

THE CHILD'S COUNTRY BOOK

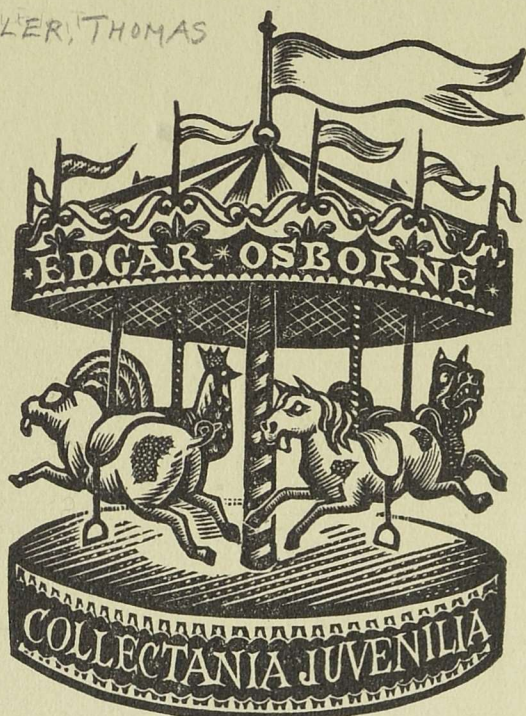
BY
THOMAS MILLER



GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS.

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THE MILKMAID.

THE CHILD'S
COUNTRY BOOK,

IN WORDS OF TWO SYLLABLES.

BY

THOMAS MILLER.

WITH SIXTEEN COLOURED ILLUSTRATIONS.



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WHY I WROTE THIS LITTLE BOOK.

HAVING written more than a dozen books, on all kinds of country things, and not one that very young girls and boys could read, without having to stop to spell the great, long, hard words, I thought I would write one full of short little words, easy to read ; and this is it. I did this, because I know, when I was a very little boy, I used to wish there were not so many hard long words in

the books I had to read, causing me to trouble my dear mother, by asking her how this word was spelt, and what that word meant, and if she could find me a short one that would do in place of the other. Where there is a long word in this little book, such as the name that a thing is called and known by, and not by any other, I advise you to break the word into little bits, just as it is done in your "Spelling Book," so as to make it more easy to read.

I knew a great deal more about bees, and birds, and flowers, and other country things, than many girls and boys, through having passed so much time, when a little boy, at my uncle's great farm-house, at Thonock. It had a thatched roof,

in which birds made their nests ; and there was Warton Wood close to it, only one field off, and quite as great a wood, I do believe, as that you have read about, in which those dear Babes were lost. And there was a great long pond, with high trees all round it, in which the ducks and geese used to swim ; and, very often, foxes would come out of the great wood, and run away with the ducks and geese ; and, sometimes, get into the hen-roost in the night, and then the fowls made such a noise that it woke us all up, in the old thatched farm-house. Then Uncle got his gun, and the servants got up, and the dogs barked, and the poultry screamed out with all their might ; but it was of no

use, for the fox had, no doubt, run into his hole, and was eating what he had stolen.

But what I liked best was, when it was very cold, to see the pretty little lambs brought in out of the fields, and placed on something soft and warm before the great kitchen fire, some of them only a few hours old. I used to sit down amongst them on the clean hearth, and fancy I knew what they said, when they bleated while I talked to them, saying: "What do you bleat for, you pretty little lambs; are you too warm, or are you too cold? Shall I move you a little nearer the fire, or draw you a little further back?" Then they used to bleat, and tell me as well as they

could, as I thought, what they wanted me to do, and I did it ; and if they became quite quiet, and went to sleep, then I felt sure that I had done it right.

It was the same with the young birds, which the farm servants brought me in. I used to place them in old hats, half filled with wool, beside the kitchen fire, to keep them warm ; for Jack, the Shepherd-boy, would come in and say : “ I’m sure some one has shot the old black-bird, that’s got young ones in her nest, in our old orchard hedge ; for I watched such a time, and she’s never been near her nest, and the young ones have been making such a noise, and they look so cold, for they’re not fledged yet ; and

there are no leaves out on the hedge, and the wind blows through it so cold."

Then I used to go with Jack, and watch such a time, and when we found the old bird did not come to her nest, we knew she had been killed ; then we took the nest out of the old orchard hedge, and brought it home, and placed it in one of my Uncle's old hats before the farm-house fire. When I heard the little birds go, "Tweet, tweet, tweet!" I used to say: "What do you want, you pretty little birds?"

And when they all opened their little yellow mouths, and gaped as wide as they could stretch them, I knew they wanted something to eat, and I fed

them with great care, giving them little bits at a time, with a quill ; and when I had fed them all, and asked them if they wanted any more, if they did not gape and say, “ Tweet, tweet,” I then knew they had eaten enough, and wanted to go to sleep again, so put the nest back into the warm old hat ; for the blackbirds and thrushes often have young ones before the warm spring days have come, or the green leaves put forth, or the daisies thrown out a silver light upon the green grass, to show where they are hidden.

When I went into my Aunt’s garden, where the row of bee-hives stood before the parlour windows, with tall standard roses, and fragrant woodbines growing

all about them, I never felt afraid that they would sting me, for I never made them angry, nor ran away in fear, to give them cause to follow me as if they wanted to know what there was wrong. I stood looking at them, and said : “ I know you can sting me, if you like, but I am sure you will not ; for I shall not meddle with your hives, nor touch one of you ; I only want to see how you get your long tongues down to the bottom of my Aunt’s roses, and woodbines, and suck up the honey ; and to watch you put the yellow flower-dust, you make beebread of, into those funny little pockets that are made in your legs.” So it was with many other living things that I watched, and saw what they did, and

where they went to, and how hard many of them worked, to get a living for their young ones, and none harder than the little mites of ants.

I had no little boy to play with me, when at my Uncle's farm ; so I used to amuse myself in the best way I could, running about the fields, peeping into, and under the hedges, sometimes going a little way, but never very far, into the great wood, for fear I should lose myself. So, having no one to speak to, I used to talk to the birds, and insects, and other things that I saw, and say to them : " Tell me what you make that noise for, and who you are, and what you do, and where you are going to now ? " and I used to fancy, at times,

they knew what I said ; and that when an insect buzzed, or a little bird whistled, they said to me : “ If you follow us, and keep very still, and look very sharp, you shall know all about us, by-and-bye : ” and I did so.

So I found out a great many things, by watching them, and reading about them in books—written by those who had watched them for years, and could tell me more about their ways than I should ever have found out, had I done nothing more than looked at them, and run after them all my life.

Though I often got quite close to them, and kept as still as a little mouse, when it sees a crumb on the floor, and waits for a chance to get it into its mouth,

and run into its hole with it—still I could not always tell what they were doing, until my Uncle lent me books that told all about them.

Then it was that I met with so many hard words, and wished the books were as easy to read as this one is, which I have written for you ; and which will tell you more about birds, and insects, and flowers, and other pretty country things, than you ever knew before. And if you cannot believe that they told me all I have told you, you must try very hard to fancy they did, as I used to do, when they seemed to talk to me in the best way they could ; though it may be that there were a many hard words in the Lamb's

lesson, and the Bee's book, and the Bird's song, which I could not rightly read; for I found many such in my Uncle's books.

I am sure you will like my little book, because it is written for you in such easy words, and contains so many things that I had such funny thoughts about, when a very little boy; and when there were no such pretty pictures in Children's Books, as those you now see.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

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THE
CHILD'S COUNTRY BOOK.

WHAT a many pretty things we see, and what pleasant sounds we hear, while walking about the country in Spring; and all look so new and fresh, now that the dark cold winter has passed away. Only a few weeks ago, and the hedges were all bare, and there were no leaves on the trees and very little grass in the fields, and nowhere was a flower to be seen; and, but for the dear little robin, with his red waistcoat on to keep his chest warm, we might have walked a long mile on the hard frosty road without hearing a single bird sing. Now the hedges are green, and the trees in

leaf, and there is a soft carpet of grass, spotted with flowers, spread all over the fields ; while birds are singing on all sides of us, and flying about, and seeming as busy as if they hardly knew what to be at first, so many things have they got to do. That little bird, no longer than your hand, has got to hunt about to find what it can to make its nest of—a bit of straw here, a bit of hay there, a morsel of wool that stuck to a bush, a feather or two that was blowing about ; a bit of moss, or anything soft and warm on which to lay its eggs, and then sit on them for days, to keep the eggs warm, until the shells crack, and the young ones come out, and begin to open their yellow mouths, and “cheep, cheep, cheep,” for something to eat, as soon as they come out of their shells. Then that little mother of a bird has to go flying about, to catch insects, to feed all her young ones ; and when she comes back to her nest, she sees five open-

mouths all gaping at once for food, and she feeds them, never missing one; then hurries off, as fast as her wings can carry her, to catch more flies.

There is no baker or butcher to call at that little bird's house, to leave a crumb or a mite of any kind of food for its young ones; yet they never want, so hard does that little mother work from morning to night, often bringing home at one time in her mouth—to share amongst her family—as many insects as would fill a teaspoon. Our Saviour took notice of the pretty birds in His Sermon on the Mount, where He says: “They sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them:” and so He does all things that He made, even the insects that are so small we can only see them through a glass.

Look at that Milkmaid, standing by the stile in the first pretty picture, she is calling “cush, cushion, cushion,” and

the cows hear her, and are coming up from the far end of the field, which you cannot see, to be milked. She will sit on that three-legged stool and sing some pretty song while milking, and the birds will join in with their music, while the warm milk keeps frothing up in her pail, making one quite long for a nice brown loaf, so that we might breakfast in the sweet green fields, drinking the rich milk while it is warm. Sometimes a great gadfly comes and stings the cow, while the maid is milking; then the poor cow gives a jump, and, while trying to kick off the fly, knocks over the pail, upsets both milkmaid and milk; then runs off, perhaps saying to itself, "Oh, bother the flies! I'm not going to stand this any longer:" and joins the other cows which you see standing in the water, in the picture: and there they will often stand for hours, when the weather is very hot, as the water is cool to their feet, and the



COWS IN THE WATER.

trees shade them, and there are not so many flies to plague them as there are in the open fields. If the cows were to say to the insects, "What do you come

buzzing about our ears and stinging us for, eh?" the insects might answer—"Why do you eat us up by thousands, when you feed on the grass, and crush us, with your great splayfeet, when we are playing amongst the flowers?" and I think the cows would give their tails a switch, and walk off with their heads down, without having a word more to say.

