Under Oxford Trees

JENNIE BROOKS

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UNDER OXFORD TREES

BY
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Cincinnati:
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New York:
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TO MY

Young-Old Mother

"O, *birds*, sing soft, and, *birds*, sing low,
For she is gone who loved you so."

I would acknowledge the courtesy of Harper's Magazine, Lippincott's Magazine, Kansas Magazine, The Continent, The Advocate, and various other periodicals, for the privilege of reprinting in book form some of these sketches.

JENNIE BROOKS.

“The world is so full of a number of things,
I think we should all be as happy as kings.”

“Would you know how May to May-men
Bringing marvels new;
Priests behold!—behold it lay-men,
What His might can do!
He is uncontrolled;
I know not if magic is it;
When His joys the world revisit,
There is no one old!”

—VOGELWEIDE, the Minnesinger.

Introductory

We had neighbors, and we rejoiced in a "Thrums" window.

Many of our neighbors succeeded one another in an ancient home, vine-draped, not a stone's throw away. Big scarlet horns of the trumpet honeysuckle flung themselves riotously about from every nook and cranny of this turreted castle, tall, bent, weatherworn, but with the very warmest, coziest corners inside for the rearing of a family that could be imagined. From the earliest of springtide, tenants began to arrive and to study the location, for in winter the rooms were empty. But lo! let a wind blow up from the south, urged on by Madam Spring, and all kinds of birds, on all kinds of wings, fluttered gayly into the garden, to peer and pry into the heart of the old apple tree stump—first come, first served!

Each new arrival was noted on the instant by the lady of the opera glass, from her point of vantage (an old cane rocker) in our "Thrums" window. "The blue-birds have come!" then, exultantly, "Do you hear the oriole's note?" Or, "An odd fellow in a dress suit is parading

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under the hedge!" and truly, the chewink, in snowiest of linen, prinks himself among dead leaves!

Ah, well-a-day, it seemed hardly fair that I, Martha-like, "busy about many things," should *never* be earliest to welcome returned travelers; that my own hands should *never* first scatter crumbs on the gray old window ledge! Yet, to-day, the earliest cardinal that flies in the spring-time makes me turn involuntarily to listen and to long for the triumphant call, "Come! the red-bird is building!" and my eyes are a' weary for one look at a brave old face.

Spring, and all young growing things astir! April sunshine and shade, and nodding flowers of lacy white lilacs shake out perfume.

Pink, and pink the little peach tree tapping with light fingers on the pane, and it's twilight, and the branches are full of little wood-birds—tumult, and stir, and distress; flutter and fly and flutter to the window sill, and against the glass. In the valley of the shadow of death, I had forgotten the birds!

Morning, and flooding sunlight, but quiet has not fallen on our garden-guests in the rosy peach tree. With idle hands, I watch them. Spring-time, and the birds a month, already, with us, missing—(can birds note an absence?)—missing the gracious presence at the window.

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Indolent, to-day, the fingers that fed them; heedless of any bird-call or cry is the Friend of the birds. Rocked by the wind, the old chair sways slowly, and into the room peer the restless folk in feathers.

April, and it's raining, and the red-bird has come to build! How she begs and calls, and flies to and fro in her bewilderment! Such unwonted tumult about the house! Such comings and goings! Will no one heed her? The one who would dream happily on midst wealth of bloom.

How she calls, and calls, that persistent cardinal bird! Dazedly I watch her, frightened to an upper window ledge, begging, beseeching, and I promise, "To-morrow I will help you—not to-day!" But she tarried not my lonely leisure, and, with who may say what mysterious sense of sorrow and of loss, she, too, left me on that April day.

Thus, all my story of the birds is not mine after all, but is filled with the joyous memory and gay companionship of her who grew young with each return of the spring.

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Outside Our Window Pane

*"These are the days when the birds come back,
A very few, a bird or two."*

—EMILY DICKINSON.

ON the seventh day of January, in a whirl of drifting snow, there fluttered into our trees a flock of tufted titmice, accompanied by four or five cedar birds. How gay they were! and how jauntily they dashed about, shaking the snow from their feathers. Little cared they for the white powder that gave them foam-crested top-knots.

"Sweet-oh, sweet-oh, sweet-oh," was the weather to them, be it rain or shine, as they romped through the snow-laden branches like truant schoolboys. Their ruddy sides shone warm as a robin's breast, and the scarlet tips on the wings of the cedar-birds gleamed like jewels; their crests alert and saucy as they frolicked about all the morning, now picking seeds from beneath the hedge, again dashing at each other in mimic battle, and crowding on to the window ledge for crumbs. By four in the afternoon they

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had all flown away, not to return again until the red maple buds signaled Spring. Only a merry band were they from the warmer shelters of the woods, out on an exploring tour, at night finding themselves only too glad to return to cozy nooks of underbrush.

January twentieth a pair of blue birds flew through the garden, calling to each other in the coaxing tones of love, the male breaking forth into the tender notes of his spring song. The earliest appearance of the blue bird that I have noted, and that nesting ideas were stirring in their heads was shown by the way they bustled about the branches, exploring knotholes, and peeping into crannies. But, after a few days' visitation, and a hopeless fight against freezing weather, they departed.

On February second a robin came and wandered about in the loneliest sort of way, even forgetting to sound his usual cheery note, and, finding his visit premature, left with dispatch, not taking time to acknowledge the courtesy when we doffed our hats in eager welcome.

February nineteenth three robins came, and this time they remained with us, though the day of their arrival was snowy, blustery, and bitterly cold. This was a "red letter" day, for in it the cardinal gave us his first spring song. Perched high in the tip-top of the maple, he flung

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out a splendid melody, defying the wind and the clouds of flying snow that almost hid him from our sight.

March fifteenth the ground was covered with snow, but the birds were determined to hold their own, notwithstanding inclemencies of the weather, and to our door came robins, cardinals, two pairs of downy woodpeckers, black-caps, two goldfinches, chip-birds, and jays, all feeding hungrily on their much-loved "corn pone." In February the bits of fat on the grape-vine trellis, the pieces of meat and suet had about them always a crowd of guests. The yellow fat the birds one and all disdained to touch, but upon the suet they pounced with delight. The titmouse first discovered this new edible, and very daintily she sampled it, twisting her head about and eyeing it well before she concluded it was safe to make a full meal; but deciding that a meat diet was a great improvement over bread crumbs in icy weather, she adopted it with gusto. At almost any hour of the day, these frisky gray birds were regaling themselves.

March first the "Least-fly-catcher" sounded his pert notes from the quince tree, and a wood pewee utters her pensive call.

April seventh a new woodpecker appeared in the garden, alighting on the trunk of a pear tree. Neither redhead, sapsucker, or flicker, he

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yet seemed a mingling of all three. A back view of him showed a glistening coat of striped black and white, stripes running up and down (not crossed, as in the zebra woodpecker), and his head was adorned with a flat cap of scarlet, no crest. As he flew, we caught a glimpse of a yellowish-white breast, and beneath, on the throat, was a patch of scarlet. The black wing from the shoulder down was edged with a pure white stripe, as if one continuous white feather reached from shoulder to tip. In size, larger than a robin, and his motions were extremely swift. His bill, light in color, and his head small in comparison with those of other woodpeckers. We hurried after him as he swiftly took his way from tree to tree, until he finally departed. Once, after that, he visited us, but we were only able to verify our former notes, concluding him to have been a "hybrid" between the yellow-bellied woodpecker and the redhead. Not large enough for the pileated, and without crest; nor was the black of his feathers any shade of brown, but the shining blue-black worn by the redhead.

April eleventh the air resounded with the call of meadow larks hurrying about in the campus. "Hee-*eer* I be! Hee-*eer* I be!" one loudly calls, and I follow him over the hillocks to verify this statement, when he suddenly rises at my feet,

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flies on, settles again, and walks through the brown grasses, only to be "flushed" once more as, deceived by his cry, I follow up this elusive bird. You see just where he settles, but by the time you get there, he is yards away. He is one of our handsomest birds, and this spring the campus proved a favorite spot for nesting, and the birds made a great show flying about. His gorgeous yellow breast, with its glossy black crescent, marks him a beauty, and with his habit of climbing up on little clumps of grass and looking about him, he is easily seen, and he is a tremendous walker, getting over the ground with amazing rapidity when he wants to lure you away from his grass-hid nest.

April tenth gave us our first thrushes—wood-thrushes flitting in the hedge, and thrashers boldly taking possession of the lawn.

Doves on the eaves April eleventh, and, later, they repeated an old blunder of building in the eaves-trough, where the floods washed them out in the same old way! Pigeons, an eminent biologist tells me, are the very most stupid birds alive, and I wonder if their cousins, the doves, partake of their attributes?

Red-eyed vireos fussing about the pear tree April twentieth, while above their heads hangs their last year's home, a daintily made swinging basket.

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Kinglets flitting about April twenty-first.

April twenty-eighth Baltimore orioles whistled loudly in the elm trees. First oriole's notes resembled closely notes of cardinal. Blithe and jolly was he! Whistle, and call, and swing in the tree tops, the very spirit of joyful life! A dash of gold among the young green leaves and tasseled elm-buds, bringing his welcome with him.

Red-headed woodpecker peers out from his winter home in the old elm on April second, finds the world very sunny and bright, and concludes to stay out!

On the seventh day of April, blue jays began building a nest in the elm tree. A robin had already laid a foundation, but the jays made short work of it, tossing out the sticks and straws, viciously tearing away the strings, and driving the robins off in a most hateful way. The ousted birds then located in the pear tree, and were driven from this place also, the jays trying to use both building sites, carrying material first into one crotch and then away across the lawn into the other tree, "dog-in-the-manger" style! This proved too laborious, and finally the elm tree held a finished jay's nest. It was fully ten days after the nest was built that the female began to lay, and even then she did not stay at home as she should, but showed every token of being a

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young matron who vastly preferred a frolic to nursery duties. On the *seventeenth* day from the first making of the nest, she settled down to the care of her eggs; but she improved every opportunity to fly off. At the approach of her mate with food, she would spring from her nest like a veritable "Jack-in-the-box" and join him on an adjacent branch, where, after being fed, she was the recipient of much blandishment from her enamored swain. Such conjugal devotion was commendable, but her eagerness to greet her mate brought death and destruction to the young life throbbing in the pinky-brown egg-shells beneath her breast (*occasionally*), for, after a prolonged period of setting (such as it was) the eggs failed to hatch, and the loving pair deserted the nest. Highwaymen of the air, hustling out of their adjacent homes the most inoffensive of our birds, and badgering every blue-bird, oriole, or cardinal that flew through the trees, we were not sorry that disaster overtook them!

The ruby-throated humming-bird appeared on the twenty-eighth of April.

Orchard orioles came to the trellis in search of strings for their pensile nests on the finest day of May. To the great surprise of the olive-backed female (such a dainty lady-like bird she was!), she happened across the suet hung on the grape-vine. Warily she tasted it, and tasted

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again, holding her head on one side in doubt as to its proper use for food. She tastes a third time, then eyes it closely, ponders awhile, and, in evident conclusion that it is worth risking, she pecks at it with great eagerness. (Off she darts, returning quickly with her mate.) Thereafter they are daily partakers of the feast, occasionally joined by their more showily dressed cousins, the Baltimore orioles. The female orchard oriole is in harmony with the leaf coloring, and the flickering green shadows trick the eye into believing her only a gigantic osage leaf.

The most frequent guests at our "buffet" lunch-table are the downy woodpeckers. The tiny things clamber, like a couple of mice, up the trellis to where the suet is hung, and if there happens to be a soft fresh piece, the bird that comes first hurries away for its mate, and together they return and sit on the trellis, one on either side of the tidbit, and peck at it in delicate fashion. The jays and redheads pounce down on the meat and gouge out a big mouthful, sometimes dropping it as they find it is more than they can really eat or carry.

May fifteenth marked the appearance of a modest woodthrush, who chose to build low in a pear tree near the hedge.

May nineteenth recorded two covetous robins

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arriving in the garden, inspecting the site of the thrush's home, and, unceremoniously tossing out the one small blue-green egg, the female robin sat herself down to lay *her* eggs in this comfortable ready-made nest. The poor little thrush fled before the assault of the larger bird, into an adjacent tree. Off went the robin for more building material, *on* went the meek little thrush. Then *two* robins swooped down upon her, and the small nest-owner dropped disconsolately to a branch of the pear tree just below the nest, shrugged up her shoulders, and looked so imploringly at me (raking hay) that I concluded it was time to "take a hand" in the affair, for, that all the loving labor of that little brown thrush should come to naught, was quite beyond endurance. As to the whereabouts of the male who should have been valiantly protecting the little home-maker, no sign was showing. Advancing with a rake, I charged upon the marauders, who debated the land, "What business of this is yours?" but finally fled angrily, and with loud squawkings of wrath, into the safe shelter of the tall osage hedge. Quickly slipped onto the nest the owner thereof, and, dragging together a lot of hay ("King David" was cutting the grass), I sat me down to see that the unfair robins did not appropriate other folks' goods.

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"King David," black, perspiring, philosophic, leaned on his scythe, delivering himself of a homily.

"When birds gits to *fightin'*, yo caint do nothin' *wif* 'em! Nebber! No, *ma'am*! Might's well let 'em *'lone*! They gwine *fit* it out *ebbry time* jes' lak *pussons*! *Yaas* 'um, dey *be*!"

"Well, the robins shan't take that thrush's nest, Dave—they shall not! Come—help—quick!" as the robins, taking advantage of Dave's "preachment," swooped down and beat off the thrush, who, seeing help at hand, this time merely hopped out to sit on the same branch of blossoming pear that held the nest, where she cuddled down into a meek little bunch of feathers, pathetically aggrieved. I beat at the branches, and I banged with my rake, but I could not reach, and "King David," determined to make hay while the sun shone, declined to join the battle, so, while I helplessly scolded, the robins went boldly to work reconstructing the nest, or rather, adding adornments. A few sticks were stuck in—long twigs—and rags, and to these was added a shred of white cloth that they tore from the thorns of a rose bush, where it had been cast up by the winds. They worked like fiends, shouting at me, in answer to my threats, all manner of bad words! But the end was not yet. I fell back on throwing sticks with (moderately) fair aim, and once

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more the robins retreated and the little thrush slipped on. I dropped upon the grass to rest, and in a twinkling back flew the robins, off came the thrush, making no effort to defend herself, just waiting for me to rise and continue the good work. The female robin settled herself quickly, and the male stood guard for perhaps an hour, the thrush never moving or complaining, sitting all hunched up and 'most "ready to cry," looking down at me as if she wanted to say, "Well, why don't you *do* something?" So, with sticks and maledictions, I ousted the robins once more, and once more the thrush "*sat*."

I breathless, devoted the hot day in its entirety, only stopping for dinner, to "fightings without" and "fears within" lest in the early morning hours the robins would gain the victory ere I was up. But "up" I was *not* for many a long day, early or late, for the setting sun saw my retirement into the mazy, crazy ways of typhoid fever, with a last incoherent thought of wonderment as to the outcome for all concerned! And my first coherent question, on returning from the hobgoblin lands through which I wandered, was, "O, *do* you know which bird held the nest, the robin or the thrush?" But I never found out, for when, convalescent, I questioned "King David," as, hat in hand, he sat by my bedside grinning congratulations on my recovery, (the

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neglected garden showed the blue grass nodding in at the window), he answered cheerfully, "Yaas 'um, yaas 'um, I *membahs* 'bout dem birds; but I nevah jes' *did* know ef *one* or *anuddah* done *hatched out!*"

Bird Notes of the Later Year.

A December Day.—

The first snow of the season! September, October, November, *May*, all ran together this fall and, with hazy days, wonderful mirage, and the warmth of a June sun, teased the gnarly old apple tree into putting forth leafless blossoms, pink, fragrant, fine. A blossom out of blossom time! Spring holds nothing in her hand so dear! When the lilacs, in second flowering, just before frosty days, deck themselves in clumpy bunches of dwarfed pale purple, scattering perfume stolen from April's lap, our hearts go up with a bound! Folk who flee away to the cities at the falling of the first leaf lose all the loveliness, the solitude, the silences that brood over the country in winter. For him who will with patience wait, snowy days hold marvelous secrets. Flaming sunsets; morning skies flooded with brilliant rosy light torched by the sun. Fairy dawns misty with hoar-frost; twig, and branch, and little russet crumpled leaves in silvery gauze, and birds complaining of chilly feet huddling on the branches to keep them warm. A line of fire

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running through the yellow grasses along the river bank, snapping its way through blackened twigs, and sending up soft gray clouds to meet and mingle with the all-encompassing mist, swept through and through with feathers of the snow. A wonderful gray day, the whitened meadows illumined by the splendid fire of the burning brush!

These are great days for bird visitors. In Southern Ohio, our most intimate bird is the Kentucky cardinal. Snow or ice daunt him not, and he sings on tip-topmost branch of tallest trees, with drooping wings of delight, in the midst of powdering snowstorms, the wind rocking him as he clings. When the cold sharpens his appetite, he comes confidently onto the window-sill, walking along close to the glass, and peeping in over greenery of the plants to see if that Friend of all the birds is crumbling up bread for him. Samples the suet tied to the shutter hinge, that we may easily become acquainted with guests. If it is not dinner time, off he goes to the back porch, and trails about in the snow until some one tosses him crumbs, or corn, or corn-bread. Mighty fond is he of that! Morning and night find him in close attendance on the chickens. When "Gran'paw" feeds them, the red birds clutter about his feet as familiarly as the Plymouth Rocks. When the house-wife

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comes to "shoo" them away with her apron, the cardinals merely back off an inch or two, rearing their crests in surprise.

He will eat popcorn on the window-sill, suet on the shutters, and boldly squabble with the squirrels over cracked walnuts, with which I regale them both. Our rarest bird beauty is he, in winter, surpassing even the gaudy woodpeckers.

This first snow, a foot in depth, coming on the heels of a May day (apple blossoms in November), hurried the birds to our windows from the famine-stricken woods in tens, twenties,—I lose count. Downies, nut-hatches, flickers, red-headed woodpeckers, titmice, gold-finches, and jays. Trouble has engendered good fellowship. In snow time they are very friendly and fearless. Bent on satisfying their appetites, they forget caution, greedily grabbing at their rations and fighting vigorously for first place. A certain tiny blue-backed nut-hatch is tame, and comes scrambling head first down the peach tree to warily light upon my hand, outstretched, full of cracked pecans. The wind is high, and the snow sifts down over us both; but mighty little reck our guests, who swing, and chatter, and stuff themselves, rather glad, on the whole, the storm is come. Twice to-day have my guests emptied the half-shell of a cocoanut, hung to the trellis, of its contents of cracked nuts.

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It's truly a "red letter day" for birds, this day of snow and ice—this real Western blizzard, with occasional shafts of sunlight illuminating the soft whiteness of the storm. Into the midst of it swings a zebra woodpecker, an unusual guest so early. He is one of our largest birds, and his advent creates a stir. He alights in the pear tree, and begins a hurried and vigorous quest for grubs, *backing* down the tree trunk, not having the knack of the "devil-down-head." Follow him swiftly all the little folk. A bird of such enormous size in their own particular garden astonishes them, and surprise could not be more plainly pictured than is shown in the manner of these "little brothers of the air." A crown has he of rose-scarlet, extending to the nape of his neck; sides of neck, cheeks, and breast rosy tinted, just a sheen where the wind ruffles the feathers. His back is cross-barred in black and white, like a guinea hen; hence his other name, "guinea woodpecker." As he briskly scurries up and down the trees, a cardinal glances up from his lunch of suet, jerks his head for a good look, and makes off after the new comer, evidently intent on studying him. When the zebra woodpecker changes his location, whir-r-r through the trees go the entire flock—titmice, chickadees, sparrows; but the cardinal is in yet closer attendance, and, like a shadow, falls from branch

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to branch, as the zebra goes up or down the tree, looking severely over his shoulder in annoyance at this unsolicited attention, for the little birds peer, and pry, and follow on their own account. "It's a plain case of 'new man come to town,'" declares our college girl, and is laughable in the extreme, showing so plainly the curiosity of our bird neighbors.

Blue-birds in the trees December fourth; delayed migration due to the summer-like *fall*!

February, plenty of snow, very cold, no water for birds, everything frozen. Nut-hatches, white-breasted little blue-backed birds, red-breasted also, on the roof of porch in front of my window eagerly eating (drinking?) snow. They "jab" their long, slender bills into the snow, then hold up their heads as if it might more easily slip down their throats. Then they pick at bits of thin ice (this is melted snow that has formed in thin sheets of ice on edge of roof), as if it were crusts of bread, swallowing with evident enjoyment the bits they manage to get off. How they do love it! and how thirsty they must be to substitute ice for water! We raise the windows and put out sundry dishes of water, and, in a trice, the birds surround them. Wonder, do all birds eat snow in water famine time?

March. All of February, January, and even in the latter part of December, we have the zebra

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woodpecker in the trees. He has become—*they* (for there are several) have become—almost as tame as chickens, and “when the gods arrive, the half-gods go.” Their hoarse “croke-croke-croke” sounds in the trees, and titmice, chickadees, downies, even the jays, scurry away out of the peach tree where the zebras delight to sit and stuff themselves with fat, or suet.

With his departure, surfeited, back come the others to feed. Oftentimes the smaller ones descend to the ground, humbly picking up the crumbs that fall from the rich man’s table. He does n’t fight, this zebra woodpecker, he simply claims the right of supremacy over the others, and they make way for him as naturally as if he had issued a command. Perhaps he has!

The chickadees and downies are acrobats. How they cling, and swing, on the swaying biscuit we have suspended by a string to a limb of the peach tree. *Tails* are of no particular use to the downies in such case. Serving as a prop in tree excursions, hanging to a biscuit in mid-air gives no place on which to support themselves, and it’s curious to see how strong is habit, for, as they dig one claw into the biscuit, and hook the other in the string that holds it, the sharply pointed tail feathers curl around the lump as if vainly trying to afford support to its owner. All kinds of birds, with all kinds of

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habits, learn all kinds of ways, and cling head downward, backs downward—any way at all, so they manage to hold on and get a good bite!

When the hairy woodpeckers come to eat, they drive off the downies, and the tiny gentlemanly downies slip along the trellis, and wait, with watching, longing eyes, and with all due respect, until the "hairies" leave. "Evil communications corrupting good manners," the downies assume belligerent ways toward the frisky little nut-hatches, and if the *latter* attempt to eat with them, the downies leave the suet and scramble around to the uninvited guests on the other side of the trellis, squawking crossly, "Get out—get out—get out!"

When the coast is once more clear of the "guinea," back goes the downy to finish his repast.

In turn, the sparrows fear the sharply pointed bill of the nut-hatches, and cling in scolding, chattering rows to the trellis above his head while he eats, with only occasional daring forays, and the saucy, scolding, querulous jay routs them all but the guinea woodpecker. The redhead routs the hairy, and the guinea routs the redhead, all in turn, all day long! The zebras and downies come feeding on the porch to our very door, when the fat is gone, "dragging their tails behind

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them” as they scurry about in the snow picking up crumbs.

Hanging to the shutters “gobbling” suet, scurrying up and down the wide bench (that stands directly up against my front windows even with the sill), picking at the cracked nuts—woodpeckers, cardinals, nut-hatches, sparrows—every wood-bird, comes, and if none interferes with the others, peace reigns; but let the little gray shadow *I* have spied stealing across the road, come silently up the terrace, skip over the snowy lawn, slip onto the porch, disappearing from my sight *beneath* the bench, and when his little gray head with beady black eyes pushes itself suddenly over the edge of the seat—presto! in a trice the birds are away! Leisurely then milord “Adijidaumo” mounts the bench, selects a nut, seats himself on my window sill, and gives me a wicked wink of satisfaction. “I did that pretty well, did n’t I?”

The last cake in the griddle is always for the birds, and it is, without exception, the brownest, and because of this is (I regret to say) always given grudgingly; but hot, steaming hot, corn-cakes are things the birds delight in. The red-head carries his share to the top of an electric light pole across the street. He lays it on the top—exactly; then he hangs to the edge with

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only his head above, and picks the food to pieces. Below him, strung along on the wires, are lines of derisive talkative sparrows who enviously watch, and instantly the redhead leaves, pounce upon the pole to clean up the crumbs. Dozens of times a day this is repeated.

Though wrens make themselves cozy in the woodshed, and a pair of cardinals once found safe winter shelter under the porch eaves, and each woodpecker shifts for himself in his own or another man's excavation, they appear in hearty good fellowship when food is in question, and "pay for their keep" in entertainment all winter long—and in summer with their song. "Between meals" they flit to the woods, "sky-larking," "be the days dark or clear," among thistle-tops, golden-rod stems, and russet pine cones.

Neither are winter woods always silent, for you may hear the call notes of the many birds who stay North, even if their song has ceased. The cheerful "Zip" of the cardinal catches your ear daily; the hoarse croak of the jay and the call of the winter wren. The persistent "chick-dee-dee-dee" of the black-cap greets us, and the woodpecker's shout; while occasionally we hear a meadow lark or, in warm, open winters, even a robin or two.

The woodpecker sometimes makes an excava-

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tion for spring nests in the late fall, on the principle of "a stitch in time." These holes in the trees are cozy sleeping apartments for them during cold weather, and ready betimes for occupancy by the prospective family as soon as the courting is over in April days. I have seen the red-headed woodpecker, on a zero morning, thrust his satiny head out of one of these apartments and look eagerly about him, as though he were gaging the weather and wondering if it were worth his while to come out into such a world of ice; but, wary of frost-bitten toes, he withdrew his head and retired for another nap.

This particular red-head made a home for himself (alone, I judge) in the early fall, excavating in a half-dead tree opposite the house. The female looked on, but eventually settled *herself* for the winter in the flicker's old deserted nest at the top of a maple in our garden. Several times during the winter she came to the porch for food, but meeting, the couple took scant notice of each other, each "ganging their ain gait" at the end of the repast, he to the elm tree, she to her nearer home in the maple. When they might have been so comfortable and cozy together!

Ways of Our Kentucky Cardinal

*"Superb and sole, upon a plumed spray
That o'er the general leafage boldly grew,
He summed the world in song;"*

*"Then down he shot, bounced airily along
The sward, twitched a grasshopper, made
song"—*

*"Perched, prinked, and to his art again;
Sweet science this large riddle read me plain
How may the death of that dull insect be
The life of yon trim Shakespeare on the tree?"*

OUR little bird, garbed in olive tints, with golden-gray breast, wings and tail feathers touched with scarlet to make her gay, located her first nest in our vicinity five years ago. This first nest I was able to secure in the early summer, and a bird's nest is an ever-varying marvel, each year differing in its construction, even though the same material may be used. This first one, however, was but the precursor of better things to come. A new era had arrived, and an æsthetic sense was being developed in my lady. The nest had

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been placed in the most secure nook imaginable, just under the overhanging eaves. The roof was so thickly draped with vines, neither sun nor rain could discommode the little Hausmutter as she brooded her young. Usually the cardinal makes her nest loosely, but, watching the robins and orioles busily gathering up strings, this one grew covetous, and came herself to the grape arbor, daintily picking from the rags the finest ravelings. Later we found them twisted into one side of the nest.

The next year we found her again picking at the ravelings of the rags we had torn into strips for the other birds, and, understanding at once her desire for finer material, we hastened to hang in cobwebby festoons upon the trellis a few yards of spool cotton cut into lengths. Hardly waiting for us to leave them, she flew down, and in the most dainty, careful way drew out one at a time, not taking greedy mouthfuls as robins do, and carried it off to her nest, the long thread trailing through the air behind her as she went. Her delight was evident, and she worked all the morning, cheered and encouraged by her beautiful, but lazy, spouse, who whistled his loudest in approbation.

Our first intimation that the young birds were hatched came in the tiny chirpings we heard—"zip," "zip," exactly like the note of the old ones,

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only much softer. A peep into the nest, which was very near to the locality of the previous year, showed us, some two weeks later, three dove-colored young ones. That very evening the mother bird warned them to fly, probably fearing depredations from us; but we were fortunate enough to find one of them fluttering in the grass, and were surprised to discover all its plumage of a warm dove color. Spreading out the wings of the little bird, each quill showed a rosy tint, and beneath the wing, also, was a promise of the brilliant garb they would put on when baby days were over. Until the cardinals are nearly grown, the two sexes are very similar in coloring.

After shifting all responsibility for the young birds on their own inexperienced shoulders, the old ones began a second nest. The first nest we then captured, to find it truly up-to-date, tailor-made.

The second nest showed very little until the falling of the leaves, but the locality was an open secret, for the male bird roosted in the thick vines close beside his mate, and as he would persist in his singing, no one was at a loss to tell the whereabouts of his home. This bird had, and *has*, the most astonishing voice I ever heard, and it did seem that summer as if even the birds themselves stopped to listen when he sang at twilight. One by one their voices dropped away

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as, just when the stars came twinkling out each evening, he flew to the highest tree-top in our garden and poured out his heavenly notes. The purity of tone it is impossible to describe, and his wonderful range and flexibility of voice I have never heard equaled in any bird. The vesper song, even, did not satisfy his soul, and often when a light shone from our window across the vine where he slept, at ten or eleven o'clock at night, he suddenly awakened and began to sing. Out into the stillness of the night he flung the exquisite sweetness of his song. His first note was always very high, then a slide down one octave exactly, over and over again. Then came the trilling, perfect bubbles of music, and a run from low C up to B flat and C, in endless repetition, until, breathless and sleepy, he must perforce give over the concert until dawn. But repeatedly subdued half-tones came out from among the leaves, as if he were hardly yet persuaded that the lamplight was not some new kind of sunrising.

The next year, on a May day morning, we, sitting under the branches of a maple tree, suddenly noticed a cardinal bird diligently bustling about under the hedgerow. She looked at us, then flitted the leaves about in a tremendous "pothor:" pulled bark fibers, filling her mouth with material, then tossing it recklessly away;

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slipping up and down through the hedge, incessantly calling out, "Chip," "Chip," and flying ostentatiously into the maple above our heads, deporting herself in a manner that plainly betokened a wish for somebody to interest himself in her affairs. Naturally, we were the ones she had in mind, as no one else was in sight; so, as I idly watched, it gradually dawned upon me she must be the last year's tenant of our garden, and, remembering old favors, was bidding for new, and I hastily ran into the house for some thread with which to test her memory.

I lightly laid the first strand of spool cotton on the grape-vine trellis, when, like a flash, the bird darted to it and swept away with it down into the garden. This proved her identity. A new cardinal would have been quite ignorant of the uses to which thread could be put, but this little home-maker had sampled the material last year and the year previous, and found it good. Thus, you see, she remembered, and, as her nest was not yet started, showed her preference at the outset, and also knew where to come. While she was gone on her journey I pulled yards more thread from the spool, breaking it into lengths of a yard and a half or two yards, festooning it along the trellis and on the grape-vine. Back she came, and almost beneath my hand gathered up thread after thread, until she had a mouth-

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ful, then off around the corner of the house. Again and again she returned, in a positive ecstasy of delight over the thread. She would alight on the end of the trellis and then hop bravely up to within my reach, daintily select her threads, and away she would sail through the air, with long streamers floating after. Little wonder she disdained ordinary things—straws and sticks and bits of bark—when she had in mind the lacy fabric she wove on the leafy spindle of a maple branch. For she had begun her nest at the very top of a young maple—a maple just planted and putting forth new leaves.

How she reveled in the abundance of the material I gave her! Last year she had shared it with the robins, jays, and vireos; this year she herself was the “early bird.” It was all her own, and greedily she appropriated it. Last year, and the year previous, she had used it tentatively, one thread at a time, watching carefully as the other birds had gone away laden with the spoil of rags and twine, and contenting herself with a smaller quantity of thread, as if she were not certain how to use it or how it would wear. Last year it was only the finest ravelings she daintily plucked from strips of cloth used by other birds, and the several threads I gave *her* on the hint she gave *me* that rags were too coarse. This

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year the thread was what she wanted, nothing more, nothing less, and before she was through with me she had used that morning between two and three hundred yards of thread. Last year she daintily tested the thread before finally appropriating it, pulling it over and over the trellis; but this year's eagerness showed her evident satisfaction with last year's architectural efforts, and also proclaimed the larger development of her artistic talents.

