VARIOUS

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Содержание

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NOVEMBER

When thistle-blows do lightly float
About the pasture-height,
And shrills the hawk a parting note,
And creeps the frost at night,
Then hilly ho! though singing so,
And whistle as I may,
There comes again the old heart pain
Through all the livelong day.

In high wind creaks the leafless tree
And nods the fading fern:
The knolls are dun as snow-clouds be,
And cold the sun does burn.
The ho, hollo! though calling so,
I cannot keep it down;
The tears arise unto my eyes,
And thoughts are chill and brown.

Far in the cedars' dusky stoles,
Where the sere ground-vine weaves,
The partridge drums funereal rolls
Above the fallen leaves.
And hip, hip, ho! though cheering so,
It stills no whit the pain;
For drip, drip, drip, from bare branch-tip,
I hear the year's last rain.

So drive the cold cows from the hill,
And call the wet sheep in;
And let their stamping clatter fill
The barn with warming din.
And ho, folk, ho! though it is so
That we no more may roam,
We still will find a cheerful mind
Around the fire at home!

– C. L. Cleaveland.

THE PILEATED WOODPECKER
(*Ceophloeus pileatus*.)

In years gone by, when large sections of the United States were covered with deeply wooded virgin forests frequented only by denizens of the wildwood, the Pileated Woodpecker was an abundant resident through nearly all of North America. A bird citizen of the deeper and more extensive forest regions, it has gradually retreated before the advance of man, and it is a very rare visitant in the Eastern States and is only found in the thickly settled and heavily timbered bottom lands which the human intruder seldom penetrates. In the Southern States it is more common and may be considered abundant in some sections.

Mr. Manly Hardy says: "The Pileated Woodpecker is a constant resident of Maine, but rarely leaves the vicinity of large timber. It prefers places where large hemlocks abound, especially those localities where a few have been killed by camp building or small fires." A strange feature of its distribution is that, though it is distributed quite generally throughout North America, there are many heavily timbered areas, well suited to its habits, in which it is not found. If it occurs at all it is very rare in the Southern Rocky Mountain regions, and is also rare in Alaska.

The Pileated Woodpecker is a beautiful bird of great size and strength. Its bill is both large and powerful. In fact, it is exceeded

in size by but one of the Woodpeckers – the ivory-billed species – which is a resident of the Southern States. It is quite variable in its habits. In some sections it is very shy and retiring, while in others it is quite tame and becomes quite accustomed to man if not ruthlessly annoyed. Mr. Hardy, writing of his experience with this bird in the woods of Maine, says: "I once had two so tame they would allow me to sit within four paces of them, and put my hand upon the tree when they were not ten feet above my head." Mr. Chapman, writing of its habits in the cypress swamps of Florida, says: "There, contrary to the experience of Audubon, I found it by no means a wild bird. Indeed, flickers were more difficult to approach," and he also writes: "I have called these birds to me by simply clapping my slightly closed palms, making a sound in imitation of their tapping on a resonant limb." Another writer states that when called in this manner, "they seem to lose their usual shyness and seem stupefied at not finding their mate, as they had expected."

Few birds are more useful in the preservation of the forest from destruction by insect pests. "A workman is known by his chips." The energy and perseverance of the Pileated Woodpecker, as it seeks for the destructive borers or other injurious insects, in the bark and wood of afflicted trees, is amply attested by numerous denuded trees and by the strips of bark and piles of chips lying on the ground. The hammering of the more familiar species of woodpeckers is but a light tapping when compared with the loud and resounding whacks of its powerful

strokes. It has been known to "chisel holes six or eight inches deep in cedar and other soft-wood trees, and as large as the holes in a post-and-rail fence," and to "pick a large hole through two inches of frozen green hemlock to get at the hollow interior." It seldom, if ever, attacks healthy trees and it is a constant resident of extensive forests that have been swept by destructive fires and the bare tree trunks left to decay.

