

VARIOUS

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Various

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Birds and Nature, Vol. 12 No. 2 [July
1902] / Illustrated by Color Photography
SEPTEMBER

O golden month! How high thy gold is heaped!
The yellow birch-leaves shine like bright coins strung
On wands; the chestnut's yellow pennons tongue
To every wind its harvest challenge. Steeped
In yellow, still lie fields where wheat was reaped;
And yellow still the corn sheaves, stacked among
The yellow gourds, which from the earth have wrung
Her utmost gold. To highest boughs have leaped
The purple grape, – last thing to ripen, late
By very reason of its precious cost.
O Heart, remember, vintages are lost
If grapes do not for freezing night-dews wait.
Think, while thou sunnest thyself in Joy's estate,
Mayhap thou canst not ripen without frost!

– *Helen Hunt Jackson.*

Graceful tossing plume of gold,
Waving lowly on the rocky ledge;
Leaning seaward, lovely to behold,
Clinging to the high cliff's ragged edge;

Burning in the pure September day,
Spike of gold against the stainless blue,
Do you watch the vessels drifting by?
Does the quiet day seem long to you?

– *Celia Thaxter, in "Seaside Goldenrod."*

THE PALM WARBLER (*Dendroica palmarum*.)

Then tiny warblers flit and sing,
With golden spots on crest and wing,
Or, decked with scarlet epaulette
Above each dusky winglet set,
They hunt the blossoms for their prey
And pipe their fairy roundelay.

– Rose Terry Cooke, “My Apple Tree.”

There are two varieties of this species, the Palm or Red-poll Warbler, and the yellow palm or yellow red-poll warbler. The latter is a native of the Atlantic States and breeds from Maine northward to Hudson Bay. The former frequents the interior of the United States and migrates northward as far as the Great Slave Lake. It is seldom seen in the Atlantic States except during its migrations.

In this connection the account of Mr. William Dutcher, regarding the first observation of the Palm Warbler in Long Island, is of interest. It is the more interesting because it partially answers the question so often asked, “Where do the birds die?” Mr. Dutcher says, “During the night of the twenty-third of September, 1887, a great bird wave was rolling southward along the Atlantic coast. Mr. E. J. Udall, of the Fire Island Light, wrote me that the air was full of birds. Very many of the little travellers met with an untimely fate, for Mr. Udall picked up at the foot of the light house tower, and shipped to me, no less than five hundred and ninety-five victims. Twenty-five species were included in the number, all of them being land birds, very nearly half of which were Wood Warblers. Among them I found one Palm Warbler.”

Both varieties winter in the Southern States that border the Atlantic ocean and the Gulf of Mexico, in Mexico and in the islands of the West Indies. While both birds are often seen in the same flock during the winter, the Palm Warbler is much more common in Florida than is the eastern cousin. When together the two forms may be readily distinguished by the brighter yellow of the yellow palm warbler.

Three of the large family of Wood Warblers may be called the vagabonds of the family, for they do not love the forest. These are the Palm, the yellow Palm and the Prairie Warblers.

Dr. Ridgway says of the Palm Warbler, “During the spring migration this is one of the most abundant of the warblers,” in Illinois, “and for a brief season may be seen along the fences, or the borders of fields, usually near the ground, walking in a graceful, gliding manner, the body tilting and the tail oscillating at each step. For this reason it is sometimes, and not inappropriately called Wag-Tail Warbler.” The observer is reminded of the titlarks as he watches the nervous activity of this Warbler as it constantly jerks its tail while it flutters about the hedges and scattered shrubbery, or when running on the ground among the weeds of old fields. It may even frequent dusty roadsides. Wherever it is, it frequently utters its low “tsip,” a note that is very similar to that of many of its sister warblers.

Dr. Brewer says, “They have no other song than a few simple and feeble notes, so thin and weak that they might almost be mistaken for the sound made by the common grasshopper.”

The Palm Warbler’s nest is a trim structure, usually placed upon the ground and never far above it. The walls consist of interwoven dry grasses, stems of the smaller herbaceous plants, bark fibres and various mosses. It is lined with very fine grasses, vegetable down and feathers. Though this home is placed in quite open places, a retired spot is usually selected. Here are laid the white or buffy white

eggs, more or less distinctly marked with a brownish color, and a family of four or five of these peculiar Warblers is raised.

