

The Bird and Its Life

BIRDS AND THEIR ATTRIBUTES. By GLOVER MORRILL ALLEN. Boston: Marshall Jones & Co. 1925. \$3.50.

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THE growing tendency toward synthetic treatment of diversified branches of science has recently been expressed in three notable books on the ever popular subject of ornithology. These are, Thomson's "Biology of Birds," 1923, von Lucanus's "Das Leben der Vögel," 1925, and Allen's "Birds and Their Attributes."

Dr. Allen's work admirably supplements Thomson's, but it does much more. The author, who is Lecturer on Zoölogy at Harvard, is like his British contemporary a scholar well versed in the broad field of biology, but besides this he holds high rank as a special student of birds. Two years ago he was selected to prepare a series of lectures on ornithology given under the auspices of the New England Bird Banding Association, and these have supplied the basis of the present work.

The first chapter of Dr. Allen's book, which deals with "Some Human Relations with Birds," contains matter of universal interest which has never before been treated so succinctly or so well. The bird in literature, legend, and decoration, the history of domestication, the beginnings of observation and experiment, the earliest collections of ornithological specimens, are entertainingly reviewed from the dawn of written records to the time of Audubon.

The strength of Dr. Allen's book lies in its intimate presentation of the bird as a living organism reacting to a medium which may be thought of as including its own heredity and physiological make-up as well as its external environment. The author is equipped to present the point of view of the modern biologist and psychologist, as well as that of what we must nowadays call the "mere naturalist." With a wealth of examples drawn from his own sentient observation out-of-doors, and enriched by equally apt evidence available only to one having his extraordinary familiarity with the ornithological literature of many lands and languages, he has drawn a more comprehensive picture of the bird's place in nature than is to be found anywhere else within so small a compass.

In his account of the structure of birds and its functional bearings, Dr. Allen has been relatively brief, realizing that this phase has been adequately handled, and that the subject is familiar to, or at least readily accessible to, those with ornithological tastes. The far less static problems which center about the origin and dispersals of birds, their ecological relations, senses and behavior, are fully and soundly discussed, the chapters being illuminated by opinions and discoveries drawn from a wide range of recent publications.



The Private Life of Paris

NOTE.—By courtesy of Dr. Egidius Kümmelspalter of Heidelberg I am able to present excerpts from a cuneiform tablet found in the ruins near Boghaz-Keui, which this distinguished *savant* has identified as the diary of Princess Cassandra of Troy. Publication of the full text is unavoidably deferred; but as recent volumes by John Erskine and Edward Lucas White have reinterpreted the history of Helen purely from the standpoint of Greek propaganda, Dr. Kümmelspalter feels that materials for a Trojan view of the question of war guilt should no longer be withheld.

WELL, Paris has gone abroad at last and left that woman on Mount Ida, so now perhaps we can have some peace in the family. I must say I think this whole affair has been mishandled from start to finish, but of course they don't pay any attention to me. Father thinks that when the boy has seen the world, and other women, he'll be willing to talk about an annulment, and that Oenone will accept any reasonable offer. But I'm not so sure.

"Besides," I said to father, "why annul it? He'll only marry somebody else, probably just as undesirable. If the boy can't even spend a summer in the mountains without getting married you might as well let him stay married. Give Oenone an allowance—it needn't be much to look big to a small-town girl

in-stat—and she'll stay on Mount Ida where she belongs. Then Paris can't get into that kind of trouble again."

"I agree with your conclusions," said Hector, "though not with your reasoning. Marriage is a sacrament. The abuse of paroles and commutation is wrecking our entire system of penology. . . . I mean—" (Hector makes so many public speeches that he doesn't always remember what subject is under discussion) "I mean the divorce evil is gnawing like a canker at the heart of our civilization." (He gets that sort of thing from Andromache, of course.) "Whither are we drifting? Something ought to be done about it. We families of the old stock should stand for the sanctity of the home. Shall we go the way of Greece? Shall we get a reputation like the Pelops family?"

"People of no breeding," said father. "What can you expect?"

