

THE
BOY AND THE
BIRDS

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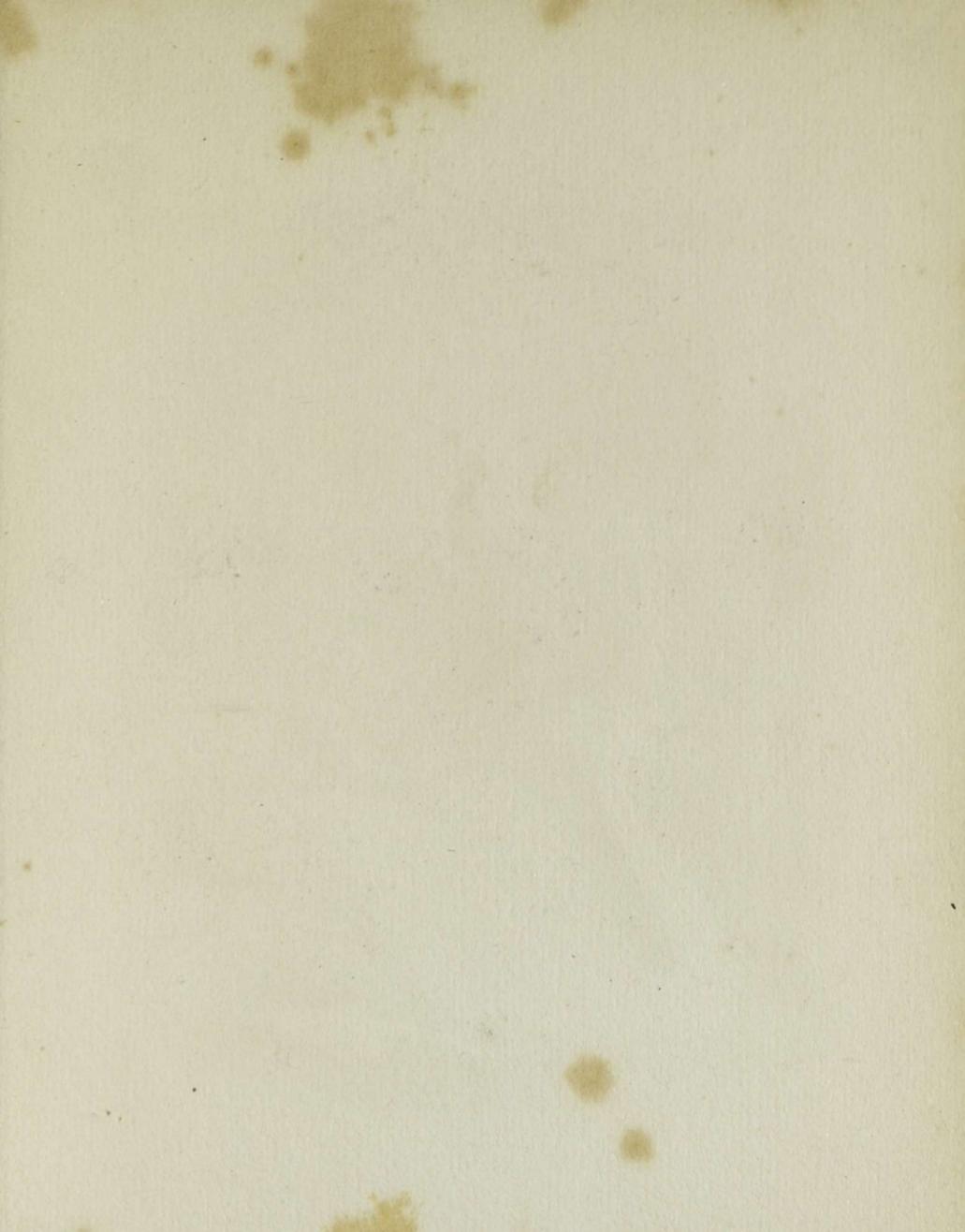
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THE
BOY AND THE BIRDS.





T. LANDSEER DEL.

H. P. POPE SC.

THE
BOY AND THE BIRDS.

BY
EMILY TAYLOR.

WITH DESIGNS BY THOMAS LANDSEER.

I shall not ask Jean Jacques Rousseau
If birds confabulate, or no:
'Tis clear that they were always able
To hold discourse, at least, in fable.
And even the child, who knows no better
Than to interpret by the letter
A story of a cock and bull,
Must have a most uncommon skull.

COWPER.

LONDON :
DARTON AND HARVEY,
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1835.

THE

BOY AND THE BIRD.

LONDON:

JOSEPH RICKERBY, PRINTER,

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“ IN one of my late visits to a friend in the country, I found the youngest son, a fine boy of eight or nine years of age, who usually resides in town for his education, just returning from a ramble through the neighbouring woods and fields, where he had collected a large and handsome bunch of wild flowers, of a great many different colours; and, presenting them to his mother, said, with much animation in his countenance, ‘ Look, my dear mamma, what beautiful flowers I have found growing in our place! Why all the woods are full of them!—red, orange, blue, almost every colour. Oh, I could gather you a whole parcel of them, much handsomer than these; all growing in

our own woods ! Shall I, mamma ? shall I go and bring you more ?

“The good woman received the bunch of flowers with a smile, and the little fellow went off to execute his delightful commission.

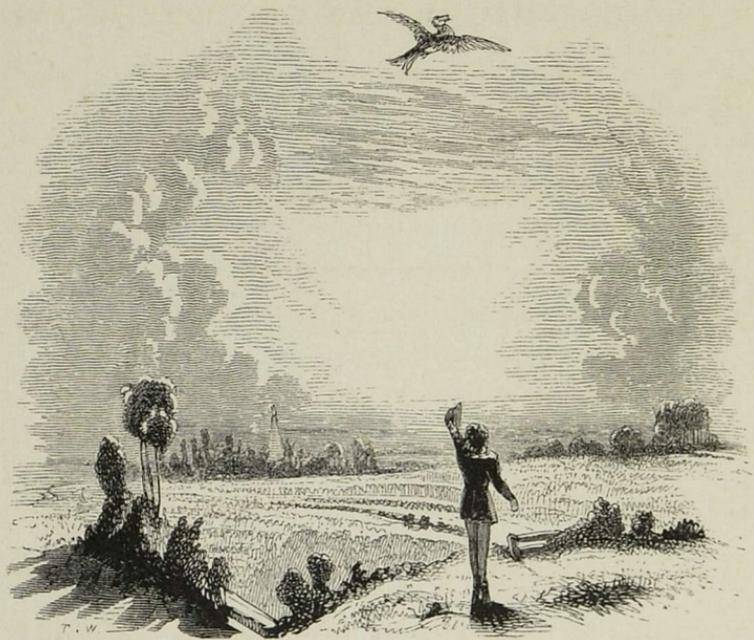
“The similarity of this little boy’s enthusiasm to my own struck me ; and the reader will need no explanations of mine to make the application. Should my country receive with the same gracious indulgence the specimens which I here humbly present her—should she express a desire for me to ‘go and bring her more,’ the highest wishes of my ambition will be gratified ; for, in the language of my little friend, ‘the whole woods are full of them,’ and I can collect hundreds more, ‘much handsomer than these.’ ”—ALEXANDER WILSON.—PREFACE TO THE AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGY.

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SKY LARK.

THE SKY-LARK.

“Where the grey clouds their parting make,
There in the dawn am I :
The early sun has seen me take
Gaily my flight on high.
Who does not love the cheerful lark,
Whose song is still of joy ?
Merrily singing, up he goes ;
Good bye, dull earth, good bye.”

AIRES OF THE RHINE.

Boy. You merry, merry creature—you elegant creature ! twining up to the sky, more like a curling wreath of smoke, or the mist from a mountain stream, than any thing else ; where did you learn that beautiful, airy flight of yours, and that yet more beautiful song ?

LARK. *Where ?*—in the fresh fields, where

I was born ; where my father sang before me, and my brothers learned to sing. My song came I know not how, in gushes, when I was twining upward, as you say, like a vapour. Where should a lark learn to sing but in the free air ? Why do not *you* sing ?

BOY. Oh ! I can never sing like you.

LARK. Perhaps not my notes ; but have you never felt the gush of song at your very heart ? When the birds and the bees, and the winds and waters sung and whistled and murmured together, could you help joining ? No : I think I heard your merry whistle even now, as you came bounding over the stile to see me. A little more liberty, a little more breathing in this summer air, and it will be a song. Yes, I think you will sing.

BOY. Will you teach me, pretty bird ?

LARK. I *am* teaching you ; and when you have caught a little of my joyous spirit, you will learn apace. Some boys stay within doors and pore over books too long to be good singers. I am glad to see you do not : you are an early riser too.

BOY. Yes ; for I have plenty of book-work to do in the day, and therefore I am glad to come abroad before my busy time begins. I cannot sing all day like you, bird.

LARK. *I* sing all day ! you are very much mistaken. There is not a busier bird in the air than I am : my songs only come in between my labours ; and may show you that it does not hurt people to work hard if other things be right.

BOY. But what are you so busy about ?

LARK. My nestlings take up good part of my summer. Did you know that I have two broods to rear in the course of the warm months ? Four or five young ones are scarcely fledged and sent into the world, before the same work is to come over again.

BOY. And I must say I think you expose your young to great dangers. When most other birds are making their nests in snug bushes, or on trees, how comes it that you should place yours on the bare ground, among the clods of the ploughed field, or hardly sheltered by tufts of grass ?

LARK. I allow that at first glance it seems very imprudent ; but yet, if you knew what a multitude of larks are reared safely every

summer, you would not think us so foolish, perhaps. For my part, I never could see much safety in a tree. School-boys have a genius for finding out nests placed in that position; but they do not so often track us in ploughed lands or in long grass. The mower is our worst enemy, of the human race. Pray observe too, how well we are fitted by our dusky plumage for the sort of nestling-places we prefer, and how conveniently we are situated as to food for our young. Field-insects and worms abound near us; and thus much time and labour, which other birds endure in seeking nourishment, is spared us.

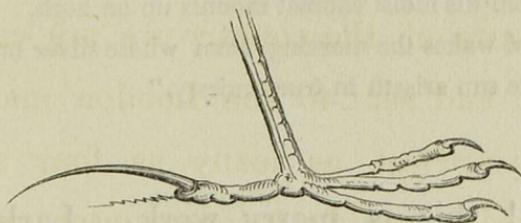
Boy. I have heard you are very fond of your young ones, though you have so many.

LARK. Oh yes ; often I am in great danger myself, from my care for them. I cannot help fluttering over their heads, when I should do much better to keep on the ground by their side ; but I cannot be quiet when I think them in peril. I do not often lose a brood : though sometimes a weasel will suck my eggs. The dangerous time for larks is in autumn, when we all flock together ; then we are reckoned good eating, and in some parts of the country we are caught by dozens, and sent to the London markets. I have heard of as many as four thousand dozen being caught in one winter, near Dunstable. In winter our food is, more than in summer, on seeds. Seeds of annual weeds, which are scattered about the meadows and

ploughed land ; and in this respect we are of great service to the farmer.

BOY. I have often observed your plumage and your crested heads, which look so like in colour to the clods ; and, though you are not gay in your colours, I must say your sprightliness and elegant shape always made me think you a pretty bird.

LARK. And pray look at my foot. How nicely it is fitted for the work it has to do.



You may imagine what a spring we can make, with this elegant instrument, from the elastic grass we tread upon.

Boy. Beautiful! and again you are mounting, pretty creature, in your spiral course. Singing, too! oh, how sweetly! Plenty of songsters have sung of you at all events; (*sings*) "Hark! hark! the lark at Heaven's gate sings,"—that is one song; and then there is another, and I think that is Shakespear's too:

"Lo! how the gentle lark, weary of rest,
From his moist cabinet mounts up on high,
And wakes the morning, from whose silver breast
The sun ariseth in true majesty."

Well! this is merry work. Lark, lark!
I must bid you good bye. The sun is high
in the heavens now, and I cannot stay with
you longer.

LARK. “ Adieu, dear, dear, adieu.” *

* Taken from Sylvester’s imitation of the note of this bird in the following stanza :

“ The pretty lark, climbing the welkin clear,
Chaunts, with a ‘ cheer, here, pere, I near my dear :’
Then stooping thence, seeming her fall to rue,
‘ Adieu,’ she saith, ‘ adieu, dear, dear, adieu.’ ”



PUFFIN-AUK, OR COULTERNEB.

PUFFIN-AUK, OR COULTERNEB.

PUFFIN. Well, I know I *am* an odd-looking bird ; you need not say any thing about it. The puffin family has a character of its own. We are all respectable people,—very : there is something of the steady old housekeeper-look about us. We do not like to be put out of our way : we have a settled fashion of waiting to receive our company in a very erect posture, as you see ; we should think it indecorous to move out of the perpendicular. These are puffin manners ;—not so

light and elegant, perhaps, as those of some other birds, and yet surely they are very composed, very dignified. Our whole appearance and *tone*, we think, is that of grave thinking birds—birds that know how to behave themselves, that are not carried away by every light fashion or fantasy; and really if you would come and visit our little party of about fifty thousand, at the old family seat at Puffin's island, you would give us credit for the order of our domestic arrangements.

I should be sorry to be guilty of the meanness of puffing the puffins; but our taste in the choice of abodes, I am sure you would allow is a pretty one. The island I mention, till *we* took possession of it, was called

Priestholm. It is situated about three quarters of a mile from the Anglesea coast, and commands a most noble view of the Great Orme's head, and Penman Mawr, with the more distant Welsh mountains behind them; while on one side we have Beaumaris, and before us the Menai Strait, spanned by the beautiful bridge, of which you have doubtless heard. Such a place as this is surely well chosen.

Our ancestors had great faith, I should tell you, in the taste of the monks; and in former times Priestholm island was the site of a religious house. It was yet more remarkable as the chosen burial-place of many celebrated Welchmen, who lived, I have heard, in very troubled times, and when they died, wished to be buried in this quiet

little island, where they might be undisturbed. But in due time the monks ceased to inhabit it ; the walls of the house mouldered away ; (there is an old tower standing yet, however ;) the great men no longer desired to be interred at Priestholm ; and the puffin people came and took possession, and gave it their own name. Not that we are the only inhabitants ; there are a few sheep, and a good many rabbits, besides ourselves, and we have also the unwelcome company of some peregrine falcons, (who are extremely teasing to us,) and of some cormorants, razor-bills, stormy-petrels, divers, guillemots, terns and curlews ;—a great many different races against one. However, in despite of them all, we are the sovereigns, and are more

numerous by far than any of the others. Wherever you look, it is all puffin property ; the air, the sea, the rocks are alive with us. And if you come when we are sitting on our nests, you must take heed where you set your foot, for I can assure you our bite is no joke. We are not easily provoked ; but it is not agreeable to be trodden upon, and have our eggs crushed. Perhaps you will not be at first aware of our numbers ; though the humming sound you will hear—something like the continual turning of large wheels—will apprise you of our close neighbourhood ; but the fact is, that a good many of us creep pretty far into the rabbit-burrows, and lay our egg there ; for we lay *but* one. There are so many rabbit-holes and cre-

vices about the island, that we do not often require to make new holes for our nests ; but if some of us happen to come in late, and to find the ground occupied, we are obliged to work pretty hard ;—or rather our male birds do so, for they are too polite to let the females trouble themselves. They scrape a hole in the sand at first, and then throwing themselves on their backs, both their strong bills and broad feet are made use of ; with the first they dig into the sand, and with the last they push out the rubbish : in this way a puffin makes a hole for his mate, with a passage which winds and turns for eight or ten feet. While the male is thus busy, his mate often sits by, very composedly admiring the prospect, and resting

herself after the fatigues of her passage to the island ; for of course you know it is only our summer residence. Such a family as that of the puffins can hardly be expected to confine themselves to one region of the globe, and we must bless other shores with our presence in winter. In April, however,

“The murmuring puffins to their shelter crowd ;”

just when the landscape loses its winter harshness ; when the bold black Orme’s Head is relieved by bright patches of green ; when the hardy plants, that have found room for themselves in the crevices of the rocks, are beginning to put forth, now leaves, and now flowers ; when the little mountain rivulets,

too, are dancing and sparkling in the sun, and we can trace them in a line of light from the top to the base of the cliff, then is the time for us: and then, too, it is a gay, busy time for man. The crowded steam-boat, with troops of holiday-people making merry at Easter, dashes past us; every body is on deck, admiring the puffins; we can hear them complimenting us as they go by; but we do not suffer ourselves to be disturbed: our work must proceed, let them say what they please; and I assure you some of us have difficulty in accomplishing it in time. If all goes well, we hatch our young in July, and depart about the middle or latter end of August; but it will often occur, where there is a nest to make, or any accident has

happened to our egg, that the little ones are not fledged by the time we want to leave the island ; in that case we never wait for them. Whatever we may feel on deserting our offspring, we must obey puffin-law ; and as soon as the signal is given, we assemble together, range ourselves in order, and take leave of our summer abode.

Our young, thus left behind, seldom escape the dangers which beset them. The cunning, clever peregrine falcon knows his advantage, and keeps guard at the mouth of the hole, till the poor little things come out for food, and they have little or no chance of escaping the stroke of his powerful bill and talons.

As to my size, I believe I may measure about twelve inches in length, and may weigh

about twelve ounces. When full grown we are not esteemed as food, happily for ourselves, and may therefore escape persecution; but our little ones are something of a dainty, and therefore sought after. I am told that when killed, the bones are drawn out, and they are pickled for sale, being sold for four or five shillings a barrel, each barrel containing twelve birds;—a sad end, but we are obliged to bear it as well as we can; and I must whisper in your ear, that I do not think the puffins are very sentimental birds, though they possess great solidity of character. Hence you must not expect me to romance about ourselves; but if you are a child of sense you will hardly fail to have a great respect for the puffin family.



CHIMNEY SWALLOW.

THE CHIMNEY SWALLOW.

So! Good morning, my young friend. I am really very sorry to have broken your slumbers, by my tumble down the chimney this morning. It was the farthest from my intentions, I assure you; but that father of mine is such a clumsy fellow! I heard my mother scolding him, only yesterday, and telling him he would certainly push me, and my brother and sister down the shaft, if he did not take care. But he does brandish his forked tail about, and flourish at such a rate, that there

is no getting him to hear reason ;—and so here I am.

