

THE BIRD OF THE MORNING.

If every bird has his vocation, as a poetical French writer suggests, that of the American robin must be to inspire cheerfulness and contentment in men. His joyous "Cheer up! cheer up! Cheery! Be cheery! Be cheery!" poured out in the early morning from the top branch of the highest tree in the neighborhood, is one of the most stimulating sounds of spring. He must be unfeeling indeed who can help deserting his bed and peering through blinds till he discovers the charming philosopher, with head erect and breast glowing in the dawning light, forgetting the cares of life in the ecstasy of song.

Besides admonishing others to cheerfulness, the robin sets the example. Not only is his cheering voice the first in the morning and the last at night, — of the day birds, — but no rain is wet enough to dampen his spirits. In a drizzly, uncomfortable day, when all other birds go about their necessary tasks of food-hunting in dismal silence, the robin is not a whit less happy than when the sun shines; and his cheery voice rings out to comfort not only the inmates of the damp little home in the maple, but the owners of waterproofs and umbrellas who mope in the house.

The most delightful study of one summer, not long ago, was the daily life, the joys and sorrows, of a family of robins, whose pretty castle in the air rested on a stout fork of a maple-tree branch near my window. Day by day I watched their ways till I learned to know them well.

The seat chosen for observations was under a tree on the lawn, which happened to be the robin's hunting-ground; and here I sat for hours at a time, quietly looking on at his work, and listening to the robin talk around me: the low, confidential chat in the tree

where the little wife was busy, the lively gossip across the street with neighbors in another tree, the warning "Tut! tut!" when a stranger appeared, the war cry when an intruding bird was to be driven away, and the joyous "Pe-e-p! tut, tut, tut," when he alighted on the fence and surveyed the lawn before him, flapping his wings and jerking his tail with every note.

In truth, the sounds one hears in a robin neighborhood are almost as various as those that salute his ear among people: the laugh, the cry, the scold, the gentle word, the warning, the alarm, and many others.

When I first took my seat I felt like an intruder, which the robin plainly considered me to be. He eyed me with the greatest suspicion, alighting on the ground in a terrible flutter, resolved to brave the ogre, yet on the alert, and ready for instant flight should anything threaten. The moment he touched the ground, he would lower his head and run with breathless haste five or six feet; then stop, raise his head as pert as a daisy, and look at the monster to see if it had moved. After convincing himself that all was safe, he would turn his eyes downward, and in an instant thrust his bill into the soil where the sod was thin, throwing up a little shower of earth, and doing this again and again, so vehemently that sometimes he was taken off his feet by the jerk. Then he would drag out a worm, run a few feet farther in a panic-stricken way, as though "taking his life in his hands," again look on the ground, and again pull out a worm; all the time in an inconsequent manner, as though he had nothing particular on his mind, and merely collected worms by way of passing the time.

So he would go on, never eating a

morsel, but gathering worms till he had three or four of the wriggling creatures hanging from his firm little beak. Then he would fly to a low branch, run up a little way, take another short flight, and thus having, as he plainly intended by this zigzag course, completely deceived the observer as to his destination, he would slip quietly to the nest and quickly dispose of his load. In half a minute he was back again, running and watching, and digging as before. And this work he kept up nearly all day. In silence, too, for noisy and talkative as the bird is, he keeps his mouth shut when on the ground. In all my watching of robins for years in several places, I scarcely ever heard one make a sound when on the ground, near a human dwelling.

Once I was looking through blinds, and the bird did not see me. He had, after much labor, secured an unusually large worm, and it lay a few inches away where it fell as he gave it the final "yank." This was an extraordinary case; the robin was too full to hold in, and there bubbled out of his closed bill a soft "Cheery! cheery! be cheery!" hardly above a whisper and half frightened withal. Then snatching the trophy he flew away, doubtless to show his luck, and tell his tale at home.

