HOME BOOK OF NATURAL HISTORY.

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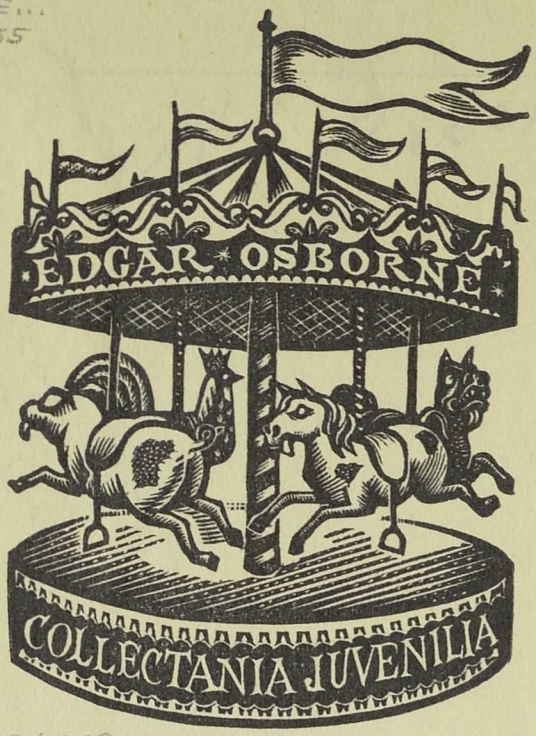

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CAT AND MOUSE.

Home Lesson Books.

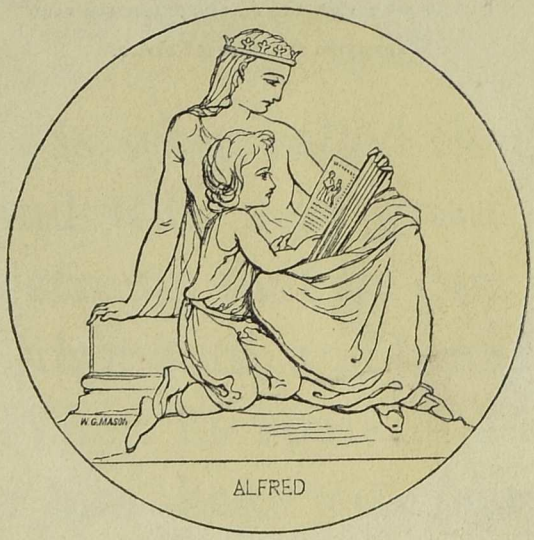
HOME BOOK

OF

NATURAL HISTORY.

ILLUSTRATED WITH

One Hundred Engravings.



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ADJOINING THE "TIMES" OFFICE.

The Lion is often called the king of beasts, and with very great justice. He is so strong, that he can take an ox up in his mouth, and bear it on his back. When he roars, all animals that hear him shake with fear. Lions live in the hot countries of Asia and Africa, many miles from here. We can only see them shut up in cages.

The Tiger is not quite so large as the Lion, but he is more fierce, and nearly as strong. He is a beautiful animal, marked with black and orange-coloured stripes. In Asia and Africa, where they live, Tigers often carry off cows and sheep, and sometimes men. In India men often go out on elephants to hunt Tigers.

The Leopard is another animal of the same kind, but is neither so large nor so strong as the Tiger. Leopards are found in most of the hot countries of Asia and Africa; and are often hunted and killed for the sake of their beautiful skins. The African Panther is very much like the Leopard, but is rather larger.

The Jaguar is a fierce beast that is found in the hot parts of South America, where he preys on deer, sheep, and any small animals. He can climb trees, and often jumps from a bough upon any creature that is passing. He can also swim well, and will eat any fish which he can catch.

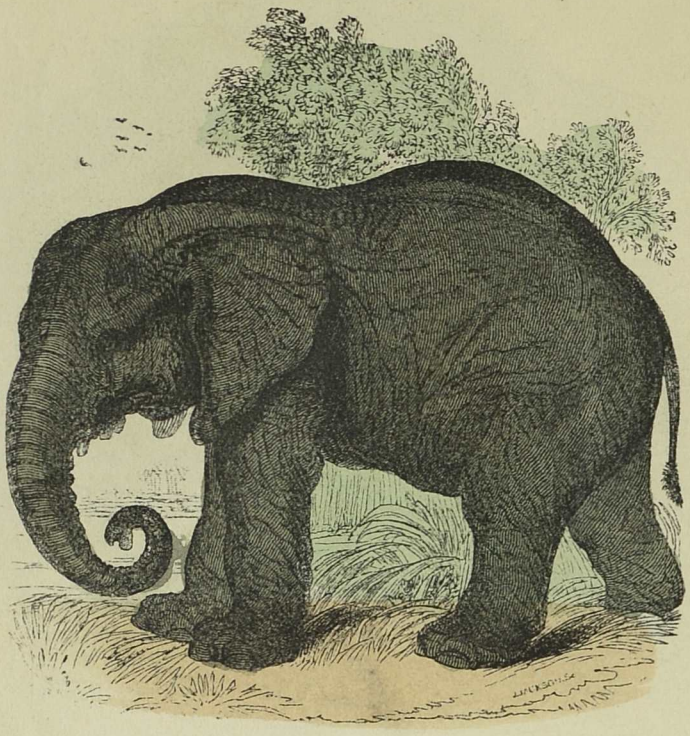
The Puma is another beast that lives in South America. He is of a red-brown colour, somewhat like the lion. He feeds on small animals, which he often jumps upon from a tree. If a Puma can be caught very young, he can be made tame, and may be left in a house to play with children.

Lynxes are found only in cold countries. They prey upon small quadrupeds and birds, which they pursue to the tops of high trees. Their eyes are very bright, and their general appearance is not savage. They are of a pale gray colour, and at a distance are often mistaken for wolves. The fur of the Lynx is very warm, and is often made into muffs, and boas, and tippets.

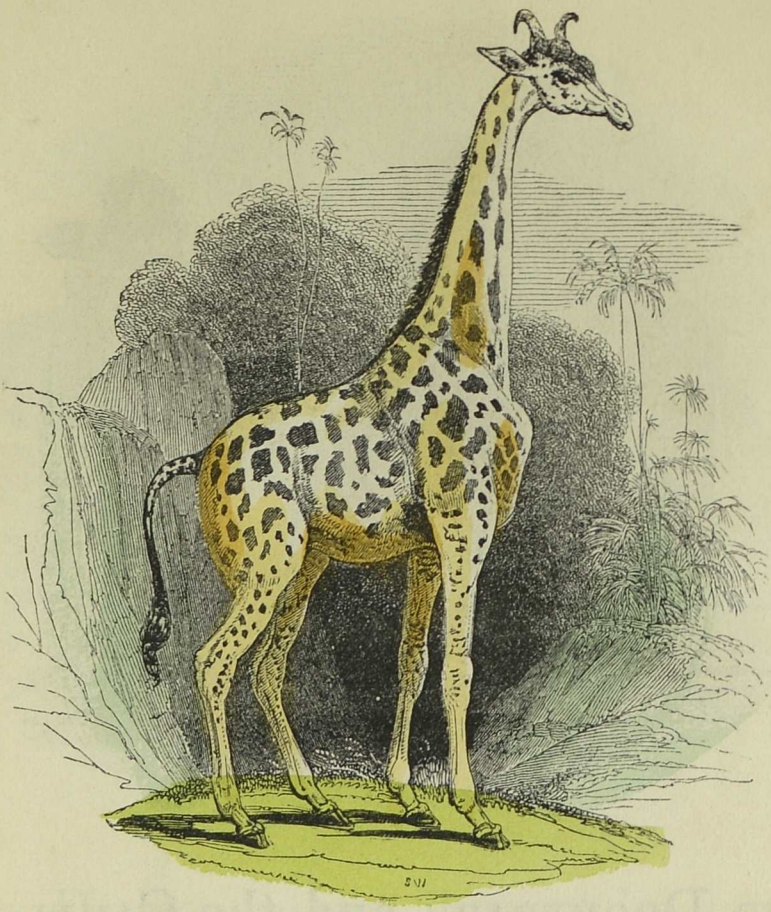
Hyænas live in caverns and rocky places in Syria and Abyssinia. At night-time they prowl about the streets of towns, and eat the dead bodies of animals that are often left there. They are very cruel, and will kill any defenceless creature that they meet with, but they seldom attack mankind. They are of a gray colour, marked with dark brown bands.

