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PINE HILLS BIRD NOTES

BY HENRY A. SLACK

The world is a great volume of natural things,
but, alas, how few leaves are seriously turned!

—THOREAU

DEDICATION

To the members of the Pine Hills Nature Study Class and to those who with them have been interested in the birds and flowers of Pine Hills, I, with sincere remembering thought, address this little book of records.

Henry A. Slack

"DO BIRDS HAVE ÆSTHETIC TASTE?"

This robin's nest was found by a junior member of the Pine Hills Nature Study Class in an elm tree on upper South Allen St.

A Few Little Thoughts for Parents of Pine Hills

"Long before the birth of Odin
Mute was thunderous ocean's roar;
Stillness o'er the huge earth brooding,
Strand was none, nor rocky shore.

"Imir sat in lonely sadness,
Watching o'er the fruitless globe;
Never morning beamed with gladness;
Never eve with dewy robe."

FOR ages earth turned a hard, barren face to the sun. There were no birds, no flowers, no soul life. God had made the earth but had not created man. Everywhere silence reigned, save when broken by the extreme throes of creative nature. Ages passed, and

"With shadows cool and sweet,
With silence like a prayer,
Breathing, brooding everywhere,"

man was created. The once sterile earth blossomed, fruited; and over all the sun serenely shone. Happily were man's days cast with singing birds and flowering fields, for through the divine ways of nature he should seek and find the higher life — the human soul that within him ran. Thus the love of nature so widely spread as to become almost universal, calls —

"Come forth and bring with you a heart
That watches and receives."

No barriers cramp or crowd in nature's realm. Her fields are open and far-reaching, and the harvest sure and plentiful. Her wild bird chorus

is making every grove a temple and every sunrise a worship. She links the human soul to her work, and man rises to kinship with his creator.

Nature is a generous teacher. The study is not burdensome nor difficult. She demands no scientific training. She makes it possible to know the flowers without botanical aid, and all her creative work without the hard climb up the steep cliffs of science. She asks only that man see and hear the things God has given to make the world and life beautiful. They who have the way of seeing and hearing these God-given things stand at the open gate of the King's highway, heirs to a source of happiness others know not of.

It is beyond man to know why we are made happy by the things seen and heard in nature, nor can man explain the many and varied feelings that course through the heart when we approach nature with loving appreciation. A simple song from the hedgerow, a comely flower from the wild will often give thoughts too deep for careless comprehension — thoughts that lead to a closer fellowship with nature and nature's God.

"A thought that impels all thinking
And lives through all things —
Therefore am I a lover of the woods,
Of the meadows and mountains,
And all that we behold,
From the green earth
To the starry heavens."

Through phases of beauty man penetrates to the heart of nature where works the infinite. Through nature is presented the various and

varying problems of life, that man by the travail of science is trying to solve.

Why man takes pleasure in killing the things God takes pleasure in creating is a question difficult to answer. There is no honor nor glory in destroying life. Humanity, sickened at the wanton slaughter of the innocent, cries out against it. Let life be sacred for all to whom God has given it! Differ as we may, justice to all involves obligations that should be universal. All who are interested in the development of character and refinement in our children should generously encourage the study of nature in early life. A man's ways are usually too fixed to be influenced, but the child, more easily interested, is often led up to the highest interpretation of nature — the elevation and preservation of life. The way to secure nature's fine influence on man is through the child's impressionable heart.

Parents do not fully realize the force for evil concealed in an inherent taste that prompts a child to hurt or kill — a taste, growing unchecked, sooner or later develops, if not a cruel, a heedless character, having no sympathy for suffering or regard for life. Such a character sees not the glory in heaven or earth, for he sees not with loving eyes.

A child's environment for the first year of life is adjusted by the parents, who are thus made directly or indirectly responsible for the impressions made on the undeveloped mind, whose intuitions frequently hold a truth not recognized

nor acknowledged. The heart of the child, sympathetically trained, is quick to respond to the many miracles of life that

“Come forth into the light of things,
Come forth and bring with them a heart
That watches and receives.”

Nature with her world of ready riches is an ever willing help in directing these early impressions. She takes nothing but good into the heart, and nothing that is good from it.

All nature is sacred and beautiful. The child that lives in accord with nature lives near to nature's God. All that is consecrated and beautiful appeals to him and his early life is made the happy forestep to the world and work before him.

God is still creating the earth and the heavens. Let man observe and learn to know and enjoy His created things, and teach the children to know and enjoy them, for so shall they live and learn

“To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth, but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity.”

I.

PINE HILLS now has a fairly good number of the earliest birds. Robins, bluebirds and song-sparrows are flying about joyously singing in every district, while from the open fields floats the meadow lark's weird call, "Hear me sing."

Hear me sing.

Over on the "Ridge" the noisy flicker calls quit, quit, quit, quit, quit, quit; and a group of grackles in the tops of the seven pines awkwardly crane and cramp their necks in the effort to gurgle up their clumsy spring notes. These grackles winter South, but have now broken camp and are distributing themselves through the Northern States. A month hence they will be settled in small companies in favorite resorts, two of which are the pines on the Manning Boulevard and the group of spruce at the upper end of the park lake.

It is yet early for bluebirds to settle to house-keeping, but they are busy house inspecting. There are twenty-five or more houses put up on Pine Hills for their use, with the prospect that they will all be occupied. Of course the ever present English sparrows contest all rights but

their own, and have frequent scuffles with the new comers, but nothing of a serious nature occurs till the bluebirds are ready to occupy the houses.

The song, field, vesper and swamp sparrows are jubilant, regardless of the changing weather, and their songs may be heard by listeners almost any hour of the day. With nesting this year the songsparrow is at the front. March is early for placing a nest out in the open field, and yet on March 27 a songsparrow's nest with five eggs was seen by a member of the Pine Hills Audubon and Nature Class in the meadow at the foot of Oak Ridge. Courageous little bird, for frost and snow will chill the air for many a day yet.

Coltsfoot, the earliest spring flower, was brought to the class last Saturday. On the clay bank near the cycle path at the south end of Allen street coltsfoot abounds. It is an inoffensive little plant that thrusts its dandelion-like heads up through the heavy spring soil and opens a pretty golden disc to the sun long before its leaves appear. It is a common flower, yet few know it.

"Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air."

April 3, 1907.

II.

"Firstly came Churl, son of Janus,
Rough for cold, in drugget clad,
Came with rack and rheum to pain us!

"Janus was he, oldest of potentates;
Forward he looked, and backward, and below
He counts, as god of years and gates,
The years that through his portals come and go."

JANUARY is the hard month of winter to get through, when Nature makes little appeal to the heart. But we have endured January and are now on the spring side of winter, looking out toward the rising sun and the day "when the sap creeps up and the blossoms swell." There will be other days of cold, of snow and high winds; but also dreamy days of sunshine, when we shall feel the soft touch of spring, when some sweet bird will drop its cheerful notes into our expectant hearts, and some fairy blossom raise its starry eyes to ours. Our winters are not quite as destitute of beauty as they seem when viewed from the windows of our homes.

On the flat a little beyond Seven Pines, one morning in late December, by brushing away a snowy covering, I disclosed to a little nature-loving companion six wee starry blossoms, as fresh and bright as had the day been one in early spring. A week later this little friend picked from under the snow near her own door the same blossoms — the common chickweed — common in no way save in the abundance of its

growth. There is scarcely a day in the year when this slender creeping plant, with its infantile blossoms, may not be found in some sheltered corner of the open field, or in our own dooryard. To hold a place in the plant world for the family it needs to be always at work, winter as well as summer, producing seed of its kind. To be productive the flowers must be fertilized by their pollen, which bees and flies distribute during the summer, but which the flowers must do for themselves during the winter. Night is the chickweed's time of rest. When the leaves in pairs are folded tenderly about the parent stem, the petals of the flower close, the head drops, and a chickweed sleeps.

Another interesting flower of early winter is the witchhazel. In its bush habit it is abundant about Pine Hills and breaks into bloom from October to midwinter. A very beautiful specimen of its tree form stands south of Seven Pines on the brow of the hill just where it tips down to Willow Run. It is twenty or more feet in height. In November, with not a leaf on the bare branches, it was covered with a profusion of blossoms—a little yellow flower setting fast to every twig. On the last of December, with the mercury at twenty degrees, it was yet in bloom and with many fresh flowers. The seed of the witchhazel matures very leisurely. Not till the following autumn, when fresh flowers appear, does it throw its seed. Side by side along the bare branches sit the hard seed capsule

of the past and the frail flower of the present. Then, as if after friendly consultation, the capsule opens, throwing the seeds broadcast with force sufficient to plant them several feet beyond the parent tree.

No book can teach the lesson as we learn it out in the open, in the wood, on the hillside, on the plain below!

Following Beaver Creek from the foot of Seven Pines north, you pass sumacs, with their red caps turned brown, witchhazel and black alder, among whose branches you see an occasional last year's bird's nest, torn by the wind that sweeps down the creek ravine.

At the foot of Oak Ridge, where South Pine avenue crosses Beaver Creek, is a fringe of pussy willows, one clump of which stands knee deep in ice and water. This shrub for several years has given the first suggestion of spring. As early as mid-January this year its little pussies began throwing off their brown wraps to look cheerily out to the passers along the avenue.

The various interesting trees scattered through Pine Hills make one of its chief beauties in the winter. The Seven Pines are a beacon pointing back many decades before the intrusion of streets to days when our hill was marshaled by their tribe. A lone group, storm beaten and weather worn, yet like chieftains that were strong to endure the wild wrenching of other years. Our birds frequent these Seven Pines. In winter woodpeckers and nuthatches tap along their

trunks, the owl hoots from their tops and watches down for the field mice speeding along their runways in adjoining fields. The crow, the jay and an occasional shrike hie hither for observation. All of Pine Hills, a large part of the city, and much of the surrounding country can be seen from these Seven Pines.

Northwest from here, crowning a ridge just across and above Pine avenue, is a larger group of trees, mostly oaks and pines. The pines occupy the upper ridge, the oaks the lower quite to the meadow flat. Some of the pines tower skyward a hundred feet and more, while the oaks stretch out gnarled arms a distance quite equal to their height. These oaks are not hoar with age, but they have passed their three-score and ten.

A pine standing on the cliff of the ridge facing north also has the honor of years and stature. Its history would take us back of the early days of our oldest inhabitant. Oaks, pines and Norway spruces in an easy, straggling line occupy the ridge from the avenue back to Holler's orchard. There are few native trees about Pine Hills that surpass in suggestive beauty those growing here. No views, near or distant, that surpass those seen from the upper ridge. East over Petersburg Hills is Hancock Mountain and the Berkshires; west the Helderbergs and the blue peaks of the Catskills. Oak ridge is a veritable parquet for the nature lovers of Pine Hills.

To rest here away from the noisy city below brings health to the mind and peace to the spirit. You open your heart and nature fills it while you are giving thanks for the opportunity.

