

### Birds That Can Talk.

Professor Scott of Princeton says that wild birds sometimes introduce variations into their songs and, again, more rarely, imitate not only the songs of other birds, but the barking of dogs, mechanical sounds like the creaking of wheels, the filing of a saw and even human speech. A writer in Bird Lore gives this well authenticated incident:

One morning while I was standing on my back steps I heard a cheerful voice say:

"You are a pretty bird. Where are you?"

I wondered how any parrot could talk loudly enough to be heard at that distance, for the houses on the street behind us are not near. Presently the voice came again, clear, musical and strong:

"You are a pretty bird. Where are you?"

For several days I endured the suspense of waiting for time to investigate. Then I chased him up. There he was in the top of a walnut tree, and his gorgeous attire told me immediately he was a rose breasted grosbeak.

At the end of a week he was saying, "Pretty, pretty bird. Where are you?" He and his mate stayed near us all last summer, and this spring they came again. He is making the same remark as plainly as ever a bird can speak.

## RHODA'S SECRET

By SYLVIA CHESTER

Rhoda laid her hand gently upon her aunt's shoulder. She had entered the room with selfish schemes in her heart; there was nothing but deep pity now as she looked at the worn miserably face of the desolate woman. Miss Dering let the curtain fall and took Rhoda's hand in hers.

"You are alone too," she said. "They won't love you any more than they love me. Molly and Mrs. Dering have all the love George has still to give; and your aunt—Do you like your aunt, Rhoda?"

"I have seen so little of her." "Ah, you are cautious! Come, sit down again and forget all my foolish words. But it was like seeing a ghost to look at you, Rhoda. Only you are pale and grave. That was not like me; I was the life of the house. Did your father ever talk of me?"

Rhoda paused before she answered and Miss Dering went on.

"But, of course, you have not seen him for years. You are like him, Rhoda. We were very much alike, Arthur and I. He would not know me now."

"You saw my mother once?" said Rhoda.

"I went to see them at Lucerne. That was before you were born. Your mother was not a lady, Rhoda, and we were all very angry with Arthur for marrying her. That was his first offense. My father was a proud man, he struck Arthur's name out of his will. I went secretly to Lucerne to see your father; but we quarreled. He had a very bitter tongue; and he did not spare me. But I saw your mother—a sweet fair little girl; I can see her now."

"You never saw her again?" "Never. We lost sight of them for years. I had my own troubles to live through. I have had great troubles, Rhoda. I was to have married Lord Woburn's eldest son; but he died. And I had other troubles after that. And now I am desolate and only borne with for my money. You know I am very rich, don't you?"

"Molly told me so."

"Mrs. Dering thinks that I shall leave it all to Molly. Perhaps I shall."

"Do I look very haggard and old?" she said, with a piteous look. "Tell me frankly, Rhoda."

"Yes, Aunt Millicent, you do look very haggard. You look older than you ought to look because you dress so youthfully."

Rhoda had meant to speak very differently—to please; to flatter; but the words came despite herself.

Miss Dering went to the glass and looked at herself. Then she turned to Rhoda.

"How would you like me to dress?" she said sharply.

"You ought to wear a pretty cap and a different dress, and let more light into your room. You would look beautiful still, Aunt Millicent—as beautiful as you did when you were young, only with a different kind of beauty."

Miss Dering dropped the curtain and sat down again.

"You are a very extraordinary young woman, Rhoda," she said. "So you do not like my room or my dress? You would like me to dress as your nuns dressed, I suppose?"

"You would not like that," replied Rhoda, with a faint smile.

"They have dressed you very prettily. Rhoda, what would I give for your youth and your quiet untroubled past!"

Rhoda did not answer, and Miss Dering went on in a lighter tone.

"The nuns have taught you how to dress and taught you the virtue of plain speaking. You will have to forget the latter lesson, Rhoda."

"You asked my opinion," said Rhoda gently.

"Oh, I like your frankness! I was just like that; you are what I was Rhoda. If you had been like your

mother, Mrs. Dering would have liked you better, but you would not have been the same to me."

"You ought to be angry with me for my rudeness," said Rhoda.

