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*[Faint, illegible handwritten scribble]*



Reward of Merit

Presented to  
Master Smale,

by  
Rufus P. Rogers  
Midr 143.

By (Catharine Parr  
Trail (Swickland))

1802 - 99)

author of 'Young  
Emigrants' etc.

Ostern, II, 640

First edn.

1830

£7-50







*"I scarcely know a prettier sight than a family  
of little rabbits frisking about their mother" &c.*

*See page 14.*

*London. Published by Harvey & Darton.*



# SKETCHES

FROM

## NATURE;

OR,

### Hints to Juvenile Naturalists.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

THE YOUNG EMIGRANTS—THE STEP-BROTHERS—PREJUDICE  
REPROVED—JUVENILE FORGET ME NOT—  
NURSERY FABLES, &c.

LONDON :

PRINTED FOR HARVEY AND DARTON,  
GRACECHURCH-STREET.

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1830.

RICKERBY

PRINTED

LONDON:  
PRINTED BY JOSEPH RICKERBY,  
SHERBOURN LANE, CITY.



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## PREFACE.

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AMONG the various amusements that offer themselves as a relaxation from the necessary restraints and fatigues of childish study, there is not one that presents greater advantages, as a source of pleasing and rational enjoyment, than the possession of little domestic animals.

A child of a benevolent and affectionate disposition, will here find full scope for exercising many amiable qualities, and will hardly fail of regarding with feelings of lively interest, the creatures that he cherishes, and which are so entirely dependent on his care for the supply of their several necessities. He will be amply repaid for

the trouble he bestows, and the time he devotes to them, snatched from other and lighter sports, by their grateful attachment to his person, and the mute caresses they offer in return for his kindness ; beside the satisfaction of seeing his little favourites happily thriving beneath the attentive care of a tender master.

Here too he will, if of a reflecting turn of mind, derive much real and rational pleasure from studying the natural history, the habits, and even the peculiar traits of character that distinguish each individual in his little family. Nor is this all. Many useful lessons of morality and industry are to be gathered by the little student of nature, which, if aptly applied by himself, or his parents or preceptors, to his own condition, may be rendered invaluable,

and bring forth excellent fruits in the child's progress from youth to manhood.

Let us not despise this simple source of knowledge. "Go to the ant, thou sluggard," says the king of Israel; "consider her ways, and be wise." The royal preacher was not above drawing wisdom from the lowly things of earth—wisdom and knowledge, whose excellence was the wonder of all nations, as we learn from the history of the kings of Israel and Judah. In the Second Book of Chronicles we read of this great king, that his wisdom exceeded the wisdom of all nations of the East; that people came from far countries to see his works and hear his words; that he was skilled in all natural history, for he spake of trees from the cedar that is on Mount Lebanon, to the hyssop that groweth out of



the wall : he spake of beasts, also of fowls and creeping things, and of fishes.

The same field of knowledge is still open. Nature still spreads open her ample volume to him who will look with careful eye upon her curious page, as well now as in the days of the illustrious Solomon ; and wisdom and understanding may still be gleaned by the industrious mind from the works of creation, which, like the Patriarch's vision of the ladder, still reaches from earth to heaven, where alone all wisdom is perfected. By these steps the children of men may be led from the creature, to fix their minds on the great, the wise, the merciful Creator ; and thus may they be taught to

“ Look through nature up to nature's God.”

# INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS

TO MY

YOUNG READERS.

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THERE are most probably many among you, my dear little friends, who have experienced the most lively emotions of pleasure from the possession of some innocent and beloved pet; who have bestowed the warmest caresses on a darling white rabbit or turtle-dove; or have amused yourselves by watching the gamesome frolics of a cosset-lamb, or shared the merry tricks of some lively kitten or playful squirrel; whose eye has anxiously regarded the drooping wings and depressed crest of some favourite bird, or sighed over your fruitless endeavours to

supply the care of the parent-bird to some half-fledged nestlings that you have rescued from more immediate destruction, or to rear some tender, wild rabbit, or tiny leveret, that has been cast upon your protection. If the labours of the bee, or the ant, or the spider, have ever engaged your attention; or you have marked with curious eye the changes of the silkworm or caterpillar, through all its various metamorphosis—if any of these things have ever been objects of your curiosity or tender solicitude, you will not be entirely uninterested in the subject of the present little volume, in whose pages I purpose to offer a few practical hints on the management of domestic animals, derived from my own observation and experience; pointing out whatever I consider beneficial either to adopt or avoid, in the treatment of such creatures as may form the subject of my little book.

When a child, my father indulged me



and my sisters and brother with keeping a variety of live stock, but always with this proviso—that they should be kindly and carefully treated. The first instance of cruelty or of wilful neglect, was to be punished by immediately depriving us of our ill-treated little favourite; considering us as unworthy of having the care of any creature who might thus be made a sufferer from our carelessness. Nor would he allow us to call a servant from his duty to attend on our rabbits, hares, pigeons, &c. unless indeed illness or extreme wet weather precluded our personal attendance on them. Moreover, he made us accountable for any injury done by any member of our quadruped family, through want of due carefulness on our part in securing them; and also gave us to understand, that any expense necessary for providing for the maintenance and convenience of our live stock, must be forthcoming from our own private pocket-money; which money, I must in-

form you, we were obliged to obtain by our own industry, and was the well-earned reward of our labours in the garden, or extra diligence in performing sundry little tasks of work for mamma or the elders of the family.

These regulations, which may seem somewhat hard to such of my young readers as have been accustomed to unlimited indulgence from their parents, and to have all their childish wishes, if not too unreasonable, gratified without their care or toil, were, nevertheless, not without their beneficial effects on our minds; and they were patiently and cheerfully submitted to by myself and my sisters, Jane and Susanna, and my youngest brother Tom, whom we took in as a sort of under partner in the concern. And though we devoted many an hour that would otherwise have been employed in play, to seeking food for our rabbits, when vegetables were scarce in the garden; and though oftentimes our fingers



ached with cold, on an autumnal and wintry day, while performing the necessary duties of attendance on our little favourites, we never suffered personal inconvenience to interfere with the comforts of our pets; and I believe I may say with truth, that during a period of four years, not one of them died from starvation, though many through casual accidents, improper food, and other causes. I shall reserve the History of our Rabbits for the first section of the little book, and proceed with my introductory notices, to which I trust you will pay all due attention.

And first let me observe to you, my dears, that half the untimely deaths that happen among domestic favourites in general, may be traced either to improper treatment through ignorance, or to want of due regularity and attention in feeding and cleaning them.

As animals in a state of captivity are unable to provide for their several necessities, it particularly behoves those young persons



who voluntarily undertake the charge of them, to be mindful of their comforts, otherwise, let me assure them, they are guilty of great cruelty.

A careless child, or one of a very volatile or inconstant disposition, should never be allowed the possession of any animal that may stand a chance of suffering from his inattention to its wants. Let all such seek amusement in insensible objects. A bat, a ball, a top, or a kite, if carelessly left about and disregarded, suffer no pain, and the loss of these misused toys falls solely on the possessor; but omitting to supply an animal with food for one day, or neglecting to attend to their cleanliness and general comforts, is productive of sad consequences. The poor little captive, after languishing in extreme misery, finally perishes by disease, brought on by neglect on the part of his thoughtless, and in this instance, cruel and unkind master or mistress.

To avoid the painful feelings arising from

self-reproach, it will therefore, methinks, be wisest and best for such children to consider well their own dispositions, before they rashly undertake the charge of sensitive creatures, who are equally subject to pain—to all the distressing inconveniences attendant on extremes of danger and thirst, heat and cold, with themselves; and if they cannot resolve to be constant and uniform in the duties they undertake to perform, let them leave such sources of amusement to the careful and benevolent, who will, from conscientious motives, be mindful of those helpless little creatures that they have engaged to provide for; convinced that all wilful neglect of them is criminal in those that retain them in subjection, whether as a source of pleasure or profit; and that such conduct will be regarded severely by that Almighty Being, whose piercing eye is abroad over all his works, and who beholds even a sparrow fall to the ground—who careth for the least even as

for the greatest of his creatures, and that he will in no wise disregard their mute appeal to his protection.

Should the experience of my early years, and the observations I have had the opportunity of making, as I acquired more reflection, prove a source of amusement or instruction to my young readers, I shall be fully repaid for any trouble I may have taken in their behalf; and hoping that some amongst them may profit by my experience, and be enabled to improve on my plans, I take my leave of them, with every wish for their success in all their undertakings, and subscribe myself, their affectionate friend,

The Author of

“THE YOUNG EMIGRANTS,” &c.



# SKETCHES FROM NATURE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE HISTORY OF OUR RABBITS.

THE first rabbit I ever possessed was a wild one, which lived in a dry sugar-hogs-head, occupying a spare corner of the coach-house. I have a perfect remembrance of the time when this little animal was given to me; I was at work in the garden, cutting the decayed flowers of the purple thrift, that edged one of the long borders of the middle walk. This was a job papa had set me to do, and for which I was to receive, when completed, the important sum of threepence. Jane and Susanna, my fellow-labourers, were engaged in a similar

manner, on opposite borders, when Robert Wade, the gardener, who was earthing up a bed of potatoes on a neighbouring plot of ground, beckoned me aside, saying, in a low voice, " Miss Kate, I have something pretty to give you, if you will come along with me, only do not say a word to the other young ladies."

Now I never could exactly understand the reason for this unnecessary charge of secrecy; and had I been older (for I was but seven years of age) possibly I might have been wise enough to have declined accepting the gift on such terms; as it was, I entertained no such scruples, but willingly followed my conductor to the coach-house. Raising me from the ground in his arms, the gardener bade me look into the great hogshead, in which I beheld, to my infinite delight, four nice little grey rabbits, munching some carrot-tops and parsley. On our approach they reared up on their hind legs, and begged imploringly



for the fresh greens which my conductor had supplied me with, for the purpose of feeding them. I had never kept rabbits, scarcely even seen these pretty, inoffensive animals, and I was so pleased and amused by watching their engaging behaviour, that it was with some difficulty I could be persuaded to relinquish my hold on the top of the tub, to which I clung while looking down on them. One rabbit in particular attracted my attention; it was distinguished from its little grey companions by a white spot on the forehead and white feet. This rabbit Robert said should be mine, provided I did not tell my sisters or brothers, or they would want to take it away from me, he was sure.

The pleasure I experienced from the possession of Whitefoot (for so I named my new pet) was greatly diminished by being forced to conceal the circumstance of his being mine from my sisters and brothers, to whom I would most willingly have imparted my good fortune; neither was I permitted to



visit my rabbit as often as I liked, but only as it suited the convenience and caprice of the gardener, whose time was generally occupied when I desired to see my treasure. Sometimes, however, he would indulge me by letting me have my pet to nurse and fondle for a few minutes, when he was employed in the coach-house; but he steadily resisted all my entreaties to be allowed to keep my rabbit in a box by itself in the root-house, where I could feed and caress it as often as I wished. To this proposal he always replied: "If you tease me, Miss Kate, I shall take the rabbit away from you, and give it to some little lady that I know, who will be content to let it remain where it is: besides, it will die if you take it away from its brothers and sisters." This argument was to me a weighty one, and contained too powerful an appeal to my affections, for Whitefoot to be disregarded; so the rabbit remained in the sugar-hog-head as heretofore.

The summer passed away, and the au-

tumnal season was already far advanced. I had enjoyed the nominal possession of Whitefoot upwards of five months, during which time he had grown a fine creature, and exceedingly tame. He would lick my fingers, rub his head against my hand, and nestle to my shoulder when I took him on my lap. His skin was as soft and glossy as grey satin, and he was the darling of my heart. I was already anticipating with joyful expectation the time when he would be all my own, for Robert had hinted at the probability of his fitting up a hutch for Whitefoot in the root-house. This root-house, I must tell you, was a shed in a secluded part of the garden, near a small oval pond of water, and which papa had taken in hand to beautify, and render a very pretty and ornamental object, by planting Spanish, and gold, and silver blotched ivy on either side the door-way, which he had turned into a gothic arch. The windows were latticed, and a screen of ever-



greens and flowering shrubs planted round, greatly improved the appearance of the place. The prospect of my rabbit being introduced into the root-house, and placed under my own immediate care, was truly delightful to me; but, alas! the end of our expectations does not always correspond with the beginning, and my childish hopes were frustrated in a manner as unlooked for as it was affecting.

One cold foggy afternoon, in the month of November, as I sat on a little stool beside mamma, hemming the bottom of a new diaper slip for my baby sister, only looking off my work occasionally to kiss the dear little thing, or touch the waxen cheek and dimpled hand that rested so quietly on mamma's bosom, we were suddenly interrupted by the abrupt entrance of Thomas, my youngest brother, who ran into the room, quite out of breath, and evidently much discomposed. His usually red cheek was colourless, his grey eyes



expanded, and gleaming through the tears that still hung in his long black eye-lashes.

“What is the matter with my dear little boy?” asked mamma, anxiously regarding the trembling child. (I must tell you that my brother Tom was not quite five years old at this time.) “Dear mamma,” he replied, “I am so vexed, for William (a labourer papa had put into the garden to help Robert the gardener, who had been sick with an autumnal fever) has just killed a nice dear hare, that was feeding among the cabbages. It was such a tame one that I do think I could have caught it, for it never ran away when we came to look at it; but William struck it with the handle of his hoe, and now it lies on the ground, looking so bad that I was obliged to cry, and felt quite frightened. Do, Katie, come and see the poor thing!” And here my tender-hearted little brother, who was remarked for his benevolence and sensibility when a child, wept afresh.

During the commencement of this narration, a faint suspicion that this tame hare, as Tom called it, was no other than my pet rabbit, Whitefoot, glanced across my mind; and this idea became more decidedly impressed upon me as Tom proceeded to descant on the unusual tameness and gentleness of the supposed hare's demeanour. Without waiting for further confirmation of my fears, I hastily threw down my work, exclaiming, "Oh! I know that wicked William has killed my innocent rabbit, my dear Whitefoot;" and without waiting to give further explanation to my words, I hastened to the spot, followed by little Tom. On reaching the cabbage-bed, the first object that presented itself to my view, was my beloved Whitefoot, lying on the dewy ground, and struggling in the agonies of death. At this afflicting sight, my tears flowed fast and passionately; not so much at that minute for the actual loss of my rabbit, as from grief and terror at witnessing the lingering



agonies of the poor dying little animal. I had heard of death, and read of it as something very awful, that must happen earlier or later to every living creature ; but I had never before witnessed the painful strife incidental to parting life. I had seen a dead bird ; but its stiff, motionless, and composed appearance, occasioned no feeling of terror to be excited in my mind ; but here, for the first time, I saw its horrors realized ; and trembling and weeping from mingled emotions of fear and grief, I stood gazing on the poor little sufferer, while my brother, scarcely less agitated than myself, clung to me, and joined his tears and lamentations with my own. The young man who had been the unthinking cause of my distress, on hearing that the rabbit he had killed belonged to me, seemed very much vexed, and said : “ Indeed, Miss, if I had known, or could have had a thought that the rabbit belonged to you, I would not have killed it for all the world.”



“ Dear Katie, is it your rabbit ?” asked my brother, in some surprise : “ how did you come by it ? I wish you had showed the nice dear to me, and then I should have known it was not a hare ; and William would not have killed it, for I should have told him it was sister Katie’s rabbit.”

I now saw my folly in having concealed the circumstance of my having a rabbit from my brothers and sisters. Had I not done so, in all probability the life of my little favourite had been preserved, and I should have been spared much uneasiness. I learned, however, by this day’s experience, that the straightforward path is the easiest to keep, and the best to pursue ; that undue secrecy and concealment are inconsistent with truth and honesty, and too often ends in shame, mortification, and disgrace. My dear mother took this opportunity of impressing this truth upon my mind, pointing out very clearly the evils to which such a line of conduct, if continued, will lead.

How valuable are the instructions of parents ! How much sorrow and uneasiness would children be spared in after life, if they would, with meek and humble hearts, hearken to the virtuous lessons that are inculcated by those whose wisdom has been earned through the experience of many years, and who, anxious for the welfare and happiness of their children, would willingly spare them some of the painful consequences arising from the commission of faults and follies incidental to their fallen nature. But how few of the many will be thus taught ! Like the young king of Israel, Rehoboam the son of Solomon, they despise the advice and wisdom of the elders, and turn to the example and thoughtless follies of those of their own age. But if I begin to moralize so soon, and so gravely, my young readers will, I fear, grow weary, and lay aside my little book unread ; and as I hope to afford them both amusement and instruction in the present work, I shall be



grieved if we part so soon. I will, therefore, return to my narrative, and tell you, that not very long after this disaster, my sisters and I agreed to purchase with our little savings three rabbits, which our bailiff's son offered us at the reasonable price of sixpence apiece. These rabbits we kept in boxes, covered over with boards, in the root-house; which boxes, though insecure, were the best accommodation we were able at that time to afford.

The commencement of our attempt at keeping rabbits was distinguished by many misfortunes, partly arising from inexperience as to the proper way of managing these animals, and partly from the want of proper conveniences.

Our doe Sappho's first litter died in consequence of our ill-timed curiosity, in taking the tender little creatures from the warm nest before they were quite a day old, in spite of the indignation of the doe, which she expressed by striking one of her hind



feet with great violence against the bottom of the box. This unequivocal token of her displeasure we did not choose to regard, and the consequence was, she destroyed the whole litter, consisting of seven young ones.

This practice of disturbing the young family is very injurious, and the does will often kill their offspring in consequence of such interference. The most prudent plan is to avoid uncovering the nest, or even taking much notice of the mother, for some days, merely supplying her with food as she may require it, without staying to fondle or caress her, until the rabbits are seven or eight days old, when they begin to unclose their eyes, which, like many small animals of the furry tribe, are closed for eight or nine days after their birth. They have also by that time acquired a covering of soft and delicate fur, which before had been scarcely perceptible, the little rabbits presenting an unsightly and naked appear-

ance, by no means pleasing to the eye of the beholder.

I scarcely know a prettier sight than a family of little rabbits, frisking and whisking about their mother, or demurely seated about her, nibbling the greens and tender herbage with which she is supplied. Perfect harmony and goodwill may be observed among these harmless creatures: no quarrelling nor fighting for food. Sometimes two little rabbits may be observed eating the same leaf, which they will share to the very last morsel. The stalks and stringy fibres of the leaves are rejected by the young ones: they usually select the more delicate and finer parts of the herb, or vegetable, for their repast.

The doe brings forth her young at the end of twenty-eight days, or a full lunar month. Previous to this event, she begins preparing a nest for the reception of her little family, in some remote corner of her box or hutch, making a deep hollow, or



basin, among the straw, and selecting from the litter the choicest bits of hay or straw she can find. These materials she collects into a sort of bundle, which she conveys to her nest in her mouth, stripping off the down from her breast and belly, to render the bed soft and warm, for the comfort of her helpless offspring.

Nature, ever bountiful to all creatures, has provided this animal with abundance of thick fur; and it is an interesting sight to behold how she divests herself of her natural covering, to ensure the welfare of her expected family. This love of offspring, which is so strongly implanted in the breasts of parents, is particularly observable in brute animals. The rabbit, a creature noticed, like the hare, for the timidity and gentleness of its habits and disposition, becomes fierce and vindictive during the early period of her attendance on her young; guarding with jealous and watchful care the entrance to her nest, and



concealing it by every possible artifice she is mistress of, from the observation of intrusive eyes. As the little ones attain greater strength and size, she relaxes her vigilance, and ceases to resent the interference of strangers, and will permit them to be taken from her side, without expressing any of that displeasure which before characterized her manners.

