

must conform; nor can everyone be translated to the stage of the world's great tragedy and find the voice, the verse, and the motions that befit a drama so tremendous. We are tested more searchingly than our grandfathers. Yet one feels that we might have done better. Is our photo press, with its screams and snarls, its garrulous frivolity and its inhuman triviality, is this the voice of the people? For here is vulgarity indeed, the mean response to awful happenings. We do not ask for pompous periods and gloomy smugness. But photographs of grinning nobodies, secret stories of the week, Mayfair gossip, dope scandals, and mere splutters of idle hate, what are these but the very form and fashion of vulgarity when taken as the comments of a mighty nation on the mightiest travail of mankind? Perhaps vulgarity is more an offense against the æsthetic than against moral values. Compared with the statesmen of the eighteenth century we have more righteous men. Our petty scandals can never achieve their unparalleled ideal of corruption; our little license is but a drop in the ocean of their lewdness. But those three-bottle men could rise to an occasion from their drinking, and fine issues touched them finely. Trevelyan's early history of Charles James Fox spares us nothing of the current depravity, yet leaves a sense of quality in public life which is lacking to-day. Giants of debauchery those statesmen often were, but still giants; and vulgarity is not of giants.

Vulgarity, then, has reversed its former meaning. It is not the many who are vulgar now. It is rather the pushing few, the would-be somebodies, the new arrivals, the latest shoots and creepers of parasitic plutocracy. Not vulgarity, but toleration of vulgarity, is the weakness of the multitude. After all, the great silent majority is far more

Victorian than we often realize, retaining both the vices and the virtues of that age. Yet the flash and tinsel of superficial swagger have their undoubted fascination; and before the insurgent democracy rises, axe in hand, to cut away the parasitic growths, there are many who find the national oak more lovely for its ruinous adornment. Aristocracy has usually the quality of dignity; a vigorous democracy has fire. But plutocracy, being the rule of little souls with big possessions, is the very hot-bed of vulgarity. For little souls must needs aspire to distinction, and distinction demands more than the aspiration of unimaginative strangers. When democracy comes into its own, it may at the worst be blind, brutish, and vindictive, but it is one of the giants and is never merely vulgar.

The Nation

### THE ARRIVAL OF 'BLACK-MAN'S WARBLER'

I AM become an Authority on Birds. It happened in this way.

The other day we heard the cuckoo in Hampshire. (The next morning the papers announced that the cuckoo had been heard in Devonshire — possibly a different one, but in no way superior to ours except in the matter of its press agent.) Well, everybody in the house said, 'Did you hear the cuckoo?' to everybody else, until I began to get rather tired of it; and, having told everybody several times that I *had* heard it, I tried to make the conversation more interesting. So, after my tenth 'Yes' I added quite casually: 'But I have n't heard the tufted pipit yet. It's funny why it should be so late this year.'

'Is that the same as the tree pipit?' said my hostess, who seemed to know more about birds than I had hoped.

'Oh, no,' I said confidently.

'What's the difference exactly?'

'Well, one is tufted,' I said, doing my best, 'and the other — er — climbs trees.'

'Oh, I see.'

'And of course the eggs are more speckled,' I added. gradually acquiring confidence.

'I often wish I knew more about birds,' she said regretfully. 'You must tell us something about them now we've got you here.'

And all this because of one miserable cuckoo!

'By all means,' I said, wondering how long it would take to get a book about birds down from London.

However, it was easier than I thought. We had tea in the garden that afternoon, and a bird of some kind struck up in the plane-tree.

'There, now,' said my hostess, 'what's that?'

I listened with my head on one side. The bird said it again.

'That's the lesser bunting,' I said hopefully.

'The lesser bunting,' said an earnest-looking girl; 'I shall always remember that.'

I hoped she would n't, but I could hardly say so. Fortunately, the bird lesser-bunted again, and I seized the opportunity of playing for safety.

'Or is it the Sardinian white-throat?'

I wondered. 'They have very much the same note during the breeding season. But, of course, the eggs are more speckled,' I added casually.

And so on for the rest of the evening. You see how easy it is.

