

Nest any more in the way that had grown so familiar. Yet, was this love? Did she really want to marry him? Her thoughts slipped back unconsciously to her last wooer. His proposal had been a very different one: she had had him at her mercy, and had not spared him. She was a little ashamed of it now; but it was his own fault. He should not have spurned her long ago. She remembered telling him that she should neither love nor marry, and there was a look in his eyes of unbelief. Had he thought she might change her mind with regard to him? Well, her engagement to Mr. Elliot would settle that, thought Betty proudly, beginning to dwell on his good qualities again.

Next day, as Mrs. Ward sat alone in the gloaming, Betty came softly up to her.

"Madam," she said, "Mr. Elliot has asked me to marry him, and I have said 'Yes.'"

"Do you love him, Betty dear?" asked her friend gently.

"I think I do. I never could love anyone passionately: it is not in my nature. But I like him very much; I miss him when he is not here—our minds and tastes have so much in common. I am always happy when he is here; and he loves me, Madam—he loves me truly."

Mrs. Ward shook her head gently, as Betty spoke in quiet, unmoved tones.

"He is a good man, and he will do his best to make you happy, I do not doubt," she said; "but I could have wished a better fate for my child."

"I thought you wanted to see me married?"

"Yes, to a man you love."

"I would not marry him if I did not love him, Madam."

"You do not know your own heart, Betty. There is a love concealed there truer and deeper than the love you are giving him."

"I give him all I have to give. I have had so little practice in loving," pleaded Betty.

And then, with a sudden half-shy impulse—

"Do you think he will answer my letter soon?"

"I expect he will answer it in person," answered Mrs. Ward, smiling.

That little speech pleased her more than any argument in Mr. Elliot's favour that Betty could have used.

And he did answer it in person. Betty was out on the terrace sunning herself and watching the view, when he came. He came out from the house alone, sent by Mrs. Ward, and he saw her standing there, wrapped in a fur cloak, bareheaded, in the sunlight. He came swiftly towards her, with his grave face lit up with joy, and she turned to him with a sudden thrill of feeling that spoke from her true grey eyes. She had not known how much she missed this quiet, grey-haired man until he came again.

"My love!" he said, and took both her hands in his.

And so Betty was betrothed.

END OF CHAPTER THE TWELFTH.



THE WAYS AND WHIMS OF THOMAS.

BY ALFRED J. BAMFORD, B.A., AUTHOR OF "TURBANS AND TAILS; OR, SKETCHES IN THE UNROMANTIC EAST."

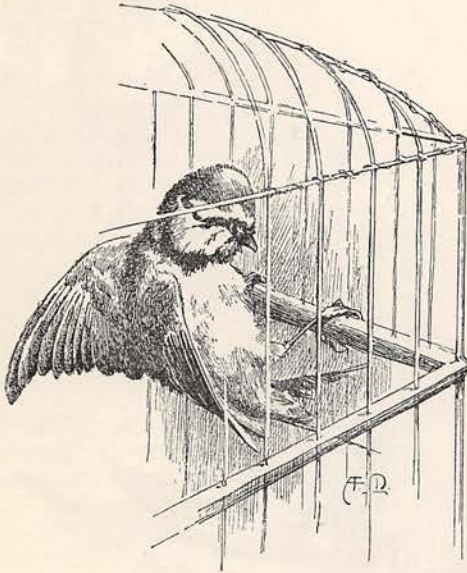


"YES, he certainly has a striking individuality," admits my host in reference to a remark of mine about Thomas. "There are few people who could stand the test of his present condition without losing self-respect. He is particularly ragged and shabby, yet as self-possessed as ever. I venture to think that if you were to appear with the tail torn away from your coat, you would inevitably feel a little awkwardness, and show it; but Thomas, as you see, though tailless, is in no way ashamed or disconcerted."

