

Choice Literature.

AUTUMNAL.

The crisp, chill dusk ; the gardens desolate ;
The crimsoning sun ; the fields that late have
ta'en
A ghostly semblance, and the corn-stalks lain
In vague bronze heaps ; dim orchards whilom
great
With golden apple-discs or pears, and weight
With oozy plums that bore the regal stain ;
The hazy hills—these hint the iron reign
Of Winter ushered in in silvery state.
E'en with the chill and sear, the doleful air
Of Nature, who in cold, dark rain-drops
grieves,
There is a comfort when one visions where
Are glowing stoves, beyond the windy eaves,
And savoury tables, love's warm kisses there,
And kindest rays the soft, rose lamplight
weaves.

Jos. Nevin Doyle, in The Week.

NEST BUILDING AND BIRD SONG.

Probably of all nests builded by birds in this locality, the most unique is that of the humming-bird. It is about five inches in circumference and just one and a half deep on the outside, and is fashioned of the softest of white stuff apparently the floss of the poplar, while over it all is ingeniously laid fine bits of fawn and pale green lichen so that it is a marvellous imitation of the bark of the branch whereon it rests, and for this reason it is difficult to distinguish it from a knot of the tree, fastened too as it is close on the limb with not a small branch on any side for support. Over the lichen is spun an invisible veil, fine like a very fine cobweb, and there is about it a warm odor like old wool or dry moss. In this nest just two pale tiny eggs are laid, and indeed there would scarce be room for another, so small is the soft hollow.

Another interesting nest is that of the wild canary. A snug one has been built yearly during the last five years in the heart of a blossoming bush here on the hillside ; each time in the same cluster of twigs, the old one having been removed every season directly after the young birds had flown. This nest is composed of bits of wool, floss, white cotton thread and grey grasses, and before or about the time the first egg has been laid, along comes a lazy cuckoo, sliding noiselessly, thief-like, from bough to bough, and depositing in this nest a brown-speckled egg twice the size of the canary. Then when hatching-time arrives and the young birds appear and grow a little, the young cuckoo, ingrate that it is, flops about and with its strong wings turns out of their home to perish the offspring of the sweet yellow bird. Every year I have watched this nest and taken from it the objectionable egg, and one year I found a second one, after the canaries had deserted the nest, imbedded in the grasses and wool, it having been laid of course before the completion of the nest, and thus covered over, it had remained unharmed during the rearing of the yellow brood.

This year, just as the canary had fashioned a fine nest in the old place, a wild wind came out of the south and tore it away, so I doubt if the bird will ever build there again. How wonderful ! this building of nests year after year in the same spot, this memory of birds, inasmuch as there is such a vast tract of country wherein to go astray and so countless a number of trees to mislead. A few years ago, along the bay shore a phoebe built its nest in a robin's nest of the preceding summer. The following year the robins arrived first and placed their nest on the two old ones, and again the next year the phoebes were lords of the tower, and so they builded alternately until six or seven nests were piled one on the other, when the spot was forsaken for a new site.

Doubtless the most comfortable of nests is the swinging nest of the oriole. Narrow and deep, and woven of soft, light colored material, it is fastened to the drooping boughs of some tall elm, out of the reach of the small boy, and in it the mother birds sits and swings through the hot summer days, the winds singing to her in fair weather, no harm molesting when storm is abroad, for the nest is builded

and hung so deftly, that the entrance is protected against the sky out of which the summer storms come.

For us the oriole has sung his last song this year, because the autumn has no food for him and he has gone south again, not so much, it is believed, to avoid the cold as to find good feeding fields for the winter. What songs he sang when the apple-trees were in flower ! His brilliant orange and black plumage all aglow against the pink and white blossoms. Then were the orchards merry with his music, for he hunted them the day long for food. We used to whistle sometimes, at best a poor imitation of his singing, yet he answered us. It is interesting, the study of bird-song and of birds' perception of musical sounds. Many times in the summer when there is music in the house, mocking-birds come about the open windows and struggle on through broken song in a mad endeavour to follow the notes of the instrument. Go out into any large garden after sunset when the mocking-birds and other singers are silent. Whistle some light air, and presently the shadows will be full of song, and it is good to feel you thus have power to make birds sing. Then, too, on a grey morning even a loon will answer you out of the mist if you imitate its note, though not, I fancy, because of any inspiration of music like that which whistling possesses for other birds—rather in all probability, it takes you for its mate and gives call for call.

