

singer. What possessed her, he wondered, that she sang with such unwonted feeling to-night! His critical ear and taste had often detected errors both in her playing and singing that would have spoilt her performances but for a brilliant and impassioned style peculiar to herself, that could not fail to attract, even though the sentiment was occasionally misapplied.

But to-night there was no mistaking the genuine ring of deep feeling underlying the words of this or that song, "There is not in this wide world a valley so sweet"—which, being one he had often himself sung, he listened to with increasing interest.

Was it the possible fear she would have to leave a home made dear to her by the love of friends that explained the pathos, and accounted for the agitation unmistakably apparent, as in full mellow tones she sang—

"How calm could I rest  
In thy bosom of shade, with the friend  
I love best;  
Where the storms that we feel in this  
cold world should cease,  
And our hearts, like thy waters, be  
mingled in peace."

As she closed the music-book, Jeanie came over to her. "That was beautiful!" she said. "Go on, darling, if you are not tired. I never heard anyone sing as you can do sometimes. I only wish I

could make the songs speak as you do. Will you sing another?"

"If you like, and I am not wearying you," answered Sybil, who felt rather than saw that she had at last succeeded in carrying the colonel's thoughts with her.

As Jeanie returned to her seat, Sybil took up the old song, "Robin Adair," and sang it with all the wild abandonment of her nature.

Her listeners sat spell-bound. The colonel was visibly moved, and marvelled at the depth of feeling suddenly revealed in the strange young creature before him.

The lamp and the candles around the piano showed in strong relief against the comparative gloom of the other parts of the room, and brought out finely the dusky warm-tinted face with its tangle of fluffy black hair high-crowning the small head.

The scarlet lips and the strongly-marked brows vivified the face, still further set off by the amber beads encircling the arched neck.

By the rapid rise and fall of the flowers on her bosom, and by the tremor in her voice, the colonel saw that Sybil Capella was moved by some strong feeling, and against his will that feeling was moving him in an unaccountable manner.

Spellbound he hung upon her words and gazed upon her. Jeanie had rested her head on her hand while the old song found its way to her heart also.

The voice of the siren had fascinated her listeners, held them captive to her power, and Sybil knew it.

As her song was breathed softly to its close, and a profound silence testified to its general effect, Sybil placed on the music-stand the song she had reserved as her last.

She knew it to be the colonel's favourite—"Ye Banks and Braes," and she rendered it as feeling it might be the last she would ever sing to him.

She gave forth its pathetic lament with a power and passion of suffering that left no dry eye in the room; and the song was to herself prophetic of future misery.

As Sybil finished, Jeanie, with a softly murmured "Thank you, dear," passed from the room reminding Beth that it was her bedtime, and that if she came quickly she would tell her a little story to send her to sleep.

"Good-night, father dear!" cried Beth with a demonstrative hug, almost glad to break a spell which had held her silent longer than she cared for. "Has Sybil made you cry or creep? I don't know which she made me feel most like. We shall miss her, sha'n't we? She goes at the end of this week, you know. Good-night, father!" and before he could detain or question her, she had followed Jeanie upstairs.

(To be continued.)

## OUR BIRDS.

By the Author of "My Great-Aunt's Cat," "Willie Hubert and his Six Little Friends," etc.

### PART I.

Now that the long winter is upon us again, I am anxious to place upon record some account of observations—made with care, though having no claim to be called scientific—with regard to the ways and doings of a variety of birds that were last year more or less frequent visitors to our lawn. I think that few people are aware of the extent to which it is possible to tame wild birds without in any way interfering with their liberty, or of the pleasures to be derived from so taming them; and, in the interests of the birds themselves, I shall indeed be glad if some who have not hitherto thought much about the matter are induced, by reading this history of our experiences, to make a similar provision for the wants of their little feathered neighbours.

About this time there appeared upon the lawn two small speckled birds, robins in their first plumage, evidently just cast adrift by their parents to make their own way in the world. There is perhaps no more touching indication of the special link that seems to exist between robins and mankind, all the world over, than the way in which young robins, which cannot possibly be influenced by remembered benefits, seek instead of shun human society. A young thrush will occasionally do the same thing, but with robins it seems pretty much a matter of course. When we were children, they used every summer to come hopping up to us among the currant bushes, evidently quite convinced of our kindly feelings towards them. It is to be feared that the fate of these confiding young robins is very often to be devoured by cats, and this brings me to what is in general the main difficulty with regard to the taming of wild birds. It was fortunate for

the result of our experiment that our cat is kept pretty strictly to the back premises by the joint efforts of two little dogs, who are of opinion that no four-footed animal but themselves ought to be tolerated upon the lawn. We were therefore able to throw food upon the ground for our birds without fear of the consequences, instead of placing it on the ledge of an upper window, which is often the only safe plan. It followed too that when puss did pay a rare visit to the front garden, she had the meek manners of one who knew that she was only there on sufferance. I have seen her run across the lawn in a cowed way, pursued by a chorus of shrieking birds; and I have watched her basking in the sun on the top of a low wall, apparently unconscious of, or indifferent to, the fact that a young robin was dancing in an excited manner on the same wall, only a few inches from her extended tail. (He had at least the sense to keep behind her!) How much craftiness may have been hidden under her innocent demeanour cannot of course be told, but it is a fact that, though an excellent mouser and rat-catcher, she has never been known to bring a bird into the house.

