OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

NOTES OF BIRDS,

INCLUDING

AN INQUIRY

Whether or not they are Instinctive.

BY MR. JOHN BLACKWALL.

(Read November 29th, 1822.)

IT is much to be regretted, that the study of ornithology is too frequently confined solely to the perusal of the best authors on the subject, and to the examination and arrangement of preserved specimens, whose faded plumage and distorted forms convey very imperfect ideas of the elegance and symmetry that so eminently distinguish this beautiful and highly interesting part of the creation. To those whom business or inclination leads to reside chiefly in large towns, such are almost the only means of information that offer themselves; but who, that enjoys the opportunity of observing the

free denizens of the fields and woods in their native haunts, would exchange their lively and unrestrained activity, their curious domestic economy, their mysterious migrations, and their wild but delightful melody, for the fixed glassy eye and the mute tongue of the inanimate forms that are crowded together in melancholy groups in the museum. Let me not, however, be misunderstood. I do not mean to insinuate, that those collections of birds that enrich the cabinets of the curious are of small utility; on the contrary, I am willing to allow that their importance is very considerable; but I would anxiously guard against an exclusive attention to the collecting and arranging of specimens, to the neglect of what is much more instructive and valuable: I mean the study of their habits, manners, economy, instincts, and notes. In these important particulars the history of birds is still very defective: the majority of authors, foreign as well as native, having limited themselves to the simple enumeration of specific characteristics and distinctions, and the occasional introduction of a few anecdotes, which from frequent repetition have, in general, lost much of the novelty they once possessed. We must except from this remark, however, the excellent works, in na-

tural history, of our ingenious countryman the late Rev. Gilbert White of Selborne in Hampshire, which abound with new and interesting facts. This diligent observer, whose example in investigating nature cannot be too highly recommended, instead of confining himself to the mere classification of natural objects, ranged the extensive wood, the tangled brake, the solitary sheep-walk, and the treacherous morass, to contemplate the manner of life, dispositions, and peculiar characters, of their feathered inhabitants, in their most sequestered retreats; and his writings bear ample testimony how well his researches were repaid. The subject, however, is still far from being exhausted: knowledge is acquired slowly; and even the most careful and indefatigable inquirers are liable to errors and omissions: much yet remains to be supplied, much to be corrected, before the history of British birds can be pronounced complete.

To the practical ornithologist, who is desirous of promoting and extending his favourite study by the communication of his own personal observations and remarks, an intimate acquaintance with the various notes of the feathered tribes is of such vast importance, that any difficulties he may encounter

in obtaining it, will be more than compensated by the numerous advantages it affords. In many instances it enables him to detect species that might otherwise elude his observation. Thus, the land rail, concealed in the long grass of luxuriant meadows, where it runs with great rapidity, and is sprung with difficulty; the grasshopper warbler, closely embowered in thick hedges and bushy dingles, where it employs every artifice to escape notice; and the sedge warbler, secluded amid the reeds and other aquatic productions of pools and marshes;—are much more frequently heard than seen: the harsh call of the first, the sibilous note of the second, and the hurried song of the last, being repeated through the night, in fine weather, during the breeding season.

It also enables him to identify species with the utmost precision: in some cases, indeed, with much greater certainty than he could by the minutest examination of good specimens. The three species of willow wren, for example, so strongly resemble each other, that even nice observers might have some difficulty in determining them by inspection; and, accordingly, we find that they have been the source of much confusion, perplexity, and error, among writers on ornithology:

as their notes, however, are perfectly distinct, a little attention to them is sufficient to remove every difficulty. In the same manner, the crow may readily be distinguished from the rook, the raven from both, and the males of most species from the females.

The arrival of many of the periodical warblers is frequently first announced by their songs; and the clamorous night-calls of the redwing and fieldfare in the months of October and November, serve to establish the fact, that these birds migrate, and that they perform their journeys in the dark.