Her royal mate offered no helping hand, seeming to think his part consisted in escorting her to and fro on her journeyings, whistling loud approval; and as for herself, she kept up a continual sort of "croon" as she busily worked. Such treasure-trove was not found every day, and she made haste to secure as much of it as possible. As I unrolled the last yard from the spool, I told her firmly that she could have no more. "What you have done with the quantity that you have already taken is a mystery that remains to be unraveled when you are through with your nest," I said, "but there is an end to all things, even to a spool of thread, and you have reached it. Take, then, if you will"—and she stood with her head on one side, listening wisely to my words, if not understanding them—"the spool itself, for I have a fancy to see how much weight you can carry in that rose-red beak of yours." Tying a yard

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and a half of thread to the spool, I placed it on the ground, twisting the thread up among the grape-vines, and sat down to see what she would do.

The spool was a new object, and as such was to be guardedly examined and mistrusted. So the madame perched herself above the spot where it lay, tilting far over, first on one side, then on the other, consumed with curiosity, but not quite daring to investigate. But the last remaining thread she coveted, and she finally gave it a vigorous jerk. Up bobbed the spool like a live thing, and down it dropped again as, in affright, she retreated to a pear-tree. Returning to the charge, she was accompanied by her mate, and together they discussed the dangers of the situation, he, following an ancient example, urging the feminine part of the family to make the venture. And she did. Boldly snatching the attached thread, she rose into the air, dragging with her the spool. Startling apparition! And she promptly freed herself from it. On the trellis the pair once more talked things over, and after repeated urgings, "O, try it *once* more," the female pounced bravely into the grass after the white trail of the thread, and this time, regardless of consequences, swept away with the spool dangling half a yard below her.

After her I ran to see the result. Into the

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top of the maple she went, and there deposited her thread, for her nest was cozily placed on the exact top of it, with the threads woven about the young branches springing thickly. In a twinkling, as she released the thread, down came the spool through the leaves, falling directly at the foot of the tree. Astonished (for she had just turned herself about to secure it), but not vanquished, she flew out of the tree and to the ground, again seizing the thread and carrying the spool aloft once more. This time she pulled it over the branch, and, evidently thinking it secure, let go of it, only to witness once more its disappearance. This second accident caused great excitement. The male bird joined her, and the two birds, with heads high and crests erect, hopped around and around this inanimate object that firmly refused to stay "put." Whatever were their thoughts or the trend of their conversation, with great patience the female cardinal tried once more to weave the attached thread into the lacelike structure of her nest, but to no purpose, as the spool fell for the third time through the leaves; and then she let it lie, and to spare their feelings I carried it away.

As I looked up into the tree, the finished nest presented a beautiful and wonderful appearance. The thread, snow white, hung like festoons of hoary lace from all sides of the nest, curiously

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woven and intertwined, and, from beneath, it hung to the length of nine or ten inches as the nest rested among the thick foliage of green leaves. Of nothing but thread was the foundation, as we found after the nest was deserted, wound around and around the small maple branches, as an oriole twists her threads, and with strands innumerable. Syringa twigs in great number were mixed into the upper part of the thread, to make a firm foundation; then above all this came the piece of paper the cardinal invariably uses—a twist of clean white tissue-paper in this case. Had that bird an idea of the fitness of things? Did it not seem so? But white tissue was a scarcity in the market, evidently, for above this were laid, one upon the other, three pieces of clean manila paper. Then came strips of grape-vine bark, a bit of blue and white cord, and some withered grasses. The upper part, composed of bark, was most carelessly tossed in; the lower part was of thread woven, intertwined, looped, and draped with as much care as any skilled lace-maker could have given to it. How did she do it with her blunt beak, made only for rough work?

Love of beauty she must have had, for the threads served the purpose of decoration, and not much of anchorage, and were entirely useless and unnecessary in the nest proper—the up-

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per part made of bark, where she placed her eggs. Imitativeness? I wonder. Had she watched the oriole? If so, she far surpassed her teacher. And such rejoicing as followed the completion of this wonderful nest! Such foolish rejoicing, far too loudly voiced for safety. Almost the entire day that unwise male bird sounded a "Rubaiyat" in praise of his home—such a jewel of a nest! What jubilant notes! What a melody of trills and whistles and shouts!

The old proverb was again fulfilled—pride and vainglory met with their deserts. The period of incubation had almost rounded out, when I noticed on a day a certain very silent blue jay sitting meditatively about. To my eye he had a guilty look, and, on general principles, I drove him out of the vicinity. Then I went to investigate. The beautifully woven fabric was torn and tangled in hopeless confusion. One side of the nest was torn out, and, as the nest hung at an angle, I could see that the eggs also had disappeared. This accounted for the appearance of that brigand, the jay. During the day the cardinals returned to our trees, the jay also, with whetted appetite; but the outraged parents pounced upon him as furiously as a pair of cats, and buffeted him until he was glad to escape with his life.

But the maternal instinct was strong in that

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softly feathered gold-gray breast, and in three days the brave little mother builded a second nest. She did not go to the old nest, as you might think, and pluck from it the now useless threads to weave into her second nest—not she! She never went near it, for I watched every moment of its building. Why did she not, I wonder? It would have been an easy matter to pull some of them out, and it was quite near the place where she made her second home. Like a true philosopher, she ignored the past with its sorrows, kept away from suggestive scenes, and as energetically, if not quite as joyously, prepared the cradle for her second brood. Did we help her again? Well, we did, and watched her fly this time quite over the house to her new home. Where, then, could it be? I ran around the house, and there on the windlass of the well I surprised the male bird in full song, gazing with upturned head into the woodbine.

In among those leaves must be the persevering home-maker, and, sure enough, out she flew as we watched, and away she went over the house to the place of the thread. “Well,” I said, “I’ll lighten your labors pretty quickly, also coax you to where my dear, dear, dear old mother can see you,” and on a near window-sill—a sill as near to the windlass of the well as to the nest, I trailed long lengths of thread. They caught her bright

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eyes instantly on her return. How delightedly she looked at them! Such great luck to have them so near! Dare she really venture to the sill of that open window? Down she flew, but just missed grasping a thread as she passed swiftly by. On to the windlass, then down again, again missing the thread. It was quite evident she must alight to gain her object, and, deciding to risk it, she plucked up courage and flew on to the sill. There she lifted her head high, took a cool survey of us, of the room, and finding things very peaceful and quiet on this summer Sabbath morning, I watching her from my chair and the dear mother gazing delightedly at her from the pillow, she leisurely selected thread after thread until she had a mouthful, and off she went to her nesting-place not ten feet away.

"Hurrah!" shouted her mate from his fence-post of observation—and though he didn't exactly *say* these words, his notes were plainly congratulatory—"that's great!" but he took precious good care to keep at a safe distance himself until the female had become more confident, and as she lingered each time a little longer on the window-sill, he finally plucked up sufficient manliness to come himself and make at least a show of helping her. His enthusiasm for work soon flagged, and he contented himself with watching her and whistling to keep her courage up.

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This nest was placed quite near to an upstairs window and on a level with it. I could look into it from the window, and easily reach it with my hand. It was modeled on the lines of her first nest—threads and syringa sticks ; but time seemed to press, and she worked in a tremendous hurry, using much less thread and with little artistic effect. In all, I think, there were about seventy-five yards of thread in this nest, as my spool was a little more than half full. The season was advancing—June 16th—and as yet she had neither chick nor child. On Tuesday the first egg was laid, so you recognize her need for haste in preparing a receptacle for it; a second egg was in the nest on Wednesday, and on Thursday the last egg appeared, and again the patient little bird began her vigil.

I now spent most of my time at the window watching the ways of my bird neighbor. At first she eyed me with suspicion. It was pretty close quarters, but I had conversed with her at such length during the nest-building time, that she knew my voice and soon began to answer me in low trillings—trillings that could scarcely be heard—and turn her head to look at me in a friendly way. The mate was not friendly. When he first darted in among the leaves, bearing to the lady of his choice a fine green worm, and espied me at my window, he left in great alarm,

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not even stopping to feed his mate, and alighted on the windlass, shouting loudly, "Whoo-oo!" "Whoo-oo!" over and over again. But I never stirred, and as he could not, as a gentleman, gorge himself while his wife went empty, he had finally to give in and come back to her with the worm. How she coaxed and called him each time he returned with food and affrightedly made many dashes at the nest ere he alighted! But he soon learned to look upon me as a fixture and to regard me with indifference.

The hot summer days ran on and on, adding familiarity to our friendship with the birds, until the mother bird and I reached that enviable stage of long silences, and my lady would barely open a sleepy eye if I essayed conversation, and then, closing it, would sit and nod, nod, nod, as an old lady does over her knitting. It was amusing to see her thus napping in the summer heat, wearing the most utterly bored expression you could imagine, her head slowly dropping to one side until it reached an angle too acute, when she would pull herself together and straighten up, only to yield a moment later to the utter weariness caused by engrossing cares of motherhood.

Fancy, then, my hurt surprise when my visit to her on a certain hot noontide was received with warlike demonstrations. She had fed from my hand as she sat on the nest many and many

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a time, but now, as I held out to her a morsel of white bread, she started up with glittering eyes and wildly ruffled plumage, a perfect fury in feathers, betraying by the glitter of her eye her kinship to the snake. Innocent of offense, I continued to urge upon her my largess, when she slipped off the nest and gave my finger a vicious dig. Her loss of self-control proved her undoing and betrayed her secret. A tiny pink morsel lay in the nest—the first bird was hatched! No wonder she was fierce, after the mishap to her first nest. Who would want a giant's great big hand to come poking insolently about the cradle of one's first-born? No wonder she stood "at arms!" But, really, I think, after all our good-fellowship, she might have trusted *me*. The birdling was only a trifle pinker than any new little human baby, and possibly thrice as large as a young humming-bird. It was almost naked, only a little fuzz showing on the wings and on the top of its head. Little time was given for even a glimpse, as the mother bird was back on the nest in a trice. Nor did I ever know her to be away from the nest unless the male bird was on guard. Experience had been a good teacher. On the next day two birds were in the nest; the next, three youngsters crowded together beneath her warm breast. How wonderful now was her instinct! No more close sitting on the nest; rather,

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she seemed to hold herself over the young birds so lightly as if to give breathing space for the small lungs. How they did sleep, those youngsters! Cuddled in a warm little bunch, they slept by the hour, the mother, perched on the edge of the nest, keeping guard. Their rapidity of respiration was astonishing, and they panted like small steam-engines, as if they must breathe as fast as they could and grow as fast, so as to lose nothing of life.

Whether birds so young already partake of the peculiarities of what is called "immature" birds—half-grown birds—I do not know, but I do know that two of these birds looked gray even when only economically rearing their skin, and one was quite pink, and in the third nest made all three birds were pink. Possibly all of them were male birds in the last case, the pale rosy coloring being only a forerunner of the vivid red of the future.

Well, my young birds grew and grew apace, and the old birds gradually lost the puffed-up pride of first parentage, admitting my always-willing-to-be-friendly self again to their confidence, and the female came quite readily on to the window-seat for the crumbs I laid there, and even inside.

It was marvelous how they feathered out. The wings on one day showed only gray quills

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with tiny paint-brush ends sticking out, and the next had burst forth into soft dove-colored feathers—dove color with a warm rosy tint—precisely as a flower blossoms in a night. On the fourth day, Tuesday, a slit appeared in the center of the eyelids of the first-born; the next, the slit had widened; and on the sixth day the young bird had its first glimpse into a wonderful world of leaves and blue sky. The eyes of the remaining birds opened in succession, and on the tenth day after the first hatching, when I made my noon-day visit, two birds were just fluttering from the nest. Between hopping and beating their wings, they managed finally to climb out of the nest, one perching on the rim of it, the other fluttering on to a twig close to my window. There they sat in round-eyed wonder, staring about them like owls, as though they would say: "Well, this is the kind of place the world is, is it? Not so very much, after all!" And when I reached forth a hand, like Noah, and drew a bird in, it evinced no surprise of any kind, but sat gravely on my finger, eyeing me with an unblinking stare. But the old ones took things not so easily, for they flew at me like demons until I retreated into a farther room, carrying off my prize for closer inspection. What a beauty it was! and how complacently it hopped from finger to finger of my hand! But as the outraged

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parents dashed against the now closed window in fierce rage, I opened the door down-stairs to which I had carried my captive, and let him go, not an instant too soon, for the cardinals flew at me viciously. It seemed inexcusable, but the dooryard was unsafe for the rest of the day, for as the third youngster fluttered out, they all three fell among the woodbine, and when one of us made a dash to bring in a bird to examine it, it was at the risk of our eyes. They permitted us to throw out crumbs, and came quickly to eat them, bringing the young ones; but it was very evident that it was their day "out" and our day "in."

We secured the nest, and found it made of successive layers, first a piece of paper bearing the words, in large letters, "Premium," "A number *One*," evidently the heading of some prize-paper advertisement. Then came the thread, yards and yards of it, secured to the woodbine and interlaced around many tiny syringa twigs. Then upon this a piece of brown manila paper, and then a few pieces of bark; then a third piece of paper with large type head-lines, "What shall be done with Aguinaldo?" more twigs and bits of bark; then a fourth piece of paper from a select sheet headed "Times-Star," announcing a bargain sale of housekeeping goods.

Such a tiny pocket of a nest as it was, after

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all, to have held such a vigorous family! The hollow of it was no larger than the curve of my palm.

The flitting was on a Friday, and on Tuesday following the female was again at nest-making—her third nest, two sets of eggs having been laid already and one brood hatched.

This nest was hung to the wire netting where the honeysuckle clung. It could be entered from either side—outside from beneath the leaves, or inside from the porch side. It was cunningly located beneath the thickest leaves. But did my lady choose the easier way? Not at all. No matter how many people were occupying the porch, she would, after exercising or going for water on the south side of the house, fly into the maple-tree at the south end of the porch, and from there sweep over our heads, the entire length of the porch, alight on a tiny twig that protruded on the wire side of the nest, and then slip through the meshes as neatly as you please. She sometimes added to the charm of her flight by sitting on the twig for two or three minutes, before stepping into the nest, and pouring forth notes of bewildering sweetness. This was her especial accomplishment—to fly home and, before settling down to the monotony of brooding, whistle ecstatically. Many times in the day did she repeat this. Occasionally on the nest she would

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whistle and call in such low, clear tones, raising her head to listen for my answer or for her mate's, if he were in the vicinity, that I felt she had, in the joy of maternity, forgotten all its pain, and the tragic episode of the blue jay was as though it never had been. Oftentimes I held my face close to the netting and conversed with the little mother as she wearily wore away the hot, hot, hot days, and she would respond by an uplifted head and a kindly reception of my words.

In this nest, in course of time, were three babies, all of them pink, pink as pink, and even smaller than the first ones—the first day one, the second day all three. On a certain day the female would not leave the nest at all. All day long she sat on the twig or the edge of the nest, and we knew that flying-time was at hand, and promptly posted ourselves near by to observe. When her patience was almost worn out, one little bird struggled out of the nest and up on to the vine, then a second and a third—

*“A flutter of wings, a fitful stirring,
A little piping of leaf-hid birds,”*

truly,—and guiding them, guarding them, cheering them on, the parent birds hung about the young adventurers. At nightfall they were yet in the vines, but in the morning all were gone but one, and as I picked him from the leafy covert,

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with kindest intent to show him the way to his "mammy," that "mammy" swooped down upon me from goodness knows where, for I had not suspected her being in the neighborhood, and showed me so unmistakably that she could take care of her own family, that I dropped her birdling and retreated in anything but good order.

The next spring our cardinal found the leafy garden lonely. The Friend of all the birds, one blossomy April day, fled into a Far Country, and, missing her, my bird went away, bewildered, choosing a location in my neighbor's garden, building her first nest away from our place. One day later, as I sat lonely by my window in the still house, into the grape trellis descended our cardinal bird, peering at me with inquiry. With a jumping heart I watched her, and wildly hoping she might even at this early date want to build again (the young ones were scarcely out of the nest), I dropped my work, snatched up a spool of thread, and hurried outside to tempt her. There, by the trellis, I unrolled yard after yard of thread as she cunningly looked on, but I had scarcely left them when my lady came edging shyly along the trellis, snatched up one thread and flew away with it over the low roof of the kitchen. I returned to my window and watched her until she had carried away all the thread; then I went out with more, and this time

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following her flight, behold there where she had built the year before was a tangle of white threads hanging in the green leaves of the woodbine. She had come back to me ; old friends were best !

This second nest was not long a-building. Her second brood was scarcely on its wings when my lady again turned over to her almost exhausted mate—for he had all the rearing of the first brood—the three hungry youngsters who had quickly become burdensome to herself, for she wanted to build again. This time she made a nest in the osage hedge, still using the thread. So ended the fourth summer.

The Fifth Summer of Our Kentucky Cardinal

*"Now at last the day begins
In the east a'breaking;
In the hedges and the whins
Sleeping birds are waking."*

THE first birds to announce the opening of a new day, summer after summer, were invariably our rare cardinals. When dawn trembled between dark and gray, and trees and birds were scarcely distinguishable, sweet, awakening calls fluted from the tree-tops. "Whoo-oo-oo!" the male begins very softly, very sleepily, very slowly, as if taking a long breath, stretching himself, and wondering if it can possibly be time to wake up! A moment's silence, and he tries it over again. "Whee-u!" Two notes this time in sighing tones. Another rest (probably napping), and back he goes to the first note: "Whoo! Whoo!"—a trifle louder now, as if he were trying his voice and was hardly yet awake or his throat clear enough to sing. It is very like human folk begin the day,

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with a stretch and a yawn and a general rallying of forces that will enable them, also, to start it in cheerful fashion. "Whee-u! Whee-u! Whee-u!" Now he has gotten as far as three notes, and all around him are little birds waking up and answering in joyous twitterings. The robin seems the first to respond, and in a drowsy tone that tells its own story, that he can scarcely believe the short night is over, and while he is civil enough to answer the cardinal's call, he is yet inclined to grumble at this early bird. Other birds instantly follow the robin's chirp, and, cheered by the chorus he has called into voice, louder and louder rings the cardinal's song. "Whee-u! Whee-u! Whee-u!" he emphasizes with astonishing rapidity six, eight, ten times, even *twenty* (for I count), then adds an admonitory "chuck, chuck, chuck, chuck, chuck!" in a lower key. Throwing his voice back to the high-notes, he pours them out so rapidly that the music holds an undercurrent of trills rippling between the louder tones of his song.

We *heard* them in the maple trees that fifth summer, it is true, but content we must be with the lilt of their song and the flash of their wings in the early spring days, for, again with reason, the *first* nest was made under the eaves of my neighbor's tiny back porch, and our intimacy with them—*my* intimacy—seemed at an end.

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But a little patience, only, was necessary, and all things righted themselves, and the fifth summer wherein my persevering cardinal made her *eighth* and *ninth* nests of thread held as much of interest as had the preceding summers.

Also, I hasten to state in their defense that it was no fickleness of mind that sent them a-home-making in strange places. It was neglect of their wants and their ways—but not by me or mine! In the fall of the year, following their fourth summer, the big, white, vine-embowered house was leased—leased to those who bethought themselves all too little of the friendly feathered folk slipping about beneath the leaves, waiting only an encouraging crumb or piece of suet to woo the hearts out of them with pretty ways.

Old Dave's ("King David's") comment was justified. It was this. When I told him the place was rented he gave no thought to what might befall the property, but emphatically groaned:

"Um-um! Yaas-um! I bet dey don' tek no such keer o' de buhds as yo' all and yo' all's mutheh done!"

At Christmas time, the snowy days of Yuletide, I went down to the lonely old house, for the renters were off a-merry-making!

The half-shell of cocoanut swung empty in the bleak wind. No Christmas cheer for winter birds, so I cracked and pounded my fingers and the nuts

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I had brought with me for old sakes' sake, and the feast was prepared. An investigation the day following showed guests had been at the board. The shell was empty! But between Christmas holly and the lilacs stretches a long gray gap, and when, in the greening days of spring, I came into my own again, the garden was desolate without the chattering gossip of my nests a-making.

April, with her shadows and her shinings, went swiftly by, trailing in her foamy wake a very warm and rosy May that, with languid touch, brought summer flowers into swiftest bloom, and—who knows?—in the home-loving heart of that cardinal stirring into life certain vagrant memories of days and years gone by!

In any case, back she came, to the garden, to me, mayhap with thought of the Beloved, so many years familiar in the window-seat.

Into the Virginia-creeper one morning swung my cardinal as I sat on the porch, and, glimpsing me, showed unmistakable signs of delight and surprise. Such flirts and flutters of importance! Such chirpings—as if to say, “Why, you’ve got back again!” as she recognized my whistle. I hardly dared think she had come to stay, but it proved true, and great was the rejoicing on all sides, for she had been a tenant much loved.

“King David,” black, good, benevolent, who,

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notwithstanding royalty, cuts my wood, carries water, makes all my paths straight; "Jim," the grocer's boy; the "Coal-oil-man," by whose light we all go to bed; Mary, the once tender care-taker of the Friend who is away—all congratulated themselves on a renewed acquaintance, and a general jubilate was sung.

Promptly she began her *eighth nest of threads* (though the young of the first nest of the summer were but two days out of it), falling into the snare I laid for her without an instant's hesitation, and, to tell you the truth, the male bird, with the utmost assurance, hurriedly brought all the family to my garden for rearing, a wide flower-bed of loose loam yielding more succulent worms than the newly sodded lawn of my neighbor.

If the male would not assist in home-making, he certainly redeemed himself in fostering his offspring, for he "mothered" them assiduously and was oftentimes at his wits' end when, feeding one, the others besieged him starvingly. The female paid no heed to any dilemma he got into, but thriftily wove her nest of cotton thread again in the woodbine, again in the same old place, and whenever the male could elude his charges he would fly into the vines, zigzagging to the top and peering out at me, an interested student, sounding from time to time a threatening note.

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Correction was in store, but he graciously postponed administering it, giving me one more chance to mend my ways and leave his domestic affairs alone!

The second brood—three birds (of the fifth summer and eighth nest of threads)—was soon following about with the half-grown birds who yet demanded food from the discouraged father, and who with *six* at his heels found no time for morbid introspection as he flew from one to the other, wildly distraught, a typical “old woman who lived in a shoe!”

With industrious haste, the female was eagerly ready for nest number 9! And if ever a bird was enwrapt with her own artistic ideas, she was the one. The use of the thread gave her three times the work, and I hope you quite understand that cardinals are not *weaver-birds*, and have never been known to use thread in their careless nests. I had really begun to wonder if this artistic female made the *third* nest each summer for the purpose of holding a third lot of eggs, or if she conjured up the third batch merely as an excuse for further fussing with those fascinating threads! Again, however, she used a tremendous quantity—one hundred and fifty yards—draping the honeysuckle (for she built again at the end of the veranda) with airy festoons.

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To tell you of her further domestic affairs would, perhaps, seem a repetition, but I do assure you it is not. Each nesting-time reveals new traits. It's like a new family moving in! She wove a wondrous fabric—singing, whistling, confident, gay! During incubation she showed the same old confidence. Three youngsters soon appeared, very small, very pink, bringing with them voracious appetites. In early dawn they were awake, and until night darkened down kept the old birds feeding them, with but short intermissions for sleep—the other young ones at last “fending” for themselves.

In the *third* summer, and also in the nest above noted, two serious accidents were barely averted. The male bird, in his eagerness, one day could not brook so much instruction on the part of his careful spouse, and, without giving her his morsel, into a gaping mouth he quickly thrust a worm, and as quickly the bird strangled on it, almost going into spasms as it “stuck.” With an angry chirp, the mother bird came to the rescue, and, reaching into the throat of the tiny one, she seized the obstruction firmly, and instantly withdrew it. The male watched her with the silliest air of astonishment, as she “masticated” the worm and then gave it to another small bird. However, even *she* was liable to

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blunder, for in the rearing of this last nestful I watched her one day, when she brought to them a large bumble-bee from which she had torn the wings. This clumsy morsel she thrust into a wide open mouth. It was too much for a mouthful. The bill of the tiny bird was held firmly open as if gagged, he could not swallow the bug! He tried and struggled and stood up even, but down it would not go! I went close to see the outcome, crying out, "Well, you've choked him!" But the mother showed little alarm, only intense watchfulness, as her unhappy offspring continued to struggle, and finally with a big and almost expiring gulp down went the bumble-bee, and away went the female for more provender. But in every nestful the father must watch how the thing was done, and, having paid strict attention, was then permitted to do a little feeding on his own account.

To the nest the male would always come in an excited rush, and with such an air of having just the titbit this time that would answer, but into the mother's mouth it must go, and she, after turning it two or three times, would thrust it into the gaping mouths of the baby birds—first one and then another. And though the female sat on the edge of the nest awaiting the arrival of the male with his burden of food, and between them were gaping mouths reached blindly up,

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this well-governed husband nearly always humbly gave to the mother his provender and store, looking attentively and admiringly into the nest as his better half administered the food according to *her* light as to how children should be nourished.

Neither was milord allowed to give them to drink. The female invariably visited the yellow crock we kept with water in the shadow of the leaves just below the nest, and it was a thing *he* greatly desired to do, watching the mother-bird wistfully as she flew back and forth, satisfying the thirsty throats!

These birds also were soon ready for flight, and their actions and preparations were most interesting and beautiful. All day long from early morning the little birds were stirring about, always crowding, pushing each other, and hopping up onto the edge of the nest by turns, and "elbowing" their way back into the over-full nest. The nest proper (without counting the thread) was extremely small this last time, and the birds looked far too little to be going about by themselves. The two parent birds kept close watch all day, one of them ever hanging over the nest, not one moment leaving it alone; one sitting on a twig close by, until two o'clock in the afternoon the first flight was made, not, however,

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until the small fledgling had long sat on the nest's edge preening his feathers, looking about him and stretching himself, and trying each leg, to see if it were strong enough to stand on. Much time also was given to preparing themselves, oiling the tiny feathers, picking at the small wings, and spreading them to their fullest extent.

It was a funny sight, this making of a toilet to appear in the world, and instinct was strong when it taught them what would be needed, and I am sure the plentiful supply of oil used on their feathers saved the lives of the owners that night. Out, then, hopped the first and strongest of the birds. Hurrah for this green old world!—tho' a fellow may be a trifle tottery about the legs! How he blinked, and clutched, and hopped uncertainly from wire to wire, until he had threaded his way to the top of the piazza (the nest had been within reach). Followed him the second, also balancing himself on the slender wires and climbing up and up, a little round bunch of down, along the vines. Two were safely away when the last and tiniest one essayed the trip. Repeatedly he climbed out of the nest and toppled back. He was too little, his feathers too few, and he was very weak, but he was full of pluck. Finally he managed to cling to the edge of the nest. Then, after a long rest, and a dazed look about him, he hopped into a flowering branch

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of honeysuckle. This was fine, much pleasanter than that stifling old nest; but, my stars! how shaky his legs were! He teetered back and forth, trying wildly to hold his balance, but generally toppled entirely over, on the *outside* this time, catching himself, in his fall, on a lower twig, and then hurrying back into the nest again, to settle down in great apparent comfort—and very glad he was to be safe home. He would rest awhile, then do it all over again. Finally he stayed out for good, and the remainder of the day three diminutive bunches of dove-colored feathers were constantly scurrying up and down the trellis. By dusk two of them had flown across the road into a low green bush of thickly springing young locusts near the campus. The other, the weak one, was sitting safely on a twig close to the nest. After tea he too was gone. As we started out for a stroll, eyeing askance the black storm clouds overhead, our neighbors called, as we passed, "Here is one of your family running about in the grass." The weakest one of the young red-birds! I captured him, hurrying back home through the rain, much perturbed in mind as to what we should do with this chap. I concluded to put him in the nest, hoping the mother would come to him. In he went, and into the house went I for dry garments. The night grew darker, and the storm wilder, and I continued

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to worry about the wee one; out I finally went and found that risky young bird out also—out of his nest and sitting there on a twig close to it all alone in the big dark. “Well,” said I impatiently, “you will be drowned if I leave you here alone. Over across the road you go into the locust bush. May be all your family is there;” and, grasping him, much against his will, I plunged through the rain and firmly established the little fellow in a snug place in the close foliage. A wild tempest raged all night, and morning broke to find birds of all kinds drowned by hundreds. In another part of the town, where there was a blackbird’s roost, they were blown to the pavement, beaten down by the rain, and in the daylight *shovelled* up and carried away in basketsful. Robins, sparrows, all flew in wild affright against the doors of houses, and if these doors were opened, dashed in to safe shelter from the storm. What marvelous Providence, then, protected the fledglings?

I had not slept for dread of what might happen to the red-bird babies, and for fear I did not do the right thing, and, with the sun’s first rays, I hurried out to the locust bush, to find it radiant, all green, and shining, fresh and fair, where, preening themselves with utmost nonchalance in the warm sun rays, sat three tiny birds—all com-

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fortable and cozy under the softly waving leaves! My heart rose cheerfully up into my throat, and the old birds from the low overhanging branches of the maples exchanged congratulations with me.

All winter the female and her mate came at times to the house, to the window-sills for crumbs, for seed, for suet, for corn-bread, for corn, bringing with them very often the young birds that we had watched throughout the summer and autumn, turning from grays and browns to scarlet and reddish browns, according to their gender. I often wondered what they thought, these youngsters, as they caught their reflections in the glass bowl of water where they daily drank and bathed. Their first acquaintance with themselves was made in soft dove-colored garments. Now each day saw a deeper tint of scarlet on the wings, the long tail feathers also growing scarlet, crests rising on their active little heads, and, positively, they had an outraged air as if they would like to cry out, "Well! what if we *are* undergoing this curious and unaccountable transformation?" and all the time half-scared themselves at what they could n't understand, and, like the little old woman whose petticoats were cut off as she slept, they were not quite sure "if I be I." Such a ragged, frowsy-looking

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fellow as my Lord Cardinal also became when the leaves turned brown and his feathers grew fewer. He even seemed surprised at himself (for he could not miss his reflected vision in the bowl of water) as he hopped about with ragged crest all awry, and feathers impoverished, glaring haughtily at us, as though he dared us to laugh. No more pride in his splendid raiment, no more flaunting of bold colors in the face of modest birds, for he himself had suffered from the haggling of time and domestic affairs.

Instead, he wore the air of an old roué—reckless, abandoned, ludicrous in the extreme; but as winter waxed old, new feathers replaced his tatters, and, to our joy, he began again to shine resplendent.

From its safe honeysuckle lodgment, when all the nesting days were done, I carefully lifted what was once the so snug home of birdlings.

A wondrous architect is a bird, and, in what mysterious corner of the cardinal's make-up, hides a something that ever prompts the use of *paper* in her nest; who can tell?

It is there, invariably.

In this nest we found three pieces of paper, as in her former nest. (Can birds count?)

The first piece was plain white paper, "criss-crossed" with strings. A second piece was thrust

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in at one side, a ragged, soiled slip of printing bearing the words, "A cure for tired and aching feet! Shake this powder into your shoe!" The last piece bore a head-line in large letters, evidently from a religious weekly, "——— shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free!"

Three Brown Babies

*"In cool, shady courts of whispering trees,
With their leaves lifted up to shake hands with
the breeze."*

WE never should have seen them but for certain unwarranted suspicions on the part of their parents. In pursuit of an elusive cat-bird, we were following the flash of her wings to the thick shrubbery of the osage hedge, with fell determination to surprise her secret. Thrushes brown and slender, thrashers bold and cinnamon-colored, as well as the robins had snugly hidden homes in the heavy foliage, and peacefully pursued their avocations. But, for kindly intentioned folks, our careless coming into the garden created a hubbub quite out of proportion to our merits or demerits, and we felt ourselves looked upon as rogues.

