

Swept in and out of his poor open maw,  
While underneath his silent feet I saw  
A short-breathed group of helpless orphans laid.  
The life was ebbing from each infant throat.  
Too young as yet for music's earliest note :  
High up a living lark sang loud and free—  
Keen was the contrast—it was sad to mark  
Those eyes, heaven-charter'd, now earth-bound and dark :  
Beneath a morning sky they could not see.

This is a very vivid picture of a deserted nest. There is a touch of natural sympathy in it that is worth many a windy apostrophe to the lark in general—the particularly poetical hen-bird that wakes the sun and the bumpkin at twilight. This last word is usually associated with night or evening, but old John Lydgate, in his "Destruction of Troy," uses the word in a matutinal sense,

Even at the twilight in the dawning,  
When that the lark of custom 'ginneth sing.

Twilight is "two lights," applicable to morn or eve.

In a book of "Poems chiefly by Gentlemen of Devonshire and Cornwall," published in 1792, is a sonnet by one Emmet :—

#### TO THE LARK ON DARTMOOR.

Sweet soaring minstrel of the wild, I hear  
The pleasing music of thy tuneful throat,  
As welcome o'er the desert to mine ear,  
As to benighted hinds the matin note.  
I thank thee, warbler, for thy cheering lay,  
But why in such a barren, lonely dell,  
While other scenes the vernal sweets display,  
A wing'd recluse art thou content to dwell ?  
O, yet I trace the motives in thy song,  
For freedom now the lofty burthen bears,  
And now a tenderer strain is pour'd along,  
And love is breathed with all its charming cares :  
Thou, though ev'n here sequestered, dost thou prove  
Life's dearest blessings, Liberty and Love.

The lark appears here in the unusual character of a wandering minstrel of love. As a rule he "wakes the coming morn," "calls up the tuneful nations," "bids the villagers rise," "carols to the evening loud," "salutes the gay return of spring," "bears her Maker's praise on high," and performs other special services for the imaginative poets, but seldom figures as a singer of amorous ditties—yet this is probably the true interpretation of his morning flight and pleasant song. His notes are quick, and therefore suggest happiness, hence the expression "as blithe as a lark." The French say "*gai comme pinson*"—as gay as a chaffinch.

Robert Southey, whose opinion of his own poetical accomplishment was not endorsed by many critics of his day, and is certainly not accepted as correct by those of this period, was far more successful in the following sonnet than in many of his longer and more laboured poems. He seems to have written from the heart, which he seldom did, instead of from the head, which he sometimes did, or from the fingers, which he often did. Structurally, the sonnet is a failure, for he commences with a couplet, divides its theme into a sestet followed by an octave; uses assonantal rhymes, comes to a pause in the wrong places, and forms neither quatrains nor tercets—shade of Petrarch ! What more could he have done in the way of error. Still, allowing his irregularities, he has left us a simple and tender poem to be termed a sonnet, as he wished it.

#### TO A LARK.

O thou sweet lark, who in the heaven so high  
Twinkling thy wings dost sing so joyfully,  
I watch thee soaring with a deep delight,  
And when at last I turn mine aching eye  
That lays below thee in the infinite,  
Still in my heart receive thy melody.  
O, thou sweet lark, that I had wings like thee !  
Not for the joy it were in yon blue light  
Upward to mount, and from my heavenly height  
Gaze on the creeping multitude below ;  
But that I soon would wing my eager flight  
To that loved home, where Fancy even now  
Hath fled, and Hope looks onward through a tear,  
Counting the weary hours that hold her here !

The mention of the word "mount" suggests a peculiar mistake which probably arose through a printer's error and has been repeated through poetic plagiarism, which in the matter of epithets is very common. Many old poets refer to the lark as "the mounting lark," which is an appropriate description ; but in Fenton's poem and some editions of Shakespeare's "Richard II." the bird is mentioned as "the mountain lark." This curious error is preserved in Davenport Adams' "Concordance to the Plays of Shakespeare." There is no such bird as a "mountain" lark ; it is a creature of low lands and lofty airs, though curiously enough the so-called "meadow lark" is not a lark at all.

There is only one other sonnet on the lark with which we are familiar and that is good old Barry Cornwall's fine effusion :—

#### TO THE SKY-LARK.

O earliest singer ! O care-charming bird !  
Married to morning, by a sweeter hymn  
Than priest ere chanted from his cloister dim  
At midnight—or veiled virgin's holier word  
At sunrise or the paler evening heard ;  
To which of all Heaven's young and lovely Hours,  
Who wreathes soft light in hyacinthine bowers,  
Beautiful spirit, is thy suit preferred ?  
Unlike the creatures of this low dull earth,  
Still dost thou woo, although thy suit be won ;  
And thus thy mistress bright is pleased ever :  
Oh ! lose not thou this mark of finer birth ;  
So may'st thou yet live on from sun to sun,  
Thy joy unchecked, thy sweet song silent never.