Before long the young robins I have mentioned quite took up their abode upon the lawn, living upon insects—which they caught with great agility—and upon the ripe mulberries that were just beginning to fall, as well as upon the crumbs that we gave them as they came hopping about our feet in an expectant manner. Later on we named them "Young Robin" and "Young Robin's Brother," to distinguish them from others of their kind. Young Robin became much the tamer of the two, and very soon would fly up on to our

hands and take food from them. A pair of old robins—the parent birds, as we supposed—often appeared in the background, and seemed, by their notes of alarm, to be warning their children not to be so venturesome. One of these, of whom we saw a great deal at a later period, we named "Old Robin." He was a very dignified old bird, and was distinguished by a white edge to each wing, very apparent in the summer time, though not so evident in the winter, when he ruffled his feathers more.

For many weeks poor Polly's cage—open, and with food in it—was left upon the lawn day and night in the hope that when she found herself in want she might come back to it again. The robins, young and old, were delighted with the arrangement, which they appeared to regard as made for their especial benefit. They hopped easily in and out through the bars and ate the soaked bread, while one of them was generally to be seen perched upon the ring which served as a handle. Other birds, probably sparrows, carried off the maize. It was only too evident that Polly herself had not come for it, since it was carried away whole, whereas she always used to crunch the grain as she ate, dropping more on the ground than she swallowed.

Our acquaintance with Young Robin had lasted about three weeks when we noticed that he was becoming very shabby and dishevelled-looking, and then came a morning when I was horrified to find a tuft of what looked like his speckled feathers lying on the grass. It was a great relief when the little bird came flying to my hand as usual. A great change had come over him, however,

inasmuch as he had a smooth olive head in the place of his rough speckled one. Before long his red breast came into view, and a little later I heard him for the first time make an attempt at a song. He was very diffident about it, and seemed to be listening to his own voice, and wondering whether he was doing it rightly.

But after this time Young Robin was seldom seen on the lawn, Old Robin having evidently decided that now that he was a full-fledged bird he was no longer to be tolerated on his "beat." It is a point with regard to which robins are peculiarly sensitive. We had, during the winter season, a robin of the front-door and a robin of the back-door, a robin of the stables and a robin of the kitchen windows, each of which reigned supreme in his own domain, and would not endure a rival. Old Robin was the robin of the lawn, and he now began to drive away his sons whenever he saw them there. The immediate result was that Young Robin very often came into the house after us, especially at meal-times. His favourite perch was the mantel-piece, from which he would watch our proceedings with interest, flying down from time to time to take crumbs from our hands, or to pick them up from the floor; and more than once, on coming down in the morning, I have found him on the breakfast-table calmly helping himself to butter. He also took great interest in gardening operations, and whenever he saw me engaged in them would come hopping about, picking up small worms, or darting at spiders, for which he had a special liking.

It was during a spell of colder weather at the end of September, when we no longer cared to sit much with open windows, that Young Robin suddenly disappeared. Old Robin had of late taken up his post on the back of a garden seat not far from the dining-room windows, where he sat and sang nearly all day long; but we missed our little bird sadly none the less. Some days passed, and then, as one of our party was resting in a hammock under some trees in a field adjoining the garden, a robin alighted on her shoulder and began pecking at some berries that she was wearing in her dress. In this way we found out the place of Young Robin's banishment, and after this we used to visit him frequently. His was not a lonely exile by any means. Whenever we called him numerous robins answered from different parts of the field. They were, I imagine, for the most part young birds, driven out of the garden like himself by the older robins, and many of them were disposed to be friendly. But there was no mistaking any one of them for our special robin. Sometimes we found him in a hawthorn bush. More often he peered down upon us from the fork of a big elm, where he appeared to be engaged in insect-hunting. He was always interested in seeing what food we had to offer him, and generally he came down for it. What delighted him most were bluebottle flies—of which I have known him eat six in quick succession—which we fished up for him out of a wasp trap. The syrup in which they had been immersed was rather a recommendation than not, I think.

Young Robin lived his field life very happily for some weeks. But when the weather grew really cold, and insects and berries became scarce, he and his brother again drew near to the house. The garden robins were fiercely indignant, and drove them about pitilessly. Their only refuge was the house itself, and they came in at any window they found open. The two young robins, with very often a third robin that had followed in pursuit, were at this time continually to be met with in one room or other. Young Robin could always be known by the serene way in which he would sit and look at us. His brother was some degrees less tame,

while the old robins always flew to the window. Young Robin was not altogether free from the faults of his race, and I am sorry to say that as soon as he felt himself safe from his enemies he was too apt to turn round and chase his brother in the same fashion that he himself had just been chased.

But I must go back a few weeks to describe our first acquaintance with some others of our birds. Two of these, a blackbird and a thrush, made their appearance a little later than the robins, and were, like them, young birds lately fledged. We often wondered what had become of the rest of their respective families, and how it was that just one solitary representative of each took up his abode on our lawn. The birds did not associate together, each living his own independent life; but neither did they quarrel. They did not come about us as the robins did, but they became very fairly tame, and would lie basking in the sun on the lawn or preen their feathers within a short distance of us, just as chickens might do. Their food consisted, no doubt, partly of worms and insects, but they also fed to a great extent on the mulberries of which I have already made mention, and which, as they ripened, attracted a good many other blackbirds to the spot.

