

his arm around his wife's waist. He was smiling; but, for once, she found nothing to quarrel with in his smile. He only said:

"Milly, I was in the conservatory, and heard it all. I am tremendously proud of you."

"Because I wasn't cross?" said Emily.

"But I had no right to be cross."

"Milly, you are a very just woman."

"Don't say that, Tom," cried his wife, with a quick movement; "I have been horrid about Wrenham and about—about Miss Durham. Tom, I wish you had told me that you asked her to marry you."

Tom opened his eyes.

"But I never did, Milly. I thought of doing it once; but I found out she liked somebody else better, so I held my tongue. Then I saw you, and was glad enough I had. Milly, you weren't —"

"Yes, I was, Tom," murmured Emily, hiding her head on his shoulder; "I was just so stupid."

Tom held her close; she felt the quickened beating of his heart, and she said:

"I shall never be—stupid about Miss

Durham again. She is so nice, and she was so brave about the chair."

"The poor chair!" said Tom. "Milly, I am sorry."

Mrs. Finlay pulled her husband's head down to her own level and kissed his hair.

"If you are sorry, Tom," she whispered, "then I do not mind."

Nevertheless, she is not ungrateful to the chair's memory. It is perhaps a fanciful notion, but she feels as though the chair died for her happiness. A water-color sketch of it hangs in her chamber, and she has, when she looks at it, an emotion of almost personal gratitude. She returned the insurance money (which duly came to her) to the managers of the museum, accompanying the money with a sympathetic note. The note made a favorable impression. Wrenham has come to the conclusion that Mrs. Finlay has her good points. It only remains to add that Tom Finlay has no cause to complain of his wife's coolness to the Durhams; and that James Hubbard is the proud possessor of a new and most gorgeous gold watch.

Octave Thanet.

A HUNT FOR THE NIGHTINGALE.

WHILE I lingered away the latter half of May in Scotland, and the first half of June in northern England and finally in London, intent on seeing the land leisurely and as the mood suited, the thought never occurred to me that I was in danger of missing one of the chief pleasures I had promised myself in crossing the Atlantic, namely, the hearing of the song of the nightingale. Hence, when on the 17th of June I found myself down among the copses near Hazlemere on the borders of Surrey and Sussex, and was told by the old farmer to whose house I had been recommended by friends in London that I was too late, that the season of the nightingale was over, I was a good deal disturbed.

"I think she be done singing now, sir; I aint heered her in some time, sir," said my farmer, as we sat down to get acquainted over a mug of the hardest cider I ever attempted to drink.

"Too late!" I said in deep chagrin, "and I might have been here weeks ago."

"Yeas, sir, she be done now; May is the time to hear her. The cuckoo is done too, sir; and you don't hear the nightingale after the cuckoo is gone, sir."

(The country people in this part of England *sir* one at the end of every sentence, and talk with an indescribable drawl.)

But I had heard a cuckoo that very afternoon, and I took heart from the fact. I afterward learned that the country people everywhere associate these two birds in this way; you will not hear the one after the other has ceased. But I heard the cuckoo almost daily till the middle of July. Matthew Arnold reflects the popular opinion, when in one of his poems ("Thyrsis") he makes the cuckoo say in early June,

"The bloom is gone, and with the bloom go I!"

The explanation is to be found in Shakspeare, who says,

"— the cuckoo is in June
Heard, not regarded,"

as the bird really does not go till August. I got out my Gilbert White, as I should have done at an earlier day, and was still more disturbed to find that he limited the singing of the nightingale to June 15th. But seasons differ, I thought, and it can't be possible that any class of feathered songsters all stop on a given day. Then, when I looked further, and found that White says the chaffinch ceases to sing the beginning of June, I took more courage, for I had that day heard the chaffinch also. But it was evident I had no time to lose; I was just on the dividing line, and any day might witness the cessation of the last songster.

For it seems that the nightingale ceases singing the moment her brood is hatched. After that event, you hear only a harsh chiding or anxious note. Hence the poets, who attribute her melancholy strains to sorrow for the loss of her young, are entirely at fault. Virgil, portraying the grief of Orpheus after the loss of Eurydice, says:

“So Philomela, 'mid the poplar shade,
Bemoans her captive brood; the cruel hind
Saw them unplumed, and took them; but all night
Grieves she, and, sitting on a bough, runs o'er
Her wretched tale, and fills the woods with woe.”

But she probably does nothing of the kind. The song of a bird is not a reminiscence, but an anticipation, and expresses happiness or joy only, except in those cases where the male bird, having lost its mate, sings for a few days as if to call the lost one back. When the male renews his powers of song, after the young brood has been destroyed, or after it has flown away, it is a sign that a new brood is contemplated. The song is, as it were, the magic note that calls it forth. At least, this is the habit with other song-birds, and I have no doubt it holds good with the nightingale. Destroy the nest or brood of the wood-thrush, and if the season is not too far advanced, after a week or ten days of silence, during which the parent birds, by their manner, seem to bemoan their loss and to take counsel together, the male breaks forth with a new song, and the female begins to construct a new nest. The poets, therefore, in depicting the bird on such occasions as bewailing the lost brood, are wide of the mark; he is invoking and celebrating a new brood.