The breeding and nursing does should be supplied with milky herbs and juicy vegetables. Sow-thistle, dandelion, lettuce, clover, and the like, are proper at this time. Green tares, which are frequently cultivated as green fodder for cattle, and which, being mixed with oats or rye, are much desired by rabbits, and form a very suitable provision for them, when they have young ones. A small proportion of dry food, such as bran, oats, hay, and the like, should be allowed these animals. The bran, or oats, may be placed in red earthen pans, such as you place flower-pots in, and

are known by the common name of *feeders*. They may be procured at any shop where the common red earthenware is sold, at the moderate rate of from one penny to three-halfpence apiece. Where rabbits have not the convenience of a regular hutch, with trough, &c. to it, I know of no better substitute than these red feeders. A small wooden box, or trough, may answer the same purpose; but being lighter, are more easily displaced by the rabbit, and the food is often wasted, by being overturned among the litter of the box.

Beside the loss of Sapho's first and second litters, one of our rabbits died from being inadvertently given hemlock\* among

\* The characters of the hemlock, or conium, in botany, are thus described:—A genus of the *Pentandria Digynia* class of plants. The stalk of this plant is smooth, spotted with reddish purple marks, and rises from four to six feet in height, branching out towards the tip into several lesser stalks, which are garnished with darkish-green compound leaves, the segments of which are



the herbage. The body of the poor animal swelled to an amazing size, and it died in sharply divided. The plant has a strong, rank smell. The footstalks are terminated by head umbels † of white flowers, each being composed of about ten rays of smaller umbels. The flower is succeeded by a small seed, of a blackish colour, resembling those of the carraway and anise in shape. The thrush, and some of the smaller birds, are said to feed upon this seed. Indeed, so plentiful is it on our banks and waste lands, that it is doubtlessly intended for the subsistence of some of the winged tribes of the air. The root of the greater hemlock resembles that of the garden parsnep, but is of a very poisonous nature. There are several species of this plant, all hurtful in their nature, if taken as food; though the hemlock has been often applied successfully, in a medicinal manner, in violent diseases.

The hemlock most commonly mistaken for parsley, by inexperienced persons, may be distinguished by the difference of colour and form of the leaf; that of the smaller hemlock, or fool's

† *Umbelliferous*, in form like an umbrella. A few familiar examples will explain to such of my young readers as may not be acquainted with the botanical terms, the precise sort of flowers meant. Such are the common and wild carrots, the parsnep, carraway, celery, parsley, the hemlock conium, and hemlock cicuter, the elder, and many other flowers, may be given as examples of umbelliferous plants.



great agony, the skin turning of a livid colour directly after death, which indicated the existence of poison. After this accident, we were careful in examining the weeds we gathered, which were brought us by the servant boy, the loss of one of our rabbits being a great misfortune to little folk like us. But this was not the greatest of our troubles: other untoward circumstances happened, that nearly put an end to our keeping rabbits at all.

The boards we placed over the rabbit-boxes were either not sufficiently weighty, or too insecurely arranged, so that our rabbits would not unfrequently contrive, during the night, by strength and artifice combined, to raise, or displace the covering of their houses, and escape from their confinement; secreting themselves among the parsley, being of a much darker and sadder green, and the division of the leaflets much sharper and narrower; the texture of the leaf is not so stiff, nor the surface so glassy as the parsley.

piles of wood, roots, and other lumber, that occupied a division of the root-house, from whence they contrived to burrow their way out into the garden, where they did much mischief among the vegetable crops. These predatory excursions occasioned us much uneasiness and anxiety, especially as we knew how particular papa was at all times about his garden. The gardener had concealed the mischief done by my darling grey Minna, to a bed of Michaelmas cauliflowers; but one day, in spite of the care I had taken to confine her safely in her box, the unlucky creature jumped out, and found her way into the garden, close to the spot where papa was at work, cutting some currant-trees. All her former evil deeds now were revealed by Lockwood the gardener; and papa, highly incensed at the ravages committed by my poor favourite, Minna, sentenced her to immediate death. I was summoned to catch her, which was no very difficult task, for she was the



tamest, most gentle animal of her species, and readily suffered her little sorrowful mistress to approach and secure her. But when I heard of the inevitable sentence decreed on my beloved rabbit, my grief was unbounded; and while I held her fast to my bosom, my tears fell fast over her soft grey head, which were rather increased than diminished, by the affectionate creature licking them from my cheeks, and endeavouring to win my attention by her mute caresses. Mamma and my elder sisters, touched by my sorrow, and interested by the behaviour of the gentle animal I held in my arms, united in entreating papa to reverse his decree in favour of grey Minna.

For my own part, I was too much distressed to be able to speak; but my silently-imploring looks, and fast-falling tears, at length moved my dear father's pity; and he bade me restore grey Minna to her box, and be more careful, for the future, in securing her.



The very next day, we observed papa very deeply engaged with his compass and scale; and in a few hours he called Jane and me to look at a plan he had been drawing for a regular set of rabbit-hutches, to be erected in the root-house, for the better accommodation of our stock, which had been increased to four does and a buck, by my brothers having purchased two half-grown rabbits. You may easily conceive the feelings of delight with which we watched the progress of the building, which was carried on in a small outhouse adjoining the granary, fitted up as a sort of work-shop, in which papa kept a variety of tools and materials for carpentering-work. Instead of following our usual sports, or sources of amusement, the moment we were released from the study, with one accord, my sisters Jane and Susanna, with my brothers and myself, hastened to the work-shop, to visit papa and his workmen; pleased enough, if we found employment

in holding a hammer or chisel, or handing a nail or screw. The rabbit-house consisted of six complete hutches, with outer and inner rooms for each rabbit. The outer room was about two feet and a half square, communicating with the inner chamber or sleeping place by means of an open arch, after the manner of the holes in a pigeon-locker, only large enough to allow of the free egress and regress of the animal: this sleeping berth had an outer door, which was kept fastened, excepting when we had occasion to put in fresh litter; the outer chamber was furnished with a door, strongly wired in front, and with a nice lidded trough, which was kept shut by means of a peg and string.

When our rabbit-house was finished, it was fixed up at one end of the root-house. The space below was closely paled in with a moveable gate or lift, as some people call it; and this place we termed the park, which served for the free range of our little



rabbits when taken off the mother; and a pretty sight it was to see a dozen or two of these innocent little creatures skipping about or standing on their hind legs, and begging for the green herbs and vegetables, as frolicsome and free as though they were abroad in the fields or warrens.

Besides the hutches for the breeding does, we had two nice large boxes fixed up, and wired in front, with sliding doors and troughs, one for the buck and the other as a fattening-house; nothing could be more comfortably or conveniently arranged than our rabbit-house was, and the only restriction laid upon us by papa was this—that we should be particularly careful in fastening all our doors and troughs, that the rabbits might not again inconvenience him by getting into the garden, and destroying his vegetables and flowers.

Our rabbits throve so well in their new hutches, that in the course of a few months



the park was filled with black, white, grey, and fawn-coloured rabbits.

Of a fine warm spring day my sisters and I used to treat our respective families with a gambol in the meadow, conveying them in baskets or in our laps to a warm sunny slope, enamelled with daisies, cowslips, buttercups, primroses, and that gay and beautiful little meadow-flower that is commonly called golden trefoil. There, seated on the ground so as to form a guard over our pets to prevent them from wandering too far, we permitted them to crop the flowery herbage, and watched their frolicsome gambols among the daisies and buttercups with infinite delight.

If any one of the little tenants strayed beyond the limits allotted for their sports, and became at all refractory, we punished the rebel by imprisoning him in the basket till he became more manageable. One of these little creatures contrived to elude our watchful care, and charmed with the liberty

he had been permitted as a favour to enjoy, ran off to the neighbouring plantation, and we never again beheld him.

On the whole, our rabbits' lives were as happy as creatures under a state of confinement could possibly be ; none of our rabbits ever suffered from neglect or unkindness : if one of us was sick or from home, the other supplied her place, and fed her rabbits with the same attentiveness as if they had been their own. As to Susanna and I, we agreed to go partners in our rabbits, which plan answered the interest of both parties, and as we never disagreed or quarrelled when children, this partnership proved a very comfortable arrangement.

For the first year after the hutches were built, our rabbits throve exceedingly ; some few we lost during the winter, from the excessive coldness of the season, which was unusually inclement, and some from want of proper management with regard to the quality of their food ; but in spite of these



accidents, our stock had increased so abundantly, that we had twenty young ones of different sizes and colours, running about in the park, five half-grown ones in the fatting-house, and several infant families with the does ; when a circumstance most disastrous in its consequence occurred, which reduced our number to a very few individuals, and occasioned us the greatest possible anguish and distress of mind.

Early one morning, as we suppose, our three cats, Pinch, Patch, and Patty, entered the rabbit-house through one of the open-arched windows, the shutters of which had been inadvertently left unbolted ; and when we came as usual at seven o'clock, to feed our rabbits, a most horrible scene of slaughter met our eyes. On the ground in the park lay the mangled bodies of no less than fourteen of our young rabbits ; five more were missing, that had either been dragged away, or had made their escape from the fangs of these murderous cats ;

one poor, terrified, half-dying little creature alone remained alive, out of twenty-five half-grown rabbits. Nor was this all: one of our best breeding does had been so torn and mangled by the claws of one of the cats, in attempting to drag her through the wires, which she had forced apart, that the poor thing died the following day, leaving a helpless litter of nine little ones, unable to shift for themselves.

Our indignation against the authors of this mischief, you may naturally suppose, was very great; but while we were lamenting over the loss of our pretty rabbits, and debating how best to punish the delinquents, the gardener came to inform us he had just drowned two of the offenders, but white Patty had made her escape. Now I must tell you, that we were very fond of the cats: white Patty especially was a great favourite, she was my sister Jane's protégée, and in spite of the mischief she had done, we could not bear the thought of depriving her of



life, particularly when we came to reflect that cats are beasts of prey, and that in killing our rabbits, they had only been following their natural instinct. Lockwood, who was influenced by no such scruples, strongly recommended us to have white Patty put to death; assuring us, after having once found the way to our rabbit-house, we should never be able to keep any of these creatures free from her depredations.

A more merciful plan at length suggested itself, and we agreed to give white Patty away, if we could find any one who would accept her. We were not long in finding a mistress for our cat. An old lady in the neighbourhood, whose cat establishment was very numerous, agreed to receive our poor puss as an additional member of her feline family; and as she resided at some little distance from us, in a neighbouring village, there was no fear of our rabbits again being molested by her.

This accident had reduced our stock

nearly to the original number, and as it happened towards the close of the summer, they did not increase again till the winter.

The following spring my sisters, Agnes and Sarah, bought two young rabbits, of a new and most beautiful species. The coats of these animals were of a snowy whiteness, the texture of the fur resembling the softest silk, and so thick and long, that it descended to the ground; their ears were remarkably long and soft; the eyes, which were red, glowed in the dark like carbuncles; but besides their exquisite beauty and superior size, which was more than double that of the common breed, they possessed far more intelligence, and were much more engaging in their dispositions and manners than the other rabbits.

They evinced the most tender attachment for the persons of their mistresses, springing into their laps, caressing their hands, and licking their faces, whenever they approached to fondle them; nor did



they ever attempt to escape from their boxes, as our rabbits had formerly done, but seemed perfectly contented with their situation and treatment.

By degrees we diminished the old stock, and increased that of the foreign breed, which was far more valuable in every respect; they were the admiration of every one that saw them, and we were very proud of our beautiful pets. But we were not permitted long to enjoy the possession of these creatures, for one night some dishonest person broke into the rabbit-house, and took thence every one of our rabbits, not leaving so much as a single one to console us for the loss of the others. This last misfortune put an end entirely to our rabbit keeping; we were unable to renew our stock, and the hutches remained empty several years; at last they fell quite into decay, and were taken down.

A few hints on the best method of managing these animals may not prove altogether useless. Our experience was,

in some instances, dearly bought, but it may not prove less valuable on that account to my young friends.

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THE rabbit being, by nature, a very strong-scented animal, requires, when in a domestic state, to be kept particularly clean and dry; and unless this important point be duly attended to, these creatures will not thrive. To further this, the bottom of the hutch or box should have several holes drilled in it, that the moisture from the animal may drain speedily off. Rabbits that are not kept clean are liable to dropsy and the rot, beside a species of madness, which often ends in death. These diseases may, in a great measure, be avoided by proper management as to their food and litter.

Young persons who keep rabbits, especially boys, if they cannot command a servant to perform these necessary offices for



their rabbits, should not be above attending to them themselves; and this may be done without dirtying or soiling either their hands or clothes, if proper means be resorted to. A short handled hoe to scrape the bottom of the hutch with, a wisp of straw, or an old mop fastened to the end of a stick, about two feet in length, to rub the places dry, and an old box, placed under the hutch to receive the dirty litter, will prevent any unpleasant consequences: these conveniences are easily procured with little expense, and will save much trouble. A little management on the part of young people will overcome any difficulty in making these arrangements; and it is a good thing to call forth the expediency of their minds even in trifles, as it teaches them to think and act for themselves as they advance in life.

My father would never tell us any thing we wanted to know, without first endeavouring to make us exercise our own reason. If we said, "Do, dear papa, tell us how this or that

thing is to be done, or what we are to do under such circumstances, or how such a thing is begun or finished," he would reply: "Go and think awhile, or try and find it out by yourselves; you have a head, you have hands to obey that head, but if you are really not sufficiently clever to discover the right way, I will tell you; but then I desire you to bear in mind, the merit of the performance will be mine, and not your own." By this means he taught us the value and usefulness of knowledge, and gave us a motive for exerting our own ingenuity and abilities.

But to return to my directions: after having thoroughly cleared away the refuse litter, which may then be removed to any convenient heap, or to the farm-yard, a little dry sand or sawdust should be sifted over the floor of the hutch, as it helps to absorb the wet and moisture. The inner berth should be duly supplied with fresh hay or straw, and should be cleaned at least



twice a week, the outer place every other day. A very few minutes will be sufficient to perform this necessary office ; and those children who love their rabbits, will think little of devoting so small a portion of time to their service.

With regard to food, I have always found the best way was to feed them regularly three or four times a day, giving them a sufficiency, but not too much at a time, as the food is apt to be wasted, these animals taking a great disgust to victuals that has been long exposed to the air of the hutches. Green herbs or vegetables should be gathered some hours before they are given to the rabbits, unless it be in warm weather, when the dew is quickly dried from the leaves. We generally managed to have a day or two's stock in hand, that they might be sufficiently dry, as over moisture occasions them to die of the rot. A portion of dry food, such as hay, which they are very fond of, dry clover, barley, straw,

chopped carrots, Sweedish turnips, bran, and oats, should be given them with their greens, to counteract the abundant moisture contained in their juices; grains they will eat, and bread, but this latter article I consider too precious to bestow upon animals, when so many poor families are in want of it.

A list of the vegetables and herbs most proper for rabbits may not be unacceptable. Among those most eagerly sought after by them, I shall name all the cabbage (or brassica) tribe, carrots—both root and top, lettuce, endive, Sweedish turnips, (the white, though they are fond of it, should be given in moderation, as it is rather too cold and watery a vegetable,) potato-tops, lucern, green oats, tares, dandelion, groundsel; sowthistle, milk, and tare thistles are very good, both as food and medicine; apple-parings, with a variety of summer fruits. They relish also the leaves and shoots of vines; parsley and parsneps they



eat greedily. There is also a favourite weed, known here by the name of hog-weed, but as I am uncertain as to the genuine name and character of the plant, I will leave it out of my list of approved herbs ; among such a diversity as I have named, there can scarcely be any difficulty at any time or season in procuring both variety and sufficiency of provision. The banks and fields will afford plenty of food, even to those that have not the advantage of a garden.

The rabbit belongs to the same genus as the hare, and is included under the generic name of *Lepus* ; there are some distinguishing characteristics between the hare and the coney, which I shall notice in a future chapter, when I give you the history of the young leverets.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE PIGEON-LOCKER—WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF ITS LAST TENANTS.

WHEN my sister Jane and I were quite little girls, we accompanied our eldest sister to the house of a neighbouring farmer, to pay for some fowls mamma had ordered of the farmer's wife. After Mrs. Mills had been paid, she asked my sister if she would like to visit the poultry-yard, which was a nice green enclosure, well furnished with various sorts of domestic fowls, such as turkeys, geese, ducks, and guinea-fowls, beside cocks and hens, and chickens of all sorts and sizes. The object, however, which more particularly attracted our attention, was a white pigeon, of uncommon size and beauty, belonging to that species distin-



guished by pigeon-fanciers by the name of powters, from the extreme fulness of the breast and crop, which they possess the power of inflating at will to a great size.

The plumage of this beautiful creature was of a snowy whiteness ; his legs and feet were of a bright red colour, and his head was garnished with a sort of crest. Besides his superior beauty, he was so tame that he readily ate out of the hand of his mistress, flew to her shoulder, or into the basket of dress corn she held in her hand.

We were all so delighted with his gentleness that we had no eyes for any other object present; and great was our indignation on hearing Mrs. Mills avow her intention of killing this amiable creature, to send to market the following week, on the plea that he was a very profitless creature, consuming a great deal of food, without paying her in any way for his keep.

It seemed strange to us that any one could be so hard-hearted as to take away the

life of so gentle and engaging a creature, merely on account of the trifling expence of the few handfuls of refuse corn he daily consumed; and eager to rescue the poor bird from so disastrous a fate, we asked what sum she would take as the price of the white pigeon. On learning that one shilling would perfectly satisfy her demands, Eliza immediately gave her the money, and very generously presented Snowball (for such we named him) to my sister Jane, promising at the same time to purchase a dove as soon as she could meet with one, which she would bestow upon me.

A shoemaker's son in our village hearing we wanted to make such a purchase, not many days after this offered us a small black dove that had lost her mate; this dove Eliza bought, and gave to me. She was so shy and solitary in her habits, that we called her the Widow.

Mrs. Mills had advised us to keep Snowball shut up for a short time, till he should



have grown familiar with his new residence, or he would certainly take the first opportunity that offered to fly home; these birds possessing, in common with many others, a strong attachment to the spot where they have been accustomed to live. Love of place seems inherent in some creatures, more peculiarly so than in others. It is stronger in the cat than in the dog, and is thus distinguished:—in the dog it is attachment to *person*, in the cat to *place*; the dog willingly follows his master in all his travels and changes of situation; the cat returns to her home, though it be deserted by her mistress, and readily attaches herself to the new tenant. The love of place in the carrier-pigeon has been too often remarked and made serviceable to man, to require dwelling on here. The swallow, (*hirundo*,) and various other of the migratory birds, are considered to possess the same instinct, which is so strong as to guide them across pathless seas and vast tracts of

land, to the deserted home beneath the straw-built shed, or the favourite chimney-top, in which they nursed their former brood.

But to return to my narrative, lest I tire you with my digression. The following spring a gentleman, to whom my sister Jane had shown her darling pet, very kindly sent her a handsome dove, with a black spotted head and dark coverts to her wings, as a mate for Snowball; and not very long afterwards we had the joyful satisfaction of beholding a nice white egg in a distant corner of the coop among the straw.

