

LOVE AND LIFE IN THE BIRD WORLD

I was looking out of the window down through the tall firs and on ^{to the mouth} the river where a red-gold late moon had fallen into the water whose current was trying to dissolve the brilliant ball and carry it away. One minute it was round. The next its even curve was broken into ragged edges and glittering shafts of light that rippled away down stream.

But it wasn't the moon or the river that held me at the window at midnight. It was the voice of a bird that came up through the dim stately firs, now here, now there. The chat had come to our woods.

It was a spirit of the night, a resonant, rollicking voice without a form. It was alone, but not lonesome. "Cher! Cher! Cher!" clear and strong it came from the black depths of a big tree. A minute later the three notes in a higher pitch startled me from an entirely different ^{place} position, with no movement or sound of wings to tell of their going. How did he do it? And how did he find his way through the dark trees? ^{he did it.} Again and again ^{he sings, apparently} the resonant notes, ^{calling} changed position, perhaps to another formless spirit. But there was no answer, which, if it had been there, must surely have sent back a message to that ^{call.} alluring voice. Here, there, in rapid succession and changing pitch, now low and rich, now high and entreating, that voice probed the ^{moonlit woods. Is what? steel} (dark shadows and the misty moonlight.)

Memories of the mocking-bird of southern California nights, those rippling, ecstatic notes, ^{now here, now there,} in the fig and avacado groves, came back. Was ^{he} a kin to this ^{southern singer} northern visitor of the same habits? ^{In reality the song little comedian cat on his paws had limbed another. his face box which invoked a muffler on his Clarion voice.}

the chat

Of a sudden, the voice was gone. The moonlight woods above the river were silent, empty. Had he flown noiselessly away to find that kindred spirit to whom he had called ^{him} in vain? I heard it, far away, vague, alluring. He was still calling to a mate. Then again, it seemed nearer. He was coming back, perhaps because he loved the woods and the river. A short, clipped note, as if asking why - why no answer. It was a little impatient.

The moon began to wane, the tall firs to grow dim and black. There was no gold ball for the river to wash away. And all at once, there was no glad, bouyant

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bouyant voice, no spirit of the beautiful night.

At three o'clock the moon had gone down. The trees were dead black, the river a dim remnant of the earlier night. But life was awakening. There were sleepy cheepings from all the bird residents. From perches in the firs to those in the bamboo clumps near the house came the voices of awakening dwellers - the towhees, sparrows, violet-green swallows, the vireos and others of the community colony who refused earlier to be inveigled from their beds by the romantic chat. It was the dark before the dawn by this time, and there were cheepings from all the bushes and trees. Undoubtedly they had listened annoyed at the moon-struck mewings of the susceptible chat. Now they must soon be up at the day's duties. All the swallows had eggs in the bird houses about the yard, and the chickadees had their nest in the same bit of log as last year. It was ^{coming} daylight and there was plenty to do for honest folks. The warbling vireo had tied her basket nest on the next limb to that she had the summer before. The towhees were ensconced on the hillside below the house and were depending on the usual support of crumbs by the kitchen window. The red-headed woodpecker, who was a winter visitor, didn't like to leave for his summer home further north because he had had such a comfortable time here during the winter, what with the suet feeds and all. Little Gairdner woodpecker was somewhat aloof to him and thought he should be moving on. All in all, the summer colony was in full swing. And what of the elusive, romantic chat who had disturbed their sleep of last night? No one knew. They were too busy. The sun was coming up now and they must attend to their own household affairs. And so the yearning, liquid voice of the chat in the moonlight woods was lost in the bright light of day and duties.

Put in information about chat -

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