

## PAPER VII.—ON THE BIRDS OF CANADA.\*

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(Read before the Society, April 25th, 1866.)

MR. PRESIDENT.—My young friends: I shall to-night briefly direct your attention to a study, which no doubt to the majority here present has proved ever since their boyhood an unfailing source of pleasure, and which I have no hesitation in saying will afford increased gratification the more it is followed. No season of the year appeared to me more propitious for bringing under your notice the feathered race than the period of the spring migration—than those lovely April mornings, when the gardens, the fields and the forest resound with the soft melody of hundreds of winged choristers. Natural history, in all its branches, has ever been reckoned a most attractive subject; it is, however, a study so comprehensive that I find myself to-night under the necessity to take up one department only: let it then be the most interesting.

We shall spend a social hour, and hold contact with the friends of your youth and of mine—the *Birds*: nor need you doubt me when I tell you that it is not in the spirit of exact science, nor with the pedantry of a professor, but rather with the freedom of an old acquaintance that I shall to-night introduce to you some of the denizens of the woods and minstrels of the grove—so correctly styled “the accredited and authenticated poets of nature.” Do not, then, expect a set discourse on ornithology. Stray jottings—rambles amongst birds and books—that is all I can promise you at present.

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\*The substance of this paper was delivered as a lecture, for the benefit of the pupils of the High School and other public institutions, and for the avowed object of making known the contents of the Museum of the Society. The lecturer, well known by his French work, “*Les Oiseaux du Canada*,” also furnished several specimens from his own extensive museum at Spencer Grange.

That branch of zoology which treats of birds is denominated ornithology, from two Greek words—*ορνιθολοζ* a bird, and *λογος* a discourse—a discourse on birds—the history of birds. It is beyond a doubt, that this department of the animal kingdom attracted the attention of mankind in the remotest ages: several birds, as you are aware, are indicated by name and their peculiarities alluded to in Holy Writ. Mention is frequently made in the earliest and best of books, the Bible, of the soaring eagle, the dismal raven, the tiny sparrow, the grave-looking owl, the migratory stork. The care taken of the prophet Elijah by our sable and far-seeing friend the raven, you all remember reading of. This reminds me I am indebted to my friend, Colonel Rhodes—the Sillery *Nimrod*—for this splendid specimen of the raven, shot last winter whilst cariboo-hunting at St. Paul's Bay.

The dove and raven were both honoured with important missions by that distinguished and most successful navigator Noah. You know how much the ibis was petted, nay honoured, in Egypt: the white ibis was in special veneration in Thebes—had the run of the city. The stork was sung by Herodotus, the swan by Virgil and a host of other poets: Aristophanes, some twenty-three hundred years ago, celebrated not only the croaking of frogs, but also the melody of birds.

It was, however, reserved to one of the loftiest minds of antiquity, Aristotle of Stagyra, to furnish the world with the earliest methodical information on zoology. This great man was the first to observe and attempt to explain the organization of animated nature. His treatise, *Nepidwon Icroptac*, will ever be regarded as one of the masterpieces of antiquity. The generation of animals, their habits, their organs, the mechanism of their functions, their resemblances and differences are therein discussed with astonishing clearness and sagacity. Aristotle may be reckoned as having established a solid basis for Natural History; and his principal divisions of the animal kingdom

are so well founded, that almost all of them are still substantially admitted. In arranging facts, he carefully goes back to causes from general results.

We next come to the Roman, Pliny the Elder, born A.D. 23, who died, as you may have read, in the year 79 of our era, from the noxious fumes of Vesuvius during the eruption which, it is said, destroyed Herculaneum. Having the charge of a Roman fleet, he had, in attempting to succour some of the unfortunate inhabitants, ventured too near the scene of the calamity: he died during the following night. I presume some of you have perused the very interesting letter recording the event, written by Pliny the Younger, the nephew and adopted son of the Roman naturalist.

As a laborious, but not always reliable, compiler, you have heard of Aldrovandus, born about 1535. I said not always reliable: to illustrate this latter point, I shall now quote from the 1st vol. *Canadian Naturalist*, an extract purporting to describe one of our most beautiful winter visitors, the Bohemian Chatterer, or Waxwing: a specimen is in the museum of the Literary and Historical Society. I was fortunate enough to snare three very fine birds of this species in January, 1864--this is the only time I saw them round my house, at Spencer Grange. I kept them all winter in my aviary, and they soon became so bloated, so uncommonly portly, from good eating, that they were struck down by apoplexy, and one after the other died. I need not tell you the sorrow such a catastrophe brought to my family circle.

"That the Bohemian Chatterer was known to the ancients there can be little doubt; but a great deal of obscurity prevails as to the names by which it was distinguished. Some have taken it to be the *Incendiaria avis* of Pliny (book x., c. 13), the inauspicious bird, on account of which appearance Rome more than once underwent lustration, but more especially in the consulship of L. Cassius and C. Marius, when the apparition of a great owl (*Bubo*) was added to the horrors of the year. Others have suppo-

\* *Canadian Naturalist and Geologist*, I., p. 467.

sed that it was the bird of the Hercynian forest (book x., c. 47), whose feathers shone in the night like fire. Aldrovandus, who collected the opinions on this point, has taken some pains to show that it could be neither the one nor the other. The worthy Italian gravely assures his readers, that its feathers do not shine in the night; for he says he kept one alive for three months, and observed it at all hours (*'quâvis noctis horâ contemplatus sum'*). It is by no means improbable that this bird was the gnaphalos of Aristotle (Hist. anim., book ix., c. 16.)

