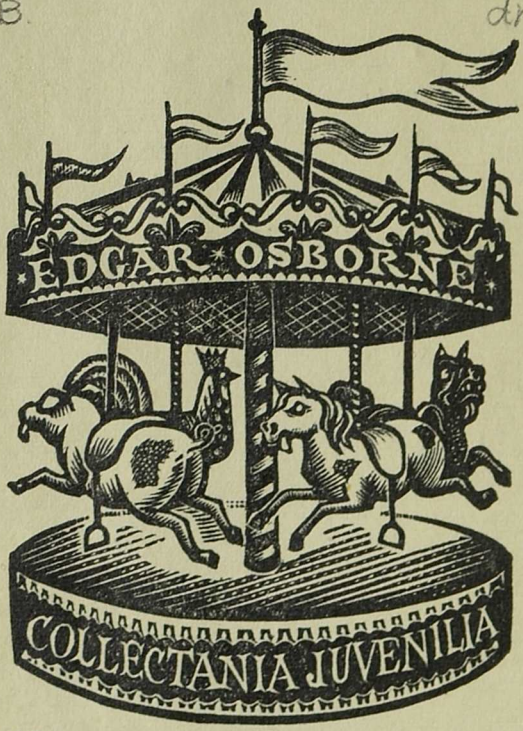
HISTORY
OF A
GOLDFINCH
1807

Rare item Cost £2
Exceptionally fine col. woodcut
T. Bewick?

SB. dr



37131 048 632 756 I, 259

This book forms part of
The Osborne Collection of Children's Books
presented to the Toronto Public Libraries by
Edgar Osborne
in memory of his wife
MABEL OSBORNE

FRONTISPIECE.

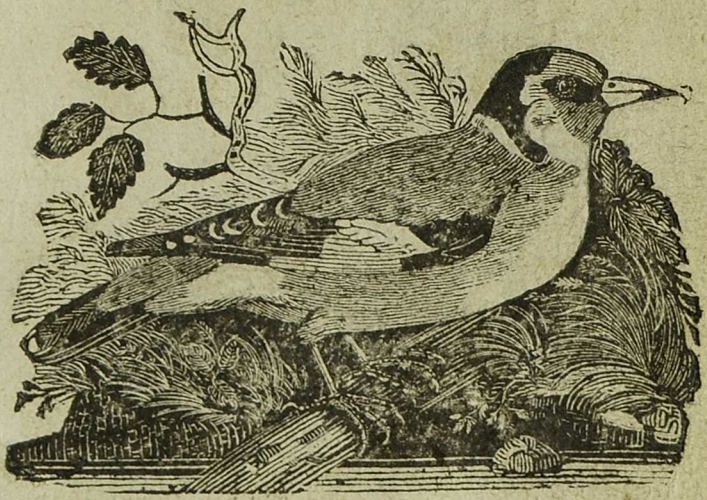
Vexed to be conquered, he ventured from home – alas! to return no more! page 16.

THE

HISTORY

OF

A GOLDFINCH.



LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY W. AND T. DARTON,
40, HOLBORN-HILL.

1807.

THE HISTORY

OF A

GOLDFINCH.

THE life and adventures of one of the prettiest of all little birds, must be a pleasing and instructive lesson to good children, who are blest with kindness to animals, good nature to their friends, and respectful duty to those from whom they draw every blessing in life.—To such, but no others, this little book is presented, with due affection, from the author.

Whilst other historians are making wonderful histories of great men, and telling their good or bad qualities, the writer of the following pages contents

himself with diverting the attention of good boys and girls, to the adventures of one of the feathered race, who was esteemed by those that had the pleasure of knowing his perfections.

Little Goldy was the son of a happy pair, who, having obtained a livelihood through the bounty of a great forest a few miles off, relied upon Providence and their own industry for subsistence; which never failed to answer, with sufficiency, their honest endeavours.—Their food was composed of a few small grains of allowance, with which they were contented; their clothing the great Creator and Governor of the universe had so well supplied to them, that their dress was decked out in beautiful colours, the brilliancy

of which never diminished; they had a new suit every year, and were satisfied with the family livery, which looked as though it were constantly new.

