

CBSE Class 11 English Core

Revision Notes

Hornbill Chapter – 5

The Laburnum Top

The Laburnum Top presents a reciprocating relationship between the laburnum tree and the goldfinch, a small bird with yellow feathers. The goldfinch arrives in her nest, built on the top of the laburnum tree, to feed her young ones.

The poem begins with the description of the laburnum ‘top’. On a September afternoon, the top of the tree stands silent and still. The leaves of the tree have started turning yellow and the seeds have already fallen. The scene depicts the season of autumn.

The silence of the tree is broken with the sudden arrival of the goldfinch. The bird arrives at the end of the branch with a chirrup. Her entry into the thickness of the branches is sleek, alert and abrupt just like that of a lizard. As she arrives, it seems as if a machine (that had been silent till then) has started up as the young ones of the goldfinch are filled with excitement and start creating noise on the arrival of their mother. They sing, chirp, twitter, and create commotion. With their chirrups and movements, the whole tree comes alive and it ‘trembles and thrills’. Thus, it becomes the engine of her family. She feeds the young ones and, after feeding them, flies to a branch-end, peeping out her dark-coloured striped face.

Finally, with a whistle-chirrup, she heads towards the vast sky leaving the tree once again with emptiness.