I wish that we could believe that the blackbird and thrush that afterwards became such familiar figures on our lawn were the same young birds that I have just been describing; but if it is a fact, as stated by the best authorities on the subject, that young blackbirds never attain their full adult plumage till the end of the second autumn, then it is clear that our special blackbird "Dick," at any rate, belonged to another generation. It was towards the end of the autumn, and when the mulberries were beginning to fail, that the blackbird we afterwards knew by this name first approached the "Birds' Window." This is, I ought to explain, a window opening on to the lawn, in front of which Old Robin and some other birds were at this time regularly fed. We gave them breadcrumbs at first, but finding that they greatly preferred bread soaked in milk, which is doubtless much more nourishing, that became from that time forth their staple food. The blackbird took the bread and milk, like the other birds; but he showed a decided preference for anything of a meaty nature that was offered him, and much appreciated a piece of cake or pie-crust. He used to come close under the window and look up in a pathetic sort of way when he was hungry. I had never seen a blackbird so near before, and I was not at first favourably impressed by his appearance. Certainly at this time Dick was anything but a beauty. His head was rough and stubbly-looking, and he had altogether an ungainly look. As a matter of fact he was preparing to moult, just as Young Robin had done. Wild birds, if one may judge from these two cases, manage this process more cannily than domestic fowls, inasmuch as they do not shed their old feathers until their new ones are pretty well developed, thus avoiding the uncomfortable interval which is usual in our poultry yards. By the time our blackbird had parted with his shabby coat he was—with his jet-black plumage and his orange bill—as handsome a bird as anyone could wish to see. It was at about this time that we gave him his name of "Dick." He very soon got to know it, and would come running out of the bushes when we called him.

Dick and the robins were not the only birds whose acquaintance we made before the winter set in. There was a border just beyond the lawn, on which grew a row of sunflowers; and among them we observed in the autumn some small birds busily at work. They were grey in colour—a very pale grey underneath, and a darker grey above—and had black heads.

Their voices and manners showed them to be tits of some sort, and eventually we came to the conclusion that they were cole-tits; but this was later in the season, when we had opportunities of observing them much more closely. I thought that they were engaged in hunting for insects, until, wishing one day to secure some sunflower seed, I found that several heads were quite empty. So industrious were the little birds, that they would have taken all the seed as it ripened if I had not tied up two or three heads in muslin. The tits were very anxious to get at these preserved heads when once the other heads were cleared, and always gave a pleased twitter when they saw me anywhere near, evidently expecting that I was going to help them to do so. When they found that there was really no more sunflower seed for them, then they too came to the window to see what else there was to be had. Unlike most of the birds, they did not care about the bread and milk, which they turned over in a discontented fashion. They liked fragments of biscuit or cake much better, partly perhaps because they were more easily carried away, in accordance with their habitual custom, no doubt to swell some secret hoard. What, however, they liked far better than even these were crumbs of fat or butter, which we placed for them from time to time on the cork of a wasp trap that had remained since the summer suspended to a jessamine-bough close to the window. I am not certain how many cole-tits came about the house in the first instance. My impression was that there were at least three or four of them; but they were such active little birds, and carried off so much food, returning continually for more, that it would have been easy to fancy that there were more of them than there really were. Throughout the winter, at any rate, only a single pair came to the window. These we named respectively "King Cole" and "Queen Cole," the former being easily distinguished by a white spot on the back of his neck and slight white bars across his wings, as well as by a greater extent of black under his chin.

A party of tom-tits made their appearance about the same time as the cole-tits. There were certainly five or six of them. They were the prettiest little birds imaginable, full of fun and frolic, and so good-tempered—never quarrelling among themselves or with other birds—that I began to think that tom-tits were a much-maligned race.

A pair of tits, in some respects like them in colouring, but very much larger, and with glossy black heads, often put in an appearance at meal-times. These we knew to be the greater tits. Their manners were very business-like compared with those of the blue-headed tits. We never saw them swinging or playing about. They always came direct to the food, scattering the smaller tits in all directions.

There is a yucca not far from the birds' window, to the long, spiked leaves of which some of the tom-tits or the cole-tits might generally be seen clinging; or they would hang suspended, head downwards, to the jessamine sprays in front of the window, against which the tom-tits would scrape their bills when specially hungry. Another bird that often tapped against the window as the cold weather came on was Old Robin, who would also come into the room if he had a chance and there was no one in it. He was, I should think, a fair specimen of what is usually known as "a tame robin," though, in comparison with Young Robin, we thought him rather wild. Young Robin had by this time quite taken up his abode in the yucca; where, by reason of the spikes with which he was surrounded and the near proximity of the window, he found himself tolerably safe from his father's furious onslaughts. Here he would sit for hours together, literally "leaning his

breast against a thorn," and looking the picture of innocence and sweetness, until his brother or some other robin appeared upon the scene, when he and Old Robin (it was the one point upon which they were agreed) would furiously attack the intruder. One of the two Robins it was, I have no doubt, who was responsible for the loose tuft of feathers in the back by which we were for a long time able to distinguish Young Robin's Brother, a gentle, timid little bird, that seemed entirely free from the fighting propensities of its family, until, alas! one day when both Old and Young Robin happened to be out of the way, I was eye-witness to a violent attack

made by this very meek little bird on a stranger robin which ventured to come to the feeding-ground.

Young Robin never fought with any bird but those of his own kind. He ignored the other birds absolutely. I shall never forget the look of mingled astonishment and disgust with which—with craned neck—he watched from his yucca a fight that was going on between his father and a sparrow. For we had sparrows among our birds, of course—a whole troop of them. I have generally seen them described as quarrelsome birds, but this was not our experience of them. In the case I have just mentioned, it was Old Robin, who

thought all other birds ought to give way to him, who began the quarrel. They lived very peaceably among themselves, as far as we could see, and never interfered with the other birds except by gobbling down as much food as they could before the others had made up their minds where to begin. They never stood upon their dignity, which gave them a great advantage over the rest. But they were comparatively very uninteresting. I never succeeded in distinguishing one from another, except in the case of one old fellow, who looked as if he wore a very big cravat, and as if he might be the grandfather of all the rest.

(To be concluded.)



### RULES.

I. No charge is made for answering questions.

II. All correspondents to give initials or pseudonym.

III. The Editor reserves the right of declining to reply to any of the questions.

IV. No direct answers can be sent by the Editor through the post.

V. No more than two questions may be asked in one letter, which must be addressed to the Editor of THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER, 56, Paternoster Row, London, E.C.

