

VARIOUS

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The Atlantic Monthly, Volume 17, No. 104, June, 1866 / A Magazine of Literature, Science, Art, and Politics

QUICKSANDS

CHAPTER I

"This is the seventy-fifth pair! Pretty well for us in so short a time!" said the Colonel's wife.

"Yes, but we must give Aunt Marian the credit of a very large proportion; at least ten pairs have come from her."

"I have nothing to do but to knit; none to knit for at home but my cat," I replied, rather shortly, to the soft voice that had given me credit for such extraordinary industry. Afterwards I looked up at Percy Lunt, and tried to think of some pleasant thing to say to her; but in vain,—the words wouldn't come. I did not like her, and that is the truth.

Thirty of us were assembled as usual, at our weekly "Soldiers' Aid Circle." We always met at the house of her father, Colonel Lunt, because its parlors were the largest in Barton, and because Mrs. Lunt invited us to come every week at three o'clock in the afternoon, and stay till nine, meanwhile giving us all tea. The two parlors, which opened into each other as no others in Barton did, were handsomely furnished with articles brought from France; though, for that matter, they did not look very different from Barton furniture generally, except, perhaps, in being plainer. Just now the chairs, lounges, and card-table were covered with blue yarn, blue woollen cloth, unbleached cotton, and other things requisite for the soldiers. They, the soldiers, had worn out the miserable socks provided by government in two days' marching, and sent up the cry, to the mothers and sisters in New England, "Give us such stockings as you are used to knitting for us!"

That home-cry found its answer in every heart. Not a hand but responded. Every spare moment was given to the needs of the soldiers. For these were not the materials of a common army. These were all our own brothers, lovers, husbands, fathers. And shame to the wife, daughter, or sister who would know them to be sufferers while a finger remained on their hands to be moved! So, day by day, at soldiers' meetings, but much more at home, the army of waiters and watchers wrought cheerfully and hopefully for the loved ones who were "marching along." In Barton we knitted while we talked, and at the Lyceum lectures. Nay, we threatened even to take our knitting to meeting,—for it seemed,

as we said, a great waste of time to be sitting so long idle.

This had gone on for more than months. We had begun to count the war by years. Did we bate one jot of heart or hope for that? No more than at the beginning. We continued to place the end of the struggle at sixty or ninety days, as the news came more or less favorable to the loyal cause. But despair of the Republic? Never. Not the smallest child in Barton. Not a woman, of course. And through these life-currents flowing between each soldier and his home, the good heart and courage of the army was kept up through all those dismal reverses and bloody struggles that marked the early part of the years of sixty-two and three.

We kept writing to our Barton boys, and took care of them, both in tent and field. And in every box sent on to the Potomac went letters from all the soldiers' families, and photographs to show how fast the children were growing, and how proud the sisters were of the brave brothers who were upholding the flag at the price of their lives.

We were very busy to-day at Mrs. Lunt's. She and I cut out shirts for the rest,—and I took an opportunity to carry one to Percy Lunt, with some directions, in as kind a voice as I could command, about the sleeves. She smiled and looked up wistfully in my face, but I turned away in a hurry to my work. Somehow, I could not forgive her for troubling my poor Robert. I couldn't before he went, much less now.

I must describe Percy if I can. She was of middling height, and very delicately formed, with a face as destitute of color as

if it had been carved out of marble. Her dark hair was cut short in her neck, and parted over her forehead and her even brows. Her eyes were dark and soft, but almost constantly bent on the floor. She dressed in black, and wore over her small head a little tarlatan cap as close as a Shaker's. You might call her interesting-looking, but for a certain listlessness and want of sympathy with others. She had been married, was not more than twenty years old at the time I am describing her, and had been in Barton only about a year, since her husband's death.

As I had neither chick nor child to offer to my country, I was glad to hear my nephew, Robert Elliott, say that the Barton boys had chosen him for Captain, and that they were all to start for Boston the next morning, and go on at once to Fortress Monroe.

This boy's black eyes were very near to my heart,—almost as near as they were to his own mother's. And when he came in to bid me good by, I could not look on his pale, resolute face without a sinking, trembling feeling, do what I would to keep up a brave outside? This was in the very beginning of the war, when word first came that blood had been shed in Baltimore; and our Barton boys were in Boston reporting to Governor Andrew in less than a week after. Now we didn't, one of us, believe in the bravery of the South. We believed them braggarts and bullies, and that was all. We believed that, once let them see that the North was not going to give way to them, they would go back where they came from.

"You will be back in a month, Robert, all of you. Mind, I don't

say you will send these hounds back to their kennels,—rather, send these gentry back to their ladies' chambers. But I won't say either. Only let them see that you are ready for a fair stand-up fight, and I'll be bound they'll be too much astonished to stop running for a week."

So we all said and thought at the North,—all but a few who had been at the South, and who knew too well how much in earnest it was in its treason, and how slight was the struggle it anticipated. These few shuddered at the possibility that stood red and gloomy in the path of the future,—these few, who knew both sides. Meanwhile both sides most heartily underrated each other, and had the sincerest reciprocal disrespect.

"I don't quite think like you, Auntie, but that is, perhaps, because I was at Charleston. A year at the South, and you understand them a little differently. But no matter,—they must go back all the same. This is my pincushion, is it?"

"Yes, and here are thread and needles. But, Rob, nonsense! I say you will be back in a month. They will begin talking and arguing, and once they begin that, there will be no fighting. It is like the Chinese, each side trying to frighten the other."

"Perhaps so," said Robert, in an abstracted way. "Let us hope so, at all events. I am sure I don't want to shoot anybody. But now I am going to Colonel Lunt's a little while; shall I find you up when I come back?"

"Come in, any way, and tell me if you have good news."

I knew what he was going to Colonel Lunt's for. He had

talked to me about Percy, and I knew he loved her. If he had not been going away, perhaps he would have waited longer; for Mr. Lunt (he was Percy's cousin) had not been dead quite two years. But he said he could not go away without telling her; and when I remembered all the readings together, and the walkings and talkings between the two, I thought it most likely she had already consoled herself. As I said before, I had no very great love for her.

Not an hour, not fifteen minutes, when Robert returned. He looked paler than before, and spoke no word, only stared into the fire. At length, with a pitiful attempt at a smile, he said, "I'm a fool to be vexed about it,—let her please herself!"

"It is bad news, Robert!" said I softly, laying my hand on his arm. His hands were clenched hard together.

"Yes, there's no mistake about it. But, Auntie, tell me, am I a fool and a jackass? didn't you think she liked me?"

"To be sure I did!" I answered decidedly.

"Well, she says she never thought of me,—never!—and she never thought of marrying again."

The wound wouldn't bear touching,—it was too sore. So I sat silently with him, holding his hand in mine, and looking into the fire, and in almost as great a rage as he was. He knew I felt with him, and by and by he turned to kiss my cheek, but still without a word.

How I wished he could have gone to the conflict with the thought of his true love warm at his heart? Who deserved it so

much? who was so brave, so heroic, so handsome?—one in ten thousand! And here was this dead-and-alive Percy Lunt, saying she never thought! "Pah!—just as if girls don't always think! If there's anything I do detest, it's a coquette!" The last sentence I unconsciously uttered aloud.

"Don't call her that, Auntie! I really think she didn't know. I wasn't just to her. I was too angry. When I spoke to her she looked really distressed and astonished. I am sure that I ought—"

"Nonsense, Robert! she must have seen your feelings. And haven't you been sending her flowers and books and pictures, and reading to her, and talking to her the whole time, this three months! Where were her eyes? I have no patience with her, I say!"

The boy had recovered his sense of justice so much sooner than I! He smiled sadly, and took both my little old hands in his. "Best of aunties! what a good hater you are! Now, if you love me, you will be kind to her, and try to love and comfort her. Somehow she looks very unhappy."

I could not answer.

"She looked—O so sorry! Auntie, when I spoke, and as if she was too much astonished to answer me. I do think it was the very last thing in the world she expected. And after she told me, which she did at once, that I was mistaken, and she was mistaken, and that we never could be any more than friends to each other, and I had got up to go away,—for I was very angry as well as agitated,—she stood looking so pale and so earnestly at me, as if she must

make me believe her. Then she held out her hands to me, and I thought she was going to speak; but she shook her head, and seemed so thoroughly distressed, that I tried to smile, and shake hands cordially, though, I confess, I didn't feel much like it. But I do now, Auntie,—and you must forgive her for not thinking quite so much of your Rob as you do."

He took a photograph from his breast-pocket, and kissed it.

"She gave me this; and she wrote on the back the date of to-day, April 16th, 1861. She said she did not want me to remember her as she is now, but as she was in her happy days. And that they could never come again."

It was a very lovely vignette, taken when she was joyous and round-faced, and with the curls falling about her cheeks and neck, instead of the prim little widow's cap she wore now. And instead of the still, self-contained, suffering look, there was great sweetness and serenity.

"I don't see why she gave it to you, Rob," said I peevishly; "the best thing you can do is to forget her, and the kindest thing she could do to you would be to cut off all hope."

"She did that," he replied; "but she said she could not bear to have me go where I was going without feeling that I had left a most affectionate friend, who would watch eagerly for my success, and sympathize with all my trials. Auntie! who knows?"

I saw by the lighting up of his dark eyes what hope lay at the very bottom of his soul. And, to be sure, who knew what might be in the future? At all events, it made him more comfortable

now to have this little, unexpressed, crouching hope, where he could silently caress it when he was far away from us all. He had all our photographs,—mother, sister, and aunt.

"And now I must go to Mr. Ford's to-night, and bid them good by. Don't let any enterprising young lawyer come here and get away all my business before the month is out. I came within an ace of making a writ only last week!"

So with smiles he parted from me, and strength was given me to smile too, the next morning, when he marched by my window, and bowed to me, at the head of his hundred men. I saw his steady, heroic face, no longer pale, but full of stern purpose and strength. And so they all looked,—strong, able, determined. The call took all our young men from Barton. Not one would remain behind.

And that is why I could not love Percy Lunt. How hard she worked at our soldiers' club! how gentle and respectful she always was to me! If I had not been always preoccupied and prejudiced, I might have pitied the poor, overcharged heart, that showed itself so plainly in the deathly pallor of the young cheek, and the eyes so weighed down with weeping. Colonel Lunt and his wife watched her with loving eyes, but they could do little to soothe her. Every heart must taste its own bitterness. And, besides, she wasn't their own child.

CHAPTER II

Every village has its great man and woman, and Colonel Lunt and his wife were Barton's. Theirs was the only family whose table appointments were of sufficient elegance to board the preceptor of the academy. All the Lyceum lecturers stopped at Colonel Lunt's; and Mrs. Lunt was the person who answered the requirements of Lady Manager for the Mount Vernon Association, namely, "social position, executive ability, tact, and persistency."

