to take him into a room where he could do no injury. He always sprinkled the table and the carpet and furniture for several feet around.

Even when he had just returned from this daily excursion, and was not yet dry from his own soaking, it excited him wildly to see anyone else in the water. He dashed around his cage, fluttered his wings as he did in spattering, pecked savagely at the wires, rushed to his water dish, flirted out every drop he could, and finally raised his head feathers like a crest, and looked reproachfully over at me, as if I had treated another better than I had treated him.

All the time he uttered a low cry, a sort of "Seep" with the mouth closed, and turned every other second to see his little neighbor splashing in his gentle way.

That little neighbor, too, took a rather naughty delight in coming close to the blackbird to shake himself, and thus sometimes to throw a drop or two upon him. At this the blackbird shook himself as though a drop of water were poison to him; and then he went to the floor and busied himself with some important matter, as if he did not know there was such a bird in the room.

The goldfinch, as I said, had nearly lost his pretty song, but sometimes he tried to sing a little in his old way. This the blackbird apparently regarded as a direct insult to him. Perhaps he thought it intended for mockery of him, for as soon as the little fellow began, he struck in with his loudest whistle — his Yankee air. That always silenced the goldfinch, for he could never get used to hearing a bird whistle in so unbirdlike a way.

One curious trick that the blackbird occasionally played off upon his little watcher outside showed a grim sense of humor that was perhaps the most uncanny thing about him. He would crouch on the floor, touching it with his breast, every feather erected, head raised, and eyes glaring; and when one was sure he was about to do something madder than ever before, he would suddenly rise to his feet in the most quiet manner, drop his feathers back in their place, and go on about his business as if he never thought of a prank. Upon this the goldfinch always seemed startled, and uttered a note or two in an inquiring tone.

Then the blackbird turned his attention to the goldfinch, and he always made one think of a savage warrior about to swallow up or totally destroy his enemy. He had a way of wiping his beak on the perch that looked like sharpening it for instant use, and if he had been out, I am sure the little fellow would have been afraid of him.

He scraped his beak violently, then looked over at the bird outside, then glanced at me, shook himself vigorously, wiped his bill again, and all in a jerky way as if he could hardly contain himself. In a moment he turned his back on the goldfinch, dropped to the floor, and proceeded to attack the middle perch as if it had mortally offended him.

There was one thing, however, that frightened him, and that — strange to say — was a long stick. The father of the family is fond of fishing, and his rods are dear to his heart; but never, so long as the blackbird lived in the house, could he bring one into the room without putting the bird into such a panic that we feared he would beat himself to death against his cage.

This was no show performance, either, although the little goldfinch — who had long ago learned the harmless character of a fishing-rod, to birds at least — looked on with the same interest with which he viewed all the actions of his strange neighbor in black.

When at last his young master returned, and the English blackbird went back to his home, the goldfinch seemed greatly to miss his daily show.

He lost all interest in coming out of his cage, and for several months after he seemed to be waiting and looking for someone to amuse him, as did his strange black visitor of the winter.

The Comical Chewink

I

One day when I chanced to drop into a bird store, — for I can never pass one without going in, — I saw a bird that was new to me, and strangely enough the owner could give it no name. "It was some common thing," he said; "a boy brought it in, and though he didn't care for it, he bought it to please the boy; he could put it in his window cage." Then, disgusted to find that I had not come in to spend twenty-five dollars for a loud-singing mockingbird to drive me crazy in a city house, or fifty dollars for a parrot who would shriek me wild in a week, the man walked off to the back of his den, and left me to look at the stranger as long as I liked.

The bird was bright and attractive, and not at all afraid of me, regarding me with nearly as much curiosity as I regarded him. I longed to take him home and get better acquainted with him. But my room was full. I had no place for another cage, and I had to leave him.

The next June, on the Hoosac Mountains, I was greatly delighted by an exquisite bird-song — a perfect tremolo, like a peal of silver bells. After much search I found the singer — a chewink or towhee bunting. All through

nesting time I enjoyed his music. I found his nest, and saw madam his spouse, and their one solitary baby in its cradle in the grass.

After I came back to the city, one day in looking up birds to fill my Bird Room for the winter, I went into the same old bird store. The moment my eyes fell upon the stranger, — still living in the big show cage in the window, — I knew it. It was a female chewink, in her modest dress of brown. Of course I could not hope to hear the tremolo that so stirred me on the mountain, but I could at least learn some chewink ways. I brought her home, gave her a fine large wire room to herself, and shortened her name to "Winks."

The first morning a bird spends in my Bird Room he is most interested in seeing the other birds at their bath. They seldom have a chance to bathe in a crowded store, and the splashing they hear always sets the poor little creatures nearly frantic. Winks was like the rest; no sooner did bathing begin than she came down to the floor of her cage, and looked out sharply as if she said, "Can it be possible? are they really in the water?"

In a moment she began to shake herself, and to run back and forth, trying to get out. Her wishes were as plain to me as if she asked in so many words to have a bath. I gave her a chance, and she took a good soaking, the first in a year, I suppose, poor thing!

The next day she made up her mind that she preferred to bathe in her water dish, which was about the size of a coffee-cup. It seemed absurd to bathe in a three-inch cup when there was a ten-inch bathtub at her disposal; so I thought I would cure her of that notion by giving her something altogether too small for the purpose, — a glass dish out of a small cage, about an inch in diameter and rather deep.

That did not discourage her in the least; she seemed rather to like it, and though the tub full of water was right before her eyes, she insisted on using only the cup. Her way was very comical. She thrust her head in, and then bent her wings and shook her feathers as if she had been into the water all over. Sometimes she was so eager about it that she fairly threw herself off her feet, and her head would go in out of sight while her tail stood straight up, and her feet for an instant pawed the air wildly. A very droll figure she made of herself; but it seemed to please her, for it was a long time before she formed the habit of bathing outside.

I said her tail stood up. I should have said the tail coverts, or the short feathers that cover the top of that member, for tail she had none; she was moulting. Much of the expression of a bird depends upon the tail, but Winks managed to perk up those coverts in a manner as saucy as she did the long tail, when it came out.

II

My chewink had some curious ways. In the first place she insisted on sitting on the floor. This did not surprise me, since the chewink is a ground bird, getting its food there, and even making its cozy little nest in a hollow in the grass.

She would bend her long legs and sit perfectly flat on the gravel, an hour at a time. Sometimes she turned her face to the room, so that she could be amused by the panorama of bird life about her; but now and then she hid her head in the back corner of the cage, probably to take a nap, though it looked as if she had turned her back upon a frivolous world and the pranks of blue jays and orioles, for serious meditation.

This, too, was her chosen attitude for a sun bath; and I never saw a bird who could make herself so flat. It is no doubt the way these birds conceal themselves in the great out of doors; and in that attitude they must have been almost invisible on the grass-tufted, pebbly hillsides where I found them living.

A queer freak of my chewink was her determination to get her feet into her food. She had mockingbird food mixed with grated carrot, which many birds toss about, daintily picking out only the bits they like. But Winks wanted to scratch hers, like an old hen; and scratch she did, too, in spite of all I could do.

Her way was funny. It was to jump into the dish with both feet, give one vigorous scratch, and then spring out again, almost before one could see what she did.

This trick, too, I tried to cure, but the bird had a way of doing as she liked. She laughed me to scorn, so to speak. I took away her broad dish and put her food in a small after-dinner coffee-cup, not much wider than her foot was long. Even into this the naughty Winks would jump, give one wild flirt with her feet, and then out, and she would not eat till she had done it. I never could cure her.

It was not because she was dull about learning. She was very bright about other things; for instance, about learning to use a ladder. One day when I was out something happened, — I don't know what, — but on my return I found in her cage twelve wing feathers. She had either beaten herself against the cage or deliberately pulled them out.

The result was seen the next morning — she could not fly. When she started out on her usual tour of the room, she came plump to the floor.

I brought at once, and put up to the door of her cage, a light ladder which I keep for the use of disabled birds. The moment she saw it she hopped up, round after round, in an experimenting sort of way, to see where they led, until she reached her doorway. Contrary to my intention at this point, she did not go in, but hopped to the top of her open door, and then scrambled to the roof of the cage. There

she was as badly off as before; for no bird that is disabled will try to fly downward.

I waited till she grew hungry and uneasy, and yet she would not venture to hop down the short distance. Then I made use of the meal-worm argument. It is the most potent "persuader" I know for birds which eat worms. Taking one of these unpleasant creatures in a pair of printer's tweezers that I keep for the purpose, and being careful to pick out a lively one, I drop it on the floor of the bird's cage. The main object in life with these wriggling things being to get out of sight, it starts instantly for a hiding-place. The movement attracts the eye of the hungry bird on the roof, and he is at once frantic to seize and stop the escape of his prey. In his eagerness he forgets his fear of falling, and is almost certain to clamber down the side of his cage, and rush in after what he considers a choice morsel.

A comical performance of the chewink was to fly about the cage as if she had gone mad. From perch to perch she went in a wild fashion, using wings as well as legs, and ended up standing on the middle perch, flapping her wings like a crowing cock, and crying, "Chewink! chewink!" as loud as she could call. She never condescended to amuse herself. I think she was old, and had outlived the follies of her youth. She went on her way about the room, paying no attention to anyone, and giving a saucy toss of her tail — after it grew out — that seemed to warn all whom it might concern not to meddle with her.

At any rate, no one did interfere; and when the spring fever set in among my birds, the chewink was the first to go her way in the world out of doors, where I hope she is alive and well to-day.

Polly's Pranks

I

Polly was a snowy white cockatoo, with beautiful yellow crest, who lived in a pleasant home in New York. The one object of her life, when I first knew her, was to get out of her cage.

She might have stayed out all the time, for it was a pet-ridden house, and the family was used to all sorts of beast and bird pranks. She might, I say, but for one or two notions which she had. One was an incurable dislike of beads, and another an equally strong liking for buttons.

The beads she attacked as if they were enemies, biting them off a lady's dress much faster than they had been sewed on, and flinging them away with a spiteful jerk that sprinkled the carpet like a shower of glass. No matter what other attractions were in a room, if a lady happened to wear a bit of sparkling bead trimming, the instant Polly was free she flew or waddled across the floor, and went to work at it, and neither coaxing nor scolding had the smallest effect upon her.

With buttons it was otherwise. She seemed to delight in them. To be sure, she bit them off, but it was in the way old Izaak Walton says a fisherman must put a hook

through a worm, "as if he loved it." She snapped off the buttons with her scissors-like beak, but she did not throw them away; she chewed them up. If no one happened to notice her, the naughty bird would snatch every button from her mistress's dress, or her master's coat, more quickly than a person could do it with a knife.

Another of this bird's tricks was to attack people's feet, and as she had a beak like a pick-axe, and never hesitated to use it, she was the terror of children and servants.

Children, indeed, she particularly disliked. She squawked at them if she could not get out of her cage, and she flew at them if she could.

These, with other troublesome fancies, condemned Madam Polly to a cage, and, as I said before, to get out of that gilded prison was her sole business in life.

First she would coax, and her way was most droll. She began by saying pathetically, "Poor Polly!" to call attention to her wishes. If anyone looked at her, she at once began to bow in the most persuasive and violent manner. If that did not bring deliverance, she wriggled from side to side, opening and quivering her wings, and almost twisting her neck off in her attempts to be winning, her big, dark eyes all the time eagerly fixed upon the one she hoped would open her door.

If these curious antics had no effect, she squawked savagely, and so loud that conversation could not be heard in the room; but her crowning effort, and one that usually

was successful, was a wheedling little song — a most ludicrous performance. It sounded like a child trying to sing in a high key and with the quavering, shaky voice of an old woman. It was the funniest song a bird ever uttered, I am sure, and no one could resist this supreme attempt to please.