Mr. Wilson, that enthusiastic student of bird life, writes in his usual interesting manner concerning the habits of the Pileated Woodpecker. In his "American Ornithology" he says: "Almost every old trunk in the forest where it resides bears the marks of his chisel. Wherever it perceives a tree beginning to decay, it examines it round and round and with great skill and dexterity strips off the bark in sheets of five or six feet in length, to get at the hidden cause of the disease, and labors with a gayety and activity really surprising. I have seen it separate the greatest part of the bark from a large, dead pine tree, for twenty or thirty feet, in less than a quarter of an hour. Whether engaged in flying from tree to tree, in digging, climbing or barking, he seems perpetually in a hurry."

During the mating season it is exceedingly noisy, not only spending much time in drumming, but also frequently uttering its love notes which to Mr. Nehrling sounds like "a-wuck, a-wuck." Mr. Chapman describes their usual call note as a "sonorous cow-cow-cow, repeated rather slowly many times," and when two birds come together they utter a "wichew note" similar to that of

the flicker. Its note of alarm has been likened to an oft-repeated ha-he, ha-he, ha-he. The same observer hears in its call note a constant repetition of a-wick, a-wick and at times tack-tack-tack.

For its nest the Pileated Woodpecker excavates cavities in tree trunks at heights varying from twenty to eighty feet above the ground. Both sexes assist in the work of making the cavity which, Major Bendire states, "vary from seven to thirty inches in depth, and is gradually enlarged toward the bottom, where it is about six inches wide." He also says that it takes from seven to twelve days to complete it and when completed it is quite an artistic piece of work, the walls of the cavity being quite smooth and the edges of the entrance being nicely beveled. The eggs are usually deposited on a layer of chips. Not infrequently every chip, as soon as it is loosened, is removed to a distance in order to remove every trace of the nesting site.

Birds as well as other animals are afflicted with parasitic worms. Mr. Langdon found on dissecting a Pileated Woodpecker, a "slender tape-worm about fifteen inches long and one-thirty-second of an inch wide," and in the tissues beneath the skin of the neck "were two thread-like, round worms of a pale pinkish tint and about three-fourths of an inch in length."

Of this wonderful bird we may truthfully say with Mr. Langille, "Whether one notes his strong flight, his elastic bounding and springing along the trunks of the trees, the effective chiseling of his powerful bill, or his sonorous cackling, one is particularly impressed with the spirit and immense energy

of the bird.”

SABBATH BY THE LAKE

Peace smiles above the scene. The waters lie
As still and blue as the arched sky they love.
No sound salutes the ear, save that, far off,
A bird recites to his fond mate his joy;
And silence seems but deeper for the slender sound.
The butterflies, that frolic noiselessly,
Think Earth is Heaven and live by loving flowers.
The trees in social groups, link branch to branch
And root to root and smile beneath the sun.
In harmony with all about I rest.
Within my soul there dwells a thought that knows
No words, but silent, sweet, it sings to me.
Peace smiles above the scene, 'tis Sabbath day.

Carrie B. Sanborn.

"HAMMOCK STORIES." MRS. FIG TREE'S FAMILY HISTORY

It was a nice, bright, sunshiny day, and the trees were freshly washed from a warm rain the night before, but it seemed to me when I first lay down in my hammock that they were not in as good humor as usual. Mrs. Pepper Tree had lost her sprightly manner, and her voice was quite peevish when, seeing some children pass on their way from school, she exclaimed:

"It beats me what those children do day after day, and year after year! They can't be very smart or they would have learned all their lessons long ago."

Grandma Liveoak reminded her that according to what she had heard tell, children had a lot more to learn than trees; that they were obliged to study about people and everything they ever did, and about stones and birds and the sky and the flowers, and bugs and flies and the rest, and she expected it took them some time.

"I presume they spend a great deal of their time studying my family history," said Mrs. Fig Tree. "It is a very old and important one, and even grown people go to big buildings when the bells ring, and read and learn about my family."

Her voice was as satisfied, oh, just as satisfied as could be,

and she seemed to be quite pleased over something while she was talking. Mrs. Pepper gave her branches a toss, as she crossly exclaimed:

"I don't see what there is in Fig Trees to study over much! All they have anyhow is queer awkward looking leaves in the spring, then green figs growing right out of the branches, no flowers or anything, then by and by all the leaves dropping off again! I wouldn't think that would take much time or was worth much time either, and for my part I wouldn't have leaves I couldn't keep all the year round."