Now do not hunt me about the room, as if I were a savage thing. Let me sit quietly on the stove, and recover myself ; then, if you please, I will tell you all I know about myself and friends ; and, after *that*, you have nothing to do but to set your window wide open, and leave the rest to me :—but if you call in Betty and Susan, with brooms and sticks, I am such a nervous creature that I shall never find my way out.

Perhaps you are surprised to hear me talk of *flying*, when I am but a young nestling. I have no doubt, however, that I *can* fly,—for several days past my parents have shown me the way up the shaft, to the top of the

chimney ; and there I have flapped my wings, and taken a view of the country round, and delightful it is. This morning my affectionate mother promised herself the pleasure of taking us all to a tree at a little distance ; and there, I believe, we were to have remained for a day or two. No doubt my fall has made her extremely unhappy ; but if you are kind enough to let me go, I have little doubt but I can find her in the garden, and it will be very pleasant to give her this proof of my strength.

You “wonder at our taste in choosing chimneys to build in.” Why, yes ; it *is* rather a singular fancy *in a bird* ;—but my mother tells me that *men* have no business to say any thing against us on that account, for that they are also very partial to heat and smoke,

and have cities to live in, (one, called London, she told me,) part of which is nearly as smoky and dingy as our chimney. Besides, we do not build quite *in* the smoke, but only in a shaft near the one which has a fire in it; so that we have the benefit of the warmth, but have quite a clear view above and below us:—nothing at all to complain of, I assure you.

“Our nest?” It is a very comfortable one; a steady, tight dish of mud and straw, lined with fine grasses and feathers. My mother says, some other swallows build their houses with a dome, leaving only a hole for entrance; but she thinks this would be too close and warm in a chimney, so that ours is quite open. She knows best, I suppose; but one day,

when we had very hard rain, I own I could have wished for a dome: the nest was quite full of water, and I caught a sad cold, and am a little hoarse now.

Between ourselves, when we are talking of situations, I have wondered now and then, whether our race have *always* chosen chimneys to build in. My mother cannot tell me that. She says it partly depends upon the answer to another question, namely, whether there have always been chimneys?—and this she does not know. She rather supposes not; and if so, she has an idea that we had at first the habit of building in hollow trees; but that, when chimneys came in fashion, some of our people found them to be very warm, pleasant abodes, exactly what they

themselves wanted, and their children have gone on using them ever since.

There are five of us young ones. My mother laid six eggs ; but nothing came of one of them. I saw it, however, and it was pretty to look at : white, and dotted with little red specks.

No ; I am not in full plumage yet. I have not got my longest tail-feathers, nor shall I have them this year ; at least not till I get to my winter-quarters, a long way off ; but when I come back next spring, if all be well, you will see what a beautiful bird I shall be. That is, I will not pretend to say my colours are handsome ; but I *am* proud to see what wonderful strength and swiftness my people possess. Yesterday, as I sat on the top of

the chimney, I could not admire them enough, cutting the air at such a rapid rate, their little bills going snap, snap continually, as they met with a fly, or a gnat, in the way. I assure you the martins could not fly nearly so fast; and then my father and mother diverted us extremely by skimming by turns just over the head of an old cat, who sat watching, and fully expecting one or other of them would fall into her mouth, and make her a supper;—but they knew their own strength and swiftness of wing, and merely wished to make a little fun with the old lady. I own, however, I should not like to see her in this room, and hope you will not be so cruel as to call her in while I am here.

I have nearly told you all I know, now;

for, being a young bird, I cannot speak of any travels of my own; and my mother is so very busy, getting food for us nestlings, that she has really no time to tell us stories. But one thing I must add, that I am hungry this morning. I had not had half my breakfast before my father pushed me down here, while he was pretending to help me to the top of the shaft. It would be a great kindness to let me go and find my mother, or see if I cannot manage to catch a few flies for myself.

There!—I see you are a good-natured creature. Open the window a little further:—that will do. Bless you! Good bye!



GREAT TIT, AND LITTLE BLUE TIT.

THE GREAT TIT,
AND
LITTLE BLUE TIT.

GREAT TIT. We are both of us called by the little, short name of tits. One of us, however, is larger than the other :—I, the biggest, am called the great tit, or ox-eye ; and my companion is called the little blue tit. Both of us are named by the learned, *parus* ; but I am *parus major*, and that little thing near me is *parus cæruleas*. We have also six cousins, all owning the family

name ; but with some other attached to it, signifying something different in their make, or dwelling-place. For instance, *parus palustris*, or the marsh-tit, lives a good deal among marshes ; and *parus caudatus*, is known by its long tail.

I have at present chiefly in view, the characters of myself and this busy, blue little thing I have brought with me ; not that we are particular friends, but she is shy, and wishes me to speak for her.

You will wish to know our sizes and colours. I, *parus major*, am five inches and a half long, and I weigh an ounce and a quarter, good weight. My head and throat are glossy black, and I have a band, or stripe of black, the whole way from the throat to the middle

of my belly. My back and shoulders are olive green, passing into bluish grey on the tail and wings : my breast and the under part of my body, except the black stripe I have mentioned, are of a sulphur yellow.

Now look at the little blue tit. Did you ever see a prettier bird ? No doubt I am myself very handsome ; but I cannot quarrel with any one for admiring *parus cæruleas* the most. Do but look at her pretty, bright azure collar, something like a little round fur tippet, her beautiful yellow breast, her pale, blue wings and tail, just tipped with white ! and, though she is such a little thing, let me tell you she has a fine spirit of her own. And when she and her mate are sitting in turn on their eggs, they have a notion of hissing and

puffing, and setting themselves up in such a way, if you approach them, that you would fancy nothing less in size than a goose could be in the tree; till you peep into a very, very small hole, and there sits the little blue tit, keeping watch over her six or seven eggs. I have no doubt in the world, that, were you to venture your finger into the hole, she would bite you most sharply for your pains; and, indeed, let me tell you, so should I, if you came to *my* nest.

I, too, build often in holes of trees; and, if I cannot find one quite hollowed out to my mind, *n'importe!*—I go to work with my little bill, and make it so; but holes in ruined buildings, and the forks of low, young pines, or larch-trees, will do: and my nest is much

admired for its neat make. It is very deep, and well covered, quite waterproof, and very well lined with hair and feathers. I like large families, and should be sadly dissatisfied if I had fewer than eight eggs to set upon; and sometimes I have ten or twelve— all the better;—though, I can assure you, the little things, when they are hatched, lead their parents a hard life; and we have generally two broods every summer.

Our chicks are blind for the first few days after they are hatched; but always ready to eat, and my mate and I have enough to do to find them insects: still we manage pretty well. They grow fast, and in two or three weeks they are able to fly: but we are a very affectionate family, and in general keep to-

gether for at least six weeks. I am very proud to tell you, also, that, tits as we are, we resemble the eagle, in the fidelity of our attachments. Most birds, I find, choose a new mate every spring; but as for us, we are content with one and the same all our lives long; except, indeed, one of us dies, and then the survivor is easily suited again. The same nest, too, if we are not disturbed in it, will serve us for many a summer.

But you will want to hear more of *parus cæruleas*; and I have talked a long time of myself only. However, in most of the above particulars we are much alike,—only that the number of eggs in a blue tit's nest is seldom more than eight or ten. Mine are yellowish white, mottled with rust-colour; and theirs are

white also, with rust-coloured specks at the thick end.

You will expect to hear some confessions about our garden robberies. Now, for my own part, I plead guilty to bees and pease. I certainly do sometimes stand near the bee-hives, and hawk for the bees as they come out, and also snap at them as they are busied in the flowers: and as for a pod of marrowfats, I do know how to shell them beautifully;—and delicious they are. By the bye, I should advise gardeners never to sow what are called *grey* pease. Let them sow the blue; they are much the sweetest, and will do them the most credit; and there is a sort, called Knight's garden pease, which I know are extremely juicy and tender,—easily shelled, too. Some

persons may censure me for the thefts above owned ; but what am I to do with my large family ? They must live. And then I can promise you, that every young tit I rear, and now and then regale with a pea, will do your garden far more good than harm.

No hunters like us, for insects in the bark and the bud, and under the leaves of your trees : the very nail-holes in your walls, the haunt of the spider, do not escape us. We draw out the grub of the cabbage-butterfly from the chinks in the barn : we bring out larvæ from under the slits of the bark of trees with our tongues. We run up the trunk, we dip and dive underneath the branches, we are here and there and everywhere, worming out the little insect which *you* cannot see ; but

which, if it were allowed to live, would spoil half your summer verdure. I would not take away from the merit of many of the birds of passage, which are also very useful in clearing your trees of hurtful insects; but pray bear in mind, that they leave the fields for half the year; and that, from autumn to spring, we, the tits, are the chief guardians of your woods.

While our summer warblers are enjoying themselves, nobody knows where, moths lay their eggs in the infant buds; and if it were not for us, shoot and blossom would both be gone before they return. The eggs would be hatched; the young worm would have come forth, and then, alas, for the pleasant green shade! But that is *our* province: we watch the buds from autumn to spring; and, though nobody may

thank us, we know very well how much of the beauty of summer is our work. Long life to the tits!



LONG-TAILED TIT.

THE LONG-TAILED TIT.

SOMEBODY tells me, that a conceited cousin of mine, the great tit, or *parus major*, has taken upon him to be the biographer of our tribe. He has a very good right to speak for himself; and, if he chooses, to speak for his cousin, the blue tit; but I intend to have a page to myself. I do not choose to be confounded with the tits of all shapes and sizes. *I* that have a tail three inches long; and carry the feathers on my head half erect, like a crest! Besides, I have no blue or yellow about me; but rather incline to a pale rose-red on the

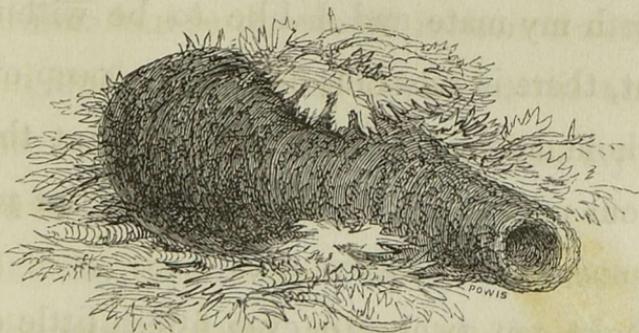
sides of my back, and under my body, and have a nice white breast, passing into pale ash-grey. But I know that my habits are not such as make men very familiar with me. While other birds are flying from one field to another, I am beating about a bush or tree all day long for insects.

The boys, however, know me, and call me Long Tom, Poke-pudding, and Bottle tit; and I *am* a curiosity, for my three-inch tail is set upon a little body only two and a half inches long; and I jerk about from bough to bough in a manner which is thought very amusing. Then my mate and I always contrive to keep our family about us, from hatching-time till the following spring; and as we have sometimes fourteen long tails whisking about round us, I

leave you to judge if we do not cut a very respectable figure.

As for my nest, I really cannot condescend to ask for your admiration of it. I could quote book upon book to prove to you that, in the opinion of the learned, it is really "one of the most extraordinary of animal structures."

Here is a picture which will enable you to form some idea of the matter.



You see it is shaped like a bag; but as to the materials that go to the making, trust me,

I should find it hard to number them. There is moss, there are lichens, there are caterpillars' webs, and woolly particles, and tough threads and feathers, oh ! such a profusion of feathers, for the inner part ! As nothing can be neater and firmer than my work when done, you must not wonder that it takes me and my mate at least a month to make our nest. We sometimes have two holes for entrances ; and as both my mate and I like to be within at night, there is room for his head to peep out of one hole, and my tail at the other ; but this is not our usual plan,—only a very superior *parus* will sometimes contrive it thus.

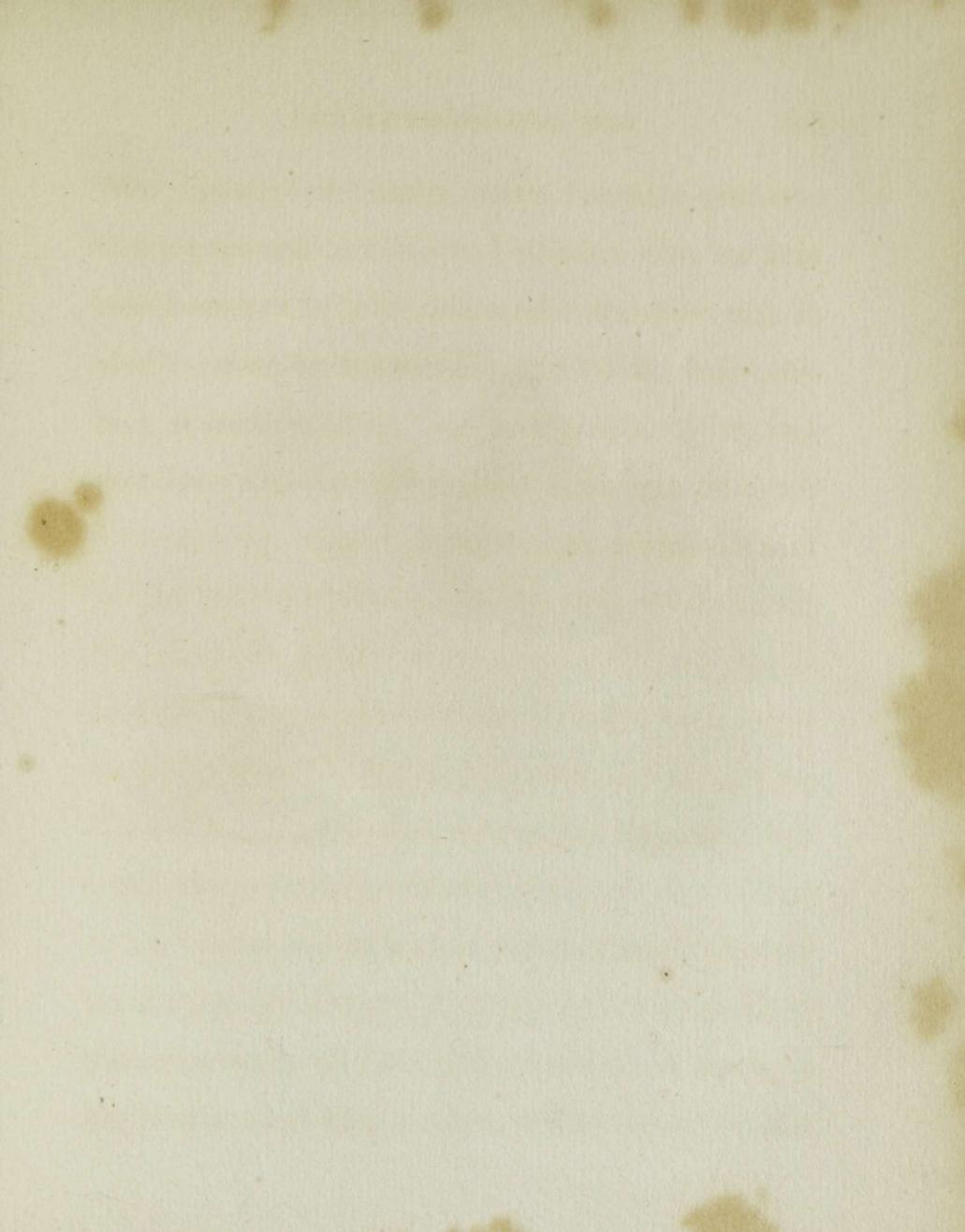
Eight, ten, twelve, or even fifteen little eggs, not much bigger than pease, are to be sometimes found buried in the soft down ; and when

our young are hatched, we are very happy ; but we are obliged to leave the nest as they grow bigger. Yet still, as I told you, we do not part, and as the weather grows cold towards autumn, we roost for the night, all huddled together, on the same twig.

For the rest, I fancy my cousin *parus major* may have told you the chief of what I should have said. I am more shy than he is, and more rarely approach human dwellings and gardens. Indeed my food is almost wholly insects ; and no gardener can lay any crime to my charge.

Like the rest of my tribe, I suffer severely in very hard winters. With all I can do, I cannot always keep myself warm ; and sometimes you will find us frozen to death on our

roosting-places. Still, some are always left : and we take care to keep in the warmest parts of the country, where the ground is moist and rich, and the foliage closely interwoven. There you will chiefly find us ; and whenever you come among us, I shall be happy to show you how nimbly I can climb a tree.





GOLDEN EAGLE.

THE GOLDEN EAGLE.

“Oft did the cliffs reverberate the sound
Of parted fragments tumbling from on high;
And from the summit of that craggy mound
The perching eagle oft was heard to cry,
Or on resounding winds to shoot athwart the sky.”

BEATTIE'S MINSTREL.

MUST I come too? Must even the proud golden eagle stoop down from his eyrie on the ledge of the steep sea-cliff, and submit to be questioned by a child? You have been looking towards me, I know, good part of the day. I have seen your curious eye vainly trying to spy

out my ways and my doings ; but the sun blinded you, and the distance was too much for you ; and though I have had you before me the whole time, you have scarcely been able to say you have seen me yet. Yes, I *will* come down ; for what harm can you do me, poor little child ; and why should not you learn what you desire ? But the rushing of my wings, if I were to descend with all my force near you, would be a startling thing, and you shall first see me sail in my majesty over the valley.

There ! Am not I indeed a noble creature ? How I ride in the high air, glorying in my might ! I am not thinking of my prey now : I am only sailing idly along for your amusement and my own, enjoying the calm sky, and

this bright sun, and caring nothing for what is doing upon earth.

Must you see me in my terrible hour, when I have marked out some poor animal for my own, as I pass near two thousand feet above it? You shall, then;—but you must have a quick eye, and not a cowardly heart: and you must remember, that though I cannot live without slaughter, I am a very merciful destroyer. One stroke of my powerful talons is often enough to end the sufferings of the animal I would kill. Do you see yonder hare, gliding along from one covert to another? I shall have him: but I must mount higher. Down, down!—a moment, and it is over; and here I am again, bearing off the prey to my eaglets. I will soon return and tell you more.

I cannot invite you to my eyrie. It is much too high for you to climb to: and, could you reach it, the footing is slippery, and the river runs dark and deep underneath. Sharp points of rock jut out on every side, to keep off intruders.

