

SKETCHES OF CANADIAN WILD BIRDS.

By W. L. Kells, Listowel, Ont.

THE BLUE BIRD.

This interesting and beautiful bird, our harbinger of spring, is one of the most welcome and attractive of all our feathered visitors, associated as its appearance is with the return of the season when the trees put forth their leaves and blossoms anew, and the earth is clothed with fresh verdure. It is resident not only in all parts of Canada from early spring until late in the autumn, but is also found in most parts of the temperate woody regions of North America. In the Southern States it is a permanent resident, where its constant warblings and innocent vivacity enliven the dull days of their winter time, and during the summer its gladsome lays may be heard at the same time by the free and hardy pioneer in the backwoods of Canada, and the poor freedman on the cotton plains of the south. As early as the first days of March, though woods and fields may still be covered deep with snow, and the water-courses still be icebound, yet if the sun shines bright and the temperature has risen a few degrees above the freezing point, the pleasing notes of the blue bird may be heard as it flies from wood to wood, as if eager to announce that winter's reign is about to close, and give place to the reviving spring, and that he is glad once more to have his plumage fanned by the temperate breezes of his native shores. The habits of the blue bird are in many respects peculiar, for though following in the track of pioneer, and delighting to make its summer stay, and rear its young in the newly-out stumps of the small clearing of the backwoodsman, yet it does not penetrate into the woods either in quest of food or for nesting purposes; neither does it remain in the old settlements unless precaution is used to provide boxes for its nesting purposes; neither does it alight and feed upon the ground like the different species of thrushes and sparrows, but in general captures its insect prey by a series of darting movements, or gleans from the leaves and bark of trees, and the seeds and grain that are procured from tall stalks, or some elevations of the ground. Sometimes in pursuit of a wounded insect, which it is pretty expert in capturing, it darts upon the earth, but the moment it has secured its victim it rises again to some perch. As the food of the blue bird is chiefly insects and creeping creatures, which it gathers from the bark or foliage of trees, or by hovering over the fields, it will be noted that it is one of the best allies of the agriculturist in his contest with destructive insects, and it should therefore be protected and encouraged to take up its summer residence near the abodes of man. In order to do this, little houses, or something containing cavities in which it can form its nest, should be placed in every garden and orchard, on some elevated post, and care taken that cats and birds of prey are not allowed to disturb them. When thus protected, they will return to and occupy the same nesting-place year after year, and their services can only be estimated by those who have their cabbage and other vegetables and fruits destroyed year after year by the ravages of the smaller kinds of butterflies and moths. While the country is still new, the blue bird finds plenty of nesting-places in the hollows of stumps and the deserted nests of woodpeckers; but as these places are destroyed in clearing the fields, if suitable places are not provided in their stead it forsakes its old haunts, follows the track of the pioneer, and is seldom any more seen in the old settlements. One of the first things which the blue bird proceeds to do, when the spring has

fairly opened, is to examine its nesting-place, and if it has not been disturbed, the female soon repairs it, and commences the duty of incubation, while the varied and pleasant warble of her beautiful consort is constantly heard in the vicinity. She begins to nest early in April, and will raise two or three broods in the season. The first clutch generally numbers five, the eggs are of a light blue colour; and the nest is formed of strips of bark, dry grass and hair. The plumage of the male on the upper parts is of a beautiful azure blue colour, the breast madder red, and the under parts whitish. The livery of the female is similarly marked, but her plumage is of a dull hue. In length it is six inches.

CURRENT NEWS ITEMS.

MR. ED. GLEN, of the 2nd concession of Stanley, has a this year's lamb which will weigh 125 lbs.

MR. WM. STINSON, of Usborne, has sold his farm, lot 14, concession 18, to Mr. G. F. Stinson, Brockville, for \$7,000.

DR. HAMILL, of New Baltimore, Michigan, an old Hullett teacher, recently bought his father's farm, near Kinburn, for \$6,000.

FOUR homing pigeons, which were released at Oakville, reached Strathroy, 100 miles distant, in three hours and eighteen minutes.

