

some time ago, that the Prince of Wales is trying to make an earlier dinner hour fashionable, it is a much-needed reform. I believe that the late hours at which the Houses of Parliament sit are arranged for the convenience of members who are engaged during the day in the law courts and in other places of business, but why cannot business begin at seven o'clock in the

morning instead of at nine or ten? The change would put everything into confusion, but only for about a week, and then we should settle down to the new fashion, or rather to the old one revived. Our eyes and general health would be benefited by the change, and, if we should not be able to work harder, at least we should work in more natural conditions.

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## SOME ANIMAL THIEVES.

BY ALEXANDER H. JAPP, LL.D.



HIVE-BEES PAYING A VISIT TO HUMBLE-BEES.



**T**HIEVERY in nature is widely extended. Whole classes of animals prey on other classes for food; whole families are parasitic, and gradually weaken and destroy those on which they feed. Life is so widely diffused, so omnipresent, that

the further science carries its searching light, the more it reveals the fact of mutual destruction. The Laureate sings of "Nature red in tooth and claw," and this is but a figure for a grand truth that seems hardly to admit of exception. In this long roll of thievery, man himself forms no exception; for, apart from moral and

casuistic reasonings, it is found that neither in the savage state nor in the civilised can he subsist without doing despite to life, which from necessity he destroys, but which by no art can he create.

But it is not with the general and necessary laws of existence that we are now to concern ourselves, but rather with some special and exceptional instances where the ingenuity, the adaptation of means to ends, is so exceptional and striking as to ensure immediate interest, and to excite surprise and wonder. And first as to insects.

Huber relates an anecdote of some hive-bees paying a visit to a nest of humble-bees, placed in a box not far from their hive, in order to steal or beg the honey, which places in a strong light the good temper of the latter. This happened in a time of scarcity. The hive-bees, after pillaging, had taken almost entire possession of the nest. Some humble-bees, which remained in spite of this disaster, went out to collect provisions, and bringing home the surplus after they had supplied their own immediate necessities, the hive-bees followed them, and did not quit them until they had obtained the fruit of their labours. They

licked them, presented to them their proboscis, surrounded them, and thus at last persuaded them to part with the contents of their honey-bags. The humble-bees did them no harm, and never once showed their stings, so that it seems to have been persuasion rather than force that produced this singular instance of self-



BIRD THIEVING FROM ANOTHER'S NEST.

denial. This remarkable manœuvre was practised for more than three weeks, when the wasps being attracted by the same cause, the humble-bees entirely forsook the nest.

Kuhn, the great German naturalist, informs us that in the year 1799 some monks who kept bees, observing that they made an unusual noise, lifted up the hive, when an animal flew out, which, to their great surprise, no doubt, for they at first took it for a bat, proved to be the Death's-head Hawk Moth (*Acherontia atropos*), and he remembers that several, some years before, had been found dead in the bee-houses. Huber also, in 1804, discovered that it made its way into his hives and those of his vicinity and had robbed them of their honey. In Africa, we are told, it has the same propensity, which the Hottentots observing, in order to monopolise the honey of the wild bees, have persuaded the colonists that it inflicts a mortal wound. This moth has the faculty of emitting a remarkable sound, which Huber supposes may produce an effect on the bees of a hive, somewhat similar to that produced by the voice of their queen. As soon as uttered, this strikes them motionless, and then the moth is enabled to commit with impunity such devastation in the midst of myriads of armed bands.

The larvæ of two species of moth (*Galleria*) exhibit equal hardihood with equal impunity. They indeed pass the whole of their initiatory state in the midst of the combs. Yet in spite of the stings of the bees of a whole republic, they continue their depredations unmolested, sheltering themselves in tubes made of grains of wax, and lined with silken tapestry, spun and woven by themselves. This the bees (however disposed they may be to revenge the mischief which they do them by devouring what to all other animals would be indigestible, their wax)

are unable to penetrate. These larvæ are sometimes so numerous in a hive, and commit such extensive ravages, as to force the poor bees to desert it, and seek another habitation.

