

YOUNG PEOPLE

AN OLD-TIME MELODY.

XVI.—"When the Harvest Moon is Shining on the River."

The nightingales are singing in the valley;

The stars, like shining jewels, deck the skies,

As still beside the garden gate they linger

And whisper of a love that never dies.

"The summer soon will pass away," he murmurs,

"But when the fields are ripe with golden grain,

Then I'll come back to keep my loving promise,

And you and I will never part again."

Chorus:

When the Harvest Moon is shining on the river,

And the merry harvest songs again we hear,

Then as sweethearts we will roam down the path that leads to home;

When the harvest moon is shining, Mollie, dear.

'Tis autumn now, and in the peaceful valley

The paths are strewn with leaves of red and gold,

But someone waits for somebody's returning,

And dreams about the loving vows he told.

Beneath the ocean's dancing foam he's sleeping,

Yet off' when sunset's crimson turns to gray,

A woman by the garden gate is waiting

For one who promised he'd return some day.

A QUARTET OF WOODLAND DRUMMERS.*

Your Old Friends, the Woodpecker and Sapsucker, Described by Prof. Pearson.

The sapsucker is not the only one that likes the sap of trees. In the country where he makes his summer home, insects of many kinds are said to gather around the little wells he makes and lean over to draw up the sweet juice through their tube-like mouth-parts, somewhat as a boy might drink through a straw the clear water from a woodland spring. Several kinds of little people go there to feast; there are flies of different sizes and colors, and there are gnats, and an occasional yellow jacket. Ants, too, climb up the trees and elbow their way among the others for their share.

While all this is going on, many of the company get their feet mired in the sticky juice which has been spilled about the edges of the spring and are there held fast. Pretty soon the sapsucker comes back for his dinner, when lo! he finds that some one has been stealing it from him, and there are the little thieves caught sure and fast. He does not appear to be at all angry at this, but hops about and cheerfully snaps up and eats all the insects he can find, and turns to catch others, buzzing near. Some observers think that the sapsuckers do not do this very often, but confine their diet almost entirely to sap. It would be interesting for some one living in the country where the sapsucker makes his summer

home, to watch the bird closely and learn to what extent he really catches insects.

Unlike Downy, the sapsucker never digs into dead wood for the larvae of insects, and if he did his tongue is not long enough to reach into their holes and spear them out of their hiding places; besides, the end of it is more like a brush, and for this reason is better adapted to gathering up sap than to spearing insects.

The flicker is more of a ground bird than any other of our woodpeckers. He is fond of digging in the fields and pastures for grubs and earthworms. His bill is not straight and chisel-shaped at the end like that of other members of his family, but it is slightly curved like the bill of a thrush and is quite pointed, a thing which aids him much in digging. He drives it into the ground much as one might drive a pick-axe, making the clods fly in a lively manner.

Often the flicker will attack ant-hills, spading the nests out with his powerful bill, and eating the ants and their larvae in numbers. Different kinds of fruit and berries, such as cherries, mulberries and wild grapes, add variety to his bill of fare. In the early winter, when other fruit has become scarce, he enjoys a few persimmons now and then for his desert. But his bread of life is a diet of ants, and he has been known to eat as many as three thousand at a single meal.

From five to seven white eggs are usually laid. When all but one of these are taken out of the nest flickers have been known on some occasions to continue laying one a day for a long time, as does a domestic fowl. A flicker near Greensboro, N. C., laid in this way more than thirty. One in Massachusetts once laid seventy-one eggs in seventy-three days.

Skirting a path along which I am accustomed to pass each morning is a row of old, scraggy locust trees. These are the regular haunts of numerous birds in the summer, and even in winter they are not deserted, for the bluebirds and meadowlarks frequently perch on the bare branches, and the white-breasted nuthatches wander much up and down the trunks. Another bird seen here nearly every day the past winter was a flashing red-headed fellow with white breast and black back. A large patch of white also was on each wing. He could cling to the side of a limb, with two toes on each foot pointed forward and two pointed backward, and brace himself with his tail against the bark while he pecked on the wood. The size and actions of this bird of course clearly indicated that he was a woodpecker, and his colors revealed his name—the red-headed woodpecker.

Only a small per cent of the woodpeckers of this species spend the winter months in North Carolina, for possibly, as some have suggested, the supply of food may be limited.

The redhead is such a handsome fellow that it is hard to think of his ever doing anything unpleasant; and yet at times he is a very bad bird, probably the worst one of the whole family. It is told of him that he will sometimes go to other birds' nests and eat their eggs. He is accused not only of being a rogue, but a murderer as well. Downey's friends, the titmouse and the chickadee, know him well, and it is whispered that they have on more than one occasion caught him plundering their nests. There is small wonder then that Downey dislikes the redhead and often disputes with him for the possession of some favorite limb or post.

In summer the birds live largely on fruit. He will light in your cherry tree, seize the ripest fruit within reach, and in another moment be off for some frequented limb at

the edge of the grove, where he likes to carry his food before eating. Here on his high dining table, he holds the cherry down with his foot and eats it at his convenience. Then he wipes his bill on the limb, using the bark for a napkin, and soon comes back for another piece of fruit. Besides plums and cherries he likes to eat grapes and berries. Many kinds of insects also go to supply his mouth with good things.

The redhead visits the corn fields during the roasting-ear time. He will tear the husk open at the end until he can see the milky white grains so snugly tucked away in rows. After eating his fill he leaves and does not return to the same ear, but when hunger again calls him to the field he attacks a new one. The corn raisers of course object to this pilfering in their fields and some of them make it a point to shoot at the thief whenever they catch him in the act.

In flying, the redhead does not travel in a straight, even line as many birds do, nor does he soar as many others, but goes swinging up and down through the air in long billowy sweeps. When you see one start across a wide field it is worth the while to stop and watch him; the sight will well repay you.

Like the flicker, this woodpecker digs a cavity for his nest in a dead tree. Five eggs are generally found in a nest. If the bird is robbed it will not keep on laying an egg each

day, but will in the course of two or three weeks deposit another set of four or five. If these are taken the bird will often try a third time to rear a brood. I once knew a pair of redheads which had their nest rifled four times, nineteen eggs in all being taken. Then they left their nest in the stump and dug out another in a tall dead tree where the boy who had robbed them before could not molest them further. Late that summer I saw the young ones flying about the grove with their parents. In appearance they were much the same as the old ones, but the head and neck of each was a grayish brown. Not until many months had passed did they get their red feathers.

The bird has many call notes, although it has no song. One which it often uses in the summer resembles closely the note of the common tree frog, and it is said that the bird and frog sometimes answer one another; each possibly thinking it is calling to one of its own kind. The strongest note of the redhead is given when he sounds his love-call from the dead resounding limb of some tall tree. It is produced by striking the hard wood very rapidly with his bill. As he hears his loud stirring signal go re-echoing through the woodland, he settles back on his perch until, faintly borne to his listening ears, comes the well known answering tap of a beloved bill, and he starts up to sound a reply.

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