

fraud that he was, he did not know a fir-cone from a hazel catkin!

I have now come to the disagreeable portion of my little tale, and will hasten over it. Poddlesby made himself a very great favourite with Johanna's parents, and they always thought their child safe when with him. Meanwhile the cloud grew and grew 'twixt Frank de Vaud and his betrothed, for he was jealous of the insinuating Saxon; and at last the storm burst and—the lovers quarrelled and parted.

Frank spent most of his time among the mountains now. He loved that somewhat ancient gun of his more than ever. But Frank seldom sang. The joy and the happiness seemed clean gone away from his big heart for ever and a day.

He gave the little chalet, at which he had spent so many a pleasant evening, a very wide berth indeed. He could not bear the sight of it. He would not have gone near it for worlds. He dreaded to look upon Johanna, lest the old love should return with such force that he might be constrained to make a fool of himself—that was how he phrased it—make a fool of himself, trample on his pride, and own he had been wrong and unjust in his jealousy.

But was he unjust? He often and often asked himself that question. What right had she to accept the gifts of that hateful Saxon? How dared she—the affianced bride of Frank de Vaud—accompany Poddlesby in his wanderings among the hills, and on excursions with him on the lake? Nay, he had been wronged; he never, never, never would forgive her.

Simple-minded innocent Johanna, she, and even her parents, had accepted presents from Poddlesby, and she did not like to seem ungrateful. What harm

could there be, she often asked herself, in acting as guide for the poor little Englishman in his rambles over the hills and in his studies?

Ah! but many and many a night, for all that, Johanna sobbed herself to sleep.

One autumn day, Frank, lying on his side on a bank of snow, upon which the sun was beating so warmly as almost to soften it, spied something black in a crevasse far down beneath him. Presently he saw the something move, next he heard it halloo.

"It *is*," cried Frank; "no, it can't be—but, by everything that is remarkable, it's nobody else but Poddlesby! Ay, scream away, my little man. I took you out of one crevasse; now, indeed, you shall become food for the eagles. Revenge is sweet."

Yes, reader, revenge is sweet, but vengeance does not belong to man. Frank lay there for two whole hours watching Poddlesby, then, his better nature prevailing, he went straight away and got assistance, and in a short time the Englishman from Ealing was out of danger. When he saw who had again rescued him, Poddlesby positively burst into tears. "Come with me, come with me," he cried, "I shall die else."

And he led Frank straight to Johanna's cottage and dragged him in, and took his half-unwilling hand and placed it in blushing Johanna's.

"I have done you both an injury," he said, "I have now to crave forgiveness, which I sincerely do."

Well, there was some good in little Poddlesby's heart after all.

I need not say that Frank and Johanna were married. Yes, and Poddlesby was at the wedding, too, and the most charming gift that Johanna had was Poddlesby's.



WILD BIRDS IN LONDON.

ALL of us have read pathetic stories of Australian gold-diggers or Canadian backwoodsmen moved to tears by the song of some imprisoned skylark, which reminded them of their English birthplace. It is to be feared that tears would not be so easily drawn from such emigrants as are of London origin; for he that spends all his days in London, with the exception perhaps of a week or so about the month of August, may very likely never have heard a lark sing in his life, unless from a cage, to the accompaniment of cart and carriage wheels. There are, however, still many birds to be heard and seen about the parks and gardens of London; where, indeed, those which can find food in such places have, perhaps, a safer and more comfortable life than they can ever lead in the country. Man debarred from the use of nets or guns is not very dangerous to creatures possessed of wings, and he drives away such

four-footed enemies as stoats and weasels, while birds of prey, hawks and magpies, avoid his presence, even in towns where it would be harmless.

Yet only one small bird, the sparrow, has deliberately chosen London for a dwelling-place. The pigeons which flutter about Westminster Abbey and the British Museum cannot be considered wild birds, any more than the ducks on our ornamental waters. They receive much of their food at the hands of man, and are descended from ancestors which he imported into their present homes. The moorhens which feed freely on some London waters may possibly have found their own way there. They are not so tame in their behaviour as the ducks, with which it is to be feared that they are often confounded.

The sparrow really has come uninvited, and taken up his abode in London, resigning all innocent country pleasures for an adventurous, and not altogether honest, life in the streets. His sooty presence graces alike Seven Dials and Hyde Park Corner; indeed, there is no class of Londoner who is so much at home in every

part of London as he. He is the only one of us that dares enter the lion's den. Buns tempt him down into the bear-pit much more quickly than they tempt the bear up. It is perhaps the corrupting influence of a town life which has given to this bold bad little bird the evil qualities which transportation has made worse. In Australia the sparrow has gone forth like a bushranger, with the vices of the town upon him, into the country, where he steals grain on a colossal scale, and is established as a public nuisance.