Very often you see a pretty calf in the fields, beside the cow; and, when they keep it short of milk, if you will go up to it, and let it suck your fingers, it will follow you anywhere, so long as you keep your hand in its mouth; and it cannot bite, as it has no teeth yet. It is a shame to put a muzzle on its little mouth to prevent it from sucking the cow's milk; but what is worse is, putting it in the oven with a crust over it to make a veal pie, when it is so little, and has no horns to defend itself with, and run them into the cruel butcher as a great bullock

would, perhaps, if it knew he was going to kill it for beef, and could get at him.

You see that large white butterfly? Well, it was a little tiny egg at first. You get a couple of dozen of the very smallest pins you can find, and stick them into a cabbage so close that the heads touch, and you will see how a whole family of butterflies are left by their mother; for that little square of pin-heads in the cabbage will, though bigger, just look like the eggs she lays on the leaves. When they come out of their eggs, they are little hungry grubs; and as their mother—whom they would not know if they saw her—has left them plenty of cabbage, they fall too eating it at once. They get fat on it, and soon become great caterpillars, eating a deal more than their own weight of food in a day. When they can eat no more, they roll themselves up in a kind of blanket, like a silkworm, and have a good long nap; and, when they wake, they find

themselves rolled up tight in a brown case, and say, "I must get out of this;" and so they do, in a little time; and you will see them, after that, swinging on the sweet peas or flying among the flowers, for they are now butterflies.

Did you hear that noise? It was the black old raven croaking; that dark mass, which looks like a bundle that has been thrown into the tree, and lodged on the broad, strong branch, is its nest; and, I dare say, there are young ones in it by this time, for the raven begins building its nest before any other bird, and may be seen carrying sticks in its horny beak as early as the end of January, to make a house for its little ones and to keep them warm, for they are often hatched long before we feel the sunshine of Spring. The raven thinks nothing about flying down and settling on the back of some sheep, and tugging off the wool with its strong sharp beak, to make a blanket for its nest. No

doubt the poor sheep feels it very hard to have the coat torn off its back in such cold weather, though it cannot help itself; for, with such a beak, the raven could pick out all the lean in the mutton chops, if he liked, in a few minutes; and were he to do so, the sheep would feel that a great deal worse to bear than parting with a few locks of wool.

As the blackbird and thrush begin to build, and lay their eggs before it is Spring, they plaster the inside of their nests to keep out the cold; for they often have young ones while the keen loud March winds are blowing, and the nights are frosty, and the snow still lies on the ground; so, knowing this, the birds take as much pains to keep out the cold and wet as a builder does to keep your chamber dry, by drawing the ceiling over with strong cement; and so close and solid is the work done inside these nests, that you cannot pull it to pieces, and it takes a very sharp knife to

cut through the stout wall these birds have made. You see, if their little ones catch cold and have a bad cough, the old ones have no flannel to make them bedgowns or nightcaps, nor no pan to boil water to put their little feet in, to draw out the cold ; nor do I think they would find a Doctor Blackbird or Thrush if they knocked at the branches of all the bushes and hedges for miles round ; so, knowing this, and having no bottles to hold the physic if they could get it, why they take care to keep their young ones out of the cold, as they say, " It is better to prevent harm coming to my little Dicks than running the risk, and trying to cure them ; so I keep their heads cool and their feet warm, and never have to fly out to fetch a doctor." And the birds are right, for it is always better to prevent evil than to cure it after it has come ; and that is why they build their nests so strong, and make them so warm, and their little Dicks never have any

coughs or chilblains ; nor do they want flannel sewing round their necks to cure their sore throats.

Do you see those little things in the grass, that look as if round green-headed nails were driven into the ground ? Those are daisies, which will soon open, and show their pretty white frills and golden eyes, with which they look up at the sky all day long, until the stars come out, when they shut their eyes and go to sleep ; for all flowers sleep though not always at night, as many wake then that have had their eyes closed all day. I do not know that it is so, though I have often thought that when the little lambs begin to bleat, and run races over the fields, they shake the ground and wake the daisies, who then knock from under the grass to be let out, and keep on pushing their hardest until they get their little green round heads through to look at the pretty lambs at play, for lambs like the daisies ; so do the sheep, which

you here see, as well as the shepherd-boy, who is sitting on the rail-fence looking at them. The lambs lie down and go to sleep beside the daisies ; and, when the pretty flowers open their eyes in the morning, the lambs know it is time to get up, and so does the skylark, which also sleeps on the ground among the daisies, that look up as if watching the lark, when it goes singing high up into the sky ; so high, at times, that you cannot see the pretty bird, though, like the lambs, you can still hear it singing. It must be very nice to have a sweet clean bed of grass and daisies, like the lambs and larks, as you know when you lie down in the fields on a warm spring day, and feel as if you would like to go to sleep, on such a bed. It is much better, and softer, and cleaner, than many beds which some poor children sleep upon, on the floors of dirty houses, which their parents are too lazy to wash and scrub, and make sweet ; for such parents



SHEPHERD-BOY AND SHEEP.

are over idle to keep their children clean,
or even to wash their own faces ; they
are not like your ma's and pa's, who take
a pride in seeing you as clean as a new

pin. Neither the lambs nor the larks would be able to get a wink of sleep, if they had such beds as some of these poor children lie down upon, on the hard floors of the dirty houses in which they are forced to live. The flowers like to be clean, and have their pretty faces washed in the dew and rain : and how pleasant it is to feel as sweet and clean as a daisy, and to be told you look as fresh as one, after you are washed.

But pretty as the lambs, and daisies, and young green spring grass are to look at, they are not more lovely to the eye than the fruit-trees now in blossom, many of them all over white ; so thick is the bloom that it hides nearly all the leaves. Look at that old orchard ; one might fancy that it was a garden owned by some great giant, and that those trees were his flowers ; that when he comes out for a walk, he would stoop down, and, with his thumb and finger, snip off the highest branch of that plumtree, and

place it in his button-hole for a posy ; for the trees are planted in level lines, like flowers in a garden-bed ; and I do not know a flower that blows that is more beautiful to look upon than the apple-blossom, so pure is the white, so rich the red of the bloom. Then to know that all those thousands of blossoms will turn to fruit—cherries, apples, plums, pears, peaches, and other rich sweet things, that are so pleasant to eat, and look so pretty when they are ripe ; though not more so than they do now, while in blossom. Though the insects will come, and the birds peck the buds, and destroy many a bushel of fruit, yet those left will be all the larger, through this clearage ; for if every bud grew to fruit, there would be so many they would not have room to swell, and be so small that you would not care for them. I do not believe the birds destroy so much fruit as some people say they do, but that they only shake down the buds while looking for

the insects they feed upon ; and that, but for the birds picking the insects from out the blossoms as they do, we should not have near so much fruit as we have. In some countries, where the people have been so cruel as to shoot all the small birds they could find, the insects have eaten up all the buds, and there has scarcely been any fruit on the trees ; and that just serves those right who shot the pretty birds, that sang so sweetly, and ate up all the insects that were in the buds ; for, when they killed the birds, they got rid of their best friends, and so they found out when the insects were left to eat up all the fruit. In some country places, they call the pretty bullfinch "pick-a-bud," because he knocks down so many blossoms, while hunting for his breakfast, that the ground beneath the tree is often white over with the buds he has knocked off while feeding.

What lovely flowers now appear !

How pretty those primroses look, nestling among the grass ; you might fancy they were tinged with the green amid which they grow, though it is not so, for there is a green in the yellow of the primrose, and it is that which gives it so fresh a look, and makes it unlike any other flower of the same hue ; and, were you to draw a primrose in water colours, it would not look like a real one, unless you used green along with your yellow to paint the petals, as the flower-leaves are called. You wonder where that sweet smell comes from that perfumes the air all about this spot. There are violets growing somewhere beside that hedge. Look, there they are, half-hidden by the dead leaves, which have kept them warm, and caused them to flower sooner than they would have done if more exposed to the cold. I always think the scented violet is nearer purple in colour than blue, though there are plenty that are blue enough, but they

have no pleasant smell, and are not, I think, in flower in Spring. Though we could not see them at first, we knew they were very near us by the perfume they threw out; and they would have kept on throwing their sweetness on the air just the same, if we had never found them, nor fell in love with their beauty. It is the same with a many good people in this world, whose lives are passed as sweetly as those of the violets, and who are often half-hidden like them, and do nothing to draw the eyes of people upon them, certain that their sweetness will reach up to heaven and be treasured there, if no one on earth ever finds it out; for as the poet named Shirley wrote, more than two hundred years ago:—

“ Only the actions of the just
Smell seewt, and blossom in the dust ;”

which means that that which is good and right will live after we are dead, and be sweet to Him who dwelleth in heaven, whether those on earth valued us or not.

for doing it. So the violets would have gone on pouring out their sweetness just the same, if no one had ever found out where they grew.

No, those are not buttercups, though, at this distance, they look like them; but they are pileworts, often called celandines, and are larger flowers than we find on the stems of buttercups, except in rare places. We find very few buttercups in flower before the month of May, though I do not know how early in the year you may not find flowers of some kind, under warm hedges; such as the dead-nettle, and the little chickweed, and one or two others that seem to be in flower, when under shelter, all through the Winter, if the season has been mild. Look at these hedges, now so green; only a few weeks ago and, had you come here, all you would have seen would have been little brown buds, which, after a few days, would, at the most, only show in their middle tiny specks of



DUCKS SWIMMING AND DIVING.

pale green not bigger than pin-heads, though after that, with two or three warm days and a few showers, those little green heads would have come poking out like

little mice from their holes, showing their green ears, so to compare them; and they would have been the first tiny leaves, so little that you might have put a hundred of them in a teaspoon. Now look at them; they are broad and green, and you can see where the May-buds are coming, which, when fully blown, will fill all the air with the sweet smell of May; and, when the blossoms have fallen, we shall find the green hawthorn berries, which will be red and sweet by the end of Summer, and such food as many birds like, and country children also; for they are then called haws, while the red berries of the sweet wild-roses are named heps, and very sweet they both are when fully ripe.