They were the only family in Barton who had been abroad. The rest of us stayed at home and admired them. They had not always lived in Barton; perhaps, if they had, we should not have succumbed so entirely as we all did, ten years ago, when Colonel Lunt came and bought the Schuyler place, (so called because General Schuyler stopped there over night on his way to fight Burgoyne,) and brought his orphan niece and adopted daughter with him, and also a French governess for the child. These things were not in Barton style at all; all our children being educated at the town school, and finished, as means allowed, by three months' polish at some seminary or other. Of course, in a country town like Barton, which numbers nearly fifteen hundred inhabitants, there is enough to interest and occupy every one. What would be gossip and scandal in a different social condition is pure, kindly interest in Barton. We know everybody,

and his father and mother. Of course each person has his standing as inevitable and decided as an English nobleman's. Our social organization is perfect. Our circles are within and within each other, until we come to the *crème de la crème* of the Lunts and six other families. The outer circle is quite extensive, embracing all the personable young men "who are not embarrassed with antecedents," as one of our number said. The inner one takes in some graduates of college,—persons who read all the new books, and give a tone to Barton. Among the best people are the Elliotts and Robertses. The lawyers and shopkeepers come in of course, but not quite of course—anywhere but in Barton—is included the barber. But Mr. Roberts was an extreme case. He had been destined to literary pursuits, became consumptive, and was obliged, by unforeseen contingencies, to take up some light employment, which proved in the end to be shaving. If it had been holding notes instead of noses, the employment would have been vastly genteel, I dare say. As it was, we thought about the French *émigrés* and *marquises* who made cakes and dressed hair for a living, and concluded to admit Mr. Roberts, especially as he married a far-away Elliott, and was really a sensible and cultivated man. But as we must stop somewhere, we drew a strict line before the tinman, blacksmith, and Democrats of all sorts. We are pure-blooded Federalists in Barton, and were brought up on the Hartford Convention. I think we all fully believed that a Democrat was unfit to associate with decent people.

As in most New England towns, the young fly from the parent

nest as soon as they are fledged. Out of Barton have gone, in my time, Boston millionnaires, state secretaries, statesmen, and missionaries,—of the last, not a few. Once the town was full of odd people, whose peculiarities and idiosyncrasies ran to seed, and made strange, eventful histories.

But we have ceased to take such microscopic views of each other since the railway came within ten miles of us, and are now able to converse on much more general topics than formerly. Not that there isn't still opportunity to lament over the flighty nature of kitchen incumbents, and to look after the domestic interests of all Barton; but I think going to Boston several times a year tends to enlarge the mind, and gives us more subjects of conversation. We are quite up in the sculpture at Mount Auburn, and have our preferences for Bierstadt and Weber. Nobody in Barton, so far, is known to see anything but horrors in pre-Raphaelitism. Some wandering Lyceum-man tried to imbue us with the new doctrine, and showed us engravings of Raphael's first manner, and Perugino. But we all voted Perugino was detestable, and would none of him. Besides, none of the Lunts liked him.

In patriotism, Barton would have "knocked under to no man," if the question had been put to it ten years ago on the Fourth of July. When a proof of it was required from the pocket, on the occasion before alluded to, of the Mount Vernon Association, I regret to say the response did no credit to Barton.

Mrs. Lunt made a great many Lady Assistant Managers in the town, and sent us forth to gather in the harvest, which we

could not doubt would be plentiful. She herself worded a most touching "appeal to the women of Barton," and described "the majestic desolation of the spot where the remains of Washington lie in cold neglect," and asked each one for a heart-offering to purchase, beautify, and perpetuate a fitting home where pilgrims from all parts of the Union should come to fill their urns with the tears of grateful remembrance.

It really seemed unnecessary to urge such a claim on a community like ours. Yet we found ourselves obliged to exhaust all the persistency and tact we had. For every conceivable reason Barton refused to respond to our appeals. The minister, Mr. Ford, declared to me that the sentiment of loyalty did not exist in America. Sometimes, he said, he wished he lived under a monarchy. He envied the heartfelt cheers with which Victoria's name was met, everywhere on British ground. "But you can't get people to give to Mount Vernon. They are afraid of slavery there. They are afraid of this, that, and the other; but give they will not." He handed me a dollar, in a hopeless way, which was a four-hundredth of his income. The blacksmith's wife would not admit me at all, saying, "There has been one beggar here already this morning!" The butcher's wife gave five cents; but I had my doubts about accepting it, for while I was indignantly relating the desolate condition of the home and tomb of the Father of his Country, and something about its being a spot only fit for a wild pelican to live in, the butcher himself passed through the house, nodding his head at me, and saying loudly, "Not a cent, wife!"

The plasterer, Mr. Rice, a respectable Vermonter, asked me who Washington was; and Mrs. Goodwin, the cabinet-maker's wife, said cordially to me, "There 's ten cents towards a tomb. I don't never expect to go down South myself, but maybe my son'll like to be buried there." Her son was buried down South, with many more of our brave Barton boys, little as we thought of it then!

Now, the butcher and baker, the plasterer, and all, have gone to the war. They have learned what it is to have a country to live for. They have learned to hold up the old flag through thunderings and blood, and to die for it joyfully. What a baptism and regeneration it has been! what a new creation! Behold, old things have passed away, and all has become new!

Soon after the battle of Cedar Mountain, and Banks's retreat, we had long, full letters from Robert. He wrote a separate note to me, in which he said, "Be kind to Percy." It was the very thing I had not been,—had not felt it possible to be. But, conscience-stricken, I went up to call at Colonel Lunt's, and read our letters to them. Percy walked home with me, and we talked over the prospects and reverses of the war. Of course we would not allow there were any real reverses.

We went on to my little cottage, and I asked her to come in and rest. I remember it was a very still evening, except for a sad south-wind. The breeze sighed through the pines in front of the house, like the sound of distant water. The long lingering of the sun slanted over Percy's brow, as she sat leaning her head on her hand, and looking away off, as if over thousands of miles. Her

pretty pale fingers were purple with working on hospital shirts and drawers, and bloody with pricking through the slipper soles for the wounded men. She was the most untiring and energetic of all the young people; but they all worked well.

We sat there some time without speaking. I was full of thought and anxiety, and I supposed she too might feel deeply about Robert.

"Aunt Marian,—may I call you so?" said she softly, at length looking up.

"Why not, Percy? you always do."

"Only, lately, it has seemed to me you were different."

She crossed the room and sat down on a *tabouret* so low that she was at my feet, and took my hand with a humble sweetness that would have touched any heart less hard than mine.

"I used to love to hear *him* call you so!" she went on, caressing my hand, which I did not withdraw, though I should have liked well to do so, for I did not at all like this attitude we had assumed of penitent and confessor. "I can't expect you to be just to me, dear Auntie, because you don't know. But oh! do believe! I never guessed Robert's feelings for me. How could I think of it,—and I a married woman!"

"Married! Percy!" said I, astonished at her agitation and the tears that flowed down her pale face like rain.

"Yes," she answered in a voice so low that I could scarcely hear it.

"Not a widow, Percy Lunt! What do you mean?"

"I think—I believe—my husband is living. He was so a few months ago. But I cannot tell you any more without papa's permission. O, I have suffered so much! You would pity me if you knew all. But I felt as if I must tell you this: and then—you would understand how I might have been, as I was, so wholly preoccupied with my own feelings and interests as never to guess that Robert's was anything but the regard of a friend. And, indeed," she added with a sorrowful smile, "I feel so much older than Robert.—I have gone through so much, that I feel ten years older than he is. You will believe me, Aunt Marian, and forgive me?"

"It is easy to forgive, poor child!" I said, mingling my tears with hers. "I have been cruel and hard-hearted to you. But I felt only for poor Robert, and how could I guess?"

"You couldn't,—and that is why I felt that I must tell you."

"I cannot ask you anything further,—it is very strange."

While Percy kept strong rein on her feelings, her impassive manner had deceived me. Now that my sympathy with her made me more keenly alive to her distress, I saw the deep pain in her pale face, and the unnatural look of grief in one so young. She tied on her hat in her old, hopeless way, and the ivory smoothness of her face spoke of self-centred and silent suffering.

"If papa is willing, I shall come to-morrow, and tell you part, at least, of my sad story; and even if he is not willing, I think I must tell you a part of it. I owe it to you, Aunt Marian!"

"I shall be at home all day, my dear," I said, kissing the poor,

pale lips with such tender pity as I had never thought to feel for Percy Lunt.

CHAPTER III

It was early in September, 1862, and on Sunday morning, the day after I had received the promise of at least a partial confidence from Percy. We were to come home together from meeting, and she was to spend the rest of the day quietly with me. Many a query passed through my mind as I walked along. I wondered at a thousand things,—at the mysteries that are directly under our feet,—at the true stories that belong to every family, and are never known but to the trusted few,—at the many that are known but to the one heart, whereon they are cut in sharp letters.

As I approached the meeting-house, I saw Mr. Ford talking earnestly with Colonel Lunt and Mr. Wilder on the porch-step, while the pews were already full, and the clock pointed to ten minutes past the usual time. I had myself been detained until late, and had walked rapidly and quite alone.

The heart of the community was on the *qui vive* so constantly, that any unusual sign startled and alarmed every one. A minute more, and Mr. Ford passed rapidly up the broad aisle, his face pale with excitement. Instead of the opening prayer, he said to us: "Brethren and sisters! there has been a great battle,—a terrible battle at Antietam! They have sent on to the North for aid for the wounded, who are being brought on as fast as possible to Washington. But they are brought in by thousands, and everything is needed that any of us can spare."

All of us had risen to our feet.

"I have thought we should best serve and praise our God by ministering to the sufferings of our brave boys! God knows what afflictions are in store for us; but all who can aid in this extremity I am sure will do so, and the blessing of those ready to perish will fall on them."

Mr. Ford ceased speaking. He had two boys with McClellan; and then Colonel Lunt, in a few words, stated the arrangements which had already been made by himself and Mr. Wilder, who was a deacon of the church, to convey any articles that might be contributed to the railroad station ten miles away. Whatever was gathered together should be brought to the Common at once, where it would be boxed and put into the wagons.

"Ah, then and there was hurrying to and fro!"

But one hour later saw Barton Common, an enclosed acre of ground, covered with every sort of garment that could by any possibility be useful in a hospital. Besides the incredible numbers of sheets and pillow-cases, wrappers and stockings, which every housekeeper drew forth from her stores, notwithstanding her previous belief and assertion that she "really had nothing more fit to give to the soldiers," there were countless boxes of jellies, preserves, and dried fruit. Everything palatable and transportable was brought, with streaming eyes and throbbing hearts, to the general contribution. From house to house the electric current of

sympathy flowed, and by twelve o'clock Barton Common was a sight to behold. Seventeen boxes full of all imaginable comforts and alleviatives set off in four wagons for the railroad station, and Colonel Lunt himself went on with them to Washington to see that they were properly and safely delivered. That was a Sunday service for us!

I had been sitting in my little keeping-room, knitting at soldiers' stockings, (what would Deacon Hall's wife and my mother have thought of my doing this on a Sunday!) and with the tea ready for drawing, when Percy came to make her promised visit. She too brought her basket of gray yarn and knitting-needles. We were not afraid of becoming atheists, if we did work on a Sunday. Our sheep had all fallen into ditches on the Sabbath-day, and we should have been worse than Jews not to have laid hold to get them out. So Percy kept on knitting until after our tea was ready, and then helped me with the teacups. When we were seated at the west window on the wide seat together, she put her arm round my neck and kissed me.

"You will forgive me all, Aunt?"

"O, you know that beforehand!"

"But I shall not tell you very much, and what I do tell is so unpleasant and mortifying to reveal, that it was only when I told papa my great reason he was willing I should tell you."

"Tell me just as much, and just as little, as you like, my dear; I am willing to believe in you without a word," I said. And so it was; and philosophers may tell, if they can, why it was.

"You remember my governess, Madame Guyot?"

"O, yes, of course, perfectly. Her dreadfully pale face and great black eyes."

