

PZ
10
3
W644
Bi

FT MEADE
GenColl

OF FEATHER A FEATHER STORIES

By Murlie Burns Wike



*Illustrated by
Marjorie Hull McIntire*



Class PZ10

Book W644³

Copyright N° B1

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.

GPO



J. H. M. C.

Birds of a Feather Stories





BIRDS OF FEATHER STORIES

THE CHEERFUL BOOK OF BRAVE BIRDS

By Murlie Burns Wike

*Author of Little Bird Students, Pictorial Bird
Stories, Little Bird Stories*



*Illustrated by
Marjorie Hull McIntire*

PUBLISHERS

JUST RIGHT BOOKS

ALBERT WHITMAN & COMPANY
CHICAGO, U.S.A.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER STORIES

Copyright, 1925, by Albert Whitman & Co.
Chicago, U. S. A.



A JUST RIGHT BOOK

PUBLISHED IN THE U. S. A.

©CIA875562

DEC 19 '25

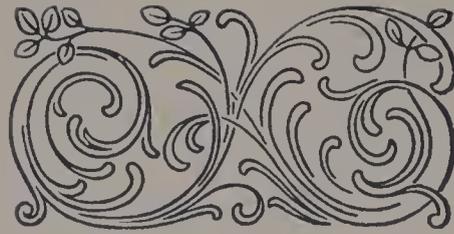
FOREWORD

In this book of bird stories the reader will enjoy the charm of fanciful story telling and also realize practical bird facts and knowledge.

The Birdless Isle story has a high quality that will make the tale live long in the reader's mind. It is a story that extraordinarily and truly visualizes the dangers of wantonly destroying our bird life. There is such a great fund of bird character information in each story of these bird tales that will lead many readers to a greater love and appreciation towards our friends, the birds.

Every story in the book is based on facts from authoritative sources and personal observation by Murlie Burns Wike.

—*The Publishers*



CONTENTS

	Page
<i>A Birdless Isle</i>	9
<i>The Oriole's Gift</i>	19
<i>On Silent Wings</i>	38
<i>The Blue Jay's Cupboard</i>	50
<i>The Ribbon Thief</i>	61
<i>A Sparrow in the Cabbage Patch</i>	72
<i>An Unwelcome Guest</i>	84
<i>A Robin at School</i>	91
<i>A Robin at School</i>	91
<i>A Noisy Fisher</i>	104
<i>The Passing Over of the Birds</i>	111



LIST OF FULL PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS

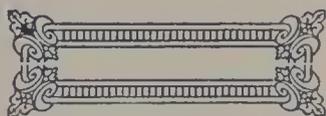
	Page
All the Foolish Men and Boys Oiled Their Guns.....	8
Their Bird Enemies Were Gone.....	15
Then One Day a Pair of Birds Found Their Way to the Island	17
When She Saw the Nest She Knew.....	25
I Know Spring Is Coming Now.....	33
Betty, Watching From the Other Side.....	41
Got An Old Soft Rag.....	43
The Tree on Which He Perched.....	51
And Write a Good Composition.....	53
Jay Birds Came to Feast on the Warm Corn.....	57
Flew Away With It.....	63
That Pretty Bird an Oriole.....	65
Helping Herself to the Nice Juicy Worms.....	73
Led the Way to the Little Wren's Nest.....	81
Young Tommy Catbird.....	85
Trying to Make the Baby Robin Eat the Worm.....	93
Spring Is Here.....	113
They Would Fly to a Warmer Clime.....	115
The Birds Had Been Quietly Gathering In Little Groups	117
Sentinels Perched Upon the Tops of the Trees.....	121



All the foolish men and boys oiled their guns

Birds of a Feather Stories

A BIRDLESS ISLE



“There was once a very pretty island away out in the ocean.”

“Is this a fairy story, mother?” young Bobby asked.

“No, my son, it is the story of what will happen to us if we do as the people on the island did,” his mother answered.

“And on this island,” she continued, “lived

some real old wise men with their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren and they were very happy. There was but one thing that ever disturbed their happiness, the wise old men would not let their people kill the birds that came to dwell on the island with them. The boys would like to shoot the birds and rob their nests. The older boys and men wanted to kill the birds to eat. They often saw them in their fields and they supposed they were eating up the grain when they were in reality devouring the worms there. The women also wished to see the birds killed for they would make such beautiful trimming for their hats. The real old men were wise, however, and would not let them kill the birds.

“Fruits of all kinds grew in abundance on the island, the grass was very pretty and green and wild flowers bloomed prettily in every nook and cranny. The whole island looked like a bright gem set in the midst of the ocean. Birds made this gem-like island musical and happy with their sweet carols. It was a little paradise and all should have been happy but they were not.

“The old men were now becoming very old and feeble and one by one were passing away, but each before he left warned the others and their people to care for the birds. At last there came a time when there was but one real old wise man left. His hair was white as seafoam

and his long beard hung down on his chest. Sadly he wandered about the island saying good-bye to everything. He loved the little gem-island that had so long been his home and he knew that as soon as he was gone the silly people would begin killing all the pretty birds that made the island so lovely, and he was sad. He pleaded with the people with tears in his eyes to protect the birds when he was gone and told them all what would befall them if they did not do so, but they heeded him not. Scarcely had his bones been laid to rest until all the foolish men and boys oiled their guns and began the destruction of the birds.

“The ladies’ bonnets blossomed with the feath-

ers of many songsters. The bodies of many more of them served as food, but many, many were left to die on the ground where they had fallen. The poor birds were destroyed everywhere until the island was left without songsters or birds of any kind.

“The land that had so recently echoed with the songs of many happy birds became as silent as the tomb. The only sound to be heard was the sad surge of the sea beating against the shore. Worms increased everywhere and ate up everything in sight until the once productive trees were literally devoured by insects. The cutworms ate the heart out of the vegetables and caterpillars multiplied undisturbed for their bird

enemies were gone. Snakes and lizards and all kinds of creeping and crawling things increased and spoiled the island until the once beautiful place became a desert in the midst of the ocean.

“Then the people learned what a bad thing they had done and wished they had the birds back again. Oh! if they had only heeded the wise men when they had pleaded with them to save the beautiful birds.

“The ants invaded the houses and carried off what they could find. Spiders crept in at the windows and spun webs over the heads of the people while they slept. Snakes crawled everywhere and slimy lizards left their foul tracks all over the house.



Their bird enemies were gone

“The snakes and lizards helped to keep down the insect horde but they became almost as great a pest as the worms. The people worked hard trying to kill the plague of living things that was slowly but surely eating the heart out of everything and threatened to devour even them in their ravenous hunger, but all their efforts to rid themselves of the mean things were of little avail.

“Then one happy day a pair of birds found their way to the island. How the people rejoiced and how they encouraged them to stay! They set aside that day as a national day of thanksgiving and have observed it ever since. The birds found the island to be such a good



Then one day a pair of birds found their way to the island

place to stay they told the other birds about it and soon there were many birds there, but it took many birds and many years to repair the damage the people did when they had killed off the birds. Now the island has regained its gem-like beauty and is musical with the voice of many birds, but woe is made to the one who harms a bird on that island.”

Bobby was silent a long time after his mother had finished her story.

“Mother, is that really what will happen to us if we go on killing all of our birds?”

“Yes, Bobby, only I think it will be a lot worse with us than it was on the island, for there will be no birds to take the place of the ones we have lost.”

933

THE ORIOLE'S GIFT



“Mother, mother, please come here quick.”

“What is it, my dear?”

“Oh mother, the prettiest bird I ever saw.”

“Where?” her mother questioned, as she reached her child’s side.

“Up there. See him?” Helen said, pointing to the plum tree now in full blossom.

“See, back of the first long white spray this way?” pointing eagerly to the fragrant, feathery blossoms.

“Oh yes,” her mother said, “that is an oriole, a Baltimore oriole.”

