MABEL OSGOOD WRIGHT, ELLIOTT COUES

CITIZEN BIRD: SCENES FROM BIRD-LIFE IN PLAIN ENGLISH FOR BEGINNERS

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CHAPTER I

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OVERTURE BY THE BIRDS

"We would have you to wit, that on eggs though we sit,
And are spiked on the spit, and are baked in a pan;
Birds are older by far than your ancestors are,
And made love and made war, ere the making of man!"

(*Andrew Lang*.)

A party of Swallows perched on the telegraph wires beside the highway where it passed Orchard Farm. They were resting after a breakfast of insects, which they had caught on the wing, after the custom of their family. As it was only the first of May they had plenty of time before nest-building, and so were having a little neighborly chat.

If you had glanced at these birds carelessly, you might have thought they were all of one kind; but they were not. The smallest was the Bank Swallow, a sober-hued little fellow, with a short, sharp-pointed tail, his back feathers looking like a dusty brown cloak, fastened in front by a neck-band between his light throat and breast.

Next to him perched the Barn Swallow, a bit larger, with a tail like an open pair of glistening scissors and his face and throat a beautiful ruddy buff. There were so many glints of color on his steel-blue back and wings, as he spread them in the sun, that it seemed as if in some of his nights he must have collided with a great soap-bubble, which left its shifting hues upon him as it burst.

This Barn Swallow was very much worried about something, and talked so fast to his friend the Tree Swallow,

that his words sounded like twitters and giggles; but you would know they were words, if you could only understand them.

The Tree Swallow wore a greenish-black cloak and a spotless white vest. He was trying to be polite and listen to the Barn Swallow as well as to the Purple Martin (the biggest Swallow of all), who was a little further along on the wire; but as they both spoke at once, he found it a difficult matter.

"We shall all be turned out, I know," complained the Barn Swallow, "and after we have as good as owned Orchard Farm these three years, it is too bad. Those meddlesome House People have put two new pieces of glass in the hayloft window, and how shall I ever get in to build my nest?"

"They may leave the window open," said the Bank Swallow soothingly, for he had a cheerful disposition; "I have noticed that hayloft windows are usually left open in warm weather."

"Yes, they may leave it open, and then shut it some day after I have gone in," snapped Barney, darting off the perch to catch a fly, and grasping the wire so violently on his return, that the other birds fluttered and almost lost their footing. "What is all this trouble about?" asked the Martin in his soft rich voice. "I live ten miles further up country, and only pass here twice a year, so that I do not know the latest news. Why must you leave the farm? It seems to be a charming place for Bird People. I see a little box under the barn eaves that would make me a fine house."

"It *is* a delightful place for us," replied the Barn Swallow; "but now the House People who own the farm are coming

back to live here themselves, and everything is turned topsy-turvy. They should have asked us if we were willing for them to come. Bird People are of a *much* older race than House People anyway; it says so in their books, for I heard Rap, the lame boy down by the mill, reading about it one day when he was sitting by the river."

All the other birds laughed merrily at this, and the Martin said, "Don't be greedy, Brother Barney; those people are quite welcome to their barns and houses, if they will only let us build in their trees. Bird People own the whole sky and some of our race dive in the sea and swim in the rivers where no House People can follow us."

"You may say what you please," chattered poor unhappy Barney, "everything is awry. The Wrens always built behind the window-blinds, and now these blinds are flung wide open. The Song Sparrow nested in the long grass under the lilac bushes, but now it is all cut short; and they have trimmed away the nice mossy branches in the orchard where hundreds of the brothers built. Besides this, the Bluebird made his nest in a hole in the top of the old gate post, and what have those people done but put up a new post with *no hole in it*!"

"Dear! dear! Think of it, *think* of it!" sang the Bluebird softly, taking his place on the wire with the others.

"What if these people should bring children with them," continued Barney, who had not finished airing his grievances—"little BOYS and CATS! Children who might climb up to our nests and steal our eggs, boys with *guns* perhaps, and striped cats which no one can see, with feet that make no sound, and *such* claws and teeth—it makes

me shiver to think of it." And all the birds shook so that the wire quivered and the Bank Swallow fell off, or would have fallen, if he had not spread his wings and saved himself.

The Martin had nothing to say to this, but the little Bank Swallow, though somewhat shaken up, whispered, "There *may* be children who do not rob nests, and other boys like Rap, who would never shoot us. Cats are always sad things for birds, but these House People may not keep any!" And then he moved down a wire or two, frightened at having given his opinion.