Birds, notwithstanding their attractiveness in plumage and sweetness in song, are many of them great thieves. When nest-building, they will steal the feathers out of the nests of other birds, and are often much inclined to drive off other birds from a feeding-ground even when there is abundance. This is especially true of one of our greatest favourites, the robin red-breast, who will peck and run after and drive away birds much bigger than himself. Very different as the robin and the sparrow are in other things, they resemble each other in this. On an early spring morning, when a little touch of frost still made the surface of the earth hard, I have seen a blackbird on a lawn at last after great efforts extract a worm, and this was the signal for a crowd of sparrows, who, by dint of numbers, managed to drive away the blackbird and carry off the worm, to feed their own young ones, no doubt.

But the stealing of nest-building material, or of worms, is not nearly so surprising as the stealing of nests themselves. In a sense, of course, the cuckoo steals the use of the nest of another bird, when she deposits in it her own egg, and steals or procures under false pretences the services of a foster-mother for an intruder; but that is not what we now mean. It is a common thing for the sparrows, when there is a prospect of a mild autumn, to save themselves time and trouble in the building of a nest for a late brood, and to drive other birds from the nest they have built and still inhabit. Sometimes even the swallow is a sufferer in this way. A very striking scene of war and theft was brought under our own observation two years ago. We were sitting in an arbour in a country garden, when our eye was caught by a gathering of birds flying about the branches of a lofty sycamore-tree, which almost swept over the top of the chimney of a disused back kitchen. In that chimney we knew that swallows had built. The noise of fluttering about the branch



BUCKLAND'S RAT.



SPARROWS STEALING FROM BLACKBIRD.

told of unwonted excitement, and caused us to watch closely. At length, as it were, on a given signal, the sparrows made an assault on the swallows in their nests; two of the luckless birds were thrown right down the chimney, where, on speedily going in, I found them caught, took them in my hand, to hear that peculiar kind of thick hissing sound which they make when frightened. After observing them a little, I let them off, when they disappeared out of view and did not return. The nests were utilised by the sparrows, who successfully reared a third brood in the chimney where the swallows had been.

Readers of Frank Buckland's most delightful books will remember that nothing pleased him more than to observe the different and delightful ways in which his pets would thieve. He would sometimes even tempt them to steal just to see how clever they could be in doing it. He tells one delicious story about his favourite Jemmy, the suricate, and another about a pet rat which he had, and which not unfrequently terrified his visitors at breakfast. He had made a house for the pet rat just by the side of the mantel-piece, and this was approached by a kind of ladder, up which the rat had to climb when he had ventured down to the floor. Some kinds of fish the rat particularly liked, and was sure to come out if the savour was strong. One day, Mr. Buckland turned his back to give the rat a chance of seizing the coveted morsel, which he was not long in doing, and in running up his ladder with it; but he had fixed it by the middle of the back, and the door of the entrance was too narrow to admit of its being drawn in thus. But Mr. Rat was equal to the emergency. In a moment he bethought himself, laid the fish on the small platform before the door, and then entering his house, he put out his mouth, took the fish by the nose, and thus pulled it in and made a meal of it. Never after this did he attempt to drag in such a morsel carried longways, though Mr. Buckland often tried him. They are wonderfully cunning.

One of the most remarkable instances of carrying on a career of theft came under our own observation. A friend in north-east Essex had a very nice Aberdeenshire terrier, a female, and a very affectionate relationship sprang up between this dog and a tom-cat. The cat followed the dog with the utmost fondness, purring and running against it, and would come and call at the door for the dog to come out. Attention was first drawn to the pair by this circumstance. One evening we were visiting our friend, and heard the cat about the door calling, and someone said to our friend that the cat was noisy. "He wants little Dell," said he—that being the dog's name; we looked incredulous. "Well, you shall see," said he, and, opening the door, he let the terrier out. At once the cat bounded to-



