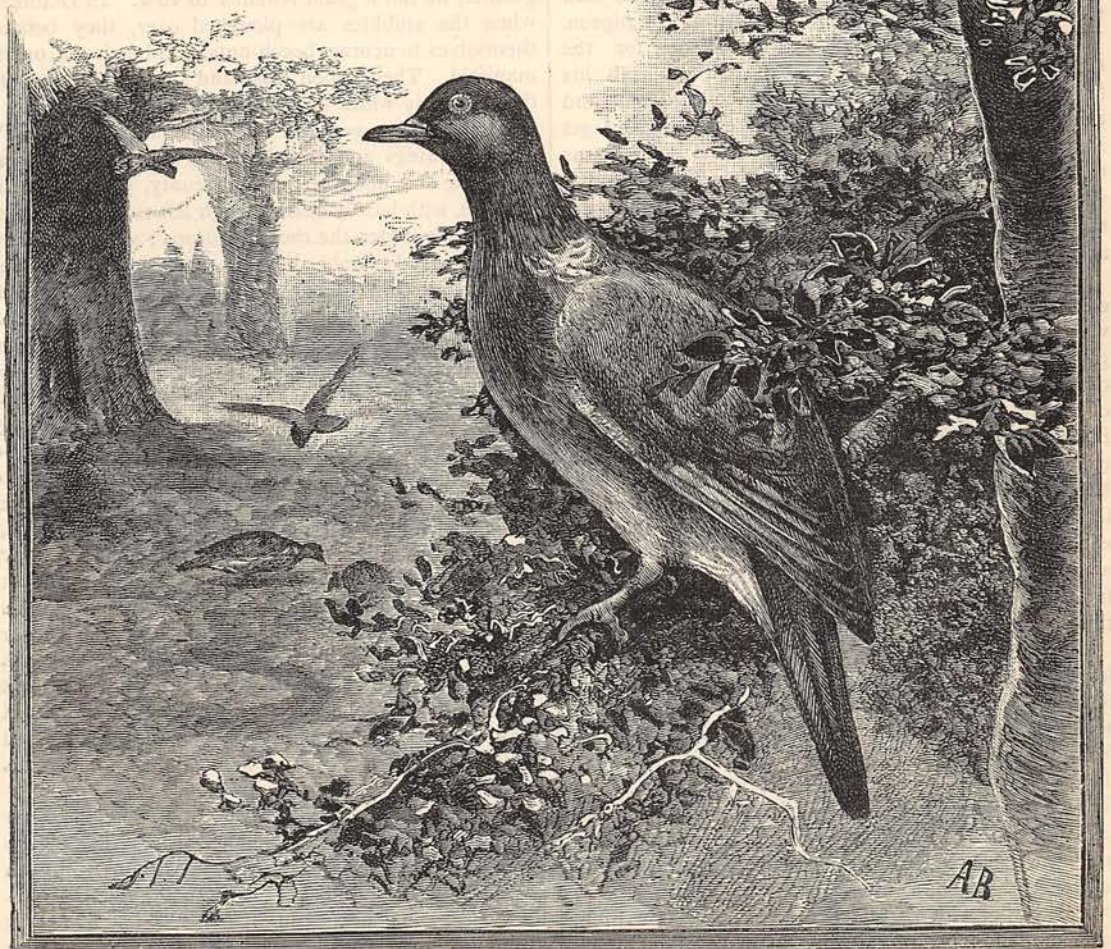


## A BIRD OF FEW FRIENDS.

**M**ANY a pleasant sight is met with in spring-time by a lover of nature, when, strolling along the edge of a cover, admiring the primrose-spangled hedge-bank, and noting that every bush is bursting with promise of summer, he watches how the tiny rabbits, too young to be suspicious, heedlessly nibble the clover, then at his approach sit upright on the *qui vive* to scrutinise him, and scurry off to the lower regions to tell their mother all about it ; or catches a glimpse of a bush-tailed squirrel scampering up a tree, jumping from bough to bough, and then, ensconced behind a fork, peeping at him with a saucy catch-me-if-you-can sort of look ; and one of the most charming sounds he hears is the velvety cooing of the wood-pigeon, after it has once or twice wheeled round above the tree-tops in all the joy of freedom and courtship, beaten its wings together, as its manner is, and dropped





down into shelter to join its mate. But though so powerful and graceful on the wing, so musical of voice, so brilliant of plumage, and altogether one of the most beautiful creatures that adorn our woods, this bird has very few friends in the country-side.

