A PARABLE FOR PEACEMAKERS

By ALEXANDER F. SKUTCH

Here in this tropical valley live untold thousands of birds of several hundred distinct kinds. They dwell together in a degree of peace and harmony that is surprising when one considers their number and diversity of habits. Since a large proportion remain paired throughout the year and occupy continuously the little plot of ground in which they nest, disputes for the possession of mates and nesting-ground are far less frequent and violent than among northern birds, which in general are migratory and each spring must find mates and claim their nesting territory anew. Here predatory members of the avian world are rare, and an almost Utopian good-fellowship prevails among the local birds.

But there is one outstanding exception, one perpetual disturber of the harmony that prevails among two hundred kinds of birds. It is a small flycatcher, with dull brownish upper-plumage and a dingy yellow breast streaked with narrow dusky lines—altogether a bird neither beautiful nor distinguished in aspect, and one that would attract the eye of none but the enthusiastic bird-watcher armed with his field glasses. Early in the sunny month of February, this plainly clad little flycatcher arrives in our valley, and at once proclaims his presence by a variety of thin-toned, breezy whistles that seem to be the spontaneous outpouring of a carefree, easy-going, vagabond nature. In these airy, carefree utterances, one searches in vain for some trace of the earnestness of his neighbor and relative, the yellow-breasted chipping thrush, the depth of feeling of the brown thrush, or the retiring modesty of the blue grosbeak. They seem to be the self-revealing expression of a nature at once light-hearted and shallow, bound by no ties. Only the persistence of his repetition of the long-drawn see-ee-ee, and the high-pitched, rapid pea-de-de-de, might lead the perceptive student of avian nature to suspect that there lurked behind that voice a vein of stubborn pertinacity unexpected in a character so gay and breezy. Yet, if poetry flourished here amid the vast forests of southern Costa Rica, the local birds might seize upon and celebrate the voice of the striped flycatcher as the true harbinger of spring, as European poets have taken the voice of the cuckoo, and North Americans the songs of the bluebird and the robin.

Yet, to a certain section of the local bird population, I fear that the airy whistles of the striped flycatcher are anything but a message of gladness and good cheer. At this season, I fancy that I hear the yellow-breasted gray-capped flycatchers exclaiming to their mates in their shrill, earnest voices, and the chipmunk voices repeating in their soft, high tones: "Confound it! So that pest is back again!"

For in March, the month of gathering clouds and the first light evening showers, the gray-caps and the chipmunk voices, together with a host of other birds of the most diverse kinds and colors, begin to fashion their nests, that they may bring forth their young in the verdant, flowery period of April and May, when flourishes an abundance of insect life that lightens the task of filling hungry nestling mouths. But not so the striped flycatchers; instead of setting about to prepare their nests, they continue to perch idly in the treetops, now and again darting forth to snatch up passing insects, and continue their thin whistles, as breezy and care-
free as ever. Not for this pair the joyous occupation of choosing, male and female together, the site of the future nest, and the dark foliage of orange or lemon trees, or at the leafy end of some long-bough overhanging their domain. What their mutual consent with the grass beside a hive of stinging wasps that will fiercely punish any heavier, less aerial creature that shakes the waving branch. Not for the female striped flycatcher the pleasant task of building the nest, while her mate perchels close by, dropping a chesry note of encouragement each time she passes him with a straw in her bill. The striped flycatchers have other ends in view; they watch and whistle while other birds build their nests.

At length, after a week or two of unhurried labor, the gray-cap, or her cousin the chipchasey, has completed her nest, a commodious structure of dry straws and weed stems, with a high dome roof to shield the occupants from sun and rain, and a wide round doorway in the outer side. A few mornings later she lays the first of the white eggs streaked with brown spots, then two or three on the following days. Now is the time for the striped flycatchers to put in their master stroke of strategy. It is not without a purpose that they have waited all these weeks in the tops of neighboring trees, appearing so blithe and innocent, yet watching every move of their intended victims, and quite aware of the precise stage of the nesting operations of the particular gray-cap or chipchasey they have chosen as their dupes.