But these are not the only advantages to be derived from an acquaintance with the notes of birds. As the feathered tribes communicate their sensations and intentions to one another through the medium of modulated sounds; the proficient, in what, without any impropriety, may be termed their language, can comprehend their various wants and emotions, and can participate in all their little joys and sorrows, hopes and fears: to him, the music of the groves is not a confusion of pleasing tones merely, but the melodious interchange of thought and feeling; which, though very limited and imperfect, still answers many important purposes, and contributes materially to the happiness and

preservation of species. Thus, birds that congregate and that live in society have usually a regular watch stationed in some commanding situation, whose note of alarm is understood by the whole community: of the truth of this observation, fieldfares and rooks furnish familiar and striking instances. The shrill call of the swallow, the harsh scream of the jay, the petulant cries of the various species of titmouse, and the plaintive wailing of the flycatcher, likewise intimate the approach of an enemy. The reiterated cackle of the domestic hen after she has laid, speedily announces the joyful event; her cluck indicates that she has become the mother of a family; by a peculiar call she informs her brood whenever she discovers any thing suitable for food; and her shriek is a warning against impending danger. What is usually called the prating of poultry is expressive of satisfaction and complacency: but it is needless to multiply examples, or to insist further on the many useful purposes to to which a familiarity with the language of birds may be rendered subservient: it will suffice to remark, that this knowledge supplies the means of making fresh discoveries, of correcting numerous errors, and of removing many of those doubts and difficulties

that have arisen from the great similarity of some species, and the peculiarities incidental to age, sex, and a change of food or climate in others, without placing the observer under the painful necessity of destroying life:—a recommendation which will be duly appreciated by every one possessed of a humane disposition and a reflecting mind.

Having endeavoured in these few preliminary observations to point out the great importance of attending to the notes of birds, I shall now proceed to an inquiry into their origin:—an inquiry well calculated toe xercise the skill of the experimentalist, and the ingenuity of the speculative philosopher; though to the generality of mankind it may seem trivial and of little moment.

The only author that I am acquainted with, who has treated this curious subject at any length, is the Honourable Daines Barrington; in an essay entitled "Experiments and Observations on the Singing of Birds," published in the second part of the sixty-third volume of the Transactions of the Royal Society: and as the experiments there detailed appear to be imperfect and unsatisfactory; and the conclusions drawn from them, hasty, unwarranted, and contrary to common experience; and, more especially, as this

author is generally referred to by our cyclopædists,* and as his opinions seem to be finding their way into modern works of respectability, where they are quoted as established facts that do not admit of a doubt ;† it was thought, that an examination of his method of investigation would be useful in exposing its insufficiency, and the consequent looseness of the arguments founded upon it; while the institution of a less exceptionable course of experiments, it was hoped, might dissipate much of the obscurity in which this intricate question is at present involved. In what degree these expectations have been realized remains to be shewn.

Mr. Barrington informs us, that his experiments were principally made with young linnets which were fledged, and nearly able to leave the nest; and the reasons assigned for this selection are, that birds of this species are docile, and possess great powers of imitation, and that the cocks are easily distinguished from the hens at an early period. These nestling linnets were educated under singing birds of various kinds; and it appears, that

* See the Encyclopædia Britannica, Art. Singing; and Rees' Cyclopædia, Art. Song.

† See Bingley's Animal Biography, Vol. II p. 166---7.

instead of the linnet's notes, they learned those of their respective instructors, to which they adhered almost entirely. In some instances, to be sure, the nestlings retained the call of their own species; which, as they were three weeks old when taken from the nest, it is supposed they had learned from their parents; and not unfrequently when they had opportunities of hearing several species, they borrowed from more than one, and their songs became mixed.*

To be certain that nestlings will not have even the calls of their species, Mr. Barrington remarks, that they should be taken when only a few days old. He then proceeds to notice instances of a linnet and a goldfinch taken at this early period, that came under his observation; acknowledging, at the same time, his own inability to rear birds of so tender an age. The first, he states, "belonged to Mr. Matthews, an apothecary at

* The reason given by Mr. Barrington for the steady adherence of birds in a wild state to their own songs, is, that they attend to the instructions of the parent birds only, disregarding the notes of all others. That young birds receive instructions in singing from the old ones, appears to be a notion of great antiquity. Vide Aristot. Histor. Animal. Lib. IV, Cap. IX.---Plinii Histor. Natural. Lib. X, Cap. XXIX. The celebrated Count Buffon seems to have entertained a similar opinion. See his Histoire Naturelle des Oiseaux. Tome cinquième, p. 47. Darwin also, in his Zoonomia. Vol. 1, p. 155, lends it the sanction of his authority.

