Drawn from photograph.

LESSONS ON BIRD PROTECTION

THREE LESSONS ON BIRD PROTECTION

I.—THE VALUE OF BIRDS TO MAN
II.—HOW BIRDS ARE PROTECTED
III.—HOW CHILDREN CAN ASSIST

Authorized by all the Provinces for use in the schools of Canada

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Ottawa

F. A. ACLAND
Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty
Ottawa, 1927

I.—THE VALUE OF BIRDS TO MAN

EVERY year millions of insects, their eggs and larvæ are eaten by such birds as the chickadee, robin, flycatcher, swallow, woodpecker, and warbler. Because of this, these birds are known as "insectivorous," which means insect eating. (Ask the children to cite instances observed.)

These insects which multiply so rapidly and in such immense numbers, would devour all the vegetation in our fields and in our forests, were it not for these little birds. We might save our orchard trees for a time, at least, by constant spraying, but we could never keep our forests alive in this manner.

A king, on one occasion, was greatly annoyed because the birds were eating some of his cherries so he ordered that every bird on the premises was to be shot. This command was carried out, and within two years there was not a single cherry to be found in his orchard, for the very simple reason that insects, unchecked by the birds, devoured the foliage as soon as it appeared.

To understand the value of birds and why they are protected it is necessary that we learn how important they are to man.

First we must realize that farming is the chief industry of Canada. Everyone is not a farmer but we are all dependent on him for the food we eat, the wool that is made into our clothing and the hides that are manufactured into shoes. We do not use all the grain, hay, cattle, fruit and vegetables that are raised in Canada, there is a great surplus. This surplus is the chief wealth of Canada and enables us to trade in the world's market. In short, we can say that Canada's prosperity is largely based on agriculture.

Farming is considered the most peaceful of occupations and yet the farmer in raising his cattle, grain, fruit and vegetables is at war with a great number of enemies.

In clearing and breaking his land he has destroyed the wild plant life upon which millions of insects fed, therefore, these insects feed upon the tender plants which the farmer has supplied in such abundance.

With this plentiful food supply insects increase very rapidly. Besides those which were feeding on the wild plants that had been destroyed, the farmer has, unknown to himself, brought other insects to his land, perhaps hidden in some plant sent from another country. The common white cabbage butterfly and other harmful insects were imported in this way. These foreign species increase even faster than the native ones, as in the new country nature has not provided any enemies to hold them in check as she had for the native species.

But the farmer finds that in his war with the insects he has a host of allies who are working from daylight until dark to help in his fight against these enemies.

Among the most important of these allies are the insect-eating birds and because naturalists and farmers found it would be impossible to raise the crops upon which we live without their help, it became necessary to protect them and to encourage them to live on our farms.

During the nesting season, when insects are most plentiful and are doing the most damage, the birds begin insect hunting before daylight and work busily until after dark, carrying this food to their hungry nestlings. Young birds in the nest in order to grow must eat more in proportion to their size than the old birds. For this reason the parent birds will build their nests where insect food is most plentiful, so that the young birds can be fed quickly and often. This is why these useful birds if they are not disturbed will build their nest close to our garden and fields where so many insects are destroying the growing plants. Thus a few pairs of Robins have been known to eat all the cut-worms in a tomato patch that otherwise would have cut down all the young plants.

One man watched thirty-two adult Purple Martins (which are large swallows) all one day, and counted the number of times they went to feed their young with insects. The total number of times for the day was three thousand, two hundred and twenty-seven, so you may imagine what great quantities of insects those few swallows destroyed in one day. The more swallows you have about your home in spring and summer, the fewer flies and mosquitoes you will have.

When there is an outbreak of locusts or crickets as sometimes happens in Canada, great flocks of birds of many different kinds will come from all parts of the country to feed on these harmful insects and save the country thousands of dollars worth of hay and grain.

