

looking object, with its awkward unwieldy body, quite bare of feathers, with patches of down on it ; and then its wide face and great goggle eyes blinking and staring at you. Whilst we were in our first moment of horror and disgust, another victim fluttered and fell down the wide chimney, but before it could reach the hot hearth Harry had rushed forward and seized it, so it was quite uninjured, and Jessie and I immediately took possession of the ugly little creature, making a great pet of it and rearing it most successfully. As soon as it came to years, or rather weeks, of discretion we gave it its liberty, but "Moses" always retained a grateful recollection of our care ; and if we called him at night when we saw other owls flitting about, he was sure to come to us and allow himself to be stroked and petted as of old. I used to like to bury my face in the soft feathers at the top of his head, and "Moses" would perch quietly on my finger whilst I did this, only his claws became very long and sharp, and as he held on very tight by them to my hand whilst I was petting him, I soon got tired of having wounds all over my fingers.

We had also a cage full of "Cardinals," most beautiful birds with bright scarlet feathers. In fact, they were scarlet all over, their legs and even their eyes included. They were very healthy and apparently very happy in a sort of hut at one end of the verandah, with plenty of room to fly about in, and, above all, a constant supply of water for their incessant baths ; whenever they wanted something to do they took a bath ! These birds do not belong to Jamaica, but are brought from South America, and so were our beautiful "Tropioles." Never have I heard such a clear sweet note as these last-named beauties possessed ; it had all the gladness of the skylark's, as well as the sweetness of the blackbird's. They were our only musical pets, and their song awakened us at daylight. They seemed very happy, and were quite tame, eating fruit out of our hands. Their plumage was magnificent, rich glossy black, and the most brilliant orange-coloured markings. Such bright fearless birds they were, about as large as a thrush, but of a much more graceful shape.

The last pet birds of which I am going to tell you were not at all successful. Outside our window grew a tree called the "sandbox ;" its foliage is something like a horse-chestnut, and it bears a pod of a round shape, made up of the most symmetrical divisions like the quarters of an orange ; when this pod is ripe it goes off like a small pistol, and scatters the seeds all about. In spite of this dis-

agreeable habit of exploding suddenly, the tree is very popular on account of its deep shade, and on one of its lowest boughs Jessie and I watched a beautiful pair of ruby humming-birds build their tiny nest. They made it of tufts of cotton and an occasional horsehair to keep all together, lining it with down from their own shining breasts. Presently, during the morning absence of the hen, we discerned two eggs, exactly like little white sugar-plums, and for some weeks we never wearied of seeing the cock flitting backwards and forwards with a drop of honey in his long slender beak, for his mate's refreshment. He did not alight whilst he fed her, but would flit like a winged jewel towards the nest, and just hover over her for a second ; we could see the dear patient little hen raise her bill, which he touched ; then with a little cry he would dart off again into the brilliant sunshine. I cannot find words to tell you how beautiful the sight was ; one felt as if it was fairy-land, for such exquisite and tiny creatures did not seem to belong to this great big rough world of ours. Presently, after nearly three weeks of watching, we saw the hen also very busy carrying honey, and then by gently moving a sheltering leaf we peeped in to see two little birds, each no bigger than a bee. Can you fancy a bee with a beak ? for that was exactly what they were like. We asked the opinion of several people as to whether it would be cruel to take the nest as soon as the young ones grew a little bigger, and at last we very carefully cut the twig it rested on, and transferred the branch to a cage, which we hung outside our window, under an awning. The parent birds saw it directly, and flew in and out of the open door, feeding their young ones just as regularly, till their feathers came and they looked quite full grown. The papa and mamma now deserted them, and Jessie and I shut the cage door and tried to induce them to feed themselves with honey out of the same flowers from which we had seen their parents bring them their incessant meals ; but no, they were either too lazy or too stupid. We then endeavoured to feed them ourselves with honey or with sugar and water, but we saw in a very few days that it would only end in their death. They drooped and lost the burnished look of their plumage, so we very reluctantly opened the cage door, and after a few preliminary flutters our lovely little captives darted away into the free air. We watched them hovering over a bough of honey-bearing blossoms, and feeding themselves quite cleverly, and then they were off like a glancing sunbeam, and we never saw them again !