

ness by leaving it behind. To the above I sometimes added a folding butterfly net, for it is well to take what comes along in out of the way places. Butterflies were individually common but I found no great variety. I suppose the season was too dry and the locality over-exposed to the strong trade wind.

In this season and locality the heat is greatly tempered by the trade wind by day, and at night one needs a blanket, though it is very different in humid places away from the coast. In Cuba there are no *poisonous* snakes (though I have seen some good big ones); but insect pests are at times somewhat too varied and abundant. In short there are minor drawbacks—and one should take reasonable precautions against illness; but in spite of all these the collector who longs for new fields and change of environment will find pleasure in both in the sunny island off our southern shores.

U. S. S. Maine, New York, February 4, 1916.

MEETING SPRING HALF WAY

By FLORENCE MERRIAM BAILEY

I

TEXARKANA", the porter announced to a curtained aisle on that April morning. Texarkana! May all men know by these presents just where they stand. We raised the shades to find that in the night winter had been left behind, spring had come in Texas, spring with its birds and flowers and green things growing. "The trees are all green!" a boyish northern voice exclaimed with fervor born of snowbanks passed in the Alleghanies. And so they were, all green, not with the dark heavy green of summer's fulfillment but with the delicate green of the first blush of spring promise, at whose delicacy you fairly hold your breath; a green that is almost white with the young hickory leaves, a tender pink with the oaks, making the woodland pools reflect a veritable fairyland forest. Blooming apple and peach trees gathered butterflies, leaf-crowned oak tassels swayed in the wind, and as the train passed through a stand of pine we breathed the velvety air of sulphuring pineries—nature was full of rich promise. All the warmth of the woods centered in the red bud, all the light of the woods focused in the snowy thorn and the dazzling white sprays of the dogwood. The ground flowers were blooming also—exquisite spring beauties, Baptisia, mandrake, and deep magenta phlox in luxuriant bunches.

Through the open windows came the spring songs of Tomtits, Cardinals, and Mockingbirds, and as if to furnish appropriate setting, there passed in rapid succession cotton fields with last year's bolls hanging, darky shanties flanked by outside chimneys, groups of pickaninnies, colored women in sunbonnets driving mule plows, and oak woods in which small brown pigs rooted for acorns. The handsome red horse-chestnut blooming in the woods recalled Audubon's famous painting of the Carolina Wren. At a wayside station the squawk of a Bluejay came in through the window, while from a passing swamp came the call of the Maryland Yellow-throat, not to be heard in Washington for fully two weeks. The first palmettos and bunches of cactus were followed near the Trinity River by the first gray moss, in which appropriately enough Parula Warblers were singing, also two weeks ahead of Washington. The

white flower spikes of the yucca, the purple clusters of the wistaria, the green bunches of Baptisia and discs of mistletoe, scarlet painted cups and fields of solid yellow and purple gave pleasing diversity as the train passed through their varied habitats.

But the vivid green of spring to us from the brown north was perhaps the dominating pleasure of the journey, greatest near the close of the day when the slanting yellow light intensified the green of a meadow, made an oak fairly glow beside a dark juniper, and gave an exquisitely delicate green to an acre of mesquite whose finely cut leaves—most interesting fact in the study of the light relations of plants—lets the sun shine through so that the ground beneath bears a carpet of flowers.

At Austin, where we saw baled cotton in the depot, the birds were a striking mixture of northern, southern, eastern, and western species. We were greeted by the song of the Canyon Wren! Out of place as it seemed in the city, the clear, pure notes rang out as bravely as in a canyon, and the little canyon dweller might easily have strayed over from congenial ground in the first escarpment of the lower Staked Plains, three miles to the westward. Several of the birds were seen in the city. One that stood on a chimney top, its long bill, rounded back, and hanging tail silhouetted against the sky, sang loudly, swaying from side to side till a lordly Mockingbird flew over and calmly appropriated its perch. Mockingbirds were everywhere, singing with equal abandon from the chimney above us or the fruit trees close beside us. And well might such southerners feel at home, for among the flowers and trees of the city were numbered yucca, tamarisk, banana, fig, and pride of India. From one of the berry-bearing pride of India trees rose a flock of the cosmopolitan Cedar Waxwings, but they may have stopped for the berries of the mistletoe, also borne by the little tree. The more northern Turkey Vulture was in the sky with its southern relative the short-tailed Black Vulture, whose services as scavenger were evidently appreciated by the inhabitants, for when it was suggested that one suspected of eating a snake should be shot to settle the matter, the citizen addressed promptly replied, "You'd have the corporation after you if you did!" Purple Martins were already back from Brazil, their loud twitterings being continually in our ears. Less traveled Western Lark Sparrows were among the commonest birds of the city, singing loudly from the trees of the yards and streets, and a resident Cardinal flew into a bare tree only a few feet from us on the grounds of the State University.