There are other interesting trees growing singly and in groups north of Western avenue. The pines grouped along the boulevard are the most in evidence. Here are several noble specimens of white pine. One stands on the outer edge of the first group just at the head of Lancaster street. On Allen street stand two of nearly one age and size that should attract more than a passing thought. They represent two types of growth. The one near the walk on the west side of North Allen street beyond Lancaster is, for its age, a fair specimen of symmetrical beauty, while the lone pine in rear of 38 South Allen is more the poetic type. Both in their way are beautiful, but very different in form. By its situation this lone pine is made a secure landmark for future generations.

Here he has stood for many years.
Here he stands and looks profound
On trees around,
Like a king among his peers.

The richly endowed, enduring white pine is of historical age, and commercially the most important tree to civilized man; and civilized man has been driving it away until there is but a trailing fringe left to tell the story of fallen monarchs and a once vast community of tribes. In sympathy with them, I receive some at least of

the fullness of life of those remaining, while I grieve over the wanton destruction of so many in our country.

The old apple trees growing beyond Lancaster street, between the boulevard and Allen street, are at all seasons of the year most interesting. No tree is as picturesque as an old apple tree. Its gnarled trunk and twisted branches are the very poetry of tree life. Most trees have a special beauty all their own at one season of the year; but the apple tree is beautiful at all seasons. The poet would say never more beautiful than in winter. Birds are partial to it. The woodpecker, the nuthatch and the chickadee climb through and over it from early fall to summer; and the bluebird, the robin, and even the song-sparrow, naturally a field bird, hie to the poetic tree on their first coming, no matter how early it may be, so

“Here’s to the old apple tree,
Whence thou mayest blow,
Whence thou mayest blow,
And whence thou mayest bear apples enow.”

February 29, 1908.

III.

Of the winter we are weary,
Weary of the frost and snow,
Longing for the sunshine cheery,
And the brooklet's gurgling flow;
Gladly then we hear thee sing
The reveille of spring,
Robin's come!

Ring it out o'er hill and plain,
Through the garden's lonely bowers,
Till the green leaves dance again,
Till the air is sweet with flowers;
Wake the cowslips by the rill,
Wake the yellow daffodil!
Robin's come!

LONGED for, looked for, here at last! Over mountain, down valley, across country to Pine Hills, songsparrow, first bird of the season, avant courier of the aerial hosts that will build their homes and summer with us! Here for a day only, but what matters that so long as he told us what we wanted most to know, that winter had packed his grip and was about to abdicate in favor of spring? To-day songsparrow is here again with his associates, robin and bluebird. The trio are always our first spring birds. Sometimes one leads in the arrival, sometimes two, and often by

"The gentle law that each should be
The other's heaven and harmony,"

the three sail in together. We give them our heart's greeting, for however the world goes ill, these birds will sing in it still.

The robin, who, by the way, is not a robin, but a thrush, belongs to the Turdidae family, a small, refined and highly distinguished family. His name, robin, was given him by the Puritan Fathers because of a fancied resemblance to the so-called robin redbreast of England. Nor is this famous robin redbreast of English story a robin. He is a stone-chat, of an historic, old-world family. Owing to his red breast, and because Robert and Robin were once favorite and famous names, he was called robin — robin redbreast.

Who has not heard the story of robin redbreast and "The Children in the Woods," or read that ancient Scottish pastoral of "Robin," and of "Robin Goodfellow," and of "Robin Hood," and "Auld Robin Gray" and "Robin Adair"?

In our bluebird we have a near relative of this widely known robin redbreast. They inherit alike from blueblooded ancestry, of which bluebird and one other, wheat-ear, are the sole representatives in this country.

And our bluebird here at home is often called the "blue robin." There is no excuse for this confusion of names. The robin and the bluebird are in looks and habits entirely unlike. To our robin unhesitatingly we accord the military rank his bearing and deportment demand. He stands tall and erect. He does not walk, he marches on to our lawn, and there drills his imaginary forces. His calls are clarion calls of

command. "Attention! Front, face! Forward, march!" and the company moves off. At break of day, from the treetop, again he shouts to the sleeping hosts, "Attention! Into line! March!" and it is fitting that he should be made grand marshal of these opening spring days.

The two other birds of the trio are different. The bluebird is not a bird to command, nor is the songsparrow. They first solicit, then woo, attention. It is not difficult to gain access to their hearts. Bluebird, gentle and confiding; songsparrow, cheerful and trusting, have nothing coarse in their natures; and are as unlike robin as blue sky and sunshine are unlike an electric flash.

And yet a more harmonious trio would be hard to find in all birdland. Robin, at early morn, briskly snaps us up and marches us quick time through the busy part of the day to noon, when we find songsparrow, who cheerily sees us along a sunny way to the quiet precincts of bluebird, and the day ends and the night passes.

March 28, 1908.

IV.

Hush! the wind roars hoarse and deep,
On they come, on they come!
Hush! the waves are rolling in,
White with foam, white with foam!

I DROPPED my work with you and came away so unexpectedly, so unceremoniously, that it gave me no time for explanations. Not overstrong or energetic, I found that the work I was doing with you, and trying to encourage others to do along similar lines, was gradually taking more of me than could be healthfully spared. As a result after careful consideration and a hasty preparation I find myself not stranded, but very pleasantly situated at Whitney Park, Monmouth Beach, New Jersey.

Historic Locality.

Monmouth Beach is midway between Long Branch and Seabright, on the very narrow peninsula terminating at Sandy Hook. It is a small, irregular plot of ground, having a mile frontage along the ocean, and is about a mile across from the ocean to the Shrewsbury river, which, at Galilee, the first station north, makes a detour, nearly surrounding it on three sides, almost touching the ocean again near Long Branch. This was the first settlement along the Jersey coast.

Shrewsbury, just across the river, west from Monmouth Beach, was one of the first established

townships in the State. It was settled by the Dutch, but soon after became the dominion of the Quakers, who built their first meeting house in 1669. There is still a Quaker meeting there, and a considerable number of Quakers, all of whom belong to the New York yearly meeting.

Monmouth Beach.

Monmouth Beach as a summer resort has only a short history. Not more than twenty-five years ago a party of six or eight New York families, in a very primitive way, colonized here for a summer, using an old inn for a club house where they got their meals and assembled for social intercourse. That was the beginning from which the present popular seaside resort with its commodious club house and many beautiful villa homes, has grown.

Protecting Bulwarks

The villas along the ocean front are protected from the varying moods of the ocean surf, which at times is vigorous and fierce, by gigantic bulwarks from fifteen to twenty feet high, of driven logs backed by carloads of broken rock. These bulwarks, notwithstanding their apparent strength, need constant care, and are the only means of preventing the sea pushing the whole front shore with its villas back into the Shrewsbury.

Drives and Parks.

Ocean boulevard runs just in rear of the villas, from Seabright to beyond Long Branch, and the

railroad in close proximity. At Monmouth the club house is now a little way back, occupying the segment of a circle three hundred feet in diameter, which is completed by seven or more cottages. The interior of the circle is parked by a lawn and large willow trees.

Just across the drive north from the club house circle is Whitney Park, an enclosure of five acres outlined by a Japanese privet hedge, with four large villa houses, all beautifully parked with lawns, trees, shrubs, flower beds and a system of connecting driveways.

Again north, and in immediate proximity, is the Shrewsbury, at this point very broad, beyond which, apparently very near, are the beautiful blue hills of the Navisink Highlands. From Whitney Park this view is at all times, in the broad sunlight or under the clouds, in storm or calm, most charming. With this outlook on the north and west and old ocean on the east Monmouth Beach seems like the center of some great park system.

A Borough of Homes.

The borough, for Monmouth is now a borough, is fed and clothed by the outlying towns. There are no business enterprises here. A small one-story express and real estate office, a one-story shop where suits and shoes are renovated, a boarding and livery stable, and a fish stall include all. At the station there is a neat little stand

where daily papers, periodicals, post cards and so forth are dispensed. The mail is delivered morning and afternoon by a carrier via bicycle from North Long Branch. For shopping and bargaining one must go elsewhere. Monmouth is a borough of homes. The quiet of the place is indefinable. One can almost hear his own thoughts, but it is health-giving and extremely restful. "Sleep that knits up the ravelled sleeve of care" is here in full force. What life most needs to-day is a little more of nature's peace and rest. And yet many of us, with clear vision for most things, see this truth as through a glass dimly.

One Feline Inhabitant.

So far as I have knowledge there is but one cat in the borough of Monmouth Beach. Of this lack of felines one hears no complaint. Birds are numerous, but not in such variety as farther north, Robins, blackbirds, meadow larks and sparrows waltz together over the lawns and trip across the piazza in most familiar ways. They nest nearby, and as you watch their pretty ways you find yourself acknowledging to yourself, and perhaps to your neighbor, the charm of it all. And he wonders why he has never before caught the spirit of these little creatures' lives as they appeal to him to-day. Ah, my friend, you have been too busy to stop to throw open the shutters of your soul for a look into the heart of nature.

Local Plant Life.

The sand and marsh flats along the river are very interesting to the nature-loving tramp. Here is always an opportunity to gratify any desire he may have to find some new or strange thing. Nature is not everywhere the same. About Pine Hills, alike on sand or clay, grows the evening primrose. Here along the river flats I find the more attractive day primrose, called sun-drops, a perfect glory of sunlit blossoms opening their golden petals to the morning sun, closing them when night comes to the eastern sky and the evening primrose takes up its vigil. Farther on, away from the shore, you come upon a group of slender stemmed iris, the blue of the flowers rivaling the blue of the sky under which they are growing. And here is the yellow thistle, a shore plant four feet in height, its cream-yellow flowers deepening to gold color in the center, with deeply-cut base leaves two feet in length — a noble plant full of artistic suggestions to the artistic eye, and covered with pricks against which you would not be tempted to kick! Crossing to the ocean side, scarcely forty rods from the river bank, you kneel to the scarlet pimpernel, the poet's flower, growing in the clean, gray sand of the beach, drawing its nourishment from above, quenching its thirst from below.

A Writer's Tribute.

Mrs. Celia Thaxter writes: "The little scarlet pimpernel charmed me. It seemed more than a

flower; it was like a human thing. I knew it by its homely name of poor man's weather glass. It was so much wiser than I, for when the sky was yet without a cloud, softly it clasped its small red petals together, folding its golden heart in safety from the storms sure to come. How could it know so much?"

The Personal Note.

I will leave for another opportunity the pleasure of writing you of other flowers and birds that make their home with the cottagers on this plot of ground lying between ocean and river. I can imagine it will not be easy to understand the description of things seen as I have given them, but I have tried to tell you where and how I am resting, hoping to find strength to resume my work with you in the autumn. I thank you for the vacation notes and good wishes you have sent me and am interested in and appreciate them all.

Sincerely your friend,

HENRY A. SLACK.

Monmouth Beach, N. J.,

June 20, 1908.

V.