"The geographical range of the Bohemian Chatterer is extensive, comprehending a great portion of the arctic world. It appears generally in flocks, and a fatality was at one time believed to accompany their movements. Thus Aldrovandus observes that large flights of them appeared in February, 1530, when Charles V. was crowned at Bologna; and again in 1551, when they spread through the duchies of Medena, Piacenza, and other Italian districts, carefully avoiding that of Ferrara, which was afterwards convulsed by an earthquake. In 1552, according to Gesner, they visited the banks of the Rhine, near Mentz, in such myriads that they darkened the air. In 1571, troops of them were seen flying about the north of Italy, in the month of December, when the Ferrarese earthquake, according to Aldrovandus, took place, and the rivers overflowed their banks.

"Necker, in his memoir on the birds of Geneva, observes that from the beginning of this century only two considerable flights have been seen in that Canton, one in January, 1807, and the other in 1814, when they were numerous, and, having spent the winter there, took their departure in March. In the first of those years they were scattered over a considerable part of Europe, and early in January were seen near Edinburgh. Savi observes that they are not seen in Tuscany, except in severe winters, and that the years 1806 and 1807 were remarkable for the number of them which entered Piedmont, especially the valleys of Lanzo and Suza."

I could dilate at length on the history of this mysterious stranger, who appears to have so startled antiquity. Here

is the ominous individual: see how silky his plumage! mark the wax-like tips of his wings! this is no doubt the portion which was supposed to shine at night. Be careful, however, not to confound him with the *Cedar* or *Cherry Bird*—our summer visitor: he resembles him much in plumage, but is twice his size.

Nor should we omit the names of Redi, Swammerdam, Willoughby, John Ray, and especially of Francis Bacon, amongst the laborious tillers of the soil of Natural History.

Next to Aristotle and Pliny, ranks the great botanist and naturalist Linnæus, who devoted a lifetime to reforming and rearranging the history of all natural productions, and lived to see his method triumphant and almost universally received. Nor was he a mere nomenclator; his vast genius led him to take the most elevated views of nature. He penetrated with a glance into causes which were the least obvious on the surface. Order, precision, clearness, exactitude of description and accurate knowledge of relations in detail distinguish his works. He it was who sent to America, to Quebec, the eccentric Peter Kalm: every guide-book reminds you of the amusing account Kalm wrote of Quebec and Montreal society in 1749; what a fine fellow Count de la Gallissonière, the Governor General in those days, appeared to the Swedish traveller;—how our respected grandmothers chatted, frolicked, dressed, danced;—how well he related all he saw, and some things he did not see. We are led next to consider the brilliant career of a French naturalist, an elegant writer and profound philosopher, Count Buffon. Possessed of a vast fortune, moving in the highest circles of a nation famous for its civilization and learning, Buffon, during half a century, from his *chateau* of Montbard, promulgated his canons to the scientific world: he tells us he spent forty years in his study, perfecting and rounding the sentences of his immortal works; but, when bearing in mind the life-like sketches of birds written by Buffon's successors and contradictors, the writers of the new school, such as Alexander Wilson, Audubon, Chas. Buonaparte, one is inclined to

regret that the sedentary philosopher should have spent so much time indoors describing his favourites, instead of ransacking the forests, the fields, the seashore, to see for himself, like Audubon and Wilson, how God's creatures lived, loved, sang and died.

No doubt, my young friends, you would like to have some details of the career of the two celebrated naturalists just mentioned, especially as their fame is identified with the name of America; both, as you may know, visited Quebec. Alexander Wilson, the author of *American Ornithology*, was born in 1766, at Paisley, in Scotland. At the early age of thirteen, he was indentured as a weaver to his brother-in-law, William Duncan. His parents were peasants. A few years after we find him acting as a pedler: dealing in cambrics, cotton, calico by day; poetry and natural history by night. His restless mind, poetic temperament and poverty induced him to seek fortune in a then new and attractive arena, the United States, where he landed on the 14th July, 1794. In 1795, he again took to the pack, and next became a teacher shortly after. In 1802, he accepted a situation as tutor in a seminary near Philadelphia. There he became acquainted with Mr. William Bartram, the naturalist and botanist, who encouraged him, and lent him the works of Catesby and Edwards, on Ornithology. Space prevents me from following the ardent admirer of birds through his rural peregrinations. There is an interesting episode in his life connected with the refusal of President Jefferson to second the efforts of the aspiring naturalist. He died in 1813, aged 47, from the effect of a cold caught whilst pursuing some rare bird, having had to swim a river in order not to lose sight of it. Although progress has been made in American ornithology since the days of Alexander Wilson, his treatise, as far as it goes, serves yet as a text-book to naturalists of every nation.

How can I becomingly sketch the adventurous existence of the Prince of American naturalists, John James Audubon? Who can do justice to the memory of this noble-minded son of science, whose great work, *The Birds of*

*America*, is likely to remain in succeeding ages—a permanent monument of the highest order of genius, celebrating the wonders of nature, in the denizens of the air and songsters of the grove?

John James Audubon saw daylight for the first time, in Louisiana, in 1782: he was of French extraction, and was sent to Paris to complete his studies. It was there he learned the art of drawing from the celebrated painter David. On his return to America, at the age of eighteen, he lived with his father, near Philadelphia, on a beautiful estate surrounded by park, lawns and gardens. He soon gave himself up to commercial pursuits, and, with that object in view, started for Kentucky. The whole of his books teem with the vivid descriptions of his wanderings in Yankee land. In 1810 he met, for the first time, his great rival, Alexander Wilson. In 1811, Audubon said good-bye to the *cash-book* and *ledger*, and, gun and sketch-book in hand, he dived into the depths of the American forests in quest of knowledge and materials to achieve his great undertaking. In 1814, he was favoured with an introduction to the celebrated prince of Canino, Charles Lucien Buonaparte, a close relative of the present French Emperor, and author of most valuable treatises on American Birds, some of which you will find on our shelves. After visiting the States in all directions, Audubon sailed for Paris, London and Edinburgh. His drawings of American birds had already attracted abroad considerable attention. In England he soon became acquainted with several men of note in literature: Professors Sedgwick, Whewell, Henslow, Dr. Thackeray, Dr. Buckland, Dr. Kidd; in Paris, Baron Cuvier, Swainson, Geoffroy St. Hilaire, his son Isidore;—D'Orbigny, Lesson, and other *savants* shewed him marked attention. The sovereigns of England and France patronised the enthusiastic disciple of Buffon, heading with their names the subscription list to his great work. I wish, my young friends, I could gratify your wish, and follow step by step this wonderful man in his ornithological rambles through the length and breadth of this green land: this day, you might be ascending with him one of the *bayous*

