

than Australia. Although we have one near neighbour much more powerful than us, we do not fear her. We have faith in her respect for the independence of other nations, her sense of right, her Christianity. Against maritime attack on the Atlantic coast Canada is protected by the proximity of Britain, and the consequent promptitude with which cruisers could be sent to her aid on the outbreak of war. St. John, Halifax, and Charlottetown must, however, be protected by forts. Something has been done already, and more may be necessary. The ingenious torpedo must also be made ready for any eventuality. On the Pacific coast we have no towns likely to excite the cupidity of an enemy. The port of Esquimaux must be guarded; but it is the summer station and repairing place of the Imperial North Pacific fleet, and protection for it is as much a British as a Canadian question.

Most of the islands which own the lordship of Britain are already well protected, and their populations are so small that the Mother Country is not likely to call upon them for heavy contributions toward their defence, and with the larger colonies it will be well not to be too exacting. They are straining every nerve to open their territories for settlement, and will grudge money taken from the best means of making them strong in war, viz., increase of population and wealth. As the resources of Australia, Canada, and the Cape increase, it may be confidently anticipated that their contributions to the defence of the Empire will become more liberal. The argument of economy will always be a strong one in favour of Imperial union, and the stronger it is the better. Any necessary disbursement now will be cheerfully met, but it should be made as little burdensome as possible.

GORDON BROWN.

IN THE SPRING.—I.

EVERY new spring seems a new creation, only less wonderful than the first, and a fresh revelation of beauty and divinity to man. Nature makes one more effort, and surely this time she will attain the ideal,—the perfectness to which all things tend. The seeming failures of the past are as nothing to her, the autumn and winter are forgotten; here and now at last is a new beginning, and an infinite possibility. And so it is that heaven lies about us in spring no less than in our infancy, and in this new world, we, ourselves, are again as gods, knowing good and evil, and capable of the greatest things.

Though spring speaks thus in the air and the sunshine, in the running streams, and the budding trees, yet the inspiration and the poetry of the season have their fullest expression in birds and wild flowers.

To the soul in sympathy with Nature even the cawing of the crows is sweet music when first it breaks the dreary silence that filled the air and the woods all the winter. But the voice of the crow is not significant of the spring, since many of these birds remain with us during the winter, in the shelter of our thickest woods and cedar swamps.

The robin is the real harbinger of spring—the first bird-herald of the new era. Throughout the whole country everybody awaits his coming. School-boys and school-girls watch for the first robin. All the country papers announce his arrival, and even the great city journals join in the welcome. No one sees him on the way; yet some morning, as if he had just flown down from the skies, there he sits on the topmost spray of a bare tree, and the glad news goes from mouth to mouth that spring has come. The earth is bleak and bare; there is no sign anywhere that Nature will ever wake again from that dead sleep; yet the robin sings as cheerily and hopefully as if all the glory and joyousness of spring were already here, and his song-bursts are to us both an inspiration and a prophecy. Even with the snow a foot deep, as it was last year in the first week of April, this brave bird showed no loss of courage. There was an old and empty nest on the bough near him—last year's nest!—but he cared not for that; he would build another, and this new hope filled him with melodious joys.

This year the robins reached Canada at an unusually early date. They were seen in the trees on the grounds of University College in this city on the 8th and 9th of March. An enthusiastic bird-lover, writing to the *Globe* from Sault Ste. Marie a few days afterwards, reported these birds in his vicinity early in February, both this year and last.

But this fact does not warrant the assumption of a warmer climate for the Sault district. Such early arrivals so far to the north must be phenomenal; and the later appearance of birds in the lower parts of the Province may be partly accounted for in another way. It has lately been made known by Canadian ornithologists that the smaller birds in their migrations to the north are averse to crossing the great lakes. Their strength of wing does not seem to be sufficient for so long a continuous flight. Some that attempted it have been seen to alight on early passing vessels, in a much exhausted condition. The probability is that by far the greater number come to a stop when they reach the great lakes on their northward flight. Here they remain, perhaps for several days, and are seen flitting along from tree to tree on the shore, until they reach the ends of the lakes; then they cross the river, and continue their flight to the north. The absence of any such obstruction on that meridian may partly explain the comparatively early arrivals at the Sault. It is certain that extraordinary numbers of birds are observed for a few days during the migration season at such points as the Mackinac Straits and the Niagara River.*

* I am indebted for the facts of this paragraph to a valuable book entitled "The Birds of Ontario," recently published by Mr. Thomas McLlwraith, of Hamilton.