Kensington, which, from a want of other sounds to imitate, almost articulated the words 'pretty boy,' as well as some other short sentences;" and the owner assured him, that it had neither the note nor call of any bird whatsoever. The goldfinch had acquired the song of the wren, without appearing to have a note or even the call of the goldfinch.

From these experiments and observations, of which I have given a concise, but I trust impartial account, Mr. Barrington was led to conclude, that "notes in birds are no more innate than language is in man, but depend entirely upon the master under which they are bred, as far as their organs will enable them to imitate the sounds which they have frequent opportunities of hearing." I am not aware, however, that he has brought forward a single fact, from which such an inference can be fairly deduced. The main tendency of his researches is merely to prove (what was before perfectly well known) that some birds have very extraordinary powers of imitation, and may be taught, when young, to sing the notes of other species, whistle tunes, or even pronounce a few words. If his remarks on this subject contain any novelty, it is, that birds so educated sometimes remain satisfied with these imitations, never

blending any of their own notes with them; and, indeed, on this solitary circumstance, slight and inconclusive as it is, the entire weight of his arguments is rested. The instances of the goldfinch acquiring the song of the wren, and Mr. Matthews' linnet learning to articulate one or two short sentences, without having even the calls of their species, which this author seems to think so decisive, prove no more than his own experiments; which, as they were made, for the most part, with birds remarkable for their imitative powers, were certainly by no means well adapted to his purpose. As for the goldfinch, Mr. Barrington heard it only once, and then but for a short time; and that no dependance could be placed on any report of the people to whom it belonged, is evident from their supposing that it sang its own notes. These are circumstances that powerfully tend to invalidate almost every thing of importance that has been advanced respecting this bird.

In order to ascertain whether nestlings when taken very young will or will not have the calls and songs of their species, they should be kept in situations where they have no opportunity of learning any sounds that

they may substitute for them; but this, I believe, has never yet been attempted.

I have already asserted, that Mr. Barrington's conclusions are contrary to common experience. I shall now endeavour to establish this charge.

It is well known to most persons who have the care and management of poultry, that ducks, guinea fowls, &c., hatched under the domestic hen, and domestic fowls hatched under turkeys, have the calls and habits peculiar to their species: that this is the case also with pheasants and partridges, brought up under similar circumstances, I have had frequent opportunities of observing. It is a matter of universal notoriety likewise, that all cuckoos of the species canorus, though hatched and reared by birds of various descriptions, have constantly their proper calls.*

* Mr. Barrington will not allow that the well known cry of the cuckoo is a song, because it does not happen to accord with the conditions of his arbitrary definition; though, to the bird, it answers every purpose of a song, as well as the more elaborate effusions of the nightingale and skylark. Mr. Barrington defines a bird's song to be a succession of three or more different notes, which are continued without interruption, during the same interval with a musical bar of four crotchets in an adagio movement, or whilst a pendulum swings four seconds; which necessarily excludes the chaffinch, redstart, hedge warbler, willow wren, and some others, that have always been accounted birds of song, as well as the cuckoo, from any pretensions to the title. Perhaps it would be more natural, and certainly less exclusive, to apply the term song to those notes that are peculiar to the males; yet this defini-

These facts one would suppose were quite sufficient to convince the most prejudiced, that birds do not always acquire the calls and notes of those under which they are bred. But, perhaps, it may be urged, that ducks, guinea fowls, pheasants, and partridges, are probably incapable of learning the calls of domestic fowls; that domestic fowls, in their turn, may be incapable of acquiring the call of the turkey; and that the cuckoo appears to be very poorly qualified for imitating the notes of its foster parents. Still I must contend, that the incapacity of these birds has never been proved; and even if it had, it would afford no explanation of the manner in which they become acquainted with their own respective calls. According to Mr. Barrington's theory they ought to be mute; or, at least, should have such notes only as they have been able to pick up casually; which, of course, would possess little or no resemblance.