These grounds presented a picture long to be remembered, for they were solid acres of blue-bonnets, low, deep blue lupins, among the choicest of the family, that made the air rich with their hyacinthine fragrance. In some fields the blue was toned to an exquisite color scheme by a mixture of pink verbena and vivid pink phlox outdoing their garden cousins in luxuriance. The lupins reached out to the edge of the big spreading live oaks, trees that interested us greatly as they bore a form of the so-called Spanish moss (*Tillandsia recurvata*), that instead of hanging in long veils grows in short tufts on the branches. As we examined it, a herd of Jerseys grazed under the trees with pleasantly jangling bells whose leisurely tinkling harmonized with the familiar *Pe-ter, Pe-ter, Pe-ter*, of the Tufted Titmouse which hunted among the branches, and the soft cooing of Mourning Doves which flew around through the trees with musically whistling wings.

On the University grounds one of the everyday birds was that theatrical

character, the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, one of the birds that makes Texas peculiarly attractive to the bird student. To easterners, to whom the name Flycatcher calls up drab Phoebes, pensive Wood Pewees, plainly clad Kingbirds, and small olivaceous Empidonaxes hard to find in the green woods, the first sight of the Scissor-tail is little less than astounding. Nature, apparently tired of making Quaker garbs for retiring woodlanders cut a new pattern, on Swallow-tailed Kite lines, adding splashes of salmon to the striking black and white plumage, after which she endowed her creation with the skill of an acrobat, the dash and fire of a master spirit of the air.

Between its noisy acrobatic feats the Scissor-tail sits demurely on a telephone wire, apparently its favorite perch, though it looks much too large to perch on a wire. But the long scissors that open and shut so effectively during aerial displays keep a nice balance, and after all, though making such a brave appearance, *forficata* is mainly wings and tail, feathers and fire. Giving chase to Hawks and Caracaras—the Mexican Eagles used as the national emblem of Mexico—is every day sport, and no chance is lost to show who is lord of the neighborhood. A pair of the Flycatchers that I happened on had a nest in a low tree and the female was quietly brooding when a strange Scissor-tail appeared. The guardian of the nest waited to ask no questions but darted at him in fury. As the two chased through the air, to our amusement the brooding bird jumped up on the edge of the nest and stood looking after them. When the visitor had been driven from the landscape the lord of the nest performed a series of aerial evolutions as if to relieve his outraged feelings. The curious performances of these original birds entertained us all the way across southern Texas.

From Austin to San Antonio we were crossing their country, the mesquite end of the great prairie that extends from the Gulf to the Saskatchewan, and between cotton fields, flowers filled the spaces among the mesquite trees. In San Antonio as in Austin we found northward bound Waxwings and White-throated Sparrows still lingering, while Martins, Cardinals, Mockingbirds, and Jackdaws swelled the list of city birds that might well make northerners envious. But though San Antonio has become a bustling American city, Mockingbirds may still sing in the plaza by moonlight and many picturesque, softly tinted adobes on the outskirts keep the flavor of the old Spanish town and hark back to the days of the Alamo.

On our way from San Antonio to Corpus Christi we crossed more arid mesquite and cactus country where the wind comes from the dry interior and there is practically a northward extension of the Mexican flora and fauna. Large herds of cattle and men on the round up were seen, for most of the country was then, in 1900, given over to cattle range. At Beeville this arid, barren, mesquite plain changed to fertile coast prairie on which there were strips of scrub oak and a mixture of chaparral, with some new flowers and old ones in new combinations. A heliotrope-like purple Phacelia grew in masses along the railroad, and scattered among the white poppies a magenta Callirhoe gave rich color as the western light shone through its broad petals, while masses of yellow evening primrose added to the rich effect. A glorious prairie sunset ending in deep red and purple told that we had entered the humid coast belt.

But back from Corpus Christi Bay, where we stopped for a little work, the prairie cover was a mixture of mesquite, cactus, and wind-compacted chap-

arral. The flora was Mexican, strange thorny bushes being interspersed with brilliant flower masses. The fences were made by pitchforks with cactus pads, the pads laid along a line on the ground rooting and branching till they grow to high impenetrable fence walls that in their season become beautiful with large yellow tuni flowers. When spring comes on the prairies of Texas, even the fences burst into bloom.

It seems a world of flowers and birds, for as you go south you meet hordes of nocturnal migrants that have stopped to rest and feed by the way. Such a cosmopolitan assembly of birds! Resident southerners jostling wings with passing northerners on their way from their southern wintering grounds to their northern breeding grounds. On the prairie near Corpus Christi there were among others both the northern and southern Vultures, and such southerners as Harris Hawks, Desert Sparrows, Road-runners, Scissor-tailed Flycatchers, Jackdaws, Pyrrhuloxias, Mockingbirds, and Caracaras side by side with such northerners as Dickeissels, Lincoln Sparrows, Lark Buntings, White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows, Upland Plover, and Warblers. Swifts, Swallows, Nighthawks, Cowbirds, Hummingbirds, Gnatcatchers, Marsh Hawks, Kingbirds, and other Flycatchers, Bob-whites, Wrens, Shrikes, Orchard Orioles, and Vireos added to the confusion. In the absence of high trees the bushes and thickets seemed crowded. Not every seat was taken, to be sure, but you were impressed by the numbers of birds and surprised by the incongruous assemblies that confronted you in the bushes. Mourning Doves seemed to be everywhere in the brush, many of them apparently passing the time while their mates brooded. Lark Sparrows were in squads singing in the bushes or feeding on the ground, their white tail crescents flashing out as they flew, Grasshopper Sparrows were chirring everywhere, and Mockingbirds were singing and scolding and going about their daily matters. Once a whirl of birds passed, explained by a handsome white-rumped Harris Hawk. Now and then a brilliant Cardinal appeared on top of the chaparral and sang.

