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SEDGE WARBLER.

OUR
IRISH SONG BIRDS.

BY
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To the dear Memory

OF

CHARLIE,

BELOVED CHILD—FRIEND—COMPANION,

WHO "FELL ON SLEEP,"

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2ND, 1884,

IN HIS FIFTEENTH YEAR,

This little Book is dedicated

BY

HIS FATHER.

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P R E F A C E.

FROM early childhood I have been a lover of birds. Their songs in particular seemed always charming, and led to innumerable questions about the songsters themselves, to which I often received somewhat unsatisfactory replies.

When I was a little boy, it was my great delight to go out with an older friend on what we called "an ornithological walk," and there note all the birds we could see and hear. Well do I remember creeping cautiously to discover the possessor of the reed-like song I so often heard in the bogs of Kilbarry, near the city of Waterford, and my astonishment when informed that it could proceed from no other than the sedge warbler, our "Irish nightingale"! How often, too, did I endeavour, and unsuccessfully, to imitate the curlew's whistle, with which my companion could, I think, deceive the birds themselves! When a book on the feathered tribes was placed in my hands, with what fearful joy did I turn over the leaves, almost too much agitated to note its contents!

Before I was ten years old, I had commenced a work of my own on my favourite pursuit, illustrated, too, by my own hand. Vividly still do I remember one of these illustrations, and the ease and speed with which it was executed. It was the drawing of the blackbird, always my favourite. First the outline was rapidly sketched; then a small circle for the eye was drawn; ink did the rest; and, in less than five minutes, the picture was complete.

It was not, however, my artistic powers alone that derived their first inspiration from the study of birds; but my earliest poem must be referred to the same source. It seems as if it were but a few years since that, driving on my uncle's car, the coachman, with one flick of his whip, brought down a pretty chaffinch from a bough over our heads, and suggested to me this little impromptu, which I imagined to be blank verse, and not unworthy of the theme:—

“ Pink ! short was thy life on earth,
Torn from thy native woods
By the cruel hand of man,
And numbered with the dead.”

Some few years after this, I became the fortunate possessor of the first two volumes of Yarrell's *British Birds*, and thus considerably extended my boyish knowledge of our feathered friends. I made a collection of

eggs, and endeavoured, as best I could, to identify the species mentioned in those admirable volumes, my only regret being that I did not possess the third.

For many years I had but little time or opportunity for the study of ornithology; but when I had settled down to a schoolmaster's arduous toil, I began again to seek solace and recreation in my old and still fondly remembered pursuits.

I formed a Field Club in the School, and enjoyed many a pleasant and health-giving ramble with some of the boys, our great ambition being to note as many species as possible when we went abroad.

In all these excursions a beloved child was with me; and gradually I extended them to a week or two in England, visiting Yorkshire, where, when on a visit to Rev. R. D. French, Vicar of Warter, we were privileged to make the acquaintance of Rev. F. O. Morris, the well-known author of *British Birds*. We also visited Bardon Hill, and many other favoured localities, such as Wymondham Park, near East Dereham, Horsey Broad, Aldborough, and other places, where we heard the nightingale and other warblers, some of them for the first time.

Then we took a bolder flight, and crossed to Holland and Germany, coming home delighted with the Icterine and great reed warblers, and hoping soon to hear them again.

By this time, too, we had formed a museum of more than 150 stuffed birds, contributed by friends in all parts of the country, and I began to give familiar lectures, with the birds as illustrations; these were kindly received, and I visited with my boy and my birds many towns in Ireland, and lectured before most of the Young Men's and Temperance Societies of Dublin.

All this is now past. That beloved child, the companion of all my little wanderings, is no longer with me, and I cannot now, alone, go over the ground I traversed so often in his dear company. Feeling, therefore, no longer able to continue my efforts thus to interest and instruct the young, I thought that I would publish my notes with some additions, as an humble tribute of undying love and regret.

I cannot flatter myself that anything original will be found in these pages. I have taken freely from all the sources at my command whatever I thought would tend to inspire my readers with the wish to observe and study for themselves. Mine is not a scientific book, and yet I trust there is nothing unscientific in it.

My great aim has been to enable, as far as possible, my readers to identify the birds for themselves; and I regret very much that the cost of illustrations placed them beyond my reach. There are many other books, however, from which this deficiency can be supplied.

To those who live near a good library I would advise

the perusal of Dresser's *Birds of Europe*; and I would recommend all lovers of birds to procure Professors Newton and Saunders' edition of Yarrell's *British Birds*, the edition of White's *Selborne* by Buckland, Harting's *Summer Migrants*, Seeböhm's *British Birds*—an invaluable and most suggestive book—and Dixon's *Rural Bird Life*, a fresh and charming work. *British Birds in their Haunts*, by the late Rev. C. A. Johns, will also well repay the reader. Other references will be found in the Appendix.

I cannot conclude without expressing my sincere gratitude to several friends who aided me in preparing my little book, more especially to Thomas French, Esq., Assistant Librarian, Trinity College, who gave me every facility in consulting such books as Dresser, Gould, and other valuable works; to the Rev. Professor Goodman, M.A., for his valuable list of the Irish names of birds; to the Rev. W. W. Flemyng, M.A., Rector of Clonegam, for his help with the proofs; to Miss Massy, a skilled and most accurate observer, to whom I am indebted for much interesting information; and, most of all, to A. G. More, Esq., F.L.S., our most accomplished ornithologist, to whose kindness and courtesy, and unfailing readiness to place his wide experience and unrivalled sources of information at my disposal, I owe more than I can ever repay.

ELM PARK,

February 2nd, 1886.

OUR IRISH SONG BIRDS.

INTRODUCTION.

THERE are two books of God—He Himself is the author of both—the book of Nature and the book of Revelation. It is with the former of these my concern lies in these simple pages. And it has always seemed to me that it is most important that the attention of the young in particular should be directed to God's wonders in the heavens above, where night after night the solemn and glittering pageant, so little heeded in its silent progress, passes across the sky—to His creatures in earth and sea, full of beauty, full of instruction, as are all His works—"sought out by all them that take pleasure therein"—pronounced by their Divine Creator Himself to be "very good."

Our children should be taught to study God's works in the open fields, or on the breezy hill—to admire His wisdom and goodness equally visible in the least as in the greatest of His creatures, and thus acquire habits of observation and research which may prove valuable and pleasurable in the extreme.

Very forcible and very admirable are the words of Charles Kingsley on this point, in his Lecture on the Study of

Natural History, delivered to the officers of the Royal Artillery, Woolwich: "A laboratory for chemical experiments is a good thing as far as it goes; but I would much prefer to the laboratory a Naturalists' Field Club, certain that the boys would get more of sound inductive habits of mind, as well as more health, manliness, and cheerfulness, amid scenes to remember which will be a joy for ever, than they ever can by bending over retorts and crucibles amid smells even to remember which is a pain for ever."

In another of his works the same most interesting writer suggests the following questions with regard to every stone, plant, or bird we may meet: "What's your name?" "How do you come to be where I find you?" "By what means?" "From where?" "Now you are here, how do you manage to live, if this is not your original abode?" And so on.

Questions such as these will furnish profitable and delightful occupation for many an idle hour, whilst all the time the questioner is learning invaluable lessons of observation, and reflection, and industry, and patience.

It has been well said that the world of fishes is a world of silence; but that the world of birds is the world of light and song. In the morning they hail the rising sun, in the evening the heathcock stands on tiptoe on the branch of the highest willow to catch the last sight of him, as he sinks into his western grave.

Of all living things birds alone possess voices musical in themselves, and most agreeable to man; they enliven our woods and groves, as well as the mountain side and the ocean shore; nay, even in the close city street the poor sparrow's chirp has a friendly sound.

Charles Waterton was perhaps the most famous of all

who loved and sheltered birds. Walton Hall, where he settled down after his world-wide wanderings, was admirably fitted by nature, as well as partly by its owner, for his purpose. It had all the varieties of soil which could entice different animals, and a lake of twenty-five acres. Around the park the owner built a wall eight feet high, at a cost of £9,000, which he saved from the wine he never drank.

There was a swamp for peewits, a heronry of forty nests, beyond it a rise, upon which at one time 5,000 woodpigeons were counted. There was a grotto, in which the owner used to sit to talk to the robins that hopped upon his shoes; and in severe weather, boiled potatoes were placed on the islands for the jackdaws. No shot was ever fired; there were no dogs, and no keepers. Happy the birds that found shelter there; they fed on their kind benefactor's bounty whilst they lived, and many of them, stuffed by his own hands, adorned his museum when they died.

The varying terms used for flocks of birds seem to me highly interesting. Thus we have:—A covey of partridges; a wisp of snipe; a flight of doves; a siege of herons; a pack of grouse; a stand of plovers; a clattering of choughs; a mide of pheasants; a bevy of quails; a muster of peacocks; a building of rooks; a plump of wild fowl; a cast of hawks; a flock of geese; and a watch of nightingales. This last hath a pleasant sound.

It is thought that the most remarkable note uttered by any bird is that of the Campanero, or Bell Bird—*Cotinga carunculata*—found in the wilds of South America.

Bishop Stanley tells us that "it may be heard at a distance of three miles, tolling like a distant church bell, when every other bird has ceased to sing in the noontide heat of

the day. It tolls, then pauses, and, after a silent interval' is heard again.

"Two travelling missionaries tell us that in the solitude of the wilderness they heard the Bell Bird for the first time.

"'Listen,' said my companion; 'did you not hear a church bell?'

"'We paused; it tolled again, like the low and solemn sound of a passing bell. When all was silent, it fell at intervals upon the ear, heavy and slow, like a death toll; then all was silent, and then again the Bell Bird's note was borne upon the wind. We never seemed to approach it; but that deep, melancholy, dreamlike sound still continued at times to haunt us, like an omen of evil.'"

Mr. Gosse, in his very interesting *Romance of Natural History*, mentions another strange bird voice. He says:—

"In the forests of Lower Canada, and the New England States, I have often heard in spring a mysterious sound, of which, to this day, I know not the author. Soon after night sets in, a metallic sound is heard from the most sombre forest swamps, where the spruce and the hemlock give a peculiar density to the woods, known as the 'black growth.' The sound comes up clear and regular, like the measured tinkle of a cow bell, or gentle strokes on a piece of metal, or the action of a file upon a saw. It goes on, with intervals of interruption, throughout the hours of darkness. People attribute it to a bird which they call the Whetsaw; but nobody pretends to have seen it, so that this can only be considered a conjecture, though a highly probable one. The monotony and pertinacity of this tone had a strange charm for me, increased doubtless by the mystery that hung over it. Night after night it would be heard in

the same spot, invariably the most sombre and gloomy recesses of the black-timbered forest.

"I occasionally watched for it, resorting to the woods before sunset, and waiting till darkness; but, strange to say, it refused to perform under such conditions. The shy and recluse bird, if bird it is, was doubtless aware of the intrusion, and on its guard.

"I was riding late at night, and just at midnight came to a very lonely part of the wood, where the black forest rose on each side. Everything was profoundly still; and the measured tramp of my horse's feet on the frozen road was felt as a relief to the deep and oppressive silence; when suddenly, from the sombre woods, rose the clear, metallic tinkle of the Whetsaw. The sound, all unexpected as it was, was very striking; and though it was bitterly cold, I drew up for some time to listen to it. In the darkness and silence of the hour, that regularly measured sound, proceeding, too, from so gloomy a spot, had an effect on my mind, solemn and unearthly, yet not unmingled with pleasure."

At the other side of the Channel the hooting of the brown or tawny owl has a weird and yet attractive effect. I have stood for a long time to listen to it, as it flitted backwards and forwards from the Baron Hill Woods, near Beaumaris, with a deep "Ho—ho, Ho-ho-o-o"—this last with a peculiar tremulous sound. In Ireland, however, we hear only the screech of the barn owl, or the "hack, hack" of the long-eared owl at night, the voice of the night jar being certainly the most remarkable of all Irish birds.

I do not think that anyone hearing this curious note for the first time, could believe that it proceeded from a bird; and it is equally difficult to imagine that the grasshopper

warbler's song can proceed from anything but an insect. This latter song I have heard but once ; but it is compared to the "running out of a slick-wheel," whatever that may be ; to me it seemed more like the winding up of a small fishing-wheel.

Birds of prey are, we know, deficient in song, as they are in nest-making. It is said that the woodchat shrike is an exception to this rule ; I have never, however, had an opportunity of judging from personal experience.

Some birds really possessed of pleasant voices and musical taste get but little credit for their vocal efforts. Of these, perhaps, the swallow is the most noted instance ; on the other hand, the song of the canary and of the chaffinch have been, in my opinion, far too highly esteemed.

In Ireland we know but little of the presence of the "three feathered kings of song"—the nightingale, the blackcap, and the garden warbler. These birds are common in England, and of late the blackcap has been frequently observed in our own Green Isle ; yet this is but in a few localities, and even in these favoured spots he does not seem to sing as he does in England. I first heard this remarked by my friend, Mr. A. G. More, and my own experience confirms it ; for the bird, as far as I have heard him here, only emits a few rich notes of his delightful song, but does not pause and warble as I have heard him in the sister island.

I have never been fortunate enough to hear or see the garden warbler, the third member of this most tuneful triad ; but I hope that I may yet have an opportunity of making his acquaintance.

The song of the tree pipit is a simple, yet a very

attractive one; and the redstart, too, has a pleasing ditty, which we are seldom privileged to hear in Ireland.

On the whole, therefore, our island is much poorer in singing birds than England; nor have our thrushes and blackbirds the opportunity afforded them of improving themselves and enriching their own vocal treasury from the songs of the nightingale and blackcap, &c., of which we find their English brethren making good use.

Since childhood I have been in the habit of noting the bird voices around me, and, looking back over the long years, three of these always recur to my memory as the happiest and most remarkable of all my experiences. The first was when, a good many years ago, I heard for the first time the blackcap sing near the Suspension Bridge, Clifton. The plaintive and lovely trills with which the song concluded are still in my ears. The second was when with my boy on the Norfolk Broads, at Horsey, near Martham, we heard the voices of countless reed warblers, like tiny bells, as they rejoiced in the summer breeze. Every sedge bed seemed full of lowly life, whilst overhead the emblem of death ever and anon was floating in the shape of a large marsh harrier, looking for his prey. The third was when, with that same beloved companion, I heard at the Hague the icterine warbler sing from the lofty trees, whilst the great reed warbler answered from below with a strain hardly inferior to that of the great musician aloft. All these are sweet and tender memories of times and seasons that cannot come again.

Very many estimates have been made of the comparative merits of our native songsters. My favourite is the blackbird, and next to him I would place the linnet; others prefer the song thrush or the skylark. The pretty gold-

finch charms many hearts with his lovely plumage and his sprightly song, whilst the robin is certainly our most plaintive, and, at the same time, most varied singer. It is a real pleasure to hear the lively twittering swallow; and the artless songs of the gentle willow warbler and the unobtrusive hedge sparrow are charged with many affecting memories to me.

The close observer will note many variations in the songs of birds of the same species; some are much superior to their brethren. Sometimes we hear great performers, especially amongst the song thrushes; and year after year we can see that the blackbird, as he grows older, is making improvements in his song. I can often detect reminiscences of the whitethroat's warning cry in the skylark's song, and the sedge warbler's is a *réchauffé* of the performances of many of his neighbours. The plaintive notes of the wood-pigeon have been supposed to have a resemblance to the words, "Take *two* cows, Davy." And *they say* that a thief named David, who was bent upon stealing *one*, hearing this apparently approving voice from a lofty tree—"Take *two* cows, Davy"—replied, "Well, indeed, mister, I'll take your advice," and acted accordingly.

One gentleman of my acquaintance, speaking of this curious adaptation of these well-known notes, said, "The bird always ends with 'Take two cows.'" Another was of opinion that the closing phrase was always "take." I should be glad to hear the opinion of my readers on this interesting point: my own is already made up.

Although the titmice and some other birds can hardly be said to sing, still many of their call-notes are extremely pleasing, and serve greatly to enliven our woods and gardens. For these reasons I have thought it well to include them in

my list, together with the cuckoo, swallow, and a few others. In point of fact, it is not always easy to decide what is a song bird, and what is not. Perhaps the most satisfactory definition of a song is, first, certain notes peculiar to the male bird, and secondly, uttered by him, for the most part, during the breeding season.

Of course, there are many exceptions; still the general rules seem to be much as I have stated. The period of singing is mainly the spring, although some birds may be heard at intervals throughout the year. The month of May is pre-eminently the month of song. In June the warblers begin to fall off; in July there are but few singers; whilst August is the mutest month in the year. Alas! it is in these months alone that I can take my much-needed vacation.

There are many points of interest to be investigated with regard to the songs of birds: as, for instance, what birds sing at night, and what birds sing whilst flying; which are the earliest risers, and which the latest to take rest. In order to determine one of these problems, I kept ward and watch with my dear friend, Mr. Samuel Bewley, J.P., on the top of his house at Sandford Hill, on the morning of Tuesday, May 31st, 1881. At 1.45 a.m., we took our places on the slope of the roof, and looked and listened with all our eyes and ears.

The result was as follows. We noted the exact time at which we heard the song or saw the bird.

	A.M.		A.M.
1. Skylark . . .	2.10	7. Gold Crest . . .	3.0
2. Song Thrush . . .	2.17	8. Rook . . .	3.7
3. Blackbird . . .	2.19	9. Great Tit . . .	3.15
4. Redbreast . . .	2.30	10. Chaffinch . . .	3.17
5. Willow Warbler . . .	2.43	11. Missel Thrush . . .	3.20
6. Wren . . .	2.50	12. Magpie . . .	3.22

Here we drew the line, and adjourned to a sumptuous breakfast which awaited us.

It was remarkable that no sparrows or other small birds were heard or seen on this occasion. Sparrows, I believe, talk often until nearly 5 a.m. before they issue forth, waiting, doubtless, as Beau Brummel used to do, "until the world is aired."

The cornerakes, who had been "rasping" all round the house from about 7 p.m. to 2 a.m., sank down sleepy and abashed as the lark began his morning song.

Now, in this case, the old proverb, "Up with the lark," was verified, and there was something very striking in the ascent of the bird to greet the first blush of dawn in the east, whilst yet Arcturus, and Wega, and Altair were shining brightly in the sky.

"Upsprings the lark,
Shrill-voiced and loud, the messenger of morn ;
Ere yet the shadows fly, he, mounted, sings,
Amid the dawning clouds, and from their haunts
Calls up the tuneful nations."

I thought, as I listened, that at that hour, all through the length and breadth of the land, these sweet and innocent voices were praising God, and I could fancy that the ear of the great Creator was bent down to listen with pleasure to those glad hymns of praise. Were they the only songs of praise from poor unhappy Ireland that pierced the skies, in that serene and fragrant "morning watch," which I shall long remember ?

We are told that birds spoke an intelligible language in Ovid's time. Lope de Vega makes one of his characters understand this, and Lord Holland states that there was a gentleman who could tell from the song where the nest

was, whether young ones or eggs were in it, and how many of each!!

Now here a difficulty occurs at once. If you could understand one bird, would you understand all? Does the hiding hawk, when he hears the sparrows talking, learn where they are to meet in the evening, and say to himself, "I shall be there for dinner too"? Does the roving cuckoo hear that the hedge sparrow's nest is almost ready, and say, "How fortunate! for my egg must soon be laid"? If I am acquainted with the language of the tomtit, shall I also be able to understand "sparrowese" or "thrushian"?

It is probable that "bird language is an elliptical one, in which little is said, but much is understood." And again, notes which seem to us to be identical may have delicate shades of meaning inappreciable by human ears.

Eagles, hawks, and other birds of prey, have shrill and piercing voices. The raven's solemn note makes the woods resound.

The crow when making love borders on the ridiculous, and the rook's attempt at a song, although occasionally made, is by no means a success.

Owls, it has been said, hoot musically in *b flat*. The cuckoo always sings in a minor third.

The woodpecker laughs loudly; so does the laughing jackass—feathered and *unfeathered*.

The voice of the goose is trumpet-like and clanging; the hiss of the gander is full of menace; his bite is decidedly painful.

The turkey struts and gobbles before his lady love in a highly diverting manner; to an adversary his language seems impertinent and ungentlemanlike in the extreme.

The peacock, like nearly all gaudy birds, hath a shocking squall.

And here I may remark that nearly all the great songsters have a sober plumage. It is so with the nightingale, the blackcap, the skylark, the thrush, and others; whilst on the other hand, the gaudy birds are usually without song.

The females of birds, too, but seldom venture on a song (unless the hen skylark be an exception), and they are plainer than the males; in both these respects differing widely from the females of the human race.

The loud cries of birds at night are evidently meant to keep them together. The lights of our great cities often attract those aerial wanderers, and high up in the air the cries of wild geese or swans, or the sharp whistle of the widgeon, may be heard by the dwellers below.

“The red-throated diver flies at a great height, and may be heard uttering a distressing cry, like that of a young child in great agony; this is at first faint, then grows louder, and dies away in the distance; soon another is heard, and so until day, when the birds betake themselves to the water again.”—BISHOP STANLEY.

The question has often been asked, “Why are birds furnished with voices such as these?” and the answer has thus been given: “Beasts on the earth can discern their companions by sight and smell, nor can they in a few moments wander far apart from one another. But birds are continually diverging from one another, and even when near, many are so small that they are hidden by the foliage of the trees amongst which they rest. Thus a pair of bullfinches were closely observed, as they flitted along a green lane, crossing from side to side, the cock slightly in advance of the hen, and it was remarked that the call-note was never heard when the birds were less than fifteen or twenty yards apart.”

We are told also that the song of the lark travels further than the bellowing of a bull, and that it has been heard above the roar and rattle of a London street, as, for once at least forsaking the well-known country haunts, it hung poised in air above the great metropolis.

The period of incubation is the time for music; the missel thrush forming a remarkable exception to the general rule in this respect; and one of the great reasons why the gift of song has been bestowed upon the male, is doubtless that he may cheer and enliven the female during her lonely task; but it is also a note of security, for it suddenly ceases if danger be near, and then the poor female bird cowers low in mute terror, to shield herself and her only treasure from the foe.

Have pity, then, compassionate Christian, and pass quietly on, nor make desolate that sweet and pleasant home, and of thy charity, in the winter time, spare those innocent creatures a crumb of bread and a drop of water, for this last they need, as much as food and shelter, when the ground is fast bound with frost.

Some time ago we were visited in Dublin by an individual who described himself as "The Bird-man," and who gave vocal imitations of many of our well-known songsters. I thought that some of his imitations were really admirable, in particular the songs of the chaffinch, the canary, the thrush, and the nightingale, whilst his "conversation between two sparrows" elicited well-deserved laughter and applause. He thus accounted for his skill. His father, who was in the habit of rearing wild birds, had once gone from home, leaving a bag of rice for his children, and a quantity of bird-seed for his feathered friends. By some mistake the rice was given to the birds, and the bird-seed

to the children. The consequence was that, on his return, he found all his birds dead, and his children singing like piping bullfinches!!

No doubt, some birds may be imitated with tolerable success; there are others which defy all our powers. I do not believe that the man has ever yet lived who could imitate satisfactorily the song of the corn-bunting, and there are many others equally impracticable.

A great deal has been written about the protective colours of birds, and in many of our feathered friends this is most remarkable. For instance, it is often almost impossible to discern shore birds like the ringed plover and dunlin, until, startled by our approach, they take wing, soon settling down again to become as invisible as before.

The ptarmigan and the snow bunting inhabit the Arctic regions in the summer; but the ptarmigan is white in winter, and the snow bunting is white in summer. Now, why is this? The ptarmigan remaining in far northern regions "so closely resembles surrounding objects that a traveller may often wander through a flock without knowing it;" but the snow bunting, coming south to winter, exchanges its snowy plumage for a brown or tawny hue, which is its great safeguard when straying along the sandy shore or country roads of the United Kingdom.

This interesting subject has been very fully and very ably discussed by Mr. Charles Dixon, in his suggestive work, "Rural Bird Life," and also in his Introduction to Vol. ii. of Mr. Seebohm's "British Birds." In this latter work he devotes his attention mainly to the protective colour of eggs. I feel sure that my readers will be interested by a brief summary of the results at which he has arrived. He divides this peculiar instinct into six divisions.

Firstly, Colour.—Example : The pheasant. When the female is obliged to leave the nest for food, she covers her eggs with pieces of vegetation strictly harmonizing with the colour of the herbage around.

Secondly, Mimicry.—Example : The chaffinch. She imitates the surroundings in *the structure* of her nest ; it is beautifully silvered over with lichen if on the branch of a tree thus covered. In the centre of a hawthorn she gilds her handiwork with scraps of paper, so that the whole structure to a casual eye appears a tangled mass of bloom.

Thirdly, Silence.—Silence is the forte of birds such as the willow wren and the whitethroat when they leave their nests, threading cautiously their way from their treasure, and almost, one might say, on tiptoe ; whilst at a safe distance they are garrulous enough.

Fourthly, Alluring Motions.—See how the sandpiper endeavours to concentrate all our attention upon herself, reeling and tumbling as if inviting us to the chase. So, too, the lapwing, with apparently broken wings and mournful cries, endeavours to tempt us far from her lowly nesting-place on the dreary moor.

Fifthly, Pugnacious Motions.—These are to a great extent necessarily restricted to their natural enemies, whilst against man they must of course be a failure. The missel thrush is a fine type of this protective instinct ; the magpie, nay, even the sparrow-hawk, often fares badly when pitted against this gallant antagonist. The ring ousel will even dash fearlessly into the face of a man should he approach her nest with its priceless contents. The titmice, too, will not spare the prying schoolboy, but will often cause him to remember the prowess of the well-known “ Billy-biter.”

Sixthly, Deceptive Motions.—The lark, descending from the sky, darts suddenly downwards to the nest, as we suppose ; but not so, but at a safe distance from it, pursuing the rest of her way on foot. The whinchat and starling act much in the same way.

I hope that my readers may be able, from personal observation, not only to avouch the strict truth of these remarks, but also to add to the interesting list which may be found in the books I have named.

The well-known fact that the plumage of the female is nearly always of a duller hue than that of the male, is doubtless connected with their mode of nesting, and thus the sitting bird is protected by the harmony between its own plumage and the colour of the surroundings of the nest.

The male stonechat is one of our prettiest birds ; his less attractive spouse is, for that very reason, when on the nest, more safe than he could ever be. Strangely enough, in the case of a very few birds, such as the dotterel and the phalaropes, where the female is more showy than the male, the latter performs the duty of incubation. All these birds build open nests ; but birds in which *both* sexes are highly coloured rear their young in holes or covered nests ; of these, the woodpecker and the kingfisher are conspicuous instances.

Domed nests are built not merely for concealment, but for other purposes ; that of the dipper, for example, in order that her eggs and young may be protected from the spray which flies so freely around.

Mr. Dixon also is of opinion that when the females are duller in colour than the male, and yet the nest is covered, the reason may be found in the fact that as in the case of

the redstart, the bright-plumaged male assists in no small degree in the task of incubation.

Very remarkable, too, is the way in which the young ones of brilliant-coloured parents are preserved from danger by their own sombre plumage. Upon the least alarm, the parents leave their young ones, who crouch low on the ground, silent and motionless, and thus are safe.

“Thus has nature beautifully supplied these feathered creatures with instinct sufficient to baffle in most cases their natural enemies—instinct which is so artfully put in force as to baffle even man himself, gifted as he is with noble reasoning powers, which enable him to be the superior and master of every other living creature.”

I have often thought that it might be possible to take a census of our birds, of course, only very much in the rough ; and I see that the same idea has occurred to ornithologists of much higher pretensions than myself. Would it not be possible, for instance, for a score of observers to listen at a pre-arranged hour to the various songs of birds on a fine spring morning in some Irish county, and then try another in a day or two afterwards, and so on ? In some respects it does not seem to be a much harder thing to do than for astronomers to calculate the number of shooting stars in August or November. Still, doubtless, there are peculiar difficulties in the matter, and I do not think that there is much probability of its ever being done, unless indeed the fact that few manors will yield to the gun an average of more than one bird to the acre can be taken as a basis.

The most abundant bird in Ireland is, I think, the chaffinch ; then come the sparrow, the robin, and the wren. The flocks of rooks and starlings which are sometimes seen

are, however, enough to upset most of the calculations upon which we had previously relied.

My kind friend, Rev. F. O. Morris, some time since showed me a letter from Lord Kimberley, in which he stated that the fauna of Wymondham Park, his Norfolk seat, included 143 birds. This was, however, surpassed by what I was afterwards told by Mr. Risings, that the fauna of Horsey, near Martham, also in the County Norfolk, comprised the enormous number of 158 different species. The glories of Walton Hall pale before such a host.

In an ordinary walk in the country, I generally meet with about twenty varieties in winter, and perhaps thirty in summer, when the migrants are abroad. The greatest number I have noted in one day was fifty-one, and this both at Beaumaris and in the Isle of Wight; of course, I reckon the birds I hear, as well as those I see, when I am abroad. In the Malahide district, comprising both shore and inland birds, I have met with more than forty in a walk of three or four hours.

There are but two ways of identifying birds—by seeing them and by hearing them; to those who are not gifted with a musical ear the latter mode is impossible, and even persons with some musical taste are very frequently unable to discriminate between the songs of the missel thrush and blackbird, or of the willow warbler and the wren. No doubt, this is the result of inattention. In Ireland, however, there are other difficulties in the identification of birds, which arise mainly from two sources. First: the difficulty of procuring books upon the subject. Mr. Thompson's "Birds of Ireland"—a truly valuable and almost exhaustive work—is now out of print. Were such a man as Mr. A. G. More to do for it what Professor Newton has

done for Yarrell's "British Birds," he would confer a boon upon the community. The only other book is Mr. Watters' pleasant and chatty little volume; but this, too, is no longer to be had, save in the auction room, and this on rare occasions. Secondly: the native nomenclature differs so widely from the scientific that it is often impossible to ascertain what bird is meant when we are told its rural or provincial name. We hear of the Felt, the Big Felt, and the Blue Felt, the Jay (but not our Jay), the Reefogue, the Philippine, Sallypicker, Thorngrey, Jink, and many others.

People stare when they are told that there are no crows in Ireland, no cranes, no woodpeckers—that the blackcap, a name given to several birds, is not rightly given to any of those so called—that the hedge sparrow is not a sparrow, nor is the green linnet a linnet.

As regards the study of Natural History, we are doubtless a good deal behind our English brethren. *Here* the ornithologist is usually regarded as a harmless, good-natured sort of person, but slightly cracked. In England he is considered an intelligent and praiseworthy individual, who knows a little more than some of his neighbours. The contrast struck me a good deal when I applied some time since for leave to bring our Field Club through a certain demesne in Ireland, and received a letter from the proprietor according us permission to *drive* through it; whilst, on the other hand, when staying with my old friend and pupil, Dr. Barton, at Aldborough, near Norwich, some years ago, I was courteously invited by the proprietor to walk through the coverts of Oulton Hall, and, when I accepted the invitation, was received most hospitably by its owner, who asked me anxiously every now and then whether I heard or saw anything out of the common, and was rejoiced

when my boy and I were able to identify the wood warbler, a bird then new to us both, although I had once or twice before heard it sing in North Wales. *O si sic omnes!*

And now let me conclude this rambling Introduction by a few practical hints upon the best methods of observing birds and gaining a knowledge of the different species we may hear and see around us.

I. Begin in your own garden, and endeavour to identify from its appearance and song every bird that dwells there. This may be done by the aid of such a book as Morris' or Johns' "British Birds," and, I hope, in some degree by the little book now in your hands.

Here at Elm Park, not half a mile from the city of Dublin, I have carefully noted the species for the last few years, and find that our fauna comprises no less than thirty-six varieties, viz. :—Sparrow-hawk, rook, jackdaw, magpie, song thrush, missel thrush, blackbird, redwing, willow warbler, chiff-chaff, whitethroat, spotted fly-catcher, swallow, swift, robin, wren, hedge sparrow, gold-crest, great tit, blue tit, coal tit, long-tailed tit, creeper, greenfinch, chaffinch, goldfinch (?), bullfinch, redpoll, pied wagtail, grey wagtail, starling, meadow pipit, yellow bunting, sparrow, wood-pigeon, common gull.