But we return from this digression. It is in the nest-building season that the robin sings his sweetest songs. Long before sunrise he pours forth his melody from the tree tops, and this is the first sound of morning that greets the all-night watcher. Then, in the evening, after he has been hard at work all day, plastering his house in the orchard, he sings his evensong, and the dusk thrills with his raptures. After a rain-shower, too, he will be seen on the top of his favourite tree warbling hopefully to his timid mate, of brighter skies and happier days. Even in the intervals of a storm, when the clouds are yet dripping, he sings courageously, until the heavy pelting drops of the fresh shower drive him to shelter.

Poets and writers of all kinds have united in glorifying the nightingale and the skylark of England, but no strong voice has ever sung the praise of many of our American birds. Yet there is a rare sweetness in the robin's strain, and if it could be translated into words there would be a poem of bird-song such as not even Shelley has written. It is but a simple homely air, not a fine or varied melody; yet it is rich and deep, and full of unutterable affection and tenderness.

The brown thrush and the wood thrush reach us from the south shortly after their cousin, the robin; but they are shy birds, and are not often seen except by those who are looking for them. They love to build their nests in thickets on the sides of small streams in quiet ravines. The cat-bird is more familiar in his habits; but neither these nor any others of the thrush family are nearly so numerous as the robins. Yet the cat-bird, the brown thrush, and the wood thrush, are even sweeter singers than the robin. The wood thrush is, without doubt, the best singer among our northern birds. Its note is finer, more varied, and more continuous than the robin's; and it is, moreover, entirely free from a certain harshness which breaks the robin's strain. At times the wood thrush abandons himself to a wild ecstasy of melody that entirely transcends description. On such occasions his song is scarcely excelled by that of his more famous relative, the mocking-bird of the South.

The blue-bird is also one of our earliest and most welcome spring comers. Though not a singing bird, it is much to be admired for its grace of form, its rich colouring, and its quiet, gentle ways.

Meanwhile our homely little Canadian gray-bird has arrived, and soon afterwards we mark the coat of yellow and black, and the long, undulating flight of the goldfinch. As May advances we greet the martens, the swallows, and the little yellow bird or wild canary, as it is sometimes called. Now, too, in the meadows the gay bobolink flutters in the air, his head quivering with sweet, tremulous raptures, till he drops down quietly beside his soberly dressed mate on the nest among the dandelion blooms. The golden oriole and the scarlet tanager reach us next, and seem like bits of the tropics that have, by some chance, been caught on the south wind, and blown to us here. The tanager is the most brilliantly coloured bird that visits the North. When it settles on a tree after its meteoric flight the branch seems all aflame. With the coming of these two birds summer may be considered to have fairly set in.

It is interesting to notice the unsettled air of our song birds for the first few days after their arrival. The crows have the business-like ways of old residents; but the smaller birds fly hither and thither in an aimless, uncertain fashion, like a dazed new-comer in a large city. The country seems strange to them yet. It is all so different from the summer glow and the breezes of balm in the land they have just left. At times they seem quite bewildered. But they become more composed presently, and set vigorously to work to build their little dwellings.

A. STEVENSON.

MY DIARY IN HONOLULU.—II.

Nor long afterwards we were again invited to the palace, and shown some ancient native curiosities. The privilege of viewing the relics of ancient Hawaii is so seldom accorded to any one that we considered ourselves fortunate. In the old days the *malos* of the men and dresses of the women were made of *tapa*, a roll of which we examined with interest. It is made by beating the fibres of the bark of certain trees into a pulp, which is pulled and stretched to the desired thickness and width, then dried in the sun, and, when in condition, it is dyed various colours, and marked out in patterns of every description. It is not made now, as the ease-loving natives could never be induced to take so much trouble. Before the arrival of the missionaries all the natives were entirely nude, except on going to battle, when the chiefs wore wonderful garments, made by massing and weaving together the tiny feathers of a certain bird. The king showed us a large cloak in his own possession. It was as large as a counterpane, and made of millions of the single yellow feathers of the wing of a small black bird called the *Ti*, once very plentiful, but now almost exterminated by the sportsmen. These feathers were woven into a fine kind of twine or fibrous lace work, one feather laid over another, and each feather only an inch long, and of the most brilliant vivid gold colour imaginable. This robe had a broad border of sapphire blue satin, which threw the gold colour into high relief. It was a most beautiful and wonderful piece of work, and no doubt took years to accomplish. There was also a strip of fibrous canvas made of the yellow feathers, but with a double border of a small, bright crimson feather; and laid along the strip at regular intervals were rows of shining human teeth. It gave me an uncanny kind of shiver, as the word cannibal came involuntarily to mind; but his Majesty hastened to tell us of the old custom, of which this is a relic, of extracting the teeth from any chief after death on the battlefield, and thus preserving them as a sign of prowess for posterity to gaze and wonder at. We saw most beautifully carved and polished calabashes, and a perfect model of a native grass hut; some bowls, made from coconut shells, looking almost like ebony, were much admired, as were the immense