To you it would seem a forlorn and cheerless house. To me it is a happy, ancient home. It is merely a platform, on yonder rock. Large sticks, disposed in rows, plank our floor; and turf and rushes are our carpet. If the rock projects over our heads, making a sort of cave for us, we do not object to shelter; but we do not seek it,—for few can bear cold and storms like us.

What are you gazing at above my head? My mate, I should judge, by the sound in the

air ; but though I could see her, and could see you, little boy, ever so far *below* me, if you are *above* me, but for a little distance, you are safe from my eye.

This projecting curtain, this eye-brow, that has been given me, is a shade that both protects my eye from the sun, and guards my prey from my attacks. For when I have slain a bird or an animal, I must rise again from the ground ready for a *stoop*, before I can strike another.

I know you wish to hear more. There is something in your eye which seems to say, " I want to read in nature's great book. I am not come here to capture or destroy. I am come with a heart loving God's glorious works, and longing to know them more and better every

day. Tell me, for you can, great bird, what is *your* history, that I may sometimes think of the solemn eagle on his rugged cliff, and contrast him with the playful little tit at my own door."

I was born in an eyrie far from this wild mountain; but the nest itself was like this one in which I rear my own young, only the sea was nearer to us there, than it is here: and, in a winter's night, the sound of the roaring waters dashing under us, made the place more grand.

My father and mother were a noble pair. I have seen other eagles since; but never a bird, I think, so large as my mother. From the tip of one wing to the other she measured upwards of ten feet; and was three feet and a

half long. My father was smaller ; but both of them were remarkable for the size and strength of their legs and claws :—and really the claw of a golden eagle is worth examining.



I cannot tell how many years my parents had lived in this nest before I came into the world—perhaps fifty or sixty. I know that many pairs of birds have been sent forth by them to find dwellings for themselves where

they could: and that this was the reason why my mate and I were obliged to come so far from home before we could meet with a quiet mountain, all to ourselves. There were three eggs in the nest at the time my mate and I were hatched; but one of them, I believe, rolled out of the nest, and only us two came perfect out of our shells. At first our bodies were covered with a yellowish down: after that, feathers began to grow; but it was three or four years before our plumage resembled in colour and strength that of our parents.

Now, I may say, I am the very image of my mother. The same rich browns with their coppery lustre; the same free, powerful command of every part. Ah! believe me, boy, you have done right to come *here* to see me.

If you ever visit a menagerie, and they point out a dull, lifeless, stupid bird, sulking in its cage, and tell you *that* is the golden eagle, you will know better; you can tell them, that though it might once have been so, and though it is still alive, it is not like what you have seen among the mountains. It wants the wild blast to temper its feathers, the thought of its home and young to enliven its eyes, the sight of its prey to bring out its terrible attributes.

My mate and I were nursed in our parents' nest for a whole summer, during all which time nothing could exceed the kindness of our father and mother. At first my mother kept chiefly within, and my father went abroad for food for her and us: but as we grew bigger and

stronger he enticed my mother abroad, for he did not like his lonely flights, and wished her to be his companion whenever he could : sometimes he remained at home, and she went alone as I have now left my mate to come and talk with you.

We did not mind being left ; nothing could harm us in the nest, and we never dreamed of any ill happening to our parents ; but it was a pleasant moment when we heard the rush of their wings at a distance, and then the gentle sweep before they landed. What a broad shadow they spread betwixt us and the sun !

My mother had some fears, lest, in her absence, we should ever venture too near the edge of the nest, and fall down the precipice. We

were much too cowardly for *that*. Indeed, by what I have seen in my own young, and what I remember of myself, I should say the young eagle is slow in acquiring courage.

We were well fed all this time. Poultry, game, rabbits and young lambs were brought in abundance to us ; and sometimes our larder was even overstocked. Fortunately we were too far beyond the reach of man to be approached, or else I must say there were strong temptations in our plentiful provision. So time passed ; and summer went away, and autumn brought shortened days, and an occasional chilly blast, which our parents well knew how to interpret. They cast altered looks upon us, and we heard them whispering together, and agreeing that it was high time to drive us

away, lest the winter should come suddenly upon them, and they should be obliged in that season of scarcity to provide for us, as well as for themselves. A day or two after this, we found the matter was settled; that we were no longer to lie still in our quiet nest, but to be pushed out, willing or unwilling, and launched upon the wide space beneath us. Trust me, though many, many years have passed, I have not forgotten that day: and, though we learned ere long to rejoice in our independence, it was a terrible moment, when we found our kind parents' hearts turned against us, and felt their powerful talons put forth to drag us from the nest.

I know all that passed up to the moment when I was about to be pushed from my

clinging hold on the rock. After that, terror took away all my faculties; and I can only tell you that in a few moments I found myself, to my surprise, resting upon my mother's back in the air. Though she had forced me forward, she had not deserted me. Swift as lightning she had darted under me, and now bore me upon her wings. What a joy it was to find her near! and how ashamed I felt at the thought that a doubt of her love and care had ever come over me!

My courage revived as I felt the fresh air, and saw how nobly my mother rode through the vast expanse. Then again she slipped from beneath me; and this time I stretched my wings, and found them far more powerful than I expected.

Ere the day was over, my young mate and I had felt all the enjoyment of our powers, and caught much of our parents' spirit. Our eye, indeed wanted practice; we could not see so promptly, or direct our flight towards our prey in so unerring a manner as afterwards. But this our parents knew would soon come; and when they were satisfied of our ability to provide for ourselves, they soared back to their deserted nest, leaving us, as we well understood, to choose our abode as we best might.

It was not long before we came here. On our way we touched at many promising spots; but they were all occupied. Every beetling crag had its pair of eagles, and none were disposed to yield possession to a young couple

like ourselves ; so that we saw it was necessary to go further from home. Here, then, we came, and here we have reared many a brood, and lived for very many summers. How many would you suppose ? More, probably, than you will ever number. A hundred years have seen us lords of this mountain ; and even now, you find, I am not dull of sight, nor heavy of wing.

Perhaps you may think life must have been very dull, thus spent in one spot and with one single companion. I have heard such a remark from gay birds of passage, who change their country and their mates every season ; and when we are sailing soberly along towards home, the young things have sometimes the impudence to twit us, and we catch the sound of

“Greybeards,” and “Hum-drums.” You will not suppose we condescend to answer them, save by an occasional brush of our wings, which frightens them and sends them flying away in all directions ; but *we*, mean time, move on to our dear home ; and when we are there, we look around, and slip into our nest, well content with our lot.

I have one anxiety, certainly, in my heart— but one,—and my mate, good fellow ! has the same. We have lived so long together, that we think our time must be drawing near to a close ; and we should not mind this, if we could be quite sure of dying together. But if one goes first, we do not know how to bear the thought of the lonely thing that will be left behind.

Sometimes, when we are in a melancholy mood, we talk it all over, and fancy one or other of us, pining away in the nest after the other is gone. But we think it cannot last long; that, as we were hatched in the same day, so very likely we may depart.

Therefore, my good, simple-hearted child, if when you are grown to be a man, you should come this way, and look up at the eagle-rock, do not be sorry if you see no traces at all of us, but tell every body that we were a happy, faithful, affectionate pair of birds; that we loved each other always—yes always,—and never had a quarrel: and, when you see fathers and mothers captious and unkind to one another, send them to this valley, and bid them look up to our nest and be ashamed.



FISH-HAWK, OR OSPREY.

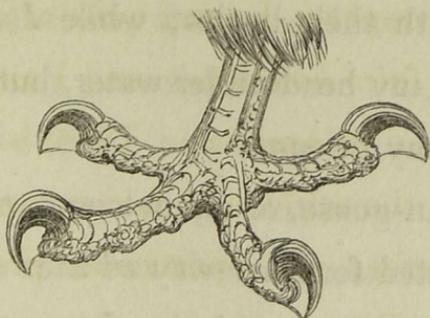
THE FISH-HAWK, OR OSPREY.

You are come into our country, I understand, to make yourself acquainted with the birds of the mountain and morass. I saw you just now discoursing with the golden eagle; and he has a good right to receive you as his own special guest, for certainly he is a king here; but now he has finished his tale, it is time that others should come forward; and I am sure all will allow my claims to be heard, next to his.

In some respects, I stand quite alone. There is but one *falco halæitus*; and I am the same bird here and in America. There is a singular mixture of the eagle, and falcon, and buzzard in us, together with particular properties of our own. We come near the eagle in size, we resemble the hawk in our beaks and wings, and our flight is sometimes like that of a buzzard.

We are really very noble birds. Our powerful beaks are hooked, and so immensely hard and strong! Our claws, also, short and strong, are fitted for our own work, which is grasping fish in the water, and lifting them out of it.

As you saw the eagle's claw, suppose you look at *mine* also.



Our outer toes, as here described, are turned forwards as well as the inner ones; but, when we require it, we can turn the former backwards, and this gives us a great deal of power over our slippery prey.

You are not acquainted, perhaps, with many birds who, like me, plunge from a height in the air into the sea. A great many of them, like myself, watch for their prey in the air, and then dart down into the waves upon it; but *they* mostly come head foremost, and catch

the fish with their beaks; while *I* seldom or never have my head under water, but seize my prey with my talons.

The solan-goose, or gannet, and the cormorant are fitted for *their* way of life. Their feet are webbed, and could do them no good in catching their prey; and therefore they are so made that they can plunge, and rise lightly to the surface, like balloons, bringing up fish in their beaks.

Though I fish in rivers or lakes, yet, in order to view me to the most advantage, you should be near the sea. And, though you may have considered the eagle's vision and descent on her prey very wonderful, I think you will allow *mine* to be even more so. There, in the high air,—sometimes two hundred feet, some-

times more, above the sea,—I may be noted, now wheeling gracefully along, to watch for any tokens of fish; now hovering over one particular spot, my wings fluttering rapidly, in order to be ready at the very moment when I see it right to descend: then down I come, like a thunder-bolt! I am in the ocean: the waters are roaring round me; but the fish is mine, and after a few moments' struggle, you will see me rise from the waves, shake the water from my body as a spaniel might do, and slowly and steadily wing my way for the land.

I can carry off very large prey, sometimes a flounder or a shad weighing several pounds; but it has happened to me, once or twice in my life, to have had rather a hard battle with a

bigger and stronger fish than I expected ; and once I was suddenly dragged under water, and nearly drowned by one of them.

My nest is situated conveniently for myself and my young : if I fish in a fresh-water lake, it is in reeds or on a jutting rock ; or, if there be trees in the place, I build on trees.

In America my race are held in particular honour. I do not, I own, quite understand the grounds of this partiality ; but certain it is that *there* it is reckoned a fortunate thing when an osprey makes her nest on a farm. We make very large structures, piling up great sticks, four or five feet high and two or three broad ; and then placing upon them large pieces of wet turf, corn stalks, and dried grass, quite a heavy mass, such as may be seen a good

way off. The eggs are three or four in number ; never *more* than this.

You have heard from the eagle of the misery he suffered when first expelled from the nest : I can say that it is quite as difficult to chase away our own young folks ; and we are obliged to take harsh measures for the purpose : but our affection for our offspring, while in their most helpless state, is quite a pattern.

It is a dangerous thing to attack an osprey's nest : and he who wishes to take a peep at my eggs and young, will hardly escape a buffet on the head, if his eyes be not attacked and severely wounded.

From one provoking enemy we, in England, are free ; but our hapless brethren in America suffer severely from the scandalous robberies

committed on them by the bald eagle. Would you believe it? this great, mean savage, allows the osprey to descend into the waves to catch his fish, and, watching him all the while, the moment he is ready to bear his prey to the land, gives him chase. The poor osprey well knows he cannot escape, so that just as the eagle reaches him, he drops the fish. Down goes the plunderer after the plunder, which he generally seizes before it falls into the water, and carries it off to regale himself at his leisure. This detestable bird, however, is sometimes attacked in return by several fish-hawks, but they can seldom do him any harm; and by all accounts he is the tyrant of the air. I am glad for my part that I have nothing to do with him.

With the golden eagle I have no quarrels. Our food is different, and he never, I have heard, eats any thing that he has not killed himself.

I dare say the eagle made you look grave by his discourse. He is such a solemn, majestic bird, and makes one feel, I know not why, so much in awe of him. For myself I pretend to no romance whatever,—being a very plain, honest, industrious fisher:—and you have had my story, and I shall bid you farewell.



THE ROOK.

THE ROOK.

Caw, caw! the work goes on cheerily, cheerily! look at our wicker castles, swinging among your tall trees. The fresh March wind is a merry blast to us; and we like to sing to it as it blows:—*Caw, caw!* What a wonderful city will this be of ours! Aye, no wonder you like to look up at it. Scores on scores of houses are we building among those trees; and there are the workmen scurrying hither and thither, and here I sit to watch them, and give notice if any harm approaches: but I know *you*, my

child, very well, and shall hold my tongue when you come, that you may see as much of our doings as possible.

You cannot peep into one of our nests ; they are much too high for that ; but I can tell you how they are made. We gather brittle, dead sticks, and lay them cross and cross in the forks of the trees ; we also pick up birch twigs, and branches of blackthorn, and weave into them long fibrous roots, which make a very neat inner basket.

As to those coarse mattresses of wool and rabbits' fur laid over clumsy walls of clay, those we leave to the crows ; but we, the rooks, take more pains with our work, and make a much prettier nest.

Ah ! I see you are eyeing that pair of youn-

kers. Silly things ! every body may see they have pitched upon a bough that will not bear their nest. Never mind ! we always let our young people find out these mistakes for themselves ; they will only be obliged to do their work over again, and to stay on the trees when all of us are gone : they will know better another year.

There is a great bustle, you will observe, about yonder tree. I will tell you how it is. We are a people living under very strict laws ; and none of us are allowed to follow our own fancies as to where we shall build, unless, indeed, we entirely separate ourselves from our colony. Now there is, on that tree, a single pair of rooks which has ventured to build thus alone and away from the rest,—all the time

pretending to belong to us,—and we have decided that the thing shall not be. A pretty scolding they have got; and there are our people pulling the nest all to pieces. Do but see how the truants slink back to our trees, and how cowed and foolish they look. Now they have all their work to do over again; and will be taunted and twitted at all the summer into the bargain.

Let me point your attention to what is going on in the next tree. While a body of our citizens are executing judgment upon the truant pair, there is a sly couple stealing a stick out of each of their nests to add to their own. Upon my word, they will be pretty sure to be found out, if they go on at this rate. They have almost finished their nest already; and the

other birds will find the difference in theirs. They will keep their counsel, however, for the present ; but by and by, if you should come among us when the eggs are laid, you will see what happens. We shall all fall, to a rook, upon the pilferers, pull their nest to pieces, and throw their eggs on the ground.

Surely you are not disturbed by the cawing overhead. That is only our *common* talk, and goes on the whole time we are nesting. A great deal of it, perhaps, indeed the greater part, proceeds from our motherly rooks, who are some of them now sitting on their eggs. *They* seldom go out ; and one would think they love to hear themselves talk, for they often caw incessantly while their mates are away : especially if it so happens that the

male is longer than usual bringing his mate her meals, she becomes very impatient, and frets and complains loud enough for the whole town to know it. When he does come at last, she has another little, short, eager cry, as he glides towards the nest to give her whatever he has procured; and when her hunger is a little appeased, she makes it up to him by singing him a song, which is longer or shorter according as the good soul is pleased with her morsel or not. He sits and rests and listens to her, and then off he goes on the same errand again. In general, also, there is a brief dialogue between them. He tells her the news, and she tells him how glad she shall be when this tiresome sitting on eggs is over.

Do you see those small birds that seem so fond of our company, and so curious after our proceedings? They are starlings: good-natured little things as can possibly be; somewhat prying and busy, but so very diverting and full of play, that we let them come and go as they please. I believe most of them have nests close to the fen yonder: they like places where reeds abound, and if you should go there, and come rather suddenly upon them, they would rush from their coverts with noise enough to startle you. Two or three pair of them, I do believe, mean to make their nests on the stunted willow just behind you, that they may be near us; and we do not intend to interfere with them. On the contrary, they are rather pets of ours; and when we alight in

large open fields, we are often attended by a bevy of them ; nor do we grudge them a little of our favourite food. We are only sorry to see how foolishly they court danger in winter : they are so fond of company that if one alights to pick up a worm, all the rest will follow too ; and then they are an easy mark for any one who chooses to let off a gun at them. And really we, who have great opportunities of watching them, and knowing what good sort of birds they are, have reason to be concerned at their misfortunes. They are the kindest parents : I have known them bring food to their young more than a hundred and forty times in the course of a day, when, perhaps, they had some distance to go in order to seek it.

I cannot help speaking a good word for these sociable creatures; but do not fancy that we admit *all* our kindred to very close fellowship. We do occasionally exchange a civil greeting with the carrion crow. In a winter's evening, just before we go to roost, we sometimes meet with him; and then he looks up, and gives us a hoarse good evening, and perhaps has a word or two to say about the weather, to which we answer in our own melodious way. We do not want to quarrel with him; but as to intimacy, we always decline it. Our tastes and habits do not accord. It would distress us exceedingly to be suspected of wounding the eyes of weak animals, or of eating any chance carrion that may lie in our way. Nor did we ever in our lives

attack poultry, or suck eggs. Therefore when, on one occasion, a pair of crows thought proper to select one of our trees to build in, we deserted it immediately ; nor was there a rook among us that would go near that tree so long as the strangers chose to remain.

Neither do we at all like the hooded crow, which, between ourselves, is quite as unclean a bird as the other ; but as it comes only for part of the year, from October to April, and never builds its nest in England, we have not so much to do with it. It goes northward, I am told, in the spring ; and makes its nest in rocks or tall trees, much like the carrion crow. A croaking, disagreeable voice it has. I believe it is about an inch longer and an inch broader than we are, and heavier by about three

ounces ; and there is a mixture of dull grey in the feathers.

Do not let me forget the jackdaws ; we *tolerate* the starlings, but we have really a friendship for the daws. We can see with great pleasure a flock of the *former* feeding together in the same field with ourselves ; but we do not mix with them : the *latter* are welcome to share and share alike with us. Indeed we should be very sorry in winter not to meet pretty often.

