

prominent families, and have therein a criterion upon which to depend in future work. All through the long spring and summer, as the migrants arrive singly and in flocks, we can assign to each its appropriate place, our old acquaintances of the winter appearing continually to guide this classification, and before we are well aware of the fact we shall find that we possess a greater or less knowledge of every bird that can be found in the fauna of our locality.

The obstacle, if it be an obstacle, presented by the multiplicity of individuals and species is thus in a great measure diminished by this grouping into families, orders and classes. A simple, accurate and exceedingly convenient classification of those birds presented in our northern fauna can be found in E. A. Samuel's "Birds of New England and adjacent States." This, examined in the light afforded by similar classifications more recently published in Dr. Coues's, "Keys to N. A. Birds," and in "the History of N. A. Birds," by Baird, Brewer and Ridgway, comprises all the later developments in N. A. Ornithology. From a comparison of these authorities we have,—

CLASS A.

Those birds in which the hind toe is on the same level with the front toes. These are aerial birds, whose life is passed almost wholly on the wing or among the trees; whose wings, therefore are fitted for flight, long and swift and strong as in the eagle, or exceedingly rapid as in the humming bird, whose feet, by this leveling of the toes, are adapted for grasping as in birds of prey, or for perching as in the songsters whose gait accordingly, whenever they do attempt to move on the ground is a hop rather than a walk. They always live in pairs and the young are hatched

helpless. In this class are embraced several orders.

ORDER I. *Passeres* or perches, the highest order among birds. All live habitually in air and though other birds perch, these are pre-eminently the perchers, and are rarely on the ground. Most of them have a sharp, conical bill which they employ to the destruction of insects and worms, rendering more service in this way to the farmer during a single season than he could repay in his life-time. They are rapid breathers and have a correspondingly rapid circulation, hence they use the most oxygen and live the fastest of all the birds. There are two groups of passerine birds differing in the structure of their vocal organs. (a.) *Oscines* or songsters proper, having the vocal organs highly developed though they do not sing, as we commonly accept that term. They excel in quality rather than in quantity, being mostly of small size. With few exceptions the eggs of all are colored. Here belongs that host of birds whose bright colors and lively songs give energy and melody to our woods and gardens, and make them the most interesting of their kind—Thrushes, Warblers, Sparrows, Larks, Orioles, Vireos, Swallows, Wrens and Finches. Here belong also the Crows and Jays who, if less highly favored in melody, have, nevertheless, their appropriate places in Nature's picture and admirably fill it.

The smallest of our birds, except the humming-bird, is the Golden crowned Kinglet, (*Regulus satrapa*), a winter representative of the *Oscines*. His characteristic livery is an olive-green back; a black head with a central spot of orange red, encircled and often concealed by gamboge yellow; a dusky space around the eye with a white line both above and beneath it; two whitish bands across the wing coverts, and a dull white breast. Much of his