of Florida, to watch the habits of the scarlet flamingo, and next month, scanning the prairies of Kentucky to catch the Wild Turkey on her nest; the season following might find you toiling up the rugged and barren uplands of Labrador—a locality so desolate, so rocky and inhospitable that, to use the words of the late abbé Ferland, “there is not enough of soil to bury decently the unfortunate traveller who might perchance die there”. Audubon visited Quebec in 1842, residing several weeks with a Mr. Marten, in St-Peter street, an excellent taxidermist and great admirer of the feathered race, and, on his departure, Audubon requested him to accept, as a token of remembrance, a copy of his magnificent work on the Birds of this Continent. There are yet several amongst us who can recall to mind the dignified, courteous, white-haired old gentleman, with black, piercing eyes, eminently handsome in person—one of nature’s true noblemen. Spencer Wood in those days belonged to the late Henry Atkinson, a warm friend of the gifted naturalist. Many the stroll did the latter enjoy at Spencer Wood, listening, under the umbrageous pines and old red oaks, to the flute-like warble of the veery and metallic notes of the Thrush. His steps occasionally wandered, I am proud to say, over that portion of the estate which has since passed to me; the shady avenue consecrated by the presence of this man of genius, is now known to my children under the name of “Audubon Avenue.” These memories, which to some may appear commonplace, I recall with unfeigned pleasure; and whilst there and listening to the harbingers of spring, or poring over Audubon’s works, I am reminded that here once breathed and stood the possessor of one of the most honoured names in natural science—a noble-minded fellow-man—whose glory and whose history are inseparable from that of North America. Audubon spent more than twenty years completing his superb drawings and compiling the Biography of the Birds and Animals of America; he sank to rest in 1852, aged seventy years, in the full blaze of his glory.

Next to Wilson and Audubon, in the field of Natural History, I shall point out to you a name widely respected



in America, and well received in Europe—Professor S. F. Baird, of the Smithsonian Institute, Washington; he is known to us as the chief compiler of the celebrated 9th vol. of the Reports of this Institution, which elaborate book you have now before you; he was ably seconded in this laborious undertaking by Mr. Geo. Lawrence, of New York, and Dr. John Cassin, of Philadelphia. Dr. Cassin is also the author, amongst other publications, of a most gorgeously illustrated work on some new Western birds, also forming part of the library of this Society.

In Wilson's *Ornithology*, published in 1814, we find mentioned 284 species. Buonaparte, in 1838, has described 471. Audubon writing in 1844, brought up the list to 506. Baird's report, which appeared in 1858, enlarged the number to 738, of which more than 300 species are to be found in Canada, either as accidental visitors or secondary species. The Smithsonian report divides the birds into six orders, viz.:—

I. <i>Raptores</i> .....	Birds of Prey.
II. <i>Scansores</i> .....	Climbing Birds
III. <i>Insessores</i> .....	Perching “
IV. <i>Rasores</i> .....	Dusting “
V. <i>Grallatores</i> .....	Wading “
VI. <i>Natatores</i> .....	Web-footed “

Each of these orders might comprise as follows:—I. order, 36; II. 18; III. 120; IV. 15; V. 42; VI. 69. Canada, not embracing all the varieties of climate and temperature which the American Union does, cannot be expected to unite all the varieties of birds to be found in the United States. The Canadian Fauna is nevertheless very beautiful and varied in its features, including a numerous collection of birds of prey. The web-footed order is well represented here. The Woodpecker family comprises some brilliantly habited individuals. But the most numerous and varied in plumage are the Perchers or singing birds. Alex. Wilson spoke eloquently and truly, when he said. “The ornithology of the United States exhibits a rich

display of the most splendid colours ; from the green, silky, gold-bespangled down of the minute humming bird, scarce three inches in extent, to the black coppery wings of the gloomy condor, of sixteen feet, who sometimes visits our northern regions ; a numerous and powerful band of songsters, that for sweetness, variety, and melody, are surpassed by no country on earth ; an everchanging scene of migration from torrid to temperate and from northern to southern regions, in quest of suitable season, food and climates, and such an amazing diversity in habit, economy, form, disposition and faculties, so uniformly hereditary in each species, and so completely adequate to their peculiar wants and convenience, as to overwhelm us with astonishment at the power, wisdom, and beneficence of the Creator.

In proportion as we become acquainted with these particulars, our visits to, and residence in the country, become more and more agreeable. Formerly, on such occasions, we found ourselves in solitude, or, with respect to the feathered tribes, as it were in a strange country, where the manners, language, and face of all were either totally overlooked, or utterly unknown to us ; now, we find ourselves among interesting and well-known neighbours and acquaintances, and in the notes of every songster, recognize with satisfaction the voice of an old friend and companion. A study thus tending to multiply our enjoyments at so cheap a rate, and to lead us, by such pleasing gradations, to the contemplation and worship of the Great First Cause, the Father and Preserver of all, can neither be idle nor useless, but is worthy of rational beings, and doubtless agreeable to the Deity.

