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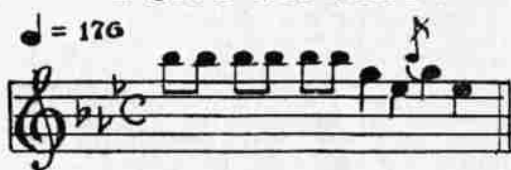
BIRDS ARE THE ORIGINATORS OF RAG TIME!

Henry Oldys, Biological Expert of the Department of Agriculture, Tells How Our Liveliest Melodies May Be Traced to the Throats of Warblers of the Field.

SCARLET TANAGER



SONG SPARROW



ORCHARD ORIOLE



CHEWINK



WOODTHRUSH



BALTIMORE ORIOLE



MEADOW LARK



American birds are the originators of American ragtime. This is the opinion of Henry Oldys, biological expert of the United States Department of Agriculture and lecturer for the Audubon societies throughout the country.

The correct way to state the proposition, however, Oldys says, is that American rag time, as well as most primitive songs, is taken from the trills, warbles and whistling of the birds. He declares that often he has heard the birds, particularly the Baltimore Oriole, sing snatches of some popular ragtime air.

Oldys cites illustrations from the music of the Negroes and tribes, and shows how the bird songs in a manner which shows a striking resemblance between them. And, as everyone knows, the principles of American rag time were taken from the music of the negroes and the American Indian. The peculiar syncopation of this type of music is found in the rudest kinds of folk songs, which are the closest to nature.

Oldys, if anyone, ought to know. Twenty years ago, for the sake of his health, for recreation, and because of his love of birds, he began to go out in the fields and woods and study their habits. As he learned more about the feathered creatures his interest grew until finally it became all absorbing.

He would sit up all night to watch for some peculiar habit of a bird. He has studied wild birds all over the United States and knows every phase of their lives. And with his study and the growing familiarity with their music came the idea that their songs could be translated into the notes, chords and scales of mankind.

Armed with a stop watch, paper and pencil, he set about to take down the songs. Sometimes it would take him weeks to get the correct notes for one bird, but he never gave up until he knew his translation was accurate, even to the eighth notes and rests. In this manner he has collected thousands of bird songs, some of which are heard but seldom.

Talk to Oldys about birds and his eye brightens, his whole manner becomes animated and before you realize it, Oldys has the floor and is launched into full swing on his favorite topic. He will clear up any little doubt about any bird if it rests in human knowledge to do so. He talks with equal facility upon the biological facts, concerning birds, their artistic and their economic value.

ALL BIRDS BUT SPARROWS HAVE ECONOMIC VALUE.

Yes, he says that birds have an economic value, that is, all but the English sparrow, whose very name is to him anathema. And he has the figures to prove his statements. And these grounds he is making a campaign through the country to save the wild birds, even the crow.

"The interest in birds is spreading," declares Oldys, "and I do not doubt but that in a few years we

will have every thinking citizen of the United States aroused to the necessity of preserving the songsters, at least.

"Mrs. Russell Sage recently aroused great interest by her dedication of an island off the coast of Louisiana to the birds. The island and its equipment cost her \$150,000. William McIlhenny's Avery Island, in the same place, is already famous, for there may be found a large percentage of the rapidly disappearing white herons, immune from hunters. It is from these birds that aligrettes are taken. The worst feature of the aligrette hunting is that the plumes must be taken from the mother birds while they are caring for their young, thus not only killing the old bird, but letting her brood starve to death or exposing it to the attacks of the wild animals that prey on birds' nests.

"Henry Ford, in Detroit, has set aside 4,000 acres for a bird park, which is of tremendous aid in beau-

tifying the city. Every device to attract birds is employed, Ford even going so far as to install an electric heater to keep a pond open in the winter time so that the birds may have fresh drinking water and a place to bathe.

"Pittsburg and Memphis have recently enacted legislation protecting birds. In foreign countries London and Berlin are in the forefront of this movement. Recently a German baron set aside a part of his estate for a bird park, and last year there were counted 500 different species. A significant thing about the baron's action was the freedom of his estates from the caterpillar plague which devastated a large section of Germany a few years ago. The birds ate every insect which crossed the baron's boundary line, while the country round was stripped of every living sign of vegetation.

