

ly, deciding that I am harmless, he flits off in pursuit of a fly, and at intervals I catch snatches of his melody borne down on the breeze through the cool reaches of the bush. The fantail is, perhaps, even tamer than the tomtit, and one dainty little chap, emboldened by my silent attitude, perches for an instant on my hat brim. After this exhibition of friendship he follows me throughout my ramble in the bush, flitting from branch to branch and breaking out into a sweet ecstacy of notes every now and then. Whilst flying, his pretty fan is half-closed, but upon reaching a perch, he spreads it out to its full width. Presently he is led some distance away in pursuit of a gaily dancing fly, and discovering some fresh attraction, forgets to return.

The sun sinks gradually down in the west in a rich, warm glow, and deep, soft shadows are filling the gullies across the paddocks. High up in the sky flocks of starlings are making off for their favourite roosting grounds. Their bodies shine like burnished copper in the dying sunlight, and their shrill cries come

faintly down to my ears. Then the Californian quail make off into the thick bramble bushes with much chattering and calling up of stragglers. Here they flutter noisily about, quarrelling with one another as they pick their respective perches for the night. Through the deepening twilight, I note a dim form making silently for the bush; it is my friend the cock pheasant returning from the fields, still cautious with the memory of the past shooting season.

Now in turn the western heavens are painted in the full splendour of the departing day. Colours so beautiful and so transitory that an intense feeling of awe and reverence steals over one as they slowly fade from sight. The day is dying fast, and all Nature seems dropping off to sleep with it. Stars are peeping out of the dusky sky, the soft summer breeze that has gently caressed the fields all day has gone with the daylight, and I stroll leisurely along the narrow, winding track, richer in mind and body, and thoroughly convinced of the fitness of all things.

NOTE.—I have purposely refrained in this sketch from alluding to the nests of the birds I have described. Next month, however, I hope to give my readers the benefit of my observations of my little feathered friends while engaged in building their nests and bringing up their tiny broods.

