



ERNESTO had been begging his parents to permit him to join the boys' camp. His mother refused to let him go as he was barely eight years old.

"Wait until you are ten," she said.

"Then you may go anywhere. Be a Boy Scout or a Pioneer if you care to."

To console him Ernesto's father promised to take him for a walk in the woods of Balintawak and San Francisco del Monte.

The following Saturday, before the sun was up, father and son, like good pals, found themselves in a large orchard of santol, mango, tamarind, duhat, and siniguelas. At first, both were silent, listening intently to the many sounds made by hundreds of birds over their heads and all about them.

"You will notice, Ernesto," his father began, "that the sounds made by birds are merry. Boys and girls sometimes begin the day with angry shouts and cries. But birds are joyful. They begin the day with happy thanksgiving songs."

"And they get up very early," joined Ernesto.

"Yes," his father agreed, "they get up early and go to work right away."

"What work do they do, Father?" Ernesto asked.

"Hunting for food for themselves and their young, building their homes, and teaching their little ones to fly and to find food for themselves when they are old enough."

Aunt Julia's True Stories

Ernesto's Excursion To The Woods

"They are just like people," Ernesto remarked as he followed the movement of a black bird hopping from one branch to another of a tall duhat tree but not flying away from it. The bird had a hood over his head. There were no feathers growing on this hood.

"What is that bird's name, Father?" Ernesto asked, pointing to the bird.

"That is the martines." The father answered. "It must have its nest in that tree."

"Does it always live in trees, Father?"

"Yes, whenever there are tall trees. Sometimes, however, they live in the eaves of churches and other tall buildings or in holes on high rocks called cliffs. Where do you think they would rather live?"

"Perhaps in the woods like these," Ernesto quickly answered.

"Now, think, and tell me why the martines and other birds like to live among trees."

"Because there is plenty of fruit to eat."

"Yes, go ahead. Think of another. Would you like to live in a place where

(Please turn to page 105)



there is no house besides yours, or where there are many houses?"

"I know. Perhaps because there are many playmates and a large place to play in."

"That's a fine guess. The martines and other birds like to go in flocks or groups. Now can you think of other reasons? What do city boys do with birds?"

"They shoot them or throw stones at them. In the woods, there are no cruel boys."

"Your answers are very good. I can think now of just one other reason. Since most birds eat insects, they live in the woods and fields where there are many insects."

"Does the martines eat insects, Father?"

"Yes, dear. It lives mostly on insects that destroy fruit. So you see that the martines, just like many other birds, is a friend of ours."

"Is it wrong, Father, to catch birds and eat them?"

"No, if they are used for food. But the martines is not commonly used for food. However, it is caught and kept in a cage because it can be taught to talk."

"Oh, wonderful!" cried Ernesto clapping his hands."

"Do you know, son, of another bird that can talk?"

"Yes, the parrot. I saw one in the movies. It could talk very clearly."

"I wish I could see a bird's nest," Ernesto thought aloud after a pause.

"Well, we might be able to see

one today. Some birds build their nests on the ground among tall grass. A nest is usually about as big as this," Ernesto's father said, forming a bowl with the palm of his hand. "It is made of grass, leaves, a few fine sticks, and some feathers. Some nests are very neatly made."

"Father, look at that beautiful yellow bird. What is it?" Ernesto interrupted.

"That is the kuliawan. I'll tell you about it while we eat our breakfast."

They sat down on the grass and opened their lunch basket.