From early autumn until spring many kinds of birds live chiefly on weed-seeds. The seeds of many common and harmful weeds were brought from Europe, mixed with the seeds of grain and vegetables. These weeds have spread over the whole of Canada and no matter how carefully the farmer cultivates his fields, they are waiting to spring up and kill out the useful plants.

Now the seeds of these harmful weeds are greatly liked by many kinds of birds. Flocks of small birds will gather during the fall and winter and remain in the weed patches until all the seeds have been eaten. Not only do they eat the seeds that remain on the plants, but they scratch away the snow to reach those that have fallen to the ground. In this way they are working for the farmer in his fight against another enemy.

Gulls, terns, petrels, and other waterbirds are useful to navigators, fishermen and pilots, for in thick foggy weather their clamorous cries sometimes give warning to the mariner that he is nearing the rocks on which they breed. Fishermen often discover schools of fish by watching the sea birds which noisily pursue them in quest of food. Gulls are also useful about harbours and inlets where they devour the garbage and other refuse matter which is thrown into the water, thus often preventing the unsanitary and disagreeable condition which would result along our beaches if it were not for their services.

SPORT

Another group of birds not so valuable as insect destroyers is protected for other and important reasons. This group is known as the Game Birds and includes the ducks, geese, sandpipers and plovers.

At a very early period in the history of the human race man lived chiefly by hunting and fishing. The desire to match our wits against the wild creatures and to hunt them for sport and for food still persists in many of us. The hunting of game birds is a healthy and manly sport. It develops our sense of sight, our sense of hearing and the art of wood-craft which we have largely lost through living in cities.

Once upon a time, when the white man first came to the American Continent, there were such vast swarms of these birds, that at certain seasons of the year they darkened the sky when they took flight. But because they have not had sufficient protection, and because men did not understand that they should give the birds some rest, especially in the spring when they are nesting, our game birds are greatly reduced in numbers, while some kinds have been wiped out of existence altogether. If the parent birds are killed in the spring or early summer before the young ones are old enough to look after themselves, the young starve to death. Therefore, if this should go on, year after year, we soon would have no birds at all.

LESSON No. 2

II.—HOW BIRDS ARE PROTECTED

Migratory Birds Convention Act

FOR many years birds have been protected in Canada by the various provinces which made their own laws. In the United States the same method was employed, but for many reasons this system did not work very successfully for these birds which migrate from one country to the other, and are known as migratory birds, comprise nearly all that are of value to man. Notable exceptions are the Ruffed Grouse (commonly known as "Partridge"), and the Prairie Chicken, both of which are still protected only provincially, not being *migratory* birds.

Therefore, in August, 1916, after several years of untiring effort on the part of the leading bird lovers and true sportsmen in Canada and the United States these two countries signed a solemn agreement or treaty to protect all birds considered worthy of protection, which twice annually cross the border. This agreement is known in Canada as "The Migratory Birds Convention" and it is already working out so well that it will in all probability be extended indefinitely.

All the birds that are protected by this treaty are named in the posters that have been distributed throughout Canada so that any one may know it is unlawful to kill these useful birds at any time, to take their eggs or to harm them in any way. It is also unlawful to take the eggs of game birds or to molest them on their breeding grounds and they may only be killed for food or sport during the open season which the law provides.

Milliners are not allowed to offer for sale or even have in their possession the feathers, which used to be so much worn by women on their hats, or any other part or parts of the birds protected by the Act.

Some people do not like this new law, but it is because they are either very selfish or because they do not understand. The aim and purpose of this law is not to stop legitimate shooting, but rather to make it *better* in the future and for all time, so that when you boys grow up you will not have to be content with listening to your fathers talk about the good shooting that *used* to be, but can still enjoy a good day's sport with your own gun.

Do not forget that the boys who disturb or kill birds protected by this Act, either by stone-throwing or shooting with the .22 rifle may be punished and so may the boys who molest the nests of protected birds. By respecting this law you will be doing your country a service and at the same time will prove yourself a good citizen.