VI. No addresses of firms, tradesmen, or any other matter of the nature of an advertisement, will be inserted.

### EDUCATIONAL.

ISABEL.—The article which instructs in "The Art of Conversing Agreeably" is to be found in vol. ii., p. 675; also, "Good Breeding as Shown in Conversation," in vol. v., p. 38.

AGATHA W.—There are several religious educational unions. The Christian Progress Union, to which you refer, is conducted by the Rev. Ernest Boys, Beverley, Sidcup, Kent; and for a card of membership write to the Secretary, Christian Progress Union, 21, Exeter Hall, London, W.C. State what you are, and enclose a stamp.

M. W.—We advise you to write to the Secretary of the Improvement Society, under the Rev. G. V. Collinson, vicar of Clodock, near Abergavenny—Secretary, Miss E. S. Knapp, Ivy Place, Hamstead Road, Handsworth. Also to the Secretary of the Christian Women's Education Union, Conference Hall, 143, Clapham Road, S.W.—Your writing needs improvement, and the lines kept straight.

THORA.—You might apply to the Hon. Secretary of the Zenana Medical College, 58, St. George's Road, S.W., Dr. G. de G. Griffith. Also to the Rev. Canon Crowfoot, Minster Yard, Lincoln, Secretary of the Delhi and South Punjab Zenana Medical Mission (Church of England). The Director is the Rev. R. R. Winter, Delhi. There is a third training institution for foreign medical missions; Hon. Secretary, Miss Hamilton, 2, Adelphi Terrace, Strand, W.C. We think one of these would suit you.

J. T.—You should perfect yourself in spelling as one qualification in a nurse, as she has to keep a book of notes daily. There is a Children's Hospital in Glasgow, where, we imagine, nurses may be trained. You had better write to enquire particulars.

### MISCELLANEOUS.

ERICA.—You would be useless as a travelling companion if unable to speak any language but your own. Write copies, and slope your letters from right to left. A companion should write a good hand, suitable for writing notes.

HOPEFUL must write to the minister of the church, and, telling him who she is, explain her wishes to become a member.

WHITE IVYLEAF and ONE IN DOUBT.—We have frequently answered this question, and said that people who are inclined to stammer should be careful to take a full breath before speaking, and also during the time of speaking. Reading aloud is one of the best assistants towards a cure.

M. H. B. and ESMERALDA.—Lines are fairly good, but not quite up to our mark.

W. I. S.—The alteration in the Christian name of an infant is made within the year at the Registrar's office, paying a fee of 1s. We suppose you could do this, or at least you could enquire there as to the proper course to be taken to alter the name.

A MOTHER.—Many cordial thanks for the information.

J. KEELING and EVIE.—You will find all we have to suggest on the subject of earning a living in our articles, just concluded, on employments for women and young girls. We must refer you to them.

E. JESSOP.—We see that nothing is said in the Civil Service papers on the subject of eyesight. You had better write, and put the question direct, to the Secretary, Civil Service Commission, Westminster, S.W., enclosing a doctor's certificate.

A. L.—If you wish to spend ten days or so at some inland place where there are objects of interest to be visited, you would enjoy a visit to Salisbury. There are some nice little quiet hotels there where you would be comfortably boarded at small expense. First, there is the beautiful cathedral to be seen; then there is the site of Old Sarum, about which you should make yourself well acquainted by procuring a little guide-book—you would find one in your hotel. Thirdly, there are the wonderful remains of Stonehenge, to which you should take a drive. Sir John Lubbock and Sir R. C. Hoare attribute a greater age to those of Avebury (or Avebury), that of the latter to the beginning of the Age of Bronze, and Stonehenge to the latter end of that period.

GRACE BRIGTON.—It is not thought that Joseph Smith did write the *Book of Mormon*, but only altered a manuscript written by the preacher of an obscure sect, named Spaulding, in 1809, of which he had, by some means, got a copy. Mormon theology is a medley borrowed from many sources besides Christianity.

A. H.—A good present for a young man would be a useful or interesting book on some subject in which he takes a special interest; a walking-stick, very straight and well balanced; a cricket bat, or balls; a lawn-tennis racket; a riding-whip, such as is at present in fashion, or a smoking cap. Any of these things would be suitable, according to the special pursuits of the young man.

PAIN D'EPICES.—The only means of obtaining such work would be to visit all the great furniture shops, and see the manufacturers of it as well.

A MOTHER.—Because your children give evidence of precocious ability you should all the more endeavour to keep them back, and allow their physical powers to develop before the intellectual. Remember that a child's brain is quite soft till the age of seven. Amongst the ancients we find marvellous precocity almost invariably followed by early death. You may have heard of Hermodenes, who at the age of fifteen instructed Marcus Aurelius in rhetoric, and triumphed over the most celebrated rhetoricians of Greece. At twenty-four he lost all his faculties, and completely forgot everything he had learnt. We have not time to give more examples, two having come under our personal observation, and both boy and girl died at about seven years old. "The sword wore out the sheath," as the old proverb says.

ABERFOYLE.—Catherine de Medicis, born at Florence 1519, was the daughter of Lorenzo de Medicis, Duke of Urbino, and the niece of Pope Clement VII., granddaughter of Leo X., and the great-granddaughter of Lorenzo the Magnificent. In 1533 she was married to Henri, second son of François I., who succeeded his father as Henri II. in 1547, and died in 1559. Catherine had seven children, three of her sons being successively kings of France—François II. (married to Mary Queen of Scots), Charles IX., and Henry III. She was Regent for Charles IX., and arranged the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, and the treacherous murder of Coligny. She died at Blois, January, 1589. Her character was cruel, treacherous, licentious, and superstitious (in religion); but she was beautiful in person, and gifted with immense personal courage. There seems no reason to doubt that many of the faults of Mary Stuart are to be traced to her influence and teachings, which were evil and disastrous to her own children, as well as to the kingdom of France. She lived at one of the most stirring and important epochs of history, and was one of the most remarkable figures in it.

