

THE ROCKWOOD REVIEW

nicious habit. Arrived in this country, he had entered upon his last debauch, and recovering from it had resolved to fly from temptation, make a home in the woods and so cut himself off from access to the accursed stimulant. Weakened by his previous excess, the want of food, and other stimulant, told fatally upon his hold of life, and he had succumbed where a stronger man might have struggled through. When the lad recovered memory, he told how his tame rabbits had escaped, and how he had followed hoping to recapture them. One of the last sights he saw in the woods was that of the surveyor sitting against a tree, beating his head to and fro in an agony too terrible to realize. Little wonder that the boy became temporarily bereft of reason.

THE CROW BLACKBIRD.

The latest Bulletin to reach the R. R. Office from the U. S. Dept. of Agriculture, relates to the Crow Blackbirds and their food. Mr. F. E. L. Beal, in a carefully written article, gives much interesting information regarding this Bird (*Quiscalus quiscula*), so common in Ontario. We have always maintained that the Crow Blackbird has more virtues than faults, and Mr. Beal's summary is so fair that we cannot refrain from printing it.

SUMMARY.

From the foregoing results it appears that if the mineral element be rejected as not forming a part of the diet, the food of the crow blackbird for the whole year consists of animal and vegetable matter in nearly equal proportions. Of the animal component twenty-three twenty-fourths are insects, and of the insects five-sixths are noxious species. The charge that the blackbird is a habitual robber of other

birds' nests seems to be disproved by the stomach examinations.

Of the vegetable food it has been found that corn constitutes half and other grain one-fourth. Oats are seldom eaten except in April and August, and wheat in July and August. Fruit is eaten in such moderate quantities that it has no economic importance, particularly in view of the fact that so little belongs to cultivated varieties.

The farmer whose grain is damaged, if not wholly ruined, by these birds may attempt to count his loss in dollars and cents, but the good services rendered by the same birds earlier in the season can not be estimated with sufficient precision for entry on the credit side of the ledger. Thoughtful students of nature have observed that there is a certain high-water mark of abundance for every race or species beyond which it can not rise without danger of encroaching upon and injuring other species, not even excepting man. This is true of every species in nature, whether it be one which, at its normal abundance, is beneficial to man or otherwise. To no group does this apply with more force than to the insects, many species of which frequently exceed their ordinary bounds and spread destruction among crops. The same argument applies to the birds. However useful they may be in a general way, there is danger that they may become too numerous. While the destruction of a noxious insect is greatly to any bird's credit, still it is believed that the principal value of the useful bird lies not so much in this special work as in keeping the great tide of insect life down to a proper level. The examination of the food of the blackbirds has shown that they do a good share of this work, and are therefore most emphatically useful birds. This does not mean that they do no