

his funk to the animal he bestrode. I have seen Mainah frequently since, in several scrimmages with tigers, buffaloes, and rhinos, and he never showed the least fear again.

During that evening, the villagers brought in the young rhino, and when I saw him the next morning, he was the impersonification of all that is savage; he was securely tethered, but he tried to get at everybody that went near him.

A tiger could not have been more savage, yet in the course of a couple of days he quieted down, ate plantains out of the hand, and in a week would follow Sookur about everywhere. I sold him afterwards to Jamrach's agent for £60, and I believe I ought to have got double that; so, apart from the sport of shooting the large animals, the catching of the young ones would prove a profitable speculation."



FISH-HAWKS AND THEIR NESTS.

ONCE spent a summer at a little fishing hamlet on the New Jersey coast, and of all the strange and interesting things I saw there, nothing was stranger or more interesting than these birds of which I want to tell you. In poetry and science they are always called "ospreys." That may be a prettier word—but fish-hawks is the better name; it is the one which has been given by all fishermen on our coast, and it is more descriptive of the birds and their habits.

A broad shallow river, which was only the sea pushing back into the land, ran just in the rear of our boarding-house, and there, all day long, we could watch the fish-hawks, circling above or swooping down from great heights, or diving headlong into the water, or sitting solemn and grave upon their nests. As soon as you come within sound of the ocean, you may see these large pouch-shaped nests wedged between the bare forks of the pine, oak, and other strong trees, sometimes ten, sometimes fifty feet above the ground. They are placed, without any attempt at concealment, in the open fields, or close to the fisher's houses, or along the river-banks perhaps a mile inland; and they form a wonderfully picturesque

feature in the landscape. They are built of large sticks three or four feet long, mixed in with corn-stalks, sea-weed, and mullein stalks, piled up four or five feet in a solid mass, and lined with sea-weed. They are not hollow like a pouch, as you might judge from the outside, but are nearly flat on top, and about as deep as a dinner-plate.

Of course they are very heavy, and the weight, together with the mass of wet stuff, saps the vitality from the tree in a few years, and it gets bare and ragged.

This great weight is very necessary, however, for it enables the nests to resist the storms and high winds which sweep over our eastern shore. And strength is what is mainly needed, for the fish-hawk builds its nest as we do our houses—to last a great many years.

Ask any one of the old fishermen about them, and he will probably say first:—

"Wall, they're a curus fowl. No matter what the weather may be, they come back on the 21st of March of each year, all at once; and the 21st of September you can't see one. They go overnight, and no man from Maine to Georgia can tell where they go to."

They say, too, that the same birds come back to the same nest every year. If it has been injured by the winter's

storms it is carefully repaired; sometimes even rebuilt entirely in the same place with the same material. One morning in the early spring I passed the ruins of a large nest which had been blown down by the wind of the night before. It was a great mass of stuff, scattered all around, and would have filled a good-sized cart. The homeless birds were flying about in great distress, flapping their wings, and uttering their peculiar, shrill note—a note that is in strange harmony with the melancholy sea. In a week I passed again and the ground was cleared of the wreck, and the nest loomed up large as ever in the tree from which it had been blown. There is no doubt that many of the nests are very old. In the field through which we walked on our way to the beach, was a nest which I was assured was a hundred years old. "As old as them cedar rails on that fence, yonder," said the man; "my grandfather told me so." I believed it then, of course, for one's grandfather always speaks the truth.

You will suppose that a bird which builds such a large nest must lay large eggs and many of them, but this bird never lays more than three, and they are little larger than a hen's egg, of a reddish yellow, splotched with brown. They are laid about the first of May, and it takes a long and patient sitting till the last of June to hatch them. During this time and after the young birds come, the care of the parents is unceasing. The nest is never left unguarded. The male bird goes fishing and keeps his family well supplied with food, while the female rarely leaves her nest, but keeps over it a tireless watch. If any one approaches she cries shrilly and hovers over her brood, with her broad wings outspread and her piercing eyes flashing. Peaceable and gentle at other times, she will defend her nest with claws and beak against the enemy or too curious intruder.