Mrs. Goldy, by her attention to the welfare of her little family, added sweetness to the pleasures of life; and by her constant care, little Goldy was very soon put in breeches, and hopped and played from branch to branch with a degree of liveliness which pleased his parents; —for he was not sullen:—but was careless, which cost him much future pain and trouble.

You have heard the story of dutiful Tommy and undutiful Harry; how one prospered and the other died miserably, on account of their conduct to their parents: so it happened to

Little Goldy; I will not say that he was rudely and impudently undutiful; but, which was nearly the same, he paid no attention to his parent's advice; he was constantly rambling from home, and though his father and mother called till the neighbourhood was filled with their lamentations, no Goldy was to be found; his parents were very unhappy; but careless Goldy, so he could pick up crumbs with his playfellows never heeded his parents' calls or their happiness; but kept on his giddy indifference to their sufferings, till a punishment fell on him, which deprived him of their protection during his life.

My little readers, I must stop a little in this part of my story, to tell

you of what consequence it is in the future comfort of life to be dutiful to your parents. You know, my young friends, that your life was given you by God Almighty—and you believe in him on that account; as you say in your catechism; "First, I believe in God the Father, who made me and all the world." Now, here you see, that because he made you, he is called your Father; the most endearing expression that can be used. The names Papa and Mamma are not equal to Father and Mother; the former may be fashionable---but the latter are lovely.

When your heavenly Father, that is, God, therefore, gave you life, he gave you certain rules to go by, called by the learned men, "The law of Na-

ture," by which you should pay that duty to your father and mother, that must cause you to be beloved by God Almighty.

You will ask me what I mean by this "law of nature," for you don't understand it.---I will tell you; you, little Ann, have got a pretty doll, or any other thing that you value; you, little George, like your horse and other play-things, you pay every attention, you take every care of them, you kiss them, you are fearful they should be hurt; and should you be deprived of them, you would break your hearts; this is what is called the affection, or the "law of Nature;" if you are so delighted, so careful, so fearful of losing your play-things—I ask you, what must be

the duty you should pay to those whom God has appointed to be your parents? who have fed you when you could not help yourselves! who clothed you when you might have been naked, like the beasts that perish; but for them! who gave you education, which might make you at some future time be looked upon as superior to your fellow-creatures, as the old proverb says:

> "When land is gone, and money spent,
> Learning is most excellent."

What must you think, if you behaved ungratefully to the parents, who did so much for you?—Could you, my dear young friends, look God Almighty in the face, as you do every night and morning when you say your prayers, for he sees every thing you do, or even

think—could you, my little boy or girl, say that "his will had been done," when, by some careless folly, or not minding what was told you, your kind parents were made unhappy!---Take care, my young friends! this is a dangerous fault---and the consequence of it will be just as it happened to poor Goldy. I know you will cry and pity him, so do I, but you cannot help saying he deserves what he met---because he was undutiful.

You must know my young readers, that there are a parcel of lowbred, vulgar, and cruel men and women, who make it a rule to gain their living by snares, traps, and nets, for catching such thoughtless, careless, run-away birds as may chance to come in their way; and,

when once a poor innocent little creature falls into any of these snares, though he tries with all his might—the nets of these wicked people are too strong; and like the chains of the wicked one, when holding naughty boys and girls—they are so confined that it is next to impossible, except the Heavenly Father should put forth his hand to loosen and break them, that those who are confined should ever get away. Thus, you see, in another instance, how dangerous it is to be careless of the advice of your dear father or mother.

Little Goldy, I assure you, had a charming voice, and his note was of the sweetest kind—he never gave his father and mother an angry word—and to give them a sour, a sullen, or a peevish

one—oh! dear! it was not in his nature! But, how often have I seen naughty boys and girls, who have pretended to be genteely educated, look at their parents, as though they would eat them. I hope none of my little good readers ever do such things; for if they do, they had better shut up the book, and sulk in a corner till they are tired—I do assure them, the pains I have taken in making this pretty instructive history, is not intended for such naughty wicked children.