How clean and happy those ducks look — swimming about in that clear water; and, were we to come here a month or two later in the season, we should see a brood of little ducklings, no bigger than your hand, swimming about

after their mother ; for no sooner do they come out of the eggs, than they are able to swim. See, one is diving ; you can just see its tail, sticking out of the water ; and there are some ducks called divers, who will go under the water close to where you are standing, and keep on swimming beneath it for so long a time, without coming up again, that you feel afraid they are drowned, unless you see them rising up once more a long way off, often as far as from the one nearest you in the picture to where you see the dark green rushes, close to the end of the little cottage. Sometimes they bury their heads among their feathers, and go to sleep on the water ; and, if you watch, you will see them blown along by the wind, without once waking, and seeming to have no more life in them than if they were pieces of cork afloat on the water. You will only find wild ducks in lonely places, where the water-courses are hemmed in with tall water-flags, reeds, and

great black bulrushes, which grow higher than a tall man ; and not often even in these lonely places, except in Winter, for they leave us in Spring.

There is one water-fowl called the bald-coot, that builds its nest so close to the river side as to get it washed away sometimes, when the water rises a little higher than common. This has happened when there have been young ones in the nest, and they have gone sailing down the river with the old bird swimming beside them, and without coming to any harm : for, when she saw a safe place, she came up and, pushing the nest before her, got it into a little spot by the bank, where there was shelter ; and the little ones, which were asleep all the time, never knew what a long ride they had had on the river, past where the willows waved and dipped down into the water, round the old stone jetty, where the great pike lies in wait for his prey, and would have gobbled them up one after

the other, as you would have eaten half-a-dozen cherries, had they not been floating safe inside their nest.

But the prettiest sight is that of a little black water-hen, swimming about in some quiet shady pool, with all her young ones paddling beside her—such mites of things to swim as you never saw, and you wonder how they have the strength to do it. Only throw a stone in the water, within a couple of yards of them, and they are all out of sight in a moment, as quick as lightning, and you cannot tell where they are hidden. Then hide behind some bush or sedge, and, in a few minutes, you will see the little black mother come out by herself, and, after swimming round to see that the coast is clear, she will go sailing in again among the sedge and rushes, and out will come all her little family once more to enjoy themselves in a swim.

Do you hear what a noise the fowls are making in that farmyard? I can



FEEDING POULTRY.

tell by the sound that some one is about to feed them, as they are calling to one another to make haste for fear they should be too late. Let us peep over

the farmyard fence. Look, there they are, just as I said, all running up as fast as they can hurry, for the food the woman has brought them in her apron. You do not see any little chickens, they are kept apart in pens, for the big fowls would peck at and frighten them if they got amongst them while feeding, then their mother would stick up her feathers, and fly at any of the fowls that dared to touch her chickens, and not a cock or hen would be able to eat its meal in peace amid such a quarrel, though they are now so quiet. I dare say there are a good many hens' nests and plenty of eggs in those sheds, and stables, and barns, which we see, and that just before market-day, they will be placed in a basket, and carried away to be sold, unless customers come to the farm to buy them before that time, as the little girls do, whom the farmer's daughter will serve, often taking the eggs fresh out of the hen's nest for them. I

have no doubt that is the cock we heard crowing, while we were looking at the ducks; for when the air is still a cock may be heard to crow almost a mile off, and he will hear the one that answers, though we cannot if we listen, which shows that a cock can hear much better than we can; and this has been proved by a person going some two or three hundred yards nearer to the cock that made answer, so that both could be heard while standing midway between them, but not without. Did you notice the sparrows perched about the palings? they would have come up and stolen the food from the fowls if the woman had not been present, and they are so quick in their actions, that before the fowls could give them a cuff of the neck, they would have hopped out of the way, and eaten what they had stolen, then come up close for more. The sparrow, like the mouse, follows us go where we may; if the mouse has its nest in the cellar,

the sparrow makes his over our heads under the tiles or thatch ; and the greatest harm he does is in winter when he will join in with a whole army of sparrows, and they will set to, and tear the thatch of a corn stack, letting in the snow and rain which rots and spoils the whole of the corn the wet reaches, so destroys a thousand times more than what the birds have eaten. If we were on the other side of the farmyard we should see the pretty pigeons about the dove cote, or standing in a row on the barn ; and it would please you very much to stand and watch their graceful motions, for some of them go strutting about as if all the world was theirs, they seem so proud of their beauty. What a pretty sight it is to see them settle down on some young girl they are fond of, when she comes out to feed them, and many are so tame that they will take food from out the mouths of those they know.

The country is never more full of beauty than it is when all our long miles of hedges are hung with the blossoms of May, and, walk as far you will, the whole air is filled with its sweetness, and not a breath of wind blows but what carries with it the smell of May-buds. And the sweet smell, and the beauty of the bloom, which makes all the land light along the hedges, sets the pretty birds singing; and you fancy, while you listen, that in their songs they say, "Oh, how sweet, how very, very sweet, is the smell of May!" And, though we cannot tell, we feel sure that there must be something in England that causes so many sweet little singing birds to come back, across the windy sea every Spring, to visit us: and what is it more likely to be than the sweet scent, and the lovely blossoms that cover all our old hawthorn hedges. Where else could they find anything half so sweet or pretty, to build their nest or rear their young ones, as

amid the green leaves and silver-looking blossoms of May. And nowhere in the wide world beside are there to be seen such lovely fields as ours—no grass anywhere so green, and bright, and smooth. Those who have been in countries far away, over the wide seas, tell us it is so; and that the cause of England being so green and beautiful is the sea, that is for ever rolling all round our island shore, and causing those gentle showers so often to fall on the grass, and keep it ever fresh, smooth, and green, as we see it now.

What a pretty green lane this is, leading as it does to nowhere but fields which lie on each side of it, and when you get to the end, you must cross a stile, and go along pleasant footpaths for a mile or two over green meadows before you come to any road, and that will be at the gate of a great farmhouse, unless you go miles round to reach it. Would you not like to have a little cottage and

live in this sweet still green lane all through the spring and summer, watching the flowers that come and go, month after month, for as the first ones die off they are followed by others of a new form and colour. Would it not be pleasant to hide behind these hedges and watch the birds as they feed on the seeds of the grass and other things, and to see the great gaudy butterflies, and dragon-flies resting on the flowers; and notice the habits of the little insects, about whose ways we know next to nothing. How nice it would be if we could make ourselves little enough, then come out again the size we are, to creep into their holes and see their nests and eggs, and watch while they nursed and fed their young ones before putting them to bed, and see them all as clearly as we can bees at work in their hives, for some beehives have glass windows in them, through which the bees may be seen building their comb of wax, and storing



COTTAGE AND BEEHIVES.

up the honey they make, though these are only the common straw beehives which you see in the picture, where the maid is hanging out the clothes behind

the cottage. Were I to tell you how bees make the wax of which they build the cells, feed their young ones, and store up their honey, I should have to write quite a big book; and I am not sure that you would then know what I meant unless it was full of pictures, showing them at work with the queen bee in the hive. And I should have to tell you how the queen bees fight, and how some of the bees sting the others to death, and then you would not like them so well as I wish you to do, such hard workers as they are, often flying miles to gather honey from the sweet flowers from morning to night, with very little rest; how they have pockets, which they fill and empty when they reach their hives, and how clever they are in building pillars of wax to support the honey-combs, when they are too heavy and full of honey, to keep them from falling down; how these cells are built to save labour and wax, and how

man with all his knowledge could not do more than they do, or get so much room out of such little space. But to do this, I should have to use such long hard words that you would not be able to spell them nor know what they meant, so you must wait until you are bigger and able to read some of the books that have been written by wise authors about bees; and until then, you can sit and think about them while eating your bread and honey, as the Queen did, when sitting in the parlour, in that famous song about the "four-and-twenty blackbirds baked in a pie." But he was a very cruel King to have a pie made of such sweet singing birds; and I should not be sorry to hear that, when he ate it, one of the bones stuck in his throat, and that the Queen who made her dinner off bread and honey got it out with the tongs. But I hope it was not true, as the birds began to sing when the pie was opened, so perhaps it

was only the crust that was baked after all, and no harm done to the pretty blackbirds, for they stay with us all the year round, and often sing long before winter has passed away.

How quick the swallow flies ; going with such force as it does, one would think, if it chanced to run its head against anything that was hard, it would kill itself ; yet, at that speed, it sweeps down, just makes a dimple in the water and is up, and off again, far beyond the reach of the eye, in a second or two. In the country, it builds its nest under the eaves, and in the corners of the windows, and would keep on working if you stood inside, with your face close to the window-pane, watching it, as I have done many a time. It begins to build its nest almost before it is broad daylight ; and sometimes, in wet weather, after it has half-built it, the whole of its work will come down to the ground, and the poor bird will have to do it all over

again. That is caused by the mud or clay it uses not getting hard ; for the swallow has to work on it while wet, just as a bricklayer has to use wet mortar ; and he would find it hard to make a high wall of that alone, without bricks, in very wet weather, but this the bird has to do ; so no wonder its nest tumbles down at times, though it is very careful not to build too much up at a time. The swallow reckons about an inch to be a pretty fair day's work, and, when that is done, will leave it to set and harden until the next morning, when it begins again, and builds up about another inch, or not quite so much, as the nest is made broader, and takes double the quantity of wet clay to finish a row of work as it gets nearer the top. It has no trowel to work with, only its chin and breast, and keeps on moving its pretty head to and fro, as it smoothes and presses down the clay, holding fast all the time with its claws. When it



GREY HORSE DRINKING.

has done, it flies off to where there is water, such as where the grey horse is drinking, and has a wash, as all clean workmen have when they have done

their day's labour ; for there is not a cleaner bird flies than the swallow, and the least bit of dirt would show on its white feathers as much as it would on a little girl's white frock. While it does work, which is mostly three or four hours, it never idles, nor stops a moment to rest, for no sooner has it used up what little clay it brought in its beak, than it is off for more, and will make above sixty of these journies within the hour, if it can find the stuff to work on near to where it is building, though sometimes it has to fly a long way, for it cannot mix its mortar without water, and, as it cannot carry much of that at a time, it will go and plunge itself clean overhead in some ford or river, then shake itself over the dirt it wants to make wet, and then work it up until it will stick. It is a first-rate fly catcher, and many a time, while sitting very still by the river side, I have heard their beaks go snap, snap, snap, as fast as a

clock ticks, when they have been flying rather low, and I knew at every snap they had caught a fly. I don't think, though, they would catch a dragon fly quite so easy, as it can fly as well backwards as forwards without ever once having to turn round, flying quite as quick tail first as it does head first, so that, while the swallow was losing time in turning round, the dragon fly, would be making off backward, and then forward again as soon as the bird turned. But I must tell you, I never saw a swallow try to catch a dragon fly, though I have seen other birds do so, and catch many a little one, but never once a large one that was longer than your finger.