I have not seen a sonnet to the skylark by an American author, which is singular, as the bird has been introduced to this continent, whereas Americans have addressed sonnets to the nightingale, which has not yet lived in the country except in a cage.

There are minor references to the lark in other Eng-

lish sonnets. Spenser opens his seventy-second in the "Amoretti" thus :—

Of when my spirit doth spread her bolder wings  
In mind to mount up to the purest sky,  
It down is weighed with thought of earthly things  
And clogged with burden of mortality.

But the lark has never been instanced in poetical analogy to better purpose or with greater effect than in that splendid burst of introspection, where fate reproached is relieved by the memory of love, Shakespeare's twenty-ninth sonnet. In the edition of 1640 it was unwarrantably entitled :—

#### A DISCONSOLATION.

When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,  
I all alone beweep my outcast state,  
And trouble deaf Heaven with my bootless cries,  
And look upon myself, and curse my fate,  
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,  
Featur'd like him, like him with friends possess'd,  
Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,  
With what I most enjoy contented least ;  
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,  
Haply I think on thee—and then my state  
(Like to the lark at break of day arising  
From sullen earth) sings hymns at heaven's gate ;  
For thy sweet love remember'd, such wealth brings,  
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

In conclusion, perhaps the truest thing ever said of the lark in its relation to poetry is the verse of Shelley's splendid lyric, which will always be the finest tribute offered to it :—

Better than all measures  
Of delightful sound,  
Better than all treasures  
That in books are found,

Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground.

Montreal.

SAREPTA.

### GLIMPSES AND IMPRESSIONS DURING A STORM.

A HEAVY north-westerly gale with hard and frequent squalls of rain and hail—nimbus clouds surmounted by broken cumulus. Patches of blue, through which the sun glances majestically and breathes out a cone of light upon the boiling sea, whilst the howling pitiless wind cuts the manes of the rushing white horses and dashes their snowy crests into spindrift, which, flying in swift momentary spray, lights up the sombre watery-purple background of the heavily loaded clouds.

The tumbling seas, driven by the furious squalls and lashed by the pattering hail, are white with rage, and toss their foaming, livid, green-flashing and broken summits high in the air, to fall, seething and hissing, into the panting hollows.

The exulting gull, poised motionless for an instant, screams to his mates with joyful note, and, quick as thought, without a movement of his pinions, with canted body, darts like a flash before the gale, and, with graceful curve, floats round upon the wind, to face the blast in ecstasy of glee, and, as the magic instantaneous burst of sunshine darts through the riven towering masses of rolling cumulus, and bathes in a flood of light the raging scene, the bird appears in bold relief, against the heavy backing of the dark horizon, enframed in a brilliant patch of iris.

The ragged-edged scud is hurrying apace, urged by the screaming, screeching furies of the north. The mountainous accumulation of vapour, piled up in dense and rolling masses, is flooded with pure celestial light on the glorious summits of the range, whilst beneath, in the purple grey of unbroken nimbus, the horizon is hidden by the smoking approach of another savage squall of wind, rain, and hail, headed by their giant leader—a towering water-spout. Down comes the shrieking blast, flattening the slopes of the heavily undulating waters, clawing their broken edges into shreds, lashing their frothy backs into eddies of snowy scum, until the demons of the storm, exhausted for a moment, pause for breath, but only to "pour forth their horrible fury" with renewed and fiercer vehement wrath—night comes on, dark and dreary, more threatening than the morn. The sun has long withdrawn his gaze and disappeared behind the dense bank of western clouds, whose noble heights are ablaze with lurid flame and glow.

The moaning wind mourns, mid sobs and bursts of tears, the stealing away of light, and, as darkness spreads a veil over the weird, melancholy waste of waters, the broken northern sky reveals its great constellation, whilst in the east the moon peeps through the fringes of the curtained ceiling, and, as she sweeps the southern sky, Orion moves with measured pace, and over him Aldebaran gazes from amidst the weeping Hyades.

F. A. H.

North Atlantic, Oct. 13, 1891.

HIGH birth is a thing which I never knew anyone to disparage except those who had it not ; and I never knew any one to boast of it who had anything else to be proud of.

—Bishop Warburton.