One fine morning, after the eggs have been laid in the domed nest, one of the striped pairs ventures closer than the owners will permit. Then one of the yellow-breasted owners, as likely as not the male, darts at the intruder, who at once prudently retires. Perhaps the female yellow-breast joins in the aerial chase. The longer and hotter the pursuit, the better for the purposes of the striped flycatchers. While all of the pair decays the owners away, the other enters the unguarded nest, takes a spotted egg in its beak, and drops it in to the ground. They have scored their first point in the unequal contest. Then they go off a while, nest collecting and calling, and at their convenience return for the second round. The yellow-breasted owners of the nest, excited and angry now, dart fiercely at them, deter- mining the striped flycatchers—provided skates and hawks and destructive boys fail to pass its way—so long as the striped fly- catchers keep their property in their stolen nest near by.

But the eggs and young of the home-robbers are preyed upon by the same enemies that take toll of the offspring of the home-builders. If they are lost, as may happen in from a quarter to a half of all the nests occupied by the striped flycatchers, they will not again extract their eggs to the structure that has been once pillaged. Instead, they demand another commodious dome nest of their dupes, the yellow-breasts, and will most likely throw out the new set of eggs that the female yellow-breast is incubating in her second structure near by, causing the unfortunate bird to build yet another. One might suppose that the unhappy pair would withdraw to some more distant locality to construct their later nests, instead of placing them within such easy reach of their persecutors and despoilers. But as a rule, this is not feasible; were they to go in search of another area suitable for their breeding operations, in all likelihood they would find it already in possession of another pair of their kind, who would resent their intrusion, and who most probably had also to contend with a pair of the pestiferous stripe-breasts.

So the long-suffering gray-ops and chip- chaseyes linger upon their own ground chosen many months before, but with consummate patience, until, at length, unhappily for them, but not more than usual bad luck, one is successful, and their bright-eyed fledglings, safely past the most critical period of their lives, fly from its shelter, and dance friskily hungrily for food in the neighboring trees. Then, when a pair of the yellow-breasted flycatchers selected by a pair of striped flycatchers as their victims, they not only lose their first nest but may lose their sub- sequent nests also. Consequently, their success depends to a large extent upon the success of their persecutors. The safety of the sec- ond nest belongs to those which are not bound up in this nest alone, but also in the earlier structure stolen from them by the striped flycatchers, and the risk of loss is doubled. Fortunately, the chipchasey and gray-capped flycatchers are hardly, pro- lific species, widespread in tropical America. The striped flycatcher, like the gray- cap (the wider-ranging of its victims), spreads over a vast territory stretching from Mexico to the northern districts of the Spanish Republic, but in most parts of its range is far less abundant than the two yellow- breasteed species whose nests it occupies. And these, despite the loss of so many nests to the striped thief, are in extensive regions of the American tropics among the most abundant and familiar of birds about the dooryards of men, in pastures with scattered trees, and along the shores of rivers and lakes. They avoid the heavy, unbroken forests where conditions are not favorable for their flycatching.
to drop a word of advice into the ear of the defenders. "Instead of dashing futilely in pursuit of your slippery assailants," I ventured to tell them, "keep your eyes on the prize instead of chasing the possum that's been chasing you."

But I fear that this would have been advice preferrd in vain. In all the great family of the American fitchewers, I have not, in years of study, discovered a single species of which the male takes a turn on the eggs. For a male fitchewer to sit in the nest would be as preposterous and unconventional as for a male woodpecker or a male barnswallow to fail to take his full share in warming the eggs and brooding the young. Being conservative by nature, doubtless the gray-caps would rather continue to risk the loss of their nests, than to change the age-old customs of their kind, just as those who have been born and raised upon the slopes of a volcano will linger there, under the constant menace of a disastrous eruption, rather than seek a safer haven in strange parts.