INQUISITIVE.—We believe that the origin of calling the terrible taint in the blood, known as scrofula, King's Evil, had reference to the tradition that the touch of the sovereign could heal the disease (*Regius morbus*). From the reign of Edward the Confessor down to the time of Queen Anne hundreds of persons assembled together annually to go through the ceremony, and a special form of public prayer was read on these occasions. Dr. Heylin, Prebendary of Westminster, has given a copy of the service in his *Examen Historicum*. One of the sacred texts quoted on which the idea was originally based, was, "They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." But an oversight was made as to the persons who were to lay on their hands, i.e., the divinely-appointed missionary-disciples, the Apostles, and the elders of the Church, who should be full of faith. Alas! some of our sovereigns were not to be thus described—Richard III. and Henry VIII. for instance.

A. S. A. G.—Proverbs xvi. 1 is a text which ought to help you, we think. Indeed, your very striving and anxiety are clear signs of God's mercy and grace; for all our movements forward and onward in our spiritual life we owe to the Holy Spirit. You constantly lose sight of the fact that evil and wicked thoughts will come to us all; but provided we reject them, and deny them admittance, and pray against them, we are free from sin. It is in allowing and encouraging them that sin would lie. You forget God's Fatherhood in your unhealthy troubling over your evil thoughts; and you forget His great and increasing love to you, even while you protest that you really love Him. In quietness and confidence possess your heart. It is the placid, unruffled pool that reflects the heaven above, not the stormy, restless, and turbulent waters. "Be still," says the Bible, "and know that I am God." He is almighty to help and to save.

BEACH.—Be quite sure your duty is to go where your father chooses to take you. You are a minor, and under his roof, rule, and guardianship.

QUINZE.—Read the articles on the care of the complexion, by "Medicus." We have ceased to repeat ourselves on this question.

## OUR BIRDS.



## PART II.

WE had also a pair of hedge-sparrows, at first sight very like ordinary hen-sparrows in appearance, but distinguished from them by having pointed bills instead of thick short ones, and by a stronger undertone of grey. At a distance too great for these differences to be noticed, we could always recognise the hedge-sparrows by a peculiar restlessness of gait, suggestive of what was doubtless the fact—a constant habit of being on the look-out for insects.

Early in the winter three chaffinches, a male and two females, joined the company of our birds. The cock-chaffinch looked a very fine gentleman among the sparrows, and evidently thought himself so. He was very indignant at their daring to come near him, and attempted to frighten them away by advancing towards them with lowered head and open beak; but the sparrows were callous to all demonstrations of the kind, and the chaffinch, finding that they were too much for him, had to content himself with driving away his own kith and kin.

Meantime, our blackbird Dick had not been unobservant of the positions taken up by the small birds round the window, and he made

some amusing attempts to put himself on an equality with them. He tried two or three times to sit on a yucca leaf like Young Robin; but the leaf always bent beneath his weight, and so let him down on to the ground. He also tried to cling to a jessamine bough like the tits; but this too proved a failure, and in the end he took up his quarters in the mulberry tree, from whence he had a good view of the lawn in general and the birds' feeding-ground in particular.

At the beginning of the cold weather a solitary thrush made its appearance at the birds' window, and there was also, to Dick's great annoyance, a regular invasion of blackbirds. He was, as a rule, good-natured to the small birds, though he did occasionally make a dash at the sparrows, whom he scattered to right and left, only to re-form immediately behind him; but, like many other birds, he was intensely jealous of the members of his own tribe. When we came down in the morning there were always six or seven of them waiting for their breakfast, and when the food was thrown out there was such a scrimmage and such a fluttering of wings, each blackbird struggling to secure a morsel, and Dick plunging about in all directions in pursuit of first one and then another. It was a wonder that they did not combine to resist him; but I never saw any of them make a stand except one poor lame bird that had lost a foot, which on one occasion had what appeared to be a drawn battle with him. I doubt whether Dick, after all, fared much better than the rest, for by the time he had scattered his foes the sparrows had made a great hole in the provisions, and the thrush too had a clever way of running in when he was otherwise engaged, and securing a good meal.

There were other things to be defended besides the bread and milk. Dick's favourite

roosting-place, next to the mulberry-tree, was a broad-leaved holly, upon which, early in the winter, there was a plentiful supply of berries. These he regarded as his own peculiar property, and he deeply resented any attack upon them on the part of the other blackbirds. But it was no blackbird that in the end robbed him of his treasure. We noticed one day a wood-pigeon sitting in an observant attitude in a large elm tree overlooking the lawn, and wondered whether it was contemplating a visit to the birds' window. What the attraction had been was evident enough when a day or two later we saw it hard at work in Dick's holly, while Dick himself looked on with a dejected air. This went on for two or three days, and by the end of that time all the holly berries had vanished.

It must have been about the end of January when we first noticed in Dick's manner to one special hen-blackbird a degree of politeness that was conspicuously absent from his dealings with blackbirds in general. He took care, it is true, to interpose himself between her and the birds' feeding-ground; but that done he made no further attempt to interfere with her, but hopped solemnly along in step with her just a little distance behind. By-and-by she came up to the birds' window, and Dick did not attempt to drive her away. Later on she drove him away, and he set to work energetically to keep the ground clear of other blackbirds until she had finished her repast, which was probably exactly what she had intended him to do. And then we knew that Dick had chosen his mate, and that she was a lady of even stronger character than his own.

