

## THE RAVEN.

When our Lord, who has a intense love for bird-life, wishes us to learn a most important lesson of life, He takes us to school to the birds, that ravens may teach us.—"Consider the raven."

As the raven is peculiarly the bird of this country and is to be seen in vast numbers all along the rugged shore line of the North-West Coast, far up into Alaska; it has occurred to me that the readers of Nunukwa in the Homeland and parts of Canada, where this bird is a stranger, will find it of interest to turn attention for a short time, to its peculiar habits and customs.

At Kitamat we have a good opportunity of observing his characteristics, he is with us the year round, on the warmest day in summer he flaps about contentedly, and when the mercury drops to zero he grumbles a good deal about the cold, but nevertheless stays with us.

Our ravens measure when fully grown 20 to 25 inches from the point of beak to the tip of the tail; across the wings 3 to 4 feet is not unusual. The young while little more than fledgelings dress as the adult bird whose garb has a royal appearance of black glossy feathers resplendent with changing tints of bright purple and blue, which in sunlight glitter like coats of burnished armour. The head is noticeably large, the sight quick and penetrating and the bill owing to the nature of the food is a strong sharp-pointed stabbing instrument, every thrust of which draws blood.

He is not dainty in regard to his diet, in fact he is omnivorous: flesh, fish snails, shell-fish, mice, birds, in all sorts of conditions; fresh, stale or very high contribute to his larder. Often he prefers food ready killed and prepared, but can when occasion demands be his own hunter. With commendable resignation he adapts himself to

circumstances, for when food is scarce he can endure a long fast with her fortitude, so in like manner; when food is plentiful he fails not to indulge himself to an extent only limited by capacity, oftentimes being scarcely able to rise from the ground.

Like as the gull on the ocean follows the ships for the refuse of food thrown overboard, and the eagle when hunting the timid of the haunts of man, searches the mountain fastnesses, eager to pick the bones of the decrepit mountain-goat, sustain himself upon the flesh of animals which have died a natural death, so the raven haunts the beach and scavours whatever surplus food is thrown from native houses. We approach him while he endeavors to pick some sand bones, the right to which is disputed several native dogs, with a sharp buke to the dogs for their presumptuous and scolding us angrily, the haughty bird with a defiant toss of his head, informs us we are unwelcome visitors.

It is an interesting sight to watch the canny fellow in search of food, he will overturn rocks, and peep under stones until he obtains a mussel or a clam. When the shell is too strong for him to break without damaging the beak; with the mussel in his bill he flies upwards to a considerable height above some flat stone, and, with wonderful intuition allowing for the deviating force of the wind, drops it, thus cracking it on the stone to his great satisfaction; lowering himself almost simultaneously and devouring the tender contents before any other member of the feathered community can challenge his ownership.

The raven is a great mimic; he can chuckle, cough, cry, laugh, talk, sing, whistle, and can imitate wild and domestic sounds with wonderful facility. He is chief of all mammalia, so the bird is at the top of the family of birds, "he is the great subrational chief of the whole kingdom of birds, he has the largest brain and the most wit and wisdom