"No, I am not angry. I know I am a frightful old woman. Don't shake your head and spoil your truthfulness. I shall tell Mrs. Dering what you have said to me." She leaned back, still looking fixedly at Rhoda.

"You must come to see me every day," she said, "and say to me exactly what you think. Perhaps you will get me to wear caps and leave off powder. Now call Stanton and go away. Tell Mrs. Dering I shall come down to luncheon."

The days passed, and the intense longing to tell the truth which Rhoda had at first felt gradually wore off. Her relatives so completely took her past for granted, they showed so little curiosity about it that it was easy to go on. Molly was too full of her own experiences to care much to listen to Rhoda's stories of the quiet convent days. The two girls spent many happy mornings in Molly's little room. When work was over, Molly was the chief talker, Rhoda heard all about the escapades with Jack that had made Molly's childhood such an exciting time.

Rhoda's afternoons were devoted to Miss Dering. This occasioned a severe struggle between Mrs. Dering and her sister-in-law, Rhoda was not present at the stormy interview between them; but though Mrs. Dering gave way, she was bitterly cold to Rhoda after that.

"I wish Rhoda had never come to Dering," she said angrily to her husband; "she is taking Molly's place with her aunt."

"Well, well, Molly will have enough and to spare," George Dering replied soothingly. "I wish the girl looked happier, Agnes; she never smiles. Have you noticed that? She looks as if she had some great burden to bear."

"What can a girl want more?" said Mrs. Dering, with a touch of bitterness in her tone. "Molly is devoted to her. It is ridiculous for her to have such tragedy airs; I have no patience with her!"

It was a day or two after this that Miss Dering one morning announced her intention of going to London for a week. She wished, she said, to consult a new doctor. Rhoda was to go with her, and Rhoda only. There was another sharp struggle with Mrs. Dering, who at first declared that Rhoda should not go; but she gave way after a time, and one bright frosty morning Rhoda and her aunt proceeded by train to Waterloo. They drove to the Langham, where Miss Dering had engaged rooms.

"I will go and see the doctor tomorrow," said Miss Dering, who looked wonderfully bright and well. "Now we will have lunch, and then I want to pay a call."

She left Rhoda in the sitting-room and went to her own room. Rhoda walked to the window and stood looking absently into the street.

After a while she heard the door open behind her and turned to speak to her aunt. She started violently, for the lady who entered was very unlike the Millicent Dering whom she had learned to know. All the false complexion was gone; her hair was plainly fastened up under a pretty cap; her dress was of sober make and fashion.

"You hardly knew me, Rhoda," said Miss Dering with a smile. "See I have followed your advice!" She walked up to the girl and patted her on the cheek. "I do not know what you have done to me, Rhoda. You have made me want to be good."

Rhoda burst into passionate tears. Miss Dering put her arms round her.

"I must have frightened you, and I wanted to please you! Come, Rhoda, let us have our luncheon and then go out; I am anxious to see how people will look at me. How do you think I look?"

been able to run down lately."

Adrian Dering was a remarkably handsome man. He was a true Dering, tall and dark and slenderly built. He reminded Rhoda a little of her father; but there was a look of intellectual power on Adrian's face that was wanting in Mr. Dering's. Yet it was a cold face; there was no tenderness or softness in its lines, no gentleness in the brilliant dark eyes. He was very cordial however to the two ladies, got tea for them, and accepted with evident pleasure Miss Dering's invitation to dinner that evening.

"This is for your black silk dress, Rhoda, it is too plain for you. Put this lace on and wear some flowers to-night. I don't want Adrian to think us dingy and old-fashioned."

Rhoda saw Adrian Dering nearly every day that week—often more than once a day. Once or twice Miss Dering sent them out together. One long walk they had in the early morning of the last day through Hyde Park into Kensington Gardens. Rhoda exclaimed at the beauty of the old trees in the Gardens.

"They remind me of the trees in our convent garden," she said involuntarily.

Adrian looked at her with one of his rare smiles.

"There is a strange fascination for me in the thought of that convent life of yours," he said. "How shut off from the world it must have been! It is the right sort of education for a girl."

Rhoda looked straight before her without speaking.