What, then, could the gray-capped flycatchers and the chipmuscineers do to put an end to this annually recurrent and often-repeated outrage? Here is a problem that I sometimes amused me upon my solitary walks. They might attempt to fight against their tormenters and attempt to make an end of them in an active war of extermination. But in this it is not likely that they would be successful; for the striped flycatchers, although smaller and weaker, are sufficiently swift and agile to elude their pursuers. Or they might become disciples of the Mahatma Gandhi, wage a passive rather than an active war, and refuse to build nests at all, seeing that so large a proportion of them are made for the use of others. But this Gandhian plan, also, could not be wholly successful; for the two species of yellow-breasted flycatchers, although the chief victims of the striped flycatchers, are by no means the only ones. The next-thieves occupy a considerable variety of covered or closed nests, including the nests of other birds as well as those of other species of the same family, the many globular structures of fibrous and downy materials built in the trees-tops by beavers, and have even been known to take possession of the nest-chamber carved by gartered trogons into the heart of a big, old white oak. Indeed, the situations that their litter of dead leaves is of service, for trogons do not line their nests with other materials. But there is no record of the striped flycatchers ever having made use of an open nest, such as those of thrushes, tanagers, sparrows, and the great majority of songbirds. Hence, were the yellow-breasted flycatchers to go on strike and refuse to build, the striped flycatchers would be deprived of the most important, but by no means the only, source of their nests. By such a course, the yellow-breasts would be more likely to accomplish race-suicide than the extermination of their enemies.

Or, taking the philanthropic—or should it be the philanthropic—point of view, the chipmuscineers and gray-caps might establish schools to teach the less gifted striped flycatchers how to build their nests. But in such a high-minded endeavor, the nuguries of success are not encouraging. Students of evolution have crystallized certain of their conclusions in the so-called "Law of Less." They have discovered that when once an organism, in the course of many generations of every variety, loses the faculty to create the need for the last, it is no longer constituted in its primitive form, but at best a substitute grade is accepted. Thus plants of a number of kinds, at home in arid regions, have little by little quite lost their leaves. What once might have been expected to in time find itself growing under humid conditions where the possession of broadly expanded leaves was of the very greatest importance, it now recovers its lost foliage in the original form, but at best, during the course of many generations, it may become commercially true of instances such as that of nest-building. As well attempt to help a snake spear forth again the legs that it has long since lost, for it spends a tangle maze over the loft of confined spaces and uses that of whole fitchewers once built.

All things considered, it is probably that the best course the victims of the striped flycatchers could take is that which they already follow. Indeed, it is not likely that the philosophic naturalist, in his comfortable armchair, will ever be able to understand conditions as they actually exist in this world of conflict and brute force. To love their enemies, to turn the other cheek in the figurative sense, is the course of action which will bring the yellow-breasted flycatchers the maximum of success in their endeavor to reproduce their kind, with the least amount of annoyance. And this, in effect, is what they actually do follow, with cries of wrath and unsubstantial complaints, no doubt, yet with no great resistance. I have never known a yellow-breasted flycatcher to try to settle accounts with the depoiler of its nest by vengefully throwing out the intruder's eggs—an act which, as we have seen, would only redound to its own further loss.

One lesson more may be drawn from this strange situation. We commonly assume that the strongest, the most perfectly equipped species, will be most successful in the struggle for existence. But this is by no means universally true. Some organisms are eminently successful by virtue of their very weaknesses. The striped flycatchers, with their grave deficiencies of instinct, lead it over the obviously better equipped yellow-breasted flycatchers, which to our eyes are a "noble" species. Seeds of a vine and a great tree germinate side by side in the dim light of the forest floor. The light-starved tree seedling grows with extreme slowness; the yellow-breasted flycatcher establishes itself and recovers lost foliage in the original form, but at best, during the course of many generations, it may become commercially true of instances such as that of nest-building. As well attempt to help a snake spear forth again the legs that it has long since lost, for it spends a tangled maze over the loft of confined spaces and uses that of whole fitchewers once built.

All things considered, it is probably that the best course the victims of the striped flycatchers could take is that which they already follow. Indeed, it is not likely that the philosophic naturalist, in his comfortable armchair, will ever be able to understand conditions as they actually exist in this world of conflict and brute force. To love their enemies, to turn the other cheek in the figurative sense, is the course of action which will bring the yellow-breasted flycatchers the maximum of success in their endeavor to reproduce their kind, with the least amount of annoyance. And this, in effect, is what they actually do follow, with cries of wrath and unsubstantial complaints, no doubt, yet with no great resistance. I have never known a yellow-breasted flycatcher to try to settle accounts with the depoiler of its nest by vengefully throwing out the intruder's eggs—an act which, as we have seen, would only redound to its own further loss.

