

Our Farm Homes

The Miracle

There's not a leaf upon the tree
To show the sap is leaping.
There's not a blade and not an ear
Escaped from winter's kee-
But there's a something in the air
A something here, a something there,
A restless something everywhere—
A stirring in the sleeping.

A robin's sudden, thrilling note!
And see—the sky is blue!
The world, so ancient yesterday,
To-day seems strangely newer;
That was warlike and stale—
Has wrapped itself in rosy veil—
The wraith of Winter, grown so pale
That smiling Spring peeps through
her. —Isabel Mackay.



One Way to Earn Money

WANTED—A few more general agents, every year for particulars. The Blank Book Publishing Co.

For several consecutive weeks, I noticed this insertion, ending finally with the statement that special terms would be offered clergymen and teachers. That clause captured me. I was a teacher, and it must be respectable. I had conscientiously practised fastening front and back doors whenever a book agent had essayed to come into my life, but this calling was no more like that than the duties of a "runner" or "drummer" were like those of a "Jew peddler." So I reasoned, and wrote for particulars.

The reply was gratifying. Liberal terms were offered, as my references were excellent. But to understand the business so thoroughly as to train others, I must first learn the trade. In short, the firm proposed that I serve an apprenticeship in actual canvassing. It would appoint me general agent for my county as soon as I obtained orders for, delivery, and received full pay for 100 copies of one of its fastest selling books. In accomplishment of this, I would gain the experience necessary to drill sub-agents, whom I would appoint when I was commissioned with the higher office. A copy of "Hints to Agents," and one of "Laws of Success," were sent to me for perusal.

The first door I tried gave back the echo of my knock with a hollow, disheartening sound that mocked me for thinking it might not be empty. The next was opened by a suspicious-eyed woman, who said she didn't "want anything," before I asked her. Another smiled sweetly on me, invited me into her parlor, asked to be shown through my sample book, encouraged me to explain the illustrations to the children, asked them if they wouldn't like to have it, and, after consuming a half hour of my time, announced that she would have that work if there were any way in the world to pay for it, but her husband was out of work, and they were living on credit. Her nearest neighbor admitted my obnoxious self, but wouldn't allow her interest to be aroused.

Towards the close of day I stumbled into the village pastor's. He looked my book carefully over, listened to my explanations, and suggested improvements on my descriptions. He did not subscribe; ministers are poor. But he wrote a recommendation for me to show, and gave names of leading church members who he thought might buy. The minister's cheering influence brought renewed buoyancy, and I laid my head on a farm house pillow that night, resolving to sell that 100 books. Next day I won the length and breadth of the village,

gaining five names. Then I walked to the adjoining town, telling the rest of the week without reward. Saturday, at dusk, I had sufficient remaining strength to rap at a low-roofed dwelling opposite the station. In the morning I would take the train—somewhere. "Come right in," and a laughing young woman drew me into her poor sitting room. "I can't take your book, but I want you to stay with me to-night, and talk off the blues. I peddle myself."



It was a relief to exchange experiences with her. "You poor thing," she said, rocking the baby; "I've been through it all. You haven't what the little boys would call 'face' enough to canvass. It is like everything else. Experience is necessary before you can make it pay. Your books will cost twice what you pay for them if you pay cash for board, and don't average more than one sale a day. I began with books. Books were the last thing the average woman wanted. I couldn't carry eatables, so I looked about for the next popular article. After many ventures I found that some little household article costing a few cents would almost sell itself. I tried dough-nut and cookie cutters, and sold at almost every house. At the time a license had to be paid for peddling, so I left my goods at the hotel, and took orders by mail, delivering on the next trip. I grew to like the work, and soon gave up book-canvassing. I was left a widow with this child to support. Canvassing was easier than washing, and I hired a woman to care for Ruth while I was gone. Just now I have three fast-selling articles at ten cents: Colored pins, hat brushes and kettle scrapers. In one village I sold thirty-six dollars worth in four days. Most everybody needs black or white-headed pins. Being a woman you know their value, and can show a woman how convenient they are. And these

little hat brushes, shaped so that they can be pushed under any kind of trimming, feathers and so on. I sell lots to young men also. But these kettle scrapers are in demand. I ask housekeepers if they haven't a pan or kettle in soak. Then I show them how much labor is saved by scraping them out with this. You want some such thing for a side line with your book. A hundred will take this, where only one will subscribe for the other. They are light to carry and will pay your way and encourage you while you are selling your hundred books. I'll let you have a gross of mine at cost. Take them to the next village, by stage, and canvass thoroughly. They are something new there."