"When I saw you first," Adrian went on, "it seemed to me as if the quiet spirit of the convent life was still resting on you; you were very pale, and your solemn gray eyes seemed to reproach the world for being so gay and flippant. I wondered then if you had ever laughed."

"You have heard me laugh since," said Rhoda, with a bitter little smile.

"Once or twice; and I have seen you smile as you are smiling now, as if you were unused to mirth. How different you are from little Molly!"

"Very different!"

"Molly has always lived in the sunshine, and she does not know what seriousness is. You, Rhoda, have learned much from those grave, quiet convent years."

"You think you understand me after a week's friendship?" said Rhoda, trying to speak lightly.

"I do understand you; I look at your face and read your nature there—tender and strong and true. No wonder you have made Aunt Millicent a different being! I thank you for that, Rhoda; your influence over her is wonderful."

"You are unjust to Molly," she answered; "you do not appreciate her."

"We do not suit each other," said Adrian, briefly. He glanced at Rhoda, and then said, "Aunt Agnes may have told you of her wishes, Rhoda."

"She told me it was her wish that Molly should marry you."

"It will be a trial for her to know the truth," he answered. "Molly could never care for me. I once wished to marry Molly; I thought it would be right. But I do not wish that any longer, Rhoda."

Rhoda was about to answer, when a girl, who had been walking at a little distance, turned and approached her. Rhoda recognized her Paris servant Sarah.

"That girl seems to know you," said Adrian, glancing at her.

"I must speak to her," said Rhoda, hurriedly. She went quickly forward.

"How strange to meet you here, Sarah!" she said in a low tone.

To her surprise, the girl burst in to tears. She caught hold of Rhoda's hand and held it.

"What is the matter?" said Rhoda faintly. Terror that Adrian might overhear made her heart beat fast. He must know the truth one day, but not by a chance discovery like this.

"Miss Dering, I saw you by chance in the street yesterday, and I have been waiting about. I followed you to-day; I want to speak to you."

"What do you want to say?" said Rhoda.

"To tell you that I won't do it," whispered the girl.

"Do what?"

"What the Frenchman wanted of me; I will send the money back to him. My sister is in good service, and she will help me. I will not have his money."

"Monsieur Lefroy gave you money? What did he give it to you for?"

"It was the night before I went away. I was to give him the address where I could always be found; and when he wanted me, I was to tell things against you. But I wanted to write and tell you I wouldn't do it, only I did not know the address. And, when I saw you this morning, it seemed as if Heaven had sent me here to these gardens so that I might see you."

The Worst Drink.

"But chichi, the chichi of Patagonia! That is the worst drink in the world," said a naval man. "The Patagonians gather wild apples. They dig pits and line them with horsehides, and in those pits they leave the apples to rot and ferment. When the pits are full of foamy, hissing juices the Patagonian warriors gather for their annual jag, and the women and children go off and hide in the woods. No wonder, for chichi is a terrible drink. It is a thick gray foam that hisses. It seems to be alive. It is like drinking snakes."—New York Press.

Beat Capsized; Woman Drowns.

Mrs. Gertrude Griffin was drowned in Oneida lake, at Utica, N. Y., Tuesday, when a wave struck the boat in which she was rowing with William Dunn, Jr., of Sylvan Beach. When the boat capsized Dunn tried to rescue the woman, but his hold slipped after he had clung to her fifteen minutes, and she disappeared in thirty feet of water.

Farmer Dead on Engine Pilot.

Seated Upon the pilot of a locomotive and holding a sack of flour, the body of Charles M. Webb, a farmer, was found at Akron, O., on Wednesday. It is supposed the man was struck by the engine while walking along the track and hurled into the air, falling upon the pilot.

Church Hit by Lightning and Burned.

The Holy Family Polish Roman Catholic church at Sugar Notch, near Wilkes-Barre, Pa., was struck by lightning and burned. Loss, \$30,000.

Infant Dies of Lockjaw.

Katherine Kevopka, three weeks old, died of lockjaw at South Bethlehem, Pa. She is the youngest person in local medical annals to succumb to tetanus.

Canned Soup Killed Lawyer.

C. Strawser Batt, a wealthy young New York lawyer, died of ptomaine poisoning at the Astor house as a result of eating canned soup.

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