

The Fish-Hawk

BY JOHN HALL WHEELLOCK



ON the large highway of the awful air that flows
Unbounded between sea and heaven, while twilight screened
The majestic distances, he moved and had repose;
On the huge wind of the Immensity he leaned
His steady body in long lapse of flight, and rose

Gradual, through broad gyres of ever-climbing rest,
Up the clear stair of the eternal sky; and stood
Throned on the summit! Slowly, with his widening breast,
Widened around him the enormous Solitude,
From the gray rim of ocean to the glowing west.

Headlands and capes forlorn of the far coast, the land
Rolling her barrens toward the south, he, from his throne
Upon the gigantic wind, beheld: he hung—he fanned
The abyss for mighty joy, to feel beneath him strown
Pale pastures of the sea, with heaven on either hand,

The world with all her winds and waters, earth and air,
Fields, folds, and moving clouds. The awful and adored
Arches and endless aisles of vacancy, the fair
Void of sheer heights and hollows hailed him as her lord
And lover in the highest, to whom all heaven lay bare!

Till from that tower of ecstasy, that baffled height,
Stooping, he sank; and slowly on the world's wide way
Walked, with great wing on wing, the merciless, proud Might,
Hunting the huddled and lone reaches for his prey
Down the dim shore—and faded in the crumbling light.

Slowly the dusk covered the land. Like a great hymn
The sound of moving winds and waters was; the sea
Whispered a benediction, and the west grew dim
Where evening lifted her clear candles quietly . . .
Heaven, crowded with stars, trembled from rim to rim.





THE POINT OF VIEW

LONG ago, in London, when neighborly curiosity had taken us prowling over the then deserted, and terribly untidy, house in Chelsea at whose windows Turner had sat to study his beloved Thames, the caretaker, vainly searching for some claim to pride in her down-at-heels charge, said: "It stands on a lot of land at the back." The delightfully roundabout way of expressing the fact that that tiny slice of a house could claim an unusually long, narrow garden in the rear has clung in my mind these many years.

ented Acres

To-day our summer bungalow, in this smiling township of hills and gentle valleys that takes its name from an English duke, "stands on a lot of land" in all directions: on rolling meadows that dip and fold and find their boundaries in hedges of full-grown trees. All ours, for the time being, for the mere sending to their owner of sundry narrow slips of paper that are not without honor in our own home town.

If a grim New England conscience holds us for its very own in ordinary times, it can, from the mere force of contrast, give us mad holiday whenever we are able to convince ourselves that we "are not in the least responsible." We, who have pursued with truly bitter ruthlessness the stray dandelion in our own home lawn, have lived here rejoicing through a riot of gold. Even the round, fuzzy seed-balls, filled with the saucy determination to spread dandelion propaganda far and wide the minute the wind blows, have shown beautiful in mass to our care-free eyes.

At last, to our really shocked minds, came the conviction: "We are going to miss the dandelions when they go." Miss them indeed! Nature rampant allows very little to be missed in her pageant of the months. Remember pleasantly is much more like her motto. The dandelion plants are long since buried beneath waving grasses, and tall reckless weeds, such as have caused endless sorrow in our strawberry-beds of old, wave triumphant, crowned by joyous bobolink or goldfinch.

Some day, we understand, an enterprising neighbor farmer is to cut and gather in our

hay, and we listen speculatively to the rattle and drone of the machines that are cutting other peoples' fields. Were these acres our very own we should have to worry about this particular crop, for it is actually ripening on the stalk. As it is we feast our eyes on the waving, shimmering grasses, marveling that they can take on such wonderful tones of palest yellow, bronze, and mauve, wondering vaguely, too, why we have never seen it so beautiful before, and then coming up short against the chuckling conviction that a conscientious devotion to full barns, and the remorseless routine of times and seasons, have never before permitted us this luxury of overripe meadows.

For luxury it surely is, this sitting for a season with folded hands watching the changing lights with no sharper reminder of the passing days than the gradual dying away of the bobolink's song, no graver anxiety than the safe launching of mother robin's third brood into the wide world.

There is no question but that idle acres make a bird paradise. They are our time-pieces, these feathered friends who so firmly believe themselves to be the true owners of our surrounding fields and woods. Like the church-bells of Europe of old they regulate our days, from the matins of the swallows on the ridge-pole to the vespers of the entire congregation that gathers on tree and bush and telegraph wire to watch the setting sun.

These same birds have taught us many a lesson in careless ease throughout the summer; for the dead trees, that every dictate of thrift and tidiness should have long since gathered into the capacious wood-shed, are their favorite resting-places; and the gaunt frame of the windmill, now dismantled, is their tower of babel. On that lofty vantage-point have assembled successive congresses of starlings and robins shrewdly estimating—and possibly parcelling out—the crop of choke-cherries in our hedge-rows, and planning to return when they shall be ripe.

The berries on the tangled woodbine over the deep piazza do not interest these hardy adventurers. These are reserved for the gentler bluebirds, who watch their slow ripening with an appraising eye. There is