"Zip-zip," or "chink-chink," as the ear reads it, sounded on all sides and over our heads. Dear me, such a disturbance of the drowsy noontide with the garden half-asleep in the sun! Where was the distrustful fellow who imputed to us

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evil designs and was sending out the note of alarm? Was it the cat-bird, glancing at us from the fence-post? Not she, with her mouth full of provender for her nestlings. Was it the cardinal? Hardly, while he remembered the spool-cotton, nor the robin, to whom we had furnished strings. Who, then, was making outcry? On whose demesne were we trespassing, A flutter of brown wings overhead, as they carried the owner thereof into the high hedge. A thrush surely! Small, to be sure, but much speckled as to breast. So much we saw as he flew above us. Out of a tree he came in a rush, never ceasing to sound his indignant "Zip-zip." Into the apple-tree, thence to the clothesline, where, with feathers bristling like "quills upon the fretful porcupine," and a top-knot that rose and fell in unison with the excited jerks of his small body, he scolded and fussed. Now we knew him. With true bird-luck we had stumbled across a nest, a nest we long had looked for. And there was nothing further for us to do but bide our time and wait until this belligerent parent should point it out. Her flights from tree to tree, from the high hedge on the west to the low hedge on the south were swift and frequent, and we had a fine view of his yellowish-white breast, thickly dotted with brown, in its very center, just below the throat, a brown rosette. Such excitement as

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filled his heart, such anger, such resentment, as he watched us turning at him two queer-looking things that we held at our eyes! An opera-glass was beyond his ken, but he knew we meant mischief, and was prepared to fight "pro aris et focus." Closer we followed him as his flights grew shorter, until, suddenly, from the low, well-trimmed hedge, out slipped his little wife, joining her voice to his in shouts that meant nothing less than "Here, here! Get out of this! Something is going to happen!" But we would n't be warned, and finding that waiting only prolonged their foolish fears, we quietly began our search for the nest in the thick, matlike foliage of the hedge. Carefully parting the branches, we first looked from above, the old birds wildly fluttering about our devoted heads. Then, stooping, we hunted from below, peering up into green shadows and, like the man of bramble-bush notoriety, came near losing an eye. In every move the parents followed us, scolding vigorously, now on this side of the hedge, now on that, never once coming near it, but as if they seemed loudly saying, "Find it if you can; we won't help!" And they did not. For more than an hour we hunted for that nest, when it was all the time just under our hands, though so cunningly hidden! At last an inadvertent movement of the hand thrust back a small branch, and there be-

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neath it lay three tiny, brown birdlings, snugly, trustfully, and soundly asleep "in the midst of alarms." They quite filled the nest, each tiny head resting over the rim of it, so comfortable, so happy, so oblivious of any danger! It was hard to resist taking them out to examine, but, to our credit be it said, we left them undisturbed, thinking, "To-morrow we'll look again." But the parents thought differently, for on the morrow the birds were flown! We captured the nest after a day or two—a small, cup-shaped thing, soft as cotton in its lining of fine grasses, and built on a goodly foundation of straws and twigs.

If you think we ever had a second glimpse of those young ones, you are vastly mistaken, for we never did. But we heard them, O, yes, indeed! And we spent an hour daily "scudding" along on our knees by the hedge, and peering up into its green shadows, a very safeguard of a hedge, as we followed the deceptive call of those wary birdlings—"Pink, pink," in the tiniest, most subdued tones, but clearly distinct, and always and ever just ahead of where we thought it. Like little mice, they crept through the foliage as quickly and as quietly. A rustle, a moving leaf, and by the time we had shifted our position and untangled our hair from the briars the birds were far enough away! The old birds followed their course in the trees running parallel with the

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hedge, guided by their baby call, "Pink, pink!" To go to their assistance would have betrayed their hiding place, and the young explorers could be trusted to take care of themselves, for we never caught a glimpse of them, not even once! The old ones we saw about the garden for many days, and the male audaciously swung on the grape-vine one morning directly in front of me, and entertained me with the most amazing bird solo. He kept his eye fixed upon me as if he were not quite sure how I would take it after his clever outwitting, but, as I could not conceal my delight and openly flattered him, he sang on and on, executing all manner of musical gymnastics. He sang until I thought he would drop from sheer exhaustion, but, only waiting to take breath, he would do it all over with variations! After an especially fine bravura he would stop and turn on me an inquiring eye, as if he'd say, "Now, what do you think of that?"

The three nests I captured this summer have all gone to a kindergarten in a great city. One of them, a vireo's hair-basket, the wind blew down to us on broken branches from the pear-tree's top, and how different the construction of the three nests—the song-sparrow's, the cardinal's, and the vireo's—and what tales they could tell (if they could only speak) to the little city

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children that to-day are studying them—of their making in blossom-time, of little green leaves that hid them, of the winds that rocked them, and of the tiny, feathered folk they cradled so safely out under the stars and the sun!

A Night With the Butterflies

A BUTTERFLY flew into the garden, danced a stately minuet mid-air, courtsied, and settled atilt the top rail of the old "snake fence." A second butterfly flew into the garden, a third, a fourth, a fifth,—nine, ten, eleven slowly drifted above the alfalfa, imitating almost to a curve the gyrations of the first-comer, as if the word had been passed, "Come, haste to the dance!" Following their leader, the butterflies dropped to the fence-rail, huddling themselves together in an odd little bunch of folding and unfolding yellow wings.

Arms on the fence-rail, I studied the butterflies. Suddenly a group of ten or a dozen more sailed lightly by, and, as if mesmerized, those on the fence rose and followed. Into the orchard, out again above the sun-smitten field and across the lawn to a cluster of trees, threading their way with utmost security as to their gauzy garments in and out among the branches of a dark-green spruce-tree, coming to rest on an outer

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ring of twigs. In a breath appeared a horde of butterflies coming from the north straight across a wide pasture, settling in the circle of trees, adding a sumptuous touch to the green and gold—for the time was mid-September, and elms and maples were flaring torches.

I had been only three days in Kansas, and, lo! a migration of butterflies.

To witness a migration of this Milkweed Butterfly, is, I learn, a rare privilege, for it is our only species in America that *does* migrate, and honored were we in its royal progress, bound for the Carolinas or the Gulf States. A rollicking, happy-go-lucky sort of crowd they seemed.

An amazing and interesting spectacle we found these frail, airy voyagers on that sunny afternoon when, by four of the clock (that strikes all the time unless its gong is tenderly wrapped in cotton batting), they drifted to us in hundreds, like autumn leaves loosed from their moorings afloat on summer winds.

As swallows soaring, curving, dropping into the chimney depths at twilight, thus the butterflies rose and fell, rose and circled higher—higher, up to the very tree-tops; then came tumbling back among the leaves, settling and unsettling themselves fussily, airily, noiselessly, as though a mere contact with a branch made them recoil;

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if not just the right place—up and away, slowly and with dignity; their selection was daintily made.

Bewildered, I turned from tree to tree—elm, maple, spruce, pine—all hung and fringed about in the lower branches with hundreds of these gorgeous butterflies. On the elms and maples they only accentuated the golden glow, but in among the prickly pine-needles and the sharp little spruce points they stood out clearly distinct, a magic flowering, of shape exquisite. Flutter and fly and readjust themselves, from four o'clock in the afternoon until after six, when, from somnolence, or in forethought of the next day's journeying, most of this wondrous swarm stood or hung immovable on all available twigs.

In flight, these wanderers seemed bent on nothing more purposeful than merry-making, indolent drifting in ease, dreaming of dainty young milkweed shoots and of warmer airs, rising as if by common impulse, floating high, and sifting like thistle-down back to their resting places.

On the twigs they strung themselves like beads, one upon another; or, rather, the comparison might well be made, they hung in bunches as droops the yellow laburnum, the purple wistaria, the fragrant locust blossom. Precisely like that they hung, bearing down by their weight all around the tree the fine fringe of the spruce,

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freighting it with Christmas gifts before the time of fruitage.

On one twig alone, measuring nine inches in length, with tiny side-springing branches, I counted nineteen butterflies, on another sixteen, on another eighteen. Though there were many more trees and abundance of room for many swarms of butterflies, the main idea seemed to be to cling close together, wings overlapping wings, in cascades innumerable.

The folded wings are of a pale buff, or pale orange, and I found them differing in shade. The open wings are of a deep orange, handsomely marked with black, a wide margin on the edge of both wings, with snow-white dots here and there, while all the delicate veinings of the wings are lacy outlined in black. A broad, oblique band of black adorns the "falcate" border of the front wings. This also is decorated with a double row of white spots. The body is black, and if milord who sports the "black and orange" is the commonest of butterflies, he is also the most interesting, the most dashing and redoubtable member of the butterfly tribe. Wintering in the tropics is for him a season of hilarity, for in the spring he returns from his revels all tattered and torn, a very different *Anosia plexippus* from the one who sailed South clad in fine cloth of gold.

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Whether or not somnolence, indifference to fate, or wing-weariness ruled the butterfly mind, I can not tell, but I stood among the swarming thousands, at the very least count, and plucked them off, one by one, experimenting with them and setting them again on the twigs. They stood on two feet only, holding up, crookedly, the other two, and with the antennæ raised high. Originally, I am told, they rejoiced in six feet, but from disuse the two foremost ones gradually diminished in size and shriveled up. I carefully examined the leaves and stems to which the insects clung, if perchance it might be food they were after; but no, they were not eating—merely meditating. There was nothing to eat. Later, I learned that in summer-time they eat a sufficient quantity to nourish their small bodies all winter, so in migration it matters not at all that the flowers are past and gone. The unfolded wings spread four or five inches, and when, here and there, bunch after bunch, as in accord, folded and unfolded, the effect was fairylike to a degree.

Set upon my hand, this or that one would remain as I placed it for perhaps ten seconds. Another would, at the unloosing of its wings, flutter instantly upwards. I set them upon my dress, to which they clung rather longer than to my hand; but not any kind of experimenting greatly disturbed them. Going the rounds, I at-

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tempted to count them as far as I could reach, but gave it up when I had numbered something over three hundred, for they seemed always on the move, settling, rising, fluttering about, mixing themselves in mazy ways.

Their custom is to hang from beneath the branches, but on all the lower branches, three and four feet from the ground, they were clustered thickly on the upper side of the twigs, their wings erect.

Aloft, where the separate butterflies were scarcely distinguishable, innumerable clustering wings pointed above the twigs and leaves; others hung from the lower part of the same twigs, with wings pointing downward. Among the yellow leaves they were only an added blur of gold. Delicately poised on a single spine of the pine-needles, they were very beautiful—erect, thoughtful, solemnly contemplative, luxuriously opening and shutting their filmy wings. Here and there one might be found solitary; but the occurrence was rare.

Among the butterflies there was constant uneasy motion until dusk drew its curtain round the camp. As moved by a common impulse, the army would flutter into the air, swaying purposely, lazily, as if for the pure joy of being wafted about by the breezes, and then come drifting down as a sunset cloud

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Their choice was never in close foliage of the branches or near the main body of the tree, but on each separate tree they clung to all the outer branches and the lowest branches, ring after ring around the tree.

On many of the opened wings, as I moved from tree to tree examining, I discerned a small black spot on the hind wings, learning later that it is the distinguishing mark of the male, and is really a pouch or pocket for the protection of the scent-scales, which, in the time of a butterfly wooing, emit a peculiar odor. As birds vie in coloring in mating-time, so the butterflies vie in scent; and while there are many butterflies whose scent-scales give forth most pleasing perfume, the scent of the Milkweed Butterfly is strangely distasteful to birds and insects; hence its immunity from attack and its marvelous rate in multiplying. Oftentimes an inexperienced fledgling pounces upon one of these tempting-looking, flame-colored insects, but the butterfly quickly responds with a touch-me-not odor, and the disappointed baby lets go. "Probably there are few nestlings that have not learned this lesson and gone through the same motions, and by repeated learnings through successive generations, it finally becomes an instinct"—to not try that game but once. The common blue butterfly, abundant at Wood's Hole, gives forth a

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faint perfume of new earth; the *Didonis* has a musky smell; another has the odor of violet; in the tiny white butterfly may be detected a smell of syringa blossom; and there is one that is said to have the fragrance of sandalwood.

As to the "mimicker" of this *Anosia plexippus*, suffice it to say, its peculiar immunity from attack has fostered the evolution of a smaller species, but quite distinct as to family, that is a perfect prototype.

One does not often have a regiment in one's front yard, and the visitation was too rare to be overlooked; so among my winged host I encamped for the night on the squirrel's bench, and the squirrel did not object, snugly asleep in his own house in a crotch of the elm.

The stars flooded the night with strange luminousness. Nine, ten, eleven—no movement from the sleepers, if they were asleep. Meditatively erect, pondering many things, always in the same position I found them as I made my rounds, once in a while striking a match and studying the phenomenon with sleepy wonder. If I picked off a butterfly, looked him carefully over, and set him on my hand, there he remained until I set him carefully back on the twig to finish out his nap. In doing this I always selected one who stood by himself, careful not to disturb his neighbors.

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The night was cloudless and absolutely without wind—not the turning of a single leaf, and, undisturbed, that multitude of butterflies slept on, and on, and on, with wings tightly folded together.

Two o'clock, three. All alone am I, in a world asleep! An exhalation of the dying night sighs through the trees; a mysterious sense of brooding wings enfolds us; the hush ineffable that comes before dawn falls over all nature. Then the keenness of the stars begins to pale, the phosphorescence of the sky sinks before a wave of gray mistiness from the east. No twitter of birds announces day; but far across the meadow a hazy curtain rolls up and backward on the sky, pushing off the faint stars to make pathway for the sun. Glows the horizon palest pinkish-saffron, strengthening in tint to orange, orange red, and rose, with long fingers of shining light reaching up and up to mid-heaven. Against this sea of color stands the forest, a network of black branches; long shafts of light peep beneath the dark shadows of the foliage, find room, and shoot across the lavender fields of alfalfa in gleaming radiance. Day has come, and with its coming my butterflies bestir themselves. Like a myriad of infinitesimal fans, the orange wings wave to and fro—slowly, drowsily. The sunlight grows stronger, rises higher, and falls aslant the fringed trees. A

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miracle of the resurrection; for to what else is comparable this swift transformation? Not in slow uncertainty, as the butterfly bursts from the chrysalis, resting from the exertion until the crumpled wings expand and grow, fitting themselves for flight; but as if touched with a magic wand, this mighty colony is wafted into the air. The opening space among the surrounding trees is literally aflutter with fully two thousand wings; the air is alive with butterflies. Around and about, higher and higher and higher; then away sweeps this army of the air through highest tree-tops, to the south—to the south!

I follow farther into the grove above, and through which they pass, and find here and there a swift awaking among other butterflies who have camped in my neighbor's trees; but so few are these, I would have given them but a glance had not my night's watching told me they were migrants.

And so, in a breath, they were gone. On their golden wings they carried with them my chance for Midas' riches; for, later, in consultation with the ex-Chancellor of Kansas State University, I learned of a man in New York who would have given five cents apiece for a thousand specimens of the Milkweed Butterfly! "And I myself would have been glad of four hundred," said the Chancellor—and I had brought

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him two! To have captured four hundred would have been easy.

Within a comparatively recent period, this wandering migrant has become imbued with a desire to extend his explorations, and has, on merchant ships, crossed the Pacific, reached Australia, and continued its loitering flight northward and westward until it has reached Java and Sumatra.

In its migration, it sometimes flies in flocks of millions, darkening the sky, and will be all day long passing overhead, as flocks of wild pigeons fly—or used to fly, as the kindly attention of “netters” has almost rendered them extinct.

The migration of these butterflies was to me a sight unique, and I astonished the biology authorities of the university by knocking at their doors at inconvenient seasons, demanding knowledge. I was received with enthusiasm and warm welcome, for these biology men were filled with joy that, outside of student circles, any one should care enough for a butterfly to sit up with it all night, and supplied me with numerous books. From the accumulated wisdom of naturalists I have learned the following:

This butterfly is rightly named the “Monarch.” The smaller one, the “mimicker,” is called the “Viceroy.” Originally these two were quite

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different, but certain ones among the "Viceroy's" that resembled the "Monarch" were avoided by the birds; consequently these multiplied tremendously, the brown markings became more and more distinct, the mimicker had perpetuated himself in a marvelous way—the survival of the fittest. Natural selection slowly, but surely, shapes the destiny of animals, insects, and plants.

As the Milkweed Butterfly produces many broods annually, the countless millions in their swarms are not to be wondered at. What is cause for wonder among the uninitiated is that, without exception, the eggs of this butterfly are laid upon the milkweed plant. How do they distinguish it? By sight would seem most natural; but they do not. It is by smell. Scudder tells us: "This is an act of instinct, one will say. But is this any explanation? We wish to know how the instinct acts. A parent butterfly that in its caterpillar life has been nourished upon willow has no means, if in the winged condition, of tasting the willow to recognize it, its organs for obtaining food being only suitable for liquid nourishment. Nor can it be by sight." And he goes on to give many interesting reasons for this last assertion, stating that "butterflies have no vision sufficiently clear for such powers of distinction as are required of them in selecting special food-plants for their young, which they

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yet discover in an unerring manner. There remains, then, apparently, nothing but smell. Many plants are odorous quite apart from their flowers, and the leaves have a special structure, . . . from some of which odors are exhaled perceptible to our dull senses—perhaps from many others perceptible to keener organs.” He tells us also of “the action of a mother-butterfly seeking a spot on which to lay her eggs, hovering about certain plants that give forth an odor somewhat similar to the one she is hunting, settling and half-settling in a dozen different places, drawing nearer and nearer to the plant she seeks, and finally finding it, there she deposits her eggs. Thus it is tolerably clear that it is to sense of smell that butterflies owe their recognition of botanical species.”

From the north they came, one and all of these “Monarch” butterflies; to the south they swept away—to the south, to the south, as far as I could see them—to Texas, to Louisiana, to Mexico, to the Carolinas.

If we marvel at the oriole’s flight, the strong wing-beat of the humming-bird that carries this gleaner of honeysuckle sweets from Massachusetts to Central America, what think we of these frail, gauzy-winged butterflies who whirl from Canada to Florida in their annual migration?

A Spring's Mischances

ROSE-GARDENS all in a row. Star-jasmines, glossy-foliaged, clambering, clustering, over-weighting wire fence-strings with fragrant luxuriance, china-berry trees of thickest shade, young live-oaks, and maples; such very probable places for bird-nests—and yet, and yet, our “mocker” would have none of them, but, from the vantage-point of an electric-light pole, choicely selected the prickly security of a “Spanish dagger.”

Neighboring was “Audubon Place,” quiet, untrampled by hurrying crowds, swarming with little children, but, for all that, the postman assured us, “lots of mockin’-birds nest there every year; yes, ’um!”

“Audubon Park,” with its meadows echoing to the pensive melody of the bolder-throated lark; with stately black-birds threading their way through the grass, carrying “a chip on their shoulder,” as who would say *they* were not the landed proprietors; gray pigeons scratching unmolested in the gravel.

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Now, might not any sensible bird find a secure home in that domain of shine and shade?

All the leaves were aquiver with exciting chatter of housekeeping plans; bird song and conversation resounded through the air. Many notes were new to my ears, our Northern birds of April holding small place here. The woods of Louisiana may be full of them, the islands of the Gulf do teem with millions of sea-birds known also on our Atlantic coast, but in the beautiful parks and cemeteries of New Orleans there was dearth. Carolina wrens were much in evidence, the ubiquitous blue jay, the red-winged black-bird, but I found no such rollicking crowd of migrant warblers picking daintily among tree buds as you may encounter in spring days "up No'th;" no such scolding crowd of cat-birds; no fluty note of thrushes clad in beech-leaf brown, nor the endless gaudy variation of woodpecker wings that made flying spots of color in the forests of Ohio.

Wander at will beneath the moss-draped trees of the "Dueling Oaks" of "City Park," or thread the white-shelled silent avenues of "Metairie," even venture into the country beyond, out on "Metairie Ridge," and the persistent bird-arias are, mostly, from the extensive repertoire of the mocking-bird. Twice out upon "Metairie Ridge" have I heard the exquisite notes of his wooing

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song. It has been appropriately called the "dropping song," and in April's nesting-time is not rare. Not content with song, the various emotions of a bird find expression in wing-ways. As a child holds up imploring hands, so young birds flutter their wings, begging favors. The wings are used in expressing anger, as weapons of defense, buffeting intruders with powerful blows. In joyous ecstasy over his melody droop a bird's wings with utter abandon, or they tremulously flutter as he stands singing out his heart. Again and again have I witnessed this act as if it is all done in highest appreciation of their own musical ability. Full voice, bewitching "wing-ways," gala dress, become all spring-time birds who go a-courting. Thus the mocker, minus purple and fine linen, all flutter and ado, sprinkles the air with silvery notes, and actually seems to fall from branch to branch through the thick magnolia leaves in conducting his ardent wooing. Of gay colors boasts he none! His gladness must show itself in motion; so, singing ever, his throat rippling over with liquid notes, soft, sweet, insistent, he drops among the leafy shadows—low, and lower, while the lady of his heart, won already by song, watches in sober contemplation.

"Exposition Boulevard" smacks of the city, but, really, it is only a sinuous, winding concrete walk flowing at the edge of velvet lawns, along

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the wide green acres of "Audubon Park," and on this boulevard my New Orleans "mockers" made their home.

Their movements were at first misleading. Hardly had we decided that a stick carried here, or a straw carried there, and lodged, made a foundation, when our theories were brushed aside by swift flight of wings as a different crotch was chosen and a string or two carried to the new place.

In and out among the jasmine tangle; then the wistaria wooed the capricious pair; then back into the young maples of "Audubon Park," considering, and down among the bluets in the grass idly fussing with the weeds. Aloft then to the swinging bulb of an arc-light, from where they took swift survey below, and descended into an appalling thicket of thorns—the "Spanish dagger." Of all places to make a nest! But it looked good in their eyes; and here in the closest part, among a hedge of five straightly growing tall stalks, bristling with bayonets, waterproof from the peculiar construction of the gutter-shaped leaves, *cat*-proof by the needlelike armament just four feet from the ground a nest was made—a bulky mixture of twigs, rootlets, rags, cord, paper, much in kind as a cardinal builds, or a cat-bird. Though the nest was quickly finished, both birds assisting in the making, no sign

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of occupancy followed for several days. I have found, however, that, without a reason apparent to me, birds will make a nest and then desert it—choosing to build in a new location. On the other hand, a certain lazy robin I know of has this spring “washed over” (as the farmers say, and which means a new fresco of mud) the interior of her three-years-old nest, and virtuously reared her family before the admiring glances of an entire university faculty. Also, this spring, returning after a two years’ absence, I find the cardinal has made her home in the sweet-scented honeysuckle “next door” to the garden she knew and loved so well. Bereft of vines is the old white house—no place where she may trust her secret! So to-day she rears her second brood of the summer in the self-same nest occupied by the first brood!

But, on a day, this completed nest of the mocking-bird mother held a faintly speckled egg in its glossy lining; another and another, until the complement of five lay snugly together. This laying process seemed not arduous. Scarcely long enough to deposit the egg did milady remain upon the nest. It was from choice that she constantly absented herself. Then at the call of her mate she was most prone to fly out into the maple to receive his blandishments and food-supplies! But they were hardly “absent,” after

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all. Let any one approach too closely to the fort and a warning call came singing through the air, a rush for home, and a quick, soft supplication that we would do her and hers no harm, for she was the gentlest thing imaginable.

We prophesied "those eggs will never hatch!" but the temperature (90° in the shade) worked a miracle, and on the tenth day the first youngster broke the shell, two on the eleventh, and on the twelfth five tiny young ones, gray-pink in color of skin, with soft gray down sticking to them here and there, lay, a palpitating bunch, among the twigs. It was curious how little "brooding" they received. The old ones fed them almost constantly, but the naked little fellows were not long at a time hidden in the warmth of the mother-breast. Scarcely a note was heard in the nest's vicinity—I do not recall one—until at the end of the chapter, but both birds evinced their delight by the odd fluttering of wings. A small gray shadow would flit among the leaves, would hang above the nest, and for many minutes at a time simply stand there raising and lowering his (or her) half-spread wings. It seemed an act of pure joy.

Then came the rains. Above New Orleans the flood-gates of the sky simply fall apart. Daily, under an umbrella that wept, like a sieve, in protestation, I waded through the flooded meadow

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to learn whether or no the mocking-bird was a good mother. I found her always on guard, nearly always sheltering the babies with her wings—eyeing me brightly, confidently. On Saturday all was well, the nest was quite dry; the plumbing was masterly.

Another day of deluge flooded the streets even-full. At twilight on the Sabbath I ventured across the dripping green. In a tree adjacent to the nest stood the two drenched mocking-birds, disconsolate. At my coming they pricked up an eager interest, flying close beside me, and alighting on the tip-top bayonet. My umbrella I tossed afar, and, drawing nearer, peered in among the leaves. A curiously quiet little bunch of birds lay there. I looked closer, loath to believe in disaster, but all five were quite dead! I stood amazed—the nest was dry as might be! To my friend whose property had been leased by the birds, and who came running out on the gallery, I announced, “Why, they are all dead! Every one of them, and the nest is full of ants!” With wrath and despair, out into the flood plunged my lady of the silken gown, and there we stood in the fast-gathering gloom, helpless, the parent birds flying about in vain hope that we might do something; and, I frankly state, the rain-drops were not the only drops that traveled down our cheeks!

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"Well," cried my friend, when she could command her voice, "those ants sha'n't have them!" and, regardless of trailing skirts, she swept into the house, reappearing almost instantly with a can of insect-powder.

"Wait," I begged. "Let us see what the old birds will do!" Half an hour we watched. The birds came and went and came again, slipping in and out of the "Spanish dagger," leaning over to look into the nest, and, without a single flutter of wing, uttering a curious, complaining, questioning, soft note. Small fight could they make against millions of insects, and it was quite evident the young birds had been slowly dying for twenty-four hours from the enemy's encroachments.

Doubled up on porch chairs, the mists blowing grayly about us, we, together with the birds, endured much of the heartache attendant upon a funeral. When darkness descended we filled the swarming nest to the rim with the destroying insect-powder.

Only one among many is this nest, where to-day the young are being destroyed by these cannibalistic ants. They are small but pervasive—so far unconquerable; and are said to have been brought to New Orleans in a lot of mahogany wood from Honduras. The impossibility of keeping them out of the houses makes them

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detested. This might be borne and dealt with, but in every locality about New Orleans the birds' nests are being preyed upon—especially, I am told, the mocking-bird nests, for they build so low.

Such a walk through Ohio woods pink with wild sweet-william. Such talk of summer in crystal-clear brook-falls. Such promise of song in flashing wings "thorough brush, thorough brier." Smoke-blue the far hills. Starred is the tall grass in the burying-ground with pink anemones. A very cozy, comfortable, sunny place to lie and listen to the gray-green curly lichens softly etching one's name on marble. Whispered to by the winds, sung to by the bee, fanned by the butterfly's wing—a lilt and a song, and silence—peace. But "improvement" has become the watchword in this quiet old place. This vine-wreathed, crumbling old stump must be removed, that tiny spruce-tree must come down. It's a very baby of a tree, close, thick, dark, shaking out a fringe of palest green on the tips of its needles.

Such a sorry place to have seeded! Directly above a double grave.

"To-morrow," consents the gardener, "it shall be done."

Twitter, and sing, and twitter—a flutter of

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wings, and on the old stump in the corner alights a wee brown bird, questioning me as I lounge on the hillside, then—away! But not far. She alights on a low-lying, aged tomb, switching about uneasily, wondering why I do n't go.

Twitter, and sing, and twitter! Back comes my tiny brown neighbor, now balancing herself on a curve of stone—

"Here lyeth ye body"—

and such a thing of quivering life she is. I begin to suspect she is not actuated by admiration of me, or by desire to scrape acquaintance.

"Twitter! Dare I come?" says she. On the next almost-hidden stone, keenly watching; to the next, the next, closely a-row; then half doubting, up she goes among the branches.

Leaning over, I pry into the little tree's secret. Is there reason why it may be spared? Surely. Snug in a crotch swings a hair-lined basket. On highest branch waits the owner to learn if I come in peace or in war.

Just a pocket of a nest and one small, blue, dark-spotted egg closely crowded to one side by a large, muddy-looking, mottled egg. Who had been intruding? Shall I thrust it out? My opportunity has passed; into the nest slips my lady, so serene, so confident I mean no harm, watching me, her russet head on nest-rim, with soft im-

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ploring eyes. Thus begins our acquaintance. On a later day a long, dusty walk by the "State Road" to the cemetery. Off flies the brown bird at my approach. Close to the tree I sit—wait—watch—listen. Around and about me fly the birds. I press down the branches around the little brown bowl—*three* turquoise jewels, and yet the intruding egg is there—the mottled, clumsy egg of the lazy cowbird. The little mother will not return while I am so near; I rise and thread my way among grassy hillocks. Following me come my small friends, from tree to tree. Have I taken those eggs of theirs? They suspect, but leave me to make sure, and I find the female brooding when I return. This time she shows no fear, only the quickened palpitation of her little body proclaims excitement—as I creep near, and near, slowly—O, so slowly, with long waits between the inches; near enough now to whisper to her, my face almost against the foliage. Enough for to-day; to-morrow I come again!

To-morrow, and to-morrow, until she learns to patiently abide my presence. With careful finger, by degrees I touch the tree. Beseeching eyes hold me from the nest's rim. To-morrow I touch *her*!

But to-morrow she is off when I reach my trysting-place. The treasures of the nest have

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been lessened by two blue eggs. Two children who have been raking hay fly before my wrath, but there is no locating the stolen goods. Comes anxiously the bird, on to the headstones, then to the tree, hastily out again, in and out, in great perturbation. The tree is the same, but can that be her home? Evidently the theft has just been committed. Where are her eggs? One egg left of her own, one cowbird's egg. It is her first visit after the disaster. Whoever may be the guilty ones? How distressed she is! How puzzled! In and out, in and out, twittering, troubled, hurried; then at last she settles down upon her nest, the male bird close at hand partaking of her excitement.

Hay and rake and lawn-mower, moved by righteous anger, I toss rods away. If she can only be protected until her labor of love is rewarded by the joy of rearing one bird and playing foster-mother to another. Another day and the last egg is taken out. But her courage and devotion are great. Upon the ungainly egg of the cowbird she patiently sits, allowing me now to touch her with cautious finger. Nearly ten days since the first egg was laid, and lower in the little tree is a nearly finished nest. Had she made this one first, and, imposed upon by the cowbird, abandoned it to build a second? One day longer, and beneath the little tree lies a broken

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shell and the smallest morsel of what would have been a bird! Another mishap in bird-land; and watching the great distress of the bewildered hair-birds, my wonderment is that among all dangers the song-birds are spared us at all.

The little nest I left, hoping she might be tempted to use it again, but not so; to-day it is empty, and the later nest is more securely hidden in a trumpet-vine. Would milady have reared the cow-bird's offspring in lieu of her own? and would she have known the difference? What rare opportunity for bird study in the outcome! But squirrel, or jay, or "public-school collectors"—and their name is legion—are they not devastating the Kingdom of the Song-Birds?

On my desk lies a wood-thrush, almost warm yet with the life that throbbed through it a few hours since. Three strong young birds to her credit in a nest that is not too well hidden in the pear-tree. That undomesticated creature, the family cat, is the villain in the case. Two old birds are, however, at the present moment assiduously feeding and guarding a young one that has ventured from the nest. Has the male bird already picked up a mate? or is it a case of charity among the birds? Knowing a neighbor's needs, do they "turn to" and help? Verily, are there more things in heaven and earth than our philosophy has dreamed of?

Under Oxford Trees

*"The butterfly flutters his wings for her,
The bobolink twitters and sings for her,
The hammock drowsily swings for her,
Under the apple trees."*

WHEN you can not go to the seashore, to the mountains, or to Japan, hang your hammock out in the sunny haze of summer afternoons, stretch yourself lazily in the soft meshes, pull down over you a big umbrella, and all things beautiful will come your way.

About you lies an old-fashioned, sleepy, sloping garden, hedge surrounded—a fluttering, golden boundary to the tall, yellow maples of September days. The quaint, oval flower-bed thrusts out stiff bunches of scarlet geranium, luring those will-o'-the-wisps, the ruby-throated humming-birds. Pink wigelias, honey-cups for bird and bee; mignonettes, sweet-alyssum, tall, white candlesticks of the foxglove; the fragrance of wall-flowers, and the bright insistence of nasturtiums that creep about, and flower under every leaf.

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The "vegetable garden" is gay with poppies, pink with sweet peas, purple and white with flowering beans; big golden blossoms of the cucumber vines usurp all the ground they dare, running through the ferny asparagus, sprinkling it with yellow stars, and bearing fruit with the celerity of "Jonah's gourd!" Crinkly lettuce, yellow-flowering, going to seed; potatoes, exhausted in the effort of reproducing their kind, dropping their white flowers, drooping languidly in the furrows, brown again after all their bravery of crisp, green leaves. Beets, purple and green, a second crop of tender young peas, a plot bearing "mint, anise, and cummin," sending forth breaths of perfume; hollyhocks, proudly erect under the wood-shed eaves, crimson, maroon, straw-color; wild grape-vines curling along the wire fence, and, guarding this smiling spot, stands a regiment of armed warriors—for the corn is "in the silk." Above this forest of slender spears hangs a luminous haze, and from the tightly closed lance-like leaves, rippling yellow silk goes bubbling and foaming down the side. Not yet the toothsome kernel of white, milky deliciousness; the silk is only the precursor, and, like blossom and flower, yields its beauty to the fruit.