The birds which are protected under the Act are divided into the three classes: *Migratory insectivorous*, *Migratory game*, and *Migratory non-game birds*.

We are not allowed to kill any of the birds in the first or last class at any time of the year, but in the case of the game birds certain months of the year are thrown open, and in those months sportsmen may shoot game birds for food and sport. But among this class there are certain kinds of birds which for various reasons are more or less in danger of extermination and the authorities of both countries are very wisely giving such birds a chance to increase again by protecting them for a period of years. One of these, the Eider Duck or "Sea Duck" as it is often called is specially protected. The Curlew and many other shore birds are protected throughout the year. Among this class will be found the small sandpipers, commonly called "peeps" which used to swarm on our beaches in the autumn and which still come to some sections in great flocks.

SANCTUARIES

The Dominion and Provincial Governments have set aside certain pieces of marshland, woodland, lakes and islands, in different parts of Canada where birds may breed undisturbed under careful protection. These reservations are called Bird Sanctuaries. A number of bird lovers also have made their wood lots and farms into bird sanctuaries and these will do a great deal towards increasing our useful birds.

The balance of this lesson to be taken up studying the protected birds named in the Poster.

LESSON No. 3

III.—HOW CHILDREN CAN ASSIST

BIRDS make excellent friends. They are very interesting, and they respond readily to kindness and protection. Many are bright and beautiful in appearance, others delight us with their songs, and nearly all our small birds are useful in destroying harmful insects, or weed seeds, or both. Any boy or girl will enjoy bird friends and the birds will help the children pass many pleasant hours.

How can we attract our friends, the birds, to live about our homes, so that we may see them often, and so that they will destroy as many as possible of the insects that trouble us?

Both boys and girls can help in many ways in this work by protecting our birds. In the first place you can befriend them during the snowy winter months by putting out bits of suet, hayseed or crumbs. A good idea is to build a small shelf in a sheltered spot in your yard or garden. Black-capped Chickadees will probably be your most frequent, and desirable guests.

Not many native birds can be attracted to live in summer in the closely built-up sections of the cities. A few Nighthawks may law their eggs on pebble-covered roofs, and numbers of chimney swifts may nest in unused chimneys, but most other native birds will refuse to live where there are no green leaves, but hordes of House Sparrows, rows and rows of brick and stone buildings, and the continual disturbances of a city.

Many birds may be attracted, however, to the vicinity of parks, gardens, tree-lined streets, suburbs, villages and farms. Try to attract, if possible, the birds about your school and your home. Trees, shrubbery, grasslands, and small water areas will provide vegetable food for birds and will also attract the insects on which many birds prefer to feed. Additional food, such as grain and weed seed, may be scattered in sheltered places in early spring, and may cause some birds to remain in the vicinity for the summer.

A good supply of water will help greatly in attracting the birds. If shallow running water is in the vicinity, you are lucky. If no such water is near, a bird bath should be provided, and any boy or girl can make one and enjoy the fun of watching the birds bathe and drink. It may be made of a shallow pan or dish, as large as is convenient. The water in it should be about two inches deep on one side and not more than half an inch deep on the other. This can be arranged by blocking up one side of the pan, or by placing a layer of pebbles in the bottom, sloping up toward one side. If running water is available a drip may be provided so that the water in the bath will be constantly changing, if not, the water should be changed at least once a day. The bath should be on an open lawn, or on top of a post five or six feet high, where cats and other enemies of birds cannot surprise the bathers.

