

the Park a few evenings before, and after the band stopped playing the birds began to sing and chatter in the bushes near by, as though they had enjoyed the music.

The Boy began to be sleepy at last, for we had been talking for more than an hour. I am going to spell "Boy" with a capital letter, now; for this lad, so idle apparently and full of mischievous pranks all day, had something about him that made us friends at once. I hope to have many other talks with him; and while thinking over our pleasant evening hour, I have selected the following passages that may interest him:

The Birds at Night.

If you should happen to go out before the birds are awake, or should startle them in the evening after they have gone to bed, where do you think you should find them, and how would their beds look?

For two or three weeks of their lives young nestlings sleep in their nests or holes where they have been hatched, and chicks that have no nests hide their downy bodies under their mother's wings; but this lasts only a short time, and after the young birds leave their nests they never sleep in a bed.

How should you feel if, instead of a comfortable pillow when your mother should say good night, leaving you tucked into a warm bed, you should hear her say, "It is bed-time now, stand on one leg and go to sleep;" or if you should be expected to hang all night from a crack in the wall; or, worst of all, if your bed were to be a pool of water, on which you were to float with your head tucked under your arm?

What if the sky is clouded?
What if the rain comes down?
They are all dressed to meet it
In waterproof suits of brown.

—*Bird World* (adapted).

The Riddle of Mars.

(Adapted from the *Scientific American*, summarizing Prof. Percival Lowell's observations).

By far the most interesting body that shines down—or rather across—from the sky these evenings is Mars. This planet is next beyond the earth in our solar system, and is, therefore, with Venus, our nearest neighbor. Mars resembles our earth more nearly than any other planet. It has an atmosphere, clouds, mist, water, ice, snow, and it is supposed to be inhabited. To be sure, we can-

not see any cities or inhabitants, for at its nearest distance to us Mars is thirty-eight millions of miles away. Seen through a telescope, Mars appears as a disk crowned with white spots and covered with blue-green and reddish ochre patches. The white spots that cap the poles come and go just as our own polar snows wax and wane. In the winter these Martian caps extend far down from each pole; at midsummer they have dwindled so that they extend scarcely more than an eighth of their mid-winter distance. As the caps melt, they must pass into a gas, which means that Mars must have an atmosphere. As the process of melting goes on the white gives place to a deep blue-green band. By former observers these blue-green patches were taken for seas. Now they are supposed to be great masses of forest vegetation uncovered by the melting of the snows in the Martian spring season. Mars owes its fiery tint to the great ochre stretches which occupy five-eighths of the area of the disk. The stretches are undoubtedly land, and seem to be deserts, for their reddish salmon hue is much like the Great Sahara Desert when seen at a distance.

Now comes a most interesting part of the story. Years ago an Italian astronomer, Schiaparelli, saw through his telescope plain markings on the surface of Mars, suggesting the outlines of a spider's web—some lines straight, others symmetrically curved. These are supposed to be canals. They appear to have their origin in the polar snows. They leave the blue-green "continents," and spread toward the equator, meeting at particular points, then diverging, forming a network over the surface of the planet. Some canals are of great length, over 2,000 miles, and some have an estimated width of from fifteen to twenty miles. At points where the canal seem to meet are dark round spots like pin-heads, called oases. These canals and oases undergo changes in appearance corresponding to seasonal changes, which gives rise to the belief that there is vegetable life, and probably animal life, on Mars.

Is Mars an old planet? It would seem so. As a planet ages it loses its oceans and gradually its whole water supply. Did the successive generations of people who have inhabited Mars take in the situation, as we would say, and as the water-supply began to fail construct this system of canals to utilize the polar ice and snows?

[Those who are interested in this subject may like to read the book from which this brief story is drawn—*Mars and Its Canals*. By Percival Lowell. The Macmillan Company, New York.]