As it was mid-afternoon, I could only compose myself till night-fall. I accompanied the farmer to the hay-field and saw the working of his mowing-machine, a rare implement in England, as most of the grass is still cut by hand, and raked by hand also. The disturbed sky-larks were hovering above the falling grass, full of anxiety for their nests, as one may note the bobolinks on like occasions at home. The weather is so uncertain in England, and it is so impossible to predict its complexion, not only from day to day but from hour to hour, that the farmers appear to consider it a suitable time to cut grass when it is not actually raining. They slash away without reference to the aspects of the sky, and when the field is down trust to luck to be able to cure the hay, or get it ready to “carry” between the showers. The clouds were lowering and the air was damp now, and it was Saturday afternoon; but the farmer said they would never get their hay if they minded such things. The farm had seen better days; so had the

farmer; both were slightly down at the heel. Too high rent and too much hard cider were working their effects upon both. The farm had been in the family many generations, but it was now about to be sold and to pass into other hands, and my host said he was glad of it. There was no money in farming any more; no money in anything. I asked him what were the main sources of profit on such a farm.

“Well,” he said, “sometimes the wheat pops up, and the barley drops in, and the pigs come on, and we picks up a little money, sir, but not much, sir. Pigs is doing well naow. But they brings so much wheat from Ameriky, and our weather is so bad that we can't get a good sample, sir, one year in three, that there is no money made in growing wheat, sir.” And the “wuts” (oats) were not much better. “Theys as would buy haint got no money, sir.” “Up to the top of the nip,” for hill, was one of his expressions. Tennyson had a summer residence at Black-down not far off. “One of the Queen's poets, I believe, sir.” “Yes, I often see him riding about, sir.”

After an hour or two with the farmer, I walked out to take a survey of the surrounding country. It was quite wild and irregular, full of bushy fields and overgrown hedge-rows, and looked to me very nightingaly. I followed for a mile or two a road that led by tangled groves and woods and copses, with a still meadow trout-stream in the gentle valley below. I inquired for nightingales of every boy and laboring man I met or saw. I got but little encouragement; it was too late. “She be about done singing now, sir.” A boy whom I met in a foot-path that ran through a pasture beside a copse said, after reflecting a moment, that he had heard one in that very copse two mornings before—“about seven o'clock, sir, while I was on my way to my work, sir.” Then I would try my luck in said copse and in the adjoining thickets that night and the next morning. The railway ran near, but perhaps that might serve to keep the birds awake. These copses in this part of England look strange enough to American eyes. What thriftless farming! the first thought is; behold the fields grown up to bushes, as if the land had relapsed to a state of nature again. Adjoining meadows and grain-fields there will be an inclosure of many acres covered with a thick growth of oak and chestnut sprouts, six, or eight, or twelve feet high. These are the copses one has so often heard about, and they are a valuable and productive part of the farm. They are planted and preserved as carefully as we plant an orchard or a vineyard. Once in so many

years, perhaps five or six, the copse is cut and every twig is saved; it is a woodland harvest that in this country is gathered in the forest itself. The larger poles are tied up in bundles and sold for hoop-poles; the fine branches and shoots are made into brooms in the neighboring cottages and hamlets, or used as material for thatching. The refuse is used as wood.

About eight o'clock in the evening I sallied forth, taking my way over the ground I had explored a few hours before. The gloaming, which at this season lasts till after ten o'clock, dragged its slow length along. Nine o'clock came, and, though my ear was attuned, the songster was tardy. I hovered about the copses and hedge-rows like one meditating some dark deed; I lingered in a grove and about an overgrown garden and a neglected orchard; I sat on stiles and leaned on wickets, mentally speeding the darkness that should bring my singer out. The weather was damp and chilly, and the tryst grew tiresome. I had brought a rubber water-proof, but not an overcoat. Lining the back of the rubber with a newspaper, I wrapped it about me and sat down, determined to lay siege to my bird. A foot-path that ran along the fields and bushes on the other side of the little valley showed every few minutes a woman, or girl, or boy, or laborer, passing along it. A path near me also had its frequent figures moving along in the dusk. In this country people travel in foot-paths as much as in highways. The paths give a private, human touch to the landscape that the roads do not. They are sacred to the human foot. They have the sentiment of domesticity, and suggest the way to cottage doors and to simple, primitive times.

Presently a man with a fishing-rod, and capped, coated, and booted for the work, came through the meadow, and began casting for trout in the stream below me. How he gave himself to the work! how oblivious he was of everything but the one matter in hand! I doubt if he was conscious of the train that passed within a few rods of him. Your born angler is like a hound that scents no game but that which he is in pursuit of. Every sense and faculty were concentrated upon that hovering fly. This man wooed the stream, quivering with pleasure and expectation. Every foot of it he tickled with his decoy. His close was evidently a short one, and he made the most of it. He lingered over every cast, and repeated it again and again. An American angler would have been out of sight down stream long ago. But this man was not going to bolt his preserve; his line should taste every drop of it. His eager, stealthy movements denoted his enjoyment

and his absorption. When a trout was caught, it was quickly rapped on the head and slipped into his basket, as if in punishment for its tardiness in jumping. "Be quicker next time, will you." (British trout, by the way, are not so beautiful as our own. They have more of a domesticated look. They are less brilliantly marked, and have much coarser scales. There is no gold or vermilion in their coloring.)