“How pretty,” Helen exclaimed, watching the glittering orange breast and the black wings of the bird, “I never knew there was such a pretty bird in the world.”

Helen had lived among birds all her life but had paid no attention to them. This had been a sorry cause to her uncle, who loved the birds and was never tired watching them. To interest her, he had given her a book on the birds for Christmas.

Helen glanced through the book admiring the pictures as she went but not reading the book. As spring advanced, however, she unconsciously

looked for the birds to come back and when they did come one by one and she could find their pictures in the book she became enthusiastic about them. She saved all the crumbs from the table to feed the birds and she spent every spare moment out under the trees looking for them. A flash of yellow, a dart of red, or a streak of blue would fill her with joy. She was forever listening for the songs of new birds and every new song would send her out hunting for the bird. The sly Brown Thrasher seemed to know this for he sang so many different songs of so many birds he had her out hunting for them all the time. When after a long search she found him, he would be perched on the topmost branch



In a tree singing

of a tree singing as if he delighted in the chase he had led her.

“Oh you saucy fellow,” she would call, “it is no wonder you are called the American Mocking Bird.”

Helen did not see the oriole for several days after he came and she wondered where he had gone.

“Wait a little while and you will see him.”

her mother told her. "He is waiting for his mate to come back from the south. She cannot fly as fast as he and does not reach here so soon."

Helen waited and before the week was out she saw him sitting on the quince tree singing as if he were the harbinger of joy, while his mate pulled at a string fastened on the shrub. "You lazy thing," Helen scolded. "Why do you not help her?" If the oriole heard, he did not heed, for he continued his song and she tugged at the string. When she had unfastened the string they both flew away.

After this the bird came often by herself and all through the long sunny days gathered string for the nest. Helen knew her call and eagerly

watched for her and kept the tree limbs well supplied with string for her use. Sometimes she fastened the strings a little tight. Then it was fun to watch the oriole tug and pull and pick at it. If it were especially hard to unfasten, she would catch it in her bill and fly out as fast and strong as she could, sometimes flying away with the string in her bill. Sometimes she would have to do it all over again. When she had taken all the string she needed she gathered bits of moss, cotton, etc., to make a warm bed for the baby birds.

Then Helen went to see the nest. She had wondered what the bird wanted with so much string, but when she saw the nest she knew. It



*When she saw the
nest she knew*

was a long stocking-like nest about six inches long and free to rock in the wind. Helen thought every minute it would fall but it never did. The mother oriole had her nest too strong to be so easily blown down. She had woven the strings in and out and had fastened the nest securely to the limb.

Helen watched the queer nest all summer but because it was up so high and because she was afraid of scaring the mother away she never saw either the eggs or the young birds but she knew they were there for she often saw the parents with worms in their bills flying to the nest.

In the autumn when the old birds had gone south for another winter, she climbed the tree,



She packed the nest neatly in a box

took down the nest, packed in neatly in a box, kept it until Christmas then sent it to her uncle with a card bearing these words: "The Orioles' Gift."

"Bless her heart," her uncle exclaimed, when he received the gift, "I knew she would learn to love the birds."

MESSENGERS OF SPRING



“Cheep-per-per!” sounded on the still air of a spring-like morning in early February.

Bessie and Betty bounded out of bed to see the first robin of the year. It was very early and when they stood at the window they could see nothing in the light of semi-dawn, so they dressed and ran downstairs to find their early visitor.

“Mother, we heard the robin’s call!” the twins called as they reached the kitchen.

“Are you sure?” Mother asked, smiling at the eagerness of her little twin girls.

“Yes!” they replied, and ran out to find him.

The sun was just rising and had not yet thawed the ground. The chill of winter was in the air, but the wind talked to itself of flowers and bees and of the wonderful spring that was on its way.

Bessie shivered a bit with the cold. “I do not see why robins come here so early when they might be enjoying all the pretty flowers in the South,” she complained.

“Perhaps the south wind whispered to them

that it will soon be spring up here," Betty replied. While her sister shivered in the chill of winter, she had caught the message of spring in the air.

"I wondered if the wind did not tell him about the twins in the North who were wishing very much for spring to come?" Bessie retorted, laughingly. She did not believe the wind ever whispered, as she had not heard it do so.

"Cheep-per-per!" the robin sang, then warbled a few notes of his spring song under his breath.

"There they are!" the twins exclaimed. True enough, there were two of them hopping along on the frozen ground.

"I think those robins are crazy," Bessie affirmed.

“I do not,” Betty declared. “I am glad they came; let us feed them.”

Both girls ran into the house for bread crumbs, which they scattered on the ground. The robins flew away in fright, but when the twins had gone into the house, they flew down, captured a crumb, flew to a nearby fence post and ate it. In a little while they forgot their fear and boldly flew down and ate the crumbs on the ground.

The next day it snowed and the robins did not appear.

“Where did the robins go?” Bessie queried.

“I do not know,” replied Betty; perhaps to the South again.”

“I do not think so,” Mother observed.

“Why not?” both girls asked at once.

“Because some of the Southerners kill them to eat,” Mother replied.

“I think that is why they came north so soon,” Bessie remarked. “Betty said the wind whispered to them; but I know better, it does not whisper, it just blows.”

In about a week the bluebirds returned and the twins’ cup of joy was full and running over. They saw them first on the grape arbor, flying from post to post, and warbling their spring song, which Betty said sounded like “liquid” music.

“I know spring is coming, now!” Betty rejoiced, dancing in the way a little girl does when she is very happy.



Majorie Hill McIntire

I know spring is coming now!

Winter had not yet gone on its way, however. In a day or two after this, it snowed and blew a regular gale.

“What will the robins and bluebirds do now?” Bessie wondered, looking eagerly out of the window where the wind was hurling the snowflakes about at a great rate.

“Do you really want to know?” it was their father speaking. He had just come in out of the snow and looked like Santa Claus.

“Yes we do!” they called.

“Bundle up well, come with me, and I will show you,” he said.

It did not take the girls long to do as they were bidden. They walked and walked for a

long time, it seemed to the girls, but it was not really very far. It seemed far because the biting wind whirled about them and slapped them in the face with snowflakes so they could hardly see where they were going.

“Now, you know!” their father said, as he stopped and pointed to something huddled in a corner by the fence they were facing.

The girls looked but could see nothing at first, because the wind was driving the snow in their faces; but they blinked their eyes rapidly and by looking sharply they saw that the dark objects were robins and bluebirds.

The twins were so surprised they could not speak. They could only stare.

Their father looked at them and chuckled. "Trust the birds to find the warm spots in a storm," he said.

"Birds are wiser than we think," Betty remarked.

"Yes, indeed!" Father responded. "We could spend our whole lives studying them and still not know very much about them."

By this time they had started on their homeward journey. As they walked, Father pointed out the south sides of hills and the protected spots where the birds gather for protection in severe weather.

"Do you know where the robins and bluebirds

find things to eat when the ground is frozen?" Bessie inquired.

"Yes," Father replied, "they stay in the woods where the ground does not freeze very hard and pick among the leaves and at the roots of trees and along the streams until spring comes to stay, when they go to the orchards to build their nests."

"Oh, I hope it will not be long coming!" the twins said, dancing and playing all the way home.

Father said nothing, but his eyes rested lovingly on his little daughters who, he knew, had the springtime in their hearts already.



ON SILENT WINGS



“Oh look, Bessie!” Betty whispered to her sister.

“Why it is a cuckoo!” Bessie said, “but what is he doing to that old robin nest?”

“That is what I should like to know,” Betty murmured.

Together the twins watched the cuckoo tearing at the abandoned nest with his bill. When

he had loosened up a billful of the straws, he flew to the sugar pear tree with them and gave them to another cuckoo. Then he flew to a quince tree near by and began breaking off a piece of the dead limb.

“He can not be feeding his young?” Bessie queried.

“Hardly, on an old robin nest,” Betty laughed.

“Why, what will he do with that?” Bessie asked in surprise.