Trees and tangles of shrubbery supply places for the nests of many birds. Shelves nailed up under eaves, porches, or sheds may be used by Robins and Phoebes as foundations for their home. Brackets fastened to barn rafters will often please the Barn Swallows, and long strips nailed under wide barn eaves will assist the Cliff Swallows to place their mud nests securely. As spring approaches put out nesting boxes about your home and school grounds. These you can make yourself. A rough box about eight inches long, six inches wide, and six inches high, with an opening about one and one-half inches in diameter in one end will please the Tree Swallow, Bluebird, Chickadee or Nuthatch. It should be placed on the side of a building or on a pole ten to twenty feet high, so that cats cannot get at it. Sometimes cats will climb a bare pole, but if it is sheathed for about three feet, at a height of three to six feet from the ground, with tin (which may be cut from old tin cans), cats cannot climb it. House sparrows must not be allowed to take possession of the boxes, or they will drive away the other birds, more useful and beautiful than they. If they are troublesome, it is best to get rid of them by judicious shooting, or by catching them in boxes at dusk. A box five inches long, four inches wide, and

three or four inches high, with an opening as large as a twenty-five cent piece, will do very well for the House Wren. A box eleven or twelve inches square and fifteen inches high, with an opening three inches across, is suitable for Flickers and Screech Owls. For Purple Martins a more elaborate structure with several compartments should be erected. All boxes should be solidly built of rough material, with watertight roof, and few or no open cracks. Boxes built of boards one-half inch or one inch thick are preferable to flimsy constructions of shingles. They should be placed where rain will not drive into the entrance-hole. Old varnish tins, kerosene cans, apple cans, or funnels may be also placed as homes for birds, and will often be accepted. They should not be placed where they will receive the direct rays of the sun in the warm part of the day, and they should have no sharp edges on which birds may injure themselves. More elaborate and artistic boxes may be constructed or purchased if desired.

Robins, bluebirds, orioles, flycatchers, and other birds may often be encouraged and assisted in nest building by a ready supply of building material. Try putting out such materials as mud, string, cotton, bits of cloth, bits of paper, feathers, and straw, on lawn or bushes, for the birds and watch closely to see which kind of bird prefers one material and which another for house-building.

It is of no use to attract birds about our schools or our homes if they are to be killed or robbed of their eggs there, and it is unfair to make a place attractive to the birds and then not protect the bird visitors that come there. Boys and girls and men and women, must not molest the useful native birds if we are to have birds for our friends. Cats, even the best of cats, like to kill birds, and they must be kept away from any sanctuary we wish to create, if it is to be indeed a sanctuary A cat-proof fence is rather costly and difficult to maintain. It is best to dispose humanely of vagabond cats, and to keep pet cats from roaming at large, particularly during the nesting season. Crows, jays and red squirrels destroy many young birds and birds' eggs, and they must not be allowed to become too numerous if we wish to have many of our small useful birds. Cooper's Hawks and Sharp-shinned Hawks catch the adult birds, and they cannot be allowed to nest near any bird sanctuary.

By the general adoption of such means for attracting and protecting birds about our schools and homes, a great and most desirable increase in the numbers of our common bird friends and helpers can be brought about. It is best, unless one can give full time to the work, to begin by adopting a few only of the measures recommended, and to increase the work from year to year.

Try to learn more about birds. Watch them closely and you will learn something new each day about their ways of living. Keep a record of their first spring appearance and note from year to year how regularly they arrive. You will soon begin to look for them on certain dates, and should get a lot of pleasure by seeing them return.

You should tell your parents and friends about the Migratory Birds Convention Act. Tell them about the closed seasons, about the illegal methods and times of shooting. Also try to remember the names of those birds which are specially protected because they are getting so scarce. By explaining these matters to your friends who may be ignorant of the law, you may save them from getting into trouble with the game wardens, who have been employed to protect the birds.

Note.—Teachers may obtain a supply of a pamphlet entitled "Bird Houses and Their Occupants" from Mr. J. B. Harkin, Commissioner of Canadian National Parks, Department of the Interior, Ottawa, upon request.

