

THE CAT BIRD.

The spirit of romance was not abroad long, long ago, and in the good old days when existence meant a struggle with all sorts of hardships and privations, our forefathers had little time to care for anything beyond the practical. Thus it happened that the practical was applied to everything, and if John Smith lived in the most beautiful glen in the world, the hamlet that grew up about him, was considered from the Smith standpoint, and called Smithville,—in fact, Smith was a rarity, beautiful glens were everywhere and a drug on the market. This same practical spirit applied to everything, and birds and trees and flowers received a nomenclature, if not beautiful, decidedly to the point. If some of these names are crude and harsh, others have a quaint charm that makes them singularly dear to us. In the latter class cannot be included the common name given to the bright-eyed, merry little mimic, commonly called the Cat Bird. It is true that this thrush does imitate a mournful feline at times, but he has other characteristics far more prominent than this occasional pleasantry. For that matter the Mocking Bird is just as fond of mimicing the cat, and I have known each of these birds, when in captivity, deliberately lead an unsuspecting Thomas many a chase in search of a disconsolate Maria. In fact this game became so common that at last Thomas gave up his investigations in disgust, and possibly became an ardent believer in spiritualism. The Cat Bird is an inveterate mimic, and delights in mischief of all kinds, and in addition has such a contempt for everything else in the bird line, that he imagines himself lord of all he surveys. The world frequently accepts people at their own estimate—that is the unthinking world, and

the bird world is very similar. The Cat Bird is an artist as a vocalist, and with the Thrasher heads the list of Canadian songsters. To see the Cat Bird giving way to his characteristic ecstasy, and to hear him pouring forth torrents of liquid notes, full of exquisite melody, on a sunny morning in June, is a joy never to be forgotten. Cat Bird indeed! surely such a virtuoso is entitled to a sweeter name. If the frequent outbursts of melodious passion reveal the sentimental side of our little friend, we soon learn that he has another characteristic, and in his search for variety, accomplishes some grotesque feats. As a mimic the Cat Bird is unique, and when in the humor will attempt to reproduce the song of any bird he hears. I have known him sit near a canary cage, and deliberately endeavor to outdo innocent Dick at his own song. To me the Cat Bird is always a source of amusement, as he is such an audacious musical prodigy, and has an undoubted turn for fun. He is lavish with his melody, and at certain seasons sings nearly all day long, apparently liking notice. I have counted nine Cat Birds singing at one time, and in full view in Rockwood Grounds, and such a glorious concert I do not expect to hear repeated for many a day. The Cat Bird has a peculiar habit of getting a piece of newspaper worked into his nest, and in civilized districts at least, seems to insist on this furnishing. I have not pursued the subject from a political standpoint, but have no doubt the piece of newspaper invariably comes from a protectionist organ. Some winters ago, a Cat Bird captured during the summer, was given to me to care for. This black coated, bright-eyed, little gentleman proved an endless source of wonder, and could never be persuaded to behave as other birds do. He was an investi-