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NOTICE.

In the following pages I have followed the Classification of the London Zoological Society rather for the sake of convenience than because I approve of it.

W. T. GREENE.

IVEAGH LODGE,
PICARDY HILL,
BELVEDERE, KENT.

June, 1896.

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FEATHERED FRIENDS

OLD AND NEW.

CHAPTER I.

The Blue Robin.

THIS exceedingly pretty bird, Der Hüttensänger (the cottage-singer) of the Germans, is a great favourite where he is not too well known, for he has a few faults which should, perhaps, be mentioned first, for to give an account of his good qualities, and then begin to depreciate him, would scarcely be fair; seeing that people, as a rule, remember what they have last read better than they do what went before, just as in a controversy the latest speaker has a decided advantage over his antagonist, a fact that often powerfully affects a jury, as lawyers are very well aware.

It is somewhat curious that fewer birds should be imported from America than from South Africa or Australia, for in the first case the passage is so much

shorter; but so it is, and Dr. Russ laments the fact in the most pathetic fashion, particularly as regards the subject of the present notice, for which he expresses a warm admiration that is certainly in every respect, save one, its due.

To the point, however. I have said that it has some defects which detract from the general excellence of its character, and so it has. In the first place, it is purely of insectivorous habits, a serious difficulty in the matter of keeping it until recently, for after a short dieting upon the makeshifts that are vended for insect-eaters, one of these birds will soon grieve its owner by having a fit, or it may even carry its objection to its feeding so far as to die, which of course is a most unreasonable proceeding on its part, at least from the fancier's point of view.

We now come to defect number two: the Blue Robin will go to nest quite freely in the aviary, making a loose clumsy construction of grass and leaves in any convenient corner, and will lay and incubate its eggs in the most praiseworthy fashion. Then, however, it seems to consider that it has done enough, for nearly always it refuses to feed the young, which are either thrown out as soon as hatched, or, if fed for a few days, are then abandoned, which is exceedingly annoying to the aviarist, and decidedly cruel to the poor little things themselves.

Why the Blue Robins should act in such an unnatural manner is difficult to say; some authorities think that

THE AMERICAN BLUE ROEN.

in consequence of the birds having too much tempting food at their disposal they over-eat themselves and become so heated that their instinct prompts them to commence breeding again. Others, however, assert that the young are neglected because the parents, not being supplied with food to their liking, namely live insects, refuse to give them what they know to be unsuitable, and that if they were correctly dieted they would do their duty by their offspring and rear them to maturity.

Possibly; but a correspondent in Hampshire, who is a great admirer of these beautiful birds, and has received some direct from North America, of which part of the world they are natives, has tested them in every way, and been unfortunate each time. Once or twice success was almost attained, and in a day or two more the young would have left their birthplace, when, lo and behold! on going to visit the aviary one morning the poor little Robins were found lying stark and stiff below the nest, from which they had wriggled in the last agonies of starvation; or they were all huddled up together in their cradle with their heads turned to the opening and equally past recovery.

It was very provoking, and my correspondent tried all means to bring the delinquents to a sense of their duty, but in vain, and at last was so disgusted by their cruel behaviour that, pretty as they were, and sweet singer as was the cock, they were exchanged for some other feathered bipeds of a more domestic-

ated and affectionate, not to say natural, disposition.

Now that it is so easy to get ants' eggs (cocoons) of good quality, there should be a better chance of successfully breeding the Blue Robin in confinement, and in fact I have heard of young ones having been fully reared in the Western Aviary of the London Zoological Society. I fancy it would be only in some enclosure of the kind that complete success could be hoped for, namely, one of considerable extent, well grassed and planted with a variety of shrubs, where the birds would have plenty of space to exercise their legs and wings and be able to find at least some insects for themselves.

I have never met with an instance of their having nested in a cage, or even heard of their having done so, nor can I fancy that they would.

The Blue Robin is a larger bird than his European namesake; his upper parts are sky-blue, and his lower ruddy brown, except the tail coverts, which are white. The female is altogether duller in colour and of smaller size than her mate. The food of these birds in a state of nature consists entirely of insects, and although in confinement they will swallow some seed, it does not agree with them; unless they can have a fair proportion of animal food they will not long survive.

The male is a charming songster, but his best notes are not to be compared with those of our English Redbreast, than which the Blue Robin is much more sociable

and amiable with his own kind, while with other birds I have never known him to interfere.

The eggs are blue and vary from three to five in number.

A pair of these birds that I once had must have been delicate when I bought them, for the cock, who always looked a little puffy from the day when he first came into my possession, soon fell into a sort of decline and died, a mere skeleton covered with skin and feathers. The hen, however, survived and I kept her for a time, hoping that she might pair with a Robin Redbreast I had, and who shared the same large cage with her. But no, the native champion would have nothing to say to the American beauty, and if he did not drive her about and persecute her, as he would have done a female of his own race, he left her severely alone and after awhile I gave her away.

What an appetite she had! and what a swallow! Thirteen or fourteen full-grown black-beetles were merely a sort of pick-me-up before breakfast for her, and whereas other birds would pull them to pieces before eating them, she would gulp them down entire and then look round for more!

I never heard her utter a sound during the seven or eight months she was in my custody.

The scientific name of the Blue Robin is *Sialia Wilsonii*, Swn.

CHAPTER II.

The Nightingale.

“WILL you accept a Nightingale?” began a letter I received one day from a hitherto unknown correspondent.

I paused when I had got thus far: “accept a Nightingale?” the King of songsters, whom I had always considered it was little short of sacrilege to cage, especially since a man I knew lost fourteen of the incomparable minstrels of the night in a week or two from the date of their capture. No! I would be no party to such a deed as wantonly to deprive of its liberty the most delightful musician in the world.

When I read a little more of the letter, however, I began to see that I had been somewhat hasty, and that I might retreat from my position not only without loss of dignity but with positive honour, not to speak of advantage, for the bird had been brought up by hand from the nest, was two years old and perfectly tame. That quite altered the matter, so I wrote to accept the lady's offer with many thanks,

My correspondent then sent me another letter, that enlarged further upon the merits of the bird, which was so tame it would go in and out of its cage of its own accord, would bathe in a saucer placed on the floor and then sit on the fender to dry itself. It would also run about the room after a mealworm tied to a piece

THE NIGHTINGALE.

of thread and trailed along, exactly like a kitten after a reel of cotton! Many other accomplishments it also possessed, but was capricious as to its song.

Well, to make a long story short, as the books say, the bird was sent to me, and a very charming creature it was. Olive brown on the back and wings, reddish on the rump and tail, and greyish white on the throat

and breast. Then what an eye! full, tender, jetty black: and such a knowing expression. How sprightly it was, and in what perfect feather!

When I opened the door of its small travelling cage it hopped out at once and flew on to my hand for a mealworm that I was holding between my fingers; this it speedily disposed of and then looked round for more.

To say I was charmed, is to speak unworthily, at least as far as the merits of my new acquisition were concerned; rather I was enraptured with "Joey", which, its former owner had informed me, was the pretty creature's name. And who, I ask, would not have been? It was so tame, so confiding, impudent even, and utterly devoid of fear.

If the door of the cage was open when I entered the room where the bird was kept, it would dart out and alighting on my hand or shoulder, give utterance to a harsh sort of squeak, which was simply its way of asking me for a mealworm; and when I had responded to the appeal by giving it one, how quickly that insect would disappear down the capacious throat of my pet!

I never saw such a capacity for swallowing as Joey possessed except in the case of the Blue-bird I have just described, and yet I do not think that my little treasure was particularly fond of mealworms; in fact, if there were any small soft green garden caterpillars to

be had, the Nightingale would not touch the former, but I never knew it to refuse a black-beetle, though it did not as a rule bolt them entire, but, unless very hungry, would dismember and eat them at leisure. Of daddy-long-legs it was very fond, but it would never touch an earthworm, differing much in this respect from its congener the Robin Redbreast.

In many of its "little ways" the Nightingale bears a great resemblance to the latter familiar bird, and when tamed is just as bold and confiding; but between their songs there is no comparison, the minstrel of the night being incomparably the better performer of the two, though his melody does not last as long as that of our friend with the red breast, which may be said to continue, practically, throughout the year.

But to return to the feeding, which is the chief point for consideration in regard to the keeping of birds in confinement: the lady who gave me Joey wrote to say that he had been accustomed to a diet of ground biscuit and yolk of hard-boiled egg, of each equal parts, well rubbed up together in a mortar, but not wetted, and a little lean meat, mutton or beef, shredded finely and raw: also to about six mealworms daily, and as many flies as could be procured.

Needless to say, I religiously carried out the recommendations, but soon found that the bird wasted far more of the egg and biscuit than he ate, and that the raw meat, in addition to making the cage smell

unpleasantly, appeared to give him indigestion, for after partaking of some he would sit motionless on his perch with his head drawn down among his breast feathers and sometimes even he would tuck it under his wing, which was a sure sign of indisposition of some kind. The dear bird, too, began to get thin, and his feathers seemed to lie less smoothly on him than formerly, so that I felt quite concerned, the more especially as I had never heard him attempt to sing a note. So I had to look about for some other method of feeding.

Nonpareils and various Buntings I had had at different times used to eat the imported German ants' eggs, and seemed to like and thrive on them, as did also a tame Starling. Why not the Nightingale? particularly as fresh insects were difficult to get, and I did not care to see Joey banging them about as he always did unless they were very small.

Well, in the cage there was a drawer that in the case of a former inmate used to be filled with seed, and in this I placed a handful of the ants' eggs as they came from the shop. Joey at once returned from among the ferns to his domicile and, with a knowing twist of the head and a flirt of his handsome reddish brown tail, inspected the novel provision for a moment, and then, to my surprise no less than satisfaction, commenced to swallow them, one by one, as fast as he could,

It was all plain sailing after that: no more hard-boiled egg and biscuit for my Nightingale, and, after another little while, no more flesh meat, but instead ants' eggs *ad libitum*, and as many fresh insects as could be obtained in addition to his regular course of black-beetles and mealworms. Snails, when quite young, he was very fond of, and would bolt whole with immense satisfaction, but their eggs were his special treat: I really believe Joey would have swallowed his own weight of them if they could only have been found in such quantity.

Mealworms are not altogether satisfactory insects, but are apt sometimes to disagree with birds that partake of them too freely, on account, I imagine, of their tough skin. They are unsatisfactory too as regards breeding them, my own experience being that it is better to buy them from the importers, who retail them at an average price of from three to four shillings per thousand.

One cause of the difficulty in keeping them is that they are liable to the attacks of a minute species of *acarus*, invisible to the naked eye, but clearly discernible when massed together in myriads, as they soon are in any receptacle devoted to the culture of the mealworm. I do not think this minute pest actually preys on the larger insects, but simply starves them by eating up their provisions.

Heat is essential for the development of *Tenebrio*

molitor, to give the mealworm its scientific title, and the bird-room or aviary is scarcely warm enough in winter for the creeping delicacy of which such birds as the Starling are so immoderately fond. It thrives best in a bakehouse, where it finds plenty of warmth and moisture as well as food, but since the passing of the Acts relating to those places it is rarely met with in this country and has to be imported from the continent where the conditions for its propagation are not interfered with by any Sanitary Authority.

Still, in case anyone should like to try and cultivate his own mealworms, I have found the following plan answer fairly well. Take a barrel, or a box, of convenient size, and line it for about four inches down from the top with smooth tin or glass, in order to prevent the grubs, or caterpillars, from crawling up: then half fill the receptacle with a mixture composed of equal parts of chaff and meal of some kind, or of "middlings", but bran is no good; introduce a thousand or two full-grown mealworms, or a hundred or so of the perfect insect, a small blackish brown beetle, cover over with a piece of coarse canvas fixed in its place by means of a hoop, in order not only to prevent the escape of the beetles which can fly, but to hinder the intrusion of such torments as mice and moths, and after depositing the box, or barrel, in some warm place, such as a stable, cowhouse, or even a kitchen corner, leave it untouched for six months, at the

expiration of which time it should be examined, but not deeply disturbed, and some more meal should be added; on the top of which should be placed a piece of coarse sacking and the receptacle be covered as before and left for another period of two or three months, at the expiration of which a number of meal-worms will always be found congregated under the sacking and can be collected as required. More meal must be added from time to time, and if the above instructions are carried out a fair supply of the insects will be available for a considerable time. Ground dog-biscuit may be substituted for meal, and is thought to discourage the development of the acarus already referred to.

It is better not to introduce dead birds, or mice, or animal matter of any kind (except what is contained in the dog-biscuit), but a regular supply of food must be kept up, and if the barrel is kept in a dry place pieces of blotting paper moistened in water, or beer, should be occasionally added, for although the meal-worm itself does not require much moisture, the full-grown beetle does, and will not breed successfully unless it can quench its thirst as well as satisfy its hunger.

On the whole, however, the mealworm cannot be propagated without a certain amount of trouble, and even when most carefully attended to entails far more care on the aviarist than an other insect, which I have often wondered is not more generally utilised for

feeding insectivorous birds than it is. I refer to the silkworm, which is much appreciated in the aviary especially when about half-grown, as well as in the pupa and moth stages of its existence: of the eggs, too, many birds are very fond, and these as well as the dried *imagines* may be preserved for a long time and will serve capitally for winter feeding. The former require no preparation, and the latter only a slight damping before they are given to the birds.

I have purposely postponed the ending of my tale as long as possible, for I cannot bear even to think about it, but as I have undertaken to tell it, I resume.

We had a cat, a yellow tabby, a fine enough animal in its way, and not by any means a savage, though endued with a natural feline appetite for mice and birds. One day some one (perhaps myself) left the greenhouse door open, and the Nightingale, my precious Joey, found his way into the drawing-room, where no doubt he enjoyed himself very much, for he was passionately fond of exploring unknown nooks and corners. Sandy was partial to the apartment, too, for there was a soft woollen hearth-rug in it, and either he must have come in, or been lying there unperceived, for presently a commotion, followed by agonizing shrieks, was heard and on one of the inmates running to see what was the matter, the cat was met darting out with something in his mouth. He rushed off, but was pursued and captured on the stairs, where he was forced to relinquish his hold of

his victim, which appeared to be dead, though it had only fainted, for presently it revived and even did not seem to be much hurt, but next day, the poor thing died, and on examination I found that the cat's teeth had penetrated one of the bird's lungs, and that its death was due to internal hemorrhage. I also discovered that Joey ought to have been called Josephine, which accounted for her never having sung.

Ah well, the poor dear little creature had careful burial in the garden and although I have since possessed other Nightingales I have never had one to compare with my lost pet.

The male Nightingale can be readily distinguished from his mate by the ruddier colour of his back, and the purer white of his breast; which latter mark will also serve to differentiate him from the female Redstart, to which otherwise he bears no inconsiderable resemblance, though he is longer and a bolder looking and more inquisitive bird.

While "Joey" was in my possession and lodged in the conservatory, a very fine wild cock Nightingale made his appearance in the garden one day, attracted possibly in his migratory flight by the presence of the captive female, whose call-note he had very likely heard in passing: I had a good opportunity of watching him for some little time and observing his active movements and quick hops from side to side in quest of the minute insects that harbour in the grass, of which

I judged that he captured a good many, chiefly small dipterous flies, of which these birds are very fond.

An incautious movement on my part alarmed the handsome and distinguished stranger, who immediately flew up into one of the trees and quickly disappeared from sight.

Surrey is the favourite county of the Nightingale, and after it Kent, then Sussex, but in the North, and strange to say the West of England it is unknown, though the country there seems to be in every way suitable for the birds; but even in the places they frequent the most, or rather used to frequent, they are yearly becoming more scarce on account of the persecution of the bird-catchers, who in spite of the well-intentioned but inoperative Wild Birds Preservation Acts wage unceasing war against them from the moment of their arrival to that of their departure from our shores.

I have recently seen it stated that a certain game-keeper was in the habit of shooting every Nightingale he met with, and of destroying their nests, because, he averred, they disturbed the "beauty-sleep" of his pheasants by their noise! and I am not sure the story is an exaggeration, for, thanks to game-preservers and their satellites, the day would seem to be not so very far distant when no more wild birds of any kind will be left in this land of ours.

A lady once reproached me with changing my mind

on the subject of caging the Wagtail, and with equal justice could bring the same accusation against me with regard to the Nightingale, for until I had Joey I was decidedly of opinion that it was little short of a crime to confine one of these incomparable songsters. But since I have seen how happy and comfortable it is possible to make their lives in captivity, and how thoroughly they enjoy and appreciate kindly human attention to their little wants, I have renounced my former theory; nor am I in the least ashamed of having done so: on the contrary, a healthy change of sentiment is entirely laudable, and it is only obstinate persistence in a given course, simply because it is an accustomed one, that is to be reprobated.

The nest of the Nightingale is not a very pretentious affair; it is made of grass stems and leaves, and is lined with finer portions of the former, and a few hairs. It is usually placed on or near the ground among brambles or nettles, and close to the trunk of a tree, or a wall, or large stone, and is not at all difficult to find. The eggs are four or five in number, usually five, they are self-coloured of a dull olive-green, and are hatched in thirteen or fourteen days.

If it is desired to bring up the young by hand—and that is by far the better plan—they should be taken when the quills of the tail and wings are beginning to burst their sheath, and may then be very readily reared on ants' eggs alone, but if small caterpillars of

any kind except hairy ones can be added, so much the better, but they are not indispensable.

Birds obtained in this manner are much more familiar than such as have been taken when full-grown even in the autumn; while spring-captured Nightingales, of which about nineteen out of every twenty die within a day or two, and sometimes in a few hours, are always more or less wild, and have a distressing knack of banging themselves about in a mad fashion at the approach even of the person who feeds them, and the sight of a stranger will often cause the more timid to fall from the perch in a fit.

The cage in which a tame Nightingale is kept should be scrupulously clean, the perches requiring to be scraped or washed at least every other day, and the floor must be covered with dry garden mould, or better still with cocoanut refuse as used by gardeners for strewing over flower-beds.

Some fanciers recommend a cage wired only in front, and advise its being constructed so much of wood that the interior shall be always in a state of semi-darkness; but a good deal must depend upon the temper and tameness of each individual bird, for some are naturally bolder than others, and take little or no notice of strangers, while others again are constitutionally timid and should always have at their disposal a dark corner to which they can retire when alarmed, otherwise they are apt to injure their delicate plumage by dashing wildly about the cage.

This reminds me that the summer after "Joey" came into my possession I thought I would try her in the outdoor aviary, and accordingly hung up her cage there one bright sunshiny morning. In the afternoon she was not to be seen anywhere, and I concluded, after a minute search, that she had escaped; but later on I saw her emerging from behind some bushes where she had, evidently, been hunting for spiders and other insects, and as she then returned to her cage and picked up some ants' eggs I perceived that I had been needlessly alarmed about her, and thought she might possibly make a match of it with an Accentor that lived in the same place; but I had to take her away after all, for I had a Starling in the same aviary, and "Jacky Spotts" took a dislike to the Nightingale and chased her about, not even permitting her to rest in her own cage, into which he would follow her with ruffled feathers and open beak, which was, to say the least, very rude on the part of Spotty.

Joey showed fight, I am bound to admit, but what chance had a little mite like her against a great big able-bodied fellow more than twice her size? None at all: the contest was too unequal, and so, much to my regret, I was obliged to take the Nightingale indoors again and let her once more have the run of the conservatory.

Now concerning the song of the Nightingale? Well, I must confess that it is very fine, full of melody, and

studded with trills and quavers and cadences, and all that sort of thing, and if there is not too much "jug" in it, even fascinating; but it has one drawback, it is just a trifle loud, and that is why I prefer a bird that has been brought up by hand from the nest to one that has been captured when adult, and that even in a case where one is as tame as the other, for the hand-reared bird certainly never fully acquires the natural song of its race as given in wood and copse by the uncaged minstrel and is, consequently, less regarded on that account by many connoisseurs: but, on the other hand, the voice of the domesticated Nightingale is more mellow than that of the wild one, not pitched in so high a key, and especially its performance is continued for a much longer period than is customary with one that has enjoyed the "sweets" of liberty, even for a comparatively brief season.

I see no reason why a pair of these birds, especially if brought up by hand, should not nest and rear a brood in a suitable aviary. The last summer of poor little Joey's life, when I had begun to think that a mistake had been made with regard to the dear creature's sex, I frequently caught sight of her hopping about the conservatory with little bits of grass or leaves, or something of the kind in her bill, and I feel sure that if she had had a mate she would have built herself a nest, and no doubt have laid some eggs and perhaps reared some young ones: so that if I ever

should possess a tame pair of Nightingales I shall certainly give them an opportunity of nesting if they like.

The Nightingale, it is almost superfluous to observe, is a migratory species, that pays a visit to our shores in the spring of the year, and deserts us again in the autumn (when permitted to do so by the bird-catchers), accompanied by its mate and young. As the males usually arrive a day or two before the females, it is probable that they only pair for the season, and not for life as the more sedate Finches are in the habit of doing. On their arrival, the cocks burst at once into song, as if to guide the females on their way, or possibly in rivalry of each other, and then it is that the trappers are on the alert to encompass the poor birds' destruction, or at the least their imprisonment for the rest of their days.

Anyone who has not had the privilege of studying these birds intimately would, not unnaturally, arrive at the conclusion that they were extremely wary and circumspect, so deliberate and cautious are they in all their movements, as they hop lightly about the ground in search of food. Two steps are not taken consecutively without a pause, during which the tail is jerked in an upward direction and the points of the wings are dropped until they almost touch the ground, while the head is at the same time turned downwards, first to one side and then to the other, until the large soft

black tender eyes have closely scrutinized everything that falls within their range.

Not much use, is there, in trying to catch such a cunning creature as that! the inexperienced spectator is involuntarily tempted to exclaim. But on the contrary, there is not a less suspicious bird anywhere than the Nightingale, or one that falls more readily into a snare, even when it has been spread before its eyes.

The usual bait is a mealworm placed in some conspicuous position and surrounded by limed twigs. The insect is tied to a little peg by means of a fine black thread, but in such a manner as not to impede its movements, and its struggles to escape soon attract the attention of the watchful Nightingale, which at once hops down to reconnoitre, goes through the whole wise-looking performance of seeing that all is safe, rushes in, seizes the prey, and is caught!

So far no great harm would be done if so many of these grand songsters did not resent their capture so bitterly as to prefer death to the loss of their freedom; but, as I have said, scarce one in twenty that are thus limed in the spring will survive their disgrace, chiefly because the captors do not know how to treat the poor creatures.

The Nightingale may be described as a purely insectivorous bird, and the trappers are bent upon making him live on artificial food, which he loathes, and which, even when he does make up his mind to swallow it,

does not at all suit his constitution: so they "meat" him, that is to say, they forcibly open his bill and compel him to take little scraps of raw lean meat (flesh) which have the effect, sometimes, of keeping the poor captive alive against his will, and at last the instinct of self-preservation gets the better of his fear and of his regret, and he eats the messes that are set before him, on which he does not thrive, quickly falling into a decline and dying, unless he is at the same time liberally supplied with insects of some kind.

There is, however, no real necessity for this cruel "meating" and the subsequent slow starvation on a practically indigestible diet, for if the Nightingale is allowed a full ration of mealworms, gentles, or similar insects he will in the great majority of cases be unable to resist their attractions, but, if left alone, will quickly begin to pick them up, and soon become reconciled to the inevitable, though certainly never to the same extent as a young one that has been brought up by hand from the nest, a by no means impossible or even a very difficult feat, providing always that an abundance of suitable insect-food is at the fancier's command.

Whether the insects be young mealworms, infantile silk-caterpillars, or baby cockroaches, is immaterial, a nest of Nightingales will flourish on them, and ants' eggs come next, but, naturally, are not so nutritious as the fresh article, but require to be cautiously supplemented with tiny morsels of raw lean meat, beef or mutton,

should any difficulty be experienced in obtaining a sufficient supply of insect-food.

For the guidance of amateurs who might have a desire to rear a brood of young Nightingales, I may observe that a considerable amount of experience has convinced me that the young of the first nest are for the most part males, and those of the subsequent batches, females.

Since penning the foregoing paragraphs I have been able myself to rear a youthful Nightingale, and did not find the task a specially difficult one: I had a good supply of the best preserved English ants' eggs (cocoons) from Romans of Llanelly, and a number of small meal-worms, on which my bird thrived admirably.

It was a young one I brought in from the garden one day, but incapable of feeding itself, though it could fly a little, and was, probably, the youngest of a brood, the rest of which escaped.

By the bye, the nestling Nightingale is very unlike its parents, and more nearly resembles a baby Robin: it is of a light reddish-brown colour thickly dotted all over, especially on the breast, with yellowish-grey spots; its tail, however, and the upper tail-coverts are of a ruddy chesnut hue, and at once afford a clue to the little creature's identity.

At first it was very shy, and would not open its bill to be fed, so that I was afraid I should have to force it, but I put it into a covered basket, on opening which a short time afterwards, it came hopping up to me with open mouth

and flapping wings, and readily took the morsel I held out for it between the points of a small old pair of surgical forceps that I had devoted to the use of young birds.

At this time the Nightingale would eat flesh-flies and wood-lice, or any kind of garden insect that was offered to it, but afterwards, when it became able to feed itself, which it did in the course of ten or twelve days after I had it, it absolutely refused to touch them, and would only partake of ants' eggs and mealworms, of which last it would, I believe, have eaten any number given it.

When this bird, which required to be fed about every twelve minutes or so from daylight to dark, while it was immature, became able to supply its own wants, it got considerably wilder than poor dear Joey had been and would never come on my hand, though while I was feeding it it used to do so freely, and I had to keep it in a cage, which was three feet six long, by two wide and two and a half high, and only wired in front.

Instead of straight perches I substituted a branch of a tree, on which it would sit and sing for half an hour at a time. It was extremely fond of bathing and soon began to change colour. The tail and wing feathers were not cast, but the body ones were and in a very short time after it was able to feed itself the nest feathers were replaced by those that distinguish the adult.

It was a very handsome creature, and large, too, with every plume as perfect as if it had been in the woods. After a time it began to sing sweetly in a low tone, as

I have said, and would take mealworms from my hand, or small caterpillars, but it did not much care for anything to which it had not been accustomed from the first. I tried it with a portion of a much vaunted "Nightingales' Food", from which it picked out some ants' eggs and scattered the remainder.

This bird I kept for about three months and then had to part with it in consequence of going from home. It was carefully packed in a little square basket padded and lined inside, and reached its destination (in the North of England) "not in the least the worse for its long journey", which was satisfactory intelligence.

The scientific name of the Nightingale is *Daulias luscinia* at "The Zoo", but *Philomela* everywhere else.

CHAPTER III.

The Coal Tit.

THIS pretty little bird is also known as the Cole Tit, although the etymology of the latter designation is not by any means clear, while that of the one I have adopted is unmistakable, and has reference to the colour of the bird's head and throat, which are both as black as the blackest of "black diamonds" and sparkle like veritable gems of the first water.

It is a British species and remains with us throughout the year, though it is very much given to wandering during the winter in search of its favourite food, that is to say various small insects upon which it subsists almost exclusively during the spring, summer and autumn months of the year.

Although pretty generally diffused throughout the country, it is not of numerous occurrence anywhere, but prefers the vicinity of fir and pine woods, which are its favourite haunt, especially during the inclement season. Insectivorous in its habits in the main, it must eat

something when its natural diet fails, and then it evinces a marked preference for the seeds of the various coniferæ over those of any other tree or plant; next to pine and fir seeds it prefers those of the sunflower and hemp, a partiality it possesses in common with the remaining members of the group, or family to which it belongs, a circumstance that should be borne in mind when it is desired to keep it successfully in confinement.

I had long been acquainted with this little bird as an occasional winter visitor to my garden, but had never thought of keeping it in a cage until one day I happened to see some in the window of a bird-dealer's shop, looking so miserable and so very much out of place that I went in and bought a pair of them immediately.

The attendant having caught two of the struggling captives, transferred them to a little paper bag which he twisted up adroitly, having previously made a few small holes in it to admit air, and I carried them away in my hand.

At first there was a great commotion in the bag, and once or twice I thought my new acquisitions would have got away by forcing themselves through the ventilators, but after a time they quieted down, and I reached home without any mishap, at least in the way of loss; but as the birds had been perfectly quiet I was afraid they had been suffocated, or had died from sheer fright.

On peeping carefully into the little paper bag I discovered the cause of the almost supernatural stillness

that had succeeded the previous disturbance in its interior. The pair of little captives had grasped each other firmly round the throat with their strong black feet, and were, indeed, all but strangled.

At once I transferred them to a suitable cage, where they promptly relaxed their hold of each other's necks and began to dash wildly about, seeking for some outlet by which to make good their escape. Finding none, however, they presently settled down and began to feed on some seeds of hemp which I had previously introduced for their benefit.

It was curious to watch their method of eating: seizing one grain in their short strong black bill, they immediately mounted to the topmost perch in the cage and placed, each, its seed between its feet and began hammering at it in the most business-like manner with its beak, soon making a hole in the shell; from this it quickly picked the kernel which was swallowed at a gulp, and then each bird flew down again for a fresh supply, when the rapid hammering process was repeated with a like result.

I could not help wondering that the birds never seemed to miss their aim, seeing that the object against which their rapid blows were directed was so small, and in such close proximity to their toes, but they did not, though their strokes were delivered with lightning-like rapidity and the edible portion of the seed was promptly in their possession.

About a dozen grains of the hemp seemed to suffice

them for a meal, and when the kernels had been devoured the birds would sit motionless for a few minutes, and then recommence their frantic search for an outlet from the confining cage, every corner and portion of which they examined with a minuteness that was remarkable and an assiduity deserving of a better result than the fatigue which was the only reward of their earnest endeavours to get away.

Tired out at last, the Tits would rest for a minute or two, then fly down for a fresh supply of food, and when that had been consumed, they would begin again their attempt to escape from "durance vile": and so on from dawn till dusk, when, tucking their heads under their wings and nestling as closely to each other as they could, they composed themselves to sleep, and rested quietly till morning, possibly dreaming pleasant dreams of liberty in the pine woods which for all they knew to the contrary, poor little things, they were never to visit any more.

A very few days, experience of them in the house was sufficient to convert my desire to possess a pair of Coal Tits into a yet stronger determination to get rid of them at once, when somebody suggested that I should turn them out into a small aviary that stood on the lawn and was then tenanted by a number of tiny Waxbills, Weavers, Java Sparrows, and I think a couple of Shaft-tailed Whydah Birds and some Masked and other small Doves.

No sooner said than done: I carried the cage containing the Tits out into the garden, and having opened its door placed it on the floor of the aviary (the inner compartment), when the little prisoners quickly availed themselves of the chance and flew out with triumphant notes of congratulation that were soon exchanged for a twitter of vexation when they found that they had only got out of a small prison into one of a larger kind.

The Coal Tit, however, soon reconciles itself to the inevitable, and when they had thoroughly surveyed and explored every nook and corner of their new abode they commenced to feel hungry, and began to search for something fit to eat, and were presently rewarded for their exertions by the discovery of an abundant supply of hemp-seed and other delicacies, including some German ants' eggs, in the inner portion of the aviary.

The little couple partook of an abundant repast, and it being then about bedtime at once took possession of a neatly constructed dwelling that belonged to a pair of Weaver-birds whom they successfully kept out of their abode, which the Tits ever afterwards appropriated to their own use.

I kept them throughout the summer and although I occasionally noticed a Waxbill somewhat bare of feathers on the crown of the head, and found a broken egg on the floor, I had no reason to suspect my little pair of British birds of being the cause of either disaster,

but rather put the mischief down to the account of a certain pert cock Saffron Sparrow who, with his mate, had a nest and young ones inside, for he did not bear the best of characters, though I must confess I had never detected him in any overt act of malicious molestation of his neighbours, at whose hands, or bills rather, as I afterwards discovered, he had himself been more than once a sufferer.