If dinner was going on when she came out, she rushed at once for the table, climbed up by the cloth, or the dress of a friend, and proceeded to look over the dishes, make her choice, and help herself. Oatmeal she liked; green corn, too, and a chicken bone to pick; but her special delight was in green peas, which she neatly extracted from their delicate skins, and ate with great daintiness. So strong was this liking that the sight of raw peas set her wild till some were given to her. Then she took a pod deftly in one claw, held it up, and removed the peas one after another, dropping the cleaned-out skins as she went on.

After eating all she wanted, if she chanced to be in an amiable mood, Polly liked to "show off" to a stranger, and she had a comical way. She climbed up the back of a chair, stood on the top, fixed her eyes on the one she intended to charm by the performance, and, the moment that person looked at her, began.

II

To begin with, Polly jerked herself up to her greatest height, as if a spring had gone off inside her like a Jack-in-

the-box, every feather erect, crest standing straight up, and delivered herself of her greatest accomplishment, "Cockatoo Cracker!" with a satisfied air, as if nothing could go beyond that. The next instant she crouched on her perch as low as possible; then bowed many times as fast as she could, as though she were hammering something. She performed the most ridiculous capers, which somehow reminded one of the puppyish gambols of a big, awkward dog. Then, if her door were not opened for all her coaxing and storming, madam proceeded to open it, or at least to try to open it. No wire, no string, no intricacy of knots or device of twisting, could baffle her. She was very knowing, and her beak and claws — hands, they almost deserve to be called — were as useful as many people's fingers. She would work with the utmost patience at any fastening, cutting string or small wire, till she got the door open. The only thing she could not master was a padlock with the key removed. She could turn the key if it were left in.

When her door was actually locked, and she knew it, her anger was roused; and she at once expressed her opinion of the world in general, and her master in particular, by first shaking her door until it seemed that the hinges must give way, and then wreaking her vengeance on the seed and water cups. These she shook loose, and then pushed out of their places upon the floor. A wide scattering of seeds or a fine shower of water delighted her, and relieved her mind.

After enduring this annoyance for some time, her master brought other tiny padlocks, one for each dish; and after that, not only her door, but each dish, was securely locked in when it was necessary to shut her up.

She was not conquered even then. Seed and water could not be locked in, and she could thrust her big beak into her seed cup, and fling the contents halfway across the room. If the seed was so low in the cup that she could not do that, she gathered a beakful and tossed it out upon the carpet, treating water in the same way, till neither food nor drink was left in her cage.

This seemed to be a great relief to her feelings, as harsh words or deeds are supposed to be with bigger folk. Before she gave up trying to open the padlocks, she would work awhile at the door, then rush madly to her seed cup and fling out a lot of seed, then hurry back to the padlock again.

Polly's last resource when she could not open the door, and seed and water were all gone, was to squawk insultingly at the top of her voice, "Ya! ya! ya!"

Reading aloud was always a trial to the cockatoo, and she generally kept up a low, mocking talk, like the long-drawn-out "Craw! craw! craw!" of a hen as she walks about the poultry yard delivering her opinions to the feathered world around her. If she were not noticed, this talk became sometimes so loud that she had to be put into another room.

This was a dreadful thing, for poor Polly was the greatest coward I ever saw in feathers. Being left alone was her severest punishment, and always prompted her to do the most mischief she could think of.

One day, by some carelessness, the padlock on her door was not fastened, and Polly had the sitting-room to herself for an hour. On the return of the mistress, she was met at the door by bows and cries of "Poor Polly," and repetitions of everything the bird could say, in the most coaxing manner.

She knew at once that mischief had been done, and one glance was enough. Polly had enjoyed a fine frolic with her work-basket. Such a wreck is not often seen: needles from their papers and pins from their box strewed the carpet; the remains of pearl buttons that she had snipped to bits lay thick as snowflakes over the floor; spools had been nibbled, thread and silk cut into short lengths and scattered about; a gold thimble dented past using in her efforts to bite it; and the delicate basket itself pulled apart and broken.

It looked as if a cyclone had struck that work- basket, and Polly was almost too happy to stay inside her feathers, but it was her last prank in the parlor. Her padlocks were never again forgotten.

Polly's Outing

I

Full of naughtiness as she was, Polly, the cockatoo, was very dear to the hearts of the family, and, like Mary's lamb, —

Everywhere the mistress went
The bird was sure to go.

So one June she traveled out on Long Island for her summer outing. This was great fun for Madam Polly, for she was out of doors most of the time. It was thought that she could do no harm in the country, but the cockatoo had a keen scent for mischief. She had not been there a day before she showed what she could do in that line.

Her cage was hung against the trunk of a cherry-tree, which was covered thickly with small green balls that the people hoped would become cherries in time; but Polly had other plans, and took it upon herself to attend to those absurd cherries.

The first thing she did when her door was opened was to seize a low-hanging branch and climb into the cherry-tree. Soon she was out of sight among the leaves, and then began a gentle but continuous shower, first of leaves and

small twigs, which she bit off and dropped, and then of the cherries-to- be.

Commands and scoldings were useless. She was among the top branches and could not be reached, and she picked leaves and fruit till she was tired of the sport; then she turned her attention to the bark, and actually girdled one branch before she was caught at it and forced to come down.

The next day she started for new fields. By way of the cherry-tree ladder she climbed, as Jack did his beanstalk, to the roof of the piazza, and then ran its whole length, squawking at everyone who passed. Especially did she revile a peddler, never ceasing her squawks as long as he was in sight. Next she mocked the neighbors' children, whose calls she answered, strangely enough, with just as many squawks as there were words in their call.

When she became tired of this amusement she settled down to "business," nibbling off the overhanging edges of the newly painted clapboards and the edges of the slats from the new blinds. It was not until she had defaced the front of the house sadly that she was discovered and brought down.

Down the front yard ran a long, old-fashioned grape arbor with ornamental front, which had at its top a pole, holding up in the air a ball surmounted by an elaborately sawed-out star. Upon this emblem of her country Polly next fixed her wicked eye, and started up. The lattice-work

was an admirable ladder; and stopping only to snip off the tender stems of a few young, growing vines, and half a dozen strings just fastened up to point out to the young moon-flowers the way they should go, she soon reached the pole, climbed it, stood on the ball, and gave her mind to that star.

Before anyone noticed her, she had nibbled the edges, bitten off the points, and turned it into a most disreputable affair. When found, she was so pleased with the result of her labor that she scrambled upon the crazy-looking star and squawked at the top of her voice, fluttering her wings and bowing until it seemed that her head must come off.

By this time the family began to think of a bill for damages, and madam was locked up, but it seemed cruel in the country to shut up a bird, and everything she did was so funny that one couldn't long be vexed at her. So the next morning the door was again opened, and Polly started out on a new tack.

This time she mounted to the top of the arbor, and started on a promenade down the sharp edge of the board that formed the ridge. This was a brave feat for the cockatoo, who always liked to keep close to her friends; and she had adventures on the way.

First a bee flew over, very near her head. This frightened her terribly. She lifted her wings, held one over her head to protect it, and crouched to avoid the attack she seemed to expect. Then she turned and twisted, ran a few

steps, and at last shrieked loudly for someone to come, not seeing that the bee had gone on about its business and was out of sight

II

Polly was afraid of everything. If a fly buzzed past her, she ducked her head as if she had been hit; and when a pair of robins came near, engaged in a dispute about something, she went almost mad with fright. She ran to the pole which held the star, climbed it rapidly with beak and claws, perched on the tiptop, bowed and spread her wings wide, then lifted them above her head like a shield. This time she did not squawk, but she was in great terror.

Next day she had the pleasure of scaring a robin. She was on a side-bar of the arbor when one of these birds alighted on the opposite side. In her alarm madam bowed and called out, "Poor Polly!" as if to introduce herself. The robin stared an instant in amazement at this unbirdlike performance, and then flew.

Polly was not unlike some boys. She was a tyrant and a bully with those who feared her, and a dastardly coward with those who did not fear her. The least bird, coming into the cherry-tree, — a tiny yellow warbler, or a minute creeper not so big as her head, — startled her half out of her wits. She would drive the half- grown chickens all round the yard, so long as they ran; but the instant one of

the chickens stood and faced her, she turned herself and ran, squawking as if for life.

There was never a droller sight than her running down the length of the ridge board, — which soon came to be her favorite promenade, — holding her wings out and shaking them, and squawking madly, stopping when she came to a bunch of grapes not much bigger than pin-heads to snip it off.

On one side of the arbor roof was the nest of a chipping sparrow. We were interested to see what she would do with it, and ready to interfere if she should go too near.

The chipping sparrow, however, was a wise little mother; she did not need our help. As soon as the cockatoo came near, the small bird appeared before her, flattering as if afraid, and Polly at once advanced toward her. The question of whether she should drive or be driven was always decided by the actions of her opponent.

So Polly ran, bowing and squawking, with crest up and her war frenzy on, while the cunning sparrow fluttered along, dragging her wings, and keeping well out of the large bird's reach until she had led her far enough. Then she slipped behind some leaves and returned to her nest, leaving Madam Polly staring in blank amazement, plainly wondering where that bird had gone.

The cockatoo had very decided opinions about the family. With the son of the house she was generally at war; she often bit him, and was always ready to show fight.

With her mistress she was on her good behavior, for she recognized her as the lawgiver for pets, and the locker-up of cages; she obeyed her more readily than any other person.

But her darling was the master, who let her do as she liked, and petted and coddled her always. On his knee she would sit an hour at a time, perfectly quiet, satisfied to be near him. For him she would sing her droll little wheedling song. To his room she would go, when sometimes she got out of her cage in the morning, and tap on the door to be let in. He was always her refuge in terror or distress.

There was nothing Polly disliked so much as to be left alone. If she were locked in her cage, she made the air ring with calls and cries, and if loose — even though reveling in mischief — she flew down and waddled across the grass — though she hated walking on the ground — to the always open door, and hurried in so as to be near somebody.

One pleasure Polly discovered that was not mischief, and only one; it was swinging. She liked to seize with both feet a long, hanging twig, and, by flapping her wings, keep herself in violent motion. Thus she often swung back and forth for a long time, hanging back down in an attitude that most birds greatly dislike.

Five months of fun Polly had in the country, and then, with the family's return home, her summer outing was over.

The Golden Goose

I

For many years there lived in my house a little bird, an English goldfinch, whose vagaries were very amusing to the household. His supreme desire was for a friend, or an object to which he might devote himself.

Out of every family that lived in the Bird Room he selected the one he preferred, and then lavished upon that one his love, and attentions that were often funny, but sometimes pathetic. The beloved object was always larger than himself, always unresponsive, and once really cross to him.

I have told the story of his affection for a scarlet tanager, and his admiration of the antics of a blackbird. I will now tell of his devotion to a golden oriole.

This oriole, who had come from Europe, was never anything in my house but a great, stupid, lumpish fellow. No doubt his experiences at the hands of man had soured him past cure, and he may have been intelligent enough in his native land, but he was not to be won by all the kindness that was lavished upon him. He flew into as mad a panic after six months of gentle treatment as he did on the first day.

I saw no signs of intelligence, and I could not gain his confidence. A pining, unhappy captive wrings my heart, but a stupid one repels me, and the name which seemed naturally to belong to this bird was "Goose."

Not that anything was implied derogatory to the real goose, for I have great regard for that bird, and a genuine respect for her intelligence; but the golden oriole was what we commonly call "a goose," that is, a little less than idiotic — not quite a downright fool.