The lecturer, by means of the diagram of a bird drawn on a large board then explained the different portions : *Primaries, Secondaries, Tertiaries, Scapulars, Rhump feathers, Auriculars, Tarsi, Tibia, Iris, Mirror*, total length, *alar extent*, and a variety of other technical terms.

Linnæus, in his *Systema Naturæ*, divides the class of birds into six orders. Blumenbach makes *nine* orders ;

Cuvier, *six*; Vieillot, *five*; Temminck, in his *Manuel d'Ornithologie*, *sixteen*; Agassiz and Gould, in a recent work, recognize only *four* orders.

Classification is one of the most important portions of Ornithology. A new light has dawned on this science, since the learned researches of Dr. Thos. Brewer, of Boston, and other American and European *savants* who have applied oology to the classification of species; thus, several rare hawks, in different plumage, have been recognized by their eggs. The eggs of owls, instead of being elliptical, like those of the generality of birds, are spherical. Eggs are also identified by their markings,—lines,—spots,—stripes,—or by the absence of them, like the eggs of some of the thrushes. Collecting wild birds' eggs has become quite a trade. Scientific institutions in Europe have given as much as £15 stg. for a rare egg. Several Canadian institutions have recently added to their museums collections of birds' eggs: the Literary and Historical Society,—the Laval University, and the Normal Schools, in Quebec and Montreal. The contributions of friends in this, as in the collection of birds, have induced me to add a collection of eggs to my specimens.

Before we examine the contents of the collection laid before us, let me point out to you one particularity respecting the birds of prey: *the female in general is nearly one-third larger than the male.*

The vastness of the subject now before us is such that I am compelled to confess how rashly I acted in promising you at the outset a discourse on the ornithology of Canada. It would require, at least, a dozen of lectures to place the topic before you in a becoming manner. I shall, therefore, content myself with familiarising you with some of the specimens belonging to our museum. Let us select a few out of each order.

Here is the King of Birds—a fair specimen of the Bald Eagle. Oh! you proud, overbearing robber, on the watch at noon-day for some industrious Osprey, hurrying to his mountain home, with a lively trout in his beak; or else, says Audubon, keeping with his mate a sharp look out for

an unsuspecting swan, a fat goose, or a dainty canvass-back. Did our shrewd, far-seeing neighbours, really intend to foreshadow the career of the Republic founded by Washington and Franklin, when they chose as their national symbol such an overbearing, grasping bully?

The Bald Eagle is more abundant in Western than in Eastern Canada. The shores of Burlington Bay and the Falls of Niagara are his favourite haunts. It is there he can be seen in his natural grandeur, circling in vast spirals over the seething caldron. The Golden Eagle, another beautiful species, is very common around Quebec. Of his ferocity, spirit of rapine, and boldness, you have heard:—of little children mysteriously disappearing from their happy homes, and of their bleached bones being found years after in an eagle's eyrie, high on the loftiest ledge of the neighbouring mountain. Science has awarded to this fine bird the cognomen of "*Aquila Canadensis*," and were it not that our future Confederacy professes to have honesty as its basis, and were it not for the sanguinary instincts of the Canadian Eagle, one would mostly wish him to take the place of the Beaver, the Rose, the Thistle, and the Shamrock, as the emblem of our nascent empire.

Shall we quit the Eagle tribe without directing your notice to that majestic Eagle which Audubon discovered whilst ascending the Mississippi in 1814, his attention having been directed to it by the pilot of the boat—a Canadian. This powerful bird, a specimen of which he shot subsequently in Kentucky, measured 43 by 122—that is, from tip to tip of wing, ten feet; and three feet seven inches from the end of the head to the extremity of the tail. But one specimen as yet exists in the American collections—that in the museum of the Natural History Society of Philadelphia. It is well to state that this gigantic bird which Audubon honored with the name of Bird of Washington, has much exercised naturalists; some protesting that it was merely an overgrown individual of the Golden Eagle, whilst others asserted that the *scutellae* on his *tarsi* denoted a distinct species.

At least twenty varieties of the Hawk family visit our

latitudes; here is the delicately spotted Goshawk, identical with the European species: the breast is of a lovely ash colour, with most delicate markings; there is the Rough-legged Buzzard; there the Marsh Hawk, whom I am sure, on viewing this specimen, you all recognize as that unwelcome prowler who made you miss by his swoop *such* a shot, on the Chateau Richer, Crane Island, Sorel, Deschambault or Ste. Clair marshes, at some period or other of your sporting career; there is another species with large expanse of wing,—that is the Broadwinged Hawk, not so large as the Goshawk, and of plumage less bright; then comes the sharp-shinned; next, the Pigeon Hawk, and, lastly, the little Sparrow Hawk, with its elegant cinnamon-coloured back and black bands on its tail. I miss here a splendid individual, the great Duck Hawk—*Bullet*-headed Hawk, as some style him—who is none else than the celebrated Peregrine Falcon of the days of chivalry; he is tolerably common in Canada West, one was shot at Charlesbourg, near this city, some years back. The limits of my discourse prevent me from quoting, for your benefit, the elegant and truthful descriptions of the Peregrine and his fearless compeers, as sketched by Audubon. Shall we leave this fierce band of day-robbers, and investigate the doings of those formidable midnight raiders, the Owls? See how grave, how omniscient they look, with their rolling, shining yellow eyes, their soft plumage and their warm fur-leggings, impervious to cold the most intense! There he sits on his perch,—the dignified patriarch of the whole tribe: the Great Cinereous Owl; look at him well—he is not an everyday visitor by any means—the largest of the owls; he even exceeds in size that white and fierce marauder, the Snowy Owl—the Great Northern Hunter, as he is aptly styled; as you know, he is frequently shot in the surrounding country during the winter months. Nature has wonderfully adapted these birds to the climates they inhabit. They hunt by day as well as by night, and, in the soft moonlight, you can scarcely hear the muffled sound of their wings, when pursuing hares or other small animals. Of the ferocity of the Snowy Owl unquestionable