TOM'S WILD KITTENS.

wards her, fawned round her, and then, followed by the dog, ran about the lawn. But a change came. Some kittens were brought to the house, and the terrier

got much attached to them, and they to her. The tom-cat became neglected, and soon appeared to feel it. By and by, to the surprise of everyone, the tom somehow managed to get, and to establish in the hedge of the garden, two wild kittens, fiery, spitting little things, and carried on no end of depredations on their account. Chickens went; the fur and remains of little rabbits, for which he perseveringly hunted, were often found round the nest, and pieces of meat disappeared from kitchen and larder. Our friend could not find it in his heart to shoot the tom; and this went on for some time, when suddenly the cat disappeared—had been shot in a wood near-by, by a gamekeeper, when

hunting to provide for these wild little things, which were allowed to live in the hedge as they kept down the mice in the garden; but first one was shot, and then another, in following their foster-parent's taste for hunting and killing rabbits and game in the wood.

This was a case of animal thieving for a loftier purpose than generally obtains, mere demand for food or other necessity. That animals always act under imperious instinct, it would appear is hardly true, unless we allow to the term instinct a meaning not commonly associated with it. Animals certainly do develop strange traits in association with man.

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"YOU'LL LOVE ME YET."

By FRANCES HASWELL.

"You'll love me yet, and I can tarry  
Your love's protracted growing;  
June reared the bunch of flowers you carry  
From seeds of April's sowing."—BROWNING.

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

A KNIGHT OF ARTHUR'S COURT.



T was a warm summer afternoon, and the garden of Elderwood House resounded with a merry Babel of children's voices. There was no very apparent reason

why the square house, fronting the dusty road that led from Winston village to the railway station, should bear a name so redolent of cool woodland and blossoming trees, but it had received that title years before Mrs. Hornby came to live there, with her four boys and five daughters.

The garden was a large but not a very picturesque one; it had no sort of mystery about it, no bosky seclusion, no winding walks over-arched by flowering boughs; there were, in fact, no trees at all, except a belt of poplars, which divided it from the adjoining grounds of Winston Lodge—Winston being a place of "villa residences." The road was shut out, however, by a high brick wall; and there was a wide lawn—not very well kept, or rather, not kept at all—where the boys played cricket; a thicket of gooseberry bushes beyond the lawn; a strawberry bed, which had gained the undeserved reputation of being unproductive, because the children always gathered most of the berries before they were ripe; and a thriving plantation of rhubarb, adapted to the needs of a large family.

"Sylvia!" cried someone, in a high key; for no voice that was not raised to something like its utmost

pitch had much chance of commanding attention at Elderwood.

In response to the call, a head was raised from the midst of the gooseberry bushes. The voice came from the drawing-room window, where a tall girl was standing, shading her eyes from the afternoon sun. Meanwhile, the young person who answered to the romantic name of Sylvia was seen crossing the sloping lawn towards the house.

"What is it, Ethel?"

"Mother wants us to make some calls."

"Calls? Oh dear! I don't feel a bit like making calls to-day. It's so hot, and I'm so untidy and dishevelled." (She had just taken off her large shady hat, thereby exposing to view a mass of light hair, which quite justified those adjectives.) "The children were so troublesome at lessons this morning, and they made me so awfully cross that I haven't recovered my temper yet. I shan't find it again all day. And I haven't got half enough gooseberries for the puddings; they're so wretchedly small."

"Yes; but, Sylvia, mother has these calls on her mind, and she won't be happy till they are made. Run and dress, like a good girl."

"But just look at my poor hands, scratched all over, and bleeding!"

"Do you not mean to wear any gloves?"

"I haven't a respectable pair of gloves in the world. Letty borrowed my tan ones last Sunday, and never brought them back again—though she declares she *did*, which is adding insult to injury; and my grey gloves are all out at the finger ends."

"You'll have to mend them, then; or you can give them to mother to mend while you change your frock."