

have missed the three Great Blue Herons which flew east, high over our heads, when we were still about a mile and a half from the river. Another peculiar fact is that I saw no Grasshopper Sparrows or Vesper Sparrows during the day. However, the latter bird does not seem to be as abundant this year as usual. I noted only one Cliff Swallow, but as they seldom go far from the barn where they nest, and their colonies are not very common, it is not to be wondered at. The most abundant migratory birds seen during the day were the Warblers (mostly Chestnut-sided, Nashville, Tennessee, and Redstarts), and the Gray-cheeked and Olive-backed Thrushes, the Thrushes being very abundant.

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THE SONG OF THE DICKCISELL. *Spiza americana.*

BY P. M. SILLOWAY

Whiling away a recent afternoon over some old piles of ornithological literature, I found an interesting article entitled "Dickcissel in His Illinois Haunts." One paragraph particularly attracted my attention: "The song of this interesting bird invariably begins with three notes, very much resembling the syllables *Dick! Dick! Dick!* These are followed by an indescribable warble with the notes running rapidly together." In his excellent characterization of the song, the writer perhaps unconsciously made use of a term which effectually limits Dickcissel to only one song, the one beginning with the three notes mentioned. Now it happened that during my last summer in Illinois, 1898, I made some special observations regarding the musical ability of Dickcissel, and it may not be amiss to record a part of the notes then entered in my journal. I trust that my friend Mr. Hess will not take this contribution as a criticism of his excellent article in that old Oologist, but merely as a further addition to our fund of recorded observations.

During July, 1898, my home at Virden, Illinois, was near a forty-acre pasture, which was cut into two nearly equal

parts by a railroad. A walk of one hundred yards along the railroad would take me to the pasture, which was tenanted by many families of Dickcissell. The volubility of this songster is well known. Sitting on the porch of my home, I could hear long after sundown the ringing phrases of Dickcissell, wafted to my ears on the clear summer air. It was my custom to walk over to the pasture about four o'clock every afternoon, and follow the tall, tree-like hedge which enclosed the pasture. During these walks I noted down many songs of Dickcissell, with a view to make a complete summary at the proper time. Circumstances, however, called me from Illinois before I accumulated sufficient data, but such as I have to offer may prove of interest. The words suggested by the songs are not vital to the descriptions, but are given as the nearest rendering into English occurring to my mind when the notes were made.

On July 13 I first fixed one particular Dickcissell as a part of a certain detail of the meadow. He soon became a landmark in my walks. His first song was like this: *Dick, dick, ciss ciss sell*, and this rendition proved to be his favorite production. Frequently I could hear in it: *Quick, quick, sell sell sell*, both songs being strongly emphasized at the last syllable. Only rarely would this songster offer: *Dick, dick, dick, sell sell sell*.

In another angle of the pasture I was sure to hear a performer who was seemingly addicted to bad habits, for as I drew near his station, he would generally take a stand on a tall weed and shrill out lustily: *Quick, quick, gi' me a chew*. Frequently he would become so importunate as to repeat his plea: *Quick, quick, gi' me a chew, gi' me a chew*. The characteristic production of this songster began with only two notes, but sometimes he would vary the performance by uttering three *dick* or *quick* notes at the beginning. Once I was in another frame of mind, perhaps, though I am free to say that I do not *chew*, for I heard this songster utter, *Dick, dick, minia-ture*, twelve times in a minute, shortly after he had shouted *Gi' me a chew*.

In the same portion of the pasture where I met the first Dickcissell, another nearby performer would regularly chant: *Dick, dick, quee quee quee, ciss ciss sell*. After a generous

measure of this song, he would change it to: *Dick, dick, dick, ciss ciss sell*. One tenant of the pasture offered a most original production as his characteristic song, which seemed to run like this: *Quick, quick, looky here, skeezics*. After trifling with me in the foregoing manner several times, the last songster would boldly omit the introductory notes, and call out: *Looky here, skeezics, see see see*. It is interesting to note that this songster had four or five songs easily distinguishable. One of his common offerings was like this: *Dick, dick, queerily*; again he would say: *Quick, queerily, quee vee*.

On July 20 I have the following production of another performer: *Dick, dick, dick, queerily, chew chew chew*. This song was frequently varied by changing the number of the *dick* notes, as sometimes only two were given, and occasionally four *dicks* formed the beginning measures.

On July 21 I found a performer who gave the following variation of the characteristic song: *Dick, dick, dick, ciss sell*. Sometimes he would utter only two *dicks*, and frequently, by way of surprise, he would call: *Dick, dick, dick, dick*, omitting the customary phrase in closing.

July 23 brought a new rendition of my July 20th songster's production. This is what I heard: *Dick, dick, dick, what d'ye see see sell*. This peculiar song was varied by changing the number of introductory notes to only two, and sometimes by giving four. Another different song heard on that day went like this: *Quee, quee, quee, quee,—Dick ciss sell*, uttered sometimes with only two *dicks* and three *quees*, like this: *Quee, quee, quee,—Dick, dick, ciss sell*.

July 26 furnished the following records: *Dick, dick,—sell sell sell, see*, which was varied to: *Dick, sell sell see*. The latter, offering only one *dick*, is the most unusual performance of Dickcissell. The same songster furnished this record: *Dick, dick, sell sell sell, quee quee quee*; and also this: *Dick, sell sell sell, quee*, as well as: *Dick ciss sell, quee quee quee*. The following is the most unique record taken, but I think it will stand comparison with the original, *Ciss sell, ciss sell, que, ciss sell*.