The young fish-hawks are the funniest

things you ever saw, awkward and misshapen, and yet with such a wise, dignified, expression! I watched for several hours a couple learning to fly. They sat balanced uneasily on the edge of the nest, solemn and grave as judges, and looked as if they had come out of the shell knowing everything. The old birds were coaxing and going through various exercises which I suppose were the first principles of flying, and the young ones tilted about and rolled over and finally got fastened between the sharp branches of the tree. The mother and father fussed and scolded, "Bill-ee, Bill-ee, Stu-pid-i-ty." The young are very slow in learning to fly—and I have heard that they often linger in the nest long after they are well able to help themselves, to be fed and waited upon, till driven away by the parents, who beat them out with their wings, and peck them with their sharp beaks. I don't like to think this, but it may be so, for one day we found a young bird drooping on the fence. He allowed us to come very close to him, and we discovered that his wing was broken. It was not shot, so he must have fallen in his effort to fly. No birds were near him, he had evidently been deserted. He looked forlorn and pitiful, so we took him home and put him in the wagon-house. The children were very attentive to him; they cut up fish for him—pounds of it,—and tried to amuse him as if he were a lamed child. But it was of no use, he drooped still more, and then died and was buried with martial noise and pomp. He would not have been a successful pet, for these birds have a lonely, isolated nature. They seem to have bred in them the wild, untameable spirit of the wind and wave, and if deprived of their free, soaring flight, and their sportings in air and water, they will languish and die.

The largest fish-hawk I ever saw measured six feet across the wings; the average size is from four to five feet. The plumage is of greyish brown except

on the breast and under part of the wings, where it is pure white. The beak is sharp and hooked, the claws long, and the legs very thick. The feet and legs are covered with close hard scales, the better to retain a hold upon the slippery fish. It used to be a common notion among the older naturalists that one foot of this bird was webbed and the other furnished with claws to serve the double purpose of swimming and seizing its prey.

Nothing can be finer than the sweep and directness of the fish-hawk's flight. You see one sailing, a mere speck in the sky; he stops suddenly, as if viewing some object in the water below; poised high in the air, without any visible motion of the wide-extended wings, he swoops down with the swiftness of lightning, and plunges into the water head foremost. If he misses the fish he rises again, and circles round in short, abrupt curves, as if from mere listlessness. Again he pauses, darts into the water, and this time comes up with his prey in his talons. He shakes the water from his feathers and flies in the shortest line to his nest. Sometimes the fish weighs six or seven pounds. Add to this the struggles of the fish to free itself, and you may fancy the strength of the bird. I have heard, but I never saw an instance of it, that the fish is sometimes strong enough to drag the bird into the water, where he is drowned. The next tide carries him up on the beach, with his claws buried deep in a sturgeon or halibut.

By some naturalists the fish-hawk has been classed with the eagle, from a similarity of appearance, but this is not just to our friend. He is much nobler in all his traits than any of the eagles. His only prey is fish; he never interferes with smaller birds, as the eagle does. On the contrary, a little timid bird called the crow black-bird builds its modest nest in the interstices of the hawk's nest. I have seen a half-dozen of these tiny homes

built into the larger one. He is not a greedy robber, like the eagle, but fishes in an honest, straightforward manner, and, in short, has but one enemy—the bald eagle.

Between them there are many desperate battles. The eagle, who is always hungry, and who seldom works when he can steal, waits till the fish-hawk catches a fish. As he comes from the water with the heavy burden, the eagle pounces upon the booty. They rise together, and in mid-air the contest goes on with beak and talon. I am sorry to say the eagle generally gets the best of it, and flies off sullenly to the nearest tree with its prize to devour it. Often the fish drops, but there is no escape for it, for the eagle adroitly catches it as it falls. The fish-hawk wisely goes fishing again right off, for he never condescends to re-seize his prey. The farmers have an idea that the depredations of the eagle among the sheep and poultry are much lessened by the hostility of the fish-hawk. On this account they have great respect for it, and I think they would not kill one upon any consideration. A fine is said to be attached to shooting any of these kindly birds; but I never heard of its being exacted; it is probably meant as a warning to stranger-sportsmen, who shoot wantonly anything which flies.

The coastmen all speak of the fish-hawk with a curious affection. He foretells a storm, they say, by a peculiar restlessness, and a repetition of his feeble whistle. When the storm breaks the birds are abroad in the face of it, however wild and fierce it may be. If one can see anything through the blinding mists and rain, it is the fish-hawk soaring aloft in the tumult, curving and sweeping on the wild wind, his white breast gleaming against the black trees and sky. These birds show great skill in flying against the wind, never fly directly into it, but tack backwards and forwards as intelligently as a sailor does upon the water.