From these, and similar observations, I have long been thoroughly convinced myself, that the calls of birds, which seem to be the simplest expressions of their sensations, are

tion would admit the peacock and turkey into the catalogue of singing birds; and the hideous scream of the one, and the ludicrous gobble of the other, are certainly any thing but musical.

natural, not acquired; and in order to determine whether this is the case with their songs also, which are generally much more complex, and, consequently, have the appearance of being more artificial, the following experiments were made.

In the summer of the present year, (1822,) I procured three young green grosbeaks,—a cock and two hens; which, as they did not see till the fourth day after they were taken from the nest, must then have been only two days old.*

These birds were reared by hand, in a house situated in the town of Manchester; where they had no opportunity of hearing the notes of any bird, except, perhaps, the occasional chirping of sparrows: nevertheless, they had all their appropriate calls, and the cock bird had the song peculiar to its species.

It was hoped, at the time, that this experiment would be considered sufficiently decisive; but recollecting that some persons, for the sake of shewing their ingenuity in raising objections, might say that these birds remembered the notes of their parents, which they imitated as soon as they had acquired

* From numerous observations that I have made, it appears that young birds usually begin to see about the sixth day after they are hatched.

the power; and being willing to remove every circumstance on which the most fastidious inquirer could fix a doubt, I placed the eggs of a redbreast in the nest of a chaffinch, and removed the eggs of the chaffinch to that of the redbreast; conceiving, that if I was fortunate in rearing the young, I should by this exchange insure an unexceptionable experiment, the result of which must be deemed perfectly conclusive by all parties. In process of time these eggs were hatched, and I had the satisfaction to find that the young birds had their appropriate chirps.*

When ten days old they were taken from their nests, and were brought up by hand, immediately under my own inspection; especial care being taken to remove them to a distance from whatever was likely to influence their notes. At this period, an unfortunate circumstance, which it is needless to relate, destroyed all these birds, except two,—a fine cock redbreast, and a hen chaffinch; which, at the expiration of twenty-one days from the time they were hatched, commenced the calls peculiar to their species. This was an important point gained, as it evidently proved

* Mr. Barrington defines the chirp to be the first sound a young bird utters as a cry for food. It consists of a single note, repeated at short intervals, and is common to nestlings of both sexes.

that the calls of birds, at least, are innate; and that, at this early age, ten days are not sufficient to enable nestlings to acquire even the calls of those under which they are bred; thus, clearly establishing the validity of the first experiment made with the young green grosbeaks. Shortly after, the redbreast began to record;* but in so low a tone, that it was scarcely possible to trace the rudiments of its future song in these early attempts: as it gained strength and confidence, however, its native notes became very apparent; and they continued to improve in tone, till the termination of July, when it commenced moulting; which did not, as was expected, put a stop to its recording.† About the middle of August it was in deep moult, and by the beginning of October had acquired most of its new feathers. It now began to execute its song in a manner calculated to remove every doubt as to its being that of the

* The first endeavours of a young bird to sing are termed recording.

† The important operation of moulting undoubtedly affects the singing of wild birds very considerably; and may, perhaps, be a principal cause of their silence in the month of August. The London birdcatchers are well aware of the advantages of occasioning their call-birds to moult prematurely, which, by this means, are brought into full song, while other birds are nearly mute. For an account of the manner in which this is effected, see Pennant's British Zoology. Vol. II, p. 332.

redbreast, had any such previously existed:* its habits also were as decidedly characteristic as its notes, and I am the more particular in noticing this latter circumstance, because the peculiar habits of birds are quite as difficult to account for as the origin of their songs.† Thus, it appears from this satisfactory experiment, which was conducted with the utmost care, that, contrary to Mr. Barrington's opinion, the notes of birds, which probably consist of those sounds that their vocal organs are best adapted to produce, are perfectly innate.‡

* Montagu, in the introduction to his Ornithological Dictionary, p. 29, states, in a note, that "a goldfinch, hatched and fostered by a chaffinch, retained its native notes," but does not give any further particulars respecting this bird.