proofs exist. The attack of a Snowy Owl, rendered desperate through hunger, on a Roman Catholic Missionary, is amusingly related in a *Journal of Travel* on the Labrador coast. The Reverend Father was so astounded at the daring of the bird of prey, that he sought his safety in flight. Of the Virginian, or Great Horned Owl, there are, according to Baird, five varieties — *Atlanticus*, *Magellanicus*, *Pacificus*, *Articus*, *Virginianus*: *Atlanticus* and *Virginianus* alone visit Canada. This bird is often caught in the steel traps baited for foxes; the ferocious attitude and indomitable courage he exhibits, when approached by dog or man, is wonderful to behold; he snaps his powerful beak, rolls his bright eyes, and erects his feathers—the very emblem of concentrated rage. I have not heard of any successful effort to domesticate the Great Horned Owl. The Barn Owl, highly valued in some countries as a destroyer of rats and mice, does not inhabit Canada.

I have now placed before you in a row, according to their size, the Owls which visit us; you notice the gradation from the Great Cinereous, the size of a large Turkey, to the little Saw Whet, a sweetly pretty, tiny fellow, not much bigger than a Snow Bunting. What an interesting group of wisecracs they all seem? Legislative or City Councillors in conclave!

You see in the Museum of our Society some fair representatives of the web-footed Order of Birds.

First amongst them, conspicuous for the brilliancy of his plumage, note the Wood or Summer Duck, *Anas Sponsa*; *sponsa* means a bride, from the gay colours of the individual probably. Here is the Mallard, the Dusky Duck, the Gadwall, the American Widgeon, the Green-winged Teal, the Blue-winged Teal, the Shoveller, the Canvass-back, the Redhead, the Scaup, the Ruddy, the Pied, the Velvet, the Surf Duck, the Scooter, the Eider, the Golden-eye, the Harlequin, the Long-tailed, the Tufted, the Red-Breasted Merganser, the Hooded Merganser, and the Gooseander. What a noble-looking diver the great Loon seems, with his speckled robe of white and black? But amongst this splendid array of water-fowl, as I previously said, the handsomest is the Wood Duck, who builds in trees at

Sorel, Lake Erie, and other places: he is, indeed, *facile princeps*. Those feathered, slim gentry mounted on stilts, you recognize as pertaining to the tribe of the Waders: the Bittern you all have seen; many of you may not have viewed before this pretty little species, called the Least Bittern; I am indebted to a Kingston friend for him. There stands next the Night Heron, or Qua Bird: have you ever observed how those two long feathers, which grow out of the back of his head, fit in one another as in a groove? You have all read, in Charlevoix and Boucher,, that two species of Crane visited Canada—the White and the Brown Crane: Linnæus and Temmink have christened one of the species *Grus Canadensis*: and still the Crane is a Western species, and ought not to visit our Arctic latitudes except when it migrates from Florida to the Arctic wilds, for the incubation of its eggs and rearing of its young. An island, once dear to sportsmen, thirty-six miles lower than Quebec, bears the name of Crane Island. You have not forgotten the mention Horace makes of the migrating Crane—*Gruem advenam*. And shall I relate to you the nice story Herodotus tells of the manner in which the death of Ibycus, the poet, was revenged by a flock of Cranes? You will then understand why the muse-loving Greeks had such a veneration for Cranes:—

“The lyric, Ibycus of Rhegium, went to dispute at the Olympic Games the prize of poetry: he came on foot, with no other companion than his lyre, on which he occasionally struck a few soul-stirring notes. At the close of his journey musing, he lost his way in the forest. Two men rushed out of the wood and struck him. The poet fell to the earth, and cast an expiring glance towards the setting sun. At that awful moment, he saw a flock of Cranes sailing past; ‘Winged travellers,’ said he, in an expiring breath, ‘behold me!—make known the assassins of Ibycus!’ The brigands laughed at these words, stripped their victim and disappeared.

“The next day, the games began at Olympia: no Ibycus appeared. The people murmured at the absence of the bard;—his rivals commenced to sing. At that moment a

man arrived in hot haste bearing a broken lyre--all bloody and pronouncing the name of Ibycus. It was the bard's lyre, found that morning close to the corpse of the poet. A loud and deep wail was then heard in the amphitheatre: the people deplored the premature end of the young favourite of the muses; but the multitude is as easily moved to sorrow as it is to forget, and the games proceeded—the memory of Ibycus fading away. Night was closing in and would soon interrupt the amusements of the crowd, when a flock of Cranes flew over the arena; their loud notes attracted general attention: two of the crowd, in a conspicuous spot, repeated to one another, in a jocular way. 'There go the Cranes of Ibycus!' This singular remark was overheard by others: the sarcastic tone in which it was uttered, and the repulsive appearance of the utterers, all conspired to create suspicion. The murderers were arrested—questioned separately—confessed their crime, and were then and there executed; so that the avenging mission confided by the dying poet to the feathered strangers was faithfully discharged."

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By long and continued efforts on behalf of some enlightened friends of agriculture, the indiscriminate slaughter of insectivorous birds in the spring and summer has been effectually stopped. You may not be hung for killing or capturing in Canada a Robin or a Tomtit, but you make yourself liable thereby to ten days of jail.

I like the old English and French custom of opening the game season by rejoicings and *eclat*. Why should not St. Hubert, the patron saint of sportsmen, have a day sacred to him in America as well as in Europe?