That year my success in breeding foreign birds had to be written down *nil*; even a sedate pair of Cockateels I had kept for a number of years in the aviary did not produce a single young one, though numerous eggs were laid in the box inhabited by them, and in which on former occasions they had reared a numerous family, or, as I should say, a succession of families.

I put my bad luck down to the mice, which certainly infested the place: but although they were undoubtedly guilty of many small peccadilloes, in this connection they would appear to have been blameless.

Summer passed, and autumn arrived in due course and departed without any change in the condition of affairs in the aviary, and then a severe winter set in somewhat prematurely. The first really cold night killed several of my poor Waxbills, whereupon I captured the survivors as well as the Whydah Birds and took them indoors, leaving the rest of the colony where they had spent the summer and not a few of them the previous winter, and there they appeared to be quite comfortable

and seemed to suffer no inconvenience from the severity of the weather.

But it was otherwise as regards the Coal Tits, which, contrary to what might have been expected, felt the cold so much that one morning, after an exceptionally hard frost I found one of them dead and the other in such a benumbed condition that it soon followed its companion to the "happy hunting-grounds" of its race, where bird-catchers cease from troubling and Coal Tits are left in peace.

Undeterred by my unfortunate experience with the first pair, I subsequently, in the following spring, I think, obtained some more of them, but upon detecting one of these in the very act of sucking the egg of a Silverbill, I caught the naughty little couple and restored them to an ill-deserved liberty in the private wood on the opposite side of the Common to where I then lived, and there they passed the summer, in all probability; and perhaps the pair I saw in my elm-tree at the beginning of the following winter may have been the same; but of course that is only a surmise, and I cannot be positive as to their identity.

On the whole I have arrived at the conclusion that the Coal Tit is not a suitable companion for other birds in a confined space, unless perhaps for the members of its own family, with whom it appears to agree fairly well; but it should certainly not be located with the delicate little Waxbills: these are utterly unable to cope

with such pugnacious creatures as the Tits, which, as I subsequently found out, are capable of worrying even such a big bird as a Cockateel, until the life of the latter has become a burden to it.

If a large aviary, however, could be devoted to the sole use of the various members of the Tit family, I am of opinion that it would be well worth while to give them a trial, for they are, all of them, really handsome birds, even the species now under consideration, and that notwithstanding the sombre colour of their headdress, and the dull bluish-greyish-green, or greenish-grey of their back and wings, for the spotless purity of the white cheeks and under-parts presents a most pleasing contrast to the less conspicuous colouring of the upper portions of the body.

As all the Tits are mainly insectivorous in their habits, it is hopeless to attempt to keep any of them in confinement for any length of time without an adequate supply of animal food, for which elaborately prepared and much belauded "mixtures" are a very insufficient substitute.

Ants' eggs, or the cocoons rather of these industrious insects, are abundant and cheap, and if freely supplied to the birds will suffice to keep them in good health with very little addition of anything else; and if the Tits are healthy, they will preserve their pretty plumage in perfect condition, and will sing, too, for they have a little song of their own, and their call-note is musical and exceedingly pleasant to many ears.

It is a very lively and active bird, too, and one of Nature's acrobats, never still for a moment, excepting when asleep; while at other times it is ever on the move, now clinging head downwards to a branch, now turning a complete somersault, and peering all the time into every scrap of moss or lichen that may be growing to the bough on which it has taken up its position, so that well-hidden indeed must be the insect or the batch of insect-eggs that escapes its keen sight, or reposes beyond the reach of its ready bill.

The late Rev. F. O. Morris, himself a true lover of Nature and a keen observer of her methods, no less than an able exponent of them, was a strong supporter and advocate of these much misunderstood and sorely persecuted birds, which, as he repeated over and over again, do infinitely more good than harm to the horticulturist.

It is true they knock off a few buds some of which may not be diseased, but how many does the gardener himself remove when he is pruning his trees? Or how many does he destroy when he discharges his gun, loaded with small shot, at a pair of useful Tits, who all the time are intent on protecting him from his many insect foes? "The man who shoots an Owl", wrote Mr. Morris, "is an encourager of vermin", and if the name of Tit be substituted for that of the "Prowler of the Night", the remark is equally correct.

An acquaintance of mine has a large garden in which

are a number of fruit trees; among these, and especially on one of them, the gardener spied a pair of Coal Tits busily at work one day, and immediately thirsted for their blood, but was powerless to act without permission from the master, which after a time was obtained and the poor Tits were shot.

That year there was a plague of caterpillars in the garden and the only tree that had any fruit on it was the one to which the poor Tits had paid such attention that the gardener had declared it was ruined and had better be cut down!

I might multiply examples, but what is the use? An ounce of observation with one's eyes open is worth a hundredweight of cut and dried precept in a book; let the horticulturist watch and draw his own conclusions instead of blindly following in the footsteps of the prejudiced and unlearned,

The scientific name, of this species is *Parus ater*.

CHAPTER IV.

The Tree Pirat.

PASSING down Rye-Lane Peckham, one day, I saw four of these birds in a cage in the window of a bird-shop where at various times I have been able to pick up a rarity, and never having seen any of them in such a situation before, I went in and asked their price.

I quite forget what I paid for them, but not a great deal, I dare say. The dealer was feeding them on bread and milk with an occasional mealworm thrown in by way of encouragement. They were fairly tame, and would take the wriggling "millers" from between his finger-tips, but made a sad bungle of killing and eating their prey, from which I concluded that they were not in the habit of devouring anything as large as the full-grown larva of *Tenebrio molitor*, but confined their attention, when at liberty in their native woods, or groves, or copses, to flies and "small deer" of that kind.

To come to the point, I purchased the lot and transferred it to a very large unoccupied cage which stood opposite the window on the top landing, where I continued to feed my new acquisitions as they had been fed at the dealer's, and they seemed to get on very well, and even began to sing a little, at least some of them did, as soon as a ray of sunshine lit upon their dwelling; but oh! dear me! they were extremely partial to bathing, and would make themselves thoroughly wet several times a day, splashing the water all over the floor of the cage, and to some distance beyond it. Then they were decidedly dirty and voided incessantly, which, probably, was in a great measure due to the nature of the food that was supplied to them, namely bread and milk for the most part: much of this, I suspect, they could but very imperfectly, if at all, digest.

Had I been acquainted with the merits of the dried ants' eggs of commerce then, or had that admirable substitute for live insect-food been as readily obtainable as it is at present, I dare say I should have kept the Pipits longer than I did—but their slender figure, neat, if not gaudy, plumage, confiding nature and pleasing, if somewhat insignificant song, were insufficient to compensate me for the unpleasant odour that soon began to arise from their cage, and that, too, in spite of the most scrupulous attention to cleanliness: so I made up my mind to restore them to liberty, and really they seemed to leave me with regret, for when I had

carried them in a small cage to the far side of Peckham Rye Common, they would not fly away into the private wood that existed there at that date, and it was only by dint of pelting them with little clods of grass that I at last persuaded them to get off among the bushes, where I left them to shift for themselves, which I had little doubt about their being able to do very well, for the winter was past and over and the voice of the Turtle, or at least of the Wood Pigeon, was commencing to make itself heard in the land.

I cannot, of course, say what ultimately became of my ex-captives, or whether some individuals of the same species that I afterwards saw in the same shop from which I had obtained mine, were the same, or not, but I fancy they must have been different, for they were much wilder than mine had ever been, and especially more so than when I had turned them loose.

The Tree Pipit, as its English name implies, is not such a ground loving bird as are some of its congeners, but frequents trees, though not usually such as are of any great altitude, and subsists for the most part, as I strongly suspect, on the different species of aphids, or green-fly, that are to be met with in such abundance there.

Mr. Morris, however, affirms that the Tree Pipits do not find their subsistence among the trees, but search for their supplies of food on the ground and seldom among the branches, which is, of course, the exact

opposite of my own conclusions; but it is not at all improbable that we may, both of us, be equally right, and that these birds resort to both situations, namely the ground and the tree tops according to circumstances, to the latter in the summer-time, and to the former when the trees have been divested of their leafy coverings by the icy hand of winter and the aphid has, at least temporarily, disappeared.

I am more in accord with the author of "A History of British Birds" when he describes the song of the Tree Pipit as pretty and tremulous, and says that its voice is low and sweet, as it is emitted from the branch of a tree, and occasionally from the ground.

As to the nest, however, I quite agree with him when he says it is always placed in the latter situation, and is a somewhat inartistic and decidedly unpretentious affair, consisting for the most part of a few dried blades of grass, some small roots, and perhaps a little hair, gathered together, artlessly, into a natural depression of the ground at or near the root of a tree or under the shelter of a bush or shrub. Bechstein is of opinion that it may even be placed on the branch of some low bush, but I have never chanced to meet with one in such a position.

The eggs vary considerably in appearance, but bear a general resemblance to those that are deposited by other members of the Lark Family; some are dull bluish-white, spotted with purple-brown, while others

are of a reddish-white shade clouded with pale purplish-grey and faintly streaked and spotted with rusty black; others, again, are pale purplish-red, minutely marked in a net-like manner with red of a darker shade; which is surely enough of variation to puzzle even the most experienced of oölogists. It is to be noted, however, that no matter how greatly the eggs of an individual bird differ in appearance from those of her fellows, the eggs that occur in a given nest are almost invariably, if not always, marked and coloured in the same manner.

This species must not be confounded with the Meadow Pipit, or Titlark, to which in some respects it bears no inconsiderable resemblance, but the latter is of a much lighter colour on the under-surface of the body and lacks altogether the pale slate-blue tinge that is so conspicuous on the breast of the former and which serves to differentiate it from its congeners.

The tail of the Titlark also is shorter than that of the bird under consideration, which on the whole is more like a Wagtail than a Lark, and is thought by some naturalists to form a kind of connecting link between the two families.

Bechstein appears to have confounded the Tree and the Meadow Pipits with each other, for the latter he names *Anthus arboreus*, which is the correct scientific appellation of the former.

CHAPTER V.

The Red-bellied or St. Helena Waxbill.

THIS is a very charming little creature, about the same size as the Lesser Whitethroat, but of even slimmer build than the latter. It is wonderfully active in its movements and is perpetually jerking its rather long tail up and down and to right and left in the most vivacious and comical manner, while the tips of its wings are rapidly flapped in close accompaniment.

Of a brownish colour generally, the plumage is plentifully besprinkled with narrow undulations of a darker shade; the breast is delicate rosy-red, and this tint is continued to the vent, but the tail and flight feathers are black. A line of brilliant red passes across the face from the eye on either side reaching to the bill and forms a conspicuous mark that is all but differentiative of the species.

Very gregarious in its habits, the St. Helena Waxbill, which, by the bye, was originally derived from the Eastern parts of Africa, has been quite naturalized

in the Island from which it derives its ordinary English name, loves to fly as well as to build in companies which, small as are the individuals composing them,

THE RED-BELLIED OR ST. HELENA WAXBILL.

nevertheless do a great deal of mischief to the millet crops of the settlers and natives who, wiser in this respect than our own agriculturists, catch their tiny

foes alive and sell them into captivity, instead of shooting them and leaving their small bodies to wither on the ground.

In addition to millet these beautiful little birds also consume a number of minute insects, and, as I strongly suspect, feed their young mainly, if not entirely, upon them, which may be the reason why the St. Helena Waxbill does not often breed successfully in confinement.

I say "successfully", for nothing is more common than for these Waxbills to nest, whether in cage or aviary, any small box or covered basket serving them for a foundation for their inartistic domicile, which, failing such adventitious aid, is not infrequently placed in a bush, or even among a few sticks arranged closely together in a corner of the enclosure.

Hay and fibre are the materials employed for building purposes, but the inside of the nest is snugly lined with cotton-wool or small feathers. The eggs are white, six or seven in number, as a rule, and about the same size as those of the European Wren. Incubation lasts twelve or thirteen days, and on the second, third, or fourth after the hatching the young are usually thrown out of the nest, when the old birds at once begin to build again. Such, at least, is the ordinary procedure in confinement, for when at liberty in their native haunts, they act, of course, in conformity with the natural instinct implanted in all created beings and attend to their young until these are able to provide for themselves.

Although I have kept these Waxbills for many years, and am acquainted with numerous amateurs who have also had them in their possession, I have never met with a single instance in which the young ones have been successfully reared in this country.

It is curious that at first the beak of all the young Waxbills should be quite black, instead of resembling the brilliant hue of that of the parents, which as the name (Waxbill) indicates is the colour of vermilion, and, judging from analogy, the youthful St. Helenas do not differ in this respect from their congeners.

Although natives of Africa and some of the adjacent islands, these little birds are not at all delicate, but will live for twelve or fourteen years in a cage without showing any sign of ailment, and moreover they are able to stand a considerable degree of cold with impunity. Damp, however, soon puts an end to them, and on that account it is not advisable to let them remain out of doors during the winter in this country, although they greatly enjoy a summer holiday among the bushes and on the grass of a good-sized garden-aviary, in which they are also seen to far greater advantage than in the house, and where they spend a large portion of their time searching for minute flies and other insects, in the grass and among the leaves: to the latter they do no harm by nibbling them as our own and most of the large foreign birds habitually do. Indeed, I cannot help thinking that if two or three

pairs of them had an enclosure, say one of twelve by six feet in area, and eight or ten feet high, well turfed and planted with suitable shrubs, box, elder, etc., they would probably be more successful in regard to the rearing of their young than they have hitherto been in this country.

The price at which the St. Helena Waxbill is sold by the dealers is now very trifling, three or four shillings a pair, or even half-a-crown, for which latter sum I have occasionally seen them offered, and except as a curiosity, or for the sake of attempting a hitherto unaccomplished feat, it certainly would not be worth anybody's while to go to any expense to induce the birds to breed and behave in a natural and proper manner to their helpless offspring: but it is something after all, to be able to say, "I have achieved complete success where everyone else has failed".

The sexes are very much alike in outward appearance, but the female is decidedly the smaller of the two, and the red of her breast and lower parts generally is less brilliant than that of the male. He sings, too, very prettily, and she seldom does—never, unless she happens to be caged by herself, when she sometimes warbles a little.

White millet (properly sorghum) is the best food for these little birds in a general way, but they may also be given some spray or French millet and Canary-seed for a change occasionally. A sod of short grass,

with or without white clover among it, is the best kind of green food for them, but they require plenty of coarse sand and a free supply of water for drinking and bathing.

Peaceful as a rule, the males will sometimes fight bitterly among themselves, but they are so light that not much damage to the combatants results from these encounters, which are usually the result of jealousy.

They readily contract an alliance with other species; thus, I have had males that mated, one with a Silver-bill, and another with a small hen German Canary! But in both cases the result was barren eggs only. Other amateurs, I understand, have been more fortunate and have succeeded in obtaining a cross between the St. Helena and the common Grey Waxbill.

All these little red-billed birds are very charming, but the subject of the present notice, often absurdly called the Pheasant Finch, is perhaps the most engaging of them all, and no collection of small foreign birds should be considered complete without a pair or two of them.

The scientific name is *Estrela rubriventris*.

CHAPTER VI.

The Crimson-eared Waxbill.

THIS very delightful little bird was for a long time reputed delicate, but erroneously so, for although I shared this opinion with many fanciers, a sad accident that befel some of my other foreign pets convinced me that the very opposite of the popular impression respecting it is the correct one.

I had a considerable number of Waxbills of different species lodged in a very convenient and comfortable lawn-aviary, in which they did well and enjoyed themselves immensely during the summer, but its last days had gone and autumn had followed in its wake, and the little strangers seemed so well and happy that from day to day I deferred catching and transferring them to their winter quarters indoors.

The aviary consisted of two parts, the first a snug house of octagonal shape that was partly glazed in front and had two small windows at the sides (it had originally been a summer-house), and the second part was an

open wire-covered court or playground. The nests and food pans were in the former and there the birds passed the night and such hours of daylight as were rainy or during which a cold wind blew.

The doorway of communication between the inner and outer portions had a little sliding door in it, such as one often sees affixed to a dovecot, and on either side of this was a ledge for the inmates to rest on before passing in or out. This little door I used to close every evening and so keep the birds snug and warm until they were released in the morning when the sun was shining, whether visibly or not.

One day, by mischance, either I shut out a number of birds, or they got through a minute opening at the side of the ledge, I cannot say which, and next morning I found many of them dead on the grass. It is unnecessary to say that I was deeply grieved; however, there it was, and the only survivor was a fine cock Cordon Bleu, which is another name for the subject of the present notice.

He did not seem any the worse for his exposure to the cold night air and to the drizzling rain that had proved so disastrous to his companions. It was buying my knowledge rather dear, it is true, but I left him out for the rest of the season, and not only did he take no hurt, but when I turned some others out in the spring he was the finest and handsomest bird of the lot.

No, the Crimson-eared Waxbill is not particularly delicate, in fact I consider that he is really the hardiest of all the small foreign Finches; but his mate is not as strong as he is, for many females of the species which I have had at different times have all died, sooner or later, from egg-binding, which was a great pity seeing that they are such lovely little creatures and so soon become quite familiar and tame.

Owing to one mischance or another, but principally thanks to the mice, I have never succeeded in obtaining any aviary-bred Cordons Bleus of my own rearing. But given an enclosure from which the pernicious rodents were altogether excluded, and in which no other birds were kept, I feel certain that it would be as easy to breed them as it is to multiply the well-known Zebra Finch, if not, indeed, more so.

The nest, which is made of hay, bass-matting and cocoanut fibre, is sometimes placed in a box, or in a small cage, in the deserted toy-nest of a Weaver-bird, or in any convenient nook or corner, but sometimes it is built in a bush, and is then domed, or it may be made on a shelf beneath some projecting ledge; it is lined with small feathers, cotton-wool, or cow-hair, though feathers are preferred.

The eggs, which are five or six in number, rarely more than the latter and seldom less than the former, are pure white and about the same size as those of the European *Regulus*, or Golden-crested Wren.

Incubation lasts eleven or twelve days, and the young on emerging from the nest have the legs and bill black, they have likewise a dingier appearance than their elders, but soon moult, put on the adult costume, and are ready to become parents in their turn at the age of from three to four months.

What their actual breeding season in Eastern Africa may be I know not, but in confinement they keep on nesting and laying all the year round: no sooner has one brood been reared than the old birds make another start and produce a second one, and sometimes, so prolific are they, they do not even wait till the young can feed themselves, but have two families to look after at one and the same time, acting in this respect like some members of the Parrot and Pigeon families.

The male is readily distinguished by the crimson patch on his face, which, in my opinion at any rate, is a sad disfigurement to him and imparts to an otherwise charming little fellow a decidedly dissipated appearance.

Look at the little hen, what a neat and trim and altogether fascinating creature she is in her dainty suit of dove colour faced with blue of the brightest shade; she has no crimson patch to tell tales of her doings, or of her whereabouts when unobserved by prying eyes, and has nothing to fear on the score of inuendo or open accusation of being no better than she ought to be.

Although her breast is of a paler colour than the same part in the male she is a hundred times handsomer than he is, and all owing to the absence of that detective patch.

The young resemble their mother in this respect, but the little cocks soon follow in their father's footsteps, and each of them gets to look as confirmed a rake as the old fellow does in a wonderfully short time after they have emerged from beneath the shelter of the maternal wing.

The song of the Crimson-eared Waxbill is sweet and low, and the way the male dances and sings to the female is extremely pretty and amusing, too. She also sings a little when caged by herself, but I have never noticed her doing so when a male was present.

The food is the same as that of all the Waxbills, namely white millet as the staple diet, and a little millet in the ear and Canary-seed for a change now and then. They will also eat ants' eggs, especially if fresh, and should be provided with some when they have little ones to feed. The best green food is Canary-grass sown in shallow pans and allowed to grow to the height of two or three inches.

The scientific name is *Estrela phœnicotis*.

CHAPTER VII.

The Black-headed Finch.

THIS is not exactly a handsome bird, for its figure is squat and the disposition of the colours on its small person is so abrupt as to give it an appearance of stiffness or formality that to many eyes is distasteful.

It is about the size of an English Redpoll, but has a larger head and a shorter tail; and is very often called by the name of Black-headed Nun, especially by the dealers. Its temperament may be said to be phlegmatic and as usually seen in a small cage it seems decidedly an indolent little creature.

As the name indicates, the head of this bird is jet black, the feathers very smooth and indued with a velvety lustre; the upper part of the neck and the vent are the same colour, as are also the under tail coverts. The rest of the plumage is of a bright chocolate brown. The thick bill has a dark leaden-blue colour, and the legs and feet are a pale flesh tint. In outward

appearance the male and female exactly resemble each other.

The Black-headed Nuns are very sociable and if a dozen or more of them are kept together in the same cage, they will all nestle closely side by side, as tightly squeezed against each other as they can contrive to be: nor are they by any means lively when thus huddled together in a confined space, but will sit for a long time without moving, and then they only descend from their perch in order to feed, and return to it as soon as their appetite has been satisfied.

Like all the rest of the birds known by the singularly inappropriate name of "Nun," the males sing in dumb-show. That is to say, one of them will stand up on its perch and go through a regular pantomime of singing, ruffling his throat feathers, opening and shutting his bill, and turning up his eyes, as if, for all the world, he was making a prodigious effort and pouring forth a perfect flood of melody, whereas not a sound is audible to most people, though I have met with some who said they could detect a faint grasshopper-like chirping if the room was very still.

That this singing in dumb-show is audible to the performer's companions is, I think, evident, from the extreme attention they pay to it; then, as soon as one has had his say, he sits down and another rises to his feet, and goes through similar manœuvres, until all the members of the party have had their turn and given

expression to their feelings, when with a croak of congratulation at the success of the entertainment, or of encouragement to the several performers, they fly off to the seed-trough, and on their return begin all over again. At first it is very amusing to watch them, but the constant repetition of the performance grows monotonous in the end.

Occasionally one of these birds will develop a talent for audible singing, especially if he is caged in the company of a Canary or a Linnet, but, as a rule, the 'song' of the Black-headed Mannikin, to give the bird yet another name by which he is frequently called, is quite inaudible to the average human listener, or in this case, spectator.

Not one of the Nuns which I have had in my possession from time to time ever attempted to build, and I cannot call to mind any instance in which I have heard of their doing so in this country. They are natives of China and may be described as fairly hardy.

In their wild or natural state they never sleep in the open air, but always in some hole in a tree, or a building, or some other place, and when kept in a cage they should be provided with a box or a nest-basket, or a roll of cork, or something of the kind, in which to pass the night comfortably. Care must be taken to place their sleeping apartment out of reach of mice, which do much damage to birds by disturbing them during the hours of darkness and causing them to rush

in a panic from their snug retreats to fall terrified on the floor, or bang themselves into a state of unconsciousness against the wires, perches, and other furniture of the aviary.

As these birds are very quiet and move about very little of their own accord, especially on the ground, their claws, or nails, will often get so long that the poor little creatures become entangled by them among the perches, and would soon die from exhaustion consequent on their vain attempts to escape, if their plight were not discovered in time to rescue them from their awkward and unpleasant position. It is therefore a good plan to examine their feet occasionally and when the nails are seen to be getting too long and curved to cut them with a pair of sharp scissors, taking care not to go too near the quick.

If, instead of fitting up the cage or aviary with straight perches, branches of trees were used, the Nuns would be more apt to fly about, and would, necessarily, be healthier and less liable to the fits that carry so many of them off prematurely in confinement.

If it is desired to breed these little birds, I think the most likely plan to succeed would be to put a dozen or more of them into a commodious aviary, or a bright cheerful bird-room of sufficient size, and give them no companions of any other species but their own.

All kinds of nesting-boxes, little German wicker-cages, cocoanut-husks and even the shell of the cocoanut

itself, as well as hollow logs, and rolls of what is called virgin cork should be disposed about the place, from which mice should be rigorously excluded. Plenty of building material would also be necessary, and in all probability the desired result would be attained, that is to say if the birds were not unduly disturbed by fussy and curious interference on the part of the proprietor.

The food is millet, white and spray, otherwise French, and they will all eat ants' eggs and mealworms, or gentles, although the live insects are by no means indispensable, for Nuns will live in the house for twelve or fourteen years without anything of the kind: but if it is desired to get them to breed, no doubt a supply of the delicacies in question would be conducive to bringing about the desired result.

No green food is advisable other than a sod of grass, for in a garden-aviary they will sometimes spend a little time on the ground.

The scientific name is *Munia sinensis*.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Maja Finch.

THIS bird is the counterpart of the last as regards size and figure, but differs from it considerably in the matter of colour, for its head and neck instead of being velvety black are silvery grey, which in old birds changes to pure white.

In its movements and habits, too, the White-headed Nun, or Mannikin, as it is also frequently called, exactly resembles the Black-headed Finch. It is a native of the same country as the latter, and might, indeed, be justly taken for a local variety of it, and not for a separate species.

That is a point, however, that can only be indubitably established by cross-pairing the two birds and seeing whether the resulting offspring would be fruitful or otherwise; but like their Black-headed relatives, none of the Maja Finches I ever possessed have shown the slightest inclination to breed, but pursued the even tenour of their way to the end, eating, drinking, bath-

ing, sleeping, dressing each other's head feathers and singing their inarticulate song.

I have seen a Japanese screen on which these birds were depicted in a most life-like manner in the act of making a raid upon a field of millet in the ear, to which, I can readily believe, they would do no small damage, for it is their favourite food, and, like their connections with the dark headdress, they eat largely for their size, and spoil a good deal more than they actually consume.

It is a pity to compel them to sleep on a straight perch, for to do so is absolutely foreign to their nature and must, I imagine, be very distasteful to them. They are quite hardy when provided with a snug corner to roost in, and I have no doubt might be induced to breed by paying a little attention to their not very exacting requirements.

As both species are extremely cheap, say 3/- or 3/6 a couple, the experiment would not be a costly one, even though it would be advisable to purchase a dozen of the birds in order to secure a pair, for the sexes are indistinguishable in outward appearance.

Dr. Russ states that the Maja Finch has bred in his aviary, and that the young are of paler brown than their parents, and have jet black bills. Incubation, according to the same authority, lasts for thirteen days.

The scientific name is *Munia maja*.

CHAPTER IX.

The Banded or Parson Finch.

THIS is an Australian species and was at one time tolerably plentiful in the market, where at present it is scarce and consequently dear. Independently of its neat and pleasing appearance, quiet and harmless disposition and pretty little song, it breeds freely in the aviary, but the young deteriorate rapidly in size and brilliancy of colouring, the brown of the body losing its rich chesnut tone and becoming paler, while the black throat has traces of white and the delicate lavender tint of the head turns to a nondescript kind of grey.

In regard to stamina, too, the aviary-bred Parson Finch seems to lose as much as it does in size and colour, and many of them fall victims to the curious and tiresome disease known as French Molt, a wretched complaint akin to the rickets of the human subject, and for which no cure has yet been discovered.

Probably, however, if the birds were kept in a large garden-aviary well planted with gum trees and other Australian shrubs (in pots, of course) they would do

better than they do indoors, and might not degenerate as happens in the case of house-reared Parsons, but every aviarist has not the means or the accommodation for carrying out such an experiment.

THE BANDED OR PARSON FINCH.

These birds will either build a nest in a small bush, in which case it is domed, or they will avail themselves of a foundation, such as one of the small German Canary cages made of wicker work, and fill it with

hay and blades of grass in the centre of which they will make a depression which they line thickly with small feathers, or, failing these, with cotton-wool or cow-hair, and, as in the case of their relative the Zebra Finch, they will do better in the former than in the latter situation.

Care should be taken not to supply them with any material, such as wool, or long hair, that might get twisted round their toes, and, by stopping the circulation, cause the latter to wither and fall off, as I have seen occur on one or two occasions with these as well as with other birds.

As the nails grow quickly, they should be looked after, and cut when requisite; this, however, is necessary rather in the house than where the birds are enjoying comparative liberty outside.

The sexes closely resemble each other, but the female is duller in colour than the male.

The scientific name is *Poephila cincta*.

CHAPTER X.

The White Java Sparrow.

THIS bird, I believe, is of Japanese creation, and, in the opinion of many connoisseurs, an improvement on the original as turned out from the great Laboratory of Nature. Everyone to their taste, however: it is not for me to initiate a controversy on the point, here or elsewhere: this is a free country, or is supposed to be one, and each aviarist must form his or her own conclusion in the matter.

The White Bird, however, is a distinct variety and not a mere albino, for, as a rule, it breeds true to colour, which the latter does not. Occasionally, nevertheless, some parti-coloured individuals will make their appearance in the nest of white parents, but are more curious looking than pretty, and indicate a recent cross.

When in good condition, the White Java Sparrow is a beautiful creature, for the gloss that adorns the plumage of the ordinary Blue is very apparent in the White variety, while the pinky-red bill sets off the snowy tint

of the rest of the body and adds a finish to it that is wanting in the person of a mere albino.

That this bird is not simply a "sport" is, I fancy, evident, for it lacks the red eye that is so distinctive a feature in cases of albinism; and therefore, however it may have originated, it would appear to be really a distinct variety.

In regard to its food, and nesting arrangements, the White Java Sparrow is identical with its Grey relative, but it is decidedly more delicate than the latter and cannot be safely left to winter out of doors in this country—at least such is my experience; other fanciers may have been more fortunate, but, if so, I am not cognizant of the fact.

When seen apart, the sexes are not readily differentiated from each other; but if together, the larger size of the male and his habit of dancing before, or rather beside, and "singing" to the female, will enable him to be identified without much difficulty.

The eggs are white and vary from four to six in number, and incubation lasts from sixteen to seventeen days. When an ordinary Grey Java is paired with a White one, the young will be mottled in various ways, but very rarely will be found to be self-coloured.

No change of food is necessary while the young are being reared and when these leave the nest they can only be distinguished from their parents by the dark colour of their legs and feet and bill; the sombre tint

of these parts, however, soon gives place to the roseate shade of the old birds, and then it is impossible to distinguish between them, so that there is always the danger to be guarded against of sending the latter away instead of the former, and in order to guard against the possibility of such a mischance, the better plan is to separate the young birds from the parents before they lose the distinguishing colour of their legs, feet and bill.

The nest is merely an immense quantity of all kinds of rubbish crammed into an absurdly large box, in the centre of which the birds form a cup-like depression which is snugly lined with feathers, among which the eggs are deposited.

None of these birds that I have possessed at any time even attempted to breed in a small box that one might have thought would have been just the thing for them, but no, they always chose one that was big enough to accommodate a pair of Jackdaws or of Starlings at the very least, and when such a thing was not at their disposal they evinced their displeasure by refusing to nest at all. Evidently they require plenty of room, and will not make the best of circumstances as many other birds will do.

In a cage the White Javas are decidedly dull and uninteresting, but when they are enjoying comparative freedom in a large garden-aviary, they are very active and lively, continually on the move and chattering

away to each other as if they really felt exceedingly happy and comfortable. When one of the party flies to a particular spot all the rest follow, emitting a loud twittering chirp as they take wing, and when they have settled down a great bobbing of tails take place amid renewed chattering that appears to be a mutual congratulation upon the successful carrying out of their purpose, and then one of them stands up and sings a song, to which all the rest listen with profound attention.

They are very fond of hunting about in the grass, although what the object or objects they search for can be I do not know, for I have never noticed that they ate any of it, nor have I ever been able to detect them in catching insects of any kind. They are patterns of frugality and will live and thrive for years on a diet of millet and canary-seed. Paddy rice, that is rice in its husk they are supposed to be very fond of, but I cannot say that I have remarked any partiality for it on their part, at least in a dry state, but if it has been soaked till soft they will then partake of it greedily; but the rice of commerce they absolutely ignore—at least all the Javas I have kept did, whether they belonged to the White or to the common Grey type.

At one time the price of these birds was rather high, namely from thirty to forty or fifty shillings a pair, but now they can be bought for somewhere about fifteen shillings the couple, and some, slightly marked

with grey, for considerably less. The latter, however, are certainly cross-bred and cannot be relied upon to throw a purely white progeny: nevertheless they will rarely hatch a purely Grey bird, which proves that there is more of the White than of the Blue blood in them.