The bird was flying toward the pear tree with a stick about six inches long and as thick as a slate pencil. He gave this to the cuckoo in the tree and flew away looking for more.

“Oh, I know now,” Betty cried, “they are building a nest.”

“But what queer nesting material!” Bessie objected.

As the girls watched him, they saw he was indeed building a nest. He gathered the material and brought it to his mate in the sugar pear tree and she wove it into a nest. They were very quiet about it, neither of them uttering a sound as they worked. If the twins had not their eyes trained for birds they would never have seen them at all. When he flew, he made no sound and kept well to the body of the tree.

“I wonder why they are so quiet?” Bessie asked.

“Perhaps they are afraid of enemies,” Betty suggested.



*Betty, watching from
the other side*

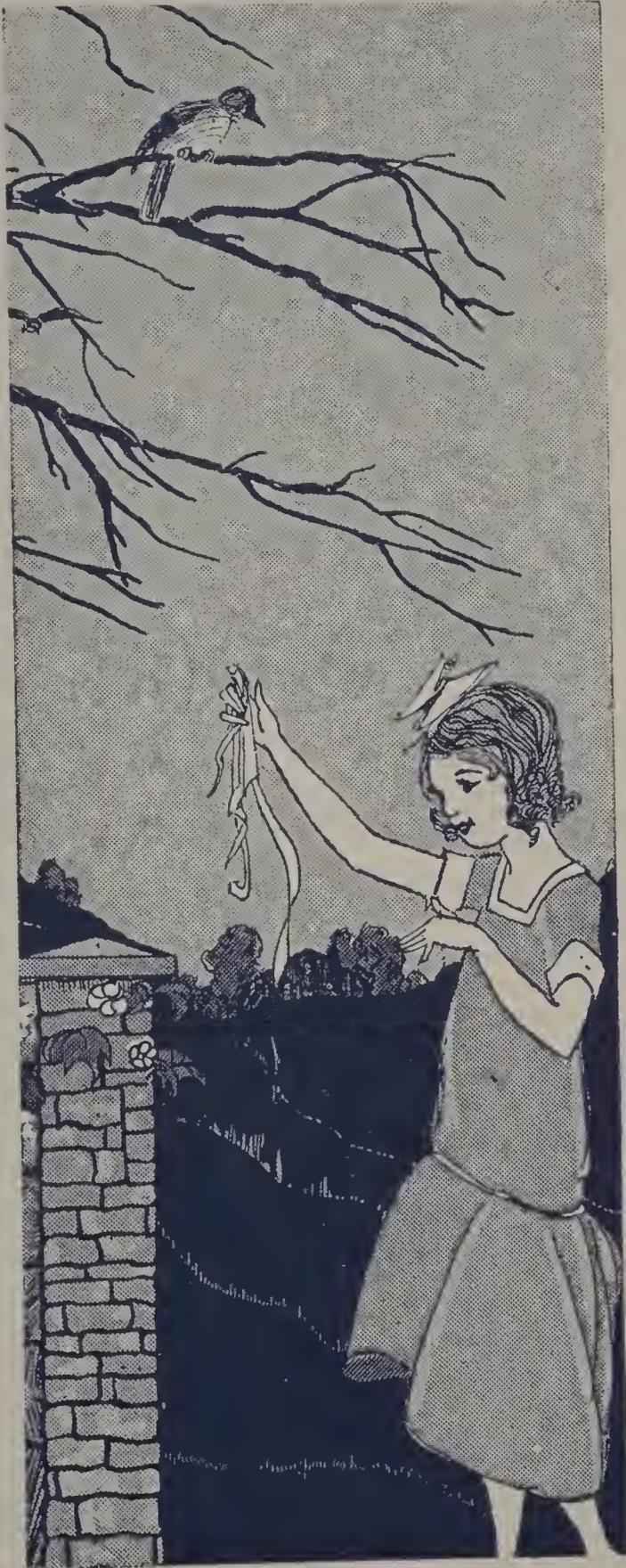
“They look big enough to fight out in the open with any bird,” Bessie argued.

“Yes, that is so,” Betty said thoughtfully, “but perhaps it is their nature to fly on silent wings like that.”

“I wonder if he would like some string to build his nest?” Bessie asked.

“You might try it,” Betty agreed, “the mate looks like she needs something with which to bind the sticks together.”

Bessie ran to the house and got an old soft rag. She tore strings off this and hung them on a quince tree where the cuckoo had been gathering sticks, then she hid to see what he would do. She did not have long to wait. In a very little while, the cuckoo came to the tree hunting



Got an old soft rag

sticks, but when he saw the strings, he caught one of them in his bill instead and flew away with it.

Betty, watching from the other side, saw him fly up with the string. The cuckoo in the nest gave a low throaty sound, as if she was surprised that he could find such good nesting material. He answered her with a low sound and flew off rather proudly, Betty thought, to get another string.

This time he caught both ends of the string in his bill and attempted to fly with it. It would not come, and he was jerked back violently. He tried another, catching it in the same way and with the same result. He caught the next one by one end and attempted to fly with it in his zig-zag way close to the body of the tree. It

caught on a limb. He tried to unfasten it with his bill, then caught one end of it in his bill and flew, putting his whole weight on it. This time he was successful and flew away with it to the nest, the string floating behind him like the tail on a kite. All this time he had not uttered a sound.

“Most birds would have scolded us soundly when the string did not come loose,” Betty remarked. She had come around to watch with her sister.

“They certainly would, especially the orioles,” Bessie agreed.

Thus the bird gathered strings and bits of wood until the string was all used up. Bessie ran to the house for more string. While she was gone,

the cuckoo flew to the south and was gone so long Betty thought the cat must have caught him. Bessie came back with the string and placed it on the quince tree. Betty went to look for the cuckoo. She met him coming back without anything in his bill. He took one of the strings in his bill and flew to the nest with it.

“I think he was looking for softer material,” Betty observed. “I wonder if he would like some dry grass?”

Bessie was too much absorbed in watching the bird’s silent, shadow-like motions to reply. Betty gathered a handful of dry grass and placed it beside the string on the tree.

When the cuckoo saw the grass, he gathered



She crouched low in the nest

a bill full of it and flew to the nest with it and came back again and again for more.

“He certainly keeps quiet,” Betty observed, “yet we could not call him a shirker.”

“No,” Bessie replied enthusiastically, “he is a worker. Come, let us see what progress they have made with the nest.”

When the female saw the girls watching, she crouched low in the nest, and watched them out

of the corner of her eye. Presently the male came back with a little straw in his bill and gave it to her. He stayed with her longer than usual, then he flew away. In a little while she left the nest and flew away after him.

The twins watched for a long time for the birds to come back.

“I wonder if we have scared them away in getting so close to the nest?” Bessie asked.

“No,” Betty responded, “I think they have done their day’s work and have gone to roost.”

“What a strange nest they built,” Bessie exclaimed, “it looks more like a pile of sticks with a few rags hanging from it.”

“And yet it is pretty in its way,” Betty observed. “I think birds have tastes the same as

people and the cuckoo's taste is for the rustic and sensible."

"There may be something in that," Bessie admitted, "but it seems to me the young cuckoos would fall out!"

When the cuckoos came back the next morning they flew about their nest. Betty said they were admiring their work. It looked even better to them than it did the night before.

