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Our Feathered Friends.—III.

BY JOHN MACSWAIN.

THE FLYCATCHERS.

THE flycatchers are plain birds. There is little or none of the brilliant coloring that we see among the warblers. They are mostly dark grayish birds with light breasts, almost all larger and heavier and without the slender and graceful conformation of the warblers. The description of Mr. Burroughs is both apt and applicable. He describes the flycatchers as "sharp-shouldered, big-headed, short-legged, of no particular color, of little elegance of flight or movement." The bill is broad, triangular and abruptly hooked and notched at the tip. There are long bristles at the rictus or inner angle of the gape. It is of such a form as to hold securely the flies which form the chief food of these birds.

Each family of birds has its own peculiarities or habits which, by the exercise of a little patience and study we can discover. In the flycatchers, their mode of securing their prey is the habit which is most apparent to us as distinguishing them from other birds. Before I had given much attention to the study of birds I often wondered what was denoted by a flycatcher's sudden fluttering flight from its perch into the air and its hasty return to the same position. But that is the way it obtains the flies on which it feeds. It remains motionless on its