Presently there arose from a bushy corner of a near field a low, peculiar purring or humming sound, that sent a thrill through me; of course, I thought my bird was inflating her throat. Then the sound increased, and was answered or repeated in various other directions. It had a curious ventriloquial effect. I presently knew it to be the night-jar or goat-sucker, a bird that answers to our whip-poor-will. Very soon the sound seemed to be floating all about me—*Jr-r-r-r-r*, or *Chr-r-r-r-r*, slightly suggesting the call of our toads, but more vague as to direction. Then as it grew darker they ceased; the fisherman reeled up and left. No sound was now heard—not even the voice of a solitary frog anywhere. I never heard a frog in England. About eleven o'clock I moved down by a wood and stood for an hour on a bridge over the railroad. No voice of bird greeted me till the sedge-warbler struck up her curious nocturne in a hedge near by. It was a singular medley of notes, hurried chirps, trills, calls, warbles, snatched from the songs of other birds, with a half-chiding, remonstrating tone or air running through it all. As there was no other sound to be heard, and as the darkness was complete, it had the effect of a very private and whimsical performance—as if the little bird had secluded herself there, and was giving vent to its emotions in the most copious and vehement manner. I listened till after midnight, and till the rain began to fall, and the vivacious warbler never ceased for a moment. White says that, if it stops, a stone tossed into the bush near it will set it going again. Its voice is not musical; the quality of it is like that of the loquacious English house sparrows; but its song or medley is so persistently animated, and in such contrast to the gloom and the darkness, that the effect is decidedly pleasing.

This and the night-jar were the only nightingales I heard that night. I returned home, a good deal disappointed, but slept upon my arms, as it were, and was out upon the chase again at four o'clock in the morning. I passed down a lane by the neglected garden and orchard, where I was told the birds had sung for weeks past; then under the railroad by a cluster of laborers' cottages, and along a road with

many copses and bushy fence-corners on either hand, for two miles, but I heard no nightingales. A boy of whom I inquired seemed half frightened, and went into the house without answering.

After a late breakfast I sallied out again, going farther in the same direction, and was overtaken by frequent showers. I heard many and frequent bird songs,—the lark, the wren, the thrush, the blackbird, the white-throat, the greenfinch, and the hoarse, guttural cooing of the wood-pigeons, but not the note I was in quest of. I passed up a road that was a deep trench in the side of a hill overgrown with low beeches. The roots of the trees formed a net-work on the side of the bank, as their branches did above. In a frame-work of roots, within reach of my hand, I spied a wren's nest, a round hole leading to the interior of a large mass of soft green moss, a structure displaying the taste and neatness of the daintiest of bird architects, and the depth and warmth and snugness of the most ingenious mouse habitation. While lingering here, a young countryman came along whom I engaged in conversation. No, he had not heard the nightingale for a few days; but the previous week he had been in camp with the militia near Guildford, and while on picket duty had heard her nearly all night. "Don't she sing splendid to-night?" the boys would say." This was tantalizing; Guildford was within easy reach, but the previous week—that could not be reached. However, he encouraged me by saying he did not think they were done singing yet, as he had often heard them during haying-time. I inquired for the black-cap, but saw he did not know this bird, and thought I referred to a species of tomtit, which also has a black cap. The wood-lark I was also on the lookout for, but he did not know this bird either, and during my various rambles in England I could find no person who did. In Scotland it was confounded with the titlark or pipit.

I next met a man and boy, a villager with a stove-pipe hat on—and, as it turned out, a man of many trades, tailor, barber, painter, etc., from Hazlemere. The absorbing inquiry was put to him also. No, not that day, but a few mornings before he had. But he could easily call one out, if there were any about, as he could imitate them. Plucking a spear of grass, he adjusted it behind his teeth and startled me with the shrill, rapid notes he poured forth. I at once recognized its resemblance to the descriptions I had read of the opening part of the nightingale song, what is called the "challenge." The boy said, and he himself averred, that it was an exact imitation. The *chew, chew, chew*, and some other

parts, were very bird-like, and I had no doubt were correct. I was astonished at the strong, piercing quality of the strain. It echoed in the woods and copses about, but, though oft repeated, brought forth no response. With this man I made an engagement to take a walk that evening at eight o'clock along a certain route where he had heard plenty of nightingales but a few days before. He was confident he could call them out; so was I.