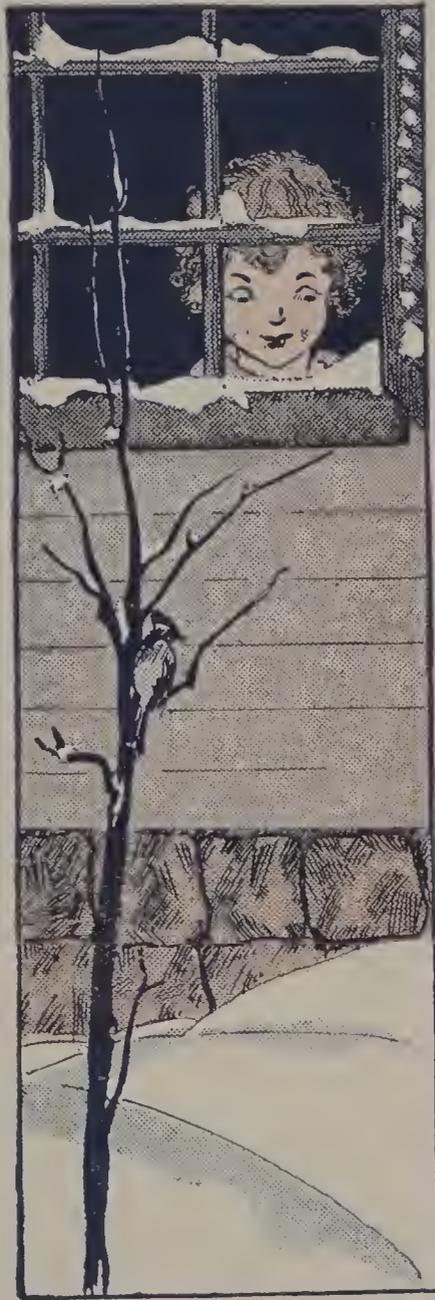
Bessie did not agree with them, but Bessie was only a young child and did not then know what the cuckoo likes and needs in the way of a nest.



THE BLUE JAY'S CUPBOARD



He was very cold and hungry. The shrill January wind whistling by him ruffled up his feathers and he shivered with the cold. A cheerless white carpet of snow lay on the ground, covering up his food supply of weed seeds. The branches of the tree on which he perched were covered with ice and he had to hold first one, then the other of his cold feet up in his feathers to warm them.



*The tree on which
he perched*

From where he sat he could see a little girl eating her breakfast. "My, if I only had some," he shivered, "I would not be so cold.

"Jay, jay," he screeched, hoping he could attract her attention. She went on eating as if there were no jays within fifty miles. Again and again he yelled jay-jay but with no better success than before. It was very provoking. Only once did she look his way and then she did not see him. Something must have been troubling her, the jaybird thought as her face was very sad.

She was indeed sad, for her teacher had told her she must write a good composition. She was to sit at her window and write a composition on what she saw there. Of all the places to find a



And write a good composition

composition that was the worst, she thought, and instead of looking out the window she pouted about it. It was Saturday morning and the compositions were to be in the following Friday.

“Marie,” her mother said, “look out that window and tell me what you see.”

Marie looked out, though she had little hopes of seeing anything.

“I see lots and lots of snow and ice. The wind is blowing quite a gale and a jaybird is sitting on a branch of the tree yelling jay jay and trying his best to keep from being blown away by the storm,” Marie answered, “but I do not see any composition in that.”

“If you were that Jay what would you like best of all?” her mother questioned.

Something nice and warm to eat and a place of shelter," Marie answered.

"If we feed the bird I think he will find shelter in one of our buildings or in some tree more protected from the wind than this one is."

"Yes, I think the reason he stays on this tree is because he is hungry." Marie said, "Mother, may I feed him?"

"Yes, slip on your warm coat and run to the barn and get a nice ear of corn for him."

It did not take Marie long to get the corn. "Now what will I do with it?" she asked.

"Put it in the oven to warm awhile then take it out and put it on that nail in the post on which the clothesline is fastened. Then come in and watch what happens," her mother advised.

The work was soon done and Marie watched eagerly at the window to see what would happen. She had forgotten all about her composition by this time.

With a glad cry the Jay flew to the corn and put as many kernels as he could in his mouth, then he flew to another tree and ate it grain by grain. Every once in a while he shrilled jay-jay as though thanking Marie for her generosity or perhaps it was to tell the other birds what a rich treat he had found. However it was, the ear of corn was soon alive with birds. Redbirds, titmice, downeys and many jaybirds came to feast on the warm corn.

Our little jay, having eaten all he wanted for that meal, flew to a clump of bushes and was



Jaybirds came to feast on the warm corn

soon busy burrowing in the snow. He then returned for another mouthful of corn, which he buried in the same place.

“I wonder why he is doing that?” Marie said. She was still wondering about it several days later when she chanced to look out the window. There in the snow where he had hidden his treasure he was busily burrowing. After a little while he flew away.

“I am going to see what he was doing,” Marie declared, putting on her wraps. She took the snow shovel from the shed and was soon busy making a path to the bushes where the bird had burrowed in the snow.

What she found was a little scooped out place,

some marks of the corn on the snow, and a few outer husks of corn.

“Why,” Marie cried, delighted, “I have found the blue jay’s cupboard and it is empty, just like Old Mother Hubbard’s. Just watch how soon I can fill it.”

Marie felt just as Columbus must have felt when he discovered America. She could hardly contain her joy and ran to the house as fast as she could to tell her mother the wonderful thing she had discovered.

The empty cob on the post was soon replaced by a new one, so the jaybird could fill his cupboard again.

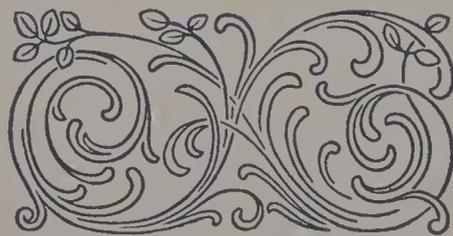
“But what about my composition?” Marie asked, “I have forgotten all about that.”

Her mother laughed. "Why not write about the bluejay's cupboard?"

"The very thing," Marie exclaimed; and so it was written.

When the compositions were read all declared Marie's to be the very best. Her classmates kept her busy answering questions about it.

"And to think," she declared, "I never thought when I was watching the blue jay I was gathering material for a composition."



THE RIBBON THIEF



“Oh!” little Hazel cried, “there goes my ribbon.” She had been sitting at the open window dressing her doll when a playful May breeze caught up her ribbon and took it out the window. It caught on a twig of the quince tree, just now very pretty and fragrant with blossoms.

Hardly had she spoken when a beautiful bird with a golden breast took the ribbon in her bill and flew away with it.

“Oh!” Hazel sobbed, running out after the bird, “that naughty bird stole my ribbon.”

Hazel could not find the bird anywhere so she came back to her mother with her face all red and swollen from crying. Her very littlest doll needed a sash very badly and that ribbon was the very width she needed to go around her tiny waist. Besides it was such a pretty shade of red, she did not know why the bird had to steal it.

“Never mind, dear,” her mother comforted her, “I will give you another ribbon just as wide and every bit as pretty.”



Flew away with it

Hazel smiled through her tears. "But, Mother," she asked, "what did the bird want with my ribbon?"

"I think she wanted to weave it in her nest," Mother replied.

Hazel's eyes grew big with surprise. "Why! I thought they used twigs and bits of grass to build nests."

"The most of them do," Mother replied, "but the orioles prefer strings and ribbons for their hanging nest."

"Was that pretty bird an oriole?" Hazel asked, "and had we not better put out some strings for her?"

"Yes," Mother replied to both questions. "And here is a white rag. Tear it into strings and



That pretty bird an Oriole

put it on the quince tree for her. It will be softer than cord and she can weave it into her nest better.

Hazel had hardly fastened the strings to the tree until she heard a sharp whistle. Looking out quickly she saw a bird similar to the first one but with a brighter breast. Presently the first bird she had seen flew to the quince tree and helped herself to one of the strings Hazel had placed there, and flew away with it.

“Was that bright bird the male?” Hazel inquired.

“Yes, dear, he always comes with her to cheer her with his song while she is gathering the strings.”

“And does he not help her?” Hazel was surprised. “Oh, there go the strings on the ground,” and Hazel ran out to put them up again.

This time she tied them on the quince tree. “Now I do not think the wind will blow them down.”

She had just time enough to get to her window when she heard the familiar whistle and saw the orioles coming back for more string. The female bird went at once to the tree and began working at the string with her bill trying to loosen it while the male whistled encouragement to her but never offered to help her.

