

to zoology, both for the sake of rendering the question less complex, and because we conceive that the botanical nomenclature of the present day stands in much less need of distinct enactment than the zoological. The admirable rules laid down by Linnæus, Smith, Decandolle, and other botanists (to which, no less than to the works of Fabricius, Illiger, Vigors, Swainson, and other zoologists, we have been much indebted in preparing the present document), have always exercised a beneficial influence over their disciples. Hence the language of botany has attained a more perfect and stable condition than that of zoology; and if this attempt at reformation may have the effect of advancing zoological nomenclature beyond its present backward and abnormal state, the wishes of its promoters will be fully attained.

|                |                   |                   |
|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| (Signed)       | H. E. STRICKLAND. | J. S. HENSLOW.    |
| June 27, 1842. | JOHN PHILLIPS.    | W. E. SHUCKARD.   |
|                | JOHN RICHARDSON.  | G. R. WATERHOUSE. |
|                | RICHARD OWEN.     | W. YARRELL.       |
|                | LEONARD JENYNS.   | C. DARWIN.        |
|                | W. J. BRODERIP.   | J. O. WESTWOOD.   |

**XL.—***On the History and Habits of the Rook, Corvus frugilegus, Linn.* By the Rev. DAVID LANDSBOROUGH.

*To the Editors of the Annals of Natural History.*

GENTLEMEN,

THOUGH birds were my early favourites, I have never made much progress in ornithology. In some future communication, however, I may attempt to give a list of the birds found in the south-west of Scotland. Before doing so I shall venture to give you some notices of a few of them, though they will be unworthy of appearing even as short addenda to the highly interesting ornithological articles, furnished from time to time by that accurate observer of the works of nature—Mr. W. Thompson of Belfast. I have little leisure for such pursuits, and I shall merely subjoin a brief sketch of a pet Rook with which I have the pleasure of being acquainted.

I visited him a few days ago at Ardrossan, and was glad to find, that though a dozen winters have passed over his head, he has all the vivacity of early life. He is a crow of aristocratic extraction; at all events he is of *high descent*, having been reared on one of the highest trees at Shieldhall, where his ancestors, it is believed, had their favourite residence for many generations. When he was well fledged he was brought down to the abodes of men by one of the aspiring youths of Shieldhall (George Oswald, Esq., now in India) as a present to his aunt Miss Oswald, and by her the pet crow, prized for his

own good qualities, and loved for the donor's sake, was brought down to her sweet villa at Ardrossan. Her villa was contiguous to that of Miss Hamilton of Holmhead, and as our rook had then the free use of his wings, and was of a social disposition, he paid frequent visits to his neighbours, and soon formed acquaintance with the occupants of Miss Hamilton's poultry-yard, consisting of a cock and two hens. The intimacy increased; the visits became longer and longer, till at last the crow became domiciled along with them; and when Miss Oswald left Ardrossan, being unwilling to break asunder the ties of affectionate friendship, she left the crow in its adopted dwelling-place. The longer they were acquainted the stronger did the friendship become, though it was evidently most ardent on the part of the crow. He was exceedingly attentive to his chosen friends the hens, and would often arrange their feathers and dress them to his own taste, so that his officious services were sometimes rejected as troublesome. The cock was still a greater favourite, and he roosted every night beside him, nestling under his wing.

After this platonic friendship had subsisted for several years, one of the hens became sick and died. During her illness he was unremitting in his attentions, waiting on her most affectionately; but he could not ward off the stroke of death. A still greater calamity awaited him, for the favourite cock also died. He was unceasing in his attention to him during his trouble, and when he died he was so disconsolate that he would not taste food for several days.

At last old age, which indeed had carried off the others, crept on the remaining hen. When she became feeble and helpless he scarcely ever left her for a moment, striving to cheer her by innumerable little acts of kindness. There were two steps up from the poultry-yard to the house in which they roosted, and when she became too weak to mount the steps, as he could not himself lift her up he always came to the kitchen-window, and kept up an incessant clamour till some of the servants came out and lifted her up.

For two days before her death she could not leave the roosting-house, and he remained along with her bringing her food, laying it down before her, and coaxing her to eat it.

Notwithstanding his unwearied assiduity and affectionate attentions the poor hen died, and it was thought that he would not long have survived her. He was quite disconsolate. Life had lost its charm. He scarcely tasted food and became altogether changed; so that from being lively and cheerful and active, he drooped and became timid and spiritless.

Some young poultry were purchased in the hope that they

might cheer him, but he seemed quite afraid of them and avoided their company.

After months had passed away he gradually recovered his spirits, and he is now as brisk and lively a bird as you can look upon. He is no longer afraid of the inmates of the poultry-yard; but though he associates with them, they have not succeeded in gaining his affections. He knows all the inmates of the house, and takes with pleasure a bit of bread or of cold meat from their hands. Unfortunately he is so much of an epicure as to be particularly fond of a new-laid egg, and when the exulting cackle of a hen proclaims that she has deposited a treasure, there is generally a race between the servant and the rook, each being eager to seize the prize.

For a long time he was allowed the free use of his wings, but complaints were lodged against him by the proprietors of the neighbouring villas that he was in the habit of perching on the roofs of their houses, and of picking the lime from the *skews*, casting it up into the air. This frolic was an overt act of mischief; but his accusers did not take into account that it was conjoined with another act of utility, for it was only the loosened pieces of lime that he removed, and chiefly, we doubt not, that he might get at the vermin concealed underneath. As no person would become bound for his more sober demeanour when he got into his altitudes, the poor fellow was condemned to have one of his wings clipped, that as a degraded biped, he might, like his accusers, walk on the face of the earth. It is vexing to see him, when he attempts to fly with the remaining wing, falling down to the ground after being provokingly twirled round.

The only way in which he can now taste some of the departed joys of exalted station is by mounting an old apple-tree in the garden, the lowest branches being within his reach, and when he has reached the highest he shows how delighted he is by proud cawings and cacklings.

He is a very cleanly bird, as his glossy plumage shows. When a pail of water is placed within his reach, he immediately enters it and splashes it about with great delight. He is still more delighted when there is a fall of snow, for he rolls in it, flaps and flutters amongst it, taking it up in his bill and throwing it about with the greatest glee and merriment.

Long live this kind-hearted rook! and as *we* have reason and revelation to guide, may we remember that we are bound to surpass him in his amiable qualities.

I am, dear Sirs, yours &c.,

DAVID LANDBOROUGH.

Manse of Steverston, Ayrshire,  
Feb. 13, 1843.



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