The scientific name is *Padda oryzivora*, var. *alba*.

CHAPTER XI.

The Olive Weaver.

THIS is a fine bird, nearly as big as a Starling, and, when in its summer dress, of a sulphury shade of yellow, marked and streaked with many broad black bars and lines; the female is much duller in appearance than her mate, but otherwise there is a good deal of resemblance between them.

They have long strong black bills, but nevertheless I always found them to be perfectly harmless in a mixed aviary where their many attempts at nidification were frustrated by some impudent Budgerigars. On one occasion, however, the male constructed a nest as big as a man's head: I had thrown some stems of grass into the aviary and the bird at once picked them up although previously he had never shown any disposition to build, or weave.

Evidently he had not before met with anything that suited his purpose, but as soon as these straws were introduced, he at once threw a couple of them over

a perch, knotted them cleverly together, and on this slender foundation proceeded to erect a marvel of bird-architecture that was the admiration of everyone who saw it. Whether the hen would have made use of it, had not the season been so far advanced, it is impossible to say, but probably she might; however, she evidently thought it was too late then, for although the cock did everything in his power to induce her to go into it, she would have nothing to say to the marvellous nest and, consequently, was very much driven about by her mate, and, I regret to say, maltreated.

The next year I sent the birds to the Show at the Crystal Palace in the spring, and that seemed to have upset them, for they made no attempt to build again, although they had been supplied with similar material to that which had tempted them the season before.

I cannot now recollect exactly how long they remained in my possession, but after a time, several years, the male began to show signs of age and decrepitude; he did not moult as usual in the autumn, and developed an overgrowth of nail and bill, dying before the advent of the following spring, apparently from the effects of sheer old age.

As the hen remained in good health I tried for some time to obtain her another mate, but eventually she, too, after having been a widow for a year or two, began to sink, finally dying of old age like her former partner.

They were fed entirely on seed, canary, millet, and

some green food now and then; they had plenty of room to fly about in and grit for the picking up: possibly, however, they required something of a more stimulating nature to induce them to breed, and if I ever had any more, I should feel inclined to allow them ants' eggs, gentles and mealworms in addition to their seed.

The song of the male is sweet, and fairly well sustained, but is loud and mixed with some harsh, grating notes that detract considerably from its merit. The female, according to my experience, is a very silent bird.

Although the male of the pair to which I am now referring used to moult in the autumn, I did not observe that he changed much in regard to his colour, though he may have done so slightly, and during the winter had less of the brilliant yellow that during the season of love and courtship decorated his shapely form. His head was blacker in summer, becoming brownish-black after the autumnal moult.

Scientific name, *Hyphantornis capensis*.

CHAPTER XII.

The Yellow-billed Cardinal.

THIS is the smallest of the birds upon which has been conferred the title of a Dignitary of the Roman Church, and as it is least in size, so has it the most insignificant appearance among its compeers. In bulk it about equals a common Sparrow, but is of rather slimmer build, and the red or crimson of its head is shaded and to a great extent masked with brown, which makes it much less conspicuous than its larger relatives, to which it otherwise bears a general resemblance.

It is destitute of a crest, and, as its English name indicates, the bill in its case has a yellowish tinge, but is darker, almost black, at the tip.

The male is a fairly good songster, and can only be distinguished from his mate by his ability in this respect, for as regards size and appearance the sexes are quite indistinguishable.

My experience with them is that they are perfectly harmless in a mixed aviary even when in company

with the smallest and most defenceless of the Waxbills. They are satisfied with a diet consisting of seed only, but at the same time catch eagerly at any small fly that comes within their reach, and spend a good deal of their time on the ground among the grass.

Much less hardy than the larger Red-crested Grey Cardinals, they must be taken indoors as soon as the evenings begin to grow chilly towards the end of September, for cold distresses them very much, as they evince by their restlessness and huddled-up miserable-looking appearance.

As they are natives of the Southern American Continent, their seasons are just the reverse of ours, and during our fine weather they make no attempt to breed, but pair and commence to make a nest when the time has come for them to be removed from their commodious out-door aviary into the house, where, as a rule, they occupy a cage during the winter.

With respect to the pair of these birds that were in my possession for a time, the inclination to perpetuate their race must have been small, for change of scene utterly put a stop to it, although they were much more comfortably situated, as far as temperature went, in their new than in their former abode: it is true they had lost the comparative freedom they enjoyed in the garden-aviary, and perhaps that was the reason why, in disgust, they gave up the idea of building a nest and rearing a brood of young,

My Yellow-billed Cardinals never got very tame, but to the last were timid and startled by the mere approach of a human being to their dwelling, while the other Cardinals and the Popes would come and fearlessly take mealworms from between my fingers.

With the Red-crested Cardinals the Yellow-bills did not get on at all, the former evidently refusing to recognise the relationship between them, but the crestless Popes were better natured and did not interfere with their smaller brethren, but of course they are of nearer kin to the latter than to the former.

Very likely had I kept them until the following season and then had turned them out in May, they would have built a nest, but having had them sufficiently long to study them, they had to make room for others.

The scientific name is *Paroaria capitata*.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Brazilian Bullfinch.

THIS bird is about the same size and shape as our familiar friend "Bully" (a pet name of the English Bullfinch), but differs from it in almost every other respect, at least when the latter wears his usual smart attire, for his foreign prototype is habited in sable of the darkest hue, his only redeeming points of colour being a narrow band of white across the wing, and a lead-coloured bill which, by the bye, is thicker than that of his European namesake.

The gentleman who was kind enough to present me with the first specimen of this species that I had seen, spoke strongly in favour of its vocal attainments, which, he affirmed, surpassed those of every other kind of bird whatsoever; indeed, so eloquent did he wax in its praise that he actually, like Silas Wegg, "broke into poetry" on its merits. Naturally I was curious to see such a prodigy, and one day the gentleman called on me in person and presented me with the only "Bicudo"

in Europe. I am bound to confess that it was not much to look at, for its plumage was frayed, scanty on the head and neck, and dull everywhere.

My friend said the bird was extremely delicate, so I placed it in a box-cage which I stood on the kitchen-dresser, as the warmest place in the house, and took care to cover it every night. The Bicudo was lively enough but rather wild, it ate and drank well, but made no sound, beyond an occasional "cheep, cheep", which had nothing particularly musical about it, but then, of course, the call-note of our own incomparable Philomela is eminently harsh.

I waited in anxious expectation of the "outburst of triumphant song" of which my friend had spoken, but I waited in vain; the Black Bullfinch had evidently made up his mind not to gratify my curiosity, which it may have looked upon as a piece of unpardonable impertinence that must be repressed at any cost, even that of perpetual silence.

Presently, I noticed a decided change coming over the bird; it had not had much to boast of in the way of feathers when it arrived, but little by little what it had fell out, until at last it lost them all and presented the extraordinary spectacle of a plump naked bird, active and lively but, of course, able only to hop and run. Then, strange to say, for the first time since it had been in my possession it was heard to warble! Its tones were low and sweet, and more frequently

audible in the evening than at any other hour, but only when the performer was quite hidden from view behind a cloth that hung over one half of the cage in order to conceal the by no means attractive looking creature inside.

At last the cook rebelled; someone had called to visit her, it appeared, and having noticed the Bicudo, had taken exception to its nude condition, and the cage had to be taken away and placed somewhere else: if so, where more appropriately than in my study? True that apartment was not nearly as warm as the kitchen, and the bird might take cold, perhaps die, in it. Well, not much matter if it did; it was by no means "a thing of beauty", and its presence could be well dispensed with in the establishment.

But the Bicudo soon showed that it had no intention of dying, for on going to feed it one morning I thought its head and neck looked a little darker than usual (for it had a very white skin), and on closer inspection I discovered that the bird's feathers were, actually, just beginning to grow!

Wonderful! In about three weeks more it was fully clothed and able to fly about the cage quite strongly., Its song then became more frequent and louder, but to my ear, presented no extraordinary merit, and certainly fell short of what I had been led to expect—but I may have been looking for too much.

It had, evidently, been kept too warm, and that was

the reason its feathers had all dropped out; when I came to think of it, all its congeners from Brazil are quite hardy, the Cardinals, Saffron Finches, and various Conures and Parrots: Why then should the Bicudo be more delicate than the others? Apparently it was not, and I made up my mind to turn it out into the garden-aviary, where I had no doubt it would do well, the time being summer, and the weather warm and fine. I did so, and the bird seemed to enjoy the change immensely, commencing by taking a prolonged bath, when he made himself so wet that he must have thought he had lost his feathers again, for he was, at first, quite unable to fly, or even to rise from the ground. However, after a while he got on some sticks that were low down and from that vantage point hopped to the higher perches, where a few vigorous shakes and many dabs at his feathers dried him thoroughly, and gave him a glossy and smooth appearance I had never noticed on him before.

Then he really sang, so that my Brazilian friend was right after all and the Bicudo was a splendid performer—I am quite sorry I cannot find or remember the poetry, in English, French and Portuguese, that the bird's melody inspired my friend to write about him.

“After sorrow cometh joy”, someone has said, (I am a poor hand at remembering names and do not know from whom I have borrowed the above quotation, but that does not much matter, for the converse was true

in my case). I had turned the Bicudo out, as I have related, and the aviary in which I placed his cage with its door open, was a large one, some seventy feet long or thereabouts. It was divided into two parts. I might almost say three, for the first part had a small brick house attached to it, entrance to which was effected from the flight by an aperture similar to those in use in dovecotes, and there my birds were accustomed for the most part to roost; it was lighted by a window that was made to open and shut from the outside and the glass was protected by a piece of wire netting placed inside.

The Bicudo, as I have said, was greatly delighted, and I left him for the night with a very comfortable feeling as to his future well-being, but next morning when I went down to feed my birds, the brave Brazilian Bullfinch was not anywhere to be seen. I searched for him high and low, in the open portion of the aviary and in the covered-in part, but without finding any trace of him, and just as I was giving up the quest in despair and deciding that he must, unperceived by me, have darted out over my head as I entered, I heard his well-known "cheep", and on looking round perceived the truant clinging to the wires of the partition that divided the aviary. But he was on the other side of it! How in the world had he managed to get there?

An inspection of the partition revealed a weak place in it, where some of the binding wire had given way and,

as a natural consequence, some of the uprights had become loose, and by a small amount of pressure could be pushed to one side, and thus, no doubt, the Bicudo gained access to the place where I found him, which was the abode of my soft-billed birds, and which being planted pretty thickly with shrubs had evidently attracted the wanderer and induced him to search for some way of getting into such a very desirable place of residence as he would think it to be when compared with the spot in which I had put him, for the Finches, but especially the Budgerigars, would not let anything grow there.

It was rather clever, I thought, of the Black Bullfinch to find out that weak place in the partition and to avail himself of it in the manner he had done; but he found nothing to eat in the Eden to which he had forced admission and when I saw him he was evidently seeking a way back again to the seed-pans. I caught him and returned him to his old quarters and made good the breach in the partition. I never saw a bird improve as he did after that, and I was very proud of him indeed, but alas! my pride had a fall one day, and a very grievous fall, too.

I have mentioned that in the brick house attached to the Finches' aviary was a window that opened from the outside and was protected by a piece of wire netting nailed to the wall on the inside. This window I made a point of shutting every night for fear of the cats,

which to my intense chagrin abounded in the vicinity and often came over into my garden to stare at and terrify the birds. One day I had occasion to go up to town and did not return until late, but before starting I said to "Someone", "Be sure and shut the aviary window before dark," and "Someone" faithfully promised to do so, but forgot.

On my return home at, or after, midnight, it was raining, and I did not think of going out to look if the little window was fastened, nor did the idea occur to me until after I had been some time in bed: then, when I heard the wind howling and the rain beating against my windowpanes, I said to myself that surely "Someone" had closed it, and I turned round and went to sleep: but oh! my laziness! my laziness! it was fated that I should rue it on the morrow.

In the morning when I went down, the first thing I did was to go and look at the window—it had not been shut! the wire guard, however, seemed to be all right, if the birds were strangely silent, so I went in and ate my breakfast without any misgiving. After that, I proceeded as my custom was, to feed the birds, and almost the first thing I saw on opening the aviary door was the poor Bicudo lying dead and more than half-denuded of feathers on the ground!

The aviary I perceived was almost tenantless, and on looking round I discovered some more corpses and a quantity of feathers: a few Budgerigars were the only

surviving occupants. A cat must have got in and done the damage! But where was the murderer? I instituted a minute search: the culprit had fled, not indeed without leaving too abundant traces of his visit, if his person had disappeared. It was too bad! Oh "Someone!" "Someone!" it was really too bad!

Well, the poor Bicudo was gone! But why had not the feline marauder eaten it, as he had done most of the other victims he had slain? I found out afterwards. The poor old fellow was too tough for a starving cat to demolish, and so the assassin had left his corpse, as well as that of a venerable canary that had been hatched and had lived all his life of 8 or 9 years in the aviary.

How did I find out that these poor birds, and especially the Bicudo, were too tough for a hungry cat to devour? In this way: I had just acquired a tame Raven and it was to fetch him home that I had gone on that eventful morning when I, confidingly, had left the closing of the window to "Someone" — I gave "Grippa" the two carcasses for his (no, her) breakfast, and she managed to dispose of that of the Canary, but only after several re-iterated attempts, but altogether failed to entomb that of the Brazilian Bullfinch in her "capacious maw", although she did her best to get rid of it, but in vain; it was really too tough, and so the poor old fellow was interred in the garden and his place was left vacant, as his memory is lamented, to this day.

There is a moral attached to my story, which I may be excused for giving; it is this: Never delegate to anybody what should be done by yourself, for if you do, you will be sorry when it is too late.

Another moral: Should my reader chance to become possessed of a Bicudo, do not keep it too warm, for it is not delicate, but, on the contrary, quite as robust and hardy as any of its fellow country birds. I fed mine on canary, hemp and millet.

Scientific name, *Melopyrrha nigra*.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Whatisit.

I think I have already mentioned more than once that there is a bird-shop in Rye Lane where I have picked up some bargains now and then. Well, one day the man that keeps it brought me a bird I had never seen before, which he said he had bought of a sailor together with a lot of common Java Sparrows. It was a small bird, just about the size of a House Sparrow and not unlike our familiar friend in point of shape and colour. On the back it was chesnut-brown, greyish white on the breast and belly, and the brown wings were marked by a transverse band of yellowish brown not unlike that on the same part of *Passer domesticus*, so that altogether I concluded the *rara avis* in question to be neither more nor less than a Sparrow.

The bill, however, as the man pointed out, was longer, narrower, more pointed and of a deeper black colour than that of our friend of the house-tops, and more-

over, he asserted that the nondescript had a very clear and musical song.

Indeed the common Sparrow sings, too, after a fashion, of course; watch him on a fine day in spring when his homely spouse is incubating her oval treasures in some convenient nook near by, and see if he does not value himself and his melody a little, as with ruffled plumes he pours forth a series of discordant shrieks and squeals: certainly he does, and many musicians are just as much justified in thinking they can sing as our old friend the Sparrow.

Well, to bring my introduction to a close. I bought the anonymous bird for four shillings, and for a while kept it by itself in a cage indoors. It certainly had a musical call-note, loud and clear, but I never heard it attempt to sing, though it would repeat its note a few times in succession, which, perhaps, was what the dealer meant when he praised its musical abilities, so I turned it out, into the soft-billed birds' aviary, as I found it would eat ants' eggs and mealworms as fast as an Indigo Bird or a Nonpareil. It was shy and retiring and generally kept itself well out of sight among the bushes, or in the covered-in portion of the aviary, so that I seldom saw it, and was only occasionally reminded of its existence by its deep, flute-like note.

One day, I noticed some straws projecting from a box that was hung up in case some of the inmates might like to sleep under cover, or to breed if they

felt so disposed, and on taking it down and opening the lid, I found that it contained a very snug nest made of hay and lined with feathers, among which lay five eggs not much unlike those of the domestic Sparrow, only rounder. Whose could they be? I watched for a long time, but no bird went near the box, and so I withdrew lest they should take cold and spoil. Some time afterwards on going suddenly into the aviary, what should I see pop out of the nest-box in question but the mysterious bird that for want of a better name I had called after "Georgie Hackett" the Whatisit.

So she was a hen, and that was her nest, and those were her eggs and she was a mere Sparrow after all. I was in hopes she might have paired with some of the other birds, and might have a brood of mules, but no, after she had been sitting for three weeks or perhaps a month, I took them away and found that they were clear. Then I introduced a Java Sparrow, a Saffron Finch (also a Sparrow) and a House Sparrow, hoping that my nondescript might pair with one or other of them, but she never did, though I kept her for several years and each season she nested and laid two or three lots of eggs.

Hoping to identify the species, I showed the bird to a number of fanciers, and even sent her to the Crystal Palace Show, but she remained unknown to the last: for one day she found out a weak place in the aviary and escaped, as did others of the inmates,

and I never saw her again. I visited the British Museum and South Kensington, but could find nothing like her at either place, whether figured in books, or stuffed, so for want of a name I have called her *Passer anonymus*.

CHAPTER XV.

The Brambling or Bramble Finch.

THIS bird is first cousin at least to our Chaffinch and visits us only in the winter, its home being within the Arctic circle, where it breeds, retiring South from stress of weather, and availing itself of the first indications of spring to return to its native haunts. It is said to have bred occasionally in the north of Scotland, as well as in aviaries, where it is asserted to have produced a fertile progeny with the Chaffinch. Without stopping to consider the probability or otherwise of that report, I will merely say that those I have kept at different times never evinced the least disposition to nest in confinement.

It is a pretty bird, but not as brilliant as the Chaffinch; the hen, I think, being handsomer than the cock, which has a great deal of black about his head and neck: both sexes have a crest that they are able to raise and depress at pleasure, but they have no song worth speaking of and are quiet and shy, though I

have read somewhere that in an aviary they are quarrelsome with other birds: all I can say is that such is not at all my experience.

They are as fond of flies and other small insects as the Chaffinch, but make a sad bungle of eating a mealworm. I found them decidedly liable to a kind of skin disease which I have called "leprosy", for want of a better name, that principally attacks the head and face, beginning round the beak; the feathers fall out, and the skin becomes hard and dry, and covered with yellowish white scales. It is very disfiguring of course but does not appear to affect the birds' health, and is, I should say, brought on by the heating nature of their diet.

In the Zoological Gardens Catalogue the Brambling is classed with the true Finches, which, I think, is a pity, as its habits approximate it to the Buntings, but it and the Chaffinch, together with the Nonpareil and Indigo Bird, might well constitute a family apart.

The accepted scientific name (quite a misnomer in my estimation) is *Fringilla montifringilla*.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Siskin.

THIS pretty little northern Finch makes about the nicest pet I have ever come across. Tamer and more confiding in disposition than almost any other little bird, it combines intelligence with docility, and can be taught a number of tricks with very little trouble, and especially to fly out and return to its cage, which it will do sometimes of its own accord without any training. It is very hardy, too, and frugal in its diet, but it cannot stand artificial heat, which soon disorganises the liver and brings about a premature ending of its days.

In appearance (black, green and yellow harmoniously combined) it is very handsome, and the male can be readily distinguished from his mate by his greater brilliancy, by his superior size, and bolder and more masculine bearing. Although the nest has been occasionally found in Scotland and even in the north of England, the Siskin does not, as a rule, breed in this country.

When it does, it builds, as a rule, in a fir tree of some kind, and makes an inartistic, not to say rude, nest of grass and roots, sparsely lined with hair. The eggs, four or five in number, are not unlike those of the Canary, with which bird the male Siskin pairs readily in confinement and produces mules which usually differ but little from him in appearance, though a few are mottled, but they are generally bigger than their male parent.

The Siskin hen will also sometimes build in a cage and even rear a brood amid the uncongenial surroundings; insect-food, however, would seem to be essential to success in such a case, and ants' eggs are recommended. For my part I have not tried to get these birds to nest, not considering that the game was worth the candle, but others may be of a different opinion, and if so, I have been advised that they should be treated like Canaries—that is to say, as Canaries usually are.

As the Siskin is a very active and lively little creature, it should never be kept in a small cage, in which it is very apt to get too fat and to die from apoplexy, or from disease of the liver. If, however, none other is available, it should be encouraged to fly about the room as much as possible, and if a few seeds of the fir or of the *arbor vitæ* can be obtained, it will go anywhere and do anything to get them.

Next to the seeds of the various coniferæ the Siskin loves those of the alder; it is also very fond of

sunflower seeds, and of hemp, but the latter is of too fattening a nature to be allowed *ad libitum*, or even in any quantity: canary and summer-rape seed are the best staple diet, but if it is desired that a pair should breed, they must be offered a large variety of food, including, of course, their favourite aliment the seeds of various kinds of pine and fir.

THE SISKIN.

I have found that fatty degeneration of the liver and apoplexy, the latter very often, indeed I might say generally, resulting indirectly from the former, are the most usual diseases of the captive Siskin, and are more easily prevented than cured. As I have given the treatment in full in another place I do not intend to repeat the directions here.

One gentleman who was rather successful in breeding Siskins in the house attributes his good fortune in this respect to the use of a nest built by a Chaffinch placed in an open wire basket made to hook on to the wires of the cage, which the hen re-lined according to her own fancy. She laid five eggs, and hatched three young ones one day, another the next, and another on the following day. For the first ten days the little ones were fed entirely on gentles in the pupa or chrysalis state, when the old birds began to make use of seed. The young left the nest fully feathered at fifteen days old, and soon afterwards began to feed themselves on soaked seed, which my informant adds should not be too suddenly withdrawn.

The scientific name is *Chrysomitris spinus*.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Ortolan.

ALTHOUGH not as brilliantly plumaged as the Yellow-hammer, this is one of the handsomest, at least of the European, Buntings; but they are not interesting as cage-birds and are, moreover, I fancy, somewhat delicate. True, I did not keep my pair very long, but nevertheless, they were in my possession a sufficient length of time to prove that they were very susceptible to cold, and pined when the supply of insect-food ran short. A Frenchman of my acquaintance had made me a present of the only two I ever had, and I believe they were male and female, for one was smaller and duller in colour than the other. Neither attempted to sing while I had them, and only occasionally uttered the note that is said by Morris to be incessantly repeated, and is certainly monotonous. Bechstein, on the other hand, describes the "song" as full and clear, but if so, I have never been privileged to hear it.

The Ortolan is a very rare visitor to these islands,

that is, voluntarily, for it is imported in very considerable numbers to figure as an entremets on the table of epicures.

It is somewhat a difficult bird to describe, as it presents no strong contrasts of colour. The head and a band across the throat are greenish grey; the back and tail, reddish brown; the throat, pale yellow, with a shade of green; the lower breast and belly, rufous fawn; and the vent and under tail coverts, greyish white. The beak and legs and feet are reddish brown. Other Buntings, including even the ordinary Yellow-hammer, are often caught with and sold for Ortolans.

The female of my pair, which I fed on seed, bread-and-milk and mealworms, got out of the cage one day and flew away, upon which I released the male, and he also spread his wings and with a joyful cry disappeared across the Common to a little wood opposite, where I hope he was joined by his partner and with her succeeded in reaching their native land once more—but I doubt it.

The scientific name is *Emberiza hortulana*.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Starling.

(ADDITIONAL.)

IN "Birds I have Kept" I had a little to say about this handsome and exceedingly clever and useful bird, but not much, for my experience with it in captivity had not then been an extended one. Since that time, however, I have had the opportunity of making the acquaintance of another member of the family, and concerning him, or I should say her, I wish to make a few remarks.

I had long entertained a prejudice against caging the Starling, though I really cannot say exactly why, but when "Jack" came into my possession, I found that I had made a mistake and that it was a very delightful pet. An occasional correspondent had written to me one day offering me a young Starling that had been brought up by him from the nest, and also its cage, a wicker one—that decided me and I replied,

saying that I was much obliged and would have great pleasure in accepting his kind offer, or something to that effect, and in due course the bird and cage arrived. The latter was not much, but of course no one should look a gift horse in the mouth, and I did not, but the bird was very charming. It was perfectly tame and familiar and whistled very prettily; but there was one great drawback; it wanted, or rather its cage wanted, a great deal, a very great deal of looking after, and after a while I felt bound to turn "Jack" out into the garden-aviary, where he seemed to enjoy himself and soon got quite strong on the wing, whereas when he first came to me he would not fly a yard, probably from disuse of his wings, or rather from never having been allowed to exercise them.

When I used to feed him of a morning, I always called him "Jack, Jack", and from whatever corner he was hidden he would instantly emerge with a shrill cry and, after a time, a repetition of his own name, and subsequently of several short sentences with which I was accustomed to greet him. Bread and milk, on which I had been advised to feed him, did not seem to agree with the bird at all, passing through him practically undigested, and, at last, giving rise to diarrhoea: raw meat he ate greedily, but it used to make the evacuations smell very badly, and insects I found to be the best diet, for on a course of mealworms and gentles he got so strong and so bright and shining as

to his plumage that it was quite a pleasure to look at him.

Whenever "Jack" caught sight of me in the garden, or even heard my voice, he would dash about the aviary calling lustily, and when I went in would fly on my head, creep all over me, and allow me no peace till I had given him his usual treat of mealworms. Fruit of all kinds and green peas were also favourite morsels of his, and I was reluctantly forced to admit that he might, lacking other food, do a little damage in a garden. On the other hand there is no doubt he does an immensity of good there, where few insects are more destructive than the ugly, legless grub of the apparently harmless fly popularly known as the "daddy longlegs", which is nevertheless a most pernicious creature, but the Starlings catch it very cleverly, driving their long bills into the maggot's burrow and invariably drawing it out in triumph.

Mealworms I found were a somewhat costly diet and I had to look about for a substitute, which I was not long in finding in the imported German ants' eggs. "Jack" would rapidly pick up any quantity of these, and dry and worthless as they looked, they agreed with him remarkably well, as also did the gentles which I bred in the covered-in portion of the aviary in a large earthenware crock with a lid smaller than itself which rested on the bran and chaff that I had put into it, so as to leave about an inch of the

“padding” visible all round. It was very funny to see “Jack” perched on the edge of this crock, rooting with his long bill among the chaff for any unlucky gentle that was desirous of rising in the world, and when one appeared, or was felt, how quickly it vanished again!

What with high living and plenty of exercise “Jack” got so impudent that it was impossible to go into the aviary without being attacked by him—or I should say her, for about this time a handsome male Starling, wild, used to come down and talk to “Jack” through the wires, and there was no difficulty, when the two were side by side, in determining that the tame bird was a female, for the black of her plumage was not nearly as sheeny as that of the stranger, and she had more white spots.

Well, one day as I was going in to feed the birds, what should “Jack” do but dart out over my head and away with loud notes of triumph over the house and out of sight. Naturally, I set her down for lost. Next day, however, or perhaps it was the day after, one of the maids came to tell me that “Jack” was on the top of the aviary trying to get in. I went to the window, and looked, and there was the truant without doubt, searching for an entrance to her former dwelling-place.

Arming myself with some mealworms, I went out cautiously into the garden, and approached the returned prodigal, with my usual call of “Jack, Jack”, and the

Starling responded by flapping her wings and answering as of old. I held out a mealworm which she took and ate with considerable appetite and while she was disposing of a second one I caught her by a rapid movement of my left hand, and, in spite of her remonstrances, consigned her once more to "durance vile". She did not like it, I think, for she flew up and down for some time, but finally settled down on the edge of the crock where the gentles were kept and had a good feed

Of course, after that I took some pains when going into the aviary to guard against the Starling getting out again, and was making inquiries for a tame mate for her, when one day off she flew once more and that time for good—at least I never saw her again to my knowledge, though she may have been one of several that used to come on the grass every day during the ensuing winter, to feed on the varied scraps that were placed there for their special benefit.

I have no doubt, could I have left the door of the aviary open, that "Jack" would soon have got into the habit of going out and returning of her own accord, and would, perhaps, have brought her handsome male acquaintance with her, and have set up housekeeping in the vicinity of the gentle-crock, but on account of the other birds I could not do so, and as she resented being shut in against her will she decided not to return after getting out for the second time, which was ungrateful on her part, and somewhat foolish, too.

Since losing "Jack", I have heard of Starlings having bred in an aviary, and make no doubt that a tame pair would do so and perhaps have an albino brood which would be valuable, as these "sports" are readily saleable at a remunerative figure, as much as £ 10, but frequently £ 5 or £ 6, being paid for one of them. Albino Starlings, Sparrows, and Blackbirds seem to have been tolerably plentiful during the summer of 1893, and their occurrence in more than the usual proportion may have been due to the long continuance of abnormally hot and dry weather that happened that year.

"Jack" never disagreed or interfered with any of the seed-eating birds that inhabited the aviary, but I could not keep a soft-billed bird with her: she nearly killed a Nightingale, and bullied a Thrush to such an extent that had I not removed him, I feel sure he would have been killed; of the Finches, Doves, and Parrakeets, however, she never took the slightest notice, which I fancy was due to their food being different from hers, but she evidently looked upon the gentle-crock, the mealworm tub, and the pot in which I kept the ants' eggs as her own especial property, and resented any approach to them as an encroachment on her rights.

The scientific name of the Starling is *Sturnus vulgaris*.

CHAPTER XIX.

The Larger Hill Mynah.

THIS bird, which enjoys an almost world-wide reputation as the prince of mimics among the feathered tribes, is the size of our Jackdaw, but plumper in body and has a shorter tail; yet I cannot help thinking that its merits are somewhat overrated. At least one I had in my possession was not a brilliant subject, and others that I have seen by no means came up to the standard that I had understood they usually attained to. Possibly the one I had may not have been a typical specimen, for he suffered from a sebaceous tumour on his head, which did not, however, seem to affect either his health or appetite, but as he afterwards died from the effect of a recurrence of the complaint in other parts of his body, it may well be that his spirits were more or less affected by it.

In other ways it is not an encouraging kind of bird to have, requiring a large cage, and the most scrupulous care and attention to keep it sweet and clean, for the

Mynah is a gross feeder and its diet of a very miscellaneous kind, viz., rice, potato, carrot, meat, fruit of all sorts, egg, and, in a word, pretty well everything that comes to table. An appetite so accommodating might be thought an advantage, but evidently the bird does not digest half of what it swallows, and I am now speaking not only of the one I kept for a while, but of others that have come under my observation from time to time, both before and since, and that is what makes the creature so objectionable in the house.

It is supposed to be related to the Starling, and its short tail together with the metallic reflections of its plumage lend colour to the notion, but I far and away prefer our native bird, as a linguist, whether a whistler, or an inmate of the dwelling, while it has the further advantage over the Mynah of being absolutely hardy and requiring only ordinary care to preserve it in health.

The scientific name of the Mynah is *Gracula intermedia*.

CHAPTER XX.

The Raven.

“WOULD you care to have Grip?” wrote a friend to me one day, “for if you would, I shall have much pleasure in sending her to you.”

Should I accept the offer, or should I decline? The bird in question had a history. She was not exactly spiteful, but you had to take care of your heels when she was in the way. She was not, strictly speaking, very handsome either, for she had plucked all the glossy black feathers from her breast, which was then only covered with grey down. Notwithstanding these decided drawbacks she was a very fine specimen of the race to which she belonged, namely the Scandinavian, and was considerably larger than any other Raven I had seen. Then I had never owned one of these birds, and decided to accept the kind offer made me, and at an early date found myself a visitor at my friend's house and contemplating, in his yard, the “ancient, grim and stately Raven” that was soon

to be made my very own, that is as far as one can be aid to have a proprietary interest in a fellow creature.

While I stood looking at her, "Grip" was hopping about, very busy, collecting a number of small stones which she arranged in rows along the steps, and when she had completed a line, she knocked them all down again, gave utterance to a funny little croak, like a chuckle, and recommenced.

"That is her favourite amusement," remarked my friend's wife.