† Several birds sing in the night, and some warble as they fly. The titlark uses particular notes in ascending and descending, and the song of the white-throat is accompanied with strange gesticulations. Larks and wagtails run; finches and buntings hop; nearly the whole of the gallinaceous and pie tribes, and many species of waterfowl walk; and woodpeckers climb. The sparrow, skylark, and most of the gallinæ are pulveratrices; and the kestril is, I believe, the only British hawk that hovers. The peculiar modes of flight and nidification are equally remarkable aud worthy of notice, but, as they are foreign to the present subject, I shall not now dilate upon them.

‡ Since writing the above, I have met with the following general assertion, unaccompanied by any evidence in support of it, in the Physiognomical System of Drs. Gall and Spurzheim; by J. G. Spurzheim, M. D. Second edition, p. 194---5. "Singing birds, moreover, which have been hatched by strange females, sing naturally, and without any

Having shewn that the notes of birds are natural, or, in other words, that they do not depend upon any previous instruction, it follows, that they must furnish the attentive ornithologist with an excellent method of distinguishing species, under all the various circumstances that are liable to affect their plumage; though it must be observed, that the great similarity so evident in the songs of birds of the same species is more in tone and style, than in the individual notes of which they are composed.*

I shall here remark, that it is highly probable that no bird, in a wild state, ever borrows the notes of others, or becomes a mocker. I am well aware, that several of our native birds, as the pettychaps and sedge warbler, have usually been termed mocking birds: but this is certainly improper; as they constantly use their own natural notes, and no others, they do not at all merit this appellation. The fine strain of the first has been thought to bear a striking resemblance to those of the

instruction, the song of their species as soon as their internal organization is active. Hence the males of every species preserve their natural song, though they have been brought up in the society of individuals of a different kind."

* Birds of the same species do not always deliver their notes exactly in the same order of succession; neither do they uniformly use precisely the same notes.

swallow and blackbird: this, however, must be entirely imaginary, as it is totally different from them in manner and notes: if it be possible to trace any similarity between them, it will be found to consist in tone merely. The song of the sedge warbler is wonderfully varied, and appears to be chiefly composed of passages borrowed from the songs of the skylark, titlark, white-throat, whinchat, lesser redpole, swallow, &c. Now if any bird is entitled to the epithet of mocker, surely it is this: yet these resemblances are common to the songs of the whole species, which inhabit situations very unsuitable for acquiring some of them. In short, these fancied imitations are not studied, but purely accidental, consisting of their own notes ab origine.

The singing of birds has been very generally attributed to the passion of love, and a desire of pleasing their mates.

> " 'Tis love creates their melody, and all
> This waste of music is the voice of love;
> That even to birds, and beasts the tender arts
> Of pleasing teaches."*

Thus the great poet of nature elegantly expresses the idea. This opinion, however, does not appear to be well founded: their language of love, their amorous strains, consist of low intermitted tones, accompanied with ridiculous

*Thomson's Seasons, Spring.

gesticulations; and are altogether different from their ordinary songs, which seem to be occasioned by an exuberance of animal spirits, arising from an abundance of nourishing food, and an increase of temperature, and by a spirit of emulation and rivalry among the males. In confirmation of what is here advanced, I shall observe, that I have known many instances of birds having nests after they have entirely ceased singing; and that some species, as the woodlark, redbreast, and wren, sing long after they have done breeding: caged birds also continue in song much longer than birds at large, though they have no mates to solace and amuse; and it is remarkable, that almost any kind of continued noise is sufficient to stimulate them to sing. That birds of the same species distinguish each other by their notes, better than by any other circumstance, and that the songs of the males serve to direct the females where to seek their society, as Montagu has suggested, appears to me highly probable; but I must differ from this ingenious writer, when he asserts, that love is the sole cause of their songs.* In support of this opinion he states, that the males of our warblers, before they

* This he does, in effect, in the introduction to his Ornithological Dictionary, p. 28, and following.