Give us the art of true inspiration,
That wakes the soul to a joy that is higher
And purer than all that the senses can give;
That teaches the language of lofty endeavor,
And hints of a life that 'twere worthy to live.

THE so-called land breeze, always uncomfortable along the coast, is seldom disturbing here at Monmouth Beach. To-day the wind is west, direct from inland, and the atmospheric conditions are not only comfortable, but enjoyable. The ocean along the east and the broad Shrewsbury on the west and north unite to temper the air of the little borough sitting so close between the two. There have been no weather extremes — no cause for complaining of heat or cold. Indeed, here is an ideal place for a season of rest and recuperation.

The Sea Gull.

The birds of Monmouth Beach are not numerous nor in great variety, but are interesting. Those most interesting because least known are the fish crow, fish hawk and the sea gull. These three are always in evidence. The fish crow, which is least numerous, finds its foods along the bank of the river. The gull and hawk take theirs from the ocean. The gull, following in the wake of the numerous vessels passing to and fro along the coast, picks from the refuse thrown from the ship's kitchen all that is required to

appease his not very rapacious appetite. Many tidbits go with this refuse, contributed by crew and passengers interested in these birds.

I pleasantly recall how entertaining the sea gulls were to a troop of soldiers sent in the fall of '63 from Hampton Roads, Va., to Folly Island, South Carolina, by the boat Nelly Pence. The voyage was slow, and most of the way rough and monotonous. All along the way gulls came out to the ship from the distant shore, and the contents of the men's haversacks was freely shared with them.

Fishermen Friendly to Fish Hawks.

The numerous fish-pounds along this coast attract the fish hawk. There are no less than twelve of these on the sea front at Monmouth, from which tons of fish are taken every season. The pounds are made by sinking long poles into the shallow sea bottom, to which are anchored large nets from a hundred to two hundred and fifty feet in length. From the tops of these poles, which project out of the water, the hawk can practice his poleless fishing avocation successfully, without being molested; for all fishermen are friendly to the fishing hawk. His best opportunity is when the nets are lifted to take in the fish. Dropping from the pole to the net, he seizes his choice of the floundering mass and darts away to some inland tree, chuckling over his easily gotten meal. The fish hawk's customary way of procuring food is to hover over the

water till he spies a fish near the surface; then he dives for it with the speed of a flying arrow. He is strong of wing and seldom misses his mark. A young bird with a broken leg, cared for at one of the cottages, measured three and a half feet from tip to tip of wing. He is very sociable and fond of his home, which is seldom far away from the sea. Along the road to Red Bank, just west of Monmouth Beach, stands an old storm-torn sycamore in the dead top of which is the nest of a fish hawk. It is a rough looking affair, two or more feet in diameter, built of coarse branches and rubbish from the shore.

Of the three birds mentioned, the sea gull is by far the most attractive and beautiful. His ease and grace of motion on the wing, which is most of the time, is surpassed by the barn swallow only.

Birds Hobnob Together.

As I wrote you in a former letter, the variety of birds here has not been great, but robins, meadow larks, red-winged blackbirds, starlings, songsparrows and chippies have been numerous and social. The robins, songsparrows and chippies have crowded their little homes as close to the cottages as tree, shrub and vine would admit. There were four robins' nests, two songsparrows' and a chippy's within a square of a hundred feet between two of the cottages. From the piazza we can look into three of the robins' nests, one of which is so near we can watch the parent

birds care for their second little brood, just out of the shell. On the lawn at Whitney Park birds make no social distinctions of race or family. In a friendly way all hobnob together, feeding on what they find or from the generous supply furnished at the Whitney cottage window. It is not an infrequent occurrence at the park to see a bird of one family feeding a young bird of another family. It was but recently I saw an English sparrow feed a young robin that had fallen from its nest to the driveway. Again I ran across a robin feeding a baby chipping sparrow, while the parent bird sat in an adjacent bush with a bug in its bill, waiting to perform the same loving act.

Helped the Meadow Larks.

Meadow larks and blackbirds come to the park from the river flats where they make their homes. Not long since, looking for flowers, I was over on the flats, which are sometimes used by fishermen to stretch their nets for repairs. In an effort to reach the river bank, where I expected to find the purple gerardia, I ran into a tangle of these nets. They were spread in devious ways with only a narrow footway between. By carefully choosing my way I succeeded in getting more than halfway to the shore, when I struck a puzzle—a ditch with a net drawn over it. I tried to cross on the net, but found it practically impossible. There was no way open to the right or the left, so I was obliged to retrace

my steps. Not being as keen for the retreat as I had been for the advance, I courted a more leisurely pace. I had not gone far when I was made conscious, by a bevy of meadow larks and blackbirds, that something had gone wrong in the bird world. Thirty or more of these birds were darting wildly about in distress and apparently to attract my attention. First, I looked for a coming hawk, but saw none. Then it occurred to me I might possibly be trespassing on private grounds. Where is the nest, was my next thought. For answer I had not long to wait. One of the larks dropped to a tuft of bog grass not more than twelve span away, where just under a spread net I found her nest and four nestlings. It took but a moment to draw the net away and give the parent birds access to the hungry little family. There was joy in camp, and the troop dispersed as I turned to continue my way off the flat.

Visiting Birds.

Other birds at Monmouth are seen in pairs mostly, seldom in large numbers. Many visit but do not breed here. They come from inland and make short stays.

Where the honeysuckle thrives there you find the humming bird. There are great hedgerows of honeysuckle at Monmouth.

In the willows of Club House Circle, just across from Whitney Park, a fish crow built its nest, also a golden woodpecker, an oriole and a

wood pewee. On the beach you see the sand-piper chasing the surf down the sands to catch the sand-fiddler, a tender morsel for his palate.

Of the warblers I have seen but one, the warbling vireo. He was here for a few days only. His song was the same as we are accustomed to hear about Pine Hills—"Don't you wish you were me? Don't you wish you were me?"

Swallows in the early morning and evening swim in the air over the cottages, à pretty sight; but they find no barns, no opportunity for nesting, and are only visitors to feed on the insect life so abundant during the morning and evening tide.

English sparrows as seen here are not as objectionable as when farther north. They are not so provokingly numerous, nor so exasperatingly noisy, but, considering the absence of other birds, quite acceptable. There is a place for all birds, when all birds are in place, and the seaside is a good place for the English sparrow.

Monmouth Beach Trees.

The willow, the locust and the sycamore are the native trees of Monmouth Beach. Others, of which there are many, have been brought here by the cottage owners. In the spring of the year the willows are extremely beautiful, but they turn brown and drop their leaves early in the fall, after which they look forlorn and blight-

stricken. Willows are brittle stemmed, and birds do not build in them to any great extent. The fish crow occasionally builds his coarse nest in the upper branches because it is a safe place. No cat or boy would venture on the brittle branches. The willows felt the effect of the storm of three weeks ago, which was in truth a great northeaster. For two days the wind blew a gale. The ocean was gray and tempersome, roaring wildly and madly pounding the beach with tons upon tons of seething water, then with a wild leap, lifted its white crests, if not mountain high, high enough to make the sight sublime. Great logs twelve or more feet long were tossed over the fifteen feet of bulkhead, with the ease of a school boy tossing his ball over a fence. The ocean has its moods. This was one of them. To-day it is of another type, so calm, so peaceful, so blue.

The Shrewsbury.

The moods of the Shrewsbury are mostly unchanging — to-day as yesterday. At its best bluer than the ocean or the beautiful Naversink Heights beyond.

The height of the flower season at Monmouth Beach has passed. Only the golden rod, the beautiful gerardia and the heath-aster remain to tell the story of a rich season of bloom, the queens of which were the scarlet pimpernel, the Sabbatia and the marsh rosemary or statice. Of many or all of these, making a list of more than

a hundred names, I hope to tell you when the
class comes together for the winter's work.

Monmouth Beach.

July, 1908.

VI.

"Give me the best of life!
To live in the world with God,
Where the seed that is sown and dies
Lifts a harvest over the sod;
Where beauty and truth are one,
Where the right must have its way,
Where the storm clouds part for stars,
And the starlight heralds the day."

ARISTOTLE, one of the first to call attention to the beauty of nature, standing in the midst of his pupils, exclaimed, pointing to the earth: "Such wonderful things as these, the earth, the sea, the great orb of day and the starry heavens, must be the work of a great Creator, of a God."

Our knowledge of natural history, the nature life of this beautiful world, has been of slow growth. The simple way to its great heart has been overlooked. Many lives that might have been made more beautiful by this knowledge have passed out over the bar without having had a suggestion even of the spiritual uplift found in the heart of a flower or the song of a bird. To many, our most beautiful flowers are "weeds." To others they are beautiful because they appeal to the life within that lies deeper than thought. One sees, another feels.

Science Is Exacting.

A friend in Switzerland writes recently: "Here on the higher mountains are many flowers of which I am grievously ignorant. I wish

I knew them all, and the birds, too. It would seem like meeting so many friends then, when one went out for a ramble, instead of comparative strangers." Like expression is often heard from people in middle life, who have not recognized their opportunity, and are now too busy to accept or to make one. For this there is some excuse. Science has made the way too hard. Insistence on scientific methods has often blocked the way to the simpler method of seeing, hearing and feeling, and thus learning the lesson that endears a world of beauty.

"They love not the flower they pick, and know it not,
And all their botany is Latin names."

Blue Vervain.

During a tramp over the flat along the Shrewsbury, near Galilee, a little station on the beach a half mile north of Monmouth Beach, I quite unexpectedly stumbled upon a group of simplus joy, blue vervain. It was a charming bit of blue blossom, radiant with sky tints, and not a contestant near for its unusual form and beauty. It was a suggestion of Willow Run, Pine Hills, where it grows more vigorous and abundant, but with no such beauty of flower. To represent to you the flower as I saw it growing there would be impossible. Most of my class are acquainted with it. Perhaps not just as I saw it growing on the Shrewsbury flats, but familiarly enough to recognize it wherever seen. The vervain is classed with medicinal herbs. Its genealogy is a

clear one, tracing back to ancient religious story. Its healing power was known before the time of Christ, and it grew on Mount Calvary. The Druids considered it a sacred plant, sacred to the memory of Thor, the god of lightning.

In the Classics.

Pliny says bridal wreaths made of vervain, gathered by the bride herself, gave assurance of a long and happy conjugal life. Virgil refers to vervain as a charm to recover lost love. In Shakespeare's time children hung vervain over the door to keep witches away. The principal herbs used in witches' cauldrons were vervain and rue. The present generation of physicians has superseded herbalists and the vervain and many other herbs are not as well known as when, sixty years ago, children gathered them, not to keep away witches, but to be used medicinally by their elders.

Pink Star of Seaside Marsh.

The beautiful *Sabbatia Stellaris* — sea pink — grows in great profusion just south of Monmouth. Here is a flower that appeals to the most indifferent. Fortunate they who have had the pleasure of living under the gracious influence of this wee pink star of the seaside marsh. Mrs. Dana says of the *Sabbatia*:

"The advancing year has few fairer sights to show us than a salt meadow flushed with these radiant blossoms. They are so abundant, so

deep hued, so delicate, one feels tempted to lie down among the pale grasses and rose stars in the sunshine of the August morning and drink his fill of their beauty."