"She was so good to me! I loved her dearly. But after she died, you remember, they sent me to Paris to a school which she recommended, and which was really a very good one, and where I was very happy; and it was after that *we* travelled so much, and I met—"

"Never mind, my poor dear!" I said, seeing that she was choked with her sorrowful remembrances, "I can guess,—you saw there the person,—the young man—"

"I was only seventeen, Aunt Marian! and he was the first man I ever saw that really interested me at all,—though papa had several proposals for me from others. But this young man was so different. He really loved me, I am sure,—or rather I was sure at the time. He was not in good health, and I think his tall, fragile, spiritual person interested all the romance of my nature. Look at his picture, and tell me if that is the face of a bad or a treacherous man!"

Percy opened a red morocco case and handed it to me. I gazed on the face with deep interest. The light, curling hair and smooth face gave an impression of extreme youth, and the soft blue eyes had the careless, serene expression which is often seen in foreigners' eyes, but scarcely ever in those of Americans. There was none of the keen, business look apparent in almost every New England face, but rather an abstracted, gentle expression,

as of one interested in poetry or scientific pursuits,—objects that do not bring him in conflict with his race.

I expressed something of this to Percy, and she said I was right about the poetry, and especially the gentleness. But he had, in fact, only been a student, and as yet but little of a traveller. They were to have travelled together after their marriage.

"It was only six weeks after that, when Charles was obliged to go to the West Indies on business for his father. It was the sickly season, and he would not let me go with him. He was to be back in England in five or six weeks at farthest."

"And—he wasn't lost?"

"Lost to me. Papa heard at one time that he was living at the West Indies, and after a time he went there to search for him—in vain. Then, months after, we heard that he had been seen in Fayal. Sometimes I think—I almost hope he is dead. For that he should be willing to go away and live without me is so dreadful!"

"You are dressed like a widow?"

"Yes,—I desired it myself, after two years had passed, and not a word came from Charles. But papa says he has most likely met with a violent death, and that these rumors of his having been seen in Fayal and in the West Indies, as we heard once, are only got up to mislead suspicion. You know papa's great dislike—nay, I may call it weakness—is being talked about and discussed. And he thought the best way was to say nothing about the peculiarity or mystery attending my marriage, but merely say I was a widow. Somebody in Barton said Charles died of a fever, and as nobody

contradicted it, so it has gone; but, Aunt Marian, it is often my hope, and even belief, that I shall see him again!"

She stopped talking, and hid her face, sobbing heavily, like a grieved child. Poor thing! I pitied her from my heart. But what could I say? People are not lost, now-a-days. The difficulty is to be able to hide, try they ever so much. It looked very dark for this Charles Lunt; and, by her own account, they had not known much about him. He was a New York merchant, and I had not much opinion of New York morals myself. From their own newspapers, I should say there was more wickedness than could possibly be crammed into their dailies going on as a habit. However, I said nothing of this sort to poor Percy, whose grief and mortification had already given her such a look of suffering as belongs only to the gloomiest experience of life. I soothed and comforted her as well as I might, and it doesn't always take a similar experience to give consolation. She said it was a real comfort to tell me about her trouble, and I dare say it was.

When Colonel Lunt got back from Washington, he had a great deal to tell us all, which he did, at our next soldiers' meeting, of the good which the Barton boxes had done. But he said it was a really wonderful sight to see the amount of relief contributed on that Lord's day, from all parts of the North, for the wounded. Every train brought in hundreds and thousands of packages and boxes, filled with comforts and delicacies. If the boys had been at home, they could not have been cared for more tenderly and abundantly. And the nurses in the hospitals! Colonel Lunt

couldn't say enough about them. It was a treat to be watched over and consoled by such ministering angels as these women were! We could believe that, if they were at all like Anna Ford, who went, she said, "to help the soldiers bear the pain!" And I know she did that in a hundred cases,—cases where the men said they should have given up entirely, if she hadn't held their hands, or their heads, while their wounds were being dressed. "It made it seem so like their own mother or sister!"

That fall, I think, Barton put up eighty boxes of blackberry jam. This wasn't done without such a corresponding amount of sympathy in every good word and work as makes a community take long leaps in Christian progress. Barton could not help improving morally and mentally while her sons were doing the country's work of regeneration; and her daughters forgot their round tires like the moon, their braidings of hair, and their tinkling ornaments, while they devoted themselves to all that was highest and noblest both in thought and action. I was proud of Barton girls, when I saw them on the hills, in their sun-bonnets, gathering the fruit that was to be for the healing of the nations.

Soon after Colonel Lunt's return, he told me one day, in one of his cautious whispers, that he and Mrs. Lunt proposed to take me over to Swampy Hollow, if it would be agreeable to me. Of course it was; but I was surprised, when we were fairly shut up in the carriage, to find no Percy with us.

"We left her at home purposely," said Colonel Lunt, in a mysterious way, which he was fond of, and which always enraged

me.

I don't like mysteries or whisperings, and yet, from an unfortunate "receptivity" in my nature, I am the unwilling depository of half the secrets of Barton. I knew now that I was to hear poor Percy's story over again, with the Colonel's emendations and illustrations. I was in the carriage, and there was no getting out of it. Mrs. Lunt was used to him, and, I do believe, would like nothing better than to hear his old stories over and over, from January to December. But I wasn't of a patient make.

Colonel Lunt was a gentleman of the old school, which means, according to my experience, a person who likes to spend a long time getting at a joke or telling a story. He was a long time telling this, with the aid of Mrs. Lunt, who put in her corrections now and then, in a gentle, wifely way all her own, and which helped, instead of hindering him.

"And now, may I ask, my dear Colonel," said I, when he had finished, "why don't you, or rather why didn't you tell Percy the whole story?"

The Colonel pulled the check-string. "Thomas! drive slowly home now, and go round by the Devil's Dishful."

This is one of the loveliest drives about Barton. I knew that the Colonel's mind was easy.

"What need is there, or was there, to cloud Percy's life with such knowledge? Why, my dear Miss Elliott, if we all knew what other people know about us, we should be wretched! No! the mysteries of life are as merciful as the revelations; let us be

thankful for all that we do *not* know."

"And I am sure we couldn't love Percy any more than we do, let her birth or circumstances be what they would," said Mrs. Lunt.

"I don't believe in natural affection, myself," said the Colonel, "but if I did, it would be enough to hear Percy congratulating herself on being of 'our very own blood,—a real Lunt!' Poor child! why should we trouble her? And I have often heard her say, she thought any blot on one's lineage the greatest of misfortunes."

"The reason the Colonel wanted to tell you about Percy was this. Now that her husband may be dead, who knew all about her, it is just possible that circumstances may arise that would need the interference of friends. If we were to die, the secret might die with us. We are sure it will be safe with you, Aunt Marian, and we think that, as you know about her husband, you had better know the whole."

Now this whole I propose to tell, myself, in one tenth part of the time it took the Colonel to tell me, prefacing it with a few facts about himself, which I guess he does not think that I know, and which relate to his early beginnings. Of course, all Barton is fully acquainted with the fact that he was born in the north of Vermont, at "the jumping-off place." He came to Boston, mostly on foot, and began his career in a small shop in Cornhill, where he sold bandannas, and the like. This imports nothing,—only he came by and by to associate with lords and dukes. And that shows what comes of being an American. He fell among Perkinses and

Sturgises, and after working hard for them in China, and getting a great deal to do in the "carrying-trade," whatever that may be, retired on his half-million to Maryland, where he lived awhile, until he went to Europe. After he returned he bought the Schuyler place, which had been for sale years and years. But in Barton we like new things, and we saw no beauty in the old house, with its long walk of nearly a quarter of a mile to the front door, bordered with box. The Colonel, whose taste has been differently cultivated, has made a beautiful place of it, applying some of the old French notions of gardening, where the trees would admit of being cut into grotesque shapes, and leaving the shade-trees, stately and handsome, as they always were. Now to his story in my own words.

CHAPTER IV

I can't think of a more desolate place than they had in Maryland, by their own account;—a great, dismal house, without chick or child in it for years and years;—full of rooms and furniture and black people, and nowhere the shout and cry of a baby. There was nobody to be anxious about,—nobody gone away or coming home, or to be wept for, or to be joyful for;—only their two stupid selves. Madam pottering about the great house, dusting with a feather duster all the knick-knacks that she had brought home from Europe, and that she might have just as well bought in New York after she got home; and he putting up books and taking them down, riding out on his white horse, and having somebody to dine once in a while,—*could* any life be drearier and more tiresome?

Why people who have great empty houses and hearts don't rush into the street and pick up the first dozen little vagabonds they see, I can't think. With soap-suds, love, and the tenderest care, why don't they baptize them, body and soul, and keep them to make music in their silent halls, and, when their time comes, have something worth to render up to the child-loving Christ? Especially, why didn't two such affectionate, tender-hearted persons as Colonel Lunt and his wife? But they did not. They only waxed duller and duller, sitting there by their Christmas fires, that warmed no hearts but their own, rapidly

growing cold.

They sat alone by their Christmas fire one night, at last, to some purpose. All the servants had gone off pleasuring somewhere, where it is to be hoped there were children enough. The Colonel went himself to the door and brought in a market-basket that stood in the porch. He opened it by the light of a blazing fire, and Mrs. Lunt guessed, at every wrapper he turned down, something, and then something else; but she never guessed a baby. Yet there it lay, with eyes wide open,—a perfect baby, nobly planned;—a year old or more; and no more afraid of the Colonel than if it had been in society ten years. The little girl sprang forward towards him, laughing, and by doing so won his heart at once. Mrs. Lunt found credentials in the basket, in the shape of a note written in good English and spelled correctly. The wardrobe of the baby accompanied her also,—fine and delicately embroidered. The note said that circumstances of the most painful nature made it imperative to the mother of this child to keep herself unknown for a time; but meanwhile begged the charitable care of Colonel Lunt.

The child, of course, took straight hold of their heart-strings. She made the house ring with her shouts and her healthy glee. She toddled over everything without restraint; tumbled over Chinese tea-poins and Japan idols; upset the alabaster Graces in the best parlor, and pulled every knick-knack out of its proper place.

The worthy couple wondered at the happiness this naughty little thing brought; and a tyranny, but one very sweet and fair,

triumphed in the decorous parlor and over the decorous old hearts. The baby was in a fair way of becoming a spoiled pest, when her own mother, in the character of French *bonne*, and afterwards of governess, came to the rescue. She told her story, which was rather a strange one, to the Colonel, and they made an arrangement with her to come and take care of the child. It was planned between them that Percy (her name is Amy Percival) should personate the only child of a deceased brother of the Colonel, and be adopted by him as his own daughter. Thenceforward the poor pale Madame Guyot took up her abode with them, like Amram's wife at the Egyptian court. I remember how sad and silent she always was, and how much her French speech separated her from us all in Barton. No wonder to me now that she faded day by day, till her life went out. No wonder that she was glad to exchange those memories of hers, and Percy's duty-kisses, for the green grave.

When the child was fourteen, the Colonel took her abroad, but before that time the governess died. In some respects the Colonel's theory of education was peculiar. Squeers thought it best for people to learn how to spell windows by washing them,—"And then, you know, they don't forget. Winders, there 't is." And the Colonel approved of learning geography by going to the places themselves, and especially of learning the languages on the spot. This, he contended, was the only correct way, and enough better than by hammering forever at school-books and masters. It was in pursuance of this somewhat desultory, but healthful mode

of education, that the family found itself, in 1857, at Baden-Baden.