"Yes," replied my friend, "she will spend hours at that game, and sometimes she will substitute straws and little bits of stick for the stones."

It was very curious and suggestive to watch her antics, which she would interrupt now and then to chase a fine pair of White Jackdaws, a Magpie, or a Jay that might approach her too nearly; but the time had arrived for her to take her departure from her old home, so my friend took her up in his arms (she was perfectly tame and gentle with him, as, indeed, were all his many birds) and popped her into a box that had been prepared for her reception some time before my appearance on the scene; then he fastened down the lid of it, and beyond poking out her bill through the ventilator, "Grip" offered no resistance to her incarceration. However, her bill (a most formidable instrument whether for offence or defence) was got in at last, and the lid was securely fastened down with

nails—it was a good-sized box—and I popped it under my arm, bade adieu to my kind host and hostess and made the best of my way to the railway station, preferring to take the bird home myself, to trusting

THE RAVEN.

her to the uncovenanted mercies of carriers or railway-porters.

In the train, I placed the box up in the hat-rack, and taking a newspaper from my pocket began to read,

Presently I might have exclaimed with Edgar Allan Poe, "Surely that is something tapping!" for "Rat, tat, tat, tat, tat!" came very distinctly from the hat-rack. The other occupants of the carriage looked up, and then glanced at each other, and one lady, evidently of a nervous temperament, gave a slight start, and shrieked in a subdued key. "Oh my! what is that?" but "Grip" did not reply, while I of course took no notice, but continued to read my paper as if no sound had reached my ear.

Presently, however, the bird recommenced knocking, and someone exclaimed. "It's a boy in the next compartment," an explanation that appeared to satisfy my fellow-travellers, for they made no further remark, although the "tapping" was continued, at intervals, until the train reached Victoria, where, taking possession of my box, I got out to change carriages, reaching home in due course, and not, on the whole, sorry to be rid, I do not mean of "Grip", but of her travelling conveyance, which was decidedly heavy as well as inconvenient to carry under one's arm from its size, for I had to walk some distance from the station to my house.

At home, at last, I carried my new acquisition into the wash-house and opened the box, when "Grip" immediately hopped out with an interrogative croak, flapped her wings, and perched on the mangle, where she again shook herself and looked round with an air

of surprise at her new surroundings. She had had her supper, but what about her breakfast in the morning?

Well, I have already described elsewhere how that was furnished and I must not repeat myself, especially as the reminiscence is a painful one.

I had intended allowing the bird the run of the garden, and to let her sleep where she was (in the wash-house, so I opened the door, and out she stalked, for one of her wings had been clipped, and I knew that she could not fly away. Recollecting then how fond she was of a ladder, I brought out a pair of wooden steps and placed them leaning against the side of the house, and these she immediately mounted, croaking and flapping her wings vigorously the while.

I left her then and went indoors, but on coming out again in an hour or so, to see how she was getting on, I found that "Grippa", as I had re-named the Raven, had in the interval done more damage to the shrubs and flowers than a couple of rabbits or even a goat could possibly have done in the same time, and I saw that it would be impossible to allow the bird her liberty, which was unfortunate, as I had counted upon that to wean her from her deplorable habit of self-mutilation.

There was no help for it, the Raven must be shut up in an old summer-house that had been converted into an aviary and had a small run attached to it: it was then tenanted by a few White Fantail Pigeons, which, of course, I transferred to other quarters, for

"Grippa" could only be let out when I or someone else was by to watch her.

She did not object to the transfer, and as I had arranged various perches for her convenience in the summer-house she soon gained the highest of them by hopping up to it from the lowest, and when she had mounted as high as she could she turned round to have a look at me, croaking at the same time in order to remind me that some hours had elapsed since she had had her breakfast.

I went and fetched her some scraps of meat, which she caught very cleverly in her bill as I threw them at her from the open door of her new abode, and after a while whenever she saw me coming she would spread out her wings and tail and ruffle the feathers of her head and neck, dance in the most absurdly grotesque fashion on her perch, and, generally, comport herself in such an idiotic manner, that I used to say to her: "You are an ugly old brute!"

She soon caught up this expression, and would repeat it to all and sundry who went to have a peep at her. As far as the members of the family were concerned, that did not matter, for they knew what it meant, and if she said it before a stranger in my presence I could explain; but unfortunately one day an elderly lady, of not the most angelic appearance, which was by no means her fault, but her misfortune, went alone to have a peep at the wonderful bird of

which she had heard an account that had greatly excited her curiosity.

No doubt she was greeted by the "grim, ungainly, ghastly fowl" in the usual manner for she presently returned and remarked to a member of the family: "I am surprised the doctor should keep such a horrid, vulgar old scarecrow as that!" The shaft had evidently struck home.

"Grippa" had another trick: she used to cough like an unfortunate afflicted with consumption, or at least a severe attack of bronchitis, and the effect was curious, not to say amusing enough, when it was first heard, but the continual repetition of the lugubrious sounds became terribly monotonous and wearisome after a time, especially when the bird began, as she always did during the summer, about 2 o'clock in the morning, and kept up the performance, at frequent intervals, through the day, and far into the night.

I was not surprised when my next door neighbours complained. As long as they thought it was a human being, they put up with the annoyance without a murmur, but when they found out that it proceeded from a Raven that had not even the excuse of being ill, they did complain, and that was one of the reasons that led me to part with "Grippa", though not, I must confess, with any poignant feelings of regret.

She had many accomplishments, such as whistling for the dog, calling him by his name "Jumbo", and

also calling "Jack, Jack" (the Starling); she could say a number of words, too, very plainly, and frequently picked up new sayings; but she was not to be trusted.

On one occasion I was in her house feeding her, and she suddenly pecked me on the back of the hand, so severely as to break the skin and draw blood, which was rather a serious thing from a creature of her kind, but fortunately no harm resulted: another time when I had let her out in the garden, she quietly walked up behind one of my boys who was sitting down reading, and gave him a bite in the leg.

The above and other similar offences were forgiven in consideration of her many comical ways, but one day when a servant lad was cleaning out the house, which had to be done every morning, she suddenly hopped down off her perch on to his back as he was stooping down below and bit him sharply on the back of his neck, nearly frightening the boy into a fit, so that he could not be induced to go into the summer-house again. But there! if I were to recount all her delinquencies I should never have done.

I had read somewhere that a Raven when carrying off an egg, is in the habit of "transfixing it with his powerful bill", but I doubted the fact, so I gave one to "Grippa" one day in order to see what she would do. She simply picked it up between her mandibles as she would have done any other morsel, flew up with it to her perch, where she steadied it between her

feet, pecked a hole in the shell, and leisurely sucked out the contents: no "transfixing" for "Grippa", she knew a great deal better than to commit so foolish a mistake.

Another time I threw her an egg as she sat facing me on her perch and she caught it deftly in her beak without cracking the shell, when she proceeded to deal with it exactly as she had done with the one she had picked up off the floor of her den.

When supplied with more food than she could dispose of at one meal "Grippa" was in the habit of covering over the remainder in reserve for another occasion, and this led to my being witness of a rather comical scene. There was a very big lean rat in the garden (how he got there was a mystery) and he lived under the Raven's house, in the floor of which he had contrived to gnaw a hole through which he would pop up and steal her leavings.

I did not interfere with the rodent, for I thought "Grippa" might, perhaps, catch him some day, but he was far too quick and wary for her, or she was too slow, I cannot say which. Once, however, I happened to see her pack away a bone or a bit of meat in a corner and cover it with a scrap of paper which she patted down on and carefully tucked round her deposit, then when she had hidden it, she remounted her perch, and the rat, popping his head out of the hole, carried off the morsel which the bird had hidden close to it.

After a little while "Grippa," as her custom was on such occasions, hopped down to ascertain that her treasure was safe, and when she found it gone anything more droll than her look of astonishment I never witnessed. She could not make it out at all, and evidently thought she had mistaken the place, for she went and looked all round her den, of course without success, and at last came back to the place where she had left her bone, looked about with a very odd expression, gave up the search, hopping on to her perch, and then began to cough as if she had not many hours to live.

Finally I set a trap for the rat and caught the old vagabond, when I consigned him to a watery grave and then gave his carcass to "Grippa", who was extremely partial to mice; but she could not make any impression on the tough hide of the rat and hid it away, presumably to wait until decomposition had made it softer. Day by day she tried it, but without effect, and at last I had to have it removed and buried, for there is nothing more offensive than a dead rat, except it be a Canary that has been fed on stale hard-boiled egg and died in consequence—the smell in that case breaks the record for unpleasant odours, as I have often found to my disgust when making *post-mortems* for correspondents.

Poor old "Grippa!" I tried to get a mate for her, for a pair of tame Ravens will breed freely in captivity, I have read, but I was not successful, and at last I

had to part with her for the reasons already given. I have no doubt she is yet alive, for these birds survive to a very great age, and are very easy to cater for, everything being fish that comes to their net. I fed "Grippa" chiefly on dead birds, mice and bits of meat; bones she was fond of picking and she would eat cooked potatoes and cabbage, or any kind of scraps from the table. She was also partial to snails (hoddinods) and to fish of any kind. In fact I never knew her to refuse anything that was offered to her with the exception of my poor old Bicudo and that rat.

The scientific name of the Raven is *Corvus cora*.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Rose-crested or Moluccan Cockatoo.

THIS is an uncommonly fine bird and a very intelligent one: true the proverb "Handsome is that handsome does" will not always hold good in his case, for he can be awfully noisy when he chooses, and that is almost continually. Still, given a quiet specimen of the race, it is a splendid creature, imposing as to size, quaint as to appearance and lovely as to plumage, when the bird is in good condition, which is usually the case with him. In size he about equals a Raven, though, of course, his appearance is very different from that of "Grip". He has a great partiality for imitating the cackle of a laying hen, often leading the unaccustomed housewife, who chances to hear him for the first time, to run out to the roost only to be disappointed in her search for eggs.

He measures about twenty inches in length from beak to end of tail, and is stout in proportion, not to say of portly build. In repose he sits on his perch

THE ROSE-CRESTED OR MOLUCCAN COCKATOO.

with his neck retracted and his bill almost hidden in his feathers, which he puffs out round his face till he looks something like a snowy Owl, though he lacks the magnificent eyes of those rangers of the night, his being comparatively small and either black or reddish-brown; the latter colour distinguishing the females, and the former the males of the species. The general hue of the plumage is creamy white, but it is suffused, particularly on the breast, with a delicate pale rose-red tinge; the crest, which has a backward inclination, is large, most of the plumes composing it being six inches in length, the upper ones are white, and the rest tinged with a reddish-orange colour pervaded with a shade of rose. This crest is raised when the creature is excited, and then the beautiful primrose tint of the side feathers of the tail and those of the wings can also be seen. At such times the Moluccan appears almost twice as big as he really is and his black beak comes out in strong contrast to the general white of his plumage. As the venerable Bechstein has well observed, "this beautiful bird has a noble air"—he has, and deserves the title, bestowed on him by someone, of King, or Emperor, of all the Cockatoos. He seems to be a favourite with Dr. Russ, who writes of him as follows: "*Der rothgehäubte oder Moluckenkakadu gehört zu den schönsten unter allen*", terms of praise that I agree with; but Mr. Gedney (the pioneer of foreign cage-bird literature in this country) is no friend

of his, and appears never to have got over the feeling of enmity engendered in him against all the race by one errant individual who belonged to the captain, and disturbed the middy's repose by a series of terrific "gur—rahs" audible, we are told, a mile from the ship.

One of these birds I once had was a magnificent creature, and certainly had a very powerful voice, but fortunately he did not exercise it to its utmost extent very often, though when he did call out every one had to run from the room. He was very tame and loved to have his poll scratched; he would coo and chuckle while undergoing the operation in a tone that was perfectly ravishing. He did not speak much; only a few words now and then, the principal of which were "Pretty Cocky", which he would utter in a variety of tones, sometimes, simply as the mere statement of a fact, in a moderate key; or he would whisper them in a scarcely audible voice, as if confiding an important secret to his interviewer, and now and then he would trumpet them forth in stentorian tones so that the whole house might hear, and tremble. His chief performance, however, was to imitate a hen that had just laid an egg, which he did to the life, but in a considerably more powerful voice than "Biddy" herself possessed.

I did not keep him very long, for in a house of ordinary dimensions, some of the inhabitants of which were in the full possession of their sense of hearing,

his full and clear tones were occasionally taken exception to.

His principal diet was boiled maize, which was cooked fresh for him every day, but he would also eat hempseed, and was rather fond of fruit, especially grapes, the sight of which used to set him off dancing and whispering "Pretty Cocky", but if the dainty was withheld, he screamed, and got it.

The scientific name is *Cacatua Moluccensis*.

CHAPTER XXII.

The Blue-eyed Cockatoo.

THIS bird is nearly as large as the Moluccan: from which it is readily distinguished by the yellow colour of the hinder crest feathers, and the largish circle of bluish coloured naked skin round the eye: the eye itself, in the individual I am describing, was black, from which I infer that it was a male.

I did not exactly own this bird, but took care of it for a time for a friend. It was long enough, however, in my custody to show me that it was a very lovable creature, extremely tame and gentle, but no linguist: at least I never heard it utter a word, but it could cackle like a hen, and occasionally did so, though not in so distressingly powerful a voice as its friend the Moluccan. I also heard it try to imitate the clarion notes of "Chanticleer the Bold," but it failed miserably, I must say, and did not repeat the attempt.

Afterwards its upper mandible grew to an enormous length, curling downwards towards the chin, and the lower mandible broadened out spoonwise, giving the bird an extraordinary appearance and interfering with its feeding. I cut and pared the over-growth, but have heard no more of the subsequent history of Blue-Eye.

The scientific name is *Cacatua ophthalmica*.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Lemon-crested Cockatoo.

ALTHOUGH I have seen thousands of these birds flying about wild in Australia, and have heard their shrill outcries high up in the air when their forms were invisible from the ground, it was not until comparatively recent years that I had one of them in the house. It was a young bird, perfectly tame, and was given to me by an acquaintance. It had never been kept in a cage, but was allowed to range about the premises, indoors and out, with one wing clipped. It had a cage, but only used it to sit on its top in the day, and sleep in at night. It was so very tame, that when it moulted I did not think it was worth while cutting its wing again, as doing so certainly detracted from the bird's appearance, so one day it wandered out into the garden and flew away, never to return.

I had inquiries made, but heard nothing more about poor "Cocky", which I expect was caught and kept by someone, for I think if he had been left to himself he would have returned. I say *he* because the iris was black; the female has a reddish-brown one.

Scientific name: *Cacatua galerita*.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Lesser Sulphur-crested Cockatoo.

THIS is a nice bird, about the size of the Rosy Cockatoo: the crest, which is of a deep sulphur or brimstone colour, is inclined forwards like that of the latter species: the general colour of the plumage is white, with a yellow tinge on the under side of the wing and tail feathers. The bill, which is of comparatively large size, is black, but the white powder so largely secreted by all the Cockatoos, and especially by this one, gives it a grey appearance. The eye of the male is black, and that of the female brown.

The one I had was a nice quiet bird, not much of a talker, but she could whistle fairly well: she lived on bird-seed, biscuit and fruit, had nuts occasionally, and wood always to bite and play with. Water of course. Somehow she contrived to get very dirty as to her plumage, so she had to be occasionally bathed, for she would not voluntarily "tub".

One day she fell ill, and surprised the family by

laying a white egg about the size of a pigeon's: directly she had got rid of it, she became as lively as ever, though apparently at death's door the moment previously.

Some time afterwards poor "Polly Cocko" showed symptoms of the same kind, but we were not alarmed, kept her warm, gave her a little oil, and nursed her up; but she gradually got worse, and although she managed to lay the egg, she did not rally as she had done on the former occasion, but, in spite of every care and attention gradually grew weaker and died, to the great regret of a large circle of friends and acquaintances to whom she had endeared herself by her gentle and quiet demeanour.

Other members of the species that I have had under observation from time to time have varied a good deal in character as well as in attainments, from which I infer that it is decidedly rash to form a judgment of a race from limited observations of a few individuals belonging to it: which is exactly what many people are fond of doing, hence the many "chameleon" stories one hears and reads of with respect to such and such a bird or beast.

A propos of chameleons, I once heard a visitor at the "Zoo" enquire what "Kahmah lions"! were and he looked vexed with me for laughing.

The scientific name of the Lesser Sulphur-crested Cockatoo is *Cacatua sulphurea*.

CHAPTER XXV.

The Bare-eyed Cockatoo.

THIS is not a pretty bird, but it is a very nice one. In appearance it reminds me of the Slenderbill, but its beak does not attain to the same preposterous dimensions as that of the latter. It has no crest to speak of—a mere apology for one in fact—but it is remarkably fond of displaying it, and having it rubbed and patted. Round the eye is a triangular patch of naked corrugated skin, of a yellowish-greyish white colour, to which it owes its name: the beak is greyish white, and the eye black or brown, according to the sex.

This bird is a native of Western Australia, and is sufficiently common there, but is not found in any other part of the great island-continent. It is not often imported, which is strange, for it is very hardy, and the most intelligent of all the Cockatoos. One member of the species, that I saw but did not possess, could, its owner assured me, and I have no reason to doubt his word, speak over three hundred words and sentences in English, French and Dutch.

My Bare-eye was not such an accomplished bird as that by a long way; but it was not without its merits, too; for instance, during the short time it was with me it caught up from the Moluccan the chant of the hen in which that maestro used so to delight, and rendered it with considerable effect: also such sentences as "Who are you?" "What do you want?" "Good morning", and so on, and would, I feel sure, have made an excellent talker and mimic, but I had to part with it, as I had to do with the rest of my Cockatoos, on account of the noise, which an invalid neighbour complained of: so that I sighed for "a home in some vast wilderness", where I could keep as many as, and what kind of birds, I pleased, but such being, fortunately, or unfortunately, not forthcoming at the time, the "Cockies" had to go.

This species feeds on grain of all kinds and is quite hardy; I believe a pair would breed in an outdoor aviary, though of course they would not develop into talkers there, but it might be worth somebody's while to try and get a few aviary-bred Bare-eyes.

The scientific name is *Cacatua gymnopsis*.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The Western Slender-billed Cockatoo.

THIS noble bird, like the last, is a native of West Australia, where it replaces the Slenderbill (*Licmetis nasicus*) of the eastern parts of that country. It is nearly as large as a Moluccan but is shorter and stouter. Like the Bare-eye it has not much crest, and like that clever bird it makes the most of what it has.

The sample, I mean the individual, I possessed was a fine male and a good talker for a Cockatoo, but unfortunately he had picked up some very vulgar expressions, and made some exceedingly disagreeable noises, which forced me to give him away to the "Zoo", where I thought his objectionable remarks would not be noticed amid the din of the Parrot-house: but perhaps that may have been the reason why I did not see him the next time I paid a visit there, nor could I learn anything about him from the civil attendant. So that I am quite in the dark as to his ultimate history, and was not encouraged to add again to the collection in Regent's Park.

The scientific name is *Licmetis pastinator*.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Swainson's Lorikeet.

THERE had been so much controversy about this handsome bird that I determined to obtain a pair of them at the earliest opportunity, and before long was fortunate enough to procure two very fine specimens in perfect plumage and condition from the late Mr. Anton Jamrach, whose untimely death all aviarists have so much reason to deplore.

They were, indeed, a splendid pair of birds, so tame and fearless, but as fierce and as cruel as hawks, as far as other birds were concerned, which was the reason why I was forced to get rid of them, for I would not keep them in a cage, nor did I choose to part with the rest of my collection on their account and for their special benefit.

The species is too well known now to need description, but I may remark that the male is considerably larger than the female, to whom he is most devoted, dancing and singing to her, combing her head for her and feeding her incessantly.

I found these handsome birds to be perfectly hardy and kept them out of doors during an exceptionally severe winter, when on more than one occasion I have actually seen them break a thin film of ice on their water-pan in order to bathe.

These birds have frequently bred in confinement, sometimes in a hollow log like the rest of the Parrot race (with one certain and a few doubtful exceptions), and sometimes on the ground behind a brick or a piece of board. My pair had begun to think about nesting, when I had to send them away, for which I was sorry, but they had already murdered a Red-rump and a White-headed Love-bird, and seriously injured my old Cockateel, "The Chaplain", which last was an unpardonable offence and led to their immediate banishment.

In a state of nature these beautiful birds feed on the nectar of the flowers of their native land, a diet for the immortals, but they eke it out with many flies, of which they partake as freely as they do of honey: in this country the dealers will tell you that the birds will live on seed, and so they may for a time, but the result, after a few weeks or months, is death in convulsions, caused by indigestion. It stands to reason that it must be so. But when they are dieted in a manner more nearly approaching that they have been accustomed to, they will live for a long time, witness a pair in the Parrot-house at the "Zoo", where they

have been since the year 1880, or a matter of sixteen years: this pair, as well as some others that are their juniors, have been fed on rice boiled in well-sweetened milk, which they have given to them fresh several times a day: the keeper also allows them a mealworm now and then, and there is also seed in their cage, but they do not appear to touch it. Fruit they will suck greedily if sweet, such as grapes, and they have some occasionally.

When I bought my pair, Mr. Anton Jamrach told me that it was all nonsense trying to keep them on a diet of seeds, even when they had been brought over to this country on it, and I accordingly fed mine after the mode adopted in the Parrot-house, and I must say I never possessed a handsomer or a healthier couple of birds.

It was as good as a play to watch the antics of the male when he was paying court to the female: the way he pranced and capered round her, the attitudes he would fall into, and the extraordinary noises to which he would give utterance, were most mirth-provoking; but he was dreadfully, furiously jealous, not only of other Parrots and Parrakeets, but also of any and every kind of bird, great or small, even of a great big foolish Wood Pigeon (*Columba palumbus*) who had no eyes, even for his own wife, and had certainly never bestowed a thought on the fair Swainsonia. But the life he led that poor Ring Dove, until I found it out just

in time to save the latter bird's life, was something too terrible.

The Blue Mountain Lories, as the Swainsons are also called, make excellent parents, I have been told, but I did not keep them long enough to put them to the proof in that direction. It is said they will bring up three or four broods in the season, accommodating themselves to our summer, instead of stupidly adhering to their own division of the seasons as so many of their fellow country Parrakeets and other birds are in the habit of doing.

The young ones, I have been further informed, issue from their birth-place resembling the old ones in every respect save size and the brilliancy of their colouring, for which reason it would decidedly be as well to mark the young birds, while yet in the nest, with a ring on one of their legs, as pigeon fanciers habitually do with the juvenile inmates of the dovecote, but in the case of the Swainsons, or any kind of Parrakeet, the ring would have to be of metal: it is very easy to slip it over the front toes of the young birds, and then by holding the hind toes up against the shank the ring will slip on the leg without any difficulty, and cannot be removed by the bird itself.

These Parrakeets, or Lories, are not very frequently imported, because their management is very much misunderstood, and yet it is simple enough and the birds are exceedingly desirable on account of their

hardiness and docility, as well as the readiness with which they will adapt themselves to a life in captivity, where they will breed quite freely. The only drawback is their ferocity. Should one of a pair fall ill, the other will quickly turn upon it and kill it, unless the sufferer is quickly removed somewhere out of the reach of the unkind partner. But given plenty of room, adequate shelter, and no company but their own, these birds are really never sick or sorry, and they are well worth keeping by amateurs who have the requisite accommodation at their disposal.

The habitat of the Swainson Lorikeets is in Eastern and North-eastern Australia, where they are of sufficiently common occurrence.

The scientific name is *Trichoglossus Swainsonii*.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Scaly-breasted Lorikeet.

THIS is neither as pretty nor as large a bird as the preceding, but is blessed with a much more amiable disposition. I had a pair of them once for a little while, and can give them an excellent character as far as my experience with them went. Certainly they never made any attempt to nest, and that is the crucial time for testing their temper, so that it is possible they might, in the end, have turned out to be as disagreeable as their more brilliantly attired relations, for the Scaly-breast is not conspicuously handsome.

His general colour is vivid grass-green, but the breast-feathers, or, to speak more correctly, some of them, are bordered with a bright band of rich Canary-yellow, a circumstance from which these birds derive their specific name, for these yellow markings give a somewhat scaly appearance to that portion of their body: the under wing-coverts are red, and the flights

SCALY-BREASTED LORIKEETS.

black; the bill is orange. The female has a general resemblance to her mate, but she has fewer spots.

As these birds are natives of Tasmania and the southern parts of Australia, they are presumably quite hardy, but I have not tested their capacity for resisting our rigorous winters. I have little or no doubt, however, that they would prove to be at least as hardy as their relatives the Swainsons, with whom they possess not a few points in common, that is to say, in the matter of rapidity of movement, and the possession of a decidedly musical voice, which is more than can be said for the great majority of their congeners.

I fed my pair mainly with Canary-seed, to which Mr. Anton Jamrach told me they had been accustomed; but I fancy it is extremely probable that a prolonged diet of seeds would have told upon their digestive system and given rise to dangerous complications, so that had I kept them permanently I should have felt disposed to have placed at their disposal a bill of fare similar to the one I had provided for the Blue Mountains, upon which the latter have done well, not only in my aviary, but in others.

All the Lorikeets have short tarsi, and are of much more strictly arboreal habit than the Broadtails (*Platycerci*) for instance; they are all extremely active on the wing, and fly with immense velocity in a perfectly straight line for a long distance, so that if they are kept in a cage it should be as large a one as possible:

in an aviary, however, or a bird-room, they would, no doubt, succeed better, as they certainly would show to far greater advantage.

I have seen them in flocks of from twenty to thirty in number clinging to the flowering branches of the gum-trees in their native country, and a very pretty sight they presented. I also saw an aboriginal hurl his boomerang at some of them, but he missed his aim! Whether it was that semi-civilisation had impaired his power it is impossible to say, but the whole flock darted off with the rapidity of a flash of lightning, screaming loudly as they went, and poor "Corrinwarra" picked up his weapon with a decided scowl on his not over handsome face, which, however, brightened up a good deal at sight of an eleemosynary sixpence, without which, he informed me in very good English, he must have gone supperless to bed.

I forget now for what reason I parted with my Scaly-breasts, but probably it was for want of room, or suitable accommodation; at all events as soon as my chief object of having them under observation for a time in order to study their habits and get their portraits drawn by a distinguished artist whose speciality is birds, I passed them on to somebody else; but I have a distinct recollection of their handsome presence and quiet, unobtrusive manners, so that should another opportunity come in my way of acquiring a second couple I shall certainly avail myself of it

and give them a more extended trial than I was able to do last time.

I feel sure they would breed, for the climate of their principal habitat (Tasmania) very nearly resembles our own, or at least that of our Southern counties, and they ought to do very well out of doors all the year round.

In the matter of feeding I would recommend a mixed diet of seed, fruit, and rice and milk boiled and well sweetened, also a few ants' eggs and mealworms thrown in occasionally. Groundsel flowers are very acceptable to all the *Trichoglossi*, or Brush-tongues, and the blossoms of the various cruciferous plants, such as the cabbage, are also useful, for the nimble tongues of the birds extract the honey from them as readily as does the sucker of the bee.

The scientific name of the Scaly-breasted Lorikeet is *Trichoglossus chlorolepidotus*.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The Ring-necked Parrakeet.

SINCE I kept the individuals belonging to this species that are mentioned in "another place," I have had some further experience with others of the race, which now occupies a somewhat lower place in my estimation than it did.

I was presented with a Ring-neck that was supposed to be a young male, but which, as I soon found, was a female, and I had some thought of buying her a mate, when a correspondent proposed to exchange one for some other bird I had, and I accepted the offer, as I generally do, with many thanks.

The new-comer was an undoubted cock, but small; he was very tame and could say a few words as well as whistle prettily, but the female was one of the wildest and most vicious Parrakeets that I had ever come across. I did not care to keep my new acquaintance in the house, and so I turned him out into the aviary where the female had already been lodged for some time. The moment the latter caught sight of

THE RING-NECKED PARRAKEET.

the new-comer, she "went for him" with a vengeance, but whether owing to the sexual instinct, or not, she suddenly checked herself and, instead of attacking the other bird, began to chatter to him: the little male replied, and the two were soon on friendly terms with each other.

At first he was unable to fly, and could only crawl about among the branches, which seemed to excite or irritate the female, who kept on continually scolding or jeering at him: so after a while he made an attempt to use his wings, but failing to hit the perch at which he aimed, he "came a cropper" on the ground, and seemed to be very much ashamed of himself for his clumsiness, while she positively laughed (in her fashion) at his mishap.

This failure to fly properly seemed to chagrin the poor fellow, and he followed it up by many attempts to use his wings, and after a time succeeded. I then perceived that the couple were looking about for a place to nest in, and one day I found the hen half-way into a cocoanut husk that was not big enough to hold her and had been placed where it was for the accommodation of a pair of Budgerigars, who had not made the expected use of it.

Seeing that Madam Ring-neck could not possibly get into the husk, I got a small barrel for her, which I fixed up among some branches; I had not the sense, however, to place it on its side, but put it standing

up on end, with a hole cut out of the top of one of the staves so that the birds could get in and out of it. The lid was movable, and revolved on a small pivot. The hen speedily took possession of the barrel, awkwardly placed for her as it was, and from her frequent and long visits to it I concluded that she would soon lay, or had, perhaps, already done so. Profiting by her temporary absence at the seed-box one day, I peeped in and saw no less than four roundish white eggs lying close together among the sawdust which I had put in the barrel, and which the Parrakeet had not removed.

Incubation had apparently set in, and the male took no part in it, indeed he seldom went near his mate, but was nevertheless on the watch and savagely repulsed any bird that ventured near. When the hen came out to stretch her wings he fed her, and I, naturally, awaited the result of the hatching with a good deal of interest.

One day, however, on entering the aviary I found a small unfledged Parrakeet lying, sadly mutilated, on the ground near the barrel, and on picking it up found that it was too big to be a Budgerigar, and could only be a young Ring-neck, and that its unnatural parents must have killed it and mutilated the remains, from which the legs, wings and bill had been eaten or torn away.

On the second morning I found another young one in the same condition, and on the next a third! So I turned the old bird out of the barrel and on looking

in found the fourth egg ready to hatch out, and transferred it to the nest of an unmated Barbary Dove in an adjoining aviary where she was sitting on two barren eggs of her own which I then and there took away, substituting that of the Parrakeet, which was much about the same size, for them.

Seeing that Doves and Parrakeets both feed their young in the same manner, that is to say by taking their beaks into their own mouths and regurgitating food on which the little ones feed themselves, I thought that in all probability the Dove might adopt the young Ring-neck and bring it up as one of her own offspring: but next morning on visiting the aviary, I saw the poor little thing on the ground under the Barbary's nest. It had simply been thrown out and was not mutilated, although quite cold and as nearly as possible dead from exposure; so I picked it up and again put it under the Dove, standing by to watch what she would do. As long as the infant Ring-neck kept quiet the Dove took no notice, but as soon as, revived by her warmth, it began to move slightly, she at once put her head down under her breast, took the poor little creature up in her bill and dropped it over the side of the box in which she had made her nest.

I replaced the unlucky Parrakeet, and again the Dove turned it out: evidently she knew that it did not belong to her, though she had never seen a young one of her own kind; but she would have nothing to do with

the stranger, so as a last resource I carried it into the house and thought to bring it up by hand.

There was no difficulty as far as feeding it was concerned, so I placed it among some cotton-wool in a little basket near the fire, and there seemed every likelihood of its doing well. Next day being Sunday, I took the birdling into the kitchen for the cook to look after while we went to church, and she, good simple soul! to ensure its being kept warm, placed it and its basket in the oven, with the result that when we returned home we found that the poor little creature was baked!