The Sabbatia does not grow in the vicinity of Pine Hills. It is distinctly a shore plant. Indeed, I should be pleased to introduce the class to it, as seen growing about Monmouth, but the most I can do this year will be to present dried specimens at our next meeting. Its name, Sabbatia, was given for Sabbatia, the botanist, but many of the Modern Pilgrims of our New England States prefer to think its name due to the belief that the Plymouth Pilgrims first saw the flower on Sabbath day.

The Rose Mallow.

The rose or marsh mallow is now the conspicuous flower of the salt marshes. It should be better known in these days of summer migration. It blooms from July to early autumn all along the Atlantic coast. Wherever the air has a salt tang the rose mallow grows and flowers profusely. It bears transplanting, and does extremely well when transferred to inland gardens, though the flowers are not so large or deep in color. It is very hardy, and will endure much rough treatment and neglect. The class will remember the plant growing in the garden at 44 South Allen street. This plant was left by mistake one whole season on the garden bank without

protection or care, but planted the following season, it grew and gave a generous bloom.

Of the scarlet pimpernel I have written you. This charming little plant does not grow away from the seashore, and, it is said, only on the New England coast. This is a mistake, for it grows about here from Seabright to Long Branch profusely. If the so-called false pimpernel is not a duplicate of the little scarlet-queen of the coast it is a near relative, and grows all about Pine Hills in the moist meadows where sport the meadow lark and bobolink. It has a pale lilac blossom, and is a large but more delicately growing plant.

Growing in the Debris.

On the corner of Cottage street and Ocean avenue here at Monmouth are the ruins of a pretty cottage burned to the ground a little more than a year ago. The fallen chimney and other debris lie scattered over a large part of the half-acre lot. From Whitney Park it is but a short walk, and I frequently visit it, being interested in the numerous wild plants I find there. The marvelous growth of some of these so-called weeds and the beauty of their minute flowers it would be impossible to describe. There are two plants, false pimpernel and spurge, prostrate plants growing out of the sand and grit of the fallen chimney, that specially interest me. They have a very small tap root and great spread of top, with a wonderful amount of delicate foliage

and blossom. The diameter of the pimpernel's circle of growth was thirty inches, that of the spurge twenty-six inches. The branches were exceedingly numerous, and the flowerets and leaflets more so. On one-half inch of the spurge I counted ten flowers and twenty leaflets. Seen through a pocket lens, these flowers look like a small button rose and quite as beautiful.

Sixty-five Species on One Lot.

On this lot, abandoned only one year, are growing sixty-five species of wild flowering plants, many of which my class would recognize. If I could hand them one of these little pimpernels, not larger than my hand, that hold their scarlet flowers not more than two inches above the sandy beach they hug so closely, they might wonder and perhaps ask where I saw the beauty of which I write. I find it has stirred one poet's heart and set a sympathetic pen in motion. Miss Emily Shaw Farman writes :

"Bright little wayfarer in scarlet cap,
With purple tuft atop and doublet green,
Flora's pet page sometime thou must have been,
Fallen from favor by some strange mishap;
It touches me to note the calm content
With which thou dost accept thy lowly lot,
And makest gay some poor, neglected spot
With thy glad presence; pitching thy small tent
Upon the farmer's homely garden path,
Or close beside the dusty roadside way;
Heedless of high or low, if but a ray
Of heaven's golden sunshine thou canst catch,
Watching and waiting, living not in vain —
A tiny prophet of the coming rain."

Around Monmouth and along the ocean and Shrewsbury shores, from Highland Beach to Long Branch, it is with flowers as with birds, there are not as many species as we have at Pine Hills and vicinity. Then, too, the species in some localities are different and less abundant. The ox-eye daisy, Black-eyed Susan and the buttercup that grow by the acre at home we hunt for at Monmouth. And so with the goldenrods and our beautiful asters.

Of the birds I will write at another time.

August 17, 1908.

VII.

A GAIN robin, bluebird, blackbird, songsparrow and meadow lark have returned to Pine Hills. It is not essential to fix the exact date of arrival nor to be first to note their coming. To know that they are on the wing, moving this way, is a sufficiently pleasing thought to quicken the pulse, give a roseate hue to March snows and March brown fields, and to temper her nipping winds.

But the birds are here; the robin back in the woods, the bluebird in the orchard, the song-sparrow at the foot of Seven Pines in the seed crop of last year's asters and goldenrod, and a little farther on, in the upland meadow, sheltered by hill and bush, hobnob in a friendly way the meadow lark and blackbird.

"One swallow does not make a summer," but the early bird suggests, as in Tennyson's poem of *Throstle*, the coming of summer —

"Summer is coming, summer is coming.
I know it, I know it, I know it.
Light again, leaf again, life again, love again."
Yes, my wild little Poet.

To the unsympathetic all this will seem a stretch of imagery, but, even so, sooner or later the actual as beautifully illustrated is sure to occur in field and woodland about our homes.

March is the month of unrest, the season of longing for the return of spring and summer.

Winter has become irksome. We now would step out of our open doors into the freshness of a new year of birds and blossoms — eager for every awakening impulse, every sweet and restful thought. For these we wait.

Meantime winter, sly and menacing, holds fast to the skirt of spring, but, notwithstanding, she comes. The sun rides higher, the day is longer, the biting winds less keen, and the fleece-white snows melt with the slightest rise in temperature and race for the valley below.

“ Here again, here, here, here, happy year !
O warble unhidden, unbidden !
Summer is coming, is coming, my dear,
And all the winters are hidden.”

March, 1909.

VIII.

THE season for nesting birds is again here. Many nests are being built, others are finished, and some are already occupied. Bluebirds occupy, or will occupy, the houses you have thoughtfully put out for them, and will be comparatively safe; but the birds nesting in trees, in shrubs and on the ground are at the mercy of the home and tramp cat. May, June and July are the months when the helpless young and the mother birds are in the nest. This is the season of the greatest danger and distress. Robins and birds that feed on the ground are most in danger. Searching for food with loving thought for their nestlings, all unconscious of the wary cat, they fall an easy prey. Already this destructive work has begun.

A few days since a lady called to see if anything could be done to save the life of a robin she had taken from the mouth of her pet cat. It was a large, beautifully marked robin. Nothing could be done. Its neck was broken.

"No more would he sing for you or me,
Out in the old apple tree."

A few hours later, as I stroked its glossy black head, the eyes closed, and the life passed out from the silken feathered robe over the bar to—where?

Two days later a little girl came bringing a myrtle warbler with a wing torn from its wee

body. Yesterday it was a waxwing crushed to death and left on the grass; to-day a headless songsparrow, bruised and bleeding! They were buried with the robin under the evergreens, where, within the last five years, have been buried one hundred and twenty-five of our Pine Hills birds.

What is happening in the trees at night! Robin's twilight song is full of happy trust, but darkness does not protect. A stealthy step creeps to the nest. The mother bird awakens. Two gleaming eyes are near her. A rush of softly padded feet, a frightened cry and all is over. Morning comes. An empty nest only remains to tell the story of the once happy home in the tree.

These are only a few of every day occurrences. Think of the hundreds of beautiful wings and singing throats sacrificed.

"Could ye but see the bright wings torn
From birds alive and bleeding,
And note their quivering agony,
I had no need for pleading.
The wingless form left in the dust —
Its deathly pain and terror,
Would wake in every human heart
A bitter sense of error.
Ten thousand thousand little birds
In cruel ways a-dying,
Have heard with breaking mother hearts
Their hungry nestlings crying.
The nestlings starve, and God's command
Has been unheard and broken,
For He who made the universe
In their behalf hath spoken."

With so many favoring conditions we should have a hundred birds where now we have but

ten. Cats, more than all other natural causes, bring terror and death to our birds. From seventy to ninety per cent. of loss is traceable to the unfeeling feline.

Where they are numerous, destruction is greatest. The district along Western and Madison avenues west of Main avenue sends more birds to the evergreens than all of Pine Hills. Cats are not nature-placed regulators. They are an artificial introduction. Against their beauty and utility we hold no controversy; but if they are worth having for household pets, they should be worth intelligent, thoughtful care. At night see that your cat has a secure retreat. Don't thrust her out of doors, nor drop her into a cellar with an open window, as one little girl told me she had several times unwittingly done. When birds are asleep in their nests in bush and tree, your pet, who climbs a tree as deftly as a nuthatch, has the opportunity to be more than doubly vicious, with no fear of interference.

Let us, with renewed effort, give such protection to the birds of Pine Hills as will insure for another year, and all years, not only the birds we now have with us, but increased numbers. It is reasonable to say we have more birds now than before the advent of our effort to protect and encourage them.

“The bonnie, bonnie little birds!

It is their hour of need.

They have no power to beg for life;

It is for them we plead.”

May, 1909.

IX.

"There's not a green leaf yet,
Wherewith a breeze could play;
The bare brown earth is wet
With the snow of yesterday;
But out on the apple-bough
A sound more sweet than rain:
Hark to the overflow!
Robin's come again."

—E. S. Oakey.

WHEN we hear the first robin call of the year we know winter is being crowded back to make way for approaching spring. To-day robin calls, calls as to his kindred of old — for all living things to waken from their long winter-night's sleep and come forth.

Yes, robin is here, and bluebird and songsparrow, rivals for first honors. I know the robin's call and I know the songs the sparrow and bluebird sing. So

"Put on your mantles of purple and gold.
Daffodils! Daffodils! Say, do you hear!
Spring is near." Spring is here.

The coming of these birds and few spring-teasing days that softened and set the snow galloping down ravines to the river, are the suggestive signs we have of the blithesome days soon to cover the frost prints of a winter's caprice.

The first report of our 1910 robin was from Myrtle avenue, west, heard the morning of February 28. The second report was from Manning boulevard, March 1, heard in Boulevard Pines.

March 4 a robin was heard and seen in the elm at the junction of Madison and Western avenues. The first bluebird was reported the morning of March 4. On the morning of March 6 robin, bluebird and songsparrow were heard and seen on South Allen street.

“ Here again, here, here, here, happy year!
O warbler unbidden, unbidden,
Sing the new year in under the blue;
Last year you sang it so gladly!
New, new, new, new! Is it then so new
That you should carol so madly? ”

March 6, 1910.

X.

"So dainty in plumage and hue,
A study in gray and in brown;
How little, how little we knew
The pest he would prove to the town!"

I N 1851 and 1852, at Brooklyn, with many promises of benefits to be derived, English sparrows were introduced to this country. This was a most unfortunate event. It was expected they would eat the repulsive measuring worm that was destroying the foliage in our park and avenue trees. They did not destroy the pest nor its white moth progenitors; and any good they may have accomplished toward this purpose has been nullified by their own subsequent career.