As usual, there were, in the crowds there assembled for health and pleasure, a great many English; among them several persons of high rank. Here were German princes and counts, so plenty that Percy got tired of wondering they were not more refined and agreeable. She was herself a great attraction there, and, the Colonel said, had many admirers. Among the guests was an English family that took great notice of her, and made many advances towards intimacy. The two young ladies and their father seemed equally pleased and interested in the Lunts, and when they left Baden-Baden asked them to make them a visit in the autumn at their house in Derbyshire.

Thinking of this, I am not much surprised. For the Colonel's manners are unexceptionably good, with a simplicity and a self-reliance that mark a true gentleman; while Mrs. Lunt is the loveliest and best-bred woman in Barton, and consequently fit society for any nobleman.

When the Lunts went to England, in October, they visited these people. And there they found Charles Lunt, a second-cousin of the Colonel's, a New-Yorker, and a graduate of Oxford. His father had sent him to England to be finished off, after Yale had done its best for him here. He and Percy fell in love immediately, and matters came to a climax.

Colonel Lunt did not desire the connection at all. Charles's mother was related to the family where they were visiting, and,

as he himself would feel it incumbent on him to state the facts relative to Percy's birth, he foresaw distinctly only a mortifying relinquishment of the alliance. Charles was, in fact, on his mother's side, second-cousin to an English Earl. The name of the Earl I don't give, for the good reason that the Colonel kept it a secret, and, even if I knew, I should not wish to reveal it.

Before Colonel Lunt could act on his impressions and decisions, Charles cut the knot by asking his relative, the Earl, to make proposals for him. He was of age, with an independent fortune, and could please himself, and it pleased him to marry Percy.

Then the Colonel asked to see Charles, and he was called in. He began by declining the connection; but finding this mortifying and mysterious to both the gentlemen, he ended by a plain statement of such of the facts as he had been made acquainted with by Madame Guyot.

"I don't know the name of Percy's father," said the Colonel, "the poor woman would give me no clew to him,—but he may be living,—he may some time trace and claim her!"

"Does this make any difference to you, Charles?" said the Earl, when Colonel Lunt had finished.

"Not a jot!" said Charles, warmly. "It isn't likely her father will ever either trace or claim her; and, if he should even, and all should come out, why, I care nothing for it,—nothing, I mean, in comparison with Percy."

Of course then the Colonel had no objections.

"Now, is it best, all things considered," said the Earl, who took the interest of a father in Charles, "is it best to say anything to Percy of her real history?"

Charles thought not by any means, and it was so agreed among the three. The young man left the room to go to his confident wooing, for there was not much reason to doubt of his fate, and left Colonel Lunt with the Earl.

"Nothing can be more honorable than your whole proceeding, Colonel, in this matter. You might have kept the thing quiet, if you had so chosen."

"I always meant to tell any man who really desired to marry Percy," said the Colonel; "we never can tell what may happen, and I wouldn't be such a swindler as to keep these facts from him, on which his whole decision might rest."

The Colonel looked at the Earl,—*"looked him straight in the eye,"* he said,—for he felt it an imputation on his honor that he could have been supposed for a moment to do otherwise than he had done. To his surprise the Earl turned very red, and then very pale, and said, holding out his hand, "You have kept my secret well, Colonel Lunt! and I thank you for it!"

"You are Percy's father!" said the Colonel, at once.

The Earl wrung his hand hard. It isn't the English nature to express much, but it was plain that the past was full of mournful and distressful remembrances.

"I never thought of it till this instant," said Colonel Lunt, "and I don't know how I knew it; but it was written in your face. She

never told me who it was!"

"But she wrote to me about you, and about the child. I have watched your comings and goings these many years. I knew I should meet you where I did. You may guess my feelings at seeing my beautiful child,—at seeing how lovely in mind and person she is, and at being unable to call her my own! I was well punished the first hour after I met you. But my next hope and desire was to interest you all enough in my own family to induce you to come here. In fact, I did think you were the depository of my secret. But I see I was wrong there."

"Yes," the Colonel said, "Madame Guyot simply informed me the child's father would never claim her, and that the name was an assumed one. I saw how it probably was, but I respected her too much to ask anything which she did not herself choose to reveal. I think she was one of the loveliest and most superior women I ever saw, though, at the time I first met her, she showed that her health was fatally undermined. It was much on her account that I left Maryland for the more equable climate of Barton."

"You were everything to her that the most tender and noble friends could be!" said the Earl, warmly. "She wrote me of all your kindness. Now let me tell you a little about her. She was my sister's governess, and I saw her in my college vacations. I need not tell you how lovely she was in her youth. She was no French girl, but a country curate's daughter in Hampshire. Now, Colonel Lunt, it would have been as impossible for me to marry that girl—no matter how beautiful, refined, and good—as if she

had been a Hottentot. How often I have wished to throw birth, connections, name, title, everything, to the winds, that I might take Amy Percival to my heart and hold her there legally! How I have envied the Americans, who care nothing for antecedents, to whom birth and social position are literally nothing,—often not even fortunate accidents! How many times I have read your papers, and imagined myself thrown on my own resources only, like so many of your successful men, and making my own way among you, taking my Amy with me and giving her a respectable and happy home! But these social cobwebs by which we poor flies are caught and held,—it is very hard to break them! I was always going to do right, and always did wrong. After my great wrong to Amy, which was a pretended marriage, she left me,—she had found out my villany,—and went to America. She did not write to me until she knew she must die, and then she related every particular,—all your great kindness to both her and the child, and the motherly tenderness with which Mrs. Lunt had endeavored to soften her sufferings. In twenty years I have changed very much every way, but I have never ceased to feel self-contempt for my conduct to Amy Percival."

Now a new question arose.

Was it best to reveal this last secret to Charles? He had been content to take Percy, nameless and illegitimate. The Earl was extremely unwilling to extend his confidence further than Colonel Lunt. It seemed to him unnecessary. He said he desired to give Percy the same share of his property that his other

two daughters would receive on their marriage, but that he could not openly do this without exciting remarks and provoking unpleasant feelings. Colonel Lunt considered that the secret was not his to keep or reveal. So nothing was said, and the marriage took place at the house of the Earl; Colonel Lunt receiving from Percy's father ten thousand pounds, as some atonement by a wounded conscience.

"Now," said the Colonel, as he finished his long story, and we drove up to his house, "I say it was a mean cowardice that kept that man from doing his daughter justice. But then he was a scoundrel all through. And now for my reason for telling you. I have my doubts, after all, about the first marriage. There are the certificate and all the papers safe in my desk. Earls may die, and worms may eat them,—and so with their sons and daughters. It isn't among the impossibilities that my little Percy may be a countess yet! Any way, if an advertisement should appear calling for heirs to the Earl of Blank, somebody besides me and my little woman would know all about it."

Mrs. Lunt insisted on my stopping to tea with them, and I had a strange curiosity to look at Percy Lunt again, surrounded with this new halo, thrice circled, of mystery. If she only knew or guessed what she really was!

She sat by the fire, for the evening was a little cool, and, as we came in, roused herself from her sad posture to give me welcome. How white her face was! It was grievous to see such a young spirit so blanched,—so utterly unelastic. If she could receive tidings of

his death, she would reconcile herself to the inevitable; but this wearing, gnawing pain, this grief at his desertion, this dread of meeting him again after he had been willing to leave her so long,—death itself would be less bitter! But there were no words to console her with.

"You have had letters from Robert?" she inquired.

"Only a telegram came saying that the Barton boys were safe. It must have been a dreadful battle! They say twelve thousand were killed on each side."

"But you will hear very soon?"

"O, yes," I said, "but Robert must have his hands very full. He will write as soon as he has a minute of leisure."

Robert was colonel now, and we were very proud of him. He had not yet received a scratch, and he had been in eleven battles. We felt as if he bore a charmed life.

After tea, we four sat round the sparkling wood-fire, knitting and talking, (people in war-time have enough to talk about,) when a loud, sudden knock at the door startled us. The old knocker thumped again and again. The servant hurried to the door, and a moment after a man rushed by him, with swift and heavy steps into the parlor, caught up Percy as if she had been a feather, and held her tight to his heart and mouth.

He had not taken off his army cap, nor his blue great coat. We all sprang up at his entrance, of course, but I hadn't a thought who it could be, until Colonel Lunt called out "*Charles!*"

There he was, to be sure, as alive as he could be, with his great

red beard, and his face tanned and burnt like a brick! He took no notice of us whatever, only kept kissing Percy over and over, till her face, which was white as death, was covered with living crimson, and her heavy-lidded eyes turned to stars for brightness!

After her fashion, Percy still continued undemonstrative, so far as words went; but she clung most eloquently to his neck with both her hands, the joyful light from her eyes streaming silently into his. O, it was fair to see,—this might of human love,—this mystery that needed no solving! His face shedding fidelity and joyfulness, and her heart accepting it with a trust that had not one question!

In a few but most eloquent words he told us his adventures. But that would make a story by itself. A shipwreck,—and capture by Japanese pirates,—prison,—escape,—landing at Mobile,—pressed into the Rebel service,—battle,—prisoner to the Union forces,—glad taking of the oath of allegiance,—interview with General Banks, and service at last for the North. It was a wild, strange story of suffering, hardships, and wonderful escapes. Colonel Lunt said he never should have known the man, nor guessed at him, but for his eyes, he was so altered in every way,—so rough and strong-looking, with his complexion tanned and weather-beaten; and he had always been such a delicate, curled darling of indulgent parents! However, he looked twice the man he was before, Mrs. Lunt whispered me; and Percy could not take her eyes off him, he looked so strong and noble, and his face so full of high thoughts.

He had been in several battles, and had been wounded twice. After his first wound he had been some time in a Southern hospital. "And now I think of it, Percy," he said, turning suddenly to her, and taking her on his knee as if she had been a baby, "it was in a hospital that I found out where you were. You must know that I hadn't the least clew to your whereabouts, and thought of you as most likely still in London. You know our plan was to travel together for some months, and I could not guess where you might be, if indeed you were alive. After the battle the other day, I went into one of the improvised hospitals to look after some brave fellows of mine, when one of the nurses asked me for directions as to the burial of some men who had just been brought in. They had officers' uniforms on, and it was ascertained that they were really dead. As I turned to give the necessary directions, a man at my side, who was smoothing down the limbs of one who had just ceased to breathe, handed me a photograph from the man's breast, all ruffled and bloody. I recognized it in a moment as yours, Percy,—though how it should have been in that man's breast, I couldn't see."

Percy and I looked at each other. But we dared not think. He went on.

"I could not recognize him. But he was one of so many who were brought in on that terrible day after the battle, and except my own company I scarcely knew any of the officers. But I saw by the photograph where you were, at least the name on the back was a guide. It was Barton, Mass., and the date of April, 1861.

So, as I had worked pretty well at Antietam, Little Mac gave me a week's furlough, and I thought I would try it!"

"Do you remember at all how he looked?" Mrs. Lunt asked, for I could not speak.

"The young officer? Yes, Madam, I looked keenly at him, you may be sure. He was tall and fine-looking, with dark, curling hair, and his regular features were smiling and peaceful. They mostly look so who are shot dead at once. And this one had not suffered. He had died at the moment of triumph."

I went home to fear and to weep. It seemed too certain. And time brought us the truth. Robert had fallen as he would have chosen to fall, leading on his men. He was so tall, and he was such a shining mark for death! But I knew that no din of cannon or roar of battle was loud enough to overcome the still, small voices of home, and that his last thought was, as he wrote me it would be, "of you all."