Birds are, as a rule, heard singing to great advantage after soft spring rain : the blackbird sings best during a heavy shower. A really lovely summer-like day, with fleecy clouds overhead, is a day of many songs ; but a stormy day seems to be the worst of all as regards bird music. On harsh, squally, ungenial days it is of little use to go out to hear the songsters, unless we are satisfied with a very few, such as the gallant missel thrush, who seems to delight in braving the storm.

The morning and the evening are the best times for song. In the heat of the day many bird-voices are altogether silent; but in the evening they may be heard in every suitable locality, yet not, I think, with the same beauty and freshness as in the early morning, when, unfortunately, there are so few to listen. At about 3 A.M. in May and June one can hear a babel of tuneful voices, in which in Ireland the blackbird's seems to be the bass or ground tone, deeper and stronger than the rest which float above it in the tender morning air.

II. Walk out in quiet localities, with one or two friends, not more; avoid talking, *if possible*; and instead of roaming about, sit down quietly under some tree, and wait for the birds to come to you, as in most cases they will readily do.

III. Bring a good field-glass with you; this is invaluable, as you can then carefully study the birds without the risk of disturbing them.

IV. Look over gates and walls quietly. It was thus I saw the green woodpecker for the first time near Beaumaris. I had heard its strange cry—"glu—glu—gluck," but could not identify the bird, until, glancing over a gate, I saw it sitting on a rail close by. As soon as it saw that it was observed, it took flight.

V. Note down your observations, no matter how unimportant they may seem to be, carefully preserving the dates and localities; these may lead to useful and interesting discoveries afterwards.

I have said that August is probably one of the mutest months in the year. It would seem, however, from the table given at the end of the book, containing the result of Dr. Kinahan's interesting observations, that September is

even a more silent month in Ireland ; whilst January and February, the severest months of the year, are enlivened by a much larger number of bird-songs.

The most constant singer is the robin ; he may be heard for eleven months in the year, being silent only in August. The song thrush probably comes next, with ten months' singing to his credit, omitting August and September only. The blackbird may be heard almost, but not quite so frequently, I think, as the thrush ; whilst the skylark, the chaffinch, and the wren follow closely upon our list ; indeed, I am not sure that I should not bracket this latter bird with the robin, as Dr. Kinahan does, were it not that, as far as my own experience goes, it is not as frequent a songster, nor does it always sing in exceptionally severe weather, when the snow lies thick on the ground, and poor robin's is the only music we hear.

I trust that my readers may act upon these few suggestions, and observe systematically the birds in their neighbourhood, wherever their lot may be cast. If they will but do this, they may possibly be the means of adding now and then a new bird to our Irish fauna ; for Ireland is still in many places a country unexplored by the ornithologist.

The robin, the thrush, the wren, may be heard all the year round ; but in the early springtime our foreign musicians begin to arrive, and fresh and tender voices, heard last, it may be, at "Afric's sunny fountains," proclaim that "the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, and the time of the singing of birds is come." Let us note the arrival of these aerial voyagers, and find fresh pleasure and delight, as we listen to those sweet and innocent voices praising God. They *pray*, for so Job hath it (xxxviii. 41) : "The young ravens cry unto God." And they

also praise Him: "O ye birds that sing among the branches, beasts, and all cattle, creeping things and flying fowl, praise ye the Lord, and magnify Him for ever."

Happy are they to whom the bird-songs of spring bring pleasant thoughts and tender memories of boyish days and country rambles with old friends and comrades now far away, or, it may be, at rest for ever in the green churchyard, where the innocent minstrels often breathe their sweetest strains, and seem to sing of hope, and joy, and life beyond the grave.

How truly it has been said, that as in the woods at night-time all is silent, though on every side the songsters lie close till the sun arise, and with his advent their bright and charming songs are poured forth from joyful hearts; so, too, is it in the soul of man. All is dark and silent until the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings, bringing freedom, and love, and joy, and sweet songs of praise from hearts at peace with God.

Often and often have I said to myself, "Will there be birds in heaven?" And although I may not answer this, yet I *know* that there will be hearts as blithe and guileless, and sweeter tongues by far amongst the great multitude that yet shall sing "the song of Moses and the Lamb."

OUR IRISH SONG BIRDS.

MISSEL THRUSH.

Tardus viscivorus ; *Merle Draine* ; *Mistel Drossel*.

STORM COCK ; Holm Thrush ; Holm Screech ; Penn y Llwyn, "Master of the Coppice ;" Jay ; Big Felt.

Bill, dark brown ; space between bill and eyes, greyish-white ; head, neck, and nape, greyish-brown ; chin, throat, and breast, yellowish-white, with deep brown spots ; outer tail feathers, tipped with white. Length, eleven inches.

The Missel Thrush may be distinguished from the song thrush by its superior size and higher, bolder flight, which is somewhat undulating, three or four beats of the wing being followed by a pause. Most people imagine that but one kind of thrush is to be met with in Ireland, and they are greatly surprised when they are informed that no fewer than seven different species of thrushes may be reckoned in our Irish fauna. The Missel Thrush is usually confounded with the song thrush, or if not, called, as it is most frequently in the country, the jay or the big felt, it is supposed not

to be a thrush at all. I hope, however, that a few plain directions may enable my readers to distinguish between the different members of the thrush family, and that the song of the Missel Thrush, heard, as it usually is, in the severest months of the year, may awaken in their minds pleasant anticipations of coming spring and summer.

The Missel Thrush is the largest of European songsters, as the gold-crest is the smallest; it is widely diffused throughout Ireland, and is very common in the neighbourhood of Dublin, where it may readily be seen and heard.

Missel Thrushes are said to be more numerous in winter than in summer, although, according to Mr. Thompson, the reverse is the case at Belfast. I have seen large flocks of thrushes in severe weather in the Phoenix Park, and, examining them carefully through a glass, have discovered that they were Missel Thrushes and redwings; the largest and smallest of the thrush kind thus fraternizing in "the hard times."

It has been said that of late years the Missel Thrush is "elbowing out" the song thrush, if such a phrase be permissible when applied to a bird; and no doubt, in the Arctic winter, 1878-9, the song thrushes died in hundreds, whilst their hardier brethren survived; but I am inclined to think that during the last two or three years, the Missel Thrush has by no means gained ground.

Although the Missel Thrush derives its name from a supposed fondness for the berries of the mistletoe, the hawthorn seems to be preferred by the bird, and hawthorn woods are sure to be tenanted by numbers of Missel Thrushes. The berries of the mountain ash, holly, and ivy form the staple food of this bird, to which it adds worms, slugs, snails, and beetles, with occasionally a little

grain. It is credited also with some little devotion at times to garden fruit, and, more culpable still, is believed occasionally to prey upon young birds.

That the services of the Missel Thrush to the gardener are by no means small may be inferred from the fact that to a nest of three young ones sixty-six journeys were counted by Mr. Weir during the day, the birds bringing snails and slugs on each occasion.

The hoarse "grakle"-like note of the Missel Thrush is much more frequently heard than his song, which consists of five notes only, said by the author of *Echoes from the Counties*, to resemble the words "d-e-a-r—d-e-a-r—d-e-a-r—d-e-a-r—d-e-a-r." I have, however, heard a Missel Thrush whose song was, "Ho, he, ho, hee, ho," repeatedly uttered, in a loud, wild, whistling tone. The song is more likely to be confounded with that of the blackbird than that of the song thrush; its sameness will, however, lead to its speedy detection. The harsh, grating call-note resembles somewhat the sound of a child's rattle, and also a note frequently uttered by the wren.

From its habit of singing in stormy weather, the Missel Thrush gets its familiar name of "Storm Cock." The author of *Echoes from the Counties* thus describes this habit:—

"One of the very first to herald the soothe season is the gallant Storm Cock, largest and most stout-hearted of our song birds. Long before his cousins-german the feldtfare and the vindedrossel have set sail for their ancestral Scandinavian home, he and his mate have selected the wind-rocked cross-tree upon which to lash their new wicker cradle. There, with well-grounded confidence in their

vessel, the hardy pair defy the gale, and take command, screeching harsh watchwords, like Danes from the wet deck of a lumbering sluppe, at the driving fleet of rooks, who, heeding the warning, cease their clamour, and beat cautiously to windward, to gain a safe offing and scud rapidly away. When all is snug and ship-shape, and the vessel rocks smoothly in a steady breeze, the jovial master-mariner takes his call-pipe, and, mounting the top-most mast, lets slip down the whispering gale a stave or two of wild music."

The song usually begins in February, and ceases early in spring; for the Missel Thrush alone of British songsters is silent during the period of incubation.

It is well known that the Missel Thrush is of a peculiarly bold and intrepid disposition. I had a striking proof of this when, some years ago, walking along the banks of the River Dodder with my friend, J. Hunter Stokes, a hen chaffinch, closely pursued by a sparrow-hawk, almost brushed against us. We watched the birds as they glanced hither and thither, believing that the chaffinch's last hour was come, when in a moment a Missel Thrush pounced down upon the hawk, and so scared and baffled him that he flew off discomfited, whilst his gallant adversary, mounting a high tree on the other side of the river, poured forth a loud song of triumph.

I was forcibly reminded of this incident when reading in Mr. Dresser's great work a translation of an article written by M. Vian, a French ornithologist. He says that the Missel Thrush and chaffinch always nest in company, and that he has never found a Missel Thrush's nest in France without finding a chaffinch's in the same or in the next tree. His explanation of this curious fact is that both the

Missel Thrush and the chaffinch begin to breed about the end of March, shortly *after* the magpie, and *before* most other birds. Now, in April the magpie is searching for nests to plunder for her young ones, and in these two, and these two alone, she can find the necessary spoil; they are readily seen, as the trees are then comparatively bare of foliage, and would fall a speedy prey, were it not that the wary chaffinch is always ready to give notice of the approach of the enemy, and the Missel Thrush is then at once prepared to give him battle: thus vigilance and courage are happily combined. Mr. Dresser is desirous of knowing whether anything has been observed in our own country. I venture to think that the little incident I have mentioned seems to imply that the alliance between the two birds is not limited to the continent, but extends to our island shores as well.

The nest consists of twigs and grasses, with "a bowl of mud" within, and a final lining of grasses. The eggs, usually four or five in number, vary very much in appearance, but are generally bluish-green, mottled with brown. The nest is sometimes placed near the ground, and at other times as high up as sixty feet from it.

SONG THRUSH.

Turdus musicus; *Merle grive*; *Sing Drossel*.

Throstle; Mavis; Grey Bird.

Bill and feet, brown; head, neck, and back, olive brown; chin, throat, and breast, whitish; the latter spotted with dark brown; tail, somewhat rounded. Length, eight inches and a-half.

The Song Thrush is the best known and most widely distributed of the thrush kind, and is probably the most popular songster in Ireland, the skylark hardly excepted. Everyone knows the song of the thrush, or thinks he does, for many cannot distinguish between it and the song of the blackbird, although they are so widely different. Gay, tuneful, hardy, and harmless, the Song Thrush is justly a favourite everywhere; and the occasional damage he may do by eating a few currants or raspberries in the summer is more than repaid by the constant havoc he makes among the snails and slugs, and by his delightful voice.

The Song Thrush is not gregarious, like his brethren the missel thrush, the fieldfare, and the redwing, for more than two are seldom seen together. In this respect he resembles most his *confrère* and ally, the blackbird.

The snail is the Song Thrush's favourite dish. Whether this diet has a beneficial effect upon his vocal powers, I know not; but I remember that, when a boy, I often heard that a compound of snails was exceedingly good for a cold. And a French gentleman of my acquaintance told me some years ago that the boys of a neighbouring school robbed the garden of its molluscs to afford him a treat, which a countryman of his own hastened to share, observing, as he entered the house, in pleasant anticipation, "I hear dat you have de snail." The sound of the thrush hammering the snail's shell on some convenient stone may often be heard as you pass some country road; and if you look cautiously over the ditch, you will see him hard at work; whilst the heap of broken shells around will tell you that is not the first time, nor the second either, that he has selected this stone for his dinner-table.

Another habit of the Song Thrush, vouched for by some naturalists, has often attracted attention and created some amusement as well. He is often seen, as he runs upon the lawn, to place his ear in an apparently listening attitude, and then to leap from the ground; the reason is quickly obvious: he has heard a worm threading its way a little below the surface, and when it ventures just to take one glance above, to ascertain the cause of the unwonted disturbance, the thrush seizes its head, and drags it triumphantly from its lurking-place, to return no more. It is said that the lapwing occasionally acts in the same manner.

The Song Thrush is silent only for a short time throughout the year. A fine soft day even in November or December nearly always tempts him to sing. In February, however, his regular spring song begins, and for about five months he continues to delight us, especially in the early morning and in the evening, with his well-known ditty, which is interrupted only by the approach of the moulting season. The bird, when in full song, will sometimes for a long time remain perched on the same bough, as he pours forth his delightful melody; and day after day, if undisturbed, he may be seen and heard in the same place. His familiar song is said to combine in a greater degree than that of any other British bird the three great requisites of power, variety, and quality of tone. I must confess, however, that, for my own part, I prefer the blackbird's simpler, but yet, I think, more eloquent and heart-touching strain.

Many of the utterances of the Song Thrush strongly resemble articulate words and phrases. Macgillivray thus renders it:—

" Dear, dear, dear !
 Is the rocky glen,
 Far away, far away, far away,
 From the haunts of men.
 Here shall we dwell in love,
 With the lark and the dove,
 Cuckoo and land rail ;
 Feast on the banded snail,
 Worm and gilded fly,
 Drink of the crystal rill,
 Winding adown the hill,
 Never to dry.
 With glee, with glee, with glee,
 Cheer up, cheer up, cheer up ; here
 Nothing to harm us ; then sing merrily,
 Sing to the loved one, whose nest is near.
 Qui, qui, qui, kween, quip,
 Tiurn, tiurn, chipiwi,
 Too-tee, too-te, chin-choo,
 Chivi, chivi, choo-ee,
 Qui, qui, qui."

Mr. Buckland, in his edition of White's *Selborne*, gives the following as the substance of part of a thrush's song, as described by Mr. Davy, a well-known London bird-catcher :—

" Knee deep, knee deep, knee deep,
 Cherry du, cherry du, cherry du, cherry du,
 White hat, white hat ;
 Pretty Joey, pretty Joey, pretty Joey, pretty Joey."

I think that both of these are excellent representations of phrases in the song of the thrush. Another very frequent utterance is—

" Sit ye down, sit ye down."

Hence the bird has been sometimes called the "sit-ye-down." An Elm Park thrush over and over again repeated a phrase which sounded like "Mr. Bewley, Bewley, Bewley, Bewley"—a name held in high repute in our neighbourhood, and, indeed, everywhere in Dublin.

High upon a tree, we are told that the Song Thrush often sits and sings, "with his eyes half-closed, as if he were at prayers," as, indeed, he probably is. When a cat is in the neighbourhood, or when otherwise greatly alarmed, the thrush often utters some loud notes which somewhat resemble those of the blackbird when disturbed, or rather "hac, hac, hac;" when quietly on the wing, a short "chip" is heard, as he flits rapidly overhead.

"A thrush's day" has been thus described by a gentleman who closely watched the birds from morning until night, from a carefully constructed hiding-place, hard by a thrush's nest:—

2.30 a.m., the birds began to feed their young ones.
4.30 a.m., the young birds had been fed thirty-six times.
5 a.m., all the little ones were awake and "preening" (pruning) their feathers. One of the young birds fell out of the nest, and the old ones set up a doleful lamentation, whereupon the gentleman came out of his hiding-place, and restored the nestling. His appearance, however, disconcerted the old ones, and he was obliged to feign departure before their confidence could be restored. 9.30 p.m., the young ones had been fed 206 times.

In times like the present, it would go hard with us if our little ones required such abundant sustenance, and we should find our vocabulary insufficient to particularise such frequent meals.

Mr. Thompson mentions a curious fact observed by him

at Wolf-hill in 1847, namely, "that on wet days the male bird invariably fed the young, the female leaving the nest on his approach, and going to almost a yard's distance from it during the time her mate was so employed. On fine days the female fed them, and the male perched on the top of a neighbouring tall tree."

The nest is usually found in the first week of March, and then generally placed amongst evergreens. Afterwards, however, it may be looked for in the hedgerows, the whitethorn being a favourite place; sometimes, however, it is found high up in the trees. Of the architecture Mr. Johns says: "The bird displays her skill as a basket-maker, a mason, and a plasterer—her only instruments her beak and her rounded breast. The outer case of twigs is succeeded by a layer of cow-dung, cemented with saliva. The cup-like chamber is lined with stucco, made from decayed wood, and a circular bowl is constructed sufficiently compact to exclude air and water, as true and as finely finished as if it had been moulded on a potter's wheel, or turned on a lathe."

The eggs, four or five in number, are of a greenish-blue colour, spotted with deep brown. Several broods are produced in the year, and both cock and hen sit upon the eggs and young.

REDWING.

Turdus Iliacus ; *Merle Mauvis* ; *Rothdrossel*.

Swinepipe ; Wind Thrush ; Felt.

Bill, brownish-black ; upper plumage, dark olive-brown, white streak above the eye ; breast, greyish-white, with

brown spots ; under wing coverts and flanks, bright orange-red. Length, about eight inches.

The Redwing is our smallest thrush. It arrives in this country somewhat earlier than the fieldfare, probably because it feels the approach of winter in the northern regions more keenly than its hardier congener.

If the fieldfare most resembles the missel thrush, the Redwing and the song thrush are very nearly alike. The former may, however, always be distinguished from the latter by the broad white stripe over the eye, and by the bright reddish colour on the sides, and on the under wing coverts, which give the bird its name.

The Redwing is a gregarious bird, and may be seen in large flocks, in much the same localities as the fieldfare ; it is, however, the least shy of the thrushes, and may sometimes be found on the very confines of our cities and large towns. In very cold weather I have seen Redwings here perching in trees just over the tram line, which passes our gate, and, no doubt, ready to pick up any food to be found on the road beneath.

The Redwing does not breed in this country, and we have not, for this reason, an opportunity of hearing its renowned song. In more northern countries, however, it has won the title of the "Swedish Nightingale ;" and Linnæus, in his *Tour in Lapland*, tells us that "the amorous warblings of the Redwing, from the top of the spruce fir, were delightful ; its high and varied notes rival those of the nightingale herself." Latterly, however, it has been said that this description is a good deal exaggerated, and that the term "Swedish Nightingale" is slightly ironical ; that the song is merely something like the syllables, "tut, tut, tut," repeated in a descending scale,

and then followed by a kind of inward twittering or warbling. This "inward warbling," or "twittering," is the final part of the song, and may often be heard in this country when the bird is preparing to depart in the early spring.

Some years ago I heard it in a soft and subdued chorus from a number of Redwings near Castleknock, Co. Dublin, and very delightful it seemed to me to be. Last year I heard it again, proceeding from a great flock at Hollywood; a similar, but even sweeter, chorus may often be heard from flocks of that charming songster, the linnet. The common note of this bird, however, has been well described by Mr. Slaney as "a sort of inward deep-drawn sigh, like an attempt at ventriloquism." I have heard a schoolboy describe it as "the screech of a pencil on a slate," and thought it a good deal like the reality. We hear it constantly overhead as we walk along the frost-bound road, and, looking up, see the Redwings, something like starlings, scudding by, or perching in the highest branches of the trees; at night great flocks rest together in the evergreens and thickets all through the country.

As the Redwing does not breed in this country, it is unnecessary to describe its nest and eggs.

FIELDFARE.

Turdus Pilaris; Merle Litorne; Wachholder Drossel;
Juniper Thrush.

Felt; Big Felt; Feltyfare; Blue Felt.

Bill, brownish-black; head, nape, and lower part of neck, ash-grey; upper part of back, chestnut-brown;

breast, light yellowish-red, with dark spots; white streak above the eye; abdomen, and under wing coverts, white. Length, about ten inches. May be distinguished from the missel thrush by the bluish colour on the back of the head, darker back, and white lower plumage.

The Fieldfare is one of three migratory thrushes who visit Ireland regularly every year. Why they are migratory, whilst the missel thrush, song thrush, and blackbird are resident all the year round, no one can tell. In their food and their habits generally they resemble the other thrushes; they differ from them only in the short stay they make in these islands. Of the three, the Fieldfare and the redwing are winter visitors; they do not breed in this country, and for this reason especially they do not sing, save in exceptional cases. The ring ousel, on the contrary, is a summer migrant, arriving shortly after the departure of the Fieldfare and redwing for more northern regions, and leaving us just before their return in the autumn. As a summer visitor, he breeds and sings during his stay amongst us. The Fieldfare has been known to arrive in this country as early as October 14, and to remain to the end of April. Shortly after their arrival they may be seen in large flocks in the open fields, and may be readily distinguished from the missel thrush, which they most resemble, by the blue patch on the back of the head, the dark marks under the eye, and the white under plumage.

The Fieldfare is a shy bird, and, save in very severe winters, will hardly permit a nearer approach than a distance of one hundred yards. A very trying season, however, makes the poor birds weaker and tamer also, and hundreds are sometimes starved to death, if the snow continues long upon the ground. All around Dublin this

fine bird may be easily seen and observed in the winter months. Wilder and shyer than the redwing, it does not actually enter the suburbs; but it abounds in the country near Kinglas, Mullhuddart, Tallaght, and indeed everywhere that food can be procured.

Fieldfares have much the same tastes as the other thrushes. In hawthorn berries they delight. In very severe winters, however, they sometimes attack the turnip fields, where they occasionally do some damage. To me the Fieldfare seems one of the finest of our familiar birds, standing erect with a keen, watchful glance, and ready, on the slightest alarm, to fly away to some secure resting-place.

BLACKBIRD.

Turdus Merula; Merle noir; Schwarz Drossel.

Plumage, wholly black; bill, bright orange. Female, reddish-brown on breast; head, neck, and back, blackish-brown. Length, ten inches.

This well-known and favourite songster is common in most parts of Ireland. He has been found occasionally even in such lonely spots as Rathlin, the Copeland Isles, and Ailsa Craig. His once common names of Ousel and Merle seem now almost forgotten, and he is known as the Blackbird in all parts of the United Kingdom. Although members of the thrush family, the ousels differ from the thrushes proper in one striking respect, viz.: the females are not of the same colour as the males, and both are without any streaks on the throat.

The food of the Blackbird resembles that of the song thrush, to which he is indeed closely allied. In spring and summer he feeds upon worms, snails, slugs, larvæ, and seeds. Of fruit also he is decidedly fond; gooseberries, blackberries, and, above all things, cherries, are highly appreciated. In winter his fare is principally composed of wheat, oats, the berries of the hawthorn, the holly, and others then in season. A great outcry is often raised against the poor Blackbird on account of the fruit he is supposed to have taken from the garden in spring and summer. Surely he who would grudge him a few cherries hath "no music in his soul," or he would not deal so churlishly with the sable musician. It is probable, however, that, quite independently of his vocal attractions, the Blackbird confers solid obligations upon the gardener, and so deserves rather his commendation than his condemnation. In support of this view, Mr. Adams, in his *Smaller British Birds*, quotes a writer in *Chambers's Journal*, who relates that a grass-plot attached to a country house was observed to be visited by a number of blackbirds, and to be completely ploughed up by their beaks. The owner of the property, being unwilling to shoot them, caused the plot to be dug up in several places, to discover the cause of their proceedings, and found it to be overrun with the larvæ of chafers. The birds were left in undisturbed possession, and although the walls were covered with ripe fruit, they left it untouched, and devoted their attention to the grubs, which they entirely destroyed, and the grass-plot resumed its original appearance.

The song of the song thrush and Blackbird may readily be distinguished. That of the former may be said to be continuous, whilst that of the latter consists of from six or

seven to ten syllables, followed by a pause of a minute or more. The song of the thrush also possesses far more variety than that of the Blackbird, which seldom embraces more than a dozen cadences; on the other hand, it is more shrill and less powerful, for the Blackbird may be heard a mile off. On the whole, I must confess that the Blackbird is my favourite, and has been from the days when, a happy child, it was my delight to pourtray his sable form with pen and ink in an incredibly short time, as mentioned elsewhere.

The Blackbird's sweetest song is often poured forth during an April shower; and he has even been seen to sit and sing during a thunder-storm. It must be confessed, however, that there are Blackbirds and Blackbirds, the song of some being very inferior to that of others. I have heard a Blackbird—I presume a young one—repeat over and over again the same ditty, apparently knowing no other. And I have noticed in a Blackbird at Elm Park a decided progress in his song, that of last year being a considerable improvement upon the preceding. In England, where Blackbirds and thrushes have the advantage of hearing the nightingale's song, it is believed that their own minstrelsy is refined and enlarged by the addition of notes and phrases borrowed from the queen of songsters; and this is not to be wondered at, as all our great musicians are more or less mocking-birds, and gifted with the imitative faculty. The Blackbird, for instance, has been known to crow like a cock.

The song of the Blackbird in the early morning often sounds somewhat harsh and unmusical. To me it seems as if he were but half awake, and, disturbed rather against his will, would have preferred waiting a little longer before he commenced his song; but as the sun arises in the

heavens, he soon wakes up, and greets it with his loud and joyous morning hymn. The shrill alarm cry of the Blackbird, when disturbed, is well known; his chuckle, as he skims over the garden wall, is said sometimes to sound like, "Ha! ha! I shall soon be back again." At the approach of night, too, he is usually vociferous, and his "pink, pink, pink, tac, tac, tac," may be heard for a long distance, as he flies from tree to tree, or nestles in the ivy before he composes himself to sleep.

Pied Blackbirds are occasionally met with; I have one in my collection. And a hen Blackbird, with a grey head, frequently makes her appearance at Elm Park. White Blackbirds—an apparent contradiction in terms, but one for which we have the authority of Archbishop Trench—have been noticed on several occasions; and Mr. Morris mentions one which was of a blue lavender colour, the legs and feet only black. Cream-coloured varieties are very rare. Mr. Johns tells us that the title to a certain estate near Paris is kept up by the annual presentation of a white Blackbird to the lord of the manor.

The eggs, usually five in number, are of a light blue or greenish-brown colour, spotted with reddish-brown. The nest—"a bulky structure"—is generally found in a bush, or in the ivy on a low wall; but it occurs in a great variety of situations.

RING OUSEL.

Turdus torquatus ; *Merle à plastron* ; *Ring Drossel*.

Ring Thrush ; Mountain Blackbird ; Mountain Stare ;
Cowboy ; Whistler.

Bill, notched, dusky ; plumage, brownish-black ; pure white crescent on the breast, with horns pointing upwards. Length, about eleven inches.

The Ring Ousel is the only thrush that visits our islands to breed and rear its young. It arrives early in April, and remains until the beginning of October. For a short time after their arrival, and again before their departure, large flocks of Ring Ousels may be seen ; and in autumn, when they descend to the plains, they are called in some parts of England "Michaelmas Blackbirds." I have never been able to find the Ring Ousel in Ireland, although I have repeatedly searched for it, and on several occasions scoured the Two Rock and Three Rock Mountains, guided by Jemmy Byrne, a resident in those parts, who believed that he was familiar with its haunts. I have reason, however, to think that it breeds in the Dublin and Wicklow Mountains ; and, if spared to next summer, I hope again to set forth in quest of the blackbird "with the white cravat." Mr. Thompson says that the Ring Ousel may be seen in most of the mountainous districts of Ireland, on Slieve Donard, the loftiest of the Mourne Mountains, on Carlingford Mountain, at Achill Head, on the famous hill of Slieve-na-man, near Clonmel, on the Comeragh Mountains, and elsewhere.

The song of the Ring Ousel is said to be the loudest

and clearest of all the thrushes. In some respects it resembles that of the missel thrush, and frequently after singing he utters that loud, clear whistle which has given him his local name of "The Whistler" on the Wicklow Mountains. Its alarm cry resembles that of the blackbird, and its loud call-note of "tac, tac, tac," also reminds us of that bird.

The food of the Ring Ousel is principally insects, worms, snails, berries, and the seeds of various trees. In England the young are said to feed on garden fruit. In Ireland, however, the bird is much more rare, and apparently much more shy also, as I have never heard of any such mal-practices here.

The breeding ground of the Ring Ousel is the moorland district or the mountain side, far from the haunts of men; there, flitting from boulder to boulder, with his white gorget glistening in the sun, he spends his Irish summer; and when his work is done, and autumn chills tell him that it is time to go, he departs on his long yet pleasant journey to southern shores.

The nest is like a blackbird's, but is always on or near the ground. The eggs, too, resemble those of that bird; but the red in the markings is of a more decided hue.

DIPPER.

Cinclus aquaticus; *Cincle Plongeur*; *Wasser Amsel*.

Water Ousel; Water Crow; Water Blackbird; Kingfisher;
River Pye.

Bill, bluish-black; upper plumage, dark brown; back, dark grey; chin, throat, and breast, pure white; lower

part, chestnut ; tail, short, and somewhat erect. Length, seven inches and a-half.

It is not easy to say whether the Dipper should be classed among the thrushes or the wrens. It resembles the wren in its song, its nest, and its habit of jerking its tail ; in other respects, however, it seems to claim affinity with the thrush. The habits of the Dipper may readily be studied, as the bird is plentiful in most parts of Ireland. Every day in the year it may be seen along the Dodder, or in the beautiful glen of the Dargle ; indeed, there are few mountain streams that it does not enliven with its innocent presence and amusing evolutions. It has often been said that the Dipper is the only bird that can walk along the bottom of a stream ; the truth of the matter seems to be that it remains for a short time beneath the surface, using all the while great exertions with its wings and feet, and then rising to take breath. As the specific gravity of the bird is much less than that of the otter or beaver, both of which remain under water with difficulty, the strain upon our little friend's powers must be very great indeed.

The Dipper is our earliest songster. He sings indeed all the year round at intervals ; but in January his song seems most frequently heard. No matter how trying or severe the weather may be, on him it seems to have no effect ; he has been heard singing with the thermometer at twenty-six degrees, perched upon a piece of broken ice floating gaily along. Whilst walking at Leixlip with my kind friend the Rector (himself a Bird), some time ago, I heard the song of the Dipper just at the famous Salmon Leap. It mingled with the roar of the waterfall, and was audible only at intervals, sounding like music far away.

The nest of the Dipper is generally found amongst the

rocks, and, according to Mr. Dixon, never in a tree or bush; frequently quite close to the rocks, and washed by the spray of the dashing water. On one occasion it is said to have built its nest in a crevice in a wall at the back of a "lasher" in the lock of a canal, dashing through the stream with great zest, to reach its unique home. The nest is domed like a wren's, and in it the Dipper lays her pure white eggs, usually from four to six in number.

HEDGE SPARROW.

Accentor modularis; *Accenteur Mouchet*; *Heckenbrannelle*; *Boeren-nactigall* (Dutch), "*Farmer's Nightingale*."

Hedge Accentor; Hedge Warbler; Dunnock; Cuddy; Reefogues; Black Wren; Shuffle-wing; Winter Fauvette.

Bill, dark brown; claws, black; head, nape, and sides of neck, bluish-grey; back and wings, reddish-brown; chin, throat, and chest, grey. Length, five inches and a-half.

This is one of the best known and least appreciated of our Irish Song Birds, and yet it has many claims to our kindly notice and regard. Modest, gentle, and retiring, the word "unobtrusive" seems best to describe both its habits and its plumage of sober brown and bluish-grey. It is common everywhere in Ireland, and indeed in all parts of the United Kingdom, but is said to have been captured but once in the Shetland Isles. It is plentiful around all our large towns, and may be heard in full song even in the squares of Dublin. Hardly, indeed, has a day passed for

many years that I have not heard and seen it ; for it is one of our perennial songsters, and seems to be always abroad.

The Hedge Sparrow is “one of three soft-billed birds, insectivorous, with the same texture of plumage as migratory birds, and yet remaining with us all the year round.” Were he to leave us with his more highly esteemed brethren every year, he would, no doubt, rise rapidly in popular esteem.

The Hedge Sparrow's food is in summer insects, and in winter principally small seeds. It is certainly one of the most harmless of birds, and it should be a welcome guest in every garden. Its favourite haunt is in whitethorn hedges ; there it may be seen threading its way, as Mr. Thompson remarks, “evidently as happy and contented as if no obstacles were opposed to its progress.” By-and-by it flies to the branch of some low tree, and warbles forth its artless song. The prop of a clothes-line at the back of our house is a favourite perching-place, and from it a Hedge Sparrow continually pours forth his simple ditty, and is almost always answered by a neighbour at no great distance. The call-note is like the syllable, “ee—ee—ee,” sometimes pronounced loudly and sharply, and the song in several respects resembles that of the wren and willow warbler, but is not so shrill or powerful as the former, whilst it consists of fewer syllables than the latter. The curious shuffling of the wings of the Hedge Sparrow has supplied it with one of its local names, and this habit is more marked as the breeding season approaches.

