

## Papers on Natural History.

### ANIMALS AND THEIR DWELLINGS.\*

BY M. SCHELE DE VERE.

How carefully do animals choose their dwellings. The bird weaves its nest with surpassing skill; the fish has its home in the reeds, and the hydra-cuse dwells forever in a diving bell. The fox perfumes, with vilest smell, the badger's cozy lodging, and the holes of the marmot or woodchuck, and thus makes them his own. The hermit-crab drops the worn-out shell and chooses among thousands, another that is newer and brighter. Another crab has, like the children of the Alps, three dwellings for as many seasons; and at stated times, the parent is seen with his numerous family gravely leaving the summer home on the sea-shore, for the cooler cottage further inland, and in winter climbing up to his quiet home in the mountains.

Some animals love to live in the midst of the din and turmoil of large cities, as the stork that, in Juvenal's days, made his nest on the temple of Concordia, in the very centre of the tumult of great Rome. Hadrian caused a medal to be struck in honor of the "man-loving bird." Others prefer company in their houses. Ants keep their aphides, or beetle; the pigeon and the castrel, love to dwell in gentle friendship together.

The cherry-finch is even a socialist, and lives in Fourierite phalansteries. They make a common roof, impervious to rain, and better able to resist the fiercest thunder-storm than the tents and huts of the Crimea. Under this, each pair has its own nest and separate entrance, and over three hundred pairs have thus been found living in peaceful communion.

\* \* \* \* What strange and startling intelligence do they shew, in the selection of proper materials for their varied dwellings. How skilful and choice the higher animals are in such matters, is known to all; but even the humblest exhibit mysterious powers. The very lowest, it is true, build no houses as yet, as the very highest build them no more; but all that do make a home, know marvellously well what materials answer their purpose best. Even the vilest worms often surprise us, both by their skill and their careful selection.

The simplest of all architects are worms, that make themselves a covering of slime and mud. The gold-haired amphitrite fashions for herself a firm, conical shelter, built up of finest grains of sand, and well cemented. Who has ever watched a caterpillar and failed to wonder at its incomprehensible powers? He chooses his grass and his fibers, his sawdust and clay, with grave circumspection; he chews them; and mixes and pounds them, until they are neither too soft nor too hard. He cuts off the hair of his own body, and, needing only short fragments, he bites it into pieces of equal length.

Place him in a jar, covered with paper, and he will make journey after journey to the top, tearing off tiny pieces and shreds, and making them serve his great purpose. Give him red and blue cloth in his prison, and he will weave it so skilfully, that the chrysalis dress will shew you a regular pattern, in which the two colors are blended. If you destroy their work, the young will prefer light pieces to mend the rent, whilst the old rather choose dark cloth. Have they, then, a sense of color? What they discern by the eye, the moth does by smell. It must smell the fur, in which it has to lay its eggs, or it would search in vain. Hence we protect furs by camphor, and other strong smelling substances, whose odor alone protect them by overpowering the original smell.

\* \* \* \* Animals discern their domiciles, even with the lowest capacities. The fish of the water know and cherish their special dwelling; some in sweet water and some in salt water; some a few feet below the surface, others many fathoms below it. To many, liberty is indispensable; some become blind in prison; carp and gold-fish, kept in captivity, produce monsters. The sluggish tortoise loves her home. A huge creature of the kind was caught by some English sailors near the island of Ascension, and they burnt a name and date into its upper shell. On their way to England it fell sick and, from sheer pity, was thrown overboard in the Channel. Two years later the same tortoise was captured once more, now quite well, near its old home, Ascension. What strange and inexplicable home sickness carried the slow, heartless creature four thousand miles back through the ocean, where there is no track and no high-road?

It must be more than a mere dull submission to habit, that attaches even animals to their childhood's home. The swallow revels for a season in the glare of distant Africa, and then returns to the north, where she finds the little village, the humble house, and the snug little corner under the leaves. What man, endowed with almost perfect

power of perception and faithful memory, would not often lose his way, and have to inquire here and there? But the bird flies, straight as an arrow, to the little spot where it first tried its wings.

### THE SYMPATHY OF BIRDS.

A gentleman observed, in a thicket near his dwelling, a number of brown thrushes, that for several days, continued to attract his attention, by their loud cries and strange movements.

At length, so great was his curiosity, that he determined to ascertain if possible, the cause of their excitement.

On looking about in the thicket he found that one of the thrushes had its wings so entangled in the bushes, that she could not escape. Near by was her nest, containing four young birds.

Without attempting to release the captive bird, he retired a short distance from the place, when several thrushes made their appearance with worms and other insects in their mouths.

These they gave first to the mother, and then to her young birds; she in the meantime, cheering them on in their labor of love, with a grateful song.

After viewing the interesting scene till his curiosity was satisfied, the gentleman released the poor bird, when she flew to her nest, and her charitable neighbours dispersed with a song of joy.

A kind-hearted little girl, whose happy face and joyous voice, remind one of the merry songsters of the grove, on hearing this story, exclaimed, "Is it not beautiful?"

"How happy the poor bird must have felt to be released, and how glad the young birds must have been to see their mother's return! No wonder the kind neighbors sang for joy!"

Beautiful, indeed, it is! But I can tell you what is still more beautiful.

It is that little girl who drops kind words, and gives pleasant smiles as she passes along—who is ready to help every one she meets out of trouble—who never scowls, never contends, never teases her companions, nor seeks in any way to lessen, but always to increase, their happiness.

Would it not please you to pick up a string of pearls, pieces of gold, diamonds or precious stones, as you pass along the streets? But pleasant words and kind actions are the true pearls and precious stones that can never be lost.

Take the hand of the friendless. Smile on the sad and dejected. Be kind to those in trouble. Strive everywhere to diffuse sunshine and joy.

Thus while you render others happy, you will not fail to be happy yourself.—*R. I. Schoolmaster.*

### SPARE THE BIRDS, BOYS!

On many farms we see the boys creeping round the fences with an old musket, killing every little bird they see. It is a mean business to destroy the little songsters that render the fields vocal, and beautify creation; besides being suicidal to the farmer. By killing a bird he may save a spear of corn or a head of wheat that the bird would have eaten, but he has destroyed the great enemy of worms, that will take hundreds of stalks, when the bird would have taken but one. Were it not for the birds, our fields would be overrun by worms, and the crops entirely destroyed. In planting, put in each hill six kernels,

One for the Blackbird,  
One for the Crow,  
One for the Cutworm,  
And three to grow;

and the little birds in gratitude for the share allowed them, will keep the cutworm from getting more than his share.

Treat the birds kindly and they will become almost domesticated—follow the plow, and pick up every straggling worm that is turned up from his dark dwelling. For doing so, they deserve well of the farmer, and no honest man will cheat them out of their part of the crop—much less kill them for trying to get it. Spare the birds, Boys!—*Ohio Farmer.*

### CARE OF BIRDS IN JAPAN.

A gentleman who was connected with Commodore Perry's expedition, informs us that in Japan, the birds are regarded as sacred, and never under any pretence, are they permitted to be destroyed. During the stay of the expedition at Japan, a number of officers started on a gunning excursion. No sooner did the people observe the slaughtering of their favorites, than a number of them waited upon the Commodore, and remonstrated against the conduct of the officers. There was no more bird-shooting in Japan by American officers after that: and when the treaty between the two countries was concluded, one express condition of it was, that the birds should always be pro-

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