There is no sound that we feel to be more rural than the cawing of rooks; yet the rook has been established time out of mind in London. Tall trees are all he wants for a home, though they may stand in the noisy Marylebone Road, or even in the heart of London at Gray's Inn Garden. But though the rook never objects to the presence of men at the foot of his trees, it is strange that he should be willing to remain in London, where the streets afford him no food, and the parks, one would think, very little. It must be remembered that, attached as the rook is to his home, he often wanders very far afield in his daily round; and as he can at any time easily overfly the few miles of houses which part even Gray's Inn from the open country, he can hardly be aware of the distinction which we feel between the life of the town and the country. A bird so wary as he, and so circumspect in his dealings with the human race, must well appreciate one great advantage which belongs to the London rookeries—that there is no rook-shooting possible there in the spring. In consequence of this advantage the numbers of the London rooks ought to increase very rapidly, and one would like to know how they settle who shall emigrate and who stay behind. The peaceful administration of rookeries has always been a wonder to men, who themselves find it hard to live in amity, even with the aid of laws.

The position of the jackdaw in London is a doubtful one. He is not uncommon, and may turn up any day in the gardens of any square; still he can hardly be counted on anywhere, and seems scarcely at home in a place where he cannot lead the cheerful and social life so dear to the country jackdaw. Perhaps he regards himself as "buried" in town, as we say of people lost in a lonely part of the country. One may be certain that without plenty of society no jackdaw would stay in town all the year round. As much may be said of the starlings, which are constantly to be seen waddling upon the grass (for the starling, though not a large bird, does not usually condescend to hop), and which sometimes appear in large flocks, wheeling, settling, and arising about one or other of the parks in such numbers as to attract the attention and abortive missiles of youthful Londoners. Starlings are said to be much commoner in England than of old; in autumn one may sometimes see them collected in numbers apparently sufficient to populate two or three counties. Fortunately there are always some at hand to enliven London; for the starling is a cheerful bird, amusing in his gait, gestures, and noises: he whistles and gurgles and rattles continually in his throat, little suspecting that men do not count him among singing birds.

The thrush and the blackbird have not chosen London for their home; they do but remain on the lands where their fathers lived, quite regardless of the changes in their neighbourhood. Barren of beauty as is a London spring-time, it has at least a full share of their music. Where worms and snails can live, there the thrush can thrive; and he is the safer in London that snow never lies long on the ground there, and frosts are generally mild; for a hard winter is fatal to many thrushes. The thrush is the boldest and most hopeful of singing birds, and will pipe loudly from a leafless tree in cold January; therefore, it is the less surprising that he may sometimes be heard to sing even out of the darkness of a London smoke-fog. The blackbird is a lazier songster, though prodigal enough of his music in warm weather; he is shyer than the thrush, and more solitary in his habits; nor does he seem to be so common in London. Yet the numbers of the two kinds are so great, while hedges and bushes are so scarce, that one wonders where they, and indeed other London birds, can find room for their nests. One cannot easily investigate this question, owing to the vigilance of park-keepers and the extreme griminess of London bushes; but the public portions of the parks certainly seem to offer very few places of concealment. The gardens and private enclosures, such as fringe the Regent's Park, are therefore a great blessing to all Londoners, as affording the birds a stronghold. It would be indeed a dull England which had lost the song of the thrush.

The popularity of the robin and the wren does not depend entirely on their singing; but the former has a deliciously sweet, if somewhat melancholy strain, and the latter an astonishingly vigorous, though unpoetical song. Robins are common in park and square; wrens are much rarer, as they are not happy except where there is plenty of cover—if one may suggest the idea of unhappiness in connection with Jenny Wren.

A short and feeble, but sweet and plaintive strain from the shelter of the bushes, proclaims the existence in London of a humbler song-bird, the little hedge-sparrow, which, with a coating of soot on his brown feathers, might almost be passed over as a house-sparrow, did not his song and his habit of creeping in and out of the bushes betray him. A strain almost as short as his, but far more fluent and loud and cheerful, is that of the chaffinch, that makes as merry music and as much of it as any bird in England. He is also one of the handsomest, and knows it. The chaffinch builds a beautiful nest, and must, I suppose, in London bring himself to use the soot-begrimed wool of the London sheep for that purpose. This, however, is his affair. As a very sociable bird he seems less well adapted to a London life than the greenfinch, which does not, however, appear to be nearly so common about town. But one may be sure in the spring to hear his husky half-querulous note.

Titmice, of at least two kinds, are to be seen in the parks—the little blue tom-tit and the great tit, or ox-eye, which has a cheerful see-sawing note, almost rising to the dignity of a song. Tits are bold birds, and will eat

almost anything, so that it is probable more kinds than these may inhabit London.

