

## THE MEANING OF GOOD.

"How do the waves along the level shore  
Follow and fly in hurrying sheets of foam?  
For ever doing what they did before,  
For ever climbing what is never clomb!  
Is there an end to their perpetual haste—  
Their iterated round of low and high?  
Or is it one monotony of waste  
Under the visions of a vacant sky?  
And thou who on the ocean of thy days  
Dost like a swimmer patiently contend,  
And though thou steerest with a shoreward  
gaze,  
Misdoubtest of a harbour or an end,  
What would the threat and what the promise be  
Could I but read the riddle of the sea?"

G. Lowes Dickinson.

## HUMMING BIRDS.

"I don't suppose there are very many people in this country of ours who never saw a humming bird," said a naturalist of Honesdale, Pa.; "but if the question, 'did you ever see a humming bird's nest?' was on the census taker's list he would receive 'No' for an answer from nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every one thousand of the population. Any rural urchin, if he is a genuine boy, can tell you where you may find the nest of every bird in his neighborhood, from the hawk's to the chip-py's—except the humming bird's. And yet this mite of the air is commoner than many other species of birds whose nests the urchin can take you to.

"A humming bird's nest is a sight worth going a good way to see, and yet you needn't go far to see one if you can only find it. I was a collector of birds for years before I ever saw one of these nests. Every year there was scarcely a minute in the day during the summer that humming birds couldn't be seen suck the nectar from the honeysuckle, holly-hock, lilies or other flowers in my garden, yet I had no idea whatever where they nested and brought forth their young.

"I noticed one summer that a fine specimen of the ruby throat, after hovering about my flowers for a few moments, invariably flashed away in one direction following a straight line, as far as I could see him, towards a thick piece of woods a mile or so away. One afternoon I followed his course to the spot where he disappeared from view and waited there to see if he would pass on another flight, intending to line him to his home as the bee hunter does the wild bee. What course he took back to the flower garden I do not know, but in a few minutes he passed where I sat, humming on his way again homeward. It was only a momentary glimpse that I caught of him, passing as he did like a ray of light, but enough to see that he went on as straight as a bee line. I followed to the second point of disappearance, waited again, and once more, after another visit to the garden, he passed me and kept on towards the woods. This time, being on the watch, I saw the wee bird as he approached and was able to keep him in my eye longer than I had before. After four relays of watching in this way, the humming bird led me to a clump of dogwood trees, where he disappeared.

"Satisfied that his nest was somewhere in the trees, I approached them cautiously, but although I saw the bird, and once his mate go and come every few minutes out of one of the trees, I could not discover the spot they made their home. I don't

believe I would have found the nest at all if it hadn't been that a blue jay flew in among the trees and lit on a branch of the tree in which the humming bird lived. The jay had scarcely perched on the limb when, like a shot, I saw something dart toward him, and as the big bird fluttered and hopped about, evidently reluctant to leave the spot, I saw that he was being fiercely assailed by the female humming bird. The little thing hummed like a buzz saw, and darted upon the jay bird from below, above, and from every side, striking him with her long needlelike bill, while he screeched and jumped about, but was utterly unable to parry a blow of his radiant but furious assailant. Presently the male humming bird returned and quickly joined in the attack on the intruding jay bird, who was soon glad to take himself off, followed by the pugnacious little fairies, until he went screeching out of sight.

The humming birds returned to the tree, and instead of mysteriously disappearing in the foliage as before, hovered about a particular spot on a gnarled and twisted branch of the dog-wood, and there, as the female finally settled down, I discovered the home of these two little sylphs beneath a canopy of overhanging leaves. The female nestled down cosily in the tiny cup which was so soft and elastic that even her delicate plumage was unruffled by contact with its moss-covered edges.

From my hiding place—for I had hidden in the bushes at the first attack of the humming bird on the jay—the nest was but a few feet distant, and I could see its character, but could not tell of what it was constructed. One thing I did notice, and that was that it was so cunningly fashioned to harmonize with the bark of the tree as to conceal it from the closest observer. Often in my visits to the nest afterward, and knowing its location so well, I was unable to discover it except after a minute or more of close observation.

For a short time after the two little birds returned to their nest, after driving away the jay—which, by the way, was an exhibition of bravery and belligerence on the part of the humming birds for which I was entirely unprepared—the male bird snuggled down close to his mate, then poised itself for a moment on its whirring wings above the nest, and disappeared. I then stepped out from my hiding place, but the bird on the nest did not move, conscious, perhaps, of security of its nestling place. Not until I had climbed the tree and bent over the nest did she seem to realize that she was discovered, and then she arose and buzzed and hummed about me with a belligerent intent as she had about the jay bird. I remained only long enough to see that two tiny eggs were in the nest. I visited the dogwood tree daily after that, and the frail birds gradually became accustomed to my presence. At first they were nervous, and one or the other of them would dart down at me, uttering the quaintest of peeps and cries.

After a few days my presence ceased to disturb them, and they came and went as if I was not there. I learned that the male relieved the female at intervals on the nest, and that humming birds carry on daily warfare against any other members

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