This harsh voiced foreign tramp, pernicious and productive beyond belief, is likely to overrun the country. Parks, avenues and gardens of our cities, towns, villages and country homes beyond have been taken by these peace disturbers in numbers so extreme as to almost exclude our native birds. Where we had the music of song birds and the direct benefit of many native birds, we now have the indecent wrangling of this English sparrow.

"From dawn until daylight grows dim,
Perpetual chatter and scold.
No winter migration for him;
Not even afraid of the cold."

Especially are these unwelcome interlopers responsible for the decrease in the number of help-

ful birds — birds that, except for their noisy presence, would nest and rear their young near our homes. They mob the robin, bluebird and wren so persistently and viciously it is nearly impossible to coax them to build in a sparrow-infested district.

There is a group of winter birds — woodpeckers, nuthatches, chickadees, wrens, kinglets and snowbirds, that, previous to the advent of the English sparrow, liked to gather and frolic about our homes, picking the food friendly hands had scattered for them. These have been annihilated or relegated to the woods, save a scattered few who may be encouraged to visit a tempting bone hung in a tree, or a suet table. But even these dislike the little barbarians that refuse to others the bone they have no use for.

It is impossible to change the nature of these worrisome birds, and quite beyond the possible to patiently endure them. Existing relations between man and birds are not such as to admit of independent existence, but our relation with this gypsy foreigner has been strained quite to the point of separation. We not only can do without him, but his dismissal would be greatly to our advantage. But how shall we dismiss him! He heeds not suggestion or warning. Our

“Look out there, now!
We’re going to shoot!
Look out there!
Don’t you understand!”

makes not the slightest impression. Shall we shoot?

There are too many differing opinions and moral points of view to answer such question assuredly in the affirmative. Apparently there is no way of relieving the situation by extermination; but is it not possible to lessen their numbers here on Pine Hills or elsewhere by concerted action toward that end?

Birds will not tarry where they cannot have a home. Where they nest is their home, for there they rear their young. Deprive them of this home, and there will be no increase. Persistently destroy the nest and gradually they withdraw from the contest. Contest it will prove, for the English sparrow will not desert the privileges seized without fierce resistance. Nothing but a united, persevering individual effort to destroy these nests will avail. Every home on the Hill should enjoin there should be no English sparrow's nest, occupied or unoccupied, within its domain. Permit their construction, then see that they are pulled down and destroyed before occupied. They will persist to the third or fourth attempt in rebuilding, then move on. Let each neighbor see that it be beyond his boundary, and so crowd them out and off of Pine Hills.

There is no æsthetic side to this question of good-riddance to the English sparrow. It is fully practical. The law of the English sparrow is not the law of man or other birds. It is a law unto themselves, and practically reads, "What is yours is mine, save by my consent," and they enforce it relentlessly to the extreme. "When

Greek meets Greek then comes the tug of war.”
Let us for a time become Greeks, and meet them
not with Greek fire, but with methods like unto
their own. When they shall build we shall raze
to the ground and destroy. So shall be restored
the equilibrium lost by the introduction of the
English sparrow.

“Farewell, strange bird! I turn my face
To other kind than thine—
A thousand leagues of land and sea
Lie twixt thy home and mine!”

June, 1910.

XI.

IT IS pleasant to report that Pine Hills has this year had a larger number of birds than at any time since its organization as a community of suburban homes. There have been more in number and greater variety.

The advent here of protective thought was followed by a successful effort to discourage the destructive bird-slayer, the tramp cat, and to secure a more direct, watchful care of the domestic cat, especially during the birds' breeding season. The result has been a freer distribution of song and other helpful birds.

In 1903 the number of species of birds on Pine Hills did not exceed thirty. This year there have been sixty-one species, with a large increase in the whole number. Only for the obdurate English sparrow, it is safe to say the increase would have been much greater.

Of our familiar birds the best loved are the robin, bluebird, songsparrow and the little socialis. Their place in the heart of the loyal bird lover is well established. Other birds as well known, but not as intimately, are the phoebe, oriole, catbird, bobolink, wren, summer warbler and the pretty, petite, ruby-crowned humming bird. These two groups busy themselves about our homes, in the trees, shrubs and vines, building their nests and rearing their young unmolested. Here is an opportunity to enter nature's domain, where dwells a spirit of unselfish love.

Another group of birds, some known, others little known, and still others not at all, occupied the meadows, groves and orchards of the adjacent country. Of these are the red-winged blackbird, the meadow lark, flicker, kingbird, cuckoo, chewink, wood and veery thrush, rose-breasted grosbeak, scarlet tanager and a dozen or more warblers.

Then, too, there was a small interesting group of birds quite unusual for this district. They were the whip-poor-will, night hawk, sandpiper, yellow legs and the little green heron. The sandpiper, yellow legs and little green heron were frequent visitors to the pool at the foot of Oak Ridge, first noticed by a lad from Newton, Mass., visiting friends on Pine Hills. Later they were often seen and reported by members of the Pine Hills Audubon Class.

Just above and beyond Seven Pines, along the ridge extending from the orchard at the south end of South Main avenue west to Allen street, straggles an old fence — so old it bears little semblance to the original — twisted in and overgrown with witchhazel, black alder, chokecherry, dogwood and native grapes — a wild tangle of shrubs and vines. This tangle row and the ravine below along Willow Run make a paradise for birds of the open. Here the meadow lark, red-winged blackbird, flicker, bobolink and catbird congregate in large numbers. It is an exceedingly safe retreat to find so near the busy haunts of men, and these birds have accepted the

opportunity, built their nests and reared their young.

A like group of birds having the habit of building their nests near or on the ground in bush or tall grass occupied the meadow and ravine east of North Allen street between Western avenue and State street. The sweet-singing, sweet-natured songsparrow was of this group.

The Boulevard Pines, at one time a haven for some of our rarer birds, have been so encroached upon by recently erected villas they can hardly be considered such now. However, the trees remaining, with numerous others along this favorite avenue, will still make a resort for many of the helpful and some of the rarer singing birds. The wood thrush, for many years spirit of the grove, filling its dark recesses with weird song, may still sing there, but not as of old, for the song of the wood thrush is an adjunct of the cool retreat of wood or grove, where

“Enraptured by the ecstasy of song
Trilled and trembled the myriad leaves,
Till the white wood-nymph, as she silent stood,
Leaned forward her sweet neck a-listening long.”

Since the removal of many grand old pines Oak Ridge has been more a trysting than a breeding place for birds. Then, too, the accession of a row of numerous houses and others in close proximity is suggestive of the birds' *bete-noir*, the cat.

Previous to these changes there were, with other birds, several families of the golden wood-

pecker, which for many years built in the tall trunks of the old pines. This year there was but one family. It occupied a last year's nest, two-thirds the way up the trunk of one of the two trees called "The Twins," standing shoulder to shoulder on the crest of the ridge.

The rolling country beyond the ridge, away southwest to the Helderbergs, is, if not a land flowing with milk and honey, a land for birds — one that will renew and enlarge our supply if we keep open doors.

There are other favored resorts in and around Pine Hills, but especial interest centers with the birds that build near our own homes. These — robin, bluebird, chippie, songsparrow, wren and phoebe, all favorite birds — have increased in number noticeably, and with a little interested effort might still further be increased. There are ways in which this may be done: First, avoid destroying them. To a commendable extent this has been accomplished. Second, provide shelter and food by planting about your home shrubs and vines, and trees along the streets and avenues. The mountain ash, the weeping mulberry, the dogwood and other fruit-bearing trees and shrubs attract not only the robin and bluebird, but others of both summer and winter birds.

Residents along Pine avenue south to Myrtle avenue have more bird life about them than the residents along Allen street between the same avenues, because they have a better setting of trees. The Aurania, pride of the Pine Hillers,

occupying one-third of this tree-barren tract, stands stark and bald without a tree to caress or drop a cooling shade — not a tree to make inhabitable its hospitable piazzas. “Oh, for a thousand tongues to tell —”

“If I knew I should die to-morrow, I would plant a tree to-day,” said Stephen Girard.

September 17, 1910.

XII.

OF THE birds of Pine Hills none takes so great a range for building nests as does the robin. He evidently gives thought to locating and placing his nest. Where and how to build is as serious a question to the robin as is the same question to his neighbor, man. Indeed, the success and happiness of his home largely depend on the putting of the nest. If he errs in this it frequently results in tragical loss of home and family.

In May of 1910 a pair of robins came into a cherry tree standing near a rear piazza of a home on South Allen street. It was on a Sunday morning, clear and cold, with a northeast wind blowing a serious gale. For some time they capered about the tree in a frolicking way, then settled to a three-branched fork half the tree's height from the ground.

To all appearance the robins were giving thought to the problem of nest-building, madame at least plainly showing she was on business bent. After a somewhat incoherent chatter both sir and madame flew out and away. In not more than ten minutes they returned, their beaks filled with dry grass. Going at once to the site selected, they made a strenuous effort to lay the grass as a base for their nest, but the wind was too violent. Their every effort was defeated. For an hour they kept diligently busy, doing over many times the little round of first work without making any

progress. They sowed to the whirlwind. Grass, stems and string were alike whisked away by unruly breezes. After a short confab they gave up the task and flew away.

The next morning they made another effort to start the nest, were again defeated and again retired.

Tuesday morning, there being a hush over all, Sir and Madame Robin were early at the trysting place. From six to two o'clock uninterruptedly they toiled, Sir Robin doing his part graciously, stopping only for an occasional burst of song when madame was busy in the nest.

Under the good management of Madame the nest had grown apace, so that when they left on Wednesday it was fully one-half completed. She was proving herself an expert architect and builder. Alert and quick, she kept things moving. Dropping lightly into the nest, she would thrust her breast forward, make six or more quick turns of her body to give the desired cylindrical form, then nimbly hopping out, with her mate drive swiftly away for other material.

Thursday morning Robin came without madame. He was in extreme excitement, calling loud and sharp, as with quick, jerky movements he flew from tree to tree. Occasionally he would dart off to a weed-patch in the rear of South Pine avenue apparently in search of the lost Madame.

Where was Madame? Did Robin know? Only too well did Robin know!

Two days later Robin returned to the tree and

the unfinished nest, accompanied by Madame Robin Two. Madame Robin Two was a demure bird, slow of speech and motion. She entered the tree from the top. Leisurely, almost lazily, she made her way to the neighborhood of the nest in the fork below, tipped it a casual glance from a branch just above, then tumbled, rather than dropped, into it. After a leisurely survey she hopped out, and the two birds, Robin and Madame Two, flew away.

On Tuesday, ten days after the first and fruitless effort, the nest was completed. Five eggs, one each day, were then deposited therein, and the duty of incubation began. Robin was songful and Madame Two faithful and patient, but their happy anticipations were not to be realized. A little later both Robin and Madame Two were trapped in the weed-patch and then —

“Never a sign in the empty nest
Tells of the love that mated, the love that sang.”

