

THE HUMMING BIRD.

From the Columbian Magazine.

That promised sketch of the humming-bird! Forgive me Mary, that it was not written long since. As you know I have been deeply interested in my vocation, and while duty, that "stern daughter of the voice of God," has been calling me to "Teach! teach! teach! from weary chime to chime," shall I not be pardoned for unheeding the quiet tones which would have persuaded me to write? But now I am quite at leisure to tell you of that humming-bird. It is well you have seen it since no words can convey an idea of its transcendent beauty.

The admirably preserved specimen of the "ruby-crested humming-bird," or "Trochilus Moschutos," in my possession, is from the island of Trinidad. The friend to whom I am indebted for it has favored me with copious extracts from the works of Cuvier, Jardine, Audubon and Wilson, descriptive of this particular species. In speaking of it, they are rather poetical rhapsodists than natural historians. Their style seems in some degree to reflect the brilliant and changing hues of this wondrous "thing of beauty."

Sir William Jardine, in his "Natural History of Humming-Birds," published at Edinburgh in 1831, says, "Every epithet which the ingenuity of language could invent has been employed to depict the richness of their coloring; the lustres of the topaz, of emeralds and of rubies have been compared with them, and applied in their names. 'The hue of roses, steeped in liquid fire,' and even the *cheveux de l'astre du jour*, of the imaginative Buffon, fall short of their versatile tints, their gorgeous plumery."

Cuvier says, "Nature has confined to America this one of her *chef d'œuvres*. The Indians, struck with the fire and splendor of their hues, which shine with the united radiance of gems and gold, have given them the expressive name of hairs of the sun." Audubon calls the humming bird "a glittering fragment of the rainbow."

There are varying theories in explanation of this exceeding brilliancy. Bullock says, as quoted by Jardine, "The preserved specimens are but the shadows in brilliancy to what they were in life. The sides of the lamina or fibres of each feather, being of a different color from the surface, will change when seen in a front or oblique direction, and as each lamina or fibre turns upon the axis of the quill, the least motion, when living, causes the feathers to change suddenly to the most opposite hues."

How many bright eyes have I seen grow brighter as they looked at my "ruby-crested" and sapphire-throated bird! How many glad voices have I heard in varying tones of exclaiming admiration! I have seen the red lips part, as with a new and strange delight, and I have wandered back to the changeable past. This is not the first humming-bird that has rested beneath my eye. And often have I seen them on the wing, now sipping the nectar of the flower, and then vanishing with an almost incredible swiftness. "They never walk, or creep, or themselves of the ground." They follow the advancing or retiring with him. They are absent in my mind with thoughts of the beloved—the departed. They have for me become the emblems of immortality.

Many years have passed since, on returning in a soft Summer sunlight from a long walk, my mother told me she had found a treasure in my absence. She had indeed caught a humming-bird! In the very climax of my enthusiasm, a pedlar entered. He examined it very knowingly, and then deliberately seated himself. He remained silent, drumming gently on the cover of his japanned trunk, yet making no attempt to offer his wares. A quiet pedlar! A pedlar in deep thought! A pedlar etherialized by a humming-bird! Soon however the mystery was explained. He had only been calculating the chances. Turning to my mother he said,

"If I was only a day's journey from Boston, I'd give you ten dollars for that bird."

In the morning it seemed quite exhausted. We reproached ourselves for not having given it sufficient air. Alas! it was dying, if not dead. We took it to the door, and placed it on the step in the warm sunshine. It seemed quite lifeless. We left it for a moment, and when we returned, it had flown. I have since learned that this is a favorite ruse of the humming-bird. When wishing to escape, it feigns itself dead. Thus is it not in life? May not what seems to us death be but the token of a new and more perfect life? Are you surprised that the past is vividly recalled by the humming-bird?

During those years, I used often to visit a beloved relative—the late Rev. E. W. D. at his quiet parsonage in R—d, eight miles from St—c, his first and last earthly home. The very spirit of love pervaded the pastor's dwelling. During the long mornings, so quiet and peaceful, I used to sit in the open door, shaded by a fragrant honeysuckle—oh! does it grow there yet, and are the steps as white as they were then?—and ever as I sat did I hear, what Audubon calls "a beautiful murmuring sound," and ever did I see the humming-bird sipping from the fairy cups of the honey-suckle, and ever came there to admire with me a bright and happy child—none other than the beloved one whom you saw smitten down at my side the last Winter—my precious cousin Mary? Do you marvel that I love the humming-bird?