The Ring-necks did not go to nest again that year, for soon after the sad catastrophe of the young ones, which I attributed to inexperience on the mother's part, they began to moult rapidly, but I hoped that in the following summer they might try again and possibly make up for their shortcomings by producing and rearing another brood, or perhaps two. The cock bird, who had been so tame, became as vicious as his mate had been, and she, strange to say, grew much more docile, but between them they persecuted the other inhabitants of the aviary to such an extent that I had to take them away and put the pair of Ringnecks in a place by themselves, where they finished their moult and looked handsomer and healthier than ever.

Winter set in severely, but they did not seem to mind the cold a bit, and frequently roosted in the

open air from choice. Once, however, I heard a great commotion in their enclosure, but took no notice as they had a habit of flying about and screaming before settling down for the night; but next morning I found the hen dead, hanging to the wires by one of her feet, which had got fixed in them, and no doubt the violent exertions she made to free herself brought on the fit of apoplexy to which her death was due.

I was very sorry, but it was a pure accident, and nothing more could be said or done about it. I thought of buying another hen, and after a time got a reputed one, but the bird proved to be a young male, which I gave away, and the old one was sent to the show at the Crystal Palace, where somebody bought it. Such, at least I fancy, was its history, but I have had so many of these birds at different times, I cannot be sure.

I ascertained the following facts about them: the male is quite two years old, sometimes three, before he acquires the characteristic ring round his neck, and is in breeding condition; the eggs are four in number, (for other hens laid in my aviary, and always had four eggs, neither more nor less), incubation lasts eighteen days and commences with the first egg, the young hatching out on successive mornings, and lastly, although these birds are natives of India they are quite hardy and absolutely indifferent to the cold of our severest winter out of doors, so that it would be

quite easy to acclimatize them in this country ; whether it would be desirable to do so, is another question, for they are very destructive among timber, and particularly so in orchards and cornfields.

In a wood bordering on Peckham Rye Common some of these birds, escaped from cages, no doubt, took up their abode every year almost, and surprised the residents of the neighbourhood by making incursions into the adjoining gardens. What they lived on is not so clear, but probably on the buds of the trees, and the young shoots, and seeds they could find about; but they appeared to thrive, for several that were caught by the keeper at different times were in splendid condition.

It would seem, however, that these truants were not fond of providing for themselves, for they used to come down and feed with the poultry, and it was while so doing that they were secured and lost their liberty for the second time, at least, in their lives. However, when the days were growing shorter, and the nights longer, was the time when they were usually caught, so it may be that the remembrance of former comfortable quarters and plenty of good food without the trouble of seeking it, may have influenced them in their decision to return to civilised life.

The scientific name is *Palæornis torquatus*.

CHAPTER XXX.

The Blossom-headed Parrakeet.

THIS pretty bird belongs to the same sub-family as the last, namely that of the *Palæornithinæ*, but it is considerably smaller and nicer also, at least in the estimation of a good many fanciers, with whom I range myself.

The first specimens of the species that I possessed I obtained from Mr. Anton Jamrach, and they were in very poor condition, that is to say had lost their tails, and had very few feathers of any kind on their bodies: they were, however, very lively, and I got them for a "song", at a time when Blossom-heads were much dearer than they are at present.

They appeared to be male and female, and I put their cage out in the garden-aviary, where I left them for some time to grow-accustomed to the place before I gave them their full liberty. As soon as I thought they were sufficiently familiar with their new surroundings, I opened their door and allowed them to come out, and they both commenced to clamber up the

wire front, which was annoying, for there were many cats about which might easily catch and kill the birds in such a position: I therefore had to catch and cage the silly things up again, until they had acquired at least a certain amount of use in their wings, and in order to facilitate matters in this connection, I removed some of the stumps of the primaries, which were quite withered up and came out almost as soon as I touched them, and in the course of two or three weeks the birds were able to fly about and had, moreover, begun to moult regularly.

So far so good: I released them, and they exercised their wings at once and seemed highly delighted. Evidently, I thought, they were a pair, for one of them had the regulation plum-colour on his head and neck, and the black colour, or torque, while the other one had a lavender-grey neck and head, and no ring. I gave them the choice of two or three small barrels, but they never even looked into any of them. Gradually the days grew shorter and the nights longer, but the pair of Blossom-heads did not appear to mind, so I let them remain in the aviary through the winter, and the cold did not affect them in the least.

Surely, I thought, they will nest when the fine weather arrives; but they did not: then the male began to exhibit many signs of age and infirmity, so that I had to take him into the house, where I soon saw that he had passed through many summers and winters

in his time and had had a considerable experience of life before his transportation, poor old fellow! He never moulted again and after a time his plumage became ragged and he himself as disreputable looking an object as when he first passed under my care.

He lived for several more years, however, and by degrees his nails and bill grew to such enormous length that they had to be cut to keep him from involuntarily committing suicide by hanging. Then he lost his hearing completely, and ultimately became blind, but notwithstanding he had quite a good appetite and was able to find his food and water as readily as he did when he had the use of his several faculties. In this sad condition he lasted for several years more, presenting such a woful appearance that he was nicknamed "Misery", a designation that was singularly appropriate in his case, for he looked the veriest picture of it. I do not think he suffered any pain, for when roused he would move about actively and his food and water were acceptable to him to the last.

I should not have mourned for his loss, it may well be supposed, and one day it occurred to me to try an experiment with the poor old creature. I had always understood that parsley was the prussic acid, so to speak, of the Parrot race, and I gave a piece of it to "Misery", who took the leaf from me gratefully and ate it greedily, but did not seem to be "a ha'porth the worse!" Another fallacy exploded!

The supposed hen remained outside all the second winter and in the following spring moulted into a cock! so that the bird must have been at least three years old before it assumed the adult plumage. It was then sent to the Bird Show at the Crystal Palace, where it took the first prize in the Class for Ring-necked Parrakeets, and was claimed at a price more than four times the amount I had paid for the two birds.

On several subsequent occasions I have had these Parrakeets in my possession, and have always found them docile and quiet, but not gifted with a great amount of intelligence; no one, however, can deny their personal beauty, which is considerable: in addition to that they are perfectly hardy and very easy to feed, for they prefer hemp-seed and Canary-seed to anything else as their staple food; they are very fond of a morsel of cake or of fruit, or of a piece of sugar now and then, and enjoy them all, holding the delicacy up in one foot, and nibbling at it carefully all round, after the manner of the large Parrots.

I have heard a pretty story about two of these birds, one of which had the misfortune to lose a foot. It contrived, nevertheless, to get about the aviary very well with the help of its bill, but came to a complete standstill in the matter of feeding, having to stoop to the level of a common Sparrow when it wanted to eat, which for a well-bred Parrakeet was intolerable. Its friend and companion agreed with the lame one

that such humiliation was not to be endured, and when any special tit-bit was offered to them, the two-legged one would hold the dainty up in one of his own feet and offer it to the cripple, nor till the latter had had as much as it wanted would the sound bird touch a bit.

The Blossom-heads have nested freely in many aviaries, and would, no doubt, have done so in mine, had I been fortunate enough to have had a pair of them at any time.

The scientific name is *Palæornis cyanocephalus*.

CHAPTER XXXI.

The Black-tailed Parrakeet.

THIS is an Australian species without very much to commend it to the notice of amateurs, for it is not distinguished for intelligence, and all that can be said in its favour is that as regards personal appearance it will bear comparison with some more gifted birds.

The pair I had came, as did most of my Parrots, from A. H. Jamrach, and remarkably fine specimens of their race they were, but I found them dull, not quarrelsome, or interfering with other birds, but extremely apathetic, and I did not keep them long—did not, perhaps, give them a fair trial, but one is so apt to take likes and dislikes at first sight.

These Parrakeets, why I know not, are generally known in "the trade" by the name of Rock-peplers, and the male is a much handsomer creature than the female, which indeed bears a general but faded resemblance to her mate. The plumage is difficult to describe, and as Mr. A. F. Lydon, the eminent delineator of bird-life, has drawn a good picture of one in "Parrots in Captivity," it is unnecessary to make the attempt.

The scientific name is *Polytelis melanura*.

CHAPTER XXXII.

The Red-winged Parrakeet.

THIS is a decidedly handsome bird and, apparently, a quiet one, but the warning: "Trust her not!" is quite as applicable in its case as it can have been in that of Longfellow's damsel of whom he bids the swains "Beware!"

When I had my first pair, they looked such sweet, pretty, innocent young creatures that I was afraid to trust them in the large aviary in which I kept my Ring-necks and other reprobates of that class, so I turned them out into another enclosure that was inhabited by Pekin Robins and similar inoffensive species.

The time was evening, and the Red-wings (Crimson-wings they are also frequently termed) seemed quite happy and contented; but in the morning!—tell it not in Gath, or for that matter in Askelon, or anywhere else, — in the morning, when I went to see how they were getting on, I found the whole place in an uproar, and all my small birds hiding themselves where they could find a cover, while the quantity of feathers that

were strewn about showed only too plainly what game the Blood-wings (another of their names and most appropriate in this case) had been up to: it was "hare and hounds", evidently, with feathers (those of their defenceless companions) in lieu of shreds of paper.

But that was not all: I had a good-sized blue-gum tree growing in the aviary in a large pot and the Parrakeets had punished it most severely; but I put that down to their delight at once more beholding one of the common objects of the woodlands wild in which they had first seen the light of day; they had caressed it, a little too demonstratively, perhaps, and had meant no harm.

But, knives and scissors! there was a big clump of English box in the aviary, too, as well as the Eucalyptus, and that, for the moment, I could not find at all! But presently I noticed a litter of leaves and twigs on the ground, and on looking more closely saw the bare skeleton of the box-tree from which those wretches of Blood-wings, in the course of a very few hours, had removed every trace of vegetation, leaving nothing but the bare stumps of the branches of what, only the evening before, had been a handsome shrub of considerable size.

Needless to say my butterfly-net was promptly brought into requisition, and the culprits transferred to the other aviary, there to take their chance with the miscellaneous collection it contained; but they were quite able to

take their own part, as I soon found, and against all comers.

They are handsome creatures, these Blood- or Red- or Crimson-wings, as they are indifferently named, and may be briefly described as of a grass-green body colour, including the head, breast, neck, belly, and upper and lower tail-coverts: the back and mantle are very dark green, the rump is light blue, and the upper and middle wing-coverts are deep crimson.

Such is the plumage of the male in full adult condition, and the female is like him, except as regards the red on the wings, which she almost entirely lacks. The young resemble their mother, and it is impossible to say of a given specimen if it is a hen, or a young cock in immature plumage.

Anton Jamrach rarely made a mistake when picking out a pair for me, but on this occasion he did, for the one he thought was the female moulted into full male plumage about six months afterwards in my aviary.

I kept them for some time after the adventure I have described, and then I had to get rid of them. Subsequently a lady sent me a very fine male, which, unfortunately, had fallen into the bad habit of plucking himself, and had made his neck and breast perfectly bare, so that he looked like one of those bare-necked chickens known, I believe, by the name of Vulture-Fowl, of which specimens were shown at the Crystal Palace Poultry Show a few years since.

I turned the feather-picker into the aviary along with some Cockateels and a hen Ring-necked Parrakeet, with the latter of which he at once struck up a lasting friendship, or perhaps I should say that he fell in love with her at first sight, for she was a very handsome bird and was in splendid condition; but she would not take any notice of the "Vulture," who soon began to feel ashamed of himself, and allowed his feathers to grow, so that in three months, or thereabouts, from the date of his arrival he had regained his natural handsome appearance and then he and the Ring-neck made a match of it, though not without a good deal of coy resistance on the lady's part at first.

They took possession of a suitable barrel and before long I could see that the hen had laid, but how many eggs she had it was impossible to guess, for I did not like to disturb her; one day, however, I caught her off her nest, and took advantage of her absence to peep into the barrel, then suspended in its proper way on the side, and in it I saw four white eggs, exactly resembling those that had been laid by the other hen I have mentioned as having killed her chicks. These eggs the bird sat on for the usual time, when they were thrown out of the barrel, and on examination I found that they were all clear.

After an interval the Ring-neck laid four more eggs, but the result was the same, although the Crimson-wing was most attentive to her in every respect; nor

did a third batch prove to be more successful, so I removed the barrel in order to prevent her laying again, as I thought that so many eggs (twelve in about two months) would exhaust her strength, and soon afterwards I sent them both away, but subsequently learned that the following summer they paired and nested again with precisely the same result.

Scientific name: *Aprosmictus erythropterus*.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The King Parrakeet.

THIS fine bird, which is about a third larger than the last, is like it a native of New South Wales and Southern Queensland, where it is becoming rare on account of the persecution it undergoes at the hands of the farmers, to whose crops of maize and other cereals it is but fair to say it does considerable damage; not so much by reason of what it eats, as of what it wilfully destroys, for when it has bitten off an ear of corn, it merely picks out one kernel and letting the rest fall to the ground, presently gathers another stalk which it treats in exactly the same way, and so until its appetite is satisfied.

Happily the King Parrakeet, and his consort the Queen, are not large feeders, but supposing each of them to dispose of twenty grains of wheat for a meal, that would mean, owing to their unthrifty habits, no less than forty ears of corn destroyed, and if that loss to the farmer is multiplied by ten or twelve heads, of which a flock of these birds generally consists, it will

be seen that an immense amount of destruction is caused to the unfortunate agriculturist, whose wrath, under the circumstances, is excusable and can well be imagined.

However, instead of shooting these extremely fine birds and either leaving their carcasses to the flies, or throwing them to his dogs to play with, if the farmer were to take them alive and dispose of them to the dealers, he would readily obtain at least five shillings apiece for his captives, which sell at prices ranging from twenty to thirty shillings each in this country, and find ready purchasers even at the higher figure.

At different times I have possessed examples of this Parrakeet, and extremely nice birds I have always found them to be, but they are somewhat delicate and require special care and attention in order to preserve them in good health for any length of time, for if treated with neglect, or fed inappropriately, they are very subject to two incurable complaints. One of these is ophthalmia, and the other atrophy, or wasting—as the disease is popularly called, “going light,” the result of chronic indigestion.

Naturally the King and Queen Parrakeets feed on unripe corn and other seeds, and are incapable, in many instances, of assimilating dry hard seed; but unless they are too far gone, a course of boiled maize, or soaked wheat, and oats, will quickly bring them round again. They require an abundant supply of small gravel and are very partial to bathing; they drink freely.

The male is a magnificent creature. His principal colour is crimson with a tinge of scarlet on his head, neck and breast: the remainder of his body is a dark sage-green, except the tail, which is very dark blue, the rump, which is a lighter shade of the same colour, and a patch on the middle of each shoulder of verditer-green, which last is usually spoken of as the "butterfly spot". The bill is orange-red.

The female is all green, with a shade of red on the breast; she has no wing mark, and her tail is rather green than blue: in both sexes the under surface of the tail feathers is black. The young resemble their mother.

The male is possessed of a nice voice, and will learn to whistle uncommonly well, also to repeat a number of words and short sentences very distinctly, but in somewhat a low tone. He will soon get to be very tame if treated kindly, will dance at command, turn a somersault round his perch, flap his wings, "shake hands," and do other little tricks, but his forte is whistling, and there is no doubt that if as much pains were taken with him as is the case with the Bullfinch and the Canary he would far and away surpass both birds as a performer, and would bring a price in the market that would make it worth the while of the Sydney farmers not only not to molest, but actually to protect him.

There is an allied species known as the Red-shining Parrakeet, from the Islands in the Pacific, that

bears a strong likeness to the King; it is, however, rather smaller and has a black instead of an orange-red bill; nor has it any "butterfly" mark on the wing. With the female of this species I am not acquainted; it is, however, of very infrequent occurrence.

The King Parrakeet has bred freely in several aviaries to my knowledge, usually in a hollow log, but once on a shelf behind a piece of virgin cork; it is fairly hardy when correctly treated and altogether makes a very desirable pet.

Scientific name, *Aprosmictus scapulatus*.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The Ceylonese Hanging Dwarf Parrot.

THIS bird is called a Parrakeet in the Catalogue of the London Zoological Society, which seems to me to be quite a mistake, seeing that the word "Parrakeet" is usually applied to those members of the Parrot family with long tails, in contradistinction to the Parrots proper whose tails are short, square, or slightly rounded in a few cases.

It might be thought that these little birds, essentially arboreal as they are in their habits, and feeding on the nectar of the blossoms and the luscious juices of the fruits in their native wilds, would be incapable of existing in a cage: but not so; not only do they endure very well in confinement, but thrive in a state of captivity, providing anyone has the patience to keep them.

I confess that a very short acquaintance with and experience of their peculiarities was enough for me.

A correspondent had written, describing a pair of birds in his possession, to ask if I could tell him what they were, and I fancy he sent me a rough coloured

sketch of one of them. Whether or not, I had no difficulty in identifying the species, and sent him the information for which he was seeking. They were green birds, he said, with yellowish-brown heads and backs, and they had a habit of hanging, not only along the top of their cage, but from the perch, in which extraordinary position they also passed the night! They had bills of the same shape as a Parrot and ate bread and milk, sweetened, and fruit, and were especially fond of grapes. Then my correspondent proceeded to describe in forcible terms some peculiar habits of the creatures and wound up by saying that no cage would be large enough, and that they ought to be kept in a field!

I thought he exaggerated, perhaps, and as he was good enough to make me an offer of them I accepted with many thanks and in due course received the birds in a large home-made cage—a box it was, with a wire top and front. Afraid my new acquisitions were not comfortable in such a contrivance, I transferred them to another residence, and hung a piece of calico over half of it in order to afford the birds a shelter or screen, for they were somewhat shy and easily startled.

Having provided for their comfort, I left them for the night with a plentiful supply of bread and milk and some grapes, so as not to keep them waiting for their breakfast in the morning.

When I came downstairs, the room was in a state I shall not attempt to describe, and the managers of

the household frantic! No wonder either, for although I had partly guessed how it would be, remembering the Swainsons' efforts in the same direction, I had taken the precaution to lay down a newspaper in front of the Pigmies' cage. But goodness gracious! I should have covered the whole of the floor.

How such a small creature, or a pair of such small creatures, for they are not bigger than a full-grown Cock-Sparrow, could contrive to accomplish what they did, was to me inexplicable. Before long, however, I found out the *modus operandi*, which consisted in clinging on to the front bars of the cage and—well, the room was just over fourteen feet in width, and the wall opposite the cage had been defiled!

What was to be done? The first thing, naturally, was to closely cover the cage round with newspapers; but then, what a life for the birds, sinners against decorum and cleanliness though they were! Why, oh why had they not been left to adorn their natal woods? But it was no use asking such a question then; they were not in their native forest, revelling among the "spicy breezes" of Ceylon, but in my breakfast-room—worse luck! as an Irishman would say—and the odours that "paraded" the establishment were, as the cook declared, anything but spicy.

"Wring their necks!" one suggested.

"Send them back", advised another.

"Let them fly away", said a third.

But all of these excellent recommendations were inadmissible: there the birds were, and there they must remain until I could, legitimately and without prejudice to others or to the creatures themselves, get rid of them.

It was a pity, too, for they were very funny, and so extremely lively, and the male had such a nice little warbling song: but that Yankee at Eden who terrified poor Martin Chuzzlewit lest he should miss his aim was nothing to them, so I wrote a good friend of mine who keeps and has kept all sorts and conditions of birds, and asked him if he would like to have them; and anxiously awaited his reply. In due course of post it came—he would.

“Wish him joy!” exclaimed the various members of my household with wonderful heartiness and unanimity, and the Ceylonese Hanging Dwarf or Pigmy Parrots were dispatched on their travels once more.

My friend, as I have said, has kept almost every kind of bird that can be named, except, perhaps, an Ostrich and a Golden Eagle, or, until then a Hanging Pigmy Parrot—but even for him, good, easy-going fellow that he is, they soon proved themselves to be just a trifle too much, and he parted with them; to whom I know not, nor has their subsequent fate transpired.

At one time I thought of presenting them to the “Zoo”, but having been rather unfortunate as regards

the reception accorded to other birds of mine that went there, I changed my intention and disposed of them as I have related.

I have often wondered what became of the creatures in the end, but suspect they must have fallen victims to the vengeance of some orderly housewife, or domestic who was unable to appreciate their idiosyncrasy, and would make no allowance for their "funny little ways."

The scientific name of the Ceylonese Dwarf Hanging Parrot is *Loriculus asiaticus*.

CHAPTER XXXV.

The Turquoise.

THIS bird is as nice as the last is objectionable. It is found in Tasmania, the islands in Bass's Straits, and the southern parts of Victoria, but it is not a common species anywhere. In size it is a little less, and especially more slender, than the Cockateel, which it resembles a good deal in its habits, not only of running swiftly and feeding on the ground, but of nesting very freely in captivity, for which it seems to be particularly well adapted, for it is cleanly, readily tamed, easy to feed, and very apt to nest; nor is it noisy, if it has hitherto shown no aptitude for learning to whistle or speak.

The general colour is green above and yellow on the under surface, the bill is black, and there is a blue mask on the front of the head, under the eye is a small patch of yellow, the flights and middle tail feathers are blue, so are the shoulders, but there the blue is of a lighter shade. The point of the shoulder is dull red, the vent orange, and the legs grey.

These birds are extremely prolific, producing, at least in the aviary, from five to seven young to a brood, of which there are usually three during the season, the first in April or May, and the last in September or even in October. The hens, however, are rather subject to egg-binding, which is the greatest drawback in keeping them. As they lay so many eggs they must be freely supplied with lime, and the best way to administer it is in the form of the crushed shells of the eggs used in the house. I have known this simple plan relieve many cases, but of course if the retention has lasted so long that inflammation has set in there is little or no hope of recovery, and in their case, as in many others, prevention is better than cure.

Canary and millet seed with oats is the right food for these pretty birds, the female of which differs from her mate by having less blue on the face, and in being a trifle smaller; but the latter point is so slight as only to be detected by comparison.

There are several species of Parrakeets very closely allied to the Turquoise, the principal of which is the Elegant, which has only a narrow band of blue across the nostrils and no red mark on the shoulders, while its belly and the under side of the tail are of a much deeper shade of orange than the same parts in the Turquoise, for the female of which it is sometimes sold, but it is a distinct species, for the young of the cross with it and the latter are intermediate in appear-

ance between the parents, but larger than either of them and sterile.

None of the Turquoisines that from time to time have been in my possession have bred, but I know of

THE TURQUOISINE.

more than one aviary in which they have done so very freely indeed, and that for years. It is a pity the bird should be so rarely imported, but as it inhabits sparsely

peopled and barren parts of Australia that is not so much to be wondered at.

As a rule it nests in holes in dead branches, but Gould relates that he found the eggs on the ground, among loose stones on one of the islands in Bass's Straits, where there was no tree of any size, only dwarf "tea-tree" scrub. So much for the Turquoise's adaptability to circumstances.

The seeds of the different kinds of eucalyptus, as well as of the native grasses, form the food of these and many other Parrakeets in their native "bush", and it seems a pity that the former cannot be imported in bulk, as it would be a useful addition to the dietary of the Australian inhabitants of our aviaries; but perhaps we shall see it advertised by and by.

There is one other point about the Turquoise that may be briefly adverted to, namely, that it is of a mild and peaceful disposition, and although not as social as some of its congeners, it rarely quarrels or interferes with its companions, whether of its own or other species.

The scientific name is *Euphema pulchella*.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Bourke's Parrakeet.

THIS charming and little known species is but very slightly larger than the Budgerigar, to which it bears a considerable general likeness, as far as regards the arrangement of its plumage, for in the matter of colouration it is very different. For example, its forehead is bright turquoise blue, and the top, back and sides of its neck, as well as the back and wings, are a bright greyish-brown, every feather having a narrow wavy edging of a darker shade, exactly as in the case of the more familiar Warbling Grass-Parrakeet, while the breast and all the lower parts of the body, instead of being green, as in the latter, are a very charming shade of salmon-red, every feather, however, being edged with a lighter tint of the same hue, unlike the Budgerigar in this respect, which displays no wavy lines in the same position. The middle tail feathers have white tips, and the long under-tail-coverts are bluish grey with white rounded ends. Proceeding backwards from the eye, but with a downward tendency, is a narrow

streak of white; the bill is dark horn colour, and the legs and feet are grey, with a fleshy tint: the eyes are grey.

This Parrakeet is a native of the central and possibly of the northern parts of Australia, and has, consequently, not very often been imported: so rarely, indeed, has it reached our shores that only three examples of the species have found their way into the menagerie of the London Zoological Society.

I think I am correct in stating that the last and largest consignment of these birds ever received in Europe were those I saw at the establishment of the late Anton Jamrach about twelve or thirteen years ago. They were all in splendid condition on arrival and out of the total number, some twenty or twenty-five, as nearly as I can recollect, I had my choice of a pair, the female being easily distinguished from her mate by the almost total absence of blue from her forehead, and the paler colour of the salmon-red covering of her breast and under parts.

I never saw a finer lot of birds, and yet I have reason to believe that twelve months afterwards, if not, indeed, long before, not one of them remained alive. I carried my pair home in triumph, but had paid such a long price for them that I kept that item of information carefully locked up in my own breast, for I really felt ashamed to avow it.

In the breakfast-room I had a large cage, that many

would have called an aviary, in which I kept a number of Waxbills of different kinds, and in this I placed the Bourkes. The cage was what is termed a waggon-shaped one, that is it had square ends and an arched top, over which there was a green baize cover in order to shelter the Waxbills in the evening when the gas was alight. Directly the Parrakeets were released, they caused no little commotion among the established inmates, but flew up to the perches under the cover and did not show themselves again for some time, though we could hear them calling to each other every few minutes.

After a while the hen ventured down, ate some Canary-seed, picked up a few grains of grit off the floor and took a drink of water; then she was joined by her mate and they explored the premises together, seeming to make themselves quite at home and taking not the slightest notice of the Waxbills, which, by that time, had recovered from their alarm and were going about their business in their usual fussy and consequential way.

We stood, almost breathless, at a distance watching "the new birds", but need have taken no such precaution, for they were not in the least shy, and when they had taken as much seed as they wanted, they sprinkled a few drops of water over their backs, by way, no doubt, of giving themselves a bath, and retired "upstairs" (under the baize cover), in order to plume

themselves and digest their dinner, for at first we could hear them shaking themselves vigorously, and then all was still.

I have often wished since that I had left them there, but they appeared to be so very affectionate together and so ready to adapt themselves to circumstances, that I thought if I were to put them into a bird-room I had at the top of the house, perhaps they would settle down and breed as some Blue-winged Lovebirds and several other species of Parrakeets had done. But no, they did not thrive in the bird-room at all; the window was not a large one, and possibly they had not enough light—at any rate they moped and did not get on at all.

As the weather was very fine just then, and I had a nice aviary in the garden, well planted with shrubs and turfed, I decided to transfer the Bourkes thither and see how they would get on.

I caught them without any difficulty, carried them downstairs in a small cage, and turned them out, as I had decided, into the garden aviary, where the gum-tree seemed to possess a great attraction for them, and, for a time, all went on very well.

Suddenly, however, a fearful and wonderful thing happened and that, too, so unaccountably, that to this hour I have no idea of the cause of it: one day when I went to look at the birds, I found that the poor cock Bourke had lost the whole of his bill! both upper and lower mandibles had fallen off!

There was no bird in the aviary that could possibly have done it, and his little mate was certainly not guilty, for anything like her devotion to him was never seen. Of course without a bill he could no longer pick up food for himself, and so she fed him with unremitting attention. For a time, particularly as he did not look ill, I was in hopes the lost mandibles might be renewed, but I soon perceived that the bird was getting thinner and weaker by degrees, and when he died a little later on he was merely a frame, nor did a post-mortem examination of the remains throw any light on the cause of the misfortune.

The hen seemed to feel her loss acutely, for she became very restless, "called" incessantly, and would scarcely feed, so that, notwithstanding the high price, I made up my mind to go to East India Dock Road once more and buy another bird to replace the departed; but Mr. Jamrach had sold them all, and I was compelled to return home as I had gone, that is as far as Bourkes were concerned, for I believe I seldom saw my friend Anton without carrying away something in the shape of a bird, or birds, from his establishment.

Altogether my short experience with these pretty Parrakeets very much impressed me in their favour, in spite of my bad luck with them, for the hen languished after the death of her mate and died in about three months from the date of my buying the pair, and about the same number of weeks after her loss, for

which she was inconsolable: I had introduced a fine cock Budgerigar to her, but she would have nothing to say to him, nor, I must admit, did he evince any great desire to form a better acquaintance with her.

The time of year was favourable, and the birds were to all appearance healthy, so that I am utterly at a loss to account for their premature death, no less than I am to offer any plausible explanation of the accident that befell the male.

Scientific name: *Euphema bourkii*.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

The Rosy- or Peach-faced Lovebird.

THIS is an African species, from the Gold Coast and thereabouts: at first sight it seems to bear a striking resemblance to the well-known Red-faced Lovebird, which is one of the oldest inmates of the foreign-bird aviary; but on a closer inspection, there will be found to be several points of difference.

To begin with, the Peach-face is decidedly the larger of the two, and the mask that covers his face is of a delicate peach-bloom tint that is much prettier than the fiery-red one that marks the more familiar bird. Point number two, it is extremely doubtful whether the Red-face has ever been bred in confinement, but the Peach-face nests freely in cage and aviary, and has been reproduced to the fourth generation at least, it not further, and that, too, without any apparent deterioration, which is unusual among cage-birds of foreign (exotic) origin, not even excepting the entirely hardy Cockateel. Thirdly, the Red-face is a stolid, quiet, undemonstrative bird, but the Peach-face is noisy,

self-assertive, and I might almost say quarrelsome and aggressive; but when all has been said and done, he is a very charming little creature, and the great difficulty with regard to breeding is to secure a real pair, for there is so little outward difference between the sexes, that even the most experienced fancier, professional or amateur, is apt to make a mistake. In the case of the Red-faced Love-bird, the male can be readily distinguished, not by the extent or depth of colour on his face, which is a sign of age, and not a differentiating mark of sex, but by the deep black hue of his under wing-coverts, those of the hen, at any age, being yellowish green. It may be that the same distinguishing feature exists in the case of the Peach-face, but if so I am not aware of it. The bill of the latter is greenish white in colour: that of the Red-face, on the contrary, is orange.

My "pair," for which I paid a long price, for they were much dearer then than they are now, turned out to be two hens, and yet they used to feed each other, and act so that I believed them to be male and female. They made a nest, for these curious dwarf Parrots really do make a comfortable nest for the reception of their eggs and young ones, in a hole of some kind, it is true, and that in the funniest way.

When the hen has decided upon a suitable site for her future dwelling, she goes to some tree with soft bark that will strip off easily, such as a willow, and with her powerful mandibles will peel away several

strips of two or three inches long and about a quarter of an inch wide, which she carries to her nest-hole, not in her bill as nearly all other birds do, but thrust in, lengthwise, among the long feathers that grow on the lower part of her back, and nearly overlap her tail; and when she has collected as many of these scraps as she thinks constitute a load, she flies off with them to the place of her choice and, bustling in, disposes, according to her fancy, of such as have not fallen off during her flight. The pieces that she loses by the way she never notices again, but proceeds at once to strip off some more, until the nest-hole is lined as far as she deems it necessary.

When both my birds began to carry bits of bark, etc., on their backs into the nest, it was likely that both were hens, but when twelve eggs had been found in it, and all clear, there could no longer be any doubt about their sex, and the question arose, should one of them be got rid of, or should males be obtained for them both?

They were such strong, healthy birds, that it was decided to adopt the latter alternative, but, as it happened, there were no Peach-faces in the market just then, and one or two amateurs who had some for sale privately were uncertain as to the sex of their birds, which they would not guarantee, so the first project fell through and instead of buying more, I sold the two I had and have not since replaced them.

One other point of difference I remember exists between this bird and the Red-face: the latter is delicate and will soon succumb to a moderate amount of cold, whereas the Peach-face is comparatively hardy and, providing it has a comfortable place to sleep in, can be wintered here with safety out of doors, which is rather curious as both species come from almost the same part of Africa.

