

## BIRDS OF THE MONTHS.



FEBRUARY—SPARROW.

THE Robin steals your praise away,  
 In vain you brave the winter cold ;  
 For all have eyes for feathers gay,  
 But no one marks your jerkin old.

## STAMMERING AND STUTTERING.

BY A SUFFERER.



**D**URING the present generation great advances have been made in nearly all departments of science, and it is somewhat astonishing that hitherto so little has been done with regard to the treatment of impediments of the speech, which (in England, at all events) are undoubtedly becoming very common. Probably the reason for this is to be found in the fact that, as a rule, people underrate the gravity of these afflictions, and indeed look upon them as affording occasion for mirth. It is with a desire to draw attention to the greatness of the evil that I take up my pen.

Many treatises have been written on the subject of stammering and stuttering, but with no great results. Learned professors have devoted much time and attention to the study of these curious affections, and have developed ingenious theories, which unfortunately are, for the most part, of no practical benefit, and my apology for adding a little more to the literature

upon the subject is that I speak from a totally different standpoint—that of the sufferer.

By most people stammering and stuttering are supposed to be one and the same thing, but this is a mistake. In the case of stammerers there is an inability to pronounce certain consonants, and a more or less violent effort is required to force them out. Stutterers, on the contrary, experience no difficulty in pronouncing the consonants; the trouble is to leave them and pass on to the vowels. For instance, in the word "pin" a stutterer repeats the initial consonant several times before he can part with it; thus "p-p-p-pin;" whilst a stammerer (if that is a consonant with which he has any difficulty) comes to a dead stop at the *p*. When at last it is forced out, there is no repetition of it, as in the other case.

A stutterer, again, speaks very quickly; when he has surmounted the first difficulty he rushes over several words before coming to another. The stammerer speaks slowly, and, in very bad cases, hesitates at nearly every other word.

The stutterer is usually loquacious, and does not

appear to be much disheartened by his impediment ; but the stammerer is timid and reserved, rarely speaks unless addressed, and then says as little as possible.

The causes of these affections are many. Illnesses of various kinds (brain fever especially) will leave them as terrible legacies. Mimicry is a prolific cause. Whilst at school two boys, with whom I was not on good terms, contracted the habit of stammering by mocking me. One recovered shortly afterwards, but the other, after the lapse of many years, is a stammerer still, and far worse than myself. Accidents and blows on the head have been known to produce these impediments.

The cause in my own case—and, I believe, in that of many others—was anxiety to do well in my studies. Naturally slow, but plodding and industrious, I was generally at the head of my classes, and strove hard to retain that position. When called on to answer a question, I would, from over-anxiety, hesitate, stumble, and stop in my reply. Gradually this habit grew upon me, until at last I became a confirmed stammerer. Then my teacher, in mistaken kindness, committed an error for which I have blamed him ever since ; he allowed me to write down my answers ! From that time I rapidly deteriorated.

Those who have never stammered have no adequate idea of the misery suffered by the habit's unfortunate victims—that is, if the latter have a grain of sensibility. There are those who, engaged in manual labour and without a spark of ambition, contrive to enjoy life pretty well in spite of their affliction ; but to those who, like myself, are engaged in commercial life, where every hour of the day they are compelled, in the ordinary course of business, to be speaking or reading, and to those who have a laudable ambition to improve their position, life is continually miserable. My own case is, I know, only a sample of many others ; and if I give a brief sketch of it, it will, I hope, be understood that I do so simply for the purpose of showing clearly the direness of the evil, and of rousing the attention of parents to their duty in this matter.

After vegetating for several years in an office, where I could see no prospect, owing to my impediment, of much advancement, I conceived the idea of competing for a situation in the Excise department of the Civil Service, where, in receipt of a fair income, I might make the best of my affliction. For five or six months I worked with might and main in the time I had to spare from office work, up at four or five every morning, and at it till nearly midnight. My exertions were rewarded, for after a stiff examination I learned that I was well up in the list of successful candidates. Before I could be appointed, however, it was necessary to pass a medical examination. Strong and healthy, the doctor told me I had nothing to fear ; but he must have enlarged on my defective speech, for in a few days I was told to appear before the head of the department in the town in which I reside. This I did, and after conversing at considerable length I left, under the impression that he would give a favourable report.

But, alas ! my doom was sealed, for soon afterwards I received a large blue envelope, on opening which I learned that I could not be appointed.

This was a terrible blow to me, for, apart from the waste of so much time and energy, the verdict appeared to be a death-blow to all my prospects.

Since then I have been some years with a large firm. A skilful shorthand writer, type-writer, with a knowledge of French, and well up in business matters generally, I give satisfaction ; but when I mention any improvement of position I am told—“ We are exceedingly sorry for you, M—, but really we do not see how we can put you in a more responsible position ; your impediment is so very much against you. If you could but get cured, we should be indeed glad to push you forward.” And because I cannot get cured I am, I suppose, to stop in a subordinate position all my life, seeing others, whom I feel to be my inferiors, rising before me. Other and better positions I could have obtained, time after time, but for this defect.

I wish to show parents and guardians what a dreadful thing to a high-spirited and ambitious boy stammering is. I say emphatically, if taken in its earliest stages, it can be effectually checked. People are apt to imagine that it is a thing of small moment, and a defect which the boy will “grow out of.” Fathers, I tell you plainly that, trifling as it may appear to you, it is a matter of terrible importance to the lad's future welfare, comfort, and happiness. In some odd cases, undoubtedly, sufferers do “grow out of it ;” but in the great majority it grows upon them till they become confirmed stammerers, and their whole life is overshadowed by a dark cloud.