THE BEAUTIES OF BIRDS

Birds are beautiful and interesting and our woods and fields would be dull places indeed without them. Their bright colours and cheerful songs, their faithful return after dreary months of winter have passed, their mysterious migrations and ingenious nest-building are both inspiring and fascinating, and tend to endear them to us. Some of our most beautiful poems have been written on the subject of Birds, a selection of which is given herewith:—

TO A WATER FOWL

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

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

Seek'st thou the plashy brink
Of weedy lake, or marge of river wide,
Or where the rocking billows rise and sink
on the chafed ocean-side?

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

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

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

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

He who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone,
Will lead my steps aright.

—William Cullen Bryant.

TO THE CUCKOO

O blithe New-comer! I have heard,
I hear thee and rejoice.
O Cuckoo! shall I call thee Bird,
Or but a wandering Voice?

While I am lying on the grass
Thy twofold shout I hear,
From hill to hill it seems to pass,
At once far off and near.

Though babbling only to the Vale
Of sunshine and of flowers,
Thou bringest unto me a tale
Of visionary hours.

Thrice welcome, darling of the Spring!
Even yet thou art to me
No bird; but an invisible thing,
A voice, a mystery;

The same whom in my school-boy days
I listened to; that Cry
Which made me look a thousand ways
In bush, and tree and sky.

To seek thee did I often rove
Through woods and on the green;
And thou wert still a hope, a love;
Still longed for, never seen.

And I can listen to thee yet;
Can lie upon the plain
And listen, till I do beget
That golden time again.

O blessed Bird! the earth we pace
Again appears to be
An unsubstantial, faery place;
That is fit home for Thee!

—William Wordsworth.

STUPIDITY STREET

I saw with open eyes
Singing birds sweet
Sold in the shops
For the people to eat,
Sold in the shops of
Stupidity Street.

I saw in vision
The worm in the wheat,
And in the shops nothing
For people to eat;
Nothing for sale in
Stupidity Street.

—Ralph Hodgson.

THE GREEN LINNET

Beneath these fruit-tree boughs that shed
Their snow-white blossoms on my head,
With brightest sunshine round me spread
Of spring's unclouded weather,
In this sequestered nook how sweet
To sit upon my orchard seat
And birds and flowers once more to greet,
My last year's friends together

One have I marked, the happiest guest
In all this covert of the blest:
Hail to Thee, far above the rest
In joy of voice and pinion!
Thou, Linnet! in thy green array,
Presiding Spirit here to-day,
Dost lead the revels of the May;
And this is thy dominion.

While birds, and butterflies, and flowers,
Make all one band of paramours,
Thou, ranging up and down the bowers,
Art sole in thy employment:
A Life, a Presence like the Air,
Scattering thy gladness without care,
Too blest with any one to pair;
Thyself thy own enjoyment.

Amid yon tuft of hazel trees,
That twinkle to the gusty breeze,
Behold him perched in ecstasies,
Yet seeming still to hover;
There! where the flutter of his wings
Upon his back and body flings
Shadows and sunny glimmerings,
That cover him all over.

My dazzled sight he oft deceives,
A Brother of the dancing leaves;
Then flits, and from the cottage-eaves
Pours forth his song in gushes;
As if by that exulting strain
He mocked and treated with disdain
The voiceless Form he chose to feign,
While fluttering in the bushes.

—William Wordsworth.

THE OWL

In the hollow tree, in the old gray tower,
The spectral owl doth dwell;
Dull, hated, despised, in the sunshine hour,
But at dusk he's abroad and well!
Not a bird of the forest e'er mates with him;
All mock him outright by day;
But at night, when the woods grow still and dim,
The boldest will shrink away!

O, when the night falls, and roosts the fowl,
Then, then, is the reign of the hornèd owl!

And the owl hath a bride, who is fond and bold,
And loveth the wood's deep gloom;
And, with eyes like the shine of the moonstone cold,
She awaiteth her ghostly groom;
Not a feather she moves, not a carol she sings,
As she waits in her tree so still;
But when her heart heareth his flapping wings,
She hoots out her welcome shrill!

