

add  
Bromph  
2nd Year P 171

NE day, I crossed the road  
below the Yellow-throat's  
garden, broke through the  
thick fringe of maples  
and syringa brush and  
crawled along on my hands  
and knees under the can-  
opy of tall ferns. The  
ground was soft and loamy.  
The dog-wood saplings,  
the hazel and arrow-wood  
bushes grew so thick that  
each vied with the other

in stretching up to reach the life-giving light of the  
sun's rays. Underneath, the blackberry reached out its long,  
slender fingers and clutched the tallest ferns to hang its  
berries where they might catch a glint of the sun, for the  
beams only sifted through in places. I was in the thicket  
of the Grosbeaks.

For several years, <sup>we</sup> I have watched a pair of gros-  
beaks that spend their summers on the side hill in this  
clump. The same pair, no doubt, has returned to the thick-  
et for at least three or four years. It seems, I can almost  
recognize the notes of their song. If our ears were only  
tuned to the music of the birds, could we not recognize

them as individuals as we know our old friends?

*Sweet P*

*or Red-bird*

In the grosbeak family, the Cardinal<sup>1</sup> is perhaps more familiar to us since he is often seen behind the bars of a cage. But his colors fade in confinement, and he is no longer the brilliant bird of the wild, that seems to have strayed up from the tropics. But even if the beauty of this bird should not survive we have two other grosbeaks, the rose-breasted of the eastern states and the black-headed of the West, both alike in character and habits.

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ing in one

of the map-

"LOOSELY BUILT AMONG THE LEAVES OF THE  
DOGWOOD LIMBS"

les along the creek, I saw the grosbeak mother singing her

*I have known poets to represent the bird singing upon its nest, but if this ever happens, it is a very rare occurrence.*

As John Borroughs says it is a very rare occurrence ~~for~~ for a bird to sing on its nest but I have several times heard the grosbeak do it. How it came to be a custom of the grosbeak I do not know for birds are, in general, very shy about appearing near the nest or attracting attention to it.



them as individuals as we know our old friends?

*Just  
D*

The Black-headed Grosbeak is one of the birds of my childhood. As long ago as I can remember, I watched for him in the mulberry trees and about the elder-berry bushes when the fruit was ripe. I could tell him from other birds by his high-keyed call-note long before I knew his name. One day, when I stopped to look for a bird that was caroling in one of the map-

"LOOSELY BUILT AMONG THE LEAVES OF THE  
DOGWOOD LIMBS"

les along the creek, I saw the grosbeak mother singing her lullaby, as she sat on her eggs. It looked to me so like a human mother's love; few, if any other birds, sing in the home; they may often long to but are afraid. ~~(It has grown to be a habit of the grosbeak.)~~ *inscr*

*where 2*  
Last year, ~~when~~ I found three spotted eggs in a nest, loosely built among the leaves of the dog-wood limbs.

When I had seen the father carrying a stick in his mouth, he dropped it and looked as uneasy as a boy, who had just been caught with his pockets full of stolen apples. This year, the nest was twenty feet down the hill from the old

"THE FATHER CAME IN AS SILENTLY AS A  
SHADOW, AND RESTED ON THE NEST-EDGE"

home. They came nearer the ground and placed the thin frame-work of their nest between the two upright forks of an arrow-wood bush. We had never bothered them very much

with the camera, but when they put their home right down within four and a half feet of the ground, it looked to me as if they wanted some pictures taken. It was too good a

chance for us to miss. The ferns grew almost as high as the nest, and it was such a good place to hide the camera, when it was focused at the home.

When I waded through the ferns and pressed aside the bushes, the nest was brimful. Above the

*"THE MOTHER FOLLOWED WITHOUT A WORD  
AND SAT LOOKING CAREFULLY ABOUT"*

rim, I could see the tiny plumes of white down wavering in a breath of air, I couldn't feel. I stole up and looked in. The three bantlings were sound asleep. Neither parent happened to be near, so I crawled back and hid well down in



the bushes twelve feet away. The father came in as silently as a shadow and rested on the nest-edge. He was dressed like a prince, a jet-black hat, black wings, crossed with bars of white and the rich red-brown of his vest shading into lemon-yellow toward his tail. He ~~craned~~<sup>craned</sup> something in each wide-opened mouth, stretched at the end of a wiggling, quivering neck. The mother followed without a word and sat looking carefully about.