"This idea ought especially to appeal to the cities in the Mississippi Valley, for they lie directly in the

path of the greatest annual migration, and they have the most splendid opportunity of any section of the United States to attract those birds to them.

"An example of the economic value of birds to the country was revealed not long ago by an examination by the Department of Agriculture chemists of the stomachs of a brood of young wrens. It was found that in a period of fourteen days in the nest they had eaten 6,000 pernicious insects, among which were 500 cut worms. And every farmer knows that the cut worm is one of his worst enemies, and the hardest with which to deal.

"It is very easy to attract wrens to the home. All that is necessary is to build a house for them, but care should be taken to make the entrance very small, or the English sparrows, or plundering animals, will destroy them.

"Attracting birds to the cities means an added means for the education of the children. The girls

love them, as everyone knows, and, strange thought it may seem, there is nothing more interesting to the average boy than birds. It is an axiom that every boy is a born aviator, but it is also true that every boy is a born naturalist, and once the latter instinct is awakened in him it will far overshadow the savagery.

"As our city populations grow, and the area of settled territory increases, the birds are losing their nesting places and consequently are decreasing in numbers proportionately. The best means of bringing them back is to restore the nesting sites and improve them with the artificial aids known to man.

"The extinction of the plume birds is looked upon by many Americans as none of our business as most of these birds live in foreign countries. It is very much of our business, however.

"The sale of the native birds' plumage is forbidden by law, but there are hundreds of plumes sold

in this country as importations from lands across the seas that really are taken from American birds. The purchaser does not know the difference. The recent prohibition by Congress of the importation of plumes will eliminate this practice to a large extent, however.

"But the world belongs to all of us. Mankind was made trustee of the earth, and given merely a life estate here. It is our duty to preserve it unimpaired, and if we fall we rob, for our own temporary benefit, those who come after us. And posterity will brand us as bandits and idiots, and rough, uncultured barbarians.

"There could be nothing more educational than moving pictures of birds. But if we kill them all we will not be able to get the pictures. We won't have any opportunity to study them and learn their habits, which are among the most fascinating of studies.

"For instance, how many people know that birds hold regular

dances, just the same as human beings? How many people know that they go through set forms of figure movements, much in the manner of the uncivilized tribes, and even the folk dances of cultured nations? They do.

"For example, take the albatross. They are famous dancers. Two birds will approach and bow. Then they will circle round one another and nod. Coming close, they fence with their bills. Then one tucks his bill under his wing and the other snaps his bill. The first bird then rises on his toes, lifts his bill in the air, and groans, while number two either keeps on snapping his bill or joins in the groaning. They both then bow and end the dance. Sometimes the affair is varied when one bird picks up a twig and offers it to the other. The second bird always declines, but finds another twig and offers that to his partner. This also is declined; the conventionalities adhered to, the dance is resumed.

"Sometimes if a man bows to an albatross, the bird will bow back, gravely, as if expecting the man to begin the dance. And the moving pictures taken of Lieutenant Scott's expedition into the Antarctic show a sailor dancing on the snow with a penguin.

"Within ten years, if we do not stop the ruthless slaughter now going on and offer the birds adequate protection, from fifteen to twenty-five of the most beautiful species will be exterminated. We can't hope to do anything through the women, for if plumes are fashionable they'll wear them.

"It is impossible to police the trade, for, in spite of the most stringent non-export laws, plumes will get into the trading centers, London, New York, Berlin and Paris. We must stop the importation, however, and world-wide action will be necessary.

"Public sentiment is the only way with which to do this. England has made nine attempts in the last five years to stop bird slaughter, and a bill now before Parliament appears to have a good chance of passing. Australia two years ago took action, and the recent United States tariff bill helped much. Germany is ready to pass the laws, but we have much work to do in Paris. Once we get the French allies with us we'll have the fight won.

"Aligrette clipping on the docks in United States ports is a drastic measure, but it is needed. If harsh steps were not taken we never would be able to make the women recognize the law, but by the time a hundred or so women have lost their plumes in a public manner the rest will think twice before spending their money on the Continent for articles which they cannot bring into the country. Then a large part of the European trade will be stopped and a source of income to the shop keepers stopped. They'll have to invent new styles which don't include feathers."