

THE ÆSTHETIC VALUE OF BIRDS.

(Extracted from "*The Practical Value of Birds*," by JUNIUS HENDERSON.)

"The beautiful is as useful as the useful." —VICTOR HUGO.

Whatever tends to make the world better and happier; whatever ministers to the æsthetic longings of the human soul; whatever leads the thoughts of men and women for the moment from the sordid pursuit of gain or from the race for personal aggrandisement to beauty in any form; whatever entices tired and care-worn people for a time from the shop, or office, or store, or mine, or quarry, and brings them into closer contact with the beauty, grace and charm of things out-of-doors; is of direct material value to the human race, even though that value may not be measurable in yards, acres, tons, bushels, or dollars.

The partial outdoor life of the student of birds fits both mind and body for life's contests. Nothing so surely restores the soul, sickened with trouble, disappointment or defeat, as to get out into the fields and woods and watch our feathered friends, with their bright coats and graceful flight, to listen to their cheery songs and observe their interesting habits—their mating, their home-building, the rearing of their young, their comings and goings in the spring and autumn migrations.

Few civilised human beings doubt the value to humanity of music, poetry, and the painter's and sculptor's arts. Even the savages of the Stone Age gave expression to a love of beautiful things in their rude drawings on cavern walls, and the wild tribes of the earth have their music, perhaps every bit as good as the crude beginning from which our own wonderful modern music slowly evolved. Beauty of every sort is good for the human soul, and he who fails to respond to its call loses much of the richness of life.

"If eyes were made for seeing,

Then Beauty is its own excuse for being." —EMERSON.

Birds have been the inspiration of much that is fine in art, poetry, and song. The world would be impoverished, indeed, if it were all destroyed. So, too, we should lose much if the chastening songs of birds were all hushed and their plumages turned to ashes.

More and more every year are the American people turning to the study of birds as part of their recreation. Ornithology has become a delight to thousands. Amateurs may be seen everywhere with field-glasses, cameras and notebooks in hand, peering into the bushes and treetops in the hope that some new