Farmers of average perceptive powers are beginning to realise that rooks *do* follow the plough solely to get at the exposed wireworms, caterpillars, *et hoc genus omne*; and if now and then they steal a few grains of corn at sowing-time or after, that this robbery is more than atoned for by the hosts of grubs they destroy. Owls, too, kestrels, and even weasels are occasionally allowed by preservers of game to survive, because it is now known they *do* prefer mice as ordinary fare. But as for the wild pigeon, who ravenously consumes all kinds of grain without doing any visible good in return, *he* has little enough to recommend him in the eyes of land-owner or tenant, unless it be the quality of his flesh, when carefully stewed.

In spite of this unpopularity, however, the flocks of these birds, so universally distributed, do not seem to diminish; for if there is one bird who knows how to take care of his life as far as human enemies are concerned, how to feed in the middle of the stubble, where surprise is almost impossible, how to send scouts in advance to the roosting-place, and how to sleep with one eye open, that bird is the pigeon. When Master Tom, home from Eton for the Christmas holidays, and recently entrusted with his father's gun, marks one into an ivy-covered oak, and thinks he is going to stalk it so cleverly, and get a shot as it flies out from its retreat, he soon learns that the bird is as wide awake as himself, and knows very well how to slip out on the other side, keeping the tree between himself and his enemy in the most annoying way imaginable.

Moreover, the balance of nature is now placed much out of equilibrium by a generation of gamekeepers who think scarcely any bird, except pheasants and partridges, has a right to a place in creation, and consequently trap with merciless pole-gin all kinds of birds of prey. A pigeon has neither courage, beak, nor claw fitted to cope with the *Raptores*; the peregrine, justly called noble because, scorning to torture its quarry, it kills it at one blow, looks on the wood-dove as its legitimate prey—fit birds to be pursuer and pursued, each in his way a consummate master of the art of wingmanship. And now that most of the larger hawk family are almost extinct, the pigeons have an easy time of it, and multiply rather than decrease.

They are far from being over-scrupulous about a site for their nest, any tree or tall shrub, furnishing a tolerable screen from prying eyes, being readily selected, provided the eggs are not placed too high from the ground. The stately cedar of Lebanon, deodar, or ivied ilex on the lawn is frequently chosen for this purpose. Like many others of their race, they lay aside much of their shyness at the breeding season, and if aware their nests will be protected, seem rather to court than shun the dwelling of man. A very favourite spot with them, where this paper is written, is in the thick bushes growing in undisturbed peace

along the banks of the streams, which run through the swampy bottoms near the woods. Here, in the tangled whitethorn, or spreading willow whose branches have completely overgrown the river, the cushat loves to rear her young, right over the quiet pool where the big trout, secure from the angler's solicitations, lies waiting for falling grubs, or newly-fledged moths; where the water-rat squats on the root at the water's edge, ready to flop down and vanish at approach of danger; where the moor-hen preens his plumage, then raises himself erect, shakes his wings, wriggles his stubby tail, and utters his twee-twee-gr-r-r, to gladden his wife, who sits hatching her eggs in the crown of a sedge-clump, or by the matted roots of the royal fern hard by.

Of all hungry granivorous birds, wood-pigeons surely have the most insatiable appetite with the smallest measure of fastidiousness. In August you will see them flying in numbers to the cornfields, alighting on any part beaten down by wind and rain, there leisurely gorging themselves to repletion. Tares and peas they are particularly fond of, keeping a grinding-mill always at work in their digestive organs. A month later, when the harvest is over, they frequent the stubbles, cleaning bare every ear that has escaped the gleaner, till not a grain remains to view. In October, when the stubbles are ploughed over, they betake themselves to acorns, beech-nuts, and berries of order manifold. Then, when frost and snow come, and all the ground is white and hard, and seeds are buried; when the newspapers bid us "Remember the birds;" when redwings and thrushes, now that may-berries are gone and holly-berries are scanty, puff out their feathers, with hardly heart enough left to turn over the dead leaves under the rhododendrons; when the poor robins, starved to unheeding tameness, flutter along the hedge from twig to twig, with head on one side, if haply a worm may be sighted in some sheltered nook—even at this time the pigeons do not mean to starve themselves, or earn any pauper pity. They merely make their way into the nearest turnip-field, strut about over the snow with a pompous air, snipping a piece out of a leaf here, digging their beaks into a succulent turnip there, until they have bored a deep hole where the water may get in, freeze, and rot the whole bulb—for what do they care about bad crops, foreign competition, or other of the agriculturists' grievances? Nothing whatever. By-and-by, if frost continues, and they begin to tire of too much green food, don't they know to an inch where the keeper spreads the feed of Indian corn to keep his pheasants from straying? and are they not equally aware that maize is a fattening and warming diet this cold weather? So that when the rest of the feathered world is at its wits' end for a livelihood, the pigeons remain plump and proud as ever.