At that moment a Chimney Swift joined the group. This Swift, who nests in chimneys, is the sooty-colored bird that flies and feeds on the wing like a Swallow, and when he is in the air looks like a big spruce cone with wings. He was followed by a Catbird, who had been in a honeysuckle, by one of the farmhouse windows, and peeped inside out of curiosity. Both were excited and evidently bubbling over with news, which half the birds of the orchard were following them to hear. "I know all about it," cried the Swift, settling himself for a long talk.

"I've *seen* the House People!" screamed the Catbird.

"They wish well to the Bird People, and we shall be happier than before!" squeaked the Swift, breathless and eager. "Listen!"—and the birds all huddled together. "This morning when I flew down the chimney, wondering if I should dare build my nest there again, I heard a noise on the outside, so I dropped as far as I could and listened.

"A voice said, 'Mammy Bun, we will leave this chimney for the birds; do not make a fire here until after they have nested!' I was so surprised that I nearly fell into the grate."

"And I," interrupted the Catbird, "was looking in the window and saw the man who spoke, and Mammy Bun too. She is a very big person, wide like a wood-chuck, and has a dark face like the House People down in the warm country where I spend the winter."

"There are children at the farm, *I've* seen them too," cried the Phoebe, who usually lived under the eaves of the cow-shed; "three of them—one big girl, one little girl, and a BOY!"

"I told you so!" lisped the Barn Swallow; and a chorus of *ohs* and *ahs* arose that sounded like a strange message buzzing along the wires.

"The BOY has a pocket full of pebbles and a *shooter*," gasped the Phoebe, pausing as if nothing more shocking could be said.

"Yes, but the big girl coaxed the shooter away from him," said the Chimney Swift, who was quite provoked because his story had been interrupted; "she said, 'Cousin Nat, father won't let you shoot birds here or do anything to frighten them away, for he loves them and has spent half his life watching them and learning their ways, and they have grown so fearless hereabouts that they are like friends.'

"But Nat said, 'Do let me shoot some, Cousin Olive. I don't see why Uncle Roy likes them. What good are birds anyway? They only sit in the street and say "chuck, chuck, chuck" all day long.'

"'You say that because you have always lived in the city and the only birds you have watched are the English Sparrows, who are really as disagreeable as birds can

possibly be,' said the big girl; 'but here you will see all the beautiful wild birds.'

"Then the little girl said, 'Why, brother, you always loved our Canary!'

"'Yes, but he is different; he is nice and yellow, and he knows something and sings too like everything; he isn't like these common tree birds.'"

"Common tree birds indeed!" shrieked the Catbird.

"That is what the boy called us," said the Chimney Swift, who then went on with his story about what he had heard the children say.

"'Why you silly dear!' cried, the big girl, laughing a sweet little laugh like the Bobolink's song, 'that only proves how little you know about wild birds. Plenty of them are more brightly colored than your Canary, and some of those that wear the plainest feathers sing more beautifully than all the Canaries and cage birds in the world. This summer, when you have made friends with these wild birds, and they have let you see their homes and learn their secrets, you will make up your mind that there are no *common birds*; for every one of them has something very uncommon about it,'

"Then our brother B. Oriole began to sing in the sugar maple over the shed. The sun was shining on his gay coat; the little girl pointed to him and whispered, 'Hush, Nat! you see Olive is right; please empty the stones out of your pocket.'"

The Chimney Swift had hardly finished his story when there was another excitement.

"News, more news!" called the Bank Swallow joyfully. He had been taking a skim over the meadows and orchard.

"These House People do *not* keep cats!"

"They may not have any now, but that doesn't prove they never will," said a Robin crossly. He had just flown against a window, not understanding about the glass, and had a headache in consequence.

"They *never will keep cats*," insisted the little Swallow boldly.

"How do *you* know?" asked the birds in one breath.

"Because they keep *dogs*!" said Bankey, twittering with glee; "two nice dogs. One big and buff and bushy, with a much finer tail than the proudest fox you ever saw; and the other small and white with some dark spots, and as quick as a squirrel. This one has a short tail that sticks up like a Wren's and a nose like a weasel; one ear stands up and the other hangs down; and he has a *terrible* wink in one eye. Even a poor little Bank Swallow knows that where one of *these* dogs lives the Bird People need not fear either cats or rats!"

