

their songs which they attribute to one species, called by them the "Swamp Robin;" for as in their appearance so in their song, there is to some degree a superficial resemblance; all have peculiar metallic voices and sing somewhat similar melodies. Their songs resemble each other much more than they resemble that of any other species. The Tawny ranks first in classification but the Hermit takes precedence as a vocalist. His song is the grandest; it is the finest musical composition and displays the most artistic execution, as well as the greatest compass and power of voice.

One is surprised to find so little about the songs of these Thrushes in the writings of the older ornithologists. Wilson says the Tawny has "no song" and calls the Hermit "a silent bird." Audubon never heard the song of the Hermit, and Nuttall does it but scanty justice. To my ear it is by far the finest song we hear in these Northern woods, and fully deserves the seemingly exaggerated title of "glorious," given it by some modern writers. The Winter Wren is his nearest rival and he startles the listener into admiration by the perfect torrent of sweet harmonies, of brilliant passages and marvellously executed trills, he hurls upon the stillness of the forest solitude in which he delights to roam; but, beautiful and joyous as his song is, in comparison with the song of the Hermit Thrush it sounds mechanical, and more like an air from a music box. The music of the Hermit never startles you; it is in such perfect harmony with the surroundings it is often passed by unnoticed, but it steals upon the sense of an appreciative listener like the quiet beauty of the sunset. Very few persons have heard him at his best. To accomplish this you must steal up close to his forest sanctuary when the day is done, and listen to the vesper hymn that flows so gently out upon the hushed air of the gathering twilight. You must be very close to the singer or you will lose the sweetest and most tender and pathetic passages, so low are they rendered—in the merest whispers. I cannot, however agree with Mr. Burroughs that he is more of an evening than a morning songster, for I have often observed that the birds in any given locality will sing more frequently and for a longer period in the morning than in the evening. I prefer to hear him in the evening, for there is a difference; the song in the morning is more sprightly—a musician would say "has greater brilliancy

of expression"—and lacks the extreme tenderness of the evening song, yet both have much the same notes and the same "hymn-like serenity." The birds frequently render their matinal hymns in concert and the dwellers in a grove will burst out together in one full chorus, forming a grander *Te Deum*—more thrilling—than is voiced by surpliced choir within cathedral walls. On one occasion an Indian hunter after listening to one of these choruses for a time said to me, "That makes me feel queer." It was no slight influence moved this red-skinned stoic of the forest to such a speech. The song of the Olive-backed ranks second in composition but he has the sweetest and most mellow voice of the three. The Veery displays the least musical ability yet his simple strain is exceedingly pleasant to the ear and his beautiful voice exhibits most strongly that peculiar resonant metallic tone which is characteristic of the genus.

I have not attempted to represent these songs by words or notes, for all such experiments as I have seen, appear to me to be failures. Neither the words of Dr. Brewer or Mr. Samuels, nor the syllables used by Mr. Ridgway or Mr. Gentry convey to my mind the idea of the songs of the birds that is impressed on my memory; and after a patient rehearsal of the notes of Mr. Horsford's score on piano, violin and flute, I fail to recognize the melodies he has attempted to write. Perhaps Mr. Horsford will say that, as I do not live in "a white pine country," I can know nothing about these Thrushes, and I certainly do not if his article in *Forest and Stream* is to be taken as evidence of what is correct. Besides their songs the three species have call notes and two or three minor notes, used chiefly when a mated pair are together. The alarm note of the Olive-backed, which Mr. Minot thinks sounds like "whit," and which he calls "the ordinary note" of the bird, is seldom used except the bird has a nest near the intruder. I think the sound would be better represented by "kwut" very abruptly and quickly uttered, with a peculiar emphatic intonation. But the songs and notes of all birds must be heard to be understood and appreciated.