“The lazy thing!” Hazel exclaimed.



Marked the place where she stopped

When the female oriole had unfastened the string and flew away with it, Hazel followed to see what she was doing with it. She had a time following the bird as she flew straight over the fences, trees and things, while Hazel had to go around, but she kept her eyes on the oriole and marked the place where she stopped. When she

came there she saw a stocking-like affair hanging from the tip of an apple limb. The female oriole was busy weaving the string into the fabric of the nest while the male oriole sang to her.

Looking closer, she saw her red ribbon shining among the white strings of the nest. It was just a narrow ribbon, a little wider than baby ribbon, for her doll was tiny and did not need a big sash.

“Why,” Hazel exclaimed, “I think she must have needed a bit of color to make her nest pretty. She certainly is welcome to it.”

When Hazel reached the house, the orioles were already there. The female oriole was having a hard time trying to unfasten one of the strings. She worked at it awhile with her bill

trying to undo the knot, then would take the end in her bill and try to fly away with the string, but it held fast. Then she tried to unfasten it with her bill. Over and over again she did this while the male whistled cheerily and encouragingly, but never once offered to help her. The more she worked at it the looser the string became, but the more tired she became, so she had to rest oftentimes before trying it again. Finally, however, she loosened it and flew away with it while the male whistled joyously as if he had done it.

“I am going to loosen all those strings,” Helen declared. “I think that bird has enough to do as it is.”

So she ran out to fix the strings. Her mother, watching her, smiled at the interest her little girl was showing in her ribbon thief.



A SPARROW IN THE CABBAGE PATCH



Little Dorothy Arnold awoke one morning to find an English sparrow sitting on her window sill, with a green worm in its mouth.

“I wonder what Aunt Susan would say if she saw that,” Dorothy thought, while she lay very still watching it.

The bird sat there looking around in the



Helping herself to the nice juicy worms

friendliest way imaginable, then it flew away to its nest in the roof.

“I never yet saw a green worm that was of value,” Dorothy mused while she dressed, “and if English sparrows catch green worms, why do people hate the sparrow?”

It was a big question for a little girl and she finished dressing quickly and ran down to tell her mother the good news.

“We can not have a bit of peace with those English sparrows. They are forever fighting and last week I caught them eating my cabbage. I do not see why someone does not kill every one of them.” It was her Aunt Susan complaining.

Dorothy came in rather timidly. “Mother,

guess what I saw?" Dorothy could not keep her secret, though she was very much afraid of her Aunt Susan.

Dorothy was always learning new things about nature and her mother was very well pleased to see that she used her eyes and ears to such good advantage.

"What is it now?" Mother asked, smiling down at her little daughter.

Dorothy told her mother what she had seen.

"I would have to see that to believe it," spoke up Aunt Susan.

A hurt look crossed Dorothy's face.

"My little girl always tells me the truth," Mrs. Arnold said quickly with a meaning look

at her sister. Dorothy smiled happily and snuggled up to her mother. It was fine to have a mother like that.

“I believe that was a cabbage worm you saw in the bird’s mouth,” Mrs. Arnold said gently. “I saw them eating cabbage worms a few years ago and it would not surprise me if they did it again. When you have eaten your breakfast we will go out and see.”

After breakfast they all went out to the cabbage patch, though Aunt Susan declared it was all nonsense. They hid behind a bush and watched for the birds to come. They waited there so long that Mrs. Arnold was ready to give up and Aunt Susan was saying, “Let us go into

the house and be sensible. We might know there is no good in an English Sparrow."

"Wait," Dorothy commanded excitedly, "there is one coming down now."

True enough there was. Dorothy knew how to use her bright eyes. The sparrow flew straight to the cabbage patch and began helping himself to the nice juicy worms and lice on the plant.

"There!" Aunt Susan cried, "that is just what they do to mine. I cannot have a single head of cabbage with them."

"I do not think you would have a cabbage if it were not for them," Dorothy's mother replied quietly, "he is eating the worms, not the cabbage."

Aunt Susan looked at her sister scornfully. She did not believe it. She wanted to rush out and chase the bird away.

“When the bird had finished, he flew close enough for them to see what he had in his mouth. It was a green cabbage worm.

Aunt Susan was surprised.

“Well!” she exclaimed, “this is the first time I ever knew sparrows were of value.”

“I can give you more proofs if you want them,” her sister suggested.

“I am willing to be convinced,” Aunt Susan replied. “I wonder what that book writer meant by calling sparrows such nuisances.”

“Oh, that is where you found that idea is it?” Mrs. Arnold said.

“Yes, and if you have any more proof, you had better be showing it,” Aunt Susan retorted.

“I know where it is,” Dorothy said and led the way to a little wren’s nest on a tree limb overhanging the henhouse, where a number of sparrows had their nests.

“There are little wrens in that nest and it is next door to the English sparrows in the henhouse.

“Why? Why?” Aunt Susan questioned, “the book said they chased all the other birds away.”

“I know,” Mrs. Arnold said, “but sometimes even writers of books make mistakes. I suppose if there were as many sparrows as there used to be, they would do some damage. It is only natural for a bird to want to live and when there

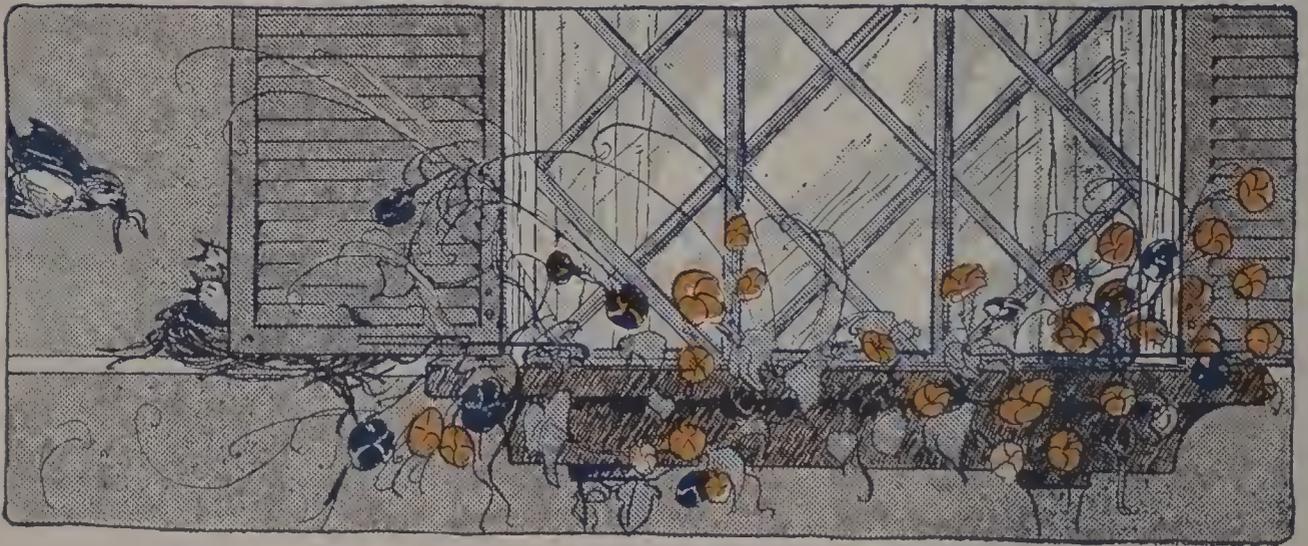
were a great number of them I suppose they chased the smaller birds away because they were stronger and wanted places for themselves.”

Dorothy then showed her aunt the nests of a number of different kinds of birds all close to the house and unmolested by the English sparrows.