This egg was an object of great interest to us, and like silly children who knew no better, we went twenty times a day to visit it, taking it from the nest, examining it, and carrying it about in our hands, to show it to every person who would be troubled with looking on it, to the great indignation of Snowball, who expressed his displeasure at our proceeding by fiercely buffeting us with his strong white wing, pecking our



hands, and strutting angrily about the coop, cooing, and bowing his head in a stately manner, evidently intending to reprove us for the unwarrantable freedom we were guilty of, in taking away his valuable egg. And here I must notice, that birds and beasts are very jealous over their young, and display great uneasiness if interfered with in any possible way during the early stage of their attendance on their little families. The latter will often destroy their little ones, and birds forsake their nests; but with these circumstances we were at that time unacquainted. Experience, however, soon taught us wisdom. In one of our excursions to visit our eggs, we had the misfortune to let one fall from our hands. It was broken into shivers: and thus perished our first hope of an increase to our stock; the other solitary egg proved to be addled, for the pigeons kicked it out of the nest.

Unacquainted with this peculiarity in our favourites, we loudly exclaimed against

their unkind and unnatural conduct ; and though we replaced the deserted egg every day, every day we found it had been treated with the same contempt. Papa, however, explained the reason, and breaking the egg, proved to us the wisdom of the birds in rejecting it ; advising us at the same time not to interfere again with the nest of the dove, who was preparing to set again. In due time our pigeons hatched a pair of ugly little birds, not much handsomer than toads, with great beaks, and bodies scantily covered, not with feathers, but long, dirty, yellowish hair ; and to add to their unsightly appearance, their eyes were closed. We were shocked at the hideous appearance of the young brood, which we had fancied would be at least as pretty as little chickens or ducklings. The old birds were less fastidious, and seemed to regard them with infinite satisfaction, carefully brooding over them by turns, the cock taking his share of nursing equally with the hen. And now



the whole tenderness and affection of these creatures seemed centered in their offspring, their sole employment that of brooding over them, and supplying them with food and drink, which they brought in their bills. Snowball and his gentle partner had been kept prisoners till this period in the coop, but mamma advised us to leave the sliding bar open, that they might have liberty to go abroad, and procure food for themselves and their young. At first we were fearful lest Snowball should be tempted to make use of his liberty and depart, especially when we beheld him take a sweeping circuit round the fields; but we were little acquainted with the devoted attachment and parental instinct that distinguishes the feathered part of the creation; an attachment so strong, that it appears for a season to alter the very nature and general habits of the bird, overcoming their natural timidity, and rendering those creatures that were before remarked for the gentleness, reserve,

and shyness of their habits, bold, fierce, and subtle. These traits are remarkable in the common domestic fowls. The turkey, goose, and hen become almost formidable; jealous, wrathful, and vindictive, they guard their young broods from all real or fancied danger; unmindful of their own wants, they are abstemious to a degree, abstaining from food, that their young may be more fully satisfied, and with unwearied constancy pass their time in searching for nutriment, protecting their helpless progeny from the approach of any foes that might molest them, calling them together, and shielding them beneath the covert of their wings, affording a beautiful pattern of parental care and parental love.

Children may here observe a picture of that self-devotedness, that unwearied tenderness that was lavished on them during the years of their helpless infancy. Like the careful hen, or tender dove, their parent watched over and guarded them from dan-



ger, supplying all their infant wants and childish wishes. The solicitude of the parent bird is confined to the safety of her young, and to the supply of their animal wants; and this care ceases as soon as her progeny are able to shift for themselves, but that of the human race begins with the moment of the infant's birth, and ceases not till death; it extends not only to the bodily necessities of the child, but to that of his soul. Let us follow the mother through some of her maternal duties.

With what unwearied tenderness does she watch over the cradle of her babe! How kindly does she sooth his fretful wailing, and hush it to repose upon her bosom! His smiles fill her eyes with tears of gladness, her breast with rapture, which none but a mother's heart can experience. If sick she redoubles her care; his cries or painful moaning fill her breast with apprehension: his restless tossing call forth all her anxiety; depriving herself of rest and slumber, she

sits beside his feverish couch, hushes him in her arms, and bathes his unconscious face with streaming tears. Nor does her solicitude end with the period of helpless infancy: with painful forebodings she marks the unfolding passions in the mind of her child, and while with anxious care she strives to implant the seeds of virtue and piety in his breast, and to root out the evil weeds that the enemy of man has sown within his heart, she trembles for his eternal welfare; her prayers are poured forth night and morning to the throne of grace in behalf of the beloved object of her solicitude. How often is her bosom wrung with anguish at the acts of disobedience, of neglect, and unkindness, on the part of that erring but dear child! Through all the changing scenes of life the child is still the dearest object of her care. She follows him through his giddy course in the world: if virtuous and prosperous, with joy unspeakable; if otherwise, who shall describe her anguish,



her tears, her deep regrets! And though too disregarded and forgotten in the moments of gaiety and pleasure, yet when shame and disgrace overwhelm, when sickness and sorrow are at hand, and all have forsaken, the mother alone is found with unwearied affection watching beside the restless pillow, and speaking peace and hope to the unworthy, but still dear object of her love. Who, my children, can fully unfold to you all a mother's anxiety, a mother's tender affection, from the earliest dawn of infancy to maturity of years—from the cradle to the grave? We may, indeed, say with the writer of those sweet stanzas, "A Mother's Love,"\*

Hast thou sounded the depths of yonder sea,  
Or counted the sands that under it be?

Hast thou measur'd the height of heaven  
above?

Then may'st thou mete out a mother's love.

\* Miss Emily Taylor. See the "Juvenile Keepsake" for 1828.

Evening and morn hast thou watched the bee  
Go forth on her errands of industry?  
The bee for herself hath gathered and toiled,  
But the mother's cares are all for her child.

Hast thou gone with the traveller thought afar  
From pole to pole, and from star to star?  
Thou hast—but on ocean, earth, or sea,  
The heart of a mother hath gone with thee.

There is not a grand inspiring thought,  
There is not a truth by wisdom taught,  
There is not a feeling pure and high,  
That may not be read in a mother's eye.

And ever since earth began, that look  
Hath been to the wise an open book,  
To win them back from the love they prize,  
To the holier love that edifies.

There are teachings in earth, and sky, and air;  
The heavens the glory of God declare;  
But louder than voice beneath, above,  
He is heard to speak through a mother's love.

The little pigeons were nearly a month  
in acquiring their full plumage, and pre-  
sented a most shabby appearance while



their feathers were growing. They were remarkably slow in learning to pick, would hasten with outstretched wings to their parents, clamouring for food, even after they were able to feed themselves. At length the old ones refused to attend to their cries, relaxing by degrees their former kindness and attention, and finally began to buffet and huff them away whenever they ventured to approach them. At length they began preparing a nest for the reception of a new family, which circumstance made the removal of the young pigeons a matter of necessity; and they, in their turns, were accommodated with a coop. The hen-coops, however, were wanted for the reception of newly hatched broods of chickens; and the dairy-maid, who had the care of the poultry, grumbled sadly at the inconvenience occasioned by the appropriation of the coops, and even hinted her intention of turning out our young pigeons, to seek shelter where they could find it. In this

dilemma we applied to papa, who taking compassion on our houseless favourites, signified his intention of having a locker made for them. This good fortune exceeded our most sanguine hopes, and we watched with inexpressible interest the plan which papa drew with rule and compass, for the better assistance of the carpenter, who was immediately set to work on the locker. At length the building was completed, white-washed within side,\* and fixed beneath the eaves of the barn.

You may imagine the delight with which we contemplated the removal of our pigeons to their new and commodious habitation; but my share of pleasure was greatly

\* This is considered to be very conducive to the health of pigeons. There should likewise be placed, near the dove-cote or locker, a lump of clay and chalk rubbish, with a large handful of salt thrown in, and worked up together, to which the pigeons can have free access. This mixture is called a salt-cot, and is considered indispensable to the prosperity of the dove-house.



damped by the melancholy death of my only pigeon, the black dove. This harmless creature had the ill-fortune to venture too near the trough of an ill-natured old sow, to pick up a few of the refuse peas she had scattered on the ground; the savage beast opened her great mouth, and snapped off my poor dove's head. In a transport of indignation I ran to papa, and having informed him of the circumstance, demanded the death of the offending animal. To this, of course, he would by no means consent; and reproved me for indulging in revengeful feelings against a creature that was incapable of hearkening to reason, or understanding the nature of the fault she had committed.

My governess said all she could to console me for the loss of my murdered dove; but I continued very sorrowful, especially when I beheld, from the window of our school-room, my sister Jane's two pair of pigeons sunning themselves on the outside

of the locker, and remembered I had now no interest or share in its inhabitants.

Have any of my young readers ever been in a like predicament? If they have, possibly they may feel some sympathy in my affliction, though I doubt much if any one of my little friends ever adopted so novel, and I might add, so foolish a means of consolation, for the death of a favourite, as I did. I had been set by my governess to learn by heart Gray's ode on the death of a favourite tortoise-shell cat, which was drowned in a tub of gold fishes; and I resolved to dissipate my grief by writing an elegy on the death of my pigeon.

On making known this desire to my governess, she could scarcely forbear smiling, thinking, no doubt, I had greatly miscalculated my poetical powers, but assured me I had her free and full consent to execute my design; proffering me at the same time a sheet of paper, with pen and ink, to commence my first essay in rhyme. Now I



was, as I before informed you, but a very little girl; and though I could write in a copy-book large text and round hand, I had no idea of writing small enough for copying verses. I felt somewhat embarrassed at my inability to write down my poetical effusions, and after some hesitation, returned the materials to my governess, preferring a petition, that *she* would write the verses as I composed them. This she consented to do with great good-humour; and, folding my arms, I stood before her with an air of profound gravity. At length I began with the following long line, which was duly written down at the top of a fine sheet of gilt paper:

I had a single pigeon, she was a widowed dove.

My governess sat patiently waiting, pen in hand, for the next line; but, alas! the next line never presented itself to my ima-

gination. I looked from the fire-place to the ceiling, from the ceiling to the window, from the window to the little book-case in the corner of the room, as if to gather some inspiring thought, but in vain. I fixed and refixed the hem of my pinafore, and counted and recounted my fingers over and over again. The suppressed mirthfulness of my five sisters and my little brothers, with the laconic, "Well, child, go on," of my governess, at length put to flight all my elegiac stanzas, and, overwhelmed with blushes and mortification, I retreated to my little stool, and was obliged to confess I had overrated my abilities, which certainly never belonged to the rhyming order. Thus ended my first and last attempt at writing verses. This circumstance afforded considerable amusement to my sisters; and though greatly mortified at the time, I soon learned to laugh at my own foolish vanity as much as they did. However, I must tell you, my



grief for the loss of my dove, and chagrin for the failure of my elegy, were speedily removed by my sister Jane kindly presenting me the pair of young pigeons which Snowball and his mate had hatched a few days previous to the completion of the locker, to which they were introduced as soon as it was considered prudent to remove them.

Our pigeons throve so well in the course of the ensuing year, that the locker was fully occupied by their hopeful progeny. They became so tame, that at the sound of our voices they would fly eagerly towards us, wheeling over our heads, and alighting on the ground at our feet, to pick the dress corn we scattered for them. Some, more familiar than the rest, would fly to our shoulders, or even alight upon our hands, and help themselves freely from our laps or baskets. Snowball and her gentle partner held rather a higher place in our esteem than any of the young

ones; whether from old attachment, or because they were more engaging in their ways, I cannot exactly tell, but certainly they were our favourites.

The usual food of our pigeons was peas, tares, and wheat; boiled potatoes, cheese-curd, and other scraps and crumbs they shared in common with the domestic fowls. During our walks, my sister Jane and I discovered a species of wild tare, which the pigeons eagerly ate; also the seeds of the milk-vetch, the most beautiful flower of the species of *vicia*. It grows wild in the hedges, rearing its bright blue spikes of flowers from among the bushes and under-wood of our hedgerows and headlands. The pods of these plants, when ripe, we collected and shelled, keeping the seed in bags for a winter store. Papa allowed us a certain proportion of refuse corn for the subsistence of our pigeons, which was regularly measured out, and delivered to us every week, with strict injunctions not to



waste any part of it. Such a quantity was to last such a time, and in return for this indulgence, we were to keep the thrift-border in the front garden duly clipped and trimmed; and as the provision of our beloved pigeons depended on our punctuality and attention to this point, you may be sure we never neglected to cut away the decayed flowers when necessary.

Our stock of pigeons increased at length so much, that the locker was found insufficient to contain them; and our means of supplying them with food not increasing in proportion to the demand for it, papa insisted on the number being reduced to five pair, which was all the locker could conveniently accommodate. The idea of having any of our favourites killed was very grievous to us, and we complained much of the cruelty of such a proceeding; but papa, who was much older and wiser than we were, proved to us, that killing some of the supernumerary pairs became an act of

necessity rather than cruelty; being, in point of actual cruelty, no worse than taking the life of a chicken, or duck, or any other animal intended for food. But he advised us not to make pets of those pigeons that were not to be preserved as breeders, as he had a great objection to killing any creature that had been regarded by us as a peculiar favourite. In addition to these arguments, he assured us it was neither right nor just to keep any creature, unless we had a sufficiency of food for their maintenance; as they must either suffer greatly from hunger, or become a nuisance to our neighbours by trespassing on their fields.

For many years our pigeons continued a source both of amusement and profit, but by degrees our stock diminished: the old one died, and the only remaining pair at last forsook the locker.

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THE pigeon-locker still remains a fixture, beneath the eaves of the barn, but its former tenants have all passed away. Not a single plaintive note is heard from their old, familiar dwelling: the sound of their strong wings, cleaving the air in their rapid flight, no longer meets our ears. Not a single solitary bird remains. They are all gone; but the locker is not entirely untenanted. Various have been its inhabitants; and some of so singularly opposite a character to each other, that I cannot refrain offering my readers a slight sketch of the creatures that have at different periods taken possession of the forsaken mansion.

The first summer after the pigeons had abandoned the locker, it remained quite deserted; but in the July of the ensuing year, Fanny, the old Cypress cat, was observed frequently ascending towards the roof of the barn, by means of the ladder that was prefixed to the hen-roost adjoin-

ing; and as she usually remained absent a considerable length of time, and was heard to repeat, at intervals, that short, inward cry, which is peculiar to that species of animals when calling their young, it was concluded that old Fanny had kittens secreted somewhere near the roof of the barn. For some time she contrived to elude our vigilance; but one day, while retracing her stealthy progress along the mossy roof of the barn, our ears were saluted by tender mewings, which appeared to proceed from the pigeon-locker, where, shortly afterwards, two innocent round faces were seen peeping out from the holes of the upper tier. Old Fanny had chosen this lofty retreat for the nursery of her infant progeny, from its apparent security; and here she had reared two of the prettiest, fattest, and most lively kittens that ever paced a parlour-hearth. Not satisfied with a distant view of them, my sisters and I induced the footman to place a ladder against the barn, and bring



down the kittens; but scarcely had he reached the locker, than he descended the ladder again, in great haste, and with evident trepidation, informing us the centre of the pigeon-locker was occupied by a nest of hornets, (*crabro vespa*,) and that he dared not approach near enough to reach the kittens, lest he should disturb these formidable creatures. The house and garden had been infested by hornets for some time past, to our great annoyance, and it was judged advisable to have the colony of these rapacious insects destroyed as quickly as possible. Accordingly, when night had closed in, and the inhabitants of the nest were in a state of quiet repose, one of the men-servants ascended the ladder, and plastered up the entrance, by which they gained egress and regress to the nest, with mortar, leaving only space enough for the introduction of a tobacco-pipe, through which the fumes of brimstone were conveyed into the in-

terior, by which means the hornets were stupefied, and in that state easily destroyed.

We had given directions for the preservation of the nest, but I regret to say only a small specimen of this curious piece of workmanship was preserved entire. This was composed of a whitey-brown substance, almost resembling in texture thin parchment, or the cloth manufactured by the natives of the Southern islands, from the inner bark of the paper mulberry-tree. In building their nests, the hornet makes use of the same materials as the common wasp, (*vespa vulgaris*,) viz. splinters of decayed wood sawn from the interior of old trees, posts, rafters of out-buildings, and other rotten timbers suitable for their use. These pieces are divided into minute fragments, by means of the strong forceps with which nature has provided the front of this insect's head. The wood, thus prepared, is moistened with glue, and kneaded with the feet and head into a



paste, and then formed into regular compartments, which, though not composed with the nicety and skill with which the wasp or the bee (*apis*) build their cells, is well worthy of our attention and adoration.

The hornet is one of the most formidable of all our British insects. Its food consists chiefly of flesh; and though it destroys our autumnal fruits, their sweet juices are less regarded than the prey it captures among the fruit-trees. Though belonging to the same species, the hornet is a most decided enemy to the wasps; eagerly pursuing it, and, when caught, tearing off the head and scaly covering that envelops this insect, sucking its juices, and casting away the trunk when deprived of its moisture. Flies also and bees it makes its prey. Nor are its attacks confined to the remote branches of the species. These creatures will also destroy one another in their displeasure; for they are remarkable for their quarrelsome disposition.

This seems in some measure to account for the comparative scarcity of these insects. Their usual haunts are the branches or hollow trunks of decayed trees; especially the ash, the wood of which appears to be particularly favourable for the formation of their nest or comb.

The next tenants the pigeon-locker received were a colony of sparrows, a pair of swallows, (*hirundo*,) and one solitary starling, (*sturnus vulgaris*,) which had by some mischance been separated from the rest of the flock; and there he sat, day after day, and week after week, uttering the most melancholy and pitiful complainings, as if intended to reproach his companions for having thus heartlessly abandoned him to solitude. This bird is naturally of so social a disposition, that it will associate with rooks and crows and pigeons, rather than be alone. Even in their gregarious state, a flock of starlings may be seen congregated with larks, all



flying together; but if any cause for alarm arises, they instantly separate each to their respective tribe. If one of these birds be separated by any accidental cause from its fellows, it expresses its grief by the most woful lamentations. Thus it was with our starling. It would sit on the top of the pigeon-locker, moping all day long. Sometimes it would join the sparrows, and fly with them from the pigeon-locker to the roof of the barn, or to the house-top, or come down with them to share the spoils of the court, or rick-yard; but though accompanying them in their flight, it seemed perfectly distinct from this noisy, loquacious, busy, bustling crew—it was still alone.

I missed the starling one morning from its usual place of resort, and as it never afterwards appeared among its companions, the sparrows, I concluded it either left the place to seek one more congenial to its habits, or pined itself to death in the locker.

As to the swallows, they nursed up two broods of little ones, and migrated with the rest of their fellows just after Michaelmas-day, leaving their comfortable habitation to the mercy of the sparrows, their neighbours, who immediately took possession of the empty tenement, in which they established their winter-quarters; and there they sheltered themselves in warm nests of straw, hay, and feathers, during the cold weather; and when the swallows returned the following spring, to take possession of their former dwelling, they could by no means induce these saucy birds to vacate the nest, and relinquish the right which possession had given them; and the sparrows have continued to breed and build, year after year, and will do so, no doubt, as long as the locker continues to afford them so comfortable a retreat.

Such is the history of the pigeon-locker and its various inhabitants, which reminds me somewhat of the old tree in the nursery-



fable, in which lived the old sow, the cat, and the raven; a story with which, doubtlessly, all my young readers are well acquainted, and have listened to with as much interest as, when a child of three years old, I used to do, while standing at mamma's knee, or seated beside my little sister Susanna, on the carpet at her feet, a happy and delighted child.