But does Master Tom really want a few of them for a pie, or to show his incredulous sisters that he *can* shoot something better worth powder than field-fares and starlings? Let him creep into the home plantation where the clump of firs is growing, one fine quiet afternoon, stand with his back to a tree, in a position



where he can keep watch on the firs, taking care the while that his gun is clear of all branches and ready for instant use, and listen. Presently he will hear a faint whistling somewhere overhead, and a flutter, and see nothing. This is the scout coming in advance to the roost. If he fumbles about in nervous anxiety to find out where it has settled, that is the surest way to frighten away the forerunner (who will warn its companions), and so *not* to have any sport. But if he keeps quiet, cautious not to step on a rotten stick, expose the gun-barrel, or make any noise, others will soon drop in, and then he may have several shots as they flutter about the branches before alighting, until the evening air is thick with the smoke of powder. Then let him pick up his trophies, carry them home, and ask the cook to take out the crops *at once*—a request which, though busy about preparations for dinner, she will no doubt be glad to grant, as it is holiday-time. To remove the crops at once is essential, as the pigeons are thereby prevented from having an unpleasant turnip flavour when they make their appearance later on at the luncheon-table.

Another way he may try—if he has patience—with

probable success. Let him shoot a wood-dove, or procure one stuffed, and take it to any wheat-stubble which the birds are known to frequent, then place it on the ground about forty yards from the hedge, propping up its neck with a short Y-shaped stick, so that it may appear in an easy attitude of feeding. He will also do well, before taking up his position under the shade of a tree up in the hedge, to be sure that no loose feathers or blood be visible anywhere about his decoy, and that it has a *natural* appearance, not looking, which is possible, as if in the agonies of an apoplectic seizure. If all is well arranged, before long the birds flying about will see their comrade, as they suppose, feeding, and fearlessly join him; not suspecting the fraud until they hear the reports which rob them of perhaps two of their number.

This, however, is a stratagem which no one should disgrace himself by adopting; for it is ungenerous to employ a mean method of compassing the death of these elegant creatures, who, with all their marauding ways, contribute so largely, in the halcyon days of summer, to give grace, charm, and beauty to our fairest woodland scenes.

A. H. MALAN, M.A.

## SOME HINTS ON LUSTRA-PAINTING.

(IN TWO PAPERS.)

### SECOND PAPER.



Now continue the instructions given in our first paper. Take your oil-tubes, squeeze out from the bottom of the tubes some flake-white, carmine, terra verte, yellow chrome, and burnt sienna. Dip your brush in turpentine, mix the flake-white and the carmine together till you get a pale pink, and begin painting the flowers; working in, while still wet, pure carmine for the dark parts, and a little cobalt mixed with carmine for the shadows. Use chrome No. 1 for the stamens, and chrome No. 3 for the pistils. Begin the leaves working downwards from the middle of the leaf, working the way of the veins of the leaf to give them a rounded appearance rather than a flat one, which would be the consequence of your putting on a flat coat all over the leaf. Use yellow chrome and terra verte mixed together for the leaves on the left-hand side of your drawing where the light falls, making the tints as varied as you can; for the leaves in shadow, use terra verte, cobalt, and yellow chrome, and brown-pink or a little burnt sienna for the after-glaze. As you are sitting with the light falling on your left side, the leaves on the right side will be in shadow, as well as all those leaves which are overshadowed either by the flowers or by other leaves. Do not use a great deal of turpentine, and put your colours on thin, with the exception of the high lights, which must be thick.

After you have got in the flowers and leaves, put in the stem of the spray with terra verte and yellow chrome at the top, and the rest of it with flake-white and raw sienna.

Having put on the first coat, cover it up carefully to prevent the dust sticking to it; for this purpose many artists turn their paintings with their faces to the wall, but if you want to keep it entirely free from dust, it is a better plan to place a lath of wood or some books at the edges of the painting, and cover it up with a piece of paper. When dry put on the glaze, that is, use the transparent colours, touching up the flowers with a little carmine, and the stem and leaves with burnt sienna and brown-pink. Do not use any flake-white or any opaque colours. You will easily see the difference between transparent and not transparent colours; for instance, the stem was painted with opaque colours, flake-white and raw sienna (the addition of flake-white makes any paint opaque), and to-day you have glazed it with burnt sienna, which gives it a far richer colour than would have been possible without the undercoat of opaque. After it is quite dry, varnish it with pure copal varnish. Your design is now ready for the background of gold lustra.

Put away all your oil paints, and take your box of lustra colours. Take your palette and pour out on it some of the gold powder, then mix with it a few drops of the medium, using your palette knife; mix till it is of the consistency of cream. Take your sable