It is gratifying to see that if our powerful and progressive neighbours have so many things to be proud of, there is one Canadian institution which they envy us; that is, our Legislation for the protection of Fish and Game. Mr. Roosevelt (son of Judge Roosevelt), in his interesting book on the Salmon rivers of Canada, "*The Game Fish of the*



*North*," testifies to that fact repeatedly. As a sop to American *amour propre*, he concludes by insinuating that it is about the only sign of progress to be found "in those benighted regions known as the British Provinces," as he humourously styles them. We will allow him, unchallenged, to enjoy his illusions on this as on other Canadian subjects, for, as a clever writer has it, "Are not illusions the best part of youth?" and Mr. Roosevelt is young. I do not think it could be possible to restore to the shores of the St. Lawrence the myriads of ducks, geese, and swans, which the old writers, such as the Jesuits, in their journal, Governor Boucher, in his *Histoire Naturelle des Oiseaux, des Animaux, et des Poissons du Canada*, written at Three Rivers in 1663—for the special information of the *Grands Seigneurs* of the Court of Louis XIV., his friends—mentioned as having seen. The account of the game met by the Jesuits on the Crane and Goose Island beaches in 1632 appears so marvellous as to be mostly beyond belief. The very beach facing this city, near the *Rifle range* at Beauport, took its name, *La Canardière*, from the legions of ducks frequenting it. It is within my recollection that a Crane Island *chasseur* counted he had had but poor shooting if he had bagged less than one hundred *Outardes* (Wild Geese) in a season.

You are aware that the most numerous order of birds by far is the *Passeres*. It would require a great many evenings to initiate you into their habits and history. I will consequently merely direct your attention to those now before you wearing the gaudiest uniforms: there, you will remark the brightest of Canadian birds, the Scarlet Tanager, or Summer Red Bird; how gracefully his black wings do set on the surrounding red! Hot weather alone attracts him over the Canadian border from the scented magnolia groves of Louisiana and Florida. The peasant lad, meeting him in our green woods, in ecstasy at such a display of splendour, hurries home to tell his mother that he has at last seen "*Le Roi des Oiseaux*," for such is the glorious cognomen the Summer Red Bird, during his July visits, enjoys amongst the French Canadian peasantry.

That sprightly-looking individual with a cinnamon-coloured back and wings, a white breast and long rounded tail feathers tipped with white outwardly, is the Cuckoo; his shrill note is occasionally heard in hedges round the city. Unlike his European congener, his habits as a parent are unimpeachable; you never catch him depositing eggs in other birds' nest,—foundlings at other individuals' doors; this shabby, unnatural practice may suit his Cockney Cousin, or our Cow-pen bird; but dandy, merry Cuckoo is too excellent a gentleman, too kind-hearted a fellow, to desert his offspring. We have two Cuckoos in Canada—the Yellow-billed and the Black-billed. Next to him you notice a bird encased in a sleek, lustrous, black uniform, with gold and crimson *shoulder-straps*, a veritable rifleman amongst the feathered tribe; that is the Red-winged Starling: is he not a jaunty, military-looking son of song? sporting *epaulettes*, he ought to stand well with the ladies; doubtless his name of *Field Officer* is due to their admiration of his gaudy uniform. There sits Robin Redbreast. What nice anecdotes I could tell you about him, my familiar friend, who returns each spring to nestle in a bushy evergreen under my library window, notwithstanding several murderous raids made in the vicinity, in the dead of night, by some marauding grimalkin, when, unfortunately for my feathered neighbour, the trusty guardian of the grounds, my mastiff *Wolf*, is wrapped in balmy sleep. You can understand what a lively memory birds retain of the spots in which protection has been extended to them, when I tell you that for six years past I have protected the birds building on my property, and that they have multiplied astonishingly.

There are this year upwards of forty nests of birds round me: one palm tree, next to my library window, contains the nests of no less than two pairs of Chipping Buntings, that friendly little fellow who comes in the very house-steps to pick up crumbs. Close to it stands a small soft maple tree: a pair of Black-cap Titmice have been industriously scooping a hole out of the heart of the tree for a week. From the habits of this bird, which, I presume,

is better known to you under the name of *Chickadee*, none do I prefer to see building about my garden: the quantity of insects it destroys in catering for its young is really prodigious. About two acres from this spot, another family of Chickadees seem intent on applying for a location ticket. Wilson's Snow Bird breeds amongst the grass, and is as careful about hiding the cradle of his children as the Song Sparrow. Robins' nests and Yellow Birds' nests are in course of construction all over the premises: the angle of a structure used last winter as a snow-slide, has been taken possession of by a pair of Robins.

Allow me to introduce to you a brave, indomitable bird—the King Bird (Tyrant fly-catcher); the peasantry call him *Tri-tri*, from his rapid, querulous note; schoolboys know him as the Crow-beater: observe the little orange tuft of feathers in the centre of his top-knot. Next to him you notice a bird with a beak notched like a Falcon: take my word for it, that is a sanguinary villain. Naturalists call him “The Shrike,,” or Butcher Bird, from the remorseless manner in which he deals with small birds, whom he impales on thorns and tears to pieces: I wonder how he can rest at night after such enormities. Fie, fie! Mr. Shrike, you are a vile fellow!—as vile nearly as a school-boy who *robs birds'-nests*. Do not, I pray, show your face on my premises! That grey, rough-coated bird is a Canada Jay; the lumberers and woodmen, who see him in winter rumaging round their camp, call him *Whiskey Jack*: he is addicted to pilfering; so say his enemies.