I stayed with her that night, and the morning stage bore me and her kettle scrapers away. I sold the little chisel-like weapons, and learned to sell books. It took four months to dispose of the hundred, but the scrapers kept my finances in such good condition, my health improved rapidly, and I enjoyed myself and other folks so much, that the time did not pass slowly. The general agency was given me as soon as the required stint was accomplished, and I forthwith journeyed from town to town appointing book agents and drilling them in the tedious art. Arriving a stranger in a certain town, I ask the station agent, postmaster, hotel-keeper, or minister, for addresses of local book agents or unemployed, reliable, counsellor persons, adapted by nature for the work. They direct me to such a person, who, if engaged, recommends another, and I go on till I

Return of the Birds

Knowing that some of our readers are intensely interested in the study of birds, their habits, their songs, and the good they are to the world, we have arranged with a reliable authority to contribute short articles for our paper, on phases of Nature study work. Any questions that our readers feel they would like to ask in connection with the subjects treated, we should be glad to have them ask. All questions will be submitted to the writer of this column, and we hope there will be many. The first contribution is on the return of the birds from their winter homes.

The birds of our district may be grouped under four heads: first, the residents which stay with us all the year round and of which the Chickadee and Downy Woodpecker are examples; secondly, winter visitors like the Snowflake and Pine Grosbeak, which nest farther north but may spend a portion of the severe winter with us; thirdly, the large class of summer visitors like the Robin, and Bob-link, who stay with us during the genial days of spring and summer, and after raising their young wing their way farther south on the approach of winter. Lastly, we have what we may term birds of passage; that is, birds like the Wild Goose where the date of their coming and going simply pass through our locality on their way from their winter quarters in the south to their breeding grounds farther north, making the return journey in the fall.

Evidently then, most of our birds only stay with us a portion of the year, leaving us again at more or less regular times. Such birds are called migrants and this migration of the birds is one of the most interesting features of bird life.

WHY THE BIRDS LEAVE US

In most cases the reason for the journey southward is the cold weather there is little insect life, whilst the grain and seeds are buried below the snow and frozen ground.

To explain why they return to the north is not so easy for they already seem to have an abundance of all they need in their winter quarters in the south. It may be that the hot summers of these countries are not suited to the rearing of young, but on this point we are not sure.

The journey is made for the most part during the night, day being largely spent in obtaining food. The birds go in flocks guided by old birds who have made the journey before and know the way. These probably steer their course by the lakes and rivers and other well marked features of the earth's surface. There are some instances, however, when the old birds leave before the young ones, and it is hard to understand how these latter make their way with certainty, to a land they do not know by a route they have never travelled. Like many of the ways of Nature. Like many of the ways of Nature. Like many of the ways of Nature. In a few years such a record will be of great value to the student of the maker of it but to others interested like himself in the life of the birds.

In keeping records some scheme like the following might be devised.

Name of Bird	First Arrival	When Commenced	Nest building begun	Young leave nest	Departure

Editor—We might all take a lesson from this man's experience.

A Big Man's Confessions

For all his caustic wit, Thomas B. Reed, of Maine, was as tender of heart as he was large of frame. He was not much of a hunter.

"I never shot but one bird in my life," he once confessed. "I spent a whole day doing that. It was a sandpiper. I chased him for hours up and down a mill stream. When at last I potted him and held him up by one of his poor little legs, I never felt more ashamed of myself in all my life. I hid him in my coat-lap pocket for fear somebody would see how big I was and how small the victim, and I never will be guilty again of the cowardice of such an unequal battle."