O, when the moon shines, and the dogs do howl,
Then, then, is the joy of the hornèd owl!

Mourn not for the owl, nor his gloomy plight!
The owl has his share of good:
If a prisoner he be in the broad daylight,
He is lord in the dark greenwood!
Nor lonely the bird, nor his ghostly mate,
They are each unto each a pride;
Thrice fonder, perhaps, since a strange, dark fate
Hath rent them from all beside!

So, when the night falls, and dogs do howl,
Sing, ho! for the reign of the hornèd owl!
We know not alway
Who are kings by day,
But the king of the night is the bold brown owl!

—Bryan Waller Proctor
(Barry Cornwall).

———

TO THE SKYLARK

Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from Heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest
Like a cloud of fire;
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

In the golden lightning
Of the sunken sun,
O'er which clouds are bright'ning,
Thou dost float and run;
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.

The pale purple even
Melts around thy flight;
Like a star of Heaven,
In the broad daylight
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight.

Keen as are the arrows
Of that silver sphere,
Whose intense lamp narrows
In the white dawn clear,
Until we hardly see—we feel that it is there.

All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud,
As, when night is bare,
From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams, and Heaven is overflowed.

What thou art we know not;
What is most like thee?
From rainbow clouds there flow not
Drops so bright to see,
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody.

Like a Poet hidden
In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not:

Like a high-born maiden
In a palace tower,
Soothing her love-laden
Soul in secret hour
With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower:

Like a glow-worm golden
In a dell of dew,
Scattering unbeholden
Its aereal hue
Among the flowers and grass, which screen it from the view!

Like a rose embowered
In its own green leaves,
By warm winds deflowered,
Till the scent it gives
Makes faint with too much sweet these heavy-winged thieves:

Sound of vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awakened flowers,
All that ever was
Joyous and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass.

Teach us, Sprite or Bird,
What sweet thoughts are thine:
I have never heard
Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.

Chorus Hymeneal,
Or triumphal chant,
Matched with thine, would be all
But an empty vaunt,
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain?
What fields, or waves, or mountains?
What shapes of sky or plain?
What love of thine own kind? What ignorance of pain?

With thy clear, keen joyance
Langour cannot be:
Shadow of annoyance
Never came near thee:
Thou lovest—but ne'er knew love's sad satiety

Waking or asleep,
Thou of death must deem
Things more true and deep
Than we mortals dream,
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream?

We look before and after,
And pine for what is not:
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Yet if we could scorn
Hate, and pride, and fear;
If we were things born
Not to shed a tear,
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

Better than all measures
Of delightful sound,
Better than all treasures
That in books are found,
Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground!

Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know,
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow,
The world should listen then—as I am listening now.

—Percy Bysshe Shelley.

———

THE EAGLE

He clasps the crag with crooked hands;
Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ring'd with the azure world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;
He watches from his mountain walls,
And like a thunderbolt he falls.

—Alfred, Lord Tennyson.

THE MOCKINGBIRD

Then from a neighboring thicket the mockingbird, wildest of singers,
Swinging aloft on a willow spray that hung o'er the water,
Shook from his little throat such floods of delirious music,
That the whole air and the woods and the waves seemed silent to listen.
Plaintive at first were the tones and sad; then soaring to madness
Seemed they to follow or guide the revel of frenzied Bacchantes.
Single notes were then heard, in sorrowful, low lamentation;
Till, having gathered them all he flung them abroad in derision,
As when, after a storm, a gust of wind through the tree-tops
Shakes down the rattling rain in a crystal shower on the branches.

—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

———

THE INDIGO BIRD

When I see,
High on the tip-top twig of a tree,
Something blue by the breezes stirred,
But so far up that the blue is blurred,
So far up no green leaf flies
'Twixt its blue and the blue of the skies,
Then I know, ere a note be heard,
That is naught but the Indigo bird.