The Wolf is one of the most savage and remorseless creatures that we know of. Wolves inhabit nearly every country of the world, except the hot climates, and at one time, many years ago, were to be found in England. They will attack a flock of sheep and kill all of them, before they commence eating one, so great is their ferocity.

The Jackal is found in almost every part of Africa and Southern Asia. Jackals are of a dingy yellow colour, and of the size of the common fox. They herd in large packs; often as many as two or three hundred are seen hunting together, uttering the most horrid cries, and pursuing all kinds of smaller quadrupeds. They are very voracious and cruel.



The Elephant is the largest of all beasts, and, except the dog, is the most sagacious. In the great plains of Africa and Asia, Elephants are found in immense troops, feeding on branches of trees, sugar-canes, and various kinds of herbage. They are easily tamed, and are then used to draw heavy weights, and to help to load and unload ships.



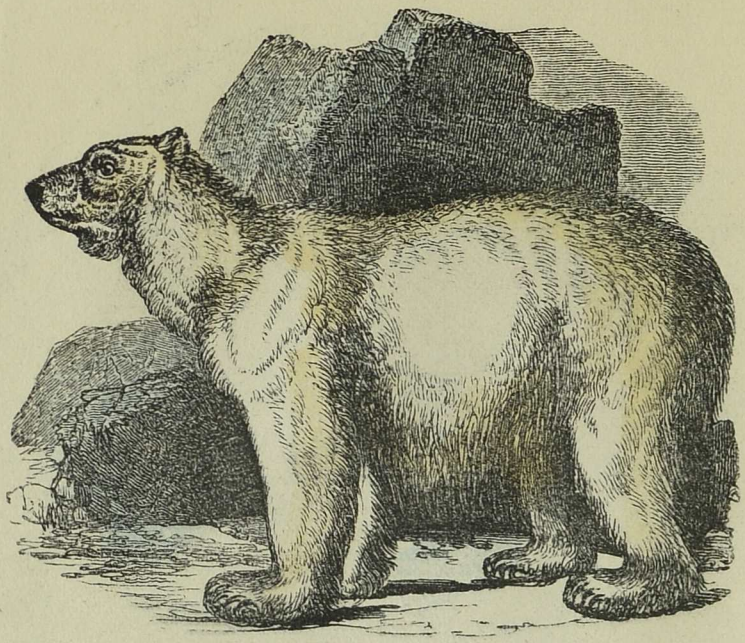
The Giraffe is the tallest of all animals. Some have been found reaching seventeen feet in height. They are natives of Africa, where they live chiefly on the tender branches of the Acacia tree, which they are enabled to reach by means of their long neck and tongue.

The Dromedary and the Camel are much alike, except that the Camel has two humps on his back. They are both natives of the hot countries of the East, where they are of the greatest use in carrying travellers and goods across the sandy deserts. They can go for many days without food or water, and are very docile.

The Hippopotamus is next in size to the Elephant, but is of no use to mankind. He is found in Africa, where it is said he passes much of his time in walking at the bottom of the rivers, rising to the top now and then to take breath. He eats grass, young branches of trees, maize, sugar-cane, or anything of that kind.

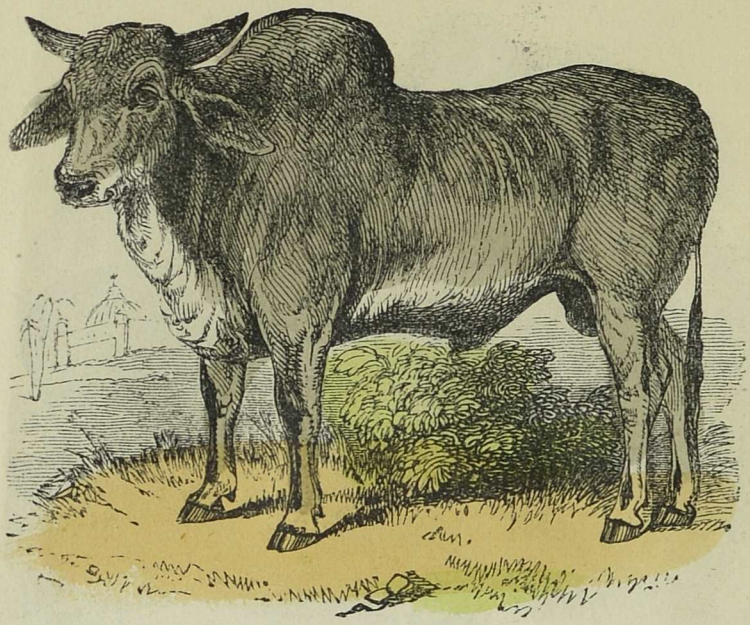
The Rhinoceros is another great animal found in India and Africa. He is very wild and savage, and can never be tamed. When a Rhinoceros meets an Elephant, a battle often ensues, for neither will go out of the way. The Rhinoceros lives in swampy marshes, and eats the coarse herbage that grows there.

The Brown Bear is a native of many countries of Europe and Asia, and lives in caves or hollows of old trees. Bears get very fat in the summer months, and pass away all the winter in their holes, without any food. They are of a savage nature, but do not often attack men. If caught young they may be tamed.



White or Polar Bears are only found among the ice, in the very coldest parts of the world. They live chiefly upon seals and fish. They are larger and more ferocious than the Brown Bears, and a drove of them will sometimes attack a boat full of men. The love of the mother for her cubs is very great, and she will be torn in pieces before she will desert them.

