

When we reach the last chapter in the life of a bird many perplexing questions arise. One of these is, what⁹ becomes of the large numbers of birds that must of necessity die from old age or other natural causes? Is it, as has been suggested, that on the approach of death they instinctively hide themselves from view, and thus concealed await their doom, or is it that they are at once removed from sight by nature's industrious scavengers, the insects and other animals? Whatever be the reason, the fact remains that comparatively few dead birds are found whose deaths cannot be traced to violence or accident. In the latter class of cases the inventions of man play an important part. Lighthouses, railways, and telegraph wires all contribute their quota to the large number of accidental deaths in the bird world. Many instances are reported of birds meeting their deaths by flying against moving railway trains, and last summer a black-billed Cuckoo was brought me which had been found dead upon the cowcatcher of the locomotive, on the arrival of the evening express from Montreal on the Canada Atlantic Railway. This bird was brought me by a bright-eyed and observant boy, who sometimes accompanies me on my tramps, evincing much intelligent interest in bird life. He tells me that last summer, while on an excursion train on the same railway, he saw a Crow fly against a wire fence, and, becoming entangled with one of the barbs, it hung there, struggling and fluttering as long as he could see it from the window of the moving train. Another curious instance was that of a Sparrow Hawk brought me last fall, which had been found in one of the flues of the boiler at Lansdowne Park, just before the Exhibition there last fall. The boiler had not been opened since the year before, and the poor creature had evidently, at some intervening time, flown down the smokestack, and, being unable to fly up again, had starved to death. What little flesh remained on its bones was completely dried up, and the plumage, except for a slight abrasion on the head, was in perfect condition, its colour, however, being slightly darkened with soot. I congratulated myself on having a ready-preserved specimen, but although it had been very dead when I got it, in less than forty-eight hours it was very much alive, and I speedily lost my faith in that method of embalming, and with it my specimen.