"I love dogs," said the black-and-white Downy Woodpecker, running up a telegraph pole in search of grubs; "dogs have bones to eat and I like to pick bones, especially in winter."

"Me too," chimed in the Nuthatch, who walks chiefly head down and wears a fashionable white vest and black necktie with a gray coat; "and sometimes they leave bits of fat about. Yes, dogs are very friendly things indeed."

Then a joyful murmur ran all along the wires, and Farmer Griggs, who was driving past, said to himself, "Powerful lot of 'lectricity on to-day; should think them Swallers would get shock't and kil't." But it was only the birds whispering

together; agreeing to return to their old haunts at Orchard Farm and give the House Children a chance to learn that there are no such things as "common" birds.

CHAPTER II

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THE DOCTOR'S WONDER ROOM

Nathaniel and Theodora, who were called Nat and Dodo for short, were standing in the hallway outside Dr. Hunter's door, engaged in a very lively argument.

"I say birds are animals," blustered Nat, pounding his fists together after a fashion of his own.

"And I'm as sure as anything that they *can't* be," persisted Dodo, "because they have feathers, and nothing else has."

"That doesn't prove anything. Everything that lives and grows is either an animal or a vegetable. Do you think that birds grow like potatoes and are dug out of the ground, or come off trees like apples?" And Nat gave himself an air of great wisdom, such as brothers are apt to wear when they are in the fifth reader, and their sisters are only in the third.

"But isn't there anything besides animals and vegetables that they might be? Perhaps they are minerals," said Dodo, brightening up as she thought of the word.

"Oh! oh! what a stupid you are, Dodo! Minerals! Why those are rocks and such things, that can't move and don't live." Nat laughed rather rudely, and, putting his hands in his pockets, began to whistle.

"I think you might tell me *what* kind of an animal a bird is, and why it has feathers and can fly, instead of laughing," said Dodo in a shaky voice; for her feelings were very tender and she remembered too late what minerals are.

"Yes, tell her, Nat," said Olive, who came through the hall just then. "Are you holding your knowledge tight in your pockets, or whistling to keep from telling it?"

Nat scowled a minute and then said frankly, for every one was frank with Olive, "I really don't know what sort of an animal a bird is, though I'm sure it *is* an animal. Don't you think Uncle Roy will tell us?"

"I'm sure he will be glad to, if he is not very busy, and he is seldom too busy to talk of birds. He is writing a book now of all the things he knows about them. Knock on the door, Dodo."

"I'm afraid to," said Dodo, clasping her hands behind her. "Mammy says that room is *full* of birds, and that we must never go in there. Suppose when the door opens they should get out and fly away?"

"Mammy was right in telling you not to go in without asking, because there are a great many books and papers there that father values, and you might upset them. But the birds that are there are not alive. They are dead birds that father has collected from all parts of America—stuffed birds, such as you have seen in the glass cases in the Museum."

"But, Cousin Olive," said Nat in astonishment, "if Uncle Roy has shot enough birds to fill a big room, why won't he let me pop at a few with my shooter?"

"You must ask him why yourself, Nat. Knock again, Dodo. Father, may we come in? The children are here, with pockets full of questions;" and Olive opened the door of the study, which Dodo named "the wonder room" that very day.

It was a very long room on the southwest side of the house. The sun streamed in through three wide windows,

and at one end there was a deep fireplace with brass andirons upon which some logs smouldered, for though it was a mild May day the great room felt cool. Around the room were deep cases with glass doors, from which peeped all kinds and sizes of birds, while between the tops of the cases and the ceiling the spaces were filled by colored bird pictures. The Doctor's desk stood in front of one window, heaped with papers and books; down the middle of the room were low book-cases standing back to back, and where these ended, before the hearth, was a high-backed settle, almost as long as a bed.

The children stood still for a minute, speechless with surprise and delight. Then Dodo made a rush for the Doctor's chair, and hugging him round the neck, cried, "Dear Uncle Roy, will you please let us stay in here a little while, so that we can learn what sort of animals birds are, and all about them? And will you tell Nat why you let yourself shoot birds when you won't let him?" Here Dodo stopped, both for lack of breath and because she knew that her sentences were mixing themselves dreadfully.