"Precisely; but it's that sort of people who are coming to the front in Greece. It's all due" (Hector took a long breath) "to this influx of alien races that can't understand our institutions and ideals. Biologically inferior races. Unless something is done to stop this Nordic immigration—"

"Now don't get on that again," said Deiphobus. "This girl Paris married isn't a Nord. I hear she's—er—rather dark-skinned. She told him her father was an Achæan with jaundice—but how she explained herself—"

"Sunburn," said Hector. "A tanned healthy daughter of Zeus's own country. You remember the stories Uncle Anchises used to tell about those Mount Ida girls—"

"You'd think he'd met Aphrodite," Deiphobus admitted. "But these old gentlemen become romantic when they recall their vanished youth."

"Come, come," said father. "No use raking over these old scandals. We can trust the boy to come to his senses."

"His what?" I asked. "Anybody who'd serve as judge in a beauty contest—"

But of course they don't pay any attention to me.

But such a place to send him! That was mother's doing, of course.

"Off to Salamis," I asked her, "to visit Aunt Hesione? Why, he'll be bored to death. He ought to have taken this chance to see Cnossus."

"I've heard Cnossus isn't what it used to be," mother explained. "Prices have gone up terribly since the Cretan war, and they say you see nobody but Achæan profiteers taking advantage of the exchange rate."

"Just the same," I told her, "Cnossus is still Cnossus."

"I'm afraid," she admitted. "A boy brought up in a Zeus-fearing home might meet with temptations—"

"Paris will find temptation in Salamis," I told her, "if Aunt Hesione has a pretty maid. You've kept him tied to your apron strings, mother; no wonder he's easy for a clever woman. Those Cnossus girls might at least give him some experience." But of course that was going too far.

"Cassandra, I'm surprised at you. You girls have such advanced ideas; you talk about everything, you dress so immodestly— When I was a young girl nobody felt decently dressed without a corset, but you go around in your loose clothes, and talk about experience—"

There's no use arguing with mother when she gets like that; the poor thing is so hopelessly Mid-Minoan.

Well, at least Paris didn't get into trouble in Salamis; he didn't stay long enough. I don't like this idea of his going on to Lacedæmon but father seems to think it's all right; that it may ease our relations with the Achæans—rather strained, just now. They're always writing notes about the tariffs on the Hellespont. Whose Hellespont is it, anyway? And Hector only makes things worse with his speeches to the Kappa Kappa Kappas about hundred per cent Trojanism and the exclusion of Nordic immigration.

"But should we give social recognition to *nouveaux riches* like the Atridæ?" I asked father.

"Oh, these boys are well enough—Menelaus and his brother. Serious young men who seem to be trying to live down the family reputation."

"Every one has his pet Nord," I reminded him.

"I certainly have no sympathy with Hector's race prejudice. Some of my best friends are Nords. . . . Besides, Helen's a Mediterranean; and while her mother may have been indiscreet her father was a

gentleman of the old school."

Well! I told them he ought to have gone to Cnossus. . . . Deiphobus had a letter from Paris yesterday.

"Semata lygra," he said. (He does so love to flaunt his few phrases of Achæan.) "In other words, bad news. He's coming home—with Helen."

"Helen!" I gasped. "You don't mean— Why, where was Menelaus?"

"Why, it seems he had to go to Cnossus a day or so after Paris arrived. Of course they couldn't both go and leave a guest to his own devices—"

"So Helen stayed and Paris was left to her devices," I finished. "Now you know he wouldn't have had brains enough to elope with her of his own accord. I suppose it was Menelaus's first chance to get over to Cnossus alone since he married, but pure courtesy ought to have kept him—"

"It was a business trip," said Deiphobus. "You don't suppose anybody would leave a woman like Helen, do you, even for a trip to Cnossus?"

"Nonsense. He was bored and so was she; and when a silly boy like Paris came along— The idea of their doing such a thing just when the international situation was clearing up! Of course he must send her back."

"Well, I'm for letting him keep her," said Deiphobus. "This Achæan saber rattling has gone far enough."

Did you ever hear of such a thing? Risk another crisis for the sake of a bored woman and a silly boy? Well, Hector won't hear of it, I know—he's so strong for the sanctity of marriage. And mother won't. When she puts her foot down father lets her have her way; and she's furious at this woman.

Well, they're here; and I must say she's behaving very well. Beautiful? Well, hardly; but you never have time to think about that. Very chic, of course; and quite a manner. All these Tyndaridae have a manner.