There, is a bird whom all of you recognise—the Kingfisher—Belted Kingfisher, on account of the rust-coloured badge encircling his throat and breast. To heathen mythology he is known as *Alcedo Alcyone*. Alcyone was the daughter of Eolus: being a perfect model of conjugal fidelity, she was rewarded, at her death, by being metamorphosed into a bird, and the heathen god, her father, whom I shrewdly suspect to have been in league with the clerk of the weather, arranged matters so that in midsummer, a succession of so many calms took place that our expert

fish-catcher could build her nest on the heaving bosom of the ocean, and rear her young undisturbed. This was, to say the least, a great privilege. Hence the origin of halcyon days—days of peace and prolonged security. I can guarantee this fact, *on the faith of heathen mythology!*

One of the most musical groups amongst our native birds are the Thrushes: some six or seven varieties are now displayed before you. First, the Robin, or Migratory Thrush; next, the Catbird, an excellent mimic, whom you can easily distinguish from his congeners by his ash colour; then, that beautiful variety, the Golden-crowned Thrush; the Hermit Thrush, which is attracted to the cool shades of damp woods, where he can, undisturbed, go and bathe at sunrise and sunset in some secluded, purling, limpid stream,—how oft have I watched him! One of the sweetest song birds of Western Canada is the Brown Thrush, or Thrasher: here is a good specimen—you will notice how much longer his tail is than that of the Hermit Thrush or Golden-crowned Thrush. The Wood Thrush is not very common in Lower Canada; and I am inclined to believe the sweet songster who, amongst the Canadian peasantry, is known as “La Flute”—the flute—from its metallic notes resembling the double-tonguing of the german flute, is Wilson’s Thrush. The Thrush family in Canada open for young naturalists a wide field of enquiry.

That little group of long-winged individuals, you of course recognise as the Swallows, of which five species visit Canada. The first, supposed to be the real harbinger of spring and hot weather, circles over our heads, at Quebec, for the first time each year, about the 23rd of April. The Black Chimney Swallow, or Swift, who dives perpendicularly down our chimneys to build its nest, forms part and parcel of every Canadian rural home: as we never see him build elsewhere than in chimneys, the question arises, where did he build before the invention of chimneys? You can add that to the other hard problems with which your painstaking teachers try your ingenuity. This is the Pur-

ple Martin—a larger species: each day, when I pass down the Upper Town market-place, and notice the garrulous crowd of Martens twittering round the eaves of the old Jesuit Barracks, I ask myself whether they are all the grand-children of those Purple Martens whose ancestors, Alexander Wilson saw, in the beginning of this century, “in great numbers, at Quebec;”\* for the memory of locality is great in Swallows as well as in other birds.

That broad-mouthed, long-winged, short-legged, dark bird, squatting on the ground, with white badges on its wings, is the Night Hawk, or Goat Sucker, *Caprimulgus*. You, no doubt, are aware why he is so persistently called

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\* Another man of note, just dead, visited Quebec about 1824, the eccentric naturalist, Charles Waterton, the discoverer of the *Wourali poison*, and author of several works most amusingly and instructively written. Charles Waterton humorously said that the principal blessings the House of Hanover had conferred on the English people were the suppression of Poperly, the creation of the ing tremendous fortifications at Quebec. It will be the Gibraltar rat. Do not be surprised if the passage of his book, relating to Quebec, should contain something eccentric also:—“They are making tremendous fortifications at Quebec. It will be the Gibraltar of the new world. When one considers its distance from Europe, and takes a view of its powerful and enterprising neighbour, Virgil’s remark at once rushes into the mind,—

“*Sic vos non vobis nidificatis aves.*”

“I left Montreal with regret. I had the good fortune to be introduced to the Professors of the College. These fathers are a very learned and worthy set of gentlemen; and on my taking leave of them I felt a heaviness at heart, in reflecting that I had no more time to cultivate their acquaintance. In all the way from Buffalo to Quebec, I only met with one bug; and I cannot even swear that it belonged to the United States. In going down the St. Lawrence, in the steam-boat, I felt something crossing over my neck; and on laying hold of it with my finger and thumb, it turned out to be a little half-grown, ill-conditioned bug. Now, whether it were going from the American to the Canadian side, or from the Canada to the American, and had taken the advantage of my shoulders to ferry itself across, I could not tell. Be this as it may, I thought of my Uncle Toby and the fly; and so, in lieu of placing it upon the deck, and then putting my thumb-nail vertically upon it, I quietly chucked it amongst some baggage that was close by, and recommended it to get ashore by the first opportunity.”—*Waterton’s Wanderings*, p 223.

Goat sucker by naturalists; it is because he never in his life sucked a Goat—never dreamed of it. It is one of those outrageous fabrications invented, by ignorance, to filch a poor bird of his good name, and which *took root* only because it was oft repeated. In the days of Olaus Magnus, Bishop of Upsal, in Sweden, few dared to doubt but that Swallows, instead of going to Senegal and the Gold coast to spend their Christmas and Easter holidays, dived before winter into the bosom of Lakes, and hibernated under the ice till spring, with no gayer companions than a few meditative trout or other fish. This was another absurd theory, but which had many great names to support and prop it up. The Revd. Gilbert White, in his *History of Selborne*, a nicer book than which you could not read, eloquently demonstrated how absurd, how impossible such a thing could take place.

You recognize at one glance that little fairy—dipped in a sunbeam, begemmed with opals, rubys, and living sapphires—it is the Ruby-throated Humming Bird. One species only frequents our climes, though it constitutes a numerous family in South America and in the West Indies. How oft in the dewy morn have you not noticed the little sylph, ecstatic with delight, hovering over the honeysuckle and bright geranium blossoms, and inserting in their expanded corollas his forked tongue in search of insects and honey. Need I dwell at length on all his loveliness, his incomparable beauty, when you can refer to the glowing descriptions which two great masters, Audubon and Buffon, have left—Audubon's especially. In spite of his elegance of diction, the sedentary philosopher, Buffon, must yield the palm to the naturalist who studied God's creatures on the mountains, prairies, sea shores, plains, fields and forests of our continent.