OLD-FASHIONED OUTINGS

PART II

While in our camp on the shore of Gloucester harbor, many were our adventures first and last, some of our own choosing, some not. In the mouth of Rafe's Chasm is a big oblong seamed rock, considerably lower than either wall at that point, with perpendicular sides and top slanting to the lower wall, which is the west, and the natural approach. At low tide the boys made a point of leaping the western channel and climbing up across the narrower eastern one, and where the boys went, the younger girls expected to follow. (How was it, I wonder, that girls began to be "tomboys" just then? They have kept it up ever since, but it is no longer a matter of reproach.) The first girl who did this held the championship for some time, but the smaller ones qualified in the end. We were there one day at half tide when a good deal of surf was running, so we established ourselves well up on the rocks, but our Newfoundland dog elected to go down and enter the water at the western corner of the chasm. He was immediately swept out, and out started somebody's eyes! "You've lost your dog!" But even as we gazed in consternation, the wave – walked back and returned him! A strange sight it was – that black dog advancing as in a vehicle, standing unconcernedly in a tall green wave and, when it arrived, walking calmly out and shaking himself! No suction, no struggle, his feet just on a level with the flat ledge; out he walked and was hugged, dripping, as soon as we could lay hold of him.

The Magnolia Swamp stretches far toward Essex and Manchester, and with the surrounding heath and forest forms a wilderness which a wild animal might range for miles, crossing now and then a lonely road; and in the summer of 1884 two of us saw a very odd wild animal in the old road. Descending suddenly from the hill above, we saw a dingy white creature jogging slowly along in the middle of the road a short stone's throw ahead. It was clumsily made, and its gait was awkward and lumbering. It had short legs, very round hind-quarters, no perceptible tail, and long, slightly wavy white hair, exactly the same all over, without mark, spot or difference. We mended our pace and gained on it, when the creature did the same without looking round and plunged into a dense cover of brier with the heavy rolling gait of an elephant and at such an angle that we never saw its head, nor could we trace its line of retreat in the underbrush.

Now what was that? Please don't say poodle or woodchuck or skunk or raccoon. It bore no resemblance to either, except, in size and color, to the poodle. The only thing I ever saw at all like it was a stuffed lynx in a New Hampshire town. In color, length of hair, and absence of tail they were exactly alike. The stuffed specimen was twice as big as the live animal and long-limbed in proportion, while the latter was thick-set and clumsy like a cub.

One September day at sunset I was sitting on a low rock platform trying to paint a great green wave which reappeared at regular intervals, gathering under the rock with a growl and falling on the shore like lead. (The effort looked like a tin wave, and an artist said it should not have been attempted. The opposite headland was better, fresh from one ducking and expecting another from the pale green border surging up out of the gray, away from the eye.) At last the sole companionship of this sulky wave became oppressive, and turning landward, I looked up into an uncanny sky – a wild red afterglow barring the slate with flame-color – and smelt a skunk, and felt far from home. And there on the top of the ridge, the highest point in that great amphitheater of wooded hills, the only habitation in sight, it stood out black against those flaming bars, amid the silhouettes of dying pines.

The dog would have been a support, but he wasn't there. After some experience of sketching-parties, he had given up attending. Collies are particular, and this one hated to sit with the wind in his face. When we first had him, he dogged every footstep for fear of being left behind, but at this stage of his development he would not stir a step with sketching material or a gardening hat; he knew too well that such accessories led to nothing. Yet his polished behavior in other respects had so impressed

a small visitor in long Greenaway robe and cap, that when she made her series of curtsies to the family semicircle on leaving, she curtsied with equal gravity to the dog as he lay chin to the floor, half under the table. And that was quite right. Doubtless we all bow to persons far less deserving than this forgiving dog who always hastened to console you when you trod on him.

However, on this occasion I had to get home alone and dodge skunks unsupported under that awesome sky. The best part of a mile away and all the way up-hill, the last pitch abominably steep and rough, the choice of site would have done credit to a robber baron, but the land falls away gently to the Manchester road on the other side. It took months with a derrick and oxen to forge the connecting link, however; and one section, which rounds a hill and crosses a gully, looked like the bed of a mountain torrent for weeks. The camp of 1865 led to the choice of 1883, as many a camp has done from Roman days on. The Pequot war settled central Massachusetts as the Revolution filled up New Hampshire and Vermont. It was not so much that the land stood empty as that men went out and saw the land, that it was good. Behold a by-product of war.