The robin has been accused of being quarrelsome; and to be sure he does defend his home with vigor, driving away any bird which ventures to alight on his special maple-tree, sometimes with a loud cry of defiance, and again without a sound, but fairly flinging himself after the intruder so furiously that not even the king-bird — noted as a tyrant over much larger birds — can withstand him. But jealous as he is of his own, he is equally ready to assist a neighbor in trouble. One day while I was studying him a great uproar arose in the orchard. Robin voices were heard in loud cries, and instantly those near the house took wing for the scene of distress. With

my glass I could see many robins flying about one spot, and diving one after another into the grass, where there was a great commotion and cries of some other creature, — I thought a hen. The robins were furious, and the fight grew very warm, while every now and then a small object was tossed into the air.

Hurrying down to the scene of the warfare, I found that the creature in the grass was a hen-turkey with one chick. She was wild with rage, shaking and tossing up what looked like another young turkey, and the robins, evidently taking the side of the victim, were delivering sharp pecks and scolding vigorously. Securing with some difficulty the object of her fury, I found it to be a young robin, which had fallen from a nest, and which no doubt the usually meek turkey thought threatened danger to her own infant.

The poor little fellow was too badly hurt to live, and although the turkey was removed, some time passed before calmness was restored to the neighborhood. It seemed to me that the chatter in the trees that evening was kept up longer than usual, and I fancied that every little youngster still living in the nest heard the direful tale, and received a solemn warning.

I was surprised to discover, in my close attention to them, that although early to rise robins are by no means early to bed. Long after every feather was supposed to be at rest for the night, I would sit out and listen to the gossip, the last words, the scraps of song, — different in every individual robin, yet all variations on the theme "Be cheery," — and often the sharp "He he he he he!" so like a girl's laugh, out of the shadowy depths of the maple.

Once I saw a performance that looked as if the robin wanted to play a joke "with intent to deceive." Hearing a strange bird note, as usual I hastened to my post. From the depths of a thick chestnut-tree came every moment a

long-drawn-out, mournful "S-e-e-p!" as though some bird was calling its mate. It was not very loud, but it was urgent, and I looked the tree over very carefully with my opera-glass before I caught sight of the culprit, and was amazed to see the robin. The tone was so entirely unlike any I ever heard from him that I should not have suspected him even then, but I saw him in the very act. No sooner did he notice that he was observed than he gave a loud mocking "He he he!" and flew across the lawn to his own tree.

One morning he was not to be seen at his usual work, but a furious calling came from the other side of the lawn. It was anxious and urgent, and it was incessant. I resolved to see what was the trouble. Stealing quietly along, I came in sight of the bird, loudly calling, fluttering his wings, and in evident trouble, though I could not imagine the cause, until looking closely I saw perched on a branch of a cedar-tree a fat, stupid-looking bird, fully as big as the robin, and covered with feathers, but with a speckled breast, and no tail worth mentioning.

There he sat, like a lump of dough, head down in his shoulders and bill sticking almost straight up, and neither the tenderest coaxing nor the loudest scolding moved him in the least. In fact, I thought he was dead, till the opera-glass showed that he winked. But stupid and ugly as he looked, he was the darling of the heart in that little red breast, and the parent fluttered wildly about while I found a stick, and jarred the branch slightly as a gentle hint that he should obey his papa. That started the youngster, and away he flew, as well as anybody, to the other side of the walk.

Wondering why the mother did not take part in this training, I peeped into the nest, where I found her sitting, and I concluded she must be raising a second family. It was indeed time for that grown-up baby to learn to care for himself,

before there was another family to feed. While I was looking at the nest and its frightened yet brave little owner, the young robin came back and alighted on the ground, and so proud and happy yet so anxious a parent is rarely seen. It was soon evident that this was Master Robin's first lesson in the worm business; he was now to be taught the base of supplies, and I kept very quiet while the scene went on. The father would hop ahead a few feet and call persuasively, "Come on!" The awkward youngling answered loudly, "Wait! wait!" Then he would hop a few steps, and papa would dig up a worm to show him how, and tenderly offer it as a slight lunch after his exertion. So they went on, that clumsy and greedy youngster induced by his desire for worms, while the patient teacher encouraged, and worked for him. As for making an effort for himself, the notion never entered his head.