Early in February a curious thing happened which ended in the complete dispersal of some of our birds. And this was the beginning of it. It was the evening of a very wet day, and our birds had assembled for their last meal, when we noticed that, while the tom-tits as a whole looked quite dry and comfortable, there was one little bird that seemed completely drenched. We supposed at first that he was simply one of the band, but we came to the conclusion later that he was a stranger, and older than the rest. Next day, though dry, he was distinguished from the rest by his dingy appearance. His cheeks were never so clean and white as those of the other tom-tits, and on some days he looked exactly as if he had come straight out of a muddy ditch. After a time other peculiarities manifested themselves. He was continually raising and lowering the feathers on his head, and he was exceedingly pugnacious. He attacked the great tits without hesitation, and sent them about their business. He nearly upset Old Robin, who was too much astonished by the suddenness of the attack to be prepared with any resistance, and he hurled himself in a similar manner against a sparrow, who went on eating without taking any manner of notice. He very much disconcerted poor King Cole, who fled with a frightened cry whenever he came near; but Queen Cole was not so easily daunted. Some scraps peculiarly acceptable to tits had been thrown out one morning on the grass, and Tommy-Tit, as we called him, showed a decided determination to monopolise them. Queen Cole kept flitting about the yucca, flipping her wings in a defiant way. Presently she flew down, and with her tail feathers expanded like a fan and lowered head, advanced upon the tom-tit, who in a like attitude awaited her attack. But before the two heads met they thought better of it, and decided to

divide the spoil, which accordingly they proceeded to do.

The worst thing that Tommy-Tit did was to attack his own relations so relentlessly that he succeeded at last in entirely banishing them from the window. Having thus succeeded in establishing himself as the one tom-tit of the lawn, he became very tame, and on several occasions took food from my hand; but I could never quite forgive his conduct to the other tom-tits. As the spring came on he disappeared, no doubt for nesting purposes. A pair of tom-tits occasionally come to the window now, but they are gentle, unaggressive birds, belonging, I imagine, to the first set.

The cole-tits, than which I do not think any more charming little birds ever existed, deserve a few words of more special notice. I tried the experiment one day of holding my hand with food for them close to the wasp-trap I have already mentioned, and King Cole took it without hesitation, while Queen Cole followed his example a little later. From this time forward they were regularly fed in this manner. We used to hear a loud and very peculiar note in one or other of the trees that border the lawn, and then there would appear at the window a tiny bird, out of all proportion to the voice, looking as if it were nearly all head, and that head being in a state of perpetual motion, as he clung to a branch of jessamine and peered in through the glass. He would give a delighted twitter when he saw anyone approaching, and though he flew away directly the window was opened, he would immediately return and take the proffered food. If it were something he did not care for, he would drop it on the ground at once. If doubtful, he would take it to the yucca, and there give an experimental bite. Anything that he liked he always took to the mulberry tree in the first instance, and from thence he almost always flew with it to the top of a tall cypress on the other side of the lawn, where, I imagine, his main larder was situated. Queen Cole was, except in the matter of tom-tits, a shyer bird than her mate. When she did take food from our hands, it was generally directly after King Cole had done so. She never pushed herself before him in the fashion of Mrs. Dick.

Occasionally a day would come on which all the food-collecting was left to her, and then she would sit on the yucca for some time, looking to the right and the left, and apparently wishing that she could see food anywhere else, before she would venture to come to us for it. She was a very thrifty little bird, and did not like to leave anything behind that might prove of use in her establishment. I have seen her carry off two or three crumbs of cake at a time in her tiny bill.

Before the end of the season, King Cole would come to my hand when held out at the window at some little distance from the wasp-trap, alighting upon it for just an instant; but he never would do so in the garden, as Young Robin would. He would, however, often come fluttering down to a lower branch, if, on hearing his voice in an apple tree, I called to him from below; and many a time he followed me back to the house to be fed in the accustomed place.

The cole-tits continued to come for food till quite the end of April. Their departure, as well as that of some of the other birds, was, I think, hastened by the fact that three small puppies, which had appeared upon the scene a few weeks before, began just at this time to appropriate that part of the lawn which lies in front of the birds' window as their playground.

Young Robin, from his post on the yucca, used to watch us feeding the cole-tits, and though we did not at all neglect him for our new pets, I think he felt a little jealous. Sometimes when I was holding out food for

the tits, a very large head (comparatively) would suddenly appear round the corner, and a long bill would snap up poor King Cole's breakfast. The sly look in Young Robin's face as he performed this little trick was inexpressibly droll.

Young Robin left us early—before the end of March. I should have felt much more unhappy about his disappearance than I did, had it not been for a hurried visit that he paid to my bedroom window—to which he had been in the habit of coming from time to time for some weeks past—a day or two after we missed him from the yucca. It was meant for a farewell visit, I feel sure. His manner said, as plainly as words could have done, that he had a long way to go and much business in hand, and could not linger. For a long time we hoped that some day, in the course of our rambles, we should come upon his place of retirement, and that he would drop down upon our hands in the old fashion, as he had done when we found him in the field. But this hope has not been fulfilled, and we must be content to wait till the nesting season is over and he comes back, as surely he will come, to his old friends.

There are other robins left, but they have grown wild and shy, and they have, it seems to me, an anxious, troubled look, as though family cares weighed heavily upon them. Old Robin sits sometimes on his favourite seat and sings a fragment of a song, and latterly he and another robin have re-appeared, in a timid sort of fashion, on the lawn before the birds' window, and have carried off soaked bread as if with the intention of feeding young ones at home. And one day I saw a sight which I record with special pleasure, because it is the only instance I have ever seen of kindness shown by one grown robin to another. Two of them came upon the lawn at the same time, the smaller one, which I imagine was a female bird, keeping somewhat in the background. Robin No. 1 (who was, I believe, Old Robin himself) secured a piece of bread, which he proceeded to break up with his bill. Robin No. 2 then flew up on to a garden seat, and began fluttering her wings slightly, as a young bird would do when expecting to be fed. Whereupon the first robin flew up beside her, and fed her from his bill.