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COLUMBA the PIGEON, in ornithology a genus belonging to the order of *passeres*. The bill is straight, and descends towards the point; the nostrils oblong, and half covered with a soft, tumid membrane, of a white powdery appearance. There are not less than seventy species, natives of different countries. Among which may be noticed the stockdove, or domestic pigeon, with all its beautiful varieties. In their wild state, these birds build in hollow trees, and holes

in rocks. The Romans first taught the Britons to build pigeon-houses, and make them serve the purpose of domestic uses. The common wild pigeon is a bird of passage, visiting us in November, and retiring towards the latter end of the spring. Among the varieties produced from the domestic breed, are those birds distinguished by pigeon-fanciers by the names of tumblers, carriers, powters, croppers, jacobines, owls, nuns, &c. The palumbus, or ringdove, is a native of Asia and Europe. It is the largest wild pigeon we have. They build in trees; nor have any attempts to render them domestic, like the stockdove, proved effectual. Though hatched in a locker, or dove-cote, they retire to their woods and wilds as soon as they can fly.

The turtle-dove is a native of India and Africa, especially Barbary. A few of these birds annually visit our woods, especially in western counties. One of the most re-



markable species of pigeons is the migratoria, or passenger. These birds are, at certain seasons, to be met with in such vast flocks in the American states, that, in Virginia and Carolina, Mr. Catesby and other authors of credit have spoken of such vast flights of these creatures, that the air has been darkened for miles by them; not losing sight, for three days successively, of these immense trains, in their flight southward. They breed in the holes and crevices of the rocks by the side of the great river St. Lawrence, and by the lofty banks of the Canada lakes. They fly to the south only in hard winters, and are never known to return.

The largest bird of the pigeon species is considered to be the coronata, or crowned pigeon of Malacca and New Guinea. In size and colour it far exceeds any of the tribe; but, from its form and habits, Buffon considered it could belong to no other genus. This bird is about the size

of a turkey, and very beautiful in plumage.

The smallest of the pigeon tribe is considered to be the little dove of Malacca, not exceeding the size of a common house-sparrow.—*Encyclopædia Britannica.*



## CHAPTER III.

## THE ROBIN'S NEST.

A CAGED bird has always been an object of compassion in my eyes; and I cannot regard one of these innocent creatures, shut out from the enjoyment of that freedom which nature has afforded him such ample means of exercising, to its fullest extent, without feelings of regret. Their blithest songs, when under the confinement of a cage, to my partial ear, seem to breathe only the mournful language of complaint, and to want that joyous melody of tone that distinguishes the free denizens of the fields and groves, as they wing their flight from tree to tree, as if rejoicing in their liberty.

I have seen a poor captive thrush, in a wicker cage, hung over a cottage door in our

village, beat its poor wings against its bars, and thrust its head through every aperture of its prison-house, in the vain hope of being able to effect its escape, and join its distant companions, whose jocund voices met his ear from the neighbouring gardens, and to which he answered in tones of loud and passionate complaining, as if he would make known to them his sad condition. Sometimes I have been quite moved, half tempted to open his wicker door, and set him free, that he might fly back to his fields and his woods, and enjoy that liberty, for the loss of which he moaned so plaintively; and I was restrained only by the consciousness, that under no consideration is it proper to invade another's right. For my own part, I would at any time rather purchase the enfranchisement of a bird, than detain him in captivity. I shall never forget the uneasiness I endured when a little girl, on account of some young robins, which I took from their nest, with the in-



tention of bringing them up by hand. I well remember the day I found the robin's nest. I had been unusually diligent in learning my lessons, and performing my tasks of work that day, which I completed much sooner than my sisters, and so much to mamma's satisfaction, that she allowed me to go out and play, or amuse myself in the garden.

The sun shone warm and bright. It was spring time, and every object around seemed to speak a language of universal joy. The breeze was loaded with sweets from the garden and meadows; thousands of gauzy-winged insects were skimming the air, or murmuring among the flowers, and birds were singing on every bush. Without waiting for my sisters to join me, I determined to take a stroll by myself in the meadow, which communicated with the garden by means of a little bridge and a wicket gate. With light and joyous steps, a mind free from care, and alive only to the consciousness of unrestrained liberty, and

the enjoyment of the unclouded sunshine and balmy breeze that played over my cheek, and invigorated my whole frame, I wandered forth into the fields, filling my lap with the flowers that I stopped to cull at every step. I believe I was as happy that morning as any living thing could be; not less than the gay butterflies that flew past me, or the busy, murmuring bees among the flowers, the birds that carolled so gaily in the hedges, or winged their flight towards their respective nestlings, or the family of young lambs that occupied the rising slope at the further end of the field, down which they chaced each other with untamed glee, realizing the natural description of "Lambs at play," given by a native poet in his "Farmer's Boy," which for sweet simplicity and natural colouring has been deservedly admired, and thus begins:—

Say, ye that know, ye who have felt and seen  
Spring's morning smiles and soul enlivening  
green,



Say, did you give the thrilling transport way?  
 Did your eye brighten, when young lambs at  
     play

Leaped o'er your path, with animated pride,  
 Or gazed in merry clusters at your side?

                    See thither, one by one,  
 From every side assembling, playmates run;  
 A thousand wily antics mark their stay;  
 A starting crowd, impatient of delay;  
 Like the fond dove, from fearful prison freed,  
 Each seems to say, 'Come, let us try our speed.'  
 Away they scour, impetuous, ardent, strong,  
 The green turf trembling as they bound along;  
 Adown the slope, then up the hillock climb,  
 Where every molehill is a bed of thyme;  
 There panting stop, yet scarcely can refrain;  
 A bird, or leaf, will set them off again;  
 Or if a gale, with strength unusual blow,  
 Scattering the wild-briar roses into snow,  
 Their little limbs increasing efforts try;  
 Like the torn flower the fair assemblage fly.  
 Ah! fallen rose, sad emblem of their doom,  
 Frail as thyself, they perish as they bloom.

I had heard the gardener mention hav-  
 ing seen somewhere, in a little pas-  
 ture adjoining the meadow, that rare and

curious flower, the bee orchis,\* (*orchis fuscula*,) which is so called from the singular

\* This plant is remarkable for the singular formation of several of its species, whose flowers have been likened to bees, flies, butterflies, frogs, lizards, and even to birds, and the human form itself.

Orchis, in botany, a genus of the Decandria order, belonging to the Gynandria class of plants. Its characters are thus described by Linnæus, which I shall transcribe for the benefit of such of my young readers who may have commenced the study of botany. It has a single stalk, with a vague sheath, and no empalement. The flower has five petals; three without, and two within. The nectarium is of one leaf, fixed to the receptacle between the division of the petal; the upper lip is short, the under, broad and large. The tube pendulous, horn-shaped, and prominent behind: it has two short slender stamina setting upon the pointil, with oval erect summits fixed to the upper lip of the petals. The leaves of this plant are oblong; in some, dark green, beautifully spotted with purple; in others, pale green, and without spots. Linnæus enumerates thirty-three species; Miller not more than twelve. The root of this plant is bulbous, fleshy, and is much cultivated in the East for its nutritive qualities; from it the



resemblance its blossoms bear when expanded to the small humble bee. So I thought I would go and seek this curious flower, and plant it in my own little garden. I did not know, that of all plants the orchis is one of the most difficult to remove, as its roots strike very deeply into the earth, and the slightest injury of any of its fibres prevents

Turks prepare that article known in our shops by the name of salep or saloop.

Beside the curious varieties of this plant, the woods and pastures afford many beautiful sorts: the large purple orchis, the dwarf lilac, the pink, the white, the pale green, the pencilled flowering orchis, with many more elegant species, that I have often gathered in my walks, and transplanted to my garden in the summer, after the flowers were off the blow; which is the best time to remove them. It is best to mark the spot where a fine orchis grows, with placing a stick in the earth beside it; then, towards the latter end of the summer, take it up, being careful to dig deep, so as not to injure the roots, and separating the mould as little as possible from it. The plant will then grow and bear beautiful spikes of flowers.

its growth ; and that the time of its flowering is the worst of all in which to remove it, as it never survives another year. I spent nearly an hour in looking for the bee orchis to no purpose ; but stooping to pluck some remarkably fine blue-bells, I discovered, just within the bank of an old dry mossy ditch, a robin's nest, in which were five pretty speckled birds, full fledged. Without pausing to reflect on the impossibility of providing suitable nourishment for these little birds, I resolved to make myself mistress of them. " They shall be my tame robins !" I said exultingly to myself, as I deposited them, one by one, in my pinafore, and hastened homeward, rejoicing in my good fortune, as I then thought it, and eager to display my prize to my sisters.

As I opened the garden wicket, I was accosted by the gardener's son, Jonathan, who asked me if I had been gathering flowers. I briefly told him of my capture of the little robins ; but instead of congratu-



tulating me, he earnestly implored me to carry the young birds back again to the nest, assuring me, that to take a robin's or wren's, or a swallow's nest, was a very wicked thing, and some misfortune was sure to happen to those that did. I told him I did not mean to hurt or kill the young robins, but to feed and cherish them, till they grew fine birds, and were as tame and handsome as the garden robins that sung so prettily; but Jonathan only shook his head, and said: "Ah, Miss Kate, you will never have any luck, depend upon it, till you take them back to the old ones." I was incredulous, and obstinately bent on trying to rear the young birds; so I left Jonathan to indulge his old-fashioned notions, and ran home as fast as I could.

Now I must tell you, that I was totally unacquainted with the nature of these birds; and was not at that time aware that their chief food, especially when young, consisted of worms, caterpillars, and a variety of other insects.

I brought them fruit, corn, and crumbs of bread, and whatever I thought likely to tempt them to eat ; but though they were fine birds, and quite fledged, they seemed to have no notion of pecking the food I scattered before them ; or they required nourishment of a different nature to that which I offered them : be it as it may, they obstinately refused all my invitations to eat or drink ; and with feelings of great uneasiness I perceived first one, then another of the members of my adopted family, begin to flag. Before night came, two out of the five were in a dying condition, and a third sat at the bottom of the basket in which I had placed it, with its wings drooping, its feathers ruffled, and its eyes dim and filmy. It was too late to replace the robins that night ; but I began to think I had better have followed the advice of the gardener's son. I regarded the dying robins with eyes swimming in tears, and went to bed with the determination of restoring the remaining ones to their nest as soon possible ;



but, alas ! when I hastened to look at my poor little captives, I found only one out of the five remained alive. He was yet lively and strong, and possibly had been induced by hunger to pick a few of the crumbs with which I had so profusely supplied the basket previous to retiring to rest. Without further hesitation, I resolved on carrying the poor little bird back to his former happy home in the mossy bank, nothing doubting but that his parents would gladly receive their lost, and, no doubt, lamented nestling. With this determination I tied on my bonnet, and carefully depositing the poor little robin in my bosom, I took my way through the shaded avenue to the meadow, through which my nearest path lay, to gain the little pasture where the robin's nest was situated. But scarcely had I reached the white gate that led to the meadow, when I was alarmed by the noisy outcries of the geese and a great white gander. These ill-natured creatures

all ran forward at my approach, flapping their wings and stretching out their long necks, screaming and hissing like so many serpents.

I must confess, at that time I was a sad cowardly child, and never had mustered courage sufficient to pass these geese, when unprotected by the presence of the nursemaid or Jonathan the gardener's son; instead, therefore, of boldly turning about and facing them, I stood trembling on the outside of the gate, and weeping bitterly; my tears flowed from a double cause—from fear of the geese, if I went forward, and grief for the inevitable fate of the poor little bird, if I went back. In sad perplexity I looked round on every side, in the vain hope of seeing some one who might protect me from my clamorous enemies; but, alas for poor little Katie! nobody appeared within sight.

Compassion, which was heightened by a feeling of remorse for having removed the



robin from the fostering care of its tender parents, which were, perhaps, even then lamenting the untimely loss of their beloved nestling, overcame my terrors, and urged me to pass the flock of geese, which had removed to a little distance, and were now quietly feeding on the grass; and, for a wonder, suffered me to pass by unmolested.

Breathless with speed and agitation, I at length regained the avenue; having replaced the robin in its nest, I had imagined in so doing I had at least preserved him from the fate of his brothers and sisters; but I was mistaken: the following day I went to visit the nest, and found the poor forsaken bird stretched on the ground beside it, stiff and cold. The parent birds had, in all probability, never returned again to the nest, after they discovered the loss of their infant brood; and the poor innocent robin was starved to death.

This circumstance made so strong an impression on my mind, that I never from

that day attempted to bring up young birds; and though I found many nests in the garden, I never touched any of the young birds, or robbed the old ones of their eggs, contenting myself with watching their parental employment, from the time of building and setting to that of hatching and feeding the callow broods: indeed, so far from molesting these innocent creatures, I became their best friend, and protected them with jealous care from those who would have taken their eggs, or destroyed their young ones.

It used to be a favourite amusement with my sister Susanna and I, to watch the progress our little protégées made in forming the mossy cradles for the reception of their future nestlings. It was pretty to see the troubled bright eyes with which some blackcap (*motacilla atracapilla*) or chaffinch (*fringilla carlebs*) fearfully, yet resolutely, would regard us, from beneath the sheltering leaves that o'ercanopied her soft downy nest.



Each species have some particular difference of formation or material, to distinguish their nest from that of their fellows, either in the interior or exterior disposal of the articles they use. Nothing can be more exquisitely neat than the nest of the chaffinch, composed of the grey lichens of the apple or pear tree, intermingled with wool and fine hair; unless it be that of the goldfinch, (*fringilla carduelis*,) whose little nest, elevated on the tall bough of some laurel or other lofty shrub in the garden, is woven with locks of soft wool, garnished with green moss from the roots or stem of some old tree, mingled with a few grey and yellow lichens; the inner part rendered most luxuriously soft with the silky down of the thistle; the seed of which plant forms so principal a part of the food of this bird as to give rise to its classical name, *fringilla carduelis* (or thistle-finch.)

The greenfinch, which is a remarkably shy bird, the slightest movement or ap-

proach of any one to her nest alarming her, and inducing her to quit her eggs or young ones, builds a careless nest of moss and hair, loosely constructed, and placed in a bush or in the hedge; quite a contrast to the neatly formed and compact buildings of the chaffinch, the goldfinch, wren, and the long tailed titmouse (*parus caudatus.*) The latter, which is called by a variety of names with us, Tom-tit, Pudding-poke, and Oven-bird, is deservedly celebrated for the curious shape and elaborate workmanship displayed in its nest, which is shaped somewhat like a long bag, built round a naked spray of a hawthorn or blackthorn (sloe); from the stem and bark of which it picks the tiny grey lichens and mosses, which are woven with inimitable skill among the threads of wool, which it unravels in its progress, lining the whole with feathers and down of the softest description, leaving only a small round hole towards the lower part of the front of the nest, by which to



enter. This little creature feeds almost entirely on insects, and has always been a particular favourite with us, from its brisk, lively manners, and the ingenuity it displays in fabricating its singular nest.

Among our particular protégées, I must not omit a wren, (*motacilla troglodytes*,) which for several successive years built her nest in the silver blotched ivy, that spread its variegated mantle over the low, straw-covered roof of our rabbit-house. This little creature always fixed on the same spot, or within a few inches of the old site, for the habitation of her little family; like a careful economist, making use of all the old materials that were suited to her purpose; and here, year after year, she hatched and cherished her numerous but tiny brood, free from all molestation. It was a matter of curiosity to watch her work, and see how carefully she covered the whole building, when completed, with an outer thatch of dried leaves, so artfully

contrived as to hide the green mossy nest, with its tiny opening, from the prying eyes of strangers. It is wonderful how this little mother contrives to feed and nourish so many individuals, without neglecting one ; and this, too, in utter darkness. There is no undue partiality displayed towards any of her numerous family, all are alike the objects of her tender solicitude.

If the wren fixes her nest in a less favourable situation for concealment, she becomes doubly diligent in shielding it from observation by artificial means. One that built in the shrubbery, among the ivy and sprays of a low stunted elm, formed an additional pent or hanging roof of dried leaves and loose fibrous roots, to hide it more effectually from sight. The wren is, I believe, the smallest, without exception, of our British birds, seldom measuring four inches in the length of the body ; its note, especially of the gold-crested, (*motacilla regulus*,) is sweet and harmonious. The wil-



low wren, (*motacilla trochilus*,) has been considered a migratory bird; it sings till October, and sometimes even later; and there is something remarkably sprightly and pleasing in its note.

Besides our favourite wren, we had other tenants that took up their abode in the rabbit-house. There were robins that built in the closely drawn furze that formed the inner walls of the shed; little blue tomtits (*parus cæruleus*) that fixed their abodes in the chinks of the long rafters, and garnished their little nests with cobwebs, stolen from some old spider's web in the neighbourhood, while sparrows occasionally intruded in the thatch, and not unfrequently, in some suitable projection of the posts that supported the building, the grey fly-catcher (*musicapa grisola*) chose its retreat.

The rabbit-house, though no longer appropriated to the breeding of our domestic favourites, being converted into a root-house and shed for garden-tools and other

lumber, still shelters many a healthy brood; and will do so, I make no doubt, as long as it shall stand. Last summer, chancing to be cutting some flowers for a beaupot, I passed the door of the old shed, and curiosity tempted me to peep in among the leaves of the ivy, just to see if it continued to shelter any of its former acquaintance; and there, indeed, was a new wren's nest, in the favourite place, just between the twisted stump of the ivy and the wall; it seemed to be an hereditary right, which, like an entailed estate, continued to pass from generation to generation.

Before I quit the subject of birds' nests, I cannot refrain from mentioning the amusing behaviour of a grey fly-catcher, while building a nest on a projecting ledge in the brick-work of the wall below my dressing-room window. This little room formed a favourite retreat during the warm sunny days of last May, for my youngest sister and I, as we were able to sit with the



window open, whenever we felt inclined to enjoy the fresh air, which came to us loaded with the perfume of the cherry-trees in full bloom on the grass-plot below. Here we passed many hours of the day, not once repining for lack of amusement; indeed, it would have been strange if we had been dull, when I tell you our little room contained a variety of prints from Wouverman; some fine mezzotintos; Alexander's battles, from the French of Le Brun; with a variety of other drawings; besides books, materials for writing, and work. And even had these been wanting, other sources of entertainment offered themselves to our acceptance, which, though of a simpler kind, were not wholly devoid of interest in our eyes; these were, watching from time to time the labours of the great black humble bee (*bombylus*) collecting honey from the snowy blossoms of the pear-tree, that encompassed the window on every side, and watching the movements of a pair of fly-

catchers, that were building their nest just below the sill of the window. These busy creatures were continually on the wing, dividing their time pretty equally between providing for their own wants, and building a suitable receptacle for their future progeny. The blossoms of the cherry-tree seemed to afford them an ample supply of provision; and it was amusing to see how they ran along the branches, with a swift motion, darting their beaks into the flowers, in search of their favourite food. The quickness and accuracy of these birds' sight must have been very great, as they never appeared to be disappointed in their object of pursuit: they pursue flies and other winged insects in the air with a rapid, half circular flight, and are away again to some post, or stick, or dead branch, on the summit of which our fly-catchers delighted to take their stand.

They seemed to make little trouble of building their nest, but rather pursued it



as a sort of interlude between their visits to the cherry-tree or grass-plot; sometimes they brought home a stalk of dried grass, or morsel of moss, a collection of cobwebs from the wall, or a feather: nothing seemed to come amiss that chance threw conveniently in their way, for I am sure they never went very far for materials; if a stray snip of muslin or a thread was wafted from our work-table, it was eagerly caught, and duly interwoven in the nest.