The marvelous green of this garden is a thousand shades—black in shadows, green in

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sunlight, olive-green, gray-green, bronze-green, apple-green—mixing, commingling, glancing out in new shades as they are tossed by the winds. 'Neath your dreamy gaze, the shining waves of transparent heat become a tremulous sea, and the winds blowing softly through the pines whisper of a salt breeze that will surely drift to you from far away!

You do not lack for society, as the inhabitants of these wide domains, though at first prone to chatter among themselves as to what your pedigree may be, end in coming to scrape loving acquaintance, and, evidently, go away pronouncing you a "jolly good fellow," for they are friendly little folk—and so wise!

A golden oriole drops from the blue sky into the topmost branches of the pear-tree from which the hammock sleepily swings. Down he comes, lower and lower, threading his way warily through the flickering leaves to tilt from an overhanging twig and examine with questioning gaze his strange-looking neighbor. A persistent stare of two minutes' duration sets his mind at ease, and, in silence, he flits to his home suspended from the little branches on the long arm of a maple.

Gay in scarlet cap, a woodpecker next adventures. Alighting on the iron ring of the hammock, he taps vigorously and ineffectually,

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then transfers his efforts to the trunk of the tree, traveling briskly up and down in his search for grubs, all the time vigilantly twisting and turning his head to see what I am about; and ends by perching on the old wooden windlass of the well, to go over the matter in discontented monologue.

A slipper inadvertently showing attracts the attention of a saucy sparrow, who alights fearlessly on the tip of it, and, to my mortification, promptly discovers a hole in the toe, which fills him with delight, as tweaking the ragged bit of kid exactly suits his teasing disposition. Exhausting the joy of this, his desire after knowledge suggests his looking above, and beneath the umbrella. He flies to the top of it, slipping, sliding over the silk surface, and saves himself by a clutch at the side of the hammock. Partly in fear, more in curiosity, he comes hopping down the edge of the rope, bending over frequently to find if, perchance, he is near enough to see under, dreading, but firmly determined to gratify his curiosity. Reaching the edge of the dark circle, he slips quickly into it, gives a "Who's afraid of *you*?" look into eyes amusedly open, snatches at the pages of a magazine lying in my lap, and darts out again into the sunshine.

Within eye-reach, a thorn-tree holds a curiously located nest. At the first division of its

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branches, where the thorns are longest, most thickly set, and sharp as stilettos, a dove chose to construct her home; in the spring she brooded in peaceful security over her family of two birdlings in the midst of this bristling array. How she succeeded in the house-building without being impaled, or how her children finally journeyed into the world without accident, was source of wonder. But, as a matter of fact, her small pink feet threaded their way daintily, and safely, in and out among the threatening poniards. Rarely she flew directly onto the nest, but, alighting on a branch, picked out a path of safety, slipping under and beneath the thorns with marvelous discretion.

A cat-bird resorts to any diplomacy in order to hide the location of her nest, but, with all her shyness, she is yet a paradox—saucy, self-assertive. A pair of them had a home in the grape-arbor just outside the kitchen door, which I discovered by accident. From the hammock my glance fell carelessly upon a gray bird quite near me in the grass, with her mouth full of straws, and on the point of flight. Catching my gaze upon her, she instantly dropped the burden, beginning assiduously to dig for a worm. Watching slyly from the corners of my eyes, I saw her hop stealthily to her straws and gather them in haste, only to drop them again the moment

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she saw me looking. This was many times repeated, when, finally concluding I must be asleep, she took the opportunity of making off (as she imagined) unobserved, and I followed her flight from the pear tree to the arbor, where her nest was barely distinguishable. Each day thereafter her maneuvers were wonderful, and the circuitous routes she took to divert my attention were many. She might be almost upon the nest, and, if observed, without hesitation would drop the material to saunter, nonchalantly, in the grass. Anything that came their way in the eating line was invariably sampled by the cat-birds, but, among all our feathered guests, cat-birds alone found a delectable morsel in the—butter!

A daintily laid breakfast table each morning snuggled itself in a cozy corner of the vine-shaded porch. A tiny pat of butter shone goldenly beside a plate, and, in time, this yellow cube was mysteriously transformed into honey-comb!

No trespasser was in sight! Vainly we speculated! Then, early one morning, "Chloe," the cook, with frantic beckonings and excited whispers, called us to view the culprit. The demurest Quaker of a cat-bird stood on the edge of the plate, thrusting deep his bill into the tasteful dainty! Down would go his head, then straight up into the air, as if allowing the delectable substance to melt and run down his throat. His joy

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was ecstatic! His appetite growing with indulgence, his courage, also, keeping pace, for, let the tray be transferred to the lap of the dear old mother, instantly he followed it, scolding at the innovation, but determined to have his share at all hazard, until (for sanitary reasons) we provided our guest with a private dish.

Other birds came and went at the breakfast hour, eagerly picking up crumbs, but bread without butter amply satisfied them.

Soon the cat-birds grew saucily defiant, entering the kitchen or dining room through door or window, and, marching boldly across the table, would attack a large roll or a small plate of butter with equal assurance, and when, between shouts of laughter at the absurdity, we tried to scold and drive them away, they stood their ground like highwaymen, advancing belligerently across the table!

"*Why*, can't we have that?" "squawk, squawk, squawk," slipping, sliding over the damask, skimming around the dishes, and never surrendering until "Chloe's" threatening fist came too near! This was of almost daily occurrence throughout the summer.

In November, when fires were lighted, and cold rains were upon us, on an unusually gloomy morning a familiar bird dashed against the dripping pane, eager, once more, to taste of butter

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shining goldenly through the glass—for our beloved “Thrums” lady was breakfasting!

We opened the window, in hopped the bird, onto the sill, and, having eaten with gusto from the “pat” we set before him, off he went (without returning thanks), and we saw him no more!

In April the blue-birds made a home in the cherry tree, directly below one of our windows. The male bird had great difficulty in persuading his wife that it was a good location, for she evidently preferred a snug hole in the apple tree, and he spent much time in explaining its advantages and flying into the crotch with building material, and back to her where she sat dubiously considering the matter on an adjacent branch; but, like a model wife, she yielded her own better judgment to her lord!

The twenty-third of April brought a heavy fall of snow, powdering alike the cherry blossoms and the mother bird, who by that time was brooding her eggs; yet she only fluttered her wings distressfully to shake it off, while around and about her circled her spouse in much alarm, himself a flash of brightest blue through the white mist. Much coaxing and strewing of crumbs enticed them to our window, occasionally inside of it on the window-sill, where, warily watching us, they would pick up a breakfast.

The male bird was game through and through,

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and as jealous as Othello. A low roof, not far from the nest and on a level with it, was his especial field for fight. All day long he remained a faithful sentinel on a branch close to the nest, perching there for hours at a time as immovable as the female. Except the excursions for food (and fights) this was the daily routine, but all the birds of the air fell under his vengeance if they dared alight on the roof in close proximity—where we had strewn crumbs. Robins, jays, sparrows, orioles, cat-birds, big or little—'t was all one to him! Down he pounced upon them, chasing them in terror, and routing them in dismay. Then he returned to his point of vantage with indignant twitterings, scolding away under his breath by the half-hour. Even the jays, twice the size of the blue-birds, never braved it out. Any bird accidentally alighting in the tree which held the nest was promptly attacked. The mother bird was no whit disturbed by the numerous battles, but serenely watched how the day went from her snug little home.

In the old apple-tree stump last year a yellow-bellied sapsucker made herself a home; but a pair of blue-birds appeared on the scene when it was about ready for occupancy, and, without ado, the female slipped into the hole and proceeded to lay her eggs. The sapsucker showed fight when she discovered the imposition, but

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the male blue-bird, with spiteful cries, flew at her, regardless of size, and drove her away. Then he took up his station on the stump a few feet above where his lady love was hidden, and from there kept watch and ward during the time of incubation. How competent he felt to cope with any rival, large or small! And, truth to tell, most of the birds took precious good care not to cross the path of this warrior in coat of blue!

With the ripening of the pears, the squirrels come in gay confidence of the tribute which is theirs. The big greenish pears, bitter beneath the skin, but sweet-hearted for all that, the "white folks" pass by, making them over to sundry little darkies of all sizes, shapes, and degrees of shade, and they, with the squirrels, grow and wax fat each year during the season of ripe pears. The bees quickly discover the royal feast at hand, and any hour of the morning shows nimble little bare-footed darkies dancing around on the look-out for stings, as they fill their old hats and baskets with the fruit. The afternoon is reserved as private foraging for the squirrels, who are shy of children's shouts and laughter. At first one comes alone, as if to reconnoitre; then back he whisks into the campus, calls together his friends, and announces, "Pears are ripe! Big yellow ones! Same old place!" and in a trice

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back he comes with his comrades, and there is not an hour in the afternoon that a squirrel is not busy in the tree. Beneath the hedge and across the road they steal, frisk up the elm outside the fence, and, the coast being clear, whisk to the grass, skimming over it to the pear-tree, where they feel comparatively safe.

The hammock is not always a desirable place when these gay fellows are about. Not even stopping to examine the fruit already fallen, they run aloft, select for themselves pears that hang on the branches, nibble at the stems until the fruit falls to the ground, then descend, and invariably select from a score of others that have *dropped* one they have themselves *nibbled* off! Taking it in their mouth, up they go again, sit down comfortably, and proceed, in some cases, to peel the fruit with their sharp little teeth, going round and round it with the precision of a patent "apple-parer."

On an afternoon two squirrels were lunching in the tree—old *habitués*, for one soon learns to distinguish them, the "old fat one," the one with the "thin tail," the "little one," and the "long, lean one"—when a sudden noise of singing, laughing children coming up the street frightened the revelers. One of them, dropping his plunder, flashed to the ground, and, crossing the lawn in a twinkling, was safely hidden in the gloom of

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the pines. The other, with an eye to future possibilities, grabbed with his teeth the half-eaten pear he had been holding in both paws, and jammed it firmly into a crotch of the tree; then followed his companion. When quiet reigned, one squirrel stole cautiously into the campus, while the other returned to his quarry, scampered up the tree, and with great satisfaction finished eating the fruit he had saved!

The chipmunks and the blue jays were direst enemies, and spent more time in disputing over one pear than it would have taken to devour two others.

Sunday morning a squirrel came early for his breakfast, and this time brought it to the elm-tree. Bad luck caused him to drop the pear when it had been reduced to almost a core. Just at that moment a cat, creeping slyly through the grass, discovered him, and he had almost reached his cherished morsel before he saw her in the act of springing upon him. Back he went, with the cat following, but as he sprang from branch to branch away up to the feathery top, she gave up the chase, and, sitting down at the foot of the tree, turned the assault into a siege. The squirrel barked loudly and furiously, advancing to the attack. His squeals were deafening as he descended the trunk of the tree, first on one side, then on the other, within a yard or two of the

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besieger, who would then fly at him to his discomfiture and swift retreat upward. This was continued for long, the cat occasionally walking around the tree and looking aloft with wishful eyes; finally she gave it up, departing slowly and indifferently, as if it were a matter of no importance after all.

Not so the victor. Not content with the sign of surrender shown in the last wave of her plummy, white tail, the squirrel, bristling with outraged feelings, sprang from the branches of one tree into those of another, following the dignified retreat of pussy on the ground beneath. Over a space of a hundred yards he went, in the tree-tops, then, still scolding and squealing in a lower key, and his bushy tail whipping about with rage, he came back to where the battle was fought, ran to the ground, picked up the dilapidated looking fruit and finished it on the spot, grumbling, choking, and muttering over each mouthful, as he brooded his troubles!

These "birds of a feather," or "folks of one fur," are not above robbing each other on occasion. A gray squirrel had conceived the idea of bringing hickory nuts from the campus and burying them on the lawn. Industrious he scratched a hole in the thick grass and covered the first one. When he had gone for a second nut, the "Parson" arose and poked about with

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his cane trying to discover the spot, but without success. Back came the squirrel and deposited another nut in like manner as the first. Scarcely had he departed on a third trip when, from a locust tree, a little brown chipmunk came scurrying down and pounced without delay on the exact place where a nut was hidden, unearthed it in a twinkling, and, holding it in his tiny paws, bit off one sharp pointed end, turned it cleverly about, and bit off the other end, then stuffed it into his pouch-like cheek and whisked away to his burrow somewhere back of the house. This accomplished, he tremblingly crept around the corner, where, sitting on his haunches and hidden by high grass, he kept a mischievous eye on further proceedings. The squirrel, all unwitting, came and went in happy confidence of his winter's store—that was promptly gathered in by the small Brownie, who, without one mistake, invariably struck the spot where a nut was buried, showing how keen had been his observation.

A Tragedy in the Tree-Top

"Oh, they listened, looked, and waited."

—WHITTIER.

STORIES not only lie around loose for the "pickin" among human-kind, but offer themselves to us from beneath the rose branches, for there are the cardinals and the cat-birds; from the honeysuckle-vines, where madame of the butterfly wings locates her lichen-covered home; even from the dark recesses of a chimney, where the graceful swift rears her young; and from the tips of swaying elm branches, where the oriole nests; from cozy nooks in orchard trees, nests of the robins and warblers—everywhere there are constant marvelous happenings among the birds.

Judge for yourself of a single robin's nest beneath my window, not long ago, and see if the whole of life's love and life's tragedy lay not within the tiny circlet of a wisp of grass.

First came the courtship of these prospective home-makers; then consultations as to where that home should be located, the pair finally con-

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cluding, after picking over last year's nest, to build in a new place, high on the wind-sheltered side of a splendid young maple. Her material the female bird found beneath the osage hedge. The foundation and the lining were of the usual mud, which she carried to the nest on her gray wings and ruddy breast. Once on the nest, she forced the wet clay to take shape by pressing it firmly down with her breast, and so cunningly lined the hollow that when we examined it later it seemed to have been smoothly turned on a potter's wheel. She wove no rags in among her material, but crowned the completed nest with a circlet of ragged strips of white cotton cloth that I tore up and tossed to her, piling it up fully two inches above the nest proper. As the rags were not a necessary complement to the nest, her idea in using them must have been purely decorative. The nest when finished presented the appearance of a little brown bowl made of twigs, grasses, and clay, with a wide rim of soft white rags woven about and about and dripping down in pendants, and into this downy place the robin settled herself, her back deeply curved, with head and tail sharply elevated by this unprecedentedly high rim.

She had been sitting on her eggs for a week, when, thinking to tempt a second robin to make a home near her, I ordered a darky to remove

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from the lowest crotch of a pear-tree the remnants of the already once rejected nest. Being called suddenly away, I left the darky to do his work, and, on my return, found he had with great difficulty climbed the maple-tree, driven off the brooding mother-bird, and rudely torn from its fastness the new nest, her hard-built home.

There it was, tossed on a pile of grass cuttings, two blue eggs broken in its depths, and the sides of the nest crushed—a pitiful wreck of lovely hopes and artistic skill. The two birds were frantic, and had they been jays, would probably have picked out the big rolling eyes of the marauder; but, being robins, only flew about, distressfully chirping. At my railing that stupid darky nodded and grinned appreciatively: “Yaas, ’um! Yaas, ’um! Fo’ de Lawd’s sake, did I git de wrong one? Dem birds sho’ act pow’ful upsot!”

For many years the robins had nested safely among these trees, and there was now no remedy but to take down the older nest, leaving thereby more chances for rebuilding. Hoping against hope that the new nest might yet be repaired and used again by the birds, it was placed low down in a peach-tree, though this seemed adding insult to injury. For two days the robins hopped about in the grass in seeming bewilderment, stopping under the peach-tree and staring up at the nest

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with puzzled eyes. For long minutes they stood considering, often gazing up at the old place in the maple, as if the whole affair was quite beyond their comprehension. But they did not touch the damaged nest, preferring finally to begin a second home in the campus opposite. When this nest was well under way, they seemed unaccountably dissatisfied, and coming back to our lawn, tried establishing a home in another maple-tree. This, too, proved unsatisfactory, the birds going about it half-heartedly, finally concluding this would not do either, and they came at last to the pear-tree closely adjacent to the first maple. Here they very warily made their nest.

All went well until the young birds were hatched. At that time a stray Maltese cat attached herself to the household, and though, in fear for our tenants, we tried to drive her away, stay she would and did. Just at dusk on a Sabbath evening the Friend of all the birds, sitting at her window, saw the Maltese stealing softly—O so softly!—over the grass to the foot of the tree which sheltered the little home. That meant mischief, and the lady of this “Thrums window” looking into Birdland could not stand it, and, though not too strong, she hied herself to the door, and seizing what came “handy,” and what proved to be a flowering plant called “Patience,” cast it, pot and all, at the would-be robber. Too

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late! The cat was up the tree in a flash and standing directly over the nest, the old birds flying about trying to drive her down. Into the woodshed then hastened this valiant friend, her willing but slow-moving feet on an errand of mercy bent—mercy and murder. Reinforcing herself with a clothes-prop, she dragged it to the garden and, with undreamed-of strength, lifted it, and with a mighty whack brought down the reluctant pussy. Here ended her accomplishments, for the “Thrums” lady could not climb a tree, and when I returned home it was too dark to investigate. In the early morning my “farmer girl” and I raised a ladder and peeped into the nest. There was one half-feathered nestling in it, with its head hanging limply over the edge of the nest—quite dead. At the foot of the tree lay a tiny fluttering robin, the second occupant of the nest. He was gasping for breath, and had evidently lain in the wet grass all night. The latter we returned to the nest, hoping the parents would care for it, which they did. They came to it, looked at it carefully, and then flew off for provender. When, returning, the mother bird held the tempting morsel of worm down to the little bird, the nestling made no response, but lay still as if in extremity of life. The mother gazed questioningly, then gently laid the worm down beside the helpless infant, as though she

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thought it possible the little one might be able to reach it in that way, as this strange condition was beyond her understanding. After waiting a few moments to see the result, during which time the fledgling lay as before, gasping for breath, away went the robin a second time, and securing another worm, offered it as she had the former. This also elicited no response, and again she laid the worm beside the youngster, then took up the first one she had brought and threw it out of the nest. Then, standing on the rim of the nest, she watched intently for any movement on the part of the occupant, at times calling to it with a coaxing chirrup. Then her mate came and they talked things over, perching in different parts of the tree and tilting away down to see if anything transpired below. When, finally, they seemed to realize the little one could not or would not eat, the female flew to the nest and carried away the remaining worm, and they both forsook the youngster. All the morning the slowly dying bird was alone, the old robins evidently considering it a hopeless case. At noon the "farmer girl" carrying a tin can holding a few choice earth-worms, climbed the tree, and lifting the head of the little bird, forced open its mouth and dropped therein a piece of "angle-worm." In this wise a number of them were forced down the reluctant throat, and, trusting to the old birds

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to carry on the good work, we left the tiny one in the nest. But come again they did not, and by night the little bird was dead.

On the second morning after, the parent birds were again in the tree. The mother bird, arriving first, stood on the edge of the nest, and after long contemplation, flew away, returning shortly with her mate. The old birds studied the nest and its contents with almost human intelligence. It was precisely as if one looked, then questioned her mate, and the other, looking also, assured her by a shake of the head that this inscrutable mystery of death was quite past his understanding. For a long time they stood gazing into the nest in a worried way, then departed, returning and departing several times, until, with sudden alertness, they dropped to the ground, as if finally they had decided upon a course of action—upon what absolutely must be done. Busily and quickly they plucked at the cut and dried sweet-smelling hay, selecting the smallest, most pliable grasses.

They mean to build again, we thought. What indomitable pluck! But if they meant to build, it was on the very top of the old nest with its pitiful occupant, for to it they carried their building material and worked steadily all morning, and as quietly as mice. Not a chirp, not a note we heard until the work was apparently done,

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then they flew away, cheerily trilling as if life yet had something left for them. The following day they came not at all; if the nest was ready, they were not ready to occupy. Neither the next day came they, nor the next—not even into the garden anywhere, and we again investigated, this time bringing the nest to the ground. To our utter astonishment, no bird was to be seen. Had they carried away the little one? Let us see. Here is the nest with its clayey foundation, its sides of sticks and straws and rags, and on the top is a closely packed mass of delicate grasses, with a few more sticks. Not a hollow, as a nest molded into shape by a soft, feathery breast, but evenly, compactly pressed down, the grasses woven around and about the top of the nest, completely covering the rags until the whole was tightly enclosed. The cup-shaped hollow was full—full and running over with a soft mass of hay and dry clover blooms laid firmly. Let us take out a little at a time, as this marvel in bird architecture lies before us on the moss-covered flagging. Very daintily we lift a little of the grass, a little more—nothing yet; more and still more, until we approach the mud-lined bottom of the nest. What is this which now mixes with the grasses as we lift it out?

Feathers, small blue quills, bones, all that is left of a tiny, tiny body shrunken, but decently

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covered and safely buried out of sight. Until we reached this point in our investigations, there was not the slightest indication of the nest's contents; showing how completely the robins had done their work and almost hermetically sealed the door of this aerial tomb.

That the old birds meant it for a finality, and not as a foundation for a new nest, was conclusively shown by the form of the covering, by its light material, and by their complete desertion of the nest after the work was done. They had used no mud, a few sticks, nothing to give stability, only what would make a thick covering. Whether in despair and simply to cover from sight what was so painful to them, or whether from motives of cleanliness this curious act was performed, who can say? After all, the old legend of the "Babes in the Wood," where

*The robins so red
Brought strawberry leaves and over them spread,*

may be historical, for never before have I heard of such a burial among our "little brothers of the air."

Bird Ways in Nest Building

*'T was a thrush sang in my garden,
"Hear my story, hear my story!"
And the lark sang, "Give me glory!"
And the dove said, "Give us peace!"*

—JEAN INGELow.

ON one of April's sunny days a certain pair of "mourning" doves concluded to go to house-keeping. Much preliminary "cooing," and evident earnest consultation took place over the location of what is, nearly always, the flimsiest excuse of a nest. When the trim gray pair kept flying in and out of the apple-tree, whose rough old branches leaned to the curling shingles of the roof below, and when they surveyed the premises with extraordinary care, deliberately examining the various crotches in the tree, it seemed that at last a vein of caution had developed in heads usually so little given to forethought. From roof to tree was an easy step, and many a promenade took place, and much strutting and pluming was gone through with before the real work of house-building began.

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House-building? Who ever heard of a home in an eaves-trough? There, however, was where my lady of the "soft, gray breast" deposited the twigs brought to her by her spouse. In a tin eaves-trough, with half of the twigs and rootlets she used lying carelessly over a hole in the pipe down which poured the water from a higher roof. Almost directly under the over-hanging spout she ensconced herself. Unwise little "Haus-frau!" Even did not the spout bring disaster, the water from the short roof on which she built would pour into the gutter and devastate her home.

What could be done in such a case? To watch her working so contentedly, taking such risks, and not try to help matters, was a plain case of neglecting one's duty to one's neighbor, so we ascended to the roof and quietly but firmly removed our neighbor's landmark. There was much astonishment shown by the birds—no resentment, no fear, and hardly had we descended when, deciding they knew more about it than we, they began again in the very same place to build. A second time we scattered the twigs, and for a third time the birds, undaunted, stubbornly started their nest in the eaves-trough. Then we felt aggrieved and left them to their fate, warning them, however, as we stood almost within hand's reach of the female. "My lady," we said,

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"the sun does not always shine as it is doing now. Rain is surer to come in April than at any other time, and you'll simply be drowned out. Water runs down the roof, not up, and, O do n't build there anyhow!"

But our warnings were devoid of good result. She did n't believe! There never had been a flood, ergo, there never would be.

So she builded then and there, looking down on us in mild surprise, as if she'd say, "Go to! What do you know of nest-building? I'll show you something new under the sun." And she did. In a short time she was sitting comfortably on her poorly built nest—predestined ark, entirely unseaworthy. For a week the weather was unusually and splendidly fair, and the happy mother brooded her eggs, looking down at us compassionately and thinking, without doubt, "How stupid they were, it's all right after all."

Suddenly, when the wind was blowing soft and warm, up rolled a cloud bank from the west, and a cold drizzle of rain set in. At first, well-sheltered by the thickly growing leaves, the dove was not inconvenienced, but, when the drizzle changed to a steady down-pour, matters assumed an alarming appearance.

The poor bird stirred uneasily on her nest, twisting about with outspread, dripping wings, trying to cover and shelter from the wet the

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precious treasures hidden 'neath the warm downy breast. Finally, when the water came tumbling down the spout, opening directly above her, rudely washing her wings and deluging half the nest, such consternation and pained surprise were depicted in her looks and actions as could not but move to laughter the most ardent bird lover. Her frightened, complaining "Coo-oo-oo'o" was echoed by her mate, who promenaded excitedly up and down the roof, himself helpless in such dilemma. The rain fell without cessation during the day, but the bird clung devotedly to her home, though the water at last set the nest afloat beneath her. Morning found her still there, and still it rained. To sit was impossible, so on her poor, little, cold, pink feet she stood guard above her wrecked home.

With intervals of cold mist it rained for another twenty-four hours, and the question momentarily was, "Is the bird yet on her nest?" and some one would dash out under an umbrella to see. For forty-eight hours she held out against the elements, then capitulated, and, with feet stiffened by the cold water, stepped clumsily onto the roof, and with distressful cooings turned to view the ruin. Long hours the two birds hung about the place, looking down at the eggs as if they wondered if there were positively no way to rescue them, then departed for other scenes.

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After waiting a day we climbed to the roof and found the nest afloat in a miniature lake, the eggs, like big twin pearls, resting on a network of twigs and rootlets that floated on the water. The marvel is that it held together at all! With renewed sunshine the unlucky architects were back again surveying the premises, evidently in a maze as to how the catastrophe occurred, finally deciding to build in the apple-tree, and we maliciously hailed them with, "I told you so!"

If you are fortunate enough to own a garden, a number of trees, especially old ones, where insects do congregate, or above all a thick osage hedge, then you may be sure of many interesting neighbors. And once you have begun to take an interest in the affairs of these feathered friends, the opportunities they offer of lively sympathy and quick observation are practically boundless. The eager call-notes of the birds, their rollicking morning chorus, their enchanting songs in time of mating, must uplift your heart as you listen.

Their ways of making nests are as different as the colors of their plumage, and the location of their homes is as variously chosen as there are varieties of birds. Some birds nest in the deep woods, retreating to solitary places to rear their young. Others more sociable, less fearful, are happy and content in making homes where a

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food supply is sure to be on hand, so build near to houses. Among the latter class we find but few that will not respond to overtures in the way of cotton, strings, wool, or plant fiber hung out to help them in their home-making. But robins, blue-jays, red-headed woodpeckers, Baltimore orioles, cat-birds, and sparrows instantly and literally "catch on" to any suggestion of the kind.

This spring a sudden influx of birds of all kinds kept us alert in following their movements. Among so many hunting for locations, we hardly knew which to choose for study. This migration of so many species at once was probably owing to rarely warm days in March, so that birds which might have gone farther north concluded to remain here and mate immediately. Quickly all seemed engrossed in nest-making, and "scrapings" were the order of the day, for invariably a fight ensued if one bird happened on a piece of material especially desirable. They will utilize almost anything in the way of string, black, white, blue, cotton or wool, but red or yellow I found they would not use.

The thrush, though never presenting herself among the other birds when they came for material, yet by some means helped herself to the best.

All we saw of her at first was when she came

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hopping about under the hedges, peering under the dead leaves for insects. Then in secrecy she made a nest low down in an old apple tree that was a part of the high, thickly leaved osage hedge at the end of the garden. Her soft notes, "Tir-o-lee! tir-o-lee!" led us to the locality of her nest, but so thick was the foliage we could not see it without prying too closely into her affairs. The spot was as secluded as the woods, and cool and dark. Cannily though she hid it, when the leaves fell in October we captured it.

It was marvelously constructed of rootlets and long, brittle, sharp-thorned osage sticks, and was on one side made more secure by a small dab of mud. The inside was of fine rootlets, and the outside showed decorative aspirations quite in keeping with nineteenth century ideas. A string or two and a bit of cotton hung to it, and on one side, caught in festoons, was half of a lace handkerchief. A rag of a thing the bird had taken from the lawn, in all probability, but strangely delicate and graceful in its present place. The bit of linen and lace was crossed and recrossed by the thorny sticks which served well to hold it in place. In a few weeks after we had seen our thrush scratching about the garden, and when we had quite given up finding her nest, though we daily saw her flitting about, she came early one morning through the wet grass

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with a brood of youngsters trailing behind her, the entire family dressed in new spring gowns of a lovely russet color.

The thrush is among the most graceful of birds, and the elegance of her shape, trim, slender, exceedingly well-groomed, marks her the aristocrat. The purity of tone which we hear in the warbling of the thrush can never be confused with other bird tones.

My neighbor one morning laboriously tied many strings to the lower end of the grape-arbor for her sweet peas to climb upon. After finishing, she proudly surveyed her work, washed the dust from her hands, and went off to a "missionary meeting." We, who remained at home, were better entertained, for, on her departure, the fun began. A robin's sharp eyes caught sight of that tempting array of strings, and instantly she flew to the top of the railing and with might and main tweaked at the knots. Excitedly she hopped the length of the rail, testing each knot in succession, and pulling so hard she threw herself off the rail several times. A second robin joined her, and they both jerked and twisted and pulled in a vicious way, but those knots were made to stay. To the ground they then went, standing on "tiptoe" to reach the top of the small twigs to which was tied the other end of the strings. In some cases those knots held, in others

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up came twig and all—the tender young sweet-pea shoots also. Then back to the railing went the birds, where they leaned over, and pulling up the strings, tried flying off with them, only to be jerked back each time, and ended by pulling up all the strings and festooning them in a hopeless tangle, until the rail was garlanded its entire length with a netting of twine, and my neighbor at evening was a sadder and a wiser woman, as she viewed the ruin of her plants.

We came to the assistance of these birds finally by tossing on our terrace a lot of long "carpet rags," in blue, white, yellow, and red, and instantly the robins came to them. The rags were three-fourths of a yard long, and one-half inch wide, but the birds greedily grabbed not only one at a time, but two and three, taking them up in successive mouthfuls, until several loops of blue cotton string hung from either side of their bill, and with long trailings of strings they flew heavily to their nest; one in a maple that had been "topped" and where the new branches made the securest kind of home. But here the robin's feet tangled in the ravelings, and she could n't possibly use all she had, trample it down and cuddle in it as best she could, so at least half a yard of blue rags and white rags flaunted out from the green. Into a pear-tree crotch the other bird carried her stuff, but a blue-jay swooped

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down and carried it out for her as soon as her back was turned. She, too, liked rags, but preferred taking them where she could easiest get them. Once the jay deliberately snatched them from the robin's mouth as she brought them to the nest, with the result of a "set-to," with the jay coming out victor.

A Baltimore oriole swinging her nest in the branches above, came down to examine the material and lightly carried away a few blue ravelings delicate enough for her dainty nest, but she evidently did not care much for it. To-day this nest swings from the branches heaped full of snow, and a little cone of snow topples rakishly above the rim. The red-headed woodpecker solemnly hung to the side of a cherry-tree, watching the proceedings with deep interest, becoming so charmed with the idea of a carpet-rag nest that he finally descended, possessed himself of one streamer, and flew off to a dead elm where he had a hole. There he dallied with it a while, then dragging it half into the hole, left a trailer out as a door-latch. The red and yellow rags were one and all declined by the birds. At first sight they really seemed to be afraid of them, and would n't come near, but after long looking they finally ventured to flirt them about, but in no case ever used them.

The building of a robin's nest is a curious

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sight. Watching its inception, you will see that mud is the chief ingredient of its foundation. Mud again for a lining, which you will find as clean and neat after the brood has grown and scattered as it is in its beginning, for the robin is a tidy little mother. A very rainy day is the time the robins select to make a beginning. Down onto the soft brown earth beneath the hedges flew our bird, pressing her soft fluffy breast close into the soil. There she screwed herself about and about, cuddling down into the clammy mixture as if to be wet and sticky was the most pleasurable sensation in the world, and when a sufficient quantity of mud had adhered, up she went to the pear-tree, flying with difficulty, her wings, breast, and claws all dripping with yellow mud. This she plastered to the tree with the same screwing motion, adding to it again and again until it seemed beyond hope that her feathers would ever be bright and clean. To this foundation she added sticks, straws, strings, finishing it all with a nice, soft mud lining, which of course hardened smoothly.