It would be an unspeakable advantage, both to the public and the private, if men would consider the great truth that no man is wise or safe, but he that is honest.—Sir Walter Raleigh.

ENERGY will do anything that can be done in this world ; and no talents, no circumstances, no opportunities will make a two-legged animal a man without it.—Goethe.

### THE RAMBLER.

WITH the lapse—or collapse—of the so-called holiday season comes the longest, and some say dreariest, part of the winter. It is singular to note the different ways in which different people symbolize for themselves the whole year of three hundred and sixty-five days. To the very young, there probably is no symbol whatever. To those a little older, the months appear in a kind of procession mounting skywards in a curved line, at the top end of which is the twelfth month from the actual month of existence. To those older again, there appears but a ring of months, to some a flat ring, to others a round hollow one, and to the very old, no ring or circle or line at all, but just the month itself whichever it happens to be. It would be interesting to know if the months have ever appeared in the minds of men, arranged on top of one another, thus forming a pyramidal figure, on whether the Russians, for example, think of them as occurring backwards. The multiplication of calendars on one's writing or dressing table brings the entire year very distinctly before us. The year begins and we note three more weeks in January, add these to four of February and here we are at the first of March. We intend to pass the month of March out of the city on business, so we run a line through March and continue it through the first week of April. April and May—spring seems already at hand. As we look at the names we seem to see the fresh yellow twigs and hear the open waters running, then a sudden cave-in—only three weeks to the end of schools and terms and hard work generally, for here is the middle of June ! Then you waste two weeks or so trying to make up your mind "what to do this summer," until Dominion Day hits you full in the face with a hard, dry, hot kind of knock there is no mistaking ; so you pack up and go to Georgian Bay or Gibraltar Point, although it is quite the middle of the month before you really get settled in your tent or boarding-house. And of course by the middle of August you must be back in town, and good gracious—here is the middle of August and next week the schools re-open, and back to work again for everybody, and Christmas is now only two months off, for here we are in October—by the yellow of the chestnut fan—and in a day or two the boys will be futilely celebrating Guy Faux day, and the mince-meat is already made and the winter nuts and apples all laid in—and here is—actually—can you believe it—Christmas Day in the morning !

Well—that's how the year spins by when one has turned—anything over thirty—and when that hollow or flat ring waxes suspiciously smaller and closer year by year. The most touching thing about childhood is the length of its year. From May to May—how long it is—before the crows caw overhead and the first dandelion prinks the green and the filmy clouds sail high over broad bright blue. From December to December—alas—for the old among us—how short, how full of snows and wailing winds, of dull dark dawns and leaden noons !

It has, I think, been noticed that *la grippe* is peculiarly hard upon brain-workers. The cause of this doubtless lies in the fact that it is partly a nervous disease and not one of dirt. It is certainly true that it attacks and carries off more individuals of the professional classes than the cholera did. But may it not be that *la grippe* is no microbe-disease whatever, but simply acute yet still simple, primal, influenza and congestion of the lungs induced in large quantities by the exigencies of modern life ? Furnace-air is known to be highly deleterious, yet the growing popularity of furnaces over stoves and fire-places is a feature of the day. I have known a so-called cold to develop rapidly the day after sitting all one evening in a crowded, close, and insufferably hot theatre or concert-hall. Impure air always gives certain persons a congestive headache. The habit of standing over or near a register frequently engenders vicious "colds"—that is to say, various particles of dust, soot and other foreign matter, enter the nose and throat, and so irritate and poison the membranes of those delicate organs. Along with all this, a microbe might still exist, but even without the existing germ, the recurring winter plague of *la grippe* might easily be accounted for. Anyway, it is worth thinking about. I have observed four or five young women, employees in a large hot office, come suddenly out into the open air talking and laughing and with their heads and throats quite unprotected. The fashion of wearing the once ubiquitous "cloud" has entirely gone out, and the girls would be ashamed of being seen muffled up. They are proud, I suppose, of being hardy, and of standing the cold so well, but I take it that they are in momentary danger of some serious evil to the throat or lungs or bronchial tubes. Men are a trifle more rational, for you may observe them, on a cold and windy day, to pull their caps down over their ears, but few women are as careless of good looks while vigilant of health as Mme. Christine Nilsson was on one occasion when I saw her skating with a funny seal cap on—with square ears of fur tied down in place and her throat well wrapped up. Perhaps if we were all *prime donne* and depended on our voices for income, we should be equally careful. *Abi tu, et fac similiter.*

One of the attractions of the Chicago Fair is to be a pyramid of four hundred pianos, connected by electricity and playing all at once, though manipulated by one sole performer. The only dissentient word yet offered, by the