At first he refused to eat; for a week I thought he would starve himself. Mockingbird food of the freshest was before him all the time, fruits of several kinds, lettuce, and everything I could think of to tempt his appetite, but not one thing would he even look at, excepting meal-worms. Of those wriggling creatures he would eat twenty in a day, perhaps more. Though I gave him as many as I dared, they did not satisfy him.

At last, one day when I was out, he fell to eating the bird food, emptied the dish in an hour, and after that I could hardly keep him supplied.

His hunger appeased, he wanted nothing more, except a perch on which to sit crouched down upon his toes all day. For the room and its inmates he cared not the least.

A bird that shows no curiosity about a place so new to him as a room is usually of a low order of intelligence. There is nothing so uninteresting in a Bird Room, or out

of it either, for that matter, as one who takes what comes and says nothing and shows no interest.

I want my birds to talk and notice things. I may not always understand them, but since they have not learned "society manners," they act out their feelings naturally, and close watching for a long time makes one expert in translating this language of expression.

In spite of my efforts, I could not feel much interest in this stranger. He was a beauty, larger than a robin, and pure lemon in color all over. He had no tail, but I knew nature would supply one, and I waited.

From the hour of the golden oriole's arrival in the room, the goldfinch was strongly attracted to him. As soon as he was placed in his new quarters the little bird went over, alighted on a perch close to his wires, and after a few moments' study of the stranger, began to talk to him in a low chatter.

The "goose" paid no heed to him. Then the goldfinch went a step further and began to sing. It was quite different from his usual loud, careless song, being low and sweet, uttered with wings held slightly out and body turning from side to side, while his eyes were fixed upon the oriole.

It was curious and peculiar, and not at all the way in which he had treated either of his former friends.

The oriole could not help noticing this, and evidently did not know what to make of it. He became uneasy, and after fidgeting about on his perch he dropped to the floor,

where he stood and stared blankly at his small serenader. Soon, however, he grew accustomed to the attentions and took them as a matter of course — as wiser folk will sometimes do.

II

From that day the goldfinch spent more than half his time before the shrine of his idol. He bathed in a hurry, and performed his toilet as quickly as he could, for he never dressed his feathers in the presence of the oriole. He took his meals in a sort of picnic style, going to his own cage for every seed, and returning to his usual seat to shell and eat it.

What there was interesting about the big, yellow bird who sat like a wooden image on the lowest perch close by the food dish, I could never guess; but the goldfinch seemed to be naturally social, and pining for companionship.

There was another one that I know of, who, while he was alone, allowed his plumage to get very rough, and took almost no care of himself; but as soon as another bird was put into his cage, he fell at once to bathing and dressing his feathers, till he was in perfect order. Then he devoted himself to his new friend with eagerness.

A funny scene took place between my goldfinch and another bird one summer. The stranger was an American goldfinch, in his fall dress of olive and black, who, for safe

keeping till a cage was brought, was put into the private apartment of my bird, and the door shut.

The cage owner received his visitor hospitably, chatted with him, allowed him to enjoy the comforts of the cage, the seed and water, and even his choice and limited dainty — the hemp seed scattered over the gravel.

All day long this amiable state of things lasted, but when bedtime came, there was a change. The guest wished to retire, of course, and also, of course, no place would do but the top perch.

At this point, however, his host drew the line. He could share his food and water, his cage, and even his beloved hemp seed, but to allow a stranger upon his private sleeping-perch was too much. He turned suddenly so savage that the poor little newcomer was obliged to retreat.

To sleep on a low perch with anyone else higher is repugnant to the very soul of a bird. The stranger plucked up spirit, and a struggle took place. Indeed, to restore peace the American had finally to be removed.

No such trouble arose with the golden oriole; he did not care where anybody slept, but it was soon plain that he was not exempt from the common lot; he had his own sore trial. He had determined not to allow his tail to grow, for what reason I cannot imagine. The instant a tiny quill showed itself, with its lovely yellow feather folded inside, the bearer went to work to remove it. It was hard work, but

he twisted himself almost into a knot, and pulled and tugged till he got it out, and then — utterly exhausted — laid his head back on its feather pillow and took a nap.

I gave him meat according to bird-book directions; I changed his food; I did all I could think of, but he kept up this bad habit all winter, and I began to fear we should never see him with a tail.

We never did, in fact, although as spring came on nature roused herself for a grand effort, and sent out five or six feathers at once. Now, I thought, the stupid fellow will be discouraged, and the tail will grow.

He was discouraged. After hours of the hardest labor he gave it up — but he gave up his life, too. Since he could not have his will, he seemed to lose what little interest he had in life, and one day he went to sleep never to wake.

No one grieved except the goldfinch, for the bird was so unhappy no one could wish to have him live. The little bird hung around the cage for a while quite dazed by his loss, and evidently expecting, or at least hoping, some morning to see again his dearly beloved golden goose.

The Saucy Oriole

I

The Baltimore oriole is so gorgeous in dress, so charming of voice, and so strongly individual in his ways, that his modest little spouse slips through life by his side almost unnoticed. Yet she is a not unworthy mate; her dress, though subdued, is more pleasing than his, her individuality is quite as marked, and she, too, can sing.

A pair of orioles that spent one winter in my Bird Room were very entertaining, and the little madam was the most saucy creature I ever saw in feathers. She was a ridiculous object as to plumage, being featherless on the head and without a sign of a tail; but never was an oriole long depressed by a little matter of that kind; she was just as self-possessed and as dignified as if she had been the queen of the whole feathered world.

Her first effort in my room was to establish her right to a bath whenever and wherever she chose to take it. The very first morning, while the older residents were bathing, and every bathtub was occupied, she made up her mind to go in. Nothing daunted by size, she picked out the biggest bird in the room to dispossess. It was a blue jay, whose bathing-dish was on the floor.



A droll figure she made when she went down to drive him out. She was not a quarter his size, and looked — without a tail — about as big as a wren. She alighted on the edge of his dish; but when the big fellow stopped splashing and stood up in the water, looking quite able to eat her, his

warlike crest rising and his large eyes fixed upon the intruder, she did not quite dare to insist.

Her next choice was more fortunate. She went to the table where a Brazilian cardinal, considerably bigger than herself, was bathing, drove him away, and stepped into the water herself.

She began her bath like any other bird, by thrusting her head in the water, but after one dip she lifted it high and flapped her wings vigorously, getting so wet that when she attempted to fly up to her cage, she fell to the floor instead. That did not disturb her, for she knew very well the use of a ladder that ran up to the cages for the benefit of disabled birds, and she delighted to hop up and down its rounds.

While the oriole was herself almost a stranger, an American robin came to live in the room. He looked so big among orioles and tanagers and bluebirds, that nearly everyone gave him a wide berth.

Not so did my saucy little oriole. When he came out of his cage and took refuge on the top of it, while he looked about to see what sort of a place he had got into, madam flew over and alighted beside him.

In robin fashion of showing hostility he hopped six inches into the air, then turned his beak toward her and ran at her. She met him with open mouth, daring him to come on. At three inches' distance he stopped and snapped his big beak. She bowed, which was her way of showing fight, perked up the tail-coverts in lieu of a tail, and did not

budge an inch. Two or three times the robin ran at her, and every time her significant bows and determined air warned him off, till at last he left the cage altogether.

The next day, during a domestic breeze, — for matters were not yet harmoniously settled at home, — her cage-mate chased the little oriole and she took refuge in the robin's cage. The owner was at home, and disconcerted by the sudden call, gave a cry and flew out. In a moment he regretted his hasty action, and came back to his own roof, whence madam quickly drove him by pecking his toes. He then dropped to his door-perch, and went into the cage.

The intruder sat calmly on the perch, utterly unconcerned at his presence. He hopped about uneasily, went to the middle perch, glanced above at her, then jumped down, all the time uttering a low cry. Several times he thrust his head out of the door as if to go, then drew back, apparently thinking it cowardly to desert his own quarters. But after half a dozen feints he did go, leaving her in possession.

II

A female Virginia cardinal, with a strong will of her own, was the next bird that the saucy oriole molested. When the impertinent visitor alighted beside her in her own cage, the cardinal drew herself up very straight, raised her crest, and opened her big beak. The interloper bowed

and snatched at her, plainly trying to seize her tongue, and once she did catch the lower mandible.

For a moment the Virginian evidently hesitated as to the manner of meeting this sort of insult. She shut her mouth, and drew herself up again with dignity, but soon afterward she flew across the room.

Elated by her success with his mate, the oriole next tried her tactics on the cardinal himself, a serious-minded personage, who never descended to personalities with any one — except his spouse.

She cornered him upon a perch, followed him along, as he moved off to avoid her, till he could go no farther, and then, as he opened his mouth at her, she snatched at his tongue.

He shut his beak, and she gave him a sharp peck in the side. He was furious; his crest stood up, his wings quivered, but he did not touch her, nor would he fly. Another time she relieved the scarlet tanager of a meal-worm he was preparing to eat by coolly snatching it out of his mouth.

Never were birds so curious and interested in their surroundings as the two orioles. They investigated every corner of the room, lifted papers to peep under them, pulled towels about to see what was hidden by them, pried open books, crept between the slats of a blind, went all over their neighbors' cages on the outside, climbing on the

wires and pulling out apple or other fruit and dropping it to the floor.

They were always fond of climbing, and hanging head down was a favorite attitude. They liked also to use their sharp beaks; if one of them could get one toe into a torn place in the wall-paper, he — or she — would hang on and pick holes in it. Giving up a thing he has set his heart on never occurs to an oriole. One of mine took it into his naughty head to occupy his neighbor's wire apartment. I drove him out; I caught him in my hand and took him out; I removed food and water, and still he would come back.

When he saw that I noticed his flying to the door-perch, and was instantly ready to scare him off, he tried another way of approach. He climbed around on the wires from the back, and tried to steal in so quietly that I would not notice him — as I could tell by his glances at me. I drove him off, and then he tried another way. He came quietly up the ladder, looked over at me, and then slipped silently through the door.

I had a fine chance to learn the unconquerable persistence of the oriole, for till the day of his liberation he never gave up trying to occupy his neighbor's house.

When spring came and the Baltimore began to sing, and when his little cage-mate had been made beautiful by a complete suit of feathers and a tail as long as his own, they went their way into the big world outside the

windows, and I saw no more of my charming but saucy little oriole.

Antics in the Bird Room

Birds have many queer ways when one can watch them closely, as I could in my Bird Room. In taking exercise, for example, no two do it in the same way.

The Brazilian cardinal turned perfect summer- sets. Standing on one end of his cage roof, he would suddenly spring into the air as if he were going through the ceiling. Just before touching it, he would turn completely over, so that for one instant his feet were toward the wall and his back toward the floor. At this point his wings were flat against his sides, and his body curved so that his head and tail pointed toward the floor. Then, without opening the wings, he passed down again, turning as he went, and alighted right side up at the other end of his cage.

This prank was played so rapidly that I could not follow it perfectly with my eyes, all through, and to see how he held himself at the point where he turned, I had to fix my eyes on that point and not try to follow his flight up and back.

This particular antic delighted the cardinal so much that he often kept it up an hour at a time.

Another bird I had, danced. This was a skylark. He would come out only when his cage was put on the floor,



and then he went around the edge of the room half flying, half running, taking mincing little steps, and waving his wings at the same time. It was a graceful, fairy-like dance.

Still another inmate of the Bird Room used to fly across the room from one side to the other and plant his two feet squarely against the wall on each side. He did it very swiftly, and did not pause a second, but he did it with so much force that it sounded like a knock.

