



THE SORROWS OF A SON AND HEIR.

I DO sincerely pity the eldest son of my pet robin, and I feel as if something ought to be done to secure for him a measure of kindness and some protection from his hard-hearted father's cruelty.

When in the early summer my robin used to come to me at all hours in the day, pleading for food for himself, his wife and his callow brood, I never grudged him his full share of mealworms. Four or five of those appetising morsels have I seen tucked into his little bill, and I could but admire the diligence he displayed in supplying the needs of his growing family.

As time went on, I occasionally caught a glimpse of one of the brown, fluffy young robins, sitting under the shelter of some laurel branch, remaining perfectly quiescent except for a grateful flutter of thanks now and then, when his parents brought him his ever-welcome rations.

At length the proud moment arrived when the eldest son was sufficiently grown up to be introduced to me. He was brought by his father to the open window, and I could watch the parental process of feeding still going on.

Naturally, thoughts would arise as to the beautiful instinct of fatherly love as shown in animals, birds and even insects. I now regret to think how often I praised my robin and pointed him out to admiring friends as an instance of the tender devotion of a parent

to his young, and in every way held him up as an exemplary and virtuous pattern of what a bird should be.

When the moulting season arrived, my robin became less and less presentable, his wardrobe was so scanty that at last he had but one feather in his tail, and his general aspect was moth-eaten. Under these circumstances birds usually hide themselves until their new apparel is complete, and then they emerge in all their bravery and resume their customary habits.

My robin was however on such familiar terms with me that he did not in the least mind my seeing him in *deshabille*, and continued to come to the window for his usual dainties throughout the moulting time.

But now begins the sad part of the story. The eldest son, hitherto the beloved of his father's heart, having donned a neat little scarlet waistcoat of his own and become in every respect a robin to be proud of, came up to the window to receive my coveted gifts.

Whilst I was in the act of feeding him his father appeared upon the scene, and with open beak and angry twitter flew at him and drove him out of sight. I regret to have to record this shocking barbarity, but the truth has to be told.

The feud still continues; I can only give the heir a mealworm now and then by

stealth, and even if the young bird ventures into the drawing-room the relentless parent follows and chases him round and round the room until I have to interfere in order to prevent actual murder taking place before my eyes. Two thoughts alone seem to possess the mind of Robin senior, how to supply himself with the choicest food and how to keep his offspring from participating in it. To these ends he passes his entire day in short flights to and fro, guarding the approach to my presence and at intervals hopping on to my writing-table and gazing at me with his lustrous black eyes. Apparently he listens respectfully whilst I tell him what I think of his disgraceful conduct. He will then break out into a song, which I must own is very sweet and melodious and may contain, for aught I know, a complete justification of his daily actions, but having no clue to his language I am none the wiser for his explanation.

It is no doubt wisely ordained that parental love should cease and the young birds be compelled to disperse and seek their own living, but still I must end as I began by saying that I feel very deep compassion for Robin junior. He will always have a warm corner in my heart and a welcome to my small gifts whenever it is in my power to circumvent his atrocious parent and secretly bestow them upon him.

E. B.

THIS BEAUTIFUL WORLD.

By JAMES AND NANETTE MASON.

SAILING recently down a river which will be nameless, where the scenery at first is extremely beautiful and afterwards only second-rate, we had not long started when—it being morning—ting-a-ling went the breakfast bell. Away trooped the greater number of the

passengers, and when they came on deck again the best of the scenery was over.

We must eat, but we thought then, and think still, that the time might have been better selected. The incident made us talk together about the neglect of the beauty of

nature observable every day and everywhere, and that was the beginning of this article.

Familiarity breeds contempt often and indifference almost always. So long as anything is novel it has a chance to charm, but the same thing, no longer novel, either wearies or