“Last summer when I was sick,” Dorothy’s mother began, “I lay in a bed upstairs facing the cherry trees. It was during cherry time and though the English sparrows were on the trees nearly all the time, I never saw one of them take a cherry, but I saw nearly every other kind of a bird helping himself to them. I could not believe it at first, but it was so. A sparrow’s mouth



*Led the way to the
little wren's nest*



Seems to be too small to eat them.

seems to be too small to eat them.”

“They will not eat corn, either,” Dorothy said. “Do you remember the corn we put out in the winter for the birds and not a sparrow ever came near it?”

“That is so, too,” her mother said.

“It does not seem possible,” Aunt Susan declared, “but I cannot doubt what I have seen.

Hereafter I will not so quickly believe everything
I read about supposed useless birds.



AN UNWELCOME GUEST



Young Tommy Catbird awoke from his morning nap terrified and speechless from fear. Above his nest, a monstrous blacksnake reared his impish head, while his darting red tongue watered for his breakfast. It came ever nearer and nearer. Fear held Tommy spellbound. He trembled yet could not move.



Young Tommy Catbird



Followed them on the branch

With a painlike cry the parent birds came back. They flew at the snake fiercely and dug their claws into his flesh. As quick as lightning, the snake recoiled and the birds flew away. The snake followed them out on the branch, but the birds did not attack him again.

Again he raised his head above the nest and explored its contents. The parent birds waited in suspense. Had Tommy time to hide? A

searching look convinced the snake the nest was empty and he left it alone. Thoroughly angry now, the snake turned his attention to the parent birds. If he could not have the nestling, he would, at least, have one of the older birds.

He glided out on the branches with the grace of a squirrel, jumping from branch to branch while the catbirds shrilled defiantly at him and cried in heartbroken tones. When the birds had a good chance, they flew at him and picked him savagely, but before the snake could grab them they had flown away, apparently exhausted. The next moment they were ready to go at him again. Whatever powers of fascination he had, availed him nothing with the fighting catbirds.



The catbirds yelled defiantly at him

It was a fight in the open and to an onlooker was very interesting.

There was such an onlooker, Floyd Miller, a farmer boy, who had heard the cries of the birds' distress and had made his way into the swamp, unnoticed by the combatants. He watched them, held still by the wily movements of the snake

that reminded him of the story about Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

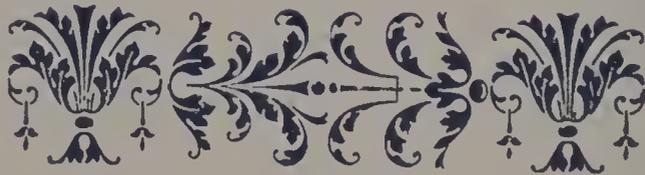
Interesting as it was to Floyd, it held but terror for the catbirds and they were slowly but surely becoming exhausted by their efforts. The snake had counted on this, perhaps, and kept after them relentlessly, hoping they would fall of exhaustion.

Then the snake caught a glimpse of Floyd out of the corner of his eye. The birds were, for the moment, forgotten while he lay quietly watching him. Floyd stooped for a stone. The snake crawled up the boughs. He hid among the foliage. He tried to make his body resemble a gnarled branch. His efforts were vain. Floyd's

bright eyes found him. A few well directed blows laid him low.

Floyd had killed the serpent none too soon, for the parent birds fluttered down exhausted and panted for breath. They could not have stood the strain much longer.

Tommy Catbird had been an interested observer of the defense his parents were making for their home and he now came out of his hiding place and chirped vigorously in celebration of the victory.





Messengers of spring

A ROBIN AT SCHOOL

“Oh my,” Roy complained, “how I wish I were a nice fat robin!”

“Why, Roy!” Mother reproved, “I thought you liked being a boy.”

“I do,” Roy amended, except when it comes

to going to school, then I should like to be free like a bird.”

“That would not do you any good,” Mrs. Carter replied, “for birds have to go to school. Do you remember the fun we had last spring watching a young robin learning its lessons?”

Roy shook his head, puzzled.

“Oh, I remember now, it was Kenneth who was with us.”

Roy was interested at once. “Tell me about it, Mother.”

Kenneth came in. Mrs. Carter appealed to him.

“Kenneth, do you remember the day we saw a robin holding down the head of another robin.”

“Yes, indeed, Mother, I wanted to throw a



Trying to make the baby robin eat the worm

stone at it to make it stop, but you would not let me..”

“We looked closer,” Mother continued, “and saw that there was a worm lying on the ground. The mother robin was trying to make the baby robin eat that worm.”

“It was just such a worm as robins like to eat,” Kenneth said eagerly, “a nice white cut-worm that they dig out of the ground. I could not understand why the youngster did not eat it. Surely he must know that was why his mother held his head down to it. The minute his mother relaxed her hold, up went baby bird’s head as if it were made of rubber, and he yelled lustily to be fed. He must have thought worms grew

on trees or on his mother, for he followed her about begging to be fed. I thought him very stupid indeed, not to know that he had a nice worm on the ground, just waiting to be eaten.

Roy laughed. "My, how I wish I had been there!"

"The mother bird had to push his head down time and time again, only to have him pop it up and call for food." Mother continued, "When she found pushing did not do any good, she became rough and started picking at the poor little fellow's head with her bill."

"Did you say the young bird was little?" Kenneth asked. "Why he was as big as she was. The only way I know it was a young robin was

by the brown specks on its breast. I thought it was certainly big enough to know how to pick up a worm for itself."

Mother laughed. "Yes, Kenneth, he was big enough. I have a habit of calling anything that is young, little. The picking of his head had a little more effect upon him than pushing it down had. At least he was not in such a hurry to raise it because he knew that it would only be picked again and it hurt to be picked. He tried it several times only to be picked until he lowered his head. I think that must have been a severe trial for the poor little bird. He was hungry and had always received his food from his mother's bill. His mother had always been

good and kind to him. He could not understand why she was so cruel all at once."

"I should think it would be hard for him to understand," Roy remarked.

"Finally," Mother continued her story, "he looked about on the ground for lack of anything else to do, or perhaps he had begun to realize that his mother must have some good reason for pushing his head down. He saw the worm. I think he must have been surprised to find it there. He picked at it gingerly, his mother standing guard over him all the time."

"She was certainly pleased when he finally swallowed the worm," Kenneth commented.

"She ought to be," Roy declared, "after all that work."

“I saw her later, teaching him to dig worms for himself.”

“Why, Mother, where was I, that I did not see it?” Kenneth complained.

“I think you were playing somewhere.”

“Do tell us about it, Mother,” Roy begged.

“It was comical to watch them,” Mother began. “He kept following her around, calling at times, and opening his mouth wide right in her face. She paid no heed to him. She picked at the ground with those quick little picks robins give, then she pushed his head up and down with her bill. He was almost as stupid in learning to dig worms out for himself as he had been in learning to eat them.”

“I think he knew enough then to know that she was trying to teach him something, for he would bob his head up and down in the funniest way without touching the ground. Mother bird renewed her efforts. She dug earnestly at the ground, watching baby-bird all the while. Baby-bird watched her antics, then tried it himself, picking the ground a little this time. That pleased the mother bird and she dug in real earnest. Baby-bird now did what the mother bird did and soon their heads were bobbing up and down in quite a lively manner. They were both hunting worms.

“Did Baby-bird get a worm?” Kenneth asked eagerly.

Mother smiled. "I think the mother bird dug up the worm and made the baby bird believe he had done it all by himself."

"I suppose he knew what to do with the worm," Kenneth said. "If he did not, I would think him hopeless, after the severe lesson he received."

He did not need any more teaching for that," Mother laughed. "He had learned that lesson very well."

"So that is the way robins go to school," Roy remarked thoughtfully. "One good thing about it is that they do not need to learn so many things as we do."

"Oh, there are many other things they must learn," Mother explained. "They must learn to



How best to dodge cats

fly. They must study how best to dodge cats, owls, snakes, and every danger that threatens. Then sometimes they are caught. They must also know how to build nests and take care of their young and many other things.”