A friend of mine tried to obtain mules between a hen Peach-face and a cock Red-face, and at one time there seemed a probability that he might succeed, but he did not, though I do not remember exactly why.

The scientific name is *Agapornis roseicollis*.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Pennant's Parrakeet.

THIS is a fine handsome bird, not quite as large as the King Parrakeet, but much more brilliantly coloured. At the same time I cannot say that I am very greatly enamoured of it, for although it will whistle fairly well, and even learn to say a few words, I do not think it is particularly intelligent, and every specimen of the species I have had to do with has, sooner or later, developed an unfortunate habit of feather-biting, and this of course soon destroys its appearance, which, after all, constitutes the bird's chief attraction.

I have tried it indoors, out-of-doors, in cage and aviary, and do not, on the whole, feel inclined to have anything to say to it again, for although undeniably handsome, I might even say magnificent, looking at the creature's plumage only, it has nothing else to recommend it, especially as it chatters incessantly in

a shrill and monotonous way that is peculiarly aggravating. It is, therefore, unnecessary to describe it, especially as an illustration is given; moreover, it is well known.

Scientific name: *Platycercus pennantii*.

PENNANT'S PARRAKEET.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The Adelaide Parrakeet.

IF there is not much to be said in favour of the Pennant, there is still less to be urged in recommendation of its near relative the Adelaide Parrakeet, which bears the same relationship to it that the *Palliceps* does to the *Rosella*, and it must by no means be confounded with Edwards' Parrakeet, which is a distinct species, but is nevertheless occasionally called the Adelaide.

Some years ago Jamrach (A. H.) had a large consignment of Adelaide Parrakeets, of which I acquired a couple, although I had no great admiration for them, for they seemed to me to be merely a kind of "washed-out" or faded Pennant, so I had them for the sake of saying I had had them rather than for any other reason, but I did not keep them long, especially as they soon began to strip off their feathers.

Some time afterwards I bought a pair of so-called Pennants through an advertisement; they were said to be moulting, and when they arrived, I found them mere Adelaides and confirmed self-multilators with

scarcely a couple of dozen feathers between them! Nevertheless I kept them for a few months, and grotesque-looking objects they were, covered with grey down only; when winter came, like the ant in Lafontaine's fable, they succumbed to the cold, although kept in a comfortable bird-room indoors with many other more delicate species that, happily, were not troubled with their infirmity.

Other amateurs have similar complaints to make, and my advice to such as have not tried this or the last species is simply, "Don't."

A flock of Pennants, or of Adelaides—and they go about in little companies of from 15 to 20, flashing by in the full glare of an Australian noon, when the sun is scorching overhead, and the locusts are shrieking themselves hoarse and everything else deaf—is a sight to be seen and to be remembered, but it is better, I think, to leave them there amid their gorgeous, sub-tropical surroundings, than to import them into this "cold and cheerless land, where gum-trees languish and mimosas fade, and fern-trees droop their feathery fronds and die", unless, perhaps, they were to be lodged in a hothouse, where I am strongly of opinion that "the game would not pay for the candle".

The scientific name of the Adelaide Broadtail is *Platycercus adelaidæ*.

CHAPTER XL.

The Pileated Parrakeet.

THIS is a very different kind of bird from the last, not as showy, perhaps, but immensely more desirable as a pet in every respect.

It is a native of Western Australia and sufficiently common there, but not often imported. It is said to be delicate and difficult to preserve in confinement, and to a certain extent this is true, but once it has become acclimatised and used to the new surroundings and conditions of life to which the inhabitants of Britain have to conform, the Pileated Parrakeet is not one to look behind it.

It is quite correct that the various specimens that have made their appearance at the Regent's Park Gardens from time to time did not stay there very long, but that is not much to go by. I know a lady who possessed one of these birds for fifteen years and then it succumbed to old age and nothing more, and I had, or preserved, in perfect health and condition another for nearly as long, when I was obliged to get

rid of it, but "for no fault", as ladies say of their cooks in the advertisements in the *Times*, and during all that time, sufficient to test the endurance of any bird, it enjoyed the most robust health, and remained in "the pink of condition", moulting regularly and easily every year.

My specimen was a female, and a remarkably quiet bird, but vivacious nevertheless, which sounds somewhat paradoxical, but what I mean is that it never screamed or made disagreeable noises, though it was lively and active, and extremely fond of carpentry, for which reason, to save the perches in its cage, a piece of soft wood was always kept fixed up, on a level with the topmost perch, across one corner of its abode, and when it was not eating, bathing or sleeping, Pilate, as we called the bird, shortly, for Pileated, was busily engaged in making minute chips of the piece of timber in question.

When let out of "his" cage—we always used the masculine pronouns when speaking of Pilate, although really the bird was a female—"he" would take a rapid flight several times round the room and would then alight on the top of an old-fashioned mirror that stood over the mantelpiece, the top of which, by degrees, was converted into splinters, until at last the paramount authority in the dwelling rose in arms and decreed that such devastation should no longer be permitted.

Poor Pilate was accordingly condemned to banish-

ment to the garden-aviary, but appeared to be so supremely miserable there that the sentence of transportation had to be speedily revoked, and the bird and cage were reinstated in their former place, the over-mantel being left to take its chance; and, indeed, for my part I was strongly of opinion that the gradual absorption, or disintegration, rather, of the fantastic adornments (?) that had surmounted it in the earlier stages of its existence, was an advantage to it and not a disfigurement: but tastes differ, of course, and in this case it was agreed that they should continue to do so.

As years passed over his head, Pilate became somewhat troubled with what the French term *embonpoint*, not corpulency exactly, but what may be termed comfortableness, which stands about half-way between the Gallic term and the Teutonic *wohlbeleibtheit*, a compound expression that is much too long for general use, seeing that the term of human life is limited. Ay, Pilate grew decidedly "comfortable" as years passed on, and latterly when he was let out for exercise he would "puff and blow like a grampus", as they say at sea, where a little imagination goes a long way, and does duty for a great deal of the same quality of the mind on shore.

Once I purchased a young companion for Pilate, the best-looking specimen out of a consignment of ten or a dozen head that Jamrach once wrote me word he had just received from Perth, W.A.; when they reached

his place, he informed me, it was impossible to conceive anything more horrible than the picture they presented, poor things! so I suspect he obtained them cheaply. However, Anton was not the man to let grass grow under his feet, or to sit down and cry for spilled milk, so he turned to and by the aid of plenty of soap and warm water soon made the birds as presentable as was, under the circumstances, possible: but they had been shamefully neglected during the voyage and the best in their case was bad.

When I saw the poor creatures, I was not impressed, but Jamrach picked out the best-looking one of the lot and I took it home with me, thinking that Pilate would be charmed to meet a young fellow country-bird of his again; but he was not, indeed he treated it with profound indifference and refused to recognize the stranger as a kinsman.

My new acquisition, however, did not live very long to trouble anyone, and the four guineas I had paid for it were lost to me and my heirs for ever, but I did not regret them: I had made my speculation, it had failed, and there was an end of it.

Pilate was an exceedingly frugal bird and lived mainly on Canary seed, of which he consumed a fair quantity; he was very partial, however, to fruit, and was particularly fond of grapes, which he would hold up cleverly in one foot, and suck until every drop of juice had been abstracted, from which I inferred, as

well as from the fact that he would also suck any flower that was given to him, that in his native country he and his fellows subsist, at least partially, on the nectar of the blossoms of the trees and shrubs indigenous to those parts.

Pilate was a very clean bird, and took great care of his plumage, bathing regularly every morning in his cup as soon as it was filled afresh, and of course emptying it, by splashing it all about as well as over himself, but when it was refilled he never soiled it a second time.

One of his most remarkable peculiarities was the care with which his dung was always deposited in the same place. This may have been an idiosyncrasy, but if a habit of the race it is certainly a very curious one.

As the species is seldom met with I will describe it in full, premising that the specific name *Pileatus* has been bestowed upon it in consequence of the cap of deep crimson that covers the top of the head. The cheeks are yellow with a greenish tinge; the wings and wing-coverts as well as the back of the neck, the back and the two long central tail-feathers are rather dark green; the rump is yellowish-green in the female and orange-red in the male; the breast and belly are of a delicate shade of lavender with a slight purple tinge; the vent is red and the inner tail-feathers are lilac with white tips, and much paler on the under than on the upper surface. The bill is light horn-colour,

and the legs and feet are grey. The tarsi are short, indicating arboreal habits.

Take it for all in all, I have never come across a bird that I prefer to the one under consideration, namely the Pileated or Crimson-Capped Parrakeet, commonly described as *Platycercus pileatus*, though a better name for it is *Porphyrocephalus spurius*, for it differs in many respects from the typical *Platycerci*.

CHAPTER XLI.

The Red-fronted New Zealand Parrakeet.

THIS is another very nice bird, which I am sorry to hear is becoming rather scarce in its own country, and is, consequently, but seldom imported now. Like the rest of the Parrots and Parrakeets that have their home in the "Southern Britain", this species is mainly terrestrial in its habits, hence its tarsi are long and it hops and runs on the ground with much grace and agility, but it is an indifferent percher. It has a curious trick of scratching with its feet on the ground after the manner of the *Gallinaceæ*.

The general colour of the plumage is bright grass-green, but the flights are dark blue and there is a narrow band of vivid scarlet across the forehead just beyond the insertion of the upper mandible. In size it about equals the Rosella, but its tail is longer and more pointed.

There is so very little difference in outward appearance between the sexes, that it is difficult to pick out a pair from among a number of these birds; however,

the female is rather the larger of the two and has a slightly narrower red frontlet.

When I went to purchase a pair in East India Dock Road, there were quite a number of them together in a large cage in the back yard, and I left it to the importer to pick me out a male and female, if he could. When he had secured the birds, he said, with his usual frankness: "I have done my best; I think they are a pair, but I cannot guarantee them."

Well, I took them home and turned them into a compartment of my large garden aviary, where they passed the remainder of the summer and the following winter, which was a severe one, if my memory serves me rightly; but they suffered no inconvenience from the cold, and never took the slightest notice of each other. In the early part of the following summer the Parrakeets were transferred to a friend, in whose aviary they at once paired and brought up a brood successfully.

This first attempt of theirs was soon followed by another, and yet another with equally brilliant results, so that I was forced to the conclusion either that my aviary did not come up to the birds' ideas of the fitness of things, or that I had been unduly hasty in assuming that they would not breed in confinement.

Moral, for aviarists under similar circumstances: Patience.

My pair were extremely fond of oats, which they preferred to any other kind of grain, and [this partiality

of theirs, I believe, is the cause of, and excuse for, the war of extermination that is being waged against them by the colonists in New Zealand.

The call of this species is sufficiently loud, but it

THE RED-FRONTED NEW ZEALAND PARRAKEET.

is sweet and not by any means unpleasant to listen to, and although my pair continued to be "as wild as hawks" while I had them, I have heard of others that

have been perfectly tame, and were even taught to speak a few words.

In a cage, however, I cannot fancy that such a lively active bird could be entirely happy and contented, and were I again to be possessed of some of them, I should do as I did with the others, namely, turn them out into as large an aviary as possible, where their swift flight, and quick movements on the ground, no less than the curious Sparrow-like way in which they jump, or hop, among the branches of the trees, is extremely interesting and amusing.

The scientific name of the Red-fronted New Zealand Parrakeet is *Cyanorhamphus novæ zelandiæ*.

CHAPTER XLII.

The Golden-headed Parrakeet of New Zealand.

THIS pretty little bird, which is about the same size as the Turquoise, is also a native of our Antipodean Islands, and is even less common than the preceding, for which reason it is of very rare occurrence in this country, so that the chance of acquiring one of them by exchange was immediately taken advantage of.

When the bird arrived it looked too small almost to be lodged in an ordinary Parrot cage, but as I had no other place for it just then, there it had to go; but the bars did not confine it long, for it immediately stepped between them as easily as it would have done through a six-foot doorway, and careered wildly round and round the room until it had quite exhausted itself, when it dropped down helpless in a corner.

Before I could secure the truant, "Cetewayo," a big black tom-cat of ours, which I did not know was present, had seized the poor bird in his powerful jaws and although it was promptly rescued, the poor little

thing had received such injuries in the back and sides, that I felt sure it must die.

I placed it in an ordinary Canary breeding-cage in a quiet corner, well supplied with food and water, and left it, thinking it would be dead before morning. But no, in spite of the formidable hurt it had received, the bird made a rapid and complete recovery, and in three weeks from the time of the scuffle, during which it had lost the whole of its long tail, it reproduced another, and was as well and "perky" as ever.

It was an exceedingly pretty, inoffensive little creature, green as to its general colour, but with a narrow band of red on its forehead, succeeded by a wider one of a golden yellow that reached to the middle of the top of the head. The eyes were reddish-brown, and the bill pale lead-colour; the long tarsi and the toes were bluish-slate-grey. The breast and the rest of the under parts were yellowish-green and the shoulders blue.

It had a very sweet voice, but ultimately came to an untimely end, poor thing, owing to its long claws becoming entangled in the nest of a Weaver-bird, where it died before its sad predicament was discovered.

Scientific name, *Cyanorhamphus auriceps*.

THE GOLDEN-HEADED PARAKEET OF NEW ZEALAND.

CHAPTER XLIII.

The Grey Parrot.

THIS, of course, is the Parrot of Parrots, of which I have had so much to say elsewhere that a few words will suffice to dispose of it in the present place.

That the Grey Parrot is phenomenally clever or capable I question very much; it varies a great deal, and although some individuals are very accurate mimics and evince a large capacity for the imitation not only of human speech, but of other sounds, and even of the actions of persons and animals, such birds are above the average and not by any means to be taken as typical members of their race, which includes a large proportion of mere inconsequent chatterers and screamers.

Strange to say, I only became possessed of a Grey Parrot a few years ago, when a friend brought me one from the Gold Coast, the history of which I have related in full already, and must not touch upon here, nor can I refer, even incidentally, to the other individuals of the same species which I have since possessed or

had under personal observation; but must confine my remarks to matters that are altogether new in this connection.

One of these birds, however, that had been personally imported by an acquaintance of mine was distressingly wild, and one of the most ear-piercing screamers that I think I have ever come across, so much so indeed that the person who had charge of it, and who had never failed before to tame the wildest Parrot, could do nothing with it.

One day a friend of mine asked me, as I was in the way of hearing of such things, if I could tell him where his wife could rely on getting a good Grey Parrot that would not die in two or three weeks after being purchased.

I replied that I could, but it was very savage, and an awful screamer, although it had been nearly a year in this country.

My friend was not deterred by this account of the Parrot's shortcomings: all he wanted to be sure of was that it was healthy, which I could safely guarantee, so he bought the creature for a couple of guineas and took it home to his wife, who could tame anything, he declared.

A month or two afterwards I met him again and inquired how the Parrot was getting on.

It was quite well, my friend said, but such a brute! they often wished it was at the bottom of the Red

THE GREY PARROT.

Sea! but it was in beautiful condition and they were not without hope of subduing it in the course of time, at least his wife was.

"Do you really think she will be able to tame it?" I asked, knowing the creature's idiosyncrasy so well.

"Oh! yes!" he replied confidently, "if she don't, it will be the first time she has ever failed!" and doubtless he knew.

A year or so passed and we met again. "How about the Parrot?" was one of my inquiries.

It was a perfect success: as tame as a Dove, and as for talking! there never was such a bird. It could say and do everything.

This was gratifying intelligence, seeing that I had recommended my friend to buy it, and it was encouraging, too, for people who owned unruly Parrots. So I made some inquiries about the method adopted to secure such a desirable end, but was met by generalities—"She has a way with her, you know," meaning his wife, and I remained as wise as before.

The secret, however, I imagine, may be summed up in two words, namely, Patience and Perseverance.

One moment; pray do not buy Grey Parrots, or even a Grey Parrot, O gentle and kind-hearted Reader, for such are almost certain to be already smitten with a dire disease, and will almost certainly die. We used to read of 80,000 of these birds passing through the hands of the dealers in a single town, but how many

of them were alive twelve months after their arrival? I have made many inquiries, and have failed to hear of even a single bird that survived for more than six weeks, and the researches of a distinguished bacteriologist have conclusively proved that this appalling mortality is due to the presence in the blood of the birds of incalculable myriads of a microbe whose multiplication is encouraged, if not, indeed, initiated, by crowding and insanitary surroundings.

The infection is most persistent, too, and it stands to reason that the places to which these poor moribund creatures are brought on arrival must be centres of contagion, and even healthy birds put there will contract the disease and quickly die like the others.

As there is, and can be, no doubt that the importers have the remedy in their own hands and, by refusing to buy birds that are brought over in an insanitary manner, can stamp out the disease, it can only be concluded that they do not choose to do so, for the deplorable mortality goes on, and the Grey Parrot race is really threatened with extinction.

One ingenious dealer has said that the cause of death is powdered glass given to the birds by the negroes before embarkation, but that is simply nonsense and the merest excuse.

What is wanted is a licensing system and adequate supervision by a competent staff of sanitary inspectors, for the ship-fever can be stamped out, if it cannot be

cured once it has been unfortunately acquired, and it ought to be put a stop to for the sake of our boasted humanity, which, it is much to be feared, does not penetrate very far beneath the epidermis of a good many people who lay claim to its possession.

All bird-shops should be periodically inspected, and all bird-dealers required to take out a license.

The scientific name of the Grey Parrot is *Psittacus erithacus*.

CHAPTER XLIV.

The Senegal Parrot.

THIS is a smaller bird than the Grey Parrot, and comes from almost the same part of Africa as the latter, with which, of course, it bears no comparison in regard to docility and capability for learning to talk, or in the matter of personal appearance. It is hardier, but occasionally falls a victim to the deadly ship-fever (shop-fever, too) that carries off so many unhappy Greys.

The top and back of the head and the upper part of the neck are jet black; the face and throat are black dashed with grey; the breast, back and wings, with the exception of the flights which are black, are green; the belly, vent, and under tail-coverts are yellowish-orange; the under surface of the short square tail is black, and the bill is of the same colour; the eye is grey and the feet and legs lead-colour.

It is not a difficult bird to keep, but the sexes are much alike, and it is therefore difficult to secure a pair; otherwise, as these Parrots are quite hardy and breed freely in captivity, they would probably be more frequently kept than they are. However, I found them uninteresting in the house and soon sent them away.

The scientific name is *Pæocephalus senegalus*.

CHAPTER XLV.

The Half-moon Conure.

THIS is a pretty little South American species, very hardy, and extremely engaging; it is not very frequently imported and is sometimes confounded with the Sun Parrakeet, from which, however, it differs immensely in appearance; for whereas the latter is clothed in a plumage of various shades of yellow and orange and has no green about it except a little on the wings and tail, the Half-moon is nearly altogether of that colour, but has an orange-yellow frontlet of a crescentic shape to which it owes its English name.

I had a pair of them for some time, but wanting room for something of more importance, they had to go. The female is a little smaller than the male, and her "crescent" is of a paler tinge than that of her mate.

Some of these birds that I have seen could talk very prettily, as well as whistle, so that on the whole I am inclined to think favourably of them, although I did not give mine an extended trial.

Instances of their breeding successfully in confinement are on record.

The scientific name is *Conurus aureus*.

CHAPTER XLVI.

The White-eared Conure.

ANYONE seeing these birds for the first time would feel inclined, as I was, to think they were perfect little angels; and so they are, but not angels of light by any means. On the contrary, I should say that if birds ever did, they hailed from quite a different place from the cherubim and seraphim, for they are perfect demons, most wantonly and horribly cruel and ferocious.

It was in this way: my friend Jamrach once received a large consignment of them, of which I had the pick. He declined to say if they were a pair, but they proved to be so, for he had a kind of intuitive sense that always led him, or nearly always, to select a male and female. Well, I brought them away, and put them out in the aviary, where they seemed to make themselves perfectly at home at once.

They were not at all shy, but, like all the Conures, extremely noisy, which did not matter as far as my own household was concerned, for we could not hear them indoors, and my immediate neighbours at that time were long-suffering people who did not complain unnecessarily.

Very well, matters went on pretty comfortably until

the spring, though I occasionally picked up a dead bird in the enclosure, or found one there with a broken leg or wing. I blamed the Budgerigars or the Ring-necks for this, however, and never once suspected the pretty little Conures, who seemed to be always engaged in caressing and feeding each other, taking little or no notice of anything else.

No doubt: sweet innocent little creatures! Well, spring came at last, and with it my Cockateels' fancy turned to housekeeping, so they cleaned out a barrel, and laid their usual complement of eggs, upon which they sat until hatched in due season; two little ones making their appearance on the eighteenth day, and the remaining three on as many successive days afterwards.

When the youngest member of the little family was about two days old, I heard an awful commotion in the aviary and thinking that a cat must have invaded, or was contemplating an invasion of its privacy, I seized a stick and calling the dog rushed hastily to the rescue, but there was no feline foe about the premises.

The old Cockateels, however, kept on flying about screaming in a distracted manner and a fearful row was proceeding from the covered-in house where the barrel containing the young ones was suspended. I opened the door, and the first things I saw were the two eldest of the baby Cockateels lying dead upon the floor, while a tremendous noise and skirmishing were

going on inside the barrel. I put my hand in and was severely bitten, but I pulled out the culprit, the Conure I always thought was the male of the pair, when the other attempted to escape, but I barred her passage and caught her, too, though not without receiving another sharp bite.

I felt so angry with the wretches that I had a good mind to end their murderous career by then and there dashing them on the ground, but I refrained and carried them indoors, where I put them into a disused cage that had at one time been occupied by a couple of Canaries and then I returned to the scene of the massacre.

The two young Cockateels were quite dead, and on examining the others, I discovered that one of them had nearly the whole of its bill gnawed off, another had lost all the toes on one of its feet, and all three were bleeding from a number of wounds scattered impartially over the whole of their poor little fat naked bodies.

I put the sufferers back into their barrel, and in time they recovered, but were always cripples, for the beak and toes were not replaced. How the one managed to eat with the stumps of her mandibles, and the other to perch without any toes on one foot was a marvel.

It was wanton wickedness on the part of the Conures that made them attack the poor little Cockateels, for there were several other precisely similar barrels in

the aviary, and all were unoccupied; but nothing would serve the spiteful White-ears but to attack and oust the offspring of the most harmless of Parrakeets, my favourite Cockateels.

I soon disposed of the Conures after that, and when a friend afterwards sent me a couple of dozen of the fiends to mind for him, I promptly returned them, and I fear offended him by so doing, but I could not help it, for I did not want a repetition of the tragedy.

All the same, as I have since thought, I acted a little hastily, for I could have put the Conures into another compartment by themselves, but it was too late when the idea occurred to me, and what had been done could not be undone.

In size the White-eared Conure is about half as big again as a Budgerigar, consequently the young Cockateel victims were actually as large as, if not larger than, their assailants, and how the latter managed to lift the fat heavy squabs out of the barrel and throw them down on the floor, has always been a puzzle to me.

These wicked, spiteful little Parrakeets (the White-ears) are extremely pretty, so that Mr. Lydon's portrait of one of them in "Parrots in Captivity" does them no more than justice. The head to the top of the neck is brownish-grey; the upper half of the cheeks, chestnut-brown; and the ear-coverts white. The throat and breast are grey with white lacing to each feather; the point of the shoulder is red; the wings and back,

green; but the flights are blue. Across the centre of the breast is a green band, and the belly and vent are scarlet; the thighs are green, and the tail, reddish-brown, darker on the upper than on the under surface. The bill is dark horn-colour, with a black tip to the upper mandible; the eye is brown, and the legs and feet grey.

When they have room to disport themselves these birds are exceedingly vivacious, but in a cage they are dull and sleepy.

The scientific name of the White-eared Conure is *Conurus leucotis*.

CHAPTER XLVII.

The Grey-breasted Parrakeet.

THIS curious bird, which is also known by the name of Monk and Quaker Parrakeet, and to the Germans by that of "The Young Widow, on account of its sprightly manner," as Dr. Karl Russ somewhat unfeelingly remarks, is without doubt the most interesting member of the great Parrot Family, and for this reason: it is the only one of them that builds itself a nest of sticks in a tree.

Of course, a good deal of speculation might be indulged in here, and attempts might be made, more or less successfully, to account for its departure from the established custom of the race; or possibly for the extreme "conservatism" that has caused it to cling to the original mode of Parrot nidification common at one time to them all—for every question that can be debated has two sides, although our good friends the Evolutionists will only admit of one. But this is scarcely the place for such a controversy; enough if,

the question having been mooted, the discussion shall¹ be carried on elsewhere.

It is a plump bird, of the Conure type, but made into a separate genus along with one or two others. Green is the colour of the upper surface, excepting that of the flights, which are blue, but the lower parts are a light dove-grey. It has a curious habit of puffing out its cheek feathers so as almost entirely to hide the light horn-coloured bill. It is chiefly arboreal, and its penetrating voice is heard almost unceasingly from dawn to dusk. Out of doors this is of less consequence, but in the house it prompts to murder of the offender.

Yet the Quaker Parrakeet is capable of learning to talk very prettily, and will become exceedingly tame and confiding, so that its shrill cries are really a misfortune, for it never quite renounces them. It is perfectly hardy, being a native of the southern parts of South America, though it is commonly spoken of as the Monte Video Parrot or, more correctly, Parrakeet.

An individual of this species that I kept in my aviary for a considerable time took possession of a small flat box that was fastened up about eight or nine inches below the wire roof and that had been intended for the use of a pair of Turtledoves: this she, or he, for the sex of that particular bird was never satisfactorily determined, proceeded to convert into a nest by improvising a roof over, and sides around

it, interlacing the twigs with which she had been supplied as cleverly as any trained basket-maker could possibly have done, while the bottom of the box was also filled up level with the sides by a variety of bits of stick twisted together in the most intricate and extraordinary manner. The original opening into this piece of basketry faced the east, but the Quaker apparently found that it admitted too much air, or cold, and deliberately closed it, substituting for it one that looked towards the south.

Naturally, when this elaborate piece of workmanship was finished, I looked for some use being made of it, perhaps even the laying of a few eggs, barren of course, but interesting as specimens nevertheless; but nothing of the kind ever made its appearance, and the bird did not even sleep in it, though many hours of daylight were spent there and she kept on adding to and taking from the structure without apparent rhyme or reason.

Eventually when I got rid of the bird, the nest was taken down and its component parts, less the box itself, were found enough to twice fill a good-sized bucket.

The Quaker is not uncommon in the market, but, curiously enough, while I had the nest-builder in my possession I could not meet with a mate for her, though I inquired in every direction, even at the "Zoo," where they had three, but not one to part with either for cash or in exchange.

The lady from whom I acquired my bird gave as her reason for parting with it that she was afraid it would corrupt her old Grey Parrot and teach it to scream, which the Young Widow was well qualified to do. I forget now how long, exactly, I kept the creature, but a matter of two or three years, I think, during which it lived in the outdoor aviary without ailing; and there, I thought, it did not scream as much as it had done during the first few days of our acquaintance, when I had tried to keep it indoors; or it may be that its yells were not so noticeable in the open air as they certainly were in the house.

The scientific name of the Grey-breasted, Monk, or Quaker Parrakeet is *Bolborhynchus monachus*.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

The Lineolated Parrakeet.

THIS little bird (it is not much bigger than a Budgerigar) is rather curious than pretty. The general colour is malachite-green, plentifully laced with black, so that the head and back seem to be wholly of that colour.

It is a native of South America and very seldom imported. For the specimen that I have possessed, I am indebted to the kindness of an occasional correspondent who had bought it at Bournemouth along with its companion, of which last I subsequently made a *p. m.*, but do not now remember the cause of death.

When acknowledging the receipt of my report of the case, the lady was good enough to make me an offer of the survivor, the male evidently, for it was much darker than the female I had dissected. I accepted, gratefully, and in due course the bird arrived, none the worse for its long journey from the North of Ireland, and, as I had been advised to "keep it warm," I

placed it, in the first instance, in the kitchen, where, I soon found, it was not at all in its place.

At first, I was not sure of the bird's identity, as I had never seen one of the kind before, either preserved in the Natural History Museum at South Kensington (where, by the bye, the authorities seem bent on revolutionizing avian nomenclature, and establishing one of their own, though on what principle, or lack of principle, I cannot guess) or elsewhere; but from its appearance, and a comparison with the description given by Russ, I soon came to the conclusion that the bird was the Lineolated Parrakeet, readily distinguished, as Dr. Russ remarks in his great work "*Die Papageien*," from all other Parrots and Parrakeets by the deep black of its back and head and neck, and its green wings.

I then referred to the "List" of the London Zoological Society and found that the name occurred there, but I have a recollection, not quite distinct though, that the birds so denominated in that place were quite different from my Parrakeet, and were rather a small variety, or local race, of the Quaker, and not at all the bird we are now considering, which I have certainly never met with in the Parrot House during a tolerably lengthened acquaintance with that Chamber of Horrors, as a recent writer has, not altogether inappropriately perhaps, named that feathered Pandemonium.

Be that as it may, my new acquisition was quiet, generally speaking, but nevertheless it had a particularly aggravating shriek at times, that reminded me not a little of my old Nest-builder, although of course it did not possess the ear-piercing intensity that characterised the note of that performer, which was no more than might have been expected considering the disparity in point of size between the two birds.

Ultimately I gave the Lineolated one away to an acquaintance who was anxious to exhibit something out of the common at the first show of the United Kingdom Foreign Cage-bird Society, which was about to be held at Preston.

Whether the bird was so shown, and whether or not it was awarded a prize, are points in its history that have escaped my recollection.

It was a tame, gentle little creature, living entirely on Canary and millet seed, although once or twice when I offered it some fruit it held it up in one foot and sucked the juice daintily, but rejected the pulp.

Scientific name: *Bolborhynchus lineolatus*.

CHAPTER XLIX.

The Festive Amazon Parrot.

THIS is a splendid creature, about the size of a Grey Parrot, and one of the most intelligent birds I have ever met with: an opinion that is not solely based on my acquaintance with the specimen I had the privilege of owning for a time, but on several more that, from time to time, have been brought under my notice.

As I have already related "The Butcher's" history pretty fully in another place, I must not enter into it too minutely here, but may briefly say that I picked him up for a trifle at a local bird-shop where I heard him shouting, but not in an unpleasantly loud voice, the words, "Buy, buy: buy, buy, buy!" in emulation of the butcher next door: hence the name that was bestowed upon him when I brought him home.

"The Butcher's" repertoire, as I soon discovered, was more varied than select, and he very frequently blurted out the most objectionable of the expressions he had acquired at the most inconvenient seasons.

For example, if he anathematized his eyes and limbs when there was no one present but ourselves, well, it did not much matter; but when he repeated the remark with the substitution of "your" for "my" in presence of the Vicar, oh dear! it was shocking! and the dear man very pardonably exclaimed: "What a dreadful bird!"

But, after all, poor "Butcher" had no idea of what he was saying, or took it for granted, perhaps, that whatever he heard proceeding from the lips of a superior human being must be all right: how was he to discriminate between a Minister of the Gospel and an infuriated carter whose vehicle had stuck fast in the slough of Rye Lane?

How indeed? but my reverend friend was not unreasonable, and ultimately smiled and forgave "the Butcher" for his reprehensible language in consideration of the marvellously life-like manner in which he uttered the mysterious words: "It's just like a rabbit!" an expression he had only heard once and whereby hangs a tale, not to speak of a tail, the particulars of which have already been made public.

The general colour of the Festive Amazon is green: his bill is light horn-colour, and just above it is a narrow band of red immediately succeeded by one of light green, and that by another of a lilac shade which reaches to the middle of the head. The cheeks are brilliant verditer green; the flights, blue; and the rump (or lower back) red.

It is quite hardy, and the one I had was exceedingly gentle and tame; more, it never screamed, which was, indeed, a blessing. As regards food, it preferred hempseed, but would eat maize, Canary-seed, monkey-nuts and oats: biscuit and fruit, of course, that goes without saying. Sometimes it was allowed a morsel of cake, or of boiled potato, and would eat them, as I suspect it would have done anything else that was offered to it.