The thrush very rarely came to the window for food after the end of February; but a thrush, which I think there is good reason for supposing to be the same bird, has for the last month been singing magnificently in the trees on one side or other of the lawn. He begins at the earliest dawn of day, and continues at intervals until it is quite dusk. There is another bird that begins to sing at about the same time in the morning, and that may also be heard more or less throughout the day—a bird that has a powerful and very mellow voice, though it has less variety of tone or power of execution than that of the thrush. It is like a good voice that has never been trained, contrasted with the highly cultivated voice of a professional singer. If in this case it is the untrained voice that I like best to listen to, it is no doubt partly because I know it to be that of our blackbird Dick. Dear old Dick has been one of the most faithful of all our birds. He does not, of course, come to the window as much as he did formerly, now that worms and insects are abundant, and he is, moreover, rather suspicious of the puppies; but he generally comes for a scrap or two in the course of the day, and we both see and hear him a great deal at other times. He spends a lot of his time in the still leafless mulberry tree—(does he ever speculate, I wonder, how long it will be before it is again covered with fruit?)—where he sits and sings, or dries himself after a bath in the pan kept for his special benefit on the garden table. He is such a bird for singing. Do other black-

birds sing as much, I wonder? I am not thinking now of his regular songs, when he sits on the highest branch of a tree and whistles at the top of his voice, but of the snatches that one hears at odd times—in the intervals, for instance, of tapping for worms, or between his sips as he stands drinking water on the garden table. When we call to him by name, he often answers by a few melodious notes, and he sings sometimes as he flies from one tree to another. I have, by the way, heard another blackbird do the same thing.

Mrs. Dick is hardly ever to be seen now. There is a blackbird's nest in some ivy growing against a wall not far from the lawn, with eggs in it, upon which it is supposed that she is sitting. So far as we can judge Dick does not—is not perhaps allowed to—take any share in the work.

It is but seldom that other blackbirds visit the lawn now; but when in other parts of the garden, as often happens, we come upon a blackbird that sits and sings as we go by, or looks us in the face in a friendly way instead of slipping away as the manner of blackbirds is, then we know that we are in the presence of one of our old pensioners, and that they have not forgotten their meals at the birds' window.

To that window, undeterred by fear of the puppies, our old friends the chaffinches, or rather a single pair of them, still regularly come. We have never been able to induce them to take food from our hands, but they are very tame, and have a pretty way of hovering in the air close to the window when they want to call our attention, which is quite peculiar to themselves. There is a chaffinch's nest, supposed to be theirs, in a lilac bush quite near. A second pair occasionally make their appearance, but are invariably driven away by the first pair. Chaffinches are quite as pugnacious as robins among themselves; even the hen bird will fight the other hen. The male bird is very polite to his mate, and often will not begin to eat until by his repeated "twiuk, twiuk!" he has summoned her to the spot.

My account of our birds would be incomplete if I did not give a brief account of some more casual visitors. Among these was a tiny wren, which only appeared once, and then seemed to be occupied in hunting for insects among the dead leaves. Then, at the other end of the scale, we had a visit one day from a crow, which stalked across the lawn in a stately fashion, making the blackbirds look quite dwarfs by comparison. It is this same crow, I am afraid, which has lately been a frequent and unwelcome visitor to our back yard, and is under grave suspicion of having destroyed three ducklings just when they were supposed to be past the dangers of infancy, and on the very day when their hen-mother had turned them off to shift for themselves—not a bird to be proud of, certainly!

On the 1st of March, when people woke to find the ground covered with a thick coating of snow, we observed an enormous flock of birds flying to and fro high up in the air. We could see from the action of their long pointed wings that they were not starlings, but we could not distinguish what birds they were, until in the course of one of their flights eastward a certain number alighted on the trees and bushes that border our lawn. It was a remarkable sight, and one that I shall never forget. There might have been fifty or sixty birds, to make a rough guess, thus assembled; and on each, from the position they had taken up, was distinctly seen—rendered still more conspicuous by contrast with the snow on the ground—the red patch from which they derive their name. The red-wings stayed but a short time, and we did not see them again. They were followed next day by equally large flocks of starlings, of which

an immense number roosted for several nights on the trees and shrubs in the garden. There also appeared one day about this time some two dozen birds which we thought must be fieldfares. They remained upon the lawn for some hours, during which time they occupied themselves in making holes in the snow in search for insects or in fighting among themselves.

The mention of starlings reminds me that I have said nothing as yet about five or six pairs that have made their nests in an old walnut-tree not far from the house, and are often to be seen on the lawn, hunting for slugs or worms. They are chiefly remarkable for the

absorbed manner in which they go about their work, noticing nothing to the right or left of them. They have the reputation of being very intelligent birds, but if so they seem to confine their intelligence very strictly to their own affairs.

Throughout March the field in front of the house—Young Robin's field—was much frequented by plovers, and also by curlews, which had a very strange appearance as they strutted about with their absurd-looking bills. And one day we had a visit on the lawn from a pair of birds which we have never been able to identify, and of which I can unfortunately only give a very vague description. They

were about the size of guinea-fowls—at least that was the impression made on those of us who saw them. In colour they were a dark grey, and in general appearance they seemed to us to resemble gigantic pigeons more than any other birds we could think of. I think the probability is that they were sea birds of some description, but they were too far from the window for us to be able to distinguish the shape of their feet or their bills. They walked about in a very composed way for a few minutes, picking the blades of grass in places where the snow had melted. Then they passed out of sight behind some bushes, and we saw no more of them.