O beautiful, valiant youth! O fearful ploughshare, tearing thy way through so many bleeding hearts! O terrible throes, out of which a new nation must be born!

IN THE HEMLOCKS

Most people receive with incredulity a statement of the number of birds that annually visit our climate. Very few even are aware of half the number that spend the summer in their own immediate vicinity. We little suspect, when we walk in the woods, whose privacy we are intruding upon,—what rare and elegant visitants from Mexico, from Central and South America, and from the islands of the sea, are holding their reunions in the branches over our heads, or pursuing their pleasure on the ground before us.

I recall the altogether admirable and shining family which Thoreau dreamed he saw in the upper chambers of Spaulding's woods, which Spaulding did not know lived there, and which were not put out when Spaulding, whistling, drove his team through their lower halls. They did not go into society in the village; they were quite well; they had sons and daughters; they neither wove nor spun; there was a sound as of suppressed hilarity.

I take it for granted that the forester was only saying a pretty thing of the birds, though I have observed that it does sometimes annoy them when Spaulding's cart rumbles through their house. Generally, however, they are as unconscious of Spaulding as Spaulding is of them.

Walking the other day in an old hemlock wood, I counted

over forty varieties of these summer visitants, many of them common to other woods in the vicinity, but quite a number peculiar to these ancient solitudes, and not a few that are rare in any locality. It is quite unusual to find so large a number abiding in one forest,—and that not a large one,—most of them nesting and spending the summer there. Many of those I observed commonly pass this season much farther north. But the geographical distribution of birds is rather a climatical one. The same temperature, though under different parallels, usually attracts the same birds; difference in altitude being equivalent to the difference in latitude. A given height above the sea level under the parallel of 30° may have the same climate as places under that of 35° , and similar Flora and Fauna. At the head-waters of the Delaware, where I write, the latitude is that of Boston, but the region has a much greater elevation, and hence a climate that compares better with the northern part of the State and of New England. Half a day's drive to the southeast brings me down into quite a different temperature, with an older geological formation, different forest timber, and different birds,—even with different mammals. Neither the little Gray Rabbit nor the little Gray Fox is found in my locality, but the great Northern Hare and the Red Fox are seen here. In the last century a colony of beavers dwelt here, though the oldest inhabitant cannot now point to even the traditional site of their dams. The ancient hemlocks, whither I propose to take the reader, are rich in many things beside birds. Indeed, their wealth in this respect is owing mainly, no doubt,

to their rank vegetable growths, their fruitful swamps, and their dark, sheltered retreats.

Their history is of an heroic cast. Ravished and torn by the tanner in his thirst for bark, preyed upon by the lumberman, assaulted and beaten back by the settler, still their spirit has never been broken, their energies never paralyzed. Not many years ago a public highway passed through them, but it was at no time a tolerable road; trees fell across it, mud and limbs choked it up, till finally travellers took the hint and went around; and now, walking along its deserted course, I see only the footprints of coons, foxes, and squirrels.

Nature loves such woods, and places her own seal upon them. Here she shows me what can be done with ferns and mosses and lichens. The soil is marrowy and full of innumerable forests. Standing in these fragrant aisles, I feel the strength of the vegetable kingdom and am awed by the deep and inscrutable processes of life going on so silently about me.

No hostile forms with axe or spud now visit these solitudes. The cows have half-hidden ways through them, and know where the best browsing is to be had. In spring the farmer repairs to their bordering of maples to make sugar; in July and August women and boys from all the country about penetrate the old Barkpeeling for raspberries and blackberries; and I know a youth who wonderingly follows their languid stream casting for trout.

In like spirit, alert and buoyant, on this bright June morning go I also to reap my harvest,—pursuing a sweet more delectable

than sugar, fruit more savory than berries, and game for another palate than that tickled by trout.

June, of all the months, the student of ornithology can least afford to lose. Most birds are nesting then, and in full song and plumage. And what is a bird without its song? Do we not wait for the stranger to speak? It seems to me that I do not know a bird till I have heard its voice; then I come nearer it at once, and it possesses a human interest to me. I have met the Gray-cheeked Thrush (*Turdus aliciae*) in the woods, and held him in my hand; still I do not know him. The silence of the Cedar-Bird throws a mystery about him which neither his good looks nor his petty larcenies in cherry time can dispel. A bird's song contains a clew to its life, and establishes a sympathy, an understanding, between itself and the admiring listener.

I descend a steep hill, and approach the hemlocks through a large sugar-bush. When twenty rods distant, I hear all along the line of the forest the incessant warble of the Red-eyed Flycatcher (*Vireosylvia olivacea*), cheerful and happy as the merry whistle of a schoolboy. He is one of our most common and widely distributed birds. Approach any forest at any hour of the day, in any kind of weather, from May to August, in any of the Middle or Eastern districts, and the chances are that the first note you hear will be his. Rain or shine, before noon or after, in the deep forest or in the village grove,—when it is too hot for the thrushes or too cold and windy for the warblers,—it is never out of time or place for this little minstrel to indulge his cheerful strain. In

the deep wilds of the Adirondac, where few birds are seen and fewer heard, his note was almost constantly in my ear. Always busy, making it a point never to suspend for one moment his occupation to indulge his musical taste, his lay is that of industry and contentment. There is nothing plaintive or especially musical in his performance, but the sentiment expressed is eminently that of cheerfulness. Indeed the songs of most birds have some human significance, which, I think, is the source of the delight we take in them. The song of the Bobolink, to me, expresses hilarity; the Song-Sparrow's, faith; the Bluebird's, love; the Cat-Bird's, pride; the White-eyed Fly-catcher's, self-consciousness; that of the Hermit-Thrush, spiritual serenity; while there is something military in the call of the Robin, and unalloyed contentment in the warble of the Red-eyed Vireo.

This bird is classed among the flycatchers, but is much more of a worm-eater, and has few of the traits or habits of the *Muscicapa* or the true *Sylvia*. He resembles somewhat the Warbling Vireo (*Vireo gilvus*), and the two birds are often confounded by careless observers. Both warble in the same cheerful strain, but the latter more continuously and rapidly. The Red-Eye is a larger, slimmer bird, with a faint bluish crown, and a light line over the eye. His movements are peculiar. You may see him hopping among the limbs, exploring the under side of the leaves, peering to the right and left,—now flitting a few feet, now hopping as many,—and warbling incessantly, occasionally in a subdued tone, which sounds from a very indefinite distance.

When he has found a worm to his liking, he turns lengthwise of the limb, and bruises its head with his beak before devouring it.

As I enter the woods the Slate-colored Snowbird (*Fringilla Hudsonia*) starts up before me and chirps sharply. His protest when thus disturbed is almost metallic in its sharpness. He breeds here, and is not esteemed a snowbird at all, as he disappears at the near approach of winter, and returns again in spring, like the Song-Sparrow, and is not in any way associated with the cold and the snow. So different are the habits of birds in different localities. Even the Crow does not winter here, and is seldom seen after December or before March.

The Snow-Bird, or "Black Chipping-Bird," as it is known among the farmers, is the finest architect of any of the ground-builders known to me. The site of its nest is usually some low bank by the roadside near a wood. In a slight excavation, with a partially concealed entrance, the exquisite structure is placed. Horse-hair and cow-hair are plentifully used, imparting to the interior of the nest great symmetry and firmness as well as softness.

Passing down through the maple arches, barely pausing to observe the antics of a trio of squirrels,—two gray ones and a black one,—I cross an ancient brush fence and am fairly within the old hemlocks, and in one of the most primitive, undisturbed nooks. In the deep moss I tread as with muffled feet, and the pupils of my eyes dilate in the dim, almost religious light. The irreverent red squirrels, however, run and snicker at my approach,

or mock the solitude with their ridiculous chattering and frisking.

This nook is the chosen haunt of the Winter Wren. This is the only place and these the only woods in which I find him in this vicinity. His voice fills these dim aisles, as if aided by some marvellous sounding-board. Indeed, his song is very strong for so small a bird, and unites in a remarkable degree brilliancy and plaintiveness. I think of a tremulous vibrating tongue of silver. You may know it is the song of a wren, from its gushing lyrical character; but you must needs look sharp to see the little minstrel, especially while in the act of singing. He is nearly the color of the ground and the leaves; he never ascends the tall trees, but keeps low, flitting from stump to stump and from root to root, dodging in and out of his hiding-places, and watching all intruders with a suspicious eye. He has a very perk, almost comical look. His tail stands more than perpendicular: it points straight toward his head. He is the least ostentatious singer I know of. He does not strike an attitude, and lift up his head in preparation, and, as it were, clear his throat; but sits there on the log and pours out his music, looking straight before him, or even down at the ground. As a songster, he has but few superiors. I do not hear him after the first week in July.

While sitting on this soft-cushioned log, tasting the pungent acidulous wood-sorrel (*Oxalis acetorella*), the blossoms of which, large and pink-veined, rise everywhere above the moss, a rufous-colored bird flies quickly past, and, alighting on a low limb a few rods off, salutes me with "Whew! Whew!" or "Whoit! Whoit!"

almost as you would whistle for your dog. I see by his impulsive, graceful movements, and his dimly speckled breast, that it is a Thrush. Presently he utters a few soft, mellow, flute-like notes, one of the most simple expressions of melody to be heard, and scuds away, and I see it is the Veery or Wilson's Thrush. He is the least of the Thrushes in size, being about that of the common Bluebird, and he may be distinguished from his relatives by the dimness of the spots upon his breast. The Wood-Thrush has very clear, distinct oval spots on a white ground; in the Hermit, the spots run more into lines, on a ground of a faint bluish-white; in the Veery, the marks are almost obsolete, and a few rods off his breast presents only a dull yellowish appearance. To get a good view of him you have only to sit down in his haunts, as in such cases he seems equally anxious to get a good view of you.

From those tall hemlocks proceeds a very fine insect-like warble, and occasionally I see a spray *teeter*, or catch the flit of a wing. I watch and watch till my head grows dizzy and my neck is in danger of permanent displacement, and still do not get a good view. Presently the bird darts, or, as it seems, falls down a few feet in pursuit of a fly or moth, and I see the whole of it, but in the dim light am undecided. It is for such emergencies that I have brought this gun. A bird in the hand is worth half a dozen in the bush, even for ornithological purposes; and no sure and rapid progress can be made in the study without taking life, without procuring specimens. This bird is a Warbler, plainly enough, from his habits and manner; but what kind of

Warbler? Look on him and name him: a deep orange or flame-colored throat and breast; the same color showing also in a line over the eye and in his crown; back variegated black and white. The female is less marked and brilliant. The Orange-throated Warbler would seem to be his right name, his characteristic cognomen; but no, he is doomed to wear the name of some discoverer, perhaps the first who robbed his nest or rifled him of his mate,—Blackburn; hence, Blackburnian Warbler. The *burn* seems appropriate enough, for in these dark evergreens his throat and breast show like flame. He has a very fine warble, suggesting that of the Redstart, but not especially musical. I find him in no other woods in this vicinity.

I am attracted by another warble in the same locality, and experience a like difficulty in getting a good view of the author of it. It is quite a noticeable strain, sharp and sibilant, and sounds well amid the old trees. In the upland woods of beech and maple it is a more familiar sound than in these solitudes. On taking the bird in your hand, even if you are not a young lady, you will probably exclaim, "How beautiful!" So tiny and elegant, the smallest of the Warblers; a delicate blue back, with a slight bronze-colored triangular spot between the shoulders; upper mandible black; lower mandible yellow as gold; throat yellow, becoming a dark bronze on the breast. Blue Yellow-Back he is called, though the yellow is much nearer a bronze. He is remarkably delicate and beautiful,—the handsomest, as he is the smallest, of the Warblers known to me. It is never without

surprise that I find amid these rugged, savage aspects of Nature creatures so fairy and delicate. But such is the law. Go to the sea or climb the mountain, and with the ruggedest and the savagest you will find likewise the fairest and the most delicate. The greatness and the minuteness of Nature pass all understanding.

