

of natural-history societies to the utmost, and doing so enlighten the minds of those who have hitherto been much in ignorance? With this spread of knowledge, mythical traditions such as that of the hibernation in caves or under water of such a bird as our common Swallow (traditions not confined, as might be presumed, to a remote country village, but which from time to time have found utterance from the lips of educated people) will happily cease to exist; while the timid rustic, gradually freeing himself from the countless superstitions connected with many of our birds, will no longer pause with bated breath when started at night by the not very cheerful cry of the Screech-Owl. To be in the country and not to care to recognize or be able to discriminate between the musical notes of the Thrush, the plaintive song of the Blackbird, the carol of the Lark, or the exquisite lay of the Nightingale, is to me surprising; yet that such people exist is but too well known. Shakespeare and our earlier poets duly appreciated, however, the varying melodies of our feathered songsters, and have never been slow to accord to each its well-earned tribute of praise:—

“It was the nightingale, and not the lark,  
That pierced the fearful hollow of thine ear;  
Nightly she sings on yon pomegranate tree;  
Believe me, love, it was the nightingale.”—  
*Romeo and Juliet*, act iii. scene 5.

Again:—

“The busy larke, messenger of daye,  
Salueth in hire song the morwe gray;  
And fyry Phebus ryseth up so bright,  
That al the orient laugheth of the light.”—  
CHAUCER, *Knights Tale*.

Or:—

“Hark how the cheerefull birds do chaunt theyr laies,  
And carroll of loves praise.  
The merry larke hir mattins sings aloft,  
The thrush replyes, the mavis descant playes,  
The ouzell shrills, the ruddock warbles soft;  
So goodly all agree with sweet consent  
To this dayes merriment.”—  
SPENCER, *Epithalamion*, 1595.

The study of natural history reveals to us a wide field, pregnant with interest and pleasure. The geologist, who, from the various aspects of nature, attempts to form a conception of how this planet has been formed, and the naturalist, whose senses are keenly alive to the beauty and importance of the manifold living objects which meet his gaze on every side, are pursuing a course calculated to lead to the highest and happiest results. Even the humble cottager who decorates his windows with flowers, and the artisan who keeps and encourages his little birds to sing and to solace him, are imbued with tastes of a superior order, which, if properly cultivated, cannot fail to induce a greater intellectual development, and consequently an increase in happiness.