One lesson more may be drawn from this strange situation. We commonly assume that the strongest, the most perfectly equipped species, will be most successful in the struggle for existence. But this is by no means universally true. Some organisms are eminently successful by virtue of their very weaknesses. The striped flycatchers, with their grave deficiencies of instinct, lead it over the obviously better equipped yellow-breasted flycatchers, which to our eyes are a "noble" species. Seeds of a vine and a great tree germinate side by side in the dim light of the forest floor. The light-starved tree seedling grows with extreme slowness; the yellow-breasted flycatcher establishes itself and recovers lost foliage in the original form, but at best, during the course of many generations, it may become commercially true of instances such as that of nest-building. As well attempt to help a snake spear forth again the legs that it has long since lost, for it spends a tangled maze over the loft of confined spaces and uses that of whole fitchewers once built.

All things considered, it is probably that the best course the victims of the striped flycatchers could take is that which they already follow. Indeed, it is not likely that the philosophic naturalist, in his comfortable armchair, will ever be able to understand conditions as they actually exist in this world of conflict and brute force. To love their enemies, to turn the other cheek in the figurative sense, is the course of action which will bring the yellow-breasted flycatchers the maximum of success in their endeavor to reproduce their kind, with the least amount of annoyance. And this, in effect, is what they actually do follow, with cries of wrath and unsubstantial complaints, no doubt, yet with no great resistance. I have never known a yellow-breasted flycatcher to try to settle accounts with the depoiler of its nest by vengefully throwing out the intruder's eggs—an act which, as we have seen, would only redound to its own further loss.

One lesson more may be drawn from this strange situation. We commonly assume that the strongest, the most perfectly equipped species, will be most successful in the struggle for existence. But this is by no means universally true. Some organisms are eminently successful by virtue of their very weaknesses. The striped flycatchers, with their grave deficiencies of instinct, lead it over the obviously better equipped yellow-breasted flycatchers, which to our eyes are a "noble" species. Seeds of a vine and a great tree germinate side by side in the dim light of the forest floor. The light-starved tree seedling grows with extreme slowness; the yellow-breasted flycatcher establishes itself and recovers lost foliage in the original form, but at best, during the course of many generations, it may become commercially true of instances such as that of nest-building. As well attempt to help a snake spear forth again the legs that it has long since lost, for it spends a tangled maze over the loft of confined spaces and uses that of whole fitchewers once built.

All things considered, it is probably that the best course the victims of the striped flycatchers could take is that which they already follow. Indeed, it is not likely that the philosophic naturalist, in his comfortable armchair, will ever be able to understand conditions as they actually exist in this world of conflict and brute force. To love their enemies, to turn the other cheek in the figurative sense, is the course of action which will bring the yellow-breasted flycatchers the maximum of success in their endeavor to reproduce their kind, with the least amount of annoyance. And this, in effect, is what they actually do follow, with cries of wrath and unsubstantial complaints, no doubt, yet with no great resistance. I have never known a yellow-breasted flycatcher to try to settle accounts with the depoiler of its nest by vengefully throwing out the intruder's eggs—an act which, as we have seen, would only redound to its own further loss.
cess; the necessity to form can, to complete itself, causes the failure of the seedling tree.

IV

The problem of the striped flycatcher is not confined to the bird world alone; it is of far broader significance. Striped flycatchers we have always with us. In the human society, they are the underprivileged, the disinterested, the inept. But the advantage of considering the problem as it occurs among birds is that we can do so dispassionately, and so reach truer conclusions. Human problems are so bound up with our fears, hopes, and prejudices that only with difficulty can we give them the detached, objective consideration essential for reaching solid conclusions about our social behavior.

In the tropical valley where I dwell, the welfare of two highly favored species of birds is intimately dependent upon that of a third species with a consequent deficiency which—without justification, as we see it—makes a claim upon their superior endowments. The security of their homes and families hangs upon the safety of the white-throated sparrow, from the point of view of the human moralist, is the most ignoble of all.

Is it otherwise among the other species? I think not. In a hundred ways, some direct, some subtle and tortuous, the welfare and happiness of the animal and man interdependently and the members of a society are dependent upon that of the poorest, the meanest, the most defective of the striped flycatchers among us. The diseases that breed in the slums and the shacks of the indigent find their victims at length in the comfortable homes of the prosperous. The views which lurk there creep into the well-ordered families of the substantial citizens. The carelessness created by idleness and destitution take toll of the good-will of the wealth more maturely accommodated. If the underprivileged class is sufficiently numerous, then the political and economic policies of the country are disordered, the entire moral atmosphere polluted. Longer suffering than their feathered counterparts, longer reigned by laws concocted in the whole ponderous superstructure of the social system, the human striped flycatchers do not assert their fundamental needs with such salutary regularity. But if their deficiencies become too acute, their sufferings too dire, they rise up with energy and wrath that shake the whole social order to its foundations and stir the very ends of the land.