I thought, as the soil was moist near the water-course, we should find the wild bluebells somewhere about, and here they are, many of them full a foot high, and with nearly all their pretty bells open. Look what a many kinds of blue there are on the flowers—how light some

parts appear to what others are—light blue, dark blue, and patches deep enough to be called purple ; and see in what a pretty form the tops of the bells are cut, and how neatly some of the points fall and bend back. I dare say those old Greeks, whom we praise so much for making urns and vases, and such like things, copied the cup-shaped flowers they saw growing about Greece and then stuck handles on them ; for there are no forms that excel in beauty many of our bell-shaped flowers, as there are no eardrops that look so pretty as a bunch of red ripe currants ; try it, little maid, by tying a bunch to a loop, and slipping the loop over your ear ; you will never admire coral eardrops again, after you have seen how pretty it looks hanging down. Nor is there any wreath for the hair, or to put round your hat, so pretty as the ground convolvulus, which is pink and white, and has quite handsome leaves, and may often be found a yard

long, with a score of flowers growing within an inch or two of each other, and all on one long stem, not much thicker than wire : but they will not be found in flower until the middle of Summer.

What a sweet wild flower a cowslip is, and how pretty it is spotted inside ; then, there are such a many on one stem—sometimes more than twenty—and standing on such thick stems, which they need be to bear such a weight of flowers, when they are weighed down by the rain. Little country children pick the yellow flowers out of their sheaths, get a little hot water in a bottle, and beg a spoonful of sugar from their mother—or, if they are very wicked indeed, steal one out of the sugar-basin, when her back is turned—then shove in the cowslips, shake it well up, and, without ever taking out a licence, sell it for cowslip wine—a teaspoonful for a pin ; and when they have got a hundred pins or so, they try to persuade some old woman to give

them a halfpenny for the lot. So you see it does not take much to start them in business, when they gather their own cowslips, beg the bottle, borrow the spoon, help themselves to hot water, and steal the sugar, if they are very, very wicked indeed. It is true, if they sell the pins for a halfpenny, they had first to supply one hundred measures of wine before they could get the pins to sell for the money. They never open a shop.

“Cuckoo, cuckoo!” I thought we should hear it before the day was over. That cry prevents us from hearing the song of any other bird, unless it be those which are very near us, and yet it does not seem to be so very loud, though it can be heard nearly a mile off; and if you are close to, you will see its whole body move, as if it had to push hard to send out the cry of “cuckoo.” You should see how the birds chase it when it wants to lay its eggs in any of

their nests, for it will not build one for itself, but will watch ever so long, till some bird leaves its nest, then get into it and lay its eggs, no matter how little the bird may be that built it. Just fancy a poor little hedge-sparrow that has laid four or five eggs of its own, sitting on them, and hatching the cuckoo's egg at the same time, and then finding a great ugly naked young cuckoo three times the size of her own baby-birds, and eating six times as much at a meal if she will only give it him, and opening its great mouth, which is big enough to put her tiny head in every time she comes to feed her own young ones. I do not know how true it is, but I was told, when a boy, that the young cuckoo would wriggle about in the nest until he got one of the little birds on his back, when with a push of his big body he would send it out of the nest, where it would be sure to be eaten up by some ferret, or weasel, or something, perhaps



CAT IN THE DAIRY.

some cat, such as you here see, that has been lapping the cream in the dairy, and which will fly out of the open window, when it feels the stick.

And so the rascal would go on until he got rid of every young bird, and then a pretty life he led their poor mother, keeping her on the wing all day to feed him, and eating twice as much, if he could get it, as all her five young ones would have done, if they had been alive. More than once, I have seen the cuckoo pecked at, and chased by a score or two of birds, and a precious row they made as they all flew round him at once, though he did not seem to be in any hurry to go, nor to be much afraid of them; but I saw clear enough that, when he went close to one to give it a peck, it got out of his way quick enough. Oh how they did jaw the cuckoo, perhaps saying, "Get away you wretch, if you had any shame in you, which you hav'nt, you would never dare to show your grey face among a lot of honest hard-working birds, who build their own nests and feed their own young ones, and are not like you, you lazy good-for-nothing, who

will walk into any poor bird's house and leave your brat behind you for it to keep. You bad mother, you! where do you expect to go to? If you are not off pretty quick, there are forty of us will all peck at you at once, and have every feather off your back. Go to the country you came from over the sea, and never dare to show your ugly face again among a parcel of honest English birds like us."

Of course, I cannot say that these are the very words the birds utter, but I think if I were a bird, I should say something very like it, if the rogue of a cuckoo tried to lay one of its eggs in my nest, and to leave me one of its great ugly young ones to keep when I had enough to do to get food for my own children.

Some people say, that if they hear a score of birds all singing at once, they can tell the name of every bird by its song, without seeing even one of them. I was never clever enough to do that, though I do think I could name about a dozen

rightly through only hearing them sing, and spring is the best time to hear them, for all our singing-birds have come from over the sea by the end of April, and with those that stay with us all the year round, they number about thirty, and that is a pretty good muster for a band, when each one brings its own music, and no two instruments are alike that they play on. Perhaps they give a concert at times, and invite all the birds to come to it that cannot sing; who knows? One thing I am sure of, and that is, the singing-birds meet now and then in still green places, where no one is likely to disturb them, and while one sings the rest listen, and when the first has done the second begins, and so they go on until all have been heard. Then, perhaps they retire, and one tells the other what he thought of such a bird's singing, and perhaps they find a little fault sometimes with the birds that sing out of tune, saying, "Well, what did

you think of the linnet?" to which the other may answer: "Not much; didn't you notice those last three notes were all alike; the blackcap pleased me most, those low shakes were really very sweet; as to that young Mr. Bullfinch, he has too much conceit by half, and hardly knows his gamut:" and I dare say there is as much fuss made with the nightingale when he first comes over, as there used to be with Jenny Lind, and that the boughs are so crowded, the birds push each other off while trying to get a peep at her, or else each shows a green leaf as a ticket, then folds its wings and takes its place. And where is there a temple built by man that looks grander than a great wood, with its pillars of trees and roof of branches, through which is seen the blue curtain of the sky. Well may the birds sing in such places and fancy themselves little angels who have met there to sing the praise of their Maker, whose songs He accepts.



THE YOUNG ANGLER.

It is pleasant to walk beside some inland river, that falls into the sea, and see the young angler sitting under a tree, watching his red float ; for when that is

pulled under the water he knows a fish has got hold of his hook, and, giving a sharp pull, he has it out in a second, and pops it into his basket. Sometimes a fish gets hold of the bait, that is very strong, and when he pulls, it pulls too, and breaks his fish-line, then swims away with the hook in its mouth. You would think, after such an escape, it would be cautious, and never make a bite at a fish-hook any more ; but it does not do so, and perhaps, before he goes home, he may catch the very same fish, and find his hook in its mouth. And how often is it the case with us, when we have done something wrong, for which we suffer, that, while the pain lasts, we resolve never to do so again, yet go and do it almost before the pain has gone : but we are worse than a silly little fish, for, when it is tempted by the bait, it does not see the hook ; while we have sense enough to know when we are going to do wrong before we do it.

Some fish are very pretty, and have fins as yellow as gold, and scales as bright as silver; and it is not cruel to catch them in a net, put them at once into water, then carry them home, and leave them to swim about in a large glass globe, giving them such food as they like to eat, and changing the water very often, so that it may be as fresh and sweet as the stream they lived in before you brought them home. Those white swans go sailing past the young fisherman, and are not at all afraid of him; and very pretty they look moving about the water, and they do it so easy too, moving one foot now and then, so as to go slow or quick just as they please. You see the young angler knows how to fish, through sitting so far back that his shadow does not fall on the water, for, if it did, it would scare the fish, and they would swim away from him, instead of keeping round his red float, which does not frighten them.

I think it is much nicer to live in a pretty village, in summer, than it is to go to the sea side, because there are so many things to be seen in the country, which are not to be found in a sea-side town. Round a village, there are pleasant walks through the fields, all among the flowers, and birds singing, and bees buzzing about, and little insects in the air and among the grass ; and pretty white lambs bleating among the daisies, and dear little calves beside the cows, and long-legged foals running races, and leaves always in motion on the trees, as if they had nothing else to do all their lives but dance for joy. And it is so nice to have country brown bread, and sweet butter just churned, and cheese-cakes and custards made of eggs and cream ; and to have honey, and fruit fresh from the garden, where we have tea in the summer-house that stands beside the hedge, in which the birds build their nests, and where we can see the

young ones if we peep among the branches. Then we sleep so sound at night, after such long walks ; and, when we wake in the morning, we can hear the birds, and the lambs, and the cows ; and the cocks crowing, and the hens cackling, and all sorts of country sounds, that are so pleasant to the ear. And when we peep out of the chamber-window, we see the garden and orchard, and fields, and hills that are a long way off ; and the boy driving cattle to water, and the milkmaid with her milkpail on her head, and carts and horses moving about, and all the busy stir of village life. And when we walk down the village street, we can stop and see the wheelwright making a waggon, and watch him put the spokes in the wheel ; or look at the blacksmith shoeing a horse, while he holds its foot up between his knees, and drives the nails into its hoof without hurting it. Then we pass a farmhouse, with beehives and

roses before it, and clean milkpans put out to sweeten ; and see the old sheep-dog, sleeping at the gate in the sunshine ; and the pretty white cat, up in the apple-tree, half hidden among the leaves, where it is waiting to catch a bird. Then we can peep in at the dame-school and see Billy, who has been a bad boy, pinned to the old woman's gown-skirt ; and little Jack, with his thumb in his mouth, crying, because he was playing at marbles on the floor instead of minding his lesson, and the old dame has taken them from him, and is shaking her rod at him, and saying what she will do if he does not give over crying, which, if she does it, will make him cry louder than ever : yet the old woman is kind to them, and will, when they are very good, strew a little sugar on the dry brown bread they bring with them to school ; and all her charge is threepence a week, which includes teaching them manners, and that is, to make

a bow to her when they come in and when they leave school; and if they forget, which they often do, she shouts out, "Where's your manners, sir?"