In the afternoon, which had gleams of warm sunshine, I made another excursion, less in hopes of hearing my bird than of finding some one who could direct me to the right spot. Once I thought the game was very near. I met a boy who told me he had heard a nightingale only fifteen minutes before, "on Polecat Hill, sir, just this side the Devil's Punch-bowl, sir!" I had heard of his majesty's punch-bowl before, and of the gibbets near it where three murderers were executed nearly a hundred years ago, but Polecat Hill was a new name to me. The combination did not seem a likely place for nightingales, but I walked rapidly thitherward; I heard several warblers, but not Philomel, and was forced to conclude that probably I had crossed the sea to miss my bird by just fifteen minutes. I met many other boys (is there any country where boys do not prowl about in small bands of a Sunday?) and advertised the object of my search freely among them, offering a reward that made their eyes glisten for the bird in song; but nothing ever came of it. In my desperation, I even presented a letter I had brought to the village squire, just as, in company with his wife, he was about to leave his door for church. He turned back, and, hearing my quest, volunteered to take me on a long walk through the wet grass and bushes of his fields and copses, where he knew the birds were wont to sing. "Too late," he said, and so it did appear. He showed me a fine old edition of White's "Selborne," with notes by some editor whose name I have forgotten. This editor had extended White's date of June 15th to July 1st, as the time to which the nightingale continues in song, and I felt like thanking him for it, as it gave me renewed hope. The squire thought there was a chance yet; and in case my man with the spear of grass behind his teeth failed me, he gave me a card to an old naturalist and taxidermist at Godalming, a town nine miles above, who, he felt sure, could put me on the right track if anybody could.

At eight o'clock, the sun yet some distance above the horizon, I was at the door of the barber in Hazlemere. He led the way along one of those delightful foot-paths with which this country is threaded, extend-

ing to a neighboring village several miles distant. It left the street at Hazlemere, cutting through the houses diagonally, as if the brick walls had made way for it, passed between gardens, through wickets, over stiles, across the highway and railroad, through cultivated fields and a gentleman's park, and on toward its destination,—a broad, well-kept path, that seemed to have the same inevitable right of way as a brook. I was told that it was repaired and looked after the same as the highway. Indeed, it was a public way, public to pedestrians only, and no man could stop or turn it aside. We followed it along the side of a steep hill, with copses and groves sweeping down into the valley below us. It was as wild and picturesque a spot as I had seen in England. The foxglove pierced the lower foliage and wild growths everywhere with its tall spires of purple flowers; the wild honeysuckle, with a ranker and coarser fragrance than our cultivated species, was just opening along the hedges. We paused here, and my guide blew his shrill call; he blew it again and again. How it awoke the echoes, and how it awoke all the other songsters! The valley below us and the slope beyond, which before were silent, were soon musical. The chaffinch, the robin, the blackbird, the thrush—the last the loudest and most copious—seemed to vie with each other and with the loud whistler above them. But we listened in vain for the nightingale's note. Twice my guide struck an attitude and said, impressively, "There! I believe I 'erd 'er." But we were obliged to give it up. A shower came on, and after it had passed we moved to another part of the landscape and repeated our call, but got no response, and as darkness set in we returned to the village.

The situation began to look serious. I knew there was a nightingale somewhere whose brood had been delayed from some cause or other, and who was therefore still in song, but I could not get a clew to the spot. I renewed the search late that night and again the next morning; I inquired of every man and boy I saw.

"I met many travelers,
Who the road had surely kept;
They saw not my fine revelers,—
These had crossed them while they slept;
Some had heard their fair report,
In the country or the court."

I soon learned to distrust young fellows and their girls who had heard nightingales in the gloaming. I knew one's ears could not always be depended upon on such occasions, nor his eyes either. Larks are seen in buntlings, and a wren's song entrances like Philmel's. A young couple of whom I inquired in

the train, on my way to Godalming, said yes, they had heard nightingales just a few moments before on their way to the station, and described the spot, so I could find it if I returned that way. They left the train at the same point I did, and walked up the street in advance of me. I had not noticed them till they beckoned to me from the corner of the street, near the church, where the prospect opens with a view of a near meadow and a stream shaded by pollard willows. "We heard one now, just there," they said, as I came up. They passed on, and I bent my ear eagerly in the direction indicated. Then I walked farther on, following one of those inevitable foot-paths to where it cuts diagonally through the cemetery behind the old church, but I heard nothing save a few notes of the thrush. My ear was too critical and exacting. Then I sought out the old naturalist and taxidermist to whom I had a card from the squire. He was a short, stout man, racy both in look and speech, and kindly. He had a fine collection of birds and animals, in which he took great pride. He pointed out the wood-lark and the blackcap to me, and told me where he had seen and heard them. He said I was too late for the nightingale, though I might possibly find one yet in song. But he said she grew hoarse late in the season, and did not sing as a few weeks earlier. He thought our cardinal grosbeak, which he called the Virginia nightingale, as fine a whistler as the nightingale herself. He could not go with me that day, but he would send his boy. Summoning the lad, he gave him minute directions where to take me—over by Easing, around by Shackerford church, etc., a circuit of four or five miles. Leaving the picturesque old town, we took a road over a broad, gentle hill, lined with great trees, beeches, elms, oaks, with rich cultivated fields beyond. The air of peaceful and prosperous human occupancy which this land everywhere has seemed especially pronounced through all this section. The sentiment of parks and lawns, easy, large, basking, indifferent of admiration, self-sufficing, and full, everywhere prevailed. The road was like the most perfect private carriage-way. Homeliness, in its true sense, is a word that applies to nearly all English country scenes; home-like, redolent of affectionate care and toil, saturated with rural and domestic contentment; beauty without pride, order without stiffness, age without decay, etc. This people love the country, because it would seem as if the country must first have loved them. In a field I saw for the first time a new species of clover, much grown in parts of England as green fodder for horses. The farmers call it