The house-wren (except the humming-bird, the smallest bird that comes under our eye as she builds) is extremely sociable and not in the least shy. Her bright eyes peer into every nook and cranny as she darts about searching for a snug place to build, and in the unlikeliest places

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you are likeliest to find her making a home. A nest last year of this fussy little person was made in a place unique. A man who worked in the brick-yard, on coming home one Saturday night, hung his dusty trousers on a clothes-line in his garden. This was at dusk. Early the next morning a wren came tilting lightly on the line, examining the flapping garment with great intentness. The lining in the upper part swung loose from the outer material, and being turned over the line so that it hung upside down, formed a sort of pocket. Here the small lady concluded was a rare opportunity, a nest made to order, needing very little more to make it habitable, and in a trice she set to work, bringing sticks, straws, feathers, and rags, and stuffing them into the hole as fast as she could. She worked all day, and some one volunteered to furnish another pair of trousers if he'd let the nest stay. But, whether he was dubious as to the fulfillment of the promise, or whether he thought a pair of trousers that would be tossed by the winds and soaked with the rain was too unstable a place to raise birds in, next morning he unceremoniously emptied the odd collection upon the ground, to the great dismay of the busy worker. At another time she built in a piece of stove-pipe high shelved in the stable. When I mounted a

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ladder and turned my camera on the family, lo! the youngsters flew swiftly out over my head!

Nearly every crotch offers to us, in the fall, free gifts of bird-homes for study. To secure these empty shells is an easy matter, to pull them apart, marveling at the different materials used, the skillful weaving, all the wonders of bird architecture.

Without the foundation there would be no home, no hearthstone to fight for, no young ones to protect, for the birds are true patriots. In summer time you dare not touch a single straw, but, by then, you may be cannily wise, having "taken time by the forelock."

Our harvests over, the birds glean the fields like mice.

Fruit time is hey-dey for them. Berries, cherries—how they do eat cherries! stripping the tree in "no time," the owner not getting a dozen! —peaches, pears, apples, grapes—birds, bees, squirrels, that is the calendar precisely. Many vineyards are guarded, patrolled, to drive away the birds, so great has been the devastation.

If one's bread and butter depend upon the grape—well and good. But if one is content with a crust in favor of the birds, let the bacchanalian revel go on.

Of our Isabellas and Delawares, season after

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season, it was delicately pointed out to us that half-ripe grapes held nectar as palatable to my feathered friends as did the wine-colored ones. Thus persuaded, we yielded both argument and fruit to cat-birds, orioles, cardinals, and others of their ilk—a tippling crowd. Our Bartletts and Seckels went the same road, but “the game was worth the candle.”

Such confidence they had in me, all those birds of the air—swinging high, swinging low, looking at me right saucily, as I stood by, resigned, while they regaled themselves on my—preserves!

Squirrels came in hordes, having passed the word about, “There’s a very odd farmer lady lives there. Nuts in winter, fruit all summer! Come along!”

As strikes a hawk from the blue, so, on a day, swept a saucy jay into the peaceful assemblage of birds and squirrels in the pear-tree-top. Straight he struck (a bristling bunch of blue and white) at a pear held in the paws of a big gray squirrel. Jam!—like lightning, into a hole went the pear, and off flashed the squirrel to the tip of a bough, squealing with rage. Triumphant was the jay! He had no need for paws to hold a pear! Into the fruit went his bill—thump! and lo! out of sight and reach went the pear. It had simply dropped through, and into a wood-

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pecker's hole, falling twelve or fifteen inches. Astonishment was depicted in feathers! The jay drew himself erect; raising his crest like an interrogation mark, then he leaned far over to peer into the mysterious opening, squawking fiercely at being outwitted.

After hopping from branch to branch, loath to relinquish the prize, off he flew in a rage. Back came the squirrel with furious lashings of his tail, and scolding chatter, looked all about him, squatted on his haunches, folded his forepaws pathetically over his breast, and with head turned to one side solemnly pondered the uncertainties of life!

My own experience with birds has shown me that, almost without exception, all birds like fruit of any kind, from berries on up the scale to plums, apricots, peaches, etc., and all birds listed as seed-eaters or berry-pickers, or devotees of the large fruits, become high livers on a diet of raw meat, suet, soup-bones, and last, but not least, enjoyable to them, comes "johnny-cake," and, when "piping hot," we tossed it to them on the snow-covered porch, to the feast came all winter birds of the air. Jays, blue and bright; cardinals, red and olive; nut-hatches, gray and black and white, guinea woodpeckers, downies, junco's, hairies, flickers, red-heads, brown creepers. They liked nothing better than the

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“corn-pone,” and would sail away with a piece in their mouth—steaming. Cold weather, snow-covered fields, and seed-bearing plants engender a lively confidence in mankind among these usually wary bird neighbors, and they troop into my garden and on to my window-sill to see what “pickin’s” may be there. The chickadees show utmost confidence, feeding from my hand, hopping from finger to finger with the agility of trapeze performers. Cedar wax wings are also most friendly, and the tufted titmouse, and as the tiny white-breasted nut-hatch flits away, it’s ludicrous to see his place taken by the guinea woodpecker (or red-bellied woodpecker), so big he looks, so awkward, so beautiful, red-capped, and in dress of checkered pure white and black.

Days With a Mother-bird

"Let the wailing of the killdeer be the only sound we hear."

"PEEP! PEEP! PEEP! PEE-EE-EEP!" Sudden outcry pierced the early morning stillness.

"Tiptoe upon a little hill" that fell sharply away to the wide expanse of a winding, rocky creek-bed I stood agaze. A desert-place, indeed, for bird nests!

The smooth emerald carpet of the hillside, cattle-cropped, daisy-dotted, dandelion-strewn, with fairy seed puffs unrolled itself softly undulate, and in a cup-shaped hollow a tiny lakelet mirrored trembling tree-shadows by day, and by night held a lap full of stars. On pale brown wings a myriad of killdeer skimmed in slanting flight above the bottom-lands, circled, soared, shouting dismay. I laughed an answer to the fearsome hubbub that betrayed what it meant to hide! Trying to proclaim that no nest of *theirs* lay in that vicinity, their very outcries proved their undoing.

On my hurried descent two birds dropped into

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the lush meadow grass vehemently "churr-urr-urring"—(a sort of rattling call) to attract and distract my attention. "Stay with us in the meadow" was their meaning. "There is nothing of interest beyond the fence! and behold *our* distress of broken wing! come *our* way!" Witlessly I trailed through the wet meadow in the wake of one bird, and another. No nest—no nest anywhere! In disgust I turned my back upon their ruses, crept between the sagging wires of a barbed fence, and trod a determined way to the water's edge. Overhead comes a hurrying sound of wings, comes falling on the air outcries and warnings, "Peep-peep-pee-ee-eep!" and alighting in front of me on the sandy shore the birds scurry east and west, giving me wide choice of direction.

"Ten feet from the hole in the fence" had been my instruction as regarded this particular kill-deer's nest. Ten feet to the left, ten feet to the right, ten feet straight ahead. No nest—or indication of a nest. Wander and wander through long "blue-grass"—to-day not "blue," but mistily tasseled with the reddish purple of seed-time, my tramping feet crushing spicy perfume from crisp young mint-leaves. Above my head, ever circling, fly the white-breasted, white-throated birds, keeping anxious eye on my movements. Surely "I burn," as children say, when these shyest of birds come so close. A small, stony elevation just be-

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yond the high-water mark I stumble upon, walk over it, and about it again and yet again, and only the Providence that holds in account even the English sparrow prevents my clumsily stepping on the eggs that, in wild joy of discovery, I finally see!

(However, I defy almost any one but a killdeer to distinguish such eggs from the stones on which they lie!) Precisely are they the color of them, a muddy gray, black-splotted, sharply pointed at one end. Three eggs in a small hollow scooped out on the very highest point of the eminence which is a mixture of rock and earth and straggling grasses. The hollow is as large as my two palms, and a curiously hard bed for a thing so delicate as an eggshell. The lining is of tiny pebbles closely, evenly laid (brought by the birds from the brook-side?), mayhap scratched together from the gravelly surface about the nest. On the pebbles lie a few bits of bark—this is all in the way of nest-building.

My long examination causes much worry to the owners of the little home, who excitedly “Peep-peep”—(it seems their only note) and come running quickly up near me, turn their back, squat upon the ground, and flutter their wings in rapid succession. What instinct, or thought, leads them to a belief that I—deluded by vibrating feathers—will hurry to the rescue

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of a wounded bird? How strenuous their efforts! How firm their faith in their own powers of deception! Closer they come—and closer. It's very funny to see them run through the grass like quail, then stretching themselves high on "tiptoe" peer at me through the clover, then deliberately turning about, roll on the ground, feigning distress. We have yet to become acquainted, you see, and 't will be a work of time. Out in the hottest sunshine lies the nest. No sign of shade, or shelter, or even protection from bush or brier. A fir-tree stands forty feet to the east, a cottonwood claps its leaves loudly forty feet to the west, but too distant are both for bird study. Under an old red parasol I establish myself in the grass about fifteen feet from the nest.

Our first day leads to little of intimacy. Not once does the female approach the nest. At noon-time when, under the cotton-wood, I break bread, and unsling my pail of milk from a leafy branch, both birds fly to the nest—long continuing there. The whole day is spent in little runs to and from the sandy shore, in incessant efforts to lead me away; and in sallies over the fence into the meadow, loudly calling me to "come." It actually hurts to see the fear of the mother-bird. Her devotion brings her near, and nearer, with almost ceaseless cries, and wearisome, useless signals of distress. She crouches deep in the

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sand—almost burying her head; she lifts high a wide out-spread wing; she opens her white-tipped tail into a broad pointed fan; she—all a-fluffy, much puffed bunch of feathers—lifts her sleek head and turns it over her shoulder watching me between uplifted wings. On the pond's edge in the meadow she trails herself brokenly, employing all her arts to rid herself of me—unwelcome guest that I am! From side to side she turns herself, one wing, then another used as “decoy,” ever and always her note is a long-drawn humming “churr-urr-urr-rr!”

June sixteenth marks an advance in her courage. At sight of me she hurries limpingly from her eggs, in vain hope that she and they are undiscovered. Her flight to-day is shorter, low among the grasses she stares back; then jumps up, runs toward me, halts, “bobs” up and down with that oddest of motions among birds, uttering every second her harsh complaining “peep-peep.” Again she “turns tail,” not in cowardice, but in invitation—“come and follow,” or admire the beauty of her plumage—the gay orange spot at the base of her tail that flaunts itself as she lowers that appendage sweepingly, every single feather spread wide. Altogether confident is she of outwitting me, of winning my compassion for her sorry plight.

Finding her maneuvers useless, by degrees she

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creeps back to the nest, comes to the edge, "bobs" and "peeps," and, by actual count, just twenty-three minutes she stands in the same position, then at last she steps upon the nest, her long, bare, delicate little sticks of legs wide apart, one on either side of the nest. By count, again, she stands and "bobs" for fifteen minutes, her back, of course, to me this time, but a watchful eye out over her shoulder, for her eyes being set in the sides of her head she can only see me with one at a time.

No tent is mine, nor cover of leafy greenness—only a very mushroom of scarlet umbrella that, in exhaustion, I change from hand to hand, all the time coaxing my lady to try and believe in my good intentions until, convinced that she has found the secret of perpetual motion, I stretch myself prone upon the earth, keeping her in eye-range through mimic avenues of tossing, waving blades o' grass. Presto! on the instant my lady sits down! I am not so formidable it appears when only my head is above the grasses, and the mushroom of red looks only like some foreign tropical blossom! Triumph number one—for the distance between us I have gradually lessened to six feet. All my soft assurances that I "will not hurt her," all my asseverations, "Why, *you* know *me!*" have at last made impression—the tone if not the words, and, though it may sound inane, on

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paper, I found this wild bird of the shore grew to know my voice as would a caged canary. Her sitting is often interrupted. She half rises, "bobs" over the eggs, watches me, "peeps" perpetually, then pantingly sits once more, her long bill wide open, her throat palpitating with quick, suffocating heart-beats, the saliva dripping without cessation from the tip of her beak. My heart smites me at this. If the emotion causing the flow is one of fear or anger I can not say, but I incline to believe it the former. At my least change of position she rises and runs away, but returns shortly, stares me out of countenance, and sits down again.

June seventeenth shows even less fear on her part, and the space between us is lessened by inches, truly, to four feet. June eighteenth she rises from the nest at my approach, but, without "trailing," or in any way attempting to distract me, only scanning me closely, greeting me with a single note, again she folds up her legs and sits down. Her back is toward me, so, as she stoops, I can plainly see the motherly, brooding way in which the white breast-feathers are fluffed up to receive the precious eggs. There seems reason in which she turns her back, invariably, before sitting on the eggs. In this position she is ready to run at a moment's notice, and, without taking time to whirl about, may fall into the grass

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as a bird would do that had been shot—for not once in all the days of our intimacy did she cover the eggs in any different position.

Long at a time did she go without food or drink. For hours at first, for though the male flew above her bringing provender from the shore, he would not alight while I was near. My voice held no charm for him! Ever suspicious, ever calling to her "Beware! beware!" from shore or meadow, from first to last he maintained a strict aversion to the "stranger within his gates."

Time a'plenty had I in those long, drowsy days of waiting for the eggs to hatch to study the little world astir in the grasses. To wonder how the bee found honey amid the tiny whorl of blossoms that climbs the tapering green fingers of the "buck-horn" plantain; up and up go the tiny wreaths, leaving in their wake a harvest of loose brown sheaves that at a touch scatter like chaff; to wonder why the "Devil's darning-needles," stitching among the clover-blossoms, should be of changeful hues—iridescent, sky-blue; and why the ants toiled up one grass blade only to run down and climb another, in fashion of trained scouts. Wonderful atmospheric changes fall on the quiet land from faintest dawn to dusk. Early morning—and the tree-filled valley submerged in a sea of mist. A soft wind rends it into filmy gray veils, flings them about until the

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sun comes up, and by his alchemy transmutes them into gold, then burns them as incense to himself. The water-willows marching along the banks show the pale under-side of their lance-shaped leaves—an olive green; then under a twisting wind they twinkle brightly in apple-green. A fine sifting snow floats lazily in air—tiny white feathery flakes from the black seed-pods of the cottonwood-tree, and down onto my book drifts a small yellow feather—a “*carte de visite*” from the flicker—preening himself somewhere in high branches. A shimmering haze hangs above the soldierly corn, hollyhocks, pink, white, rose-color, crowd the fence corners; a dashing king-fisher swings through the air to perch solemnly on a fence-post and philosophically try a “fisherman’s luck” in the bubbling, mint-sweetened waters of the creek, while, from afar, come the patient calls of the ploughman. High noon—and all the air fragrant with sweet smells and a’hum with dozy insects.

June nineteenth. Surely is the sitting bird now resigned to the companionship forced upon her! When I creep through the “hole in the fence” she utters not a single chirp! Carefully I walk past her to reach my accustomed place on the other side, talking to her always. She rises, makes an obeisance, mildly questions me “Pee-ee-eep?” and resumes her place. To-day

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as I lessen the space to three feet she only looks over her shoulder, but does not rise. Her once panting mouth is closed at last, her whole alert body relaxed. Her throat, with its two bands of velvety black, no longer throbs to frightened heart-beats. The water no longer drips from her bill—an immense comfort, this, to me. If, weary of the broiling sun, I seek shelter 'neath the cotton-wood, she instantly follows, afar off. Let the red umbrella again move toward the nest and she slips through the grass like a sprite, and is ready with quaint genuflexions on her side of the nest when I reach mine! and without concern turns her back and sits down.

The twentieth, twenty-first, and twenty-second are only repetitions of each day's work, the bird showing less of fear at each visit. Any change of program drives her wild with fright, and a black umbrella substituted, thoughtlessly, for the red one sent her away from my vicinity for a whole afternoon. Also, if I am lying in the grass she feels more confidence.

At sun-down on the twenty-sixth day much excitement was shown by both birds. I had come late, and the old birds flew about in apparent anger. Cause sufficient they had—one egg was missing. Two eggs, however, required, and received her most devoted care until the twenty-ninth day of June. Noon-time, sleepy-time, but

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more commotion and crying from my friends the killdeer than ever before. From my hill-top I felt something very unusual must have happened—and ran hastily down to find out. Directly at my feet dropped the female when I stood beside—an empty nest! How she quivered, and trembled, and rolled about in the grass! “Look at me-me-me!” while the male squawked and fluttered and dragged himself about, a close second in appeal! Well—what could I do? No young birds, no shells, simply an empty nest! A small stony spot, a bit of brownish sand, gray pebbles, clusters of “bunch-grass,” but not a youngling to be seen! My verdict was—theft! Out of heart with bird work, I drop down among the grasses, puzzled over the antics of the old ones.

The male disports himself, and “brags” of his wounds directly in front of me, but the instinct of the female is too strong—it can not brook suppression—she daintily picks an insect here and there from among the grasses at the nest’s edge—aha! young birds *are* about somewhere! (for, though she does not feed her babies, she does “catch” the food, and breaks it up for them, or scratches it from the ground for them to pick up), and gladness succeeds despair. Putting out my hand to help myself rise, lo! I lay it almost on a small brown object lying flatly on the ground! one of the young killdeer! Hardly out of the

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shell and warmly feathered! Nearby is the second bird-baby, and both are exactly ten inches from the nest. Perfectly inert they lie—two mottled brown splotches scarcely larger than a silver dollar, and on one side protrudes a funny little brown head for all the world like the head of a turtle.

In wonder I lift first one, then another, and lay it in the palm of my hand. The bright black eyes are wide open—so different from tree-born babies! Scarcely out of the shell and able to walk! To run, I should have said, for, as I put down the first one he staggered up on a very drunken pair of legs and tottered, like a palsied old man, off among the weeds. Taking the remaining morsel of bird in my hand, I held it out to the mother who, with much talking, had come and stood almost within my reach. I said, "I have it—here it is, see? *Your* little bird—see?" Though not a linguist, I think she knew kindness when she saw it, and she also knew me, for she "bobbed," and courtsied, and circled about me, just out of reach, in evident maternal pride, and I felt that we were each congratulating the other on the successful issue of her nursery affairs! Then the faint calls of the baby who had lost himself in the weeds sent the mother running, though her backward glances showed a divided heart, fearing to leave me wholly alone with the one, and to lose the other in the tangle-weed.

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Back to the nest straggled the venturesome one, an anxious mother jerking along behind him. When I laid down the one I held she hastily "stepped aboard" and brooded them. But the world was too new and interesting to be so soon forsaken. An inquisitive head pushed itself out from her feathers, and stayed out despite her evident disappointment. 'T was her only chance to cuddle them, for such canny youngsters would soon be independent of their parents! Quickly the little one struggled himself free—no "apron-strings" for *him*! and gayly he zigzagged through the grass, his patient progenitor rising to follow. In "no time" he became a successful traveler, though a reckless one, and it was greatly amusing to follow him about and see him reel from stone to stone without the vaguest idea of where he was going, leading his mother by the weakest "Pee-ee-eep!" you can imagine! only a mother's quick ear could have caught it!

The moment he unwarily stopped in the grass that moment she sat upon him, literally, appearing much aggrieved when he *would* promptly sally forth. His little bare, green legs might have been covered with snake-skin, so close was the resemblance. I pick him from the grass and carry him, protesting, back home. The one left in the nest is not strong. He manages to walk out a step or two, but falls weakly. On my hand he

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lies quietly as I examine his dress. The diminutive wings are barely an inch long, so different from a song-bird's wing. Nature only supplies a need as it becomes necessary, and he is, above all, a walking bird. His downy feathers are thick, thick, the upper ones mottled, and his breast is snowy white. One black ring about his throat is strongly marked, the second collar of black, reaching from shoulder to shoulder, will grow with his growth. The tails of both birds are, as yet, but little half-inch "curly-q's" of three tiny feathers—quite awry! but, when older, they will be long and scalloped out in "points" like a woodpecker's—but not stiff like the tails of those birds. As I hold the young one on my hand the mother walks alertly from the shelter of the grasses, to *her* side of the nest, bobbing and bowing consent to my investigation. Perhaps she thinks it only fair I should learn a little of those birdlings on whose coming I so patiently waited. When I place the bird in the nest she makes no attempt to coax it to walk, but only looks at it as if marveling at its stillness. Either home seems a good place to the errant one, or pure luck sends him back to be unwillingly cuddled, to push out from his "Mammy's" white breast his little brown head, that, white-striped, shows the scholarly look of a professor in spectacles.

The next day I find him skipping among the

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stones in liveliest fashion, and, wonder of wonders, he runs into the narrow stream at sight of me, out of his depth his swimming powers come in play and float him safely to the other shore. Swimming he was, however, or the current would have carried him down stream. The nest I search for the weak one. He is not there—but lies dead on the grass. As I pick him up the mother runs near, looks at him on my hand, shows no concern whatever, and soon turns away. On the following day the trick of misleading me is played with vigor. No young one is to be seen about, but both birds fly to greet me as I come through the meadow, and, once on their side of the fence, they separate and run swiftly over the ground, east and west. Far, far, up the creek—and I foolishly stumble after the female, crossing on stones the wide, shallow brook she so lightly skims through. Through fragrant banks of mint she leads me, and I hesitate, half-doubting, the other half provoked, then turn to watch the male just disappearing in the distance around a curve of the bank. How silly I have been to follow! Midway between the two I shall probably find their treasure. So it is, just midway, and running along the sand, skipping over stones much more rapidly than I can. Scarcely had I turned, however, when the mother decided the “game was up,” and screaming a loud signal, she flew

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after me, and the male answered her call at once. Again the little fellow strikes the water, and like a puff of down, swims boldly across. Such enterprise for one new-born! The friend I have to-day brought with me to see the wonder of a baby killdeer gazes in envious admiration as he comes to shore on the other side, and with short, rapid steps strides away. "O!" she exclaims, "if *my* babies could do that at three days!"

The killdeer-mother shows alarm at the presence of a stranger, but when the youngster wades the brook to hide among the rushes near me, she comes in my direction very willingly when she hears my voice. As yet the baby only needs his legs, but, one week later, after deluding me into a long chase on foot, and I have all but caught him, lo, he lifts himself into the air and flies! Such a mite of a bird to be running about I have never seen! He tumbles up and down among the rocks in most careless fashion, always landing on his feet, and without hesitation when I "cornered" him, ere flying days, would embark on the ripples like a good old sailor.

Three weeks are required to hatch the young ones, so, probably, the nest held the eggs on the eighth of June, and I did not see them until the fifteenth. As yet, August sixteenth, the hillsides along the creek echo to the sound of killdeer calls. Whether the birds lay twice in a summer I must

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wait to discover until next June. Though their name is derived from their melancholy call-notes, "Kill-dee," "Kill-dee," "Kill-dee!" not once did I hear these sounds during my study of the birds. They uttered no note but the one, "Pee-ee-eep," in question, in anger, in alarm, in friendly greeting. In the fall I have often seen them in crowds along the shores of ponds, and then, when they raised themselves and flew into the fields, their calls of "Kill-dee!" were very plain.

The Flitting of the Wrens

THEY began a nest under the eaves of the front gallery on June 5th. Cunningly chosen was the site—in the southwest corner. Blew the winds from the north, only more firmly would it pinion the structure against the low cornice; from the west no gale might strike it, and on the east it was house-protected—that little home. Do I say “little?”

The birds have all just flown, and, having taken it from its two months' resting place, my tape-measure records its dimensions. In circumference at the bottom, just thirty-nine inches; the height is but nine inches; it tapers slightly toward the top, where, placed a trifle to one side, like a toppled crater of an extinct miniature volcano, is the cradle where lay the tiny mottled eggs. The depth of this cradle is exactly two and one-half inches; also, two and one-half inches across the top. Why should such a mite of a real nest require so much outside structure?

Tiny green boxes under the Judge's eaves accommodate his wrens. “Sunnyside” has none, but in lieu of them the wrens heretofore have utilized various sections of rusty stove-pipe stuck aloft

THE FLITTING OF THE WRENS

in the carriage house, or, slipping through various "knot-holes," made securest of nests behind the weather-boarding. Thus, when my wren, out of pure sociability, elected to make an "open-air" home just above my hammock, she met welcome.

The foundation was laid on a Saturday. "Ophelia"—(of tragic fame, but queen of domestic science in my kitchen as a "rest-off" from her "pickaninny" winter school)—Ophelia wished to scrub the porch, and her broom "swished" among the building material laid low in a corner from which the wrens daintily made selection. Ophelia scolded, the wrens reasoned, and, eventually, my teacher-maid yielded to their chidings. The twigs I brought (wishing to help) were rejected, but my bounty was carefully inspected for strings. Feathers, I then recalled, were always found in a wren's nest, and I secured a beautiful bunch from the Plymouth Rocks. Feathers, indeed! How scornfully she tossed them over, flinging them aside, and flying aloft with some especially crooked stick! Did n't she know her own mind, forsooth?

Bits of white cotton, yes, stuck here and there about the base on the extreme outside among crinkly, brown mosses and golden yellow oat-straws. White cotton cord—good! it served to tie up a bundle of knotty twigs, zigzagged up the side and hanging in a two-yard length below

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the nest made the fingers itch to pull, and see what would happen.

June 14th the nest was completed—long a-building, was it not? Over every stick that went into it the birds seemed to hold council of war. 'T was curiously fashioned. At the very bottom the twigs were laid in a wide circle, round and round and round. As the bulky thing grew the shape changed gradually into a square, until at the top it had assumed the exact form of a log cabin, "criss-crossed" at the corners just as the logs are laid, only in this case roughly, unevenly. The lining was of narrow strips of grapevine bark. The little circular opening at the top is funny to look at. Here the feathers came into play, and stood high up around the edge, white, black, brown, fluffy, and soft as a feather boa. It is decorative in the extreme—even if accidental. But she was not a tidy mother—the nest was not left cleanly, as most bird nests are, for the lower part swarmed with "mites."

Such a lengthy period of householding as now set in for the family I have never before known in bird-life. From the time of completion until the first egg was deposited in the nest elapsed just one month, though during the entire period all birds of the air were notified that this was exclusive property. Sparrows (meddlers always), thrushes, even a "drumming" young

THE FLITTING OF THE WRENS

woodpecker, were routed in fine haste by these gallant little "cup defenders"—for that's just what the nest proper looked like, a small, brown cup.

July 10th saw the first spotted egg, hardly larger than a "hummer's," lying in the nest. Followed this an egg each day, until five crowded together there.

On the 25th day of July the first bird was hatched, two more on the 26th, two on the 27th, and on the 5th of August the birds came out of the nest, making hazardous wing-way among the trees. Then was jubilation and song increased, and a wren is the most persistent optimist in all the world! Storm, or wind, or rain pelting the roof like pebbles, above the diapason could be ever heard the short melody of the wren. He (or she) would sit on the wildly swaying, empty hammock strings and sing, sing! Rain-drenched her feathers, but, as I watched her through the window, she would cock up an eye at me. "Come out! Everything's all right!" Sing, sing, sing! Was I in the hammock, it was the same on sunshiny days. The little birds came titling along the edges, alighted on my sleeve, even twittered at me, and tried to understand the sounds I essayed by way of bird conversation, and, altogether, looked upon me as one who understood.

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I regret to say my own prying started the migration. I climbed up to peer into the nest. A bright, bright eye shone on me out of the gloom. I stared at it, it stared at me, then I poked a finger in on something soft, and two wee, soft things slipped out under my hand like a flash of light. "Six ways for Sunday" that mother ran, or flew rather, for close on the heels of the first two followed the last three, landing in lilac bushes, and in the grass, on the porch floor, and clutching wildly on the bark of the trees, where they showed almost the agility of the woodpecker in climbing up.

"Ophelia" captured one. It showed no fear, cuddling into the hollow of her warm, brown hand as snugly as under its mother's breast. Such an absurd morsel of a bird!—with a tail ridiculously short—half an inch, maybe,—and "perked" at an insolent angle!

How she chirped and called and scolded those young ones into safety! And how she darted to my hammock ropes when, in aimless fluttering, one baby plumped himself into my lap! But they were tremendous flyers for young ones, and more fully feathered out than any young birds I have seen at leaving the nest. It was quite a surprise to see them so fully dressed. I surmise they had been lazy. One youngster we put back into the nest to see what would happen. He

THE FLITTING OF THE WRENS

stayed in just one second, then hopped up on to the edge and gazed around. Did n't quite like it, and dropped suddenly out of sight into the depths of his home. Up and out and back again, occasionally cheeping answer to the peremptory demands of his mother from the shadowy umbrella tree: "O, I *can't* come! I'm too *little!*" dropping back. Eventually she got him away—but it took discipline!

Just before I reduced the nest to ashes the mother flew up as if to be sure none of her family were going to make a holocaust. It lay on a chair, and the bird hopped from rung to rung, then up onto the back of the chair, peered up at the vacant niche, then back to the nest, hopped down onto it, into it, satisfied herself that none of her brood was there, and darted gayly away.

Out in the hayfield a "bob-white" hovers—a nest full of eggs in the hay. Shy, is she? Not a bit of it. You who have only seen a quail scurry across the dusty road can not understand the delight of having a whole flock come trailing up through the deep snow three times a day for meals. Last winter two parent birds and six obedient children fed always in the dooryard with chickens, and having partaken of the collation they stepped gravely back to the shelter of the woods.

Heredity shows in the case of the bird now

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nesting, for she allows the children to lift her from the nest, stroke her gently, and put her on again, or she sits quite patiently on her eggs while one smooths down her shining feathers.

The cat-bird's eggs, in her well-concealed nest amid the blackberry bushes, have undergone a curious transformation. What began it, what first pricked the tiny globes with innumerable punctures, I do not know; but an opening of shells shows them to be full, not of bird life, but of huge black ants, that have undoubtedly devoured the contents.

In a Silken Cradle

*"Spin, spin, Mergaton, spin!
Gigoton, Mergaton, spin!"*

'T WAS a sunny afternoon in August when my story began, and, as usual when one is not looking for a story, it dropped into my lap. It was hot, that midsummer day; the "*chur-r—ing*" of the locusts testified to it, and nothing was astir save nut-hatches browsing up and down the tree-trunks, and sparrows sparring for place in the white dust of the road.

Suddenly a bird flew down onto the flagstones beneath the elm, straightened himself up, and stared at some object almost beneath his feet. Back to the tree he flew, then down again to the pavement, prepared to give battle to a force so swiftly covering the distance that intervened between it and the elm-tree.

I ran to look. The besieger was a huge green worm! Quite an appetizer, indeed, for *any* bird's supper! What great luck! And at it the bird made a swift dash. But capture was not so easy as it looked. The worm had a word to say about

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it, for, swift as light, up came the flat-faced green head, two tiny pin-point eyes glistening like rubies, and the small jaws snapped together with a click. The bird backed away. Discretion is a large part of true valor. Following came the worm. Enraged, the bird made fiercer assault, but click, click, click went the jaws with a savage snap, and up came the green head, threatening, as before. Astonished, maddened, the bird flew at the worm, striking boldly, but not hitting, for the worm swiftly and deftly turned in self-protection, snapping viciously, until the bird gave up the attack and, with a spiteful note, flew among the branches.

With incredible speed the worm hastened to the foot of the elm and rapidly ascended. Time now, was it, for us to interfere, and we gently presented to the victor a small branch of laurel, upon which it clambered, to be brought into the house for closer inspection.

The worm was as thick as my middle finger, and four inches in length. As it clung with its soft, clumsy feet, flat and blunt, like—well, like the feet of an elephant, really—we offered it, for supper, a smaller bunch of osage leaves. Two long tushes hung over the lower lip, and at the touch of some foreign substance, “snap!” went the jaws as the worm bit savagely at it. How enraged it was! Not only at the impertinence of

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our handling it, but also because we were interrupting its private business. That it had something on hand was evinced by the eager hurry with which it was traveling when the bird first saw it. That this business brooked no delay we discovered later, as you shall see. The worm knew precisely what it wanted, where and when and how, but here came two stupid bipeds—it was a triple quadruped at the very least—and interrupted all its plans! Such a beautiful worm, too! The long, corrugated body of a delicate, translucent apple-green, and as flexible as India-rubber. Its face, small and disc-shaped, was a pale brown, and as we held the creature it turned and twisted and snapped its jaws as if it would say:

“O, hurry and be done! I’ve no time to spare.”