pair in spring, sing almost incessantly, and with great vehemence; that from the time of pairing till the hens begin to sit, they are neither so vociferous, nor so frequently heard as before; that during the time of incubation their songs are again loud, but not so reiterated as at the first; and that so soon as the young are excluded from the eggs, they cease singing entirely:* but it may be remarked, that if they are not heard so frequently and earnestly after pairing as before, most probably it is because they are occupied in attending to the females; and I have already observed, that their amatory notes, which they chiefly use at this period, are totally different from their ordinary songs. When the hens are sitting, or by any accident happen to be separated from their mates, the attention of the latter is much less engrossed; their notes of love are suspended, and their customary strains renewed. It is a very mistaken notion of Montagu, that the songs of these birds cease immediately when their eggs are hatched, as, in numerous instances, it is notorious that they continue even for some time after the young have left the nest. Surely it is needless to insist, that it cannot

* See the Introduction to the Ornithological Dictionary, p. 30, 31.

be love that prompts the young males to attempt their songs so soon as they are known to do :* besides, it has been shewn, that when educated early under other species, they sometimes possess their notes exclusively, which would hardly be the case, if love is their only motive for singing.

For the information of those who may wish to be acquainted with the singing birds of this particular neighbourhood, I subjoin the following catalogue.

* Young birds frequently begin to practise their songs when only a month old.

A Catalogue of Singing Birds, heard in the Neighbourhood of Manchester; with the Periods at which they commence and discontinue their Songs, taken at a mean of five years' observations.

Birds.	Commence Singing.	Cease Singing.
1 Redbreast——Motacilla rubicula	Jan. 3	Dec. 14
2 Wren——Motacilla troglodytes*.....	do 13	do. 3
3 Missel Thrush——Turdus viscivorus†....	Feb. 1	May 28
4 Throstle——Turdus musicus	do. 8	Aug. 12
5 Skylark——Alauda arvensis	do. 9	July 8
6 Hedge Warbler——Motacilla modularis..	do. 9	do. 19
7 Chaffinch——Fringilla cœlebs.....	do. 10	do. 7
8 Starling——Sturnus vulgaris	do. 15	May 30
9 Blackbird——Turdus merula ..:.....	Mar. 20	July 13
10 Green Grosbeak——Loxia chloris	do. 24	Aug. 12
11 Titlark——Alauda pratensis	April 4	July 9
12 Lesser Redpole——Fringilla linaria	do. 5	Aug. 5
13 Woodlark——Alauda arborea	do.	Oct. 25
14 Goldfinch——Fringilla carduelis	do. 11	June
15 Redstart——Motacilla pnœnicurus	do. 14	do. 29
16 Willow Wren——Motacilla trochilus....	do. 14	Aug. 23
17 Linnet——Fringilla linota	do. 15	July 6
18 Lesser Fieldlark——Alauda minor.....	do. 17	do. 8
19 Swallow——Hirundo rustica	do. 19	Sep. 25
20 Stonechat——Motacilla rubicula	do. 24	June
21 Whinchat——Motacilla rubetra	do. 25	July 1
22 Black-cap——Motacilla atricapilla	do. 25	do. 22
23 White-throat——Motacilla sylvia.....	do. 29	do. 16
24 Pettychaps——Motacilla hortensis	May 12	do. 11
25 Sedge Warbler——Motacilla salicaria‡ ..	do. 17	do. 16

* The redbreast and wren sing at all times of the year, except during severe frost; and several species of birds that cease singing about the latter end of July, or the beginning of August, are sometimes heard again in autumn, when their songs are generally feeble, imperfect, and of short continuance, like the early efforts of our warblers in spring.

† The missel thrush is the largest British bird of song.

‡ In this catalogue I have omitted the yellow bunting, reed bunting, golden-crested wren, yellow willow wren, and some others, that have not uniformly been accounted singing birds.

It would be difficult, nay impossible, to convey a distinct idea of the songs of these birds by any verbal description: indeed, the delightful associations they excite, with the adventitious circumstances of time, distance, situation, &c., so greatly influence their effect, that even the best imitations are utterly inadequate to produce any thing equal to it.