Sometimes a bird will prefer to exercise in his cage, and then he flies madly around his perches, over and under and behind and around them, hardly touching them with the tips of his toes, and looking every minute as if he would bang himself against the wires, but he never does. Most birds simply fly about the room with more or less fury.

Blizzards

I

Blizzard we named her; not because that rough, unpleasant name particularly well suited the demure little damsel in dusty brown who came to live with us, but for the reason that she came in with the blizzard that tossed and tumbled, and half buried New York, on that famous Monday of March, claiming our hospitalities against the inhospitable world of wind and snow outside. How she got into the house is still a mystery. Mamma thought she must have come down the chimney and through the stovepipe, but it is hard to believe that a bird, however distressed, would venture into a long, dark tunnel like that, not knowing where it might end.

It seems more likely that when someone opened a door to go out, and was met by a wild sweep of the gale, and a dash of fine, sharp snow in his face, that half blinded him, poor little Blizzard flew in with it; perhaps because she saw warmth and comfort inside, or possibly just because she was blown in and could not help herself.

However it came about, there she was, bright and pert as a sparrow can be, and plainly delighted to get out of the storm. She rebelled at being caught, and even bit savagely

at her captor, but in spite of that she was taken upstairs to a warm, snug room and set free, where we thought she would be safe, for Blizzard was not the only guest in the house.

There was first, Elizabeth, the cat, who liked nothing better than tender young sparrow for breakfast, and knew well how to get it, too; and Napoleon, the dog, who made it his particular duty to guard the household from all four-footed and feathered enemies; and worse, — for those two could be shut out of the room, — there was Laura.

Laura was a parrot of high degree and beautiful manners, dressed in several shades of green, with a gay yellow cap, and a dash of rose-color on her wing. She did not at all know what to think of this vagabond of the street, whose vulgar antics she was accustomed to watch through the windows only. She turned her aristocratic head on one side, fixed one large red eye on the plebeian, and plainly did not altogether approve of her for a companion.

But Blizzard had no scruples; she was not in the least afraid of her high-mightiness; in fact, she never saw the bird she was afraid of, and she assumed the aggressive herself.

For some moments the two stared at each other, head feathers erected and all bristled up for war; then suddenly, with a keen appreciation of the advantage of taking the initiative, the sparrow made a dash at Laura, and passed just over her head without pausing.

That insulted bird started, and gave a violent snap of her big beak, just too late to touch her lively enemy. Again and again was this performance repeated, the saucy street ruffian swooping down as if to annihilate the stately parrot, and that bird every time surprised out of her dignity, startled, snapping her bill, trying to seize her tormentor.

At length Blizzard tired of this amusement, and proceeded to show contempt of her roommate in a new way, by alighting on the perch beside her. The perch was three or four feet long, and the size of a broomstick.

Laura, sitting calm and composed at one end, was suddenly shocked by the sparrow dropping down upon it about four inches from her seat. In a moment, after one look of horror and disgust, down went Laura's head, and off she started hand over hand, as parrots walk, beak wide open, to seize her disreputable foe.

The graceless upstart simply hopped back a step or two. Laura followed, snapped again, and again the sparrow retreated. Thus they passed down the length of the perch, and when they reached the end, Blizzard hopped over the back of her clumsy pursuer, came down the other side, and led her back in the same impertinent way.

There was one droll sort of dance that Laura indulged in that seemed to amuse, or at least to interest Blizzard, for while it was going on she stood still in her turn, and looked at every movement. The excitement was produced by scraping a crumpled newspaper over the matting.

What it suggested to the parrot, no one could guess, but the instant it began she erected her feathers, spread her tail like a fan, expanded her wings, put her beak down and rubbed the upper edge of it along the floor, while she walked round and round, toeing in, and always ploughing the matting with her big bill. This curious movement she kept up without pause so long as the noise was continued.

An eating-place was set up for the storm refugee on the window-sash, and bread and water provided for her comfort. The water she accepted with thanks, but she soon discovered that Laura's now vacant cage contained a dainty more to her taste — a large, square cracker. This she pecked at eagerly, first standing outside and putting her head between the wires; but finding this inconvenient, after looking about on every side, and scorning the open door as a probable trap, she slipped between the wires and helped herself freely, hammering the cracker to bits and scattering crumbs all over the floor, while the owner of the cage observed with displeasure the disorderly manners of her small neighbor.

II

After enduring the sparrow's performances awhile, Laura went home, and the door was shut.

We were sure she could guard her food, for she was a bird of spirit herself, and not used to being imposed upon. To the ladies of the family she was very gracious, readily

accepting a finger for a perch, and kissing and behaving in a charming manner, but I regret to say that to the gentlemen she was very different.

Whether she had been teased till her temper was soured toward the sex, no one knew, but from the smallest boy to the biggest man she detested the whole race.

On the approach of the son of the household, aged six, she invariably seized the edge of her seed dish, and shook it so violently that seeds were scattered all over the floor; if his hand came near, she bit it, and sometimes she flew at his face, screaming and chattering with fury.

Blizzard did not approve of the new arrangement, but cracker she was bound to have; and after a few cautious advances, holding herself ready for instant flight, she grew careless, and plainly made up her mind that Laura was far too slow to catch so very wide-awake a personage as herself.

So once more she slipped through, and busied herself on the floor within six inches of her big neighbor, getting even so bold as to snatch at Laura's tail when it hung in her way.

For some time the parrot looked on, with wise head turned over one side, and Blizzard became perfectly indifferent, when at last the long-suffering bird leaned over and snatched up the intruding scapegrace by the back.

Had it been the head, this would be the end of the poor sparrow's story, but the feathers are thick on the back.

Blizzard screamed at the top of her voice, the family ran into the room, and the bird escaped, leaving a mouthful of feathers with Laura.

This experience subdued the street gamin for a while, and she retired to the top of the window-casing to recover from her fright and investigate the damage to her draperies, while Laura sat bridling in her cage, saying " Cr-r-r — cr-r-r" in a low but evidently crowing tone, as if meaning, "There, miss! how do you like that? Perhaps you'll keep out of my house!"

As it began to grow dark, Blizzard prepared for the night, and in the way one might expect from a sparrow. There was no elaborate dressing of plumage, removing of the day's dust, and drawing each soft feather in place for the night; she simply laid in an extra supply of provisions — fairly stuffed herself, till we were alarmed.

Perhaps, poor thing, it was not from greediness, but because she had a dim feeling that this unusual warmth and abundance might be a dream, and that she should wake up to find everything covered with snow and no food to be had, and so it was the part of wisdom to fill herself while it lasted; plenty of wisdom of a certain sort abode in that small, brown head.

Whatever the reason, she did eat an enormous supper, and then retired to the place she had first selected as her private retreat — on top of the window frame.

There she composed herself, and nothing was heard from her till morning; but alas, we forgot the early-rising habits of the sparrow's family. Laura, used to life in a house, never stirred feather till other people got up, but this street vagrant began with the first streak of light to fly around the room, to ask for breakfast, to stir up Laura, and to disturb things generally. In fact, she made herself so disagreeable that it was resolved to turn her out to care for herself.

Meanwhile the snow and wind had been having it all their own way out of doors. Great drifts were piled up against the windows, the sidewalks were lost, and even the street looked like mountain-chains on a small scale.

No one thought of going out of the house, for the first step from the door plunged one into a snowdrift over his head. Nothing could be done toward clearing it away till the snow stopped falling, or the frolicsome wind ceased playing tricks with it, and building a wild country up in the middle of the city. So no one went out, horses stood in their stables, and not a sparrow showed a feather outside.

This day Blizzard was fuller of pranks than ever, and there was not a bit of mischief that little brain could contrive that failed to be done.

The last of her tricks, which almost had a sad ending for herself and us, was to set the house on fire. Actually, with engines snowed into their houses, streets filled with mountains of loose, dry snow, and hydrants all out of sight

under them, that incorrigible rascal picked a match from the match safe, carried it off under the bed, and probably pounded the end to see if the little brown knob was good to eat.

However she did it, she flew up suddenly, and in a moment there was an odor of burning. Fortunately someone was in the room, or we should no doubt in a few minutes have been all afire, for there in the crack between the breadths of matting the match was brightly burning. The matting itself was already afire, and a nice little bonfire would have carried us all off in smoke, if no one had been there to put it out.

That settled Miss Blizzard's fate, and as soon as the sun came out, a window was opened, and away she went out into the white world to join the army of feathered tramps to which she belonged.

Three Sparrows that Live in a House

I

I know a house in Brooklyn which is a sort of bird's hospital, where are living more birds than people, and where all wounded and suffering feathered creatures find shelter and comfort.

While I am writing this story, there are, among the other birds, three English sparrows, street birds that had been hurt, and rescued from cats and cruel boys, and taken care of till they were well.

One of these birds is sentimental. He wants to be coddled all the time. He is so grateful for his comfortable home that he is unhappy if he cannot be with one of the family who have been so kind to him.

Most tame birds are satisfied if they can perch on a shoulder or arm of the person they like, but not so this sparrow. He wants to be held in a warm hand, or snuggled up within the arm, and he is so determined to get into his favorite place that when the family want to do something besides hold a bird, they have to roll him up in a shawl and lay him in a snug corner of bed or chair.



The thing he likes best of all is to be taken into bed, and he cannot fly to go there himself. So in the early morning, long before anyone, except a bird, wants to get up or even to be wakened, he will begin his loud squawks, and never stop till one of his kind mistresses gets up, takes him in her

hand, and holds him shut up in it under her cheek. There he is happy and still, and she can sleep as long as she likes. Did ever a bird have so droll a sleeping-place?

The second queer sparrow was almost dead when brought in from the street. He recovered his health entirely, but he, too, can never fly, so he is obliged to live in a house. This bird is not sentimental — far from it! he is very fond of eating, perhaps even a little greedy. And besides being fond of his dinner, he seems to like a joke.

He always insists on going to meals, for he understands the dinner-bell as well as anyone. He squawks and calls and makes a commotion till he is carried to the table and set down upon it. Then he runs about, tastes everything, makes up his mind what he likes best, and eats as much as he wants of it.

He is fond of a joke, as I said, and he shows it in this way: the thing he likes best to eat is butter, and after taking a bit, he always wants to wipe his beak, as birds do. The place he chooses to use for this purpose is the coat-sleeve of the head of the family. Grease spots on the coat-sleeve are too much for the most amiable man to endure, so the bird was early made to understand he must not do it, but must use the tablecloth or the edge of a dish.

The clever bird knew what was meant, for this family talk so much to their pets that they learn to understand a great deal. They seem to know perfectly well what is said to them, and what they must not do. The English sparrow

is one of the sharpest witted of birds, and he plainly understood — as his manner showed — that he must not use a coat-sleeve for a napkin.

But English sparrows have no notion of giving up anything they like, and this one is not only obstinate like his fellows, but has a spice of mischief besides. So now, while taking his meals as usual with the family, he slyly watches his chance. When the coat-wearer is particularly busy and has forgotten for a moment to be on guard, the saucy bird will thrust his beak into the butter, hop silently but quickly to the coveted sleeve, wipe the beak, and dash away before he can be touched, and then perhaps chuckle over the joke the rest of the day.

II

The third sparrow living in this house is, however, the most astonishing one. In this protected home, where food and drink never fail and no work is needed to secure them, where street fun and street dangers and domestic affairs and all other sources of work or play are denied him, he has turned his active mind to the improvement of his talents, and with two canaries for companions, has learned their song.

