

more ashamed of my unbelief. And now that I too have forfeited all claim to be believed I shall only ask you to listen to a few more of my bird yarns, selecting such as will not lay too great a strain on your imaginative powers.

It often puzzled me how birds did for water in winter when snow and ice covered almost all the available sources of supply, and open water was to be had in but few places. The most natural solution (in more senses than one) of the difficulty did not occur to me till I happened to observe a Goldfinch eating snow in February.

If I am not mistaken the tail, in its capacity of rudder, is generally supposed to be an indispensable part of a birds outfit, and I must confess to a similar opinion, held till August of last year, when I saw in broad daylight, and watched for some time, a Night Hawk so utterly devoid of tail that it seemed as if the after half of the body had been chopped off with it. And yet this bird was hawking for its daily meal of insects, among its brothers, and performing all those graceful aerial evolutions for which the species is noted, with apparently as much ease as any of them. I also read in the last number of the *Ornithologist and Oologist* (one of our exchanges), of a Yellow-billed Cuckoo without a tail having been observed on its nest, and the question at once suggested itself, by what kind of accident are birds deprived of this useful appendage, or do these instances merely indicate the beginnings of a new phase of avian evolution, analogous to that by which man has attained his present tail-less eminence?

Though birds in general conform more or less strictly to certain rules in the selection of their building materials, we occasionally find an individual who sets these rules at defiance, and displays the originality of a master mind in the selection. For instance a Robin's nest found in this vicinity a year or two ago embodied in its composition art, literature, finance, and the manufactures, art being represented by a skein of colored embroidery silk, literature by a newspaper clipping, finance by a cancelled cheque on the Bank of British North America, and a fragment of a promissory note, and the manufactures by a piece checked cotton shirting. It will be noticed that the builder showed great impartiality except perhaps, as above indicated, an undue preference for checks.