

UTILITY OF SMALL BIRDS.

* Birds are the staunch friends of every man that raises fruit, grain or grass. They are the constitutional check put upon depredating insects. Every cherry that a robin eats he pays for at least five hundred times over by countless and nameless injurious insects devoured as a part of his meat diet. Woodpeckers, meadow-larks, bluebirds, blue jays, sparrows, robins, and the whole tribe of thrushes, are valuable friends of the garden and farm. They never boast of their services. They seem quite unconscious of their usefulness. They make no demand upon the farmer, on the score of beauty, song, or service. They perform their disinterested labour of abating the insect plague under all discouragements, and even when requited with abuse and persecution. With these services, they also bring to us an amount of enjoyment in their songs which no man of sensibility can enough appreciate; and which is not a whit less deserving because they sell no tickets for their concert, and pass around no hat after their performance.

And yet one would think that the service and the songs of birds were their vices. The eagerness of boys to kill them, the ruthless destruction of them around towns and cities, principally on the Sabbath days, by boys, apprentices, and grown-up louts, bids far to exterminate small birds in the vicinity of large places, unless laws shall interfere. This evil, like all others, is largely the result of ignorance. If all parents would make humanity to brute beasts, and partiality to birds, a subject of instruction; if all schools would give to boys some intelligent conception of the use of birds; if all newspapers would join in giving line upon line and precept upon precept; if ministers of the gospel would take that sparrow for a text, which our Saviour has immortalized by his words, there would soon exist a public sentiment that would put an end to this barbarism. Reader, can you do nothing for the birds?

A NOISY BREAKFAST PARTY.

Mr. Shirley Hibberd has published an interesting book, called "Brambles and Bay-leaves." In it he tells us something about his pet birds, and as the account is very amusing, and also shows how much may be done with birds by kindness and

patience, we ask our readers to listen to him as he describes a rather noisy breakfast party.

"We are just now ready for breakfast, and we sit at the fire surrounded with cockatoos, macaws, and parrots. All the voices of the animal world salute and deafen us. *Old Poll*, the pet of the parlour, can bark, growl, bleat, purr, or whistle, and in addition, ask for every thing she wants, and for many things she does not want. She can be insolent or polite; and, as a result of our teaching, she is a very expert thief. I could tell a hundred anecdotes about that one patriarchal parrot; how she takes tea from a spoon and beer from a tumbler; how she cracks nuts, and crows like a cock; how she leaves her cage to steal sugar or fruit; how she can recite two complete stanzas of *Johnny Gilpin*, and bandy small talk with anybody. When her noise and impudence ceases, we turn to the cockatoos, of which we have three elegant, docile, loving creatures: one pure white, with a crest that looks like flakes of turbot; another with pale sulphur crest; and a third with white and crimson plumage—strictly a cockatoo parrot, the most loquacious of the whole family, but so gentle in her demeanour that she never was guilty of a single mischief yet. To visitors, the gray and green parrots, of which we have two each, are a perfect bore; they scream and yell and bark, and, if a chance were afforded them, would dig their pickaxe beaks into innocent faces and hands; but these gentle crested favourites are determined to be loved, and at the first sound of a strange voice, up go their crests, down go their heads, with a soft ejaculation of 'Cock-a-too;' and if they do not get their accustomed scratching on the poll, they seem dejected for the day. As for *Betty*, the cockatoo parrot, she says plainly, 'Scratch your *Betty's* poll; *Betty* wants her poll scratched,' and scratched it must be over and over again before *Betty* will turn to her bread and milk, and allow an interval for conversation.

"Then we have a pair of Australian ground parroquets; two splendid macaws that dazzle the eye with their oriental plumes of azure and vermilion; a pair of slender and brilliantly-coloured lorries; that have never yet, and never will, acquire more speech than the utterance of their names; and a pair of Brazilian toucans, with enormous bills, and plumage

more dazzling than the dress of a harlequin.

"You would just think yourself in *Babal*, were you to be spiritually present when we sit down to breakfast surrounded by these, the noisiest members of our happy family. But if you were present in the body also, I would insure complete silence by one clap of the hand, and you should hear a pin drop if you wished it. Then one by one each should go through its performance of imitating a farm-yard, a fiddle, a pair of bagpipes, or a series of incoherent and very comical speeches. *Old Poll* is the only one that would occasionally trouble; and she is so self-willed, that you would have to take your chance whether she would take breakfast with us and talk sensibly, or cough, bark and growl you into a state of stupid deafness. But if all went well, *Polly* would be a polyglot; for she can gabble French, German, and Latin with very tolerable accent, and mix with her classical quotations the more familiar sounds of 'Beer, ho,' 'Ba-ker,' and the words and air of 'Pretty, pretty *Polly Hopkins*.' When *Betty's* turn came, she would in a nasal singing tone, ask you some impertinent questions, such as 'Can you spell *Istactepetzacuxochitl Icohueyo?*' and before you could give her an answer, such is her want of politeness, she would hurry through a whole string of small talk; ask for tea, beer, cakes, nuts, grapes, and finish off with *Quin's* 'incoherent story,' which, with a slight blush, I confess to have spent the occasional leisure of a whole year in teaching her. While this went on, the other birds would get jealous; and to keep peace, we should have to scratch no end of proffered polls, and make a compromise with master *Tommy*, the elder of the green parrots, by the present of a chicken bone for him to pick and chuckle over.

"The exhibition always finishes by feeding the toucans, which are the 'lions' of the collection; we hand them each a choice morsel—a task which you might think dangerous, seeing that their beaks are large enough for the seizure of a fat baby, and you would think it no trifling matter to appease appetites having such formidable representatives. Yet, immense as are the horny appendages with which the toucan takes his daily bread, his mode of eating is decidedly pretty and amusing. The food is taken on the point