I spent some hours in the house one day for the purpose of hearing this wonderful thing — an English sparrow singing like a canary. He was shy about showing off, but I kept very quiet in the other parlor while his

mistress coaxed him with talk and piano music to sing. Before long, finding himself unable to resist, he dropped the ordinary street squawks, with which he had been regaling us, long enough to sing several times. He poured out with great freedom all the warbles and quavers of the canary song, including a remarkable trill, and he did it better than the canaries who taught him, because his natural voice is better than theirs, being richer and fuller, and not so shrill. One who heard him without seeing him would never think of the singer being anything but an unusually fine singer of the canary family.

Think of it! a common wild English sparrow, saved from a violent death in March, and by October singing a fellow captive's song better than he can sing it himself. Perhaps this accomplished bird, if sent out into the streets as a missionary, might teach the others to do the same. We could forgive the English sparrows a good deal if they would fill our streets with song.

When at last I had to leave the house, I went into the back parlor where the bird lives, without canaries at present, in a cage among house plants in a sunny window, and looked at him. Plenty of food and water, and no struggle for life in the dust of the street, have given his coat rich and pure coloring, so that he is really as beautiful as it is possible for one of his tribe to be. Nothing less than seeing him could convince me that the fine song I had heard could have come from a common English sparrow.

Doctor Dot

I

Dot was the roundest, the funniest, and the wisest chicken that ever lived in a house, and she never was in the least afraid of anybody. For a while after she was adopted into the family she ate only bread and milk, and then varied this baby food with crumbs from the table, with now and then a fly which was careless enough to alight near her.

She delighted to be on the table when the family were eating. She would run from one to another, cocking her wise little head on one side, and accepting a crumb of bread or a bit of potato from each one. But as she grew bigger, and made experiments for herself, such as taking a nip of the butter, hopping up on to the platter and getting her feet into the gravy, a law had to be made that Miss Dot must take her meals alone.

Her greatest treat in these early days was to be put up on the window frame, in the middle where the two sashes meet, there to hunt flies, which delight in that spot. She would run after a fly as eagerly as any of her cousins on the ground, and would often be so heedless as to fall off, so that Ella, her little mistress, had to stand by her while on

that dangerous elevation, lest she should fall and break her neck.

As she grew bigger, Ella decided that although Dot was very well for a pet name, it was hardly dignified enough for so important a personage as she had become. After much thought it was enlarged into Dorothea Daniel Davidson, the latter after the uncle who presented her to Ella. She was usually called Dot, or D. D., or Doctor (which D. D. stands for, you know), and at last, in this way, the name Doctor Dot became pretty well fastened upon her. It was rather a queer name, to be sure, but Dorothea did not care; she would answer to any one of the whole list.

It might have been rather lonely for one poor little chick in a house full of big people, but she was not alone; she had one special playmate, Mother Bunch, and plenty of neighbors besides. The most important of these was Abercrombie Fitz Plantagenet, the cat, who lived in a basket that hung from the gas fixture, and was never so happy as when her basket was set spinning by some kind hand.

One would think this performance would have muddled her brains and made her a dizzy, topsy-turvy good-for-nothing, but so far from that she was one of the wisest and most clear-headed of her race, as you might know from her name. When not spinning around in her airy residence, she would sit for hours on a chair by the window, looking at the passers, and evidently closely

studying human nature. Should no chair be properly placed, or should the blinds be closed, this wise cat — Cromie, as she was called for "everyday" — would cry and mew, and pull some one's dress, until the difficulty was remedied, when she would take her seat with dignity and resume her studies.

Very different from this stately dame was her baby, the only one which survived a sudden catastrophe in her last family, and was named Mother Bunch because she was such a funny bunch of a thing.

From the first, Mother Bunch and the Doctor were the best of friends; they played together like two kittens. They would roll over and over and run after one another; the kitten would slap and the chicken would nip. The Doctor seemed determined to do everything that Mother Bunch did, and in fact I think she was rather ambitious to be a kitten herself.

When they were in the yard together, she would play with a bit of hanging clothes-line as the kitten did, taking it in her mouth and running around the post; and she made frantic efforts to climb the clothes-post after Mother Bunch.

At first the Doctor would run from a rat or a cat, but as they grew older and Mother Bunch became blind, she seemed to know she was the protector. A strange cat could no more than show its head in the yard before Doctor Dot flew at it with her mouth open, screaming as an angry hen

will. The intruder always quickly decided to retire to a more quiet neighborhood.

Mother Bunch's favorite napping-place was between the blinds and the window, and if she found it closed, she would cry and tease till it was opened for her. Dorothea always took her place on pussy's back during the sleep, partly perhaps to protect her, but a little to indulge in a nap herself.

She was fond of playing with children as she saw the kitten doing. She would run after them and snatch at their clothes, and once she drove a little boy into a corner, and frightened him half out of his wits by jumping at him as if she would eat him up.

Doctor Dot always seemed to think the small flower-bed in the yard was made for her amusement. No sooner would a tiny plant show its head above the ground than she would pull it up, apparently for fun, or to see what it was doing there, and she would scratch up the earth around it to see if there were any more impertinent little leaves around. The air with which she did this was so comical that Ella couldn't feel very sorry about the flowers.

As time went on, it looked very funny to see a hen about the house, though she was such a small one, but she refused to be sent out of the house to live. If she found the door shut against her, she would get on to a window-sill and peep and cry to be let in, till some kind heart inside took pity and opened the way for her.

All babies grow up, and now Dot was no longer a chicken, but a full-grown bantam hen, and her frolics with Mother Bunch were at an end. New notions came into her head; she began to think it was high time she had a nest like other hens. She grew uneasy, clucked around like any old feathered matron, and teased Ella till she fixed a box with a nice nest for her, and into that Dot retired and laid her first egg. Such a cackling and clucking over one small egg was never heard. So important and fussy was Madam Dorothea that it was almost impossible to live with her. Egg after egg was laid in that nest till she had enough to suit her ideas of a family, and then she took to setting, in regular poultry-yard fashion. When at last she came off with ten chicks, the proudest mother in the world, another decree went forth, that now indeed Dorothea Daniel Davidson must live in a house of her own in the yard.

So under a large pear-tree, in a pretty low-roofed cottage with a lattice front, now went to live Doctor Dot and her babies ten. She was so much engrossed with her cares, so concerned for the safety of those ten little feathery balls on legs, that she never seemed to regret her change of home. When the chicks grew too big to sleep under their mother's wings, a larger house was built, with perches and a door, and in that the family were nicely accommodated.

One more cunning thing Dot did before she settled down into the life of a common hen. One night the coop door blew shut and she and her family could not get in. It

was cold, and she longed for her comfortable roost inside, so she came to the house for help. The door was shut, but she flew up to the old window and tapped on the glass with her bill. Some of the family, not seeing very well, were frightened a little, but Ella knew her at once.

"Why, it's Dot!" she said.

She opened the window to let her in, but that was not what Dot wanted. She pulled Ella's dress and tried to draw her to the door.

"Perhaps she wants help," suggested one, and Ella started out to see. She opened the door, and Dot ran on ahead eagerly. Ella followed, and she led directly to the shut-up coop, where the whole bantam family were collected. No sooner was the door opened than they all hurried in, and in a few minutes were snugly asleep for the night.

Birds Out of Doors

My First Bird

Many years ago, when I was a schoolgirl, I lived in an old-fashioned house away back from the street, in the outskirts of a Western city. It was before the English sparrows had come to drive other birds away, and our own native birds used to live in town with us. Vireos sang from morning till night in the trees that shaded the streets; Baltimore orioles swung their beautiful cradles from the tall boughs of the elms; and robins ran over the lawns without danger of having their hard-got worms snatched out of their mouths by the impudent foreign sparrows, as they are now.

I knew nothing about birds, and was absorbed in schoolbooks and music lessons and all school-day interests, but the first spring that we lived in the old-fashioned place, one bird forced himself upon my attention, and he was the first I ever noticed.

The grounds around the house were very large, and halfway down to the front fence was an old rustic arbor that was seldom visited. In or about that arbor somewhere, dwelt a bird with his family, and every evening and half the night, as it seems to me now, he sang to us. As soon as it grew too dark to see plainly, the song began, "Whip-poor-will! Whip-poor-will! Whip-poor- will!"

Because it was too late to see to read, I used to sit on the steps and listen, and think it the loneliest bird song I

ever heard, but I never saw the singer. Though, as I have said, it was in the edge of a city, with houses all around, so common were birds about us then that no one thought of disturbing him. It being also before the days when every boy thinks he must have a "collection," no one tried to find the nest, though there were three boys in the house with me, and several more next door.

One evening after the whip-poor-will had sung for some weeks, I was surprised to hear a droll baby voice trying to imitate his notes.

On listening, I found that the elder was teaching the youngster — actually giving him a music lesson. First the perfect song rang out loud and clear, and the weak quavering voice tried to copy it. Then the singer repeated the strain, and the infant tried again. So it went on night after night till the little one could sing almost as well as his father.

That was my first bit of bird study, though I could never see the singer, did not even know how he looked, and had nobody to tell me where to find out; besides being always so absorbed in books, which I loved almost more than anything in the world, that I did not try much. But I never forgot the baby whip-poor-will's music lessons, and have always counted him the first bird I ever knew.

The reason I failed to see the whip-poor-will, though I stole down to the arbor so softly, was because he could see in the dark so much better than I could; and when he saw



me coming, he slipped off his perch and flew away so silently with his soft plumage that I did not hear him. And the reason I could never find the nest was because the mother bird, the eggs, and the little ones were so nearly the

color of the ground where they lay that I might almost have stepped on them without seeing them.

The whip-poor-will is about the length of a robin, but much stouter. His dress is gray and black and brown and white, very much mixed up. His mate is a little more brown than he, and she makes no nest, but lays her two eggs on the ground, or a bed of dead leaves, and brings up her twin babies in the same cheerless place. Droll little birdlings they are, too, in suits of soft down so nearly the color of the ground that when they cuddle down and keep still, as I have said, it is almost impossible to see them.

The Thrushes Who Lived in the City

In a city I know is a yard which is made safe for birds by having a high, tight board fence, with the top fixed so that cats cannot walk on it.

The top of fences in the city — as you probably know — is the common parade ground of the cats who have no other place for walking out, where they can look into the yards and decide where they want to go down. It is right they should have some place for exercise, for when cats and dogs are shut up in cities they should be made as comfortable as possible.

The family I am telling you about are very fond of birds, and they hoped, when the birds passed over in the spring, to coax some of them to stay, by making a safe place for them; so, as I said, they fixed the fence to keep off the cats, and then set out shrubs and vines and other growing things in the yard, till it was a nice cozy place that any bird might enjoy. To their delight a pail of wood thrushes concluded to spend the summer there, and soon a nest was built.

Now cats are very clever little beasts, and though the fence highway was closed to them, they would sometimes get in through the gate or a door, or in some way. Then the

birds were very much alarmed and uttered cries of distress. The family, hearing the cries, always rushed out to see what was the matter, and of course drove the cat away.



In a very short time those intelligent birds learned that the people of the house would protect them, and in a few days they began to call upon their human friends when in trouble. Instead of just calling and crying where they happened to be when a cat appeared, one of the thrushes would go to the back door and give a peculiar call, which was given at no other time. The people soon understood it, and someone would run out to drive away the enemy. If there happened to be no one in the kitchen, so that the birds could get no help on that side of the house, they would fly to the front piazza, perch on the rail, and call till someone came.

The family were so pleased with the birds' confidence in them that they were very willing to run out to protect them whenever called. All summer long they held themselves ready to obey the calls, and a little family was safely reared, and all flew away for the winter.

Birds soon learn who are their friends, and become tame. Another pair of birds who were very friendly with a family were Virginia cardinals or cardinal grosbeaks. These are very shy birds, and so afraid of people that they will desert a nest if anyone touches it. This pair built in a rosebush on a trellis before a kitchen window, so low that the eleven-year-old son of the family could touch it; he never did touch it, and the birds did not mind when he or any of the family looked at them as much as they liked.