All these are birds which reside in England throughout the year, and some of them may never have left the park they were born in, and perhaps think that the inhabitable world is only a few acres wide. This is, however, unlikely, as most birds migrate more or less, sometimes unintentionally. Strong gales carry European field-birds even to the Azores in mid-Atlantic. But there come to London every year, as it were for the season, birds which we know to pass the winter beyond seas. Of these perhaps the commonest is the flycatcher, which may be seen any day in early summer making his short flights from some low branch or iron railing. Being a bird of plain plumage, and given generally to silence, he attracts but little notice from Londoners, most of whom probably put him down, despite his long slender bill and spasmodic flights, for a sparrow. In the country

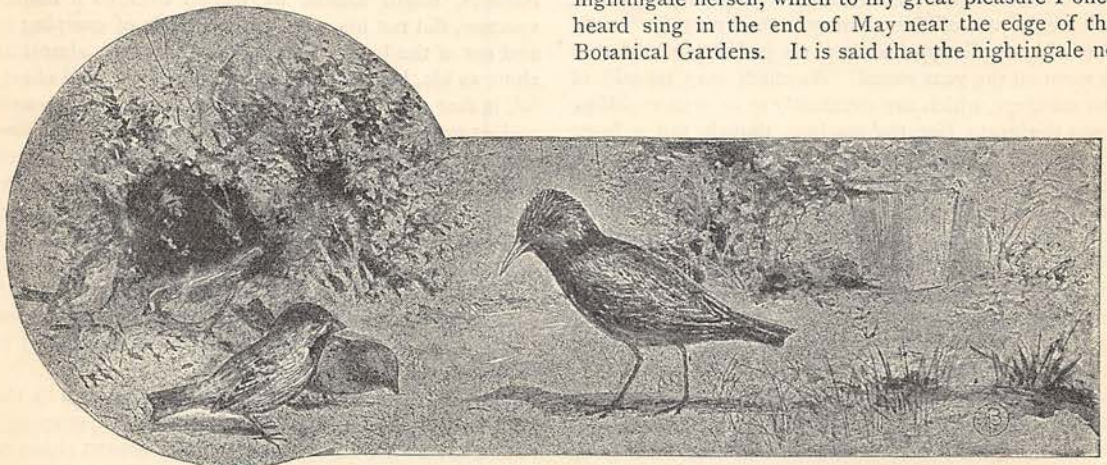
the flycatcher displays no sort of skill in the hiding of his nest, but seems to repose a just confidence in such human friends as may discover his secret. In London, where men lock their doors, it would not do

to be trustful; and he must exercise unusual care in finding a hiding-place. The return of spring is heralded, even to Londoners, by the sweet sad song of the willow-wren, and the jerky notes of the chiff-chaff, both of which small warblers, haunting as they do the tops of the trees, are able to find a home where the whitethroat does not seem to penetrate. They may be heard in London steadily from the time of their first arrival, and therefore undoubtedly breed there. This I do not think is the case with that most brilliant of



WILLOW-WREN AND CHIFF-CHAFF.

songsters, the blackcap, which I have nevertheless seen and heard two years running in the same place, but in neither year till quite late in the season. So shy a bird could hardly be at ease in London, and what brought him there at a time when migration was not going on it were hard to say. The same puzzle has presented itself in the case of a still greater singer, the nightingale herself, which to my great pleasure I once heard sing in the end of May near the edge of the Botanical Gardens. It is said that the nightingale no



SPARROWS AND STARLING.



THRUSH, BLACKBIRD, AND BLUE TITMICE.

longer comes even to Hampstead and Highgate ; but I have heard her in Epping Forest, quite close to the outskirts of London.

No bird could seem more out of place in town than the cuckoo—a parasite that could find there few entertainers. Yet he comes sometimes. I have heard him calling in the grounds of Buckingham Palace ; and once in Kensington Gardens, at the end of July, a cuckoo flew over my head. It is his way to slip quietly over a hedge and out of sight when men approach him, and he seemed anxious on this occasion to attract no notice, in which he was surprisingly successful.

There are some birds which may be seen tolerably often in London, and yet can hardly be classed as even temporary residents. The swift is a great haunter of towns, but seems to draw the line at London. A flock may sometimes be seen gambolling and screaming over Regent's Park ; but as they do not settle even for a moment, and ten minutes of their lightning speed takes them far away into the country, it is impossible to claim as residents birds which come so literally on a flying visit. The same remark applies in a less degree to the swallows and martins, which are more abundant; indeed they may be seen so constantly during the summer about Kensington Gardens, that it is possible some may breed in the neighbourhood. I have, however, never seen a martin's nest in London, and if Banquo's theory, that the "martlet's" presence is a sign of delicate air, be correct, it is probable that I never shall. About October, when the swallows depart, great numbers of them pass through town, and at this time they may be seen not only in the open places, but all over the City, even hawking up and down the dingy lengths of Oxford Street. The passers-by seem generally so unconscious of them, that I have almost fancied they may be invisible to a born Londoner. Other migratory birds occasionally halt awhile on their way through London ; thus I have noticed a solitary wheatear in the open plain of

Regent's Park, while on Hampstead Heath I have seen a ring-ouzel, generally an inhabitant of the lonely moors. Eccentricities of weather may drive birds into town. After the great gale and snowstorm of January, 1881, gulls were wheeling about the Victoria Tower, and a pair of wild ducks settled on an ice-floe that was drifting up to Westminster Bridge. Finally, London is not yet so big but that some strong-winged birds fly over it simply to get to the other side ; thus I have seen a pair of herons high up in the air, steering a south-easterly course over the brick wilderness with



CHAFFINCH, GREENFINCH, AND ROBIN.

the greatest apparent confidence. Such sights are the rare gift of fortune ; but every day London can show a tolerably long list of birds to any one who will be at the trouble to look and listen.