The weed-patch was feeding ground for birds, and the happy hunting ground for bird-loving cats.

“Yes, well your story pleads the cause
Of those dumb mouths that have no speech,
Only a cry from each to each,
An inarticulate moan of pain —
Something that is beyond the reach
Of human power to learn.”

More fortunate were two robins that a month later came prospecting to the birch by the south-front piazza. This first visit was made about the

middle of June. Before they left they had chosen a cosy corner close to the trunk of the tree for their nest, not more than twelve feet from the ground.

Robin and Madame were a quiet couple, quite willing to agree on matters pertaining to their home. The next visit was early the following morning, and they at once set to work. Within the week the nest was complete, and five days later a complement of four eggs were snugly stowed away within the nest, and Madame covering them.

On only two occasions during the incubating period did Robin take Madame's place over the eggs, and then but for the morning hours. Madame, extremely faithful, left her charge but once a day for food and exercise.

Twelve days after the first covering of the eggs four wee birds were in place of the four wee eggs, and the broken shells carried out and away, leaving the nest tidy for the mother and the little brood.

So far Robin had done little but stand guard about his home and with his song keep Madame cheerful.

The young birds grew apace, and were soon holding fast to the upper rim of the nest, for no longer was there room within. For Sir and Madame Robin the nerve-racking season was at hand. Meantime the weed-patch had been cut and danger from that source removed. The mighty slayer of birds must now hunt from the

open. This on Pine Hills was no longer safe or sure. However, several attempts were made to raid the nest, none of which was successful. Robin had learned a lesson. He had found that willing help was near, and he never hesitated to make prompt and vigorous demand in time of need. His demands were intelligently made, were understood and prompt help rendered.

A little more than four weeks after their first visit to the birch tree robins carried safely away their full-fledged little family without having had to register a single tragedy.

On a window lintel under the piazza of a home on North Allen street two robins built a nest, and without being disturbed safely carried away two little families of four each.

A pair of robins built their nest on a shelving cap of one of the supporting pillars of a piazza roof on South Pine avenue.

Another pair built under the eaves of a south-east dormer window in the roof of a house on South Pine, between Myrtle and Western avenues.

All birds haunt apple trees. In the rear of 481 Western avenue stands an apple tree in which, for eight successive years, robins have built nests with varying success, sometimes taking away their full number of young, at others tragically sacrificing a part or all.

At Stop 30 on the Schenectady road a robins' nest was built on the lintel of a closet window, from which "the life in the nest" was sympa-

thetically watched from first to last, and there was no tragedy.

A Norway maple on the south side of Western avenue, below West Lawrence street, was a nest rendezvous for two families of robins, two orioles and a red-eyed vireo. Two families in one tree and with other birds is quite unusual.

"They'll come again to the apple tree —
Robin and all the rest —
When the orchard branches are fair to see,
In the snow of blossoms drest;
And the prettiest thing in the world will be
The building of the nest."

October 28, 1911.

XIII.

"For, half our May 's so awfully like May n't,
'Twould rile a Shaker or an evrige saint;
Though I own up I like our back'ard springs
Thet kind o' haggle with their greens an' things,
An' when you 'most give up, 'ithout more words
Toss the fields full o' blossoms, leaves an' birds."

—Lowell's Bigelow Papers.

THE first signs of returning spring have long since passed, and still we wait the advent of warmer, happier days than we are having. We long for the ideal fullness of May and songs of the birds that are here waiting the inspiration for song and work that comes with

"The fair pledges of blithesome May
When birds and flowers are happy peers."

At about the same time in early spring, year after year, certain groups of birds come to Pine Hills for a summer home, sing their songs, build their nests, rear their young, live again their happy, joyous life, then go back to the gypsy camps of a southern winter. This has been their life with us for many years, and how slight the knowledge we have of it, and how lacking in responsive sentiment is our attitude toward them!

At the dawn of summer days these birds greet us with showers of song. What should be the greeting we return?

"Wise it were to welcome and make ours whate'er of good they bring."

Love the birds! They are the cheerful notes of earth and air.

The birds we saw a year ago, have seen for years, are as charming to-day as when they first sang.

So far as discovered, the birds now with us are here given in the order of their coming:

Robin, bluebird, songsparrow, grackle, red-winged blackbird, starling, meadow lark, flicker, swamp sparrow, goldfinch, phoebe, catbird, kingbird, cow-bunting, chewink, red-eyed vireo, rose-breasted grosbeak, oriole, bobolink, barn swallow, cliff swallow, redstart, house wren, field sparrow, vesper sparrow, chipping sparrow, wood thrush, creeping warbler, summer warbler, Maryland yellow-throat, myrtle warbler, kinglet, tanager, cedar waxwing, wood pewee, veery thrush, chimney swift, least sandpiper, grasshopper sparrow, sparrow hawk, crow, humming bird.

The robin, bluebird, songsparrow, phoebe, chippie, wren, summer warbler and the hummer are the every-day dooryard birds if there are trees, shrubs or vines about our homes. Their cheerful presence should be encouraged with kindly attention to which they readily respond. Are you so fortunate as to have robin, wren or bluebird in a nearby tree, or a warbler and chippie in the shrubbery, or a possible hummer on the porch vine, turn a loving heart to them and a watchful eye on the household and tramp cat, for they leave

“Never a sign but the empty nest
Of the love that mated, the love that sang.”

When birds are located for the season there is very little change from day to day in any given place, either in number or variety. Oak Ridge, once an extremely pretty bluff, lies on the west side of Pine avenue near the terminus of Myrtle avenue. A number of its fine old oaks and pines have slipped away, but it still remains an attractive spot for birds and for an hour's rest and uplift of soul. The most opportune time to see and hear the birds of Oak Ridge and the fields beyond is an early hour of the morning, for then they hold their song service, after which they disperse to tour for the early worm.

The rolling fields and ravines east of upper South Allen, past Seven Pines to Willow Run and beyond is a district where home the meadow-lark, starlings, flickers, bobolinks, kingbirds, goldfinches and other well-known birds. For these birds this has been a favorite district; but the builders have sighted an opportunity and the birds perforce must move out. Seven Pines, Willow Run and the fields above lie in the direct line of march, and soon we that know them now shall know them no more forever.

“Hushed the stream, and torn the grassy slope,
The tuneful vale in silence lies;
No touch will more awake its song,
No birds in adoration meet,
No communion with nature sweet,
With bowed heads we cry
No more upon the hills—No more.”

In the open, east from North Allen, between State street and Western avenue, near and past

St. Mary's Cemetery, look for meadowlarks, red-wings, flickers, bobolinks, kingbirds, pewees, least flycatchers, goldfinches, song, field, vesper and chipping sparrows and a fair sprinkling of wrens and warblers with an occasional wood thrush note to stimulate the admiration of the bird lover.

Another opportunity to search out the bird treasure of Pine Hills is along the so-called Tunnel path, beginning just west of where Manning boulevard turns on to Western avenue, and running northwest back to the pine barrens. It is not a highway of roses but is a fruitful field for the faithful.

Manning boulevard notwithstanding the ravaging hand of civilization, still holds out in its one shady nook, sufficient inducement to call a return of the queenly wood thrush, in whose glad music is a song of hope and aspiration for all that hear it.

There are a few other quite notable birds that come to Pine Hills, spend the summer and go again, having stayed with us quite unseen and unknown. They are rose-breasted grosbeak, indigo bunting, purple finch and scarlet tanager, birds of the trees along our streets. They are attractive in color and brilliant singers.

"Yet these sweet sounds of early season,
And these fair sights of sunny days,
Are only sweet when we love and listen,
And only fair when we fondly gaze."

May 25, 1912.

XIV.

GRUBS ATTACK OATS.

Evening Journal Correspondence.

Nassau, Sept. 6.—Many farmers are bothered by grubs. Whole pieces of corn are being destroyed. Cabbage plants also are attacked.

THIS and similar reports have been circulating through various sections of the State for the past two or three months. The destructive white grub has been at work in grain fields, meadows and pasture lands.

What is the cause, and what the remedy? The cause is a lack of grub-eating birds. The remedy is more grub-eating birds. To illustrate, I relate an incident that not long since claimed my attention. A young farmer came to ask if I could explain why the crows were boring his meadow plot full of holes, and killing the grass. The plot looked very much as if it had been hetchelled with a rough-toothed harrow. When asked his thought regarding it, he replied: "I think the crows are feeding on the grass roots." I suggested the white grub, and he went back to the meadow to investigate.

Two days later he came again. This time to confirm the truth of my suggestion. The white grub had attacked his meadow, and the crows had attacked the white grub.

Many people, perhaps most, take exceptions to the crow. Farmers, with scant knowledge of

his habits and ways, quite universally condemn him for the corn he takes. Whether it be corn or grub the crow seeks, or whether crow or grub is most injurious to his crops, is a question he does not consider.

The great benefit conferred on the farmer by the crow and other ground birds is not appreciated. They eat an almost infinite number of destructive insects and also rodents, not least of which is the field-mouse, which always works under cover of the stowed grain. Corn enters into the menu of crows only in small ratio.

The grub-plagued district of Nassau and other like plagued districts, need the help of our insectivorous birds; and it is well just here to consider that these and other birds came not to their place by chance. They were put here for a purpose. This purpose man has violated, and perforce must now hang away the destructive gun, and ask a recall of the birds. But again, birds come not at beck or call. It will require time and effort to restore conditions of which we have been robbed by heedless methods.

Ignorance is not bliss, and it is not folly to be wise.

September 21, 1912.

XV.

Slayer of the winter, art thou here again?

Oh, welcome thou that bringest summer nigh,
The bitter wind makes not thy victory vain,
Nor will we mock thee for thy faint blue sky.

WE KNOW the way the earth stores the sun's heat during the summer months for winter use; and now while the dark days are upon us, we know her numerous little folk who are to people forest and field are with her, sheltered from frost and snow in restful quiet. They are not a timid little folk. When spring gives the signal, they will not hesitate to face the frost-traps March will set for them. Spring may trifle a wee bit with time ere giving the signal, but when given, the birds, the flowers, the green fields and green trees will respond. Nothing has perished; nothing suffered.

Just now here on Pine Hills the footprints of winter are strongly marked. There will yet be slow-moving, nerve-racking days to test our endurance before birds come to stay or dainty flowers respond to sun's loving caresses.

Meantime, while we wait, sturdy and silent in their rugged winter coats stand the old oaks of Oak Ridge. They cannot as in other days bend to the storm, and so are torn and broken by the gales winter shoots over the ridge. Having no fear of winter in their veins, there they stand, hardy pioneers, rooted to the present and the past, loved by all who have an open heart for

nature. There were others that have been felled by progressive men and hauled to the mill and the idle andirons.

How much of life's rapture is your right,
In earth's joy what may your position be,
Rocked by breezes, touched by tender light,
Fed by dews and sung to by the breeze?

Something of delight and of content
Must be yours however vaguely known,
And your grace is mutely eloquent
And your beauty makes the Ridge a throne.