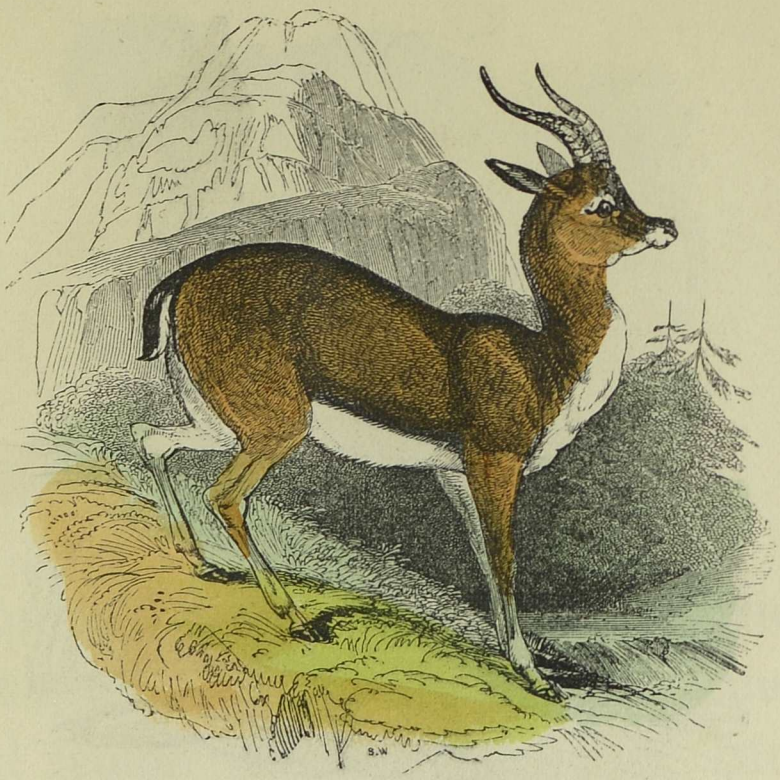
Bisons or Buffaloes, as they are often called, are found in great herds in the vast prairies of North America. The Indians almost depend upon them for subsistence; their flesh is excellent food, their skins make warm robes, and their horns and hoofs are of much use. Buffalo hunting is a most exciting, though very dangerous sport.



The Zebu, or Brahmin Bull, inhabits many parts of Asia and Africa. In some places Zebus are held sacred to the Indian god, Brahma, and are never killed; but they are often used to draw carts and carriages. Their flesh is not so good as that of our ox, except the hump, which is of excellent flavour. They are of a white or ashy gray colour. They vary in size, some are as big as our bull, while others are no larger than sheep.

ZEBRAS are only to be caught in the southern countries of Africa. They chiefly inhabit the mountains, where they congregate in immense herds. When they are attacked, they form a circle with their heads in the middle, and present their heels to their enemy, whom they kick with great violence. They can run very fast, but have very seldom been tamed for the use of mankind.

Wild Asses are taller and more elegant in shape than our common Ass. They inhabit Tartary and Persia, and other countries of Asia, where they are often caught and eaten by the inhabitants. They are very difficult to tame, and it is not known that one has ever been made serviceable to mankind.

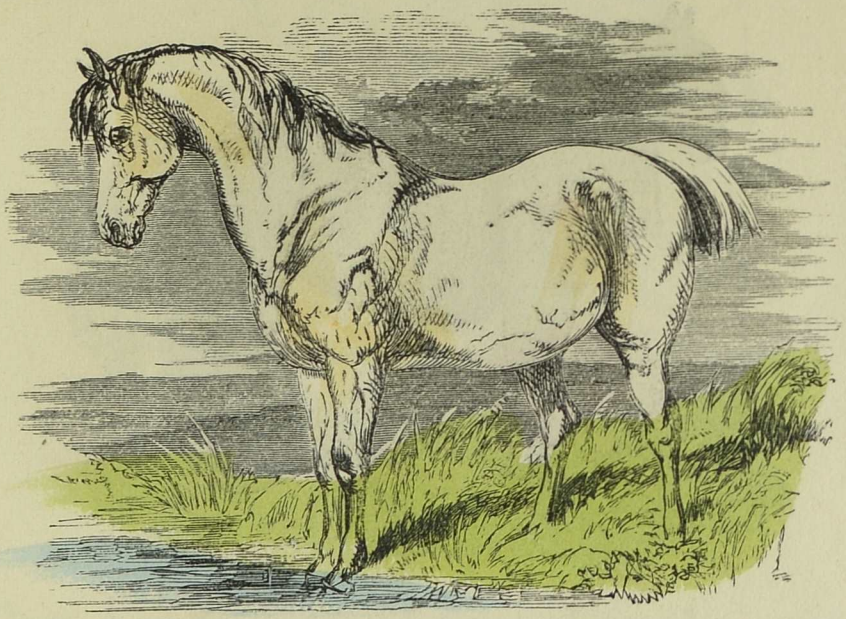


Gazelles are a beautiful species of Antelope, which inhabit the north of Africa. Their limbs are light and slender, and their form is very graceful. They run together in large herds, and when danger threatens, place their young ones inside a circle, and turn their horns against the enemy.

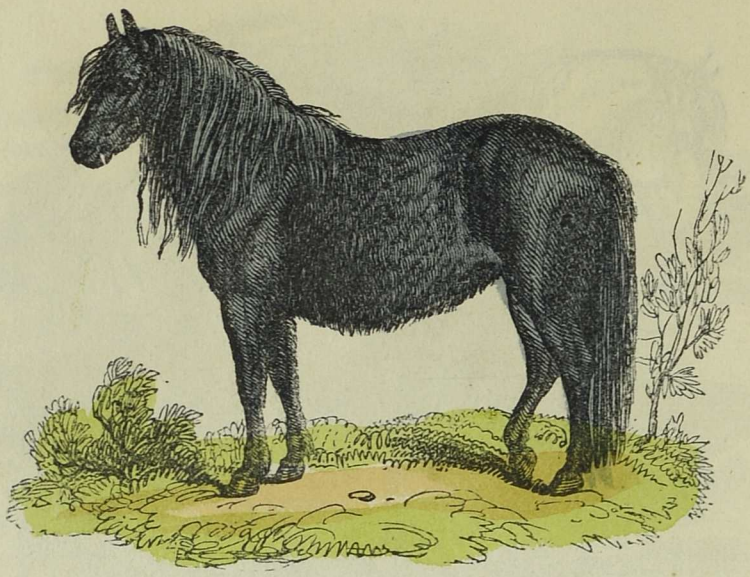
KANGAROOS are found in Australia. They have very long hind legs and thick tails. Under the breast, the female has a curious pouch, into which the young ones jump when they think they are in danger.

Monkeys are chiefly found in Africa, but there are many different kinds, and some of them inhabit India and the Indian Islands, and others America. They are for the most part a harmless race, living on fruits and the roots of trees, and are generally full of life and agility. They vary much in size and form and colour. They nurse their young with as much care as human beings, whom they imitate in many of their actions.

Crocodiles are the largest of all reptiles. They inhabit the Nile, and other great rivers of Africa, and are very much dreaded by the natives, and by all animals that live near them. They are very voracious, and immensely powerful creatures: some specimens have been seen thirty feet in length.