Little Goldy, however, was vain of his voice; but did not know that danger was so near; a parcel of little birds tried to out-sing him—he whistled louder; still his notes were exceeded. Vexed to be conquered, he ventured

from home—alas! to return no more! he ventured to look at those who, in little barred houses, whistled the most enchanting notes---he ventured to come close to them---but did not find his mistake till he was surrounded by the snare of a base, deceitful being, improperly called human; who, having caged a number of equally thoughtless, innocent birds, kept them upon scanty allowance, and did not even allow that if they did not sing to the utmost stretch of their voices, to entangle other thoughtless creatures into the horrid state to which their own silly imprudence had reduced them---alas! into imprisonment for life!

Like his master, the wicked one, the bird-catcher who had been some

days watching for his prey---having gained so good a prize, barred poor Goldy amongst the rest of his unfortunate companions, where he was doomed to utter his song of lamentation for the loss of his unhappy parents, during the remainder of his miserable life. All this you see, arose from his inattention to the advice of his father and mother. It was useless for him to cry and moan, the tears of his family did not, in the least, soften the hard heart of his keeper; he was exposed like a slave, for sale, and compelled to be out in all weathers, to suffer the insult and humour of every vile boy or girl, who delight in teazing and vexing their fellow creatures.

A very shocking fright seized poor Goldy one day, when he saw three or four of these cruel wretches come round

his prison, and put some money into the hands of his gaol-keeper; who, indeed, did not care what became of the poor birds, so he had the money; upon this, three or four little unfortunate sparrows were given to these monsters of cruelty, who instantly tied their legs together to some pieces of wood they had brought with them, and, with gunpowder, delivered their prey from further sufferings, by blowing them up*!

Do you not, my dear little friends, cry, ready to break your hearts at such shocking, such new kind of cruelty? I should not wonder, I should not be displeased, were I to see such murder-

* This absolutely happened some time since in Fleet-Market.

ous minds, at some future time, make a full confession, and beg repentance of their crimes, in the most awful situation in which beings can be placed.

But, as I am upon telling you a little story or two about cruelty to the dumb part of God Almighty's creation, a little history comes into my recollection: A foolish, silly boy, I hope no little girl would have thought of such a thing; or, if she did, I should be ashamed of her; took it into his head that a poor bird which had fallen into his power, would look *very pretty*, after his feathers were plucked off. To work he went, the poor bird did not complain, and he plucked every feather except the wings; and, to make the bird look the prettier, as he called it, he

got some warm paste, and with it stuck a piece of red cloth upon the poor creature's head, and then let it go. Whilst he was admiring the victim of his cruelty, his father, who abhorred it, seeing him very attentive to the wicked work that he had been about, called him, and questioned him in a kind manner, how he could be so cruel to an innocent creature that never injured him? "The boy did not," he said, "think any harm in it; he thought it looked pretty;" and added, "that he had not hurt the bird." Upon this his father called him, in the same mild way; for had he scolded, it would not have been so effectual; and plucking some of the hair from the young gentleman's head, asked *if it hurt him?*

The boy cried, and said, it hurt him very sadly indeed. The father then plucked some more, the pain of which made the boy cry very loud. "Now then," says the father, "learn in future to be more tender to your fellow creatures; for if such a small portion of hair which I have plucked from your head has occasioned you such pain, as to make you cry so bitterly, what must you think of the pain which the poor little, defenceless bird was put to, when, without any provocation, you plucked the feathers from its whole body! Go from my presence, you cruel, wicked boy. and never let me see your face, till you are sensible of your monstrous crime!

This punishment had such effect up-

on the son, that, as he himself not long since told me, he never could abide to be cruel to little innocent creatures ever afterwards.

But poor Goldy, under all his trouble, never failed to sing his hymn of lamentation, with a hope, that some time or other, the all-merciful God, without whose permission not even a sparrow falls, would cause him to be released. His prayers were not unheard, his sorrow for his undutifulness was pardoned; and one day the very writer of this history, passing by the prison where Goldy was confined, took a liking to the poor little fellow—purchased him, and brought him home; but remember, he did not confine him; he opened his cage door, and then suf-

fered him to wander in any part of his parlour; and that he might not be lonesome, the same gentleman purchased a canary bird, as a companion for Goldy; the doors of their cages were never shut, their cages were dwellings without being prisons; and, I do assure you, my good boys and girls, it would make you jump about merrily, if you were but to see how little Goldy and his companion hopped about the carpet, and on the breakfast table, sang the joyful song of gratitude, for the liberty and benefits they enjoyed.