Mrs. Fig answered her in a very polite tone, just as if she was talking to company: "Excuse me, Mrs. Pepper, but probably you never heard that it was my family that gave the first man and woman who ever lived in the world their clothes!"

Mrs. Pepper said she never heard it, and she guessed no one else ever did either. But you could see she was getting curious, and so were the other trees, and they finally asked Mrs. Fig to tell them, and so she began.

"Long, long ago there was the most beautiful garden that ever was heard or thought of and every lovely flower that grows, and every tree that amounts to anything, was there. But the rose bushes had no thorns, and there were no spiders or bugs or worms to bother the trees and shrubs, but only great butterflies as bright as the rainbow. And there were no brambles or thistles or burrs, but only violets and clover blossoms and other flowers, and all the birds sang more sweetly than the nightingale, and the fountains

were clear and sparkling, and the fruit was always ripe, and everything was just as beautiful as could be, and the first man and woman were the most beautiful of all, only they didn't have any clothes."

Mr. Pine rustled his needles in an embarrassed sort of way, and Grandma Liveoak said that didn't seem just the right thing, somehow; but Mrs. Fig calmly remarked: "That was what they thought too and so they made themselves lovely clothes out of fig leaves."

Mrs. Pepper guessed that that wouldn't help them much; that clothes made out of fig leaves would amount to no clothes at all. But here Mr. Pine spoke, saying:

"If I might with propriety venture a suggestion on so delicate a subject, I think possibly it was bathing suits the first man and woman made of the fig leaves. My friend, the East Wind, assures me that" —

"Rubbish," cried Mrs. Pepper, "rubbish! I don't believe that they ever made any clothes of her old leaves at all, so there!"

And now Mrs. Fig's voice was so polite it made me quite nervous, and she spoke very slowly. "The first man and woman went to all of the other trees and looked their leaves over very carefully, but none of them were good or pretty enough, and finally they came to the Fig tree." Here Mrs. Fig made a long pause, repeating, "Finally they came to the Fig tree. And the first woman said: 'Oh, aren't these leaves just too lovely for anything! The Fig tree is the best and prettiest of all. We will make our

clothes out of her leaves. And so they did, and what's more, they got into a whole lot of trouble just because they had something to do with another tree besides the Fig."

Mrs. Pepper rubbed two branches together, and it made the most sneery sound you ever heard, as she asked: "I suppose you want me to believe that 'other tree' was the pepper?"

"No," replied Mrs. Fig, "I don't think there were any pepper trees in the garden at all."

Then you should have seen how angry Mrs. Pepper grew and I did wish that Grandma Liveoak would hurry and say something so there would be peace; but sure as you live, when she spoke her voice sounded strange and very dignified, and she only said:

"The other trees may have family histories too, Mrs. Fig, if they chose to boast of them!"

"A poet once said," began Mr. Pine.

But Mrs. Orange Tree interrupted him to ask what they were saying about her; that she heard "best and prettiest leaves" mentioned.

Mrs. Fig told the story all over again, and I wanted to explain to her that I had never heard it just that way; but her stubby branches were standing very firm and determined, and I knew it wouldn't do a bit of good.

"Poets," said Mr. Pine, "are the wisest people in the world, and one of them" —

"I don't care a twig for the first man or the first woman," said Mrs. Pepper crossly. "I know all the painters choose me, and they

put my leaves and my clusters of white blossoms and red berries on paper and boards, and painters are the people of all the earth who know what is beautiful, so that proves the first place mine."

"This poet once said of our family," Mr. Pine began again.

"The brides all choose me," cried Mrs. Orange, "and who in the world is so important as a bride? And if they choose me, I must be first and prettiest."

"As I remarked," said Mr. Pine, "this poet" —

But such a noise you never heard, and even Grandma Liveoak as bad as the rest, and Mrs. Pepper and Mrs. Fig and Mrs. Orange, all claiming so many things for their family. And they got to saying unkind things to each other – they really did – and you have no idea how dreadfully sarcastic trees can be. But just as I was wondering however it would all come out Mrs. Pepper stopped still for a minute, then leaned her graceful boughs fringed with fine narrow leaves way over until they kissed Mrs. Fig's bare branches, and said gently: "I am sure it was a great honor to have your pretty leaves chosen by the first man and woman, and I am very sorry I was cross."