Ever since I entered the woods, even while listening to the lesser songsters, or contemplating the silent forms about me, a strain has reached my ear from out the depths of the forest that to me is the finest sound in nature,—the song of the Hermit-Thrush. I often hear him thus a long way off, sometimes over a quarter of a mile away, when only the stronger and more perfect parts of his music reach me; and through the general chorus of Wrens and Warblers I detect this sound rising pure and serene, as if a spirit from some remote height were slowly chanting a divine accompaniment. This song appeals to the sentiment of the beautiful in me, and suggests a serene religious beatitude as no other sound in nature does. It is perhaps more of an evening than a morning hymn, though I hear it at all hours of the day. It is very simple, and I can hardly tell the secret of its charm. "O spherical, spherical!" he seems to say; "O holy, holy! O clear away, clear away! O clear up, clear up!" interspersed with the finest trills and the most delicate preludes. It is not a proud, gorgeous strain, like the Tanager's or the Grosbeak's; suggests no passion or emotion,—nothing personal,—but seems to be the voice of that calm, sweet solemnity one attains to in his best moments. It realizes a peace and a deep, solemn joy that only the finest

souls may know. A few nights ago I ascended a mountain to see the world by moonlight; and when near the summit the Hermit commenced his evening hymn a few rods from me. Listening to this strain on the lone mountain, with the full moon just rounded from the horizon, the pomp of your cities and the pride of your civilization seemed trivial and cheap.

Whether it is because of their rareness, or an accident of my observation, or a characteristic trait, I cannot tell, yet I have never known two of these birds to be singing at the same time in the same locality, rivalling each other, like the Wood-Thrush or the Veery. Shooting one from a tree, I have observed another take up the strain from almost the identical perch in less than ten minutes afterward. Later in the day, when I had penetrated the heart of the old Barkpeeling, I came suddenly upon one singing from a low stump, and for a wonder he did not seem alarmed, but lifted up his divine voice as if his privacy was undisturbed. I open his beak and find the inside yellow as gold. I was prepared to find it inlaid with pearls and diamonds, or to see an angel issue from it.

He is not much in the books. Indeed, I am acquainted with scarcely any writer on ornithology whose head is not muddled on the subject of our three prevailing song-thrushes, confounding either their figures or their songs. A writer in the Atlantic¹ gravely tells us the Wood-Thrush is sometimes called the Hermit, and then, after describing the song of the Hermit with great beauty and correctness, coolly ascribes it to the Veery! The

¹ For December, 1858.

new Cyclopædia, fresh from the study of Audubon, says the Hermit's song consists of a single plaintive note, and that the Veery's resembles that of the Wood-Thrush! These observations deserve to be preserved with that of the author of "Out-door Papers," who tells us the trill of the Hair-Bird (*Fringilla socialis*) is produced by the bird fluttering its wings upon its sides! The Hermit-Thrush may be easily identified by his color; his back being a clear olive-brown, becoming rufous on his rump and tail. A quill from his wing placed beside one from his tail, on a dark ground, presents quite a marked contrast.

I walk along the old road, and note the tracks in the thin layer of mud. When do these creatures travel here? I have never yet chanced to meet one. Here a partridge has set its foot; there, a woodcock; here, a squirrel or mink; there, a skunk; there, a fox. What a clear, nervous track Reynard makes! how easy to distinguish it from that of a little dog,—it is so sharply cut and defined! A dog's track is coarse and clumsy beside it. There is as much wildness in the track of an animal as in its voice. Is a deer's track like a sheep's or a goat's? What winged-footed fleetness and agility may be inferred from the sharp, braided track of the gray squirrel upon the new snow! Ah! in nature is the best discipline. I think the sculptor might carve finer and more expressive lines if he grew up in the woods, and the painter discriminate finer hues. How wood-life sharpens the senses, giving a new power to the eye, the ear, the nose! And are not the rarest and most exquisite songsters wood-birds?

Everywhere in these solitudes I am greeted with the pensive, almost pathetic note of the Wood-Pewee. Do you know the Pewees? They are the true Flycatchers, and are easily identified. They are very characteristic birds, have very strong family traits, and very pugnacious dispositions. Without any exception or qualification they are the homeliest or the least elegant birds of our fields or forest. Sharp-shouldered, big-headed, short-legged, of no particular color, of little elegance in flight or movement, with a disagreeable flirt of the tail, always quarrelling with their neighbors and with one another, no birds are so little calculated to excite pleasurable emotions in the beholder, or to become objects of human interest and affection. The King-Bird is the best-dressed member of the family, but he is a braggart; and, though always snubbing his neighbors, is an arrant coward, and shows the white feather at the slightest display of pluck in his antagonist. I have seen him turn tail to a Swallow, and have known the little Pewee in question to whip him beautifully. From the Great Crested to the Little Green Flycatcher, their ways and general habits are the same. Slow in flying from point to point, they yet have a wonderful quickness, and snap up the fleetest insects with little apparent effort. There is a constant play of quick, nervous movements underneath their outer show of calmness and stolidity. They do not scour the limbs and trees like the Warblers, but, perched upon the middle branches, wait like true hunters for the game to come along. There is often a very audible snap of the beak as they arrest their prey.

The Wood-Pewee, the prevailing species in this locality, arrests your attention by his sweet, pathetic cry. There is room for it also in the deep woods, as well as for the more prolonged and elevated strains. His mate builds an exquisite nest of moss on the side of some shelving cliff or overhanging rock. The other day, passing by a ledge near the top of a mountain in a singularly desolate locality, my eye rested upon one of these structures, looking precisely as if it grew there, so in keeping was it with the mossy character of the rock; and I have had a growing affection for the bird ever since. The rock seemed to love the nest and to claim it as its own. I said, What a lesson in architecture is here! Here is a house that was built, but built with such loving care and such beautiful adaptation of the means to the end, that it looks like a product of nature. The same wise economy is noticeable in the nests of all birds. No bird would paint its house white or red, or add aught for show.

Coming to a drier and less mossy place in the woods, I am amused with the Golden-crowned Thrush,—which, however, is no thrush at all, but a Warbler, the *Sciurus aurocapillus*. He walks on the ground ahead of me with such an easy gliding motion, and with such an unconscious, preoccupied air, jerking his head like a hen or a partridge, now hurrying, now slackening his pace, that I pause to observe him. If I sit down, he pauses to observe me, and extends his pretty ramblings on all sides, apparently very much engrossed with his own affairs, but never losing sight of me. But few of the birds are walkers, most being hoppers, like

the Robin. I recall only five species of the former among our ordinary birds,—the one in question, the Meadow-Lark, the Tit-Lark, the Cow-Bunting, and the Water-Wagtail (a relative of the Golden-Crown).

Satisfied that I have no hostile intentions, the pretty pedestrian mounts a limb a few feet from the ground, and gives me the benefit of one of his musical performances, a sort of accelerating chant. Commencing in a very low key, which makes him seem at a very uncertain distance, he grows louder and louder, till his body quakes and his chant runs into a shriek, ringing in my ears with a peculiar sharpness. This lay may be represented thus: "Teacher teacher, teacher, teacher teacher!"—the accent on the first syllable and each word uttered with increased force and shrillness. No writer with whom I am acquainted gives him credit for more musical ability than is displayed in this strain. Yet in this the half is not told. He has a far rarer song, which he reserves for some nymph whom he meets in the air. Mounting by easy flights to the top of the tallest tree, he launches into the air with a sort of suspended, hovering flight, like certain of the Finches, and bursts into a perfect ecstasy of song,—clear, ringing, copious, rivalling the Goldfinch's in vivacity, and the Linnet's in melody. This strain is one of the rarest bits of bird-melody to be heard. Over the woods, hid from view, the ecstatic singer warbles his finest strain. In this song you instantly detect his relationship to the Water-Wagtail (*Sciurus noveboracensis*),—erroneously called Water-Thrush,—whose song is likewise

a sudden burst, full and ringing, and with a tone of youthful joyousness in it, as if the bird had just had some unexpected good-fortune. For nearly two years this strain of the pretty walker was little more than a disembodied voice to me, and I was puzzled by it as Thoreau by his mysterious Night-Warbler, which, by the way, I suspect was no new bird at all, but one he was otherwise familiar with. The little bird himself seems disposed to keep the matter a secret, and improves every opportunity to repeat before you his shrill, accelerating lay, as if this were quite enough and all he laid claim to. Still, I trust I am betraying no confidence in making the matter public here. I think this is pre-eminently his love-song, as I hear it oftenest about the mating season. I have caught half-suppressed bursts of it from two birds chasing each other with fearful speed through the forest.

Turning to the left from the old road, I wander, over soft logs and gray yielding *débris*, across the little trout brook, until I emerge in the Barkpeeling,—pausing now and then on the way to admire a small, solitary white flower which rises above the moss, with radical, heart-shaped leaves, and a blossom precisely like the liverwort except in color, but which is not put down in my botany,—or to observe the ferns, of which I count six varieties, some gigantic ones nearly shoulder-high.

At the foot of a rough, scraggy yellow birch, on a bank of club-moss, so richly inlaid with partridge-berry and curious shining leaves,—with here and there in the bordering a spire of the false wintergreen (*Pyrola rotundifolia*) strung with faint pink flowers

and exhaling the breath of a May orchard,—that it looks too costly a couch for such an idler, I recline to note what transpires. The sun is just past the meridian, and the afternoon chorus is not yet in full tune. Most birds sing with the greatest spirit and vivacity in the forenoon, though there are occasional bursts later in the day, in which nearly all voices join; while it is not till the twilight that the full power and solemnity of the thrush's hymn is felt.

My attention is soon arrested by a pair of Humming-Birds, the Ruby-Throated, disporting themselves in a low bush a few yards from me. The female takes shelter amid the branches, and squeaks exultingly as the male, circling above, dives down as if to dislodge her. Seeing me, he drops like a feather on a slender twig, and in a moment both are gone. Then, as if by a preconcerted signal, the throats are all atune. I lie on my back with eyes half closed, and analyze the chorus of Warblers, Thrushes, Finches, and Flycatchers; while, soaring above all, a little withdrawn and alone, rises the divine soprano of the Hermit. That richly modulated warble proceeding from the top of yonder birch, and which unpractised ears would mistake for the voice of the Scarlet Tanager, comes from that rare visitant, the Rose-breasted Grosbeak. It is a strong, vivacious strain, a bright noonday song, full of health and assurance, indicating fine talents in the performer, but not genius. As I come up under the tree he casts his eye down at me, but continues his song. This bird is said to be quite common in the Northwest, but he is rare

in the Eastern districts. His beak is disproportionately large and heavy, like a huge nose, which slightly mars his good looks; but Nature has made it up to him in a blush rose upon his breast, and the most delicate of pink linings to the under side of his wings. His back is variegated black and white, and when flying low the white shows conspicuously. If he passed over your head, you would note the delicate flush under his wings.