One of these neat, plain looking birds, grew so familiar with us as to hop on to the window-frame, within a few inches of our hands, peep into our faces with her cunning bright eye, steal a thread, and away with it to the nest: at last she paid her visits so frequently, and seemed so little inclined to depart, that we began to flatter ourselves our little friend had conceived quite an affectionate regard for us. But her motives were not quite so disinterested as we imagined; she had taken a great fancy to

a long strip of blue muslin, which hung half in, half out of the window. This coveted piece of finery, by degrees, she made her prize, and flew with it to the cherry-tree, from whence she could more conveniently convey it to her nest, which was opposite. And here it was amusing to watch the dilemma of the poor bird, and her indefatigable attempts to render her prize portable; her patience was truly admirable. The wind for some time baffled her design, by twisting the long ends round her little feet and legs, embarrassing her flight so that she could by no means move from the branch on which she had perched herself; and we concluded she must relinquish the attempt. Just as she had nearly conquered the difficulty, a slight gale wafted the rag to another bough of the tree; and at this interesting crisis we were summoned to dinner. On our return, we concluded the bird had given up the task as impracticable, for the blue rag was nowhere to be



seen ; blown away, as we supposed, by the passing breeze ; and Mrs. Flycatcher and her mate were busily engaged hunting for insects among the cherry blossoms.

Our surmises, however, proved erroneous ; the perseverance of our little grey friend had been crowned with success. Nearly a month after this, a ladder was raised by the servant lad, to clean the outside of the dressing-room window, when he discovered the forsaken nest of the fly-catchers. The empty nest was taken down, and found to display a singular variety of gay stripes of blue muslin, rags of lace, and gauze, and nearly a whole yard of new white Holland tape, interwoven with the cobwebs, moss, and other materials, which are usually employed by this bird in the construction of its nest : the interior displayed innumerable ends of cotton, thread, silk, and minute snips, which these thrifty little creatures had collected while we were employed with our needles. Some of the spoils, the tape

for instance, must have been a regular theft from our open work-box, during our occasional absence from the dressing-room.

And now, having given you the account of the fly-catchers and other of our feathered favourites, I cannot conclude this chapter without again introducing to your notice my cherished pet, the robin redbreast, (*motacilla rubecula*,) which, in spite of his occasional vagaries, still holds a large place in my affections; nor do I wonder at the universal partiality that this bird excites, when I reflect how the remembrance of it is associated with our earliest childhood, from being the first object to which our feelings of benevolence were directed. What child has not been taught to sweep the scattered crumbs from the table, for the robin that hops so confidently about the door or windows of our dwelling; and, whether it be a cottage or a palace, still continues to share our bounty? And, when induced by cold or hunger to visit the inte-



rior of our dwelling, what child has not felt his or her heart beat wild with delight, on beholding the little feathered stranger pick from the window-sill, or from beneath the table, the crumbs that their hands have kindly scattered for his entertainment? Or, when captured by some friendly hand, with what joy has its soft head been kissed; its bright black eye gazed upon; its finely tinted breast admired and gently coaxed; and the permission of being the favoured one to set it free been eagerly sued for? And then, the satisfaction of restoring Pretty Robin to his liberty, and seeing him burst away so gladly from our grasp, and take his stand upon some neighbouring spray, uttering forth his full sweet song of thanks.

It is these sweet remembrances that makes the robin still so dear to us; the very sight of it recalls *home* to our minds—the home of our infancy; that nursery of our young heart's first affections, of its first ideas; of all our childish joys and childish sympathies.

I remember, one cold winter, we had no less than five pet robins, which daily visited our pantry and kitchen: these little creatures thankfully received our donation of crumbs and corn; and one in particular attached himself so much to us, that he would fearlessly hop across our feet, and look up in our faces with his cunning black eye, as if he would have said, "Are you displeased at such liberties?" The other robins left us when the mild weather returned, but this pretty creature continued to visit us occasionally all the spring, and built its nest in the middle branches of a laurustinas-tree that grew near the lattice of the pantry window. Here I must observe, that the nest of the robin is rather a slovenly piece of architecture, being loosely and carelessly put together, without much attention to shape or neatness; it is composed of dried leaves, ragged moss roots, and hair, with a few feathers in the interior. The robin builds occasionally in the sunny side of a ditch or bank, or within a shed;



but more generally in some thick leafy bush near the ground.

There is something peculiarly charming in the song of this bird ; so clear, so exhilarating, that it gives me positive pleasure to listen to its carol. Even in spring, when the air is filled with music from every bush and tree, I can distinguish the clear, sharp notes of my favourite songster among the general chorus.

Last winter one of these birds, urged by the inclemency of the weather, became our constant guest, leaving the kitchen only for a short period at a time. This little fellow made himself perfectly at home with the servants, attending their table during meal times, and receiving all scraps with which they were pleased to favour him ; taking his stand on the frame of one of the neighbouring chairs, from whence he had a good view of the ground beneath the table, and ready to hop forth when a crumb fell. He enjoyed, indeed, the range of the kitchen and

pantry at will, and throve exceedingly on his good fare; from being small and thin, Mr. Robin plumped out into a fine fat bird, and became so bold and saucy, that he would so far forget his good manners as to hop on to the table, and without waiting for an invitation, help himself to bread, and any morsel that lay conveniently in his way: nothing escaped the glance of his clear bright eye. His favourite situations were the top of the open pantry door, the frame of the old fashioned round table, or one of the oaken pegs behind the kitchen door, where he would sit and warble forth his sweet song, as if to reward us for the food and shelter we afforded him. But though he was, without exception, the finest and handsomest, and most familiar robin I ever saw, I must confess he was not without his faults, as his behaviour one day fully proved.

One cold, snowy morning, robin was absent from the kitchen much longer than



usual, and we were beginning to wonder what had become of him, when he suddenly made his entry through the open lattice of the pantry, accompanied by two other robins, exceedingly lean and ill-favoured; forming a striking contrast with our fat, comely little friend. It was evident these two were invited guests, by the patronizing manner in which Mr. Rob did the honours of the house; introducing them to his favourite perches, and showing them where the best food was to be found. This was all very well; but I am sorry to say, his subsequent conduct was not distinguished by that kindness and liberality the votaries of true hospitality are bound to observe. Scarcely had his hungry visitors begun to partake of the crumbs that were scattered beneath the table, than he bristled up his feathers, hopping about with a menacing air, and scolding in harsh and angry tones. A battle immediately commenced, which was maintained for some minutes with great spirit, by one of his

outraged guests; but victory decided, at length, in favour of our old acquaintance, he being nearly half as big again as his famished adversary. Having driven both his visitors from the kitchen, Rob returned elated with success, and flying to his favourite peg, sang a song of triumph; puffing out his red breast, and ruffling his feathers, as if to express his satisfaction for having vanquished his enemies.

This ungenerous behaviour, on the part of old pet, quite lost him my esteem; and proved the opinion of naturalists to be just, when they declare the robin to be combative, jealous, and selfish towards his own species, though gentle and confiding in his general behaviour to man.

These birds emulate each other in their songs; and it is almost laughable to observe the airs of offended dignity evinced by these little songsters, if one appears to excel the other in the length and compass of his warbling.

The robin is a native of the whole Eu-



ropean continent, and in all countries is distinguished for the confiding manner in which he enters the dwellings of man, and silently, as it were, prefers his claims for food and protection. His attractive little ways endear him to us, and he ever receives a kind and affectionate welcome. In every country he is distinguished by some familiar appellation. In Sweden he is called Tommi Liden, in Norway Peter Ronsmad, in Germany Thomas Gierdet, in Italy he is Petto Rosso, (or Redbreast,) and in England Robin, "Pretty Robin Redbreast."

## CHAPTER IV.

MY BROTHER TOM AND HIS DOMESTIC  
FAVOURITES.

The Subject of Birds continued—Tragical Death of the young Jackdaws—The Owl Otho—The tame Sparrow—Mamma's Singing-bird—Some Remarks on the Natural History of the Owl.

My brother Tom was remarkably fond of domestic animals of every kind, and when a young boy, was never without one or more pets on which to lavish his regard. He was an affectionate, kind-hearted little fellow, and careful that the creatures under his protection should want for no comfort that he could procure them; never leaving home without first supplying the wants of his little favourites, and duly recommending them to the attention of those persons with



whom he possessed the greatest influence, that none of his creatures might suffer from his absence.

At one time Tom had quite a domestic menagerie, in an outhouse that he had fitted up for their accommodation. Among the most remarkable members of the collection were three beautiful rabbits of the French breed, that had snow-white coats, the hair of which hung down to the ground, of a delicate silken texture; a guinea-pig; two very handsome kittens; a tame chicken, that he rescued from the devouring jaws of a voracious old sow; a box full of white mice, and a mongrel dog named Rover. In addition to these, he had a magpie, and an owl named Otho.

Between the rabbits, the kittens, and Rover, the greatest harmony existed. They had all been brought up together, and the force of habit and early association had entirely subdued the enmity that usually subsists between these animals. The cavy, or guinea-

pig, was a stupid and rather uninteresting member of this little society, and did not attach himself to either of his companions; but Rover and the rabbits were so fond of each other, that they were always to be seen reposing in one corner of the house, nestled together among the straw; or, if the rabbits had been removed to the box appropriated to their use, Rover would mount guard on the top, as if to defend his helpless companions from the assault of any enemy that might intrude upon their privacy to molest them.

One day, the door chancing to be left unfastened, the rabbits made their escape into a distant clover-field; and on Tom's return from a stroll in the plantation, accompanied by Rover, he espied his three runaways feeding at large. After some difficulty he succeeded in catching two of them; but the third baffled his skill, and he was obliged to leave Rover to keep watch, while he hastened home with his



two naughty truants. A few minutes afterwards he called me to witness the novel sight of the dog bringing back the fugitive rabbit in his mouth, quite unhurt, and safely depositing it with its fellows in the house. I have seen him twice perform the same good office, and with an equal display of care and tenderness towards the little animal, which appeared to receive no particular injury from this mode of being carried; and what was even more surprising, evinced no marks of terror, on finding himself in the jaws of a creature, towards which, generally speaking, they inherit an instinctive dread. So powerful are the effects of early education and habit in overcoming natural instinct.

Now I must tell you, that my brother Tom had taken into his head to long for the possession of a tame jackdaw, under the vain idea of teaching it to talk; and as he could not easily procure one of these birds by any other means, he climbed the old

ash-tree, that grew in part of the garden-paling, and took from a hollow branch, which the daws had for several succeeding years usurped as their right, a nest containing five half-fledged birds, the dark unsightly skins of which were scantily concealed by a covering of stumpy black feathers.

Tom attended so indefatigably to the wants of his young carders, (as in our part of the world the country folk call jack-daws,) that he began to entertain ideas as to the possibility of their being reared, when an unforeseen termination was put to all Tom's lively hopes. He had been invited by some young friends to join a fishing-party, which would in all probability detain him the whole day from home; but before he set off on the expedition, he earnestly recommended his precious brood to the attention of the cook-maid, with whom he chanced to be a very great favourite; "because he was so kind," as she used to



say, "to poor dumb things." Moreover, old Hannah and my brother Tom went partners in the possession of a grey Cypress cat. Hannah promised her young master to attend like a mother to his young car- ders, and that they should want for no- thing good in his absence; and Tom, who had carefully provided a good store of pro- visions for them, which he bought with his own savings, considered he had done all things necessary towards ensuring the com- fort of his birds, in leaving so worthy a substitute in his stead. But, alas! whilst old Hannah was gone to the gate of the court-yard, to see her dear Master Thomas well mounted on black Sloven, his donkey, the grey Cypress cat (an errant thief) had found her way into the pantry, had eaten the last morsel of chopped meat, which Hannah had carelessly left uncovered on a shelf in the pantry, and was diligently licking the plate when Hannah returned. I am afraid the old woman, in the first burst

of her indignation, bestowed some hard thumps on poor puss, for our ears were saluted by some pitiful mewings just about that time. It was an unfortunate circumstance, but it so happened that there was no more fresh meat of any kind in the house, but plenty of excellent salted beef and pickled pork. The young birds soon became clamorous for a supply of food; and Hannah, thinking what was good for human beings must be equally so for birds, and possibly considering that a dinner of salt pork would be an agreeable change, treated the poor birds with some pieces of meat from the brine, cut rather larger than usual, so that one or two of the unhappy jackdaws were choked in their endeavours to swallow these delicate morsels. The rest she dosed with several tea-spoonfuls of toast and water, to wash down the pork, and, as she said, to prevent the poor creatures from being thirsty.

This novel diet agreed so ill with the



little carders, that when their master returned, and hastened with anxious interest to visit his young family, not one was left alive to greet him. Great was his indignation at the sight of the dead birds. He instantly accused old Hannah of having neglected to feed them during his absence. This charge she refuted; exclaiming, in a pitiful whine, "Sure, Master Thomas, if I didn't feed them with the best of pickled pork, and washed it down with plenty of nice toast and water to strengthen them; and if that a'nt doing well by them, I don't know what is." To have convinced Hannah that salt pork was not good diet for young jackdaws, required more eloquence than any of our household possessed. She persisted in attributing the death of the young birds to every cause but to that of her bad management.

The next object of Tom's regard was a white owl, which had been caught in a trap set for rats in the granary. The owl

was not severely wounded, though disabled from seeking its living as formerly by flight, the pinion of one of the wings being hurt. This bird was immediately taken under my brother's protection, and allowed a place under an empty cask which had the bottom out, and one of the staves broken, so as to allow a free egress and regress to any creature of a moderate size that might choose to shelter under it. Beneath this cask Otho the owl lived all day, excepting when Tom chose, for his amusement, to bring him into the house: of a night he enjoyed the range of the garden undisturbed.

Now I must tell you that Tom did not like any one should tease his owl but himself; and we were all rather fond of exciting the wrath of this solemn bird, by rolling a stone towards him, an empty cotton reel, or something of the sort, just to see him lift up his great wing and put out his sharp talons, and hiss and scold, or



throw himself on his back, when any one approached him. Besides, he used to look so droll, sitting in a corner of the room, nodding his head and looking so wise, with keen black eyes, and hooked beak buried in the white feathers, that surrounded his face like a swansdown wig.

One day Tom came into the parlour, where we were all sitting at work, with his owl Otho under his arm, evidently much discomposed. On enquiring the cause for his displeasure, he replied that Miss Jane's cat had robbed his owl's pantry in a most unprincipled manner, of two mice, a bat, and some bits of meat, which he had with some trouble procured, and now the poor thing had nothing left for his supper. Somehow this intelligence was given with such an air of offended dignity, yet with so much simplicity, that, instead of awakening our sympathetic feelings in behalf of the injured owl, we could not help laughing. Our ill-timed mirth had the effect of

increasing poor Tom's displeasure; and he who was, generally speaking, full of mirth and good-humour, now took it into his head to be seriously offended; and when Jane offered to amuse herself, and bring him into good-humour, by teasing Otho, he rose from his seat with a resolute air, saying he did not choose his owl to be so insulted; and added, as he left the room: "Miss Jane, I would advise you to take the last look of Otho, for that owl you shall never see again." Now, by some mysterious coincidence, Tom's words were verified; for neither he nor us ever saw the owl from that day: it disappeared in the course of the afternoon, and was never seen again.

Tom's attempts at rearing and keeping birds proved as unsuccessful as my former ones had done with regard to the young robin. I must confess, taking young birds from under the parent wing, is a practice for which I am no advocate; it is so seldom these attempts are crowned with



success; and so many helpless creatures are exposed annually to the miseries arising either from starvation and neglect, or over-feeding with improper aliment. I would rather dissuade my young friends entirely from any attempts of the kind. To those that possess benevolent feelings and kindly dispositions, I would plead in behalf of the tender nestlings, which are taken from beneath the fostering care of the parent-bird, from the warm and sheltered nest, to be placed in some rude basket or cage, where they are exposed to the inclemencies of the cold air upon their naked, unfledged limbs, and the painful sensations arising from hunger and thirst, or the want of that peculiar food which is absolutely essential to their preservation; and to seek which many birds migrate, previous to the period of incubation, to those countries that produce the particular insect or seed requisite for the nourishment of their offspring; guided in their flight

across unmeasured distances of sea and shore, by that unerring Wisdom which governs the animal creation, from the emmet that crawls upon the earth, to the eagle that builds her house among the cloud-capped rocks. To man is given reason and power to exercise his judgment, and he is accountable to his Maker for all his actions. A superior intelligence governs the animal world: they obey an unerring law, from which they never swerve. This law they call instinct. It was established by their all-wise Creator, and like the rest of his works, fills us with admiration, and obliges us to acknowledge his wisdom is excellent, and his ways past finding out. This instinct, that leads so many of our birds to migrate in winter to warmer climates, or brings the natives of warmer climates to pass the breeding-season with us, is incomprehensible to our reason; we can only refer the wisdom of the bird back to the providential Power that made the



creature subject to a law whose impulse they obey with one accord.

The migration of the water-fowl is beautifully illustrated in a little poem that appeared some time since in "The American Literary Gazette," and which, being peculiarly applicable to my subject, I shall insert, assured it will be read with pleasure by those of my readers who are lovers of nature and true poetry.

### THE AMERICAN WATER-FOWL.

Wither, 'midst falling dew,  
While glow the heavens with the last steps of day,  
Far through their rosy depths, dost thou pursue  
Thy solitary way?

Vainly the fowler's eye  
Might mark thy distant flight to do thee wrong,  
As darkly painted on the evening sky,  
Thy figure floats along.

Seek'st thou the plashy brink  
Of weedy lake, or maze of river wide;  
Or where the recking billows rise and sink  
On the chafed ocean's side?

There is a Power, whose care  
Teaches thy way along that pathless coast,  
The desert and illimitable air,  
Lone wandering, but not lost.

All day thy wings have fanned,  
At that far height, the cold, thin atmosphere ;  
Yet stoop, not weary, to the welcome land,  
Though the dark night is near.

And soon that toil shall end ;  
Soon shalt thou find a summer home, and rest,  
And scream among thy fellows : reeds shall bend  
Soon o'er thy sheltered nest.

Thou'rt gone : the abyss of heaven  
Hath swallowed up thy form ; yet on my heart  
Deeply hath sunk the lesson thou hast given,  
And shall not soon depart.

He who, from zone to zone,  
Guides thro' the boundless air thy certain flight,  
In the long way that I must tread alone,  
Will guide my steps aright.

When my two eldest sisters were little  
girls, one six, the other eight years old,  
they had a tame sparrow, which had been  
injured in a trap : the gardener was just on



the point of wringing its neck, when, touched with pity for the poor little bird, they begged Simms (that was the gardener's name) would give it to them. This he accordingly did, first binding up the injured leg with a piece of split reed, drawn from the thatch of one of the outhouses; the hollow part of the reed being placed so as to admit the bird's leg, and then bound carefully together with a bit of soft thread; thus giving the broken limb an artificial support.\* The

\* This plan I have seen practised under my own eye repeatedly, both with birds and small animals. The first time I ever saw this operation performed, was by an elderly lady, a friend of my mother's, who happened to overhear my sister Jane lamenting over the deplorable situation of a favourite old cat, that had been found in the garden with her fore leg dreadfully fractured. Bidding Jane not to cry, the lady sent her into the garden to cut an elder stick from a great bush that grew in the shrubbery; and having split the stick, and removed the pith with the point of the knife, she next wound a piece of soft rag round the wounded limb; she placed it be-

plan succeeded so well, that in the course of a week or ten days the bandage was able to be removed, and the sparrow could hop about almost as well as before it received the injury.

During the time of its confinement my sisters attended its little wants with unremitting kindness; and this pretty creature became so sensible of the attentions it received at their hands, that it evinced the

tween the two hollow halves of the elder-stick, and bound them both together, but not so tightly as to prevent the circulation of the blood. Fanny was then suffered to retire to a soft bed of hay, made up for her in a warm nook of the back kitchen, and supplied with milk and other food occasionally: in a short time she was perfectly restored. This poor old puss, who was the best mouser that ever was seen, had her leg broken no less than four different times during the course of her life; and we pursued the same plan in setting it. We had a chicken, which underwent the same process, and with the like success; besides several other instances I could mention, in which it proved equally efficacious in restoring the limb to its former usefulness.



most lively regard for them, hopping towards them gratefully, and picking the crumbs from their hands. I regret to say, this affectionate little creature was killed by a cat, that chanced to enter the nursery while the nurse-maid and the children were gone out for a walk in the neighbouring meadows.