About three miles off, there is a place much frequented by jackdaws, and we have occasion to pass this frequently as we go for food in a morning. The daws are rather lazy, and we never find them stirring before us ; but as soon as our well-known *caw* is heard, up they

all spring, and there is such a chattering and welcoming! They often go with us for the day; and in the evening, as we return, they escort us back a little way past their own homes, and then bid us farewell for the night; or if one of them recollects something that should have been said, he will come flying after us, deliver his message, and then return.

This is a pleasant circumstance in our lives, I assure you: and, though the daws are much smaller than we are, there is a strong family resemblance, in disposition as well as person; and yet we never choose to build our nests in the same places. I wish, poor things, they would take to trees, for they are greatly interfered with in the crannies and holes they so much prefer.

I ought to have told you about our eggs; for you cannot, I know, see them here. They are of a pretty blue-green colour, mottled with dark-coloured spots, or blotches; and our females lay from three to five of them for a brood.

When the young are hatched, and old enough to be left, both father and mother assist in bringing them food; and, greedy as they are, there is often some difficulty in finding them enough. If the spring and summer be very hot and dry, the grubs and worms are hidden far under the ground, and our poor parent birds may be seen wandering about, hunting for grasshoppers and any thing they can get. We generally find a good breakfast of dew-worms, as we are very early risers; but

even these fail us in seasons when the mornings are nearly without dew, and then there is grief indeed in our city. If you were to come among us then, your heart would be melted by the cries of our young for food; and I could tell you tales of the labours and sacrifices of our old birds which would surprise you.

If you hear a neighbour complain at such a time of robberies in his newly-set potatoe-fields, do say a word in our excuse! When we can find other food, we care little for potatoes; but hunger and misery force us to attack them at times.

Suppose, however, all goes on well. Our young will soon be taught to fly; and then we shall take our leave of the rookery

for the summer months. In autumn, however, you will find us here again for a little time.

We are very sociable, as you observe, and have great pleasure in telling one another about what we have seen in our summer excursions. Some of us put our nests in order against the spring ; but it does not often happen that these last through the winter storms, though we can work them up again with much less trouble than at first.

Before we part, let me tell you one or two things which will prove that there is a kindness of heart among rooks. It does happen sometimes that a mother rook is killed before her young are reared. Do you think we let the poor orphans perish ? Oh, no ; no such

cruelty was ever heard of in our cities : we *do* spare time, however busy we may be, from our own families, to attend to the deserted ones ; and not a nest in the whole rookery will be better provided for than this.

Another thing ; when one of our company is wounded by some cruel sportsman, we do not desert him, as too many birds would. We have even been known to brave the danger of being shot by the same gun, in order, if possible, to help him. We fly round and round, hop before him, and do all we can to make him follow us.

But enough has surely been said to show you that we are a respectable, industrious, kind, sociable, well-regulated people. We hope you will give us this character wherever you go ;

and do not oblige us to say that you have come among us in vain, and are as idle, as cross, and unneighbourly as if you had never been acquainted with rooks.



WILLOW WREN.

THE WILLOW WREN.

I too am called a wren ; but have also several other very pretty names, not one of which I can pronounce properly ; but *you* may, gentle youth, so you shall have them all, every one, vulgar and learned.

In the common tongue, then, which is spoken by English boys and girls, I am Willow wren, Yellow wren, Hay bird, and Bee bird. In the Latin, I am alternately *silvia trochilus*, *cucculis trochilus*, and *trochilus asilus*. It is a sad thing that the learned, at least, cannot agree a

little better. I should like, for instance, to be known all over the world as *silvia trochilus*. Why should I not? "*Silvia!*" there is something soft and gentle and pastoral in the very sound. It is music in itself; and I flatter myself it expresses my character very well. But *cucculis!* who ever heard of such a name for a pretty songster? it can hardly be uttered without choking.

Do then, my kind friend, lend your aid. Call me, and write me down, *silvia trochilus*. It may seem of little importance; for a name, some may say, is nothing. I cannot agree with them, for a name is a key, and sometimes the only one, that will unlock what we wish to lay open and examine.

You may have seen *me*. I am a little more

than five inches long. My back of a yellowish green ; the under part of my body white ; my breast and part of my wings and tail-feathers a pale, whitish yellow ; and there is a dull streak over my eye, which distinguishes me from my cousin the wood wren, in whom it is bright yellow.

You may have seen *my nest*. An old strawberry bed is rather a favourite site with me. Periwinkles, too, are very suitable plants for me to make my dwelling in.

But I do not dislike a bank, or the root of a tree, or bush ; and as to the structure of my nest, I am not so closely tied down in my materials as some birds. Sometimes I raise a framework of dried grass ; indeed this is my most common plan ; but I have been known to

use little fibrous roots instead ; and if the gardener has left any nice strips of bass-mat in my way, I can plait them together with dry leaves so firmly that you may roll it along like a ball on the ground without spoiling it, which is not the case with my *grassy* nests. Sometimes I mix with the hay bits of moss, and slips of bark ; but you may depend upon me for having a good feather-bed. I make no point of having always the same outer walls ; but plenty of feathers within, I will have.

I am sorry to complain of any one ; but really the gardeners are not kind to me. If by any chance they find my nest in the strawberry-bed they destroy it without mercy. They mistake the matter. They confound us with the petty chaps, monstrous devourers of ripe

cherries. But we have no taste for fruit : even when we are very hungry, and it is put before us, we cannot be induced to touch it : yet we allow that there is a show of reason in the gardeners' bad opinion, for often we are seen on the cherry-trees, pecking at the leaves, close to the fruit. All our pains, however, I can assure them, are directed to the buds and leaves, which we free from caterpillars and other insects.

When you have found my nest you will see that I have a good notion of protecting myself from the weather. I have a comfortable dome over my head, and a nice little side-door, to creep in at. I do not lay more than seven eggs ; that number I have found enough for my management, and am only surprised at my re-

lation. the little brown wren, encumbering herself with such large families. I am a very neat creature, extremely fond of washing in cold water; and when at large and flying about in the fields, this always does me good. But should you ever catch one of my race, and make him a prisoner in a cage, I should advise you not to indulge him in this too freely; for a daughter of mine was lately killed by the kindness of a gentleman who, knowing her neat habits, placed a pan of water in her cage. As usual, she ran eagerly to her bath; but, not having the liberty of bustling about in the air immediately after it, and rubbing herself dry against the leaves and twigs, she was seized with a fit of the palsy, and never sang again. You must also remember that my species are

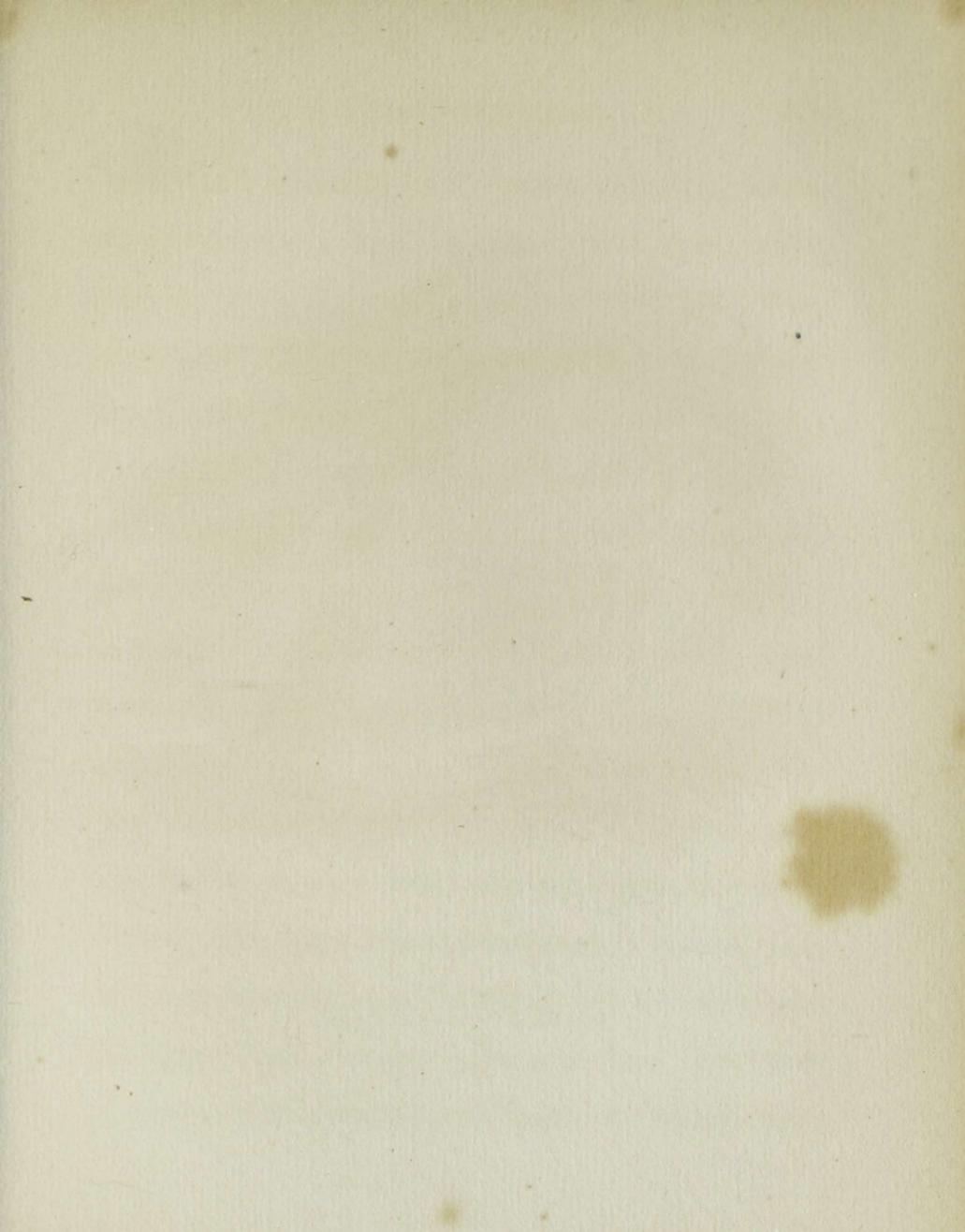
not accustomed to winter in your climate. We are birds of passage, and leave you the beginning of October, and you will not see us again till the latter end of March. Our habits, therefore, are not like those of the brown wren. As for us, when we reach warmer countries, we may continue to bathe as long as we please; but our cousins, I am told, prudently content themselves with throwing dust over their backs instead of water.

It is not becoming to praise oneself, but most people think I am a very pretty songster; and my voice is so loud that I can be heard even above the nightingale. I am also easily tamed, and not ungrateful for kindness; but truth obliges me to confess, that among my companions I am hasty and turbulent. Once let me

be engaged in single combat, and I am persevering and relentless as a game-cock.

As to my history during my winter migration, I would rather not tell you that. It is agreed between myself and some other birds of passage, that though our doings may be very fairly canvassed in those countries to which we make our long visits, the enquirers have no right to pursue us into foreign parts. *There* we do not trouble them. Andalusia may give us her fruits, and we may sing our songs in the gardens of the Alhambra, or visit the banks of the noble Niger. But with all this it seems to us that English people have nothing to do ; and we are resolved to keep our own counsel. When we come back, it is enough for them if we come in

good humour, and are ready to sing them our best songs, and behave ourselves conformably to their customs; but the rest is our own affair, and I am determined not to gratify impertinent curiosity.





GOLDEN-CRESTED WREN.

THE GOLDEN-CRESTED WREN.

“ANOTHER wren!”—Yes, indeed ; and pray why should there not ? especially as I happen to be the only crowned head in the whole wren family, which is, as you have seen, a very numerous one. Some among them, I must say, are as little like real, regular wrens as I am like a raven. But let that pass ; we little wrens have very liberal enlarged minds, and tolerant dispositions : only, if the willow-wren, and the little brown creature that has been chattering to you, do not think it worth their

while to mention me, it is high time I should assert the honour of my crest. I only heard quite by accident what was going on, or I should have been here before. The long-tailed tit-mouse was talking so loud to his little ones in the larches, that I could not help staying to listen, though I was very busy at the time; and I heard Bottle Tom say, how abominable it was in the other tits to speak so little to you of him: so, thought I, depend upon it my cousin wrens have been before *me*; and I will take care to let the young gentleman know there is such a bird as the golden-crested wren.

Allow me to arrange my feathers: there! now you see me to better advantage. It happens very often, I understand, that my crest is not observed, in consequence of my position,

or of my darker feathers being somewhat ruffled. I plume myself upon being the smallest bird in England. They tell me, indeed, that I am only half the weight of the brown wren, which I can hardly credit; but if it be true, it proves that I must be much more slim and elegant in my make, since I am scarcely shorter than he; but then my bill is more slender and light.

I understand one of these brown wrens came to you in winter, and complained a great deal of the cold. Poor creatures! they are wonderfully tender. As for me, I cannot say I care so much about the weather. I am so *very* busy always, I really have no time to think of it.

You have "never seen me before." I do

not wonder at that : I like the very tops of the trees ; and, being small and never still for a moment, you cannot often get a view of me. We whisk about, now on this side, now on that, in a way that defies observation.

“ What are we so busy about,” do you ask ? Oh ! I could not tell you half the wonderful things we do. A good deal is for fun : we like tumbling and dancing of all things ; and then we have our nest to make, and our families to rear.

You have heard the long-tailed tit speak of his nest : well, ours is nearly as beautiful. We hang it, for the most part, under the broad bough of a fir, or cedar, or yew ; and if the bough above forms a good shelter, we build no dome. Nothing can be neater than our way

of working, with green moss and lichens, felted with wool, and lined with the down of willows and a quantity of soft feathers ; such a number, indeed, that I do assure you when my mate sat upon her eggs this summer she was quite buried in the down, and I was afraid it was too warm and close for her health. However she survived it, and hatched me ten little ones ; and I must tell you of a singular disaster that happened to them. We were not so careful as usual in making the bottom of our nest strong enough to hold our large family ; and a few days after they were hatched, while I was abroad looking for insects, it gave way, and all our young ones fell on the ground. Only conceive the distress of my mate ! she flew in search of me ; but it would have been

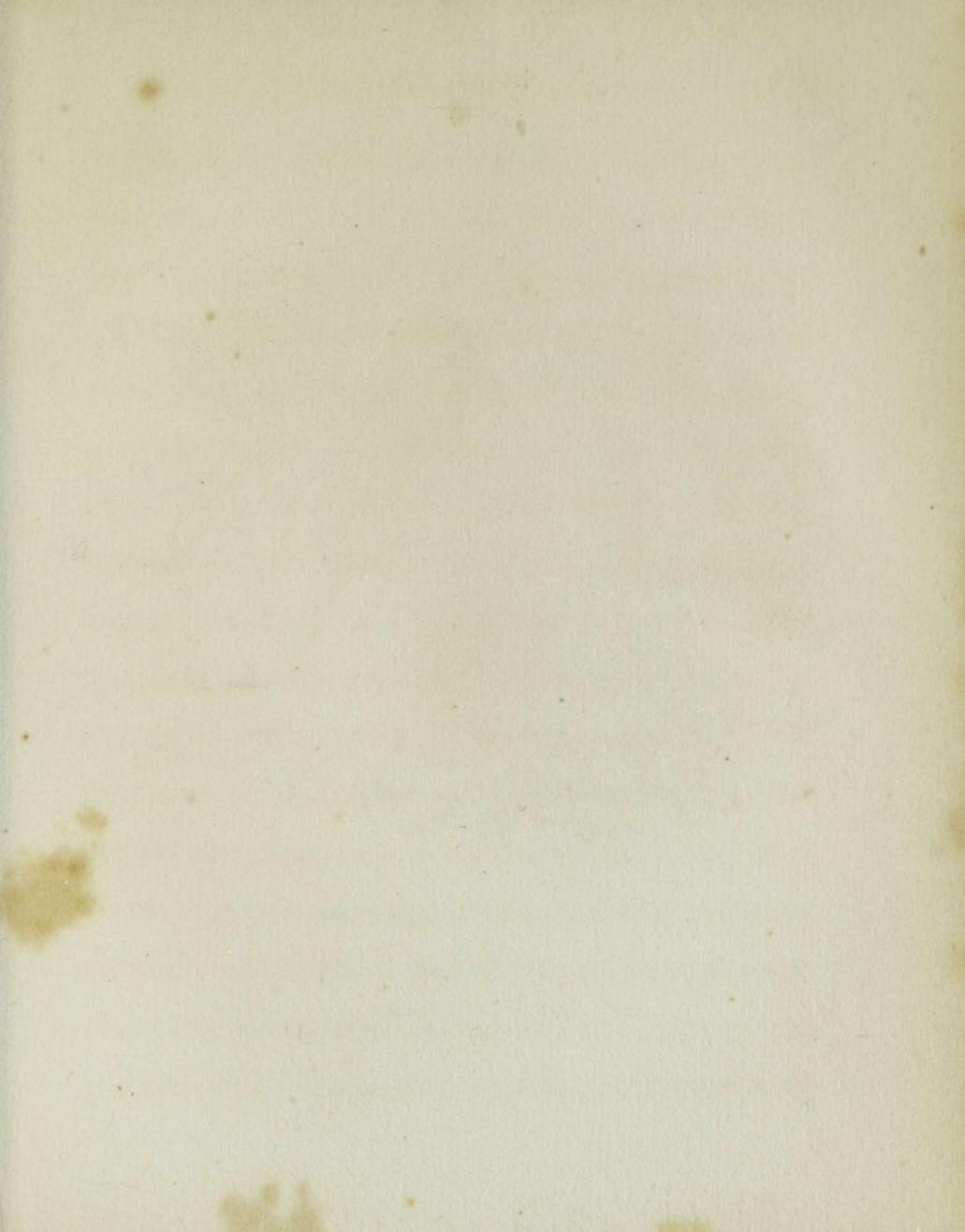
entirely out of my power to help her, and our dear nestlings would certainly have come to an early end, if a kind young lady walking that way, almost immediately after, had not seen them on the ground. She understood in a moment the whole case, found the nest, and with wonderful cleverness fixed in the bottom, and sewed a large leaf over it; a laurel leaf, I believe. Well, then she picked up all our dear little ones, restored them to their warm bed, and I leave you to judge of the delight of their mother and me. Yet even this obligation could not conquer our shyness; and, though we peep at Miss P. from the top of our trees, and are always happy to see her, we have seldom allowed her to see us; which, I own, seems rather ungracious.