“Why,” Roy cried in surprise, “I thought every bird knew how to build a nest without being taught.”

“I never saw a bird teaching another how to

build a nest but I did see one that did not know how to build her nest. Rather she did not know where to put it, so it would stay in the tree. I had watched her carrying straw in big bill fulls for days at a time and depositing it on a bare limb of our crab apple tree. It only fell off, making quite a pile of straws under the tree. I had seen her look at it in a puzzled way as if wondering why it did not stay there. There was a nice forked limb quite near that would have made a splendid support for her nest but she never found it. Finally she gave it up entirely and flew away. I have wondered many times if that bird ever did build a nest."

Roy had been thinking. "I wonder," he said,

“if the reason why we have to go to school so much longer than the birds is because we have so much more to do than they.”

“Yes, son,” Mother spoke softly. “Our schooling is to fit us for our life work which is not quite as simple as a bird’s life work.”

“I understand, now, Mother, and I will try to like school as well as I can.”



A NOISY FISHER



Little William played in the cool, sweet-smelling mint, every now and then running up to ask his father some question about the pleasant place where he was. William had never been in the country before and everything seemed so wonderful to him.

“Father, what was that blue thing that scooted up the creek so fast and made such a great lot of noise?”

“William, do not make so much noise, you will scare all the fish away.”



That was a bird, my son

“But, Father, what was it? Will it hurt me?”

“That was a bird, my son, a kingfisher.”

“A kingfisher?” William cried, “and does he fish for kings?”

His father laughed. “No, my son, he is called a kingfisher because he is the king of fishermen among the birds.”

“Then he catches fish, but where are his line and hook?” William asked.

“He needs no line or hook,” William’s father told him. “Look, there he is now on those stones looking in the shallow water for fish. Watch him and you may see him catch a fish.”

William looked and saw him patiently walking about on the stones and gazing very intently in the water. William watched him for awhile but he soon lost patience with him. He wanted him to catch something quick!

“But, Father, why did he make such a noise when he went up the creek? Wasn’t he afraid he would scare the fish away?”

“It is his nature to make a noise like that and he may do it to scare the fish upstream so as to have them there when he goes fishing. He never makes a sound while he is watching for



Flew away to a limb

them.” His father answered.

William sat very quiet for about another minute, waiting for the kingfisher to catch something, then he moved a little near this wonderful fisher. Little by little he came closer and the wary kingfisher saw him. Kingfishers do not like human company and he soon flew away to a limb of a tree farther up stream, making a mean rattling sound as he flew.

William was ready to cry. He did so want to see that kingfisher catch a fish. "How did he do it anyway?"

"Father, will a kingfisher fish from a tree limb?"

"Yes, William, he will wait until he sees a fish, then he will dive down and catch it in his mouth and fly up with it.

This was the strangest thing he had ever heard and William's eyes grew large with wonder.

William soon went to work building a mound in the sand where his father was fishing. It was a fort against the Indians and he became so interested in it he forgot all about the kingfisher until he heard that shrill rattling sound.

He looked up quickly. The kingfisher was diving in the water. He ran as fast as he could to where the kingfisher was and saw him come up with a little minnow in his mouth. He soon flew off with it to the deeper woods.

“Father, Oh Father, that blue fisher caught a minnow!” William cried, running back to his father. “He flew off with it. What will he do with it?”

“He will eat it himself or feed it to the little kingfishers,” his father said.



The blue fisher caught a minnow

“Eat it! bones and all without being cooked?”

“Yes, my son, and he will swallow it whole, head first.”

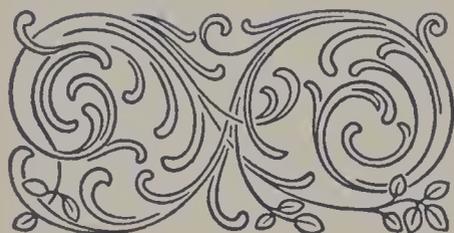
William burst out laughing. “What a funny bird. Do you know,” William’s eyes were twinkling, “I should like to see you catch a fish that way once. It would be lots of fun.”

“It might be for you, but I should not like it at all,” his father declared. He was busy gathering up his pole, lines and fish.

“Come on now, you young knowledge hunter, let’s go home and tell mother what you wanted your father to do.”



THE PASSING OVER OF THE BIRDS



“Jay! Jay!” Bluejay screamed in his chilliest voice, one morning early in September. It was one of those golden blue and green days. The sunlight filtered through a smoky haze and dreamed all day long on the hills and green val-

leys. Every stream reflected the clear blue of the sky and the fleecy white of the clouds. It was indeed a day to make the heart of a bird glad.

“Spring is here!” Meadowlark protested, but his voice was uncertain and a little sad. Early in March he had perched on a dripping post and cried joyfully, “Spring is here!” The roads ran deep with mud and water. The sunlight was weak and thin. There were no leaves on the trees, no grass on the ground, yet there was a promise of Spring in the air that tingled through him and set his voice ringing across the water-soaked fields with his glad message, “Spring is here!”



"Spring is here"

This September day was much nicer than that dripping March day, yet Meadowlark was sad. He knew too well the promise of those dreamy Autumn days was Winter.

“Cheer up, Dear!” his mate replied. She tried to tell him there was no reason for sadness. They would fly to a warmer clime as they had done before and find the spring there.

As the days grew colder and the time came when Meadowlark knew he must go South or freeze, if he did not starve, his voice became sadder and sadder as he cried, “Spring is here!” He was like a lost bird hunting his lost happiness.

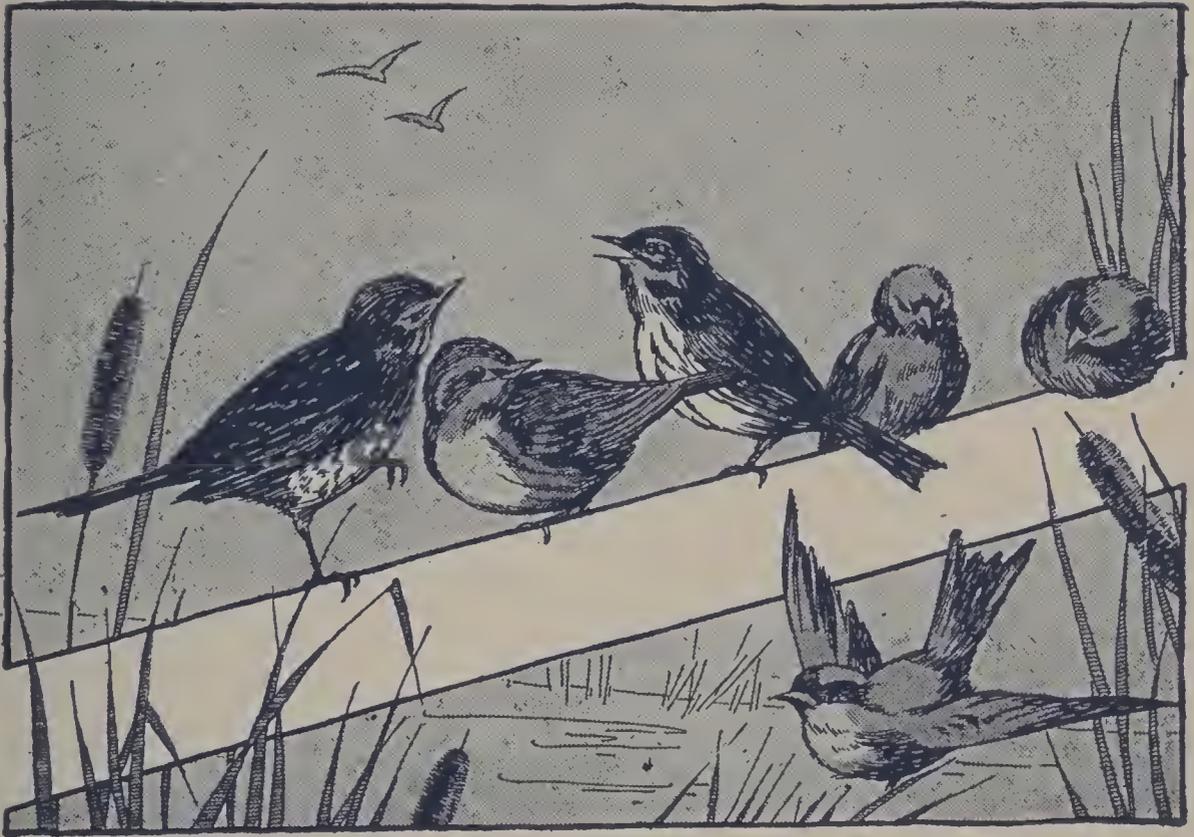
In spite of Meadowlark’s sadness, the time was one of great happiness for the birds. It was a



They would fly to a warmer clime

regular holiday time for them, as young Robert Evans well knew. Often had he stood at the top of the hill in the pasture field and watched them as they frolicked among the trees just like a lot of boys playing tag.