It was not because the birds were stupid or particularly confiding; for when I went there and looked at them, though not very near, they were as wild as if they lived in the woods. They knew I was a stranger, and I could not tell them I was a bird lover, nor stay long enough to have them get acquainted with me.

Barn Swallows in a Frolic

Barn swallows are busy little fellows, nearly always soaring around in the air over our heads, appearing not even to see us down on the earth below.

I was greatly surprised one day to find a barn swallow having a frolic with a dog. I was passing through a meadow on the side of a mountain in Massachusetts, to reach a grove where birds lived. The meadow was all in terraces or great steps, and looking down over them, I noticed the queer antics of a dog belonging to the farmhouse where I was staying. First he would appear above the edge of a terrace in great haste, then suddenly disappear, and in a moment show his head at the other end of the grassy steps.

What could be the matter? I hurried down the meadow to the edge of the first fall of the land. There I saw the family pet, a beautiful shepherd dog, much excited, running back and forth on a rather narrow ledge below me. Now he rushed frantically along thirty or forty feet, with tail wagging as if in sport, then wheeled and ran back in the same eager way. Sometimes he made a dash to the left and tore madly up the side of the mountain; again he flung himself over the edge, going almost heels over head in his zeal.

What could be the cause? I could see no playmate; his young master was mowing farther down the meadow. I thought of woodchucks, — his favorite game, — but though I looked carefully, not one of those wary creatures was to be seen; moreover it is business and not play when dog and woodchuck meet.

At last the dog leaped into the air, and my eye fell upon his playfellow — a barn swallow! I could hardly believe my eyes, but I sat down on the bank and watched for some time the strange game. The dog would sit quietly at one end of the run till the swallow swooped down just over his head, and skimmed along at that height the length of the terrace.

On the appearance of the bird the dog started at full speed after him, and when the swallow turned back the dog did the same. If the bird went up towards the barn, the dog scrambled up the steep bank after him; if downward towards the lower meadow, his four-footed playmate followed. When the bird rose higher, the dog, as I said, sat down and waited. This they kept up a long time, and I looked on till the dog walked off, as if he had had enough of the fun.

After that I kept close watch of swallows, and I found that they are very sharp to see what is going on below them, and that they like to play — even to play a joke.

One day I had come in from the woods and was resting on the piazza, looking at the birds on the lawn. There were

robins and song sparrows running about in the grass, and a flock of swallows flying round and round overhead. All of these were busy catching small flies, and when one had a mouthful he flew off to the barn, where were four or five nests full of hungry young ones.

While I was looking at them, suddenly one left the flock and swooped down at a robin who was hunting for his dinner on the ground. The swallow did not quite touch him, but he came so near that the robin dodged and then straightened up and cried "Tut! tut! tut!" looking up at me as if to see if I had noticed how the swallow had insulted him.

A robin has a good deal of dignity, you know, and does not like to be made to dodge. He looked after the swallow, but it was of no use, for he had joined the others, and I don't suppose the robin could tell him from his brothers any more than I could.

Another time the swallows were flying round in great circles over a meadow. The hay had just been taken away, and the owner turned his hens in to pick up the grasshoppers and other creatures left without any grass to hide in.

The newcomers did not interfere in the least with the swallows, who get their food entirely from the air; but no sooner did the busy, plodding hens begin to run about, than one or two swallows marked them for a little fun, and

began swooping down at them, as the one I told you about had treated the robin.

The birds did not actually touch the hens, but they scared them very much. A hen would dodge and cry out and run a little away, and then go to feeding again. The swallows seemed to think this great fun, for they kept it up till the poor hens were fairly driven out of the field.

Sometimes it is no joke on the part of the swallows. I have seen a party of them drive away a cat who was prowling about, perhaps hoping to catch a bird to eat. This was a serious matter. The birds would fly down and give her a sharp peck on the head or back, and be off so quickly that she could not touch them, though a cat is very quick herself. This they kept up till the cat would run and hide.

Once I saw several of these birds in the same way drive away a kingfisher who was fishing from a half-sunken fence in a salt marsh on the seashore. I wondered why they disliked to have him there, but after he had gone I saw the reason: there were some baby swallows just out of the nest, and the parents wanted them to perch on the fence, where they could easily feed them. The kingfisher was in their way.

How the Dog Interfered

All the tanagers that I have known have been rather shy birds. They do not like to have their nests seen by people, and for that reason I was very much pleased when I found one.

I was walking along a little-used path in the woods with a friend — another bird lover — when we noticed that a beautiful bird in scarlet and black, a scarlet tanager, did not want us to go up that way. He went ahead of us from tree to tree, keeping an eye on us, calling all the time "Chip-chur! Chip-chur!" as if to put someone on guard.

When we stopped a moment to see what the fuss was about, we saw his mate in her modest dress of yellowish green. She was sitting on a low branch saying "Chip-chur!" too, and it was plain she did not like our going up that path either. That made us think there must be a nest somewhere near, and looking sharply around, we both saw it.

The nest was beautifully placed in a sort of arch made by a tall, slender sapling or young tree being bent over to the ground, probably by a heavy weight of snow, and held there till it grew so. It could not get up straight again to grow into a tree, so the twigs grew out the whole length of

the slender trunk, making a beautiful arch, high enough for a child to walk under. At that time it was covered with fresh green leaves, and was one of the prettiest things in the woods. In the middle of this arch was the nest.

The birds, finding that we were quiet, flew away at last, and we at once hid ourselves as well as we could, hoping they would not see us and would come back. There was a tangle of young trees where we were, tall enough to hide us, and we crept under them, covering our heads with branches of leaves so that our hats would not show. Then we sat down and waited for the birds to come back.

Now we were not alone that morning. We had the big dog who always followed my friend, and we took him into the tangle with us.

Pretty soon the tanagers appeared, the scarlet beauty perched high up on a tree, looking sharply around to see that no spectators were about, while his mate tried to get up her courage to go to the nest, which was not finished. Nearer and nearer she came, pausing and looking around and calling to her mate to make sure he was near.

At last the shy bird was on the arch, and close to the nest, just about to take the last step and go in, and we hardly dared to breathe though mosquitoes nearly drove us wild, when suddenly there came a terrific report — the dog sneezed!

Like a flash, away went the tanagers. No doubt they thought something dreadful — an earthquake, perhaps —

had happened, for they never came back to finish that nest. We went there many times, but never a tanager was to be seen. The next time they hid their nest so well that we never found it, and weeks afterward we saw them in another part of the woods feeding a nestling.

Upper and Lower Story in the Bird World

In a Western city where I spent part of a summer, I saw a curious thing among the birds. There were two kinds of birds living in the business streets, English sparrows and purple martins.

Now these two birds are not very friendly, because they both want to live in bird houses and holes and such sheltered places. The martin has to go south in the winter to find food, and the English sparrow does not, for he finds his food anywhere. When the martins come back in the spring to their old homes, — martin houses, boxes, and such places, — they find the sparrows living in them, everyone filled full. Then there is likely to be trouble and much fighting among the birds, for the English sparrows, when once they get in, are hard to get out. So the martins have been obliged to go to other places to nest.

For that reason I was surprised to find both species living in that city, and no fighting between them. The way they had settled it, as I soon saw, was by dividing the city between them; that is, living at different heights in the air, almost as well separated as the upper and lower stories of a house.

The English sparrows lived in the lower story. They had their nests in vines on the houses, and over the doors and windows and such places, and they got their food and spent their time on the ground and low trees. They rarely flew higher than the trees and the telegraph wires.

The purple martins lived in the upper story. They gathered their food of flying insects in the air, high up above the buildings, and alighted only on the tops of the tall business blocks and on the highest wires. I never saw one go lower. In that way each tribe of birds had its own level, and did not interfere with the other.

The place the martins had selected for their homes was most curious and interesting. The business block about which I saw them had a flat roof, and the front brick wall ended in a square top. For ornament, or to protect the wall from rain, a terra-cotta covering, a half-cylinder in shape, was placed over this square top; that is, as if a stove-pipe or a tile used for drains were cut in half for its whole length. This made a low sort of arch over the brick wall, which was open at the end.

Under this arch, perhaps five or six inches in the highest part, the martins had made their nests. Here they were to be seen from morning till night, sitting in the doorway and going in and out, very much at home. Of course all of them had to go in at the same entrance, and there were a large number who seemed to live there.

Whenever I looked out of my windows, I could see the beautiful dark blue martins circling about over the tall buildings and calling in their sweet voices, apparently unconscious of what was going on in the busy streets, and the sparrows chirping and squawking down below in their noisy fashion.

Purple martins are beautiful birds and are fond of living near people, but they will not build nests in trees like robins. They prefer comfortable martin houses; and in the spring, when they come north for the summer, if they find their houses occupied, they will not stay. Mrs. Celia Thaxter, who was very fond of birds, had a hundred martin houses put up on the island where she lived, and the birds liked them so well that the first year a hundred pairs of martins settled there for the season.

The Lost Baby

One lovely June evening, a few years ago, I was walking on a lonely road away up in the Green Mountains, where they run nearly to the top of the map in the State of Vermont.

I was engaged in my usual summer occupation of watching and studying birds, and my desire that evening was to hear the twilight hymn of a certain hermit thrush who sang from the thick woods beside the road. For some reason the bird was not singing, and I wandered on and on, not liking to give him up, till it began to grow dark and I found myself much farther than usual from the farmhouse where I was staying.

I was about turning to go back, when suddenly a strange, loud cry burst into the silence. It was unlike anything I had ever heard. No bird, I thought, could utter such a sound, and I did not care to meet any wild beast from the woods, especially as I had already heard very strange voices from that quarter. At that moment I noticed a robin perched on a tall post a little farther up the road, looking over with great interest at something on the ground, and when the cry was repeated, I saw that it came from that spot.

The bird's evident curiosity aroused mine, and I determined to see what it was. Slowly I walked on towards it, the cries sounding louder, with a rustling among the weeds that showed me where the creature — whatever it was — was moving.

As I came nearer, the hopping and thrashing about increased, and the weeds moved violently. I caught sight of a queer-looking creature, more like a big toad than anything I could think of, leaping or jumping along beside the road.

I tried to take him in my hands, but he uttered louder and more frantic cries, and scrambled under a thick patch of low bushes that bordered the way. I followed, — not under, but over the bushes, — for now I began to think it might be a young bird. But as I parted the branches over him, he slipped farther on, till he passed through and came out into the open the other side.

On coming near him, I heard from the woods a low, rapid tapping, which I thought was made by a woodpecker. And knowing that one of the largest of the family, whom I had never seen, lived in that neighborhood, I was more than ever determined to see the youngster, — probably, I thought, a woodpecker baby.

When he appeared outside, therefore, I pounced upon him, and took him up in my hands. He was not a gentle captive. He struggled and tried to bite me, and as my hands

closed over him, he uttered a wail more despairing than any before.

On the instant, as if in reply, there came a shriek from the darkening woods that would have startled me greatly if I had not at once recognized that it was the agonized cry of the mother of the infant I held, for of course it was a young bird I found in my hands.

Unfortunately for the student, bird babies look a good deal alike, so, as the easiest way to name my prize, I glanced up at the distressed mother. She had come into plain sight, forgetting her own danger in her anxiety and terror, and no doubt thinking it was now all over with her precious offspring.

I looked for a woodpecker, but I saw a cuckoo, and knew I was looking, for the first time, on a full-grown young cuckoo.