Mr. Poole, as quoted by Mr. Thompson, remarks :—“March 3rd. At this season the Dunnock displays some curious evolutions, probably by way of exhibiting its gallantry ; suddenly raising the wings from the body, and

holding them for a moment at right angles with it, and then repeatedly flapping them with an attractive and languishing air. It also floats in the air in a manner quite foreign to its usual habit. One whose nest I was examining, when frightened off, evinced great distress, and even simulated being wounded, as is the custom of many, indeed of most species of birds with which I am acquainted."

It is remarkable that although this bird is apparently so tame and familiar, it will hardly ever, under any circumstances, enter houses. Mr. Morris, however, tells us that on one occasion, after a very heavy fall of snow, a Hedge Sparrow entered his kitchen at Nunburnholme Rectory. About Christmas these birds may be seen in parties of five or six; shortly afterwards they separate, and are not observed together again until the termination of the breeding season.

The name "Hedge Sparrow" has been frequently objected to, on the ground that the bird is not a sparrow at all; but popular as this epithet has been since Shakespeare's time, it is not likely that it will be ever dropped for the more pretentious title "Accentor."

"The Hedge Sparrow fed the cuckoo so long,
That it had its head bit off by its young."

King Lear, Act I., Scene 1.

The nest is one of the earliest of the year, "and this being placed in an almost leafless hedge, with little art displayed in its concealment, generally becomes the booty of every prying boy; and the blue eggs of the Hedge Warbler are always found in such numbers on his string, that it is surprising how any of the race are remaining."

The eggs, four or five in number, are of a spotless blue.

ROBIN.

Erythacus Rubecula ; Rouge-gorge ; Rothkelchen.

Redbreast ; Ruddock.

Bill, black ; legs and claws, brown ; head, neck, back, and tail, olive-brown ; chin, throat, and breast, orange-red, encircled by a band of bluish-grey ; lower part of the breast and abdomen, white ; colours of the female duller. Length, five inches and three-quarters.

No bird is better known than the Robin, and none more appreciated than he. A favourite with young and old, he meets with more kindly consideration than any other of our feathered friends. The time-worn ballads of "The Babes in the Wood," and "The Death and Burial of Cock Robin," have doubtless had much to say to the great popularity of our little friend ; and his bold and confiding manners, and his sweet song, heard at all seasons, and in all weathers, have deepened, as we grew up, the favourable impression we entertained of this pretty songster from our earliest childhood.

As a song bird, I am, for my own part, disposed to give the Robin a very high place. No bird has so plaintive or so varied a song ; it is, indeed, impossible to say that any two cadences are exactly alike. "It consists," as has been well observed, "of simple trills, in a soft tone and minor key, interspersed with pauses more solemn than sound. There are also occasional faintly whispered notes, especially a plaintive, prolonged final note, peculiarly touching ; yet, as if by some power of chastened fortitude, the bird sustains his cheerfulness withal."

The "shilling note" of the Robin is well-known. It can be readily imitated by tapping two shillings briskly together—a performance that is said sometimes to bring a neighbouring Robin quickly to the spot. There is also a deep-drawn note, something like a sigh, which we frequently hear before we are aware that poor Robin is so near us.

The Robin sings all the year round, except for about six weeks in summer, from the last week in June until the second week in August. From the middle of December to the middle of January, he can be heard in the morning only; but further on towards spring, his voice takes up its evening hymn as well. Frost does not much affect his song, for we hear him in the severest weather, when no other songs, save the wren's, are ever heard.

There is reason to believe that about October the resident Robins are reinforced by the arrival of birds from more northern regions, and that in this way we may account for the great number of Robins we hear singing in all parts of the country. At times a flood of gentle melody pours on our ears from every side as we walk abroad.

Another curious fact mentioned by Professor Newton, is that the old birds retire during the moulting season to distant and secluded spots, and that during their absence the young ones take possession of the old haunts. When the old birds return in the autumn, severe conflicts ensue; every lawn becomes a battle-field, in which the young birds are worsted, and forced to retire to other camping-grounds.

The Robin, although a familiar, is yet a shy bird, nor does he display that valour in defence of his eggs or young ones which is so conspicuous in other birds. It is also very doubtful whether his character will bear very strict investigation as to amiability, for he seems to be essentially

of a jealous nature, and unwilling to brook any rival, or, indeed, near neighbour, in the domains he considers his own. It is said that one killed twenty of his own species, merely because they intruded upon a greenhouse to which he believed that he had a prescriptive and exclusive right.

Mr. Thompson mentions some amusing instances of the pugnacity of Robins. Two Robins were so absorbed in combat, that they fought from the air downwards to the earth, until they disappeared in a man's hat that happened to be lying on the ground, and in which they both were captured. In another case, "two Robins, having fought most wickedly in the air, alighted to take breath; and having recovered a little, they were about to recommence the charge, when a duck, that had witnessed the combat, quickly waddled up, and in the most gentle and pacific manner shoved, with his bill, the one to the right, and the other to the left, thus evidently separating them to prevent a renewal of the conflict."

I have never witnessed a Robin as fearless as one I saw some years ago at Fir House, near Tallaght, Co. Dublin. As we stood in a group around the owner, Mr. Handcock, whilst he held some crumbs in his hand, a Robin would fly over our shoulders, snatch a crumb, and quickly depart, as quickly to return, quite unabashed by the strangers in conversation with his old friend.

The nest of the Robin is usually placed upon the ground, or very near it, seldom, if ever, in a tree, but frequently under a bush or upon some hedge-bank. The eggs, five or six in number, are white, a reddish-white, with darker red spots at the larger end. The Robin's nest has been found in some very extraordinary situations. Bishop Stanley says: "A pair of Robins took up their abode in the Parish

Church of Hampton, in Warwickshire, and affixed their nest to the Church Bible, as it lay on the reading-desk. The vicar would not allow the birds to be disturbed, and therefore supplied himself with another Bible, from which he read the lessons of the day. A similar instance occurred at Collingbourne, Kingston Church. The clerk, on looking out the lessons for the day, perceived something under the Bible in the reading-desk, and in a hollow place, occasioned by the Bible's resting on a raised ledge, found a Robin's nest, containing two eggs. The bird, not having been disturbed, laid four more, which were hatched on the 4th of May. The still more extraordinary part of the story is, that the cock bird actually brought food in its bill during Divine Service, which is performed twice every Sunday; and it is further highly creditable to the parishioners, particularly the junior portion of them, that the birds were never molested, and not an attempt even suspected to be made on the nest and eggs deposited in so hallowed a spot." The Bishop adds: "We can remember, indeed, a Robin hopping more than once familiarly, as if aware how safe from peril it was at such a moment, upon our own Bible, as it lay open before us, reading the lessons on Christmas Day."

One more anecdote seems not out of place here. The mizzen-mast of the *Victory*, beside which Lord Nelson was standing when he received his death-wound, was placed by William IV. in a building in the grounds of Bushy Park. In the hole left by a cannon shot in the mast, a pair of Robins built their nest, and reared their young. Mr. Morris tells us that this interesting relic is now in the armoury of Windsor Castle.

The Robin feeds principally upon insects, earwigs, and

worms, and also upon different kinds of berries. He may occasionally annex a few currants; but he is, on the whole, a real benefactor to the gardener and agriculturist, on whose footsteps he may be seen constantly to attend, waiting with anxious expectation, like Mr. Micawber, for something “to turn up.”

I may be permitted to conclude this notice with two Robin poems, which often occur to my own mind. One accounts for the red upon his breast in this fashion:—

“ Bearing His cross, while Christ passed forth forlorn,
His Godlike forehead by the mock crown torn,
A little bird took from that crown one thorn,
To soothe the dear Redeemer’s throbbing head.
That bird did what she could— His blood, ’tis said,
Down dropping, dyed her tender bosom red.
Since then no wanton boy disturbs her nest,
Weasel nor wild cat will her young molest;
All sacred deem the bird of ruddy breast.”

J. H. ABRAHAM.

The other is the Redbreast’s Epitaph:—

“ Tread lightly here, for here, ’tis said,
When piping winds are hush’d around,
A small note wakes from underground,
Where now his tiny bones are laid.
No more in lone and leafless groves,
With ruffled wings and faded breast,
His friendless, homeless spirit roves.
Gone to the world where birds are blest,
Where never cat glides o’er the green,
Or schoolboy’s giant form is seen,
But love, and gay and smiling spring,
Inspire their little souls to sing.”

ROGERS.

REDSTART.

Ruticilla Phœnicurus ; *Becfin des murailles* ; *Garten rothling* ; *Roodstaartje* (Dutch).

Redtail ; Firetail ; Quickstart.

Bill, black ; legs and claws, brown ; head, back, and wing coverts, grey ; forehead, white ; breast, tail coverts, and tail, bright rust-red ; two middle tail feathers, brown. The female has not the white and black on the head. Length, five inches and a-quarter.

I hardly thought that I should have been able to have included this beautiful bird in the list of Irish Song Birds, as one which observers were at all likely to see and hear for themselves. Mr. Thompson writes of it as "a very rare visitant to Ireland." He says that "this is singular, as it is a regular vernal migrant, not only to England, but to Scotland, and is met with from the borders to the extreme north of the latter country. Nowhere are there districts apparently better suited to this very handsome and interesting bird than in Ireland. I have always regretted its absence as a summer visitor, when meeting with it in localities of various character in England." Mr. Watters says : "This elegantly formed species is one of extreme rarity in its occurrence, and has only been obtained in three or four instances in different localities on the island. Interesting in habits, and beautiful in plumage, it is a matter of regret that it is not a companion with the many other summer visitants to our shores." Mr. Seebohm remarks that "it is virtually absent in Ireland ;" and Mr. A. G. More speaks of it as "a very rare visitor, occurring in two or three instances in summer or autumn."

R. D. STARR.

It was, therefore, with much pleasurable excitement that, in company with my friend, Mr. Charles Pownall, I accepted an invitation from Miss Massy, of Coolakeigh, Enniskerry, to visit the Deer Park, Powerscourt, and see the Redstarts, male, female, young ones, nest, and all. Were it not that I had known Miss Massy for several years as an indefatigable and really skilful observer, I should have feared that some mistake had been made, as the news seemed almost too good to be true; but with her diagnosis we felt that all must be right. We went, we saw, and were delighted; and I hurried to communicate the pleasant tidings to my kind friend, Mr. A. G. More.

All this occurred on June 18, 1885, and on June 27, Mr. More accompanied my wife and myself to the historic spot, to see, and hear, and judge for himself. There we found Miss Massy awaiting us; the old birds were in the trees, the young birds were with them, save one which Miss Massy had taken in the hope of rearing it by hand, and we had excellent opportunities of seeing both cock and hen, and of being witnesses to the first instance on record of the Redstart's breeding in Ireland.

The credit of the discovery should, I think, be shared by Mr. Anton, the head keeper at the Deer Park, who first saw the bird, "with a tail like fire," as it fluttered around the cage of a siskin, which he placed on the wall near his house, and by my kind friend Miss Massy, whose knowledge enabled him to identify it as the Redstart, a bird previously unknown in the district.

The Redstart is a migratory bird, arriving usually early in April, and departing late in September. Like other migratory birds, it returns year after year to the same locali-

ties, to build its nest and rear its young. Its habits in many respects resemble those of the robin, and its call-note, which has been written down as "wee-tit-tit," or "oi-chit," reminds one of the shilling note of that bird, and also of the "pse-chip-chip" of the spotted fly-catcher. I have myself heard the bird sing but once, and that in Gunton Park, Norfolk. To me its song, though short, seemed very pleasing and melodious; it may be heard sometimes at night, and also whilst the bird is on the wing.

The Redstart is an insectivorous bird, and feeds on flies, gnats, larvæ, and small butterflies; fruit and berries are also sometimes eaten. It has often been said that the frequent movements of the tail made by this bird were in a lateral, and not a vertical direction; this, however, seems to be a mistake. Mr. Seebohm says that "the tail is waved like a fan, and always vertically;" and this I believe to be the case.

The Redstart is sometimes, when a cage-bird on the Continent, let loose to catch flies; and there is a story that one caught 600 in one hour, or about ten per minute. Services of this kind would be at times much prized in our own country.

As the Redstart is "a bird of ruins and rocks," as well as of orchards and gardens, its nest is frequently found in holes in old walls, as at Powerscourt, as well as in hollow trees; and there the eggs of a lightish greenish-blue colour, unspotted, and varying very much in number, are deposited. Mr. Dixon has taken as many as twelve from one nest, the bird continuing to lay an egg after egg disappeared.

The Black Redstart (*Ruticilla tithys*) is, according to Mr. More, “a rare winter visitor, occurring chiefly on the east and south coasts,” and, of course, never breeding in this country. Mr. Allan Ellison has kindly forwarded to me a fine specimen of a male which he shot at Shillelagh, County Wicklow, in December, 1885.

This bird is remarkably plentiful on the banks of the Rhine, and especially between Köln and Mainz. Its plumage is of a bluish gray, the bill, cheeks, throat, and breast, black; tail, light chestnut-red; white patch on the wings. It is sometimes called the Tithys Redstart, most probably from a Greek word for a small bird of that description.

STONECHAT.

Saxicola rubicola; *Tarrier rubecole*; *Schwarzkehliger*.

Stonechatter; Blackcap.

Beak, legs, and claws, black; head, neck, and back, also black; sides of the neck, white like a collar; breast, beneath, bright reddish chestnut; tail, almost black. The female has the upper parts brown instead of black, the collar less distinct, and the red on the breast fainter. Length, five inches and a-quarter.

This very attractive little bird enlivens with its presence nearly all the wastes and commons of our country. Like the whinchat, the gorse, or furze, as we call it in Ireland, is its favourite resting-place, and “the topmost twig” is frequently adorned by our little friend with his black head,

white collar, and ruddy breast; whilst his well-known voice, like the clicking of two stones together, is repeatedly heard as he flits on before us from one "coign of vantage" to another. I have but very rarely heard the song of the Stonechat. It is uttered in a very weak, low voice, and generally whilst the bird is on the wing; but of the "click, click," or "twit-click-click," he is by no means chary.

It has been remarked that Stonechats always perch on the top of the bushes, and also on the tops of the dock-weeds, when they alight; and we may notice cock and hen a few feet apart in this conspicuous position, each jerking its tail, and clicking responsively—the male bird, of course, in a louder tone—the first "music of the wastes," except perhaps the skylark's song. It has been said that, strictly speaking, the term "Stonechat" should have been given to the wheatear—a bird which never perches on trees or bushes, but always upon stones, or on the ground. It is probable, however, that the clicking notes of the Stonechat led to this appellation being conferred upon it, instead of that of the "bushchat," which has been proposed by some ornithologists.

The food of the Stonechat consists in summer of grubs and insects of various kinds; in winter it may partake of a few seeds. It is, however, a most inoffensive, as well as a really beautiful little bird, and one which greatly enlivens the solitude of our commons and mountain sides.

The nest is often made upon the ground, always near it, and is very carefully concealed, especially when placed, as it sometimes is, in a furze bush; there the eggs, five in number, are laid, usually towards the close of April. They are of a greenish-blue colour, with spots upon the larger end of reddish-brown.

In most parts of Europe, the Stonechat, like the whinchat and wheatear, is a bird of passage ; but owing to our comparatively mild winters, it remains all the year round in Ireland, and is, I think, equally plentiful at all seasons.

WHINCHAT.

Saxicola rubetra ; *Tarier ordinaire* ; *Wiesenschmätzer*.

Furzechatter.

Beak, legs, and claws, black ; upper plumage, dark brown ; broad white streak over the eye ; throat and breast, fawn colour ; patch under the eye of dark brown ; chin, white, with streak extending beneath the dark patch ; tail feathers, white at the base, but brown at the extremity ; white spot on wings. Length, five inches.

The Whinchat is a much less common bird in Ireland than either the stonechat or wheatear. It resembles the former of these birds ; the colouring in the male, however, is not so striking, and the white stripe over the eye makes it readily distinguishable. I am not quite sure that I have ever observed the Whinchat, although for some years I have been on the look-out for it. In the neighbourhood of Dublin it is quite a rare bird, but has been noticed by my friend, Captain Cary, at the Green Hills, not far from Tallaght, where I hope to look again for it this year.

Mr. Thompson says that the Whinchat is common in Donegal, Kerry, and other Irish counties ; but I have never noticed it in the counties of Waterford, Wicklow, Kildare, &c., with which I am myself familiar. The fault may

probably be my own, as until lately I have not been on the look-out for it, believing that it seldom, if ever, occurred in Ireland.

The Whinchat, unlike the stonechat, is a migratory bird. It usually arrives early in April, and departs before the end of September, and, whilst it remains with us, frequents the wild common, where it particularly affects the dock-leaves, which seem to divide its allegiance with the whin or furze bushes, from which it derives its name.

The call-note of this bird much resembles the words, "a-teck, a-teck." It has, however, besides a brief and hurried song, often uttered whilst the bird is in the air; the motions of the tail and wings whilst perching resemble those of the stonechat. Its food consists of insects of various kinds, seized usually whilst on the wing. It builds its nest either very low down in some bush, or on the ground; it is difficult of discovery, and the bird is said to approach it by a labyrinthine track. The eggs, five or six in number, are of a blue or bluish-green colour, spotted or speckled at the larger end.

WHEATEAR.

Saxicola ænanthe; *Motteux cul blanc*; *Der Steinschmätzer*.

Fallowchat; Stonechat; Stonechecker; Whitetail.

Bill, black; legs and claws, brownish-black; head, crown, neck, on the back, and nape, bluish-grey; black

patch encircling the eye ; chin, throat, and stripe over the breast, cream colour ; breast, pale brown ; upper tail coverts, white, and very conspicuous when the bird is on the wing ; tail, black. The female has a brown, instead of a black, mark around the eye, and her colours are generally fainter than those of the male. Length, six and a-half inches.

This pretty bird is usually the first of the summer migrants in the early spring ; it generally precedes the chiff-chaff by a few days, and makes its appearance in the vicinity of Dublin about the third or fourth week in March. It has been supposed that a few Wheatears, as well as a few chiffchaffs, remain all the year round in sheltered parts of the country ; if true, this would account for their occasional appearance long before the time of the spring migration has arrived.

Some have thought that the name “ Wheatear ” is only a corruption of *white ear*, given to it from its spring plumage. The white on the upper tail coverts, however, is very conspicuous as the bird is on the wing, and would suggest rather the term “ white tail,” by which the bird is known in some parts of England.

Mr. Thompson tells us that in the north of Ireland this bird is called the “ stonechecker,” from its note “ check, check,” and also from its generally perching on stones. In Kerry it is called “ custeen-fayelough,” meaning “ the cunning little old man under the stone,” and elsewhere “ casur cloch,” or stone-hammer.

I have never heard the Wheatear sing ; but its song is said to be “ wild and varied.” The note, like the knocking of two stones together, is, however, constantly heard, the

bird jerking its tail and depressing its wings at every utterance.

Mr. Booth says that in Scotland there are two kinds of Wheatear, identical in plumage, but differing in size; that the larger variety arrives later on in the year in the Highlands, on its way farther north, and perches on the tops of trees, where the smaller bird is never seen. This view, however, has not, as far as I am aware, been corroborated by any other writer. In some parts of Scotland this bird is called "the shepherd," in others, "the clacheran," and on the mountain tops, when the thick Scotch mist is falling, as you approach the pile of stones on the summit, you hear the "clacheran" before you can see the cairn; it pilots the travellers to the cairn, and seems "as if it were breaking the stones that are soon to cover you."

The rabbit burrows, sand hills, mountain sides, and turf bogs are usually tenanted by the Wheatear; and I have seldom walked along the strand at Malahide in the spring or summer, that my little friend has not flitted before me, full of life and animation, and of curiosity, too, as to my intentions respecting himself and his belongings.

The Wheatear was formerly in great request for the table in England; and it is said that even lately 1,840 dozen have been taken in traps for this purpose at Eastbourne. A leading firm in Brighton had, some years ago, no fewer than 60 dozen brought in in a single day. As a "tit-bit" it formerly rivalled, in the estimation of gourmands, the famous ortolan or green bunting.

The Wheatear is the strongest-winged bird of all the chats, and may be found as far north as Greenland and south as the Mediterranean; it is said also to be common in Egypt and the East generally. Insects are its staple

food, and these it often captures on the wing. The nest is usually found in some deserted rabbit burrow or under some large clod or stone. The eggs, five or six in number, are of a delicate pale blue colour.

ICTERINE WARBLER.

Hypolais Icterina ; *Becfin à poitrine jaune* ; *Garten Laubvogel*.

Bill, legs, and toes, yellowish-brown ; head, neck, and back, greenish ; throat and breast, pale yellow ; tail, brown. Length, five inches and a-quarter.

The Icterine Warbler is said to derive its name from the Greek word *ikteros*, meaning bile or jaundice,* because it charms away that unpleasant disorder, or more probably from the yellow colour alluded to in its French name. It has occurred but once in Ireland, having been shot at Dunsinea by Mr. J. G. Rathborne, June 8, 1856. Mr. Rathborne was attracted by the splendid song of the bird, which was quite new to him, and was enabled to secure the only specimen ever obtained on Irish soil. Every now and then, as he watched it, it rose up from the willow trees, after the manner of the flycatchers, to secure its prey, and then returned singing to the branch again. In England the first specimen of the Icterine Warbler was obtained at Hythorne, near Dover, in 1848 ; and, after a long lapse of years, I understand that the bird was observed several times in 1884.

* “ A yellow bird which, if one sees, being sick of the yellow jaundice, the person recovers, and the bird dieth.”

Mr. Gould, writing before the occurrence of this bird in England, says: "It is somewhat singular that this species, so familiar to every naturalist on the Continent, and which inhabits the gardens and hedgerows of those portions of the coasts of France and Holland which are immediately opposite to our own, should not, like the rest of its immediate congeners, more diminutive in size, and consequently less capable of performing extensive flights, have occasionally strayed across the Channel, and enlivened our glens and groves with its rich and charming song, which is far superior to that of either of the three other species of the group."

On 26th July, 1882, I had the pleasure of hearing the remarkable song of the Icterine Warbler, when on a short Continental tour with my boy. Strolling into the Bosch, as the public park at the Hague is named, and on the look-out for birds, we heard a bird begin to sing high up in one of the tall trees near a little brook or pond. The song was new to us both, and we listened attentively; at first it sounded to me somewhat like that of the thrush, and I thought that perhaps it might be the song of the red-wing; but after a few preliminary phrases, and two or three somewhat harsh notes, it burst into the most delightful bird song I have ever heard. This latter had the true nightingale ring, and yet the bird seemed to possess even greater powers of execution than his famed English rival. With extraordinary brilliancy and rapidity he ran up and down the scales, and concluded all too soon for his delighted auditory. As he ceased, we heard another fine song, though much inferior to that to which we had been listening, and which proceeded, as we believed, from a great reed warbler on the banks of the stream close by. Our knowledge of

Dutch being of a very limited nature, we were unable to ascertain the name of this great artist at the time, called, I believe, by the Hollanders, "geelborstje;" nor did I identify it until I read Dresser's description of the song of the Icterine Warbler. He quotes Mr. Collett, who, writing of its occurrence in Norway, says: "It is the very best of our songsters; its song not a little resembles that of the nightingale; but one finds in it again the ditty of the thrush." This description seems to me to be true to the life. The cry of the bird when its nest is approached is said to resemble the syllables "pi-ti-u-y"—a very significant cry indeed.

I was glad that we had an opportunity of hearing this bird, so familiar to me as having occurred in the neighbourhood of Dublin; and I cannot but regret its very rare occurrence in Great Britain, for to my mind, although its song wanted the liquidness of the nightingale, and was, perhaps, marred by a few discords in the shape of some harsh, strident notes, in general effect, although heard in the broad daylight, it seemed to be superior to that of Philomela herself.

In appearance the Icterine Warbler differs but little from the willow warbler and chiff-chaff. It is, however, a larger bird than either, and its bill is stouter, as in all aquatic warblers—a distinction to which my attention was lately drawn by my kind friend, Mr. A. G. More.

Should this bird again occur in Ireland, its wonderful song should at once reveal its presence; and let us hope that "the sweet singer" may be heard and appreciated by many admirers.

SEDGE WARBLER.

Acrocephalus Schænobænus ; *Becfin Phragmite* ; *Schilf Rohrsanger*.

Irish Nightingale.

Bill and claws, brown ; head, dark brown ; back, brown, tinged with grey ; throat, whitish ; breast, darker ; broad yellowish-white stripe over the eyes ; tail, brown, slightly rounded. Length, about four and a-half inches.

The Sedge Warbler may be said to be the only "Irish member" of the aquatic warblers, for the reed warbler, so well known in England, has been only once obtained in this country. The Sedge Warbler, on the contrary, is plentiful enough, and may be heard, if not seen, in the neighbourhood of nearly all our country ponds and streams, provided only that they afford sufficient shelter in the shape of reeds, sedges, and other aquatic plants. The term "Riverain Warblers," as distinguished from the sylvan, has been applied by Temminck to the Sedge Warbler and to other kindred birds, whose absence from our shores we can only lament, but not account for.

The Sedge Warbler usually arrives before the end of April, and leaves us again early in September ; its song may be heard shortly after its arrival, and the bird continues to sing up to the end of July, if not longer. Different estimates have been formed of the Sedge Warbler as a songster. Gilbert White calls it "a delicate polyglot," and says that "it sings incessantly day and night during the breeding-time, imitating the note of a sparrow, a swallow, a skylark," and that it "has a strange hurrying

manner in its song." He also says: "The sedge bird sings most part of the night, and when it happens to be silent, a stone or clod thrown into the bushes where it sits will immediately set it a singing, or, in other words, though it slumbers sometimes, yet as soon as it is awakened it reassumes its song." The strict truth of these remarks anyone can investigate for himself. I have often put them to the proof. The bird is indeed very bold, and when disturbed, instead of hiding in silence, or hurrying to escape, as other birds do, seems to turn round and soundly rate the invader.

The term "Irish nightingale" is frequently given to the Sedge Warbler; save, however, that it sings in the night, its notes bear no resemblance to those of the Philomel; at the same time, they are often pleasing, although they always seem to me to have a reedy flavour. Mr. Sweet gives the song proper as "chit, chit, chiddy, chiddy, chit, chit, chit;" it is, however, often interspersed with some melodious notes borrowed from the songs of other birds, the performer recurring every moment to his own, which is, no doubt, much superior in his estimation.

I was told some time ago that the nightingale had been heard singing not far from the Mageough Home, Palmerston Road, Rathmines, and that it could usually be heard at about 11 p.m. With two young friends I accordingly hastened to the trysting-place on the very next night, and there waited in anxious silence for the expected song. It came at last, the well-known reedy effusion of the "Irish nightingale," the indefatigable and ever wakeful Sedge Warbler.

If, however, the bird is unduly exalted by this high-sounding title, he is, on the other hand, as I have pointed

out elsewhere, often robbed of the credit really his due by the reed bunting, whose more conspicuous form enables him to appropriate the song of the Sedge Warbler, hidden in the heart of the bush, whilst he poses elegantly on the topmost spray. As a songster I should be inclined to place the Sedge Warbler after the willow warbler, and before the whitethroat; and, like the latter of these birds especially, it may often be heard to sing upon the wing, whilst in pursuit of those insects which form its staple food.

Mr. J. C. Atkinson calls the Sedge Warbler "this everlasting little songster." The "Irish nightingale" is, however, the title by which he is best known at this side of the Channel; and certainly, if unwearied persistency and marvellous mimicry are to be highly esteemed, he does his best to console us for the absence of "the noblest Roman of them all." The nest is usually in bushes, close to the ground, and near the water. The eggs, five or six in number, are whitish, with spots of dull brown.

GRASSHOPPER WARBLER.

Acrocephalus nævius; *Becfin locustelle*; *Busch-Rohrsänger*.

Cricket Bird; Brakehopper.

Bill and feet, brown; upper plumage, brown, with centres of feather darkest, so as to give the bird a spotted appearance; chin, throat, and breast, whitish; tail, long and cuneiform, and of a brown colour. Length, five and a-half inches.

The Grasshopper Warbler is a very rare bird in Ireland. Mr. Watters says of it: "It has never passed under my own observation, or that of Mr. Richard Glennon, who has had some forty years' experience of the distribution of our native and migratory species." Mr. Thompson, however, examined two specimens, one shot near Belfast, the other near Wexford by Mr. Poole, who remarked that it frequented the thorn bushes on a fence, and would sing while he was close to it, adding that "its peculiar rotatory song bears no greater resemblance to anything than to the running out of a slick wheel." The late Dr. Ball, father of our Astronomer Royal, often heard its curious voice in the neighbourhood of Youghal. It is a regular summer visitor to the County of Waterford.

For my own part, I have never seen the bird, and I believe that I heard it only on one occasion, in a field not very far from the Railway Terminus, Tramore, Co. Waterford. My friend, Miss Massy, however, is of opinion that it visits the neighbourhood of Bray Head for a short time every year. The fact that the bird is so seldom seen, and that when heard its note is ascribed to the common grasshopper, will probably account for its existence as an Irish Song Bird being usually unsuspected. Mr. Thompson quotes McSkimmins' *History of Carrickfergus*, in which it is remarked that this warbler "inhabits thickets and close hedges, and makes a noise in the summer evenings resembling the winding up of a clock, or the call of the common grasshopper." To my ears, on the solitary occasion referred to, it seemed to savour somewhat of the "churr" of the nightjar, but fainter, and in a higher key.

The Grasshopper Warbler often sings at night, and occasionally on the wing. "Nothing," says Gilbert White,

“can be more amusing than the whisper of this little bird, which seems to be close by, though at a hundred yards’ distance, and when close to your ear, is scarce any louder than when a great way off. The country people, when you tell them that it is a bird, will hardly give you credence.”

The late Rev. C. A. Johns, in his *British Birds in their Haunts*, gives a most interesting description of an interview with the Grasshopper Warbler, from which I venture to make a few extracts :—

“I never passed through a certain valley and wood on the skirts of Dartmoor without feeling myself compelled to stop once and again to listen to the monotonous whirr of what I had been told and what I believed to be the note of the large green grasshopper or locust. ‘Monotonous’ is, perhaps, not the right word to use ; for an acute ear can detect in the long unmusical jar a cadence descending, sometimes a semitone, and occasionally almost a whole note ; and it seemed beside to increase in loudness for a few seconds, and then to subside a little below the ordinary pitch. The song of this bird is but an exaggeration of the grasshopper’s note, and resembles the noise produced by pulling out the line from the winch of a fishing-rod ; no less continuous is it, nor more melodious. On one occasion in Hertfordshire, I crept quietly towards the spot whence the noise proceeded ; the sound ceased, and the movement of a twig directed my attention towards a particular bush, on which I saw a little bird about as big as a hedge sparrow, quietly and cautiously dropping, branch by branch, to the ground. In a few minutes I observed it again a few yards off, creeping with a movement resembling that of the nuthatch up another bush. Having reached to nearly the

summit, it became motionless, stretched out its neck, and, keeping its mandibles continuously open and slightly elevated, commenced its trill again ; then it shuffled about for some seconds, and repeated the strain."

The Grasshopper Warbler belongs to the aquatic warblers, and therefore is usually found in marshy districts or in thickets on the banks of streams, where it creeps about like a mouse. In the case of the bird heard by Mr. Johns, however, he tells us that it was several miles from any stream. I hope to make further acquaintance with this most interesting bird, and I shall feel greatly obliged for any communication respecting its occurrence in Ireland. The nest is placed on the ground, and the eggs, five or six in number, are of a white colour, with specks of brownish-red. In its general appearance the bird resembles the sedge warbler ; but it has no superciliary streak, and has a much longer tail, rounded, and of a "cuneiform character." It is of course insectivorous.

Since this notice was written, I have learned from that laborious ornithologist, Mr. R. Ussher, J.P., that the bird regularly frequents the neighbourhood of his residence, Cappagh, Co. Waterford ; and the Rev. W. Flemyng, Rector of Clonegam, has repeatedly observed it near Portlaw, in the same county.

