

of eggs each bird lays. Sometimes the Woodpeckers build their nests quite deep in the hollow trees; and Mr. Thompson has spent a half a day in cutting out the tree in order to see the nest and the eggs. Some birds were very shy, and in order to study them closely, he would build a fortification, and observe them by the hour. In case the birds noticed the fortification and left their nest, he used traps to catch birds in order to notice their colors and the shape of their bills and heads, then he would set them free. There were some birds that he could see only at night. In order to do this, he would sleep in a hammock suspended from the trees, and as soon as he heard the bird sing would start out to find it. Sometimes he would hunt for hours without success, but this would not discourage him. The next night he would start out just as earnestly. He is very much surprised that so many country people dislike the cat-bird, because they say it is a very common bird and does not sing. He says, "It is true that it is not a pretty bird, but it is a very fine singer." The cat-birds in this part of California are very common. They do not sing, they simply chirp. He says that the mockingbird's name is deceptive; most people think it has no song of its own, but it has, and he compares its song to that of the English nightingale.

Mr. Thompson gives a very good idea of the country through which he travels. One sees the tall trees with the birds flying from limb to limb, the streams flowing through the meadows, the low hills in the distance, and at their feet the level valleys.

One of the essays is entitled, "In a Palace of Reeds." One day when Mr. Thompson and a friend were strolling through a little valley, hunting for birds, they came across this palace. I will quote his words: "Not far from Indian Ford, an old Indian camp, stood the Palace of Reeds, built by Nature's own hand, on a low bluff of the river's east bank. We found it, Will and I, while rambling in the valley, and, by virtue of the right of discovery, quietly appropriated it for our indwelling during the fair weather of the delightful Georgian spring. Imagine two wild plum trees, in full sweet-scented bloom, standing twenty-five feet apart, with a thick-leaved muscadine vine flung over them like a richly wrought mantle. The boles of the tree are gray and mossy, fluted with antique pillars. The ground is flecked with rugs of dark southern moss through which the violets and spring beauties have found their way. The keen odor of sassa-

fras and the delicate fragrance of tulip honey perfumes the air. You stand on the threshold of this natural palace, and looking through the tender gloom of its arched hall, you see the cool river flowing and singing on. You hear the dreamful hum of tiny wings. You see the plum flowers shake and let fall their golden pollen dust, and the reeds, the tall gold-and-green reeds, rise all around the palace, forming its walls. The place was handsomely furnished with a mossy log for a sofa." Mr. Thompson and his friend would sit in this palace for hours, making sketches of birds and fish, and then resting themselves by reading Keats and Shelley. Then they would examine the bird's eggs they had gathered. When the nights were clear, they hung their hammocks in the palace, and many times they were awakened by the screeching of an owl in the tree above, or the croaking of frogs in the river below. From within this palace, Mr. Thompson and his friend attempted to make pencil studies of the wild birds in their natural attitudes, afterward painting them in water colors from the specimens held captive. "Sketching a wild bird in the freedom of the woods and brakes is the utmost shorthand known to the artist. It must be done with all the dash and hurry of phonographic reporting. Five seconds cover a very long step in a bird's movements." Sometimes they would follow a bird for a full hour before they could get a passable outline sketch. After sketching for a whole day like this, a survey of the sketch-book, leaf by leaf, would be both amusing and instructive. A wood-duck had her nest in the hollow of a tree just across the river from the palace. Mr. Thompson hid himself in the palace and watched her go in and out. She would do it so silently that he would not know she was there if he were not looking. He watched her for several weeks, hoping to discover her method of conveying her young to the river. This he never found out. One morning they were in the river swimming beside their mother as if they had always been there.

The style of the book is simple and fascinating. With the author we travel through valleys and over hills, and we share the thrill of joy when he is successful and the pang of disappointment when he fails. Such a test is the highest one that can be applied to any book. The best writer, like the best speaker, is the one who carries with him his audience.

The book is valuable in the instruction it gives us in natural history. It gives us not only im-