I kept this bird a considerable time and then it had to go, to make room for others, for I had not unlimited space at command, and when I bought a new bird, one of the old ones had, necessarily, to give way to it. However, as he fully deserved, "the Butcher" found a comfortable home, but he changed his name, I was given to understand, and was ever afterwards known as "the Doctor"!

The scientific name of this eminent favourite of mine and of everyone else's who has had the pleasure of his acquaintance is *Chrysotis festiva*.

CHAPTER L.

The Hawk-headed Parrot.

THIS is my Prince of Parrots, and without exception the very nicest bird that I have ever been privileged to have the custody of for a time. Others may have been more accomplished or have been adorned with more brilliant colours, but not one was so tame and gentle (with me at all events, if not with everyone), so full of tricks and fun, as this one.

Not but that Nature has been prodigal of gifts to it, in the shape of adornment, for it is really a handsome bird, if the tints of the plumage are not gaudy or glaring. In size it about equals the last two, and I consider it a marvel of our Great Mother's taste in the combination of colours.

The top of the head is creamy white; the occiput, cheeks, and ear-coverts, are whitish-grey, with a white line running down the centre of each feather; instead of being rounded like those of most birds in the same part of the body, the head-covering of this bird is acuminate, each plume ending in a narrow

point. The breast is of a deep vinous-red with a purple subhint running through the red, and every feather is edged with blue. The same arrangement prevails with regard to the long nuchal feathers which the Hawk-head has the power of raising at will into a kind of Elizabethan ruff round its neck. The back, wings and under tail-coverts are an exceedingly rich and brilliant green, but the flights are black, as are also the side feathers of the tail and the whole of its under surface. The prominent naked space round the eye is lead colour, but the iris is brown, and a merry-looking, twinkling, intelligent eye it is! The legs and feet are dark grey, and the nails black.

To give a complete history of these remarkable birds (for I have been fortunate enough to possess two of them at the same time) would simply mean to give them a whole volume to themselves, and just at present I have many pressing claims upon the space at my disposal, not to speak of the time requisite for such an undertaking. I may, however, remark here that the females of the Hawk-headed Parrots have none of the creamy white on their heads, but are covered or capped with grey, the feathers being extremely short and inserted closely together into the scalp: in other respects the sexes are outwardly indistinguishable.

These birds, which really have a very accipitrine appearance, are extremely gentle, playful, amusing and lovable, but they have an innate sense of fun and

humour and delight in teasing a person who shows fear of them. For instance, "Pinto," my female Hawk-head (so named in honour of the Brazilian

HAWK-HEADED PARROTS.

gentleman who made me a present of her) would ruffle up all her feathers, hiss, and run round the table in apparently a frantic endeavour to reach an old lady

who sometimes called to pay my wife a visit, and had in some way or other offended the Parrot—probably by making some remark reflecting on its personal appearance, for Pinto had lost the tip of her upper mandible in some unexplained manner, and the lower one had, consequently, grown out beyond it, making a projecting, shovel-like excrescence that did not add to the poor creature's attractive appearance, and being a female, the bird was, naturally, a little sensitive on that score.

But it was only make-believe, for Pinto would not have injured a hair of the old lady's head, had the two happened to come into mutual contact a hundred times a day: on the contrary, they would have made up their little difference at once, and have been fast friends ever afterwards. But our acquaintance was timid and Pinto enjoyed giving her a fright and seeing her run away. Such a huge creature running from such a diminutive one was an exquisite joke, the fun of which was keenly appreciated by the Hawk-head.

In the same way "Joey" (the male of my pair) had his likes and dislikes, and among the latter was my youngest son Charles, who had teased the bird over and over again, and especially delighted in poking the Hawk-head with a stick, when the Parrot would swing from his top perch by one foot, spread out his wings and tail, ruffle all his feathers, and scream "Murder! au secours!", a confusion of tongues to

which he was partial, and would then look exactly like an animated bundle of coloured rags.

Charley had been warned, but without effect, and one day "Joey" happened to be out of his cage when the boy entered the room, whereupon the Parrot, determined to wipe out old scores, and charmed to find an opportunity for doing so, flew at him and after him into the passage, whither the boy had fled shrieking, and was just in time to bury his head in the cook's apron, she having emerged from her kitchen to see what was the matter.

"Joey" was bent on having his revenge, and mistook his enemy, or made a wide shot, and seized on the cook's bare arm, nearly carrying away a piece of it! The good woman, however, who was very partial to the bird, took it in excellent part, and merely remarked as she bound up her injured limb: "It's better it should be my arm than Master Charley's face, and I know he (Joey) didn't mean it."

The Parrot was really very fond of the cook and tried, by kissing and caressing her and chattering to her in his most tender tones, to show her that it was all a terrible mistake and that nothing was farther from his intention than to hurt her.

The scientific name of the Hawk-headed Parrot is *Deroptyus accipitrinus*.

CHAPTER LI.

The Ringdove.

WHO has rambled 'on a bright spring morning through the leafy dales and glens of this in many respects highly favoured island of ours, and has not paused for a moment to listen to the vibrating sounds, repeated at brief intervals, that descended from the tree tops all around, as if a legion of invisible sprites (for not a bird is visible) were calling to each other in sport, "Coo, coo-coo, coo-coo-coo, coo," or maybe, when the note is every now and then inflected more deeply than usual, in anger or perhaps in defiance of each other?

And who, a fortnight or three weeks later, when taking his walks abroad in a copse, or plantation of larch, beech, chestnut, or even of fir or oak, has failed to notice, here and there, a slight platform of sticks, carelessly laid on some horizontal branch at a varying height of from 15 to 30 feet from the ground, between the interstices of which a couple of white eggs,

or the breast of the sitting bird, or perhaps the callow young have been distinctly visible from below?

The sounds and nest alluded to are those of the Ringdove, or Wood Pigeon, a native bird that is known by a variety of local names, among which are Queest, Woodquest, Cushat and Wood Dove.

THE RINGDOVE.

As it is a truly handsome and most presentable looking creature, the Ringdove attracted my notice very early indeed in my bird-keeping career, but for a long time my desire to include it in my collection remained ungratified, though every winter I used to see it hung up in the poulterers' shops in considerable numbers, some of which I even occasionally helped to

reduce, and found them excellent eating, save on the rare occasion when I chanced to engage a veteran whose pectorals defied mastication, even after a prolonged course of stewing.

At last—what an infinite world of meaning is condensed into those simple words!—at last, I saw an advertisement offering a pair that were said to have been hand-reared, for the very modest sum of half-a-crown. I wrote to the address given, and in due course received the birds, which were all and indeed more than all my fancy had painted them, for they were in magnificent condition, but, unfortunately, rather wild.

I turned them out at once into my aviary, which was a decidedly unwise thing to do, and they presently began to dash themselves about until they made their handsome foreheads bleed by knocking them against the roof, and that although I had immediately run away and left them alone to settle down and recover from their alarm.

After a while they grew calmer, but not, as I afterwards found out, until they had completely exhausted themselves by their silly and unreasoning antics.

There was plenty of food scattered about, and presently some one who was on the watch at a distance in a window saw them alight on the ground and drink, their exertions having no doubt made them feel thirsty; then they hurriedly picked up a few grains of corn and directly afterwards recommenced their mad

flight up and down the aviary, greatly to the consternation of the rest of the inhabitants, which until then had never seen anything so big with feathers on, except the chickens in another enclosure further down the garden, and with which they had never been in actual contact.

After some time the watcher at the window saw the Doves settle themselves down again and compose their weary wings to rest on a perch, but the first time anyone went near them, off they were again, flapping wildly round and round until they dropped from sheer exhaustion: and so this unpleasant state of affairs continued for several days, by which time the silly Doves had quite disfigured their heads, and I very heartily wished them back again whence they had come.

By degrees, however, they got a little, a very little, tamer and instead of rushing wildly about when I entered the aviary of a morning to feed them, would take refuge in the covered-in portion of the enclosure, where they would remain, hiding, until the coast was clear again.

They were very handsome birds, I must say, and much larger than any of the domestic Pigeons, except the Runt, and perhaps some of the bigger breeds of Pouters. They measured one foot five or six inches in length and were stout in proportion, with small finely-shaped heads, long straight bills, and bright eyes that sparkled like beads of jet.

The female could scarcely be distinguished from her

mate except when the two were together in the spring, when the male developed two little protuberances on the base of his upper mandible, which lasted during the season and gradually decreased in size as the months wore on, disappearing in winter, when only a very trifling difference in size enabled me to tell which was which, and then only when the two birds were sitting or standing side by side, for apart it was impossible to differentiate them.

Notwithstanding the above evidence that the male, at all events, was not quite insensible to the genial influence of the season, my Wood Pigeons never made the least attempt to build a nest, though I kept them for two or three years, nor did I ever hear them "coo", or make any sound except a slight hissing kind of grunt when they were disturbed.

They were very peaceable and never interfered with any of their companions, although some of the latter were extremely unkind to them. A rascal of a Bengal Parrakeet, for instance, led them a sad life, darting at them savagely and hanging on by his beak to its long tail whenever one of them made its appearance in the outside aviary to feed, so that at last nothing but the direst pangs of hunger would force them to come out and face the tyrant, and the hen Dove became so weak that she was unable to rise from the ground.

Fortunately I discovered the hardships to which they were subjected in time to save their lives, and banished

the Bengalese savage, when the Doves came out again to eat and bask in the sun; then they got so tame that they would actually sit on the perch and let me stand close to the wire and look at them for a couple of minutes before they flew away. It is just possible that they might, in time, have become quite familiar, but I parted with them to an amateur and am ignorant of their subsequent history.

As I have said, they were very handsome birds, their necks glistened in the sun with all the colours of the rainbow, and their entire plumage was covered with the kind of "bloom" one sees on plums and Java Sparrows and some other things: this became them, and added much to the general attractiveness of their appearance.

The bill was of a pale orange colour, but the cere almost white; the iris reddish-yellow, and the bare skin round the eyes blue. The top of the head and the back of the neck were greyish blue, and the sides of the latter part reflected metallic tints of green and purple on either side of the broad patches of creamy-white that partly encircled the neck. This band, or "ring", consisted of fourteen feathers on either side and presented a conspicuous mark that is not to be seen on any other kind of Dove. The throat was a brownish-purple fading into light greyish-blue on the breast and sides; the back was bluish-grey tinged with brown at the upper part and a light greyish-blue below.

The wings are large for the size of the bird, and are moved by relatively enormous muscles, so that the flight is extremely powerful and capable of being sustained for a considerable length of time: the measurement across the extended pinions is about two feet four inches from tip to tip of the flight feathers. The wing-coverts, lesser and greater, are dark bluish-grey, but the first four or five of them on either side are white and form a spot that is more discernible when the birds are flying than when at rest. The primaries are greyish-black, with a narrow white margin on the outer aspect of each; the tertiaries are a dark bluish-grey, and the tail, which is long and broad, consists, when perfect, of twelve feathers slightly rounded at the tips; the central pair are bluish-grey with darker ends, and the remainder are of a duller shade at the base, lighter in the middle, changing into black at the extremities. The under surface of the tail is greyish-black, traversed about the centre by a band of bluish-grey. The legs and feet are purplish-red and the nails dark brown.

Although there are instances recorded of these birds becoming quite tame and familiar with their owners, even to the extent of eating from the hand and alighting on the shoulder of the person who fed them, neither the pair to which I have been referring, nor others of the same species that I subsequently had were ever even moderately tame, though possibly they might

have grown so had I paid them more attention, for, if the truth must be told, after having actually kept them and carefully observed their habits, my partiality for the Ring Dove decreased, until at last I was glad to give them all away.

The Cushat, Woodquest, Ringdove, or Wood Pigeon, as the bird is indifferently named, feeds principally when roaming at will through its native woods on beech-mast, acorns, and any seeds it can find lying about, and it is only in seasons of dearth that it does harm to the farmer's crops by levying a light toll that might well be granted the birds in consideration of the good they do at other seasons.

Occasionally they will build in gardens, even close to a house, but only when the experience of generations has taught them that they will not be molested. In captivity, however, they will seldom breed, or even pair, and although a single male will occasionally form an alliance with a female of one of the domestic varieties of Pigeon, the union is invariably unfruitful; one or two instances to the contrary given, circumstantially, by continental authorities are explainable by the fact of the supposed "White Pigeon" being an albino specimen of the Ringdove.

In Paris these birds have taken up their abode among the trees in the public gardens, as they have in other cities and in our own St. James's Park, where a few summers ago I counted thirty head of them, some quite

young, walking about with the utmost unconcern on the grass or on the footpath; one of them, indeed, was so unconcerned I had to push it out of my way with my foot.

I am unable to positively assert as the result of personal observation that these Doves divide the task of incubation and that of feeding the young, but judging from the habits, in both respects, of all the other members of the Columbine Family I should say they do, and that Mr. Morris was absolutely correct when he asserted that such was the case, in opposition to, or contradiction of, someone who denied the fact.

At first the young Ringdoves are covered with a pale primrose coloured fluff or down, and have their eyes closed, the eye-ball being covered by a skin or film that falls off in the course of a few days. When full grown they bear a general resemblance to their parents, but are duller in colour and lack the iridescent tints that so marvellously add to the decoration of the latter: they are fully grown when three months old and are then much esteemed as delicacies for the table.

Reverting to the dietary of these birds, I am able to affirm that they, at least occasionally, eat snails, for I have seen the molluscs (and not very small ones either) taken from the crop of some of these birds that had been shot in the autumn; but I have no knowledge that they "occasionally partake of a diet of worms" as Mr. Morris declared they are in the habit of doing.

I find, on reference to the Reports of the London Zoological Society, that the Ringdove has bred in their gardens, but the place in which the birds were confined is of large extent and contains trees, on one of which the nest was built, and it would, I fancy, be quite hopeless to expect them to nest in any ordinary garden aviary.

On the whole the Ringdove is a much nicer bird when flying about at liberty in its native plantations and woods than when confined, and for the reasons indicated in the foregoing paragraphs, I cannot recommend any amateur to try to domesticate it.

A word of protest against the practice of giving the accepted name of this species, "Ringdove," to the semi-reclaimed Barbary Turtle, may fitly close an article on the bird whose scientific designation is *Columba palumbus*.

CHAPTER LII.

The Triangular-spotted Pigeon.

THIS is a large handsome species with which, however, I have not had a great deal to do, but what I have seen of it has impressed me favourably, and I should not be sorry were an opportunity of renewing our acquaintance to present itself.

It is a native of Western Africa and sufficiently common there, but it is not very frequently imported. The specimen of the species that I had in my possession some few years ago was a male; his general colour was dark greyish-blue, deeper on the upper than on the lower surface of the body, and on the sides he had a number of small white spots of the shape that has given to him his usual English name.

In size he equalled a Homer and somewhat resembled it in shape; his wings were strongly developed and no doubt he was naturally a strong flyer, but one of the pinions had been injured in some way and my bird could not rise from the ground.

I never heard him "coo," but he used to give

utterance to a series of little peevish grunts when anyone approached him, and at the same time he would try to strike the intruder with his sound wing.

Altogether he bore a greater resemblance in voice and manners to the members of the genus *Columba* than he did to the Turtles, and at the "Zoo" he is considered to be the Ethiopian representative of the former.

I have not heard of any instance of the bird being bred in this country, but see no reason why it should not, as it feeds on corn and seed like ordinary Pigeons, but evinces a marked preference for the small round yellow maize, of which it will consume a very appreciable quantity in 24 hours; so that it is not at all difficult to comprehend the enmity of the Guinean agriculturist, which has led to a considerable diminution of the bird's numbers in its native land.

I think it also probable that the Triangular-spotted Pigeon will partake of fruit as well as corn, for, like the frugivorous section of its congeners, it develops a pair of protuberances on its upper mandible during the breeding season.

The scientific name is *Columba guinea*.

CHAPTER LIII.

The Cape Dove.

THIS pretty and diminutive species is, notwithstanding its English name, found on the Eastern and Western coasts of Africa as well as in the Cape Colony, specimens having been brought from Djedda in Arabia as well as from Namaqualand and all intermediate parts to Table Bay.

In size it about equals an English Skylark, though its long tail and slim body make it look larger. It is one of the prettiest and most attractive of the smaller Doves; that is to say, the female is, for the male is decidedly disfigured by the black mask that covers his head and face. The little hen's dress, however, is simply perfection, combining as it does in small compass so many delicate shades of grey, and at the same time she is quite free from the black face-marks that distinguish the cock and utterly spoil his appearance; which is a pity, for he is a very charming little fellow, and is devotedly attached to his spouse.

How these miniature Doves conduct themselves in

their native country I cannot pretend to say, for I have never been there, but in an aviary in our own island, nothing could be better behaved than they are. Not that the Cape Dove cannot hold its own, in a general way, for it mostly can; but, as far as I have been able to determine it never interferes either with other Doves or with the members of its own particular family circle, although the latter may be an extended one.

These birds appear to pair for life, and are devotedly attached to each other, spending much of their time in mutual feeding and endearments.

The nest, at least in an aviary, is a very slight affair indeed, consisting of a few sprays of heather or tufts of grass loosely piled together on any convenient spot, such as the deserted nest of one of the larger kinds of Doves, an agglomeration of sticks laid by the owner among the boughs of a "Christmas-tree," on a flat palm-like branch, or on the lid of a fruit or other basket, the preference being usually given to the last-named situation, probably as affording a surer foundation for the nest than any of the other natural or artificial arrangements of twigs, &c., already mentioned.

As happens with most of the members of the family, the Cape Dove, also known by the names of Masked and Harlequin Dove, lays two white eggs about the size of those of a Lark, but rounder, and the young are, usually, male and female, which mate together when adult, and pass the remainder of their lives in

close companionship, without any degeneration taking place among the offspring in consequence of in-breeding.

In our changeable climate, the nesting plans of this little Dove are not altogether a success, at least not after a certain point, for at first they appear to be carried on smoothly enough, but just at the moment when success seems to be about to crown the efforts of the parents, misfortune steps to the front and failure and disappointment ensue.

The tiny couples pair, build their inartistic nest, lay their two eggs, upon which they each take a turn with praiseworthy assiduity after the manner of their race, and when the young are hatched, which occurs on or about the seventeenth day of incubation, attend to them with laudable care and attention, and all goes on as merrily as the proverbial marriage ball. Well fed, well nursed, and, generally speaking, well looked after, the young ones thrive apace, and by and by begin to sprout their feathers. Then comes the crucial time, not only for the expectant aviarist, but for the birds themselves, for the old as well as for the young.

As long as the latter are quite little and helpless, featherless and blind, the devotion of the parents to them is exemplarily, and they brood them continuously; but as soon as they get big enough to wriggle about on their natal platform, and to exchange their baby covering of yellowish down for quills that look like bristles, they either tumble off the flat nest, and are

killed by the fall, or die from cold before their misfortune has been discovered; or, if they escape such a calamity and live to reach the age when the parental instinct warns the old birds to cease brooding them at night, they succumb to the chilling effects of the night air on the very first occasion of their being left to sleep alone, and it is only during exceptionally warm weather that they are fully reared, that is to say, when located out of doors in this country.

Should any person feel impelled to inquire, Why in such a case has it never been attempted to breed them in the house? I can only reply that possibly it might be done, though, as far as my experience with them goes, both personally and by report from trustworthy sources, the Harlequin Dove has not made the slightest attempt to nest when confined in a cage even of considerable dimensions indoors, but as soon as they are released and restored to comparative liberty in a garden aviary they at once commence to build.

It may be that in a well-appointed place where the temperature necessary for the well-being of the young ones could be maintained by means of hot water pipes, or hot air flues, there would be no difficulty in rearing them to maturity, but there are few amateurs so fortunately situated in this respect and the birds have to take their chance without the aid of artificial warmth.

Once they are acclimatized the Masked Doves may be wintered out of doors in a well-sheltered aviary, it

is said; but the better plan, I think, is to take them in by the middle of October, returning them to their fair weather quarters in May; for although they might be able to resist a certain amount of dry cold, damp soon overpowers them, and if they do not die at once, they are liable to contract arthritic rheumatism, and become so crippled as to be unable to fly; or else their toes get contracted and they cannot walk or even stand without evidently suffering acute pain: therefore, in the interests of humanity, it is well not to expose the poor little things to the risk of catching such a terrible complaint.

The young Cape Doves differ considerably in appearance from their parents, and are more or less speckled and spotted, but when about six months old they assume the adult plumage and are indistinguishable from their elders.

In the matter of diet, they are easily accommodated, their sole food consisting of Canary-seed and white millet, on which they will do very well; they are fond, however, of pottering about in short grass, where I have repeatedly seen them picking up small insects, for in common with most Doves and Pigeons they are not strictly vegetarian in their habits, but devour a good many flies and grubs, and especially small snails, which last they may, possibly, mistake for stones, as these are swallowed whole.

I fancy these miniature Doves might in a suitable

situation be readily taught to go out and return, particularly if the experiment of leaving their door open were first tried when they had young ones nearly ready to fly and not liable to suffer from an absence of an hour or so on the part of the old birds.

One of my Harlequin hens once got out of the aviary by darting over my head as I was going in to feed them and immediately winged her way to some adjoining tall trees, in which, it being evening at the time, she passed the night, and next morning I found her sitting on the wire roof of her abode conversing with her mate through the bars.

I soon caught and restored her to his society, but must say that he appeared to be considerably ruffled in temper for he began to call out "Hoo hoo" in an angry tone, and chased her about the place in a manner I had never seen in his case before.

Her flight was really a very pretty spectacle, for her short rounded wings and long tail, which latter was spread out fanwise to its full extent, caused her to progress through the air with an undulating motion that was extremely graceful, so that I felt almost reconciled to losing her for the sake of the pleasure of watching her as she flitted across the garden to the poplars, on which she ultimately alighted; and there she received no very cordial welcome from the Sparrows which were the usual tenants, and which seemed, to judge by the uproar they made, to be greatly annoyed at her intrusion.

The evening was far advanced at the time, as it happened, when the little thing made her escape, and darkness soon put an end to the undignified scolding and unneighbourly conduct of the Sparrows, which, however, I expect was renewed at day-break or before it next morning; and this would account for the return of the truant to her former domicile as well as to the mate she had left behind her, for no doubt the Sparrows resented her coming among them and drove her away from the vicinity of their valuable nests.

It is almost superfluous to observe that these small and extremely defenceless birds had better be kept in an aviary by themselves, or at least in a compartment of one occupied by no tenants of greater size, or armed with more formidable beak and claws, especially if at all combatively inclined; but a dozen or two of them will agree together perfectly well, or they may be lodged with some of the smaller kinds of foreign birds, such as Waxbills, that are in general favour with amateurs.

This reminds me that I once was witness of a rather comical incident, when a pair of Harlequin Doves were utterly routed and put to flight by no less formidable an antagonist than an impudent little cock Zebrafinch. The pair of Doves had been sunning themselves for some time in the outside or flight portion of the aviary, and having had a good "air bath" wanted to go inside in order to have something to eat, and one

of them, the hen, flew up on the landing-board that led into the "dining-room," or "refectory" of the establishment, but the Zebrafinch barred the way and the Dove was afraid to venture, whereupon her mate, seeing her predicament, bravely hastened to her assistance. Pushing past his partner with a little "hoo" that evidently meant, "let me try," he confronted the valiant defender of the pass, but was resolutely resisted by the tiny Finch, who immediately sounded his "penny-trumpet" and showed such a determined front that the Dove thought discretion would be the better part of valour and at once retired from the contest, leaving the audacious little Australian in possession of the field; so that I was obliged to intervene and dislodge him before the Doves were able to have their dinner.

Two or three, occasionally four, broods may be looked for during the season, and no doubt all the young might be reared if provision were made for replacing the parental heat as soon as instinct had taught the old birds that their progeny should be left to shift for themselves at night. But unless this can be done, probably not one of all the baby Doves will live to reach maturity, unless, as I have said, the weather happen to be exceptionally fine.

A lady aviarist of my acquaintance residing in Hampshire was successful in fully rearing some of these Doves during the summer of 1887, but only after

having had the mortification of losing a number of chicks exactly at the moment when success appeared certain; however, as aviarists are mostly thankful for very small mercies, her last good fortune quite reconciled her to all the preceding losses and disappointments.

The note of the Cape Dove is rather peculiar, resembling the syllable "hoo" or "heugh" frequently repeated, rather than the well-known cooing of so many other members of the family. The intonation, however, varies a good deal according to the temper the bird is in at the time of calling, as well as to the season of the year.

The female I have found to be a very quiet, silent little thing, and have never heard her give utterance to anything more than a little grunt; but the young ones hiss from a very early age, if in a scarcely audible tone, and lift up their ridiculous-looking apologies for wings with as much assurance as if they were as big and strong as a Goura.

I have occasionally seen two males pretend to quarrel with each other, but it was not an exciting contest to witness, and, as a rule, subsided after a second or two, the rivals betaking themselves off in different directions, apparently well satisfied with the result of the duel.

The scientific name of the Cape Dove is *Œna capensis*.

CHAPTER LIV.

The Barred or Zebra Dove.

THIS is another charming species that has done fairly well in my possession, although it has not bred in the aviary in which I had placed it, very comfortably, too, as I imagined. Other amateurs, however, have been more fortunate in this respect, and have had individuals that nested and fully reared their young, and perhaps if I had given mine a more extended trial I might have been equally successful, but my Barred Doves, like many more of my birds, had to make room for fresh arrivals. I did not therefore have an opportunity of fully testing their capabilities in the matter of nesting; though I suspect that the Doves I had were all males, for they nested, that is built nests, but I never found any eggs, nor could I detect the slightest difference of marking on the plumage.

The Barred, Zebra, or Striated Dove is larger than the Harlequin, but his tail is much shorter than that of the latter species, so that although really of stouter build he looks less than the latter, but tested by weight the

Harlequin is only about half that of the Barred Dove. As regards its temper the species now under consideration does not quite come up to the standard of perfection to which the Cape Dove has attained, but as the former is a native of India that is not so very surprising, for I have always found that the African inmates of my aviary were more amiable and better natured than those that hailed from "the gorgeous East", and infinitely more peaceful than our English birds, at least with very few exceptions among the latter, the Ringdove for instance, as I have already shown.

If the Barred Dove is less gentle than its Masked congener, it is also more delicate, for although I believe some amateurs have successfully wintered it out of doors, I was quite unable to do so, and had to bring mine in in October, which, as I now recollect, was the reason why I had to send them away, not having room to dispose of them in the house.

They seemed to feel the cold very acutely, and looked so thoroughly miserable in the garden aviary that I had no alternative, but had to take them out of it at once, for although they were only exposed to the sudden cold for a day or two they appeared quite benumbed by it, and I do not think they would have survived a much more protracted exposure to the inclemency of the commencing winter. What then must have been their sufferings and ultimate fate had I steeled my heart against them and left them out to take their

chance against the wind, and rain, and frost, not to speak of the fog of November and the following months to the end of March, which last I feel certain they would never have reached alive?

The favourite food of the Barred Doves is white millet, so called, but really sorghum, and Canary-seed, but they will also eat hemp, though I do not think it

ZEBRA OR STRIATED DOVE.

agrees with them, being too heating, and should not be allowed, except perhaps a little in the winter by way of stimulant.

Spray millet is good and wholesome by way of change, but my Doves did not appear to care very much for it. I have seen them try to swallow some of the small yellow maize but not very successfully, and I

am afraid there might be a little difficulty in digesting it, unless, indeed, it had been previously boiled, or softened by soaking in warm water. Indian dari some of them appear to relish, but it is an acquired taste; however, if they do take it, it is very good feeding for them.

Green stuff of all kinds they are extremely fond of, but I think they prefer groundsel, especially when it is in full flower, when they greedily pick off and devour the buds. Lettuce seems also to be liked, but it has a tendency to make them drowsy, especially if they eat the stalks.

With regard to small worms, snails, and insects of all kinds, they will take as many of them as they find, and in their wild state, I imagine, consume a large amount of animal food. Ants' eggs, supplied to them as bought, seem to be thoroughly enjoyed, and they will pick up the larvæ and pupæ of the common flesh-fly (blue-bottle) as greedily as they will their favourite millet, or indeed with even greater gusto.

Very likely I did not allow mine a sufficiency of insect food and that in consequence they did not lay: I would advise a liberal supply. If insects could not be obtained, probably a little lean meat, shredded or chopped up finely, might have an equally beneficial effect; it is recommended by a French naturalist and aviculturist, M. Rousse.

The scientific name of the Barred or Zebra Dove is *Geopelia striata*.

CHAPTER LV.

The Turtle Dove.

ALTHOUGH long accepted as the personification of all that is sweetest and most charming in Nature, as well as the emblem of lovers in the "spooniest" stage of their existence, the Turtle Dove, or Turtledove, is nevertheless not by any means the paragon of perfection it has been called by the poets of all ages and climes, but a very fallible creature indeed.

My own experience with it is far from favourable, and yet I feel bound to admit that the bird is not without its good points. In confinement, in a cage, it is very nice, becomes very tame, and has rather an agreeable voice; but turn it loose into an aviary of any size, and it will behave in even a more idiotic manner than its relative the Ringdove, than which it will turn out wilder and more unmanageable: at least such is my experience.

It is a pity this should be so, for the Turtle Dove is a pretty creature, that is to say, as far as its personal appearance goes; but "handsome is that handsome

does" is a proverb I am not prepared to dispute in this connection.

The bird now under consideration is not much more than half the size of the Wood Pigeon, it reaches our shores in the spring, nests and rears its young ones in our midst, and then takes its departure, prudent emigrant that it is, to warmer climes on the very first indication of the approach of our inclement winter. As soon as the first leaves begin to assume the sere and yellow tints of autumn this Dove commences to get ready for its journey, and long before the last remnant of clothing has dropped from the woodland, is warmly ensconced in Egypt, Libya, Nubia, or even in Italy and Spain.

In confinement the Turtle Dove is very impatient of cold, and about November gets so benumbed and wretched-looking that it has to be, or should be, taken into the house, as I always did with those of which I had possession.

As in the case of the Wood Pigeon, so in that of the Turtle Dove, ever since reading my Bechstein "in days gone by," I had longed to possess a pair, but many obstacles intervened to prevent the realisation of my desire. Everything, however, it is said, will come to him who waits, and at last I noticed an advertisement in that most useful journal, *The Bazaar, Exchange and Mart*, and put myself in communication with a person who wished to dispose of one of the birds in question.

In the course of a few days after writing, I received by rail a box, not much larger than a cigar-box, which, had it not been labelled "Live Bird, with care," I never should have imagined to have held a living creature. A dozen or so of gimlet-holes had been bored

TURTLE DOVES.

round the sides of the box and admitted a limited amount of air and light into its interior for the use of the prisoner, which I scarcely expected to see come out of it alive. The box, or I should say its cover, was fastened down with rather long nails, so that I had a little difficulty in opening it, but at length I succeeded

and shall not soon forget the spectacle that presented itself to my sight.

The poor Turtle Dove was certainly alive, but every morsel of skin had been rubbed off the top of its head, the lid of the little box was a mass of blood, and the box itself nearly half-filled with feathers! I took the unhappy captive out, and it did not move, for its eyes were sealed up with clotted blood that had flowed from the injured scalp: I got some warm water, bathed the poor eyes and the bird opened them, feebly, looked stupidly round it, as well it might, poor creature! and shut them again, with an inspiration that sounded uncommonly like a sigh.

I loosened my hold of the bird and it made an immediate dash at the window, which it struck with such force that it fell, apparently lifeless, to the ground. I picked it up and found that it was only stunned. I placed it in a cage and it presently began to knock itself about so frantically, perhaps from the pain of its bruised head, that I felt tempted to wring its neck in order to put it out of its misery; but I concluded to wait, covered over the cage, and went away.