That bit of bright scarlet on yonder dead hemlock, glowing like a live coal against the dark background, seeming almost too brilliant for the severe Northern climate, is his relative, the Scarlet Tanager. I occasionally meet him in the deep hemlocks, and know no stronger contrast in nature. I almost fear he will kindle the dry limb on which he alights. He is quite a solitary bird, and in this section seems to prefer the high, remote woods, even going quite to the mountain's top. Indeed, the event of my last visit to the mountain was meeting one of these brilliant creatures near the summit, in full song. The breeze carried the notes far and wide. He seemed to enjoy the elevation, and I imagined his song had more scope and freedom than usual. When he had flown far down the mountain-side, the breeze still brought me his finest notes. In plumage he is the most brilliant bird we have. The Bluebird is not entirely blue; nor will the Indigo-bird bear a close inspection, nor the Goldfinch, nor the Summer Redbird. But the Tanager loses nothing by a near view; the deep scarlet of his body and the black of his wings and tail are quite perfect. This is his holiday suit; in the fall he becomes a dull green,—the

color of the female the whole season.

One of the leading songsters in this choir of the old Barkpeeling is the Purple Finch or Linnet. He sits somewhat apart, usually on a dead hemlock, and warbles most exquisitely. He is one of our finest songsters, and stands at the head of the Finches, as the Hermit at the head of the Thrushes. His song approaches an ecstasy, and, with the exception of the Winter Wren's, is the most rapid and copious strain to be heard in these woods. It is quite destitute of the trills and the liquid, silvery, bubbling notes that characterize the Wren's; but there runs through it a round, richly modulated whistle, very sweet and very pleasing. The call of the Robin is brought in at a certain point with marked effect, and, throughout, the variety is so great and the strain so rapid that the impression is as of two or three birds singing at the same time. He is not common here, and I only find him in these or similar woods. His color is peculiar, and looks as if it might have been imparted by dipping a brown bird in diluted pokeberry juice. Two or three more dippings would have made the purple complete. The female is the color of the Song-Sparrow, a little larger, with heavier beak, and tail much more forked.

In a little opening quite free from brush and trees I step down to bathe my hands in the brook, when a small, light slate-colored bird flutters out of the bank, not three feet from my head, as I stoop down, and, as if severely lamed or injured, flutters through the grass and into the nearest bush. As I do not follow, but remain

near the nest, she *chips* sharply, which brings the male, and I see it is the Speckled Canada Warbler. I find no authority in the books for this bird to build upon the ground, yet here is the nest, made chiefly of dry grass, set in a slight excavation in the bank, not two feet from the water, and looking a little perilous to anything but ducklings or sandpipers. There are two young birds and one little specked egg, just pipped. But how is this? what mystery is here? One nestling is much larger than the other, monopolizes most of the nest, and lifts its open mouth far above that of its companion, though obviously both are of the same age, not more than a day old. Ah! I see;—the old trick of the Cow-Bunting, with a stinging human significance. Taking the interloper by the nape of the neck, I deliberately drop it into the water, but not without a pang, as I see its naked form, convulsed with chills, float down stream. Cruel! So is Nature cruel. I take one life to save two. In less than two days this pot-bellied intruder would have caused the death of the two rightful occupants of the nest; so I step in and divert things into their proper channel again.

It is a singular freak of Nature, this instinct which prompts one bird to lay its eggs in the nests of others, and thus shirk the responsibility of rearing its own young. The Cow-Buntings always resort to this cunning trick; and when one reflects upon their numbers it is evident that these little tragedies are quite frequent. In Europe the parallel case is that of the Cuckoo, and occasionally our own Cuckoo imposes upon a Robin or a Thrush in the same manner. The Cow-Bunting seems to have

no conscience about the matter, and, so far as I have observed, invariably selects the nest of a bird smaller than itself. Its egg is usually the first to hatch; its young overreaches all the rest when food is brought; it grows with great rapidity, spreads and fills the nest, and the starved and crowded occupants soon perish, when the parent bird removes their dead bodies, giving its whole energy and care to the foster-child.

The Warblers and smaller Flycatchers are generally the sufferers, though I sometimes see the Slate-colored Snowbird unconsciously duped in like manner; and the other day, in a tall tree in the woods, I discovered the Black-throated Green-backed Warbler devoting itself to this dusky, overgrown foundling. An old farmer to whom I pointed out the fact was much surprised that such things should happen in his woods without his knowledge.

From long observation it is my opinion that the male Bunting selects the nest into which the egg is to be deposited, and exercises a sort of guardianship over it afterward, lingering in the vicinity and uttering his peculiar, liquid, glassy note from the tops of the tall trees.

The Speckled Canada is a very superior Warbler, having a lively, animated strain, reminding you of certain parts of the Canary's, though quite broken and incomplete; the bird the while hopping amid the branches with increased liveliness, and indulging in fine sibilant chirps, too happy to keep silent.

His manners are very marked. He has a habit of curtsying

when he discovers you, which is very pretty. In form he is a very elegant bird, somewhat slender, his back of a bluish lead-color becoming nearly black on his crown; the under part of his body, from his throat down, is of a light, delicate yellow, with a belt of black dots across his breast. He has a very fine eye, surrounded by a light yellow ring.

The parent birds are much disturbed by my presence, and keep up a loud, emphatic chirping, which attracts the attention of their sympathetic neighbors, and one after another they come to see what has happened. The Chestnut-Sided and the Blackburnian come in company. The Black-and-Yellow Warbler pauses a moment and hastens away; the Maryland Yellow-Throat peeps shyly from the lower bushes and utters his "Fip! fip!" in sympathy; the Wood-Pewee comes straight to the tree overhead, and the Red-eyed Vireo lingers and lingers, eyeing me with a curious, innocent look, evidently much puzzled. But all disappear again, one after another, apparently without a word of condolence or encouragement to the distressed pair. I have often noticed among birds this show of sympathy,—if indeed it be sympathy, and not merely curiosity, or a feeling of doubt concerning their own safety.

An hour afterward I approach the place, find all still, and the mother bird upon the nest. As I draw near she seems to sit closer, her eyes growing large with an inexpressibly wild, beautiful look. She keeps her place till I am within two paces of her, when she flutters away as at first. In the brief interval the remaining egg

has hatched, and the two little nestlings lift their heads without being jostled or overreached by any strange bedfellow. A week afterward and they are flown away,—so brief is the infancy of birds. And the wonder is that they escape, even for this short time, the skunks and minks and muskrats that abound here, and that have a decided partiality for such tidbits.

I pass on through the old Barkpeeling, now threading an old cow-path or an overgrown wood-road; now clambering over soft and decayed logs, or forcing my way through a network of briars and hazel; now entering a perfect bower of wild-cherry, beech, and soft-maple; now emerging into a little grassy lane, golden with buttercups or white with daisies, or wading waist-deep in the red raspberry-bushes.

Whir! whir! whir! and a brood of half-grown Partridges start up like an explosion, a few paces from me, and, scattering, disappear in the bushes on all sides. Let me sit down here behind this screen of ferns and briars, and hear this wild-hen of the woods call together her brood. Have you observed at what an early age the Partridge flies? Nature seems to concentrate her energies on the wing, making the safety of the bird a point to be looked after first; and while the body is covered with down, and no signs of feathers are visible, the wing-quills sprout and unfold, and in an incredibly short time the young make fair headway in flying.

The same rapid development of wing may be observed in chickens and turkeys, but not in water-fowls, nor in birds that

are safely housed in the nest till full-fledged. The other day, by a brook, I came suddenly upon a young Sandpiper, a most beautiful creature, enveloped in a soft gray down, swift and nimble, and apparently a week or two old, but with no signs of plumage either of body or wing. And it needed none, for it escaped me by taking to the water as readily as if it had flown with wings.

Hark! There arises over there in the brush a soft, persuasive cooing, a sound so subtile and wild and unobtrusive that it requires the most alert and watchful ear to hear it. How gentle and solicitous and full of yearning love! It is the voice of the mother hen. Presently a faint, timid "Yeap!" which almost eludes the ear, is heard in various directions,—the young responding. As no danger seems near, the cooing of the parent bird is soon a very audible clucking call, and the young move cautiously in the direction. Let me step never so carefully from my hiding-place, and all sounds instantly cease, and I search in vain for either parent or young.

The Partridge (*Bonasa umbellus*) is one of our most native and characteristic birds. The woods seem good to be in where I find him. He gives a habitable air to the forest, and one feels as if the rightful occupant was really at home. The woods where I do not find him seem to want something, as if suffering from some neglect of Nature. And then he is such a splendid success, so hardy and vigorous. I think he enjoys the cold and the snow. His wings seem to rustle with more fervency in midwinter. If the snow falls very fast, and promises a heavy storm, he will

complacently sit down and allow himself to be snowed under. Approaching him at such times, he suddenly bursts out of the snow at your feet, scattering the flakes in all directions, and goes humming away through the woods like a bomb-shell,—a picture of native spirit and success.

His drum is one of the most welcome and beautiful sounds of spring. Scarcely have the trees showed their buds, when, in the still April mornings, or toward nightfall, you hear the hum of his devoted wings. He selects not, as you would predict, a dry and resinous log, but a decayed and crumbling one, seeming to give the preference to old oak-logs that are partially blended with the soil. If a log to his taste cannot be found, he sets up his altar on a rock, which becomes resonant beneath his fervent blows. Have you seen the Partridge drum? It is the next thing to catching a weasel asleep, though by much caution and tact it may be done. He does not hug the log, but stands very erect, expands his ruff, gives two introductory blows, pauses half a second, and then resumes, striking faster and faster till the sound becomes a continuous, unbroken whir, the whole lasting less than half a minute. The tips of his wings barely brush the log, so that the sound is produced rather by the force of the blows upon the air and upon his own body as in flying. One log will be used for many years, though not by the same drummer. It seems to be a sort of temple, and held in great respect. The bird always approaches it on foot, and leaves it in the same quiet manner, unless rudely disturbed. He is very cunning, though his wit is not profound. It

is very difficult to approach him by stealth; you will try many times before succeeding; but seem to pass by him in a great hurry, making all the noise possible, and with plumage furred he stands as immovable as a knot, allowing you a good view and a good shot, if you are a sportsman.

Passing along one of the old barkpeelers' roads which wander aimlessly about, I am attracted by a singularly brilliant and emphatic warble, proceeding from the low bushes, and quickly suggesting the voice of the Maryland Yellow-Throat. Presently the singer hops up on a dry twig, and gives me a good view. Lead-colored head and neck, becoming nearly black on the breast; clear olive-green back, and yellow belly. From his habit of keeping near the ground, even hopping upon it occasionally, I know him to be a Ground-Warbler; from his dark breast the ornithologist has added the expletive Mourning, hence the Mourning Ground-Warbler.

Of this bird both Wilson and Audubon confessed their comparative ignorance, neither ever having seen its nest or become acquainted with its haunts and general habits. Its song is quite striking and novel, though its voice at once suggests the class of Warblers, to which it belongs. It is very shy and wary, flying but a few feet at a time, and studiously concealing itself from your view. I discover but one pair here. The female has food in her beak, but carefully avoids betraying the locality of her nest. The Ground-Warblers all have one notable feature,—very beautiful legs, as white and delicate as if they had always

worn silk stockings and satin slippers. High tree Warblers have dark brown or black legs and more brilliant plumage, but less musical ability.