trifolium, probably *trifolium incarnatum*. The head is two or three inches long, and as red as blood. A field of it under the sunlight presents a most brilliant appearance. As we walked along, I got also my first view of the British blue-jay—a slightly larger bird than ours, with a hoarser voice and much duller plumage. Blue, the tint of the sky, is not so common and is not found in any such perfection among the British birds as among the American. My boy companion was worthy of observation also. He was a curious specimen, ready and officious, but, as one soon found out, full of duplicity. I questioned him about himself. "I helps he, sir; sometimes I shows people about, and sometimes I does errands. I gets three a week, sir, and lunch and tea. I lives with my grandmōther, but I calls her mother, sir. The master and the rector they gives me a character, says I am a good, honest boy, and that it is well I went to school in my youth. I am ten, sir. Last year I had the measles, sir, and I thought I should die; but I got hold of a bottle of medicine, and it tasted like honey, and I takes the whole of it, and it made me well, sir. I never lies, sir. It is good to tell the truth." And yet he would slide off into a lie as if the track in that direction was always greased. Indeed, there was a kind of fluent, unctuous obsequious effrontery in all he said and did. As the day was warm for that climate, he soon grew tired of the chase. At one point we skirted the grounds of a large house, as thickly planted with trees and shrubs as a forest; many birds were singing there, and for a moment my guide made me believe that among them he recognized the notes of the nightingale. Failing in this, he coolly assured me that the swallow that skimmed along the road in front of us was the nightingale! We presently left the highway and took a foot-path. It led along the margin of a large plowed field, shut in by rows of noble trees, the soil of which looked as if it might have been a garden for untold generations. Then the path led through a wicket, and down the side of a wooded hill to a large stream and to the hamlet of Easing. A boy fishing said indifferently that he had heard nightingales there that morning. He had caught a little fish which he said was a gudgeon. "Yes," said my companion in response to a remark of mine, "theys little; but you can eat they if they *is* little." Then we went toward Shackerford church. The road, like most roads in the south of England, was a deep trench. The banks on either side rose fifteen feet, covered with ivy, moss, wild flowers, and the roots of trees. England's best defense against an invading foe is her sunken roads. Whole armies might be ambushed in

these trenches, while an enemy moving across the open plain would very often find himself plunging headlong into these hidden pitfalls. Indeed, between the subterranean character of the roads in some places and the high-walled or high-hedged character of it in others, the pedestrian about England is shut out from much he would like to see. I used to envy the bicyclists, perched high upon their rolling stilts. But the foot-paths escape the barriers, and one need walk nowhere else if he choose.

Around Shackerford church are copses, and large pine and fir woods. The place was full of birds. My guide threw a stone at a small bird which he declared was a nightingale; and though the missile did not come within three yards of it, yet he said he had hit it, and pretended to search for it on the ground. He must needs invent an opportunity for lying. I told him here I had no further use for him, and he turned cheerfully back, with my shilling in his pocket. I spent the afternoon about the woods and copses near Shackerford. The day was bright and the air balmy. I heard the cuckoo call, and the chaffinch sing, both of which I considered good omens. The little chifchaff was chifchaffing in the pine woods. The white-throat, with his quick, emphatic *Chew-che-rick* or *Che-rick-a-rew*, flitted and ducked and hid among the low bushes by the roadside. A girl told me she had heard the nightingale yesterday on her way to Sunday-school, and pointed out the spot. It was in some bushes near a house. I hovered about this place till I was afraid the woman, who saw me from the window, would think I had some designs upon her premises. But I managed to look very indifferent or abstracted when I passed. I am quite sure I heard the chiding, guttural note of the bird I was after. Doubtless her brood had come out that very day. Another girl had heard a nightingale on her way to school that morning and directed me to the road; still another pointed out to me the white-throat and said that was my bird. This last was a rude shock to my faith in the ornithology of school-girls. Finally, I found a laborer pounding stone by the road-side,—a serious, honest-faced man, who said he had heard my bird that morning on his way to work; he heard her every morning, and nearly every night too. He heard her last night after the shower (just at the hour when my barber and I were trying to awaken her near Hazlemere), and she sang as finely as ever she did. This was a great lift. I felt that I could trust this man. He said that after his day's work was done, that is, at five o'clock, if I chose to accompany him on

his way home, he would show me where he had heard the bird. This I gladly agreed to; and remembering that I had had no dinner, I sought out the inn in the village and asked for something to eat. This unwonted request so astonished the landlord that he came out from behind his inclosed bar, and confronted me with good-humored curiosity. These back-country English inns, as I several times found to my discomfiture, are only drinking places for the accommodation of local customers, mainly of the laboring class. Instead of standing conspicuously on some street corner, as with us, they usually stand on some by-way, or some little paved court away from the main thoroughfare. I could have plenty of beer, said the landlord, but he had not a mouthful of meat in the house. I urged my needs, and finally got some rye bread and cheese. With this and a glass of home-brewed beer I was fairly well fortified. At the appointed time I met the cottager and went with him on his way home. We walked two miles or more along a charming road, full of wooded nooks and arbor-like vistas. Why do English trees always look so sturdy, and exhibit such massive repose, so unlike, in this latter respect, to the nervous and agitated expression of most of our own foliage? Probably because they have been a long time out of the woods and have had plenty of room in which to develop individual traits and peculiarities; then in a deep fertile soil, and a climate that does not hurry or overtax, they grow slow and last long, and come to have the picturesqueness of age without its infirmities. The oak, the elm, the beech, all have more striking profiles than in our country.