But in ways still more subtle and immaterial, our happiness is influenced by even the least of the creatures around us. Rearing animals peculiarly affected by the proximity of suffering and distress. The sight of a crippled beggar, a misdirected child, a fly-tormented horse, a broken-winged bird, or even a mutilated butterfly, casts its shadow of melancholy large or small, over the sweet fields of the fairest morning. Those who know how to live well try to surround themselves with creatures in good health and fine spirits. The raw-boned horse and the weebbone dog are not found in the house of the peace-loving person.

The psychology of happiness has never been fully analyzed. How is it that great catastrophes, such as wars, plagues, and earthquakes, throw a cloud of unhappiness, proportioned to their magnitude, over persons far removed from actual contact with them, hardly affected even by their indirect consequences? By what mystic bonds of sympathy are the living and the dead, the distant, the near, that suffer, does this action at a distance occur? Perhaps, in some fashion we fail to understand the meaning, whatever of man or other living creatures, in nature how remote, exerts its proportioned influence upon our actions and attitudes. This prevents our happiness from attaining its fullest measure. Perhaps none will ever enjoy full, unfruited advantage until, O, when—in misery and pain quite vanish from the earth.

In smaller spheres of action, the dependence of our well-being upon that of the creatures around us is becoming increasingly evident to thoughtful men. The farmer who applies the doctrine of “cure or kill?” to his livestock, neverly thinks of it that the ability of his farm to yield the first step in the practical application of this philosophy. Only savage, insensitive natures possess the courage—generously instead of selfishly—to bear the pain, suffering, or misdirected animals. The same applies with added force to our own kind. Individuals, and a nation may be gauged by its effort to educate the underprivileged, that they may create for themselves the things they need for the completion of their lives, for their happiness. In all enlightened countries, the congenitally defective and inart—those true striped flycatchers that can never be taught to live up to our own natures—are supported by public charity or kept in appropriate institutions. These benefactions in favor of the underprivileged are a huge drain upon the resources of the community; but wise administrators and thoughtful citizens do not doubt the wisdom of making the sacrifices, just as the yellow-breasted flycatchers have learned, under Nature’s wise tutelage, to give up their nests to the striped-breasts without too much resistance and with no revengeful reprisals. Peace and harmony are bought only at the expense of giving the unenlightened their vital needs or by exterminating them. A few modern states, understanding the unwisdom of ending, have attempted the eradication of their striped-breast class. The wisdom and the practical ability of this policy remain to be proved.

V

Logically, it requires but a short step to apply to the family of nations the parable that points so plain a lesson in situations where selfishness and prejudice do not blind us to its truth. Yet in practice it is a step so long that only a few of the most far-sighted of statesmen have been able to take it. From the example of Nature, as we have learned from experience, to have learned that where a striped-breast class exists, peace and security can be attained by either of two methods: by its extinction or by yielding to its necessities with the best grace we are capable of assuming. The rule still holds when we turn from birds and men as individuals to those aggregations of men called nations. An underprivileged nation is one poor in natural resources, or with insufficient territory for its population, or with position and climate unfavorable to the welfare of the people entitle it to hold. Add to these that most dangerous of all: nations intellectually and temporally unfulfilled for self-sufficing, or misdirected animals. The same applies with added force to our own kind. Individuals, and a nation may be gauged by its effort to educate the underprivileged, that they may create for themselves the things they need for the completion of their lives, for their happiness. In all enlightened countries, the congenitally defective and inart—those true striped flycatchers that can never be taught to live up to our own natures—are supported by public charity or kept in appropriate institutions. These benefactions in favor of the underprivileged are a huge drain upon the resources of the community; but wise administrators and thoughtful citizens do not doubt the wisdom of making the sacrifices, just as the yellow-breasted flycatchers have learned, under Nature’s wise tutelage, to give up their nests to the striped-breasts without too much resistance and with no revengeful reprisals. Peace and harmony are bought only at the expense of giving the unenlightened their vital needs or by exterminating them. A few modern states, understanding the unwisdom of ending, have attempted the eradication of their striped-breast class. The wisdom and the practical ability of this policy remain to be proved. Peace will reign only when nations learn to make sacrifices to preserve it, to abide with good-humored patience inconveniences which arise from unavoidable international difficulties and to feel an obligation toward neighboring countries less fortunate than themselves—in short, when they learn to act as individuals or as nations.
even the highest sacrifice—for the public good. When has a nation spontaneously made a genuine sacrifice for the good of mankind? National honor is far inferior to the best individual honor, so-called "national honor" being a species of arrogant, swaggering pride, rather than a scrupulous care in the performance of obligations. No prudent man would care to do business with an individual or firm that could produce no better record of the fulfillment of contracts than the majority of nations have shown throughout history.