In the Summer of 1833 my vacation was passed with an only sister in Ohio. While there I went with a friend to see "the tame humming-birds?" In the office, so called, of a physician, whose versatility of talent must have been a source of pleasure at least to himself as to his friends, amid books and dirt, with the bones of an arm here and a pair of boots there, with a range of busts on one side and

casts and plaster and sand underneath, with a skull here and the most beautiful and perfectly-finished model of a cottage *ornée* there, and all was a collection of tame and unspeakably beautiful humming-birds! My friend in her home beyond the Mississippi will recall the delight with which, like Lady Hammond, as related by Audubon and another "lady" by Wilson, we each took one in our hand, and held it to lip and bosom. Do you wonder that I gaze with delight on the humming-bird?

In the Summer of '42 I was advised to try for my health the waters of Avon. But of what avail were sulphur baths for the body while the spirit knew no fount of consolation? Dared I even hope for health while she, the beloved and cherished one, was dying? Was F. E. F., the latest flower of St—c, fading away in her brightness and beauty and must I linger there? As these thoughts pressed heavily, and I walked wearily up and down the garden paths, I heard a low murmuring, and a humming-bird flashed across my sight. I sought to follow it, but it eluded me. I reached for it but it vanished. And then I felt that it was for me "a messenger-bird," and my heart knew that she was dead! Oh! since that hour, my soul is deeply stirred by the sight of a humming-bird, and it hath become to me as a token of the spirit-land. Yet until this hour, none have known how my thoughts are thus linked to the past. Judge, then, of the surprise as well as delight with which I welcomed this gift. How gratefully it was received, the following lines in vain attempted to express.

TO H. H.

'Tis said the air around us oft is stirred,
By angel-visitants, on pinions light;
That their soft, waving music may be heard
By the rapt spirit, in the hush of night.
But on mine eye, at noon-day's waking hour,
Flashes a wing of radiance untold;
It bears me where no angry tempests lour,
Where gentle waters flow o'er sands of gold.
Oh! slay, hourly, dost thou bless my sight,
My precious bird! thy vision of delight:
How shall I thank the giver? In my heart
Are grateful thoughts, which may not reach
The ear—
Be every good in earth and heaven his part!
And life for him one long and blissful year!

"Beloved till life can charm no more—
And mourned—till pity's self be dead."

ONE WAY TO NULLIFY A BAD LEASE.

From the Boston Times.

There is a shrewd and wealthy old Yankee landlord away down in Maine, who is noted for drying his "sharp bargains," by which he has amassed a large amount of property. He is the owner of a great number of dwelling-houses, and it is said of him that he is not over-scrupulous in his rental charges, whenever he can find a customer whom he knows to be *responsible*. His object is always to lease his houses for a term of years, to the *best* tenants, and get the utmost farthing in the shape of rent.

A diminutive Frenchman called on him, last winter, to hire a dwelling he owned in Portland, and which had long remained empty. References were given, and the Yankee landlord ascertaining that his applicant was a man "after his own heart" for a tenant, immediately commenced to "Jew" him. He found that the tenement appeared to suit the little Frenchman, and he placed an exorbitant price upon it; but the lease was drawn and duly executed, and the tenant moved into his new quarters.

Upon the kindling of fires in the house, it was found that the chimneys wouldn't "draw," and the building was filled with smoke. The window sashes rattled in the wind at night, and the cold air rushed through a hundred crevices about the house, until now unnoticed. The snow melted upon the roof, and the attics were drenched from leaking. The rain pelted, and our Frenchman found a "natural bath room upon the cellar floor;" but the lease was signed, and the landlord chuckled.

"I have been vat you call 'suck in,' vis zis dum maison," muttered our victim to himself, a week afterward; "but *n'importe*—ve sal see, vot ve sal see!" Next morning he rose bright and early, and passing down town, he encountered the landlord.

"A-ha! *Bon jour, monsieur*," said he, in his happiest manner.

"Good day, sir. How do you like your house?"

"Ah! Monsieur—elegant, beautiful, magnificent! *Eh, bien, monsieur*; I have but ze one regret—"

"Ah! what is that?"

"Monsieur, I sal live in zat house but tree littel year."

"How so?"

"I hav find, by vot you sal call ze lease, zat you hav give me ze house for but tree year, an' I have ver' mooch sorrow for zat."