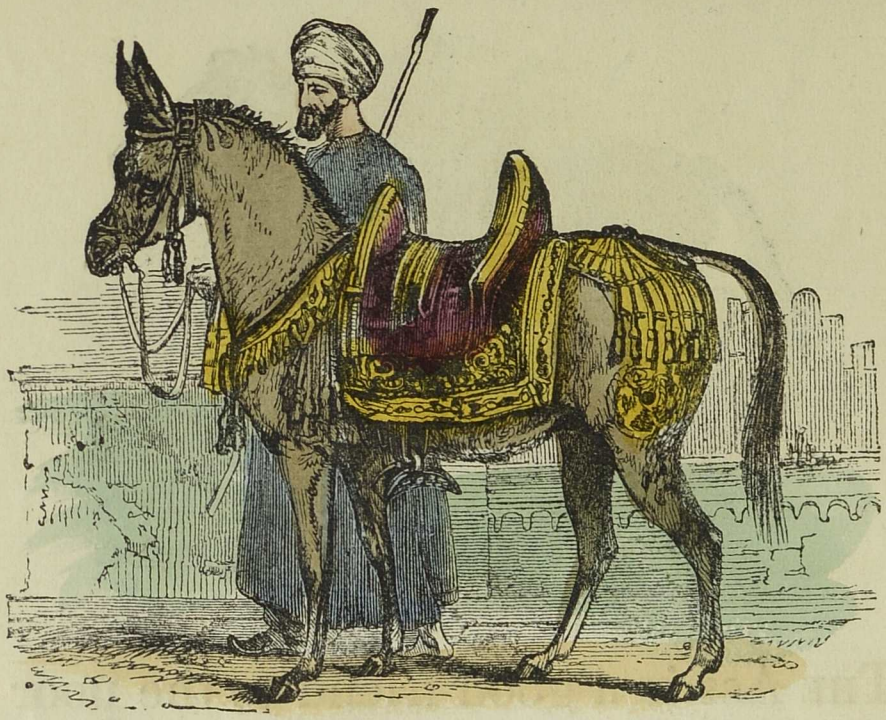


The Horse is of more use to mankind than any other animal. He can carry a man on his back, or he can draw a gig, or a cart, or a plough. There are many kinds of horses. Some can run very fast; they are racers. Some can jump well; they are hunters. And some are very strong, and can draw heavy loads; they are dray-horses. Horses feed on oats, and hay, and grass.



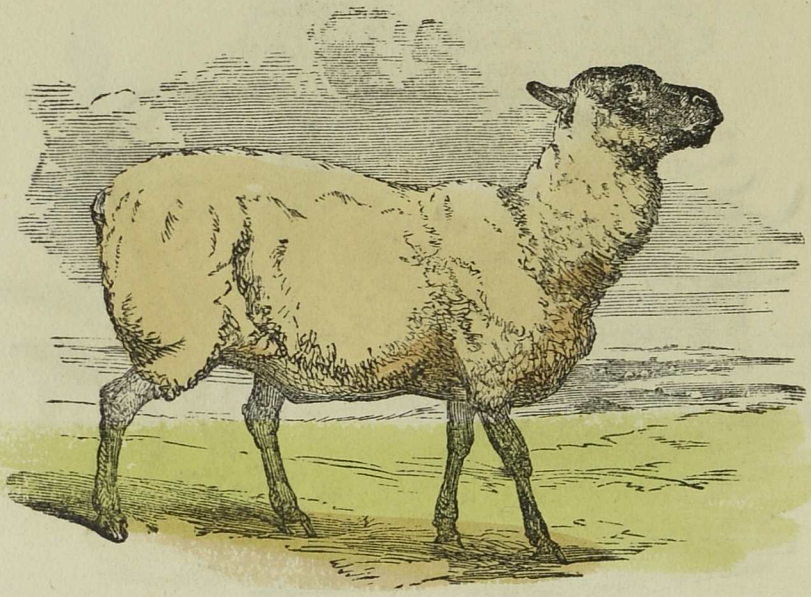
The Pony is a small kind of horse, which every lad knows. He is often used to draw a little carriage, or for boys or girls to ride on. The Shetland Pony, which comes from an island near Scotland, is a great favourite, as he is handsome, and very strong. Some ponies can trot and gallop as fast as horses, but they cannot carry heavy burdens. Ponies eat hay and corn in the stable, but in the fields they feed on grass.

The Ass is a good friend to the poor man. He will eat almost anything that is given to him, and will work very hard. Poor thing! he is often ill-treated by bad men and boys, and made to carry burdens that he can scarcely bear; such folks do not gain much, for the ass will work more willingly for those who treat him well. On Hampstead Heath you may often see forty or fifty asses carrying little boys and girls.

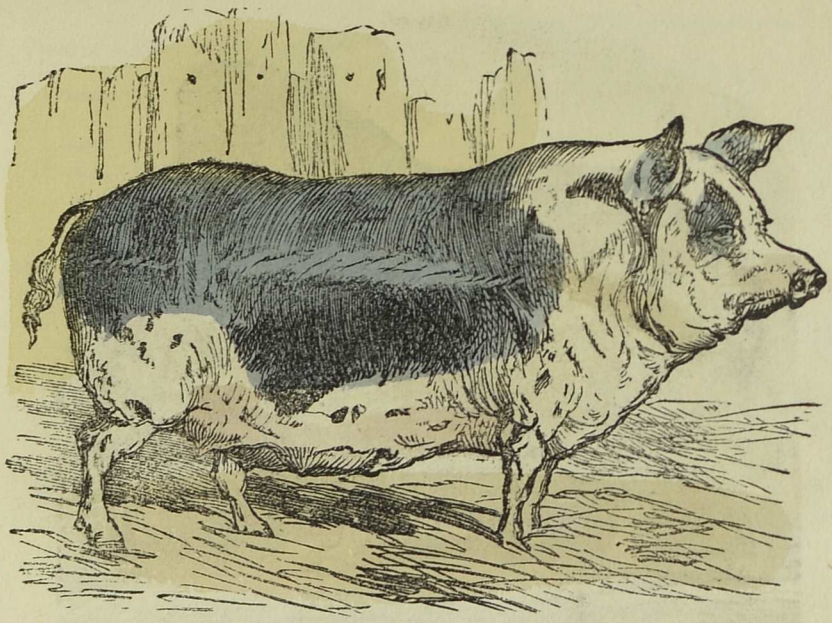


The Mule is a very useful animal. He can trot nearly as fast as the horse, and is stronger than the ass. In Spain, mules are very common, and all the grandees ride on them. In Switzerland, mules are ridden across the mountains, because they are so sure of foot, and seldom fall. The father of the mule is a horse, and the mother is an ass.

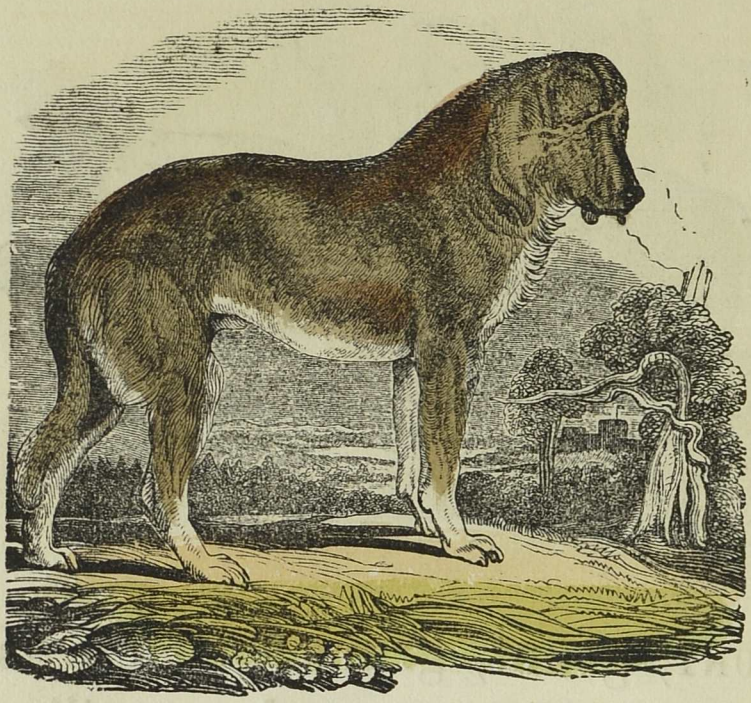
THE Cow gives us milk, from which we make butter and cheese. When you go on a visit to a farm-house, you must see Betty, the maid, milk the cows; and if you are good, she will give you a cup of nice warm milk. The young one of the cow is called a calf. We eat its flesh, which is veal; and with its skin we make our boots. The hide of the cow makes a strong leather, and the horns and hoofs are boiled down into glue.