Now the grass begins to seed, and must be mown to make hay to feed the cattle in Winter; and the sound you just now heard was made by the mower, with his rag-stone, as he whetted his scythe to make it sharp, and give it a rough edge, which is the best to cut grass. How hard he works—what long strokes he takes—what hundreds of blades of grass and pretty flowers he cuts down at every stroke he takes; and look how smooth and level the field is where he has mown it, and the grass is raked off.

It is very pleasant to go into the hay-field, and help to make hay, because the more you throw it about the better it is for it. It has to be turned over with hayforks, and well shaken and dried, before it is put into the waggon, which you



FARMER'S WAGGON.

see standing empty, to be carried away by horses and made into great haystacks like those you see standing up, with pointed tops, behind the cartshed in the

farmyard, where the woman in the other picture is feeding the cocks and hens. Though there are many hundreds of kinds of grass, there is only one that gives such a nice smell to new hay, and that is called the vernal grass, and very pretty it is.

Then, if the farmer is good-natured, he will only laugh when he sees you rolling in it, and throwing it over each other, covering up some dear sister or brother with hay, as the little Robins did the "Babes in the Wood" with leaves, until not so much as a hand or foot can be seen. There are some grumpy, cross old farmers, who will not let children play with the hay, but are as nice about it being handled as if they had to eat it—I wish they had; do not go into their hayfields, for they will not let you have a jolly romp, as if you could do any harm—such grumpys!

Though he does not do it on purpose, sometimes the mower, with his sharp

scythe, cuts off the head of some bird or pretty field-mouse, or something that is squatting and hiding in the grass, and afraid to move when it hears the scythe coming near it. I once picked up a corn-crake—such a handsome bird—with its head cut clean off in that way; and you do not know how sorry the mower was for what he had done, when I showed it him, though he could not help it.

Many a pretty little field-mouse and dormouse's nest is found in the field, after the grass is mown, often with the young ones in, that are quite blind, and have hardly any hair on them, and are not much longer than a pin. The nests of birds, too, that build on the ground, as a few do, are also found when the grass is cut down early in the season, as it is sometimes; also the nest of the ground-bee, and those of many strange insects that burrow in the earth, and of whose habits we know so little.

Now the roses are all in bloom, and throw out such a strong sweet smell after a shower, that the very wind seems weary as it moves along, under such a load of fragrance. The scarlet stocks are also in flower; and it must bother the bees to know which to go to for honey, so many blooms as there are to choose from: and the great woodbines, which are also called honey-suckle, now put out their blossoms, streaked with red, white, and yellow, and as long as your fingers; and, when you smell their perfume, you think nothing is half so pleasant, except it be the sweet-briar. In our walks we find the tall crimson foxglove, all speckled inside, and looking amid the green as if there was a fire, while many of them rise up so close that they touch each other. Beside the water-courses we see the blue forget-me-not, which is so pretty a name, and such a dear little flower, that we take it home and give it to those we love, hoping they will never

forget the giver; and there is no wild flower to compare with it for beauty, unless it be the pretty scarlet pim-per-nel, which grows by the wayside in places, and is no taller than the white star-shaped chickweed.

That old gar-den-er, who is going home to his little cottage, with the basket and rake over his shoulder, could, if he liked, tell us a good deal about the insects he turns up with his spade, while digging the ground: of some that he finds which are great grubs, as long as your finger, and turn to beetles; and others that waken up out of the earth, and open their great wings and fly about; also the tiny ants, that make a nest in which hundreds live, and seem never at rest except in winter, so busy are they in arranging their eggs, and feeding their young; they are such clever little things that they can make an arched passage on the hard, level gravel walk, with only grains of sand, and along which they can



THE OLD GARDENER.

safely walk in and out, without knocking down one single grain ; though, were you to kneel and blow hard with your breath, you would make a great gap

through it as wide as this book, and not leave a mite of the tunnel standing in the middle of the pathway. That old gar-den-er could also tell us of insects that attack the goose-ber-ry and currant-bushes, while they are in flower, and spin webs over the little green berries, which cause them to drop off and never become ripe ; of the green fly, that spoils so many roses ; of the jumping thrip and the cuckoo-spit, which, when full grown, is about as long as your nail, and looks like a little tiny frog though it is a rare fellow to leap, and could, at one bound, spring clean across the table : he could tell us how one insect lays its eggs in the nest of another, so that, when its young come to life, they feed upon those which were the first to occupy the nests ; and they, in turn, are eaten by others, which also are at last picked up by the birds, and so on to the end ; for many of the birds are served up as food on our tables.

It must make the birds very happy to fly about and stand pecking among so many sweet flowers ; and to show them to their young ones, which, by this time, are able to fly, though not very far at a time without resting ; and you may always tell a young bird from an old one through its flying so short a distance at a time. But many of our sweet singing birds will soon leave us, and fly to some country over the sea, where it will be Summer when the cold Autumn winds are blowing through the hedges in which they built their nest. For the corn is now in ear, and will soon be ripe enough for the reapers to go out with their crooked sickles to cut it down, and gather in the harvest.

And where the forget-me-nots grow beside the long lake-like pond, you will also find the water-lily. When first the water-lily shows itself among the leaves before it opens, it looks like an egg in a green nest ; then as it gets larger you

might fancy it was a bird sitting among the green leaves in the middle of the water, but when it fully expands you see a great grand white flower, as large as a saucer sometimes, and you wonder how it came there, and could almost believe that some water fairy, who was hidden beneath, was holding it up in her hands. If you could look beyond the trees, you would see men and boys busy sheep-washing, which is always done before they clip off the fleece, to make the wool clean, and this is called sheep-shearing. Sheep are good swimmers, and so you would say, if you saw the men take hold of them, and push them about in the water, for no sooner do they take their hands off, than the sheep swims to the bank, where it stands bleating, while the water makes quite a pool on the ground as it drips from the wool ; then she sees her lambs, and they run up to her and bleat so sadly, seeming to say, " What ever have they been doing to our poor

dear old mother, why bless my heart alive, she's as wet as sop, and I do believe the brutes have been trying to drown her. Come, cheer up, old girl! and have a run with us in the sunshine, and you'll be all the better for it, for I see now, they've only been washing you, and I am glad of it, for to tell you the truth, you was'nt a bit too clean, but smelt rather strong, and I always caught a lot of sheep-ticks after sleeping beside you, and I hope they are all drowned, for they are nasty things to bite; and I should have asked the shepherd to have rubbed you well over with sheep-salve if you had'nt had this ducking instead; but come along, old girl, and have a run in the sunshine, and you'll soon be dry." And the old sheep says "baa, baa, baa," which means, "Well, my son, I don't mind if I do." But if it makes the lambs stare again to see the old ewe after she has been washed, you may guess how wide they open their eyes in wonder

when they see she has had all the wool clipped off her, and no marvel that, in their way, they exclaim, "Well, I never! why, mother, what a guy they have made of you. They have even taken off the old flannel petticoat that used to reach to your heels, and hardly left a bit of anything on your back. What a shame to strip you in the way they have done, when the days will soon begin to draw in, and the nights to get cold, and you'll want an extra blanket to keep you warm. I wonder how they would like to be nearly stripped to the skin, then left to sleep on the cold ground. You had a nasty cough after that ducking, mother, and I should'nt at all wonder if you have the ague now." And it does seem hard, yet there is no other way of getting woollen clothes in winter to keep us warm, any more than there is of getting mutton chops, without causing sheep to suffer. Then, by next year, the wool will have grown so much, that the sheep

will have to be sheared again, and it very often happens, that when their fleeces are so long, they get tangled among the brambles and thorns, and cannot get clear unless some one helps them, or they lose great handfuls of wool in struggling to free themselves. When a boy, I went to a sheep-shearing feast, at a farmhouse, and they gave all us boys fur-men-ty in brown por-rin-gers, and a wooden spoon each; it was made of boiled wheat, spice, sugar, and new milk, and though it was very nice, you could not eat much of it, for you felt after, as if you had eaten rather too freely of small gravel, so heavv was the boiled wheat.

Look at that poor ass, which his master has tied by the leg, instead of leaving him free to have the whole range of the common! There seems to be only a few thistles within his reach, and though he likes such prickly food, he would prefer freedom with it, instead of



THE PATIENT ASS.

being tied up as he is. What patience there is in his poor face, what a gentle look in his eyes, and I like him all the more because mention is made of him

in the pages of our Holy Bible, as you all know. He knows as well as a child does, when he is spoken to gently and treated kindly, and will prick up his ears and trot on as fast as he can, sooner through a few kind words than he will from cruel blows. Some worthy people are called asses, because they do more than their duty, and save the idle from work, and take trouble upon themselves for the sake of others, who do not deserve such kindness; and I would rather be such an ass than one of those who called me so, after I had done all the good I could for him; for the feeling that we have done our duty is better than thanks from those whose praise comes only from the lips, instead of the heart. I once heard of a youth, who, thinking to do something very clever, took up an ass's little foal in his arms, and laid it at the feet of a young lady who had just come from the sea side, saying, as he did so, "A present from

Margate." The young lady looked very archly at him, stroked the head of the pretty foal, and said : " Yes, I see it is ; and bears the well-known motto of —

“ ‘ When this you see,
Remember me. ’ ”

Which was very like saying, she could not look at that ass without thinking it was like the youth who brought it to her, and re-mind-ed her of him. I do not think he ever came with a “ present from Margate ” to that witty young lady again—not even with a little monkey, for fear of the old well-known motto.