More sad the thought, these remaining will fall before the devastations of nature's open fields, unless a protest or a plea be raised in their behalf. Here is an opportunity for the citizens of Pine Hills. Why not secure Oak Ridge and the adjoining plots of ground, front and rear, for a district park, a pleasure ground, where for a brief time at least, the ever-present, every-day business thought of "Wherewithal shall I be clothed and fed" shall be banished. Citizens of other districts in the city are making strenuous efforts to secure the privilege and place for district parks. Pine Hills has the opportunity at its door; such an opportunity as other districts may seek and not find. Why not secure it while it is not too late and in so doing not only add an attraction to our already attractive district of homes, but leave for the generations to follow a chance for grateful remembrance of their forbears.

Oak Ridge just west of Pine avenue and the junction of Myrtle was named for the marked

resemblance of the vicinity, as seen from the summit of the ridge, to the ground where during the Civil War was fought the battle of that name. On the north side at the foot of the ridge a snarled, ill-defined, uninviting foot path opens a rambling way to the summit, and across to a belt of dark firs grouped along the west side. Here on a lilt of turf under the sheltering bushes, through the open door of your heart you may take in the soul rest that floats to you over hill and dale from the blue mountains in the distant sunset-way.

What more than tropic winds, just this side Heaven,
What airs from Paradise,
Blown deep within your heart of hearts has given
This sweetness to your sighs!

Children climb up and over the steep rough sides of the ridge with lung-expanding shouts and merrymaking laughter, but their immature thoughts dip not to the deeper, more restful influence there open to the mature mind.

Oak Ridge, once the favorite rendezvous of our Pine Hills bird is now the tramping and camping ground of boys. Robins, bluebirds, finches and other song birds yet dear to memory do not trust to these the secret of their pretty nests and little ones. The flicker and other high perching birds occasionally conceal a nest in the tops of the taller trees, or stop to rest, drop a song or a call note, but the multiple of song passes on to a safer retreat.

What truth is here, oh, man!
Hath hope been smitten in its early dawn!
Have clouds o'ercast their purposes and plans!

In two instances the early spring robin has been reported as seen in this vicinity. The time was a little early for the return of these migrant birds. It frequently occurs with robins and bluebirds that individual birds, loath to move on south with the main body of their companions, have sought and found a sheltered nook where they could spend the winter north. In 1912 a flock of robins found such shelter in Holmes' woods just west of the Pine Hills boulevard. Last winter, 1913, a half dozen bluebirds wintered in the vicinity south of Oak Ridge, making frequent visits to Pine Hills. It is not always the weather that forces our birds to go south when winter approaches. It is quite as likely to be the hold up at that season of the year in nature's commissary department, leaving it a question of food supply. Under the snow everywhere present, about which we thoughtlessly fret lies buried a world of plant life all unconscious of our unrest. There in tranquil solitude they wait as we wait for the blithesome season when nature shall summon them to their places in woodland and field, about our homes and along our streets.

Already we have had assurances of the coming of spring in the ever-early pussy willow, whose soft woolly tips were in evidence near Manning boulevard the first of February, previous to the

recent heavy fall of snow. We, who are anxious for an early coming of spring, need not be unnecessarily distressed over the snow-covered fields. A thick blanket of snow is protective to nature's buried stores. The stern well-blanketed winter foretells an early springtime and summer harvest.

After the winter's blanket has been rolled back, the first wee one here on Pine Hills to spring from the lap of mother earth will be the little golden crested coltsfoot. Hie away then to the clay bank along the west side of South Allen street beyond Mercer street. There you will find these little golden headed dandelion-like flowers thrust out to the sunlight. It is a sturdy little plant with beauty enough to stir the fabled heart of stone.

Pretty firstling of the year!
Herald of the host of flowers!
Hast thou left thy cavern drear
In the hope of summer hours?

The robin's clarion note is by many said to be the first song note of the spring, but many trustworthy observers divide the honor with the blue-bird and songsparrow, giving commendation for early arrival to the meadow lark, the flicker and the starlings.

Just now, all who are interested in the coming of the birds and flowers, have their thoughts and senses sharply turned southward whence will come these blessings of beauty and song life. To ourselves and often to our friends and neigh-

bors we are saying, "When the birds come north again," but what then? Are we not indifferent and careless in thought given, if we give any, to this beautiful bird life? We enjoy the songs for they have power to thrill the heart. They should help us keep faith in the soul of nature; but the thought of God in nature scarcely appeals to us. We fold our hands in sleep, and are awake only to the deceptive notes of an overstrained social life.

Life has import more inspiring
Than the fancies of thy youth;
It has hopes as high as Heaven,
It has labors, it has truth.

March 7, 1914.

XVI.

"When first the March winds melt the snow,
And to the sleeping flowers below
The early meadow lark sings—"

AT THIS season of the year we listen for every bird note and greet with joy each singer as he comes back to take his place with the old choir of singers for the coming summer.

The meadow lark heard and seen in a field near South Allen street March 12 was not a too stimulating indication of the coming birds; but to those who are anxiously looking forward to such days it gives a forecasting thought. Accurately speaking, the meadow lark in our State is not surely a migratory bird. In some sections of the State they are permanent residents; but if they do not winter in this immediate vicinity, they are never so far away that a bright spring-suggesting winter's day will not call them here for a period shorter or longer as regulated by food conditions.

Nearly all birds have two homes. Such are called migrants—migrants because they alternately move to and from each every spring and fall. In our State there are about twenty-five species of non-migrant birds that make permanent homes in various districts and localities. Of these are the hawks, owls, crows, jays, partridges, woodpeckers, meadow larks and other smaller birds.

Here on Pine Hills, about our homes and

along the avenues, the call-notes of the chickadee, the nuthatch and the downy woodpecker are of almost daily occurrence. While in the outskirts, along New Scotland avenue, the Western turnpike, beyond the Boulevard, the "Tunnel path," which nearly a century ago was the roadbed of Albany's first railway — could be heard and seen many others. A day spent in Holmes' woods would possibly disclose fifteen or more of the twenty-five non-migrating species accredited to this district.

It is the pacific pace-maker who sees and hears. The business or social stride gives little opportunity for an appreciative enjoyment of nature's fullness and beauty.

"Hark, oh, hark!
The meadow lark!
Do you hear
His happy singing?
Sweet and clear
His voice is ringing —
Sweet and clear
From the meadows
Where the shadows
Disappear."

The law governing bird life called instinct is nearly if not quite identical with the reasoning faculty in man.

Darwin classifies birds as feathered animals and ranks blackbirds, starlings and crows next to man in point of intelligence.

When considering the mental capacity of birds, their reasoning power, justly or not, is generally marked low; but may not this also be

said of the human species? There are large numbers of the human species grossly lacking knowledge of creative nature. Regarding nature they are intellectually dull and deficient in reasoning capacity. They look to the face of nature, and perhaps smile, but give no thought, for they have none. For nature's God they have reverence, but for nature — "What is nature?"

Meadow larks are exceedingly interesting birds. They are keen, almost intellectually so, as any one can testify who has had occasion to match wit against theirs in an effort to discover the nest they conceal. Where one succeeds in the effort a hundred will fail, and the meadow lark's nest is safe even in the open. When the season comes for the arrival of mates and nest-building, they drop into the tall grass of the meadows, and are quiet and shy until fall, when they, their little families with them, rise to the trees, and later join others of the species moving south.

Meadow larks are seldom seen in the interior of woods. Pastures and meadows are their natural resort. In pastures they place their nests in the shelter of a tussock of grass; in meadows, usually in a depression of the ground, often made by hoofs of horse or ox.

Larks sing their best in the early part of the season, early morning and on cloudy days. In the early part of the season he comes alone, and evidently from choice goes to the topmost branch of some sturdy, lone tree in open field to sing

his praise anthem. It is far reaching and sweet—one of the most attractive bird voices of early spring. They whistle in minor key their “re-da-chee-a,” “re-da-chee-a,” with a finer musical modulation “to the nice ear of nature” than a prima donna. There is great variation in the alternate succession of similar chords, but all are clear and ringing, and would have a decided tinge of sadness were they not so sweet.

Not in many years have we had so few birds about us as during the past year. In the opens there were not many, and in the woodlands

“Where, oh, where, are the tribes
That made merry the summer day!”

And now to the interest of all who are anxious for signs of a coming spring, I will copy from a note book of 1899 two entries: “March 25th. And now the songsparrow and robin have come! Against the warm south window drones an early awakened fly. To the west in the distance the snow-capped Helderbergs glisten blue and white in the sun, but spring is here.” “April 3, 1899. To-day six inches of snow covers the ground, and a high north wind is blowing. Our robins have gone to the Pine Grove swamp for shelter and berries, the bluebirds and songsparrows to upper woodlands where seeds are found, to await the return of milder days.”

March 24, 1914.

XVII.

THE blue birds and robins seen in Pine Hills the past winter and still to be seen in favorable localities are the stayovers and transient visitors. After the passing of freaky March they will move on to adjoining States farther east and north. Not until the mild days of April break the frost-bound fields will the summer bird come. When the coltsfoot (earliest spring blossom) lifts its golden crest to the sun; when earthworms, the beetle and other burrowing insects come to the surface for air and light; when the table is spread, then will come the summer birds,—robins, bluebirds, songsparrows, meadow larks, starlings and others, to join the spring awakening, the carnival of song, of love-making, home-building and domesticity.

Two winters since a group of birds were frequent visitors to the neighborhood of South Allen street where it crosses and Pine avenue where it breaks at the ravine a little farther west. It is safe to say that nearly every midwinter a small party of bluebirds or robins or both may be seen roaming not "in the gloaming," but by broad daylight about the south and west suburbs of Pine Hills. Sometimes they venture to the localities of the previous summer's nest quite to the interior of its streets and avenues.

It is not always severity of winter that drives our birds south. The insufficiency of food is often the moving cause.

Along the Chenango valley in the fifties, when woodlands were numerous and more in acres than now, it was not of infrequent occurrence for whole troops of summer robins to move back to these woods and there spend the winter. Pratt's mountain, so called at that time, near the village of Sherburne, was a favorite winter rendezvous for robins, and frequently other summer birds. Where now are the woodlands that were once protection, not only to the birds, but to the soil? Felled by the axe of penurious man.

The food and habits of the robin and blue bird are much alike. Both are hardy, quite as hardy as many of the winter birds. In temperament they differ extremely. Robin is vivaciously loud, at times almost noisy, he is inclined to be selfish and domineering and is by no means a model in domestic life.

The disposition of the bluebird is temperate, modest and attractive. He is quite shy of the approaches of mankind, and yet seeking a place for his nest he chooses one near the habitat of man. Their domestic life is more than commendable, it is charmingly realistic. Few birds give more or better attention to domestic life than the bluebirds.

The bluebird is the stone chat, a hardy aristocratic family of Norwegian ancestry. They were given the name bluebird for their color, blue, being symbolical of divine life.