My sisters lamented greatly for the cruel death of their pretty favourite; and the footman, who was a remarkably good-natured man, seeing his young ladies so grieved for the loss of their pet bird, set a brick-trap in the court-yard, and soon succeeded in capturing a fine fat cock sparrow, which he offered for their acceptance, to supply the place of the dead bird, which, I must tell you, was a hen sparrow, of no particular beauty, either of plumage or form; but though the new bird was much handsomer, it was very bold and fierce, not at all resembling the meek, gentle creature they had lost; and instead of appearing at

all grateful for the attentions he received, this saucy sparrow resisted in a violent manner all attempts towards reconciliation.

Finding their overtures towards friendship vehemently resisted, and fearing he would beat himself to death against the nursery window, they agreed to restore the little rebel to his former liberty ; but previous to letting him go, Agnes placed about his neck a large gilt earring, that one of the servants had given her that very morning, having broken its fellow, and not thinking it worth replacing. This ring Agnes fastened round the neck of the sparrow, and opening the window, sent him back to his mates, that busy little crew that were all dressing and pluming their brown feathers, perched on the naked sprays of the elm trees on the bleach below ; to whom I dare say he told a very sorrowful tale of the terrors he had endured, from the time he became imprisoned in the brick trap, till the



collar was fixed about his neck and his liberty granted.

Nearly two years after this adventure, papa was firing his gun at a flock of small birds that had nearly destroyed all his new-sown radish seeds, and was perfectly astonished, on finding among the killed and wounded, a sparrow having a gilt ring round his neck. On mentioning the circumstance in the parlour, the sparrow and ring were both identified by my sisters to be the very same they had formerly set free from the nursery window.

I have often been amused, when a child, by hearing mamma tell the story, how she was deceived by a bird-merchant, when she first married and came to live in the vicinity of London.

One fine spring afternoon, as she was sitting near the open window, at work with a young lady, (a friend who was staying with her on a visit,) a man stopped at the window, having several cages in his hand,

and asked mamma if she wished to purchase a rare singing bird, that had been brought from foreign parts; as he spoke, holding up to view a cage containing a bird of most magnificent plumage, having a fine long drooping tail of scarlet and blue feathers, and a crest of the same splendid colours, curiously striped across with black. The body and wings of the bird were small in proportion to its crest and tail, but delicately formed, and displaying a variety of agreeable hues. The asking price of this handsome creature was fifteen shillings, but after a little hesitation, the bird-merchant consented to let mamma have cage and all for half-a-guinea. He vouched for the fine singing of the "Peruvian warbler," as he termed the bird; and assured mamma and her friend, they would be enchanted by the melody of his notes, when once he began to sing; adding, the bird would be rather shy at first, and required to get used to his new situation before he displayed his



vocal accomplishments. He added moreover, as one of his merits, he was not at all dainty, and would eat the commonest sorts of seeds and corn.

After having heard so fine a character of the "Peruvian warbler," mamma could not resist her own inclination, and the entreaties of her friend, to purchase him. The money was paid down, the cage handed over to her, and the bird-merchant departed.

For some time mamma and her friend could not do a stitch of work for admiring the gay colours of the bird; but they shortly began to notice the want of proportion in his form, and the awkward manner in which he carried his head and tail, which seemed as if they did not belong to him: besides this, he had a very pert, familiar air, not at all according with the grace and dignity expected from his foreign breeding; but still they were far from suspecting the cheat that had been put upon them, anxiously listening for the commencement of his tune-

ful song, and were not a little mortified when, after puffing out his breast, and giving evident signs of his intentions of favouring them with a tune, he suddenly stopped, and eyeing his auditors cunningly through the wires of his cage, only uttered forth, in clear distinct tones, the significant and well known cry of spink, spink, that distinguishes the chaffinch from his tuneful companions of the fields and groves. Still they were unwilling to think they had been deceived, and flattered themselves with the idea, that spink, spink, might be only a familiar prelude to a better song, like the scraping of a violin preparatory to the musician's commencing a fine air. But this cherished hope was of short duration. When papa returned home to tea, he walked up to the cage, and no sooner had he glanced upon its tenant, than his quick eye discovered the cheat, and he proclaimed the fine feathers that adorned the head and tail of this "Peruvian warbler," to be entirely artificial, and the rest of his gay co-



lours only the effect of paint, skillfully laid on. Mamma and her young friend were not a little chagrined at this mortifying declaration; but still encouraged a faint hope that this *rara avis* did not owe his beauty entirely to borrowed plumes. A few days, however, put the matter beyond dispute; first, his fine crest dropped off, next his long tail; and when divested of these external decorations, mamma beheld with regret her fine foreign songster, her "Peruvian warbler," to be nothing more nor less than a mere English chaffinch, a bird of the smallest reputation for vocal powers of any of the feathered choir; inferior even to the common sparrow.

Never did any prisoner seem more charmed with being released from his fetters, than did this poor bird from the incumbrance of his borrowed finery; his black eye sparkled with delight, as he hopped about his cage, uttering, at intervals, his familiar note of spink, spink.

As mamma saw no reason why this poor chaffinch should be kept shut up in a cage, she caused the servant to set the door open and offer him his liberty; but if mamma did not know when she had a good bird, the chaffinch knew when he had a kind mistress and a good home, and refused to go away. So mamma had the cage hung over the door of the summer-house, to the end that Mr. Spink might stay or go, just as it pleased his fancy, continuing to supply him with food and water. These favours he seemed very sensible of, and continued to eat his seeds and return to his perch in the cage at night; enjoying the liberty of the garden all the day. His docility and attachment rather endeared him to his mistress and the household; and he continued to live in the garden till the following spring, when it is supposed he joined himself to a company of marauding sparrows and chaffinches, that came to pay their respects to beds of new-sown garden seeds, as he dis-



appeared in their company, and was never seen afterwards.

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BEFORE I dismiss the chapter on birds entirely, it may be as well to give a few particulars relative to the natural history of the owl. There are no less than forty-six species included under the general name of *strix*, but I shall confine myself entirely to the common white owl (*strix flammea*.) The usual weight of this bird is about eleven ounces; its length fourteen inches; its breadth, from wing to wing, nearly three feet. The upper part of the body, the coverts and secondary feathers of the wings, are of a fine pale yellow or buff: on each side of the shafts are two grey and two white spots, placed alternately; the exterior of the wing-feathers yellow; the interior white, marked on each side with four black spots. The lower side of the body

wholly white ; the interior feathers of the tail white ; the exterior marked with dusky bars : the legs, which are short and thick, are feathered to the feet ; the toes are armed with strong hooked talons ; the edge of the middle claw is jagged. The eyes are black and piercing, and surrounded by a circle of thick, soft, white feathers, which appear intended to defend the eyes from too great a glare of light.

The white owl is almost domestic ; inhabiting, for the most part, our barns, hay-lofts, granaries, and other out-houses ; and is very useful to the farmer in clearing these places from mice.

Towards twilight it quits its perch, where it has sat dosing during the day, and takes a regular circuit round the fields, skimming along the ground in quest of mice and other small vermin. Country people pretend to prognosticate the weather by the flight of this bird.

They seldom stay out long together, re-



turning to their old retreat to devour their prey, which they carry in their claws. This species do not hoot, but hiss and snore; and while they fly along the ground, will scream most frightfully. They are a bird of prey entirely, but their principal food is mice and birds: like all their species, the light is extremely obnoxious to them, and appears to render them blind while exposed to its influence, as they stagger and often fall backward, when brought to a strong glare of sunshine. They are remarkably fierce when offended, and will bite and tear with their claws any thing that comes in their way.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE YOUNG LEVERETS.

ONE cold, bright afternoon in February, my sister Susanna and I having obtained permission from mamma, went out to take a ramble by ourselves in some pretty wild, woody lanes that skirted the park and grounds of a nobleman, whose land lay contiguous to our own estate.

In spite of the keen influence of a north-east wind, we enjoyed our stroll exceedingly; finding plentiful amusement in listening to the cheerful carol of the robin, and the first melodious songs of the black-bird (*turdus merula*) and thrush, (*turdus musicus*,) that saluted us from every bush and thicket; and marking the early buds beginning to unfold on the hedge-rows. A few sunny days had coaxed into



greenness the woodbine, whose mantle of sad-coloured verdure was kindly flung across the leafless sprays of the hawthorn, and the naked branches of the young saplings, as if to shield them from the chilling gales of winter, while it sought support for its own weak, fragile stem.

The elder\* too had yielded to the same genial influence, and gave promise of returning spring. Though its leaves are of a sad colour, and somewhat coarse in texture, I love the elder. It is one of spring's earliest heralds; it tells of buds and blos-

\* *Sambucus nigra*, a black-berried elder; so called from a musical instrument called *Sambuca*, formerly in use among the ancients, supposed to have been made of the elder-wood. This tree is common all over England, but was brought originally from Germany, where it is a native. The elder unfolds its leaves in February and March; it is one of our earliest deciduous trees that resumes its green livery: it blossoms in May and June. The leaves and flowers of the elder were formerly held in much esteem for their medicinal and healing qualities.

soms yet to come: its broad umbels of white flowers give great effect to the closely wooded lane, standing forward among the lighter foliage in beautiful relief: it comes too when the blackthorn, the whitethorn, and crab-trees have shed their blossoms; and its rich clusters of ripe purple fruit in autumn look very imposing, and afford a pleasant beverage in winter for the poor, whose luxuries are so few; besides employing many women and children at that season gathering the berries for sale, which, when duly freed from the stalks, are sold at the rate of one shilling, or one shilling and fourpence per peck.

Beside the elder we noticed the gosling willow, here and there bursting its prison, and putting forth its downy head to view; and on a close inspection might be seen the delicate tassels of bright crimson that terminate the slender sprigs of the hazle bushes; while high above them, the powdery catkins, or male blossoms, wave grace-



fully to every passing breeze. Then there were early primroses, whose pale buds were just beginning to peep through the green calix that encompassed them; but these were only to be viewed at a respectful distance; they were beyond our reach, having been nursed up in the moss that lined the banks of the deep, sheltered ditches; and we could only sigh to gain possession of them, and turn with grateful feelings towards the solitary varnished celandine, or white daisy, that courted our attention among the grass on the sunny side of the bank. The sight of this sweet, modest flower, recalled Burns's Mountain Daisy—

Its snowy bosom sunward spread;

and Montgomery's sweet lines to the same meek child of nature:—

There is a flower, a little flower,  
With silver crest and golden eye,  
That welcomes every changing hour,  
And weathers every sky.

The prouder beauties of the field,  
In gay, but quick succession shine ;  
Race after race their honours yield :  
They flourish and decline.

But this small flower to nature dear,  
While moons and stars their courses run,  
Wreathes the whole circle of the year,  
Companion of the sun.

It smiles upon the lap of May,  
To sultry August spreads its charms ;  
Lights pale October on its way,  
And twines December's arms.

The purple heath, the golden broom,  
On moory mountains catch the gale ;  
O'er lawns the lily sheds perfume,  
The violet in the vale ;

But this bold flowret climbs the hill,  
Hides in the forest, haunts the glen ;  
Plays on the margin of the rill,  
Peeps round the foxes den.

The lambkin crops its crimson gem,  
The wild bee murmurs on its breast ;  
The bluefly bends its pensile stem  
Light o'er the skylark's nest.



'Tis Flora's page; in every place,  
In every season, fresh and fair,  
It opens with perennial grace,  
And blossoms everywhere.

On waste and woodland, rock, and plain,  
Its humble buds unheeded rise:  
The rose is but a summer's reign;  
The daisy\* never dies.

The exquisite simplicity and beauty of this little poem will be sufficient apology to my young readers for introducing it in this place. The daisy and celandine are the first wild flowers of any consequence that appear in our banks and lanes. The poet Wordsworth has celebrated the latter, by some pretty lines addressed to the celandine, "the first flower that blows in spring," beginning,

There is a flower that shall be mine,  
'Tis the little calandine.

\* *Bellis Perennis*, begins to bloom as early as January, and continues in some situations all the year round.

But I shall forbear inserting them at length, as they may be seen in Mrs. Laurance's "Poetical Primer," a pretty collection of poems for young people.

Susanna and I were already anticipating the time when the hedges should have put on their gay livery once more, and the banks be bright with fresh green leaves and tender grass, embroidered with primroses, buttercups, violets, daisies, cowslips, and meadow saxifrage, (*saxifrage granulata*,) that tall pensile flower that bears silvery white blossoms and pale slender green leaves; it comes in with blue-bells and violets, and may be seen on sunny banks and little thickets of underwood, raising its delicate, fragile stem, and opening its snowy bells to the spring sunshine.

The thought of spring and spring flowers made our young hearts dance with joyful anticipation, when, just at the same instant, we both espied a knot of full blown primroses, in a sheltered nook at the roots



of a clump of tall holly trees, that grew on a pretty rising ground in the lane; which spot in spring and summer is always gay with furze (*genista Anglica*) and tufts of long yellow broom, (*spartium scoparium*,) beneath whose friendly covert many a pheasant's and partridge's downy brood have been nursed up, from year to year, unmolested and unseen.

Eager to secure the prize as a present for mamma, we both hastened to the spot where the primroses grew; but on stooping to pluck the flowers, we discovered two tiny brown leverets, sheltered beneath the long tufts of grass and leaves, nestled side by side, half perished by the chilling wind that waved the scanty foliage round them. The poor little things trembled in every limb; but whether from terror occasioned by our approach, or by the loud barking of a dog not far from the spot, I cannot determine.

Our natural affection for all kinds of animals prompted us to succour these little helpless creatures. We looked carefully round on every side, thinking, if we could discover any traces of their mother, we would deposit the little hares safely among the furze and bushes, and leave them to her fostering care; but no sign of her recent steps among the dewy grass appeared, and we conjectured that, in all probability, she had fallen a victim to a sportsman, whom we had passed at a turning in the lane, with a dead hare in his hand.

As the little orphans were evidently too young to provide for themselves, we resolved to take them home, and see what we could do for them. Carefully depositing them on a bed of soft dry moss, which we collected from the roots of the holly-tree, I placed them at the bottom of the little wicker basket I had in my hand. During



our walk homewards we often lifted the lid of the basket, and peeped in on our little captives; but they appeared very insensible to their change of condition, remaining perfectly quiet, their little noses buried in the warm fur of their bosoms, and crouched closely together among the moss.

On reaching home we eagerly displayed our treasure, lifting them gently from the basket by their ears, sliding the other hand carefully under them at the same time, that we might not hurt the tender things. And here let me pause, to observe that no animal requires to be more tenderly handled than a hare or rabbit. Some children take them up round the middle of the body, a very injurious practice. Others grasp them by the ears, and hold them dangling in the air, leaving the whole weight of the body to be thus sustained. This cannot fail of hurting the little creatures exceedingly. The most judicious

method of lifting it appears to be gently raising it from the ground, and then supporting it on the hands or arms, unless an old basket-lid or box be at hand for placing them upon. Our little hares were so small, they would sit with ease on the palm of our hand without the smallest inconvenience.

Mamma and my sisters were quite delighted with our little foundlings, but expressed strong doubts as to the possibility of bringing them up, as they were evidently too young to eat any green food; being not more than a week old at furthest, though covered with a warm coat of thick, brown fur, and with eyes wide open. In this latter particular hares differ from rabbits, kittens, puppies, and many other of the inferior animals which come into the world blind. The young of the hare (*lepus*) is furnished with warm clothing and quick sight from its birth; and this seems a necessary provision of nature, when



we consider it is not nursed in a burrow in the ground, as the rabbit and the mouse tribe, but exposed to the inclemency of wintry seasons, sheltered only by the grass and herbage of the moorland-heath and copse; which would be but a scanty protection, did not nature provide it with suitable covering from the cold, and sight to give it warning of the danger to which it is constantly liable.

Susanna and I were not easily to be discouraged in our design of rearing our little hare, having formerly assisted in bringing up a litter of nine little grey rabbits, whose mother was killed by a cat when they were not more than eight days old. Our plan succeeded so well that not one of the number died; and as the manner in which we managed to rear them may prove useful to some of my young readers, I shall take the opportunity of introducing it in this place.

Having procured a saucer with a small

portion of bran, we warmed some milk and poured over it; and when reduced to a warmth not exceeding that of new milk just taken from the cow, we proceeded to feed our little family; taking care to spread a coarse cloth over the table and on our laps, to prevent spoiling our frocks, (a very needful precaution,) we took a little milk in a teaspoon, and placing the little rabbit under the hollow of our hand, so that its head came between the thumb and fore finger, to keep it steady and prevent its escape, we proceeded to feed it, insinuating the point of the spoon between the teeth of our nursling. At first the little rabbits were very refractory, turning round and round, drawing back their heads, and skipping through our fingers, rebelling sadly against this novel mode of receiving food; but after a few trials of patience, and a little perseverance, we induced them to receive the milk readily, and by the end of the fourth day they had become so docile,



that they would voluntarily lick the milk from the teaspoon, and finally gather round the saucer, helping themselves freely to the milk and bran, and without any further invitation, nibble a morsel of bread from our hands, or eat parsley or any other tender herb we chose to offer them.

With such encouragement to persevere, no wonder if we entertained lively hopes respecting our young leverets. Without further delay we set about feeding Tots and Brownny, for so we named our adopted favourites, but not without many remonstrances on their parts. Never having been accustomed to be served out of silver, the little hares did not seem to know what to make of these shining pap-boats, which we so unceremoniously forced between their teeth, and many were the attempts they made to escape from our hands; but generally speaking, they evinced their displeasure by preserving a sullen and stupid demeanour.

Perseverance will overcome many difficulties, and we had at length the satisfaction of perceiving Brownny beginning to suck the milk from the spoon, and Tots soon follow his sister's worthy example, and several teaspoonfuls were demolished to our delight. I must however notice, that part of the milk was spilled on their breasts, which circumstance sadly distressed the cleanly creatures. Their first movement, when released from our laps, was that of washing their breasts and feet, till they had reduced the refractory fur to a tolerable degree of smoothness.

The difference in character between these two little hares was very decided. Though by far the smaller, and more weakly of the two, Brownny was the more lively and engaging: her love of order formed a striking feature in her disposition. As soon as the *tidy* little thing (to use an expressive provincial term) had carefully cleaned her own fur, she would go to her companion,



and diligently assist in recomposing his ruffled coat, licking his head, ears, breast, and back, with the greatest care and tenderness, which good office Tots never considered it incumbent on him to perform in return; a want of gratitude that served to endear Brownny the more to me, though Tots had been the object of my more peculiar care. Brownny was not only more cleanly in her general habits, but of a more docile and tractable temper, and soon learned to ingratiate herself, by licking our hands, and greeting us with various tokens of regard.

After having fed our little nursling, our next care was to prepare them a habitation, and a commodious wooden box was soon selected from the lumber-yard, into which, having comfortably lined it with soft hay and moss, we introduced our little hares; and as the night promised to be cold, they were permitted to remain in a distant corner of the school-room; an indulgence for

which we were very grateful, as it gave us an opportunity of watching all their manœuvres, which were of a most amusing description.