I did not study him closely, for between his own struggles and his mother's painful cries, I could not bear to hold him long. In a minute I opened my hands, and away he went, half flying, half hopping up the road after his mother. She had instantly, upon his release, slipped back among the trees out of sight, and resumed the tapping sound, which I then found was a modification of the "Kuk! Kuk! Kuk!" of the family. It was her talk to her little one.

It was the first time I had seen a young cuckoo just out of the nest, but the very young nestling is the oddest baby I ever saw. It is about as big as the end of my thumb, black

as ink, and stuck all over with tiny white quills that look like pins on a black cushion. It does not look as if it could ever grow to be as big as its mother.

You have heard or read, perhaps, that the cuckoo does not make a nest, but puts her eggs into the nests of other birds, leaving them to hatch and rear her youngsters. This is true of the cuckoo of Europe, but remember always that our cuckoos make nests and bring up their own young, and are just as tender and careful of them as any bird I know.

It is true that a few cases have been reported of eggs found in other birds' nests, but so far as I have heard, these cases were not positively proved. Moreover, even if true, it happens so seldom that it does not affect the general rule.

How the Crow Baby was Punished

I once watched the doings in a crow nursery. The babies were out of the nest, and came with their mothers to a pasture away from most of the houses, and quite near the woods where their home had been.

There was, to be sure, a low cottage next to the fence, which the birds did not seem to notice. It was a farmhouse, with doors and windows nearly all on the other side, so that the people were not often seen next the pasture, and there were no children to run about and be noisy.

I was staying in that farmhouse to study the birds, and one of my windows looked into the pasture. I was very careful never to let the birds see me at the window, and so I had a fine chance to see how a crow mamma brings up her family.

The big-little ones were about the size of the grown-ups, but they had funny little dumpy tails, and were clumsy in getting about. Their cry sounded just like a human baby cry, "Ma-a-a! Ma-a-a!" It was very droll, and I watched them with great interest.

The most important thing the elders had to do was to teach the youngsters how to fly, and every little while one or both of the parents would fly round the pasture, giving

a peculiar call as they went. This call appeared to be an order to the little folk to follow, for all would start up and circle round for a minute or two, and then drop back to the fence or the ground to rest.

Once, while I was watching them, this cry was given, and all flew as usual except one bob-tailed baby, who stood on a big stone in the middle of the field. He was perhaps so comfortable he did not want to go, or it may be he was afraid and thought mamma would not notice him.

But mothers' eyes are sharp, and she did see him. She knew, too, that baby crows must learn to fly, so when they all came down again she flew right at the naughty bird, and knocked him off his perch. He squawked, and fluttered his wings to keep from falling, but the blow came so suddenly that he had not time to save himself, and he fell flat on the ground.

In a minute he clambered back upon his stone, and I watched him closely. The next time the call came to fly he did not linger, but went with the rest, and so long as I could watch him he never disobeyed again.

A Jay's Table Manners

The Canada jay is a bird who lives in the northern part of the United States, in the solitary woods or near them, and is closely related to our jolly blue jay. He seems to be as full of fun and antics as his cousin in blue, and many stories, some true and some untrue, are told about him.

Wood-cutters and hunters who camp out in these mountains and woods call him "camp bird" and other such names, because he is fond of coming about a camp and making himself free with their property. He carries off their meat, and helps himself to anything he wants.

The campers forget that they have intruded into his home, where he feels that everything belongs to him. Some men are fair-minded enough to see this, even some of the Indians who live up there near the birds. One of them told a lady who traveled in that part of the country that the woods belonged to the bird. It was his home, and men had no right there; in fact, they were intruders. When men appeared on his ground, and the bird came to see what they were about, they called him impertinent, while the truth was, the men were the impertinent ones.

The Indian name for this bird is something like "Wiscachon," and he has come to be called by white men "Whiskey John" and "Whiskey Jack."

He is a beautiful bird in soft gray plumage, and one of the most intelligent of the family. All the jays are interesting, and know more, it is thought, than any other birds. Travelers generally tell the troublesome and funny things they do, but Dr. Merriam, who has known birds all his life, has told a little story that shows him in a new light, in pleasant relations with his fellows.

The doctor says that it was his habit when camping out to give the birds what was left of his meals, and among the rest of the fragments were often a few pancakes, a favorite dish in the woods.

The way the cakes were served to the jays was by thrusting a sharp stick through one and pinning it to the ground, so that it could not be carried off. Then the jays, who are not much afraid of men, would come around to get the dainty, which they like as well as some other little folk do.

Although there might be a half-dozen birds, all anxious for the cake, they never once quarreled over it. One would go up and pull off a piece, then another would follow, and so on, each one taking his turn and waiting for his brother to pull off his bit before he went up himself. Were not those pretty good table manners for a bird brought up in the woods?

Friendly Wild Robins

When wild birds find that the people about them are always kind and never trouble them, they often get very tame. I have known of several cases of robins so tame that they did not at all fear the family near whom they lived.

I have told in another book about a pair of robins who nested in one yard for fourteen years. If they were not the same pair all the time, they were descendants of one pair, for they came every spring to the same old places, just as tame and fearless as they had been when they left them in the fall — fearless of the family, I mean. They were as shy of strangers as any robins, but any one of the family could look at a nest or pick up a young robin without frightening the birds.

One day there arose a great hue and cry on the lawn, and someone from the house went out to see what was the matter. All the robins of the neighborhood were flying about, scolding and crying at the top of their voices and circling round the head of a man who was walking quickly away.

It seems he had picked up a young robin just out of the nest, and the parents had called in their neighbors to help rescue it. The lady, who saw what was the trouble, went to

the man and claimed the youngster as a "tame bird." The man gave it to her, and in an instant the cries ceased. Not only the parents knew the little one was safe in her hands, but all the other birds seemed to understand it also. She carried the baby bird back to the lawn and put him in a safe place, while the elders looked on perfectly satisfied.

I know of another young robin picked up from the ground when he was just out of the nest, to save him from cats. He was not caged, but allowed to go all over the house, and out of doors.

When his kind mistress thought he was old enough to take care of himself and keep out of the way of cats, she tried to give him his liberty. Again and again she carried him out of doors away from the house and left him, but he would not be left. He would stand on a branch and shriek and call like a lost child, till she came back. Then he would fly to her shoulder, rub his head against her cheek, and give sweet little notes, showing his love for her, and his delight at getting back to her.

Another lady, who nursed a little robin that was hurt, had the same experience. The bird was so happy with her that he would not leave her. She told me she had sometimes set him on her hat and walked about the streets and into shops with her live-bird ornament, and he never thought of leaving her.

She often took her pet into a grove and let him fly about wherever he chose. He liked it very much, but the

minute she started up to leave him, he flew to her. He would not be left.

I could tell you other stories to show that when birds are well treated and made happy with people, they get much attached to them, and often prefer to stay with them. But they must be well fed, kindly treated, allowed a good deal of liberty, and above all — never teased.

A lady told me a funny story about a robin. He was brought up in the house from the nest, and never learned to sing the robin song, for he had not heard it. He plainly tried to make some sort of music, and one of the family taught him to whistle "Yankee Doodle." He whistled it perfectly, and never tried to sing anything else.

Once this Yankee Doodle robin got out of the house and flew up into a tree. When the wild birds came about him he entertained them by whistling his favorite air, which sent the birds off in a panic.

Robins have been known to imitate words. One that I know of lived in the house with a parrot who talked, and learned from him to say "Aunt Maria" as plainly as the parrot himself.

The Droll Mockingbird

The more I see of the mockingbird, the more sure I am that he plays many of his pranks for pure fun.

When he lives in a cage and learns to mock the sounds he hears about him, such as the postman's whistle, the call to the dog, or the chicken's cry of distress, he delights to give these sounds by way of a joke, — for instance, the cry of a chicken in the night, when it will send some kind-hearted person out to the coop to see what is the matter, or the postman's whistle, to make someone run for letters.

A mockingbird that I once knew lived in a cage next door to a network partition which separated him from a large family of canaries. When first placed there, the bird seemed to be struck dumb by his neighbors' singing, while the truth was, he was simply studying his lesson. For days he remained silent, taking notes, learning their song; then suddenly, without any rehearsal so far as known, he burst out into the canary song, in a loud, ringing tone that struck every little yellow throat dumb for a time.

After this it was his pleasure to keep silent till half the birds in the room were shrieking at the top of their voices, and then all at once to break into the concert with their own trills and quavers, so loudly given as to shut them all

up in an instant. Then he stood and jerked his wings, and flirted his tail, and hopped gracefully back and forth in his big cage, evidently enjoying the consternation he had produced.

A curious thing I once saw was a free mockingbird regarding the antics of a kitten at play on the grass. The bird took his position on a tree almost directly above pussy, leaned far over, jerked his tail, and uttered a peculiar sound like the "Fuff" of an excited cat. This is, in fact, the bird's war-cry, and for the little fellow to declare war upon the enemy of his race, when even in its infancy it was so much larger than himself, was very droll. His manner showed that he appreciated it, and enjoyed it as a joke.

On one occasion, when I was engaged in studying this bird in North Carolina, there happened to be something outside the fence that attracted the turkey buzzards, so numerous in that State. Many of them abandoned their usual occupation of soaring about in the air, and came one after another to earth, in plain sight.

Having never seen these birds much, I was greatly interested in their movements, their gracefully decreasing circles, and as they neared the ground, their hanging legs, and their evident hesitation to alight. I had seen several come to the spot, and was wondering what could be there to attract them, when a mockingbird noticed the unusual gathering, flew down the yard, and perched upon the fence near where they were busily engaged in the road.

A few moments he stood looking at them intently, then suddenly, with a loud war-cry, dropped down among them. I was frightened, for they were big enough to eat him, but what was my amazement to see the buzzards rising in a panic, twenty of them. The mockingbird knew them better than I, and undoubtedly he did it as a joke, for the next minute he hopped gaily upon the fence, and began his loudest song, wriggling his body, and flirting his wings in a gleeful manner. At another time the joker became interested in the movements of a brood of chickens that with much noise and chatting accompanied their mamma about the yard. No doubt he planned another joke, for he quietly dropped from his perch into the midst of them.

A hen is a different bird from a buzzard, however, and the joke was not a success. The mother turned sharply upon the intruder, and he discreetly left her and her family in peace. No triumphant song and no posturing on the fence followed this failure.

I have seen a mockingbird play a friendly trick upon another by suddenly hopping over his head and coming down on the other side, just avoiding touching him, but so barely missing that the victim always sprang to one side, or ducked his head.

I noticed, too, that the second bird watched his chance, and before long paid the joker in his own coin by jumping over his head when he did not expect it.

But life is not all fun even to a mockingbird. Here is a little story of one who was in trouble. The person who wrote me about it had found a young mockingbird in a nest in a low thorn-bush. It was about ready to fly, and thinking he would secure it for his young sister, he went to the house for a cage. "All the time we were at the nest," he says, "the mother bird was giving her cry of distress, and continually darting down at us, as though to fight. As soon as we started back with the cage, she set up her cry, and when we were less than twenty yards from the nest, she flew down and pushed the young one out. As it fell, it made an effort to fly, and was carried ten or fifteen feet from the bush. We rushed up to get it, when the old one flew down to the ground, and with either her claws or her bill carried it up to a height of ten or twelve feet, then let it go, and flew, the young one making an effort to follow her. This it did, till it gave out and fell, when the mother came down and lifted it again; and so she did, as we followed her up, for three or four times, till we were ashamed of ourselves and left them. I am satisfied," he concludes, "from her cries and action, that it was the mother's supreme effort to remove her young from danger."