The robin, so named by the Plymouth Pilgrims, is an American bird, the migratory thrush

of the thrush family. The early settlers gave the name robin because of his red breast which reminded them of the red breast of their much loved English robin.

The robin and the bluebird rear two families each in a season, and with favoring conditions often three. Their diet is mostly insectivorous, noxious insects, destructive to growing crops, and our fruit and forest trees.

These birds will daily consume their weight in food of which eighty-five per cent. of that of the robin and sixty-five per cent. of the bluebird is made up of destructive insects. All insectivorous birds are extremely helpful to man in the problems of food and "what with all shall we wear."

Why are we so universally uninformed regarding the utility of our birds? Are birds a divine creation? If a divine creation, were they created for esthetical or divine purpose? If for a divine purpose, why are we so regardlessly destructive of the divine will and purpose? What is your answer, oh man?

Behold this an emblem true
Of man's capricious way,
Who, when affliction clouds his way,
Bows the stiff heart to pray;
But when his sun is up and bright,
Will in his gifts the heavenly giver slight.

The tree sparrows have been quite numerous here in Pine Hills this winter. They came last fall just as our summer birds were winging their

way south. They will go in the spring when the summer birds return. Their homes are in and about Labrador. Our winter has no hardship for the tree sparrow, and being seed eating birds they find in the open country around Pine Hills an abundant supply of edible food. In sunshine or storm, fair or unfair weather, they drive about our streets, dropping into the trees and shrubs on our lawns, then to the ground as unexpected and suddenly as if dropped from an aerial bomb. They travel about in parties from fifty to a hundred and more; are abrupt in all their movements, quiet, unobtrusive and with all are an attractive small bird to have familiar touch with.

March 7, 1915.

XVIII.

KNOWLEDGE is the keystone of success. It concentrates thought and establishes principles which should rightfully govern. Ignorance makes man a willing servant to the misuse of laws essential to his prosperity.

As a people we know too little of nature's creative methods. As tillers of the soil we know less, and need to stand away from the hurrying commercial world for calmer, more intelligent consideration before we can make a right estimate of the value of such methods. Work is not well done if not in harmony with nature. We often pursue wrong methods and in the confusion of ways make mistakes, and a burden of intended blessings.

When man came to the habitable parts of the world he was the signal that set the creative and the destructive forces of nature in opposition.

Cultivation of the soil gave increased vegetation which induced increased insect life and a destructive war between animate and inanimate life. Birds came to the relief of vegetation and man prospered. With prosperity came careless disregard of nature's ways in the helpfulness of birds. They were hunted to death for their plumage, for the pleasure of the palate, and for the amusement of sportsmen and pot hunters.

O darkened sense! O dense, deaf ear,
The world has placed its ban
Against the genii once so dear,
And strife and greed for many a year
Have spoiled the sweet, old atmosphere.

You will recall Longfellow's poem, how the birds of Killingsworth were exterminated through a bounty from the ruler. The next year the land was barren and the king offered a bounty for living birds who became numerous and restored the harvests to the realm.

Not alone they who are commercially interested in the products of the soil, but all who are dependent on these products are asking what can be done to destroy the insect pests now so destructive to agricultural pursuits. To all such I advise, "Read the handwriting on the wall—protect the birds!"

Under the surface of the broad acres of our fertile country a host of root eating grubs are destructively working. On the surface are hordes of beetles and insect pests equally busy destroying surface vegetation. In our forest trees and in the trees of our parks and streets are myriads of trunk borers and leaf-sucking insects—drawing the very life blood. In the air from horizon to horizon are clouds of winged midgets that carry into our homes annoyance and poison into our bodies.

Of all this we are abundantly conscious and yet it is with no great concern we read the handwriting on the wall—"Protect the birds."

The farmer, because more directly interested, should join the effort now being made. He at least should be policeman of his own acres.

This unfortunately he not only is not, but too often, perhaps, unconsciously becomes a party to the birds' destruction.

During the season of 1913 from our own and adjoining States came the anxious oft-repeated call, "What can be done to save our growing crops? In meadow and field the white grub burrowing in the ground beyond the reach of mechanical device is destructively at work." Prompt response through the press came to this query. Entomologists and laymen proclaimed and explained but no direct or specific answer was given.

An anxious inquirer in a communication to the *New York Times*, describing the destructive work of the white grub in the city park and botanical garden, gave suggestive answers when he explained, "The starlings in the park, until the white grub appeared, were not earning their salt as insect destroyers, but now they are showing they are equal to the task and that the grub is very sweet to their taste."

Here we have reliable assurance in unity with the ways of nature, when there is no interference of man. The starlings were doing the work for which they were better adapted than man and his mechanical devices. Our despised crow would do the same thing.

Again the handwriting on the wall — "Recall and protect the birds." Man may destroy or drive the birds away, but he cannot change the laws of nature, nor put in their place laws of

his own, without loss and disappointment. In the struggle for existence birds are the helpful co-workers with man; but his treatment of these helpful agents has been so cruelly reckless, work against our insect pests has been unbalanced. Insect life is again rampant and man is paying the penalty. He is being heavily taxed with no birds to protect. Protective legislation has been weak and tardy. The unfeeling destroyers of bird life are still alive and active. Helpful birds have decreased in number. Many species have been exterminated and others are desperately facing the same fate.

“ Shall we care, you and I,
When no birds go winging by? ”

April 7, 1915.

XIX.

THE question, "Do birds think?" is so universally affirmed or negated in accord with individual thought or interest, the answer is lost in a labyrinth of theorizing. The answer given by naturalists and others interested in bird lore is frequently if not always individualized, and the response of the general public to the question is hesitant and unassured. Apparently there is no open way to a comprehensive answer to the question.

Birds have no language intelligible to man's understanding, and the speech of man is unintelligible to birds; hence that avenue through which a convincing answer might be sought, is closed. But why, if facts as defined by man are truths, and the perception of truths, knowledge, why should not man have a more comprehensive knowledge of the facts—the truths in nature? Why does man hesitate to concede the faculty of thought and reasoning to birds and others of the lower animals? What proof have we that they do not think? We can only judge by the circumstances under which actions are performed, whether they are due to instinct or reason; but it is a significant fact that the more the habits of birds are studied by a naturalist, the more he attributes to reason and the less to instinct. Birds' ways are extremely suggestive of the intelligence that directs intelligent man, and a careful examination of the nests and their

location gives fairly convincing evidence of an ability to think and reason as well as to construct.

Locating the nest is almost as highly important as the manner of constructing. With birds the quality of fear—the apprehension of danger is largely developed. Their first thought or impulse when selecting a place for their nest is safety, for on this depends success or failure in establishing a home wherein to propagate a family and thus perpetuate their species.

Is it not a reflection on the higher intelligence of man that as factor in the destruction of our beautiful bird life, he ranks first?

Ye have nests in the mountains, all rugged and stark;
Ye have nests in the forest, all tangled and dark;
Ye build and ye brood 'neath the cottagers' eaves,
And ye build and ye sleep on the sod with the bonny green leaves.

Where the nest, there the birds' home.

The Baltimore oriole, one of our most sagacious birds, hangs its nest preferably in an elm tree near the extreme end of a slender pendant branch, where it is quite beyond the reach of fur or feathered animals with evil intentions, such as hawks, owls and climbing rodents. The selecting of such site shows not only a clearly understood protective method, but sagacity. No animal of more than feather weight, even with the tree as an accomplice, could disturb the nest or its occupants.

The Indigo bunting, a common but not well-known bird, many warblers, and frequently the

catbird conceal their nests in briar or thorn bushes, and are protected by their sharp, harassing thorns—so sharp even the grown boy hesitates to investigate.

Our dapper little goldfinch, actuated by like protective reasoning, conceals his pretty nest deep in the heart of an overgrown bull-thistle.

Birds that build their nests on the ground in open fields—the meadow lark, the bobolink, and many of the sparrow families are safeguarded by their ability to deceive the would-be discoverer by the extreme effort required to discover the nest. Sometimes the nest of an open field bird is accidentally found, but as a rule the problem is a difficult one.

The little field sparrow is an adept at making such problems. His method can scarcely be considered instinctive.

The kingbird builds a nest far up some sturdy tree standing near a running stream or pool of water where insect life is abundant. He is an insectivorous bird, and destroys hordes of insect pests. The kingbird's protective thought is in his ability to defend himself. * He is exceedingly antagonistic and a rabid advocate of preparedness. Woe betide the bird, great or small, that drives into his domain with evil intent. Not only is he defender of his own nest, but of the nests of the smaller birds in his neighborhood.

The chebeck or least flycatcher, the humming bird and the gray gnatcatcher saddle their nests on an outreaching branch of a thickly-

leaved forest or fruit tree, relying on their method of constructing for protection. Their nests are round and compactly made of loose felt-like material, the outer side over all closely covered with lichens stripped from the bark of the tree in which they are built. They are very deceiving. The nest of the humming bird is not larger than a horse chestnut and looks very like a large knot of the branch on which it is placed. Only an expert observer finds a humming bird's nest.

Do birds think? The field sparrow builds its nest on the ground in the open field. If by chance or with malicious intent you approach the nest when the mother bird is covering her eggs, she abruptly flies up before you, then abruptly falls at your feet, apparently disabled by a broken wing or leg. Sympathetically you stoop to pick her up when she hobbles lamely away. You follow, and when again with like intent you stoop to pick her up, she repeats her first device, and after not only winning you away from her nest, but all thought of it, she flashes up and away when fear of the intruder has passed.

There are other birds than the field sparrow that practice similar protective methods. The catbird is a gay deceiver. He sees you approaching his nest. If by chance your approach is too direct, he, being a good ventriloquist, sounds out his warning notes as if from a bush a hundred yards or more beyond where he is concealed.

You are deceived, pass on, and his nest is undiscovered. Do birds think?

The golden woodpecker, flicker, highhole or yarrup, as he is variously called, excavates a recess high up in the trunk of a tall pine tree in which to place his nest, the entrance being made just large enough to admit a "highholder." These birds never leave their nest alone when sheltering their eggs or young, watchful care being the protective thought—seclusion and inaccessibility to all but the feathered tribe.

The kingfisher's method for protection is to drop a holt at the end of a two or three-foot tunnel, burrowed into a stiff bank of sand or clay near a stream or lake where fish are likely to be abundant. Into this holt are dropped the eggs, which the mother bird will brood. Here, too, the young birds will be cared for until able to care for themselves. Then for the first they will leave the dark recess home and for the first time behold the light of day.

Robins, more than other birds, trust man for protection. They build their nests about his home, in vines climbing the nearby trellis, under the porch on the cap of a supporting column, on the narrow lintel over the door, or on the window-sill back of blinds, regardless of danger conditions, trusting man for the safety of all that is most precious to them—their home and family; but

Their life is in a work-day world,
A world ajar, weak and wrong,
Which calls for labor without song,—
Labor which alone is incomplete,
But when song-attuned, most sweet.

HENRY A. SLACK.

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