WHITETHROAT.

Sylvia rufa ; *Becfin Grisette* ; *Weisskelchen*.

Nettle-creeper ; Haychat ; Polly Whitethroat ; Peggy
Chaw.

Bill, legs, and claws, brown ; head and neck, grey ; back and wing coverts, reddish-brown ; chin and throat, white ; breast, whitish, tinged with rose-colour, which is wanting in the female. Length, five inches and a-half.

Next to the willow warbler, this interesting bird seems to be the most numerous and most widely distributed of our summer migrants ; yet it is one quite unknown to the public generally, whose fauna as regards song birds is limited to the blackbird, thrush, lark, robin, linnet, and wren. It has been well said that this is a bird “ of the thickets and the lanes ; ” in this country perhaps, more exactly, of “ the hedges and the lanes ; ” for there are few hedges unfurnished with a Whitethroat, and few country lanes in which this merry warbler may not be heard and seen as he flits from side to side, sallying ever and anon into the air, and all the time apparently “ inebriated with the exuberance of his own verbosity.”

The song of the Whitethroat is by no means of the first order ; at the same time, it is to me always a pleasing sound, for to my mind a sort of golden thread, peculiar to nearly all the warblers, seems to run through it. It is of a peculiarly hurried nature ; and the bird whilst singing erects the feathers on his head, distends his throat, and gesticulates with great vehemence. I have often noticed that the song in some Whitethroats sounds something like

“see to the hay in the meadow;” and snatches of this ditty may be heard as the bird darts over your head, or watches your approach from some bush a few yards in advance of your path. If you approach it very closely, the song suddenly ceases, and instead you hear a warning cry very like the word “chaw” uttered in a solemn voice; hence the name, “Peggy Chaw,” sometimes given to the bird.

Walking down a country lane, silence may reign until it is broken by this warning note, which, uttered quite close to you, has sometimes almost a startling effect; if you remain quiet, and keep watch for a moment, you will see the little Whitethroat dealing round to have a good look at you, or seated motionless on a twig, with his eye fastened suspiciously upon you, and uttering every now and then this menacing monosyllable. I have on more than one occasion, however, heard the Whitethroat warble so delightfully as to make me believe for the moment that I was listening to some greatly superior songster; on these occasions the bird usually interpolates the notes of other birds with his own, and proves himself to be, like the sedge warbler, a really good mocking-bird.

The term “Nettle Creeper” has been applied to the Whitethroat, from the fact that it frequents hedges where nettles abound, and that its nest may often be found amongst their stems. In Ireland, however, the bird is usually called the Polly Whitethroat, or, as I heard it once styled by a bird-dealer, “the Great Impayrial Polly Whitethroat.” The food of the Whitethroat consists of insects, and Mr. Stebolan tells us that the “daddy long legs” is an especial dainty. It also is fond of a few currants, raspberries, and other fruits when in season. This bird arrives

towards the close of April, and leaves us again about the end of August or beginning of September, although it is found in England later than this.

Mr. Thompson mentions that, in a catalogue of Irish birds, published in 1772, the following entry may be found :—" *Motacilla Curruca*, white-bellied nightingale, seen about Ballydangan in May." The bird is now, however, to be found in all parts of the island; but as far as I am aware, the Lesser Whitethroat (*Sylvia Sylviella*) has never been observed in Ireland. The term *Babillard* is applied to both birds in France.

The eggs of the Whitethroat are usually four or five in number, of a greenish-white colour, speckled with grey.

GARDEN WARBLER.

Sylvia salicaria ; *Fauvette des Jardins* ; *Garten Grasmücke*.

Greater Pettychaps.

Bill, tail, and claws, brown; head, neck, and nape, greyish-brown; chin, throat, and breast, whitish, tinged with rust-colour; wings, brown, first feather very short; tail, dusky brown. Length, under six inches.

I can say but little of this bird, for I have never been fortunate enough to see or hear it, although for some years very anxious to do both. Mr. A. G. More, in his *List of Irish Birds*, speaks of it as "a rare summer visitor, and very local. Has been found breeding in the counties of Antrim, Fermanagh, Tipperary, and probably Cork." Sir Victor Brooke, Colebrook, Fermanagh, thus writes to me of

its occurrence : “ It is a regular summer visitor in the north of Ireland, but confined mostly to places where the woods are natural, fir plantations not affording it the indispensable thick, tangled undergrowth it loves. In consequence of this, it is not common.”

The Garden Warbler is a migratory bird, and arrives in England before the end of April, the male, as is usual with the warblers, somewhat in advance of the female. It is rare in the west of England, and is said to be absent from Wales. Mr. Harting, however, thinks that it has probably been overlooked by the comparatively few naturalists to be found in the latter country. The same writer, in his *Sketches of Bird Life*, quotes the following estimate of its song, by Mr. Robert Gray, who frequently heard it in Scotland :—

“ In the sheltered and wooded districts of the midland and southern counties it is one of the most attractive songsters, tuning its loud and gleeful pipe on the top of some fruit tree an hour or two after daybreak, and again about dusk. These love-notes, however, are not of long continuance, for the bird becomes silent after the young are hatched, unless a second brood is reared, when the same wild, yet mellow, blackbird-like song is again for a short time heard.”

The Rev. F. O. Morris thus estimates its vocal powers :—

“ It is one of those species which, as the Psalmist says, ‘ sing among the branches ;’ and the note, which is heard up to August, is exquisitely sweet, rich, and flute-like. Its voice is mostly uttered from the depth of some shady recess, but sometimes also from the top of a moderate-sized tree. Some of the notes are low and soft, others

loud and clear, and the harmony of the whole falls with a most pleasing cadence on the ear of the listener."

I hope that I may be privileged next year to hear this charming song, and judge for myself of its merits.

The nest is generally built in a low bush, and the eggs, four or five in number, are of a whitish colour, spotted with two shades of brown; they much resemble those of the blackcap.

NIGHTINGALE.

Philomela luscinia; *Rossignol ordinaire*; *Nachtigall*.

Bill, dark brown; legs and claws, pale brown; upper plumage, chestnut brown; chin, throat, and breast, whitish; tail, red brown, somewhat rounded at the end. Length, over six inches.

The Nightingale hardly deserves to be included in the list of Irish songsters, although a single specimen, which I have lately seen preserved in the Museum, Queen's College, Cork, is said to have been obtained at the Old Head of Kinsale. I was, therefore, glad to make this an opportunity for noticing the most delightful of British songsters; without it, my book would resemble that representation of *Hamlet*, from which, "by particular desire," the part of *Hamlet* was omitted.

The partial distribution of the Nightingale is a very curious circumstance. It has been said never to have arrived further north in England than Carlisle and Scarborough, its most northerly breeding-place being a wood

near Doncaster; and yet it is found in Siberia, in Russia, and in Sweden. In Scotland a pair are said to have bred in Calder Wood, in West Lothian. In Wales it is unknown, and so it was in Ireland until the single occurrence noted.

It has been supposed by some naturalists that the migrations of the bird are almost due north and south, and that it never passes to the westward of three degrees west longitude; this would exclude part of Devonshire, all Cornwall, part of Cheshire, and all North Wales. The only reason that has been assigned for this curious fact is that the West of England and Wales do not produce the vegetation upon which the insects feed that constitute the staple food of the Nightingale. Others have thought that this bird usually avoids a hilly country; that it flies low, and that the east of England is best suited to its habits, as being for the most part flat. It has been noticed also that where hills do occur, the Nightingale seeks other localities, and is found for the most part in the cultivated plains. Rumours that a Nightingale has been heard singing are common enough from time to time both in Wales and in Ireland; but on inquiry it has always been found that some other night singer has been mistaken for the queen of song.

The Nightingale usually arrives in England about the middle of April, the males, as is the case with many migratory birds, arriving a few days before the females. Mr. Harting mentions that in 1867 three London bird-catchers, between April 13 and May 2, took 225 Nightingales; and the whole of these, with five or six exceptions only, were cock birds. It is considered a matter of great importance to capture the male birds before the arrival of

the females, as, if taken after they have paired, they invariably die in captivity.

Since the increase of ornamental gardens in the neighbourhood of London, Nightingales have become comparatively numerous, and have been frequently heard in the Botanical Gardens, Regent's Park, Victoria Park, and in Kensington Gardens. The song ceases at the close of the first week in June, and Nightingales are, therefore, only in song for about seven weeks in the year.

The song of the Nightingale has for ages been the theme of the poets,* and many of their theories are new to the ornithologist. They speak of the bird as the only songster of the night, and as singing only by night. They always make the singing bird a female, and she is "bereaved," "lorn," "solitary," "mournful;" whereas, as we know, the male Nightingale alone is the songster, and he sings "always to his brooding mate." Shelley seems to make the bird a lark, for he speaks of her as "climbing in circles the windless sky." Even the great Shakespeare himself is credited with the idea that the sadness of the Nightingale's song was partly due to the fact that, as she sang, she "leaned her breast up till a thorn." For so Lucrece:—

" And whiles against a thorn thou bear'st thy part
To keep thy sharp woes waking."

So, too, Pomfret:—

" The first music of the grove we owe
To mourning Philomel's harmonious woe;
And while her grief in charming notes express'd,
A thorny bramble pricks her tender breast."

* See "The Poet's Birds."

Mr. Harting thinks that Sir Thomas Browne was probably right when he ascribed the origin of this odd idea to the fact that "the Nightingale placeth her some prickles on the outside of her nest, or roosteth in thorny, prickly places, where serpents may least approach her." It has been noticed, however, in the *Zoologist* for 1862, by Rev. A. C. Smith, that on two occasions a strong thorn was found projecting upwards in the centre of the Nightingale's nest, the result, of course, of accident; and Mr. Hewitson has adduced similar instances in the case of the hedge sparrow.

So much has been written about the song of the Nightingale, that I think it unnecessary to say much upon the subject. The two things that most impressed me in it were its liquidness and its power. In the first of these qualities I believe that no songster can approach the Nightingale; and with regard to the latter, I was astonished to find, in listening to a Nightingale in England, at Anglesey, near Alverstoke, when on a visit to my old pupil, F. J. Barton, that the concluding notes were taken up by an echo. I at first imagined that I was listening to another bird at a distance; but I soon found that this was not the case.

Mr. Frank Buckland, in his *Notes to White's Selborne*, gives Mr. Davy's reading of the song of the Nightingale, as follows:—

"It commences with 'wheeting' and 'kurring,' which may be thus written :

'Wheet, wheet, kure, k-u-u-r-r.'

The song after that commences :

'Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet,

Jug, jug, jug, jug, jug,

Swot, swot, swot, swotty.'

They lie a long time on these notes, finishing up with 'swotting' and 'kurring.' The 'sweet' is pronounced in a plaintive manner; the 'jug' is quick, like a dog barking."

The call-note "sweet" is much akin to the "whit" of the wood warbler and willow warbler, and the "hoo-id" of the chiff-chaff; it is, however, always in the Nightingale followed by a warning "kurr," which somewhat reminds me of the whitethroat's utterances.

The Nightingale sings by day as well as by night; but in the multitude of songsters in May and June his notes are often overlooked. I heard a perfect babel of bird-songs some years ago in the Isle of Wight. There were not a few Nightingales' voices amongst them; but they had by no means the same effect as when heard in the stillness of the summer night. For my own part, I believe that if our blackbird were to sing at night, his song would be almost as much appreciated as that of England's famous warbler.

The most probable reason for the absence of the Nightingale from Scotland, Devonshire, Cornwall, North Wales, Ireland, and other places, is that the small beetles and caterpillars upon which it feeds are not to be found in these localities; various attempts have been made to induce young birds to remain in Scotland and elsewhere, but always without success.

As the habits of the Nightingale most closely resemble those of the robin, the eggs of the latter have sometimes been taken away, and those of the Nightingale put in their stead, in the hope that the young birds would return year after year to the place of their birth, as we know that swifts, swallows, and other birds do; but this expectation has,

always been disappointed. Sir Robert Jardine offered one shilling a-piece for all the Nightingales' eggs that could be procured, and sent a great number to his country seat near Edinburgh, where they were placed in robins' nests. In many cases the young birds were hatched and reared. They flew about in the vicinity for some weeks after, and when the period of migration arrived, departed to return no more.

So many Nightingales are captured on their arrival in England, that it has been supposed that the birds must breed in their winter quarters, or the supply could never be maintained. Mr. Blyth, however, declares "that migratory birds, with the exception of two species of sand martin, do not even pair until they have returned to their summer haunts."

It seems almost too much to hope that this famous songster will ever be naturalized in Ireland. I trust, however, that many of my readers may be privileged to hear it in England or elsewhere, and as they listen to those "sweet descants," join with "rare old Izaak" in saying, "Lord, what music hast Thou provided for the saints in heaven, when Thou affordest bad men such music on earth!"

BLACKCAP WARBLER.

Sylvia atricapilla: Fauvette à tête noire; Schwarzkopf.

Bill and feet, black; head and crown, black, but in the female, chocolate brown; back, brownish ash-colour; breast, ash-colour, white lower down; tail, brown and somewhat forked. Length, over five and a-half inches.

This delightful songster is unhappily very rare in Ireland. Mr. Thompson mentions several instances of its occurrence in different localities, and tells us that he heard its song for the first time in Shane's Castle Park, County Antrim. He says: "When accompanied by Mr. Selby and the Rev. Edward Bigge, of Merton College, Oxford, the song of a bird which I had not before heard attracted me; and the attention of the former gentleman being called to it, he stated it to be unquestionably that of the Blackcap, with which he was quite familiar. On the following day, we heard the song of another repeated for a long time in Massareene Park, on the other side of the lake. Neither songster was seen."

Some years ago one of my pupils shot a young Blackcap near the saw mills on the River Dodder, about three miles from Dublin, and forwarded it to me. Not very long after I received another specimen, shot by Mr. Blandford, at Oldecastle, County Meath. I was therefore anxious to see and hear the bird for myself, and, lecturing on birds at St. Werburgh's Temperance Association, under the presidency of the Rev. Canon Greene, I mentioned that there were some birds in Ireland I was most desirous to observe, in particular the Blackcap, wood warbler, garden warbler, woodlark, and ring ousel, and stating that I should be happy to give a small reward to anyone who would tell me the localities where they might be found. A few evenings afterwards, having had some new palings erected between our garden at Elm Park and the front lawn, I was sedulously engaged in painting them green when I observed a respectable-looking young lad coming up the avenue; laying down the paint-brush, which had already done some execution on my own apparel, I awaited his approach.

“Have I the pleasure of addressing Dr. Benson?” said he. I stated my conviction that he had. “I was at your lecture the other evening,” said he, “and I want no reward for telling you where at least one of the birds you named, the Blackcap, is certain to be found; for I have often listened to it there.” “And where is that?” I rejoined. “Near St. Valerie,” said he, “on the road from Bray to the Dargle. I have often stood on the bridge and heard it sing.” I thanked him heartily, and said that I would go out almost immediately, in the hope of hearing it too. And then entering into some conversation with my kind informant, I said, “I suppose that you are engaged at business during the day.” He said, “Yes; that he had come up from the County Cork to the great city.” And then I went on: “In what line are you then?” He answered at once, “In the same line as you are.” It occurred to me that he meant that as I was a poor school-master, he, too, was something in the scholastic way; but to make sure, I added, “And what line is that?” “*The oil and colour line,*” said he; “for I am an apprentice in Brooks and Thomas’”—one of the largest Dublin houses engaged in the painting and papering business. The wit and readiness of the answer struck me as irresistibly humorous, as I stood with my paint-pot and brush at my feet, and the stains of green paint here and there on my face, and hands, and clothes; and I can never hear or think of the Blackcap since without recalling my young friend, through whose means I first made the acquaintance, in Ireland, of this unrivalled songster. I ought to add that, a few days after, I went out to Bray, and stood on the bridge near St. Valerie; and although I did not hear the Blackcap there, yet I did hear it a very few minutes’ walk

further on, just inside the entrance gate to Lord Monck's demesne at the Dargle, and I have gone to hear it there every season since.

It is remarkable that Mr. Barrington, of Fassaroe, a well-known naturalist, had noted its breeding in his grounds during successive years; and this would show that this particular locality is much favoured by those birds, as Fassaroe is only a very short distance from the Dargle demesne. I have never been able to hear the Blackcap elsewhere in Ireland; and having repeatedly gone over the ground, I am of opinion that whilst there were two Blackcaps in the neighbourhood, there was but one wood warbler, a still rarer bird, which I had also the good fortune to hear for the first time in this country when I took the hint given me by the young gentleman "in the same line as myself."

The song of the Blackcap is, to use a phrase of Mr. Harting, "simply delightful." There is something wonderfully rich and mellow in it; but to hear it in perfection, the bird must stop and warble at some length: for when, searching for food, it roams half hopping and half creeping through the trees, it only emits a few rich notes, which can give but a faint idea of the real power and beauty of the song. Some years ago I heard the Blackcap sing near Clifton Suspension Bridge. I had never heard the bird before, and thought at first that I was probably listening to the nightingale, until a sight of the bird shewed me my mistake. I do not think that I ever heard so lovely a bird song as that was; and it concluded with three trills which surpassed anything I had ever heard before, or indeed since, the song of the Icterine warbler alone excepted.

Many prefer the song of the thrush to that of the black-bird; and just the same taste probably leads them to prefer the song of the nightingale to that of the Blackcap. But for my own part, the blackbird's and the Blackcap's songs touch my heart more than any other bird music I have ever heard. The black cap of the male makes him conspicuous enough for observation. The head of the female is brown, and she is said to be larger than the male—a very unusual circumstance in birds of this family.

The Blackcap usually arrives about the middle or end of April, and leaves us again in September; it ceases to sing about the first week in July. It has, strangely enough, sometimes been shot in winter; and Mr. Thompson mentions such instances of its occurrence near Raheny, Co. Dublin, near Clonmel, and also in the counties of Cork and Galway at this season.

The food of the Blackcap consists early in the year of insects and caterpillars; in July, however, it develops a taste for raspberries, and encourages its young in seeking similar dainties; for it is probably the greatest berry-eater of all our warblers. But who would grudge a few raspberries in return for such music as it has to give? The nest is generally placed in some low bush, sometimes in the holly, and at times among briars and brambles. The eggs, from four to six in number, are variously coloured, but usually whitish, with brown and black spots. The cock assists the hen in the task of incubation.

I hope that many of my readers may hear the delightful song of the Blackcap, "full, sweet, deep, loud, and wild," as Gilbert White describes it; and I think that they will hardly fail, if they try the neighbourhood of the Bangle and Emmiskerry in the sweet spring-time of the year.

WOOD WARBLER.

Phylloscopus sibilatrix; *Becfin sifleur*; *Wald Laubvogel*.

Larger Willow Wren; Yellow Wood Wren; Green Wren.

Bill, dark brown; legs, pale brown; upper plumage, bright yellowish-green; chin, throat, and breast, yellow; streak of bright yellow over the eye; under plumage, white. Length, five inches and a-quarter. May be distinguished from the willow wren by its larger size, brighter colour, and more slender shape.

Of the "three willow wrens" the Wood Warbler is the largest and the rarest. Mr. Thompson, in his *Birds of Ireland*, says that "it holds a very doubtful place in our fauna." Mr. Watters does not mention it at all. For my own part, I have only observed it in one locality, and almost exactly in the same place for two successive years (1882 and 1883). I was well acquainted with the song, having heard it near Beaumaris, and again at Oulton Hall, Norfolk. I was therefore greatly gratified when I heard it at the Dargle, not far from Lord Monck's entrance gate. I visited the glen several times in order to hear and see the bird, and brought some friends with me on two or three occasions for the same purpose. As far as I could judge, there was but one Wood Warbler at the Dargle in each year, probably the same bird, whilst there were two blackcaps. In 1884 I observed the blackcap again in the vicinity; but my search for the Wood Warbler was in vain. In 1885 I heard it once at the Glen of the Downs,

County Wicklow; it has also been heard at Shillelagh by Allan Ellison, in Donegal, and near Lough Erne.

It is not very easy sometimes to distinguish between the three willow wrens, save by the song, which differs widely in all three. It may be stated, however, that the Wood Warbler is the largest and the greenest of the three, that he has a better defined superciliary streak than the willow warbler, that he is much whiter on the breast and belly, and that when he first arrives, he is in his loveliest plumage of yellow and green. The chaff-chaff is a smaller and thinner bird; his legs, too, are dark brown, whilst those of the Wood Warbler and willow wren are a brownish flesh colour. Mr. Harting, in his valuable monograph on our *Summer Migrants*, states that, on examining a large series of willow wrens, he has come to the conclusion that, as regards the wings, the following formula may be relied on:—

Wood Warbler, 2nd feather equal to 4th; 3rd and 4th with outer webs sloped off towards the extremity.

Willow Warbler, 2nd equal to 6th; 3rd, 4th, and 5th sloped off.

Chaff-chaff, 2nd equal to 7th; 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th sloped off.

The song of the Wood Warbler deserves to be styled a remarkable rather than a melodious one; in my opinion it is by no means equal to that of the willow warbler. It has been well represented by the syllables, "tweet, tweet, tweet, teet, teet, teet, tee, tee, tee, ee, ee, ee," pronounced with a certain hissing sound—hence the terms *sibilatrix* and *siffler*—and hurried towards the close; as the bird sings, it seems much agitated, its throat distended, and its head turned from side to side. The term "shivering note"

has been applied to this song by Gilbert White and others, and with some propriety; the syllables mentioned before, however, seem to me exactly to describe it. After singing it sometimes utters a curious shrill cry, so very unlike the song as to lead one to believe that it must proceed from some other bird. When listening to this bird in Norfolk, I pointed out this peculiarity to my kind host, Mr. Bolton; but he could hardly credit what I said till he saw and heard for himself. Wood Warblers also have a "tweet" or "twe-it" which much resembles the "whit" of the willow warbler and "hoo-id" of the chiff-chaff.

Mr. A. G. More, F.L.S., in his list of Dublin birds, mentions the Wood Warbler as noticed by Mr. Blake Knox at Glen Druid, and at Derrybawn and Powerscourt, in the Co. Wicklow, by Mr. H. C. Hart; it is probable, however, the bird might be seen and heard in various other localities by competent observers, for a specimen was shot in the Co. Fermanagh by Sir Victor Brooke, in June, 1870. I should like very much to have an opportunity of exploring the woods and hills of some of our midland counties in May and June for this and one or two other birds which may possibly have escaped notice.

The Wood Warbler builds a domed nest, and on the ground, like the willow warbler; the entrance is at the side. The eggs, usually six in number, are white, profusely spotted with purple-brown.

WILLOW WARBLER.

Phylloscopus trochilus ; *Becfin Pouillot* ; *Laubvogel*.

Willow Wren ; Golden Wren ; Sallypecker ; Hay Bird.

Bill, dark brown ; upper plumage, dull olive-green ; chin and throat, whitish ; breast, lighter ; yellow streak over the eye. Length, about five inches.

This is perhaps the most delightful of all the warblers that visit this country, the blackcap only excepted ; and that sweet songster is so very rare as to be almost unknown to any but a few ornithologists ; but the little Willow Warbler is abundant everywhere ; his active form may be seen in almost every tree, and his sweet and gentle song enlivens every plantation in the country.

In Ireland this bird is generally known as the “sally-pecker,” and is one of our earliest visitants, arriving generally third in the list, the wheatear being first, and the chiff-chaff second. I have, however, on at least one occasion, noticed the arrival of the Willow Warbler in March ; in that year it preceded the chiff-chaff ; but it usually arrives about ten days or a fortnight after that pre-eminently “early bird.”

The Willow Warbler spends our winter season in Africa ; it is common in the valley of the Nile, and, according to Mr. Seeböhm, is found as far south as the Cape and the Transvaal. It is also found in Persia, India, and North America, but has not yet been observed in the Hebrides, although it has been seen occasionally in Orkney, and once at least in Shetland. In Ireland it is hard to say where it

is not found, and from April to July its song is perhaps the most frequent we hear.

The call-note of the Willow Warbler closely resembles that of the chiff-chaff, but is shorter, "whit" or "whid" instead of "hoo-id;" indeed this call, with modifications, seems common to the three willow wrens, as they have been so often called. The song is of a very sweet and plaintive description; it begins with syllables sounding something like "weechy, weechy," and consisting of about eight syllables altogether, and sometimes more; the ending varies. The bird ceases to sing towards the end of July, but often resumes its song in September, before its departure. The close observer will, however, note a change; it is more plaintive than before, and the ending, too, is different. To my mind there is something very pathetic in that autumn song; to me it seems always to close with the words, "But I am going, going."

Three reasons have been assigned for the name "Willow Warbler" or "willow wren." Yarrell thinks from the prevailing green colour of the bird. Mr. Thompson, in his *Birds of Ireland*, says: "This name was doubtless bestowed upon the bird originally on account of its partiality to willows, which I have frequently remarked, the twigs and branches of the common osier, abounding with aphides, being on such occasions its chief favourite." Mr. Harting, however, suggests that the name may have been bestowed from the circumstance that these little birds make their appearance just as the willow is budding. Gilbert White speaks of three willow wrens, the smallest, the middle, and the largest, meaning, doubtless, the chiff-chaff, the Willow Warbler, and the wood warbler. The last of these, as we have seen, is very rare in Ireland; but the other two are

the most widely distributed of all the warblers, the second being decidedly the more plentiful.

Mr. Harting mentions some instances which show that the Willow Warbler possesses powers of flight we could hardly conceive from merely witnessing the short excursions it makes in this country.

“ On the 23rd of April a willow wren came on board a vessel eighty miles from Malta, and fifty from Cape Passaro, the nearest land. Two days later another alighted on the rigging sixty miles from Calabria, and 135 from Mount Etna. On the 16th of April, eighty miles from Zante, and 130 from Navarino, a willow wren and a chiff-chaff were found dead on board, presumably from exhaustion, as they were apparently uninjured.”

I was, when a boy, for a long time unable to identify this pretty little bird; for, judging from the plates in works on ornithology, I expected it to be a much greener bird than it really is. To most observers it seems to be rather brownish on the back, with a pale breast, merging into silver lower down. The green is, however, as before remarked, very apparent in the wood warbler.

The nest is always made upon the ground, and usually in thick grass; it is invariably lined with feathers, whereas the nest of the wood warbler is lined with grass and hair; both nests are domed. The eggs, from five to seven in number, are white, speckled with rust-colour.

CHIFF-CHAFF.

Phylloscopus collybita ; *Beeftin véloce* ; *Weiden Laubvogel* ;
Tjif Tjaf (Dutch).

Sallypecker ; Lesser Pettychaps ; Least Willow Wren.

Bill, legs, and toes, dark brown ; upper plumage, dark olive-green ; faint streak over the eye ; chin, throat, and breast, dull white. Length, four inches and a-half.

This hardy little bird is one of the first to arrive on our shores in the early spring ; it usually makes its appearance in the neighbourhood of Dublin before the end of March. It seems strange that so small a bird should visit our shores at a time in which in most years winter still lingers ; it is not improbable, however, that some members of this species do not leave the British Isles at all, but remain in the southern parts of England until the first dawnings of the spring. A few birds of this species have thus been noticed in Cornwall ; and Mr. Dresser states that in January, 1872, he heard the well-known notes of the Chiff-chaff in the grounds surrounding the Crystal Palace at Sydenham.

If a few remain with us all the year round, however, there still can be no doubt that the Chiff-chaff is strictly a summer migrant, and that it is possessed of powers of endurance of cold and hardship which seem wonderful in so small and apparently fragile a bird.

In Ireland the song of the Chiff-chaff is one of the earliest harbingers of summer days ; and my good friend, the Astronomer Royal of Ireland, no mean authority on

birds, is wont to mark it by the presentation to a young friend in the neighbourhood of a book with the date of its first occurrence inscribed as "Chiff-chaff Day."

The notes from which this bird derives its name really constitute its song; they are usually interpreted as "chiff chaff, chiff chaff;" but many variations may be noted. At times it is "chiff chaff, chaff chaff;" at others, "chiff chaff, cherry, churry." Some think it more like "chink, chank;" whilst in Normandy the bird is called *compteur d'argent*, in allusion to its song. It seems not unlikely that this latter name has given its origin to the strange word "collybita," often applied to this bird, and apparently derived from the Greek word, *κολλυβιστής* (*kollubistes*), a money-changer. If we approach the Chiff-chaff closely, the song usually ceases, and instead of it we hear only a low, chattering sound, something like "cheep, cheep, cheep."

The alarm-note, according to Meyer, is represented by the word, "hood-id"—a note which can only be distinguished by a practised ear from that of the willow warbler.

The Chiff-chaff is by no means as plentiful in Ireland as the willow warbler; still it may be seen and heard in probably every county from time to time. It often frequents lofty trees, in which the latter bird is seldom found; and from their summit its tiny note, like a chime of bells, may be heard sometimes at a distance of half a mile. In the grounds surrounding Elm Park the willow warbler may be heard every day and all day from April to July; but we usually hear the Chiff-chaff only twice or thrice in the season, and generally just before its departure in September.

The food of this little bird consists entirely of insects, and Rev. J. G. Wood says that it saves many a good oak from destruction by devouring on its first arrival the caterpillars of the green oak moth; it also feeds on aphides and flies, which it may be seen catching on the wing. The Chiff-chaff has sometimes been called "the oven-builder," from the shape of the nest which it constructs. It is usually placed on the ground, but sometimes in a low bush, or in the stump of a tree. Its six eggs are white, with dark purple spots.

GOLDEN-CRESTED WREN.

Regulus cristatus; *Roitelet ordinaire*; *Goldköpfge*.

Bill, black; legs and claws, brown; crest, orange-yellow, with black band on each side; forehead, whitish; head, on the sides, yellowish; neck and back, olive-green; chin, throat, and breast, yellowish-grey; tail, dusky, with greenish-yellow margin. Length, three inches and a-half.

The Golden-crested Wren is the smallest European bird, and one of the most beautiful. Although a common bird in Ireland, it is probably more frequently overlooked than any of our resident song birds; few, indeed, save the ornithologist, seem to be aware of its existence here. It is well known that its numbers are greatly increased in Great Britain by the arrival in the autumn of hundreds of birds from the North of Europe; such an arrival of Gold-crests was witnessed by Mr. Selby on the Northumberland coast, where great numbers were so fatigued and overcome by a change of wind, or by the length of

their journey, as to drop the moment they reached land, incapable of further exertion.

The habits of the Gold-crest are very similar to those of the tits, and the bird might possibly be mistaken at a distance for a blue or a coal tit ; the notes, however, are different, and as you draw nearer, the crest on the head at once leads to its identification. Mr. Mudie remarks of the Gold-crest that "it whisks about, now on this side, now on that, more like a meteor than a being of solid matter;" and certainly there is something fairy-like in the attitudes and gestures of these little birds as they sport about the trees in small parties in the autumn and winter. The word "tiny" seems to me best to describe the bird itself and its song; the call-note somewhat resembles that of the tits—a "see, see," or "tzit;" but the song has often been compared to the music of tiny bells. Others have thought that there was something that reminded them of a wheel in its peculiar iteration, and this seems to me to be nearest the truth. It is heard very early in the year, and is sometimes uttered when the bird is on the wing.

The nest, which is a very beautiful one, is placed under the branch of a fir-tree, and generally near the end of the bough. It is made of wool and moss, is lined with feathers, and spiders' webs are used to compact the structure. The eggs, from six to ten in number, are of the size of peas, and generally of a pale white, speckled with brown or red.

WREN.

Troglodytes parvulus ; *Troglodyte ordinaire* ; *Zaunkönig*.

Bill, rather long and brownish ; upper plumage, reddish-brown, with bars of dark brown ; chin and throat, greyish ; light streak over the eye ; tail, short and erect. Length, less than four inches.

The little Wren is one of the smallest birds in the land. Always associated with Cock Robin, and by many supposed as Jenny Wren to be a near connection of that favourite bird, if not indeed his wife, the Wren by no means shares his popularity in Ireland, but is contrariwise persecuted, for reasons hereafter to be mentioned, with unrelenting ferocity.