I now hold in my hand a most gorgeously-habited little songster, who pays us an occasional visit in July. His azure mantle has bestowed on him the name of *Indigo* Bird. Buffon calls him "Le Ministre," probably because he was, like the French Ministers of State, robed in blue :

our own Cabinet Ministers, as you know, on the recent visit of the Prince of Wales, chose blue for their *grande tenue officielle*. Never shall I forget one bright July morning walking in my garden, shortly after sunrise. In the centre there stood an old apple tree, bearing pink and white buds and green leaves; close to it my children had grown a very large sunflower: its corolla was then lovingly expanding to the orb of day, whose rays streamed through the overhanging canopy of dew-spangled blossoms. In the fork of the apple tree a pair of Robins had built their clay-cemented nest, in which, protected by soft hay, rested four emeralds of pure sea-green, whilst the male Robin was carolling forth his morning hymn from the topmost branch of a neighbouring red oak. I was in the act of peering in the nest, when my eye was arrested by the resplendent colours of an azure bird nestling in the sunshine on the saffron leaves of the sunflower. The brightness of the spectacle before me was such, its contrasts so striking, that I paused in mute astonishment at so much splendour. Was it a realm of dream-land spread out before me—a vision painted by a fairy! It was, my young friends, only the Indigo Bird of Canada, in his full nuptial plumage, seen amidst the bright but every-day spectacle of a Canadian landscape.

What a charming musician, the Vireo or Red-eyed Fly Catcher, during his protracted stay from May to September: scarcely visible to the naked eye, amidst the green boughs of a lofty elm, he warbles forth his love ditty from sunrise to sunset? How eagerly I watched, this spring, for the return from the South of the *Sweet, Sweet Canada bird*, the white-throated Sparrow—whose clear, shrill clarion resounds even in the depth of night! How is it he did not accompany this spring his congener, the Song Sparrow—the *Rossignol*—so dear to every Canadian heart, with its simple but soft melody?

Have any of you ever noticed the Redstart darting, like an arrow, after the small flies, then relighting on the twig, uttering his shrill *increasing* note, very similar to that of that pretty summer Yellow bird, also one of the fly-catch-

ers, as you are aware,—a family most numerous, and if not generally gifted with song, at least wearing a very bright livery. The Redstart, the male bird, is easily known by his black plumage; when he is flying, he discloses the under portions of his wings, which appear of bright maize. The female is more of an olive hue, and does not resemble at all her mate: they breed all round Quebec, and stop here about three months. It is needless for me to furnish you with a very lengthy description of the Blue Jay: you are all acquainted with his cerulean plumage and harsh note, especially before rain.

I must not, however, forget to point out to you that richly-dressed individual, wearing black and orange badges: that is the Baltimore Oriole. He visits chiefly the Montreal district and Western Canada. Black and orange, did I say? why that was the official livery of a great English landowner of Maryland, in the days when democracy amongst our neighbours was not. We have it on the authority of Alexander Wilson, no mean authority, as you know, that this brilliant July visitor took its name from Lord Baltimore, on whose estates a great number of Orioles were to be seen. It is satisfactory to find that, even in Republican America, the English aristocracy is becomingly represented not only at the White House, but also in the green fields and green woods of the great Republic. The *Baltimore Oriole* is a tolerably good musician. You can see how brilliant are the colours of these Canada birds now exhibited to you!

I think you will all agree with me, in saying that no country can furnish a group of brighter ones than those now exposed to view, and composed of Canadian birds only:—the Golden-winged Woodpecker, or Rain Fowl; Blue Jay; Field Officer; Maryland Yellow Throat; Wax Wing; Indigo Bird; Ruby-Throated Humming Bird; Scarlet Tanager; Baltimore Oriole; Meadow Lark; Pine Gros Beak; Cardinal Grosbeak; Rose-breasted and Towhe Bunting.

As for song, we may safely assert, with the same Alex-



ander Wilson,\* that the *Fauna* of America can compete with that of Europe: true, we have not the Skylark, nor the Blackbird; and the Robin, although very similar to him in note and habits, is still his inferior; but we have the Wood Thrush, with its double-tongued flute notes, Wilson's Thrush, the Brown Thrush, the jingling, roystering Bobolink, the Canadian Goldfinch, whose warble reminds you of the Canary. The far-famed European Nightingale has certainly met with a worthy rival in the American Mocking Bird, whose extraordinary musical powers have been so graphically delineated by the great Aububon.

My young friends,—I was thinking of introducing you into the very *sanctum* of Natural History, and the advanced hour of the evening compels me to leave you merely at the threshold. If it should so please you, we may, at some future day, resume the investigation of this subject. I thank you for your long and constant attention.

*Au revoir!* J. M. LEMOINE.

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\* "The opinion which so generally prevails in England, that the music of the groves and woods of America is far inferior to that of Europe, I who have a thousand times listened to both, cannot admit to be correct. We cannot, with fairness, draw a comparison between the depth of the forest in America, and the cultivated fields of England; because it is a well-known fact, that singing birds seldom visit the former in any country. But let the latter places be compared with the like situations in the United States, and the superiority of song, I am perfectly persuaded, would justly belong to the Western continent. The few of our song birds that have visited Europe extort admiration from the best judges. 'The notes of the cardinal grosbeak,' says Latham, 'are almost equal to those of the nightingale.' Yet these notes, clear and excellent as they are, are far inferior to those of the wood thrush; and even to those of the brown thrush, or thrasher. Our inimitable mocking bird is also acknowledged, by themselves, to be fully equal to the song of the nightingale in its whole compass. Yet these are not one tenth of the number of our singing birds. Could these people be transported to the borders of our woods and settlements, in the month of May, about half an hour before sunrise, such a ravishing concert would greet their ear as they have no conception of."—*American Ornithology*, vol. II., p. 275.