But such folly! Father has annulled Paris's marriage by decree and served Menelaus with divorce papers by publication—I saw the tablet myself. That's mother's doing—mother, who was so enraged at Oenone.

"After all," she explained, "Helen is one of the old stock, like ourselves." (Mother takes her Society of Argo Descendants so seriously, poor thing.) "It's too bad she made that unfortunate first marriage with a man so far beneath her, but why should one mistake ruin a whole life? Helen has quite opened her heart to me. Her manners are modern, of course, but she agrees with me about the importance of keeping up the old traditions. Just a sweet old-fashioned girl—"

I see plainly that this woman is going to get us all into trouble.

Well! You can see the trenches from the city wall, and I don't understand yet just how it happened. They're getting out a White Tablet explaining it for the neutrals. Anybody can see that the war has been forced upon us, but all this about ultimatum and the Achæan mobilization is too complicated for me. But what it comes down to is that Hector, the defender of the sanctity of marriage, was really to blame. Hector and his ethnology and his Anti-Immigration League. When he said that this demand for the return of Helen was foreign interference in a purely domestic issue, that was the end of watchful waiting.

Our diplomacy has been badly bungled, too. The idea of Deiphobus asking the Achæan ambassador at their last interview if he was going to declare war just for a word, matrimony; just for a scrap of brick. I'm afraid they'll use that in their propaganda.

(At this point there is a lacuna in the document, covering apparently a space of some years.)

Helen and I are becoming quite good friends, now that Paris is in the trenches at last. After all, the war does bring people together. I'm afraid I judged her too harshly, in the old days. She's really had a hard life.

"You can't imagine," she told me, "how dull my girlhood was. Always reminding ourselves that we of the old stock must set an example to these pushing parvenus—I hated it! I longed for a breath of clean air from the open spaces. I wanted to get away from it all. . . . And then I met Menelaus. Here, I thought, is somebody unspoiled—red-blooded and virile. A fit mate for me. . . . And then to marry him and find that his one ambition was to make himself a synthetic gentleman, to live down his family and live up to me!

"But I always affect men that way. When

Theseus kidnapped me I expected to suffer the ultimate outrage. I tried to steel myself against it, to reflect that after all one grows by experience—it makes a full life— And then he proceeded to turn me over to his mother and treat me like a trust fund— Oh, the men I have known!”

“No wonder you preferred Paris,” I observed. “He may not be clever but at least he’s a gentleman.”

“Yes,” she said thoughtfully, “yet the war doesn’t seem to have matured him as it has most people. See how wonderfully Deiphobus has come out since Hector was killed and he had to take over the High Command. . . . But perhaps now that Paris is in the trenches—”

“It wasn’t fair of Deiphobus to send him to the front,” I said hotly. “Poor Hector would never have torn your husband from your arms—”

“We musn’t blame Deiphobus,” said Helen. “He’s doing his best to mobilize the man-power of the nation. I gave Paris willingly to my adopted country. I am no hyphenated Trojan. I too must do my bit.”

Paris came to see me yesterday—home on leave—and I was amazed at the change in him. He’s lean and hard and self-reliant—and the astounding thing is that he seems to like trench life.

“I was getting fat and lazy at the base camp,” he said, “and I felt like a slacker. The minute Helen changed her mind and agreed to let me go to the front I jumped at the chance.”

“She must be delighted to see you looking so well.”

“I don’t know,” he said with an uneasy frown. “She seems to think I’m out of character. . . . By the way, do you ever hear anything about Oenone any more?”

“Oenone? Good heavens, no! Why should I?”

“I just wondered,” said Paris. “Well, good-bye. I’m going back.”

“Back to the front?” I asked. “Why, you only came home yesterday. Do you mean to say Deiphobus gave you only twenty-four hours’ leave?”

“Don’t blame Deiphobus,” he said as he went out. He added something I couldn’t catch; it sounded like “worse places than the front.”

I wonder what he could have meant.

Poor Helen! I suppose I ought to say poor Paris, but after all he’s dead and she’s left to bear her grief. And the worst of it was that there was a pacifist movement to send her back to Menelaus and end the war with a peace without victory. But Deiphobus stopped that. He explained the underlying cause of the war—Mycenæ-to-Mesopotamia and all the rest of it—and told the people that the only answer was force to the uttermost.