The Wren is widely distributed in the old world, ranging from Scandinavia in the north to Algeria in the south ; and it is remarkable that Europe, Asia, and Africa present us with but this one specimen of the group of birds to which it belongs, the bird called the Northern Wren occurring only in Iceland, the Faroes, and a few other islands. It has been thought by Mr. Seebohm and others that the Wren in the island of St. Kilda differs in some particulars from that of the mainland. It has, however, I believe, been decided by most ornithologists that these differences are insufficient to constitute it a distinct species. The active figure of the hardy little Wren, and its loud and cheerful song, may be seen and heard in every lane and hedgerow, and by every cottage-side in Ireland.

The song of the Wren somewhat resembles that of the canary, and is wonderfully loud for so small a bird. It is usually uttered from the topmost twig in the hedge, through which the bird has been, mouse-like, threading its way, and when ended, the little warbler again disappears for a time.

I seldom hear a Wren without remembering the late Chief Justice Whiteside's definition of a true orator—"He has something to say; he says it, and then at once sits down." The Wren's cry of alarm sounds something like "chit, chit," uttered in a sustained chattering tone, and hence probably the sobriquet, "Kitty" Wren, sometimes given to the bird. Although by no means similar, I constantly find people who are unable to distinguish between the songs of the hedge sparrow, Wren, and willow warbler.

Two or three curious facts about the nest of the Wren have frequently been made subject of remark: one is that the Wren adapts the materials of the exterior of the nest to the place where it is constructed, so as to avoid all those contrasts of colouring which might attract passers-by, and thus endanger its safety. For instance, if placed in a haystack, the outside will be composed of hay; if on a mossy bank, of moss, or under a tree, of twigs, and so on. Mr. Harting mentions a case in which a Wren built a nest on the stump of a tree, and hatched out its young ones. Next year it built another on the top of the old one, and thus inhabited "a storied house."

Another peculiarity is that the bird sometimes constructs several nests in spring; these are not intended for incubation, but are evidently meant for "houses of refuge," the bird removing from one to another, as may seem desirable in the wintry weather. These "cocks' nests," as they are usually called, are, however, thus accounted for by a writer in the *Magazine of Natural History*:—"During the period of incubation, the male, apparently from a desire to be doing something, constructs as many as half-a-dozen nests in the vicinity of the first, none of which are lined with feathers; and whilst the first nest is so carefully

concealed as to be seldom found, the latter are very frequently seen."

On the other hand, it is well known that Wrens crowd together in severe weather, and these nests are probably designed to afford shelter and accommodation when needed in such trying times.

The nest is a large one for the size of the bird, and is domed and spherical, save on the side by which it is fastened to some object. Mr. Macgillivray mentions one which, begun on the 30th of May, was not completed until the 8th of June, both cock and hen working with unabated diligence until it was finished. The outline of the nest is usually traced first, and then the sides are enclosed, leaving only an aperture for entrance at the top.

The Wren lays seven or eight eggs, of a pale reddish-white colour, although sometimes a much larger number may be found; and it is said that on one occasion as many as twenty were taken out of a single nest.

On St. Stephen's Day, December 26, the "Wren Boys" may be seen in most parts of Ireland carrying rushes decked with streamers, in the midst of which a little ball usually does duty for a Wren, and soliciting "backsheesh" from everyone they meet. In some places the heads of the "boys" are enveloped in stooks or wisps of hay. The chant, as I have often heard it in Waterford, runs thus:—

"The Wran, the Wran, the king of all birds,
St. Stephen's Day was caught in the furze;
Although he is little, his family's grate;
Stand up, good lady, and give us a trate.
Drolleen! drolleen! where's yer nest?
In the bush that I love best,
In the hollow ivy tree,
Where all the birds do follow me."

I am aware that there are other versions of the Wren Boys' song; that which I have given is, however, the only one I have heard sung on St. Stephen's Day. The word "droeilin," pronounced *drolyeen*, is the Celtic for Wren, and the song begins in the vernacular with the words: "droeilin, droeilin, ri an t'eum."

The origin of this strange custom is by no means certain. Mr. and Mrs. Hall, in their work on Ireland, tell us that "it is traditionally said that in 'the ould ancient times,' when the native Irish were about to catch their Danish enemies asleep, a Wren perched upon the drum, and woke the slumbering sentinels just in time to save the entire army. Consequently the little bird was proclaimed a traitor, outlawed, and his life declared forfeit whenever he was encountered." In the Isle of Man a similar onslaught is made on Christmas Day; but in most parts of England the Wren seems to share the sanctity of the robin. Mr. Johns quotes a rhyme common in the west:—

"Whoso kills a robin or a Wren
Shall never prosper, boy or man;"

and a similar couplet from the north:

"Malisons, malisons, mair than ten,
Who harries the Queen of heaven's Wren."

With one more quotation I will conclude this notice of our little friend:

"Beside the redbreast's note, one other strain,
One summer strain, in wintry days is heard.
Amid the leafless thorn the merry Wren,
When icicles hang dripping from the roof,
Pipes her perennial lay; even when the flakes
Broad as her pinions fall, she lightly flies
Athwart the shower, and sings upon the wing."

GRAHAME.

GREAT TIT.

Parus major ; *Mésange Charbonnier* ; *Kohlmeise*.

Blackcap ; Oxeye ; Tomtit ; Sawsharper.

Bill, black; legs and toes, brown; crown of head, black; sides, white; chin and throat, black, with broad black line down the breast, which is yellowish-green; back, olive-green; white bar on the wings. Length, six inches.

Although it is only by a stretch of charity that the tits can be included amongst our Song Birds, still their cheerful and varied cries are so pleasant to hear, and tend so much to enliven our woods and groves, and even our town gardens, that I think it well to give a brief notice of these very interesting birds.

The word "tit" is supposed by some to mean "little," as in titlark; by others to be derived from the Greek, *titis*, a chirping bird. The word "mouse" is said also to correspond with the French name *mésange*; it seems, however, most probable that the "titmousen," as they were formerly called, derived their names from their small size, and their habits when searching for food. It has been truly said of these little birds, that there are none more interesting, and none more useful; the quantity of insects they destroy is almost incredible, and their lively gestures, their wonderful activity, and the amusing postures they assume, have led to their being styled the acrobats and harlequins of the bird-world.

There are four members of the *Paridæ* common in Ireland—the Great Tit, blue tit, coal tit, and long-tailed tit. As the habits of these different birds are almost

identical, I shall first notice the points common to all four, and then briefly describe the song and other peculiarities of each.

Insects constitute the staple food of titmice, although at times they seem almost omnivorous, and will eat pears, turnips, apples, and even pick bones. The quantity of insects and caterpillars they destroy is really astonishing. Mr. Weir states that a pair of blue tits fed their young between a quarter past two in the morning and half-past eight in the evening no less than 475 times, each time bringing at least one caterpillar, and sometimes two or three; so that this one pair probably destroyed six or seven hundred in the course of a single day. Were it not for the operations of the tits in searching for and destroying the eggs and larvæ of destructive insects, our crops and trees would, in many instances, suffer irretrievable injury. If the rooks clear the fields of the larger insects, the tits perform a similar office for the trees and shrubs: nay, more; for, as Mr. Harting remarks, "The blue titmouse, pre-eminent amongst its fellows as an insect-destroyer, peeps into the nail holes of our walls, which, though closed by the cobwebs, will not secrete the spider within; it draws out the chrysalis of the cabbage butterfly from the chinks in the barn; it takes the maggots from the oak-galls, and, according to Mr. Bond, feeds its young very much with the small larvæ of the gooseberry-moth, while it also preys on the grubs of wood-boring beetles, including *Scolytus destructor*, the worst foe of the clan."

The Great Tit, though larger than the other members of the family, is only about the size of a sparrow, and is a very common bird in Ireland. It is usually called in this country the Blackcap, a name also given to the reed

bunting, and the stonechat, as well as to the blackcap warbler. It is often confounded with the smaller coal tit, from which, however, it should readily be distinguished, not only from its superior size, but from the black markings which descend in *Parus major* down the breast and belly, whereas in the coal tit the head alone is black, and besides there is a white patch on the back of the head, which is very conspicuous to the observer.

The Great Tit is a bold and gallant bird, and his stout beak and strong claws render him a formidable adversary to much larger birds than himself. The story that he attacks little birds, splits their skulls, and feeds upon their brains, always seemed to me to need confirmation; but Mr. Johns tells a sad tale of a Great Tit, which in a well-filled aviary killed every occupant with the exception of a quail, which he was just about to kill, when he was interrupted in his work of wholesale butchery.

Like the other tits, this bird generally builds in holes in walls or in trees, from which also it has been known to suspend a nest woven from the branches and domed; but occasionally it utilizes an old pump, or the deserted nest of a magpie. It is said also to build among the crevices of the sticks of the rook's nest, and live there on amicable terms with the proprietor. The eggs, from six to nine in number, are white, speckled with rusty-red. The flight of the Great Tit is stronger than that of any of the others, and the fact that one was met with hundreds of miles from land has been so often recorded as to impress us with the idea that the bird is capable of great efforts if only he chose to make them.

The voice of the Great Tit is really pleasant to hear, and is welcome as one of the earliest harbingers of coming

spring. It is generally heard very early in January, and sometimes in the most severe weather. By some the word "oxeye" has been supposed to represent this familiar sound, and hence the name as applied to the bird; but to my mind it is much more akin to the filing or sharpening of a saw. This tit has, however, a varied repertory, so much so that I have often hoped that I was about to discover some rare bird, when listening to him; for, as has been well remarked, the tits seem "to possess the faculty of compounding notes, which they repeat over and over again, and then apparently forget." Whenever I now hear a note that is strange to me, I put it down to the credit of the Great Tit. The saw-song is perhaps this bird's most conspicuous effort; he has, however, some sweet and taking notes, including a loud "tee, tee," and "see, see, see, see," like the blue tit, whilst at times a "pink" most suspiciously like the chaffinch's may be heard. The saw-song is audible at the distance of half a mile. In Spain one of its notes gives it the title of "*Qui vive?*"

BLUE TIT.

Parus cæruleus; *Mésange bleue*; *Blaumeise*.

Tomtit; Bluebonnet; Bluecap; Nun; Billy-biter.

Bill, legs, and toes. bluish-grey; crown of the head and throat, blue; cheeks, white, with blue border; white band over the eyes, beneath it a bluish-black streak; back, olive-green; breast, yellow, with stripe of deep blue down the middle; wings and tail, bluish. Length, four inches and a-half.

This bird is even more plentiful than the great tit, with whom it is often found in company; it is more frequently seen on the ground and in the roadway, and is, on the whole, more tame and sociable. Its actions are even more lively, if that were possible; and no matter what the weather may be, it seems to be in excellent health and spirits. Wordsworth has well described its actions:—

“ That giddy sprite,
Bluecap, who, with his colours bright,
Hung head pointing towards the ground,
Fluttered, perched, into a round,
Bound himself, and then unbound;
Lithest, gaudiest harlequin!
Prettiest tumbler ever seen!”

The notes of the Blue Tit are much less varied than those of the *Parus major*. His staple remark is “see, see, see, see,” or “joe-atty, atty, atty,” with occasionally “chicka, chicka, chee, chee.” The nest is placed in the holes of trees or in posts; there the eggs, usually from five to eight, of a pinkish-white colour, with brown spots, may be found, and the owner ready to defend them at the risk of life itself. Hissing, puffing, and fluttering, “Billy-biter” will drive you from the nest if he can. Mr. Dixon says that he has often started back in alarm, “fearful that, instead of a nest and eggs, the wall contained some poisonous reptile,” and that “the bird, even if taken in the hand, will attack you courageously with its beak.”

COAL TIT.

Parus ater; Mésange noire; Kohlmeise.

Tomtit; Blackcap; Colemouse; Cole Tit.

Bill, black; legs and claws, lead colour; crown of the head, throat, and front of the neck, black; breast, whitish; cheeks and nape, white; back, bluish-grey; wings, the same colour, with two white bands. Length, about four inches and a-half.

This is by no means so common a bird as the great or the blue tit; it is, however, to be met with in most parts of Ireland. To me it seems to be cast in a gentler mould than the other titmice, the bird next to be described alone excepted. The smaller size of this bird, the want of the black stripe down the breast, with the patch of white on the nape of the neck, should always enable us to distinguish the Coal from the great tit. Its notes, too, are different; they are softer and sweeter than the others; perhaps the most frequent is an "if hee," which we often hear. On one occasion, however, I heard a Coal Tit singing really delightfully snatches of a low, sweet song, which I never heard before or since.

Mr. Dixon thinks that of late years the Coal Titmouse has become much more plentiful than of yore, whilst, on the other hand, the marsh tit is becoming rarer; and this he explains by the fact that the Coal Tit is a bird of civilization, and the marsh tit a bird of the uncultivated places, which in England are rapidly becoming fewer. I have, however, never met this latter bird in Ireland, where one would imagine that there were plenty of acceptable

localities, whilst the Coal Tit can hardly be said to be rare anywhere in Ireland. Mr. Dresser and other naturalists consider the Coal Tit of the British Isles to be distinct from that of the Continent of Europe. Hence the term *Parus Britannicus* is applied to our bird, instead of *Parus ater*, which is given to the Continental variety; this latter has a blue back. It has often been remarked that the marsh and Coal Tits are never common in the same place, and a similar statement is made with regard to the stonechat and whinchat.

The nest of the Coal Tit is placed in a hole, but, according to Mr. Hewitson, nearer the ground than that of any of the other tits. Sometimes it may be found in a mouse-or rat-hole. The eggs, six to eight in number, are, like those of all the other tits, white, with reddish spots.

LONG-TAILED TIT.

Acredula caudata ; *Mésange à longue queue* ; *Schwarzmeise*.

Bottle Tit ; Poke Pudding.

Bill, legs, and claws, black; head, neck, throat, and breast, white; black streak over the eye; back, rose-red, with a similar tinge on the sides beneath the wings; tail, black, save outer feathers, which are whitish. Length, five inches and three-quarters. As the tail, however, is three inches long, the body of the bird is exceedingly small.

The song of this bird is the poorest of all the tits ; it is confined to what has been called a “ spluttering note,” in addition to the stereotyped “ see, see, see,” of the family of titmice. The bird, however, is a really interesting one, and its nest is the neatest in our island. Were it not for its long tail, this tit would seem but little more than a ball of feathers, and would probably escape notice almost altogether ; this conspicuous feature, however, at once attracts attention, as the little company moves in single file from tree to tree. These little parties traverse the country in all directions, and may frequently be seen in the environs of Dublin. At the Dargle I have noticed the four different species of tits within an hour in the same trees. The Long-tailed Tit, however, seems to prefer the society of the gold-crest to that of the other titmice with which we should expect to find it associated naturally.

In severe weather these little birds crowd together at night ; but, according to Mr. Thompson and other observers, this is the ordinary habit of the species, and not consequent on the piercing breath of winter ; for Mr. Sinclair remarks that he was much entertained by observing a family of about ten or twelve Long-tailed Titmice going to roost in company, when each individual endeavoured to get as near the middle of the group as possible ; and that enviable position was no sooner attained by a few than those from the outskirts used all their efforts to insinuate themselves towards the centre, and, foiled in this, next exerted their powers to avoid being placed outside—in all respects just the practice noticed in winter. In the case of a pair kept in confinement, it was noticed that every night the hen crept close to her spouse, and, putting her head lovingly under his wing, slept in peace and security.

The nest of the Long-tailed Tit is considered to be the most beautiful of all British birds, and is constructed by the female alone. It is oval in shape, with a small hole for the bird to enter, and is composed of wool and moss, with a lining of feathers. The eggs are white, speckled with red, and about the size of peas; they are usually ten to twelve in number; but as many as eighteen have been found in one nest.

Mr. Dresser believes that "the present form of the Long-tailed Tit is confined to the British Isles, and that it never assumes the white head of the Continental form." A local difference in the case of the English coal tit has been similarly remarked.

MEADOW PIPIT.

Anthus pratensis ; *Pipit farlouse* ; *Pieplerche*.

Titlark ; Moss Cheeper ; Meadow Lark.

Bill, dark brown ; legs, toes, and claws, light brown ; hind claw as long or longer than the toe ; head, neck, back, and wings, dark brown ; breast, whitish, spotted with dark brown ; outer tail feather on each side, white. Length, about six inches.

The sea-shore and the mountain side are the favourite resorts of this well-known and widely distributed species. In winter, however, it seems common everywhere ; by the road-side, along the river mud, and on the quays, this unassuming and apparently weakly bird finds abundant

sustenance. In Scotland it is the only bird seen about the lofty summit of Ben Lomond and other high mountains, and I have myself often observed it near the summit of Snowdon.

Two things cause this bird to appear somewhat weakly to us—its call-note and its flight. The former sounds somewhat like “peep, peep”—hence probably the bird’s name—and its flight is of a peculiarly jerky and wavering, I had almost said hesitating, character. A little flock of Pipits, flitting feebly head to wind, and apparently undecided where to fly or to alight, always gives one this impression. At the same time, I am not aware that the bird is at all more delicate than his congeners, and he manages to live and thrive in winters that kill off blackbirds and thrushes by hundreds.

A favourite resting-place of our little friend is the top rail in some field near the sea, or the telegraph wire, from which he starts off ever and anon to sing his simple and yet pleasing melody. The Meadow Pipit rises only a short distance, probably not more than fifty feet, from the ground, uttering, as he does so, a low “trit, trit,” or “chit, chit.” He pauses for a moment at the highest point of his ascent, and then descends with outstretched wings to the ground or to his former lowly perch. Just as he reaches the ground, he gives utterance to a few really melodious notes, which, however, can generally be but imperfectly heard. The bird is probably not more than one minute in the air; but, with very short intervals, the ascents are repeated over and over again in fine weather.

The food of this harmless little bird consists of insects and larvæ, and in winter he frequents manure heaps and stack yards to seek them. There the Meadow Pipit may

be always distinguished from the pert sparrows, hopping confidently along, by its humbler running gait.

The nest of the Meadow Pipit is always on the ground, and generally consists of dry grasses ; sometimes it is found in a tuft of reeds, surrounded by water, and there the eggs, usually from four to six in number, of a light reddish-brown colour, mottled with darker brown, are laid. Two broods are probably produced in the year. The cuckoo very often "selects this bird's nest for its nursery." Mr. Yarrell, says : "The egg of the cuckoo is more frequently deposited and hatched in the nest of the Meadow Pipit than in that of any other bird." Why we do not know ; but wonderful, indeed, is the attachment evinced by the Meadow Pipit for its strange foster-child. "I know of few things," says Mr. Stevenson, in his *Birds of Norfolk*, "more ridiculous than the great baby cuckoo helplessly flapping his wings and opening his mouth, as he sits on a bush or railing to receive unnumbered delicacies from the beak of his foster-parent."

TREE PIPIT.

Anthus arboreus ; *Pipit des buissons* ; *Der Baumpieper* ; *Boompieper* (Dutch).

Titlark.

Beak, dark brown ; legs and claws, light brown ; head, neck, back, and wings, olive-brown ; chin and throat, brownish-white ; breast, yellowish, spotted with brown ; hind claw, curved so as to form fourth part of a circle. Length, over six inches.

I feel some hesitation in describing the Tree Pipit as an Irish Song Bird. In the year 1878 I believed that I saw and heard a bird of this species near the railway station, Portmarnock, County Dublin ; and next day, and on several occasions afterwards, I sent out two of our boys to shoot it with an air-gun, being very desirous to make the matter absolutely certain. However, they failed in the attempt. Feeling sure, however, that I was not mistaken, I wrote a short account of the bird for the *Zoologist*, and shortly afterwards there appeared in the same journal a letter from Mr. H. C. Hart, in which he stated that a nest, with eggs believed to be those of a Tree Pipit, had been found at Raheny, about three miles from Portmarnock, thirteen years before. A few weeks after this, I saw a Pipit at Milltown Railway Station rise from the top of a moderately high tree, describe almost a semicircle in the air, and return to another tree directly opposite ; and I pointed it out to a gentleman as a specimen of that very rare bird the Tree Pipit. In this latter case, however, I do not feel as certain as in the former, as whilst the different call-note and the flight from the tree caused me to believe that the bird could not possibly be a meadow pipit, the song did not seem to resemble that of the Tree Pipit. Since 1878 I have sought, but always in vain, for this bird in the localities where I believe I noticed it and elsewhere. I feel, therefore, that there must still be some doubt about the matter, as, indeed, there must always be when no specimen can be produced.

The Tree Pipit greatly resembles the meadow pipit in appearance, but it is a little larger and more slender ; it has also a longer tail, and seems to stand higher and more erect ; it has not the long hind claw of the

meadow pipit, which would be unsuited to a perching bird. Its song, too, is much superior, and consists of a few very pleasing notes. Mr. Seeböhm says that it concludes with a plaintive "tsee-a." At other times it utters a curious "tee-yew, tee-yew," whilst its call-note is a somewhat loud "tsee, tsee." In company with my boy, I greatly enjoyed its song near Gloddaeth Woods, Llandudno.

The Tree Pipit is not gregarious like the meadow pipit, nor is it resident throughout the year. It arrives generally in the second or third week of April, and leaves us again in the autumn. It seems strange that it should do so, when we remember that its close ally, the meadow pipit, remains with us all the year round. The food of this bird consists mostly of insects, although it has been known to feed occasionally upon seeds.

Its nest is always on the ground, and there the eggs, from four to six in number, are laid; they are usually of a greyish-white, with a purple-brownish tinge. "Amongst our land birds," Mr. Hewitson remarks, "there is no species the eggs of which present so many or such distinct varieties as those of the Tree Pipit; no one would at first believe them to be eggs of the same species."

ROCK PIPIT.

Anthus obscurus ; *Pipit obscur* ; *Strandpieper*.

Rock Lark ; Sea Lark ; Dusky Lark ; Shore Pipit.

Beak, legs, and claws, brown ; head, back, neck, and wings, olive-brown ; whitish streak over the eye ; throat

and breast, yellowish, spotted with brown; hind claw longer than the toe, and much curved. Length, about six inches and three-quarters. Can be distinguished from the meadow pipit by its larger size, darker plumage, and stronger flight.

The Rock Pipit is to be found generally along our seashores, but never ventures inland. The term Shore Pipit has been suggested as that by which this bird should be known; but in Ireland it generally figures, with several other widely different birds, under the convenient title of the Sea Lark. Larger, darker, and stronger than the meadow pipit, it is still frequently confounded with that bird. It pairs in March, but does not incubate for at least a month later, when its eggs may be found in a hole in a bank, or rabbit burrow near the sea. Mr. Hewitson found it once in a heap of dry sea-weed upon the sandy shore. The eggs are usually from four to six in number, and, like those of the tree pipit, often differ materially in colour, some being of a mottled brown, whilst others are of a greenish-grey. Mr. Watters has observed the nest of this bird on the Island of Rockabill, ten miles from the County Dublin coast, and it no doubt often seeks similarly wild and retired spots to bring up its young.

The usual cry of this bird is a shrill "cheep;" a "hist" is constantly uttered if the nest is near and in danger. I cannot say that I have ever heard its song, which is described as a short, soft warble. My impression was that, whilst in soaring it somewhat resembled the meadow pipit, unlike that bird, it descended in silence.

I observed not long since a pair of Rock Pipits when disturbed ascend to a great height, and having remained

aloft for some time, descend rapidly and in silence, almost to the very spot from which they had been flushed.

The food of the Rock Pipit consists of small marine insects found amongst the rocks when the tide is low, and also occasionally of seeds.

SKYLARK.

Alauda arvensis; *Alouette des champs*; *Heidelerche*.

Beak, legs, and toes, brown; hind claw, very long and slightly curved; head, back, and wings, different shades of brown; a crest can be erected at pleasure; neck and breast, whitish, with brown streaks. Length, seven inches and a-quarter.

This is one of the best-known and most widely appreciated of all our Irish Song Birds. For the Skylark shares with the linnet the honour of being "the poor man's bird." With the Dublin shoemakers it is an especial favourite, and its cage, with its sod of turf under the bird's feet, may be seen outside the windows of some of the poorest houses in our city; for, as our carpenter remarks, the shoemakers of Dublin are more "affable" with the Skylark than with any other bird. To my mind, however, there is something inexpressibly sad in the caged Skylark's song. I cannot bear to see the poor prisoner beat his wings and breast against the bars, as he pines for liberty and for the home above which he sang so sweetly in happier days. In an interesting Paper on the Skylark in *Poultry*, January 2, 1884, Dr. W. T. Greene tells us that there are Skylarks

who will neither eat, drink, nor sleep, but who sing themselves to death when caged; and I entirely agree with his conclusions, not only that the bird is one which, of all others, it is the height of cruelty to keep prisoner, but also one whose wonderful song is quite unfitted for a room. Heard, as we usually hear it, from a great distance, and thus mellowed and modulated, the effect is by no means so pleasing if the bird be close beside you.

The height to which the Skylark ascends is variously estimated at from 1,000 feet to 1,000 yards; the former is the more probable, and the duration of the song, at the most, does not exceed one quarter of an hour, embracing in that short space "an overture, a fantasia, and a finale." A writer in the *Magazine of Natural History* says that "those acquainted with the song of the Skylark can tell, without looking at it, whether the bird is ascending, or stationary in the air, or on its descent; so different is the style of the song in each case." As the bird rises, his song is louder and bolder; but descending it is in a quieter and more subdued strain, as it is with ourselves when we are coming down in the world.

The Lark, like most great songsters, is a good mocking-bird, and will often incorporate in his song the notes of other birds around him; in particular, I have frequently heard him reproduce the warning notes of the whitethroat. He sometimes sings on the ground, but not so freely or so blithely as when he chants his joyous melody at "heaven's gate."

The great popularity of the Skylark's song has been alluded to before; and, in many cases, the "poor exile of Erin" takes a Lark with a sod of Irish earth beneath it, as he goes abroad, so that one day a portion of clay from

the old land may cover him, as he lies asleep in his "narrow house."

In that inimitable work of Charles Reade's, *Never too Late to Mend*, the effect of a Skylark's song in Australia, a great many years ago, is finely described :—

"One Sunday, round a small squatter's house, from thirty to forty rough fellows gathered, some of them diggers, and all of them far from home. They came this Sabbath day to listen, not to a preacher's voice, but to the well-remembered song of an English Skylark. As he hung in a large cage outside the door, like most singers, he kept them waiting a bit; but at last, just at noon, when the mistress of the house had warranted him to sing, the little feathered exile began, as it were, to tune his pipes. The savage men gathered round the cage that moment, and soon the same sun that had warmed his little heart at home came glaring down on him here, and he gave music back for it, more and more, till at last, amidst breathless silence and glistening eyes of the rough diggers, hanging on his voice, outburst, in that distant land, his English song. It swelled his little throat, and gushed from him with thrilling force and plenty, and every time he checked it to think of its theme, the green meadows, the quiet stealing streams, the clover he first soared from, and the spring he sang so well, a loud sigh from many a rough bosom, many a wild and wicked heart, told how tight the listeners had held their breath to hear; and many a time too, the rugged mouths opened, and so stayed, and the shaggy lips trembled, and more than one drop trickled from fierce, unbridled hearts, down bronzed and rugged cheeks. *Dulce domum!* And these rude men, full of oaths, and strife, and cupidity, had once been English

boys, and strolled about the fields with little sisters and brothers, and heard this very song. The little playmates lay in the churchyard, and they were changed, oh, how sadly ! but there was no change in this immortal song. And so for a moment years of vice rolled away like a dark cloud, and the past shone out in the song-shine : those faded pictures of fleeted days ; the cottage, the old mother's tears when he left her without one grain of sorrow ; the village church and its simple chimes ; the clover field hard by in which he lay and gambolled while the Lark praised God overhead ; the chubby playmates that never grew to be wicked ; the sweet hours of youth, and innocence, and home."

Methinks "Thou didst not leave Thyself without witness," *even there*, O God !

The Rev. C. A. Johns quotes the following stanza in French, "as equally successful in imitating the song of the Skylark, and describing its evolutions" :—

" La gentille Alouette, avec son tirelire,
Tirelire, relire et tirelirant, tire
Vers la voûte du ciel ; puis son vol en ce lieu
Vire, et semble nous dire : Adieu, adieu, adieu."

The call-note of the Skylark is a rich inward double note, difficult to describe, and this is constantly heard as the birds fly in flocks over the fields in autumn and winter.

"Up with the Lark" is a well-known saying, and some time since, when, with my dear friend, Mr. Samuel Bewley, I kept watch and ward at Sandford Hill, to time the birds at their arising, it was abundantly fulfilled, the great songster *descending* from his morning song at 2.10 a.m., whilst yet Arcturus, and Wega, and Altair were shining brightly in the sky.

The Lark in singing often erects a crest upon his head, and hence has sometimes been mistaken for the crested lark, *Alauda cristata*, which is said to have been observed in this country, and which is common on the Continent, where I have seen it dusting itself on the roads after the manner of our own Skylark.

The colour of the Larks is decidedly protective, harmonizing so well with its surroundings that the bird will sometimes rise almost from under one's feet without having been previously perceived. The Skylark never perches on trees or in hedges; it may occasionally be seen upon a rail, but the air and the earth are emphatically its abiding places. The protective instinct of the Skylark, before alluded to, is also strikingly manifested by the fact, that it never alights close to its nest after singing, but at some distance from it, reaching it on foot.

The nest is, as everyone knows, always on the ground.

“Thou, simple bird, dwellest in a home
The humblest; yet thy morning song ascends
Nearest to heaven.”

The rut of a cart-wheel, or any slight hollow or depression, is often availed of; and there a simple structure of grasses and fibrous roots is made to contain the five greyish or brownish eggs the hen Skylark calls her own.

May we all, when our time comes,

“Mount upward, lark-like, from the sod,
And join, O happy souls, the harmonies of God!”

MACKAY.

WOODLARK.

Aulauda arborea ; *Alouette lulu* ; *Baumlerche*.

Bill, legs, and claws, brownish ; head, neck, and back, dark brown ; feathers on the head sometimes form a crest ; pale yellowish streak over the eye ; throat and breast, pale brown ; tail, short ; hind claw straight, and half again as long as the toe. Length, about six inches and a-half.

I have never seen this bird alive but once, and that on board the mail steamer midway between Holyhead and Kingstown. The little voyager was apparently fatigued, and took advantage of the "Ulster's" capacious bridge and deck for a brief resting-place before resuming his flight. It is said to have occurred at Ovoca, and once at Donnybrook ; at the former place, indeed, Mr. Lamprey reports that it has been frequently heard singing ; and Dr. Burkitt has noticed it in the neighbourhood of Waterford. For my own part, I have never been so fortunate, although for many years I have been anxious to hear this charming songster. Mr. Thompson states that in Antrim and Down it only frequents districts where the soil is warm and the country well wooded and cultivated ; in such localities the Woodlark may be heard singing, chiefly in the morning, from September until June.

The Woodlark sings either perched on a tree or hovering in the air. Mr. Selby states that it remains for an hour on the wing ; but Bechstein asserts that it is often for hours in the air. The ascent is made in circles, and not in spirals, like that of the skylark, nor does the Woodlark mount so high, although it remains much longer aloft.

The nest, we are told, is the centre of the circles the

Woodlark describes, warbling all the while its sweet, soft song, which, more continuous than the skylark's, has all the richness of the blackcap's. The French name, *lulu*, is supposed to resemble the most frequently recurring syllables in this song, which, uttered, as it is sometimes, in the stillness of the night, whilst the bird unseen floats high above the earth, sounds almost like heavenly music.

The Woodlark may readily be distinguished from the skylark by its smaller size, short tail, white stripe over the eye, and by the white spots at the end of the tail feathers. The food of this most interesting bird is composed chiefly of insects and small seeds. Its nest is built upon the ground, beneath some bush or tuft of grass. The eggs are four or five in number, of a whitish hue, streaked with dark brown.

SNOW BUNTING.

Plectrophanes nivalis ; *Bruant de neige* ; *Schneeammer*.

Snowflake ; Tawny Bunting ; Mountain Bunting.

Beak, yellow ; legs and claws, black ; head, neck, and portion of the wings, white ; under surface of the body, white, tinged with reddish-brown ; tail, reddish-brown, interspersed with white ; hind claw, straight and long. Length, under seven inches.

The song bird of the Arctic regions is a winter visitor to our shores, but both in England and in Ireland decreases in numbers as we approach the south. It usually arrives

towards the end of October, and leaves again for the north about the third week in March. In the neighbourhood of Dublin its favourite resort for many years has been the road leading to the Pigeon-House Fort; I have seen flocks there frequently, but not for the last two or three years; it may be that the increased traffic from the number of houses recently built on the roadside has driven it farther away; it was also said to frequent the West Pier at Kingstown.