Helen M. Merrill, in The Week.

OUT-DOOR SKETCHES.

THE SPRING FLOWERS.

A "late spring" has its advantages, as it generally secures a longer term of existence for the sweet spring flowers—the most charming of all our native flora. The unusually cold May and June of this year greatly prolonged the frontier between spring and summer, and, if it made the early flowers somewhat later in blossoming, at least kept them much longer with us. The bloodroot (*Sanguinaria*) usually over by the beginning of May, lasted, in some localities, till the middle of it. The lovely three-leaved lilies or trilliums, continued with us all through May, being found in some shady places even after June 1st. The wild violets—purple, yellow and white—lasted well into June, and the bright graceful scarlet columbine (often called by the children "honeysuckle") remained in bloom in some spots till the end of June, and even beyond it, wild roses and columbines thus being in bloom at the same time. The first opening columbines I found in the second week in May, and the last I know of was still blooming, within sight of orange lilies, on July 12th—this faithful flower thus continuing this year two full months in bloom. But owing to the lateness and coldness of the early spring, most of our spring flowers were this year included within the covers of May. For in it there were blooming not only the shadflower, the bloodroot, the trillium, the pretty plummy (*dicentra*), the arun, the columbine, the Canadian honeysuckle, the violets, the addertongue, the saxifrage, the convallarias and their connection, the smilacina, the slender mitrewort and its pretty cousin, the tiarella—the graceful purple crane-bill geranium and its distant relation, the white anemone ; all these and many other less conspicuous flowers "too numerous to mention," especially in their long-winded Latin nomenclature. Then June, in its turn, brought on its graceful troop, many of the May flowers lapping over into June, so that there was a profusion of bloom all through these two months. Among those that cluster thickly on the borderland are the more shrubby flowers, the aralia, the originseng, the actaea with its "white feathery clusters," the osmorrhiza, the blue cohosh, the viburnum or wild snowball, the chokecherry, the dogwood, with a host of smaller blossoms, such as the charming little white *trientalis*, the pretty drooping purple blossoms of the pentstemon, the white clusters of the arenaria, and all the more common, though sometimes despised, bloom that springs about our daily paths. The little weekly flower notices in the *Montreal Star*, giving a brief description and woodcut of our principal spring flowers, have given to many a new inter-

est in the flowers they often passed by, classing them under the generic name of "mayflowers." There may not be much in a name—regarded by itself ; yet somehow, the fact that we can call a thing by its right name seems to give it a new interest. "A rose by any name may smell as sweet," but what sweet visions does not the very name of a rose suggest ? It is doubtful whether we should take quite the same interest in our friends if we could not call them by their names, and so the ability to find out the right names for our flowers of spring has this year given an added zest to many a woodland walk, and grave professional men and working men and women, as well as the happy young idlers in spring woods, have this spring been attracted to spend delightful hours in looking for and identifying the wildflowers thus brought before their notice. The *Star* has thus done a real service in stimulating an intelligent love of nature among its readers.

But the longest spring must pass into summer, and so one by one the sweet spring flowers drooped, faded and passed into the maturer stage of development. The pretty brambleberry blossoms, as well as the less showy ones of strawberry and raspberry, have fulfilled their mission by becoming the delicious fruit that becomes a staple of our summer food ; the chokecherry and alder and shadflower have furnished many a meal for the birds ; the nuts are getting ready for the squirrels, and the bright scarlet clusters of the actaea rubra and the white waxen ones of the white variety, shine out amid the woodland with a brilliancy which even their snowy blossom did not possess, for, after all, it is the harvest time which is the glory of the year. But still, it is the spring-time—full of the indefinite delight of hope—"which is its chief charm," and it is with a wistful regret that we, each year, bid adieu to the budding and blossoming of spring-tide, even though it is the beneficent law of nature that beauty of the flower is but the precursor and promise of the matured fruit.

Fidelis, in The Week.

JUST THE LITTLE THINGS.

The last touches in finishing a piece of work are of more importance than many careless persons remember. Who has not suffered great inconvenience because the buttons on a garment were not firmly sewed on ? Buttons, every one knows, have a strange perversity in parting from their fastenings just at the moment when there is not a minute to spare to sew them on again. A little care when the garment is finished or sent home from the shop to see that every button is secure saves endless future worry and trouble. No woman appears well dressed, no matter how costly and handsome her costume may be if an effect of untidiness is given by a missing button from dress or glove, bows pinned instead of sewed on, and a frayed appearance at the bottom of the skirts. Just a little care and thought given to these trifles would remedy this evil.