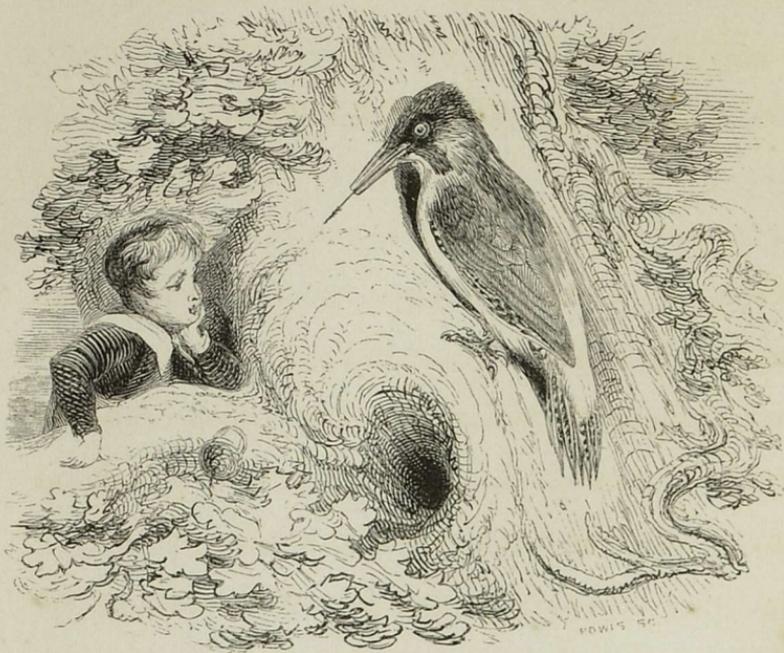
I have said that we are tolerably satisfied with your climate in winter, and do not migrate here; but we are migrants in more northerly regions. Such of us as were reared in the Shetland Isles, as soon as we are strong enough to bear the flight, come and spend the winter in the Orkneys, and more southerly parts; and then we always return to hatch our young in Shetland: and in the United States, where birds, bearing our family crest, are, I am told, very common, we come in April, and generally leave the latter part of the year.

Wherever we are found there is great friendship between us and the tits. We often bring our families to the same tree; and, though *they* like the middle story best, and *we* the

attic, there is a great deal of good-humoured invasion of one another's territories, and we sometimes dare one another to feats of tumbling. My golden-crested younkers are a pretty good match for the Bottle Toms; but for some reason or other, the members of my family are not so attached as the tits: they very soon disperse, and care but little about each other. While they are together, however, they are loving and kind; and this I suppose is the chief thing. Only let us be happy and comfortable, and when we part we shall be very happy too, no doubt, though in a different way. This is what I once said to my friend Tom Tit; and he assured me it was very like what he once heard one gentleman say to another, sitting

under his tree, and they called it PHILOSOPHY: and then Tom whisked his tail, and looked grand; for he piques himself on listening accurately. I do not care what they call it, but it is very pleasant to feel as I have said.





THE WOODPECKER.

THE WOODPECKER.

WELL, let the other birds go, if they please, and tell their stories ;—what is that to me ? I have taken care to drum upon my old hollow tree loud enough for them to know that I am here, and quite ready to answer any questions that may be asked ; but they who wish to be acquainted with me must visit me at my own house, for the woodpecker is nothing without his tree. My dear old oak ! how happy I am in having found such a home !

The wood I was reared in was a pleasant one,

and my mother always spoke much in praise of poplars ; but on the whole I am sure I have done wisely in travelling so far, and fixing my abode at last here, where we are not overdone with woodpeckers, and where there are plenty of old trees which seem almost to ask for my aid in clearing them of the insects that are devouring them. There seems no reason why my mate and I should not rear up a fine brood of young ones here ; and I hope the owner of the wood will thank me for the favour I am doing him.

Stay ! while I am waiting, I may as well try what sort of a sound I can draw from some of these other trees ; for we must remember our young ones will wish to establish themselves another year. TAP : *that* wont do ! the wood

is as sound as possible. I must leave that for ages to come. Let me try this beech—TAP! TAP! that is better; perhaps it may be a great grand-child's portion. I do not think it will be ready, however, these ten years. That pollard ash; (TAP!) much better; it has really a very pretty hollow sound; it will do in less time; in two or three summers, perhaps, it will be no very tough job to scoop a hole in it big enough for a nest for my grand-children. Meantime it will furnish me with many a meal. I can see that there are myriads of insects just under the bark, and plenty of work going on in the branches. But that old elm yonder; really that is a most delightful tree. No occasion for me to try it now; I sounded it in three places yesterday, and they all gave out

charming music. How my children will bless me, by and by, for having chosen them such a place as this ! Why, it is a legacy for ages ! Woodpeckers after woodpeckers may live and die here, and enjoy domestic happiness with the least possible trouble.

Where can my mate be ? Oh ! I hear him ; he heard me tapping just now, and has begun the same sport. There he is, drumming away ; and the sound rolls through the woods, and echoes again from the opposite bank of the stream, till you would think a dozen of us were at work.

What a pity it is that a fine old wood like this should not be able to tell its own tale ! My own oak, now : how many entertaining accounts it might give me, as I sit within on

my eggs, of all the strange things it has seen! My mother used to tell me that her parents were reared in an oak, and that they had heard very long histories of things that had happened three or four hundred years ago. I dare say this house of mine is as old as any in the kingdom. There is still a good deal of life in the branches ; and I see signs of a crop of acorns this year ; but the inside of the trunk is so empty that if it were not for the boughs I should not have taken such a fancy to it. The other day I heard some gentlemen talking about it, as they stood looking up at the tree ; and I kept very close, determined to hear what could be said. “ Ah ! ” said one, “ and is this the great oak that was planted in the reign of king John ? what a fine old ruin. ” “ The

very same," replied the other. "You see it is quite hollow, and useless as timber ; but I shall keep it as long as it will stand as a curiosity ;" and then they said something about one Robin Hood, which I did not understand ; and they spoke of the beautiful deer, which in past times used to browse on the green turf around ; and they sighed and groaned, as if there was nothing now worth seeing in the woods. I had a great mind to show myself just then ; for I could not help thinking, if the gentlemen knew what beautiful birds the woodpeckers were, it would be a great consolation to them ; but, not being certain how they would receive me, I thought it better to be quiet.

And here, at last, is my mate : how very

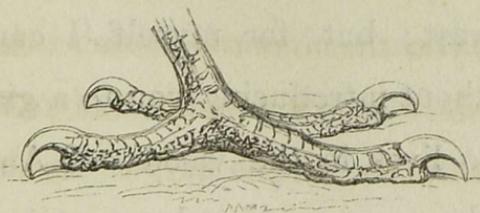
handsome he is ! Such a rich glossy green ; such a brilliant red crown ; and such bright yellow feathers towards the tail ! and then such a beak as *that* is a fortune to a bird—it is meat, drink, and habitation. His little joyous cry, too, what a pleasant sound it is !

If any one wishes to see my nest, it is not very difficult to reach. I have taken care to scoop out the hole pretty deep, and to open it under a bough, so that not every idle school-boy may see it ; but those who are really curious, and do not wish to harm me, may look in. I must just tell you, however, that we have a clever, quick way of playing bo-peep with a passer by : we glide round the tree so as always to be on the opposite side to the observer ; and then, as we carry in no moss,

or feathers, or other material for the lining of our nests, there is nothing to betray us : we merely make the hole, and lay our eggs on the soft, powdery bark. Four or five of them there generally are ; and when our young come out, they live on the tree for some time before they attempt to fly any further.

We are capital at catching ants ; and here I must tell you that our tongue is as useful to us as our bills. It is six inches long, and barbed, so that it draws out the larger insects as with a hook ; and it is supplied with a sticky, glutinous fluid at the tip, so that the smaller ones are caught upon it as with bird-lime. If you could watch us when feeding, you would be astonished at the quantity of insects we thus catch and devour. We are enabled to

support ourselves on the trunks of upright trees by means of our short, strong legs, and hooked claws. Indeed our feet are so remarkably fitted for the purpose, that I should like to give any one a particular lesson on the subject, who has time and patience to attend to me. "See here!" I would say, "this foot of mine



is yoke-toed:" that is, two of its toes are turned back, and two forward, and the two front are yoked together at the place where the leg ends and the foot begins. Thus I am able to walk up a branch, while my strong,

stiff tail serves me as a support behind ; but I cannot come *down* very cleverly : I am obliged to come backwards ; and though I *stand* and peg at the hole in the tree very safely, I am not equal to my neighbours, nut-hatch and tree-creeper, in running over it just where they please. I dare say they will tell *their* stories ; for indeed they have much to tell of their life in the forest ; but, for myself, I cannot take leave without introducing you to a giant of my race, who lives in the woods of America. I myself, the green woodpecker, or *picus viridis*, am thirteen inches long ; but he, the ivory-billed woodpecker, who is also called *picus principalis*, is twenty ; and his beak is an inch broad at the base, of the colour and hardness of ivory, and half an inch of the tongue is as

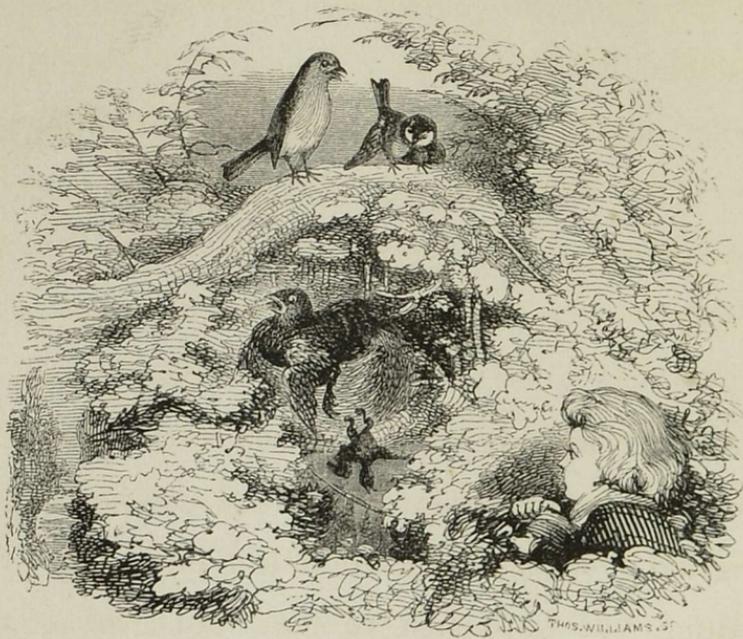
hard as horn, flat and pointed, and barbed. He is the prince of our people, by all accounts, and chooses royal palaces for his dwelling. No common tree will content my cousin *picus principalis*: no common forest. The cypress swamps, where enormous trees rear their lofty heads to heaven, are his favourite abodes. There he is the grand performer. Hour after hour his loud double-drum is sounding; and, if you can make your way through the under-wood, and do not lose yourself among the thick twisted rhododendrons and hemlocks, you will have no difficulty in seeing where he has been. There, I am told, you will find cartloads of bark lying under the pines, enough to make you think a dozen woodmen had been at work. No; none but the wood-

pecker: you may gaze at the trees in wonder and dismay. At first you can think no otherwise than that he is a reckless wretch, worthy of nothing but punishment. It is not so: thousands of towering pines would be laid low in one season by one insect, if it were not for him. The enemy "lodges between the bark and the tender wood, and drinks up the very vital part of the tree:"* and you would see more of them standing without bark or leaf, a miserable spectacle in the space of a few months, if it were not for the woodpecker. Such a surgeon as he is! no gentle glancing over the surface of a diseased part; but deep, deep cutting and probing.

I could also tell you of my other American

* Wilson.—American Ornithology.

cousins. They are not so large as the ivory-billed bird; but as spirited. Some of them are less in repute among the farmers, because they attack the Indian corn; and one of the race is a great devourer of the apples; a most unfair one too, since he is the daintiest fellow that can be, and is sure to single out the best tree and the finest fruit. Well, nobody can say this of me. I trouble no one; and if any man grudges me an old tree or two in the wood, I only say that I wish he may never be in want himself of a covering over his head, and food to eat; and I wish that he would walk into the woods with the pleasant and simple feeling of a child, and then I think he would be all the happier for seeing the happiness of our race.



ROBIN RED-BREAST AND CUCKOO.

THE ROBIN RED-BREAST

AND

CUCKOO.

HEN RED-BREAST. (*To the boy.*) Yes; I see you are admiring me: and indeed you are not singular. I *am* a very wonderful bird! Such a thing has happened to me! Just come a little way down the lane to my nest, and you shall see. *There!* did you ever in your life see a young robin so large as that? Be so kind as to come a little nearer, for it has the trick of opening its mouth so wide when my mate

and I come near, that you can see little else, unless you look closely :—a little nearer if you please. There : I will get upon this thorn while you peep in.

But soft ! what have we here ; you are treading on something that belongs to me. As sure as I am a red-breast, it is one of my own poor little robins that I left in the nest a few minutes ago ; the poor pet has certainly tumbled out and been killed. I must speak to my large nestling, and beg her to be so kind as to take better care of the other little one.

Stay ! now you can have a good view of it. Quite a superior bird, you see : something not at all in the common way. The tail so long, and the colours very different from those of

robins in general. I am sure my mate is extremely unreasonable not to be delighted with it. Here he comes, however, with a fine worm. —Well, Robin, dear; you look tired! Come, sit down by me on this perch, and rest yourself a little time.

ROBIN. Rest! rest! my dear. How is it possible one should have any time for rest with such a great, ugly, ravenous creature as that in the nest?

HEN. Nay, Robin, now you are downright cross; I am sure you must allow it is very handsome.

ROBIN. I allow no such thing, Mrs. Red-breast; it is an ugly, voracious, selfish thing. I am sure you cannot know that it has thrown one of our own dear little ones out of the nest.

HEN. Indeed, Robin, I do know it, and am very sorry; but I dare say it was entirely accident. You must give him some of your excellent advice, for you know, my dear, I always trust to you, with your good sense, to talk to the chicks when they are naughty.

ROBIN. Talk to them, indeed! that will not bring my poor son Robin to life. How in the world did you come to hatch such a monster?

HEN. And pray, my dear, will you tell me how I could possibly have helped it? I found the egg, as you very well know, in the nest one day when we had been out, and I showed it you directly. You know I told you it was bigger than my own, and not the same colour; but I little looked for so large a bird from it.

* See Note at the end of the story.

If you did not like it you should have thrown it out ; but, on the contrary, I am certain you looked quite pleased.

ROBIN. No such thing, my dear, I was not pleased at all ; but *you* looked so proud and happy that I did not like to mortify you : and then, since the bird has been hatched, you have done nothing but admire it, and gossip with the neighbours about it, while I am to have all the trouble of feeding this prodigy of yours. You do not even stop at home to keep it from doing mischief : and there are all the neighbours laughing at you the whole time.

HEN. Laughing, Robin ! No, sure, you must be mistaken ; they are quite envious of us, I am certain !

ROBIN. Excuse me, Mrs. Red-breast, but

I cannot be mistaken. I heard neighbour Wagtail chattering with Mrs. Titling as I came by just now; and she says she has a cousin who had just such a child last spring, and it was nearly the death of her: she hopes she shall never have the ill-luck to have such another. Then there were a party of sparrows jabbering all together, and laughing at us with all their might. "A pretty piece of business chalked out for the robins," said one. "Do you know they have got a young cuckoo to bring up!"—"Time they should have their turn," said another; "I had it last year; but it shall never happen to me again, if I can help it. I will push the ugly thing out before it has had time to do me any mischief, I am determined."—"But do you

hear," said another, "how mightily proud Mrs. Red-breast is of her charge? She has been all round the grove this afternoon to tell us what a fine bird there is in her nest." And then they all chattered and laughed to such a degree, that if I had not been sobered, I should certainly have flown in among them, and chastised them for their insolence.

HEN. Better not, Robin; better not, my dear mate. You know you have often allowed to me that you *are* of rather a hasty temper, and wish you could learn to curb it. Come, let me help you to smooth your feathers a little; and then, perhaps, my dear, you will indulge us with a song. (*Cuckoo screams.*)

ROBIN. Song, indeed! It will be long enough before that creature learns music! I

declare it is screeching for food again already ; and our other little red-breast has not had more than a single worm this morning. What *am* I to do ?

HEN. Stay where you are, Robin, and let *me* have my turn this time. I am rather delicate, it is true, and cannot fly far ; but I will bring a worm from the brook.

ROBIN. No, no ; *that* you shall not, indeed. I am rested now, and will set out again directly : only promise me, my dear, that you will stay at home, and see that all goes on right till I come back. I would not lose our other little bird for all the great things that ever were hatched.

HEN. Well, I will, I will ! There ; you see I am on the nest now : no harm can possibly happen. (*Robin departs.*)

HEN. So, little boy, you are still there : I am very glad of that ; for I wanted you to admire my nestling more leisurely. That mate of mine is a worthy fellow ; but he does want *taste* sadly. He does not know a beautiful bird when he sees it. Now, as I have often observed you peering about here, I dare say you do ; and I have the greatest pleasure in welcoming you. I will just hop upon the next bough, and you can look as much as you please.

Apropos : here is my neighbour Mrs. Titling. I can never believe she is so ill-natured as Robin says ; but we will see. Well, neighbour Titling ! you are come to look at my new nestling at last.

TITLING. Why, yes, Mrs. Red-breast, I had a mind to see whether it be the bird I

have heard so much of;—one that makes the oddest kind of cry imaginable, not at all like the singing of any bird I know. Aye, I see! yes; I am sorry to tell you it is the very same. A cuckoo, as sure as I am alive! This is a very unfortunate circumstance, my dear friend: I am deeply concerned for you. You really have no idea of the trouble you will have.

HEN. You do not say so, Mrs. Titling! I confess I was inclined to be pleased with the charge, and to think a great honour had been done me.

TITLING. Honour! my dear Mrs. Red-breast: do not you know that the mother of this bird is the laziest, most good-for-nothing creature that flies? Do not you know that she

makes no scruple of dropping an egg in the nests of any of her poor neighbours, and leaving them all the trouble of bringing up her child, while she never looks after one herself? It is really abominable.