The Snow Bunting does not breed in this country, nor does it sing; it is, notwithstanding, a most interesting bird; and there are few prettier sights than a flock of Snow Buntings overhead uttering their wild and pleasant chirp, and displaying their beautifully variegated plumage, then wheeling suddenly round before they alight. As we examine them through a field-glass, the plumage of any two seems hardly the same. Some retain much of the summer dress of virgin white; others display the brownish colour, which has given the bird its name of the Tawny Bunting, whilst the remainder seem midway between the two; in all cases, however, the white markings on the tail and wings are very conspicuous.

Their flight has been compared to that of a butterfly, and I think justly; but in some respects it resembles that of the yellow-hammer, and their call-note is not unlike his, but in a gayer and more twittering strain; I have no doubt that by many they are taken for flocks of chaffinches, as are probably the bramblings also when they sometimes appear on our roads in winter. Mr. Macgillivray saw both old and young birds together on the Grampian Hills in August, 1830. He saw a male on Ben Muiedhui, the second highest mountain in Scotland, on the 4th of that month; it may probably, therefore, breed in some of these

elevated and little frequented districts. Captain Feilden found a Snow Bunting's nest in Grinnell Land, 82° 33' N., containing four eggs, and lined with the feathers of a snowy owl, whose nest was not twenty feet away. And Linnæus tells us that it is the only living animal that has been seen 2,000 feet above the line of perpetual snow in the Lapland Alps.

My last sight of this pretty and most interesting bird was at Newcastle railway station, County Wicklow, on 18th February, 1885, when I saw a flock of about ten on the sea-shore, exhibiting that variety of plumage to which I have referred.

The eggs are said to be reddish-white, with brownish spots.

REED BUNTING.

Emberiza schœniclus ; *Bruant des roseaux* ; *Rohrammer*.

Reed Sparrow ; Blackcap ; Chink ; Black-headed Bunting ;
Water Sparrow.

Beak, legs, and claws, brown ; head, throat, gorget, and ear coverts, black, with white collar beneath ; back and wing coverts, black ; breast and under-wing coverts, yellowish-white ; tail, slightly forked. The female has reddish-brown on the head, where the male has black, and the white collar is less distinct. Length, six inches.

If the corn bunting has but little song, the Reed Bunting has even less. I have never heard more from it than

a monotonous “sherrip,” as Meyer calls it—a chirp of two notes, twice pronounced, and followed by a somewhat more rapid and sharper “chirp, chirp,” the bird sitting in the same position for a long time—a habit often noticed in its brethren, the corn and yellow buntings. Although the Reed Bunting is so indifferent a songster, he gets credit frequently for the performance of the sedge warbler, whose varied song may be heard, as he hides low down in the sedges, whilst the Bunting overhead is supposed to be the songster.

Writing to one of the papers some time since about the rare occurrence of the blackcap in Ireland, a correspondent next day stated that it was quite common on the banks of the Barrow, and that he had often listened to its delightful song. *His* blackcap, however, was the Reed Bunting, and what he imagined to be its song was really that of the unsuspected sedge warbler.

The Reed Bunting is, however, a very handsome and elegant bird; its black head and white collar have a pleasing appearance as it flits about amongst the reeds, and even its monotonous song is not unpleasurable to the lover of Nature.

The bird can hardly be said to be plentiful. When a boy I constantly observed it at the Kilbarry marshes, near the city of Waterford; lately I have seen it at Portmarnock and Mullhuddart, and on the river banks at Dundalk; but it is by no means common anywhere. In winter it may sometimes be seen with chaffinches, greenfinches, &c., in the stable-yard, or with wagtails in the sheep-folds seeking warmth and food. In happier times the Reed Bunting lives on insects, larvæ, and the seeds of aquatic plants. From what has been said it is evident that this elegant

and unobtrusive bird is not commonly known, indifferent observers often confounding it with the stonechat or even the sparrow, whilst others with as little reason dignify it with the title of blackcap, and "Irish nightingale."

The nest is generally placed on the ground in some marshy situation, and is composed of grasses, fragments of rushes, &c. The eggs, four or five in number, are pale brown, with purple spots and tracings. The male bird shares the task of incubation with the female.

BUNTING.

Emberiza miliaria ; *Bruant proyer* ; *Grau ammer*.

Common Bunting ; Briar Bunting ; Lark Bunting ; Corn Bunting ; Bush Lark.

Bill, legs, and claws, brown ; head, neck, back, and tail, light brown, with dark strokes ; chin, throat, and breast, whitish-brown, with dusky spots ; tail, dark brown, and slightly forked. Length, seven inches and a-half.

It is only by a stretch of charity that the Common Bunting, or rather the Corn Bunting—for it is by no means so plentiful as the yellow bunting—can be included among our Song Birds. Still it certainly does possess what is evidently intended for a song, and which, as is usually the case, it reserves for the breeding season.

It is easy to observe a large brown, heavy-looking bird, something like a lark, but much stouter, sitting sometimes for hours on a twig, and uttering from time to time a

harsh, guttural song ; this is our friend the Corn Bunting. Scare him away, and he will fly off heavily and yet strongly, with his legs dangling down in a curious fashion, somewhat reminding us of the heron when on the wing. To me the song sounds something like the syllables, "Tie, tie, wissa, wissa, wissee," different birds laying the accent in different places. The call-note sounds like "tzit" or "tsips."

Mr. Thompson's observations of this bird in Ireland correspond with those of Gilbert White, who says that "in our woodland districts it is a rare bird;" it is rather a denizen of the open fields, and of the bare arable land, and is sometimes found in the vicinity of large potato gardens. I was surprised to hear it singing not long since at the North Lotts, close to the North Wall, Dublin, and not far from the starting-place of the Holyhead steamers. Poor though the song of the Bunting undoubtedly is, to my mind it is always suggestive of the country, its peace and quiet, as opposed to the hurry and turmoil of city life ; and thus it is to me a pleasant sound.

The Bunting is a grain-eating bird. Mr. Thompson has, however, also found in its stomach the seeds of weeds, in addition to which were fragments of stone ; insects and larvæ are also eaten when procurable. The Bunting has much of the lark about it, and often roosts on the ground in stubble fields ; it does not, however, run, but hops. It apparently produces but one brood in the year.

The nest is always on or very near the ground, and is lined with hair. The eggs, four or five in number, are of a dull white ground, with dark purple spots and streaks.

YELLOW BUNTING.

Emberiza citrinella ; *Bruant jaune* ; *Goldammer*.

Yellow Hammer ; Yellow Yoldring ; Yellow Yorling ;
Writing Lark.

Beak, horn colour ; legs and claws, brown ; head, neck, and breast, bright lemon-yellow ; back and wings, reddish-brown, with dark patches ; tail coverts, yellow ; central tail feathers, short and black. The colours of the female are much duller, and reddish-brown predominates. Length, six inches and a-half.

If this were not one of our most common birds, it would be thought one of our most beautiful ; almost as plentiful, however, as the sparrow or chaffinch, it is for this reason held in slender estimation.

Mr. Stevenson, in his *Birds of Norfolk*, says : “ Though resident with us at all seasons, the Yellow Bunting seems more particularly associated with the recollection of heat and dust, its long-drawn, weary song accords so well with the dry, scorching atmosphere ; and through a strange ventriloquial power, possessed by this bird in an eminent degree, its notes are heard from a distance as though close to the ear of the listener, and when apparently farthest off, are not unfrequently uttered within a few yards.”

Meyer, in his *British Birds*, speaks of the Yellow Bunting as an unrivalled ventriloquist, and mentions an instance in which the note of a bird caged in a room was supposed to be the answering song of a bird in the garden outside, even by those close to the cage. He tells

a pleasant story of this same Yellow Hammer and a young cuckoo, which is well worth recounting.

“ The cuckoo was fully fledged, and old enough to sit upon the perch. It was at first very shy, and although constantly crying for food, would not take anything that was offered to it, and appeared entirely incapable of feeding itself. We tried many devices, such as fastening a bird's skin with wings extended upon a quill, and then putting a piece of meat upon the point of the quill, which was made to project beyond the beak of the bird. This stratagem, which is sometimes successful with young birds that will not open their mouths to a human nurse, succeeded, and our cuckoo was now quite willing to open its mouth oftener than we were willing to be at the trouble of waiting upon it. One morning when we were tired of supplying the insatiable voracity of this never-satisfied bird, and had suffered it to cry for food for some little time without attending to it, we heard it utter, on a sudden, an extraordinary gobbling note of satisfaction; and on looking up hastily, saw it in the act, as we thought, of devouring the Yellow Bunting, whose small golden head was already entirely within the red cavernous jaws of the cuckoo. The head, however, emerged in safety, and the little bird then picked up a piece of meat and returned to the cuckoo. Again the golden head disappeared in the cavern, and again the gobbling note was repeated. It was now evident that the wonderful instinct of the little bird was roused by the hungry cries of the young monster, and that it was busily employed in supplying it with food. Our task was, therefore, at an end, and we continued to admire for several weeks the unremitting attentions of the admirable little creature to its adopted child. We had reason also

to admire its instinctive choice of the food most desirable for its nursling. The cage was supplied with various sorts to suit the several tastes of its inhabitants, such as seeds, crumbs of bread, German paste, and meat. The latter only was selected by the Bunting, although himself a seed-eater, as the most proper sustenance for a nestling cuckoo. The young bird appeared to entertain a grateful, or at least a conscious sense of the attentions of its little friend, in as far as it always addressed its supplication for food to it alone, never descending from its perch to supply itself, unless the irresistible temptation of a hairy caterpillar was offered, on which occasion its laziness was so far overcome, that it would hastily descend, and seize it with great avidity."

The song of the Yellow Bunting is decidedly monotonous, yet still I think of a plaintive and, to my ear at least, a pleasing character. It consists of a few short syllables, followed by a long note in a lower key, and not unlike the words: "A little bit of bread and no cheese." This last long-drawn syllable is frequently omitted, perhaps from laziness, or, as has been suggested, by the approach of another male Yellow Hammer, whom the songster hastens to encounter. I have several times heard Yellow Hammers with curiously varied songs, and on one occasion followed one for a long distance on the Great Orme's Head, imagining that it was some other variety of Bunting.

Mr. Watters is of opinion that the Yellow Hammer selects three in the afternoon as the most suitable time for the exercise of its vocal powers; for, no matter how situated, he says "that it will then commence its changeless and interminable chant." Perhaps the fashionable bird-world may then be abroad, and our little friend is

desirous of calling attention to his powers as an afternoon vocalist.

The call-note of the Yellow Bunting somewhat resembles the word "gick," and is one of the commonest bird-sounds in winter, not only in the country, but along the quays and in the streets of our cities, where these birds may be seen in small flocks mingling with sparrows and chaffinches, &c., in search of food. The nest of the Yellow Bunting is most frequently found in furze, but often on a bank or upon the ground; it is usually lined with hair, and in it the hen lays four or five eggs of a purplish-white colour, with spots of a dark reddish-brown. The name "Writing Lark" is sometimes given to this bird, "from the hair-like markings on the eggs, as if drawn by a pen."

CHAFFINCH.

Fringilla cælebs; *Pinson ordinaire*; *Buchfink*.

Beechfinch; Horsefinch; Pink; Shilfa.

Bill, bluish; legs and claws, brown; crown of the head and nape, dark bluish-grey; back, chestnut; chin, throat, and breast, reddish-brown; wings, black, with white bands; tail, black, but middle feathers grey. The female is without the reddish-brown on the breast, and the head and nape are brown, not blue. Length, six inches.

I am inclined to think that the Chaffinch is the most common bird in Ireland. In the towns, indeed, the sparrows may be more numerous; but once they are left behind, Chaffinches seem to constitute two out of every three birds

we meet; and very handsome birds they are; were they more rare, they would doubtless be prized. But as men who are constantly seen in places of public resort are but little thought of, no matter what their qualifications may be, so too is it with birds; the more seldom seen, the more they are thought of, whilst those we meet with every day are but lightly esteemed.

Very early in the year the Chaffinch's spring greeting may be heard; but he puts his song gradually together, rehearsing the opening syllables first, and then waiting for several days, or even more, till, in more promising weather, he sings his spring song with all its finish and vivacity. We do not think very much of his song or himself in Ireland; but in other countries he is highly appreciated. In England, for instance, Mr. Frank Buckland, in his Notes on Gilbert White's *Selborne*, tells us that "poor Spitalfield weavers will give £3 or £4 each for a good Chaffinch; that the birds are sung in matches from £1 to £5, and that many bird-fanciers will come for miles to hear a Chaffinch. Two birds are put up at a time in separate cages to sing a match; fifteen minutes is the time allowed for the singing match, and the bird who does the greatest number of complete songs in that time becomes the winner. It is said that three Chaffinches, at Tournay, sang 1118 times in an hour, the winner having 420 songs to his credit! In London the greater portion of these finches are "sighted," or as they call it "done;" the corner of the eye is slightly touched with a red-hot needle, in order that the bird, not discerning night from day, may sing the more. A sad song truly, and distressing to the ears of every compassionate man.

Some think that a Chaffinch's song may thus be put

into words:—"Ring, ring, rattle, chuck wido;" others "Ring, ring, rattle, Jack White." Some, too, will have it end with "sister dear;" and I think that this latter is the most frequent termination. Although I have heard birds with a different ending, and some with a double trill, which is much admired, yet I believe that most London dealers prefer the "chuck-wido" birds. In Germany, where they say, "a Chaffinch is worth a cow," we hear of (1) the double trill of the Hartz; (2) the wine song; (3) the rider's song; and others. The wine song is thus written down:—

"Fritz, Fritz, Fritz, willst du mit zum Wein gehen?"

And the bridegroom's song is—

"Fink, Fink, Fink, Fink, willst du denn mit dem Bräutigam
zieren?"

Birds which add to their song a "pink" at the close are very highly prized; the bird-fanciers call this the "Amen." I have heard, I think, but one "Amen Chaffinch" in Ireland.

Rechstein, however, tells us that the song of the wild Chaffinches in England far exceeds that of the cage birds in Germany. The well-known call-note of the Chaffinch "pink, pink," or, as the Germans think, "fink, fink," is said to be the origin of our English word "finch." It may be heard all the year round, and is uttered both by cock and hen; but another note, "wheet, wheet," proceeds from the male bird alone, and is heard only in the breeding season.

Chaffinches are said to "record" for about four weeks, gradually putting the song together; but promising vocalists have sufficient practice in a week or fortnight.

The term *cælebs* ("the Bachelor") was applied to the Chaffinch by Linnæus, from the fact that the males alone remain in Sweden during the winter, the females migrating further south, through Holland into Italy. Gilbert White's observations confirm this curious fact; he says that, of large flocks in the fields at Christmas, at least fifty to one were females, which had apparently arrived from more northern countries. Mr. Morris, too, says that in Worcestershire the cocks formed flocks for themselves. In this country, however, the separation of the sexes seems only to apply to the migratory Chaffinches, for we usually see cock and hen together all through the winter.

The Chaffinch's nest is justly considered one of the most perfect of all our small birds, and Mr. Dixon says that more time is taken to build it than any other nest, save that of the long-tailed titmouse. A fortnight elapses before it is ready to receive its precious deposit, and then the eggs, four or five in number, are laid, oval in form, and of a dull bluish-green colour, spotted, and sometimes streaked with dull red or brown. The nest, walled in green, is decked also with gems of white; if no lichen can be procured, white paper is made to serve as a substitute. An old apple-tree is a favourite spot, and there I have seen the nest some four feet from the ground, and exposed to every passer by the garden walk. The hen only sits, and she is fed by the cock, who sits close by to cheer her with his animating song. Speaking of the nest of the Chaffinch, Mr. Hewitson says: "No one whose heart is touched by the beauties of nature can have examined that exquisite structure without uttering some exclamation of wonder and delight, and without comparing it with all that is most admirable in art and of man's invention." To which I will

add, kind Christians, postpone your investigations until the young birds are reared and flown, nor break up that sweet and happy home by taking their only treasure from the patient architects and watchers who are so often at your mercy.

BRAMBLING.

Fringilla montifringilla; *Grosbec d'Ardennes*; *Bergfink*.

Mountain Finch.

Bill, in winter, yellowish-white, in summer, lead-colour; legs and toes, light brown; head, cheeks, nape, and upper part of the back, black, tipped in winter with light brown; head and neck, in summer, velvet-black; chin, throat, and breast, fawn-colour; wings, black, variegated with brown and white; upper tail coverts, white; tail, black and forked. Length, six inches and a-half.

The Brambling is but little known in Ireland, and I do not think that I have ever met with it in its wild state. In appearance it somewhat resembles the chaffinch; the white tail coverts are, however, a distinguishing mark. Mr. More describes it as an "irregular winter visitor, chiefly occurring in the North of Ireland, and in hard weather."

The Brambling, or Mountain Finch, is, like the snow bunting, an Arctic bird, but is not by any means as common in Ireland. It is said to breed in Denmark, Norway, and Lapland; there is no record, however, of this bird having bred in Great Britain, except in confinement,

and I believe that the young ones were not reared in these cases by their parents. It usually arrives in November, and leaves again for the north in March. Mr. Gray says that "it arrives during the night on the east coast of England, and is often observed, shortly after daylight, flitting among the rocks on the sea-shore, evidently in a somewhat exhausted plight after its long flight; at such times it may be almost taken with the hand. It appears at first to betake itself to the higher grounds; but after a time, especially on the approach of snow, it descends to low-lying farms, where it becomes a familiar tenant of the stack-yard, mixing with chaffinches and yellow-hammers."

The Rev. George Robinson, of Tanderagee, informed Mr. Thompson that on the 25th of March, 1844, he saw a flock of some thousands, unmixed, so far as he observed, with any other species, in a beech wood at Elm Park, County Armagh. I imagined that in January of the present year I saw a bird of this species, near the new harbour, Ballygeary, County Wexford; but of this I cannot be perfectly sure. I was attracted by the call-note, which was new to me, and saw a bird with a black head at some little distance. I was, however, unable to approach sufficiently near to identify it. The call-note is said to be a chirp resembling the syllable "tweet," or "tuit," as it appeared to me; it has also another note sounding something like "chip-a-way;" others think that its call-note sounds like "ziv, zir," with a "zh" of the greenfinch pattern.

The nest is placed in lofty trees, and the eggs, four or five in number, are yellowish-white, with dark red spots.

HAWFINCH.

Coccothraustes vulgaris ; *Le Grosbec* ; *Kirschnacker*.

The Grosbeak.

Bill, pale blue, and very thick ; legs and claws, brown ; head, cheeks, and nape, fawn-colour ; plumage at the base of bill, and reaching to the eye, black ; chin and throat, black ; back, reddish-brown ; wings, black ; wing coverts, white ; tail, short, outside feathers black, centre feathers, white and brown. Length, seven inches.

I have never seen or heard this bird, although I have very frequently heard of it as occurring at times in the Phoenix Park, and with every recurring winter have sought for it there, but hitherto in vain. Mr. Watters states that on two occasions only he was fortunate enough to observe it, "on one at the Scalp, near Dublin, in 1848 ; and on the other at the Phoenix Park, in 1852. In both localities the food was similar, the berry of the hawthorn ; this seemed in all cases to be taken sideways with the beak, and broken with the same movement that forced it from the stem, and this, too, with the greatest apparent ease. This feat, when we recollect the amount of exertion required to break those berries by ourselves, affords a very good idea of the immense strength of the mandibles."

Mr. Thompson quotes from an interesting paper on the Birds of Donegal, by Mr. J. V. Stewart, in which he gives the following account of two of these birds, which he killed and examined anatomically. The communication is dated from Ards House, December 4th, 1828.

"I shot a pair of these birds a few days ago in fine

plumage—the first instance, I believe, of their occurring in Ireland. Their strength of beak, as compared with the size of the bird, is quite wonderful; it results from very strong and large muscles, which, extending on either side from the eye to the occiput (hind head), reach from the lower mandible to the top of the cranium, where they meet; they are separated from the eyes by deep bony ridges, to which they are firmly attached. By contracting these muscles, which are thus so firmly attached to the skull, it exerts such a force as enables it to crack, with its hard and strong bill, the thick stone of the hawthorn berry—an operation requiring a strong exertion of the human jaw. A few hours after they were dead, I took a strong pair of scissors and a knife, using them as levers, to force open their bills, and found the muscle had so firmly contracted, that to effect my purpose I had to use a wedge, a forcible proof, it will be allowed, of their strength. Their bills alone, however, are formed as a pair of nutcrackers, as the muscles of the neck, unlike those of the woodpecker's, are not strong. Not so with the wings, which are furnished with such strong muscles that they could almost vie with the pigeon in strength and rapidity of flight."

Like most showy birds, the Hawfinch is shy and skulking, and usually difficult of approach. His flight is undulating, and at times rapid, whilst his song is said to consist of "four simple whistles in an ascending scale, the last two long drawn out, with a 'click' on the wing something like 'bpt,' or the greenfinch's 'zh.'" The song has been compared by others to that of the bullfinch.

I hope that some of my readers will scour the hawthorn woods in the Phoenix Park for this interesting bird, and acquaint me with the result of their investigations.

The eggs of the Hawfinch are said to differ from those of all the other British finches. "They vary from four to six, and are of a pale olive-green, spotted with black, and streaked with dusky grey." The nest is found in trees or bushes, and is said to resemble "the ringdove's flat platform of a nest." Mr. Dobbleday has discovered that the Hawfinch breeds regularly in Epping Forest, and Mr. Stevenson says that it is on the increase in Norfolk.

GREENFINCH.

Coccothraustes chloris; *Verdin ordinaire*; *Grünfink*.

Green Linnet; Green Grosbeak.

Bill, flesh-colour; legs, pale brown; all the plumage, green, variegated with yellow, which is remarkably light in individuals; sides and middle tail feathers, greyish; tail, forked. Length, about six inches.

The Green Linnet, as it is usually called in Ireland, is one of our most common and least valued birds. In St. Patrick's Close I have seen little urchins come into the dealer's shop, and heard them say, "Please, sir, a penny bird;" then from a long box, filled with crowding, huddling finches, one will be extracted, popped into a small paper bag, and borne off in triumph, for what fate I am glad not to inquire. Along the roads and hedgerows in spring and summer, and in the streets and on the quays in winter, we may constantly notice the hardy and sociable Greenfinch—"hail, fellow, well met"—with the chaffinch, the yellow bunting, and other kindred spirits.

The form of the Greenfinch is stout, and somewhat heavy; but the plumage is sometimes very bright and beautiful, the 'yellow in the wings and tail showing conspicuously as the bird flies before the observer: on the other hand, very dingy and battered birds are often seen in our cities, some of them hardly distinguishable from a hen sparrow, after the smoke and grime of their surroundings. I cannot say much for the song of the Greenfinch; it may be heard in April, and consists of one dominant note, syllabled by Meyer as "tway," by Seeböhm as "zh," and by others as "a, ee," long drawn out, together with a few twitterings, reminding one somewhat of an "inferior canary;" another plaintive note is heard later in the season, which also much resembles one of that favourite cage-bird.

In summer the Greenfinch is a sociable bird, and five or six cocks may be heard pouring forth their song high up in the same tree; two nests have also been found in a similar position upon the same branch. I have also noticed here a curious habit of the Greenfinch, to which Mr. Watters and other writers refer; it sometimes in the breeding season flies from its perch with a heavy, flapping wing, uttering its song all the while, and, making a circuit, returns to the vicinity of its starting-point again, reminding one something of the way in which a cock pigeon will fly off with a loud, clapping noise from the roof-top, when he wishes to make a good impression upon the lady of his choice.

The Greenfinch is said to be the most readily tamed of all our songsters; after a few lessons it will sit upon its owner's finger, and readily take its food from his hand. The term *Coccothraustes*, "berry-breaker," or perhaps "grain-crusher," has been given to this bird and to the

hawfinch alone of our British birds, from their strength of bill, and the use they make of it, confined, in the case of the Greenfinch, mainly to the husking of the seeds upon which it feeds.

The Greenfinch builds a pretty nest ; according to Mr. Seeböhm, "slovenliness is the secret of its beauty ;" it is found in ivy, in a bush, laurel or evergreen, and in it the eggs are laid, usually five in number, of a greyish- or bluish-white, speckled with purple or brown. It is said that some hybrids of this bird with the common linnet may occasionally be seen wild, and we know that in confinement it is frequently mated with the canary.

As a proof of the tameness, or rather "tamableness," of the Greenfinch, to which I have previously alluded, I may mention Mr. Thompson's narrative of certain young Greenfinches taken at Fort William, near Belfast, kept for some little time, and then given their liberty. "In the evening they as regularly returned to their cage to roost, as in a wild state they would have done to their favourite tree or shrub."

A careful observer of birds tells us that on one occasion he was silently watching a nest of young Greenfinches, when the old bird perched near, and the young set up a great chirping.

"Hitherto," he says, "I had been quite concealed from the old bird ; but the wind moving the ivy leaves, her eye and mine met, and the same moment she uttered a quick note, which was scarcely uttered before all the chirping instantly ceased, the young ones perfectly understanding the sign."

An example of quick and intelligent obedience worthy of imitation in our own domestic circles. Who can read it and not think kindly of the pretty Greenfinch ?

GOLDFINCH.

Carduelis elegans; Grosbec chardonneret; Distelfink.

Thistle-finch; Draw-water.

Bill, white, with black tip; back of the head and nape, black; forehead and throat, crimson-red; wings, variegated with black, white, and brilliant yellow; tail, black, with white oval spots, and slightly forked. Length, five inches.

This, one of the most beautiful of our Irish birds, is, I fear, becoming one of the rarest; in some counties, indeed, it seems to be almost extinct. In Dublin, for instance, we usually see it only in a cage, and even in the County Meath, where at one time it was very plentiful, it is now rapidly becoming scarce.

The "twit, twit," of the Goldfinch is perhaps its characteristic note, uttered on the wing as "twit, tuit-it," or "tzitlit," sometimes "eaglet." It has a blithe and pleasing sound; but the song is, on the whole, much inferior to that of many of our other song birds. On one occasion, however, I heard two Goldfinches singing most delightfully on the road leading to Llanfaes from Beaumaris; rising into the air, fetching a short compass, and returning to the top of the trees again, they seemed to sing in rivalry, and more sweetly than I had imagined possible.

Grahame, in his *Birds of Scotland*, has well described our little favourite:—

"But mark the pretty bird himself, how light
And quiet his every motion, every note!
How beautiful his plumes; his red-tinged head;
His breast of brown! And see him stretch his wings;

A fairy fan of golden spokes it seems,
Oft on a thistle's tuft he, whistling, sits
Light as the down ; then, 'midst a flight of downs,
He wings his way, piping his shrillest call."

It is a pretty sight to see the Goldfinches at work in a thistle field, climbing up the stems and hanging out of them whilst they tear the thistles to pieces, and scatter the down abroad as they seize upon the seeds. Their food consists, however, of many other seeds besides these, such as dandelion, hemp, groundsel, &c. ; to this latter seed, however, the linnet seems more attached than the Goldfinch. Larvæ and various insects are mainly used in feeding their young.

In Norfolk, and in some other parts of England, the Goldfinch is usually called "the Draw-water," from the fact that, when tamed, it is often taught to draw up its drinking-water in a little bucket. As a reward, according to Mr. Watters, it is permitted to contemplate itself in a looking-glass attached to the back of the cage.

The Goldfinch's nest is a really beautiful structure, consisting of grasses, moss, and lichens, interwoven with wool and hair, and is often found in the fork of an apple-tree, and sometimes in a bush or evergreen. The eggs, four or five in number, are of a bluish-white grey, with purple and brown spots.

SISKIN.

Carduelis spinus; *Grosbec tarin*; *Zeisigfink*.

Aberdevine.

Bill, in summer, orange-brown; legs and toes, pale brown; crown, black; behind the eye, a yellow streak; chin and throat, black; breast, yellowish; wings, dusky, with yellow transverse bar; tail, dusky; base, greenish-yellow. Length, four and a-half inches.

This pretty and interesting little bird is by no means common in Ireland. It "occurs principally as a winter visitor; but the nest has been found in Antrim, Wicklow, and Waterford." I never met with the bird except in winter until last year (1885), when my accomplished friend, Miss Massy, identified it with a bird whose song was unknown to me, but which I heard singing on the 18th June, not far from Powerscourt Waterfall. Mr. Thompson tells us that in 1847-8, Siskins appeared at Ranelagh, County Dublin, in December, and remained until April. I have never, however, seen any here of late years.

The song has been written down as "dididlidlideiâh," and I have endeavoured to make out those syllables in it. To me, however, it seems rather to have a "creaking" sound, accompanied by a pleasant twittering, as, in little parties, the birds flit about the alder trees, their favourite resting-place.

The Siskin is said to be the only bird which will pair with both sexes of the canary, and the song of the hybrids is much prized by fanciers. The nest is found in trees not far from the ground, and the eggs are pale white, spotted with purple.

REDPOLL.

Linota rufescens ; *Sizerin boreal* ; *Bergzeisig*.

Lesser Redpoll.

Bill, legs, and claws, brown ; head, neck, back, and wing coverts, brown ; chin, black ; forehead and breast, vermilion, and in summer the crown of the head also ; abdomen, whitish ; tail, brownish, and somewhat forked. Length, four inches and one-quarter.

This is one of the smallest birds in the country, being somewhat less than five inches in length ; it is, however, very elegantly shaped, and is such a pleasant, lively little creature, as to make it quite a favourite with bird-keepers. It is not uncommon about Dublin, although by no means as numerous as the linnet—the Greater Redpoll, as he is sometimes called. In winter it is, however, more rare, although occasionally met with in flocks which frequent groves of birch and alder trees, where the habits of this graceful and fearless little bird may be readily observed. In the North of Ireland, Mr. Thompson tells us this bird is usually called “thorn-grey,” to distinguish it from the linnet, which is styled “whin-grey,” and the twite, whose local name is “heather-grey ;” and there it is often found, in company with the grey linnet, along the sea-shore in winter.

The food of these little birds consists principally of seeds. To those of the alder they are especially partial ; in many respects their attitudes as they seek for food remind us of their agile brethren the titmice, in whose company they may sometimes be found. Audubon says of them : “ Few

birds display a more affectionate disposition than the little Redpoll, and it was pleasing to see several on a twig feeding each other by passing a seed from bill to bill, one individual sometimes receiving from his two neighbours at the same time."

I cannot say much for the song of this bird; to me it seems but a pleasant twittering. As it flies, however, it utters the usual linnet call-note, "chottuck, chottuck;" or, as the London bird-catchers write it, "tollick, tollick," to which it usually adds a prolonged "chee." Another note frequently uttered gives it the name "Henri." In some parts of France, it has also been interpreted as "me-ik;" but the "chottuck, chottuck, chee," is, in my humble judgment, its most characteristic performance. The flight is strong and light, and the bird wheels round with great rapidity in the air, and seems to dart down from the clouds into the topmost branches of a tree.

Mr. Johns is of opinion that the habits of the Redpoll and the siskin are almost identical; that their haunts and their habits are so much alike that a description of either bird would serve equally well for the other, colour alone excepted. I am not well acquainted with the habits of the siskin, a most rare bird in most parts of the country. It seems to me, however, not to be as strong on the wing nor as lively a bird as the merry, confiding little Redpoll.

The nest of the Redpoll is placed in bushes or in trees, such as the willow and the alder, and is made of dry grass, moss, or weeds, "with down from the catkin of the willow as lining." The eggs, four or five in number, are a bluish or greenish-white, with spots of reddish-brown.

LINNET.

Linota cannabina ; *Grosbec linotte* ; *Blutfink*.

Gray Linnet ; Brown Linnet ; Rose Linnet ; Lintie ;
Greater Redpoll ; Whin-grey ; Thorn-grey.

Bill, greyish ; head, legs, and claws, brown ; forehead and breast, crimson ; back, wings, and upper tail coverts, chestnut brown ; abdomen, whitish ; tail, black, and somewhat forked. The crimson plumage is only worn in the spring and summer ; in autumn and winter it is replaced by different shades of brown. Length, five inches.