WHERE is there a boy or a girl who does not know the SHEEP? And who does not delight to walk in the green meadows, and see the young lambs at play? We eat the flesh of the sheep, and call it mutton; we cut off his fleece to make it into coats and dresses for ourselves, and every part we turn to some use. In Australia there are immense flocks of sheep; often as many as fifty thousand belong to one man.



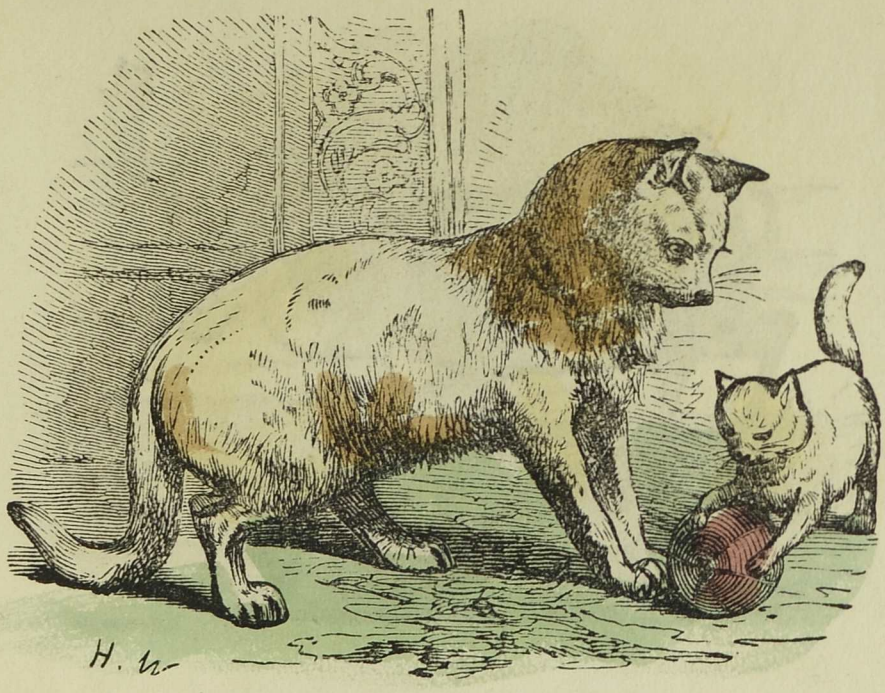
GRUNT, grunt, grunt! Here is a fat PIG. She eats and eats till she can hardly stand, and then she lies down and eats again. What a greedy thing! Pigs like to roll in the mud, and make themselves dirty. When little boys run about with dirty faces, and hands, and clothes, they look very like pigs, do they not? The female pig is called a Sow, and often has twenty young ones at a time. Is not that a large family?



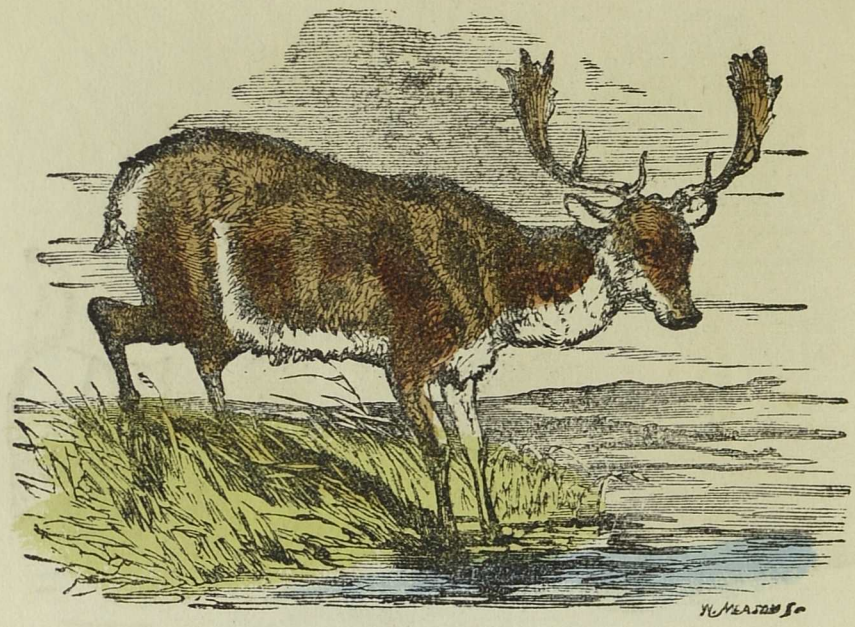
Is not this a fine-looking Dog? He is an English Bloodhound. He is very strong, and can run as fast as a horse can gallop. His scent is so keen that he can follow a stag for miles, though he may not catch sight of him, and he is never known to give up the chase. Bloodhounds are not often seen now, but in former times they were used to catch men.

This is a Shepherd's Dog. He is a very useful fellow. He protects the sheep at night when they are sleeping in the fold, and helps the shepherd to drive them to market. He is the most sensible of all dogs, and if he could but speak, would be of more service than many idle men and boys. When you are older you must read "Anecdotes about Dogs," which will tell you of their great sagacity.

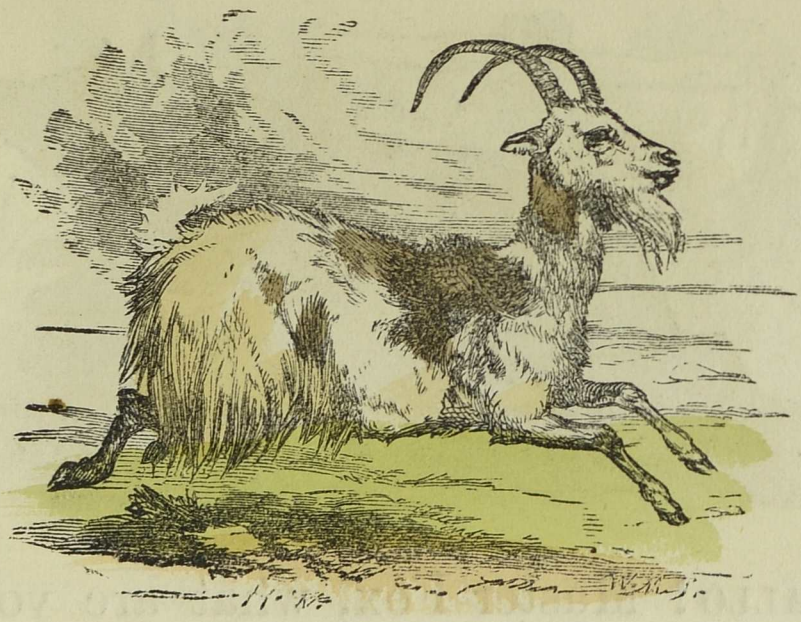
SPANIELS are very useful dogs, and are great favourites. They are very affectionate, and will do as they are bidden like many other dogs. Water Spaniels will jump into a river or the sea, and fetch out a stick or anything else that is thrown in for them. And many a time has a Water Spaniel saved the life of a little boy or girl who has fallen into the water.