If the merry greenwood was as our native heath, so too was the water. It was about a third of a mile off the Rock that he of the rifle once had a difference with a shark. He was out alone in a dory when the shark happened along and thought, being there, he might as well see if he couldn't upset the boat. So he came swarming up on the oar until the youth got tired of it, and standing up, balanced himself not to overreach in case the shark proved slippery and thrust the butt as hard as he dared between the eyes, which were about a foot apart. But the shark was not slippery. He felt rough, and as hard and solid as a ledge, while the youth felt as if he had hit that same. However, his Honor seems not to have enjoyed it either, for he soon settled in the water, and circling lower and lower two or three times, disappeared.

Some years before that, this boy was out with another when the harbor was full of herring, and a whale appeared which had followed the schools in. And he popped up so frequently and blew in such unexpected places that the boys deemed it best to make for the nearest land. Meantime the whale rose in their wake with his jaws wide open in the middle of a school of herring, and they saw a lot of the fish flipping dry in his throat; and the boat came in and all the passengers stood on deck looking at him, and then he got excited and ran aground, the tide being low, on some shoals in behind the Island, and thrashed about so, they thought he must have hurt himself. It was a thrilling afternoon.

The dory is a proved little craft for serious business in rough water, while none can be better for ladies about rocks and beaches; because it has a flat bottom and there is no keel to catch and leave you tipping about with the lap of the water running ever so far inside. Moreover, the dory has so much shear that very little of the bottom touches at one time; and if it hangs anywhere, you can take it by the nose and work it off quite easily. We fully appreciated the merits of a build which permitted crossing the harbor in good gowns to make a call we did not wish to spend a whole evening on, landing perhaps on a lonely bit of shingle with a sharp little sea thrashing in, "firing" all along the tops of the waves. We often went out to supper in dories, taking a small charcoal furnace, a griddle and a pitcher of batter, and rowing down to some great flat sheets of rock made for the purpose on the Point. There we pulled up the boats, set up housekeeping and fried our flapjacks, first waiting to enjoy the sunset over the western shore reflected in the harbor. (If you stay in the house the sun always sets while you are at supper, if you notice; and this is nature's revenge on you for eating indoors instead of out-of-doors, like Christians.) Then we rowed home by moonlight or perhaps by starlight, pausing to amuse ourselves by stamping on the bottom of the boat, startling the fish under us and making them dart, leaving a phosphorescent wake far below.

If a thunder-shower surprised us, we rolled the boats over and crept under, the valued shear allowed plenty of air. It is true, if the shower lasted too long, the water was apt to run down the rock and leave somebody in a puddle, while it might become painful to take too perfect an impression of the pattern of the rock on one elbow, but it's worth getting wet to cross the harbor in the rain with the drops hissing in the water and turning to pale fire wherever they strike.

The dory is a stiff little craft, too, not easily upset, as some of our party proved at the beach one day. Half-a-dozen of them embarked in bathing dresses and when beyond their depth stood up on the seats and rocked with all their might; but this not effecting their purpose, the girls jumped out and the two or three men left danced on the gunwale and finally overturned it.

One starlight evening two of us, escaping from the heat in town, were floating close inshore somewhere down near Black Bess, when suddenly out of the darkness arose the sound of a sailboat bearing down on us full tilt. We sprang up in dismay, though it was dead calm and we knew no boat could come where we were. We peered into the darkness, but nothing came and the sound died as it sprung into being, full grown, without crescendo and without diminuendo. There was no splashing, either; just the full, steady rip of the cutwater at speed. It lasted perhaps a minute, and was a startling affair. Experienced persons say they never heard anything like it, and suggest sharks. People always suggest that – what can you expect after Lyell said shark to our family pet, “the sea-serpent,” which our own grandparents saw in 1817 from such a coign of vantage that if it had been a shark, one would think they would have known it. We all know the place where they were driving “along the edge of a cliff – when he saw the sea-serpent at the base – on the white beach where there was not more than six or seven feet of water; and giving the reins to his wife, looked down upon the creature, and made up his mind that it was ninety feet long. He then took his wife to the spot, and she said it was as long as their wharf, and this measured one hundred feet. While they were looking down on it, the creature appeared to be alarmed, and started off.” (Lyell’s Diary.) This is an incredulous world.