So we procured a small pasteboard box and, making holes in it, imprisoned the insect. Of course it must be fed until the spinning of the cocoon began. This, we concluded, would be delayed at least a month. As we tendered the worm some fresh leaves, it took two vigorous bites out of the edge of one of them in a half-starved way, and we left it to its supper. In about an hour we opened the box, and, finding the worm apparently busy gnawing, we attempted to remove the first leaves and put in others, but on

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lifting them we found almost invisible filaments attached to them and to the box. The weaver had begun to spin! So we gently laid the twig back in the box and watched its further utilization for a loom. To the lid the worm seemed determined to attach itself. Try as we might, push it back to the bottom as we did again and yet again—for we wished to remove the lid to watch the worker—patiently the great clumsy creature climbed repeatedly to the lid and began anew its operations. The first strands it wove were difficult to see, so fine were they, but that something was holding the leaves into place was proven by their suspension. We then turned the box upside down, cut out the bottom, and set ourselves to watch operations, with the box turned sidewise. In among the osage leaves the worm had curled its heavy length, then, lifting that flat brown face, it climbed again to the edges of the box, moved its mouth delicately over an infinitesimal space, back and forth as a butterfly moves its “feelers.” Slowly drawing back its head with the all but invisible silver thread issuing from the spinnarets, just below the mouth, it grasped the leaf and softly mouthed it, then reached up two tiny claws and clinched the filament securely to the edge of the leaf, as we might press down a bit of wax with our finger tips. Back then to the box lid, the shining thread reel-

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ing out as from a spindle, and again it was fastened to the lid. In the first little web that was woven, the insect quickly hung its hind feet, or rather the hooks on the feet that were like bird claws, thus suspending a part of the body and showing the strength of the woof. It then wove loops and girths, fastening them alternately to the leaves on which it was climbing, and to the box, the side, and the lid. Back and forth it moved, slowly and with precision, making no mistakes, and presenting a spectacle of such marvelous fascination that sleep was impossible, and all night we watched the growth of the wondrous cradle. Silently, ceaselessly, never stopping even though the electric light over the dresser flashed onto it continuously; the thin haze of a shimmering web growing, growing, and folding in the artist more and more closely. It was not fast work, however; it was very slow, and as, with head propped on my hands, I watched from hour to hour, the large body seemed to diminish in size, as probably it really did, for from being a closely packed living box of silk, it came at last to be but the germ of what it once was. By early morning an entire network had enclosed the body, and by noon this network had been overlaid, as the artist still worked, with gauzy, semi-transparent wrappings through which could be faintly seen the now closely-confined architect.

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It was then very hard for the inhabitant to turn himself about, but the busy mouth moved back and forth, drawing after it silken thread and silken thread, endlessly, tirelessly, and by the next day all movement had ceased so far as could be seen.

Ordinarily, the next thing on the program for the inhabitant of our silken cradle is to cast aside its caterpillar skin and enter into the pupa stage of existence, and this is generally done within twenty-four hours after the cocoon is finished. If this was the case with our giant worm, then the next stage was long delayed, for after the pupa stage is reached, usually in a few weeks emerges the butterfly, or moth. Whether this transformation immediately occurred or not we shall never know, but if such was the case, then a very sleepy butterfly baby swung in its cradle many months longer than need be.

"In about two months," said the scientist, "it will emerge." Said my maid: "That won' nevah come out 'til de springtime. We live on the fa'm whah I was rais' an we of'en get 'em by de run, we chil'ren. The skin gets hahd, so hahd you cain' break it 'less wi' a hatchet. Then it get thinnah and thinnah 'til you can see 'im in thah, an' then he comes out!"

This was in August. October passed, November, December.

IN A SILKEN CRADLE

Daily we watched the cocoon, almost hourly listened for stirrings of life, and on New Year's morning we were rewarded. Happy augury on the dawning of another year, when, beneath the satin-fine coverlet, velvet wings begin to unfold with the thrill of renewed life. Was it by this time a butterfly, our sleeper in the swinging cradle? Had it reached the last stage of existence? If so, it was a very sluggard, for, after stirring at intervals during twenty-four hours, and keeping us on a sharp lookout for the first premonitory opening of the cocoon, the whirring noise ceased, and presumably the householder settled down for a longer nap.

The noise it had made was a curious one. A busy "whirring" as of a small soft body turning about and about with lightning rapidity, as a squirrel swiftly treads the wheel in his cage. Each day we lifted the box to our ears many times, listening for a second awakening, but no sound came to us. January gave place to February, stinging cold, but we kept the web-like cradle in the sunny exposure of a south window in a warm room, hoping to rouse its occupant into life. March succeeded February, April passed, and we felt sure our butterfly had died, our biological friend declaring that in all probability it would never emerge. "'T was dead, dead, dead!" May came along, and white butterflies drifted

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above the grass, and still our tenant tarried in deepest slumber. In the early morning hours of the twentieth day of May the whirring again commenced, not so loud or swift as at first, more muffled and more like straining or stretching. In a few minutes a tiny, tiny movement became apparent at the smaller end of the cocoon, and slowly, slowly the strands of the web gave way, as layer after layer parted to the determined pushing of the dweller within, and presently through a hole, into which I afterwards found I could not insert the tip of my little finger, out crawled a small, wet-looking body, dragging itself exhaustedly and pausing often to rest ere it was quite free from the cocoon. Then, finding at last no impediment, it lay quietly for perhaps half an hour, when it began unfolding a pair of wings—wings that were as creased and crumpled as tissue paper crushed in the hand, and soft and wet. The creature seemed to grow and expand before our eyes, a miracle in its resurrection, as with extreme leisureliness it daintily and languidly unclosed to our sight its beautiful wings, that grew, and grew. Opening and shutting, folding and unfolding, for hours the insect kept its wings in motion, as if no higher bliss could be asked than this—life, and motion, and flooding sunlight—and the wrinkles smoothed out

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as if by magic as the body pumped a fluid into their network of tiny tubes.

The grand climax was reached after nine full months of preparation, and our busy insect of a long ago August day lay before us—a jewel in coloring. But the big green worm so closely packed with silk for the weaving of its tent curtains was scarcely less beautiful and marvelous than the splendid creature that lay basking in the golden light. Its body was two inches and a half in length and thick as my middle finger, of a delicate tan color, and soft and furry. To manufacture a cloth of that beauty and texture would be equivalent to the finding of a gold mine! The wings, which measured from tip to tip, outstretched and fully grown, a little over seven inches, were gorgeous in coloring—a rich warm cream color shading into tan and red browns. On the smaller wings was a large dice-shaped spot, the sides of deep black, the top of the cube being an exquisite shade of pale blue. On the larger or front wings was an octagon-shaped spot, transparent like the thinnest mica. The entire wing felt to the touch like softest feathers, and, under a microscope, looked like them.

Some hours after its emergence the moth made great efforts to fly, but the wings were not yet strong enough, and it only succeeded in flut-

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tering about in the box, thumping its heavy body up and down. On the second day after its emergence the moth managed to flutter and fumble itself out of the box to the window-seat, but it would eat nothing, sugar water and honey tempting it not at all.

Small wonder! The *Attacus cecropia* has n't any mouth! But *I* didn't know it—not then. They have in lieu of this a keen sense of smell, and, guided thus, at night they sally forth seeking a mate—soon perishing, as they, of course, take no nourishment.

Our insect paused so long on the window-seat, we concluded it must be dazed, or in a state of profound meditation as to the sudden change that had overtaken it. On the third day it could not yet carry into the air its heavy body, and as it fluttered blindly against the window-pane, we tossed it to the grass outside, where it fell helplessly. On the grape-vine we next perched it, and, like a clumsy child, it fell to the ground. Then, in impatience at its stupidity or laziness (but what could one expect after nine months of uninterrupted sleep?), my farmer girl seized it by the wings and tossed it boldly high into the air, where, as by a miracle, the wings spread themselves and, fluttering, dipping, soaring, away sailed this joyous new-born creature over the house-top, through the elm branches, to lose itself

IN A SILKEN CRADLE

from sight far away in the campus, without a pause or rest.

The silken tent, at first opaque in its silvery sheen, often becomes transparent towards the end of the term of confinement for its occupant, but, though the one in question became perceptibly thinner, it was not sufficiently so as to allow our seeing the insect ere it emerged. On tearing apart the cocoon after the departure of its maker, we found the brown shell it had left behind. This resembled a mummy skin, being dark brown in color and so delicate of texture as to crumble on being touched, but showed all the rings and markings of the body it had once encased.

The cocoon of this *Attacus cecropia* moth is of two parts, a loosely wrinkled outer covering and well-shaped and dense inner pod with the finest of floss silk separating the two. At both ends it is loosely woven, that the moth may easily escape. The *cecropia* is our largest native silk-spinning insect, and holds its place among the giant *lepidoptera* of the world. Silk has been made from the ravelings of this cocoon, and for one who will invent an easy and inexpensive way of unraveling this mystery of weaving there is a fortune in prospect. Utilized in the manufacture of silk, this material would be placed within easy reach of every one, for it would be as cheap as cotton.

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It is astonishing how few children have seen this marvel of cocoon-making. In silk-worms, yes, but to select or find a worm for themselves from the big outdoor world, and watch every process from the nibbling of the green osage leaves to its ultimate end as moth or butterfly, is, I find, almost a thing unheard of.

At Wood's Hole, this summer, I met on the beach-road near the "Buzzard Bay" shore a traveler similar to the one of which I have told you. He was in a tremendous hurry, apparently, but I intercepted him, and with careful coaxing brought him home to the children, on a blueberry branch, turning it from end to end as the nimble fellow too closely approached my shaky fingers—for I've a mighty fear of all creeping things!

We encased this big, beautiful green worm in mosquito netting, adjuring him to "Spin! spin! spin!" But spin he did not, spin he would not, though it was September and high time. He spent frivolous days in wriggling through the meshes of his net, to be found, finally, after long search, performing acrobatic feats by hanging to the mantle. Returned, forcibly, to his cage, he went straight to work to do it all over again!

We kept him two weeks and a few days, supplying him with fresh leaves, but he grew so

IN A SILKEN CRADLE

weak and thin from homesickness, or continual exercise, that we turned him loose out of doors, in the salty grass, to hang himself in a nest of his own selection on any desirable branch, and wished him good luck for the winter!

A Lichened Nest

*"And the humming-bird that hung
Like a jewel up among
The tilted honeysuckle horns."*

HE who finds a ruby-throated humming-bird's nest has sharp eyes, but he who discovers this tiny creature making her first arrangements for a home may truly thank his lucky stars. Often we come upon this eminently sociable and easily tamed bird in woody places far from men's habitation, drawn thither by hillsides of wild blossoms. But hereabouts he seems to prefer our old-fashioned gardens.

In a field of corn, run riot with high-reaching morning-glory blossoms, you may find at early morning many humming birds dipping into the pink and purple magnificence of the freshly opened flowers or in a fence-corner where the Virginia creeper rears its flaring yellow trumpets. and wherever the "golden candlesticks" of the narcissus spread wide their petals to the sun. In all these choice honey-holders the humming-bird is sure of nectarine delights, and here he

A LICHENED NEST

hangs on quivering wing, greedily extracting the last drop. Then away. But *where* away is quite "another story."

In April, if it be warm, and surely in the first May days, the first moment, in fact, that there is any promise of gay blossoms and scarlet geraniums are their especial delight, darting into the garden come these gauzy-winged, ruby-throated birds. During successive seasons a pair of them (or their descendants) nested in the honeysuckle at the end of our veranda, but only once were we fortunate enough to see the female as she built. The female, a little gray-green bit of a bird, was sole architect, but though she did all the work, she was generous enough to allow her spouse a voice in the matter of its location.

In the gray dawn of a spring morning we were wakened from a sound nap by a succession of queer little squeaking noises coming apparently from just outside the window. Bird or mouse it must be, with the preference given to the latter, and creeping noiselessly to the window, we looked out, to see perched near the top of the thick vines two humming-birds. In and out beneath the leaves and under the coral flowers went the female, followed closely by the ruby-throat. The pair fluttered in and out for several minutes before the tiny green housewife darted off for material, the male bird remaining perched on a

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branch in contemplation of the advantages of the situation. He looked up and around, peering into crannies of the woodwork over which the honeysuckle climbed, and, certain cobweb curtains thickly draped about the tops of the white pillars, must have filled his small heart with delight. Spiders close at hand to ensnare bugs for the delectation of himself and family was luck indeed. Truly they had well chosen! In a short time the female returned, carrying in her long, needle-like bill a small collection of silky threads, dandelion down, possibly; mayhap, soft wrappings of the hairy ferns just uncurling themselves, or delicate shreds of the inner bark of decaying trees. These she cunningly placed at the exact intersection of several branches, not hanging her nest, but laying the material carefully across the twigs, and with her tiny feet disposing of it quite to her satisfaction. The second time she went for building material her spouse followed, but she returned unattended by him, and I regret to say he did not, to our knowledge, put in an appearance again until the nest was finished and occupied. How our little neighbor did work at her home, and how unsuspectingly! Never dreamed she that behind green blinds were interested eyes keeping watch of her movements. Her first material was all of hair and down and soft, silky stuff, which she wove deftly in and

A LICHENED NEST

out with her long bill, shaping it gradually with her small, downy breast, which she pressed into it again and again, forming a thimble-shaped cup. All day she worked, and day after day, coming and going with mouthful after mouthful of house-stuff, only occasionally taking time for refreshment among the blossoms. When the nest was high enough and round enough for her satisfaction, my little lady began to put on the finishing touches by bringing tiny pieces of gray-green lichen that, in the flickering green-leaf shadows, soon rendered the nest almost indistinguishable. Carrying the pieces in her beak, she would place them against the side of the nest firmly and securely as she hung in mid-air, poised on her tiny, vibrating wings; then she would alight on a branch close to the nest and inspect her work, evidently going in for outside effect as much as for utility. It was a marvel how she carried her stuff in and out in such safety and with such accuracy. Her motions were so swift, so seemingly irresponsible, but she made no mistakes, not at any time striking against the trellis in place of through it, or even mistaking the precise location of the nest. We greatly longed to help her with nest material, and during one of her absences we hung near the nest fine, soft ravelings and flossy, silken threads, that the tiny house-

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builder no sooner saw than she utilized for a lining to the nest already quite complete.

Shortly two tiny, white eggs appeared in the nest—eggs oval in shape and not larger than beans; and the careful little mother never left them long at a time, the ruby-throated father really doing a little of his share in raising a family, by assiduously feeding his spouse during the time of incubation. Nearly three weeks passed away, and then on a certain morning we noted unusual symptoms of solicitude on the part of the male bird, such frequent comings to the edge of the nest, such excited squeaks, such airs of fussy importance, that we felt a crisis had arrived in the family—the young birds must have broken the shell. True enough, though for a day we were not able to get a glimpse of them, but the second day we peeped into the nest while the mother was away.

Tiny, tiny things they were, scarcely larger than a honey-bee, but with an extraordinary bill, a bill that was out of all proportion to their length. Carefully the mother bird nursed her youngsters, staying as closely at home as she could, but the father, having finally wearied of parental duties, left the providing to her, so she was obliged to go abroad pretty frequently. The tiny ones she fed as the woodpeckers fed their young, by regurgitation, and also by ramming her

A LICHENED NEST

bill down the throats of the youngsters until it seemed as if it must impale them. The father's duties, however, had not been overpowering, for he (and she, too) had not hesitated to help themselves to the harvest of flies and wasps gathered by Madame Arachne. What matter if it required a little forethought and consideration as to the way in which this harvest must be reached? It saved wing-weariness, and was eminently acceptable. Many times the largest spiders resented this wholesale appropriation of eatables, and as the touch of the humming-bird's bill in the encircling gossamer threads set them trembling to the center of the web, the owner thereof rose in wrath and scrambled over the surface in fierce pursuit. But the hummers were sufficiently wary to confine their depredations to the outskirts of the demesne, darting quickly away before the vengeful insect.

The young "hummers," when flying-day arrived, launched themselves into the air like old stagers, though they followed their mother from flower to flower, learning from her how to feed, and perched themselves, waiting, on the grapevine. As she probed the trumpet flowers for honey, they, waiting, truly resembled nothing so much as big bumble-bees.

The little family in time grew quite tame, often flying into the windows, attracted by a

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bowl of cut-flowers, even coming to perch on our fingers sometimes if tempted by a blossom. I have found them quite fearless if always made welcome. That even their judgment is not always infallible was shown by the following incident: My farmer girl was sitting under the grape-vine trellis one evening at sunset, and as I stood talking to her, a pair of "hummers" came darting at her shoulders, striking her sharply, and evincing both anger and surprise when they found the gaudy flowers of her dress were unreal.

The Trials of a Goldfinch

*"Here in the fork the
brown nest is seated."*

—R. L. S.

WITH a sweep and a dip and a whirl the rollicking wild canaries come among us on some rare April day. They surprise us invariably, even if it be as late as in May, when they drift into the garden like a lot of yellow leaves blown on the winds. They rarely appear singly, but a perfect colony of them come fluttering through the air, settling in tree branches or threading their ways through the mazes of the osage hedge (a place they particularly like), and filling the air with song. They are the gayest little birds imaginable, careering hither and thither, seeming always bent on a merry-making. Their song is pure melody, its sweet, lisping notes much like the notes of a true canary, only stronger, braver, freer. To my ear the words of his song are much like those of the robin, though the goldfinch does not ring its changes so everlastingly. The robin never knows the time when he is not ready or

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willing or glad to sing. Nothing daunts him. Sidney Lanier tells us how it goes—

*"Five o'clock, ten o'clock, twelve, and seven;
Nothing but robin songs heard under heaven.*

*Is it fame that ye sing for and who shall be first?
Yet each day's the same and the last is the worst,*

*And the summer is curst with the silly outburst
Of idiot red-breasts peeping and cheeping."*

Few of us would agree, however, with the last two stanzas. A robin never sings too long or too much, or too cherrily. Him, the goldfinch, echoes but as the music of a flute repeats the deep, bold notes of the 'cello. The robin's song is all of cheer, "Chee-eer, chee-eer-o, cheer-eer, chee-eer-up," rolling the words over and over deftly enough, while the goldfinch, tossing himself into the air, warbles, "Chee-eer, chee-eery chee-ee-eer, chee-eer," sweet, clear, insistent. Truly he is a bird of great happiness, and a holiday-maker par excellence. Great his need also for a cheerful disposition, as he winters with us through snow and hail and ice, this dainty bird in black and gold attire. A bird, one would think, should be among the first to migrate, and one who would require the mildness of a Southern climate to keep him alive. But he's not

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that style of a bird at all. He's strong and brave and bright, and flirts among the snow-laden branches of the deep woods or rustles among the seed-laden weeds as philosophically as he tilts on thistle-tops in the summer or glints among the dandelions. All the spring and early summer days see him dallying, procrastinating, apparently doing nothing under the sun but having a good time. "Sowing his wild oats," one might think, but on the contrary, he is gathering them, or something akin to them, from any seed-bearing plant he can find. His idle ways are a scandal among his neighbors in the garden, who, after exchanging with him the compliments of the season, leave him entirely alone in his frolicsome ways, trying to set him a good example by their busy and important manners; for they are all soon at work constructing their homes. Who shall censure him? Who shall say which is the better way? Can we blame him for his high spirits and his joyous song celebration of the passing of cold weather? He's been all winter in the lonely woods, and he's glad to see folks. 'T is small wonder he looks about him when he comes to town or country gardens in the fine spring days. The winter was bleak and long, notwithstanding our yellow bird kept a good heart, and blossoming trees and soft, warm winds send his spirits way, way up to the blue.

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He's an eye for beauty, has this gay gallant. Spring means more to him than merely mating and a home, and he is determined to enjoy it. He hesitates about taking up serious responsibility. A goldfinch seems fully to realize the fact that but once may he be young, and, while indulging in countless flirtations, he takes extremely good care not to involve himself in a permanent engagement. Thus, during the months of May and June, this precautionary bachelor disports himself in the bravery of his summer clothes, greatly rejoicing in his freedom. The last of June or in July he seems suddenly to become aware of young birds of a different family from his own, and, after recovering from the surprise this gives him, he repents him of his dilatory ways, and, hastening to make love in earnest, he takes to himself a wife. "Blest the wooing that's not long a-doing." Marvel it is that the soberly clad lady of his choice does not yield to him immediately her heart, but now, coquette in her turn, she only bestows her favors after much solicitation.

The warfare, waged as a usual thing among other birds in time of mating, I have never noticed among these finches. Each seems to select his own mate and, without interfering in the choice of others or being interfered with, he proceeds to build a home. The female gold-

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finch is much less brilliant in color than her mate, being above a somber brown, and beneath a warm yellow, a wise provision, for among the leaves the brooding mother is scarcely distinguishable. Reverse the colors, and note how quickly that bunch of yellow feathers would catch the evil eye of a hawk. With the end of summer goes the song of the goldfinch, and autumn, with her russet tints, drops over his head a coat of pale brown. Their nest in the osage hedge last summer was a triumph for the female, for build there she would, and did, though it required the finesse of a woman ere she wheedled her spouse into her way of thinking. She first charmed him with coaxing notes, and under the thick leaves proceeded to show him the advantages of the place, while he stood on a branch above her, looking very glum and hard to be persuaded. He was for building in the syringa, as usual, and when, yielding in her turn, she followed him to the tree, he sidled close up to her and whispered and coaxed and chirruped to her with most earnest persuasion. She listened wisely and chirped back, but before quite agreeing with him she urged him to make just one more inspection of the spot she had selected, and he was lost. Without ado or giving him time to change his mind, she began building her home in the hedge, in which labor he quickly joined her. The nest

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was made of strippings from the inner bark of trees, and the hanging pieces of apple-tree bark, where the woodpecker had made a hole, proved most desirable, and the finches gleaned it well. A few small strings and grasses made a fair foundation, and some delicate ravelings of silk that we contributed were delightedly used for the interior. It was a very dainty nest, so softly lined with cotton and silk, and so snugly hidden low in the hedge. Troublous times awaited the owners, however, and scarcely was the first egg laid when a roving chickadee suddenly espied the little pocket, and, the bird being off her nest for a few short moments, in a trice he had snatched a mouthful of the downy stuff and carried it away. The sparrows, always on the watch, without an instant's hesitation followed his example, and owing to their pulling and tearing the nest fell apart and out rolled the tiny egg, breaking as it fell. Just as the ruin was complete back came the female, closely followed by her mate, and up and down, in and out of that hedge-row the two birds traveled, as if in hope that they had mistaken the location and had happened on another bird's nest and that their own would yet appear intact. The destruction of the nest was accomplished so quickly we had scarce time to realize what was afoot ere the mischief was done. But a courageous heart beat in that little yellow breast, and

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the day following she was again busy with nest-building, and again in the hedge, a little higher up than before, and she was soon brooding her eggs. In these days there appeared in the shrubbery a new bird, one with which we were quite unfamiliar. He seemed about the size of a robin and of dark-brown color. His, rather her, actions were very irresolute. She sat quietly in the trees or flitted about from place to place as though on a tour of inspection, and finally departed as unostentatiously as she had come. The goldfinch had grown quite used to our presence by this time, and to our almost daily inspection of her nest, and when next she quietly slipped off allowing us to view her treasures we found among her own pearly eggs an extra egg, an egg much too large and much too clumsy ever to have been the property of the goldfinch, and a spotted egg at that. Even while we wondered over this there came to mind the strange bird. 'T was a cowbird, the laziest, most shiftless citizen of birdland, and this time she had imposed the rearing of her offspring on these unsuspecting little songbirds. Apparently the finch had not detected the fraud, or else had resigned herself to circumstances, for she cuddled under her motherly breast all the eggs quite impartially. The male bird, when he took his turn to watch the nest while the mother went out for exercise,

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seemed at a loss to account for this curious affair. He would hop on the edge of the nest and go round and round it, looking down into it with deep interest, the incongruousness of its contents evidently puzzling him. But he possessed the happy faculty of making the best of things, and if his little wife, by extraordinary effort, had managed to bring forth an egg of gigantic dimensions it was cause not to sigh for, but to sing for, and right cheerily he did this. Neither did his spirits fail when from this curious egg there issued a birdling unlike any he had ever seen among the goldfinches. Being larger, the egg rested more snugly among the feathers above it, so, of course, was the earliest to hatch. Like a young robin, the cowbird was big and ungainly, and as hungry as any two robins I ever saw. The male bird fed it assiduously, and when the gaping mouth would thrust itself up in front of the still brooding mother, we wondered if she knew, and if out of the great charity of her mother-heart she adopted it as her own, or if, perchance, she concluded this was to be her one ugly duckling, and looked for better things when the other members of her nursery should appear. In either case she took good care of it, and when a day or two later, two of her own bantlings pecked their way into the world, she was no more fussily important over them than

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over the stranger. Dandelions, sunflowers, and a variety of seed plants kept the little family close at home, their needs being well supplied in the garden alone. A nestful you may be sure they were—two naked, just beginning to grow feathers, little yellow birds, and one big frowsy-looking bird of brownish-yellow. The disposition of the intruder also was not of the best, and created constant trouble in the otherwise happy family. Though quite as well cared for as his self-chosen brothers, to the astonishment and disapproval of his foster-parents he was assertive and generally disagreeable. Always and ever his head obtruded itself first when the older birds brought food to the nest, and he crowded and fussed and squeaked to such an extent that the young finches found it difficult to sleep and grow large enough to defend themselves from his encroachments, as he hustled them out of the way when he chose to change his position. The mother chided him sweetly, but was of too amiable a disposition to give him his deserts. The male bird proved even less of a disciplinarian, for, despite the frowning look his black cap gives him, he is of character and manners most charming. The young cowbird soon grew too large for its narrow quarters, and was the first to leave the nest by two or three days. Gladly did the owner of that home “speed the parting guest,”

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after its departure cuddling herself down over her own youngsters and fluffing out her feathers in pure delight. The young finches were always amicable when we came to the nest, but the cowbird would stand up and draw himself back, opening his mouth widely and ruffling up his plumage like a little fighting-cock. The male finch took entire charge of the stranger when he hopped out of the nest, and fed him devotedly all day, no easy task either, for he was always hungry. When the other birds had flown from the nest it was extremely funny to see the great, overgrown baby of a cowbird following about the tiny yellow birds, who, standing beside him, were obliged to do a considerable amount of stretching to be able to reach up to the ever-ready mouth. A baby sparrow was at the same time following its parent about the lawn, and the cowbird not hesitating to take his food where he could get it, often intercepted himself between the two and received into his mouth the food intended for the young sparrow. It was a clear case of charity among the birds, and for many days the bird who did not belong to anybody got every time the "early worm." Finally the cowbird disappeared from among the goldfinches, who remained happily in our garden and in the neighborhood until September. I have come across them but rarely in the winter—once on a country

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road among a whole flock of snowbirds and when snow was flying; again in early February on the "Morning Sun" road, where we very unexpectedly saw two of them busily at work hunting seeds among the underbrush. Probably in a cozy nook near by was the colony, and these two were advance couriers to see if, perchance, spring was on the way and they might prepare for a townward flitting.

Feathered Guests

*The Summer winds is sniffin' round the bloomin'
locus'-trees,
And the clover in the pastur' is a big day fer the
bees.*

—J. W. RILEY.

OWING to the fact that our visitors are dressed in feathers our garden parties are not cut short by the falling of the leaves. With mercury at zero and even much lower, our cordial invitations to breakfast, dinner, or supper find eager acceptance. Blue grass and clover apparently are no more enticing around our doorstep than frost and snow, and the birds flit as gayly over the one as the other, for though a few of our aerial friends wing their way southward in migratory days we have company enough all Winter.

In the summer of a "clover year" it is hard to find a more lovely sight than a lawn thickly grown with the nodding blossoms of the white clover, and birds of gay plumage disporting themselves there among. Clover is supposed to make an untidy lawn, but ignorant of a "clover-year,"

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we grumbled at old 'Umfry; we said, "That old darkey has sown the lawn in white clover instead of blue-grass," but for once in a way 'Umfry was not to blame. 'Umfry cuts the grass (when he gets round to it), also in these periodic visits he cuts everything in sight, reaping where he has not sown—mignonette, sweet alyssum, woodbine carefully trained along the fences, bird-nests in the hedges, all go down under the relentless hand of him who considers "order heaven's first law." But this time 'Umfry was not responsible. Clover renews itself every second year. So Dame Nature nourishes the soil and at the same time causes extravagant tipping among humming birds and bees, especially the bees, who

*"Stutter in their buzzin'
An' stagger as they fly."*

"A clover year!" Hills and hollows, fields and meadows literally swept over with snow of the clover bloom, or blushing rosily with the great pink blossoms, and dewy mornings and evenings full of perfume!

*"Sweet by the roadsides,
Sweet by the sills,
Sweet in the meadows,
Sweet on the hills;*

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*Sweet in its white,
Sweet in its red,
O, half its sweet can not be said!
Sweet in its every living breath,
Sweetest of all perhaps in death."*

For the long branches of the "sweet clover" will for many a long day perfume your linen closets. In shadiest places on the lawn and terrace always had we odd bowls and dishes and kept them filled with clean water, where the birds came constantly to drink and to bathe, though they reversed the order and drank after bathing. No watering-place habitues ever enjoyed more fully their summer outing than these birds of all feathers, who spent a great part of their time in splashing. Eighteen and twenty different varieties of birds gossiped daily in our garden. Blue jays, blue-birds, the tufted titmouse, king birds, robins, cat-birds, orchard orioles, Baltimore orioles, cardinal birds, tanager, wrens, thrushes, sparrows, woodpeckers, nut-hatches, and many another. In the morning, by the time our breakfast was over, the birds were entirely through with their matins, and ready with sharp appetites for their first meal. Without waiting to be summoned, they congregated about the steps with impatient clamoring. Under the hedges the thrushes daintily pick their

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way and join the excited group. Down on the edge of the terrace in the midst of a veritable snow-bank of clover occasionally may be seen a patch of vivid and variegated coloring. A jay in robe of purplish blue dashed with white and black; cardinal birds, male and female, in coats of vivid scarlet and olive brown; thrushes serene and dignified, gowned in russet tints, and a flaming oriole complete the group.

The woodpecker flies down and grabs a large piece of bread, which he carries to the top of the electric-light pole across the road. Here, on the very top, he lays his quarry, then hanging on by his toes and propped by his tail, he nibbles at ease until all is gone. Though there may be many more pieces of bread where this one has come from, yet the sparrows seem to take an especial delight in following the red-head, and will perch in large numbers on the crosspieces of the pole, watching greedily for a chance to snatch a crumb. When the woodpecker flies down for more food the sparrows hop on the top of the pole and clean up the remnants of the feast as quickly as may be. When he returns they retire discreetly to the wires and enviously watch his repast. When all the bread has disappeared from the ground the woodpecker returns again to the top of the pole and anxiously ex-

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amines it, if, perchance, any tid-bit has been overlooked. He hates the sparrows, and when his shyness prevents his coming down immediately at feeding-time, he hangs on the tree and scolds viciously at them, for they are ever on hand to eat, and he also snatches their bread from them again and again. In the side of the elm the red-headed woodpeckers made a home this year, and as soon as their young ones could fly they brought them to our lawn for supplies. The little fellows were too unsophisticated to know that they ought to hold us in mortal fear, and they came so close as almost to take food from our hands. They came swinging down most awkwardly onto the grass at our feet, and after grabbing a piece of bread and swallowing it, would straighten up, and, giving themselves an air of bravado, look us directly in the eye, as if they wanted to say, "My! was n't that a big fly for me?" Then in place of eating more, they would sit and stare at us, as if they meant us to understand, "You folks are quite as funny to *us* as *we* are to *you*."

The heads of these young ones were dark gray, sleek, and shining. No glint of scarlet color showed in promise of the satin red cap they would don later, but after a few weeks a sheen-like red bronze gradually became apparent, as their heads turned and twisted in the sunlight. The young ones were much more confiding than

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the old birds, and were easily taken up in the hand.

It is certainly astonishing how quickly the young birds of every species follow in the foot-steps—or wing-ways, we might say—of their elders. Hardly are they fledged and clumsily flying than by example and by precept, if we may judge from the constant chatter, the babies are taught to do exactly as the parents, and come to porch and window-sill for food.

With all those different wings imagine the coloring in mid-winter the snow sparkling like diamonds, and against it the vivid scarlet of the cardinal, the shining, grayish bronze of his mate, her wings tipped with scarlet, scarlet crest and tail, her throat greenish-yellow, and beside her as an offset of color the purple-blue of the jays and the russet-browns of the sparrows. The female cardinal has a coat that takes often a shining olive-green; especially among leaf shadows, and I have often been deceived into thinking the cardinal male had picked up a new friend until she dashed out into the sunshine, and against all authority I still assert she looked a pure green with yellow breast, and under her wings also yellow, but her crest, her dark neck, and her brilliant wing-tips betrayed her as she coquetted among the vines.

We had only to open the door and call in

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those cold, snowy days, and the dashing cardinal would come in the most friendly way and take the bread almost from our hands.