She treated each bobbing head in the same way.

Then, with head cocked on the side, she examined each baby, turning him gently with her head, and looked carefully to the

needs of ~~each~~<sup>all three</sup>

~~one~~ before departing.

"SHE EXAMINED EACH BABY, TURNING HIM GENTLY WITH HER HEAD"

The male stayed near the nest. When I arose and stood beside the arrow-wood, he was scared. He cried "Quit! Quit!" in a high, frightened tone, and when I didn't, he let out a screech of alarm that brought his wife in a hurry. Any one would have thought I was thirsting for the life-blood of those nestlings. She was followed by a pair of robins, a yellow warbler and a flycatcher, all anxious to take a hand in the owl-ousting, if indeed, an owl was near. I have often noticed that all the feathered neighbors of a locality will flock at such a cry of alarm. The robins are always the noisiest and loudest in their threats, and are the first to respond to a bird emergency call.

The weather was warm and it seemed to me, the young *"HE PERCHED AT THE VERY TOP OF THE FIR"* *brosbeaks* grew almost fast enough to rival a toad-stool. Sunshine makes a big difference. These little fellows got plenty to eat, and were where the sun filtered through the

leaves and kept them warm. The young thrushes across the gully were in a dark spot. They got as much food, but they rarely got a glint of the sun. They didn't grow as much in a week as the grosbeak babies did in three days.

I loved to sit and watch the brilliant <sup>father</sup> ~~papa~~. He perched at the very top of the fir and stretched his wings till you could see their lemon lining. He preened his black tail to show the <sup>g</sup>hidden spots of white. Of course,

"FOLLOWED THEIR PARENTS OUT INTO THE LIMBS OF THE  
ARROW-WOOD"

he knew his clothes were made for show. It was the song of motion, just to see him drop from the fir to the bushes be-



low. What roundelay he whistled, "Whit-te-o!Whit-te-o!  
Reet!" Early in the morning he showed the quality of his  
singing.

Later in  
the day, it  
often lost  
finish.

The notes  
sounded  
hard to get  
out, or as  
if he were  
practising;  
just run-  
ing over

the keys of

"HE FLAPPED HIS WINGS, TEASING MAMA  
FOR A MORSEL"

an air that hung dim in his memory. But it was pleasing to  
hear him practise, the atmosphere was too lazy to call for  
perfect execution. He knew he could pipe a tune to catch  
the ear, but he had to sit on the tree-top, as if he were  
afraid some one would catch the secret of his art if he  
sang lower down. Perhaps, he was vain, but I have watched  
him when he seemed to whistle as unconsciously as I breathed.

The morning of July sixth, the three young birds  
left the nest, following their parents out into the limbs

of the arrow-wood. They were not able to fly more than a few feet, but they knew how to perch and "call for food. I never heard a more enticing dinner song, such a sweet, musical "tour-a-lee."

The triplets were slightly different in size and strength. The eldest knew the note of alarm, and two or three times, when he got real hungry, I heard him utter a

*"I SAW THE FATHER DISTRIBUTE A WHOLE MOUTHFUL  
OF GREEN MEASURING-WORMS"*

shriek that brought papa and mama in a hurry to get there before he was clear dead. Then, he flapped his wings and teased mama for a morsel. The minute his appetite was satisfied, he always took a nap. There was no worry on his mind, as to where the next bite was coming from. He just contracted into a fluffy ball, and he didn't pause a second



on the border-land; it was so simple, his lids closed and it was done. He slept soundly too, for I patted his feathers and he didn't wake. But at the flutter of wings, he

*"THE MOTHER ALWAYS COCKED HER HEAD TO ONE SIDE,  
SO THE BABY COULD EASILY GRASP THE MORSEL"*  
awoke as suddenly as he dropped asleep.

The parents fed their bantlings as much on berries as worms and insects. Once I saw the father distribute a whole mouthful of green measuring worms. The next time, he had visited a garden down the hill-side, for he brought one raspberry in his bill and coughed up three more. Both parents soon got over their mad anxiety every time I looked at their birdlings. In fact, they soon

seemed willing enough for me to share the bits from my own lunch, for the youngsters were very fond of pieces of cherry taken from a small stick, twirled in the air above them.