As night drew on, these little creatures, which had before appeared so sullen and mopish, seemed to awaken into life and glee. Without betraying the smallest dread of our persons, they skipped about, playing a thousand wanton and gamesome tricks; leaping over one another, racing and chacing all over the room like two lively kittens. Then, when tired with these exertions, they would sit down, side by side, as demurely as possible; nestling closely together, licking each others ears and noses with the most caressing affection; then separating, they would make the tour of the room, examining every object with minute scrutiny and apparent curiosity. They seemed mightily well pleased with the gay hearth-rug; and having attentively examined it, came and squatted down in



front of the fender, or seated themselves on the hem of one of our frocks, without the least apprehension of danger. They were, in fact, the most innocent and engaging little animals you could imagine. When they ran, they perched up their ears, (which at other times laid flat to their heads,) and sprang forward with a sort of bound, sometimes cutting the most comical capers sideways. These little creatures became so much attached to us, that if we only moved across the room, they would run after us, skipping across our path, and raising themselves on their hinder feet, as if to solicit our regard. One of Brownny's favourite seats was between my feet, as I sat before the fire of an evening, when she amused herself by nibbing my shoe-ribbons, or biting the hem of my gown; but these frolics were only of an evening. During the day they kept closely together in their box under the hay, and never moved, or appeared to take the least interest in any

thing that was going forward ; but as soon as the daylight appeared, and dusk came on, their spirits revived, and they became exceedingly lively and entertaining.

Somewhat surprised at this peculiarity, I applied to our gardener, who was a sort of factotum, and knew a little of almost every thing, and had made some observation on such things as came under his eye, for information on the subject ; and he told me that not only hares, but many other animals, in a wild state, came out to feed and enjoy themselves of a night, keeping close during the day, or only going out for food. He told me the old hares leave their young ones in some sheltered form, which is the place in which she sits, and is often absent for some hours together, only returning once or twice to suckle them ; but as soon as night approaches, she leads her little ones forth to some pleasant place, where they frolic and enjoy themselves in the moonlight, on the open common, high pas-



tures, or among the dewy corn till sunrise, when they again betake themselves home, to dose away the remainder of the day till evening comes again.

It is commonly affirmed that hares sleep with their eyes open, because no one has been able to catch them napping with them closed. Owing to their quickness of hearing, they are awakened by the most distant sound; so that before the approach of the intruder, the hare is roused. The eye of the hare is so globular, that the rays of light strike on it from all surrounding objects, whether behind or before. This is a valuable provision towards her security, as she both hears and sees the approach of her enemies, of which she has an infinite number, before they are near enough to molest her. I shall, however, reserve such remarks and information as I have been enabled to collect from Buffon and other naturalists, to subjoin at the end of the chapter, and proceed to relate what little remains to be said of my two pets, Tots and Brownny.

I regret to say, Tots was found dead one morning in his box. I have the idea his death was occasioned by giving him his milk too warm, or the air of the closely shut up room was not proper for an animal accustomed to live abroad in all weathers; or, more probably, he required some food we were unable to procure for him. Perhaps our little Tots died the death of many other favourites, from over kindness. We missed his innocent, merry gambols with his sister Brownny of a night, on the carpet or beside the fire. Brownny we determined to remove to a more airy situation, better suited to her former habits of life; and as she could now eat green food, mamma kindly allowed the gardener to fit up a convenient box, nicely wired in front, in a corner of the rabbit-house; and having bored some holes in the bottom of this new house, that it might be kept perfectly dry, we sifted some clean white sand at the bottom of it, according to the advice of Cowper the poet, and supplied our little favourite with such



diet as we thought most proper, not giving her the food in too great quantities at a time. In our treatment of our little hare we were glad to be guided by the experience of Cowper, who has given a very interesting account of three tame hares he brought up—Puss, Bess, and Tiney; and which little memoir I would recommend to the perusal of my young readers, as it contains many circumstances likely to afford at once amusement and instruction. The little narrative is to be found, I believe, at the end of every edition of his poems lately printed.

The food we gave Brownny, who now became a sort of partnership concern between Susanna and me, was carrots, lettuce, the leaves of cabbages of every description, sow-thistle, dandelion, endive, groundsel, the twigs of sweetbriar, hawthorn, and of the birch-tree, clover, fresh hay, the blades, and indeed the ears, and even the straw of wheat-oats, or any other species of corn,

winter tares, peas, and bran, became by turns the food of Brownny. She would readily take bits of bread from our hands, and several sorts of fruit; apple-parings she would eat, and the tendrils and leaves of the grape-vine she rather coveted, but soon grew tired of them. All kinds of pinks and carnations she readily ate; but these being costly dainties, it was only now and then, just by way of a treat, we ventured to crib a leaf or sly offset, from some old and valueless pink or clove, from a distant parterre. The leaves of the flower, commonly called Michaelmas-daisy, she seldom refused. Potatoes, especially the root, she seemed to care little for. Swedish turnip she ate readily, and such weeds as were of a bitter, milky nature, she seemed to hold in great esteem.

Brownny became so much attached to me, that she would distinguish me from my other sister, lick my hands, and rear up against the wires of her box at my ap-



proach, and testify her pleasure at the sight of me by many silent caresses. As we could not enjoy much of her company in the rabbit-house of an evening, the time when she was most entertaining, we were sometimes allowed to bring her into our play-room, that we might see her tricks before we went to bed.

Brownny always evinced considerable pleasure while listening to music. When practicing our music, she used to be particularly attentive. A lively air, not too loud, appeared greatly to interest her: she would pause in her gambols, erect her ears, raise herself on her hind feet, and listen attentively, expressing her satisfaction by a low drumming noise.

Sometimes, when much excited, she would spring into my lap, look earnestly in my face, as though silently demanding an explanation of the sounds that pleased her so well. I have noticed a love of music in several animals. One of my dormice

evinced the most lively pleasure on being placed on my knee, while my cousin played an air on the violin. My sister Jane had a black kitten which was also very fond of music. Passing through a field one summer's evening, when a flock of sheep were feeding, I could not help observing the behaviour of a ram with a bell tied to his neck. The church bells, from a neighbouring village, were ringing merrily. The animal stood for some time motionless, his head turned in the direction from whence the sound came: he then shook his head, which caused the bell he carried about him to sound. This seemed to arouse a desire of emulation in him. He continued alternately pausing, to listen; then shaking his bell with violence, evidently delighted at the music he produced. Some dogs are capable of distinguishing tunes. The hare has been remarked by many persons for its predilection to sweet sounds, and has been even taught to beat the tabor.



The only trick we succeeded in teaching Brownny, was leaping over our hands, or a stick, when held at a considerable distance from the ground. This she would perform seven or eight times successively, and seemed to take delight in these feats of agility. She would also rise on her hind legs, rub her soft brown head against our hands, and lick our fingers, when we stooped to caress her.

Brownny lived with us very happily for nearly two years. I regret to say, her death was one of a very tragical nature. A weasel, that had haunted our garden-hedge for several days, found means to insinuate its narrow head between the wires of the box, and killed our poor hare. One morning, when Alice, mamma's maid, came to call Susanna and me, she related, with tears in her eyes, the melancholy catastrophe which had happened to our beloved Brownny. This doleful news caused us both abundant weeping.

Thus died, in the flower of her age, our poor Brownny. Susanna mitigated her grief by composing an epitaph for her deceased favourite, which we interred with all due ceremony, beneath the mulberry-tree at the bottom of the garden; planting flowers round the grave, and placing a stone at each end, to mark the spot of interment, which remained unmolested for several years, till another gardener came, who had never heard of Brownny, and dug round the mulberry, to give its roots manure, and utterly destroyed all trace of the grave of our lamented little hare.

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I SHALL now add a few particulars, collected from different authors that I have consulted, on the natural history of this little quadruped.

The hare is distinguished by the generic name of *lepus*. It is a native of almost



every country in Europe, and indeed of all the temperate and cold parts of the world. The young are brought forth fully clothed with a thick covering of warm, soft fur. They are not blind, like most of the smaller quadrupeds, but enjoy sight from the very day they come into the world. The hare does not burrow like the rabbit and many other animals, but sits on the ground, in what is termed her form; choosing a southerly aspect in winter, a northerly one in summer. She suckles her young twenty days, after which period she leaves them to shift for themselves. These animals inherit a strong attachment to place, seldom abandoning the form they have once chosen, returning to it after having been pursued many miles by the hunters. In their general habits they are solitary, each one occupying its own peculiar seat, but the members of one litter seldom remove far from one another. If a young hare is found in her form, you may generally con-

clude there are others not far from her. The natural life of a hare is from eight to nine years, but one of Cowper's hares lived to be eleven years and eleven months old.

This inoffensive creature has so many foes to contend with, that it seldom, if ever, reaches the natural term of its existence.

In polar countries the hare changes its tawny or russet coat for one of silvery whiteness. This seems to be provided by the benevolent author of nature as a means of self-defence for eluding the vigilance of its enemies, who are not so well able to distinguish it from the snow-covered ground over which it moves.

The hare, guided by that peculiar instinct which has been as aptly as beautifully termed, by a modern writer of some eminence,\* "God's gift to the weak,"

\* The authoress of "Solitary Hours" has thus expressed herself in an exquisite little poem, called "The Reed Sparrow's Nest," which appeared in "The New Year's Gift," a small volume edited by Mrs. Alaric Watts.



chooses her retreat where the surrounding objects are of a similar colour with her own russet coat. The fallow fields, the brown heath, or beds of withered fern, among decayed leaves, and sheltering under-wood, she makes her form ; and though the most defenceless and timid of all animals, instinct supplies her with means of security, which, if it displays little courage, shows a sagacity which courage alone could not have supplied.

When sorely pressed by pursuing hounds, she will oftentimes start another hare from her form, and lie down in it herself, thus diverting the danger by presenting a new object for pursuit. Sometimes she will commit herself to the watery element, crossing a river or ditch several times successively ; by which means the dogs often lose the scent, and she eludes their vigilance. Various are the stratagems adopted by this little creature for securing herself : sometimes she has been known to leap on to the top of a wall or ruined building, and

squat down among the long grass and weeds, and even venture into the abodes of her enemy, man; or not unfrequently, with admirable sagacity, find refuge under the door of the sheep-cote, and mingle with the flock, as if conscious that here she was safe from pursuit, making the weakness of the timid sheep her bulwark of defence.

Having attained a place of security like this, no vigilance can force her to abandon it. Hares are alike the prey of man and beast, and even of insects, which torment them exceedingly, and often force them to abandon their form, and choose a distant retreat less exposed to their attacks.

Hares chew the cud and part the upper lip, which they keep in constant motion: they seldom utter any sound, unless in pain or sudden peril, when their cry is sharp, piercing, and expressive of agony. They are considered unclean by the Jews, and are among the animals forbidden by the Mosaical law.

These are all the particulars I have been



able to collect, likely to interest and prove instructive to my young readers; to whom I hope my gleanings may not be totally devoid of entertainment.

## CHAPTER VI.

## ANECDOTES OF PAPA'S MONKEY.

ALL children love hearing or reading stories or anecdotes of monkeys. For my own part I must confess, nothing delighted me more when a child, than listening to monkey stories; and when a little older, and I was able to read for myself, I greatly relished the amusing anecdotes related of these droll animals, by the ingenious author of "Sandford and Merton."

Papa's monkey was presented to him by the captain of a merchant-vessel, who brought Ned (for so he was named) from the island of Ceylon, where monkeys used once to be held in such high estimation by the natives, that they even regarded them as objects worthy of adoration and worship;



so blind and foolish is human nature, unenlightened by the truths of revelation, which teach us that God is a spirit, and to be worshipped in spirit and in truth. And all other things, whether animate or inanimate, are the works of his creative power, and that to pay homage to them, is to exalt the creature above the Creator, which constitutes *idolatry*, and robs the Almighty of the honour due unto his name.

Ned was of the same class with those common monkeys that may be seen in the streets of London, or at fairs and wakes, sitting on the tops of Italian boys' organs, figuring away on the backs of French poodles, or dancing quadrilles, dressed in red jackets and fur caps; or fastened by a long chain to the collar of some patient camel, or that much injured animal a dancing bear, whom they often sadly annoy by their apish tricks. Ned might, with these monkeys, be described as being of a dusky, greyish brown colour, mixed with rusty

yellow ; naked face, ears, and hands ; the forehead much wrinkled ; inquisitive, round eyes : the hair rather long, of a dirtyish brown, parted down the middle of the head on either side. Like the rest of his species, he was much addicted to mischief, which propensity he indulged whenever any opportunity offered of putting it in practice.

He always displayed great reluctance at being washed, which necessary act of cleanliness he was made to perform at least twice a-day.

One day Ned observed the shoe-boy very busily engaged blacking his master's boots ; and fancying the boots looked very much improved by the operation, and that he required some embellishment of the kind to set him off to advantage, he watched his opportunity, and dipping the brush into the liquid, blacked his feet and half way up his legs ; and then being charmed with the effect produced by his application of the blacking, he next applied the brushes to his



face and hands, wiping his fingers from time to time on his head; and a pretty figure he made of himself, as you may easily imagine. He was still in the midst of his frolic, when, alas for the poor painter! his unusual chattering and notes of approbation attracted his master's notice, who just then chanced to come that way, and quickly put an end to his employment, by ordering the servant to catch him and bring him to the kitchen, where he caused a small tub of water to be set before the culprit, with a piece of flannel and soap, and commanded the weeping monkey to wash himself instantly. With much reluctance, and the most ludicrous expressions of regret, the poor monkey proceeded to perform his ablutions, wringing his hands and casting the most rueful glances, first at his master, then at the cold element: at length, taking the flannel, he dipped it into the water, soaped it, and applied it to his face. No sooner had the cold fluid touched him, than he

renewed his lamentations, casting the most imploring looks of entreaty on his master ; but there was no reprieve. When he had thoroughly cleaned himself, he was permitted the use of a towel. This indulgence he received with evident delight, skipping joyfully about with it in his hand, and making the most diverting grimaces while he applied it to his hands and face.

Ned had a little house to sleep in, with a small pillow, and a rug to cover himself with : monkeys being the natives of tropical countries, require artificial warmth to keep them in health.

This house stood in a warm nook of the kitchen, and it formed one of Ned's chief employments to drag his house as close to the fire as his strength would permit, and make up his bed. This he would do twenty times before he settled to sleep, putting off the covering, shaking up his pillow, then lying down, to try if it was easy and comfortable. To render his bed more soft, he



would convey to it all sorts of rags, or any article of wearing apparel he could conveniently purloin. Any careless person who left silk handkerchiefs, gloves, caps, or frills in Ned's way, never saw them again; at least not in a wearable state, as he cut them to pieces with his sharp teeth, tearing them to bits.

Time will not permit me to relate all his pranks: how he would hide up the maids' aprons and pattens, and the footman's knives and shoes; or how he stole my grandfather's wig that the hair-dresser had just sent home in full dress, and having paraded about in it for some time, finally skipped into the tall cherry-tree opposite the parlour window, and hung it on the topmost bough, to answer the purpose of a scarecrow. Ned delighted in teasing papa's tame owl, that lived in the dark corner of the summer-house in the garden; and would bring it from its cool, shady retreat, and place it on the gravel walk in the full blaze of a meri-

dian sunshine; appearing greatly to enjoy the evident discomfiture of the poor bird. Sometimes, however, he received a severe peck from the owl's strong beak, or a flap with her wing in his face, that somewhat disconcerted him. Of an evening he kept at a respectful distance, for experience taught him that he could not meddle with his feathered adversary with impunity. Besides teasing the owl, he persecuted papa's squirrel; and besides taking every opportunity of waking him, when the pretty innocent thing was enjoying a comfortable nap, he would run to his case, put his paw through the bars, and steal his nuts or biscuit, throwing back the shells with the most impertinent freedom.

These and many other tricks I could tell you, but shall confine myself to one or two of the most remarkable of his pranks.

A few doors off from my father's house lived a rich maiden lady, with whom Ned had contracted some degree of friendship



This lady often sent for Ned to entertain her with his tricks, and rewarded him with a profusion of cakes and sweetmeats in return for his drollery; and Ned, who knew where he was well treated, often paid a visit of his own accord, for he was a very cunning fellow.

Now, this lady had been given a fine lemon-crested cockatoo, a bird of extraordinary beauty, and who could repeat a few unintelligible sentences, which passed for talking. The bird could certainly pronounce its own name very distinctly, and would walk about the house, tossing its head, and squalling out in a shrill tone, "Pretty cockatoo! pretty cockatoo!" and some odd sounds, which those persons who professed to be skilled in parrot and cockatoo dialect, interpreted very clearly to mean, "How do you do? how do you do?" and "Very well I thank you." Well, this cockatoo was made a great fuss about, and all the lady's friends and acquaintance were

invited to see and hear it, till they must have been tired of the poor bird's very name.

It so happened that this famous cockatoo met with an accident, and hurt its head. I rather think a neighbour's paroquet broke from its cage, and paid a visit to the garden where the cockatoo lived, and in a fit of ill-humour pulled out some of his best crest feathers, and left a sad bare place on his head. Be it how it may, the cockatoo had a sore head, and his mistress was assured the best way of curing it, was simply immersing the bird several times a-day in cold spring water. One morning, while this operation was being performed, Ned made his entrance at an open window into the house, and taking his seat on the sill of the window, appeared infinitely delighted with watching the whole proceeding, especially enjoying the resistance made by the poor cockatoo, who by no means seemed to relish the immersion of his head in the water.



A visitor unexpectedly coming in, the cockatoo's mistress was summoned away, and Ned was left sole guardian of the sick bird. No sooner was the door closed, when this mischievous animal, resolving to take his turn in dipping the cockatoo, began chasing him about the room, and finally having hunted him into a corner, clutched him by one of his wings and dragged him, in spite of his resistance and complaints, to the tub of water, into which he dipped his head repeatedly, threatening, scolding, and even beating his unfortunate prisoner into submission; and finally held his head so long under water, that the poor cockatoo was drowned.

Hearing a strange confusion, the lady hastened to the scene of action, just time enough to witness the last struggles of her beloved bird, her fine lemon-crested cockatoo! Before she had time to inflict any punishment on the offender, he had dexterously effected his escape through the open

window. For this misdemeanor he was well whipped and kept chained for a month. He seemed perfectly aware of his offence, for he never went into the house of his offended friend again; but evidently considered her as the author of his wrongs, for when she chanced to call on papa, if he was in the parlour he would run up the window-curtain, and secrete himself among its folds, chattering, scolding, and threatening, when sufficiently beyond her reach.

His last piece of mischief was something on a par with the murder of the poor cockatoo. My aunt Jane, who kept papa's house at that time, had two kittens, Sprightly and Venus. Sprightly was a lively kitten, as white as snow, and as full of frolic and fun as any kitten could well be; while her sister Venus was a grave, sober little puss, who passed all her time in dosing before the fire; she was, moreover, rather a cross kitten, and would draw up her back, dart out her claws, and run



away under some distant chair or table, if any thing approached to molest or disturb her slumbers. Ned, who was a beast of some discrimination, attached himself particularly to Sprightly: would nurse and dandle her in his arms, carry her about the room on his back, and suffer her in her turn to make very free with him. But no such friendship existed between Venus and him; she resented the least freedom on his part with indignation, growling and spitting whenever he came near the corner where she usually sat beside the fire. This mode of proceeding greatly incensed Ned, and he adopted a system of persecution against this poor kitten that served to increase their mutual antipathy towards each other. If Venus scratched and bit him, making use of ill-language, which in cats people term swearing, Ned repaid her by pinching her ears and tail, pulling her fur with his long, lean fingers, and twitching her nice whiskers whenever he could do so with impunity.