Goldy afterwards learnt some pretty tricks. Whenever his master took him out of his cage in a morning, the little contented creature picked the small quantity of sugar that was given him, as

a treat, with the greatest thankfulness. The sweet fellow would look up in his master's face with all the gratitude in his power, and whistle out such pretty notes, as though he were to say, "Dear Sir, how thankful I am for the benefits which you bestow!—Were it not for you I might have been the property of some unfeeling boy or girl, who would have confined me with a chain round my middle; I might have been obliged to labour like a slave, before I could taste either my seed or my water;—I might have fallen into hands that would have made me fire off gun-powder, and many other things, quite contrary to my natural disposition; but you have preserved me from them all!---Indeed it is much more than I deserve, for my

treatment to my parents; but as, by this time, they have got more of my brothers and sisters, I hope they are as happy as I am contented."

Thus, my little friends, must you be obliged to say, if, in consequence of ill behaviour at home, you are compelled to go many miles, where there would be no good father and mother to take care of you. Some friend might be found to give you lodging, board, and little indulgences; but these would not equal the tender caresses, the anxious concern, and desire of your welfare, by a father and mother, who love you, whose love is sincere, and who would spend their lives, lest you should be made unhappy.

The behaviour of little Goldy is

therefore a constant lesson to all good boys and girls; he and his companion first sang their morning song to the Great Creator of all things, who even counts the hair of your head, and has equal care of the mouse and the elephant; they then sang a song to their benefactor, who released them from captivity---they next breakfasted and took the innocent pleasures which their liberty allowed them through the day, without crying for more, when they did not want it, as some naughty children do. And, when the day had passed in this pleasing manner, they charmed him with their evening song; and retired to rest, ever happy, ever thankful!

It gives me pain to remark in this little history, that one of the

pleasures *allowed* to little children, is the license of giving pain to those poor little things called flies, kittens, puppies, and other parts of the dumb creation. I should rather that my good little readers would make a better use of their fancy for birds and insects.

I have read of one Nero, a Roman Emperor or Governor, who delighted when he was a child in tormenting flies; when he came to be a man he was one of the most cruel men that ever lived, for he killed his wife and his own mother. Had that mother caressed him for his kindness to the poor unprotected flies, and punished him for his cruelty to them, he might, no doubt, have

abhorred such an inhuman practice, and lived a good man.

I have often considered, with great pleasure, a passage in a modern book, that is very instructive, and very much to my present purpose; it is that part in which Uncle Toby is praised for his merciful disposition: "My Uncle Toby," says the writer, "was a man patient of injuries;—not from a want of courage---where just occasions presented, or called it forth. I knew no man under whose arm I should sooner have taken shelter;---he was of a peaceful, placid temper; all was mixed up so kindly in him, that my uncle Toby had scarce a heart to retaliate upon a fly:---"Go," says he, one day at dinner, to an over-grown fly, who had buz-

zed about his nose, and cruelly tormented him all dinner time, and which, after infinite attempts, he had caught at last, as it flew by him; "I'll not hurt thee," says my Uncle Toby, rising from his chair, and going across the room with the fly in his hand---"I'll not hurt a hair of thy head: Go," says he, lifting up the sash, and opening his hand as he spoke to let it escape; "go, get thee gone; why should I hurt thee!---This world, surely, is wide enough to hold both thee and me."---This might serve for parents and governors, instead of a whole volume on the subject.

My little friends, by the daily exercise of humanity, your very diversions may be improved into virtue.

Consider, that a poor cat has only

one life, and I am sure is a very useful animal in its place; that an owl ought not be destroyed because it may be like a cat, any more than that a poor little frog should be destroyed because it is like a toad. Remember that it is considered unlucky to hurt the little Robin Red Breast, and the consequence is, that the bird builds nests near the house. It is, therefore, ill usage only that drives that beautiful part of God's creation, the charming feathered race from our roofs. The author of this little book hopes, however, that those, whose good behaviour gains them leave to read the History of Little Goldy, will tell their play-fellows that, "instead of being guilty of barbarity, they would do all in their pow-

er in preserving their lives, and promoting the happiness of those innocent parts of God's creation, whose comforts arise from the mercy shown to them by their fellow creatures."