Grandma Liveoak gave a little laugh, exclaiming, "Well, what a silly old tree I am! Do you know, I came very near being a little put out there, just for a second, simply because another tree mentioned her family." Then she praised Mrs. Fig and told her it was a good thing to think well of one's own sap and wood. And Mrs. Fig said she might have been mistaken about what the first woman said, and that probably she took the fig leaves because

they were the handiest or something. And Mrs. Orange got the wind to blow over some of her prettiest blossoms to the other trees, while high above Mockingbird was singing and over on the hedge a meadow lark gave its call, and it was all very sweet and pretty.

"As I was saying," calmly remarked Mr. Pine, "a poet once said of our family:

> Who is the king of all the wood?
> Be it distinctly understood
> It is the Pine!"

Karrie King.

BUILDING FOR BIRD TENANTS

When on walking through a city park on a blustery winter day one suddenly spies the little bird houses, built by the custodian and perched high up among the branches of the trees, a smile invariably creeps over the face and a thought of summer steals into the tired brain. Would that the building of bird houses became more fashionable among our boys!

One of the simplest and most artistic of them may be formed from a cocoanut shell. The opening may be so made that the piece of shell cut out can be turned up like a little porch roof over the door. If these be fixed just at nest-building time and the architect should kindly leave the nut inside the shell the birds will be most grateful.

Down south many of the door-yard trees seem to be growing gourd fruit. In reality the gourds (with an opening in the side of each) are tied on or hung there by means of their own crooked necks to make nests for the birds.

Sometimes one may see whole rows of them upon a pole which is nailed to a stable roof and often they are found hanging to the ragged edge of the roof of a negro cabin. As far as I can learn, the idea originated with the colored people, who take great pride in the number of birds they can attract about them by this and other kindly means. The little yellow houses seem to delight the birds so much that one is seldom put up in vain, and the

tenants pay lavishly with coins of song and many a trill of joy.

Lee McCrae.

THE LIGHT OF THE LEAVES

Hurry, skurry through the air
Leaves are falling everywhere.
Gold and crimson meet or miss
Smile or blush at the frost king's kiss.

Whirling, twirling, o'er the ground,
Forced by merry winds around;
Piled by childish hands on high,
There, like martyred saints, to die.

Crackle crackle, sound their knells,
Imprisoned sunshine in them dwells
Like tiny tongues, 'twixt earth and sky
They whisper love to passers by.

Falling, ever falling, they,
Consumed to make the world more gay;
The misty cloud of smoke o'erhead
Seems like the veil Shakina spread.

Down and down comes memory's leaf,
Bright with hopes or sere with grief;
The brightest one in life's huge pile
Is that from which our bonfires smile.

– Cora May Cratty.

THE STARLING
(*Sturnus vulgaris*.)

The Starling belongs to an interesting family of birds, represented in America by but one species and that one only recently introduced. In the Old World, however, there are about two hundred species which are widely distributed throughout Europe, Asia and Africa.

The common Starling is a native of Europe and northern Asia and is admitted to the bird fauna of North America both because of its accidental occurence in Greenland and of its introduction into the parks of New York city. Regarding its introduction into this country, Mr. Chapman says that it has been brought across the ocean on several occasions, but only in the case of the last importation was the effort to make it establish a home within our borders a success. "The birds included in this lot, about sixty in number, were released in Central Park, New York city, in 1890. They seem to have left the park and to have established themselves in various favorable places in the upper part of the city. They have bred for three successive years in the roof of the Museum of Natural History and at other points in the vicinity. In the suburbs about the northern end of the city they are frequently observed in flocks containing as many as fifty individuals." From the fact that it is a resident throughout the year and has endured

our most severe winters Mr. Chapman thinks that the species may be regarded as thoroughly naturalized.