HEN. Well, I am very sorry; very much shocked at what you tell me: but it strikes me,—suppose I try to bring up this bird better than her mother. What do you think of *that* scheme now, my dear Mrs. Titling? will it not be a very noble thing if any of us little birds succeed, by pains-taking, in educating young cuckoos so as that they shall never play such sad tricks again. Well; what say you?

TITLING. I do not know, Mrs. Red-breast, indeed, *what* to say. I have great doubts of

your success—most likely the sin goes by inheritance: but to tell you the truth, I had a scheme of my own, hatched between me and two or three other mothers, which we are thinking of proposing for general adoption; and that is to make all the birds sign an agreement to turn out every egg that a cuckoo lays in their nests; then we should see if the bird really *is* so hardened a wretch as people say, or whether she would not be induced to take a little trouble herself, rather than that there should be an end of the cuckoo race.

(During this dialogue the young cuckoo has been peeping out to see that he is not observed: watching his opportunity, he hoists the remaining little red-breast on his back, and throws it with a jerk out of the nest.)

HEN. No, indeed, I am not equal to that, my dear Mrs. Titling. I prefer my plan ; and only think what a triumph it will be of good over evil ! and my mate, who really *is* a generous fellow, can have nothing to say against it. He often talks of the advantages of early discipline ; this is quite a case in point,—he can begin as soon as he pleases.

TITLING. Neighbour Red-breast, be so good as to look what your foundling has done.

HEN. Oh, what will become of me ! what will become of me ! my other little red-breast thrown out too, and Robin coming home ! and I promised him not to leave the nest. Oh ! dear Mrs. Titling, tell me what I shall do !

TITLING. My dear friend, how can you ask such a question ? No doubt you will imme-

diately begin to give the cuckoo a good moral education. I thought you talked of returning good for evil.

HEN. You ill-natured creature ! now I see it is true, as Robin said, that you were all laughing at me : but what does it signify talking ? Oh ! my poor little red-breast, I shall never be able to get you into the nest again ; and I dare not stay till Robin comes home. Oh, what shall I do ! what shall I do !

TITLING. Better be off, my dear, as soon as you can, I think.

HEN. No, *that* I will not :—what ! leave all the trouble to poor Robin ; and he coming home tired and grieved ! No, thank you, neighbour Titling, for your advice ; but I *do* know better than that.

TITLING. Well, I see I can be of no further service, so I wish you good morning, Mrs. Red-breast; hoping you will have a pleasant task in bringing up your charge.

HEN RED-BREAST ALONE. (*In a melancholy tone.*) There is one thing,—one only I can do:—the poor little thing is alive, and I hope not much hurt. I will push him up into that snug corner, just at the foot of the tree, where there is plenty of warm moss, and cover him over carefully till Robin comes home; and see, here is a fine worm for him. Come, I do begin to hope he will live. Oh, I wish, though I dread to see Robin!

(*Robin returns:—she flies to him, and tells him the whole story. Robin examines the little*

bird, finds him unhurt, then seats himself by his mate.)

ROBIN. Well, my dear, I see you are very sorry, and are ready to allow this wonderful creature is no such precious treasure as you thought; and now we must think what is best to be done.

HEN. Why, you are a great deal too kind, Robin. I fully expected you would scold and storm, and perhaps peck at me furiously.

ROBIN. I am afraid to think of what I might have done if our little bird had been killed; but, perhaps, this is the best thing that could have happened; for I am convinced that great creature never would have allowed it to grow up in the nest.

HEN. An ugly, ill-tempered thing!

ROBIN. "Ugly!" my dear! I thought you considered it very handsome!

HEN. No, Robin, "handsome is that handsome does;" and *you* are very handsome, Robin.

ROBIN. Now do not flatter, and coax, or, perhaps, I *shall* be angry. Well, first, what do you think we had better do with this very beautiful bird?

HEN. Oh! I do not know; I suppose you will be for letting it take its chance.

ROBIN. There you are wrong again, Mrs. Red-breast. I should be the most miserable bird in the universe if I could do such a thing as abandon the poor creature to starve. On the contrary, I intend to feed it, and expect you will do the same, as long as it requires our

aid : and we will do our best to shelter our own little nestling in this snug hole you have found for him. He will of course require double care ; and I shall be very timid about leaving him, lest some polecat or weasel should take a fancy to him : but I trust, my dear, you will spare no pains now to guard him.

HEN. Oh, Robin ! do not trust ME. If you will but take the charge of him, I will be on the wing all day long, picking up food for him ; but do not leave me here any more.

ROBIN. Now you are my own good, humble, gentle little dame again, and I *will* trust you thoroughly. Let me see : we will take our turns with both the birds, and you shall find how nicely we will manage : and, my dear, if any of the neighbours laugh at us,

I will sing so loud a song that you shall not be able to hear them chatter. That is the way to get through the world and silence evil tongues. So do not mind about the cuckoo or any thing; but just let us take things as we have found them, and make the best of them, and we will be the happiest robins that ever were.

NOTE I, PAGE 128.

I DARE not vouch for the perception of our robins or other small birds, nor can I account for the fact that they have never, as far as I can learn, been observed to turn out a cuckoo's egg, except on the supposition that they do not know it. One may be allowed, however, to imagine that possible of one bird which

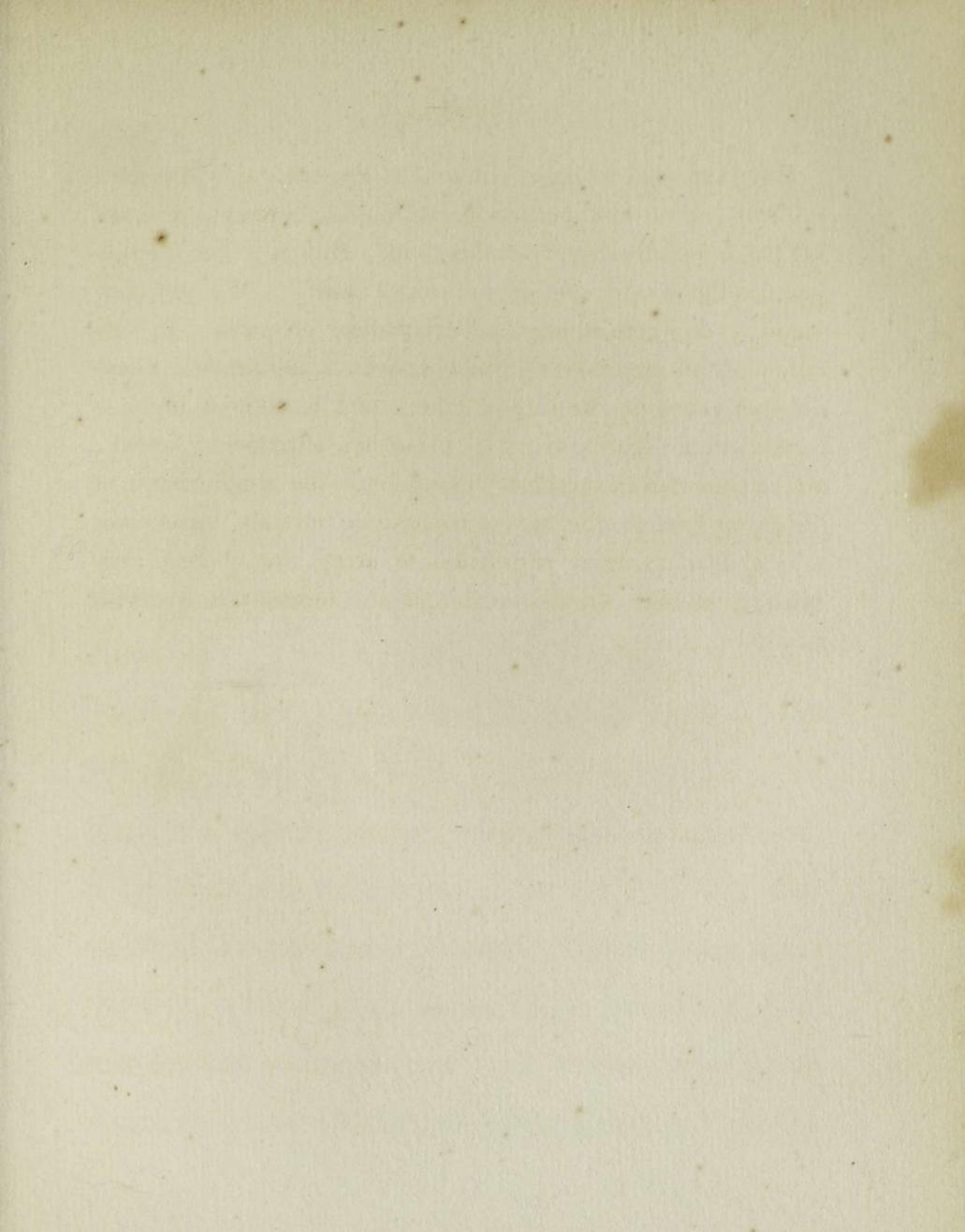
is certainly true of another, though a similar consequence may not ensue. A cat-bird was observed by Wilson during the process of forming its nest, and afterwards of incubation. When it had laid three or four eggs, Mr. Wilson took out two, and, in their place, put two of the eggs of the brown thrush, and took his stand at a convenient distance to see how the bird would behave. "In a minute or two," says he, "the male made his appearance, stooped down, and looked earnestly at the strange eggs; then flew off to his mate, with whom he seemed to have some conversation, and instantly returning, with the greatest gentleness took out both the thrush's eggs, first one and then the other, carried them singly about thirty yards, and dropped them among the bushes. I then returned the two eggs I had taken, and soon after the female resumed her place as before."

The above is curious; but what shall we say to the Samaritan-like kindness and charity of the male in the anecdote which immediately follows? "From the nest of another cat-bird I took two half-fledged young, and placed them in that of another which was sitting on five eggs. She soon turned them both out. The place where the nest was, not being far from the ground, they were little injured; and the male, observing their helpless situation, began to feed them with the greatest tenderness and assiduity."—WILSON.—AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGY, VOL. II. CONSTABLE'S EDITION.

NOTE II.

There can be no doubt, from the observations of Mr. Wilson and others, that the cow-bird, or cow-bunting, of America, lays its eggs in the nests of other birds—these birds being all considerably smaller than the parasitical one. No instance, as yet, is known in which the cow-bunting makes her own nest ; and the eggs of the birds into whose nests the intrusion is made uniformly disappear. The egg of the cow-bird is much larger than that of any one of the birds whose domicile she is kind enough to visit. The description given by Dr. Potter of the agitation of the original proprietor of the nest is diverting enough:—“ The yellow-throat returned, while I waited near the spot, and darted into her nest; but returned immediately, and perched upon a bough near the place, remained a minute or two, and entered it again ; returned and disappeared. In ten minutes she returned with the male. They chattered with great agitation for half-an-hour, seeming to *participate in the affront*, and then left the place.”—So far Dr. Potter. But *is* it an affront ? Do the naturalists understand enough of the language of birds to distinguish on this occasion the expressions of wonder, perhaps of admiration, from those of indignation ? The ascertained fact is, that the foundling egg, the subject of such wrath, is not turned out of the nest, while the eggs of the parent birds invariably, I believe, are. The presumption then is, that it is a favour rather than an affront.

But when shall we cease to marvel at Providence ! We have just seen the cat-bird pertinaciously resisting attempts to make her hatch the offspring of another bird. How is it that the cuckoo and the cow-bunting are not turned adrift ? We see their young, everywhere orphans, yet everywhere protected. In violation of all common rule and instinct, a mother-bird abandons her young to the care of others, and is allowed to be a parent without sharing either in a parent's affection or labour ; and to meet this extraordinary exception to the usual course of things, we have another, not so remarkable certainly, because not so rare, of a universal willingness to accept the charge, even when it involves the destruction of the foster-parent's whole family !





LITTLE BROWN WREN.

THE LITTLE BROWN WREN.

I HAVE no objection to other birds being called wrens, as well as myself—and a great many there are, I understand, who assume that name—but no bird beside me shall be called *troglydtes vulgaris*, that I am determined. It does not signify if you cannot understand why I have gained that name : indeed, to tell the truth, I do not know myself. That Latin dictionary, young gentleman, will not help you much ; for, though you may know enough of Latin to know that *troglydtes* means a “ dwel-

ler in caves," *that* is not the question ; but rather, why I, who never saw a cave in my life, am named so. Just so far may be said, that I hide up my nest very snugly, and sometimes build under the brow of a river's bank, where the waters, in their constant flow, have washed away the under part, and left a little overhanging turf. But then I like as well a hole in an ivied wall, and the side of a haystack, or the eaves of a thatched cottage.

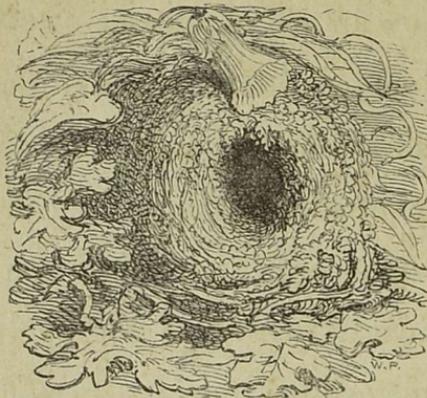
This is bitterly cold weather. I am trying to keep myself warm, I assure you ; shuffling and hopping about as fast as ever I can : but I am not at all certain that I shall get through this winter. You have no idea how sorrowful the cold makes us wrens. At all times we are gentle and peaceable as it is possible : but the

frost ! really it does pinch me so much that I am quite afraid of being made cross ; and, therefore, I dare not mix much with my fellows. I get by myself, and bear it as well as I can ; and if they will but let me into the cow-house, I dare say the cattle will keep me warm. I shall take up very little room there, I am such a tiny little morsel of life ; and I look even shorter than I am, because, instead of carrying my tail in the direction of my back, I set it up erect, almost like a turkey-cock. They tell me altogether I am about four inches long. I am quite aware that I am not handsome. Indeed, I have no idea of being admired, and I keep very much to myself and my family, and only desire to live as He who made me *meant* me to live. I suppose a great gay bird

was made for some rather different purpose ; but we, little brown wrens, are in general very happy. And we have heard that there is nothing too small for the great Maker of all to attend to : so we go on building our nests as our mothers did before us, as we suppose other birds will build when we are gone. It is pretty work, just doing as wrens were meant to do, without thinking of any thing else.

If I were in the warm cow-house now, or the sun were to break out and melt away this frost, I could sing you one of my most cheerful songs ; and you would feel in a moment that the bird who could pipe away so merrily must be happy ; but you have called me out in such a pinching day, that really I can hardly chirp, much less sing.

Well! now I have warmed myself by a little hopping about, and met with a few nice insects, I will tell you about my nest. Let me build with what material I may, nobody can say I am slovenly: on the contrary, I always take the greatest pains to work neatly and strongly; but I do not always use the same things, nor shape my house in the same way; for if there be no sheltering pent-house just over my head, I make myself a dome, and if there be, I am content without it. Also, though in general I prefer using a great deal of beautiful green moss, yet if I build in a hay-stack, grass will sometimes serve me. I *line* well with hair, wool, feathers, and down.

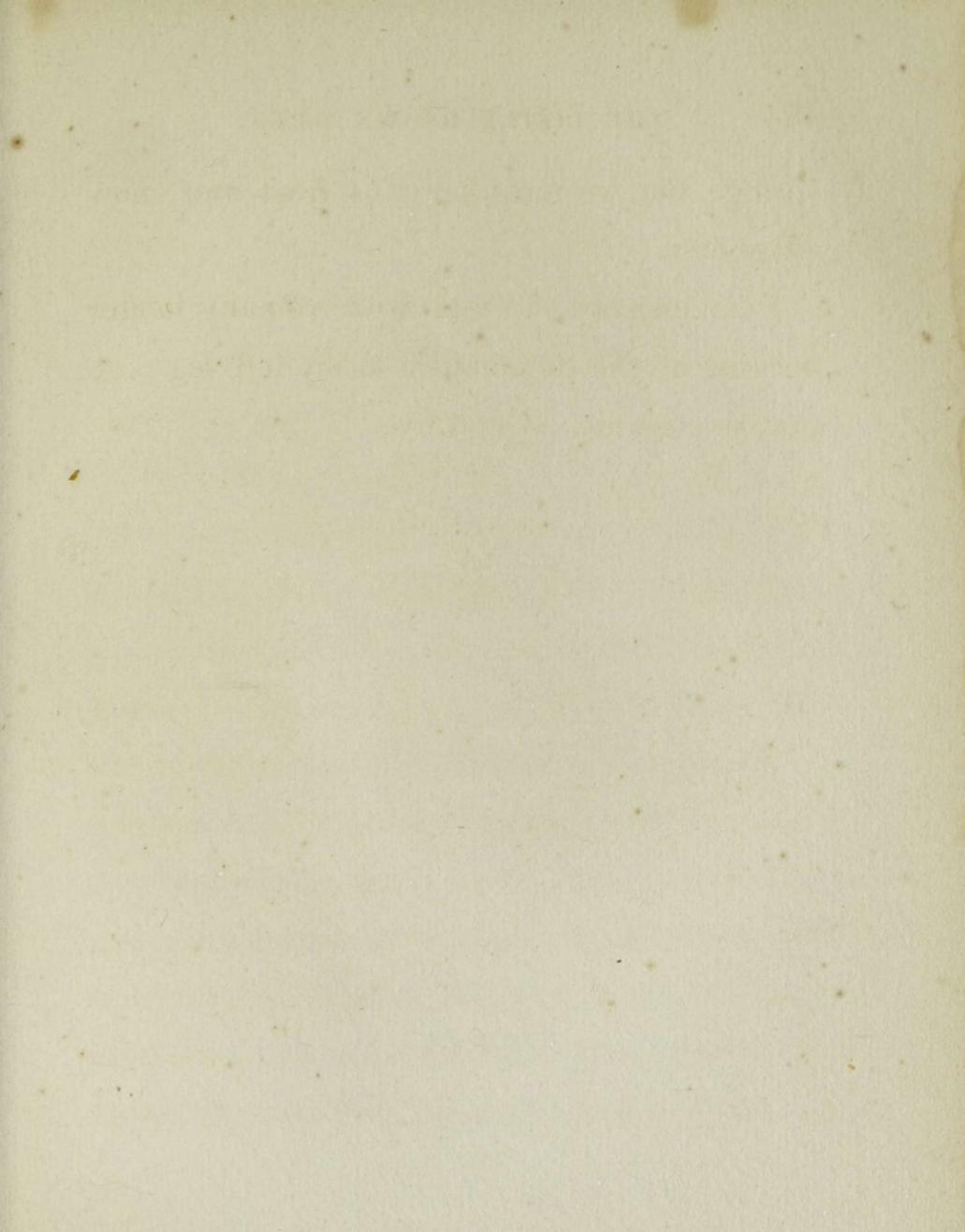


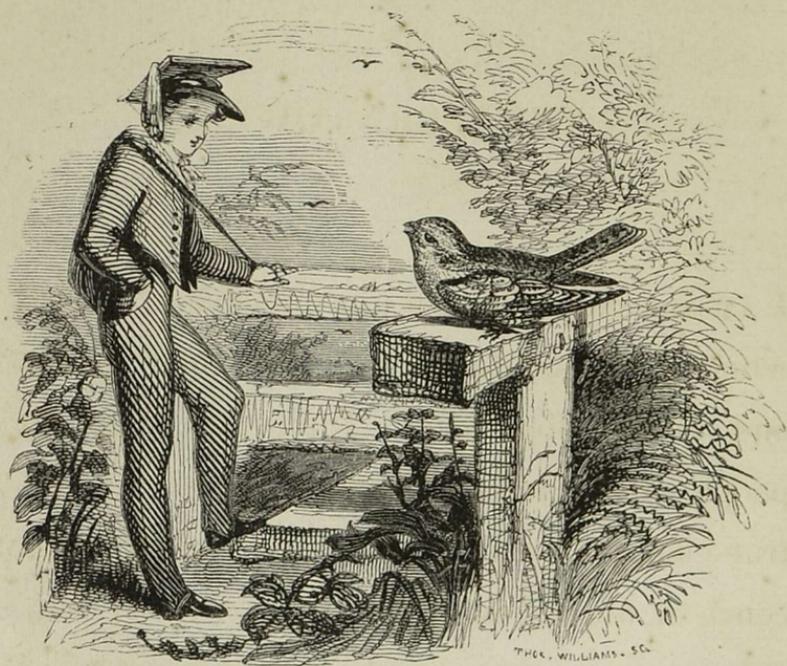
That is but a foolish story which the boys tell of my mate's nests—"cock-nests" they call them. I assure you our cock birds are not such simpletons as to spend their time in making several other houses near our own, while we are sitting on our eggs. The fact is, that we are often obliged to leave our nests before they are finished ; if we have reason to think they are discovered ; and so these wise people have fancied that our mates have been