But let us return to the latter part of the history of our little favourite bird. Having for years given constant pleasure to his master by endeavours to please him, Goldy was as constantly his master's care and attention, and of course knew not the evils of want; because he did not deserve them. You should learn by this, my little readers, to shew your gratitude to that Great Provider, God Almighty, "who knows your necessities before you ask, and your unworthiness in asking," (I think you will

find something of this in your Prayer-books) by your duty to your kind parents, your attention to your instructors, and your general good behaviour to your fellow creatures: but above all things avoid cruelty towards them. I could bring many little stories to your minds concerning the bad ends of those who delighted in torment. Absalom for his undutifulness to his parent was hanged upon a tree; God Almighty took an effectual way to punish him that, shocking to relate! sought his father's life! What became of Nero, of whom you have heard before, for bleeding to death his schoolmaster Seneca; why, I will tell you: for this and his other cruelties, he became so hated and abhorred, that his subjects

chose rather to let him live than release him from the terrors that constantly surrounded him; so that when he found that no one would rid him from a life of misery, he laid violent hands upon himself, and sent to perdition, an abandoned soul which has never been exceeded for barbarity, treachery, and every kind of wickedness.

I beg that my little readers will not take what I mention to them as reproaches; for I verily believe, that not one of them would deserve any reproaches for such horrid sins! I only give cautions that the little folks should take care, lest by not regarding one error, they might fall into a greater, and so go on, till they found it very

difficult to escape from—*the Wrath to come.*---Now *Wrath* means *God's Anger*; and I am sure my little readers would not wish to be in danger of God's anger, by doing any thing against his will, especially when they are acquainted that want of duty to parents, neglecting the advice of their instructors, and tormenting their fellow creatures, *whom God has made*, are displeasing to him, and, if continued in, he will *most certainly* punish.

Well, after little Goldy had lived to please his master, and had given him the greatest satisfaction, the God whose knowledge extends as much to the feathers of a sparrow, as his care to the safety of a kingdom, looked down upon the little creature; and,

satisfied with the praiseworthy actions of its innocent life; he laid its soul at rest!

I think that this will suggest to my good children the following very excellent lines, which I should wish that they might learn. It is taken from Mr. Addison's *Hymn on Providence*; beginning "The Lord my pasture shall prepare," &c. The whole is only four verses, and goes to a very pretty tune; and, therefore soon learnt by those that are attentive and industrious. I shall only quote the last verse but one in this place:

"Though in the paths of Death I tread,
With gloomy horrors overspread,
My steadfast heart shall fear no ill,
For thou, O Lord, art with me still;
Thy friendly crook shall give me aid,
And guide me through the dreadful shade."

I have thus, my readers, given you an account of a good little bird, for whom I had a great regard—because—he deserved it.—You must not, however, misunderstand me; for I wish you to know, that under the history of little Goldy is intended that kind of advice to little boys and girls, which will be useful to them in their conduct through life, preparatory to futurity; and it is not doubted but every parent will explain to their tender offspring, the necessary duties inculcated in this small tract, humbly submitted to their attention.

I was so affected with the loss of my worthy, little companion, that I could not resist the wish of shewing my respect for his memory, by the following

EPITAPH.

Enclos'd in earth poor Goldy lies;
His life a lesson to the wise!—
Of humble birth and virtuous ways,
He wish'd not undeserved praise;
Content with Nature's gifts, his song
In praise to God he would prolong.
His *Maker*, pleased with the lay
So fervent, so sincere, each day;
To shew e'en birds attract *his* care,
Gave Goldy, happy years, his share.
Now Goldy rests in peace.—the just reward,
Of those who virtue's pleasant ways regard.

My young friends, profit by the lesson which is thus set before you--- and, if you cannot make it out, ask your father and mother in a dutiful manner, when they have opportunity to answer

you---and they will tell you in the most gentle manner what I wish you to understand. Ever considering the beautiful saying of the wise man: "Train up a child in the way he should go---and when he is old, he shall not depart therefrom."

OTHER BOOKS

OF INSTRUCTION AND AMUSEMENT

ARE

NOW PUBLISHING,

For the Perusal of such

JUVENILE READERS

Who conduct themselves as

GOOD CHILDREN,

Wishing to

ORNAMENT SOCIETY.

W. AND T. DARTON, PRINTERS.

V.C