The next morning, the poor Turtle Dove's head presented a sorry sight; the wound on it was dry and black-looking, as if the skull had been seared with a hot iron, but the wretched creature had eaten and drunk and was evidently recovering. After a few days, a crust peeled off the top of its head and I saw that

the skin was partially united, although, of course, no feathers would, or could, ever grow on it again, for the poor thing had literally scalped itself.

After that I let the bird out into a small conservatory, where it seemed to get on very well, for it could hide behind the flower pots when anyone went near, and it soon regained its health and vigour, but was so horribly disfigured that I could not bear to see it and so one day I took it across to the wood on the opposite side of the common and let it fly away among the trees, which it did with right good will, to my great satisfaction, and that was the last I ever saw of it, poor maimed creature!

I may add that I had agreed to give the former owner half-a-crown for the bird, if, on receipt of it, I was able to approve of its condition and appearance; but when I sent him the blood-stained lid of the box in which he had enclosed the Dove and explained that owing to his careless packing the poor creature was irreparably spoilt, he replied that I might keep and do what I liked with it, as he would not have it back.

It will not, I fancy, be amiss to add here, that in sending to any distance a bird that has a habit of springing up from the ground, such as a Pheasant, Quail, Dove, or Pigeon of any variety, the lid of the box in which it is placed should always be padded on the inside with some soft material. I generally use a couple of newspapers for this purpose and

they answer very well when folded several times and tacked loosely round the inner edges of the lid so that they bulge down a little in the centre. Then, when the bird bumps up its head it is not hurt as it would be if it struck against the bare hard wood. A perch, too, should always be provided in the box for such birds as use one, and the food, instead of being scattered on the floor where it soon becomes defiled by the prisoner's excrement, should be confined in one corner by a little piece of board a couple of inches high so as to give room for a supply sufficient to last through the journey and a little to spare. Some soaked bread similarly fastened in the opposite corner will serve in lieu of water, which cannot be conveniently put in.

Between two opposite corners of the box a round or square hole should be made large enough to admit a sufficiency of both light and air, and this hole should be protected by means of a piece of perforated zinc nailed or screwed over it on the inside. In a box thus fitted a bird may be sent quite safely even for a long distance; it will travel comfortably and arrive without a ruffled feather.

To resume: some months after the experience I have related, a man who kept a bird-shop in my then neighbourhood, called on me with a couple of extremely nice-looking Turtle Doves in an old Parrot-cage. He assured me that they were perfectly tame and would

feed from the hand of the person who had brought them up from the nest.

They certainly seemed to be as described, for they allowed me to stroke them and even take them in my hand without evincing the least fear, or showing any sense of annoyance; but as to eating some corn I offered them, "No, thank you", they positively declined—but perhaps they were not hungry.

I inquired the price, and on being told that I might become their owner for the ridiculously small sum of four shillings sterling, I gave the man the amount and at once transferred the birds to another and more roomy cage, in which also they seemed to be quiet and perfectly at home.

Had I left them there, all would, probably, have been well, but I had a number of other Doves and Pigeons in one of my aviaries in the garden, and concluding that the Turtles would look very well among them and form a pleasing combination with their scarcely more brilliantly plumaged relations from foreign parts, I turned them out one fine morning, about a week after I had obtained them from the dealer.

I cannot determine if it was the smell of the fresh air and of the flowers in the garden, or the sight of the other Doves or of the plants in the aviary itself that drove them wild, but my sedate pair of hand-reared Turtles lost their heads at once on regaining comparative freedom and as soon as they were released

from the cage, dashed furiously about, just as the Wood Pigeons had done, or, I should rather say, a great deal more wildly, and after banging their heads against the wires until they were covered with blood, fell exhausted on the grass, where they lay panting for a few minutes, and then started off again on their mad career.

Not knowing what to do, or how to stop the silly birds from injuring themselves, I turned away and left them alone, hoping they would settle down when they found that there was nobody looking at them, but later on I found that they must have been carrying on their foolish game all day, for their heads were in almost as sad a plight as was that of the first of their race I ever had when I released him from his travelling-box: so I went into the aviary, net in hand, and having caught the pair of silly Doves, transferred them once more to their cage, where after an interval of a week or so their heads began to look better and indications of a renewed crop of feathers were plainly to be seen in place of those that had been rubbed or knocked off against the wire roof of the aviary.

What to do with the birds I scarcely knew; I did not want to keep them in the house, nor did I feel inclined to try them in the grassed and planted aviary any more, so after some deliberation I put them along with the Wood Pigeons and the Parrakeets, where I was glad to find that they behaved themselves a little

better than they had done in the first quarters where I had placed them.

I soon saw, however, that the male bird had injured one of his wings so that he could scarcely fly, which in one sense was rather an advantage, as it kept him from knocking himself about, but the hen remained very wild. After a time they both got more reconciled to their life out of doors and their heads got quite well, but the wing of the cock did not: on the contrary, it became worse and evidently gave the bird pain for he let it droop and frequently pecked at the swollen joint.

Whether the accident made him ill-tempered or not, I cannot say, but he became very disagreeable to his mate, and pecked furiously at the foolish big Ringdoves whenever they went near him, but he would scuttle away in a great hurry from all the Parrakeets except the good-natured Cockateels, which he did not appear to be afraid of.

I left the Turtle Doves out all that summer and the hen recovered completely, but the cock did not improve; and finding in November that the pair of them seemed to feel the cold severely, I caught them and caged them indoors again.

I do not now remember what became of them, though I have an idea that I gave them away to someone, but I am not sure—I know neither of them died while with me.

The above little experience reminds me how superior very often are the pleasures of anticipation to those of actual fruition. I had longed, I was about to say from time immemorial, but at all events for a long while, to own a pair of Turtle Doves, and lo, when my long-cherished desire was, after much waiting, gratified, I was only too glad to get rid of my prize.

I may have been unfortunate in my experience, no doubt: in all probability I was, for Mr. Morris and other writers give numerous instances of the great tameness, docility, amiability and general desirableness of these birds. Well, be that as it may, for my part I have lost all wish to try them again, out of doors at any rate, and although there is no telling what may happen, I do not expect that I shall ever possess any Turtle Doves again.

Nevertheless the bird is a nice bird, a very nice-looking bird, and is a trifle bigger than the Barbary Turtle, so often but so erroneously described as the "Ringdove." The male Turtle Dove is about a foot in length, of slender shape and weighs about six ounces when in good condition. His legs and toes are bright red, and his claws (nails) blackish brown. His beak is grey, but the tip of the upper mandible is of a brownish yellow colour, and very hard, while the inside of both upper and lower mandibles is red.

He belongs to a numerous sub-family the members of which all bear a general likeness to each other, that

is in so far as they are all of slender build, have small heads and long powerful wings well adapted for strong and swift flight: the feet are well adapted for the ground, if not as robust as those of the Pigeons proper, and their plumage, in general, has more or less of a ruddy tinge. The back of the neck is encircled by a narrow band of black colour for the most part, but occasionally, as in the present instance, spotted, dashed or fringed with white.

Hybrids are not uncommon between the different species that go to form the group, and the cross-bred birds proceeding from the union of the Turtle Dove with the Barbary Turtle are said by Bechstein to be fruitful. I have, however, no personal experience on this point, but judging from analogy, am inclined to doubt the correctness of the report.

The plumage of the Turtle Dove is rusty-brown on the upper surface of the body, but the feathers have grey margins and black and cinereous spots in the centre. The crown of the head and the back of the neck are greyish-blue, and across the latter are placed four black stripes with silvery edges. The throat and the upper part of the breast are red of a vinous tinge. The shoulders are black, but each feather has a rusty margin which gives a mottled appearance to this part. The flights are reddish cinereous grey.

The bird, indeed, is one that it is far from easy to describe, and in different specimens there is by no

means uniformity in the disposition and arrangement of the colours, some individuals displaying far more brilliant tints than others, the duller plumaged birds being, probably, young males or females, which last are always a trifle less showy than their mates.

The seeds of trees, such as the pine, fir, larch, beech, birch and alder, are greedily devoured by the Turtle Dove, which will also pick up those of the red poppy, the milk or sow-thistle and many others, as well as snails and beetles, so that it is of much benefit to the agriculturist and rids him of many a fruitful crop of pernicious weeds, while the damage done to flax, rape, peas and wheat is quite considerable.

These birds drink regularly about eleven o'clock in the forenoon, and again towards evening, evincing a decided preference for spring water, to obtain which they will often travel a distance of more than a mile.

Nesting commences directly after their arrival, and it is at least doubtful if the birds are mated when they come over in April, or at latest in May. Under favourable conditions they have two or three broods during the season, which lasts until August. The nest, a slight affair, is constructed with twigs by both birds on a flat bough covered with dense foliage and at a varying height from the ground. Male and female share the task of incubation and of feeding the young.

The Turtle Dove will, it is said, live for fourteen or

more years in confinement, and is much more frequently kept in Germany than it is in this country.

In the Eighth Edition of the "List of Vertebrated Animals" of the London Zoological Society, hybrids are recorded as having been produced in 1863 and 1867, between the Common Turtle Dove and the Barbary Turtle. And a pair of the former had a pure-bred young one in 1878 in the same Gardens, but nothing is stated about the fertility or otherwise of the hybrids.

The males, says Morris, arrive before the females and appear to pair for the season only.

The scientific name is *Turtur communis*.

CHAPTER LVI.

The Cambayan Turtle.

THIS is a remarkably fine bird, and one of the most interesting that I have ever kept. It has a noble appearance, too, and is almost as big as the Wood Pigeon. The head is bluish-grey, the back chocolate-brown and the throat and breast greyish-vinous-red; the legs and feet are vermillion.

The male and female are much alike but the latter is somewhat the smaller of the two, and both have the characteristic black band on the back of the lower third of the neck that is common to the whole of the Turtle sub-family.

The first pair of these birds that I had were given to me, and not knowing anything about them, except that they were said to be natives of some part of Africa, I concluded, naturally enough, that they were delicate and would require to be kept very warm indoors, so I put them in the largest cage I had at my disposal, and there they moped all day, sitting with their heads retracted into their breast, closed eyes and

ruffled feathers, except when they were eating or fighting, which they did pretty frequently, so that in spite of their handsome appearance they were presently voted uninteresting if not, indeed, a nuisance, and got rid of at the first opportunity.

As it afterwards proved, I acted too hastily in the matter, and had plenty of leisure to lament my precipitancy before I got another bird of the same kind. After a while, however, I happened to hear of one that was for disposal and secured it.

It turned out to be a male, and a remarkably fine one, too. It was summer when he arrived, and, notwithstanding my unfortunate experience with the Wood Pigeons and the Turtle Doves, of which I have already related the history, I turned him out at once into the further aviary, which was then occupied, among others, by a pair of Indian Green-winged Pigeons whose adventures I reserve for a subsequent chapter, and, on the whole, he behaved a great deal better than might have been expected.

True, he commenced by attacking the Green cock, and when that poor creature had been utterly discomfited, the Cambayan began to make love to the Green hen, which discouraged his advances by every means in her power, striking at him with her wing whenever he attempted to go near her and uttering the most indignant remonstrances that in my ears sounded like the syllable, "Hoof, hoof", rapidly repeated, but which

doubtless were withering sarcasm, if one could but have understood her language.

In order to restore peace I procured a hen Barbary Turtle and introduced her to the Cambayan as the next best thing I could do for him, seeing that it was impossible to obtain him a mate of his own race. She was only about half his size, it is true, and looked very pale beside the swarthy Moor, but in a short time she built a nest and laid two eggs, on which the huge Cambayan sat during the daytime and the little Laughing Dove at night.

As I had never seen the birds pair, or indeed take the smallest notice of each other, I was naturally anxious to see the result of their most attentive incubation, which I feared would be nothing of more consequence than a couple of addled eggs. In this, however, I was agreeably disappointed, for at the end of seventeen days I caught sight of a little black-looking thing in the nest, and the next day it had a companion, and the two turned out to be the offspring of the badly matched pair, at least badly matched in point of size, for they really were a most affectionate couple.

The young strangers grew apace but were by no means pretty, for their shapeless bodies were covered with dark, almost black down, and their complexions could not be described truthfully as anything but swarthy. When fully grown they resembled their father in appearance, but their mother in point of size, and were, I judged from their manner, cock and hen.

A second brood soon followed, and before these were altogether able to feed themselves, a third, and during the first week of the lives of these last a sad accident took place that widowed the Cambayan and left the callow Dovelets depending on his sole care.

Upon entering the aviary one morning I found the poor mother lying, stiff and cold, with out-spread wings, on the ground below the nest, and a subsequent examination of the remains showed that she had been accidentally choked while in the act of feeding one of the little ones. These were so young I scarcely expected them to live, but their father behaved nobly and finished bringing them up alone.

I afterwards tried to get him another mate, but failed, for of several Barbary Doves that I bought as females, not one was really a hen, and fierce fighting between the birds was the consequence of each mistake.

Two of the hybrids were shown at the Crystal Palace, but as they were the first of the kind that had ever been seen there, they were, of course, ignored by the "judges," who only noticed what they knew. However, someone bought them at the upset price (fifteen shillings, I think) and I subsequently also disposed of the other four, one of which at least, as I subsequently heard, laid a number of eggs that were all barren, thus proving the Doves to be sterile hybrids and not mongrels, which would have been fertile.

Failing in all my attempts to get a hen for the Cam-

bayan and commiserating his loneliness, I one day bought a nice matronly Blue Rock Pigeon in Rye Lane and introduced her to him, when he hailed her advent with every demonstration of satisfaction.

At once the old fellow changed his note "'Tis a pity, so it is!" which since his widowhood, or at least since his last children had grown up, he had been in the habit of indulging in from early dawn till after dusk, for another that resembled the words "Ha! hoo! hoo! ha! hoo! hoo!" repeated a number of times as he pranced about the aviary with fanned tail, bowing head and drooping wings after my Lady Blue.

All his blandishments, however, were of no avail: the Pigeon rejected every advance with scorn, and after an interval of bootless courtship he resumed his interrupted cry of "'Tis a pity, so it is!" which was certainly a very aggravating one when repeated so constantly and in such a mournful key.

Sometimes he diversified it with another that sounded like "You're a stoopid thing, hoo, hoo!" and at last the neighbours complained of the annoyance and I had to send the poor old chap away.

That I am not fanciful in my interpretation of his cry, was proved by a lady asking me one day what sort of Parrot it was in my aviary that was always calling out "What a pity!" and his other expression "You're a stoopid thing!" was equally unmistakable.

But I have anticipated a little. After a time my Lady

Blue, proving herself to be utterly impracticable, for she laid several eggs that were all broken when she fought the Cambayan for trying to take his turn upon them, I sent her away, and then his lamentations became so continual and insupportable that he, too, had to go.

In his new home, which, I was glad to think, was a comfortable one, he mated with a little white Japanese Dove (so-called), by whom he had a numerous progeny, not distinguishable, when grown up, from their half-brothers and sisters, the offspring of his first little wife.

I am sorry to have to record anything bad of that, in so many respects, noble and trustworthy old fellow, my Cambayan Turtle, but the truth must be told though the heavens fall, and it is this. When two or three pairs of hybrids had been hatched to the swarthy Moor and his lily-white spouse, he unaccountably deserted the latter and married one of his own daughters! who built a nest and laid many eggs that all turned out to be barren.

He is yet alive, I have been given to understand, or was quite recently, but has not repented of his reprehensible conduct, being as devoted as ever to the hybrid.

At the Western Aviary in the Zoological Gardens, Regent's Park, the Cambayans have bred as freely as possible, both among themselves and when mated with some allied species, and I may say that upon the whole they are among the nicest birds I have kept, whether as regards personal appearance, docility, quaint lively

ways, curious notes, or extreme hardiness, for although denizens of the Dark Continent they are quite as insensible to the many changes of our inconstant climate as any of our own domesticated Pigeons.

Like these, the Cambayan Turtles are of frugal habits and will eat anything in the shape of seed or corn, although they evince a marked preference for the yellow round maize when they can get it. I have seen my old fellow "tub" as soon as I had broken the ice for him.

The Cambayan Turtle is found as far north as Egypt, where he alights on the Nile when he wants to drink, rising from the water like a duck.

Scientific name, *Turtur senegalensis*.

CHAPTER LVII.

The Japanese Turtle.

IN the last chapter I had occasion to mention this bird, which is merely a white (perhaps an albino) variety of the Common Barbary or Laughing, otherwise Collared Turtle; it is also frequently spoken of as the Java Dove, but is supposed, not without reason, to be of Chinese creation; the children of the Flowery Land being well-known adepts in the Jacobean art of modifying colour in domestic and other animals, witness their white Java Sparrows and Mannikins, which last are also called Bengalis, or Bengalees, so that the rumour which connects these white Doves with the Celestial Empire is probably correct.

Compared with the ordinary members of its species, the Japanese Turtle presents no special peculiarity save its milk-white colour, for in size, shape and voice it exactly resembles its relatives, though it is more delicate, and cannot be safely wintered out of doors in this country.

At one time, not very long ago, these Doves were

rather expensive, but as they breed very freely and always true to colour the price has declined materially, so that they can now be purchased at a slight advance upon that of the ordinary Barbary Doves, and it no longer pays to import them.

The first pair of these birds that I possessed were presented to me by a friend when they were quite young, indeed only just able to feed themselves. This, however, did not keep them from pairing pretty quickly and when the little ones were hatched it was amusing, and pitiable, too, to watch the helplessness of the youthful parents, which had not the remotest notion what to do with the two poor little naked pink things that suddenly made their appearance under their wings in place of the couple of nice smooth white eggs they had brooded so carefully.

Of necessity the young ones died, for we could not feed them, and it never seemed to occur to the inexperienced father and mother that it was their duty to do so; and after their disappearance the little mother became ill and was a long time before she regained her health, even to a certain extent, the strain upon her system had been so great.

There is no doubt that these birds are more delicate than the ordinary variety, but they are also prettier, though the grey Quakerish common Barbary Dove is by no means ill-looking.

Any little flat basket, placed on the floor of the cage

or aviary or on a shelf, will serve for a nest, and a handful of hay or fibre to line it with will be gratefully accepted by the birds.

Paired with one of the ordinary variety, the young that result will be perfectly fruitful and will partake of the characteristics of both parents; consequently they have a faded washed-out appearance that is the reverse of attractive, so that the cross is not one to be recommended. It is curious that the conspicuously darker colour of the Cambayan Dove was able to conquer the pallor of the Chinese, for their mongrel offspring were very little, if at all, lighter than their father.

These White Doves must not be exposed to cold, which soon causes their death from congestion of the liver, and if they are kept in an unheated room during the winter the cage they inhabit should be at least partially covered during the night. The best food is Canary-seed and millet with a little small corn or dari now and then. Coarse grit, salt and plenty of water are indispensable.

The scientific name is *Turtur risorius* var. *albus*.

CHAPTER LVIII.

The Bronze-spotted Dove.

THIS is another very nice bird, about the same size as the last species, but of a stouter or plumper build; it has also a much shorter tail. It is a native of South-western Africa, whence it is often imported in considerable numbers: it is, however, decidedly delicate and no attempt should ever be made to winter it out of doors in this country.

I once tried to acclimatize a pair, but the result was deplorable for the poor Doves and distressing to myself, nor would anything tempt me to repeat the experiment, which was not carried out to the bitter end. They were in a very comfortable aviary, too, but even there the cold seemed quite to paralyse them, and when I caught them in order to bring them into the house, their feet were swollen and felt just like ice.

The Bronze-spotted Dove is a very pretty bird. The top and back part of its head are bluish-grey; the forehead white, and from the angle of the mouth to the eye extends a narrow black line that surmounts

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BRONZE-SPOTTED DOVES.

another white one; the face, throat and breast are brownish-red; the rump is crossed by a band of black and another of reddish-brown; on the shoulders are several spots of greyish-purple shining with metallic reflections, whence the species is named.

There is but little difference in appearance between the sexes, but the spots on the wings of the female are rather smaller than, and not quite as lustrous as, they are in the case of the male.

It was unfortunate that my Spotted Doves should just have commenced to nest as the cold weather set in, for of course that put a stop to the proceedings, and they never recovered fully from the shock they had received.

One of the pair, the female, if I remember rightly, died at the Crystal Palace Bird Show to which I had sent them, and the survivor I gave away to a friend, but it soon died too, whether from the effects of a torpid liver or from grief at the loss of its mate I am not sure, but in all probability both causes had something to do with its demise, for the Bronze-spotted Doves are very affectionate little creatures, and visibly fret when alone.

I found the liver congested in the case of the one that died at the Palace, no doubt owing to the cold.

Scientific name: *Chalcopelia chalcospilos*.

CHAPTER LIX.

The Tambourine Dove.

IN "Birds I have kept in Days gone by" I mentioned having had a pair of Pigeons, or Doves, with chocolate backs and white breasts, to which I gave the name of "White-breasted Pigeons" in consequence of being unable to identify them. I have since learned that their proper designation, in English, is as above, and I have but little to add to what I then said about them.

Subsequent experience, however, has confirmed my former estimate as to their delicacy, as well as to their general desirableness as inmates of the aviary.

I am doubtful if they are the same as the birds described by Russ under the name of Die zweifarbigte Fruchttaube, for I cannot perceive any of the characteristics of the Fruit Pigeons in these little Doves, while the authorities at the London Zoological Gardens place them among the seed-eaters, of which they constitute the genus *Tympanistria*.

I am not aware of their having bred in this country, though, if suitably lodged, I see no reason why they should not do so.

Scientific name: *Tympanistria bicolor*.

WHITE-BREASTED OR TAMBOURINE DOVES.

CHAPTER LX.

The Crested Dove.

THIS, in every sense of the word, is a most delightful bird. It is about the same size as the well-known Barbary Dove, but has the advantage over the latter of possessing a handsome crest, not unlike that of the Cockateel in shape; its general colour is bluish-grey and white, but the wings are decorated with a number of glittering spots and bars of a greenish-purple colour reflecting metallic tints that tend considerably to its adornment.

The tail is long and tipped with white and the bird has a curious habit when alighting on a perch or bough of tilting it up and at the same time spreading it out broadly, fanwise.

The male and female bear a close outward resemblance to each other, but the latter is the smaller of the two and has less of the glittering markings on the wing to which reference has already been made, so that when together the sexes can be distinguished readily enough, but it is more difficult to do so when they are seen apart, which, however, is not often the

case, for they are very affectionate creatures and the pairs are much attached to each other.

These birds were some of the common objects of the Bush when I was in Australia, where we used to call them, why I know not, Ground Thrushes! I was very anxious to have a pair of them for my aviary, but a long time elapsed before I could gratify my wish. At length, however, I procured a pair in exchange for some of my Cambayan hybrids and found that in their case (the Crested Doves') enchantment was not altogether the effect of distance, for the birds were very delightful from every point of view.

Extremely quiet, they did not interfere in the least with the tiniest of their fellow-inmates, but, on the contrary, permitted themselves to be driven away from the seed-pan by birds that were not half their size, so that I congratulated myself immensely on my new acquisition, and thought that if the Doves could only be induced to breed how very delightful it would be.

They had bred freely in other aviaries, I was aware, for I knew of one instance in which sixteen young ones had been obtained from a single pair in one season, by the simple device of transferring their eggs to some Barbary Turtles whose own were, of course, destroyed, and these simple creatures hatched the valuable eggs of the Australians, and brought up the young ones as carefully and tenderly as if they had been their own.

Nor did the Crested hen appear to have suffered from the extra demand on her system owing to the production of such an unusual, not to say unnatural, number of eggs, for when fourteen of these had been taken from her and given to the Barbarians, the aviarist permitted her to incubate the last two and these also were successfully reared by their own parents, making, as I have said, no less than sixteen young Crested Doves from one pair in the course of one summer, and that at a time when they commanded something like thirty shillings a pair in the market. Since then the price of these handsome Doves has fallen considerably, but it is still sufficiently high to make a good breeding pair of them a by no means unprofitable investment for the aviarist.

I was not destined, however, to be as successful with my Crested Doves as the amateur to whom I have referred was with his, for my pair began to moult soon after I had them, and then, just as they had finished and were commencing to place a few sticks in order in a wire basket I had hung up in the aviary in the expectation that they might avail themselves of it, cold weather set in and the attempt to build was abandoned.

As the Doves did not seem to be particularly affected by the cold and frost, I left them where they were and thought, as they were feeding well, that they would take no hurt. One morning, however, I found the hen

huddled up in a corner on the ground, dead, and on examination discovered that her liver was much affected and more than twice its natural size.

Soon afterwards I gave the cock away, but he too died in the spring and was also found to have suffered with his liver as well as his mate, which is curious seeing that in their native country there is often frost, but, of course, it is never of such long continuance as it is with us, nor is there the amount of damp in the Bush from which we suffer during an English winter, and the damp and cold combined it is that proves so disastrous to many otherwise hardy foreign birds.

I have often thought that it is after all decidedly cruel to take exotic birds from their own bright sunny lands and compel them to linger out the remnant of their days amid the varied horrors of what it pleases us to call the British climate.

The result of my first experience with the Crested Dove in this country was unfavourable, no doubt, but as the birds are very desirable from all points of view, I should never be surprised to find myself giving them another trial, for even fifteen shillings a pair (about their present price) would pay well, for they are frugal eaters and, when properly lodged, very free breeders indeed, but I would take care, of course, not to expose another pair out of doors during the winter.

The scientific name of the Australian Crested Dove is *Ocyphaps lophotes*.

CHAPTER LXI.

The Indian Green-winged Pigeon.

THIS gorgeously plumaged bird reminds one, from the brilliancy of its colouration, of one of the Fruit Pigeons, not to say of the Birds of Paradise, but it is nevertheless no less distinct from the latter than it is from the former of those feathered jewels, for it is a very frugal and hardy seed-eater.

Although a native of our Indian Empire it will live quite as well in this country as any of our domestic inmates of the Dovecote, and on the same kind of food, though it displays a preference for yellow maize, which is much too fattening for it to live upon exclusively.

In shape the Green-winged Dove or Pigeon is compact and plump and in size it about equals one of the smaller Tumblers. The plumage is a rich metallic green on the upper surface of the body and a delicate vinous-red on the lower parts; the under-aspect, however, of the tail is black.

The sexes are much alike in colour but the female is decidedly smaller than her mate.

I bought my first pair, as usual, from the late Mr Anton Jamrach, and very nice birds they were, as were almost all I ever obtained from the same source. I was very proud of my beautiful pair of Pigeons and

THE INDIAN GREEN-WINGED PIGEON.

put them into the aviary, where they immediately made themselves at home, strutting about and looking as if they thought that the whole place belonged to them.

As the cock at once began to drive the hen about, bowing and strutting and inflating his crop as he walked along rapidly behind her through the grass, I thought

that before long I might have the pleasure of seeing them begin to build a nest; but alas! I had some Californian Quail in the same enclosure, very delightful creatures and perhaps the tamest birds I ever had, but at the same time the most tyrannical and wicked, beating even the White-eared Conures in this respect, and *they* were bad enough!

I did not, at the time, suspect the Quail of hostile intentions towards my handsome Green-winged Doves, or I should certainly have taken them away, but one morning when I went to feed the birds I saw the cock Pigeon perched high up on a branch, and looking very frightened and miserable, as he had reason to do, too, for he had evidently been in the wars and had lost, or been stripped of pretty well half his feathers. The hen Pigeon was not to be seen anywhere about, but the place was strewn with feathers, which come out of these birds almost at the slightest handling. With a foreboding of evil I entered the aviary, and on searching about presently found the poor hen Dove in a corner dead and greatly disfigured.

My first idea was that a rat had effected an entrance and done the wicked deed: but no, for even as I held the scarcely cold body of the Pigeon in my hand the Quail flew at it, and by the fierce "war-whoop" the cock raised as I drove them away I knew that my "Indian Chief" and his fiery-tempered "Squaw" had been the perpetrators of the deed. Why, it is impos-

sible to say, for nothing could have been more inoffensive than the poor Doves, or, I feel sure, have given less provocation to the Quail.

Well, it was a thousand pities, but there was no use in fretting about what was done, so I paid another visit to Mr. Jamrach with the intention of buying a new mate for the disconsolate widower, but there were no more Green-winged Doves in stock just then at the Depot in East India Dock Road, Poplar, and I had to return home as I had gone—stay, not quite, for I brought some other birds back with me, I feel certain, though I cannot now recollect what they were: however, there was not a Pigeon among them; on that point I have a distinct recollection.

The summer passed away, all too quickly, as it has a trick of doing in this variable climate of ours, and the Quail having been promptly removed from his society, the widower Dove lived quietly by himself in the aviary in company with a pair of Thrushes and some other small and harmless birds, until I received the Cambayan, of whom mention has been made, and then peace forsook the semi-sylvan scene, and spreading her wings flew rapidly away to that Empyrean she must then have regretted having left for earth; and had I not put the Green-wing elsewhere he would certainly have been killed by the desperate Moor.

For a long time I tried to obtain another Green-winged hen Pigeon, but in vain: cocks there were in

the market, but not a female, for love or money, so at last I parted with the male, who never made the slightest advance towards any other bird, whether nearly allied to himself or not.

The scientific name of the Indian Green-winged Dove is *Chalcophaps indica*.

I was under the impression that these Doves had bred somewhere, probably in the Western Aviary at the "Zoo", but on referring to the Society's "List" I find no notice of the fact recorded there, and conclude that I was mistaken.

CHAPTER LXII.

The Australian Green-winged Dove.

THIS bird bears a striking general resemblance to the last, but in spite of the fact that the authorities in the Regent's Park call it the "Little Green-winged Dove", it is considerably larger than its Indian congener, and can be readily distinguished from the latter by its white forehead and the larger and broader eye-streak of the same colour, as well as by the greater brilliancy of the metallic reflections on its back and wings.

The female of this species I do not happen ever to have met with, but in all probability the same difference exists between her and her mate as obtains between the two sexes in the Indian species.

At the time when I was looking out for a mate for my male Green-wing a correspondent very obligingly offered me one of the Australian Green-winged Pigeons, which I accepted with pleasure, thinking that perhaps it might be a female. However, as soon as it arrived

and the two birds were introduced to each other, I saw that it was not, but a male, and a fine one, too.

As the new-comer was the bigger and evidently the stronger of the two, the Indian soon got the worst of the combat which, I must say, he provoked; but after the battle, which was short, sharp and decisive, the birds agreed to divide the aviary between them, each occupying one half without trespassing upon the territory of his rival, except for a few minutes at feeding-time, when a few grunts and angry flaps of the wing were generally exchanged.

After a time I had had enough of the Green-winged Pigeons' society, and sent them away, Australian and Indian, nor have I had any of either species since.

I am surprised these birds are not more frequently imported, and consequently kept in aviaries, than they are, for they are perfectly hardy, and did not appear to suffer the slightest inconvenience from the weather, even during the exceptionally severe winter of 1888-9, which they passed in one of my out-door aviaries.

Russ, in his "Handbook for Bird-fanciers," states that some Indian Green-winged Pigeons produced young ones in his aviary, and he gives them a good character for general amiability; he also lauds their personal beauty, and considers them to be as hardy as they are gentle and uninterfering. He adds that the young resemble their parents from the first but their plumage is duller, and the metallic reflections on it not so apparent

as in the case of their elders. The Australian Green-wing he merely mentions.

It is quite likely that the two so-called species may, really, stand to each other in the relation of local varieties of one, and that alliances between them would be productive of fruitful mongrels and not of barren hybrids. Should I ever have a couple of each I shall cross-pair them and try the experiment, but in the meantime someone else might have the opportunity, and if so I should be glad to be made acquainted with the result.

The scientific name of the Australian Green-winged Dove is *Chalcophaps chrysochlora*.

This brings me to the end of my labours for the present, but before concluding I may remark that should any aviarist be in doubt as to where to go for provisions for his birds, he cannot do better than apply to Messrs E. and T. Pink, of Staple Street, Borough, S. E. who keep all and everything needed by cage-birds, whether hard or soft-billed.

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