A few words to the general public as to their treatment of stammerers or stutters.

Many kind-hearted men and women endeavour to help the sufferer by saying the word which they imagine he is striving to utter. Friends, don't do this. In the majority of cases you will get hold of the wrong word, and make his confusion worse confounded. And, apart from this, it is extremely galling to him to be dependent on other people in this way. If you wish to earn his gratitude and respect, endeavour to listen to him as if you had not noticed anything peculiar in his speech.

Never laugh at a stammerer. If you could for once put yourself in his place and feel the unutterable humiliation which he experiences, you would never again let the ghost of a smile cross your face when talking to one. When I have gone into shops or offices, and, whilst striving hard to make myself intelligible, have seen the clerks or assistants grinning as though they thought it fine fun, it has sometimes been very difficult to restrain myself from “going for them” and administering a salutary lesson.

And now a few words as to the cure of these afflictions. I may at once say that I know of no unfailing remedy for confirmed sufferers, and have been unable to find one to meet my own case, though I have tried everything within my power. Filling the lungs with air before trying to speak, keeping artificial substances

in the mouth, and many other "unfailing" remedies have all been useless.

Mesmerism has been recommended, and several eminent professors have experimented upon me; but, it being found impossible to exercise "influence" over me, the efficacy of this remedy has not been ascertained.

I paid a large sum of money to—and resided for two months with—a gentleman who has, I believe, worked several cures. I must not divulge the particulars of his treatment, but it had no effect upon me.

When the impediment has obtained firm hold of a person, I am afraid that in the majority of cases there is not much hope of cure. But I have known several stammerers who have imperceptibly shaken it off as they advanced in life, and, with maturer years, acquired more calmness and self-control. It is to some extent a nervous affliction, as when excited the sufferer is always worse. Although somewhat of a pessimist, I think I have reached the lowest point; my friends, indeed, say I am improving, and flatter me with the prospect of being in a few years quite free from my impediment.

But my desire is to put parents on their guard when the first signs of an impediment appear, for I say confidently it can then be stopped if properly dealt with.

Do not be harsh with the child. A person (I cannot give him the noble title of "man") once said to me, "Had I been your father I would have cured you. I'd have thrashed you every time you stammered." I should be sorry to call such a person my father, and assuredly he would only have frightened me and made me worse.

Do not laugh at a stammering child; it will do more harm than good. Be kind and calm, but firm.

When you notice the first signs of an impediment, say, "Come, John, I am sure you can do better than that." Make him take a gentle inspiration (not a violent or prolonged one), and then repeat the sentence slowly and distinctly. You will probably find that he will do so without hesitation; if he should not succeed at the first attempt, make him try again. Persist in this whenever you hear the slightest hesitation, and you will have your reward; but neglect it, and before many months the impediment will have obtained such a hold upon him that your efforts will be unavailing. It is some consolation to me to know that by giving this advice I have been the means of saving several boys, and I now give it thus publicly, in the earnest hope that more good may result than can possibly be the case if I restrict my advice to cases which come under my cognisance.

Endeavour as much as possible to awaken the boy to a sense of the vital necessity, for the sake of his future welfare, that he should throw off the bad habit; for such, in the majority of cases, I believe it to be. I know well that this is a difficult task, for the young are proverbially thoughtless; but if it be done, they will in after-life render you their heartfelt thanks.

I feel very strongly upon this matter, and "out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh." I have no hesitation in saying that a parent who will permit his child to grow up a stammerer is guilty, if not of absolute cruelty, at least of culpable indifference. If my short paper has the effect of drawing attention to the subject, I shall be satisfied.

## OUR SECOND VOYAGE TO MARS.

FROM OUR ROVING CORRESPONDENT.

### I.

#### HOMEWARD BOUND.



WE dashed from the mighty Sun back into space. The metallic mists of copper, of iron, of calcium, of magnesium, of barium, of cobalt, of nickel, of sodium, of manganese, which had blazed forth in every hue of prismatic colour—an inconceivable pyrotechnic display—slowly amalgamated into the one white glare. From a gorgeous hurly-burly of intensely blazing clouds of many colours the Sun slowly became a brilliant white luminary in the heavens, gradually diminishing in size from extending all over one side of the view to first a half, then a quarter, and at length a tenth of the expanse of the heavens.

Back we went into the outer darkness of space. The huge spots appeared again, not as vast regions—territories, so to speak, of an open expanse, traversed

in many directions with brilliant clouds—not of water as the Earth's cloudland, but of metallic mist—of iron, of magnesium, of sodium, and numbers of other metals—through which the inner and darker orb of the huge world might be seen. The "rice-grains" of the Sun no more appeared as little worlds of dazzling light, but were merged together on his mottled surface. The rose-clouds even began to melt undistinguished amid the general blaze of light of the huge orb of day.

Back our aerial car dashed through space away from that vast region of light and force and motion which we had dared to approach. We passed through the realm of the corona, on to where what you call the "zodiacal light"—the distant solar atmosphere—extended itself. On we went through regions of meteors—systems on systems—sometimes rushing to the right, sometimes to the left of us, sometimes above, sometimes beneath, sometimes cannonading on our car with their bombardments and crushing in flames against its surface.

We passed the orbit of Mercury, but he seemed