Thomas is a blue titmouse. While we are speaking about him, he is in a cage on a corner of the breakfast-

table, evidently conscious that he is a member of the family, and, if the smallest, not the least important. He certainly is very small—and seems smaller from having dispensed with his tail, and, indeed, a good deal more of his natural feathering. A hand is put to the bars of his cage with a trifle from one of the dishes—it matters little to him which, for he is not fastidious—and Thomas seizes the offered morsel, settles with it on one of the perches, holding it under his little blue feet, while he divides and disposes of it delicately but promptly. There is a slenderness of form about that little bill of his which almost disguises its effective strength. That tit-bit swallowed, there is no eager, vulgar looking for the next. Thomas is not a dependent waiting upon the favours of his superiors. He is rather a person of importance, whose tastes are studied and whose wants are anticipated. The next delicacy will be ready as soon as he is. So he will have a turn round his cage, running zigzag about on

the side wires, then taking a tour under the wires of the top, and dropping upon his perch just as a ministering finger is ready to tempt his palate with another *bonne bouche*, after which he is off again. There is little wonder that—bird though he be—he is called a titmouse. But his movements out-



HIS FAVOURITE POSITION.

mouse any mouse in variety if not in celerity. Where is the mouse that could lead, or even follow, Thomas upon the under-side of his cage-roof? And as for quickness of movement, when Thomas gets excited he is not seen as a definite form, but as a greeny-blue streak or band running in all directions, and bent at all manner of angles.

We all have our pet, and often most unreasonable, aversions, as Shylock explained to the Duke of Venice. Thomas would doubtless object to the "harmless, necessary cat," referred to by the Jew, but as he is kept out of the way of creatures of that order, he has no opportunity of manifesting this dislike. He, however, does evince a very strong dislike to white pocket-handkerchiefs. The taking out of one of these articles, much more the offering of one to him, excites his worst passions. He lifts his crest, spreads his wings, and attempts to seize and tear the offending cambric to pieces.

All this is very absurd. But I am sorry to have to record that he has been proved capable of passion more criminal than eccentric. He formerly shared his cage with a brother, and that brother is no more. My friend tells me that he had often noticed conduct which to an unsympathetic observer might have suggested quarrelsome dispositions in these two brothers, but which by him and his family had been attributed to nothing worse than love of excitement.

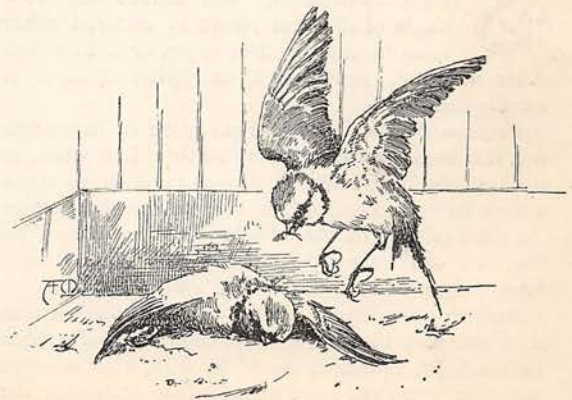
One summer, during their holiday, they asked a

neighbour to take charge of Thomas and Dick. On their return from their holiday, poor Dick presented a most pitiable appearance. Thomas had got the upper hand and had used his opportunity; and, while it had been sport to him, it had been death to Dick. The two brothers were at once separated, but it was easy to see that this ought to have been done before. It was now too late.

A day or two afterwards there was a funeral, and Dick's stripped and torn little body was buried out of sight. But not even the funeral of so near a relative tended in the least to depress the light-hearted Thomas. On that day of mourning he was as cheerful as ever, neither lamenting the dead nor fearing the halter of justice. Nor from that day to this do I understand that he has suffered a single twinge of conscience.

"We'll take a walk after breakfast," says my friend and host, "and I'll show you where Thomas was born."