But to return to summer and summer baths. Let me tell you when bathing proclivities are in question, the catbird surpasses all others among the birds. Our winter birds, too, though not caring for baths, are always grateful for a drink, and will without delay avail themselves of the privilege of a cup of water. Our catbirds have an especial fondness for a deep-yellow pudding bowl in the shade of the maple, and no sooner is it filled full of clear, cool water than there is a rush for first place. One, two, and three catbirds balance themselves on the rim, and with fluttering wings jump in and out again many times ere they settle down for a good bath. The water is too deep, or, in its clearness is deceptive as to depth, for the birds exhibit in pantomime what in words would be:

“O dear, that water is too cold, and awfully deep! We’ll drown, maybe—ugh—ugh,—ugh” and accentuate this with little shrugs and shivers, so you see how much courage it takes for a bird to bathe, even though they are full of longing for the treat. The young catbirds run around the edge of the bowl as if trying to hide from the energetic parents who push and urge by turns. Though cleanliness be next to godliness, these

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are the generality of small boys, and when they youngsters are quite as averse to the process as have finally scrambled into the bowl, they scramble out again in a hurry, half-washed, and wholly resentful, and run away into the hedge to preen their soft baby plumage as quickly as may be. The catbird seemed the only bird that resented intrusion on his ablutions, and always insisted on making his toilet quite alone and uninterrupted by other birds. At sunset they came as eagerly to bathe as in the early morning, and when they settled in low branches and looked disconsolately at the emptied bath, we hastened to fill it and with grateful chirpings the birds plunged instantly into the bowl. In fact, evening baths seemed as much, if not more, in demand than morning plunges, as if day was done and all housekeeping cares laid aside, the babies asleep and the tired parents free to refresh and cleanse their tired bodies. When the sparrows intruded upon a catbird's bath, this bather in gray quickly made an angry splashing that deluged the small bird until he was glad to hop out and join his companions on the rim of the bowl, there to patiently wait until milord finished his ablutions. The robins bathe with orderly precision, not squabbling among themselves as sometimes the catbirds do, and in a shallow dish close by the sparrows splash in happy companionship. A car-

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dinal bird, on a certain hot noon, plunged into the swimming-pool, and was having a splendid time splashing and dashing in the water, when a catbird suddenly espied him, and without hesitation he hurried down to the edge of the bowl, and, plunging in, gave battle to the astonished cardinal. Bearing no malice, and having, after all, had a refreshing bath, the cardinal shook his feathers and soared into the top of a tree, there breaking into song, sending forth a shower of notes, sweet, clear. At this the selfish catbird lifted his head, and, standing half-submerged in the water, listened a moment in puzzled wonderment. Then, springing from his bath, he perched himself on a ridge-pole, and in harsh, derisive tones, imitated the whistle of the cardinal. Again and again, over and over, this dripping, spiteful gray bird rang his burlesque melody in a small, cracked voice, throwing into it a saucy twang that called forth applause from us for his elocutionary efforts. As for the cardinal in the tree-top, away up against the blue, he paid no more attention to the mocker than if he did not hear him. Perhaps he did not. Life was lovely to him; life always is seemingly to a redbird, for unlike other of his feathered kinfolk, he seeks the topmost branches of the highest tree to sing and sing and sing. If you hear his call, never look low for him; turn your opera-glass up

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against the sky, and on the very highest tip of a branch that is strong enough for his small body, there you may see him, a mere speck.

A red-headed woodpecker chooses for his bath hour a time when the pools are comparatively deserted, for he is either an arrant coward or devoid of social proclivities. As, alighting on a tree trunk, he waits the flight of the greedy sparrows from the vicinity of the bread crumbs, so he does in bathing. Clutching the bark of the tree with his yoked toes and supporting himself by his tail feathers pressed closely against the tree, he turns his shining crimson head this way and that, looking gravely over his shoulder like a timid little old lady until, when the coast is clear, he slips quietly down to the big yellow bowl and plunges in, solemnly splashing his beautiful coat of black and white until it comes out of the process of preening like glistening silk. He allows no familiarity from any bird, and never condescends to squabble over a precedence in favors.

A bluebird one morning insisted upon a family bath, and with her mate and her two baby birds in their new coats flew down to the pool. After a small splash on her own account, she hopped out, and around and around the bowl she chased the youngsters. Away they would flutter into the hedge, then out again, and hide under the rim of

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the bowl. Bathe they would not until one of them, in its hurry to fly out of the way, struck against a parent bird in midair, and so tumbled into the water. This encouraged the other young one, and together they splashed about in the water, to the evident satisfaction of the old birds, and after the ablutions they all flew into a low-growing tree and preened their feathers, at times hopping out into the sun and spreading out their wings to let their feathers dry.

The bobolinks in the fall may also be often seen roving over the fields in company with smaller birds, and their call once heard is never forgotten. Their stay is short, however, for they quickly leave us for the rice-fields of the Southern States. Here they disport themselves in sober winter clothes of brown, and are known as the "rice birds."

*I'm Robert O'Lincoln, but some folks say "Bob!"
And I sing, and I sing, and I sing!
The air's full of sunshine, the grasses all nod,
As I swing, and I swing, and I swing.*

September sees a great flitting away of our summer folk of the tree-tops. Warmer, sunnier climes lure them, and orioles, bobolinks, thrushes, chats, and many others follow the call.

October's falling leaves warn the grackles and meadow-larks to move on, and by November the

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real winter birds are settling down all about us, hunting warm winter quarters in the forests or about the house. Wrens make themselves cozy in the woodshed; a pair of cardinals found snug hiding one winter under the eaves of a porch; woodpeckers—the males—selfishly go to sleep in the dark holes they have already excavated with a view to spring housekeeping.

All the winter-birds are seed-eaters, *nut-pickers* par excellence, and a strolling band of players could not afford one greater amusement.

Woodpeckers and jays seem best provided for with their well-hidden hordes; not too well hidden either, for “M’sieu of the Bushy-tail” frequently surprises himself by stumbling on unexpected treasures.

Pine-warbles, grosbeaks, snow buntings, brown-creepers, white-throated sparrows, all the woodpeckers come to the house for food. Tapping at my window, literally, they all come, Devil-downhead—“Devil-may-care,” by the way he tumbles up and down the window-frame—oftenest of all comes he, little, but “powerful hongry.” The half-shell cocoanut (their own private dish) that hangs on the trellis, I fill to the full twice a day with cracked nuts; ever is it ready for re-filling. Crumbs and hulled popcorn ever on the window-sills; hot corn-cakes on the porch for breakfast; suet on the trees.

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"Peace" is the watchword among born enemies, for solitude, and winter's desolation bring them together in sympathy and for protection. Small birds elaborately ignore former idiosyncrasies of the jay in the matter of eggs and, if you are lucky enough to run across such a band on your walk of a snowy day, in their winter coats, you will find them a jolly busy lot, and a bright feature of the landscape.

"Vergiss nicht die kleinen Vögel."

Gray Days and Migrating Birds

QUAKERISH dawns, and a wind untying soft, gray, misty night-caps from the trees. To the North, a range of hills—or is the undulent length lying low along the horizon a far island? The wide intervening pasture land is submerged in the high-tide of fog. Barely is it day and, silently, across the pale sky drift long lines of birds sharply silhouetted. Against the faint yellow light of coming sunrise tall trees are stenciled blackly, and, through the thicket of their branches sweeps a rosy sphere—not *in* the sky apparently but *out* of it—against it, a toy-balloon sailing high and changing from rose to gold. Here and here through the tossing fog bank tiny islands of feathery green show themselves, and, in mid-September the haze hangs veilingly all the day.

Gray days in the deep woods are days of incomparable loveliness. In September the trees are yet full of birds, fuller than in mid-summer, for the crowd is augmented by the arrival of a host of migrants, all of them out of voice, however, except the cardinals, who seem to whistle and sing as gayly, and with as many notes as in

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the spring time. The glowing tints of autumn, and warm days of Indian summer oftentimes tease the birds into long lingering, and even November sometimes sees the robins about, or a risky thrasher picking among the brown leaves. Autumn flings out its first signal in crimson banners of woodbine that cover in smothering embrace trees reaching skyward. A background of dark green oak-leaves, and shining across and through the paling colors of the maples, the blood-dyed foliage burns in ecstasy. The beeches clothe themselves in russet brown, the oaks don robes of splendid scarlet, and the yellow maples flare out like torches.

A gray day in spring-woods sets one to listening for the faint sound of all young growing things. Ear to earth catch we not the soft, persistent pricking of leaf-mold, as the pointed leaves of the "adder's tongue" spring upward? Almost we hear the fairy unfolding of the flower's white, or yellow lily-petals curling backward until the starry face of it seems a smile! The whispering of tasseled wind-tossed tree-blossoms; the nibblings of the squirrel who, hanging to a branch, with his canny paw draws up an elm tree tip to nibble the tender heart from out the buds. All manner of delicate noises tremble on the air in a soft-shadowed gray day in the woods. The muffled flutter of wings, as, with melodious

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twitterings the robins fly to and fro with mud-bedaubed feathers. Sunny days are not for plasterers among the rank and file of bird-dom!

Gray days in autumn woods! A day without the stirring of a bough; a day of slow-falling quiet mist when the trees stand proudly, silently, as conscious of their wealth, and dare not even shiver lest they lose a golden leaf! Glad of the penetrating moisture enameling their foliage and rejoicing in their full time of fruitage. How sweet the spicy smell of ripening walnuts! How eagerly are the hazel-nuts casting forth their treasures! On the yellow carpet, the carpet of Oriental hues, the squirrels frisk, and among the dripping leaves jays "whose eyes hint tragedies," woodpeckers, nut-hatches, birds innumerable gayly disport themselves. The fine rain is but a shower bath to these feathered folk. Under their vigorous attacks the hazel-nuts come rattling down like hail. No bird-song do we hear, singing days are over, but excited persistent chatter of things in general, and exchange of views as to best roads going South.

The red-headed woodpecker is noisily carving out his spring-time nest—his sleeping apartment for the winter. His, alone, understand, for his mate of the summer must now shift for herself! If she survives the winter she is lucky—he will graciously allow her to rear his family!

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If not—a shrug of his shoulders shakes off his sins, and almost any foolish young bird will be captivated next summer by his “red, white, and blue—(black)” coat!

Gray days in the forest are singularly quiet. Any slightest sound awakens interest—almost you may hear the sighing of a leaf in its fall. The woodpecker’s drum is the only harsh, disturbing note. I wot of a “downy” woodpecker whose industry gave forth a cheery sound of houses building through many gray days. From early spring until fall she busied herself in carving holes in a pear-tree in the very maddest sort of way! The first hole cut, she left it half-finished to begin a second. The second was well excavated into the tree and turned downward in its course, and out of its depths she made the chips fly in true “manual labor” fashion. Abandoning this one she marked a third place for excavation just below it; left this unfinished and started a fourth on the south side of the tree. Such perseverance! Such hurried returns to her work after short absences! Such scurrying about from hole to hole, trying to bring the work on each to the same stage of advancement! Not a look to right or left; no whit disturbed by our observation! Straight to work—no frivolling for her! At no time whatever did I see a mate attendant upon her. Dissatisfied with her artistic effort

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on the fourth hole she cut above it a fifth, a sixth, a seventh in an even row, only one of the number being finished by October—her own sleeping place, it proved, through the winter! For that purpose only was it utilized, as a spring storm blew down the tree, and thus cut off all our hopes for the little home-maker in a prospective family, in that locality at least!

September skies are darkened with the long lines of passing birds, but many of our summer birds linger until after October, or until early frosts send them away on swift wings. Squirrels and chipmunks have long ago laid in their winter stores, but the former will not disdain to come at any time to doors or windows for nuts—and they are mighty gay company withal.

In the campus jays and squirrels drink at the same water-trough, in most amicable fashion, on opposite sides. All went well until a jay, regardless of sanitation, plunged in for a bath. Promptly both squirrels dropped to their haunches, folded little brown paws over their white breasts, turned their heads sidewise *looking* the query, "Now 'd ye ever see the like o' that?"

It's a simple matter preparing for winter, but tell me, do, if a squirrel may "sniff" a snow-storm? Breakfasting, one warmish sunny morning last winter, I on the inside of the pane, two squirrels on the sill outside nibbling nuts in the

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friendliest way, and entertaining me with all manner of acrobatic feats of springing from shutter to shutter—directly across my window—all in a moment a thrifty idea seemed to flash into their brains. No longer did they crack the nuts but carried them one, and one, (over three dozen of them, for, interested in proceedings I handed out as many as were called for), across the road and hid them away. First, they scrambled the nuts into tree crotches, jammed them into holes, or into tight places between trunk and branch—pounding them firmly down—for I got my opera-glasses and watched. Then when all available “holes” seemed “taken,” they begun to bury the nuts in the long brown grass now fast whitening with *snow*! Back and forth they went from campus to porch—to window-sill and the nuts—burying them in haste until the snow was too deep for digging, but *not* until it had grown deep enough to fly like powder under the busy paws!

Our last singing visitor on a gray, gray misty day was a tiny song-sparrow. Migrating was he,—evidently, had become separated from his “folks,” and dropped exhaustedly into our grape-vine trellis. How he panted, and gasped, open-mouthed! Rested, he “took heart of grace,” cleared his throat, warbled a note or two, and launched forth upon a sea of song! Was it

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pride in his accomplishment that tossed his head so high? or of the little brown button on his breast? For three gray days he lingered making the garden sweet with song, and on swift wings fled away to "Dixie!"

On the morning of October seventeenth, the grayest of gray days, a band of migrating robins came to rest on the lawn. The Saturday before at supper time, there appeared in the maple a single robin, evidently very tired and drowsy, as it cuddled down in one spot nor stirred for two hours. To all appearances the bird went sound asleep, quite heedless of the concern she created among the sparrows who circled excitedly about her, uneasy in their small minds as to what such a queer customer might be, for she did not show the ruddy breast of the robins with which they were familiar, looking much more like a small gray owl. After perhaps half an hour, a male bird appeared and coming down to her side waked her with various chirpings. Languidly she listened to him and, complying with his urgent remarks, she dropped to the ground and with him drank thirstily from the bowl of water, returning to her roost and going to sleep immediately. In the morning both birds had gone. On Monday morning when we stepped out onto the back porch, we found that the night had brought us strange visitants. The lawn was

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covered with robins, gray, dusty, travel-stained fellows, thin and gaunt looking, and minus the ruddy coloring of the well-fed, home-bred robins that were hopping excitedly about among the strangers. The rim of the wide yellow bowl that is always full of water for the birds was crowded with robins; the edge of the tub, on the well curb, brimming with water also, held its own circle of the birds crowded together as thickly as they could find standing room. Around both drinking places, out on the ground, were numberless other robins impatiently awaiting their turn. Such a time, as the first-comers were having drinking as if famished, flirting the water about, tossing it over themselves and each other, and twittering away in throaty tones that answered very well for "grunts" of satisfaction! How crazy with delight they were about the water! As quickly as the ones that had satisfied their thirst would fly off, the waiting ones scrambled into their places. The birds on the ground were not still a moment but hopped around and around the bowl as if it were almost impossible to wait for a drink—shoving and pushing one another.

Such a fluttering of gray wings when they all arose! The air seemed full of birds, coming and going and changing places constantly. Many of them after drinking plunged into the bowl for a bath, crowding each other in their haste, and

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by their number quickly displacing all the water. Food seemed no temptation to them, they were only weary and thirsty, and after their water-revel, they all fluttered into the trees and, fluffing themselves out precisely like young owls went off into a nap, and there they dozed until afternoon! creating consternation among the smaller birds who no doubt believed that a plague of owls had fallen upon them. About two o'clock they bestirred themselves, began to stretch and to preen their feathers, rise into the air and fly about as if testing their renewed powers, and then with one accord sailed away southward, taking with them our own door-yard robins. When they were on the ground, their weariness seemed so great that it drove away all fear, for we walked close up to them, and might easily have taken one into our hands, had we not feared a premature flight. They seemed absolutely oblivious of us—their only ideas being water and rest.

Whence came they? How far had they journeyed? And how did they know just where water might be found? Had they stopped by pure accident? Hardly, birds have more method than that. Were the earlier comers of the Saturday before "scouts?" Had our domestic robins met them in air and given them information, or had they simply, flying over, glimpsed the water beneath? In case they were invited guests,

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then the entertainers had more on their *claws* than they bargained for, amazement showing plainly in their stare as the newcomers usurped *all* the water privileges. There were few ruddy breasted robins among the migrating birds, and those few were very pale in color, and were so thin that the white rings around their eyes gave them all a wild appearance. Possibly the fall in temperature from 80° to 52° of the night before had bewildered the birds with sudden cold, and they hardly knew where to go or what to do, their instinct being to drop from the higher, colder atmosphere to Mother Earth's cosey lap to cuddle down and keep warm!

Before the Storm

By way of being an "Attic Philosopher," making the most of my "sky parlor" with its narrow windows glimpsing far a purple horizon; passing the time of day with prideful pigeons strutting, anon, on my high window-ledge; noting, above the smokeless chimney-tops, against the blue long sweeping flights of duck as they follow the curving of the peaceful "Kaw" in early migration northward, scraping acquaintance with an occasional troop of cardinals seed-hunting in the tall weeds of the bottom-land bordering the river—to me, then, making the best of things outwardly, consumed with longing inwardly for a place to scrape closer acquaintance with the outdoor things of this Western land, came suddenly a house and acres and trees and birds, in the dragging days of winter!

With immense satisfaction I entered into my inheritance. The wide, sunny south window on the ground floor appealed to me, for, outside, stood a long-armed umbrella-tree, bare and bleak.

Birds there were—birds there must be, for

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an occasional shout proclaimed the woodpeckers abroad, and a faint trial-note from a bluebird, here and there, showed *him* duped by languorous days into belief of spring's arrival.

In my new housekeeping delights I now reckoned the coming birds, and with all haste spread the ground with almonds, pecans, English walnuts, and with eager hands bunched up the soft, fresh suet on the lowest branches of the "umbrella."

But 't was astonishingly hard to teach new birds new tricks! Having, heretofore, to *earn* their living in these parts, such largess was to be *suspected*, *inspected*, and passed by! No one single bird came! Even my pigeons of the rooftop, stupid though they be, had shown more quickly an appreciation of favors scattered on my hotel window-sill.

Then, one day, gingerly the sparrows came—"English" sparrows from the barn-top, "Harris" sparrows from the osage hedge—out of curiosity—and pecking away at the cracked nuts on the window-ledge, peered at me with wonder. A new thing this, in an aristocratic neighborhood!

Then upon this boulevard of fashion fell one of winter's stormiest gray days. The warm, pink light that spread over the sky morning after morning for weeks and months glowed no more,

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and the dawn came in a weepy, misty haze; and lo! in early morning, beneath my bed-room window, the umbrella-tree had blossomed out with shivering birds. The little peach-tree in Ohio bore only petals of a single color; but here were hues of the rainbow on branches whose glory is but leaves!

Cuddled in the corner of my window-sill, as I drew up the curtain, was the female cardinal, and she stood my close, delighted presence as if we were old friends, screwing herself about and about, with every feather fluffed to make the most of its downy covering for protection against the howling gale. The opposite corner shielded a small sparrow, who pushed himself back into the cranny, determined the "ill-wind" should blow *him* only good, for he faced it and had the benefit of its force in fixing him securely.

But the tree! As if awakened to the coming stress for food (the snow was lightly flying,) the branches were literally strung with birds! Sparrows in chattering rows fluffed out—innumerable. Two bluejays, handsome, dashing, in spring suits, sitting sullenly apart, angry, aggrieved at the change of temperature and dearth of food. Eight-thirty A. M., and no breakfast! Sudden cold after springlike days—deplorable, not to be endured! Hunched up, stubborn-looking, they sat in the rocking gale, squawky, complaining. No

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compromise of any kind would they accept. Fair weather and a prompt breakfast—only these would move *them* to amiability. On another twig swung the splendid cardinal, cheery as you please, head up, his feathers light as down. He looked about him inquiringly, at intervals softly crooning, “Whoo-oo-oo?” A second female cardinal perched near him. *She* had secured a *grain* of *corn* (left-over lunch from yesterday), and her head drawn down into her feathers as if for warmth, she faced me fearlessly, not five feet outside my window-pane, twisting her head this way and that, so it was an easy matter for me to watch her turning the kernel over and over in her open mouth. She would stand it lengthwise in her beak, as if trying to crush it; then, her mouth closing, I would think, “Now its gone down.” But no, again and yet again she showed it to me “on end” in her bill, and fluttering her tiny red tongue about it. Then, finally, it must have been arranged to her liking, for she tidily wiped her mouth on a branch and settled down to wait developments—or my coming down stairs.

An extra bad morning called for extra good rations, and fried mush, together with English walnuts (extravagant fare for birds, but a “lag-niappe” that went with bad weather), was added to bread-crumbs, suet, and corn.

But the suet was as yet untouched. “Vergiss

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nicht die kleine vögel" held no place in the Decalogue of Western Christianity; but, led by the hungry horde of sparrows, these new birds were, after ten days' temptation, learning new tricks.

My largess, flung from the south window, instantly was accepted. To the ground swooped the hungry crowd, and, in the circle of young grass coaxed into greenness by a fictitious spring, now snow-besprinkled, the motley crew in feathers greedily disported themselves. Each seized his ration and flew aloft. The jay held his nut neatly between his feet on the branch and daintily picked the heart out of his pecan, deftly shuffling it about for convenience. The female cardinals—those motherly, comfortable, olive-gray birds—helped themselves to crusts of bread, which they nibbled at politely. What color in their feathers as they sat before me! The long, drooping tail showed beneath a warm, rosy gray; outside it is grayish brown, tipped with red; the breast is a soft golden gray, always with hint of a warmer color beneath; the wings red-tipped, and her crest of red stands straight up, blown erect (for the wind is at her back) until it is a perfect prototype of an Indian's head-dress. Her expression is the mildest in the world. You would know she was amiable, "easy to be entreated," by just one look. *She* does not begrudge the season its wintry days now and then.

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With her mate, she kens of warm, sheltering places.

Where the crusty jays betake themselves, I do not know; but they look mighty unpleasant folk out there in the wind and the snow, querulously scolding, and as they utter their three cross notes they have an up-and-down motion like a killdeer.

The chickadees have sampled the suet. At last it is found to be edible. A taste only, and they are off again to the tree-top. But swings through the air a downy woodpecker, scarlet-capped. Low on the trunk of the umbrella-tree he alights, scurries boldly up, and attacks the suet. Guest number two for this table! Down swoop the sparrows! "Is it possible that white stuff is to *eat*?" What an opportunity for greediness has been neglected! They swing above the downy and watch him, who, with an eye to business, pays no smallest heed to *them*. Below him his tiny mate, in sober black and white (no red cap for her) shyly adventures, but again and again retreats at sudden flutter of any bird's wing, especially when the big guinea woodpecker clambers up the tree-trunk.

Aha, the surly bluejays have turned an eye his way! Swoop! Away dodges the downy, and, with mircoscopic examination, his opponent digs out a huge mouthful of the dainty. Good! Comes the mate, and yet another of his

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ilk, learning at last where to look for the most "toothsome" morsel. The cardinals drop to the ground, and "Monsieur," picking up a grain of corn, hops briskly across the grass and daintily, delicately, lovingly places it in the open mouth of his mate, who flutters her wings in affectation, precisely as a coquette twirls a fan. Feeding his mate, and it's *snowtime*! Spring is truly on the way; nesting ideas are in their heads! Laughs my friend, who, breakfasting with me, looks out of the window, "Such a tree! like a Christmas-tree hung with pieces of crusts and suet!" "Heathen you are!" I declare; "not one of you people look after the birds."

Into my group of breakfasters come three folk in furs—two in brown, one in gray. Shall I tell you their names? Well, the fat, jolly little beggar in gray is "Joe"—"Joe Cannon," of whom one hears much in Kansas. The wee brown one is "Ted," for at not any single moment is he too busy to stop and run across to one squirrel or another to see what *he* is about! And the third one is named "Bob," military to a degree.

But this morning, in the misty snow and tearing wind, the squirrels do not stop to eat. They have other "fish to fry," and with squeals and hurry, they rush about on the lawn, burying their plunder of black walnuts with industrious haste. And do you know where they have also found

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place to hide their nuts? In the pocket of an old coat hanging under the eaves of the back porch. Stuffed to the brim is that musty old brown pocket, and when the rains come, in warm, snug shelter "Adjidaumo" sits upon the long beam and feasts himself.

But these are "fast-days"—stormy, weather-breeding—not feast-days, and in wondrous short time the jays follow suit and are carrying off nuts to places unknown to me. My opera-glass can not follow them.

Beneath the tree, close to the ground, cowers a chilly robin-redbreast. He has come too soon! Sifting snow powders his gray feathers as he "cuddles" himself up to keep warm; and in this one position he stands for *thirteen minutes* by my tiny clock!

Now the snow is deepening, the tree is shedding its "blossoms;" they flit before the gale, and I see them no more.

But the sun is *bound* to shine! Red and round and warm, it comes masterfully up day after day. Like magic the whiteness of the ground sinks away beneath the early greenness, the peach-trees across the way glow in pink, the plum-trees don bridal garments, the elms and maples shake out their tassels, and a rollicking note tells me the orioles are in the tree-tops, swinging, balancing,

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picking tiny insects from among young buds. The robins run in pairs, oftentimes in threes! But "three's a crowd," and *two* give battle, while the "prize" looks on unconcernedly, and eventually flies away with the victorious one in feathers.

To-day the squirrels—one, two, three, four, five—come to the edge of the porch—not quite brave enough to eat out of my hand, but with sufficient courage to pick up nuts that I drop, and to sit up solemnly and crack and eat them while I wait.

The cardinal whistles a new note. I answer. He adds two more notes in melody new to my ears. I reply. From tree to tree he hunts that other bird! *Where* can he be? Who is his rival? Back of the house he flits, then into the pine-trees, then across the street, calling, whistling, trying me with all manner of vocal exercises, growing more and more excited as his quest seems useless, for me he can not locate, well-hidden behind the porch curtain. For more than twenty minutes we keep up the game of hide-and-seek, and till I, quite breathless, give over the game.

It seems but the other day—even mid-December—when the roadside showed patches of tiny white asters! But to-day the air is full of fragrance, and the trees march along the

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banks of the smiling river "Kaw" clothed in lacy garments of pale olive green, and the dip of oars and echo of college songs across the water proclaim in no uncertain tone, "Spring; spring, spring!"

An Apartment in Demand

"Sap-suck's gittin' down to biz!"

—RILEY.

THE original owner, builder and excavator first brought herself into notice by a peremptory "tap-tap-tap-ping," presumably on our porch door. Springing to answer the summons, we found, not a raven, but a yellow-winged flicker who had chosen a spot on the east side of an old apple-tree stump for its nest and had begun operations in the most vigorous manner. A mighty wind long ago twisted off the top of the tree, leaving a stump perhaps ten feet high. Procrastination spared it for the home of this flicker, who, with provident eye, discovered the amount of labor saved in having an outside thatch to one's house that was crammed with delicious grubs. Virginia creeper wreathes the trunk from bottom to top and swings out great bunches of flowers for the humming-bird. Our flicker with its chisel-shaped bill ripped off the bark of the apple-tree and, flinging it to right and left, finally settled down to excavating a hole in the old wood. Soon

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a little stream of saw-dust trickled to the grass beneath, and, later, the ground was strewn with good-sized chips as the work progressed and the builder enlarged her dwelling. When the opening became deep enough to hold its body, the bird worked from the inside pushing out the chips energetically. The male bird also assisted in the work of excavation.

This nest-making was watched with deep interest by the other birds. They perched on a clothes-line near by, and on every available branch, peering, peeping, and chattering about the performance, and when the flicker disappeared, even swinging themselves down to look into the hole. A black and white woodpecker "Downy" examined the nest minutely and with evident delight, hitching himself gravely about the entrance, and had quite decided to occupy, when the return of the owner caused him to depart with obsequious haste. A tiny gray bird—a wood-pewee, for a day or two disputed the title to the estate, but the flicker proved her claim by routing out the usurper whenever she caught her in the nest, when the intruder would hide beneath the branches of the creeper and narrowly watch the flicker coming and going, and being gone she would slip in herself, only to be again routed!

When, emerging from the eggs, two young-

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sters came to fill up the nest, busy times began for the parents. The appetites of the young birds were ravenous. From morning until night they cried out for food in no gentle tones, and many a grub dozing in fancied security beneath the apple-tree bark, was pried out and sacrificed on the altar of family affection. But most of the sustenance was excavated from the terrace below our windows, long puzzling us as to what it could be. Hour after hour would the busy birds dig, dig, dig into the bank, devouring with great gusto the tid-bits found therein. Up and down the terrace the birds would travel, never once lifting their heads to exhibit a wriggling worm as the robins do, but evidently swallowing as fast as they could gather up the morsels.

Watching, waiting, puzzling, and the aid of an opera-glass finally discovered to us their feast, and our investigation of the terrace showed it to be full of tiny ant hills, the inhabitants thereof serving as food for the flickers. Their smooth long tongues covered with a sticky exudation, they plunged into the center of a colony of ants and licked up the busy workers as a cat licks cream. Packing their throat full, away they would go to the nest where they literally crammed the ants into the gaping throats of the young birds, ramming down the supply in such a vigorous way that my constant apprehen-

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sion was lest the sharp bills should pierce through the back of the small neck. Thus the fledglings were fed precisely in the manner in which the nest was excavated—with repeated and rapid vibrations of the head of the bird, as the long tongue forced itself again and again into the wide open mouth, evidently drawing supplies from a full reservoir. There was no difficulty about observing the feeding process, for the birds were extremely lazy about flying, or trying their wings at all. They would scramble to the entrance of the hole and clinging to the edge, look out from their round window mildly wondering, much resembling prim little Quaker ladies in silky caps of gray.

When they were not “wondering,” they were calling loudly for food. Crowded together they would hang out two funny little heads that would nod and nod as their owners squawked out “Food-food-food!” “Ants, ants, ants!” “Food-food!” over, and over again, endlessly. It was a work of great patience and perseverance on the part of the wearied parents—persuading them to flight.

Worn out with satisfying the voracious young appetites, they called and coaxed their children to “fly, little birdling, fly!” and patience giving out, finally allowed them to go hungry for a whole day, during which time they squawked

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wildly to be fed, and were answered with scolding loud and long. One whole day of this treatment and then one young flicker stepped out onto the branches of the Virginia creeper, fluttered his wings and flopped aimlessly away, tumbling at last into the grapevine, where he rested, surveyed the world and proudly took further flight. After a day of solitary state and little food the last bird came out, and for a week or two they stayed about the place, rousing us at all hours with their efforts at "drumming" on the porch roof as they solemnly dragged themselves before our windows. These young flickers were of a warm gray color, mottled with black, having sharply pointed tail feathers, bright yellow under wings and tail, and bright yellow quills, with a black ring in a circlet about the throat.

The nest was no sooner vacated, than my lady of the soft gray-white breast who had kept an eye on affairs slipped in and took possession. From time to time she slipped out and daintily selected a straw or a long piece of withered grass and returned with it to the nest, took it inside and then came out to perch in front of the hole and fall into a "gray" study about something. She was a very curiously acting little bird, always stopping to meditate after each effort toward nest-building. She seemed to have liked the coziness of the nest, and, still, as she

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was used to building a home of "feathers and moss and a wisp of hay," something about this one was n't quite as it should be. So trying to equalize matters, she carried in straws, but could find no way in which to weave them and, puzzled, would come out and perch on a branch to think the matter over. Perfectly quiet she sat for five or ten minutes at a time, looking at the hole in the tree, twisting her head this way and that, wondering what she should do about it, then down into the grass, take up more building material and repeat the whole performance. She evidently did not know quite what to do, but the idea of a home ready made, so secure, so charmingly located, held a fascination she could not resist, and with alternations of pride and misgivings she set up her house-keeping. She was the most silent little bird, uttering but a single soft, pathetic note, "Dear!" "Dear!" and this at long intervals. But her housekeeping was not for long. I hardly think she laid any eggs before abandoning the place, as after a few days she disappeared from the garden.

A year before a "Pic-bois-jaune" (or flicker), had started a nest in another crumbling tree in the garden, but luck was against it, for scarcely had it cut with great labor and precision the round hole for the opening and partly exca-

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vated, than, after one of the intervals for rest, it returned to find a red-headed woodpecker in possession, and possession being *all* points of the law in bird-dom, in possession she remained, and after vain attempts to recover its "holdings" the flicker retreated to the campus where are building sites a'plenty.