Once I found a hedgehog rolled up tight in a ball, and carried it home, and kept it for many months, feeding it on bread and milk, and leaving it to pick up what it liked best, and that was black beetles, which it found in the coal cupboard. If he shuts himself up in a tight ball, you may roll him about the floor, and throw him across the room, and he will not open himself do all you can.

I was once trying to make him show himself, and threw him, by chance, into a pail of water, that made him show his nose pretty quick, I can tell you ; though it did him no harm, I think it made him sneeze again.

I used to pass the corner of a rabbit warren, and if I went up very softly to the bank, in which they had made large holes to their nests, and gave a loud whistle or a shout, scores of little rabbits that were about would come full gallop, and run into their burrows so quick, that you hardly caught sight of them as they stuck up their short white tails, and went helter-skelter into their holes : and sometimes I used to see young hares playing about, such pretty little brown things as you would have loved to have kept as pets ; as I once kept two of them, until they grew big ones, when they made a pie of one and jugged the other. Was it not very cruel, after they had got used to me ? But the pie was very nice—so

full of rich gravy ; and though, I dare say, I cried while eating it, I was more sorry when it was all gone.

And have you never found, my dears, while grieving over some trifling matter which really did not merit a tear, that if you have a rich rasp-berry tart in your little hand, you have not yet bitten a piece out of, that the thought of how nice it will eat turns aside the torrent of your grief—diverts the mind, so to speak, from the trouble to the tart, and from the tart to the trouble, until the first bite is made, when your whole mind is at once filled up with the pleasure of the repast, and you dry your pretty eyes, and wonder whether there is any more tart to be had or not ? And this is what wise and learned people call Phi-lo-so-phy, a rather hard word, meaning that no trouble can be found too great to prevent us from minding our tart, if we have got one ; and, if we have not, it will cheer us amid our grief to think that we may have one soon.



NUTTING, AND BLACK-BERRYING.

What famous places some of those old commons are for black-berries, where the poor people have the right of turning in their asses, cows, and horses to

feed. No one ever thinks of stubbing up the brambles on a wild free common, and so they are left to grow and spread year after year, becoming so broad, and getting matted so closely, that you cannot reach anything like halfway across them to get at the bramble-berries, which hang so black and tempting in the middle, so sharp are the hooked thorns. I have seen wild places in England, where, if they would have borne the weight, two waggons might have been driven side by side over the bramble-bushes that spread so wide, and were so close, as to form a solid hedge as broad as a large dining-room ; nor could I, by any means, reach the large ripe berries in the midst of that immense space. Some few of the longest branches might be hooked out with a stick, but there were others you could not reach at all ; and once a boy went with me, and we got two peck-baskets full of black-berries in one after-noon, and a pretty job we

had to carry so heavy a weight home, for each basket-ful weighed a many pounds. It was said that the place in which we got them had never been ploughed nor dug, nor grown anything but what was wild, and came up of itself, since the world began, and it looked as if it had not, it was so savage and wild all over.

There never was such a spot for badgers, foxes, ferrets, stoats, weasels, and wild cats as that, for there was nobody either to shoot or trap them; nor was there a hare or rabbit to be found within five miles of the place. If the hunter chased a fox, and it once got there, the hounds were whipped off the scent, so thick and close were the hazels, brambles, and gorse-bushes; and it is well known that a fox can find a way into a hole too small to admit a fox-hound. There were also snakes and adders; and I once saw a black adder a poacher had killed there a yard long. The

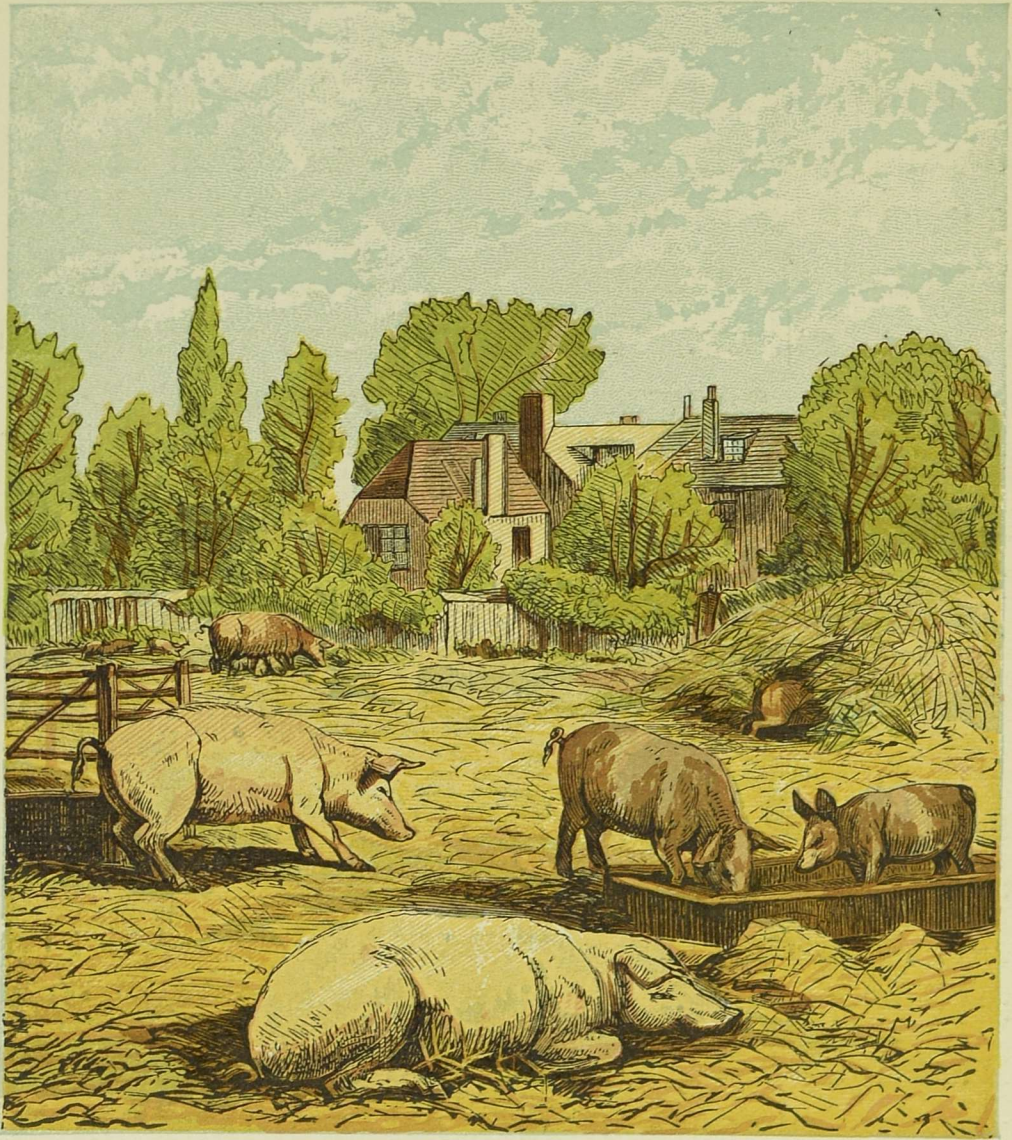
adder is the only ve-nom-ous reptile to be found in England. Snakes are as harmless as eels, so are toads and newts. The adder has a deadly poison in its fangs, but there are very few to be found now. As for a snake or a toad, they are as harmless as a pretty little kitten, and there is no more venom in them than there is in a ripe sound cherry, and those who tell you there is, know nothing at all about them. I do, and tell you a truth, now well known, that there is no venom in either a snake, toad, newt, or frog. When you are a little older, read Bell's "History of British Reptiles," and you will never be afraid of any one of them any more; too many people hear things, repeat, and believe them, and never once try to prove whether they are true or not. Servants often do so, and frighten children. They say, "blind as a mole," when it can see as well as either you or I; and that the ant "lays up store for the Winter," when it

sleeps all the time, and never once eats nor wakes again until late in the coming Spring.

Owls made their nests in the old hollow trees, that grew here and there in this wild-looking spot ; and great broad-winged hawks built in the branches, and looked down upon the aged crabtrees, and sloe and bullace bushes, which, at the close of Autumn, were quite black with the ripe wild plums that hung on them. No apples you ever saw had a more tempting look than those wild crabs at this season ; they seemed so yellow and ripe, and were so richly tinged with red on the sides that caught the sun ; but only bite one, and it would make you screw your mouth up, I can tell you, for no vinegar or lemon that you ever tasted were ever half so sour as those crabs, that seemed so much like sweet ripe apples. Then there were smooth open spaces, where the turf was as soft as a carpet, with patches of purple

heath further on, and great beds of fern, on the edges of which grew thousands of harebells, that only flower at the close of Summer. Beyond these, we came, here and there, upon a wild growth of all kinds of shrubs and trees, which there was no passing through—thorns and brambles, hazels and hollies, with trailing ivy and woodbine—all closing round some huge old oak that stood up like a giant above the close thicket that hemmed it in. Beside these, there were acres of moist ground, facing the south, that in Spring-time were blue and yellow, and green and white, with bluebells, primroses, and lillies-of-the-valley; and this we used to call the Druid's Garden, and try to fancy that some old Druid lived there many hundreds of years ago, and walked about among those lovely flowers; for we could not think there ever was a time when they did not grow there, without any other help than that of the sunshine and the gentle rain.

