



THE CROW.

From Farmers' Bulletin, No. 51, by F. E. L. Beal, B. S., Assistant Ornithologist, U. S. Dept. of Agriculture, Washington.

### The Crow.

The common crow is one of the best known of our birds and at the same time one of the most unpopular. Many are the sins laid to his charge, and of the bulk of them he has been proved guilty. He destroys young chickens, robs the nests of small birds, pulls up the sprouting corn, and eats those harmless creatures that are useful in devouring insects, such as frogs, toads, and small snakes.

With such an evil reputation, they must, however, have something in their favor, as the farmer rarely or never seeks to destroy them and their numbers do not seem to decrease as the country becomes more densely populated. In the immense quantities of insects the crow consumes he fully makes amends for all his other sins, which after all are not as black as they are painted. In the more thickly settled parts of the country the crow certainly does more good than harm, especially when ordinary precautions are taken to protect the young poultry and freshly planted corn from his depredations. If these precautions are neglected, however, losses will surely be incurred. So the hens and turkeys should not be allowed to roam any distance from the farm buildings with their brood, and tarring the seeds not only prevents them tearing up the young corn, but also compels them to turn their attention to insects.

The cultivated fruits are seldom touched by the crows, though they eat some of the wild varieties, and are partial to the seeds of the different kinds of sumac.

During the spring and early summer beetles constitute their principal food, and vast numbers of them fall a prey to the voracious bird. Later on their diet consists chiefly of grasshoppers, varied with caterpillars and spiders. They have a trick of trying almost everything eatable, especially when food is scarce. They eat the frozen apples found on the trees in winter, as well as any pumpkins, turnips, and potatoes which have been overlooked. They will even eat mushrooms when nothing more palatable can be found.

### The Bluebird.

The bluebird is among the first of the migratory birds seen here in spring, and always meets with a warm welcome, being regarded as an omen that winter is over. It generally builds its nest in a hollow tree in the garden or orchard, though it depends little on either to supply its wants, seeming to prefer the wild fruits and berries found on various shrubs and creepers. It is by no means an epicure, as it invariably gives the preference to whatever is most abundant. Beetles, grasshoppers, and caterpillars form the chief insect diet; in the months of August and September nearly one-half of their food is grasshoppers. So vast quantities of these injurious insects are destroyed by the bright little bird. Being a useful inhabitant of the garden and orchard, the bluebird should be encouraged there, and as they are always willing to take advantage of nesting boxes, it is an easy matter to have any number of them about the premises.

### The Wren.

No complaints can be made against the house wren on the score of robbing orchards, as it subsists entirely on insect food. It is a prolific breeder, rearing from twelve to sixteen young in a season, so a family of these birds must ensure a great reduction in the number of insects in a garden.

Wrens are most diligent foragers, searching every tree, shrub and vine for caterpillars, and examining every post and rail of the fence for spiders and insects. As they always work near their nests, they are invaluable in gardens and orchards, and by providing suitable nesting boxes it is easy to have them wherever they are most needed. Every effort should be made to induce them to build their nests near the house, it being impossible to have too many wrens, as the good they do is incalculable.

## THE CHILDREN'S CORNER.

### The Golden Fleece.

(Continued from page 323.)

The moon threw its bright beams over the plowed field, where as yet there was nothing to be seen. Any farmer would have said that Jason must wait weeks before the green blades would peep through the earth. But by and by, all over the field, there was something that glistened like drops of dew. These bright objects sprouted higher, and proved to be the steel heads of spears. Then appeared a vast number of polished brass helmets, beneath which were the bearded faces of warriors, struggling to free themselves from the earth. Next were seen their bright breastplates; in every hand there was a sword or spear or shield. Wherever a dragon's tooth had fallen,

there stood a man armed for battle. They clashed their swords against their shields, and eyed one another fiercely, for they were boiling over with the red-hot thirst for battle. Then they began to shout: "Show us the enemy! Death or victory! Conquer or die!" Then they caught sight of Jason, and, crying with one voice, "Guard the Golden Fleece!" they ran at him with uplifted swords and protruded spears. Jason prepared to die valiantly, but Medea bade him throw a stone among them quickly. The armed men were now so near that Jason could see their flashing eyes, when he let fly the stone, and saw it strike the helmet of a tall warrior who was rushing upon him with his blade aloft. The stone glanced from this man's helmet to the shield of his nearest comrade, and thence flew right into the angry face of another, hitting him smartly

part, with my nine and forty comrades."

"You never would have succeeded in this business, young man," said the king with a scowl, "if my undutiful daughter had not helped you. Had you acted fairly, you would have been, at this moment, a black cinder or a handful of white ashes. I forbid you, on pain of death, to make any more attempts to get the Golden Fleece."

Jason left the palace in great sorrow and anger, but as he hastened down the steps, the Princess Medea called him back. Her black eyes shone with such cunning that he felt as if there were a serpent peeping out of each of them.

"What says my royal and upright father?" inquired Medea, smiling. "Will he give you the Golden Fleece without any further risk or trouble?"

"On the contrary," answered Jason, "he is very angry, and positively refuses to give up the Golden Fleece, whether I slay the dragon or no."