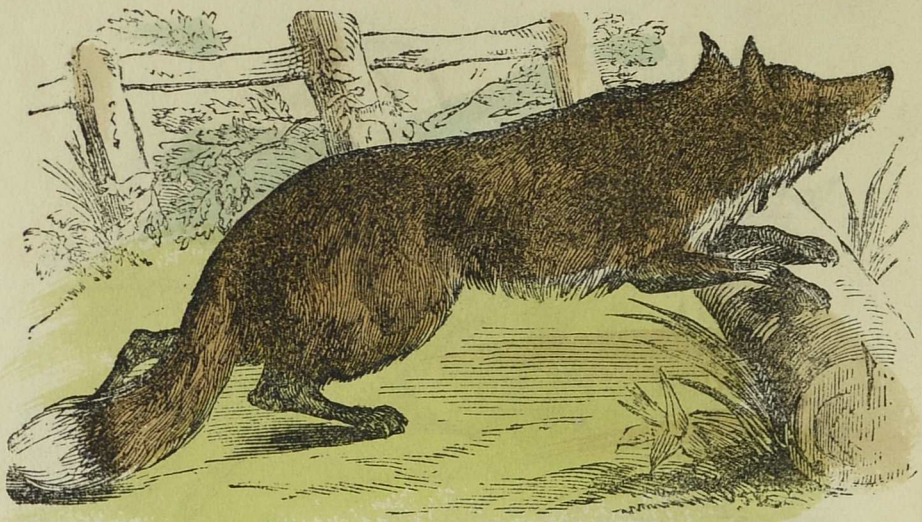
THE CAT is too well known to need much description. Nearly in every house in all parts of the world is "Pussy" seen sitting on the hearth-rug by the fireside, or lying by the window, basking in the sunshine. Cats are very useful in keeping away rats and mice from our store-rooms and pantries; and kittens we know are the nicest play-fellows in the world for young children.



The Deer is a beautiful creature. Did you ever pass through a park and see a herd of deer lie under the great trees, or watch them bounding across the lawns? Those are pretty sights. We eat the flesh of the deer, and call it venison. The horns are made into the handles of knives, and the skin is used for many purposes. There are many kinds of deer; those we usually see are the Fallow Deer.

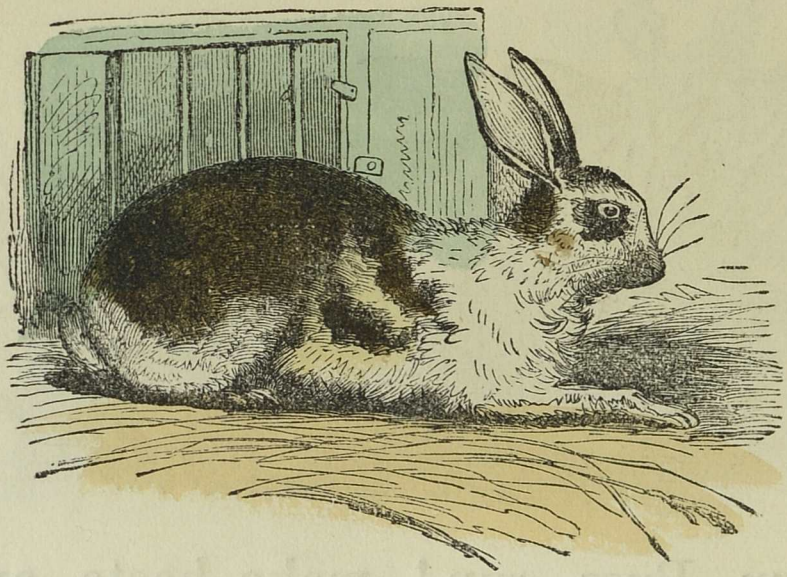


The Goat is not so useful as the sheep. It is true, the she-goat gives milk to children that are ill, and goat's skin is made into many things; but the flesh is not fit for food, and the hair is good for little. Goats love to climb high rocks, where they jump about with joy. They are often made to draw little carriages, in which boys and girls ride, but they are rather apt to be tricky.



HALLO! Master Fox, what are you looking at? Is there a nice fat hen on the other side there that you would like for your dinner? Yes, I dare say you would; but we want the hen to lay eggs for our breakfasts, so you had better be off, or the farmer's dog will see you, and you will have to run for your life, my fine friend. Some gentlemen keep hounds on purpose to hunt the fox with, and often hundreds of people follow the hounds.

Run, Puss, run! make haste, and you will get away from the dogs that I expect are chasing you. Hares are the most timid of all animals, and well they may be, for dogs, foxes, weasels, and great birds try to kill them; but the Hares can run so fast, that very often they escape from their cruel enemies. Hares make little nests in the fields, called forms, and there they hide up during the day; and in the evening they run about to feed.



Tame Rabbits are well known to all boys and girls; they are pretty pets, and if properly attended to, they are a nice amusement. Wild Rabbits live in great numbers together in holes in sandy hills; these places are called warrens, and very curious it is to stand near one and watch the little inhabitants as they pop out and bite the green leaves of the young trees, and then at the slightest noise jump back again to their holes.

The Guinea Pig, or Cavy, originally came from South America, but is now found domesticated in almost every part of Europe. Guinea Pigs are cleanly little animals, about the size of a large rat, and are spotted over with patches of black and orange. They have no tails. They feed on corn, vegetables, and tea-leaves. Their voice is a shrill kind of squeak, not very agreeable.

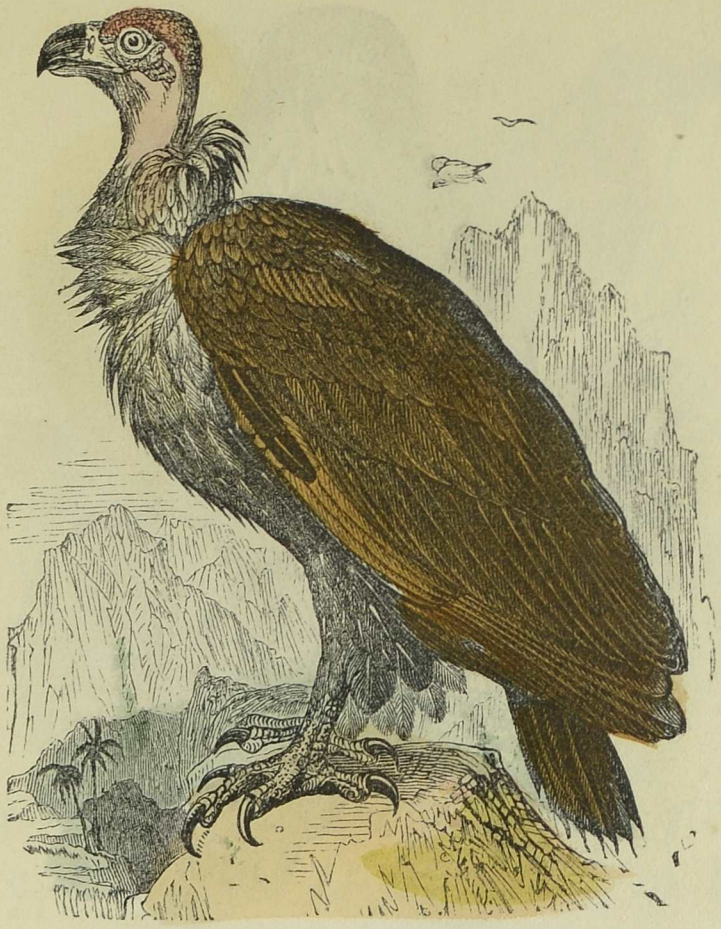
SQUIRRELS are beautiful little animals that live in the woods, where they jump about from tree to tree all day long. They feed chiefly on nuts, acorns, beechmast, and the young shoots of trees, and convey their food to their mouth like rabbits with their fore feet. They gather up stores of food in the hollows of old trees, for winter time, when they are seldom seen abroad.