Presently my companion pointed out to me a small wood below the road that had a wide fringe of bushes and saplings connecting it with a meadow, amid which stood the tree-embowered house of a city man, where he had heard the nightingale in the morning; and then, further along, showed me near his own cottage where he had heard one the evening before. It was now only six o'clock, and I had two or three hours to wait before I could reasonably expect to hear her. "It gets to be into the evening," said my new friend, "when she sings the most, you know." I whiled away the time as best I could. If I had been an artist, I should have brought away a sketch of a picturesque old cottage, near by, that bore the date of 1688 on its wall. I was obliged to keep moving most of the time to keep warm. Yet the "nosee-'ems," or midges, annoyed me, in a temperature which at home would have chilled them speechless and biteless. Finally, I leapt the smooth masonry of the stone wall and ambushed myself amid

the tall ferns under a pine-tree, where the nightingale had been heard in the morning. If the keeper had seen me, he would probably have taken me for a poacher. I sat shivering there till nine o'clock, listening to the cooing of the wood-pigeons, watching the motions of a jay that, I suspect, had a nest near by, and taking note of various other birds. The song-thrush and the robins soon made such a musical uproar along the borders of a grove, across an adjoining field, as quite put me out. It might veil and obscure the one voice I wanted to hear. The robin continued to sing quite into the darkness. This bird is related to the nightingale, and looks and acts like it at a little distance; and some of its notes are remarkably piercing and musical. When my patience was about exhausted, I was startled by a quick, brilliant call or whistle, a few rods from me, that at once recalled my barber with his blade of grass; and I knew my long-sought bird was inflating her throat. How it woke me up! It had the quality that startles; it pierced the gathering gloom like a rocket. Then it ceased. Suspecting I was too near the singer, I moved away cautiously and stood in a lane beside the wood, where a loping hare regarded me a few paces away. Then my singer struck up again, but I could see did not let herself out; just tuning her instrument, I thought, and getting ready to transfix the silence and the darkness. A little later, a man and boy came up the lane. I asked them if that was the nightingale singing; they listened, and assured me it was none other. "Now she's on, sir; now she's on. Ah! but she don't stick. In May, sir, they makes the woods all heccho about here. Now she's on again; that's her, sir; now she's off; she won't stick." And stick she would not. I could hear a hoarse wheezing and clucking sound beneath her notes, when I listened intently. The man and boy moved on. I stood mutely invoking all the gentle divinities to spur the bird on. Just then a bird like our hermit-thrush came quickly over the hedge a few yards below me, swept close past my face, and back into the thicket. I had been caught listening; the offended bird had found me taking notes of her dry and worn-out pipe there behind the hedge, and the concert abruptly ended; not another note; not a whisper. I waited a long time and then moved off; then came back, implored the outraged bird to resume; then rushed off, and, as it were, slammed the door indignantly behind me. I paused by other shrines, but not a sound. The cottager had told me of a little village three miles beyond, where there were three inns, and where I

could probably get lodgings for the night. I walked rapidly in that direction; committed myself to a foot-path; lost the trail, and brought up at a little cottage in a wide expanse of field or common, and by the good woman, with a babe in her arms, was set right again. I soon struck the highway by the bridge, as I had been told, and a few paces brought me to the first inn. It was ten o'clock, and the lights were just about to be put out, as the law or custom is in country inns. The landlady said she could not give me a bed, she had only one spare room, and that was not in order; and she should not set about putting it in shape at that hour; and she was short and sharp about it, too. I hastened on to the next one. The landlady said she had no sheets, and the bed was damp and unfit to sleep in. I protested that I thought an inn was an inn and for the accommodation of travelers. But she referred me to the next house. Here were more people and more the look and air of a public house. But the wife (the man does not show himself on such occasions) said her daughter had just got married and come home, and she had much company and could not keep me. In vain I urged my extremity; there was no room. Could I have something to eat, then? This seemed doubtful, and led to consultations in the kitchen; but, finally, some bread and cold meat were produced. The nearest hotel was Godalming, seven miles distant; and I knew all the inns would be shut up before I could get there. So I munched my bread and meat, consoling myself with the thought that perhaps this was just the ill wind that would blow me the good I was in quest of. I saw no alternative but to spend a night under the trees with the nightingales; and I might surprise them at their revels in the small hours of the morning. Just as I was ready to congratulate myself on the richness of my experience, the landlady came in and said there was a young man there going with a "trap" to Godalming, and he had offered to take me in. I feared I should pass for an escaped lunatic if I declined the offer; so I reluctantly assented, and we were presently whirling through the darkness, along a smooth, winding road, toward town. The young man was a drummer; was from Lincolnshire, and said I spoke like a Lincolnshire man. I could believe it, for I told him he talked more like an American than any native I had met. The hotels in the larger towns close at eleven, and I was set down in front of one just as the clock was striking that hour. I asked to be conducted to a room at once. Just as I was about getting in bed there was