"Yes, Jason," said the princess, "and unless you sail from Colchis before to-morrow's sunrise, the king means to burn your ship and kill you and your comrades. But the Golden Fleece you shall have. Wait for me here an hour before midnight."

At the appointed hour they made their way to the sacred grove, in the center of which the Golden Fleece was suspended to a tree. Gleaming among the oak trees it shone with a radiance like the golden glory of the setting sun.

"How gloriously it shines!" cried Jason. "Let me hasten onward and obtain the prize."

But, just at that moment, an antelope came bounding fleetly through the grove. Suddenly there was a frightful hiss, and an immense head was thrust forth which swallowed the poor antelope with one snap of its jaws. Then the horrible head came waving through the air almost within arm's length of Prince Jason. Medea had in her hand a magic sleeping potion, contained in a golden box, which she tossed into the monster's wide-open throat. With one tremendous wriggle, which shattered the trees around, the dragon fell motionless on the ground. Jason snatched the Golden Fleece from the tree, and rushed straight to his galley. The nine and forty Argonauts were ready, with oars held perpendicularly, and as he leaped aboard they gave a mighty shout, and the ship flew over the water, homeward bound. N. H.

### Avoid Trifling Disputes.

A woman whose goodness and tenderness make her loved by all who know her, once said to an impatient girl friend: "My dear, learn to allow others to be mistaken. It is a difficult lesson to acquire, but it is one that will make you and all who come in contact with you happier."

The wise advice often occurs to me while listening to discussions and heated arguments upon utterly unimportant matters.

Nobody likes to be told that he is wrong, and few of us will believe it of ourselves when we are told of it. When there is no principle involved, it is wiser, gentler and kinder to let a trifling error pass unnoticed. If a friend has bought the material for a portiere, and has had the curtain made by a seamstress under the fond conviction that she has saved money by so doing, why tell her that she could have bought a pair of ready-made portieres for what she has paid for the material and the making of one? It will only lessen her enjoyment in her property, and do neither her nor you any good. When a mistake is made and past changing, let it alone. It is a great undertaking to try to right the world, and those whose temerity permits them to attempt the task should be careful that the so-called righting is not in itself a mistake.



THE BLUEBIRD.

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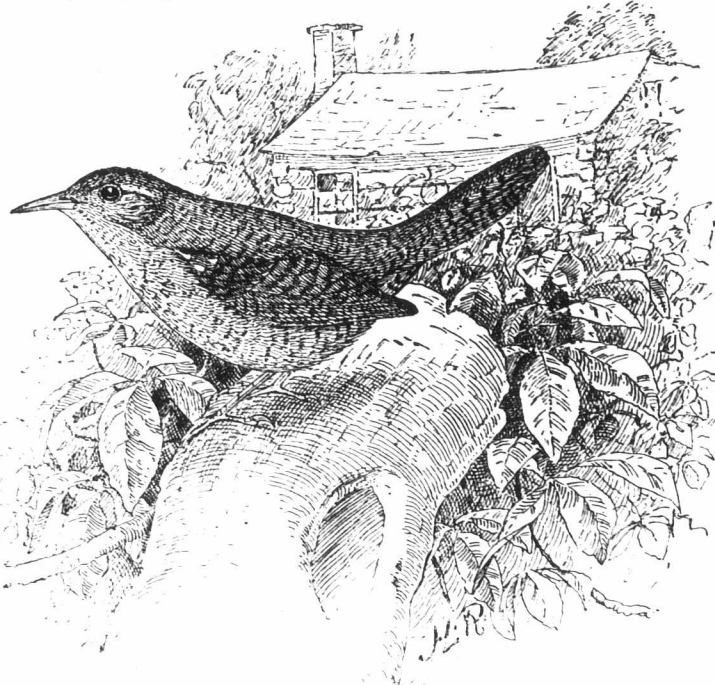
between the eyes. Each of the three took it for granted that his next neighbor had given him a blow, and they at once began to fight among themselves. The confusion spread, and in a moment they were all hacking, hewing, and stabbing at one another, lopping off arms, heads, and legs, and doing such deeds of valor that Jason was filled with admiration. In a very short time all but one of the heroes of the dragon's teeth were stretched lifeless on the field. The last survivor had just force enough to wave his crimson sword over his head, and give a shout of "Victory! Victory!" when he too fell down dead.

"Let them sleep in the bed of honor," said the Princess Medea, with a shy smile at Jason. "The world will always have simpletons enough, just like them, fighting and dying for they know not what."

Next morning early Jason went to the palace of King Aetes. Entering the presence-chamber, he stood at the foot of the throne, and made a low obeisance.

"Your eyes look heavy, Prince Jason," observed the king; "you appear to have spent a sleepless night. I hope you have concluded that it would be wiser not to get yourself scorched to a cinder in attempting to tame my brazen-lunged bulls."

"That is already accomplished, may it please your majesty," replied Jason. "The bulls have been tamed and yoked; the field has been plowed; the dragon's teeth have been sown; the crop of warriors has sprung up, and they have slain one another to the last man. And now I solicit your majesty's permission to encounter the dragon, that I may take down the Golden Fleece from the tree, and de-



THE WREN.

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