Those great hogs, that were left to pick up what they could in the cornfields after harvest, are now, as we see them, put into the straw yard to be fatted up against Christmas, and cured for next year's bacon. But for them, we should have no hams, nor rich mince or pork pies, spare-ribs, or sausages, nor none of that rich bacon which is so nice with roast veal and boiled fowls, nor yet that white lard which makes such flaky pie-crusts and short cakes. And who is there, that ever sat down to a dinner of ham and green peas that did not think a pig was a very nice thing when not too fat. Many a poor family rarely taste any other meat, and as it does not take much to keep a pig, and they can grow plenty of cabbages and potatoes in a very little bit of garden ground, they sit down and give thanks for so good a meal, and treat the pig kindly, and look at him with loving eyes, though thinking how many stone he will weigh,



HOGS IN THE STRAWYARD.

and about eating him all up after he is killed. Some people make pets of little pigs, and let them come into the house to be fed, and I have heard of one old

lady, who, when a very little pig was given her to pet, sent it back with her love, and would they be good enough to keep it until just before Christmas, then she should be much obliged to them, and would have it killed, and cured, and hung up for bacon. Still I like to see them in the country, in Autumn, feeding on the acorns that have fallen from the great oak-trees, and which they seem to be very fond of; but were any one to give me a nice little sucking pig, instead of making a pet of it, I should have it stuffed and roasted, and placed on my table along with plenty of apple-sauce and mealy potatoes, for it is my belief that pigs were sent to us to be eaten, even up to their very tails, and country people say that there is not a bit anywhere about them but what is good. When you think of the trouble the little Old Woman had who went to market to buy a pig, before she got home, to get supper ready for her good man, I am

sure you will say that it would have tried your patience sorely ; had it been yours, and if the stick had not banged the dog, and the dog laid hold of the pig by the ear, I think the old man would have gone to bed without his supper that night. I have heard say, that a pig will run up nine streets at one time if it has the chance, sooner than go the way the pig-driver wants it, but I never could see very clearly how it could run up so many streets at once—can you ?

See—in yonder field—Harvest has begun ! There the reapers are hard at work cutting down the ripe corn with their sharp crooked sickles. Were we a little nearer, we could hear the hard brown ears of wheat rattle together as the reaper presses them down, and cuts them off about a foot above the ground ; after which he binds them into sheaves, each sheaf about as thick as you could clasp in both your arms ; after that, the sheaves are piled into shocks, the stubble

end resting on the ground, and the corn standing up higher than your head, one leaning against the other, with an opening at the bottom for the air to pass through the shock, and dry the sheaves. The last thing is the waggon, that comes to carry them away to be piled into a large cornstack, that contains many hundreds of sheaves ; and, when that is well thatched over, the Harvest is gathered in. Then the poor gleaners come into the field, to pick up the ears of corn which the reapers have let fall ; and many a poor woman and her children glean enough to supply them in bread half through the Winter.

When a little boy, I was a gleaner, and went into the cornfield with a large pocket before me, and a pair of scissors hanging from a string by my side ; and when I had gleaned a handful of corn, I cut the straw off to within two or three inches of the great brown ripe ears, and rammed the ears well down into the

pocket. When that was full, I went under the hedge, where my dinner-basket was standing, and where I had placed a large coarse bag—bigger than a pillow-case—and into it I emptied my pocket of corn, cramming it hard down; then I began to glean again, filling the pocket and emptying it into the bag, until it was nearly night, when I went home, having gleaned as much corn as I could carry on my head; and very tired I was, after such a long, hard day's work, for I was but a very little boy, and began to glean at five in the morning, after walking above two miles. Then my legs and hands were very sore, through moving among the hard sharp stubble which the reapers left standing, about a foot high, after they had cut down the corn; and which was almost as hard and sharp as a field of iron-skewers, all standing with their points up, and their heads fast in the earth. And as poor little boys only wore stockings in Winter, and as

you could not pick the ears of corn up with gloves on had you worn them, you may be sure it was sharp work moving your feet through, and putting your hands into those keen, hard straw stubs, which, in some places, were as close as they could stick.

Then, after gleaning-time was over, we beat out the corn on the floor with a stick ; and, when that was done, carried it in a sack to some field, and, spreading a sheet on the ground, took a basin of corn and chaff out of the sack, and, holding it up as high as we could, let it fall gently on the sheet, while the wind blew all the chaff away over the fields, as it did the thistle-down when it was ripe ; and when we had done, only the clean, bright brown grains of corn were left, which we again carried home in the sack. Then we had to take it to the mill to be ground, and the miller was a great thief, and kept about a quarter of it for what he called toll, and

made us pay him beside in money ; but one day the wind blew his mill-sails down, and all the people said it served him right for taking twice as much toll as he ought to have done ; and, by so doing, robbing the poor gleaners who had picked it all up an ear at a time. Still it was very pleasant to eat the sweet bread which you had got through your own hard labour, and which nobody had worked for to feed you with, though you was but a very little boy ; and I often think those little girls and boys are the happiest who help their parents to support them, and never eat the bread of i-dle-ness.

What a many things I saw while walking to the cornfield in the early morning, and re-turn-ing at night ; and during the dinner hour, when I went where I pleased, and peeped about under the hedges, and into all kinds of holes and corners. There I first saw the great stag-beetle, that made me jump

again, as it came up with its horns erect, and, if you have never seen it, you would not believe there was a beetle alive in England half its size. I also found the nest of the little harvest-mouse, built close under the ears of standing corn; and it is so little and so light, that it runs up one of the straws on which the corn grows to get to its nest, which is not bigger than a cricket-ball. It is the smallest animal in the world, and not a bit bigger than those large black bees you see flying about so near the ground; and in that tiny nest, which a big boy could shut up in his hand so that you could not see a bit of it, it lives, often with eight or ten young ones; and if you once saw its nest, and little ones in it, you would never again wonder how the little old woman and her children lived in a shoe; because, you see, it might have been one of the old shoes some of those great giants had thrown away, who used to go out to thief, and

carry home a couple of bullocks over each shoulder, and a dozen sheep and pigs under each arm ; and a giant who could do that, must have worn a shoe big enough for a very little old woman to have lived in.

But the greatest treat of all was to go into the orchard, and help to gather the last of the ripe fruit, to be stored up for winter use, as it is in some large farm-houses, where they have great apple-bins or chests, as long as a bed, and so deep that a little boy or girl might stand upright in the inside. Into these the fruit is placed in layers, on straw ; it must all be sound and dry, not any wind-falls among it, because the bruises would soon decay, and one apple would rot another. And what can be nicer than a ripe Ripston Pippin, that has been kept until the middle of Winter, to eat after dinner. Plums and mellow pears cannot be kept long ; but there are some hardy apples, which keep sound and

good until Spring. How nice it is to have as much ripe fruit as you wish to eat ; and then a swing put up between two of the large old apple-trees, and to play there, and ride in the swing, when, if you happen to fall out, it hurts you no more than it does the mellow fruit, such a soft carpet of grass is spread under the trees to catch all the wind blows down. And some of the old orchard-trees bear such heavy loads of fruit that the branches would break down with the weight, were it not for the strong props placed under them ; for the cat's-head apples are as big as the head of a large cat, and it only takes one to make a good-sized apple-dumpling. Then the plums, do they not make one's mouth water only to think of them ? Oh, those golden-drops and green-gages ! that taste like honey, and rasp-berry, and red currant jelly all mixed, only much nicer, because they are so cool ; and you have only to put them in your mouth and just

shut it, to find nothing but the stone left; for they know how nice they are, and what pleasure the flavour gives you, so hurry down your little "red-lane," as old nurses call your pretty throats, as if they knew that was what they had grown for. What long ladders it takes to reach the fruit that grows at the top of the highest trees! It makes you feel dizzy to go up one, if you look down, though it does not if you only keep looking up or straight before you, and not thinking about how high you are.

The grapes are now also ripe, if there has been a frosty night or two; and those you see the boy gathering in the picture, and giving to the little girl who holds open her pinafore, are the Black Hambro', which are not so soon ripe as the Sweet Water, which are yellow. The elder-berries that make such nice wine, have been gathered some time, and very nice it is on a cold night about Christmas, when you have been paying



GATHERING GRAPES.

a visit, to have a glass of it hot, with a rusk, before going home ; it makes you feel quite as warm, while walking in the frost, as an extra cloak would. It is too

soon yet, to gather the wild sloes and bullace, as they require a few sharp frosts to ripen them, before they are fit for pies and puddings.

Many things now tell us the Summer is over ; there are not so many leaves on the trees as there were, and those that we see are of a paler green, or turning yellow and red, which is called the fading of the leaf ; and, after that, they will fall off, for they will be pushed out of their places by the young buds which are beginning to swell under them, and will be the new leaves that we shall see next Spring. Instead of flowers, we now see the ripe seed vessels ; and along the hedges many kinds of berries, which, though now green, will change to purple and scarlet ; and it is not safe to eat any of them, except the haws and haws, black-berries, sloes, and bullace, for they are filled with poison, though they look so tempting to the eye, and a great many people have died through eating them.

There are fewer flowers than there were, and what there are vary greatly from those we saw early in Summer, and are harder, and better able to bear the cold nights which we now feel ; neither do you hear so many birds sing, for many have left us, and gone over the sea to warm countries, and they will not come back again until Spring. There are not half the number of insects flying about and settling on the grass, the leaves, and the flowers, as were to be seen only a month or so ago ; and these are more signs that Summer is over, and that Autumn, with its mists and fogs, and cold, damp, long nights is very near, and that those evening hours, which it was so pleasant to walk out in after the heat of the day was over, will have to be spent indoors beside the cheerful fire, where we can sit and look at the ruddy glow on the hearth, instead of the golden sunset, which we so often watched at the same hour. The flocks and herds which

we still see in the fields, eating the second crop of grass, which has grown up since the fields were mown, and the hay got off, and made up into great haystacks, which will soon be required for food, and be brought to them, or they will be driven into the sheds and straw-yards, and the sheep into the folds.

But there is still one more harvest to gather in, and that is the hops ; and, if you have never seen a hop garden, you have missed a very pleasant sight, and will find it unlike any other garden you ever walked in, it is so clean, and the hops grow so tall up the straight long poles round which they twine ; and the hop-leaves are quite as pretty as those of the vine, while the hops, when ready, are of a rich yellow green, and throw out such a strong pleasant smell as makes you feel sleepy if you stay very long amongst them. It is nearly the last out-of-door work that poor women and children can find to do, for any one

can pull the hops off the vines, and put them into the hop-pockets, from whence they are taken to the kiln to be dried. The hop-pickers very often camp out in the grounds, and lead quite a gipsy life, cooking their meals in the open air, and seeming to enjoy it very much, as others do, who go "hopping," as it is called, merely for the pleasure of the thing, as boys and girls go out to make hay, for the fun they have in the hayfield, as you all know. And when the weather is very fine in Autumn it is more pleasant to walk out in than any other season of the year, as it is not so hot as in Summer, nor so cold as it is in Spring, and this is why it is so. The earth is cold in Spring, after the long Winter, and warm in Autumn after the hot Summer, and this makes it so pleasant.