"So you have been here two whole days without finding me out," said the Doctor, seating Dodo comfortably on his knee. "Aren't you afraid of the old ogre who keeps so many birds prisoners in his den, and bewitches them so that they sit quite still and never even try to fly? You want to know about birds, do you, Miss Dodo, and Nat feels grieved because I won't let him pop at our feathered neighbors that live in the orchard? Oh, yes, my boy, I know all about it, you see; Cousin Olive has been telling tales. Come round here where I can see you. I can answer your question more easily

than I can Dodo's. Don't look ashamed, for it is perfectly natural that you should like to pop at birds until you learn to understand the reasons why you should not. It was because you two youngsters have seen so little of Nature and the things that creep and crawl and fly, that I begged you from your parents for a time.

"House People are apt to grow selfish and cruel, thinking they are the only people upon the earth, unless they can sometimes visit the homes of the Beast and Bird Brotherhood, and see that these can also love and suffer and work like themselves.

"Now, my boy, before we begin to learn about the birds I will partly answer your question, and you will be able to answer it yourself before summer is over. Animal life should never be taken except for some good purpose. Birds are killed by scientists that their structure and uses may be studied—just as doctors must examine human bodies. But if you kill a bird, of what use is its dead body to you?"

"I would like to see if I could hit it, and then—I—guess," hesitating, "I could find out its name better if I had it in my hand."

"Ah, Nat, my lad, I thought so; *first* to see if you can hit it, and *perhaps* because you want to know the bird's name. Did you ever think of trying to cut off one of your fingers with your jack-knife, to see if you could do it, or how it is made?"

"Why, no, uncle, it would hurt, and I couldn't put it on again, and it wouldn't do me any good anyway, for I could find out about it by asking a doctor, without hurting myself."

"Yes, that is right; and for the present you can learn enough about birds without shooting them yourself, and if

you learn your lesson well you will never shoot a song-bird."

"May we see the book you are writing, Uncle Roy, and learn all about the birds out of it?"

"It is written in words too long and difficult for you to understand. Here is a page on the desk—see if you can read it."

Nat stood by the Doctor's chair, but the longer he looked at the page the more puzzled he became, and at last he said, "I think, if you please, I'd rather have a book with only the birds' plain American names." Then he spelled out slowly, "C-y-a-n-o-c-i-t-t-a c-r-i-s-t-a-t-a. Why, that's Latin, but it only means Blue Jay."

"Couldn't you write a *little* book for us, uncle—just a common little book, all in plain words?" pleaded Dodo. "There's plenty of paper here, and of course the know-how is all in your head; because Olive says you know about every bird that lives in our America—and then you need not put them quite all in our book."

"Bless your innocent heart! How many different kinds of birds do you think there are in 'our America,' my little Yankee?" "More than a hundred, I guess," said Dodo after a long pause.

"Nearly a thousand, my lady!"

"A thousand! I think we couldn't remember so many. Does Olive know about 'nearly a thousand'?"

"No, nor about a quarter of them, Dodo. There are a great many birds that are rare or curious, but are not very interesting to people like you and me," said Olive.

"Suppose you make us a little book about some of the very nicest American birds," put in Nat, who had been

looking at the row of stuffed birds in one of the cases, and began to feel a real interest in knowing their names and something about them. "Oh, Uncle Roy! Here's a Robin. See! Dodo, see! I knew it in a minute; it's like meeting a fellow you know;" and Nat pranced about while the Doctor laughed as if he was well pleased.

"Now, children," said he, "I have an hour's more work this morning, and then we will talk over this bird matter. Here is a little blank book, and a pencil for each of you. Go down in the orchard, and when you find a bird, write in the book how it looks to you. So—size, color of head, throat, breast, back, tail, and wings—that will be enough for once; but try to remember, also, how it sings. You had better help them a bit to begin with, daughter," he continued, turning to Olive, who went as gladly as if she were only ten years old like Nat, instead of being seventeen, and nearly as tall as her father, with skirts that covered her boot tops.

CHAPTER III

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A SPARROW SETTLES THE QUESTION

The apple trees were not yet in bloom in the orchard, but the cherries were tricked out in dazzling white, and the peaches were blushing as prettily as possible. On either side of the walk that led down through the garden, hyacinths, great mats of single white violets and bunches of yellow daffies were in flower, and as far as the children could see the fresh green orchard grass was gilded with dandelions.

"Isn't it lovely?" cried Dodo, "I want to pick everything." She began to fill her hands with dandelions. "Only I wish that mother was here"—and a little quaver shook the merry voice.