The mockingbird is a great enemy of the cat, of course. All birds recognize the cat as an enemy that would like to eat them. Mocking-birds are known to drive cats off the premises, as I have told you swallows will do also.

Did you ever hear a mockingbird sing? and notice what funny words it seems to say? Those of you who live in the

South of course have heard him often. The first time I ever heard one, I wrote down the words his song sounded like.

Here are some of them.

"Su-ky! su-ky! su-ky! come he-e-e-re! come he-e-e-re! malory! malory! malory! pe-de-de-de! quit! quit! qu! qu! qu! chick-a-pa-tee! chick-a- pa-tee! chick-a-pa-tee! pr-r-r-r! cup-o-tea! cup-o- tea! cup-o-tea! pic-o-lo! pic-o-lo! pic-o-lo!" So he would go on an hour at a time, in a loud, clear voice, jerking his tail, lifting his wings, and turning his head to one side and the other, with bright black eyes fixed on me as if to see how I liked it.

I liked it very much indeed, and kept still and listened as long as he would sing.

A Sociable Baby Dove

Never were there more lovely and winning bird babies than young mourning doves. A dove's nest is a frail sort of platform that very soon drops to pieces, and the nestlings have to hold on to the branches for themselves. This would not do at all for restless babies — they would fall to the ground very soon; but young doves are quiet little fellows, with manners as composed as their mamma's. There are always two of them, and they sit side by side close together, saying nothing.

Some people think that mourning doves never say anything. They are very quiet, but they are not dumb. They utter soft, sweet notes, so very low that one has to be near them to hear at all.

The dove's nest is rarely very high, and in one place where I studied I often came upon them. There they would sit perfectly still and look at me calmly, as if they knew I would not touch them.

Sometimes the mother was there, just having fed them, perhaps. She, too, sat perfectly still, in just the position in which I had caught her. If her head happened to be turned to one side, she would hold it there as if she were suddenly

frozen stiff, and no matter how long I stayed, she would not move.

Besides their silence there is another queer thing about doves. When they fly they make a whistling sound that has been supposed by the wise men to be made in some way by the air among the wing feathers, and the dove song of "Coo-o!" with slight variations, was thought to be all he could sing.

All these strange things made the dove very interesting, and so one day when I came upon a young dove sitting on the lowest branch of a tree, I thought I would see if he could talk. I stopped six or eight feet from him, and began a low whistling call.

The bird instantly answered me, in a low but clear tone, and as long as I stood there and called, he answered. It seemed to make him uneasy, however, for he flew from one branch to another, though he did not go away.

The next day I found him there again, and again I began talking to him. He answered every time, with a sweet note, and sometimes he fluttered his wings a little, but it made him restless again, and suddenly he flew directly toward me. It looked as if he were going to alight on my head, but he passed over a few inches above it, and alighted on a tree.

I turned and went on calling, when he flew to the ground almost at my feet, still answering me. Finally he flew back to the tree I found him on, and there I left him.

The sounds the dove baby made were so much like the whistling supposed to be made by wings that I thought I would find out more about it. So I went to a tree where doves spent a good deal of time, and hid myself under it. There I heard many notes, some of them like those made by the baby in answer to me, and some like their louder "Coo-o!" only very low. In fact, several days' study under the doves' tree taught me that they are as talkative as any birds, only they speak hardly above a whisper; and that they can make the whistling sound without flying, and can fly without making it at all. So there is still more to be found out about doves.

The Ducklings Who Would Not Give Up

Perhaps you have heard the story of Bruce and the spider, how the tiny creature taught the man a lesson in patience and never giving up if he wanted to succeed in anything. Well, spiders are not the only creatures who,

If at first they don't succeed,
Try, try again.

A droll sight was that of a party of ducklings who evidently had that for their motto. They were not long out of the shell, and they started out one morning to have a swim. Unfortunately they chose the sea for their swimming-place, and set out bravely to wade in.

It happened to be when the tide was coming in, very quietly, with hardly a ripple. Every few moments a little wave not more than an inch or two high swept gently up on the beach, and then drew back into the ocean, after the manner of waves.

Now ducks, however young, are very dignified, and slowly and solemnly the little family party waddled down toward the water. They were in no hurry. The sun was warm and pleasant; they had eaten their breakfast; they had the day before them.

Just as they reached the edge of the water, the tiny wavelet ran in, lifted the pretty yellow babies off their feet, swept them all far up on the beach, then turned, leaving them high and dry on the sand, and ran out to sea again.

The ducklings, not at all discouraged by this shabby joke of the wavelet, gathered themselves together and started again down the beach as bravely as before. Again the saucy wavelet came up to meet them, and again they were all set down far up on the beach.

One would think they might be discouraged. Far from it! They wanted to go into the water, and into the water they would go. A third time they set out for their swim, as earnest, as calm, as hopeful as at first. Of course they met the same fate as twice before, but of course they did not give it up.

Whether they ever really did get into the sea is not known. Eight or ten times, in fact as long as the observer had time and patience to watch them, the same game went on; each wavelet carried them all far up on the beach, and they all waddled back, with the single purpose of going into the sea for a swim.

Another of the duck tribe that I once saw lived with his mate in the yard with some hens, and did not approve of the loud cackling the hens make over every egg.

There was a little pond in the yard for the use of the ducks, and this knowing drake soon found out that the hens did not like to go into the water as ducks do. So

whenever a hen came cackling out of the hen house, he would rush after her, seize her by the back of the neck, and drag her, squawking, fighting, and beating her wings, to the pond, where he would give her a good sousing, and then let her go.

The hens soon learned to expect it, and when one began to tell the world that there was a fresh egg in the box, she would go shrieking around the yard as fast as legs and wings could carry her, while the drake, with fury in his eye, scrambled after her.

Birds and Dolls

One day, when I had my Bird Room, I was dressing a doll for a young friend, and I laid it on my desk while I made the clothes.

Now on my desk I kept a small china box full of dried currants soaked soft, which the birds were very fond of. When a bird wanted one to eat, he would fly up on the desk and ask for one by looking at the box and then at me.

The first bird who came for a currant that morning was a thrush. The instant he saw the doll he was struck with panic, and flew madly, as if he feared the doll would eat him.

I laughed at him, for I thought he was simply a coward, but I soon found that every bird in the room was afraid of it. Some of them flew quietly but quickly away, while others scolded and squawked, and made a great noise over it. When I held the doll up so that all the birds in the room could see it, they made as much row as if the poor little doll were a big cat, used to eating birds.

I thought that was droll, but I found afterwards that wild birds do not like dolls any better than captives. Once when I was watching the birds in a big yard full of trees, a

little girl set her doll up on the ground, leaning against a tree, forgot it, and left it there.

The first birds who noticed it were a pair of blue jays who had a nest in the same yard. They came to the next tree and looked at it and talked softly together. Then they swooped down at it as if to see if they could scare it away, and finally they squawked at the poor doll and flew away.

Then two robins came to see what sort of a thing was there. They were evidently a good deal scared, but kept their courage up by shouting "He! he! he!" as they came near. One of them was determined to get near enough to see, and he came slowly nearer and nearer till about a foot from the doll, when he suddenly sprang up as if it had started for him, and both of them gave loud shrieks and flew away in a panic.

The next visitor to the bugaboo was a red-headed woodpecker. The minute he saw it he burst into a loud woodpecker chitter like "T-t-t-t-t!" growing louder and louder, and higher and higher, till it was almost a shriek, all the time with eyes fixed on the doll.

This strange performance excited all the birds around, and many of them came to see what was the matter. When the woodpecker had said all he wanted to, he suddenly stopped, and the birds flew away as if the show were over. Not a bird dared to go very near the tree so long as it stayed there.

But the doll did not seem to mind it a bit.

Bird Poems

Sing, pretty birds and build your nests,
    The fields are green, the skies are clear,
Sing, pretty birds and build your nests,
    The world is glad to have you here.

The little birds fly over,
    And oh, how sweet they sing!
To tell the happy children
    That once again ‘tis spring.

Whenever I fly
    From my own dear nest,
I always comes back
    For home is best.

The merry brown thrush sings away in the tree,
     To you and to me, to you and to me,
And he sings all the day, little girl, little boy,
    “Oh, the world’s running over with joy;
    But long it won’t be,
    Don’t you know, don’t you see?
Unless we’re as good as can be?”

What do little birdies say,
    Flying through the gloomy wood?
We must sing the gloom away,
    Sun or shadow, God is good.

I thank Thee for the little birds
    That eat my crumbs upon the sill.
I thank Thee for the pretty snow
    That's coming down so soft and still.

The birds are coming home soon,
    I look for them every day,
I listen to catch the first wild strain,
    For they must be singing in May.

I think I hear music
    And song, in my sleep–
Perhaps Spring is coming,--
    I'll just take a peep.

I know the song that the bluebird is singing,
    Out in the apple tree where he is swinging;
Brave little fellow, the skies may be dreary,
    Nothing cares he while his heart is so cheery.

Little bird upon the tree,
    Sing a song to me,
Sing a song of cherries ripe,
    In the early morning light.

Saucy little bluebird
    Singing, off he flew;
With his pretty brown vest
    And his suit of blue.

Little bird blue,
    Come, sing us your song;
The cold winter weather
    Has lasted so long.

Robins in the tree tops,
Blossoms in the grass,
Green things a-growing
Everywhere you pass.

How pleasant the life of the birds must be,
    Living above in a leafy tree!
And away through the air what joy to go,
    And to look on the green, bright earth below.

Who taught the bird to build her nest
Of wool and hay and moss?
Who taught her how to weave it best
And lay the twigs across?

A little bird with feathers brown,
Sat singing in a tree;
The song was very soft and low,
But sweet as sweet could be.

Said robin to the blue bird,
    "My nest I now must build,
And shortly you shall see it,
    With pretty blue eggs filled."

Hidden away in the elm tree up so high,
Three little birds in a cradle wee, near the sky;
All tucked away so tenderly, safe and warm,
Rocked by the breezes silently, safe from harm.

The old woodpecker is hard at work,
    A carpenter is he;
And you can hear him hammering
    His nest upon the tree.

Over in the meadow,
In a nest built of sticks,
Lived a black mother crow
And her little crows six.

Over in the meadow,
In a hole in a tree,
Lived a mother blue bird
And her little birdies three.

There are many soft, downy cradles,
But one that I love the best,
Is up in the elm tree swinging,--
An oriole's cozy nest.

Of all the weavers that I know,
The oriole is best;
High on the branches of the tree,
She hangs her cozy nest.

A bird sits swinging in our tree,
This is the song she sings to me;
"Oh, don't you touch my little nest,
But leave my birdies there at rest."

Dear little bird, you need not fear,
Your nest to me is very dear;
So sing, dear bird, your very best,
While all day long your birdies rest.

The humming bird! The humming bird!
So fairy like and bright;
It lives among the sunny flowers,
A creature of delight.

The brown owl sits in the ivy bush,
And she looks so wondrous wise,
With a horny beak beneath her cowl,
And a pair of large round eyes.

God made the pretty bird to fly,
    How sweetly has she sung;
And though she flies so very high,
    She won't forget her young.

Whistled the blackbird to his mate,
"I think we had better go, dear;
Showers of gold and purple leaves,
Fields that are brown and yellow sheaves
Tell of the coming snow, dear,
I think we had better go, dear."

The north wind doth blow,
And we shall have snow,
And what will the robin do then?
He'll sit in the barn
And keep himself warm
And tuck his head under his wing,
    Poor thing!

When all the ground with snow is white,
    The merry snowbird comes,
And hops about with great delight
    To find the scattered crumbs.

A bird that stays in wintry days,
    A friend indeed, is he;
And better than all the other birds
    I love the Chickadee.