The Chestnut-Sided belongs to the latter class. He is quite common in these woods, as in all the woods about. He is one of the rarest and handsomest of the Warblers; his white breast and throat, chestnut sides, and yellow crown show conspicuously. Audubon did not know his haunts, and had never seen his nest or known any naturalist who had. Last year I found the nest of one in an uplying beech-wood, in a low bush near the roadside, where cows passed and browsed daily. Things went on smoothly till the Cow-Bunting stole her egg into it, when other mishaps followed, and the nest was soon empty. A characteristic attitude of the male during this season is a slight drooping of the wings, and tail a little elevated, which gives him a very smart, bantam-like appearance. His song is fine and hurried, and not much of itself, but has its place in the general chorus.

A far sweeter strain, falling on the ear with the true sylvan cadence, is that of the Black-throated Green-backed Warbler, whom I meet at various points. He has no superiors among the true *Sylvia*. His song is very plain and simple, but remarkably pure and tender, and might be indicated by straight lines, thus, – –V–; the first two marks representing two sweet, silvery notes, in the same pitch of voice, and quite unaccented; the latter marks, the concluding notes, wherein the tone and inflection are changed. The throat and breast of the male are a rich black, like

velvet, his face yellow, and his back a yellowish green.

Beyond the Barkpeeling, where the woods are mingled hemlock, beech, and birch, the languid midsummer note of the Black-throated Blue-Back falls on my ear. "Twea, twea, tweae-e!" in the upward slide, and with the peculiar *z-ing* of certain insects, but not destitute of a certain plaintive cadence. It is one of the most languid, unhurried sounds in all the woods. I feel like reclining upon the dry leaves at once. Audubon says he has never heard his love-song; but this is all the love-song he has, and he is evidently a very plain hero with his little brown mistress. He is not the bird you would send to the princess to "cheep and twitter twenty million loves"; she would go to sleep while he was piping. He assumes few attitudes, and is not a bold and striking gymnast, like many of his kindred. He has a preference for dense woods of beech and maple, moves slowly amid the lower branches and smaller growths, keeping from eight to ten feet from the ground, and repeating now and then his listless, indolent strain. His back and crown are dark blue; his throat and breast, black; his belly, pure white; and he has a white spot on each wing.

Here and there I meet the Black and White Creeping-Warbler, whose fine strain reminds me of hair-wire. It is unquestionably the finest bird-song to be heard. Few insect strains will compare with it in this respect; while it has none of the harsh, brassy character of the latter, being very delicate and tender.

That sharp, interrupted, but still continued warble, which, before one has learned to discriminate closely, he is apt to

confound with the Red-eyed Vireo's, is that of the Solitary Warbling Vireo,—a bird slightly larger, much rarer, and with a louder, less cheerful and happy strain. I see him hopping along lengthwise of the limbs, and note the orange tinge of his breast and sides and the white circle around his eye.

But the declining sun and the deepening shadows admonish me that this ramble must be brought to a close, even though only the leading characters in this chorus of forty songsters have been described, and only a small portion of the venerable old woods explored. In a secluded swampy corner of the old Barkpeeling, where I find the great purple orchis in bloom, and where the foot of man or beast seems never to have trod, I linger long, contemplating the wonderful display of lichens and mosses that overrun both the smaller and the larger growths. Every bush and branch and sprig is dressed up in the most rich and fantastic of liveries; and, crowning all, the long bearded moss festoons the branches or sways gracefully from the limbs. Every twig looks a century old, though green leaves tip the end of it. A young yellow birch has a venerable, patriarchal look, and seems ill at ease under such premature honors. A decayed hemlock is draped as if by hands for some solemn festival.

Mounting toward the upland again, I pause reverently as the hush and stillness of twilight come upon the woods. It is the sweetest, ripest hour of the day. And as the Hermit's evening hymn goes up from the deep solitude below me, I experience that serene exaltation of sentiment of which music, literature,

and religion are but the faint types and symbols.

LAST DAYS OF WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

PART III

CONCLUSION

Landor has frequently been ridiculed for insisting upon an orthography peculiar at present to himself, and this ridicule has been bestowed most mercilessly, because of the supposition that he was bent upon revolutionizing the English language merely for the sake of singularity. But Landor has logic on his side, and it would be wise to heed authoritative protests against senseless innovations that bid fair to destroy the symmetry of words, and which, fifty years hence, will render the tracing of their derivation an Herculean task, unless Trenches multiply in proportion to the necessities of the times. If I ever wished the old lion to put forth all the majesty of his indignation, I had only to whisper the cabalistic words, "Phonetic spelling!" Yet Landor was not very exacting. In the "Last Fruit off an Old Tree," he says, through his medium, Pericles, who is giving advice to Alcibiades: "Every time we pronounce a word different

from another, we show our disapprobation of his manner, and accuse him of rusticity. In all common things we must do as others do. It is more barbarous to undermine the stability of a language than of an edifice that hath stood as long. This is done by the introduction of changes. Write as others do, but only as the best of others; and, if one eloquent man forty or fifty years ago spoke and wrote differently from the generality of the present, follow him, though alone, rather than the many. But in pronunciation we are not indulged in this latitude of choice; we must pronounce as those do who favor us with their audience." Landor only claimed to write as the best of others do, and in his own name protests to Southey against misconstruction. "One would represent me as attempting to undermine our native tongue; another, as modernizing; a third, as antiquating it. *Wheras*" (Landor's spelling) "I am trying to underprop, not to undermine; I am trying to stop the man-milliner at his ungainly work of trimming and flouncing; I am trying to show how graceful is our English, not in its stiff decrepitude, not in its riotous luxuriance, but in its hale mid-life. I would make bad writers follow good ones, and good ones accord with themselves. If all cannot be reduced into order, is that any reason why nothing should be done toward it? If languages and men too are imperfect, must we never make an effort to bring them a few steps nearer to what is preferable?"

It is my great good fortune to possess a copy of Landor's works made curious and peculiarly valuable by the author's own

revisions and corrections, and it is most interesting to wander through these volumes, wherein almost every page is a battlefield between the writer and his arch-enemy, the printer. The final *l* in *still* and *till* is ignominiously blotted out; *exclaim* is written *exclame*; a *d* is put over the obliterated *a* in *steady*; *t* is substituted *t* is substituted for the second *s* in *confessed* and kindred words; *straightway* is shorn of *gh*; *pontiff* is allowed but one *f*. Landor spells *honor* in what we call the modern way, without the *u*; and the *r* and *e* in *sceptre* change places. A dash of the pen cancels the *s* in *isle* and the final *e* in *wherefore*, *therefore*, &c. *Simile* is terminated with a *y*; the imperfect of the verbs *to milk*, *to ask*, etc., is spelled with a *t*; *whereat* loses its second *e*, and *although* is deprived of its last three letters. To his poem of "Guidone and Lucia" has been added this final verse:—

"The sire had earned with gold his son's release
And led him home; at home he died in peace.
His soul was with Lucia, and he praid
To meet again soon, soon, that happier maid.
This wish was granted, for the Powers above
Abound in mercy and delight in love."

And to this verse is appended the following note: "If the pret. and partic. of *lay* is *laid*, of *say*, *said*, that of *pray* must be *praid*. We want a lexiconomist."

In his lines entitled "New Style," which are a burlesque on Wordsworth, Landor introduces a new verse:—

"Some one (I might have asked her who)
Has given her a locket;
I, more considerate, brought her two
Potatoes in each pocket."

Landor has been accused of an unwarrantable dislike to the manufacture of words; but so far from true is this, that I have known him to indulge with great felicity in words of his own coining, when conversation chanced to take a humorous turn. He makes Sam. Johnson say that "all words are good which come when they are wanted; all which come when they are not wanted should be dismissed." Tooke, in the same conversation, cites Cicero as one who, not contented with new spellings, created new words; but Tooke further declares, that "only one valuable word has been received into our language since my birth, or perhaps since yours. I have lately heard *appreciate* for *estimate*." To which Johnson replies: "Words taken from the French should be amenable, in their spelling, to English laws and regulations. *Appreciate* is a good and useful one; it signifies more than *estimate* or *value*; it implies 'to value justly.'"

Taking up one day Dean Trench's excellent little book on "The Study of Words," which lay on my table, Landor expressed a desire to read it. He brought it back not long afterward, enriched with notes, and declared himself to have been much pleased with the manner in which the Dean had treated a subject so deeply interesting to himself. I have singled out a few of these

notes, that student of etymology may read the criticisms of so able a man. Dean Trench is taken to task for a misuse of *every where* in making two words of it. Landor puts the question, "Is the Dean ignorant that *everywhere* is one word, and *where* is no substantive?" Trench asserts that *caprice* is from *capra*, "a goat," whereupon his critic says, "No,—then it would be capracious. It is from *caper*—*capere*." *To retract*, writes Trench, means properly, as its derivation declares, no more than to handle over again, to reconsider; Landor declares that "it means more. *Retrahere* is to draw back." But he very vehemently approves of the Dean's remarks on the use of the word *talents*. We should say "a man of talents," not "of talent," for that is nonsense, though "of a talent" would be allowable.

"Κοσμος is both 'world' and 'ornament,' hence 'cosmetic,'" writes Landor in answer to a doubt expressed by Trench whether the well-known quotation from St. James, "The tongue is a world of iniquity," could not also be translated, as some maintain, "the ornament of iniquity." Making use of the expression "redolent of scorn" in connection with words that formerly expressed sacred functions and offices, Landor adds: "Gray is highly poetical in his 'redolent of joy and youth.' The word is now vilely misused daily." "By and bye," writes the Dean. "Why write *bye*?" asks his commentator. Once or twice Landor credits Horne Tooke with what the Dean gives as his own, and occasionally scores an observation as old. "Why won't people say *messenger*?" he demands. "By what right is *messenger* made out of *message*?"

"Have you nothing else for the old man to read? have you nothing American?" Landor inquired upon returning Trench. Desiring to obtain the verdict of one so high in authority, I gave him Drake's "Culprit Fay," and some fugitive verses by M. C. Field, whose poems have never been collected in book form. Of the latter's "Indian Hunting the Buffaloes," "Night on the Prairie," "Les Très Marias," and others, known to but few readers now, Landor spoke in high commendation, and this praise will be welcome to those friends of "Phazma" still living, and still loving the memory of him who died early, and found, as he wished, an ocean grave. With "The Culprit Fay" came a scrap of paper on which was written: "The Culprit Fay is rich in imagination,—few poems more so. Drake is among the noblest of names, and this poem throws a fresh lustre on it." Observing in this poem a misuse of the exclamation "Oh!" Landor remarked, "'Oh!' properly is an expression of grief or pain. 'O!' without the aspirate may express pleasure or hope." Current literature rarely makes any distinction between the two, and even good writers stumble through carelessness.

Style in writing was one of Landor's favorite topics, and his ire was rarely more quickly excited than by placing before him a specimen of high-flown sentimentality. He would put on his spectacles, exclaim, "What is this?" and, having read a few lines, would throw the book down, saying, "I have not the patience to read such stuff. It may be very fine, but I cannot understand it. It is beyond me." He had little mercy to bestow

upon transcendentalists, though he praised Emerson one day,—a marvellous proof of high regard when it is considered how he detested the school to which Emerson belongs. "Emerson called on me when he was in Florence many years ago, and a very agreeable visit I had from him. He is a very clever man, and might be cleverer if he were less sublimated. But then you Americans, practical as you are, are fond of soaring in high latitudes." Carlyle in his last manner had the same effect upon Landor's nerves as a discord in music produces upon a sensitive ear. "Ah," said he with a quizzical smile, "'Frederick the Great' convinces me that I write two dead languages,—Latin and English!"

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