And now the dear little black and white swallows are drawing closer, and making ready to leave us. In some places, they may be seen in thousands, among reeds,

and in osier-paths, beside rivers, where they keep up a constant twitter from morning to night, while every hour of the day fresh ones come to join them. You might almost fancy that you heard those who are waiting, chiding the late comers, and that there was something almost angry in their twitter while they said, "How is it you are so late, we've been waiting these two days for you, and should have been half way over the sea by this time, but for the promise we made to wait for you. Don't tell us about your young ones not being strong enough for the journey; you should let them take plenty of exercise, as other mothers do. Why, I made my little Bill and Sall, start off for a fifty-mile fly, every morning as soon as it was light, and wouldn't let them have a mite of breakfast until they had done it. How did I know they flew fifty miles and back before breakfast? Why I made their old father jump on the top of a train that

went out the day before, and told them where he would be waiting to see that they did the whole distance. He used to fly back with them, and I waited breakfast until they came. Here come our old friends from the Lakes, and as the wind is in our favour, we shall start soon after midnight." And so they do, for it is very seldom anybody sees them depart, though where there were thousands seen the night before, not a single swallow can be found within miles of the same spot next morning. But they will return to us in Spring, and pleasant it is to hear their low sweet twitter, after the long, cold, dark nights of Winter.

Beside the swallows, no end of seeds leave the stems, on which they hung as flowers, and fly away; you have only to take up a head of groundsel, or a thistle, and blow or shake it, to send the seeds floating through the air, when, after flying a long distance and sometimes a

great height, they will settle down, and many of them take root in the ground where they fall, and flower again the next year. You will also see those pretty wheel-shaped spider-webs hanging across narrow paths from the hedges or bushes, or anything that is raised a foot or two from the ground, and these will cling to your hats, and get round your faces, unless you take something in your hand to clear the way before you. It is that sticky stuff in the webs which is so hard to undo, that holds the flies so fast when they strike against them, and but for that, the spiders could not catch them. When you look close at these pretty webs of net work, and think that the poor spider has to spin his own silk, and make one of these nets, then sit in it quite still until a fly comes before he can have any breakfast, I am sure, instead of calling him a nasty ugly thing, you will think he is a very clever fellow, and can do a deal more than you can.

As to the flies, did they not spoil that nice cold fillet of veal ma was going to mince? You never knew a spider do such a thing; and I can tell you, if he had caught those blue-bottles before they got into the safe, they would never have fly-blown that veal. So, you see, a spider is as useful in clearing the place of flies as a cat is, where a house swarms with mice, that nibble at all they can get at.

The bee has to fly a long way now to gather honey to what he had to fly a few months ago, and I fancy he grumbles a good deal more than he did over his work, saying to himself, "I don't like going back to the hive without a good load, and I thought our Queen-bee looked rather black at me last time for having been so long away; though I am sure, if she would only come out of the hive, and look about, she would see what a few flowers there are in which honey is to be found, and what a distance they lie apart. In Summer, I had only to fly

over the hedge and alight in the first field I came to, where there was sure to be a little clover, and I could get a load, and have a bit of a nap in the clover flowers, and be back so soon, that she would say, 'Well done, you are a good bee, and have been so quick, we shall soon have our combs full of honey, if you work like that.' And now, when I go back, if she speaks to me, it is only to say, as she watches me empty it out: 'Humph! is that all, after having been out so long? I must not lay so many eggs, if you can't do better than that, for fear there shouldn't be honey enough for the young bees to eat.' And it is not very pleasant to be grumbled at like that, when you do your best; and if she keeps going on in that way, the next time a swarm leaves the hive, I'll join it, and try to find a fresh Queen." Now I do not think that Queen-bee would grumble at him, if he went about his work with more of a goodwill, instead

of mur-mur-ing as he does ; for she has sharp ears, and if she cannot hear all he says, some of her servants can, and they are sure to tell her, if it only be in the hope of getting into her favour ; and, though she hates all tale-bearers, she is forced to listen to all that is going on, like other Queens.

Look at those geese among the stubble, from out of which all the corn-sheaves have been carted off ; they will be taken to market, and sold as stubble-fed geese, through having got fat on the corn they found amongst the stubble ; and I have no doubt the owner would not let the poor people glean in his corn-field, for fear they should pick up the fallen ears he wanted to give his geese. It would have looked a deal better of him, to have turned his geese out on the village common, where the five fat turkeys are, as you see them in the picture, and have left the poor to glean the corn ; and if they had not found so much



TURKEYS ON THE COMMON.

to eat, they would have had the pond to swim in, which is behind the trees.

Do you know that we have, in England, a wild bird quite as good to eat,

and as big as a turkey, and that is the Great Bustard, though he is more scarce now than he used to be. Sometimes he has been found to weigh as much as thirty pounds; and you know there are but few prize turkeys that weigh as much after they have been made fat for Christmas. He likes lonely places best, and, no doubt, the noise of the railway scares him, for trains run through the spots where he used to be found; and I dare say he will take himself off, one of these fine days, and we shall see him no more. There are not so many bitterns, nor badgers, nor wild cats as there used to be; and I do not see why we should wonder more at this, than we do because wolves are no longer found in England; though, at one time, there was a great many, when there were not so many scores of people living here as there are thousands now. It is because there are fewer waste places for them to hide in, that is the cause of these wild crea-

tures going away, and becoming so scarce.

And is there nothing that will hurt us in a great silent wood? you ask. There is nothing at all to be afraid of, except that you may lose yourselves; nothing that can harm you, unless it be the adder, and it is not often that one is met with, and when seen, it gets out of the way as fast as it can creep. The only danger is in sitting down on one, and it is so easy to look and be careful, before you are seated. Were you to chase a wild cat, which has a great thick bushy tail, three times the thickness of a tame cat, it might fly at you, if it could not escape; but there are very few of these to be found now, as the game-keepers always shoot them when they have the chance, as they destroy so much game. They are very strong and savage; and, for their size, have legs quite as thick as a lion's. It can run up a tree with as much ease as you can run

along a level road ; and when there, it hides itself amongst the branches ; and woe be to the pretty bird that happens to come within its reach, for it is killed in a moment.

Many animals, like insects, go to sleep at the close of Autumn, and never come out of their nests again until Spring. Some only sleep part of the Winter, and lay up a stock of food against they wake ; when having eaten enough to last a month or more, which is something like a meal, they coil themselves up and go to sleep again. The dormouse and little harvest mouse coil themselves up into a ball, and were you to find them, and roll them along the ground, they sleep so sound you would not wake them ; so does the hedge-hog. The long-tailed field mouse fills his larder before going to sleep, so that if the weather should become so warm as to make him think it is Spring when it is not, he does not mind it much, but eats his fill, and has

another nap for a few more weeks. So with the squirrel; he lays up a store of food in three or four places, so that, when he wakes and eats up one lot, he runs to another, where he can sleep and eat again. But the nest these animals make to sleep in, and store up food, is not a bit like what they make when they are going to have young ones. And is it not very strange that, while the weather is fine and the sun shines, they should begin to store up their food for Winter. How do they know it is going to be cold, and that, if they come out of their warm beds in Winter, they could not find a mite of any-thing they could eat any-where? God, who watcheth over, and careth for all things that He made, has taught them how to provide for their wants.

Though so many birds leave us, that do not return until Spring shows her first flowers, others come to winter with us; then leave again as soon as the cold

season is over. One of these strangers sings very sweetly, and this is the red-wing, which is very much like the thrush that remains always with us. The red-wing likes to be among trees, though there are so few leaves on them; and the reason is, so many snails and worms are to be found under those that have fallen. The fieldfare also visits us in Autumn, and feeds on the many berries which are found in our hedges, seeming fondest of the heps and haws.

Amongst the many that never leave us, are some of our sweetest singers, such as the larks, linnets, and finches; the blackbird and thrush, and many others, among which are the dear little robin, that we now hear warbling about our homes.

If birds do not talk to one another, why, when they sing, does one wait until the other has done before it begins, I should like to know? No bird is so rude as to in-ter-rupt another, while it is

speaking, but listens to all it has to say before it replies, which is a good deal more than many people do whom I know. Were you to place a little bird before you, and say to it : " I wish I had no lesson to learn, no school to go to ; nothing to do all day but play, and fly about, and pick up a bit of food here and there, just when I was in the humour, and not at certain hours as I do, whether I want it or not. I wish I had nothing else to do, but play and sing like you." The little bird would hold its pretty head aside, as it always does while it listens, and, when you had done, perhaps it would say : " Excuse me, but I have a great deal to do, and work very hard at times. First, I have to fly across the sea, before I can reach here ; then, I have my food to seek, and my house to build, which is more than you have to do ; then, I have my eggs to lay, and to sit on them quite still for days to keep them warm, for, if they

once get cold, all the little ones inside would die ; then I have all my little ones to feed, and I will just put it to you, and ask what you would do, if you had five little brothers and sisters to find food for, and had to go out and catch it first, a fly at a time : and when you did bring them food, and they all opened their little red mouths at once, and cried, 'now me, now me!' how would you know which had been fed, and which had not, when Dicky is so much like Sally, and they have not even a night-cap or a bed-gown on to tell one from the other, nor a feather to fly with ?

You would never have the patience to go so many journies, nor catch so many flies ; for some flies are very artful, and dodge round corners, and, when you make a snap at them, they turn back, whip under you, or fly round your tail and are off like one o'clock. No, my dear, I have something more to do than play and sing, I do assure you ; and

when you think I am singing to please myself, I am only running over, in my notes, what I have got to do ; for it is much better to sit and sing it over, than to sit grumbling and saying, ' Oh, bother it all ! I've got this, that, and the other to do, and I wish it was all far enough ; ' and it makes work more pleasant, when you do it cheer-fully, and sing over it ; and, after all, what is the use of grumbling when it must be done ; that does not do it."

So, having begun your little COUNTRY BOOK with the pretty singing birds, that come over the sea in Spring-time, I end it when they leave us in Autumn, to seek a warmer climate, until our cold Winter is past and gone ; when they will return to build, and sing again in our budding hedges and sweet green fields.

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