But the song that dominated part of the brushy prairie was a new one to my ear and became the song of songs to me, for it is to the southern prairie what the rare song of the Pine-woods Sparrow is to the moss draped pines of Florida, and the chant of the Hermit Thrush to the pointed firs of the northern mountains. The Cassin Sparrow! Even now, long years after, the name of that plain little brown bird comes with bated breath. How it recalls the first time it was heard! It was on an ordinary sunny Texas morning that I walked out into ordinary chaparral prairie in an every day mood, all ignorant of the existence of *Peucaea cassini*, when lo! from the brown bushes in front of me up sprang a little winged creature, a 'blithe spirit', an embodiment of the deepest joy of life, and with head raised and wings outspread, from a well spring undefiled poured out a song that held both the gladness of the blooming prairies and all the joy and hope of his mate on the nest.

While such intimate pleasures were to be experienced among the birds of the neighboring prairie, interesting hints of the surrounding water bird life, both resident and migrant, were obtained at Tule Lake to the northwest and also along the shore line adjoining Corpus Christi.

Tule Lake was alive with Grebes, Shovellers, Plovers, Sandpipers, and Terns, and a party of tall pinkish Avocets were wading out across the small waves, putting their long up-curved bills down delicately before them; while Stilts, all black above, all white below, stilted up on long pink legs, were going

through a variety of amusing antics and raising their black triangular sails over their backs. Rising from the lake flocks of Sandpipers would go whirling away dark before us, at a turn glancing white against the blue sky.

Not far from Tule Lake, at Priour's Ranch, the home of an old collector, specimens of rare southern birds were to be seen, among them skins of the Black Skimmer, Roseate Spoonbill, and most remarkable of all, Mexican parrots said to have been taken near Corpus Christi when severe southern winds were blowing up from below the boundary line. A barrel of wild cat and coyote skins was shown us and the skulls were seen lying around in the corners of the workshop. Live Brant of different species were in hen coops in the yard, and a small mother Tree Duck driven away by a Turkey whose society she had enjoyed was said to be dividing her time between the barnyard and the kitchen.

Beyond the ranch we were pleased to find eight Roadrunners, so quaint and curious that they are to other birds what the cactus is to garden plants. In some places along the way we saw them standing up on fence posts, crested heads and long necks raised and long tails flipped up enquiringly, for all the road to see. Here they were so tame they would not take the trouble to get out of sight. A few Snowy Egrets, Poorwills, small moth-like Bullbats, and Mexican Eagles added to the southern feeling. Picturesque Mexicans with two-wheeled mule carts carrying women with black rebozas over their heads, and men with peaked hats, together with pole houses thatched with cattails, reeds, or marsh grass, accented the Mexican flora and fauna.

The shore line from Corpus Christi Bay south afforded many novel sights. A line of pasture fence posts that extended thirty or forty rods out into the shallow water of the bay, were favorite perches of a variety of water birds. Three Cormorants, a Great Blue Heron, and two Brown Pelicans made up the row one day, the Pelicans making droll figures like china toys with heads erect and chins drawn in. Formerly, we were told, a thousand Pelicans nested on a small island twelve miles from Corpus Christi, but the colony had been entirely broken up. Only about half a dozen of the interesting birds were seen when we were there. In flight, with their big bills on their pouches, their great flapping wings and short tails, they were droll figures indeed, suggesting wise feathered magicians. Deserted nests of Great Blue Herons, big saucers of twigs set on bush tops, were seen, and on a low grass-covered island the Herons themselves were found standing. Along the shore were seen Sandpipers, Plovers, Willets, Yellow-legs, Stilts, Curlew, Turnstones, Gulls, and Terns, together with Kingbirds, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Horned Larks, and Pipits—along the shore of the Gulf of Mexico, as I liked to say to myself. An historic spot below us made it seem more real, for here during the Mexican war one side buried a ship-load of flour and the other side on discovering it, dug it up! Sometimes the picture from the shore of the gulf was a monochrome, a gray sky over gray water touched with life by white caps blown in by the wind. On moonlight nights when the yellow globe filled all the sky with light down to the level prairie horizon, giving a wonderful effect of wide illumination, the harbor was especially beautiful and peaceful, with the silvery gleam of the moon on the water, and the soft lapping of waves along the shore.

(To be continued)