Blue on the branch and blue in the sky,
And naught between but the breezes high,
And naught so blue by the breezes stirred
As the deep, deep blue of the Indigo bird.

When I hear
A song like a bird laugh, blithe and clear,
As though of some airy jest he had heard
The last and the most delightful word:
A laugh as fresh in the August haze
As it was in the full-voiced April days;
Then I know that my heart is stirred
By the laugh-like song of the Indigo bird.

Joy on the branch and joy in the sky,
And naught between but the breezes high,
And naught so glad on the breezes heard
As the gay, gay note of the Indigo bird.

—Ethelwyn Wetherald.

BLUEBIRD

"So the Bluebirds have contracted, have they, for a house?
And a nest is under way for little Mr. Wren?"
"Hush, dear, hush! Be quiet, dear! quiet as a mouse.
These are weighty secrets, and we must whisper them."

—Susan Coolidge.

THE BLACKBIRD

A slender young Blackbird built in a thorn-tree:
A spruce little fellow as ever could be;
His bill was so yellow, his feather so black,
So long was his tail, and so glossy his back,
That good Mrs. B. who sat hatching her eggs,
And only just left them to stretch her poor legs,
And pick for a minute the worm she preferred,
Thought there never was seen such a beautiful bird.

—D. N. Mulock.

ROBERT OF LINCOLN

Merrily swinging on brier and weed,
Near to the nest of his little dame,
Over the mountain-side or mead,
Robert of Lincoln is telling his name;
Bob-o'link, bob-o'link,
Spink, spank, spink;
Snug and safe is that nest of ours,
Hidden among the summer flowers.
Chee, chee, chee.

Robert of Lincoln is gayly dressed,
Wearing a bright black wedding coat;
White are his shoulders and white his crest,
Hear him call in his merry note:
Bob-o'link, bob-o'link,
Spink, spank, spink;
Look, what a nice new coat is mine,
Sure there was never a bird so fine.
Chee, chee, chee.

Robert of Lincoln's Quaker wife,
Pretty and quiet, with plain brown wings,
Passing at home a patient life,
Broods in the grass while her husband sings:
Bob-o'link, bob-o'link,
Spink, spank, spink;
Brood, kind creature; you need not fear
Thieves and robbers while I am here.
Chee, chee, chee.

Modest and shy as a nun is she,
One weak chirp is her only note,
Braggart and prince of braggarts is he,
Pouring boasts from his little throat:
Bob-o'link, bob-o'link,
Spink, spank, spink;
Never was I afraid of man;
Catch me, cowardly knaves, if you can.
Chee, chee, chee.

Six white eggs on a bed of hay,
Flecked with purple, a pretty sight!
There as the mother sits all day,
Robert is singing with all his might:
Bob-o'link, bob-o'link,
Spink, spank, spink;
Nice good wife, that never goes out,
Keeping house while I frolic about.
Chee, chee, chee.

Soon as the little ones chip the shell
Six wide open mouths are open for food
Robert of Lincoln bestirs him well,
Gathering seed for the hungry brood.
Bob-o'link, bob-o'link,
Spink, spank, spink;
This new life is likely to be
Hard for a gay young fellow like me.
Chee, chee, chee.

Robert of Lincoln at length is made
Sober with work, and silent with care;
Off is his holiday garment laid,
Half forgotten that merry air;
Bob-o'link, bob-o'link,
Spink, spank, spink;
Nobody knows but my mate and I
Where our nest and our nestlings lie.
Chee, chee, chee.

Summer wanes; the children are grown;
Fun and frolic no more he knows;
Robert of Lincoln's a humdrum crone;
Off he flies, and we sing as he goes:
Bob-o'link, bob-o'link,
Spink, spank, spink;
When you can pipe that merry old strain,
Robert of Lincoln, come back again.
Chee, chee, chee.

—William Cullen Bryant.

