

A CANNIBAL GRACKLE.

The morning of May 30 in crossing the mall to the Smithsonian Institution, I noticed what appeared to be a fight between a Purple Grackle and an English sparrow, and stopped to see the outcome. The Grackle held the sparrow by wing or leg under its feet and pecked savagely at the head. The fluttering sparrow escaped two or three times, but was instantly recaptured. Presently the Grackle began swallowing the grewsome contents of its bill obtained from the still fluttering sparrow. I did not wait to see more, but at noon I sought the spot and found a dead female English sparrow with the back of the head laid bare to the skull. So far as I could see it was not injured elsewhere.

Is the Purple Grackle a bird of prey or was it a fight to the death only, the blackbird swallowing his billful merely to get rid of them? Was he after a meal or after revenge? As the little corpse was covered with ants when I found it I could not be sure whether the Grackle had eaten the brains or whether the ants had emptied the skull they now filled.

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AGNES CHASE.