So we stroll out together on a blowy day of the first week in March. We pass through a cold, dismal-looking town of stone-built cottages and smoke-begrimed mills and factories, out through the town, till we find ourselves on a path striking through fields, and then we enter a narrowing clough, through which ripples and bubbles a noisy little stream of clear water, shut in by a thick growth of stunted trees climbing up the hill on either side. It is a pleasant walk now we have left the houses and chimneys behind. The air is fresh, for it comes direct from the sea, not many miles to windward of us, and the sun is shining brightly between hurrying showers. Our path takes us up the side of a hill. It is a stiff climb, but the breeze we enjoy as we rise is invigorating. Upwards still we go till we strike the edge of the moor and the eye wanders over the rolling expanse of heather. A number of peewits are beating their way against the wind overhead; some half a dozen grouse come rushing nervously past us, as though they did not know that grouse-shooting had ended some three months before; and, flying low to escape the force of the wind, some crows come round the shoulder of the hill on a foraging expedition.



THE TRAGEDY.

But we only skirt the moorside. Leaving the heather almost as soon as we find it, we follow a path down again through the hill-side pastures. Almost from our feet, up into the wind that seems ready to make sport of him, rises a skylark. He cannot stand against so stiff a breeze, but, even as he is carried along upon it, he rises upwards and pours forth his song. The grass and the heather are withered, the moor is bleak, the wind is strong, but the skylark has seen the sun, and, though its glory is now hidden again, the bird rises into the rain-cloud and sings of the coming spring.

And now, in a few moments, we are down again among trees, following a winding path that leads ever down and down, until, at the bottom, it crosses a brook by a rustic bridge formed by a single tree-trunk thrown athwart the water-course. Soon we have to cross the brook again—this time by a solid stone bridge, but still under the trees. Close by this is a rough, dry wall, and in this wall, between some of the less closely set stones, the parents of Thomas once made their nest. Here it was that Thomas, with Dick and one or two anonymous brothers and sisters, first saw the light. The nest had been placed in an exposed position, but those who were left in it, when Thomas and Dick were invited to my friend's home, escaped detection as nestlings, and entered in due course upon the responsibilities of the full-fledged. They are very probably, at this moment of our inspecting the place of their birth, among those birds who from the branches overhead are inspecting and discussing us. The spot is a lovely one, and I cannot help telling my friend that had Thomas been brought up amidst its beauty and peace, his character might have been developed to less fratricidal ends.



FEAR NEITHER OF HALTER NOR JUSTICE.

PATCHWORK—PAST AND PRESENT.

SO far as the present paper is concerned, the term "patchwork" will include any work made of different pieces of material, either sewn together by their edges, or laid on each other and then sewn down, or *appliquéé*, as it is usually called.

Perhaps the earliest historical piece of patchwork was the handiwork of our first mother Eve, when, as we are told, she sewed fig-leaves together to make aprons for herself and Adam, although we are left in the dark as regards the needle and thread used by her, and can only conjecture that they *may* have been a sharp thorn and a fibre of some sort!

Another very early example, dating so far back as B.C. 980, was the Egyptian funeral tent of Queen Isi-em-Kebs, mother-in-law of Shishak, who besieged and took Jerusalem some three or four years after the death of King Solomon.

This is, at the present time, preserved in the Museum at Boulak, and may be described as an enormous piece of patchwork, consisting of thousands of pieces of the skins of gazelles, first dyed, and then sewn together with threads of the same colour.

The outer edges appear to have been bound with a cord of twisted pink leather.

The tent itself consists of a flat top, divided down the middle; on one half are six large representations of vultures, each surrounded with a text in hieroglyphics; the other half is covered with yellow and pink rosettes on a blue ground.

The side flaps show first narrow coloured bands, then a fringe pattern, next a row of broad panels, red, green, and yellow, with a device in blue and pink; on this border are figures of gazelles, kneeling, with a pink Abyssinian lotus suspended from each animal's collar. The remainder of the side flaps and all the