## THE "GIRL'S OWN" SHORTHAND CLASS.

### IV.—ABBREVIATIONS.

#### HOOKS AND CIRCLES.



WHEN the vowels and diphthongs have been once fairly conquered, no serious difficulties will be found in the remaining lessons in the *Teacher* to impede the student's progress. But before finally leaving the

vowels, I should like to press upon girls once more the importance of being able to use them freely. In swift reporting it is impossible and unnecessary to insert vowels—vocalise, as it is called—in every word; and when the learner can write at the rate of fifty words a minute, she may begin to omit them in the case of familiar words and clear outlines, distinguishing between words of the same outline (as "rat," "rotz," and "root") by writing them above, on, or through the line, according as they contain first, second, or third-place vowels. But unfamiliar and difficult words may always occur, no matter how skilful the phonographer may be, and it is most important that he or she should be able to render them intelligible by quick and accurate vocalising. It would never do to have to stop to consider what the vowel is and how it is made.

The circles, hooks, and loops, which constitute our next lesson, present no great perplexities, and are most useful in writing. When two consonants occur together in a word, it will be noticed that one of them is very frequently an *r*, *l*, *s*, *w*, or *n*; consequently, special means are provided by which the conjunction may be written quickly. If we had to form, say, the word "green" by writing *gee-ray-en*, we should have an outline not only unnecessarily long, but also misleading, as we should expect each consonant to have its own distinct sound, and to be divided from the next consonant by a vowel; whereas *gr* is a single sound, and "green" a monosyllable—not "gareen" or "go-reen." To express these double consonants, therefore, phonography has special signs. The thick *n* for *ng*, the *ch*, *th*,

and *sh* you have had in the ordinary shorthand alphabet; *wh*, as in "where" and "whisper," *kw*, as in "quick" and "queen," *gw*, as in "Gwen," the thickened *m* for *mp* and *mb*, the thickened downward *l* for terminal *ler*, upward *l* with an initial hook for *wl*, as in "well," with the larger hook for *whl*, as in "wheel," you have also come across. The last three are not pure double consonants; but when there is only a single intermediate vowel, and the outline is clearer and simpler than the two consonants written in full would be, such an extension of the practice is allowable. For "feeler" we should, for example, use the *lr* outline; but for "gallery" the upward *l* and *r* would be necessary in order to provide for the insertion of the vowels. The *r* and *l* hooks are a further development of the same method of combination. The little hook which represents *r* is on the left-hand side of a perpendicular stroke, and underneath a horizontal one; the *l* is on the right-hand side, or above the straight stroke, and both are initial hooks—written, that is, at the beginning of the consonant to which they are joined—written first, but always pronounced second. You will easily remember the correct sides for the two hooks, by noticing that the *r* hook may be imitated by hooking the fingers of the right hand, and the *l* by hooking the fingers of the left hand, just as you learned the direction of the *l* and *r* strokes by curving the fingers. The *r* hook occurs more frequently than the *l*, and is therefore given the more easily-made stroke, it being easier to write from left to right than to make the backward—right to left—sign.

When we come to the curves, it is evident that the hook cannot be used quite so freely. It is easy enough to form a hook inside the curve, either initially or finally; but if we attempt to write it on the outside—the right hand, that is to say, of an *f*, or the upper side of an *m*, we shall produce a very awkward outline and a very illegible one. The difference between the *r* and *l* hooks is therefore indicated by making the former small and the latter large; "large" begins with an "l," you will observe, so *l* is appropriately made large. Similarly, a terminal hook on the right or left hand, at the

bottom or top of a straight stroke, supplies *n* or *f* (or *v*); but with a curve it always represents *n*; and as the larger hook is wanted for the more general termination *tion*, there is no terminal *f* or *v* hook for curved consonants, and the ordinary long stroke must always be used. For example, "fly" is written *fr* (small hook) *i*; "fly" is *fl* (large hook) *i*; "grave" is *gr-v* (hook turning upward); "green," *gr-n* (hook turning downward); "man," *m-n* (hook); "move," *m-v* (stroke *v*); "motion" (large hook).

The vowels are placed before or after the hooked consonant in the same way as with the single consonant. When it is convenient to use the hook, but desirable to indicate some intermediate vowel, the dot vowel is expressed by a little circle, written before or after the double consonant, according as it has a long or short sound; and the stroke vowel is written through the consonant. In the word "chairman" it is much easier, and gives an infinitely better outline, to use *ch* and the initial *r* hook than to use the downward *r*; and to vocalise it we have only to add a small circle in the second vowel-place before the double consonant. "Barley" is plainer as *br-l-ē* than as *b-r-l-ē*, but in the monosyllable "bar," the downward *r* would be employed; and, generally speaking, when there is a long or accented vowel between the two consonants, the stroke consonant should be used, especially in words of one syllable. The hook being reserved in the main for the short *ch* and *ē* sounds, as in "apple," "telegraph" (*t* with hook *l*, *gr* hook, and final *f* hook), "terminus," "leader," etc., very seldom requires vocalising.

The circle *s* is one of the simplest, prettiest, and most useful of phonographic signs. It is employed almost invariably when a word begins with *s*, the exception being in words like "cease" and "sizes," where there is no other consonant to which to affix the circle, and where, consequently, one stroke *s* must be used. It is employed when *s* occurs in the middle of a word (numerous examples of which are given in Exercises 20 and 21 in the *Teacher*); and also when *s* is the last letter. But, obviously, it cannot be used where *s* is