"But you can have it longer, if you wish—"

"Ah, Monsieur, I sal be ver' mooch glad if I can have zat house so long as I pleas—eh, Monsieur?"

"Oh, certainly, certainly, sir."

"*Tres bien, monsieur*! I sal walk rite to your offices, an' you sal give vot you call ze lease for zat maison jes so long as I sal vant ze house. *Eh, Monsieur*?"

"Certainly, sir. You shall stay there your life-time, if you like."

"Ah, Monsieur, I have ver' mooch tanks for zis accommodation."

The old leases were destroyed, and a new one was delivered in form to the French gentleman, giving him possession of the premises for "such period as the lessee may desire the same, he paying the rent thereof, promptly," etc.

The next morning our crafty landlord was passing the house just as the Frenchman's last load of furniture was being started from the door; and an hour afterwards a messenger called on him with a "legal tender" for the rent for eight days, accompanied with a note as follows:

"MONSIEUR,

"I hav bin smoke, I hav bin drowned, I hav bin frees to death, in ze house vot I hav hire of you, for ze period as I may desire." I hav stay in ze dum house 'jes so long as I pleas,' an' ze bearer of zis will give you ze key.—*Bon jour, Monsieur.*"

It is needless to add that our Yankee landlord has never been known to give up "a bird in the hand, for one in the bush."

TENACITY OF LIFE IN A VULTURE.—

One day when we were out with our guns, one of the party shot a large vulture that had perched upon the carcass of a dead sheep, and was certainly doing the neighborhood a benefit by removing the nuisance. As soon as the bird was shot, it fell and turned upon its back; but struggling a good deal, two of the attendants, of which each person of our party had one, were ordered to despatch it with bamboos. This was accordingly done, and after receiving several severe blows upon the head, it appeared to be quite dead; one of the men then took it upon his shoulder, and we pursued our sport. We were out several hours, the vulture hanging all the while from the shoulder of the man, apparently lifeless, its eyes closed and its head much lacerated by the shot and the strokes from the bamboos. Upon our return, the man who carried the vulture, glad to get rid of his burthen, (for these birds will sometimes weigh as much as thirty pounds) slung it upon the ground with a force of itself sufficient to kill it; but to our surprise it seemed to be re-animated by the shock; for after opening its eyes, it suddenly turned, and was on its legs in a moment. Advancing a step or two, it stretched out its wings, rose heavily into the air, continuing to rise until it was entirely lost to our view in the distance. We were all so much astonished at thus so unexpectedly beholding the dead alive, that no one thought of making an attempt to prevent its escape. The tenaciousness of life which the vulture possesses, as this anecdote will show, is almost incredible; and so great is its rapacity, that when engaged in devouring its prey, it will allow a person to approach and seize it, though this is at all times a dangerous experiment.

WHO CANNOT BE RICH?—A Polish woman who has a stall in the Franklin market, found herself about five years ago, a widow with four young children and an estate of just one dollar and fifty cents in money. She did not, however, turn her steps towards the "Alms-house" or spend her time in begging from door to door. Though embarrassed by a very poor knowledge of our language, she immediately invested her capital in some articles which she could sell, and commenced operations, employing the children as she could for her assistance. For a year or two past she has had the market stall. A few months ago she learned that the owner of a good farm of seventy-five acres, in one of the central counties of the state, was very desirous to sell his farm, and it was accepted—for it was all in cash. The Polish widow now has her country estate, where she has been spending some months, though unwilling to retire as yet, she has returned and resumed her stall. What a fine provision for herself and family has she secured by five years of determined effort! What proof has she made, that this is the land where all may be rich, who have health, and where they only have it not, are proper objects of charity. We only hope that this honorable Polish widow will not be tempted to throw herself and her farm away upon some lazy loafer.

[Journal of Commerce.]

WONDERS OF CHEMISTRY.—Aqua fortis and the air we breathe are made of the same materials. Linen and sugar, and spirits of wine, are so much alike in their chemical composition, that an old shirt can be converted into its own weight in sugar, and the sugar into spirits of wine. Wine is made of two substances, one of which is the cause of almost all combustion or burning, and the other will burn with more rapidity than any thing in nature. The famous Peruvian bark, so much used to strengthen stomachs, and the poisonous principle of opium are found of the same materials.

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OF THE

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Mr. and Mrs. MOODIE, Editors.

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The terms of subscription—ONE DOLLAR PER ANNUM—invariably to be paid in advance.