a rap at the door, and a waiter presented me my bill on a tray. "Gentlemen as have no luggage, etc.," he explained; and pretend to be looking for nightingales, too! Three-and-sixpence; two shillings for the bed and one-and-six for service. I was out at five in the morning, before any one inside was astir. After much trying of bars and doors, I made my exit into a paved court, from which a covered way led into the street. A man opened a window and directed me how to undo the great door, and forth I started, still hoping to catch my bird at her matins. I took the route of the day before. On the edge of the beautiful plowed field, looking down through the trees and bushes into the gleam of the river twenty rods below, I was arrested by the note I longed to hear. It came up from near the water, and made my ears tingle. I folded up my rubber coat and sat down upon it, saying, Now we will take our fill. But—the bird ceased, and, tarry though I did for an hour, not another note reached me. The prize seemed destined to elude me each time just as I thought it mine. Still, I treasured what little I had heard. I perceived clearly the surprising quality of this bird's song.

It was enough to satisfy me of its superior quality, and make me more desirous than ever to hear the complete strain. I continued my rambles, and in the early morning once more hung about the Shackerford copses and loitered along the highways. Two school-boys pointed out a tree to me in which they had heard the nightingale, on their way for milk, two hours before. But I could only repeat Emerson's lines:

"Right good will my sinews strung,
But no speed of mine avails
To hunt up their shining trails."

At nine o'clock I gave over the pursuit and returned to Easing in quest of breakfast. The landlady and her daughter, of the only large and comfortable-looking inn, were washing windows, and would not listen to my request for breakfast. The fires were out and I could not be served. So I must continue my walk back to Godalming; and in doing so, I found that one may walk three miles on indignation quite as easily as upon bread.

In the afternoon I returned to my lodgings at Shotter Mill, and made ready for a walk to Selborne, twelve miles distant, part of the way to be accomplished that night in the gloaming, and the rest early on the following morning to give the nightingales a chance to make any reparation they might feel inclined to for the neglect with which they had treated me. There was a foot-path over the hill and through Lechmere bottom to Liphook, and to this,

with the sun half an hour high, I committed myself. The feature in this hill scenery of Surrey and Sussex that is new to American eyes is given by the furze and heather, broad black or dark-brown patches of which sweep over the high rolling surfaces, like sable mantles. Tennyson's house stands amid this dusky scenery, at a place east of Hazlemere called Blackdown. The path led through a large common, partly covered with grass and partly grown up to furze — another un-American feature. So precious as land is in England, and yet so much of it given to parks and pleasure-grounds, and so much of it left unreclaimed in commons! These commons are frequently met with; about Selborne they are miles in extent, and embrace the Hanger and other woods. No one can inclose them or appropriate them to his own use. The landed proprietor of whose estates they form a part cannot; they belong to the people, to the leaseholders. The villagers and others who own houses on leased land pasture their cows upon them, gather the furze, and cut the wood. In some places the commons belong to the crown and are crown lands. These large uninclosed spaces often give a free and easy air to the landscape that is very welcome. On the border of Lechmere bottom I sat down above a straggling copse, aflame as usual with the foxglove, and gave eye and ear to the scene. While sitting here, I saw and heard for the first time the black-capped warbler. I recognized the note at once by its brightness and strength and a faint suggestion in it of the nightingale's. But it was disappointing: I had expected a nearer approach to its great rival. The bird was very shy, but did finally show herself fairly several times, as she did also near Selborne, where I heard the song oft repeated and prolonged. It is a ringing, animated strain, but as a whole seemed to me crude, not smoothly and finely modulated. I could name several of our own birds that surpass it in pure music. Like its congeners, the garden warbler and the white-throat, it sings with great emphasis and strength, but its song is silvern, not golden. "Little birds with big voices," one says to himself after having heard most of the British songsters. My path led me an adventurous course through the copses and bottoms and open commons, in the long twilight, but brought me safely to Liphook at ten o'clock. I expected and half hoped the inn would turn its back upon me again, in which case I proposed to make for Wolmer Forest a few miles distant, but it did not. Before going to bed, I took a short and hasty walk down a promising-looking lane, and again met a couple who had heard night-

ingales. "It was a nightingale, was it not, Charley?"

If all the people of whom I inquired for nightingales in England could have been together and compared notes, they probably would not have been long in deciding that there was at least one crazy American abroad.

I proposed to be up and off at five o'clock in the morning, which seemed greatly to puzzle mine host. At first he thought it could not be done, but finally saw his way out of the dilemma and said he would get up and undo the door for me himself. The morning was cloudy and misty, though the previous night had been of the fairest. There is one thing they do not have in England that we can boast of at home, and that is a good masculine type of weather; it is not even feminine; it is childish and puerile, though I am told that occasionally there is a full-grown storm. But I saw nothing but petulant little showers and prolonged juvenile sulks. The clouds have no reserve, no dignity; if there is a drop of water in them (and there generally are several drops), out it comes. The prettiest little showers march across the country in summer, scarcely bigger than a street watering-cart; sometimes by getting over the fence one can avoid them, but they keep the hay-makers in a perpetual flurry. There is no cloud scenery, as with us, no mass and solidity, no height nor depth. The clouds seem low, vague and vapory,—immature, indefinite, inconsequential, like youth.