One day, however, he happened to find poor Venus enjoying a comfortable nap on his bed, whither she had crept for the sake of the warmth. The cook had just placed a saucepan of water on the side of the fire, in which she was about to boil some French beans for dinner; the lid was off, and this wicked monkey, without more ado, clutched the poor sleeping kitten, and popping her into the saucepan, put on the lid, and scampering into his house, laid himself down on his bed, and affected to be fast asleep.

The servant, who had only been absent a few minutes, was surprised at the pitiful sounds that saluted her ears on her approach to the fire; nor could she imagine from whence they proceeded, till having occasion to move the saucepan while she stirred the fire, she felt an unusual motion within it, and taking off the lid, perceived the half-drowned kitten, which presented a most melancholy spectacle, as it raised its head from the interior of the pot, and shook its wet ears with a rueful look and mewings



of the most melancholy description, as if to be released from its watery prison: fortunately the water was cold, so poor puss was saved from a cruel death by the timely interference of the cookmaid.

This was the last trick Ned ever played while in papa's possession, for my aunt Jane was so indignant at his treatment of her poor little puss, which she by no means desired to have served up to table as kitten-broth, that she entreated her brother to give away this cruel monkey. This request he complied with, and presented Ned to a lady, who consented to receive him, in spite of his bad character for drowning cockatoos, and stewing young kittens.

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Improbable as this circumstance may appear, it is nevertheless strictly true, and deserves to be recorded as an additional

proof, if such were wanting, of the singular propensity towards mischief that exists in these animals; and as it tends to confirm the opinions of some modern writers, that animals of the higher order possess some reflective faculties, in addition to that instinct which governs their general habits and conduct. This reflection, however, appears limited within a very narrow compass, when compared with the reasoning powers in man, and is only occasionally exercised. Those animals in which it appears most conspicuous are—the elephant, the ape tribe, the dog, and the horse. Many interesting and wonderful anecdotes might be related of each of these creatures, in confirmation of their superior intelligence; but as they would most likely be familiar to my readers, I shall forbear inserting them.

So much has been written by celebrated travellers and naturalists on the history of monkeys, that I shall forbear enumerating the variety of the species, or pausing to re-



peat any of the marvellous tales related of them.

In its formation the larger animals of the ape tribe are said to approach nearer to man than any other: their powers of imitation are very lively; but while they voluntarily copy the actions of man, they seem incapable of inventing any thing by the exertion of their own mental powers. They are imitative, but not inventive.

The ape tribe, of which the monkey forms the third in degree, is divided into four species:—ape, baboons, monkeys, and sapajons. They are inhabitants of the torrid zone, and are to be met with in most parts of Africa, India, China, Japan, South America, and many of the islands in the hot latitudes.

They feed chiefly on fruits, vegetables, corn, eggs, and the like; and occasion much mischief by their destructive and wasteful habits, infesting the fields of rice and maize, and committing great depreda-

tions in the gardens and orchards that chance to be near their native woods and places of resort. For further particulars I refer my young friends to the abridged works of Buffon, and other ingenious naturalists that have written on this subject.



## CHAPTER VII.

## THE PEACOCK AND HIS ATTENDANT.

SOME years ago my sister Sarah and I were on a visit at the house of a widow lady, residing in a delightful part of Norfolk, where the county is divided from that of Suffolk by the river Waveney. During our stay at C—— park, we received an invitation to spend a day with a young married lady, who resided in the same neighbourhood. After dinner we amused ourselves by walking up and down the long grassy terrace that bordered the moat, and admiring the picturesque appearance of a remarkably tall Babylonian willow, that drooped over the moat, sweeping its graceful foliage into the water, as if to woo its tumbling shadow in the glassy mirror be-

low. Our attention was soon attracted by the sight of a peacock of most splendid appearance, which, on the approach of his mistress, descended from one of the upper boughs of the willow, and advanced towards us with slow, majestic steps, erecting his crest and arching his neck, as if to display his gorgeous colours to our view; like a court lady, he seemed somewhat to need the assistance of a train-bearer, as the longest and finest of his feathers were sadly injured from sweeping the dusty ground.

Though residing in the country all my life, I had seen but one of these rare birds before, and that chanced to be a white one. I remember being charmed with his beauty, though he certainly appeared to considerable disadvantage, as he lodged in a coal-house, or rather, coal-hole; but in spite of the embellishment of the coal dust, he was regarded by my sisters and myself as an object of great interest and admiration. The feathers of his crest, back, and train,



were shaded with a beautiful pearly white, differing in texture from the rest of the plumage, and resembling the richest and finest silk damask in appearance. The owner of this rare bird had once been a farmer of some opulence, but owing to a variety of losses, he had been compelled to quit his farm, and retire to humble lodgings in a neighbouring village.

The peacock, which had been the delight of himself and his wife during their prosperity, now became the companion of their adversity; neither being disposed to part from him, though they had no convenience for his accommodation, not even so much as a court-yard for him to walk about in.

I fancy the poor white peacock, that had formerly enjoyed the unrestrained range of fields and groves, did not much relish the change in his circumstances, which must have been most annoying to a bird so fond of liberty; besides the indignity and mortification of being forced to hide his

beauty in so vile a prison as a dirty coal-hole, in which he had scarcely room sufficient to turn himself about without great inconvenience.

Our dairy-maid had formerly lived servant with the farmer and his wife, and she obtained mamma's permission to take her young ladies to see the white peacock. I was a very little girl at the time, but I well remember joining my voice to the general entreaty for the emancipation of the peacock from his odious place of confinement. The farmer regretted he had no better lodgings for his favourite bird; and as he was now too poor even to afford to buy dress-corn for its consumption, he said if we would promise to be kind to him, and use him well, he would give us the peacock. This generous offer we heard with infinite satisfaction, but dared not accept it until we had consulted our parents. Many were the tears we shed when papa positively forbade us to receive the peacock,



because he had been told these birds were exceedingly destructive to the fruit and vegetables in a garden. Now, papa's chief amusement and delight was superintending his flower and kitchen-gardens, and he suffered nothing to interfere with this favourite pursuit; so we were obliged to decline the farmer's offer of the white peacock. I heard afterwards he found a purchaser for his favourite in the person of a rich baronet's lady, who chanced to hear of his wish to dispose of the bird; and no doubt the poor captive was nothing loth to exchange his gloomy prison, among coal-dust, for the enjoyment of the extensive park and pleasure-grounds adjoining the hall.

Jupiter, for so the green peacock was called, was so gentle that he suffered us to approach him, and stroke his beautiful shining neck and back, and contemplate the exquisite shadings and variety of colours on his plumage, without appearing in the least displeas'd at our freedom; indeed he

seemed, on the contrary, rather to court than shun our caresses, by following us up and down the green terrace, sweeping after us with the grandeur of a king adorned in his robes of state; though neither velvet nor pall could vie with the native lustre of our peacock's dress, which far outshone all silks, satins, or brocades, that ever came from the weaver's loom. No painter's skilful hand can blend the glorious hues, or give that brilliant tinting that we observe in the plumage of this lively bird; so infinitely do the works of nature exceed those of art.

Seeing us so charmed with the peacock, our friend offered to present him to us, provided we could devise any plan for conveying him home; telling us at the same time she was apprehensive that he would be shot by the gamekeepers, as he had of late taken a great fancy for rambling in an adjacent wood. We could not find it in our hearts to refuse the gift so kindly



offered, and agreed, that when mamma sent the servant and chaise to fetch us home, a distance of seventeen miles, we would, if possible, carry home Jupiter.

This arrangement perfectly satisfied all parties that were admitted to the consultation; but whether it proved equally agreeable to Jupiter, I must leave undecided; certainly he conducted himself in a most accommodating manner during the journey, which must have been a very inconvenient one to him, as his legs were tied to prevent his escape, and a large portion of his long train hung drooping from beneath the apron, as he stood at the bottom of the chaise. He kept his head very meekly on my knee, and only trod on my foot once or twice during our ride. Few birds under his peculiar circumstances, I am convinced, would have behaved with so much moderation and good breeding. In short, Jupiter gave an additional proof of how greatly beauty of appearance may be heightened

by good behaviour: a remark I would have my young readers particularly attend to. And let me assure them, the inward graces of the mind, with the adornments of a meek and quiet spirit, are prized by all persons, whose opinions are of any value, far beyond the mere outward show of dress or personal advantages. A fit of illness or untoward accident may destroy the brilliancy of the finest complexion, or the graceful contour of the most perfect form; but gentleness, meekness, obedience, temperance, benevolence, and generosity, combined with true piety and humility of heart, are subject to no such casualties; but the more these virtues are exercised, the brighter they become; shining more and more unto the perfect day. And without these graces, the most lovely face is neither valued nor regarded; whilst the possession of them sheds a sweetness and serenity over the countenance, making the most homely features seem fair.



Having thus far moralized, let me now return to my narrative, and tell you what became of Jupiter.

As soon as we reached home, the servant released our patient prisoner from his bonds, and introduced him into the poultry-yard, throwing down some dress-corn for his supper; leaving him to improve his acquaintance with the hens, ducks, guinea-fowls, and pigs, that gathered about him with every symptom of astonishment and curiosity.

I fancied Jupiter looked something disconcerted at the unceremonious way in which the common fowl surveyed him, and the inhospitable and selfish manner with which they devoured the food that had been thrown down for his refreshment. However, he bore their ill-behaviour with much temperance, though evidently greatly disconcerted by their want of good breeding.

For some time he seemed undetermined where to pass the night; but being a bird

of lofty notions, he chose the most exalted situation he could find, which was no lower one than the topmost chimney of the old hall. Now the highest station is not always the most agreeable, and Jupiter, I fancy, proved the truth of this remark, for the next night he descended a little lower—from the chimney of the house to the roof of the farm; and from thence still lower—to that of the cow-house. The fourth night he condescended to retire to a distant waggon-shed, where he finally fixed his roost on a long beam beneath the roof.

There were some peculiarities belonging to this bird that I cannot pass over unnoticed, and which, however singular, I can vouch for, as they fell under my own immediate observation, and are worthy of remark.

The day after their arrival, Jupiter took a regular survey of the premises; and as if he had been previously acquainted with the map of the estate, he visited every field



and pasture-land, garden and plantation, without once trespassing on the adjoining land of our neighbours by any chance. He generally sought out the ploughman, Peter, and followed him while turning the furrows, keeping within a few yards of him and the horses. He was by nature a bird of solitary habits, living apart from the domestic fowls as much as possible. One white hen, however, attached herself peculiarly to him, and in spite of his evident disregard for her, persisted in forcing herself into his company, especially at his hours of feeding: like an evil genius she followed him everywhere. Some persons might have considered her affection purely disinterested: I gave her ladyship credit for no such motives, having narrowly watched her conduct, and observed that covetousness was the mainspring of all her pretended friendship for the peacock, to whose mess of corn or boiled potatoes she helped herself most plentifully. This hen was the torment

of Jupiter's life. The moment he received his supply of food, with the most audacious boldness she proceeded to devour the largest share: while the peacock, with great majesty and becoming dignity of deportment, was turning himself about, which he could not do very readily, on account of his long train, the white hen had darted her head under his wing, and nearly emptied his red earthen platter of its contents. Sometimes, when greatly outraged by her encroaching behaviour, he would give her a peck or two on the back, or a flap with his wing; but the rude creature never mended her manners, and would tread on his fine gay train with her dirty feet, if it incommoded her in any way. Her rudeness and presumption were quite disgusting.

Jupiter had been accustomed to come to the parlour-windows to be fed and caressed, and the gentle creature would feed out of our hands; taking a morsel of bread, or a few grains of corn from us, carefully avoid-



ing hurting us with his sharp bill. He had grown so familiar, that he always presented himself at meal-times to receive his share; his usual station being the lower shelf of an unoccupied flower-stand, where he patiently waited till his red platter was duly supplied with potatoes, or any other vegetable from the table. If the servant omitted to pay proper attention to the gentle notices he was wont to give of his presence, he would ascend the steps, and advertise him of his wants, by pecking at the glass, then descend to his former place; but if the summons was not obeyed after a second or third repetition, he would utter one or two loud, discordant notes of disapprobation, and walk away in evident displeasure.

Jupiter knew his station, and he knew the dinner-hour to a minute: one would almost have imagined he had had a watch, or could calculate the sun's advance on the dial-stone. Be it how it may, if the

cook did not remember the dinner-hour, Jupiter did; for at two o'clock precisely he was sure to be at his post.

One week, owing to some unavoidable circumstances, we were less punctual than usual. Jupiter waited patiently for the cloth being laid, but growing tired, he went away. Next day the same accident occurred: Jupiter became indignant, and vented his reproaches in such squalls of disapprobation, that we were, in pity to our ears, obliged to have him huffed away. We began to wonder how he would proceed on the morrow. We imagined he would give up all hope, after his fruitless attempts, but we had not given this clever bird credit for his sagacity. Instead of wasting his precious time in watching the parlour-windows, he placed himself in the court-yard, so as to command a view of what was going on in the kitchen; and as soon as the cook had taken up the dinner, away went the peacock to his stand, fol-



lowed by his old attendant, the white hen. From that day Jupiter waited till the servant began to carry the dishes to the table before he went to his old post, and he never afterwards was disappointed of his dinner.

Jupiter's usual haunts were the fields, the plantation, the orchard, and the flower and kitchen-garden, where, I am obliged to confess with some reluctance, he made sad havoc among the fruit and tender vegetable crops, paying particular attention to the young greens; carefully selecting as dainties, the inner leaves and heart of the cabbage, brocoli, and cauliflower plants. The early-sown peas, both leaves and pods, he paid much respect to, besides having a delicate taste in lettuces, Brussel sprouts, savoys, and many other of the choicest vegetables. Nothing came amiss to him: he had an excellent appetite. He was extremely fond of blackberries; and I have often met him, when walking in the mea-

dow, selecting the best and ripest for his desert that the hedges could afford.

Sad complaints were brought against our beautiful green bird for his misdoings in the gardens and fields, I must tell you; for he went out gleaning very regularly before the corn was cut. The gardener grumbled, mamma looked grave, and we were obliged to be very penitent for the depredations committed by our unlucky protégé. In many instances, I am convinced, our poor pet was sadly traduced. If the garden-gate was carelessly left open, and a fat overgrown hog, or a donkey got in and munched up a bed of nice vegetables, such as peas, beans, carrots, or cauliflowers, the mischief was all laid on Jupiter: it was that disagreeable, destructive bird that was in fault!

The following autumn, just about the latter part of November, Sarah and I received an invitation to spend a fortnight from home with a friend, but previous to



our leaving home we gave strict injunctions to all the servants to pay due attention to the wants of Jupiter. A sudden and unexpected frost set in, accompanied by a heavy fall of snow, and Jupiter, who had been constant in his daily applications for food, was absent one morning at the usual time of being fed; at noon-time he did not appear, and that afternoon he was discovered on his perch under the waggonshed, frozen to death with the cold of the preceding night. This news greatly grieved us, for we loved the handsome green bird very much. We had not calculated on the chances of his sufferings from cold at this early period of the season, or we should have given orders to have him removed to a more sheltered roost of a night. Peacocks being originally natives of a very warm climate, are subject to die from exposure to an inclement atmosphere; therefore care should be taken to provide them with warm lodgings, and good food during sharp weather.

So lived and so died our peacock Jupiter! His plumage was carefully preserved, his body buried, with all due decorum, under the great sycamore-tree in the garden, and his head sent as a present to an ingenious gentleman who lectures on skulls, whose mantelpiece it still graces, in company with that of a cuckoo, a hawk, an owl, and a sea-gull.

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A FEW remarks on the natural history of the peacock may not be wholly inapplicable, before I close the chapter.

*Pavo*, or the peacock, is a bird of eastern origin, being a native of India. They are found also in a wild state in the islands of Ceylon and Java. They abound in Persia, in Africa, and Asia, and in some of the West India islands; but near the river Ganges, in the East Indies, they are said to come to the greatest perfection, both for size and colour.



The Indians practice a curious method of capturing these birds in their native woods. They go out with torches to the trees where they roost, and climbing the boughs, present a painted image of the peacock to their view. The peacock, who seems somewhat curious in his disposition, stretches forth his neck to examine the intruder, and is instantly captured by having a noose thrown over his head by the sportsman. The inhabitants of the river Ganges frequently take them by means of a strong birdlime, boiled from the milky juice of a tree called *ficus indicus*, and some other plant, with whose name I am unacquainted. In a sweet little poem, entitled "An Evening Walk in Bengal," in Bishop Heber's Journal, the peacock is thus mentioned:

With pendant train and rushing wings,  
Aloft the gorgeous peacock springs;  
And he, the bird of hundred dyes,  
Whose plumes the dames of Ava prize.

In our climate the peacock does not come to perfection in size and colour under three years. The peahen lays five or six greyish eggs, but in hot countries twenty, about the size of those of a turkey. These she secretes in some private place, as the cock is apt to destroy them. The time of setting is from twenty-seven to thirty days. The little pea-fowl are not remarkable for their beauty. They may be fed with curd, chopped leeks or cabbage, boiled potatoes mixed with barley-meal, and moistened with water or milk. They eat worms and insects, especially grasshoppers.

These birds prefer the most elevated situations to roost in during the night—the branches of high trees, the tops of houses, sheds, and the like. They appear to have a great dislike to rain, uttering the most discordant cries during wet weather and previous to its commencement.\*

\* There is a peacock living at the distance of half a mile from us, who almost answers the pur-



The life of this bird is reckoned by some naturalists to be twenty-five years, but others compute its extent to be not less than a hundred, in its wild, free state. Its flesh is still considered as a dainty, though rarely brought to table, excepting on grand occasions, at the houses of the great and rich.

The peacock must have been in some repute in Palestine; for we hear that Solomon caused his ships of Tarshish to bring, among other rare and precious merchandize, (as the gold of Ophir, ivory, and spices,) apes and peacocks. When first introduced into Greece, they were sold at Athens for the sum of one thousand drachmæ, equal in value to thirty-two pounds five shillings and ten pence. Alex-  
pose of a barometer. His opinion of the weather never errs; for if the sky is ever so clear, and we hear his warning notes, rain is certain to follow. Some animals possess an instinctive knowledge, in regard to natural phenomena, that exceeds the observation and reasoning powers of man.

ander of Macedon was so struck with the beauty of this rare bird, when pursuing his conquests in India, that he made a law that no one, under payment of a severe penalty, should kill a peacock. It is supposed these birds were first introduced into Macedonia by this monarch.

At what time they first appeared in England is not precisely known. The feathers and crests it seems, from old chronicles, were worn as ornaments by our kings so early as the reign of John. In all probability they were brought from the East by the Crusaders, to whom we are indebted for many of our most useful arts, and luxuries of our gardens, both in fruit and flowers.



## CONCLUSION.

AND now, my young readers, I must take my leave of you for the present, with the hope you may not have had cause to regret the time spent in the perusal of this my little volume; and I trust its pages have contributed something towards your amusement, and to increasing the stock of useful knowledge which, in the days of your youth, I hope you are endeavouring to lay up in the store-house of your mind, which if duly supplied, will prove a source of infinite pleasure as you advance through the vale of years towards maturity.

I have not entirely exhausted my stock of original matter which I have drawn upon for the materials of this little book; much that is both instructive and amusing yet

remains, and possibly I may be induced in a future volume, to relate “The History of my Sister’s Barbary Doves;” “The Tortoise that lived in an old lady’s garden in our village, with some particulars relating to its former master, a poor French boy, that was shipwrecked on our coast;” “The Hedgehog, Peter, that lived in the potatoe-pit;” “The History of my Dormice;” with a variety of other subjects, equally calculated to amuse the mind of the juvenile reader.

THE END.



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