In setting the table, how much more tempting and attractive appearance it will present if the cloth is clean, and laid perfectly straight on the table, the dishes and glasses shining bright, the meat and other articles of food tastefully arranged on their respective dishes (not piled on, quite regardless of appearance), and a few flowers for the centre of the table, even if they be nothing more than a bunch of fresh clovers, a few fern fronds or a cluster of those yellow daisies, with the rich brown eyes, gives a finished, inviting aspect to the table that whets, in no small degree, the appetite. In the country there need be no difficulty in procuring something fresh and green, for the table the whole year round, but how often we see that where there is an abundance of anything, there is it the least used and appreciated.

When sending a gift to a friend, a little attention given to the simple matter of wrapping it up, often adds to its value, and to the pleasure of the recipient. There is nothing particularly wrong with brown paper and grocer's

twine, both very useful in their place, but how much better the gift will look if wrapped in fresh, crisp, tissue paper, and tied with a narrow ribbon. Not only does it look better, but it conveys to your friend a pleasant sense of anticipation and appreciation that far exceeds the extra trouble it may have been to think of it. To wrap a gift daintily, and tie it with scrupulous nicety, should be a rule never departed from nor broken without some very good reason.

Some may say that to receive a letter from a friend, if it contains kindly messages and loving thoughts, quite obliterates the fact that the paper is rough, and perhaps soiled, the writing pencilled, and the sheet of paper folded and refolded to make it fit an envelope intended for commercial use. But there are few people who will not value the kind sentiments more if they are neatly and carefully penned on paper of conventional style, folded once, and fitted into an envelope of the proper size. Attention to all such little details in everything we do, and to put to practical use the good old proverb, that "whatever is worth doing, is worth doing well," is not beneath the notice of anyone, but it brightens both for ourselves and others the common, everyday paths of life.

THE KEY-NOTE OF PERMANENCE.

Thirty years ago, I made a pilgrimage to the little church near Clevedon, where the Hallams' rest, and saw the graveyard, the marble tablet in the church, and the ancient yew-tree. It was then, a lovely, quiet place, with not a house near, and fifty yards from it, but hidden from view, the broad estuary of the Severn filled with the tide. I heard the water wash below the cliffs as I passed by. Sorrow and death, and a peace which passeth understanding, and the victory of the soul seemed present with me, and the murmur of the Severn was in my dreams the music of the River of Life that flows from the throne of God, into whose vast harmonies all our discords are drawn at last. I felt it was the impression of the place. I knew afterwards that it was the impression of the poem ("In Memoriam") that gave it to the place. And this impression of victory, is the lasting power of the poem. It is the same conquest of life arising out of defeat and death, of peace built up out of doubt, and joy, whose mother was sorrow, but who has turned his mother's heart into delight ; moral conquest, the triumph of the soul over outward forces of nature, even over its own ill—that is the motive of the poems that endure, that stand and shine like the beacon of the Eddystone, amid all the tempests of time, that save and bless the navies of humanity.

We are flooded to-day with poems of despair, poems full of the spirit which takes pleasure in feeding upon the corruption of society, and prophecies, when it lifts its drooping beak from the offal, that to this carrion complexion the whole of humanity will come at last. That is the class which points mankind as hurrying into decay. That poetry and the temper that produces it, will not last. The poetry of defeat, withers in the mind of the race. The poet himself who writes it, withers away in the memory of man. Had "In Memoriam" been only waiting for loss, it would have perished even if its worth had been greater than it is ; but since it tells of loss passing into love, since it describes death entering into life, it is sure to live, and would do so even if its worth had been less excellent.

Of course, I do not mean to say, when I say this, that inartistic work, if its motive be a victorious one, will live. I am speaking of artists and their work, not of those who are not artists. The poet's work of those who are not artists, of whatever temper it be, of the victorious or the defeat temper, is bound to perish. But "In Memoriam" is good art work, done by a man whose natural gifts had been polished by study, and carefully trained by steady work. Its subject impassioned its writer, and the subject, so simple, calls to the heart of man. As the poem moved on, the subject expanded, and the sorrow spoken of, passed from the particular sorrow of the poet, into the universal sorrow of the human race. So also, did the victory over the evil of sorrow. The poet's personal conquest over his own pain became the conquest of the human race over the whole of pain.