When strong winds finally completed the destruction of this giant tree and it lay on the ground in fragments of rotten wood, we learned that the hole in which the woodpecker had raised her brood was seventeen inches deep. Presumably she found a hollow already for occupancy when half way down, and her bill had drilled through into it. The gray bird, (a wood-peewee,) in her preparation had filled the hollow to the height of at least five inches with the grasses we had watched her select.

A yellow-billed sap-sucker excavated a hole closely adjoining that of the flicker, but higher up, but having omitted to examine the other side of the branch he had chosen, to his great astonishment he had drilled but an inch or two in when his bill came out on the other side, the opposite side of the stump having rotted off. Such dismay was his as he scrambled around to the back part to examine the tree, thrusting his bill in the hole on that side, then back again

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to the front and thrusting his bill through *that* side again, hanging on with his feet at the mouth of the hole and turning his handsome head side-wise so his eye could squint at the daylight shining through, but very wisely accepted the situation with good grace and made a home in the dying maple. This tree itself would have lived for many a year had not these superbly costumed, sweet-tongued fellows gratified their taste by "tapping" it with hundreds of holes in "sugar time." The trunk of the tree was literally honey-combed with the marks made by this woodpecker, and many times two, three or four of the birds might be seen at one time drinking sap from the newly-drilled holes.

The pine-trees that once stood in front of the house also suffered from their depredations, the gummy sap exuding and running down in streams from the holes they made.

Last summer a red-headed woodpecker appeared at our door, or on the lawn rather, with three young ones, two of his own very evidently, one marked like the young of the yellow bellied-sap-sucker. Whether the latter had made a mistake and laid in the wrong nest, or whether the strange bird had been found in the woods "unappropriated," we do not know.

Most likely the little fellow's parents had met

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with a mishap and he was alone in the world. Just possibly, however, the sap-sucker had been driven out of her nest by a later comer—the red-headed who thus adopted the offspring of the former tenant as her own. Certainly she gave him as good care as the others.

In the Spring o' the Year

*"Mr. Bluejay, full o' sass,
In them baseball clothes o' his,
Sportin' 'round the orchard jes'
Like he owned the premisis."*

IN February, on a bright, warm day somewhere about the first of the month, the bluejays arrived in goodly number, and, coming out in the early morning, an outrageous calling and crying greeted me, while from the limbs of the pine-trees about the house there came circling over my head and alighting at my feet a dozen or more of these bright, saucy fellows, demanding their breakfast. Their familiarity and their actions showed them to be the same birds we had fed during the previous summer, and the bread I quickly scattered proved their identity, for they instantly fluttered around me to the ground, squabbling over and snatching at the largest pieces as I crumbed them. The birds gave no sign of timidity, and when the crumbs were all devoured, imperatively demanded more. Their early appearance was followed by snow and

IN THE SPRING O' THE YEAR

very cold weather, but rations must have been low in the "bush," for those bluejays were the hungriest tramps whose inner cravings we ever tried to appease!

In an idle way, in the first of the summer, we occasionally tossed them a few crumbs; but they soon showed us that they looked for it as a regular thing and as a business not to be neglected, calling us sharply to account when we forgot. At twelve o'clock almost to the minute one would come, and, alighting on a branch, begin to call. Then he would fly away, returning with one, two, or three other birds, sometimes many more, when they would all join in a discordant choir of sounds, until fed. At five o'clock, "sharp," they returned for supper. The jays showed no disposition to be social, treating the whole transaction as a mere matter of business. They were hungry, and we, having taken the contract to feed them, must stick to it, else they would make such uproar we should be glad to; but invariably they departed without even an interested glance at us.

A robin will eat what you give him, but will hop sociably around, afterward with his head on one side, looking at you, questioningly, as if he appreciated your open-handed hospitality and would like to say so, if you were only not too stupid to understand. Sometimes he will come

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hopping familiarly by my chair on the porch, then up the step into the hall, quite inside, peering up the stairs and sidling through open doors inquisitively, then walking out with an approving nod, taking his departure with dignity and friendly deliberation. During a sudden drenching rain-storm, a robin sought shelter close beside my chair. His feathers were limp and dripping, and he stood dejectedly fluttering his wings and shrugging them up to his ears, cocking up at me occasionally, an eye full of disgust. "A little rain," he said, (or meant to say), "is all very well, but when it comes to a downpour like this, and a fellow gets so wet he simply can't fly, why, it's too much for *me*, I can tell you!" Then he resigned himself to circumstances and settled down close to my rocker, occasionally fluttering his wings and casting upward a deprecating glance, until the sun burst through the clouds, and in a trice he deserted me for the moist ground, where he found, now, rare pickings of worms. How eagerly he turned his little black head, listening for the faintest stir among the earth-worms, and how viciously he dragged them out when he discovered them!

Our especial family of bluejays nested in an elm tree before our gates, year after year. One year the robins had the nest, then came the bluejays' turn; then the latter "took up the claim,"

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and it was occupied each season by the same birds, or else handed down in entail through successive generations. As usual we were interested in the nest-building, and offered suggestions in the way of rags, and strings and pieces of cotton, which they took in good part and, mostly, used them. One jay carried away a long strip of sky-blue calico, which she seemed puzzled to utilize. But, after studying the situation from all sides of the nest and giving it much deliberate thought, she succeeded in weaving it in and out until only a yard of the stuff swung gayly in the breeze, and there it waved all summer and through the winter, seemingly a fine enticement to cats, but it proved only decorative, after all, no harm coming to the family; and the prettiest nest that year was one with the blue wings of the mother bird brooding above, a ribbon of blue twined round about, and the triumphant pennant floating below.

Jays enjoy (?) rather a bad reputation, which extends even to the rearing of their babies; but much watching of their ways, in this nest, revealed to me only great solicitude on their part from the first little peep of the young ones until they were fairly launched into a sea of green leaves. But, (with apologies), I must own, that, in other cases, when the newly-fledged were yet standing about on the tree branches and clinging

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among the trellises crying to be fed, not yet strong enough for long flights, I have known the parents to coolly desert them. Lacking confidence in their wings, a little shy of exploring the strange world into which they have plunged, squawking for food, yet ever showing fight when approached, these orphans hang about the house in the most undecided way. They perch, dejectedly, upon fence-posts, and, occasionally, submit to a hand-pat; by much circumvention, you *may* coax them to eat from your hand, and, having eaten, they may follow you in blundering flight as you go indoors, only to almost beat the breath from their small bodies in aimless fluttering against walls and windows until caught, and released.

Jays are also said to be "wary, and shy." Far from this we found them! Lords, indeed, of all our domain! They conducted their domestic affairs coolly and indifferently, so far as *we* were concerned, accepting our help, but scolding us at a great rate all the time.

Flying-time was a day of great tribulation one year. There were only two young birds in the nest, and when they seemed almost ready to take upon themselves the responsibilities of life, we were startled one evening at supper by sounds of battle. We sprang to the door to see two infuriated bluejays, the old birds, attacking

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the family cat as she lay basking in the sun at the foot of a long flight of stone steps. The cat looked guilty enough, but was trying to assume an air of injured innocence, edifying to behold; which, however, did not impose upon the birds or upon us. One of them stood directly in front of her, hardly a foot from her nose, with both wings drooping on the stones and mouth wide open, uttering angry cries of vengeance and despair. The other bird was behind the cat, and at intervals of about half a minute, swooped over her head, in front of her eyes, making vicious pecks that only just failed to strike her. Evidently one of their young birds had been devoured, but not a stray feather proved it. We sided with the besieging party, and sat down to watch it out. After five minutes of persecution, the cat began a retreat, first one step higher, then a halt and with blinking half-shut eyes she feigned sleep. Then another step, another nap, the birds pursuing her fiercely. When the last step was reached, she looked to us for help, and, failing that, sneaked under the grape-vine. From the trellis above the birds carried on the assault, and it ended in a grand rout for pussy, who suddenly raced to the porch, and thence to the wood-shed, the jays pursuing her to the very door. Next morning the birds left their nest the instant the cat appeared, renewing the battle, which resulted

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in the cat's final retreat under the house for the remainder of the day. After breakfast the only young bird in the nest essayed its first flight, hopping unsteadily along the limb until it grew brave enough to trust its wings, reaching the Virginia creeper on the house in a state of mingled fear and triumph, fluttering from there to the ground. The old jays having lost one child were greatly wrought up over the safety of this one, and the air resounded with warning cries as the birds kept one on each side of the little chap, until he could get to the tree again and away into the campus.

A jaunty young robin appropriated a nest of the year before—also a jay's nest. When we saw her examining the premises, we remonstrated, assuring her that it was too badly out of repair to be weather-proof, or a safe place to raise a family; but she decided it would save trouble and she'd run the risk. So, with great pretense of house-building, she jumped into the shaky structure, flirted the straws and sticks about, making it more insecure than before, daubed it carelessly with mud, and without ado began to lay her eggs and assume matronly cares. Her shiftlessness led to a tragedy. Hardly had the youngsters begun to stir themselves when, one afternoon, something pushed itself over the edge of the nest and fell to the ground with a

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sickening thud. It was one of the young robins, and I picked up a warm featherless little body with the life knocked out of it. Two minutes later, down came a second bird, losing its life, also, on the stones, and when the bereft mother reached home, I stood under the tree, with the birds iying on my hand, and tried to explain matters, hoping she would exonerate *me*! But she was sadly distressed, also suspicious, and, when I laid the birds down on the flag-stone and went off a little way to watch her, she hopped around and around, examining them carefully, calling and coaxing impatiently. The other parent bird arriving, the two talked the matter over, flying anxiously from nest to birds and back again, until I carried the unlucky infants away.

Troubles in Bird Land

The chirrup of the robin and the whistle of the quail,

As he piped across the meadow, sweet as any nightingale.

—J. W. RILEY.

ALONG THE RILEY ROAD

THE old "Riley Road," running over hills and through deep dales, often dabbling its dusky way through the clear waters of "Indian Creek," and passing through dense woods, is joyous with ripples and runes of bird-song. Fields of stubble on one side of the rocky highway are alive with quail and meadow larks that rise flutteringly, half startled by rolling wheels, then settle tentatively on low twigs and in fence corners, as if, after all, there is no cause for alarm. The borders of the road are yellowing with golden rod and purpling with asters; butterflies, white and bronze, soar in the ecstasy of summer sunshine over the tiny flowers of the sweet Indian grass, that yields its perfume of the crushing of its feathery growth.

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The quails, disturbed, run before you like a flock of chickens, clucking and clacking, and not until far away, quite across the field, do they regain their equanimity and send out their cheerful call. The first note of a quail always seems as if brought forth with an effort. It begins with a whistle of "Bob," sharp and clear; then a rest, as though he were wondering, if after much practice, he had got it right at last, and then he follows it up briskly with "White!" repeating instantly and more continuously, "Bob White; Bob, Bob White!" and than this there is no clearer bird call.

The meadow larks along this quiet road are not shy, and in many cases evince curiosity as we, sitting quietly under a convenient tree, turn upon them an opera-glass. Closer and closer they come in short flights across the stubble, their gay, yellow waistcoats, golden mail as the sun strikes their breasts.

Among all the countless variety of birds to be come up with on this wandering Riley Road, if your laggard steps can keep pace with wing flight, not one offers to your inspection a disposition more various in its moods than the shrike. Though his character is not a reputable one, yet he has certain domestic qualities that endear him to his family, such as watchfulness and tender solicitude for his mate in nesting

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time, and, later, for the young birds that crowd his nest. Following him over fields of stubble is an exciting pursuit, and on a certain afternoon, when we first discovered him perched on an old fence post, we were unfortunate enough to lose him in the chase. His family was somewhere in a dense thicket in which he disappeared, for from his bill dangled an especially fine worm, and he himself was a thing of beauty, glancing through the sunlight in his glistening feathers of white, gray, and black. His reputation for cruelty is, however, not unfounded. A farmer gave us the benefit of his observations of this bird, at the same time declaring that the "butcher" birds exhibited a neatness and skill in their work that must have been born of long habit, or is an inheritance from ancestors who were dextrous carvers.

'T was in harvest time, that heyday of life for the shrike, when he convicted himself by his bold ways. The corn stalks had been cut and stacked, and as the men were carryng these away, from beneath one of the piles ran out a little field mouse. As the frightened mouse scurried away through the stubble, down swooped a bird, striking him sharply with his powerful bill. The mouse stopped as if paralyzed, uttered a pitiful squeal, then recovered himself, and started away for shelter in the nearest stack,

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only to become on its way the recipient of another vicious dig. The blows were forceful, but carefully aimed, as if with intent to worry but to kill, as a cat would badger a mouse, for a summary death would lack the flavor of carnage which seemed a special delight to this brigand of the air. Flying high, the butcher bird descended again and yet again upon his victim, who, unable to reach shelter and entirely powerless to parry the blows rained upon him, ran wildly hither and thither. Then the shrike descended to the ground and ran along after the mouse, turning it this way and that, giving it a vicious dig whenever opportunity offered. The mouse squealed with pain and grew so bewildered and weak that he finally gave up all attempts to escape, and cuddled down in a little hollow, to be immediately seized by the shrike in his bill and carried into the air. From time to time, as he made his way to the neighboring woods, the bird dropped the mouse, allowing it to fall a short distance, descending upon it with the swiftness of light and catching it in its claws, never once allowing it to fall to the ground. This act, several times repeated, must finally have squeezed all life out of the mouse; let us hope so, at any rate, and that the little animal was dead before the shrike disappeared with it into the woods. The act seemed

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one of sheer cruelty, the bird exhibiting a sort of eager delight in seeing how much pain he could inflict without killing his victim. Possibly a scientific turn of mind and a leaning toward vivisection incited him to the experiment; let us judge him as charitably as may be.

Later, when the plow was turning fresh furrows through the stubble, this shrike (or another) presented himself in search of prey. He followed closely in the track of the plow, diligently searching for worms, and upon finding one almost invariably flew to the top of the stubble. Those watching concluded he there swallowed them, but a closer inspection revealed a sadder state of affairs. Occasionally, it is true, he made a short excursion to the woods, carrying a choice mouthful, but the greater part of the day was spent in balancing himself on the stubble. On these sharp points he decoratively hung the worms extracted from the soil. Many of these were found still wriggling, but others hung limply, the executioner having made sure in all cases that the thorn had pierced through, firmly impaling them. The bird was entirely undisturbed by observation, and spent much time and careful thought in placing a worm to his complete satisfaction. No matter how frantic were the struggles of the worm, it never got away from the inquisitor. The number of worms impaled

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was much more than sufficient for one family, and as birds generally prefer their worms fresh, a large amount of this provender must have remained hanging until blown away by the winds, hence the wholesale slaughter seemed absolutely without excuse.

Chronicles of Summer

The wind blew him out of the tree-top.

—"BILLY."

HE was black, he was brown, he was small. He could not walk, he could not fly. A cyclone hurried his advent into a world big, and empty, and bewildering. The high grass almost submerged him—a fluttering, disconsolate, lost little body, so willing, so absolutely desirous of being adopted by anything that wore wings, no matter what the color.

His screams rent the air, and he evidently had formed no idea of his own size, for he flopped as frantically, and as clumsily after a sparrow or a wren that alighted near him as he did after folk of his own race and color,—the big, glistening black-birds.

"A bee," quaintly says some old writer, "is the first summer bird;" but close upon his heels, this year, came "Billy," for, last to leave in the fall, first in spring, arrived the crows.

Late blue-bells are yet in blossom. Swinging low among the grasses, the bending honey-

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cups nod 'neath the weight of a bee. Honey-bees, bumble-bees, fat, black and golden, curl in heavy surfeit on the flower's silken lip; dandelions, pierced by a shining lance, fumbled over droningly by the "Taster of Sweets," yield nectar from their golden fringe. The summer opens always with a spring party for the bees, and a harvest of bugs for the birds! "The land," truly, "flows with honey," if not with milk!

By the time the slits of young bird-eyes have widened into roundness, from flower, and tasseling-tree buds the parents may gather all manner of insect provender for even more widely opened mouths!

"Billy" dodged among all this teeming prodigality of sustenance, as I watched him from my stone seat under the pine, but his wit did not match his appetite—he had yet to learn to feed himself.

And 't was cold, if summer did tremble in between icy breezes a day at a time. Patches of blue spread themselves along the picket-fence, hiding warmly 'neath the gooseberry bushes, lest blurry skies let down the sleeting rain, or "scatter hoar-frost like ashes."

No longer than a fortnight since buds, and branches, and young leaves stood amazedly imprisoned in sparkling crystal, rainbow-hued, iridescent! In shadow, the thicket of osage, with

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bending, swinging branches; tall, over-arching elm trees, pendulate with oriole nests,—all frostily silver, the magic of sunlight creeping inch by inch, the line of summer-time marked in yellow-green beneath his wand.

A rollicking, liltng whistle—orioles daintly picking their breakfast from opening elm-buds! A meadow-lark (in bravery of lemon-yellow vest and velvet cravat), from the fence-post top, in delicious melody slurs his six gay notes. The pasture is alive with these dandies; they bob up like quail from every tiny hillock. Come you near the nest, their lure is a broken, fluttering wing, and it is only by chance, in the purpling-seeded blue-brass, you stumble on a nest most rarely made. Made? Woven around, and around, and around, the long grasses drawn down and tied one within another, crossing, ever crossing, in curious network; close-fashioned at one end, close down upon the ground, ever growing wider-mouthed, with an overhanging fringe of grass veiling the entrance. And there, in one such dry, safe pocket, I found last summer a bevy of five naked, pink youngsters, who had just reached the sitting-up stage of existence, and whose heavy pink abdomens, as though loaded with shot, anchored them safely as they sat back on two slim little legs, or in trying to move, rolled about drunkenly on that very useful part

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of their economy! The sound of the scythe was heard in the land, the grass was ready for the reaper—but much pleading saved the little “home-stead” until the young ones could fly into the bushes.

A robin,—careless mother!—has diligently made her house in the shelter of a porch-climbing crimson Rambler. Poor choice of location, for the cabin-roof sags low, and pickaninnies pass in and out the door, their kinky heads “snagging” on thorny branches. But serenely unconcerned sits the feathered “Haus Frau,” possibly understanding the admonition of the “Mammy” before whose door she has built. “Ef yo’ chillun,” I heard her warn, waving her pudding-stick,—“Ef yo’ chillun lay yo’ finge on dat nes, I gwine bat yo’ heads off! Hyah me?”

Natural gas mains cross the meadows; but how may a robin wot of that? or forecast a shining beam from the tiny window that would pick its way straightly, and illuminatingly to her, her home, her youngsters, her spouse? Yet such was the case. From the grayness of indoors, nightly, and in early twilight, fell a bright ray of light across the nest, that was just exactly on a level with one’s eyes. I sit on the shaky, rotten platform and watch the parents suddenly appear from the dark. The light full shining in their eyes they composedly drop “angle-worms”

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and fly-by-night bugs into four wide yellow mouths, then patiently wait for opportunity of nest-cleansing. By nine o'th'clock, sleep descends in earnest on the brood. The father dreams in the "Juniper Tree" close by, and not any number of "camp-meetin' chunes" from assembled darkies disturb the dozy mother, who now sits warily on the nest's edge, *half* her body over the outer edge, *half* pressed softly above the bodies of the just-beginning-to-be-feathered young ones. Around the rim, sticking out from beneath her feathers and resting on the edge, are four small heads! All this for the purpose of good air, I presume, and to keep the vital parts safe from the chill of night. And I may as well add, right here, that I tried, last night, to have a "K. U." man come down and photograph this brood that was half-reared by artificial light; but he was at a "May-Day" pageant, and I waited a more "convenient season," which never came.

Ten o'clock, lights out, all's well; but the winds blew and the rain fell, and at dawn came distressful cries. A pickaninny ran up my hill, crying out, "Granny says fo' yo' to come down; de bird's nes' done blowed down wid de vines!" Sure enough, on the porch amid a tangle of rambler-roses lay a soaked and battered nest, and four bedraggled, dead little birds. Had the rose itself not swung loose from support, the nest

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would have held through the storm—for, no matter how flimsily built, a bird's nest is anchored with marvelous security. 'T was useless to assure the mother *we* were n't to blame! We had betrayed her confidence, and as we gathered up the birds, she flew away, not to return—so far—after the catastrophe. I have gone through woods after a storm, where huge trees have been uprooted; where they have been snapped off like twigs by the mighty wind, and I have found but one bird's nest cast loose upon the ground, tho' a' many yet clung among the fallen branches.

Sturdy rose-pink branches of the "hundred-leaf" rose hide a secret! Such hubbub of song! Such fluttering, excited notes. Came I out, honestly, only to gather crisp, curly lettuce leaves, sprigs of mint, and to make moan over thrice-grown potato sprouts, thrice-frosted, all dancing raggedly in the breeze, and wind-hurried from their moorings across earth's brown carpet. But I am a trespasser—the birds proclaim it!

I wish I could make you hear their alarm-note—the call of the thrush when danger threatens. Am I at my desk at the farthest end of the house, am I upstairs on household cares intent, through all the scale of multitudinous bird-song, that one high, questioning note strikes straight where it is aimed, and, even before my stumb-

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ling feet have carried me a' down the stair, I know a cat is skulking under the trees, or hiding in the grass, or blinking in hypocritical innocence on the stable door-sill. The call is high, clear, imploring, a sort of slur,—“Oh, *come!* Oh, *come!*” with an ever rising inflection. Quiet falls instantly I am there, experience having taught them it means rescue.

To-day, however, no cat trails her stealthy way among the feathery bloom of cucumber vine along the fence top. Why such fear? I lift a heavy-headed rose. Just below, in dark green shadow, sits, still as death, a wee speckled thrush! His bright eyes shine confidently into mine, he does not move a feather or utter a cry. Fear of anything has not yet awakened in his baby breast. Among big, faint-pink fading flowers of the overhanging quince tree, the old birds close in upon me. The game is up! What will I “do next?” they wonder. For seven minutes, by my watch, I keep my stand, the old ones swinging down to look in my face; and in lowest tones whisper “Tir-o’lee!” the little one, trusting to luck, does not budge an inch as I hold back the branches to watch him. Then I give him “Good morning” and a laugh for his canny quietness. He only stares, and stares!

The wrens, with much ado, made nest in a trimly painted, pale-green tobacco box placed

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under the porch roof. Said the "Judge," "The sparrows have taken the box this year," promptly emptying out the conglomeration of "feathers, and straws, and a wisp of hay," all the time considering that the darting wrens were twittering, "Thanky, sir." But when they instantly went to work, and again collected the stuff and re-made their home in the same box, the Judge concluded it was time to consult the dictionary, to learn that the two species made somewhat similar nests, and that *he* had made a slight mistake in his interpretation of bird-language!

Snug in an old tin paint bucket in the carriage-shed, another pair of wrens made home. Waiting for the fledglings to grow, for "kodaking," I waited too long, for as I turned my camera their way, as if by premeditated signal, out above my head sailed the whole bunch of five!

But we left "Billy"—where? Floundering in the grass, trying to identify his "kin-folk!" The sloping stretches of lawn, gold-green in sunshine, are possessed by dozens of black-birds. Among them has Billy no place? Apparently not.

Old birds fly about him, they even walk boldly and bow-leggedly up to him to judge of his "points." With eager flop, Billy acknowledges the attention, hastening to explain that he's lost! Alertly and arrogantly, they walk away, with

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high steps. Pursued, they soar into the trees,—a totally incomprehensible thing, that,—rising from the ground,—to Billy, who, in astonishment, stops whimpering to stare!

His long wing-feathers are scarcely half out of the quill, so it is only by haphazard springs that he finally lands on the rim of the drinking pan under the trees. There he edges up to every bird that comes to drink, shortly tumbling from the perch, helplessly.

Unsummoned, birds of all feathers come to study him. Each one, he fondly thinks, will claim him, if they would only stop to talk the matter over! He chases the flickers, (ant-hunting in the grass,) who rise to the tree-trunks in great affront, and gaze at him over their shoulders.

Enraged by persistency of following, a jay stands and scolds, circled round and round by this would-be son, or daughter! A young robin, in similar distress, I have seen fed by the “neighbors,” also an orphaned thrush; a cow-bird, in dependent at first, then a beneficiary of the sparrows! Young blue-birds, (the mother dying) have been raised among a robin brood.

But a crow-black-bird, I learn, is a bad mother, though the race ranks high in bird aristocracy. Her nest-making occupies much time. This spring she made it high in the elm, and it

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was full half of white, yard-long strips I had flung onto the driveway for the other birds. To her high-located nest was a long "fly," so, when she first came, she concluded to utilize a nearer location. She gathered up rags into loop after loop, dripping from each side of her mouth, then dropped them, and greedily made off to what looked to her a more desirable string, sampling them all, and finally sheering suddenly into a small cedar.

A heap easier it would be to just decorate the nest of a *thrasher*, so safely hidden within, that even *I* had not yet seen it! Not so easy, after all! In a flash, up from the drive darted the architects, and out of the tree fled the crow, discreet, not valorous, leaving festooned on the outer branches all her length of white string, to point a moral—"Thou shalt not jump thy neighbor's claim."

Valiantly was the nest defended all day, for in numbers came the black-birds, chattering about the insult to one of their high class. Even the splendidly purple males "took to" gathering up strings, and made feint of attack, but with no success. Ten black-birds, to two small thrashes! But the "battle is *not* to the strong!"

Later I found no eggs had yet been laid. The nest was finished and awaiting the pleasure of its makers to occupy; but they kept a wary

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eye on their property, and to-day the female is setting. They have nests full of young ones—the black-birds, but they must fend for themselves at the earliest stage, for, if the parents weary of too vigorous appetites, occasionally they are deserted. They show no such patience as the flickers, who feed, and feed, and continue to feed, the supply invariably equaling the demand, until the lazy youngsters are almost too big to climb out of their hole.

In looking over Billy, the black-birds have a “you’re nothing to *me!*” air that is indescribable. They fly high and leave him gazing disconsolately heavenward. Righteously angry at the birds in default, I gathered Billy up and carried him into the house, and, according to old legends on the raising of babies, I administered to him bread and milk—or I tried to, rather. ’T was not the diet his stomach yearned for; he would have none of it. The milk ran out of his mouth on both sides, and his bill he shut like a clam on the bread, and swallow it he would not. In a strawberry box I made his bed, and, as is usual with bad babies, he went to bed hungry.

Daylight, and Billy’s peremptory tones coming up from the kitchen. I put him out onto the grass, hoping for help in his misery, but none came, though he shouted himself weak with notes

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of woe. His guilty progenitors were about somewhere, but they gave no sign.

Then, with his breakfast on my mind, I telephoned to "K. U." "On what shall I feed a baby black-bird? He won't eat bread and milk." A laugh came over the wire. "Give him cracker and milk; the bread is too heavy." So, on soaked salted wafers I expensively regaled Billy, who, with avidity and gusto, gulped them down. On this he grew and waxed fat, strawberry-cradled by night. By day, hobbled to a string under the japonica bush, he called on all the powers to help him find his "Mammy." In due time—in short time—he learned to walk proudly, and even sooner he learned the marvelous accomplishment of flying.

Anything more surprised than he when the birds he followed lifted themselves on wings and left him, I have never seen! He would relax limply and stare, "Now *how* was that trick done?"

Society he yearned for, of his own kind, but, barring that, he adored, and made confidence of, "Jack," an Irish setter. A wee mite of a bird, and "Jack," like a giant, looked him over daily, undecided whether to "mouth" him or ignore him. He would study the midget, then turn questioning brown eyes on me, while Billy sitting on my hand eagerly croaked about many

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things. He progressed from "cracker and milk" to a diet of angle worms, having only one, at first, as dessert, and in not many days he learned to forage in the earth-mold for succulent morsels.

He was with us for months; was always an agreeable companion, with a propensity to steal anything that took his fancy; but the woods and the trees, and the streams, and the fields, looked so good to him we took him, on a day, over into the pasture, and set him free, to probably, in his time, repudiate his offspring as *he* had been forsaken.

Mocking-bird notes rang out of many tree-tops this spring. So persistently they filled the air with their melody that a cardinal caught the song—only a little less varied, less facile. Tossed out from the top of a tall cottonwood beyond the vineyard, only the glint of scarlet betrayed the identity of the singer, as he rapturously warbled throughout the late afternoon. I have known him, in captivity, to catch the notes of a canary; but in the open, this accomplishment was wholly new to me.

On the banks of the Mississippi, 'way down in Louisiana, I heard, on a day, the muffled notes, in somewhat awkward rendering, of the mocker's song in the thicket beyond an abandoned levee. It proved to be a rascally jay per-

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sonating the "Pride of the South," and chuckling with glee at his fancied success.

At "Linden Plantation," on the banks of the Mississippi, the levee protecting the country from overflow was moved back nearly a mile, and consequently, all buildings of value were moved back inside of the new levee. Now birds, you know, certainly do have a "home feeling," a home love for those who long abide in one place and near where they constantly build. Thus a mocking-bird had built for long in an elm tree in front of a certain house. This house, then, following the protection of the levee, was carried to the center of a large cotton field, a mile from its former position, with not a shrub in sight! What did the deserted mocker? What would any faithful follower do? She came swiftly after, and made a nest in a pile of old boards and dèbris piled near the house, rearing her brood in the same happy security that had protected her always.

When, in July, the half grass-grown driveway of my farm is alight along its curves with the creamy "Candles of the Lord," (flowering stalks of the Yucca), whole colonies of domesticated wood-birds flock adown its length, bringing with them the season's harvest of youngsters. Until September they swing about among the bushes, and, when the burning of the leaves be-

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gin, heaped for lighting on the driveway, they all run along the grass at its side, cannily snatching at the insects that fly out before the fire, just as the chickens do!

Slipping, sliding, babbling, laughing, dancing, singing our brook comes flinging its way across sunlit meadows and through ferny hollows; over broad shallows of golden sand, where water-birds come to drink and to swim. The lazy country road follows its twists and curves, and in the thicket of haw-apple-trees, a certain old, deep hollow held a blue-bird's nest.

I, "devotee," daily make my "Novena" to the place. I have no "blessed candle" to make true my wish of no harm to these three naked little youngsters who will, some day, be "blue," but I doubt if good "St. Roch" himself could insure safety in a country where no ban is put upon the persecuting of the birds.

But I do not worry. How could I, when all the lovely world is mine—is any one's—for the mere taking. Shining, sun-spread pastures; purpling shadows in the forest at high noon; piny woods of cathedral quietness, where the sun filters goldenly through the fringed trees, and crowds of small wood-birds take you into most friendly communion. The golden-crowned thrush walks with dignity from the bushes, stares at you, plodding the road-ruts, and walks back

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again, in no manner disconcerted. Aromatic smells of Araby are shaken from the branches at every breeze, and with the melody of bells, the crystal-clear water falls over shelving ledges all the long way.

Thus, I, philosopher, bird-questing, wandered, well content, under a sky of June. Came I then to Mary, the gardener's wife, in tears, and a gingham apron! She sat upon her porch, under its snowy luxuriance of an eaves-climbing "Baltimore Belle." Evil speakers had talked scandal of her—*cow!*

"Folks are sayin' she's got the tuberculosis in her jaw!" wept Mary. Then outbursts of wrath, "Those who talk had better look out!" and down into the apron went Mary's tear-wet face! Now, Mary's heart is not strong—has a tendency to lag; so I loftily counsel.

"No *matter*, Mary! Do not be *troubled*. *Nothing* is worth making yourself ill over! Nothing in all the world is worth getting angry about-nothing! Why, I *never* am angry, never!" and so on, and so forth.

An admiring eye emerges from a corner of the apron, and with a friendly pat on her shoulder, I go on my pilgrimage. At its end, I find an empty nest, and two belligerent birds chasing through the air after a bevy of small boys in "overalls" who are scudding away into the woods.

UNDER OXFORD TREES

"Christian Science" meets its Waterloo in the wave of wrath that rises up in my heart and chokes me! Back on my steps I fly across the brook, up the hill, panting, breathless, to the house of my disciple,—Mary.

"Let me get to the 'phone," I gurgled. I poured into that patient ear all my vials of hottest wrath. The "game warden" was at the other end of the line, and promised prosecution; but when I paused, appeased, perspiring, and looked into Mary's awestruck eyes, the full meaning of it all came over us, and tears for "Timothy," (the bluegrass-loving, tuberculosis cow!), and tears for the birds were promptly mixed with tears of wildest laughter. To preach is so easy; but to practice—"there's the rub!"

AUG 18 1911

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