

Many of us can remember, in one of the London parks, the man on whose arms, head and shoulders the sparrows used to perch in numbers. I once knew a lady who could put her hand beneath a sitting robin and feel the warm eggs, and another whom a brown owl allowed to take a similar liberty. These privileges are not vouchsafed to all. But anyone who can remain quiet—and does not keep a cat—can teach wild birds to trust them. And they will thus learn more of their individualities than from any cage-bound captive. A tamed bird in the bush is its natural self."

"THE STORY OF SAN MICHELE."

The wanton and cruel destruction of the birds on Capri Island, near Naples, had gone on for centuries, and yet the fact was fully known to people that could and should have taken action to stop it. Much of the world is selfish, much is complacent, and much does not care. Dr. Alexander Munthe's book, with its strong dramatic appeal, compelled attention, and the great Mussolini as a consequence enacted legislation and has changed Capri from a huge bird trap to a bird sanctuary. There are no half measures, dire punishment is the lot of any transgressors.

In a letter to Lord Howard of Penrith, Dr. Munthe writes:—"I have just received an official communique that, by order of Il Duce (Signor Mussolini) a special Decreto Legge—decree with the force of law—has been published in the *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, declaring the whole island of Capri a bird sanctuary, with severe punishment for killing any birds the whole year round. It is added in the communique that 'this provision will make a great impression in the animal-loving world, both in Italy and abroad.' So it will, Capri being known since the time of the Romans for the exceptionally large number of migratory birds coming here every spring to rest, or die, after their long flight across the Mediterranean. I could never have believed that my book should have created such a great sensation in Italy. In my letter of thanks to Mussolini, I have told him that 'he could not have trusted to more eloquent collaborators than to these thousands and thousands of missionaries of the sky that propaganda abroad for the sacred cause he personifies.' What it means to me you will realise better than most people. Indeed, it means the crowning success of my book. It means the saving of the lives every spring of thousands of exhausted migratory birds, many of them on their way to inaugurate summer in an English garden. If this is not literary success, I really do not know what literary success means."