Does anyone ever read “The Toilers of the Sea” nowadays, or remember the finale? Having purposely allowed the tide to catch him, the hero sits in a niche in the cliff awaiting death, with his eye on the ship which bears away his beloved, who has married the wrong man. And as the ship drops behind the horizon, the water covers his eyes – when we read that, with one accord we made for the beach, and as soon as the tide served round a big ledge, we practiced that scene, and found it unimpressive. As we expected, you float off: you can’t stay there! and we thought Victor Hugo should really have practiced it himself.

Helen Mansfield.

OUR KINSMAN

Alive in this world of beautiful forms,
No form is alien to men, or apart,
Each morning sunbeam our being warms,
Each tree is a kinsman of friendly heart.

We love the clear bird songs that fill our ear
With melody ringing for us alone.
The cricket's chirp is for us, and we hear
A human voice in the rivulet's tone.

Each lovely thing of nature finds room
In our heart of hearts – our lover and mate,
The star and the dew and the vine's sweet bloom
Are fitted to us, and our spirit innate.

They are kinsmen – each century blazing star!
Each snowclad summit, each rose-flushed peak
Have most subtle oneness with us, for afar
Of things sublime and eternal they speak.

With all beautiful things that live, we are one.
We are kin to the circle of nature's whole.
So, O beautiful trees that stand in the sun,
Your beauty entrancing slips into the soul.

For the children of one great Kinsman above
Are the myriad forms of nature and we.
Kinsman, Creator, He fits our love
To the star and the flower, the bird and the tree.

– *Mrs. Merrill E. Gates.*

THE LONG-BILLED CURLEW (*Numenius longirostris*.)

Each day are heard, and almost every hour,
New notes to swell the music of the groves,
And soon the latest of the feathered train
At evening twilight come; – the lonely snipe,
O'er marshy fields, high in the dusky air,
Invisible, but, with faint, tremulous tones,
Hovering or playing o'er the listener's head.

– Carlos Wilcox, *"The Age of Benevolence."*

The Long-billed Curlew is the largest of the American curlews and has a wide range covering nearly the whole of temperate North America. It is not a bird of high altitudes and in winter it seeks the milder climate of the Southern States, Mexico, Guatemala, Cuba and Jamaica. During the breeding season, which is passed in the South Atlantic States or in the interior of North America as far north as Manitoba, it is not a social bird. While migrating, however, and in winter, it enjoys the society of its fellows and is generally observed in flocks of a greater or less number.

Mr. Wilson has well described its flight during migration or when passing from one feeding ground to another. He says, "The Curlews fly high, generally in a wedge-like form, somewhat resembling certain ducks, occasionally uttering their loud, whistling note, by a dexterous imitation of which a whole flock may sometimes be enticed within gunshot, while the cries of the wounded are sure to detain them until the gunner has made repeated shots and great havoc among them."

Though the natural home of the curlews is the muddy shores and grassy lowlands adjacent to bodies of water the Long-billed species also frequents drier places at a distance from water, and even breeds in the uplands. Here their food consists of worms, insects and berries. When fattened with such food their flesh is tender and lacks the stronger flavor that is present when they have fed exclusively on the animal food of the marshes of the sea shore. It is interesting to watch the Curlew upon the beach as it gracefully moves from point to point in search of food. Now and then it thrusts its long sensitive bill into the soft soil and usually draws forth some form of animal food – a larva of some insect, a crab, a snail or a worm. Frequently it will explore the holes of crawfish and it is often rewarded with a dainty morsel of curlew food.

The Curlew's bill is very characteristic and especially adapted to the bird's habit of probing for food. It is very variable in length and not infrequently grows to a length of seven or eight inches, and it has been known to reach a length of nearly nine inches. The upper mandible is somewhat longer than the under and is provided with a knob at the tip. The bill is much curved, a characteristic which has given the bird the names Sickle-bill and Sickle-billed Curlew or Snipe. It was the curved bill that suggested to Linnaeus the generic name *Numenius* for the curlews. It is a Greek word meaning the new moon. The long bill also suggested to Wilson the specific name *longirostris* or long-snouted.

Dr. Coues says, "Its voice is sonorous and not at all musical. During the breeding season, in particular, its harsh cries of alarm resound when the safety of its nest or young is threatened."

The Long-billed Curlew spends but little time in home building. Its nest consists of a layer of grass placed in any suitable saucer shaped hollow on the ground.