"She will come by and by, dear," said Olive. "You know your father had to go away on business, and you wouldn't like him to go all alone."

"Why do people have business?"

"To earn money, to be sure, to buy your pretty frocks and shoes, and give you plenty to eat."

"But House People are the only ones who must work for what they have—everything else takes what it wants."

"There is where you are very much mistaken, Miss Dodo. Everything works for its living in some way. Take, for example, the birds that you are going to study. They have to build their own houses, and feed their children, and travel about every year on their own particular business."

"Travel—do birds travel?" cried both children in the same breath. "Oh, where do they go, and what for?"

"Father will tell you about that. Now you must do what he said—each find a bird, and see if you can describe it. Suppose we sit on this great root. It belongs to the oldest tree in the orchard, and Grandmother Hunter used to play house up in the top of it when she was a little girl. Father told me he had a perch up there when he was a boy, so that he could watch the birds. Perhaps, if you are careful and really want to keep quiet and see the birds, he will have one fixed for you."

"How jolly!" said Nat. "Sh-h! I see a bird now—such a queer little thing—it's running round like a mouse. Oh! oh! it goes just as well upside down as any other way." And Nat pulled out his pencil and book and waited for the bird to come in sight again, which it was kind enough to do very soon.

"Size"—wrote Nat, struggling with his pencil, which would squeak, because he had foolishly put it in his mouth. "How big would you call it?"

"Little," said Dodo promptly.

"Kind of little, but not so very. I've seen smaller in the Museum," said Nat. "What would you call it, Olive?"

"I should call it rather a small bird, if I were not speaking exactly. But if you wish to be more particular you must try to guess its length in inches. When I was about your age father measured my right-hand middle finger and told me it was three inches long. Then he made two marks across it with violet ink, which takes a long time to wash off, so that my finger made a three-inch measure. I soon grew accustomed to look at a bird and then at my finger, from nail to knuckle, and then try to tell how many times longer the bird was

from the point of his beak down over his back to the tip of his tail. Of course I made a great many mistakes and could seldom tell exactly, but it was a great help."

"How long is my finger?" asked Nat eagerly, spreading out a rather large hand for a boy of ten.

"About four inches."

"Then that bird is quite a little longer than that—five or six inches anyway." And he wrote, "Length, five or six inches."

"Ah, he has gone," wailed Dodo. "Oh, no, he hasn't. He has come round the tree again—he says *squank, squank, squank*, as if his voice was rusty. Is that his song, Cousin Olive?"

"No, he is only talking now."

"Talking? It seems to me that birds can do ever so many more things than I thought they possibly could."

"Black head," said Nat, as he continued writing; "sort of gray on top and white in front; his tail is black and white and rusty looking underneath, and—there, he has flown away! Do you think that will do, and will uncle know his name? Oh, I forgot, he says *squank*, goes head down, and picks things out of the tree bark." "Yes, that will do for a beginning, but father will tell you some simple names for the different parts of every bird, so that your descriptions need not confuse you. If every one gave his own names, no two people would quite understand each other."

"Oh! I see a bird," whispered Dodo, pointing to the grass at a little distance. "See! it's quite as big as a Pigeon and speckled all over black and brown and has a red mark on the back of its neck. Please write it down for me, Olive; it

takes me so long to write, and I haven't seen it in front yet. There, it's turning round—oh! it has a black mark in front of its neck like a cravat and it's speckled underneath. It has flown a little further off and is walking up a tree, and it's very white on its back where its tail begins. Oh! do hear it laugh, Nat." And the Flicker, the big Woodpecker with golden lining to its wings, for it was he, gave out peal after peal of his jolly call-note.

"Can't we go in now to ask Uncle Roy the names of these birds, and see if he won't begin our book this afternoon?"

"It isn't an hour yet since we came out. Come down through the orchard; I hear some Bluebirds singing and perhaps you can see them. They are very tame, and often make their nests in the knot holes in these old trees."

"See, Olive," said Dodo, "what is that down in the grass by the fence? It is something moving. Do you think it can be any sort of a wild animal?"

"No, it's a boy," said Nat. "I see his head. Perhaps he has come to catch some birds. Let's drive him away." "Gently, gently, Nat," said Olive; "it is a boy, but you are not sure that he is doing any harm, and besides it was only yesterday that you were vexed with me because I wouldn't let you pop at the birds yourself. We will ask him what he is doing."