building as well as ourselves. I can answer for mine:—he helped me to make that in which I hatched last summer, and was very kind in sitting near me and singing to me while I sat: and then when our little ones were hatched, and there were twelve of them, he took his full share in feeding them. Do you ask what is become of him and them?—Why, indeed I do not know. And if you question me very closely, perhaps I must say I do not care. We wrens love all other wrens so well, that we have not a great deal of affection to spare for particular individuals; and my mate and young, I suppose, are of my mind. But I have my eye on a very substantial, proper-looking cock at this very time, and I believe he is thinking of me too; very likely he will be my mate next

spring; but we must see this frost and snow away first.

I cannot stay and talk with you any longer because of the rheumatism in my left leg; so pray excuse me. Good bye!





FERN OWL.

THE FERN OWL.

I AM anxious to have a place among the birds whom you are catechising about their history and habits, for though I am happy to say people are beginning to open their eyes to my true character, and I constantly hear my innocence of all bad propensities asserted by competent persons, my race have had a very long struggle for common justice. It is hardly half a century since one Mr. White of Selborne protested that we were utterly incapable of doing the mischief imputed to us ; that we

never could, by any possibility, milk goats ; nor, said he, were we the least likely to wound cattle with our bills. He said very true ; but prejudice is strong, and a bad name was still fastened upon us. The fern owl was still called the goat-sucker in English, and in Latin *capri-mulgus*, which keeps up the error. Let me entreat you, kind friend of birds, whenever *you* talk Latin about me, rather to call me *nyctichelidon*. This is my latest name,—given me by a gentleman who knows me well ; and I see no objection to it, except that it may be a little hard to spell and pronounce at first sight ; but for the sake of justice, you, I am confident, will soon overcome that small difficulty. Then, in English, you may always call me the fern owl.

I am really very harmless, except to nocturnal moths, and night-flying insects. What the swallow does for you in the broad noon-day, I do in the twilight—and later. *He* clears the air of the numerous day-insects, which would otherwise be too many for your comfort and the beauty of your vegetation; and *I* do the same by those other enemies, which though less visible to you, are quite as mischievous. But I have long felt that I shall find no sympathy among other birds. The swallows rejoice and sport together all day long; but I have few companions, and, what is worse, I am taken for an enemy, and insulted and persecuted by nearly all the small birds, who mistake me for a hawk, though I have never injured them. Thus I have learned to amuse myself with my

own reflections ; and, except at such times as I come out and fly round your oak trees in an evening in search of prey, I lead the life of a very hermit.

I am certainly too of an indolent turn, and take no trouble in building my nest. On the bare ground, just at the foot of a large beech or oak tree, you may sometimes find my two dusky eggs. I come to this country in May, and I leave it early in September, and have plenty of time to rear my one small brood.

As to my person, I will not say I am of a handsome form ; but I believe it is agreed on all hands that the marking of my plumage is extremely beautiful. It is freckled and powdered with different browns ; quite an elaborate

piece of painting. You may see my picture in many books ; only I would wish to observe upon it that I am generally drawn with my mouth open, (for a reason I will explain,) and that this gives me a fierce look, which I do not possess, and takes me at a disadvantage ; because my mouth certainly *is* very large. But I do not wonder at artists ; for one very peculiar thing about me is that I possess, in common with some relations of mine in America, a set of large strong bristles on each side of my mouth.

There is only one family of us in England ; and therefore this is the more remarkable. Our bills are not unlike the swallow, except in this respect. Both of us have them so formed as that the sides do not quite close, and we can

thus carry any soft substance without crushing it ; but *we*, who hawk by night, find great convenience in the hairs I have mentioned, which both serve as feelers, and also entangle and enclose the insects we catch.

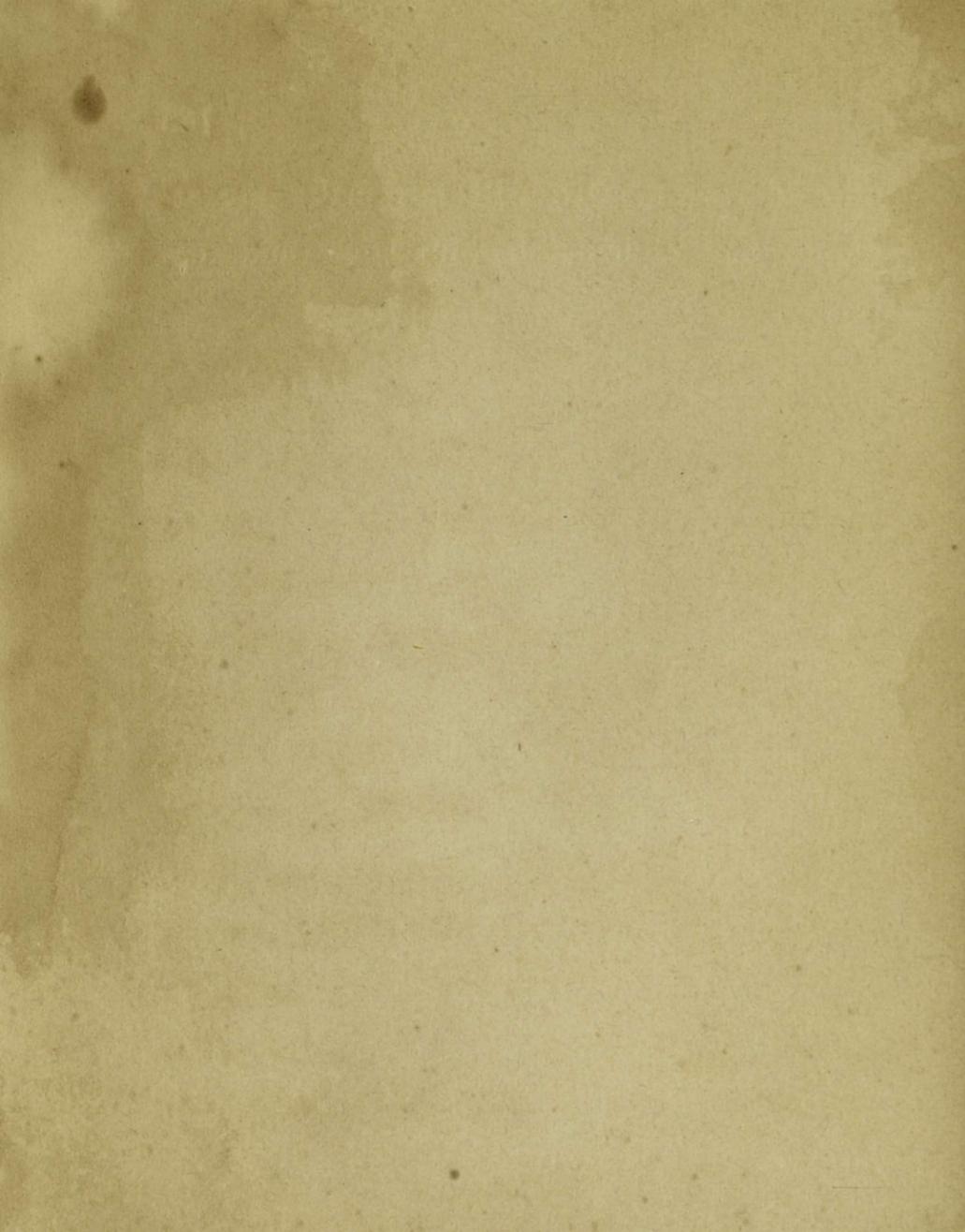
Our song is a strange one, and unlike that of other birds ; being a sort of hissing and booming, which is said to be louder, but similar to that of large beetles, when on the wing at twilight. We also produce a snapping sound, by striking our wings rather smartly over our backs when any intruder approaches our haunts ; and on such occasions we fly round his head and make all the noise we can to frighten him, but, beyond this, we are powerless.

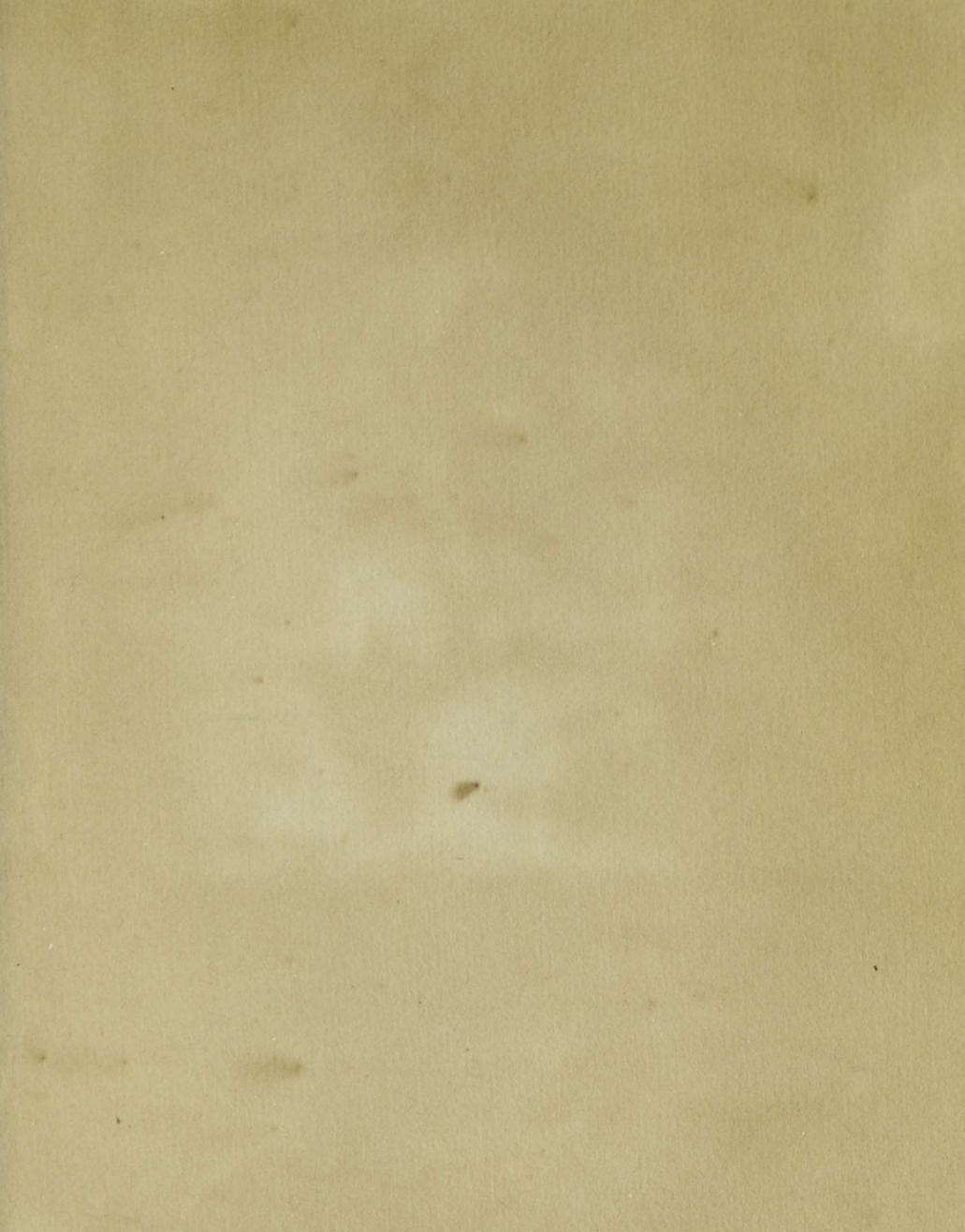
Our length is about ten inches, and our weight three ounces. Some of our American

cousins are bigger, and some smaller than this. We have two in that part of the world, called by the odd names of "chuck-Will's widow," and "whip-poor-Will," about whom I must say a few words, because they are really oddities, and worth your knowing. They are birds of passage, too, and come to North America in April; and during all that month, and the month of May, they keep up their singular call for several hours every evening, and again before the morning's dawn. Their names they gain from their song, which is, in one, an exact repetition of the words "chuck Will's widow," every syllable being distinctly pronounced, and the principal stress laid on the last word. The other, "whip-poor-Will," also utters the

words from which his name is taken. They both hawk, as I do, for large moths and insects, and have very nearly the same habits. When two or three of the “whip-poor-Wills” meet, they make a prodigious noise, and strangers cannot sleep within hearing of them. They come, too, very close to man. They will perch on his house, or the neighbouring barn, or tree; but they are rarely seen during the day, and still more rarely disturbed by the people, who like their busy chorus, and hold them in great repute;—not that I am aware of any thing in them, except their odd song, which should make them greater favourites than myself: but so it is, and I will try not to envy them; while I hope you, and those to whom I

now address myself, will not make my attempt too difficult by injustice and calumny.







EIDER DUCK.

THE EIDER DUCK.

To the North ! to the North ! Enter your strong-built ship ; and come, if you wish to come to me, over a cold Northern Ocean. You may keep the shore in view, if you please, for a good part of your way : you may survey Suffolk, Norfolk, Lincolnshire and Yorkshire, and all the eastern coast of Scotland. But, perhaps, your captain will advise you otherwise, for that coast is treacherous, and you will proceed more safely at a greater distance from the shore. There, dash through the Pentland

Frith ; leave the Orkneys on your left hand. True, I believe, you might find many of my kindred there, and in the Shetland Isles also, but I prefer calling you to my high court in Iceland. However, should it happen that you are becalmed, and can prevail on the captain to lend you a boat, you may as well look in on my friends at Sulas-Skerry. But it is not often that you will have such a chance ; and, even if you have, you may be disappointed, for our eggs and young, on this wild and lonely rock, are often woefully thinned by the gulls, who are sworn foes to us, and reign here in amazing multitudes. You see, as you draw near, what kind of place it is. The giant cliffs stand out as if in defiance of man, and all his means of access. Your heart grows

faint at the lonely, dismal spectacle before you.

Why have I sent you here, do you ask, where no human foot can ever yet have been, and where there is not a moving thing to be seen, nor a sound of life to be heard? Stay! man *has* property here;—that which will bring money and money's worth to his purse and board. It is his poultry-yard, his aviary, and every foot of rock is tenanted. Let your boat touch the little strand. Your voice cannot be heard while the surges dash and roar around you; but the sailors know what to do. One of them has climbed the rock, and sends down a broad mass of stone from the top to the bottom.

Mark! what say you now? Look at those

thousand hollows in the rock that each sends out its hosts of living creatures. As far as you can see, from the height to the shore, it is all birds, birds only. The gannet is there, and the tern, the storm petrel, the kitty wake, and the puffin, but most of all the gull. If you look to the very top of the cliff you will see the skuas, those fierce, terrible birds which even the eagles dread to approach. The poor fowlers, who resort to the island for eggs, dare not go near their nests without long sticks armed with spikes; for, when the birds see any one approach, they fall upon him with headlong fury, and the spike is an important instrument of defence. Oh! you may hear wonderful things of those fowlers—how they are let down by ropes tied round their bodies, from one

ledge of the rock to another, while they hastily fill their bags with eggs or young fowl. Sometimes there is scarce footing for them to stand upon. Sometimes they are on places where they cannot stand upright, because of the rock, which hangs over them like a ceiling, while the sea dashes and roars below. The busy, noisy tribe is roused now. The birds brush past you like a squall of wind ; you can feel the blast of their wings, and they darken the sky over your head like a cloud.

Now is the time, if you want to look at my brethren. The wilder people of the island are gone, and you may see them seated on their downy nests. You may almost touch them, so quiet are they, and gentle.

But you have looked long enough now ; and

you must come further, further. Steer on toward the North !

If all be well, in a few days you may look to find yourself in sight of a strange land :— mountains of snow stretching far and high ; and between these and your ship there will be a long stretch of nearly level land, covered everywhere with snow, though we suppose it to be in the middle of June ; and as you go on, there will be small, rocky islands, or rocks of all shapes, peeping out of the water ; but you will carefully avoid these, and in due time enter the harbour of Reikivig, in Iceland.

