running of a shrew mouse over the part affected; for it is supposed that a shrew mouse is of so baneful and deleterious a nature, that, wherever it creeps over a beast, be it horse, cow, or sheep, the suffering animal is afflicted with cruel anguish, and threatened with the loss of the use of the limb. Against this accident, to which they were continually liable, our prudent forefathers always kept a shrew ash at hand, which, when once medicated, would retain its virtue for ever. A shrew ash was made thus: Into the body of the tree a deep hole was bored with an auger, and a poor devoted shrew mouse was thrust in alive, and plugged in, no doubt, with several quaint incantations, long since forgotten.” And then the superstitious villagers thought that an animal injured by a shrew mouse could be healed by the touch of a branch of the shrew ash. The remedy was as imaginary as the evil it was intended to cure.

BIRDS.

“You winged choristers, that dwell in woods, and there maintain a quire,
Whose music doth all art excel, nought can we emulate, but admire;
You, living galleys of the air, that through the strongest tempest slide,
And, by your wanton flight, who dare the fury of the winds divide.
Praise Him, and in this harmony and love
Let your soft quire contend with that above.”

WE have now to speak of a great class of animals very different from those we last considered. After the “beasts of the field,” that were made subject to man, we come to the “fowls of the air,” or, as we generally call them, the great race of birds; and here again we are struck with the infinite variety of species, and admire the wisdom with which the great Creator has provided each with all that is necessary for its subsistence, from the greatest to the least. “Behold the fowls of the air,” the Saviour said to the men to whom He wished to teach reliance on the Divine care, “for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?” And thus it is, from the lordly eagle in his nest on the lofty crag to which no man can climb, from the great albatross flying over the sea a thousand miles from land, down to the little wren in its tiny nest in the coppice, or the pretty redbreast hopping across the snowy field in winter, the Lord provides for all. Two sparrows are sold for a farthing; but not one can fall without His knowledge.

The classes of birds are as various as those of the quadrupeds, and correspond with the latter in many particulars of disposition and habit. Thus the birds of prey, that live upon flesh, are fierce and cruel, like the cat tribe, living alone, and generally avoiding the neighbourhood of man and of beasts and birds. The gallinaceous birds, or those of the poultry tribe, on the other hand, are sociable and friendly, living together in harmony, and readily submitting to the control and protection of man. Some birds, like the amphibious animals, seem equally at home on land and in the water. Some, like the rabbit among quadrupeds, are remarkable for their rapid increase in number; others astonish us by their swiftness; while many, though strong on the wing, never care to leave the grove in which they have once established themselves. Others, guided by an unerring instinct, wing their way, at the approach of winter, to the warmer regions of the south, returning to their northern haunts when the cold season is past, and heralding by their coming the approach of genial spring and sunshine.

Some general features, however, all birds have in common. If we notice the shape of their bodies, we shall see that they are admirably adapted for quick movement. From the shape of the swimming birds the first ideas of the form of a ship have doubtless been taken, while the swallow careering through the air has no small resemblance to an arrow or bolt shot from a bow. The bones of all birds are hollow, and very light compared with the size of the bird, and the muscles of the wings are very large and strong; the senses, too, are highly