However, the next afternoon a most unfortunate occurrence occurred. A real Bird Authority came to tea. As soon as the information leaked out I sent up a hasty prayer for bird-silence until we had got him safely out of the place; but it was not granted. Our

feathered songster in the plane-tree broke into his little piece.

'There,' said my hostess — 'there's that bird again.' She turned to me. 'What did you say it was?'

I hoped that the Authority would speak first, and that the others would then accept my assurance that they had misunderstood me the day before; but he was entangled at that moment in a watercress sandwich, the loose ends of which were still waiting to be tucked away.

I looked anxiously at the girl who had promised to remember, in case she wanted to say something, but she also was silent. Everybody was silent except that miserable bird.

Well, I had to have another go at it. 'Blackman's warbler,' I said firmly.

'Oh, yes,' said my hostess.

'Blackman's warbler; I shall always remember that,' lied the earnest-looking girl.

The Authority, who was free by this time, looked at me indignantly.

'Nonsense,' he said; 'it's the chiff-chaff.'

Everybody else looked at me reproachfully. I was about to say that 'Blackman's warbler' was the local name for the chiff-chaff in our part of Flint, when the Authority spoke again.

'The chiff-chaff,' he said to our hostess with an insufferable air of knowledge.

I was n't going to stand that.

'So I thought when I heard it first,' I said, giving him a gentle smile.

It was now the Authority's turn to get the reproachful looks.

'Are they very much alike?' my hostess asked me, much impressed.

'Very much. Blackman's warbler is often mistaken for the chiff-chaff, even by so-called experts' — and I turned to the Authority and added, 'Have another sandwich, won't you?' — 'and particularly so, of course, dur-

ing the breeding season. It is true that the eggs are more speckled, but ——'

'Bless my soul,' said the Authority, but it was easy to see that he was shaken, 'I should think I know a chiff-chaff when I hear one.'

'Ah, but do you know a Blackman's warbler? One does n't often hear them in this country. Now in Switzerland ——'

The bird said 'chiff-chaff' again with an almost indecent plainness of speech.

'There you are!' I said triumphantly. 'Listen,' and I held up a finger. 'You notice the difference? Obviously a Blackman's warbler.'

Everybody looked at the Authority. He was wondering how long it would take to get a book about birds down from London, and deciding that it could n't be done that afternoon. Meanwhile 'Blackman's warbler' sounded too much like the name of something to be repudiated. For all he had caught of our mumbled introduction I might have been Blackman myself.

'Possibly you're right,' he said reluctantly.

Another bird said 'chiff-chaff' from another tree, and I thought it wise to be generous. 'There,' I said, 'now that *was* a chiff-chaff.'

The earnest-looking girl remarked (silly creature) that it sounded just like the other one, but nobody took any notice of her. They were all busy admiring me.

Of course I must n't meet the Authority again, because you may be pretty sure that when he got back to his books he looked up Blackman's warbler and found that there was no such animal. But if you mix in the right society and only see the wrong people once it is really quite easy to be an authority on birds — or, I imagine, on anything else.

A. A. M.

## AMERICA'S LINKS WITH WESTMINSTER ABBEY

BY JAMES F. MUIRHEAD

'It seems as if the awful nature of the place presses down upon the soul, and hushes the beholder into noiseless reverence. We feel that we are surrounded by the congregated bones of the great men of past times, who have filled history with their deeds, and the earth with their renown.'

'The silence is articulate after all, and in worthy instances the preservation great.'

'I had from the first so profoundly and thoroughly naturalized myself to the place (Westminster Abbey), that it was like going back to a home of my youth.'

When Washington Irving, Henry James, and W. D. Howells wrote the above words, I dare say they would have rejected the idea that Americans had any need to be reminded of any special links with Westminster Abbey. They would have claimed practically all its associations as part of the priceless common heritage of the English-speaking races on both confines of the Atlantic, and would have regarded it as a work of supererogation to commend this great 'temple of silence and reconciliation' to the particular notice of their fellow countrymen. But even in a bequest of general scope there may be items that appeal specially to individual legatees; and it may well be interesting to dwell on a few of the more direct and exclusive ties of Westminster Abbey and the new England beyond the seas.

It is not without significance that one of the most important services ever rendered to the Abbey was the work of an American. No one to whom the history of the church has any meaning, can afford to ignore the Register of