The downy young resemble the adult bird but little. In color they are a pale brownish yellow modified by a trace of sulphur yellow, the under parts being somewhat darker. The upper parts are

irregularly mottled with coarse black spots. At this period in the life of this Curlew, the bill is straight and about one and one-half inches in length.

ON JEWELLED WINGS

There are few or none who fail to delight in the beauty of the butterfly, while to the thinker its different stages of existence are rich with lessons in which the analogy-loving soul of man can revel to fullest gratification. Flitting about above the things of earth it seems to descend for rest only, or to sip the sweets of some nectar-bearing flower. In the sunshine all day long, chasing at will through field or woodland, and with no more care than the so-called “butterflies of fashion” (not as much, for it needs to give no thought to the fashion or fit of its garb), it basks till nightfall in the delights that go to make up its ethereal existence.

But whenever we thus watch the brilliant little creature we should remember that it has come up through many changes and tribulations to this its last and perfect stage. Weeks, months, or – as in the case of one or two species – three years before, a tiny egg was deposited in some safe, secluded spot, the parent butterflies dying soon after because of their mission being then accomplished.

The egg is the first stage of the butterfly, as it is also of the moth. The eggs of the different species vary greatly in size and shape, and are deposited in as many different kinds of places. Some are placed on the under side of leaves, others on the outside of the cocoon; some are glued together in rings around the smaller branches of fruit trees, others on the interior of bee-hives. In this stage they remain for periods varying from a few weeks to three years, when the larva or caterpillar state is entered upon. The larvæ are very greedy, beginning to eat as soon as hatched and devouring the leaves, spreading themselves over the web prepared for them by the parent, ravaging the fruit trees, or routing the bees from their rightful possessions. A number of changes of skin take place during the larval stage, ranging from five to ten. Some are smooth-skinned and are used by insectivorous animals for food, while others are hairy and on this account are rejected as food, the hair having the power of stinging much the same as nettles.

Having attained its full growth the instincts of the caterpillar undergo a change. It ceases to eat and begins to weave a couch or cocoon round about itself by which it is finally more or less enclosed. It then throws off the caterpillar or larval skin and appears in the third stage.

This state of its existence seems to me the most mysterious and therefore the most interesting. More than one of these cocoons have I found attached to walls, fences, limbs and in similar places, looking as though they were but the dried-up remains of some species of insect life. But there was life within them, a germ which sooner or later would spring forth in all the wonderful beauty of the moth or the butterfly.

This third period is termed the pupa, nymph or chrysalis state. Its duration varies from a few weeks to several months, according to the time of year at which it enters this stage. The common Cabbage Butterfly, which rears two broods during the season, is quickest to make the change, only a few weeks of the pupa form being necessary. Some remain in the chrysalis a month or more, appearing in the butterfly form at the close of the summer. Those becoming encased in autumn are like the hibernating animals in many respects, lying dormant the winter through. The only sign of life ever discovered in the pupa is a convulsive twitching when irritated, and for this reason those who know nothing of the hidden beauties of butterfly life miss a great deal of pleasure in not being able to study the seemingly lifeless chrysalis.

When mature the pupa case cracks toward the anterior end, and the butterfly or moth crawls forth with wings which, though at first small and crumpled up, in a few hours attain their full size. As soon as they are strong enough the new creature mounts upon them and, if it be a butterfly, flies out into the sunlight; while the moth hies away to some dark corner until nightfall, then for the first time in its existence it rises upon wings to enjoy the summer zephyrs.

I remember having watched one butterfly leave the chrysalis and, though but a child at the time, I shall never outlive the impressions which that rare pleasure left with me. It was one of the

large-winged, black-white-and-yellow fellows which every one admires so much, and which species is regarded as a treasure here in these Central States. Little by little the ugly casing opened, and when I first saw the baby butterfly he was like a tiny mass of mingled colors, with neither life nor shape to give me an idea of the sort of creature into which he would develop. Soon he began to move uneasily, like a child awaking out of a long sleep; then he stretched his wings leisurely as though proud to have found them at last. Next he drew himself up and finished bursting his paper-like shell, gained a foothold on the plank on which we had placed him and looked about with a, seemingly, very much surprised though gratified air. Meanwhile he kept working his wings and stretching them anon, very impatient because of their, to him, slow growth. At last he gained the confidence to try them, and within an hour from the time we first saw him he had arisen and flown away into the sunshine to seek his place in the world.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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