Mr. Barrington, in his essay, has attempted to construct a table, by which the comparative merits of British singing birds may be examined; but as he does not appear to have formed a correct estimate of the songs of some species, and as his table is inaccurate in other respects, besides being too limited, I have endeavoured to supply one that will be more comprehensive, and, I trust, less objectionable; making, as he has done, the number 20 the point of absolute perfection.

TABLE.

BIRDS.	Mellowness.	Sprightliness.	Plaintiveness.	Compass.	Execution.
1. Nightingale..	19	14	19	19	19
2. Skylark	4	19	4	18	18
3. Black-cap	14	12	12	10	8
4. Pettychaps	14	6	14	10	9
5. Redbreast	9	8	12	14	14
6. Linnet	10	15	6	12	13
7. Woodlark	18	2	17	8	6
8. Goldfinch	4	16	4	10	12
9. Sedge Warbler*	2	16	0	18	14
10. Lesser Fieldlark	8	7	5	4	5
11. Willow Wren	6	4	5	5	5
12. Throstle	3	10	2	10	4
13. Blackbird	8	1	4	5	3
14. Chaffinch	2	14	1	4	5
15. Green Grosbeak	5	3	5	5	5
16. Hedge Warbler	3	4	3	4	4
17. Wren	1	16	0	4	5
18. Swallow	4	6	2	3	3
19. Missel Thrush	3	4	1	5	3
20. Starling	4	2	2	4	2
21. Titlark	3	2	2	2	2
22. Siskin	1	4	0	3	3
23. Lesser Redpole	1	4	0	3	3
24. White-throat	1	4	0	3	3
25. Redstart	1	4	0	2	2
26. Stonechat	1	3	0	3	2
27. Whinchat	1	3	0	2	2
28. Dartford Warbler					
29. Water Ouzel†					

* Mr. Barrington has inserted the chaffinch, hedge warbler, and reed sparrow, in his table; which (according to his definition of a bird's song) ought not to have been admitted: indeed, the notes of the reed sparrow are so mean, that I am inclined to believe that he has attributed the song of the sedge warbler to this species, especially, as he remarks, in a note, that it sings in the night: an error by no means uncommon among ornithologists,—yet, if this is the case, he has greatly underrated it; for though harsh in tone, and hurried in manner, and though the same note is repeated frequently in succession, it certainly possesses great variety, and is, upon the whole, rather agreeable.

† I have included the Dartford warbler, and the water ouzel, on the authority of Montagu. (See the Supplement to his Ornithological

This long catalogue of birds, most of which, it appears, are to be found in this immediate neighbourhood, composes the feathered choir, that enlivens the pastoral scenery of England with a rich and varied melody of song which probably is not surpassed in any part of the known globe.

The following poetical description of the vernal chorus, with which I shall close these observations, is from Thomson's Seasons, Spring.

"Up springs the lark,
Shrill voic'd, and loud, the messenger of morn;
Ere yet the shadows fly, he mounted sings
Amid the dawning clouds, and from their haunts
Calls up the tuneful nations. Every copse
Deep-tangled, tree irregular, and bush
Bending with dewy moisture, o'er the heads
Of the coy quiristers that lodge within,
Are prodigal of harmony. The thrush
And wood-lark, o'er the kind contending throng
Superior heard, run through the sweetest length
Of notes; when listening Philomela deigns
To let them joy, and purposes in thought
Elate, to make her night excel their day.
The blackbird whistles from the thorny brake;
The mellow bullfinch answers from the grove:
Nor are the linnets, o'er the flowering furze

Dictionary.) The former I never saw alive, and, therefore, could have no means of estimating its song; and though I am well acquainted with the latter, I have never had an opportunity of hearing its notes.

Pour'd out profusely, silent. Join'd to these,
Innumerous songsters, in the freshening shade
Of new-sprung leaves, their modulations mix
Mellifluous. The jay, the rook, the daw,
And each harsh pipe, discordant heard alone,
Aid the full concert; while the stock-dove breathes
A melancholy murmur thro' the whole."