No, I can’t pretend that the marriage wasn’t as big a surprise to me as to everyone else; and I do think Helen might have told me. There’s been rather malicious talk in certain circles; but while of course it is rather soon after Paris’s death our petty proprieties seem trivial in times like these. Helen has been disappointed in all the men she’s known, but Deiphobus is a better mate for her. . . . And how wonderful for him! He’s always been grim and solitary but I know he’s loved her for years. Now he has attained his heart’s desire at last.

Poor Deiphobus is so devoted to his duty! He’s been home only once since the honeymoon. Thank goodness! this can’t last much longer; the last Achæan offensive was stopped short. I think we’ve broken their will to victory.

I don’t believe I could live through another armistice celebration. We’re all more or less crazy, I suppose, with the lifting of the long strain; but I’m really worried about Deiphobus. He looks terribly depressed.

“You need a rest,” I told him. “Now that it’s over you and Helen ought to go somewhere for a second honeymoon.” He looked at me very queerly.

“Cassandra,” he said at last, “all this began because Menelaus went off to Cnossus, alone. Remember? . . . I’m thinking of running over to Cnossus myself as soon as we’ve demobilized. . . . Alone, of course—just a business trip.”

What kind of business, I wonder? I’d have asked him, but he went off to see about bringing in the Wooden Horse. Personally I think it’s a great mistake to be so hasty in putting up a war memorial, and I don’t like the design of this one at all. But of course they don’t pay any attention to me—

(At this point, for obvious reasons, the narrative abruptly ends.)

ELMER DAVIS

The BOWLING GREEN

Solitaire

PATIENCE is the game to play when you want to let the mind run free. Specially if you have something to write and want to find out what, if anything, you have been subconsciously thinking. You move the little folding card-table close to the fire, and while the rudimentary mind is busy with the game, building up those sequences of red and black cards, it may come about (so, anyhow, you hope) that the better parts of your skull may have something to say to you. It is like the rookies drilling on the parade-ground while the grizzled fellows with stars on their shoulders are indoors discussing the subtleties of manoeuvre. And then, you think to yourself, isn’t that exactly what the human being does: pulls up his little collapsible table of body and soul as close to the blaze of life as seems convenient and plays on it his comic game of solitaire . . . that’s the worst of it, everything is a symbol of everything else. Hullo, here’s a bit of luck: to get an ace in the very first layout.



But what a night. Howling wind, snow sifting under the crack of the front door, the rattle of panes, now the wild yell of the 11:30 train as it comes round that gale-swept curve under Harbor Hill. The trains will be late in the morning, and if we don’t get something written tonight—here, the seven will go on that eight; fine, and that turns up a two for the ace—there *must* be, on such a gallant evening, something important to write about—we have laid out on the table two stimulations: a slab of apricot pie and a notebook of pen-drawings by Elizabeth MacKinstry which we saw on a publisher’s desk and so admired we borrowed it to study: it is full of the daintiest little skirmishes, nymphs, vagabonds, tiny houses against blue hills, lonely trees with thunder behind them; the Urchin too was fascinated by Miss MacKinstry’s thrilling little sky-scapes. “That gives me an idea of how to draw a cloud,” he said. It looks quite easy the way Miss MacKinstry does it: just a quirly line and a thin sweep of blue paint around it—but when she’s done it (I’ve told you of her book, “Puck in Pasture”) it’s as lovely as something by Keats. I wonder if Keats ever saw a night like this? I doubt it, for real blizzards are rare in South England; yet he conveyed it in “The Eve of St. Agnes.” But Lowell and Whittier knew these evenings. Odd, and never pointed out by Keats students, that that St. Agnes Eve weather was the real Saranac kind of thing that Keats most needed; if he’d had more of it he’d have lived longer.