They went through the orchard, and found a boy, about twelve years old, lying in the grass. He had dark hair and eyes, and a sun-burned face, but was very thin, and a rude crutch was lying beside him.

"Well, little boy," said Olive pleasantly, "what is your name, and what are you doing here?"

The child looked frightened at first and hid his face on his arm, but finally looked up, and said timidly, "My name is Rap, and I was watching the birds. Please, I didn't know anybody lived here, only cows, and I've been coming in most times for two years."

Then they saw that he had a tattered piece of a book in one hand, which he slipped inside his jacket as carefully as if it were a great treasure.

"Watching them to like them or to catch them?" asked Nat suspiciously, then feeling ashamed the next moment when Rap answered:

"To like them. I'd never kill a bird! I've sometimes found dead ones that have hit against the telegraph wires; and it makes you feel lumpy in your throat to see how every little feather lies so soft and lovely, though they never will fly any more."

By this time the three were seated in front of the strange boy, looking at him with great interest.

"What is the book you were reading when we came up?" asked Olive. Rap pulled it out and laid it on her lap, saying, "I don't know its name—the beginning part that tells is gone—but it's all about birds. Here's a picture of a Bluebird, only it isn't quite right, somehow. Oh, I do wish I had all of the book."

Olive turned over the leaves that looked familiar to her and saw that it began at page 443. "Why, it is part of the first volume of Nuttall's 'Manual of Birds.' My father has the whole of this book," she said. "Where did you find this bit?"

"The rag pedler that comes by every fall lets me look in his bags, 'cause sometimes there are paper books in them,

and he gave me this for nothing, 'cause it was only a piece."

"Why don't you ask your father to buy you a whole book, instead of grubbing in rag-bags?" said Nat thoughtlessly.

Rap looked from one to the other, as if in his interest he had forgotten himself for a time, and then he said quietly, "I haven't any father."

"I haven't any mother," said Olive quickly, putting her hand gently on the thin brown one. "We must be friends, Rap."

Her sympathy soothed him immediately, and his gentle nature instantly tried to comfort her by saying, "But you said your father owned the whole of my book. How glad you must be!"

Then they all laughed, and Nat and Dodo began telling about their uncle's room and all the books and birds in it, and about the book he had promised to write for them, until Rap looked so bewildered that Olive was obliged to explain things a little more clearly to him. "Come home with us," cried Nat and Dodo, each seizing him by a hand, "and perhaps uncle will tell you all the names we must learn—head, throat, wings, and what all the other parts are rightly called—and then we can go around together and watch birds."

But as Rap turned over and scrambled up with the aid of his crutch, they saw that he had only one leg, for the trouser of the left leg was tied together just below the knee.

Acting as if they did not notice this, they led the way to the house, going close to the fence that divided the orchard from the road, because there was a little path worn there.

"What is the whole of your name?" asked Dodo, who could not keep from asking questions.

"Stephen Hawley," he answered. "My mother is Ann Hawley, who lives by the mill, and does all the beautiful fine white washing for everybody hereabouts. Don't you know her? I suppose it's because you have just come. I believe my mother could wash a cobweb if she tried, and not tear it," and a glow of pride lit up his face.

"But you said a little while ago that your name was Rap."

"Everybody calls me Rap, because when I go along the road my crutch hits the stones, and says 'rap—rap—rap.'"

"Here's a dead bird," said Nat, picking something from under the fence.

"It's a White-throated Sparrow," said Rap, "and it's flown against the telegraph wire in the dark and been killed." "We will take it to uncle and ask him to tell us all about it."

"Yes, yes," said Dodo, "we will all go"—and Rap hopped off after the other children so quickly that Olive had hard work to keep up with him.

This time Nat and Dodo did not hesitate outside the study door, but gave a pound or two and burst into the room.

"Uncle Roy, Uncle Roy, we have seen two birds and written down about them, but we didn't quite know what to call the front part where the neck ends and the stomach begins, or the beginning of the tail, and Olive says there are right names for all these parts. And we found Rap in the orchard and he only has half a book, and here's a White-throated Sparrow, and we want to know how it's made and why birds can fly and why—"

Here the Doctor laughingly stopped them and turned to Olive for a clearer account of what had taken place in the orchard, while Rap stood gazing about the room as if he thought that heaven had suddenly opened to him.

