A-G [Grinnell,
E. + J.]
Smallest
1900

Grinnell, E. and J. Our smallest penman, the unknown

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"THE LANDS OF THE SUN EXPAND THE SOUL."

VOL. 13, No. 1.

LOS ANGELES

JUNE, 1900.

OUR SMALLEST FRIENDS, THE HUMMERS.

BY ELIZABETH AND JOSEPH GRINNELL.

WE have found a good deal of entertainment when Mrs. Anna Hummer nests low. It is emphatically "Mrs. Hummer," for her brilliant lord is off to the arroyos or blossoming fields as soon as the real cares of a family are upon him. Thus is the little wife left to the building of the fragile nest, the provisioning of the larder, and the rearing of posterity. She is capable, and spends no time, that we have observed, in repining at her limited sphere. Ever faithful, fearless, untiring, she meets the demands of her annual twins, even nesting twice, if there be time, before the summer mid-heat. She begins about Christmas, and we have seen her incubating as late as June. Once she was caught repairing an old nest in August, but she gave it up in a few days. We have protected this tiny bird in many a rain when, to our imagination, she and her young were in imminent danger of drowning. She accepts our intervention in the matter of parasols and gingham aprons and things, for cover, with a trustful look, and takes no exceptions. She is the most fearless of all our birds, and we have tamed her at nesting time into complete trust. One hardly dares to close one's fingers over the frail being, lest in spite of tenderness of touch she be crushed. We have photographed her and her young in every desired attitude: on the wing, in the act of feeding, or poised above the nest.

It takes about two weeks so to tame any of the birds that we can handle them at will, but when accomplished it gives one a

thrill of delight unequaled by any other victory. The mechanical work is done of course by a professional, after we have finished the preliminary taming and coaxing. Some of the accompanying photographs were published in the Wide World Magazine, London. With the British love of claiming everything it sees, that magazine announced that the photos. were taken in the "Island of Dominica," thus leaving out of the question our own Southern California, because, forsooth, it is not under the English crown. We could afford the slight.

A summer resident of our lowlands, and reaching to the summit of the mountains, is the Black-chinned humming bird. It is most abundant in the foothills, where it nests after the middle of May. These birds are more abundant after a wet

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"DINNER, PLEASE."

winter, choosing to breed near streams. They retreat as the flowers grow dry, and may be found later at high altitudes. The Black-chinned hummer is colored a brilliant metallic of amethyst violet, changing to blue and green. In this species the female also wears a throat patch of spotted metallic, but is modest of coloring.

We have also the Costa's hummer, occurring as early as April, and nesting in barren washes far from water—differing in this from the former. The head of this bird is a purplish red with violet reflections. Lower parts grayish. Female plain, with some metallic spots on throat.

The Rufous hummer loves our orange groves during its spring migrations, where it may be seen among the blossoms

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MRS. GRINNELL AND "MRS. HUMMER."

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Photo. from life by Daugherty & Grinnell.

"WE LIKE SUGAR, TOO."

and almost taken from the thickest clusters with the hand, if one takes the trouble to wait stock-still. It is not known to breed farther south than the higher mountains. The Rufous hummer is a golden green above, having a reddish gloss in some lights. The belly and under tail-coverts are of dull rufous or pale cinnamon. The wings are blackish, with a violet luster. A lustrous bird indeed, and well might it be coveted by the lover of precious stones. It is an animated diamond impossible of reproduction in carbon.

Less glorious of tints, but very beautiful, is the Anna's hummer, first referred to, which is common the year round. Like all the hummer family this bird follows the flowers. In winter it is in the orange groves; late in the fall it finds its

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POISING AT THE NEST.

sweet sustenance in stubble patches where the tardy weed-blossoms hold out inducements. They may be seen in profusion flitting among the eucalyptus tops when in flower, or close to the ground among the petunias or nasturtions. They do not wait for a blossom to expand, for they pierce the petals of the buds at the apex or puncture them at the base. Their chief food is nectar, alternated with a meat diet furnished by tiny spiders and flies. After a gentle rain, when swarms of little flies, almost invisible, dance above the alfalfa, we have seen these birds eating them without stopping to count their victims or alighting for several minutes, taking them on the wing and not seeming to disconcert the cotillion. We have never seen any of the hummers walk, their slender toes being

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FEEDING THE BABIES.

(Humming birds, from life)

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HUMMING BIRDS, FROM LIFE.

fashioned only for clinging. They dart in and out of the garden spray, back and forth like a rainbow flash; or they sit under the dripping leaves of a rosebush and bathe in the dew. This last is a common sight after a fog, and the lover of birds, out early, will take a hearty laugh at the proceedings. In the sunlight, under the drip of the dew, sits an animated bunch of luster, out of whose tiny black eye shines the unmistakable sign of intelligence. On the top of the head is a close-fitting crown of metallic scales meeting a throat-shield of the same effect. The iridescence is a lilac crimson, and the lay of the metallic scales is interrupted only by a line from the base of the beak through the eye. The back and middle tail-feathers are a golden green, other parts whitish, glossed with green. The female is plainer, with no scales on the head and throat. In a wet year the Anna hummer nests low. If we have had early rains, and, by the last of December or the first of January, see these birds picking at last year's pampas tufts, or at the spider webs spread out on the hedges, we know we shall find the nest no higher than our head, or possibly than our elbow. In a dry season the bird selects a eucalyptus branch a hundred feet above, where she incubates amid the fragrance, and looks down from her fairy perch like a fragment from the stars.

The eggs of the Anna hummer (as are those of all the family) are two in number, the size of a Boston baked bean, and pure white. The engravings show the growth of the young, the shape and tiny size of the nest, and the trustfulness of the mother bird as no pen can portray them.

Pasadena, Cal.

THE WHITE INDIAN.

IT is eighteen years since a slender young man with long yellow hair and an almost unearthly ambidexterity of utterance, made the athletes forgotten in their own arena—a "Spring Meeting" of the Harvard Athletic Association. The great Hemenway Gymnasium was jammed with the iridescent crowds such a college contest brings out. And it was a good meeting. Bird-like Fay, a rufous Apollo, had set a standard of grace not yet lowered. And Squibb, and many another hero of long ago, had wrought such feats of forearms and biceps as the \$50-a-week professionals do not find it worth the hazard of their necks to try. And Dr. Sargent, director,

had capped the climax with his rocking chair miracles in the flying trapeze.

But they were all as though they had not been, when the young Medicine flower, Té-na-tsa-li, stalked out from under the balconies, followed in single file by his impassive brown brethren; and harangued the multitude, and then promoted and presided over a strange ceremonial dance. None but the young men who had jeopardized their bones to win the soft patter of gloved hands, remembered any more the "events of the day."

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