It’s odd that copy written at midnight tends to get so much darkness mixed with the ink. In the morning, sometimes, you sit down to write a mere casual letter and find yourself cackling with laughter at nothing at all.—If you burn soft coal in your mind, the chimney gets dangerously stuffed with soot: another of those curst analogies. The cards aren’t falling so nicely this time; there’s a black queen buried somewhere and until I can get her out the whole thing is held up: it’s because, absent-mindedly, I shuffled ’em too much. You know that feeling, that if you shuffle the cards too thoroughly they go bad. Another analogy. I’ll go down and look at the furnace to shake off these analogies. Donny, the sheepdog, is uneasy tonight. I know what’s wrong: I don’t usually sit in the living-room so late; he wants to get up into the big armchair, as he always does when this room is left dark; but he doesn’t quite like to while I’m sitting here. He knows that I know he always does it, but we carry on a little pretence and I never overtly notice him when he’s in that chair; if I did he would feel it a matter of honor to get out. (There is good theology in this.) He has his manners too: he will pretend not to notice my apricot pie if I bring him a biscuit. One of the children made a rather profound remark about Donny: we were wondering why he sets up such a terrific growling, even if he has no serious intention, when any stranger comes near the house.

“He likes to hear himself growl!” said one of the young thinkers.

The wind whoops up the chimney, the cards make their little patterns, and I begin to wonder whether I will get that Bowling Green written tonight. Surely an experienced journalist (I say to myself) ought to be able to write something harmless, something that would be pleasant reading and not give the show away. That’s what journalists are for; but the deuce of it is, the things one has really been thinking of, such as the delicately beyond-the-horizon feeling of those MacKinstry sketches; or the windy water-front out at Huntington where I’d like to buy a little piece of ground, are always either too vague or too comic. John Donne, for instance, he was a poet who wrote poems about what he really thought.—I don’t believe I can work out this hand unless I cheat a little; I’ll take out one of those hidden cards, and if it fits I’ll use it.—I’m thinking of John Donne because in Miss A. Page Cooper’s booklet about Kipling I found this passage:—

A pioneer book dealer of New York in the ’90’s, S. F. McLean, whose shop used to be across from Cooper Union, had occasion to furnish Kipling with many books while he was in Vermont.

“One day,” says Mr. McLean recalling his famous customers, “a man came into my shop and called for the poetical works of Dr. John Donne. I had never heard of Donne; and not having the book, I offered to make a search for it and communicate with the customer if he would leave me his name and address.

“With fine penmanship he wrote on the back of a card that I handed him: ‘Rudyard Kipling, Brattleboro, Vermont.’”

A complete list of the people now living who have been, at one time or another, well steamed with Donne, would be—to me—one of the most exciting of the world’s documents. I believe Miss Cooper is wrong, though, when she says that Kipling’s verse about “Fifty North and Forty West” (“when the steward falls into the soup-tureen,” etc.) is reminiscent of a P. and O. voyage. The P. and O. ships don’t go anywhere near that dark green neighborhood.



Tomorrow will be the kind of day when the seasoned commuter puts into his brief-case an extra pair of socks, and perhaps even some of what the St. Bernard dogs used to carry round their necks in little kegs (Oh *Bisquit Dubouché*: does that name mean anything to you?) and warns his wife that the good old Oyster Bay train will be late. Sad to think that our children presently will not remember those jovial old locoes as they come sliding into Roslyn station, the snow purling up around the cow-catcher. The live and resolute air of those tall driving-wheels and smokestacks; and some day it’ll be electric all the way, a line for mummers like the Great Neck traffic. It’s queer to recall that this, now, will soon be the Olden Time.—The cards are beginning to be tedious; the game is working out but there’s no real exhilaration in it because I cheated. And I’m beginning to think how delightful it is, when you really *have* decided to funk the job, to lie down on the couch and read O. Henry without a single pang; to drift, drift into nescience with that howl of the wind in your ears. Donny has climbed into the chair, with a face of embarrassment; the apricot pie is finished; John Donne is dead centuries ago and would forgive me anyhow; and Miss MacKinstry, illuminator of such sweet and tiny parables in blue and green, has too much antic in her reed-pen to hold this cowardice against me. Her little notebook of drawings she has bound up in the cover of an old copy of “Shakespeare’s Heroines” by Mrs. Jameson, and casting about for one final analogy of comfort I recall the frailty of those heroines. They too sought the couch rather than the writing table. And here in the back of Miss MacKinstry’s notebook I find her pen has written a little verse—

When the Happy Child has flown
Then the Student’s hour is on;
When the Student lies asleep
Let the Poet vigil keep;
When the Poet slumbers too
Earth alone can all renew.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.