"Now, children," said the Doctor, as soon as the youngsters had stopped chattering, "I will first *tell* you some stories about the birds; then if you like them I will make them into a little book that other girls and boys may read." And as the children began to dance about, he continued: "But before I tell you the names and habits of some of our home birds, you must learn a few things that are true of all birds—what they are; where they belong among animals; how they are made; how they do good and why we should protect them; and the wonderful journeys some of them take. To-morrow I will begin by answering Dodo's questions whether a bird is an animal, and why it has feathers."

"I think a bird is something like a boat," said Rap eagerly. "When it flies its wings are like sails in the air, and when it swims its feet row under the water, and the tail balances behind like a rudder and the head sticks out in front like the bowsprit."

"You are right, my boy," said the Doctor, looking at him attentively; "and would you also like to know how this beautiful boat is made? If a ship-builder could plan a vessel that would go through wind and water as birds do, he would be the wisest man in the world. But you see, Rap, a man did *not* plan any bird.

"I will go down and ask your mother to let you come and hear the stories with the other children—how would you like that, Rap?"

"Will you? Will you really let me come? Oh, I am so glad! I know mother'll let me any day but Monday and Thursday, because I have to watch clothes on those days."

"Wash clothes?" said Dodo in surprise.

"No, watch them," replied Rap, laughing. "Those two days the miller lets mother spread her things to whiten in his big meadow, and I have to watch and see that they are not stolen or don't blow away."

"Isn't it very stupid to sit there so long?"

"Oh, no, it's lovely; for there are lots of birds and things about."

"To-morrow will be Wednesday," said the Doctor. "Come up to Orchard Farm by nine o'clock, Rap, and we will begin our lessons with this little White-throated Sparrow Nat has found."

"And uncle!" cried Dodo, "you must make inch measures on our middle fingers with violet ink, the way you did to Olive's when she was little."

CHAPTER IV

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THE BUILDING OF A BIRD

It rained on Wednesday—a warm spring rain, swelling the rivers and ponds, and watering the newly planted garden; but discouraging the birds in their nest-building, and disappointing Nat and Dodo, who wished to have their lesson in the orchard.

"Come in here, children," said the Doctor. "The wonder room, as Dodo calls it, is a good place for a talk about feathers and bones, and the rest of the things birds are built of. I have sent for Rap, too, so that the trio may be complete."

"Feathers and bones for building birds?" said Nat. "What a queer idea for a bird story."

"Not a bird story exactly," answered the Doctor. "But some things are true of all birds, and you must know them if you wish to understand the *reason why* of any bird in particular."

In a few minutes the three children were seated on the wide settle, with a cheery log fire, to make them forget the outside dampness. Quick, the fidgety little fox-terrier, sat by the hearth, watching a possible mouse hole; and Mr. Wolf, the tawny St. Bernard, chose the rug as a comfortable place for finishing his morning toilet.

Olive presently joined the group. The Doctor took the dead White-throated Sparrow from the table, and began to walk about the room, stopping now in front of the fire and then by the window.

"Here is a Sparrow, different from every other kind of Sparrow, different indeed from any other sort of bird in the world—else it would not be the particular sort of a Sparrow called the White-throated. But there are a good many things

that it has in common with all other birds. Can you tell me some of them?"

"I know!" said Dodo; "it has a good many feathers on it, and I guess all kinds of birds wear feathers, except some when they are very little in the nest."

"Quite right, little girl," said the Doctor. "Every bird has feathers, and no other animal has feathers. So we say, 'A bird is known by its feathers.' But what do you suppose its feathers are for?"

"To make it look nice and pretty," said Dodo promptly.

"To make it lighter, so's it can fly," added Nat.

"To keep it warm, too, I guess," was Rap's answer.

"Well, you are all three partly, but not quite, right. Certainly the beauty of a bird depends most on its feathers, being not even skin-deep, as you may well believe, if you ever noticed a chicken Mammy Bun had plucked. But, Nat, how can feathers make a bird lighter, when every one of them weighs something, and a bird has to carry them all? They make a bird a little heavier than it would be without them. Yet it is quite true that no bird could fly if you clipped its wings. So some of its feathers enable it to fly—the large ones, that grow on the wings. Then, too, the large ones that make the tail help the bird to fly, by acting like a rudder to steer with. Perhaps the small ones too, all over the body, are of some help in flight, because they make a bird smooth, so that it can cut through the air more easily—you know they all lie one way, pointing backward from their roots to their tips. Then when Rap said feathers keep a bird warm, he guessed right. Birds wear plumage as you do