The Ferret is a very bold and ferocious little animal, which is much used in England for catching rabbits and rats. In a wild state it is a native of Africa, and it cannot exist through the cold winters here without it has a warm place to live in. The eyes of the Ferret are red and fiery, and its skin is of a dirty yellow colour.

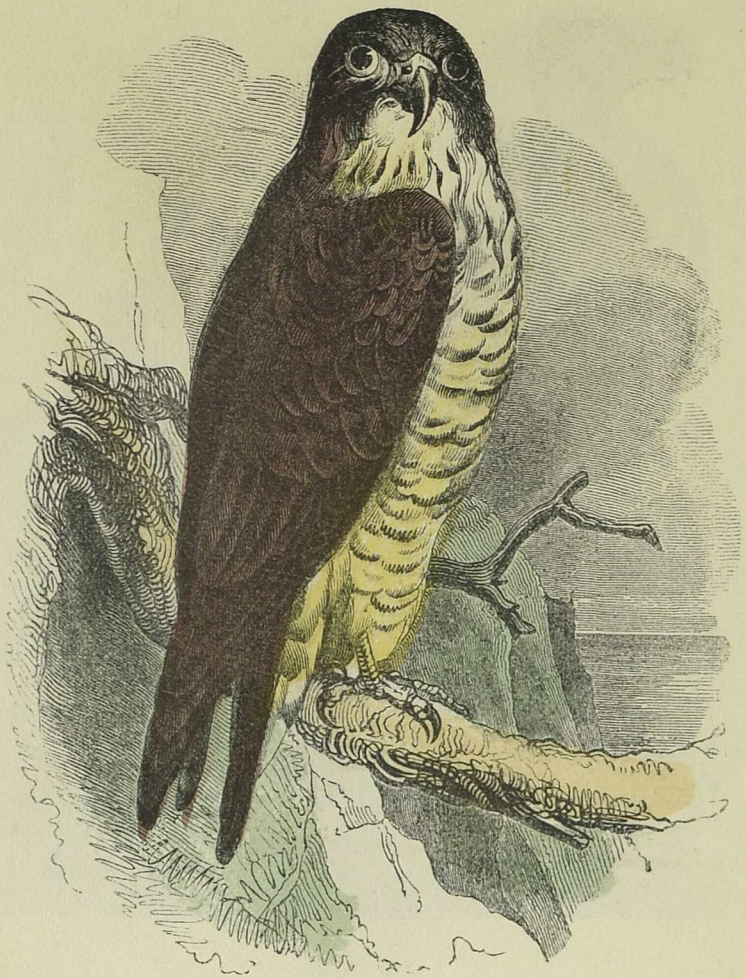
The Weasel is a pretty little animal somewhat resembling the Ferret, but not of such a cruel disposition. Weasels are found all over England, and in many other countries. Their chief food is mice and little birds, but they sometimes kill young ducks and fowls, and have been known to attack rabbits and hares. They are of a red colour on the back, and white underneath. They do not often exceed seven inches in length.

Who does not know our little friend the Mouse? He lives in almost every house, and eats the same food as we do—the rascal. Mice are found in all countries that mankind inhabits, and always in men's dwellings. No creatures have more enemies than they—cats, owls, snakes, weasels, and many other animals destroy them continually, but somehow they never seem to decrease.

Eagles live amidst dense forests, or on the top of high rocks, where men cannot approach them. They are of a savage nature, and so strong that they can carry away a lamb. This is the Golden Eagle, which is often seen in Scotland. There are many kinds.



VULTURES of different kinds are found in many parts of the world. They are large birds, nearly as strong as Eagles: they chiefly feed on the dead bodies of animals. They can see to an immense distance, and it is said that their sense of smell is very acute.

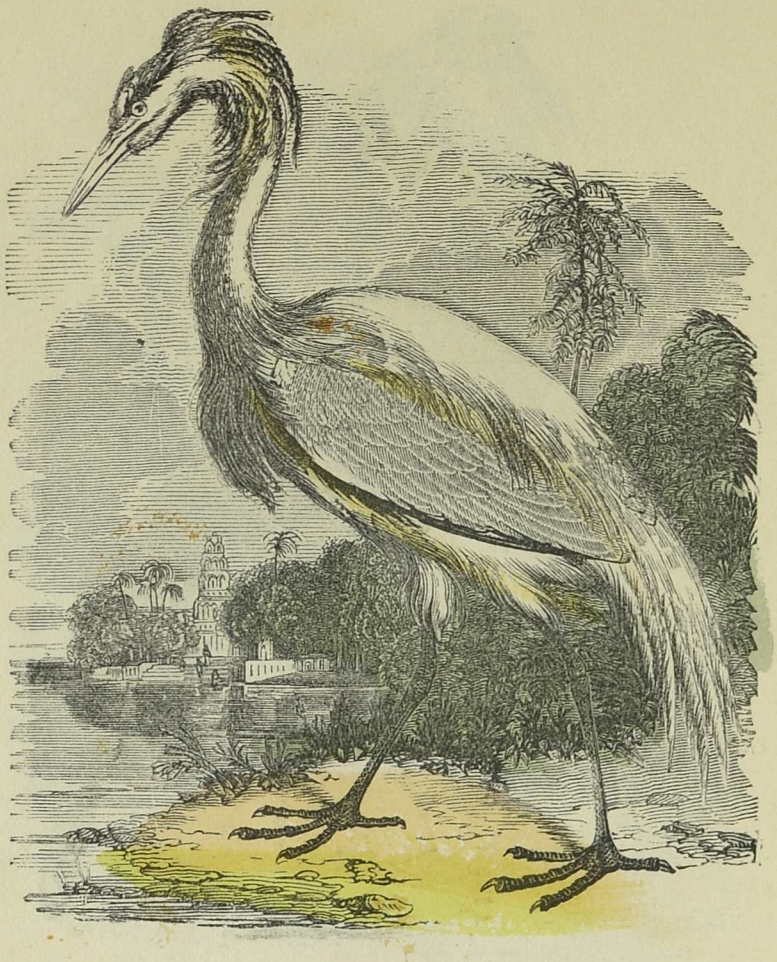


The Peregrine Falcon is found in nearly all Northern countries. This is the bird which was used in Hawking in former days. It is very swift of flight, and will strike down herons and all such birds at a blow. It is of a cruel disposition.

The Kite is a well-known bird of prey, which is often found in England. It is very destructive to the fowls in farm-yards, and kills also the hares, rabbits, and partridges. Kites build their nests at the top of high trees, over which they may often be seen hovering, watching for their prey, upon which they pounce down with one long swoop.