We spent the next two days watching and photographing, but it took all the third forenoon to find the three bantlings. The mother had enticed one down the slope to the hazel bushes near the creek. I watched her for two hours, be-

fore I heard

the soft

"tour-a-

lee" of the

youngster.

He perched

on my fin-

ger and I

brought him

back to the

nest. An-

*"SHE SLIPPED HER BILL CLEAR INTO THE  
YOUNGSTER'S MOUTH"*

other, we found down in the thimble-berry bushes, which, with the third up in the maple saplings over the nest, seemed to be in the keeping of the father.

Nature has given the Grosbeak a large and powerful bill to crack seeds and hard kernels, but it seemed to me this would be rather an inconvenience, when it came to



feeding children. If it was, the parents did not show it. The mother always cocked her head <sup>to</sup> one side so her baby

"WHEN HE TURNED HIS HEAD, HE SHOWED  
A BLACK SILK HAT"

could easily grasp the morsel, and it was all so quickly done, that only the camer<sup>a</sup>'s eye could catch the way she did it. She slipped her bill clear into the youngster's mouth, and he took the bite as hurriedly as if he were afraid the mother would change her mind and give it to the next baby. X

After watching the Brosbeak family all day, we put the children in a little isolated clump <sup>of</sup> bushes late in the afternoon, and when we paid our visits early the next morning, they were still there, <sup>16</sup> but perched well up in the top limbs. We had, at last, reached almost a "bird in the X

hand" acquaintance with the parents. We could watch them at close range and they didn't seem to care a snap. The mother wore such a plain colored dress, in comparison to her husband's almost gaudy suit. When he turned his head, he showed a black silk hat, that was enough to distinguish any bird, but, for my part, I would hardly have called his wife Mrs. Black-headed Grosbeak, had I not known they were

"THE FATHER WAS FEEDING THE CHILDREN, —  
HE HARDLY KNEW WHICH TO FEED FIRST."  
married.

I have watched a good many bird<sup>in</sup> families, but I never saw the work divided up as it seemed to be in the Grosbeak household. The first day, I stayed about the nest, I noticed that the father was feeding the children almost



entirely, and whenever he brought a mouthful, he hardly knew which one to feed first. The mother fed only about once an hour, while he fed every ten or fifteen minutes. This seemed rather contrary to my understanding of bird ethics. Generally, the male is wilder than the wife and she has to take the responsibility of the home. The next day I watched at the nest, conditions were the same but I

*"QUIVERED HIS WINGS AND BEGGED FOR A BITE"*

was surprised to see that the parental duties were just reversed. The mother was going and coming continually with food, while the father sat about in the tree-tops, sang and preened his feathers leisurely, only taking the trouble to

hunt up one mouthful for his bairns, to every sixth or seventh the mother brought. To my surprise, the third day, I found the father was the busy bird again. Out of eighteen plates exposed that day on the Grosbeak family, I only got five snaps at the mother and three of these were <sup>1</sup>poor ones. The fourth day I watched, the mother seemed to have charge of the feeding again, but she spent most of her time trying to coax the bantlings to follow her off into the bushes. It was hardly the father's day for getting the meals, but on the whole, he fed almost as much as the mother, otherwise, the youngsters would hardly have received their daily allowance. I have watched at some nests, where the young were cared for almost entirely by the mother, and I have seen others, where those duties were taken up largely by the father. <sup>w</sup>Many times, I have seen both parents work side by side in rearing a family, but the Grosbeak seemed to have a way of dividing duties equally, and alternating with days of rest and labor.

The Grosbeak family stayed about the thicket for over two weeks. I saw the babies, when they were almost full-grown birds and watched them follow their parents about. They were able to find bugs and feed themselves, but each child knew it was easier to be fed than to go about looking under every twig and leaf. One juvenile flew up to



the limb beside his <sup>9/</sup>father, quivering his wings and begged for a bite. His father straightened back and looked at him with an air of inquiry, "why don't you hunt for yourself?" The little fellow turned his back as if in shame, but he kept on crying. The father flew into the next tree, the little beggar followed and squatted right beside him, as if he half expected a trouncing. I looked to see him get it. The father turned and fed him. He couldn't resist! In some ways children are the same, and bird papas are, perhaps, a good deal like human papas."

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