This is one of the most common Irish birds, and, in the opinion of many, deserves to rank first amongst our native songsters. With the lark it shares the distinction of being "the poor man's bird," and is very frequently seen in the poor man's window or hung just over his door. In winter and in the early spring linnets are to be found in large flocks, and the bird-catcher may be seen busily at work with his clap-net, and call-bird often tied by the leg, and able just to flutter for a short distance from his perch. In a field near Baldoyle great numbers are taken. I was told that nine dozen were captured "in one clap of the net," and that at least 1,100 linnets had been made prisoners in the season. It struck me as very remarkable that the birds, when disturbed, only flew off for a very short distance, and then returned again to the call-bird and the net, like moths to a candle. In many cases bird-lime is in requisition, and I have seen the twigs lined on the Herbert Road from Bray to Enniskerry, and the bird-catchers going round plucking

the birds like plums from a tree. During the breeding season the birds are, in a measure, protected by the Wild Birds Act ; but when it has expired, what Mr. Watters calls "the bird-lime battue" is commenced upon the young birds or "branchers," as they are sometimes styled.

The various names given to the Linnet are all descriptive of the same bird, but in different stages of plumage, and at different seasons of the year. In his nuptial dress the forehead and head are of a beautiful crimson hue ; but this fades in autumn into a dark brown. The female is always clad in more sober hues.

The food of the Linnet consists of seeds of various kinds, hence its scientific name, from *linum*, flax, and *cannabis*, hemp ; the thistle, the dandelion, and the chick-weed also supply it with food ; whilst in winter it lives and thrives upon berries of ivy, holly, and the mountain ash. It is a most serviceable bird to the farmer, destroying both insects and weeds.

The borders of the sea-shore are a favourite camping ground for Linnets ; there they feed on the dandelion and other seeds. Thus they are very plentiful along the sea-shore from Dublin to Malahide, and also on the east coast of England, during the summer, from July, haunting the sandhills, or, as they are called there, "denes" or "links." The well-known "Happy Valley," near Llandudno, is a favourite assembling place ; and I have often turned away from the strains of the band to listen to the sweet, wild song of the many Linnets to be found there. A friend in Achill Island, writing to Mr. Watters, says : "Many times I have been sitting by the heath-side on the hills of Achill, when the entire bosom of the Atlantic appeared one molten sheet of silver prised with the rainbow reflections of the setting

sun, and suddenly heard, breaking the solemn silence of the place, fifty or a hundred Linnets singing in one united chorus a burst of seraphic melody. The shadow of the sea-eagle floating homeward to his eyrie never disturbed them; but their minstrelsy rung out heart-thrilling until the sun had left but a broad glare on the horizon."

The call-note of the Linnet sounds to me much like the word "chottuc," quickly pronounced, to which it adds occasionally a wild, rich note as it flies.

Mr. Frank Buckland, in his very interesting Notes on White's *Scelborne*, gives the following as the London bird-catchers' version of the Linnet's song:—

" Hepe, hepe, hepe, hepe,
Tollaky, tollaky, quakey, wheet,
Heep, pipe, chow,
Heep, tollaky, quakey, wheet,
Lug, orcher, wheet."

"The toy Linnet is a bird that has been taught to sing by the titlark, woodlark, or yellow-hammer, and only a very few take the perfect song. Perfect toy Linnets are said to be worth any sum of money you like to ask. £15 to £20 would be readily given for a good one; it is said, however, that there is not a perfect bird in London at present." I fear that our Irish fanciers, although quite as enthusiastic as their English brethren, would be hardly justified by the state of their exchequer in venturing to pay such a price even for a "perfect" bird, were it to be found.

The Linnet's nest is lined with wool, and is usually in a bush or tree not far from the ground. The eggs, four or five in number, are of a bluish-grey colour, speckled with red or purple-brown.

BULLFINCH.

Pyrrhula Europæa ; *Bouvreuil Commun* ; *Rothgimpel*.

Hoop ; Red Hoop ; Nope.

Bill, black and very thick ; legs and claws, brown ; crown of the head and chin, glossy black ; nape of the neck, back, and lesser wing coverts, bluish-grey ; lower part of back, white, and very conspicuous when the bird is on the wing ; throat, breast, and abdomen, red ; greater wing coverts, black, with white ends forming a bar ; rest of the wing and tail, black. Length, over six inches.

This very handsome bird is rapidly becoming scarce in Ireland, although still, I think, much more plentiful than the goldfinch. It may be seen in various localities about Dublin ; in particular, I have hardly ever passed along the wood from Finglas to Mulhuddart without noticing a pair or two of Bullfinches flitting along before me. I have never heard this bird sing ; but I am told that it sings in a low and plaintive strain. The call-note, "hoop, hoop, hoop," I have, however, often heard, and it has frequently revealed the presence of the bird, which I had not suspected before. It was remarked by an acute observer, in the case of a pair of Bullfinches wending their way along a green lane, with the cock somewhat in advance, that their call-note was never heard unless the distance between the two birds was more than about twenty yards, the male bird then deeming it necessary to let the female know exactly where he was. In confinement the Bullfinch may be taught

to whistle, and sometimes even to repeat a short sentence ; the latter feat is, however, somewhat rare.

The Bullfinch is a very conspicuous bird on the wing ; the white upper tail coverts, which remind us somewhat of the wheatear, enable us to identify him at once. The fine velvet black on the head, and the light red on the breast, render him one of our handsomest native birds.

The Bullfinch does, perhaps, more injury to the garden than any other of our Irish Song Birds ; his partiality for the buds of cherries and plums is very great ; at the same time, it must be remembered that this is only for a short time in the year, as the young birds are fed almost entirely upon insects, and, in autumn and winter, berries of various kinds are their chief food. Mr. Harting, in pleading for the Bullfinch, says : “ Those who wish for a good show of fruit must drive away the Bullfinch from the buds ; not, as some thoughtless gardeners do, with a charge of shot, which strips off more buds in a second than a Bullfinch could pick off in an hour, but by means of scarecrows and nets and frequent visits to the trees. In this way you may save your fruit from the destroyer, and still hear his pleasing song.”

Instances of what are called melanism frequently occur in the Bullfinch when in confinement ; birds fed on hempseed are especially liable to become black. Mr. Thompson mentions an amusing instance of this in his *Natural History of Ireland*. He says : “ Many years ago, at Edenderry, near Belfast, where a pair of Bullfinches had been for some time kept, the male died, and the female, whose grief for his loss was very evident, soon afterwards moulted and assumed a full garb of black. Such, being considered equivalent to the widow’s ‘ weeds,’ was looked upon as

almost supernatural, and more particularly so when, after a year of mourning, she, at moulting time, threw them partially off, and exhibited some white feathers in her wings."

The nest of the Bullfinch is lined with wool and hair, and is generally placed in a hedge or bush at some height from the ground. The eggs, usually five in number, are of a greenish-blue, streaked and spotted with red and purple.

STARLING.

Sturnus vulgaris; *l'Etourneau vulgaire*; *Gemeiner staar*.

The Stare.

Bill, yellow; feet, flesh-colour; plumage, black, with metallic purple, green, and bronze reflections; each feather tipped with brownish-white; tail, short. Length, about nine inches.

Who does not know the Starling, or the Stare, as he is so frequently called? Who has not heard him in the tall e m-tree, or on the chimney-top, wheezing, screaming, singing, piping, turning his head restlessly all the while, as if expecting a sudden descent from the sky of some unknown prodigy of nature? Who has not seen him "swimming" across the open, and envied the lightness and fleetness of that free wing of his? Well-known indeed he is everywhere, and everywhere at home, from the North Cape to the Cape of Good Hope, from Siberia to China

and Japan, from Iceland to the Canaries, from the Shetland Isles to Cornwall. A country bird and a city bird, a London bird and a Dublin bird, his pleasing shape and his wonderful voice make him one of the most familiar of all wild birds.

Has the Starling any song properly his own, or are the strange and yet occasionally tuneful sounds we hear his attempts, more or less successful, to imitate other sounds and voices around him? This is a question which may admit of debate; but that he is indeed the "mocking-bird" of the British Isles, and that he seems anxious always to reproduce, as well as he can, the various sounds of animal life around him, are facts which admit of no denial. I was much struck with this in the case of Starlings who built in the lofty elm-tree near our house. A call of three sharp whistles, used only by my boy and myself, was taken up and reproduced by these feathered listeners with such fidelity as to lead me to mistake their imitation for the well known summons. Meyer compares the ordinary call-note to the word "staar," from which the bird takes its name. When a great number of birds get together, the effect of their piercing cries, interspersed with softer and more melodious sounds, is grotesquely pleasing.

The wonderful aerial evolutions performed by flocks of Starlings have been always a source of pleasure to the observer. At one time they resemble a huge net, or balloon suspended in the air; at another, separating into small parties, they quickly reunite, like a well-trained army, in one dense mass, and sweep gracefully forward or alight chattering in the tops of the trees.

The most wonderful assemblage of Starlings I have ever seen was at St. Patrick's Cathedral, in the city of Dublin,

on Tuesday, 19th January, 1886. My kind friend, Rev. Sterling Tomlinson, Dean's Vicar, had told me that a great gathering of Starlings congregated every evening at the Cathedral, and then went to roost under the eaves of Marsh's Library, in the Close; and in response to his invitation, at about four o'clock in the evening before mentioned, I arrived just as the early groups of Starlings were arriving too. From about four o'clock to half-past four, parties of birds were heaving in sight, and from every quarter, some high up in the air, others lower down, some in groups of six or eight, others of fifteen or twenty, until at last the top of the long roof and the minarets of the Cathedral were black with Starlings. Then in a moment they rose into the air, and dived down on the lower roof of the Library; for a second or two they rested in the long spouts, and then disappeared under the eaves in silence, leaving not one behind. Mr. Tomlinson estimates the number, after repeated observations, at about two thousand, and he has witnessed this curious and enlivening spectacle for almost three months.

Bishop Stanley has admirably described the movements of a large flock of Starlings as follows:—

“At first they might be seen advancing high in the air like a dark cloud, which in an instant, as if by magic, became almost invisible, the whole body, by some mysterious watchword or signal, changing their course, and presenting their wings to view edgeways, instead of exposing, as before, their full expanded spread. Again, in another moment, the cloud might be seen descending in a graceful sweep, so as almost to brush the earth as they glanced along. Then once more they were seen spiring in wide circles on high, till at length, with one simultaneous rush,

down they glide, with a roaring noise of wing, till the vast mass buried itself unseen, but not unheard, amidst a bed of reeds projecting from the bank adjacent to the wood; for no sooner were they perched than every throat seemed to open itself, forming one incessant confusion of tongues. If nothing disturbed them, there they would most likely remain; but if a stone was thrown, a shout raised, or, more especially, if a gun was fired, up again would rise the mass, with one unbroken rushing sound, as if the whole body were possessed of but one wing to bear them on their upward flight."

The Starling is almost omnivorous, its food embracing insects, worms, snails, seeds, grain, and fruits; in winter the birds frequent the sea-shore to obtain their share of marine insects, in quest of which they may be seen busily turning over the stones. Their nests may be found in the most widely different sites—holes in trees, high cliffs, spires, ruins, church steeples, pigeon-houses, nay, sometimes, it is said, occupying a portion of a magpie's nest. The eggs, four to six in number, are of a greenish-blue.

The "metallic" plumage of the Starling, purple, green, and bronze, distinguishes it from all other European birds; but the young are of a greyish-brown colour until the first autumnal month, and thus have often been considered a distinct variety, and described under the title of the "solitary thrush." Albinos, and partial albinos, are sometimes met with, but not, I think, more frequently than amongst blackbirds and some other varieties of smaller birds. That very beautiful bird, the rose-coloured pastor, is really a Starling, and closely resembles our familiar friend in its flight, its voice, and its general course of procedure.

SWALLOW.

Hirundo rustica; Hironde de Cheminée; Schwalbe.

Barn Swallow; Chimney Swallow.

Bill and tail, black, the latter much forked; crown, neck, and nape, glossy dark blue; forehead and throat, chestnut, with bluish-black bar underneath; lower parts of plumage, reddish-white. Length, under nine inches.

Although the pretty, cheerful Swallow, a prime favourite with everybody, is not usually ranked amongst the Song Birds, still there are few who have not admired his lively, pleasing song. I thought it therefore desirable to give him and his nocturnal brother, the nightjar, a place in this little work; and my resolve has been approved by such high authorities as Mr. A. G. More and Mr. Rathborne, of Dunsinea.

The Swallow, as everyone knows, is a migratory bird; he spends half his time with us, and the other half in equatorial regions, for he has "no winter in his year." Europe, Asia, Africa, all can boast of his presence; in this latter country a few remain at the oases all the year round. In America, however, his place is taken by the purple martin. In Ireland the Swallow is more plentiful than either the house or the sand martin; but the latter bird generally makes his appearance a little earlier in the year. In England the usual date of the Swallow's arrival is about the 15th of April; in Ireland it is generally seen much about the same time. Mr. Thompson mentions the 30th of March as the earliest date of its appearance near Belfast; the middle of April, however, seems to be the time at which it may be reasonably expected.

Mr. Harting, in his *Summer Migrants*, quotes a very interesting table of the mean date of arrival of the birds of the Swallow tribe, as prepared by Mr. Forster, and submitted by him to the Linnæan Society; it will be found in the Appendix to this book.

Another account thus deals with the arrivals of this species:—Spain, February; Malta, March; Italy, March 31; Black Sea, April; Palestine, middle of March; North of France and Belgium, April 5 to 15; South of Sweden, 22nd April to first week in May; the Dovrefjeld, 1st June. It may be seen from these lists that the bird may be confidently expected here on or before the 15th April in ordinary years.

The well-known note of the Swallow is said to sound very much like the word “tweet,” uttered in a quick and peculiarly lively manner; but, in addition to this, it has a soft and most pleasing warble, consisting of several rich notes, and one that reminds us strongly of a passage in the song of the wren. This attractive warbling song is uttered as the bird is on the wing, and sometimes when at rest; to my mind it breathes a peculiar cheerfulness, coupled with gentleness and untiring energy, and is in these particulars almost unique amongst our familiar bird songs.

The return of the Swallow tribe to their old haunts has often been remarked; birds carefully marked having been found several years running in or near the old nesting-place. How many thousand miles the bird must have traversed in the meantime it is not easy even to conjecture; as regards migration alone, the distance would be 5,000 miles annually, at the least, to which should be added each day's aerial voyaging, the bird often sixteen hours on the wing in the

long days, at a speed of—shall we say?—60 miles an hour. Wonderful indeed is this velocity, and yet it is much below that of the swift, which is believed at times to attain a rate of speed almost twice as great; yet more wonderful still is that unerring instinct given by the great Creator which enables these and other migratory birds to return periodically, not only to the same country, but to the same town, the same street, and the same well-known nesting-place, year after year. “Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the Swallow [swift] observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord.” (Jer. viii. 7.)

The Swallow and the house martin have been noticed as inhabiting opposite sides of the same country road or street, in their hunting, or rather hawking, grounds; they also are careful not to poach on one another's preserves. Whilst the swifts are in this country, I seldom fail to see a few hawking over Elm Park; and I noticed last year that when they left in August, their places were taken by Swallows, which had previously seldom, if ever, appeared.

The swift may be distinguished from the Swallow by its universal dark colour, as also by the great size of its wings, its more rapid flight, and its loud, screaming voice. The Swallow may be known from the house martin by its steel-blue colour, and chestnut throat and forehead; the house martin also displays a very conspicuous white patch near the tail as he flies. The sand martin is smaller than either, of a grey-brownish colour, its under plumage being of a dirty white. All the Swallows have forked tails.

In White's *Selborne*, with Buckland's Notes—a book which should be in every library—much information is

given about the Swallow, its drinking and washing whilst flying, its feeding its young on the wing, its supposed rivalry with the swift, and many other interesting topics. He mentions also the fact that it acts as excubitor or sentinel to other birds in announcing the approach of the hawk and other birds of prey. As soon as a hawk appears, with a shrill, alarming note, he calls all the Swallows and martins about him, who pursue in a body, and buffet and strike their enemy till they have driven him from the village, darting down from above on his back, and rising in a perpendicular line in perfect security. This bird will also sound the alarm, and strike at cats when they climb on the roofs of houses, or otherwise approach the nests.

On one point alone does "good old White," as he has been happily termed, differ from ornithologists of the day. He believed that it was possible that some Swallows might hibernate instead of migrating, and remain in holes in trees or banks in a torpid state, till the spring sun called them, like the insects, to life and activity again. This was indeed a very ancient belief, expressed in the familiar lines—

“ The bat, the bee, the butterfly,
The cuckoo, and the Swallow,
The corncrake, and the nightingale,
They all sleep in the hollow.”

Even the great Linnæus seems to have held the same opinion, as also Bishop Stanley and many others. In the *Zoologist* for 1845, Mr. Holme, of Oxford, writes:—"On the hibernation of this species [the house swallow], I was told many years since by old Wall, then keeper of the Kildare Street Museum, in Dublin, that after a heavy snow

in the winter of 1825-26, on going into the Museum to see whether the snow had melted through, he found four Chimney Swallows perched close together on a cross-beam, with their heads under their wings; but on approaching his hand to them, they flew off, and escaped into the open air." Mr. Gosse, too, holds the opinion "that a few, for some reason or other, evade the task of a southward flight, and remain, becoming torpid, occasionally betrayed into a temporary activity, and resuming their active life, about the same time, or a little before the time, of the arrival of their congeners from abroad." I must confess that my humble belief in the matter is entirely in accord with that of Mr. Johns, who was of opinion, that although torpidity was out of the question, it was probable that some few stragglers remained after the great body had migrated, to survive until the following spring if the winter proved a mild one; if otherwise, however, only quickly to perish, from lack of food and warmth.

The attachment of the birds to the neighbourhood of water at roosting-time, led to the belief that Swallows retired under the water of ponds and streams for the winter, from which they had but just emerged when seen skimming close to the surface in the early spring. The height at which Swallows fly is generally believed to be a good weather forecast; this arises from the fact that the insects upon which they feed fly low in damp, cloudy weather, but mount up higher when the air is dry and clear.

The food of the Swallow, as well as of the swift and martins, consists of insects. Dr. Jenner is of opinion that, on their first arrival, and for some time afterwards, they feed mainly upon gnats, but that their favourite food is a

small beetle, which has been found, on dissection, in great abundance in their stomachs. Mr. Harting states that they sometimes take honey-bees, as related by Virgil, and that the sand martin has been observed to prey upon the common wasp.

The nest of the Swallow has been described as "a ring of mud, lined with dry grass and a few feathers," a mud-made shell or cup; this is shallow, and always open, and hence the sitting Swallow, unlike the house martin, is always exposed to view. The eggs, four to six in number, are pure white, with brown or grey markings. The sitting bird is fed by its mate.

There are many questions about the Swallow tribe which still await a satisfactory answer; one is, Why is the swift, the most powerful of the five birds of this species, the last to arrive, and the first to depart? Another, Why does the sand martin usually outstrip its more powerful congener the Swallow? A third, Whither do the early arrivals we sometimes note retire when winter, or something very like it, returns for a few days, and the birds are at once missed from their accustomed place? For other interesting topics in connection with this most interesting bird, its arrival, and its departure in great multitudes from our shores, I would refer my readers to Mr. Harting's suggestive work on *Our Summer Migrants*, to which I have often turned for information within the past few years.

NIGHTJAR.

Caprimulgus Europæus ; *Engoulevent ordinaire* ;
Nachtschwalbe ; *Tagschläfer*.

Fern Owl ; Churn Owl ; Goat-sucker ; Dor Hawk.

Bill, legs, and claws, brown ; middle claw “pectinated,” or “comb-like ;” plumage, generally a greyish-brown, delicately traced and shaded ; white spots on the wings of the male. Length, about ten inches and a-half.

The Nightjar is to my mind one of the most interesting birds in the country. Few, indeed, save the ornithologist, are aware of its presence ; and hardly anyone could imagine without some information on the subject, that the strange, weird sound which often breaks the stillness of the summer night in different parts of the country, was really the voice of a bird. The Nightjar is one of the latest of our summer migrants ; he arrives usually about the 1st of May, and leaves us again about the end of September. The month of July is, however, the month to hear him to perfection, and nearly all my experiences of the bird were acquired by me then. There are several peculiarities about the Nightjar which make it very interesting to the lover of birds ; amongst these, I may speak briefly of its remarkable voice, its plumage, its “pectinated” claw, and its mode of perching on the branch of a tree. I hope that in the near future my readers may be led to see, and hear, and judge for themselves as regards these matters.

The Nightjar is closely allied to the swifts, and just as they are retiring to rest, after a long day’s chase of insects,

he appears on the scene, full of life and vigour, and prepared for a good night's work. As the twilight begins to fade, we may see a hawk-like bird dart quickly forth, and, describing a wide circle, return to the fern-covered rock or thicket from which he came; "for the bracken is to the Nightjar what the heather is to the red grouse." As he rests, we hear that strange cry, which, once heard, can never be forgotten; at one time apparently quite close by, at another dying away into the far distance; after a few seconds it ceases, and then, quick as thought, we may see the bird pass above our heads, and vanish in the evening gloom, uttering, as he flies, a note, "co-ic, co-ic," for the "wheel-song" is heard only when the bird is at rest.

At the China Rock, near Beaumaris, I have often watched this bird; but my first introduction to his "strange song" was when walking many years ago from Waterford to Tramore. At about midnight one night in July, it broke upon my ears, and I was assured by my friend and pupil, Rev. Joseph Bewley, a great lover of birds, that it was the "churr" of the Nightjar. Mr. Seeböhm compares this note to the letter "r," rapidly pronounced so as to make the tongue vibrate, and sometimes varying in tone, as if the bird were at one time drawing in its breath, and at the other breathing out as it sang. The "coic," or "chie," or "dak," uttered on the wing, is compared by Mr. Norgate, in the *Zoologist* of March, 1884, to the sound produced "by twanging a short bit of India-rubber cord when it is tightly strained, or a metallic tongue fixed by one end in a vice." Besides these sounds, it also makes occasionally a curious clapping noise, of which Gilbert White observes: "When a person approaches the haunt of the fern owls in an evening, they continue flying round the head of the

intruder, and by striking their wings together above their backs, in the manner that the pigeons called smiters are known to do, make a smart snap ; perhaps at that time they are jealous for their young, and their noise and gesture are intended by way of menace." In leaving the song of the Nightjar, I think that the word "purring" seems as applicable to it as "churring," and that it is certainly the most remarkable bird-voice heard in Ireland.

The plumage and markings of the Nightjar remind one forcibly of some of our large moths ; the peculiar softness of the feathers, and noiselessness of the flight, of its nocturnal associates the owls. With reference to what is called its "pectinated claw," which much resembles a close-toothed comb, many theories have been entertained. Some have thought that the bird captured its insect prey with this claw, and thus transferred it to its mouth ; others believe that it was used to divest the bill of the insects which might adhere to the bristles in the mouth. Mr. Seeböhm, however, is of opinion that most probably it is of service in disengaging the hooked feet of the beetles upon which the bird feeds from the bill. The Nightjar perches lengthwise on the bough of a tree, not across it, as other birds do ; and, sitting with his head down and motionless, the bird's colour is eminently protective, for it looks precisely "like the stump of a dead, broken-off branch."

The female makes no nest, but lays her two eggs in a hollow on the ground ; they are of a white colour, blotched with grey ; the hollow made by a cow's or horse's hoof is a favourite spot ; and the bird, as she sits closely upon her eggs, escapes notice, from the protective colouring alluded to above. Mr. Norgate says that, on 29th June, 1876, he saw a female Nightjar sitting on her two young ones, which

were nearly feathered. The old bird, on his approach, remained motionless, except that it closed—or nearly closed—its large eyes, or at any rate that eye which he could see, as if aware that its eyes were the most conspicuous part of it. The young birds are of a lighter colour than the old birds, and are without the white spots conspicuous on the wings and tails of the males. They are usually hatched out by the middle of July.

Both the Nightjar and the cuckoo have very frequently been mistaken for hawks; and zealous gamekeepers in England add them to the trophies hanging on the stable-door, or in front of the cottage. No more harmless bird, however, can be found than our interesting friend. The moth, the beetle, the cockchafer alone have cause to fear that swift and noiseless wing, that wide and snapping mouth. The common error preserved in our name goat-sucker, and the German, *Geissmelker*, is admirably exposed by Waterton. “When the moon shines brightly,” he says, “you may have a fair opportunity of examining the goat-sucker; you will see it close by the cows, goats, and sheep, jumping up every now and then under their bellies. Approach a little nearer; he is not shy; ‘he fears no danger, for he knows no sin.’ See how the nocturnal flies are tormenting the poor kine, and with what dexterity he springs up and catches them as fast as they alight on the belly, legs, and udders of the poor animals. Observe how quietly they stand, and how sensible they seem of his good offices; for they neither strike at him nor try to drive him away as an uncivil intruder. Were you to dissect him, and inspect his stomach, you would find no milk there; it is full of the flies that have been annoying the herd.”

The haunts of the Nightjar are “open heaths and wooded

districts." In Ireland, however, it seems usually to prefer hill-sides, with fern-clad rocks, to trees. I have myself heard it in only three localities in this country, viz. : Hill of Howth, near Dublin ; the Old Tramore Road from Waterford ; and Pembrokestown, not far from the town of Tramore. I have frequently heard it in Wales along the Menai Strait, and at Llanfairfechan.

Mr. Gosse gives an interesting description of "a night with fern owls," as described by Mr. Thomas, the bird-keeper at the Surrey Zoological Gardens, with which I shall conclude an imperfect notice of this most interesting bird. Mr. Thomas had taken a holiday, and intended to spend a summer night in the open air many miles away from London. He selected a haycock at the edge of a wood as a fit resting-place, and then burrowed down into the middle of the hay, just leaving his head exposed for a little fresh air, and free for any observation he might make under the light of the unclouded moon. "In such a soft, warm, and fragrant bed, sleep soon overcame him, till he awoke with a confused idea of elves, sprites, fairies, and pixies, holding their midnight dances around him. I had not been long again settled," he says, "on my grassy couch, reflecting upon my wild, fantastic dream, when my attention was drawn to the singular wild, ringing strain of the fern owl. It resembled at times the whirring, rapid rotation of a wheel, now swelling, now diminishing, the sound intermixed with 'kurring' and 'croaking' noises, some of them having a ventriloquial effect ; there was now and then a sharp, unearthly kind of shriek ; presently there were the same sounds issuing from other quarters of the wood, until the whole place was ringing with the wild nocturnal notes. As day-break advanced, I could see the fern

owls (there were at least from four to six birds) hawking for moths, chasing and pursuing each other, and sweeping along with surprisingly sudden turns and tumblings. As I sat motionless, with my head just above the surface of the hayrick, I had a good view of their proceedings; the birds were continually snapping at the numerous small moths which were hovering over the heaps of hay. The birds are not very shy when pursuing their prey, for they would glide along close by me. Amidst the gloom one could see them looming in certain positions, as a ship at sea is sometimes to be seen in the night-time. At times the fern owls would suddenly appear close to me, as if by magic, and then shoot off, like meteors passing through the air. The spectral and owl-like appearance, the noiseless, wheeling flight of the birds, as they darted by, would almost persuade one that he was on enchanted ground; and I wished at the time that some of our Museum naturalists had been with me to have shared the pleasure I felt at this nocturnal and beautiful scene from nature."

The well-known American "Whip-Poor-Will" is a bird allied to this species.

CUCKOO.

Cuculus canorus; *Coucou gris*; *Gemeiner Kuck Kuk*;
Gauch; *Koekoek* (Dutch).

Bill, black; legs and toes, yellow; head, crown, neck, and back, bluish ash-colour; chin, throat, and breast, paler; under parts, whitish, barred with greyish-black; vent also whitish; tail, bluish-black, with white spots.

The plumage of the female is brown rather than grey; adult females, however, differ but little from the males. Length, about fourteen inches.

It may at first sight be thought strange to include the Cuckoo amongst our birds of song. The fact, however, that its well-known cry is uttered by the male bird only, and by him only in the breeding season, may be accepted as a proof that it is really a song, and that the singer deserves a place in our list of song birds.

When the Cuckoo goes abroad, he much resembles a hawk as he skims along; and hence the common idea that the Cuckoos become sparrow-hawks, or rather merlins, in the winter. He is seldom seen on the ground; there he is clumsy and awkward, and progresses by short hops as he searches for food; but he flies rapidly and without apparent effort.

The range of the Cuckoo extends from the Arctic Circle, both in Europe and Asia, to South Africa and Southern India; everywhere in and about the United Kingdom he is common, and may be found in the small uninhabited islands of the Hebrides, and is said even to have occurred in the Faroe Islands.

With the poets the Cuckoo has always been a bird of fame; so Shakespeare:—

“ The plain song Cuckoo grey,
Whose note full many a man doth mark,
And dares not answer nay.”

And Wordsworth:—

“ O Cuckoo ! shall I call thee bird,
Or but a wandering voice ?

.

Darling of the spring,
No bird, but an invisible thing—
A voice, a mystery.”

Whilst Quarles, in his *Divine Fancies*, thus alludes to the strange habits of the bird :—

“ The idle Cuckoo, having made a feast
On sparrows’ eggs, lays down her own in the nest ;
The silly bird, she ownes it, hatches, feeds it,
Protects it from the weather, clocks and breeds it ;
But when this gaping monster hath found strength
’To shift without a helper, she at length,
Not caring for the tender care that bred her,
Forgets her parent, kills the bird that fed her.”

The times and seasons of the Cuckoo have been aptly described in the doggrel :—

“ In April
Come he will ;
In May
He sings all day ;
In June
He alters his tune ;
In July
He prepares to fly ;
Come August,
Go he must.”

The Cuckoo’s well-known song is always in a minor third ; but in some birds the key is much higher than in others. When several birds are singing in the same neighbourhood, the effect is, therefore, often very curious. Besides his “cuckoo” song, the male has a harsh note which has been written down as “quawawa” or “haghaghaghag.” The female has a laughing note, “quickwickwick,” or

“kickikickicki,” as my friend, Mr. Rathborne, of Dunsinea, a great authority on such matters, has it. When the male “alters his tune,” it is for “cu cu cu cu,” and it is said that he will approach, if mimicked well by some careful observer.

I do not think that I ever heard the Cuckoo’s note under such pleasing circumstances, or was so favourably impressed with it, as when visiting the fine valley of Glen-na-smcoil (the Valley of the Thrush) a few years ago, in company with Captain Cary and another friend; the male bird passed us flying low, and followed at a short distance by the female, whom he seemed to lure onwards by a singularly melodious “cuckoo, cuckoo.”

When this bird appears abroad, he is often mobbed by smaller birds, who seem to hold him in great detestation, perhaps from the idea that he belongs to the hawk tribe; occasionally, however, he appears to exercise a kind of fascination over them, for at his cry birds will flock from various quarters, and betake themselves to neighbouring trees as if to listen and admire. As the bird sings “cuckoo,” he seems to bend down, lower his wings, and jerk his tail—peculiarities which our German friends have endeavoured to reproduce in the Cuckoo to be found in most clockmakers’ establishments.

No certain reason can be assigned for the strange habits of the Cuckoo with regard to its young. The bird does not pair, and male and female are seldom seen together; but the male is usually attended by a smaller bird, which Mr. Johns believes to be a meadow pipit; this obsequious attendant flies after him, and perches near him when he alights, as if affected by some mesmeric influence. The females are much fewer in number than the males; they

are polyandrous, and visit from time to time the districts which the males have appropriated as their own.

For a long time it was believed that the female laid but one egg; but now she is credited with from five to a dozen; these are variously coloured, and hence it was thought that she possessed the power of assimilating the colour to that of the eggs of the bird in whose nest she intended to deposit them. This idea is, of course, erroneous. Professor Newton's opinion is that the peculiar colour is hereditary in the bird, as is also the habit of laying year after year in the nest of the same bird. In the *Zoologist* for 1873 it was mentioned that a wagtail had built its nest for eight or nine years in the same spot, and that each year it had contained a Cuckoo's egg. The usual colour of the eggs is a greyish-white, with spots of greenish-buff; but some are blue and unspotted.