I have nothing to do with the town of Reikivig ; but you will, perhaps, halt there and take your walks in the neighbourhood. It is sum-

mer, as I said, and accordingly you will find little patches of verdure, and some Alpine plants, moss, and lichens, and here and there a garden, though very rare, in which you may find little turnips, potatoes, and radishes. No corn, no trees, no shrubs, not even firs. Few land-birds, only ravens, the Iceland falcon, snow-buntings, snipes, and wag-tails ; but sea-birds plenty :—cormorants, puffins, terns, and ducks of my own and other species. You may visit us, as it is summer, by day or by night—the light of our summer midnight being much like that of a dull noon-day in England ; but come when you will, you will find us. And we shall like best to welcome you to our own little island of Vidoe, about four miles from the main land. In every little hollow, in

every place where a nest can possibly be contrived, you will see an eider duck. Stroke us ! we are not to be disturbed. Our kind masters guard us well, and provide us every comfort, and in return we enrich him with our eggs and down.

We form our nests of marine plants ; but we line them with our own down, that beautiful down which we pluck off our breasts for the purpose : as each egg is laid in the nest, we cover it with more of the same warm and delicate covering. If allowed to remain undisturbed, we seldom lay more than four, of a pale olive-green colour, rather larger than those of a common duck ; but as we are made here the property of man, we are enticed to part with more of our beautiful down, by the removal of our

eggs, which leads us to keep laying for several weeks, still covering them with a fresh supply, to which our protectors help themselves freely. In this way they will cheat us of half-a-pound apiece in the course of a summer ; and this they sell, I am told, for about six shillings.

Our eggs, too, are favourite food. Sometimes the Icelanders boil them hard, and serve them up with sauce of sugar and cream: sometimes they are hastily cooked in those wonderful boiling waters with which the island abounds.

No animal of prey is allowed to approach us. The cat and the dog are banished from Vidoe while we are rearing our young ; and if a fox appears, our masters spare no pains to be rid of him.

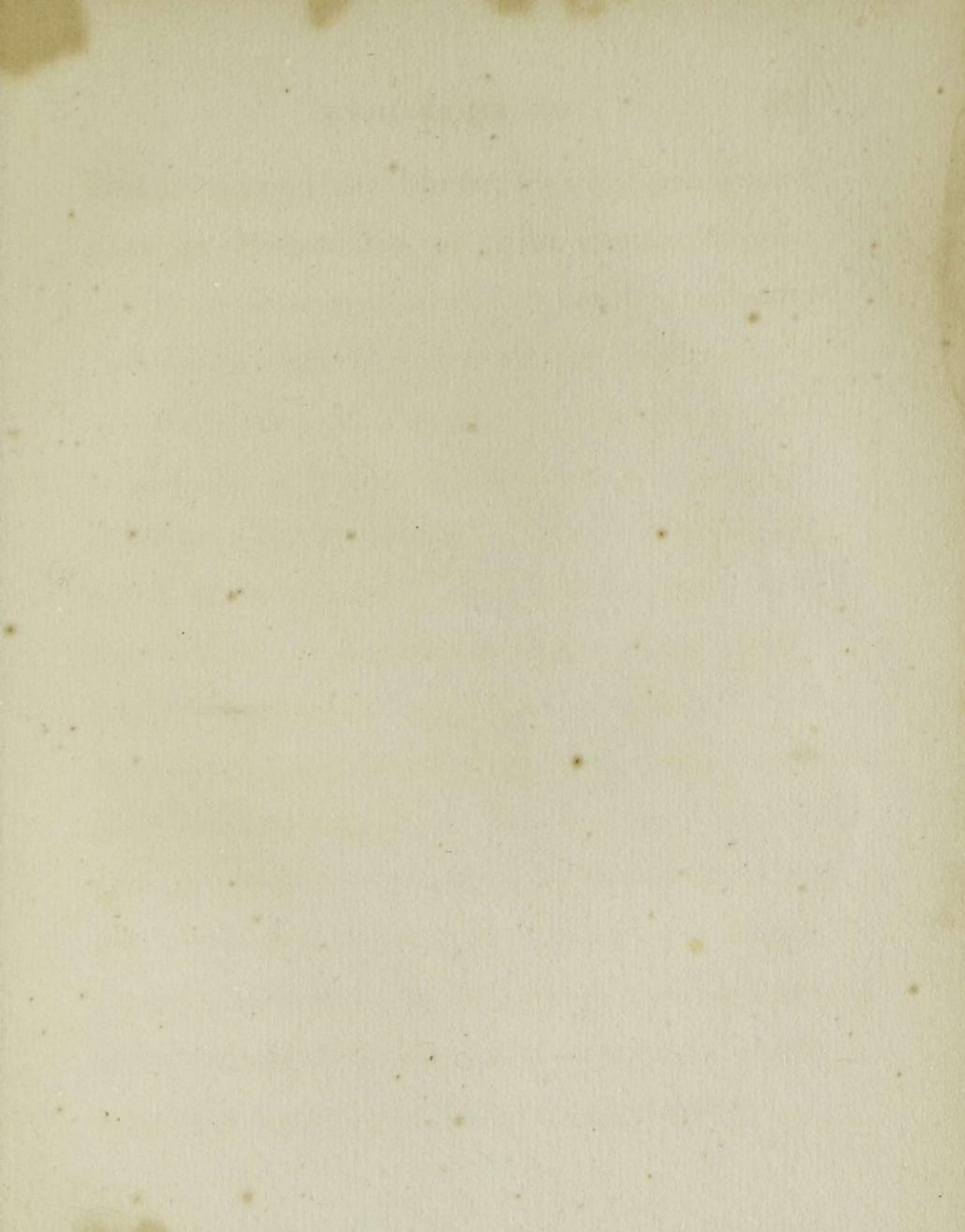
Our colour, you see, is pale yellowish brown, mottled with lighter shades, and with black. Our wings dusky, with rust-coloured edges.

We move toward the south in the winter, if the weather be very severe, and the sea choked with ice; if not, we stay where we are. We swim on the surface of the waves in large flocks, making sometimes long excursions by day, but returning at night; and, though we are so plump and soft in our make, our flight is exceedingly rapid;—not less, when we please, than between seventy and eighty miles in an hour.

And now, though I shall never return your visit in my own proper person, yet when the cold winter nights come, perhaps you may be

glad to creep under a coverlet which I have stripped my breast to prepare. There it lies, the warmest, the lightest, the softest covering that nature has ever given and art applied. It is much that man has learned its use : but do not let him fancy it was made but for him. He who made the bird cares for what he has made, and gives it its downy cushion to guard it, and to guard its young from the bitter colds of the North. I suppose you very often think of this ; for so wise and clever a being as I have heard man is, must surely know how to be thankful for himself and for us too. And though our praises may do our Maker no good, yet I have understood that he loves to see his creatures happy, and full of love to him who has made them so. But I must leave it to man's own

conscience ; for it would ill become me, a poor Northern bird, to set myself up as a preacher to him.





GER, JER, OR GYR-FALCON.

THE GER, JER, OR GYR-FALCON.

Boy. Bird, wonderful bird ! stay one instant, and do not mock me thus by your rapid flight. I saw you yesterday, I see you again to-day ; but I do not believe you belong to this land. I do not think you have a home and little ones in England : your look is wild and foreign ; you seem scarcely to rest your wing for a moment among us ; you make havoc among the birds ; you take *what* you like, and *when* you like ; as you come, so you go. Does any body know your story and your home ?

FALCON. I come from an island far to the north, where the icy winter winds would chill your poor little frame, and the summer sun would scarce have power enough to make your small garden gay. I come from the haunts of the eider duck and the puffin; and I have but flown over here just to make my noon-day meal. You say true; I do not belong to this country. I shall be in Iceland again to-night; and when I may come hither again depends on various things—on the weather, on my appetite, or my own wish to roam.

Boy. From Iceland do you come? * What, from that island which is full five-hundred miles from us in Scotland? And you left it but this morning, and you return to-night?

* See Note 1.

Wonderful! Of what can your wings be made, rapid bird! that they bear you thus swiftly on?

FALCON. Something more than an hundred miles an hour, I believe, indeed, I may have travelled.* Nothing extraordinary that, however, since you surely know that my cousin Peregrine can manage a hundred and fifty in the like time; and besides, my child, you have seen me rush forward to catch my prey, when my speed was more than five times what I have said. No matter of wonder then that *I* should dine in Scotland and sup in Iceland; but wonderful, very wonderful, that such power should be put into any creature. And the better you know me, the more would you admire.

* See Note 2.

BOY. I see it; I know it: I have always found it so; and this is why I like to look and listen. Yes, I saw you strike your prey the other day, and the force of your stroke made me shiver for the poor bird you maimed, and for the other which you killed; and yet your strength was not spent; you did not wait and gather up force, like the lion or the tiger, for another spring; nor, like the eagle, require to rise up to your height again for another stoop; but you dashed on, striking as you went, and carrying all before you. It seemed cruel work; but yet I know you must live.

FALCON. I must; and you, surely, will not act the tyrant and usurper. These lands are none of yours: this barren waste has been our sporting ground for ages; and the birds and

animals that haunt it have many a happy day in spite of us. They are prepared too for us: it is not an unfair chace; and, let me tell you the shepherds have to thank me for saving some of the sickly of their flock. I pounce upon the raven and the crow, their deadly enemies, and seldom indeed do I miss my mark. No human archer shoots so truly.

BOY. I see, now you come nearer, what fine long wings you have; longer a good deal than those of the hawks I have been used to see.

FALCON. What! I suppose you have only seen the baser race—those short-winged creatures, the kites and sparrow-hawks and buzzards. Well, I am glad you have found out one difference between me and them; though,

of course, you cannot be expected to understand our characters at once. We (and I am the king among them) are called the "*generous* hawks." We are far more swift, far more bold than the rest; and when we are taken into the service of man, we attach ourselves to our keeper, and obey his commands and signs.

Boy. And have you, and such as you, noble bird, ever submitted to be governed and ordered by man? It seems strange, very strange, when I look at you, who are almost as large and wild as an eagle, that you should ever allow yourself to be a slave.

FALCON. *I* never was a slave; nor, if I can help it, ever shall be. But I could not answer for it. We are a grateful and forgiving race,

and when we have overcome our first feelings of anger at our captivity, we become fond of those who feed and take care of us. It must be allowed that the value our masters have for us is a flattering thing. Pray do you know that there was long a law in Iceland which condemned every man to death who killed a white falcon?

BOY. But you are not white.

FALCON. No; but I have already changed my plumage several times, and perhaps I shall be white at last. I know some who are like the driven snow for whiteness, and these are the most valuable. The king of Denmark prized them so much that he used to send his falconer over, every year, to procure a supply; and when he had obtained them,

he used to give them as presents to other kings.

BOY. But I cannot understand your use, nor how you can be made tame.

FALCON. Our *use* has been to amuse your race. A falcon is encouraged to catch his prey at the command of his master; to bring down birds for his table, whenever he requires it; and the sportsmen have pleasure in seeing our combats with our enemies. So you find, boy, that, while you are sorry to see us kill game to satisfy our hunger, others have trained us to catch it for their amusement.

BOY. Yes, I see. But tell me how you are tamed.

FALCON. I!—not *I*; I never was tamed: but one of my companions has had some in-

sight in the business, and I will tell you *his* story.

When a falcon is first caught, his master claps straps upon his legs, which he calls jesses, and he fastens a ring to them, upon which his name is engraved, that if the bird should be lost, the finder may know where to bring him back. Little bells, also, are hung to the straps, which mark where he is, if he should be lost ; so that, in the first place, you find it would be hard for him to make his escape.

The falconer always carries him on his fist, and he is not allowed to sleep ; and if he is stubborn, or if he tries to bite, his head is dipped into water. He has then a hood put over his head, which covers his eyes ; and

thus, poor fellow, he is kept without food or light or sleep for several days, till he is so worn out that he will allow his master to cover or uncover his head without resistance ; and then they give him his food, which you may be sure he is glad to take.

When he is thus in some measure broken in, he is carried out into the air, his head is uncovered, and he is taught to jump upon the fist and sit there, by having food given him. Then it is thought time to make him acquainted with the *lure*, which is a thing stuffed to look like any bird the falconer wants him to pursue, whether a pigeon, a heron, or a quail ; and they always take care to give him his food on this lure. The use of it is to tempt him back when he has flown into

the air. It takes a great deal of time and trouble, even after he is acquainted with this, and used to return to it when called, before he is perfectly fit to do his master's pleasure. He is led to fly at all sorts of game by being shown these lures, and fed upon them; but ger-falcons are chiefly famed for their pursuit of the heron, the kite, or the woodlark, because these birds, instead of flying downwards, as some do when they are in danger, strike up directly towards the skies. Then the falcon mounts upward after them, and strives to get higher than they: they mount and mount till both are quite lost in the clouds; but soon they will be seen descending, and fighting as they come, till the poor quarry falls to the ground wounded or dead.

Boy. I have read of such things in books ; but we do not see them now ; and you may rest much more quietly *now* I should think, noble bird, than you used to do when thousands of pounds were given for a cast of hawks. But pray tell me how you are caught, for I should think it can be no easy matter.

FALCON. It is much easier for man to entrap us than for us to escape his devices. The way in which my friend was caught he told me ; for, wonderful to say, he made his escape and flew back to Iceland, after being three years in Denmark. He said that he was deceived by the fluttering of a pigeon which was hung out as a bait ; and that, when he descended to strike it, he found himself on a sudden, he knew not how, enclosed in a net. Then

he was treated much as I have described to you in order to train him. To his dying day he carried the ring with the king of Denmark's device upon his leg, but he managed to get rid of the bell.

BOY. But now tell me how you live when you are free, and where you make your nests.

FALCON. I make my nest on my cliffs, with twigs, lining the middle with moss and feathers: I lay either two or four eggs, somewhere about the latter part of May or beginning of June. I shall not enter very minutely into my history, because as yet we have managed to escape very close observation from man, in our true state, and we wish to do so still. You will not find me often here; and the weather in these high Scotch regions is so

uncertain that I can hardly recommend you to wait for my coming another day; but I am glad we met to-day.

If you should meet with my cousin Peregrine in the course of your rambles you may more easily become acquainted with him than with me. Both in Scotland and in Wales you may frequently see him, if you do but find out his most usual haunts. He is smaller than I am, for my length is twenty inches, and the stretch of my wings four feet, whereas he is hardly sixteen inches; more than half a foot less in breadth. But he is a bold, noble fellow, and will course a heron almost as well as myself. It is a fine sight to see them up in the air together; the heron striving to keep highest, and then when he has failed in that, doubling

back his neck, and presenting his sharp-pointed bill upwards, behind his wing, to the falcon, so that Peregrine cannot strike his head or neck, and is obliged to take care lest he should fall upon this sharp point, and be himself wounded.

Boy. But I want to ask you——? Bird, wonderful bird! what is become of you? I see nothing but a dark speck hovering over me:—higher it flies, higher—it is gone! Now it has taken the Northern way. It is going!—it is gone! It will be in Iceland before the night. Oh, when shall I see it again?

NOTE I, PAGE 178.

DR. SHAW says that "the flight of a strong falcon is wonderfully swift. It is recorded that one belonging to a duke of Cleves flew out of Westphalia into Prussia in one day; and in Norfolk a hawk has made a flight at a woodcock near thirty miles in an hour."—MONTAGU.

But what are these, compared to the velocity and continuance of that flight recorded to have been performed by a falcon belonging to Henry IV. of France, which escaped from Fontainebleau, and in twenty-four hours after was found in Malta, a distance not less than one thousand three-hundred and fifty miles, a velocity equal to fifty-seven miles an hour, supposing the hawk to have been on wing the whole time. But these birds never fly by night; and allowing eighteen hours light, his flight must have been seventy-five miles an hour. But it is not probable either that he had many hours of light in the twenty-four, or that he was retaken the moment of his arrival; so that we may conclude less time was occupied in performing the journey. It is very difficult to ascertain the actual distance a falcon may fly in a given time in pursuit of its quarry. Colonel Thornton says *nine miles in eleven minutes*, independent of the numerous turns: and the force with which they strike at their utmost speed is such that Colonel Thornton has known a hawk of his cut a

snipe into two parts. Probably a hawk and other birds pursued or pursuing, fly at the rate of not less than one hundred and fifty miles per hour; and certainly one-hundred miles is not beyond a fair computation for migratory continuance, not only of the hawk, but of the wood-cock, snipe, and other similar birds. The eider duck's usual flight has been ascertained to be not less than at the rate of ninety miles an hour; a sparrow will fly at the rate of more than thirty miles an hour.

NOTE II, PAGE 179.

A correspondent in "Loudon's Magazine of Natural History," No. 32, p. 107, who seems to have had good opportunity of enquiry into the characteristics of the different species of falcons, gives it as the opinion of "several eminent falconers of the old school," that the ger-falcon of Northern Europe is of a race distinct from the Iceland falcon. Great regard is to be paid to the testimony of such persons, especially as they were in the yearly habit of sending to Norway and Sweden for ger-falcons, at the time when Iceland falcons were most in request; and from the familiar acquaintance thus obtained with both species, it is highly probably their judgment is correct. They state the Iceland falcon

to be rather larger than the *ger*; the wings longer, (an important distinction,) and tail shorter; the older birds nearly white on the head, and sometimes on the whole body. The head, also, larger. At the same time they describe the bird as being more manageable, and that there is a decided difference in the mode of striking its prey.

“An old falconer, lately dead,” says Mr. Loudon’s correspondent, Mr. Hay, of Stoke Nayland, Suffolk, “has assured me he has seen upwards of fifty Iceland falcons, at the same time, in the care of persons who were about to start with them as presents to the different courts of Europe.”

On the single authority of Mr. Mudie,* (as far as I am aware, for I have not been able to find any other,) I have represented the *Iceland* falcon as visiting the north of Scotland. The *ger* certainly does; and as it has never yet been found to breed there, it remains to be proved whether such visitants as appear on our northern shores are of Norwegian or Icelandic parentage. The probabilities seem, I think, in favour of the latter.

* Feathered Tribes.

THE END.

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