MR. URIAH McFADDEN, of the 12th concession of Grey, has flax growing on his farm which measures over thirty-two inches in length.

MR. G. BLATCHFORD, of North Exeter, has purchased from Mr. P. McPhillips 100 acres of land, being lot 2, concession 1, Usborne, for \$6,000 cash.

MR. SAMUEL BROOK, of Usborne, near Winchelsea, has three ewe lambs all from one ewe, which now weigh 100 pounds each, and the wool on which will average six inches in length.

THE Huron *Expositor* has been shown some fall wheat, grown near Seaforth, stalks of which measured seven feet, and which, if properly matured, will yield 50 bushels per acre.

MR. ROBERT HERON has sold his farm, the south-east quarter of lot 16, in the 4th concession of Dawn, containing fifty acres, to Mr. James Hunter, who lives adjoining, for the sum of \$1,100 cash.

SOME packages of Dominion \$1 and \$2 bills were stolen from the Dominion Treasury recently without being signed. They are now in circulation, of the following numbers: \$1 bills from No. 505,001 to 505,600; \$2 from No. 145,001 to 146,000; a second package of \$2 from No. 155,001 to 156,000.

ON Tuesday, the 4th inst., Thomas Hunt, of Elmira, gave a mare troubled with heaves half a pint of coal oil, in the hope of curing her of her malady, but the medicine had the opposite effect from what he desired, the animal dying in eight minutes after the draught. The animal was worth \$60, and the coal oil five cents.

MR. JOHN McDOWELL, of Roxboro', McKillop, recently sold a four year old mare to Mr. John Shipley, of Hullett, near Clinton, for the sum of \$240. This fine animal was sired by "Old Netherby." Mr. McDowell has since purchased a three year old gelding from Mr. Joseph Evans, of McKillop, to replace the one he sold, paying therefor the sum of \$200 cash. These sales show that McKillop can hold its own with the best of them in the matter of horse flesh.

THE Stratford *Beacon* says:—"It is rather late in the season now to speak of remedies for the curculio, which has of late years made successful plum culture almost an impossibility in this country, but in conversation with Mr. A. McD. Allen, of Goderich, a most successful fruit grower,

the other day, he informed us that he had completely conquered the "Little Turk," and his remedy is worth recording. In the spring, as soon as the blossoms form, he sprays them with Paris green, in the proportion of a teaspoonful to a bucket of water, and about a pint to each tree. This destroys the curculio at once, and the trees bear abundantly. Every one who has a plum tree should keep this for future reference."

ON Tuesday, the 4th inst., Mr. Frank Thompson, of Mansfield, Ohio, shipped a carload of splendid horses by Great Western Railway, the following being the persons of whom they were purchased and the prices paid:—J. Shipley, Clinton, mare, \$240; T. McMichael, Hullett, yearling stallion weighing 1,200 lbs., and got by "What's Wanted," \$250; Jas. Tremear, Hullett, two year old, \$150; J. Moffat, Goderich township, three year old, \$190; G. T. McKay, three year old, \$200; W. Laithwaite, Goderich township, \$180; J. Allinson, Clinton, \$105; J. Gentles, Kincardine, three, \$220, \$190, and \$200; Anthony Taylor, Hullett, an unusually fine three year old, \$280; T. Stanbury, Clinton, two year old, \$200.

THE Marquette *Review* says:—"A party of twenty Scotchmen passed through the Portage last week on their way home to Scotland. They had been up west looking for land, but they found it so completely locked up and the land regulations so unsatisfactory that they became disgusted and determined to return to their native land. The Rev. Mr. Bell, of this place, met this party of immigrants, and when he learned that they were returning home he remonstrated with them, and asked them why they did not squat until such times as they could make definite arrangements for settlement. They became highly indignant and felt insulted at this question, and said they had not come out to the country to be squatters, but came with the anticipation of being able to procure farms without any trouble. The party was possessed of considerable wealth, and was prepared to engage in farming operations extensively. There are many more immigrants in the west who will also retrace their steps if a more settled land policy is not made at once."

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