Not long after I saw one of the same brood seated on a twig and asking to be fed. I was quite near, and the robin papa hesitated to come. Master Robin called more and more sharply, drawing up his wings without opening them, exactly like a shrag of the shoulders, and jerking his body in such a way that it looked like stamping his foot. It was a funny exhibition of youthful imperiousness, and resembled what in a child we call "spunkiness."

One of the most interesting entertainments of the later days was to hear the young bird's music lesson. In the early morning the father would place himself in the thickest part of the tree, not as usual on the top, in plain sight, and with his pupil near him would begin, "Cheery! cheery! be cheery!" in a loud, clear voice; and then would follow a feeble, wavering, uncertain attempt to copy the song. Again papa would chant the first strain, and baby would pipe out his funny notes. This was kept up, till in a surprisingly short

time, after much daily practice both with the copy and without, I could hardly tell father from son.

When the maple leaves turned, in the fall, and the little home in the tree was left empty and desolate, I had it brought down to examine. It was a curious and remarkably well-made nest, being a perfect cup of clay, a little thicker around

the top, well moulded, and covered inside and out with dry grass. This snug cottage of clay has been the scene of some of the sweetest experiences of all lives, great as well as small. For the happiness it has held I will preserve it: and thus moralizing I placed it on a bracket in memory of a delightful study of the Bird of the Morning.

Olive Thorne Miller.

RANDOM SPANISH NOTES.

SPAIN is for all the world the land of romance. For the artist it is the land of Murillo, Velasquez, Fortuny, and Goya, of sunlight and color. For the student of history it holds the precious archives of the New World adventure and daring, of that subtle and sanguinary policy in religion and war which is typified in the names of Loyola and Philip II. For the lover of architecture it contains some marvels of Gothic boldness and fancy, and Saracenic beauty and grace. For the investigator of race and language it holds the problems of the Basque and the gypsy. The great races who have had their day there, the Roman, the Goth, the Norman, the Moor, have left visible traces and an historical atmosphere of romance.

And yet the real Spain is the least attractive country in Europe to the tourist. The traveler goes there to see certain unique objects. He sees them, enjoys them, is entranced by them, leaves them with regret and a tender memory, and is glad to get out of Spain. There are six things to see: the Alhambra, the Seville cathedral and Alcazar, the Mosque of Cordova, Toledo and its cathedral, the Gallery at Madrid, and Monserrat. The rest is mainly monotonous and weariness. With the exception of the Alhambra, which has a spell that an idle man finds hard to break, and

where perhaps he could be content indefinitely, there is no place in Spain that one can imagine he would like to live in, for the pleasure of living. Taking out certain historical features and monuments, the towns repeat each other in their attractions and their disagreeables. Every town and city in Italy has its individual character and special charm. To go from one to another is always to change the scene and the delight. This is true of the old German towns also. Each has a character. The traveler sees many a place in each country where he thinks he could stay on from month to month, with a growing home-like feeling. I think there is nothing of this attraction in Spain. The want of it may be due to the country itself, or to the people. I fancy that with its vast arid plains, treeless and firesome, its gullied hills and its bare escarped mountains, Spain resembles New Mexico. It is an unsoftened, unrelieved landscape, for the most part, sometimes grand in its vastness and sweep, but rugged and unadorned. The want of grass and gentle verdure is a serious drawback to the pleasure of the eye, not compensated by the magic tricks of the sunlight, and the variegated reds, browns, and yellows of the exposed soil and rocks, and the spring-time green of the nascent crops. I speak, of course,