The walk to Selborne was through mist and light rain. Few bird-voices, save the cry of the lapwing and the curlew, were heard. Shortly after leaving Liphook the road takes a straight cut for three or four miles through a level, black, barren, peaty stretch of country, with Wolmer Forest a short distance on the right. Under the low, hanging clouds the scene was a dismal one—a black earth beneath and a gloomy sky above. For miles the only sign of life was a baker's cart rattling along the smooth, white road. At the end of this solitude I came to cultivated fields and a little hamlet and an inn. At this inn (for a wonder!) I got some breakfast. I sat at the table with the family, and had substantial fare. From this point I followed a foot-path a couple of miles through fields and parks. The highways for the most part seem so narrow and exclusive, or inclusive, such penalties seem to attach to a view over the high walls and hedges that shut you in, that a foot-path was always a welcome escape to me. I opened the wicket or mounted the stile without much concern: as to whether it would further me on my way or not. It was like turning the flank of an enemy. These well-kept fields and

lawns, these cozy nooks, these stately and exclusive houses that had taken such pains to shut out the public gaze—from the foot-path one had them at an advantage, and could pluck out their mystery. On striking the highway again, I met the postmistress, stepping briskly along with the morning mail. Her husband had died, and she had taken his place as mail-carrier. England is so densely populated, the country is so like a great city suburb, that your mail is brought to your door everywhere, the same as in town. I walked a distance with a boy driving a little old white horse with a cart-load of brick. He lived at Hedleigh, six miles distant; he had left there at five o'clock in the morning, and had heard a nightingale. He was sure; as I pressed him, he described the place minutely. "She was in the large fir-tree by Tom Anthony's gate, at the south end of the village." Then, I said, doubtless I shall find one in some of Gilbert White's haunts; but I did not. I spent two rainy days at Selborne; I passed many chilly and cheerless hours loitering along those wet lanes and dells and dripping hangers, wooing both my bird and the spirit of the gentle parson, but apparently without getting very near to either. When I think of the place now, I see its hurrying and anxious hay-makers in the field of mown grass, and hear the cry of a child that sat in the hay back of the old church, and cried by the hour, while its mother was busy with her rake not far off. The rain had ceased, the hay had dried off a little, and scores of men, women, and children, but mostly women, had flocked to the fields to rake it up. The hay is got together inch by inch, and every inch is fought for. They first rake it up into narrow swaths, each person taking a strip about a yard wide. If they hold the ground thus gained, when the hay dries an hour or two longer, they take another hitch, and thus on till they get it into the cock or "carry" it from the windrow. It is usually nearly worn out with handling before they get it into the rick.

From Selborne I went to Alton, along a road that was one prolonged rife-pit, but smooth and hard as a rock; thence by train back to London. To leave no ground for self-accusation in future, on the score of not having made a thorough effort to hear my songster, I the next day made a trip north toward Cambridge, leaving the train at Hitchin, a large picturesque old town, and thought myself in just the right place at last. I found a road between the station and the town proper, called Nightingale Lane, famous for its song-

sters. A man who kept a thrifty looking inn on the corner (where, by the way, I was again refused both bed and food) said they sang night and morning in the trees opposite. He had heard them the night before, but had not noticed them that morning. He often sat at night with his friends, with open windows, listening to the strain. He said he had tried several times to hold his breath as long as the bird did in uttering certain notes, but could not do it. This, I knew, was an exaggeration; but I waited eagerly for night-fall, and when it came paced the street like a patrolman, and paced other streets, and lingered about other likely localities, but caught nothing but neuralgic pains in my shoulder. I had no better success in the morning, and here gave over the pursuit, saying to myself, It matters little, after all; I have seen the country and had some object for a walk, and that is enough.

Altogether I heard the bird less than five minutes, and only a few bars of its song, but enough to satisfy me of the surprising quality of the strain.

It had the master tone as clearly as Tenyson, or any great prima donna, or famous orator has it. Indeed, it was just the same. Here is the complete artist, of whom all these other birds are but hints and studies. Bright, startling, assured, of great compass and power, it easily dominates all other notes; the harsher *chur-r-r-r-rg* notes serve as foil to her surpassing brilliancy. Wordsworth, among the poets, has hit off the song nearest:

"Those notes of thine—they pierce and pierce;
Tumultuous harmony and fierce!"

I could easily understand that this bird might keep people awake at night by singing near their houses, as I was assured it frequently does: there is something in the strain so startling and awakening. Its start is a vivid flash of sound. On the whole, a high-bred, courtly, chivalrous song; a song for ladies to hear leaning from embowered windows on moonlight nights; a song for royal parks and groves—and easeful but impassioned life. We have no bird-voice so piercing and loud, with such flexibility and compass, such full-throated harmony and long-drawn cadences; though we have songs of more melody, tenderness, and plaintiveness. None but the nightingale could have inspired Keats's ode—that longing for self-forgetfulness and for the oblivion of the world, to escape the fret and fever of life,

"And with thee fade away into the forest dim."

John Burroughs.