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August Birds in Cape Breton, 1893 From Frank Bolles' book From Blomidon to Smoky and Otliver Papers, to which are added line drawings by John H. Dick from Robie W. Tufts' Birds of Nova Scotia After traveling for two weeks through Cape Breton, on rail, steamboat, wagon, and my own legs, I felt sure that its distinctive tree was the spruce, its prevailing flower the eye-bright (*Euphrasia officinalis*), and its most ubiquitous bird the junco. Certainly three more cheerful, sturdy, and honest elements could not be woven into every-day life, and they seem to me to be emblematic of the island province and its people. The junco was everywhere, in sun? shine and in rain, at gray dawn and after dewy eve; in the spruces which watched the sea at Ingonish, and in the early twilight of inland Loch o' Law. He, she, and the infant juncos were at the roadside, in the fields, in the pastures, on the mountain top, and by the trout pool, and they were always busy, happy, and treating their neighbors as they liked to have their neighbors treat them, like brothers. These neighbors included song sparrows, white-throats, grass finches, yellow-rumped and black-and-white creeping warblers, black-capped and Hudsonian titmice, some of the thrush family, and occasionally pine siskins. Of the thrushes, the robin was by far the most numerous, noisy, and generally distributed. He was not, however, a bird of the lawn, the orchard, and the shade tree by the house door, but by preference a dweller in larch swamps and spruce thickets, secluded river beds and upland forests. He was the first bird in every lone grove or deep wood vista to give a note of alarm and warning to the neighborhood; and the first to respond to a cry of fear or pain uttered by any other bird. The hermit thrush was present in fair numbers, and blessed the woods and pastures with his anthem. I saw Swainson's and gray-cheeked thrushes, but the catbird and thrasher were apparently unknown, as was also the veery. The robin's conduct made me feel as though he were not one and the same with the common New England dooryard birds, but of a race as different from theirs as the Cape Breton Highlander's stock is from that of the matter-of-fact Scotch mechanic of the cities. The people round Loch Ainslie and between Cape Smoky and St. Anne's Bay speak and think Gaelic; and the robins in the Baddeck and Margaree woods speak and think a language of the forest and the glen, not of the lawn. One evening, as I lay on the sandy shore of Loch Ainslie, close to the mouth of Trout Brook, the spotted sandpipers of the lake told me a secret of their little lives which seemed well worth knowing. The evening air was full of rural music: the tinkle-tinkle of cowbells; the clatter of Sharp-tailed Sparrow tiny sheep-hoofs speeding over the wooden bridge; the complaining of geese, homeward bound, by the roadside; and the harsh, rattling cries of the kingfishers, which, half a dozen strong, persecuted the small fry of Trout Brook's limpid waters. A school of big trout could be seen lying sluggish at the bottom of the brook, and their little kinsfolk were jumping freely in all parts of the quiet water. Tiny flies hovered over the pools; and if they touched, or almost touched, the water, agile fish flung themselves into the air after them. Again and again I cast my feathered fly upon the ripples; but as no answering rise pleased my



expectant nerves, I tossed my rod aside, and drifted on towards evening with the stream of life and light and color flowing over me. The bell-cow came to the stream and drank, then passed slowly up the road homewards; a lamb, whimpering, followed his woolly parent to the fold; the geese, with outstretched necks and indignant heads, scolded all who passed them; and suddenly an eagle with mighty wing came sailing towards me across broad Ainslie's ripples, bound for his mountain loneliness. The sun had sunk below the western hills--hills from whose seaward side Prince Edward Island could be seen as a long, low haven for a sinking sun to rest upon; the sky was radiant with color, and the lake's slightly ruffled surface took the color and glorified it in countless moving lines of beauty. From the gold sky and over the gold water the black eagle came eastward, swiftly and with resistless flight. Nearer and nearer he came, until his image dwelt for a moment in the still stream, then vanished as he swept past above the bridge, and bore onward to the dark hills clad in their spruces and balsams. He seemed like the restless spirit of the day departing before the sweet presence of sleepy night. Below the bridge. Trout Brook runs a score of rods between sandy beaches to a bar which half cuts it off from the lake. Upon this bar sandpipers were gathering by twos and threes, until their numbers attracted my attention. I strolled slowly towards