The common Starling easily adapts itself to its environment and can withstand quite a diversity of climatic conditions. However, while it was introduced with difficulty in the eastern United States, efforts made to introduce it into the State of Oregon have not met with success. Wherever the conditions are favorable it breeds rapidly and not uncommonly a pair will rear two broods in a season.

This engaging bird has commanded the attention of observers for centuries. Pliny speaks of it in his Natural History, and one writer has said that "its varied song, its sprightly gestures, its glossy plumage, and, above all its character as an insecticide – which last makes it a friend of the agriculturist and the grazier – render it an almost universal favorite." Some of the notes of the Starling's song are harsh but on the whole the song is pleasing and "heard as they are, at a season when every sign of returning spring is eagerly looked for and welcomed, are certainly one of the most cheerful sounds that greet the ear." Its whole energy is thrown into the song, which is uttered with ruffled feathers. It is also a mimic of no mean order. One authority says that it delights "in reproducing familiar sounds with the greatest fidelity to truth. We have heard individual Starlings reproduce the call notes of the skylark, goldfinch, wagtail, and other small birds; sometimes we have been startled on a winter's day to recognize the cry of the common sandpiper or the grating call note of a fern owl in

the middle of a crowded city, and have discovered the author of our astonishment in the person of a Starling, that is pouring forth his rhapsodies from some neighboring chimney top." Pliny says: "Agrippina, the wife of Claudius Caesar, had a thrush that could imitate the human speech, a thing that was never known before. At the moment that I am writing this, the young Caesars have a Starling and some nightingales that are being taught to talk in Greek and Latin; besides which, they are studying their task the whole day, continually repeating the new words that they have learnt, and giving utterance to phrases even of considerable length." The young birds are very noisy and while feeding and training them the parents are scarcely less so. So great, in fact, is this noisy babble that it often becomes very unpleasant.

The Starling is a gregarious bird at all times, but this habit is more marked after the breeding season has passed. It has its favorite haunts and, though a flock may be dispersed during the daytime while feeding, all will congregate in the favorite locality at nightfall. Mr. William Yarrell, in his "British Birds," gives an interesting anecdote regarding the abundance and social habits of the Starling. Speaking of an English estate, he says, "This locality is an evergreen plantation covering several acres, to which these birds repair in an evening – I was going to say, and I believe I might truly say – by millions, from the low ground about the Severn, where their noise is something altogether unusual. By packing in such myriads upon the evergreens, they have stripped them of their leaves, except just at the tops, and have driven

the pheasants, for whom the plantation was intended, quite away from the grounds."

Regarding their nesting and mating habits Mr. Henry Seebohm says: "Early in April, sometimes not until the beginning of May, the Starlings have mostly mated and gone to their breeding holes. Previous to this, however, much quarreling goes on for the choice of suitable sites. The strong gain the best holes, while the weak seek quarters elsewhere. The Starling will build its nest almost anywhere, and it needs but slight encouragement to take up its quarters in any suitable hole or box placed for its reception. It will even dislodge large tiles and burrow considerable distances under the eaves, and its bulky nest often stops up some spout, to the dismay of the householder. A hole in the gable or inside the dovecot are also favorite places, while its partiality for holes in the trees is none the less. It also commonly breeds in ruins, churches, and old masonry of every description. In the wilder portions of the country the Starling selects a hole either in a tree or a rock for its purpose, and it will often breed in great numbers in caves or in crevices of the ocean cliffs." The nest is not a fine piece of bird architecture. It is coarse and slovenly constructed with dry grass, fibers, twigs, small roots, rags, twine, paper and in fact of any substance that strikes the fancy of the bird. It is lined, though not always, with wool, vegetable down and feathers. At times when the nest is placed in hollow trees the bedding consists of powdered wood. The Starling returns to the same site year after year, but always

builds a new nest.

Though the Starling will often pilfer fruit trees, especially late in the season, it is of great service to man, for its chief food consists of worms, larvae and various adult insects. It is a voracious feeder and thus destroys a large number of forms of insect life, many of which are very destructive to plant life. It "is almost as closely associated with man as the sparrow," but unlike the sparrow it is much more able to adapt itself to a change of surroundings.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.