As soon as the nesting season was over and the young birds able to take care of themselves, the birds had been quietly gathering in little groups. There were young birds and old birds. There were bluebirds, and robins, and meadowlarks. There were catbirds, and fly catchers, and thrashers. There were many other birds. All summer long they had kept to themselves, suspicious of their neighbors, but as soon as nesting season was over they had forgotten all that and had one grand playtime. They hunted in the sunny cor-



The birds had been quietly gathering in little groups

ners. They hawked for insects. They played like children at school. They were careless and carefree and happy. They were gipsy birds living a gipsy life.

They were like people who have lived in one place long enough to become fond of it. They had found a better place to live and are glad to go, yet they feel sad to think of leaving their old home where they had spent many happy days.

Some of the birds go early but most of them linger as long as they dare, but by the middle of November all but a few stragglers have gone to their Southern home.

The blackbirds make a big fuss about their going. From the unpopular cowbird to the beau-



They gathered in big noisy companies

tiful red winged blackbirds, they gather in big noisy companies. Their path southward follows the line of the beechnut, the acorn and other soft shelled nuts. Robert Evans has watched them many years and he thinks they must send out scouts to find where the nuts are plentiful. His father owns a big beechnut woods and when there

is a crop of them, the blackbirds come in droves and stay for days until the nuts are harvested. When there are no nuts the birds do not come.

Robert loves to hear them chatter. They put him in mind of the camp-meeting days his grandmother tells about. Little companies of them will walk about as if viewing the place and talking about it. Others will be gathered as if around a council table discussing grave affairs. They have sentinels perched upon the tops of the trees and when anyone comes near, especially if it is a boy with a gun, they hastily fly out of the way. Often if a shot is fired among them, they will leave the woods though they have not begun to harvest the nuts.



*Sentinels perched upon
the tops of the trees*

The Blackbirds are the noisiest in their passing. Once, while in the woods, Robert witnessed a very quiet passing. It was one of those still, breathless days late in August or early in September. All nature seemed to be holding its breath. Robert was fishing. There were no sounds save the sleepy drumming of a partridge, or the drowsy whirr of insects. Even the voice of the stream was hushed. Robert became very lonely. He wanted to shout and break the intense stillness.

All at once the scene changed. Robert jumped to his feet. Every shrub, every tree was full of birds. Every bird was alert and busy, gliding from one branch to another and calling to each other in pleasant little voices. They were quite



They were gone

different from the blackbirds. One could not help hearing and seeing the blackbirds. If we saw these birds passing over once in a lifetime, we could count ourselves fortunate. There were small birds of all kinds, but most of them were warblers. In a moment they were gone and the woods became as quiet as it was before they came but Robert was no longer lonely. He had seen a passing over he will never forget.



Often, too, he has heard them passing over at night. It is usually on a moonlight night. Birds can see to travel better on that kind of a night.

*I hear the beat
Of their pinions fleet,
As from the land of snow and sleet
They seek a southern lea.*

*I hear the cry
Of their voices high
Falling dreamily through the sky,
But their forms I cannot see.*

Longfellow

Thus they go, bravely facing the dangers, half reluctant, half glad. Thus they will come back and call to us some drenched, mud bespattered day next March, "Spring is here!" thrilling us with their bird songs that the winter is over and that Spring is truly here.

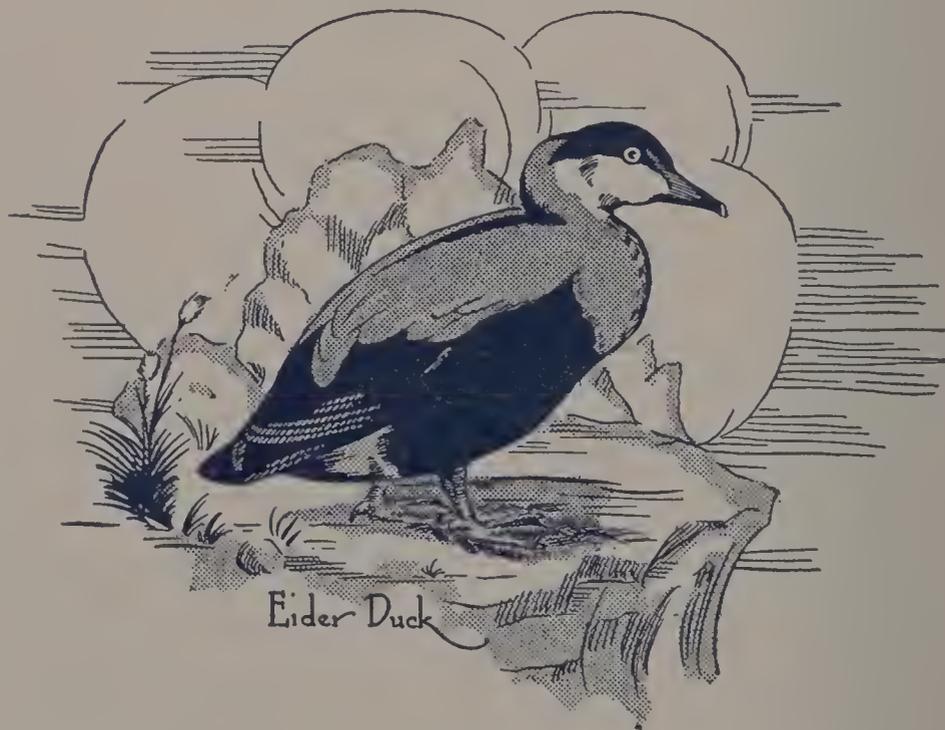
Finis

THE NORTHLAND BIRD LIFE

THE GOLDEN BOOK OF ARTIC BIRDS

BY ROY J. SNELL

AUTHOR OF - STRANGE LAND BIRD LIFE,
THE DINNER THAT WAS ALWAYS THERE,
: LITTLE BOY FRANCE, ETC



Eider Duck

JUST RIGHT BOOKS

ALBERT · WHITMAN · COMPANY
..... PUBLISHERS

CHICAGO

..... U.S.A.

BUSY LITTLE BIRDS

THE WONDERS OF BIRD LIFE

By Clara J. Denton

Author of "Real Out-of-Door Stories,"
"Open Air Stories," "Real Bird Tales."



ILLUSTRATED BY

Sue Seeley

"A JUST RIGHT BOOK"
PUBLISHED BY

ALBERT WHITMAN CO.

CHICAGO

U. S. A.

REAL BIRD TALES

COMMON BIRDS of FARM and ORCHARD

BY CLARA J. DENTON

•• AUTHOR OF ••

"BUSY LITTLE BIRDS" "REAL OUT-OF-DOOR
STORIES" "OPEN AIR STORIES", ETC.



ILLUSTRATED BY SUE SEELEY

"A JUST RIGHT BOOK"

PUBLISHED BY

ALBERT WHITMAN & COMPANY

CHICAGO

U. S. A.





LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00025594605