It is as imprudent for a country of great wealth, culture, and resources to allow itself to be surrounded by rude, impoverished neighbors, as for a rich man to live among starving paupers. The rich man, if wise and far-sighted, will increase his security, and probably also his wealth, by helping his neighbors to earn an adequate living. But there may come times when he is called upon to give bread to protect himself. But with certain nations, diseased by greed or intoxicated with delusions of their own grandeur, no degree of generosity, no amount of graceful yielding, can bring peace and conciliation. Such countries no longer struggle for the means of existence; they are content only with domination. What nation could have yielded to the demands of the Persia of Darius, the Macedonia of Alexander, or the France of Napoleon, and continued to exist? Carthage and Rome, as two states whose pride and ambition had no bounds, were well equipped to understand each other. Their statements knew that conciliation was impossible and no peace between them could be lasting, because neither could break any limit to its power. It is as though the striped flycatchers, not content with the single nest they must have or fail to reproduce their kind, believed that their noble qualities entitled them to every nest the yellow-breasted flycatchers could build; for the yellow-breasts there would be no middle course between destroying the striped flycatchers and being destroyed by them.

ALEXANDER F. SKUTCH—NATURALIST

Dr. Skutch was born in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1864. His formal education was obtained in private schools and at Johns Hopkins where he received his doctorate in botany in 1892. His own story follows:

During my undergraduate years, I spent the summers on Mt. Desert Island, Maine, studying the northern plant life, especially that of the seashore. During the summer of 1926, I enjoyed my first glimpse of the tropics, on a botanical expedition to the island of Jamaica. Here we stayed for six weeks in the Blue Mountains. After the return of the party, I settled down for six weeks more on a banana plantation to make a study of the anatomy of the banana leaf for the United Fruit Company—that became my doctorate dissertation.

In 1929 I went to Altamirano in western Panama as a fellowships from Hopkins to continue my studies of the banana at the research station of the United Fruit Company then maintained there. In 1936 I continued these studies at Tula, Honduras. Upon these visits to Central America, I became deeply interested in the birds. I found that the birds of this region had all been classified, but incredibly little was known about how they lived. I resolved to dedicate myself to this study. In 1922 I spent half a year on a banana plantation on the border between Guatemala and Honduras, making an independent study of the birds. I spent all the following year studying the birds of the Guatemalan highlands at elevations ranging from 7,000 to 10,000 feet and here I also made a collection of the plant. This led to a continuation from the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University to collect for them during the following year in the Guatemalan highlands.

In 1932 I came to Costa Rica, with plans to combine my studies of the birds with botanical collecting as a source of support. Hearning much about the Valley of El General, I resolved to go there. I found a pioneer community, with unpaved roads and no very outskirts of the principal village. The local Jugo Radio Station was most helpful; through him I acquired a cabin with a thatched roof in Rivas, where I lived for a year and a half—then the length of my intended visit. Later I spent two more sessions in natural history work in other parts of the valley.

At the beginning of 1940, I accepted the post of entomologist of the conservatory in the National Park of San José, but resigned after six months to go to Peru, Ecuador, and Columbia on a rubber survey party for the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Having come to look upon the Valley of El General as home, I returned in 1941 and bought a farm of fifty hectares (about 125 acres), so neatly carved from the forest that the pastures are now littered with logs and stumps. Here I have been living since then, doing substitutions farming—keeping sufficient horses and cattle for the work of the farm. All the time the farmland work—agriculture in the wet season—I devote to studying the wild-life and to writing.