The bird most in favour with the Cuckoo seems to be the meadow pipit or titlark; but she often patronizes the nests of the pied wagtail, hedge sparrow, yellow bunting, and many others. In some of these cases the Cuckoo, no doubt, sits upon the nest when laying; in others, however, it would be impossible for a bird of her size to do so; in such cases, therefore, the egg is laid upon the ground, and then carried by the female in her bill, and carefully inserted in the opening of the nest. As her egg is very small, and her gape very large, this is not a very difficult performance. Different reasons have been assigned for the Cuckoo's strange habits; the most probable seems to be that the old birds remain for so short a time in the country as to make it impossible for their young to be sufficiently strong upon the wing to accompany them in their flight, and that they would thus be certain to perish were it not

that their foster-parents tend them with such unremitting pains and attention ; this is a question, however, which it is by no means easy to determine.

Dr. Jenner, in 1788, was the first to discover the fact now so well known, that the young Cuckoo ejects the young of the bird in whose nest it has been hatched from their rightful home. He says :—

“ I discovered the young Cuckoo, though so nearly hatched, *in the act* of turning out the hedge sparrow. The little animal contrived to get the bird upon its back, and, making a lodgment for its burden by elevating its elbows, clambered backwards with it up the side of the nest till it reached the top, where, resting for a moment, it threw off its load with a jerk, and quite disengaged it from the nest. It remained in this situation for a short time, feeling about with the extremities of its wings, as if to be convinced whether the business was properly executed, and then dropped into the nest again.”

More than one observer has noted a fact which seems to bear upon this strange instinct in the young Cuckoo—that the bird, when touched unexpectedly, throws itself backward with considerable force. Mr. Gould was for a time, however, sceptical as to this wonderful performance ; he has, however, had reason to change his opinion, and he has now given the weight of his great authority to the belief that the young Cuckoo makes short work of other young birds hatched out in the same nest.

The food of the Cuckoo consists mainly of insects ; it is a climbing bird, but it explores trees in a horizontal or slanting direction ; it does not ascend perpendicularly like the creeper, nor does it use its bill for making holes in trees, like the woodpecker, but seems to be “ a half perch-

ing and half climbing bird." It is also a most voracious eater, and it is only by constant and almost painful assiduity that when young its wants can be supplied by its foster-parents. Their devotion is indeed extraordinary. Mr. Weir tells us that on one occasion he found a young Cuckoo covered by an old titlark with outstretched wings from a very heavy shower of rain, while her own young ones had in the meantime been expelled by the Cuckoo, and were lying lifeless within two inches of her nest; the infatuated bird thus converting herself into an umbrella for the sole benefit of the murderer of her own offspring. It is said that if two Cuckoo's eggs are laid in the same nest, and hatched out, the stronger of the two young birds will eject the weaker.

I may conclude this notice of one of our most remarkable birds by quoting John Heywood's Epigram, dated 1587, as given in the last edition of White's *Selborne* :—

“ Use maketh maistry, this hath been said alway ;
But all is not alway as all men do say.
In April, the Koocoo can sing her song by rote ;
In June, of tune she cannot sing a note :
At first ‘ koocoo, koocoo,’ sing still can she do ;
At last ‘ kooke, kooke, kooke,’ six kookes to one coo.”

APPENDIX.

NATURALIST'S CALENDAR.

(Compiled from White and Markwick's Calendar, kept at Selborne.)

*Showing the arrival and departure of singing Birds of Passage.
The second dates express respectively the earliest and latest
dates recorded.*

SUMMER MIGRANTS.

Name.	Arrival.	Departure.
Wheatear ...	Mid March ; March 15.	End of August ; Oct. 26.
Chiff-chaff ...	End of March.	Early in Oct. ; Oct. 28.
Willow Warbler ...	Early in April.	Mid September.
Wood Warbler ...	End of April ; April 10.	Mid September.
Garden Warbler ...	End of April.	September.
Nightingale ...	Mid April.	Mid Aug. ; Aug. 29.
Blackcap ...	Mid April.	Sept. ; Sept. 19.
Grasshopper Warbler	Mid April ; April 16.	September.
Sedge Warbler ...	Late in April.	Mid October.
Whitethroat ...	Late in April ; April 14.	Late in Sept. ; Sept. 23.
Ring Ousel... ..	Early in April ; Mar. 30.	About Michaelmas ; October 11.
Whinchat ...	End of April.	Late in October.
Redstart ...	Mid April ; April 8.	Early in Sept. ; Sept. 30.
Spotted Flycatcher ...	Early in May.	Early in Sept. ; Sept. 29.
Tree Pipit ...	Third week in April.	September.
Swallow ...	Mid April ; March 26.	Early in Oct. ; Nov. 16.
House Martin ...	Mid April ; March 28.	Mid Oct. ; Dec. 8.
Sand Martin ...	End of March ; Mar. 21.	Mid Aug. ; Sept. 8.
Swift ...	Early in May ; April 13.	First week in August ; August 27.
Nightjar ...	Mid May.	End of September.
Cuckoo ...	Mid April ; April 7.	Early in August ; last heard, June 28.
Corncrake ...	Mid April.	Early in October.

WINTER MIGRANTS.

Name.	Arrival.	Departure.
Fieldfare	End of Oct. ; Oct. 12.	Late in April ; May 1.
Redwing	Mid October ; October 1.	Late in April.
Snow Bunting	End of October.	Mid April.
Brambling	End of October.	March.
Hawfinch	End of October.	April.

DATES OF ARRIVAL OF THE SWALLOW TRIBE IN
VARIOUS PLACES IN EUROPE.

From a Table furnished to the Linnæan Society by
MR. FORSTER.

	Swallow.	Sand Martin.	House Martin.	Swift.
Naples	February 27.	April 3.	April 10.	April 15.
Rome	March 3.	April 5.	April 15.	April 18.
Pisa	March 5.	April 8.	April 16.	April 20.
Vienna	March 25.	April 12.	April 20.	April 23.
Bruges	April 5.	April 25.	May 1.	April 30.
London	April 15.	April 25.	April 30.	May 3.

TABULAR VIEW OF BIRDS IN SONG EACH MONTH IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF DUBLIN.

By J. R. KINAHAN, M.D.

From *Proceedings of Dublin Natural History Society*, Vol. I.

	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	April.	May.	June.	July.	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
Dipper ...	s	s	s	s	s	s	...	s	s	s	s	s
Song Thrush ...	s	s	s	s	s	s	s	...	...	s	s	s
Blackbird ...	s	s	s	s	s	s	...	s	...	s	s	s
Missel Thrush...	...	s	s	s	s	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Fieldfare ...	...	...	r	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Redwing ...	r	r	r	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	r
Ring Ousel ...	...	...	...	...	...	s	s	s	...	...	...	...
Robin ...	s	s	s	s	s	s	...	s	s	s	s	s
Pied Wagtail ...	s	s	s	s	s	s	s	...	s	...	s	s
Grey Wagtail ...	s	s	s	s	s	s	s	...	...	s	s	s
Wheatear ...	...	...	...	s	s	s	...	...	...	...	...	...
Whinchat ...	...	...	...	s	s	s	...	...	...	...	...	...
Stonechat ...	...	...	s	s	s	s	...	...	...	...	...	...
Whitethroat ...	...	...	...	...	s	s	s	s	...	...	...	...
Willow Warbler	...	...	...	s	s	s	s	...	...	...	...	...
Chiff-chaff ...	...	...	s	s	s	s	s	s	s	...	...	...
Gold-crest ...	s	s	s	s	s	s	...	...	...	...	...	s
Blue Tit ...	s	s	s	s	s	s	s	...	...	...	...	...
Great Tit ...	s	s	s	s	s	s	...	s	s	...	...	...
Coal Tit ...	s	s	s	s	s	s	...	...	...	...	...	...
Long-tailed Tit	...	s	s	s	s	s	s	...	...	...	...	...
Hedge Sparrow	s	s	s	s	s	s	s	...	...	s	s	...
Meadow Pipit...	...	s	s	s	s	s	...	...	...	...	...	...
Starling ...	s	s	s	s	s	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Greenfinch ...	...	...	s	s	s	...	...	s	...	...	...	...
Siskin ...	...	...	...	...	s	s	...	...	...	...	...	...
Linnet ...	...	s	s	s	s	s	...	...	...	...	...	...
Redpoll ...	...	...	s	s	s	s	...	...	...	...	...	...
Chaffinch ...	s	s	s	s	s	s	s	...	s	s	...	s
Yellow Hammer	s	s	s	s	s	s	s	s	...	...	...	...
Corn Bunting...	...	s	s	s	s	s	...	s	...	...	...	...
Reed Bunting...	...	s	s	s	s	s	...	s	...	...	...	...
Woodlark ...	...	...	s	s	s	s	...	...	...	...	...	...
Skylark ...	s	s	s	s	s	s	s	...	s	s	s	s
Wren ...	s	s	s	s	s	s	s	...	s	s	s	s
Swallow ...	...	...	...	s	s	s	s	s	...	...	...	...
Woodquest ...	...	s	s	s	s	s	s	...	...	...	...	...
Corncrake ...	...	...	...	...	s	s	s	s	...	...	...	...
Cuckoo ...	...	...	...	s	s	s	...	...	...	...	...	...

(s) *Sings.* (r) *Records.* (...) *Not Heard.*

HON. DAINES BARRINGTON'S ESTIMATE OF THE
PRINCIPAL BRITISH SONG BIRDS.

			Mellowness.	Sprightliness.	Plaintiveness.	Compass.	Execution.	Total.
Nightingale	...	...	19	14	19	19	19	90
Linnet	...	...	12	16	12	16	18	74
Blackcap	...	...	14	12	12	14	14	66
Skylark	...	...	4	19	4	18	18	63
Woodlark	...	...	18	4	17	12	8	59
Robin	...	...	6	16	12	12	12	58
Goldfinch	...	...	4	19	4	12	12	51

BIRDS THAT SING WHILST FLYING.

Skylark, Woodlark, Meadow Pipit, Tree Pipit, Blackbird, Whitethroat, Swallow, Cuckoo.

Gilbert White gives the Wren also. I have, however, never heard it sing whilst on the wing.

BIRDS THAT SING AT NIGHT.

Sedge Warbler (Irish Nightingale), Grasshopper Warbler, Nightjar.

The Song Thrush and Robin often sing at night.

Mr. Arthur Irwin heard a Thrush in full song at 1.30 a.m., at Newtownmountkennedy, on March 22, 1866.

BIRDS WHOSE FEMALES SOMETIMES SING.

The most noted of these is undoubtedly the Skylark, although Burns was somewhat at sea when he spoke of her as absent all day from her nest, on a singing tour—

“ The lav’rock in the morning she’ll rise frae her nest,
And mount to the air wi’ the dew upon her breast,
And wi’ the merry ploughman she’ll whistle and sing,
And at night she’ll return to her nest back agin.”

The hen Meadow Pipit is also occasionally a songster.

This Dr. Kinahan has proved by dissection, and in one case, at all events, he has shown, by a similar process, that a hen Starling possessed like vocal powers to the male.

I am not aware that the females of any other birds are similarly gifted.

OUR SONG BIRDS' NESTS AND EGGS.

(Compiled from the *Field Naturalist*, by Rev. J. G. Wood.)

Popular Name.	Locality of Nest.	Average No. of Eggs.
Missel Thrush.	Trees.	4-5
Fieldfare.	Never known to breed here.	—
Redwing.	Hardly ever nests here.	—
Song Thrush.	Bushes and hedges.	4-5
Ring Ousel.	On or near ground.	3-5
Water Ousel.	Holes in stream-banks.	5-6
Nightingale.	Hedges and bushes.	4-5
Blackcap.	Do.	4-5
Garden Warbler.	Do.	4-6
Whitethroat.	Do.	4-5
Wood Warbler.	On the ground.	6
Willow Warbler.	Do.	5-7
Chiff-chaff.	On or near the ground.	6
Grasshopper Warbler.	Tufts of grass and bushes.	5-7
Sedge Warbler.	Bushes and reeds.	5-6
Redstart.	Holes in trees and walls.	4-6
Tree Pipit.	On the ground.	5-6
Meadow Pipit.	Do.	4-6
Rock Pipit.	Do.	4-5
Skylark.	Do.	3-5
Woodlark.	Do.	4-5
Snow Bunting.	Does not breed here.	—
Corn Bunting.	On or near the ground.	4-5
Reed Bunting.	On the ground, near water.	4-5
Yellow Bunting.	Low bushes or hedge-banks.	3-5
Robin.	Almost anywhere.	5-7
Hedge Sparrow.	Hedges and bushes.	4-5
Wren.	Banks, thatch, walls.	6-10
Stonechat.	On or near the ground.	5-6
Whinchat.	Do.	5-6

Popular Name.	Locality of Nest.	Average No. of Eggs.
Wheatear.	Holes in walls, &c.	5-6
Gold crest.	Below branch of spruce-fir.	7-8
Great Tit.	Holes in walls and trees.	6-9
Blue Tit.	Do.	6-12
Coal Tit.	Holes in trees.	6-8
Long-tailed Tit.	Trees and bushes.	9-12
Chaffinch.	Tree forks, bushes, &c.	4-5
Brambling.	Does not breed here.	—
Greenfinch.	Trees, hedges, and bushes.	4-6
Goldfinch.	Hedges, bushes, and tree forks	4-5
Bullfinch.	Thick bushes and trees.	4-5
Linnet.	Thorn hedges and fuzze.	4-6
Redpoll.	Bushes and stunted trees.	4-5
Twite.	On ground, in grass or heather.	4-6
Siskin.	Trees.	—
Hawfinch.	Trees and bushes.	4-6
Starling.	Dovecots, ruins, towns.	4-6
Swallow.	Eaves, chimneys, &c.	4-6
Nightjar.	Holes in ground.	2
Cuckoo.	Nests of Hedge Sparrow, Meadow Pipit, Wagtail, &c.	—

ODDS AND ENDS OF BIRD-LIFE

FOR

MY YOUTHFUL READERS.

The largest European song bird is the Missel Thrush.

The smallest European bird is the Golden-crested Wren.

The smallest European Thrush is the Redwing.

The migratory Thrushes are—the Ring Ousel (summer), and the Fieldfare and Redwing (winter).

The gregarious Thrushes are the Missel Thrush, the Fieldfare, the Redwing, and the Ring Ousel.

The only song bird not heard during the time of incubation is the Missel Thrush.

The Golden Oriole and the Mocking-bird of America (*Mimus polyglottus*) are also allied to the Thrushes.

White's Thrush is a singularly beautiful bird.

The only bird able to walk down a tree head foremost is the Nuthatch.

No Woodpeckers are indigenous to Ireland, and of the Carrion Crow but one specimen is known.

The Sedge Warbler is often called the "Irish Nightingale."

The only bird peculiar to Great Britain is the Red Grouse, to which some would add the St. Kilda Wren.

The bird which in Ireland is called the Yellow Wagtail is known to naturalists as the Grey Wagtail; the true Yellow, or Ray's Wagtail, is a very rare bird in this country.

The Pied Flycatcher is usually the last to arrive of our summer migrants.

The Skelligs, County Kerry, and the Bull and Cow Rock, County Cork, are said to be the only Irish breeding-places of the Gannet.

There are about fifty-five summer and forty-five winter migrants in Ireland.

Neither the Black Grouse nor the Ptarmigan is a native of Ireland.

The bird usually called the "Green Linnet" is not a Linnet, nor is the "Hedge Sparrow" a Sparrow.

The most beautiful nest in this country is that of the Long-tailed Titmouse.

The Wren and the Dipper are the only birds in Ireland with erect tails.

The only song bird of the Arctic regions is the Snow Bunting.

The Laughing Jackass is a species of Kingfisher.

When, as in autumn and winter, flocks composed of various species feed in company, it is found that they separate at night; birds only of the same species roosting together, to assemble again with their congeners in the morning.

A few birds are more common in Ireland than in England; of these the principal are the Peregrine Falcon, Raven, Chough, Magpie, the Stonechat, the Grey Wagtail, the Snipe, Heron, and other water birds.

The females of birds of prey are usually one-third larger than the males of song birds; amongst the Warblers, the hen Blackcap alone is larger than the cock.

The Germans imagine that the voice of the Chaffinch most nearly resembles the human. In the West of England they say he always cries about the 25th of March—

"Pay your rent—Pay your rent—Pay your rent."

That rare and beautiful bird the Bearded Tit is sometimes called the "Reed Pheasant."

The call note of the Pied Wagtail resembles the word "physic;" that of the Pied Flycatcher, the syllables "pse-chip-chip." The latter is said to be the mutest bird in Great Britain or Ireland.

The voice of the Magpie and that of the kid are somewhat alike.

The Jay possesses the loudest voice of any British bird.

The Cormorant is the "basso" of his tribe, with his trombone notes.

The Kentish Goldfinches, the Essex Chaffinches, and the Surrey Nightingales are generally preferred.

No Irish Owls hoot; the Tawny Owl may often be heard in Wales, with his "Ho-ho-ho-ho-o-o," the third "Ho" pronounced in a tremulous tone.

The Nightingale is the easiest bird to catch, and the hardest to keep alive.

The Chaffinch sang his full song, January 28, 1886, an unusually early date.

Young birds in most cases attempt to sing shortly after they leave the nest.

The speed of the Swift has been estimated at more than 150 miles per hour; that of the Swallow at more than 100; the Homing Pigeon rarely attains a speed of more than forty miles for any considerable distance.

A Swift could fly to Africa from Ireland in about seven hours; a Swallow would take ten or twelve probably.

The Corncrake, or Land Rail, is a migratory bird. A specimen has occurred in the Bermudas, 600 miles from the American coast.

The Fire-crested Wren is not found in Ireland.

The "Cuckoo's mate" is the Wryneck, a bird only once taken in Ireland.

It is said that most birds utter a double note when the nest is near.—(Blyth.)

It is said that the Dipper can walk along the bottom of shallow streams.

Migratory birds usually cross from Africa to Europe during a Levanter. June is the only month in which no birds are crossing the Straits of Gibraltar.—(See Harting's *Summer Migrants*.)

The Seagulls on the Yorkshire coast are often called the "Flamborough Pilots," as their cries warn sailors of the near approach to land in a fog or snow-storm.

LIST OF IRISH BIRDS—ORDER *PASSERES*—

*Compiled mainly from Mr. A. G. MORE's recently published
"List of Irish Birds."*

LANIDÆ.

Great Grey Shrike,	<i>Lanius excubitor.</i>	Rare.
Red backed Shrike,	<i>Lanius collurio.</i>	Has once occurred.

MUSCICAPIDÆ.

Spotted Flycatcher,	<i>Muscicapa grisola.</i>	Summer migrant.
Pied Flycatcher,	<i>Muscicapa atricapilla.</i>	Has once occurred.

ORIOIDÆ.

Golden Oriole,	<i>Oriolus galbula.</i>	Very rare summer migrant.
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CINCLIDÆ.

Dipper,	... <i>Cinclus aquaticus.</i>	Resident and common.
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IXIDÆ.

Gold-vented Thrush,	<i>Pycnonotus capensis,</i>	Once near Waterford.
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TURDIDÆ.

White's Thrush,	<i>Turdus varius.</i>	Has thrice occurred.
Mistletoe Thrush,	<i>Turdus viscivorus.</i>	Resident and common.
Song Thrush,	<i>Turdus musicus.</i>	Do.
Redwing,	<i>Turdus iliacus.</i>	Winter migrant.
Fieldfare,	<i>Turdus pilaris.</i>	Do.
Blackbird,	<i>Turdus merula.</i>	Resident and common.
Ring Ousel,	<i>Turdus torquatus.</i>	Summer migrant.

SYLVIIDÆ.

Hedge Sparrow,	<i>Accentor modularis.</i>	Resident and common.
Redbreast,	<i>Erithacus rubecula.</i>	Do.
Redstart,	<i>Ruticilla phœnicurus.</i>	Very rare summer migrant.
Black Redstart,	<i>Ruticilla titys.</i>	Rare winter migrant.
Stonechat,	<i>Saxicola rubicola.</i>	Resident and common.
Whinchat,	<i>Saxicola rubetra.</i>	Summer migrant.
Wheatear,	<i>Saxicola œnanthe.</i>	Do.
Icterine Warbler,	<i>Hypolais icterina.</i>	Has once occurred.
Reed Warbler,	<i>Acrocephalus streperus.</i>	Do.
Sedge Warbler,	<i>Acrocephalus schœnobænus.</i>	Summer migrant.
Grasshopper Warbler,	<i>Acrocephalus nœvius.</i>	Rare summer migrant.
Greater White-throat,	<i>Sylvia rufa.</i>	Summer migrant.
Garden Warbler,	<i>Sylvia salicaria.</i>	Do. rare.
Blackcap,	<i>Sylvia atricapilla.</i>	Do. somewhat rare.
Wood Wren,	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix.</i>	Do. rare.
Willow Wren,	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus.</i>	Do. common.
Chiff-chaff,	<i>Phylloscopus collybita.</i>	Do. do.
Golden-crested Wren,	<i>Regulus cristatus.</i>	Resident and common.

TROGLODYTIDÆ.

Wren,	<i>Troglodytes parvulus.</i>	Do.
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CERTHIIDÆ.

Tree Creeper,	<i>Certhia familiaris.</i>	Do.
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PARIDÆ.

Great Titmouse,	<i>Parus major.</i>	Do.
Blue Titmouse,	<i>Parulus cœruleus.</i>	Do.
Coal Titmouse,	<i>Parus ater.</i>	Do.
Marsh Titmouse	<i>Parus palustris.</i>	Very rare.
Long-tailed Titmouse,	<i>Acredula caudata.</i>	Resident and common.

AMPELIDÆ.

Waxwing,	<i>Ampelis garrulus.</i>	Winter migrant, rare.
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MOTACILLIDÆ.

Pied Wagtail,	<i>Motacilla lugubris.</i>	Resident and common.
White Wagtail,	<i>Motacilla alba.</i>	Summer migrant, rare.
Grey Wagtail,	<i>Motacilla sulphurea.</i>	Resident.
Yellow Wagtail,	<i>Motacilla Raii.</i>	Summer migrant, rare.
Meadow Pipit,	<i>Anthus pratensis.</i>	Resident and common.
Rock Pipit,	<i>Anthus obscurus.</i>	Do.
Tree Pipit,	<i>Anthus arboreus.</i>	Of doubtful occurrence.

ALAUDIDÆ.

Skylark,	<i>Alauda arvensis.</i>	Resident and common.
Woodlark,	<i>Alauda arborea.</i>	Very rare.

EMBERIZIDÆ.

Snow Bunting,	<i>Plectrophanes nivalis.</i>	Winter migrant.
Reed Bunting,	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus.</i>	Resident and common.
Bunting,	<i>Emberiza miliaria.</i>	Do.
Yellow Bunting,	<i>Emberiza citrinella.</i>	Do.
Ortolan,	<i>Emberiza hortulana.</i>	Has once occurred.

FRINGILLIDÆ.

Chaffinch,	<i>Fringilla cœlebs.</i>	Resident and abundant.
Brambling,	<i>Fringilla montifringilla.</i>	Winter migrant, rare.
Tree Sparrow,	<i>Passer montanus.</i>	Very rare.
House Sparrow,	<i>Passer domesticus.</i>	Resident and common.
Hawfinch,	<i>Coccothraustes vulgaris.</i>	Winter migrant, rare.
Greenfinch,	<i>Coccothraustes chloris.</i>	Resident and common.
Goldfinch,	<i>Carduelis elegans.</i>	Resident, somewhat scarce.
Siskin,	<i>Carduelis spinus.</i>	Somewhat scarce.
Mealy Redpoll,	<i>Linota linaria.</i>	Winter migrant, very rare.
Lesser Redpoll,	<i>Linota rufescens.</i>	Resident.
Linnet,	<i>Linota cannabina.</i>	Resident and common.
Twite,	<i>Linota flavirostris.</i>	Resident, little known.

Bullfinch,	<i>Pyrrhula Europæa.</i>	Resident and common.
Crossbill,	<i>Loxia curvirostra.</i>	Very rare.
Two-barred Cross- bill,	<i>Loxia bifasciata.</i>	Has occurred twice.

STURNIDÆ.

Starling,	<i>Sturnus vulgaris.</i>	Resident and common.
Rose-coloured Star- ling,	<i>Pastor roseus.</i>	Very rare.

CORVIDÆ.

Chough,	<i>Pyrrhocorax graculus.</i>	Resident, especially in W. and S. W.
Raven,	<i>Corvus corax.</i>	Rare.
Carriion Crow,	<i>Corvus corone.</i>	Extremely rare.
Hooded Crow,	<i>Corvus cornix.</i>	Resident, not numerous.
Rook,	<i>Corvus frugilegus.</i>	Resident and common.
Jackdaw,	<i>Corvus monedula.</i>	Do.
Magpie,	<i>Pica rustica.</i>	Do.
Jay,	<i>Garrulus glandarius.</i>	Resident in a few counties.

HIRUNDINIDÆ.

Swallow,	<i>Hirundo rustica.</i>	Summer migrant.
House Martin,	<i>Chelidon urbica.</i>	Do.
Sand Martin,	<i>Cotile riparia.</i>	Do.
Purple Martin,	<i>Progne purpurea.</i>	Has occurred once

The total number of species of Birds occurring in Great Britain is 395, according to Mr. Harting's "Handbook of British Birds" (1872).

Residents,	...	...	...	...	...	130
Periodical migrants,	...	...	...	...	...	100
Annual visitants (in limited numbers),				...	...	30
Rare and accidental visitants,		...	...	...	...	135
Residents not found in Ireland,		...	...	...	...	13
Periodical migrants in Ireland,		...	...	...	...	10
Others of very rare occurrence,		...	...	...	...	8
Annual visitants not found in Ireland,			...	...	...	8

The principal birds found in England, but not in Ireland, or on one or two occasions only, are:—The Nightingale, the Lesser Whitethroat, the Reed Warbler, the Redstart, the Tree Pipit, the Golden Oriole, the Cirl Bunting, and a few others.

BIRDS WHICH HAVE OCCURRED IN IRELAND, BUT
NOT IN GREAT BRITAIN.

GRIFFON VULTURE—*Vultur fulvus*.

Once at Cork in 1843. This specimen in Natural History Museum, T.C.D.

BLACK-WINGED KITE—*Elanus caeruleus*.

Once in the County Meath.

GOLD-VENTED THRUSH—*Pycnonotus capensis*.

Once near Waterford, January, 1838.

PURPLE MARTIN—*Progne purpurea*.

Once near Kingstown, 1839 or 1840. This specimen is now in the Science and Art Museum, Dublin, and is the only authenticated example obtained in Europe.

BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO—*Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*.

Once in County Antrim, 1871. Only one other instance of its occurrence in Europe.

BELTED KINGFISHER—*Ceryle alcyon*.

Two individuals in Ireland, in 1845; the only two known to have visited Europe.

SNOW GOOSE—*Chen hyperboreus*.

Has twice occurred.

NODDY TERN—*Sterna stolidus*.

Two shot off the Tuskar in 1830.

The last five are American birds.

IRISH NAMES OF BIRDS.

BY REV. JAMES GOODMAN, M.A., *Professor of Irish, T.C.D.*

	Name.	Pronunciation.	English Name.
(1)	Coilichin Cátha,	Cuiliheen cawha,	Linnet.
(2)	Gealbhan-lin,	Galoon-leen,	Do.
	Caisdin-cloiche,	Caish-deen-klohe,	Stonechat.
	Dreoilin,	Dhrow-leen,	A Wren.
(3)	{ Donchadh an chaipin,	Doncha-an-chapeen,	Blackcap. }
	{ Mairin an truis,	Maw-reen a trew-ish,	The Female. }
	Fuiscog,	Fishogue,	A Lark.
	Druid,	Drid,	A Starling.
	Ainleog,	Ain-logue,	A Swallow.
	Glasog,	Glas ogue,	A Wagtail.
	Gealbhan tighe,	Galoon tea,	House Sparrow.
	Gealbhan buidhe,	Galoon bhee,	Yellow Hammer.
	Gealbhan catha,	Galoon cawha,	Chaffinch.
(4)	Gealbhan cuillin,	Galoon cuilin,	Bullfinch.
(5)	{ Gealbhan Feothadain,	Galoon Feow-ha-dhawin,	Goldfinch. }
(6)	{ Lasair coille,	Lasser cuille,	Do. }
	Gealbhan sgiobail,	Galoon skibowil,	The Bunting.
	{ Lon dubh,	Lunn dhuv,	The Blackbird. }
	{ Ciarseach,	Kiar sheach,	The Female. }
	Smolach,	Smow-lagh,	A Thrush.
	Smolach druishlighe,	Smowlagh druishlee,	The Briar Thrush.
(7)	Riobhog,	Ree vogue,	The Hedge Sparrow.
	Siocan,	Shook-awn,	Fieldfare.
	Spriodog,	Spirridogue,	The Redbreast.
	Snagardarach,	Snagar darragh,	Woodpecker.
	Colur,	Collure,	A Pigeon.
	Colmb,	Colm,	A Dove.
	Cuach,	Cooagh,	A Cuckoo.
	Cag,	Cawag,	Jackdaw.

	Name.	Pronunciation.	English Name.
	Fíolar,	Fiúller,	An Eagle.
	Scabhac,	Sheawack,	A Hawk,
(⁸)	Seabhac Seilge,	Sheawack Shellge,	A Falcon.
	Corog,	Cur ogue,	A Scaldcrow.
	Príochan,	Preechawn,	A Crow.
	Príochan na gcearc,	Precchawn na gark,	The Kite.
	Fiach dubh,	Fee-och dhuv,	Raven.
	Corr,	Cur,	A Crane.
(⁹)	Corr iasg,	Cur-iasg,	The Heron.
(¹⁰)	Corr liughan,	Cur-loon,	The Curlew.
	Cadhan,	Cawan,	The Barnacle.
	Ge Fíadhain,	Gay feain,	Wild Goose.
	Cearc uisge,	Kark usge,	Water Hen.
	*Ceann cait,	Kown-kait,	An Owl.
	Sgreachog,	Schreathogue,	Do.
	Traona,	Tray na,	A Corncrake.
	Gearradh guirt,	Garra Guirth,	A Quail.
	Coilleach Feadha,	Cuilleagh fah,	A Pheasant.
	Creabhar,	Kreaw-er,	A Woodcock.
(¹¹)	Cearc Fraoig,	Kark free-ig,	A Grouse.
	Naosgach,	Naosg-agh,	A Snipe.
(¹²)	Gabhairín Rogha,	Gaw-reen row,	The Jack Snipe.
	Bunan,	Bun awn,	A Bittern.
	Pitrisg,	Pit-risk,	A Partridge.
	Feadog,	Fadogue,	A Plover.
	Pilibín,	Pillibeen,	A Lapwing.
	Faoileán,	Fweelan,	A Gull.
	Cobach,	Co bagh,	The Blackbacked Gull.
	Loma,	Low-ma,	A Loon.
(¹³)	{ Fíach mara,	Fee-uch marra,	Cormorant.
	{ Seaguidhe,	Shag-ee.	Do.
	{ Broighil,	Broil,	The Whitebreasted do.
	Canog,	Cawnogue,	A Puffin.
(¹⁴)	Gobachán,	Gubba chawn,	Oyster Catcher.
	Goinead,	Guinay-ad,	A Gannet.
(¹⁵)	Guardal,	Guardal,	The Storm Petrel.

**i.e., Cat Head.*

(¹) The Chaff Cock. (²) The Flax Sparrow. (³) Denis of the Cap, and Mary of the Trews. (⁴) The Holly Sparrow. (⁵) The Thistle Sparrow. (⁶) The Wood Flame. (⁷) This is the little bird that hunts the Cuckoo. (⁸) The Hunting Hawk. (⁹) The Fishing Crane. (¹⁰) The Screaming Crane. (¹¹) The Heather Hen. (¹²) The Goat of the Frost. (¹³) The Sea Raven.

(¹⁴) This bird picks up his food when the tide is ebbing, and as soon as it turns, he flies off in search of another ebbing strand, which he never succeeds in finding. Hence the Irish proverb:—"Níor eirig an da thraig leis an n Gobachan a riamh!" i.e., "The Gobachan never succeeds in overtaking two ebbing strands." He would have fared better by sticking to one.

(¹⁵) This bird is by some improperly called the Irish Ortolan. It is found in large numbers on Inish vic Killane, one of the Blasquet Islands, off the Coast of Kerry. It makes its nest in the rabbit-burrows, and is easily caught by the Islanders, who salt and use it as an article of food.

Books recommended for Reference and Study.

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