SEA BIRD

Up and down! Up and down!
From the base of the wave to the billows' crown;
And amidst the flashing and feathery foam
The Stormy Petrel finds a home,
A home, if such a place may be,
For her who lives on the wide, wide sea,
On the craggy ice, in the frozen air,
And only seeketh her rocky lair
To warm her young and to teach them spring
At once o'er the waves on their stormy wing!

—Barry Cornwall—The Stormy Petrel.

THE BIRD'S LULLABY

Sing to us, cedars; the twilight is creeping
With shadowy garments, the wilderness through;
All day we have carolled, and now would be sleeping,
So echo the anthems we warbled to you
While we swing, swing,
And your branches sing.
And we drowse to your dreamy whispering.

Sing to us, cedars; the night-wind is sighing,
Is wooing, is pleading, to hear you reply;
And here in your arms we are restfully lying,
And longing to dream to your soft lullaby;
While we swing, swing,
And your branches sing,
And we drowse to your dreamy whispering.

Sing to us, cedars; your voice is so lowly,
Your breathing so fragrant, your branches so strong;
Our little nest-cradles are swaying so slowly,
While zephyrs are breathing their slumberous song;
While we swing, swing,
While your branches sing,
And drowse to your dreamy whispering.

—Pauline Johnson.

MORNING ON THE LIEVRE

From amid a stretch of reeds,
Where the lazy river sucks
All the water as it bleeds
From a little curling creek,
And the muskrats peer and sneak
In around the sunken wrecks
Of a tree that swept the skies
Long ago,
On a sudden seven ducks
With a splashy rustle rise,
Stretching out their seven necks,
One before, and two behind,
And the others all arow,
And as steady as the wind
With a swivelling whistle go,
Through the purple shadow led,
Till we only hear their whir
In behind a rocky spur,
Just ahead.

—Archibald Lampman.

THE THROSTLE

'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.

Sing the new year in under the blue.
Last year you sang it as gladly.
'New, new, new, new!' Is it then so new
That you should carol so madly?

'Love again, song again, nest again, young again,'
Never a prophet so crazy!
And hardly a daisy as yet, little friend,
See, there is hardly a daisy.

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

—Alfred, Lord Tennyson.

THE SANDPIPER

Across the narrow beach we flit,
One little sandpiper and I;
And fast I gather, bit by bit,
The scattered driftwood bleached and dry.
The wild waves reach their hands for it,
The wild wind raves, the tide runs high,
As up and down the beach we flit—
One little sandpiper and I.

Above our heads the sullen clouds
Scud black and swift across the sky:
Like silent ghosts in misty shrouds
Stand out the white light-houses high.
Almost as far as eye can reach
I see the close-reefed vessels fly,
As fast we flit along the beach,—
One little sandpiper and I.

I watch him as he skims along,
Uttering his sweet and mournful cry;
He starts not at my fitful song,
Or flash of fluttering drapery;
He has no thought of any wrong,
He scans me with a fearless eye.
Stanch friends are we, well tried and strong,
The little sandpiper and I.

Comrade, where wilt thou be to-night
When the loosed storm breaks furiously?
My driftwood-fire will burn so bright!
To what warm shelter canst thou fly?
I do not fear for thee, though wroth
The tempest rushes through the sky;
For are we not God's children both,
Thou, little sandpiper, and I?

—Celia Thaxter.

———

NESTING TIME

The bees are busy in their murmurous search,
The birds are putting up their woven frames,
And all the twigs and branches of the birch
Are shooting into tiny emerald flames:
The maple leaves are spreading slowly out
Like small red hats, or pointed parasols.
The high-ho flings abroad his merry shout,
The veery from the inner brushwood calls:
The gold-green poplar, jocund as may be,
The sunshine in its laughing heart receives,
And shimmers in the wind innumerably
Through all its host of little lacquered leaves.
And lo! the bob-o-link—he soars and sings,
With all the heart of summer in his wings.

—Archibald Lampman.