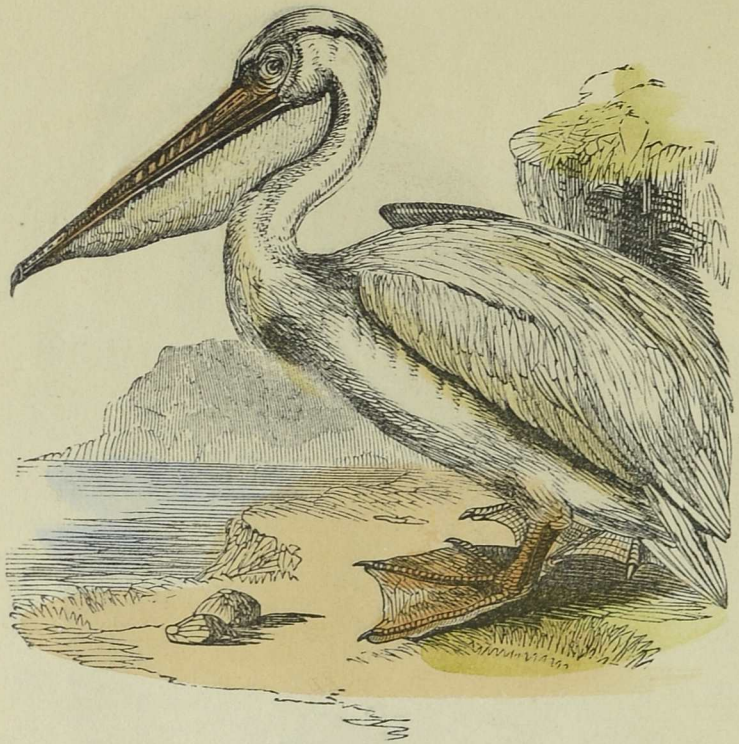
The Ostrich is found on the sandy plains of Arabia and Africa, over which it can run faster than the fastest horse. The female lays her eggs in the sand, and it is said leaves them there for the sun to hatch.

The Secretary is a large bird, which lives in South Africa. It feeds on serpents, lizards, and all kinds of reptiles. If it can be caught when young, it may easily be tamed, and taught to kill venomous creatures.

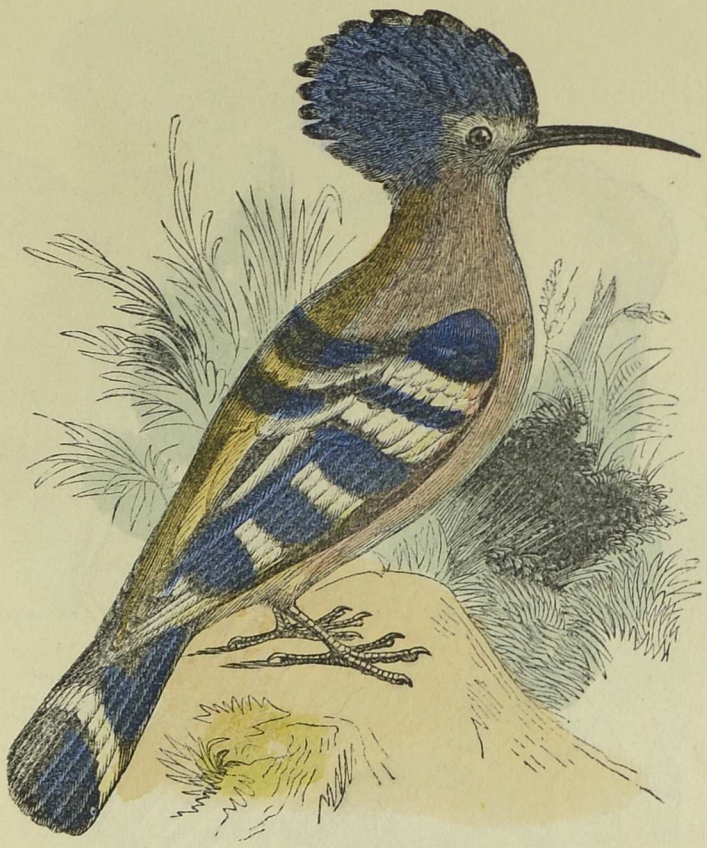


The Demoiselle, or African Crane, is a graceful and beautiful bird. It feeds chiefly on grain and seeds, or insects, and often grows to be more than three feet high. It is sometimes found in India, where it frequents the banks of streams.

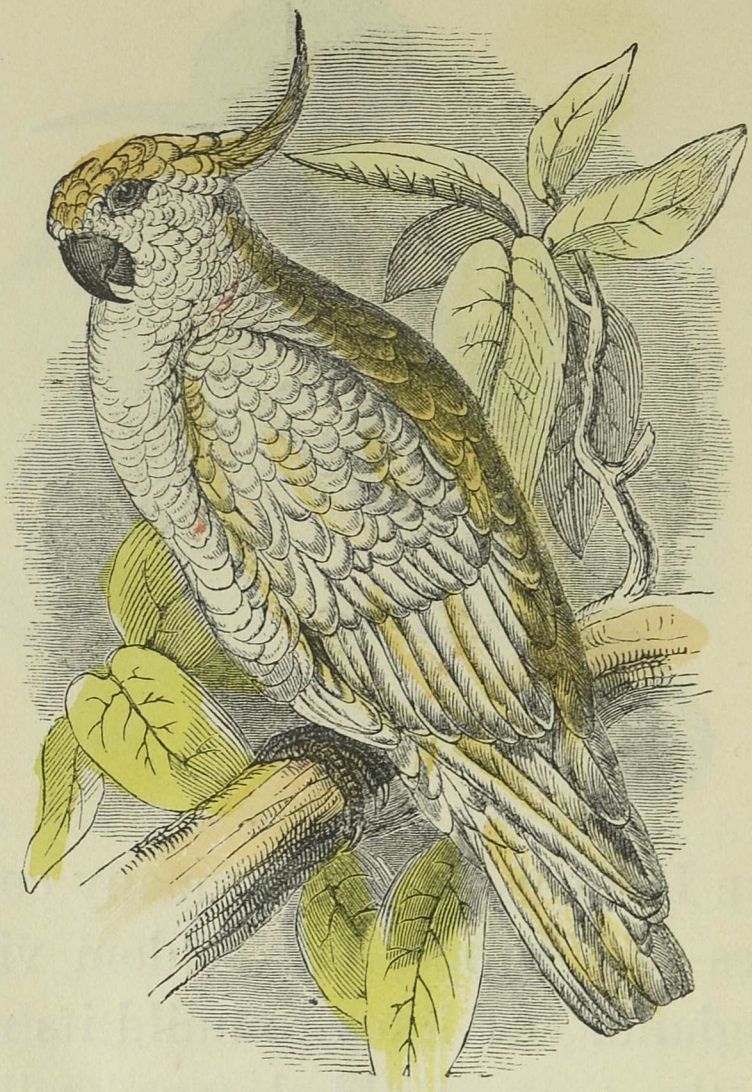
The Heron is found in almost all countries in the world, and may often be seen in England. It is a solitary bird, and will stand for hours by a river waiting for fish, which it seizes with great rapidity. Herons build their nests on the top of high trees, a number of them together—just as rooks do.



Pelicans are natives of Africa and India, and the countries by the Black Sea. They live upon fish, which they catch in the pouch under their lower bill, from which they feed their young. They inhabit desolate rocks and islands, far away from human dwellings. The old story of the Pelican feeding its young ones with its own blood is a fable.

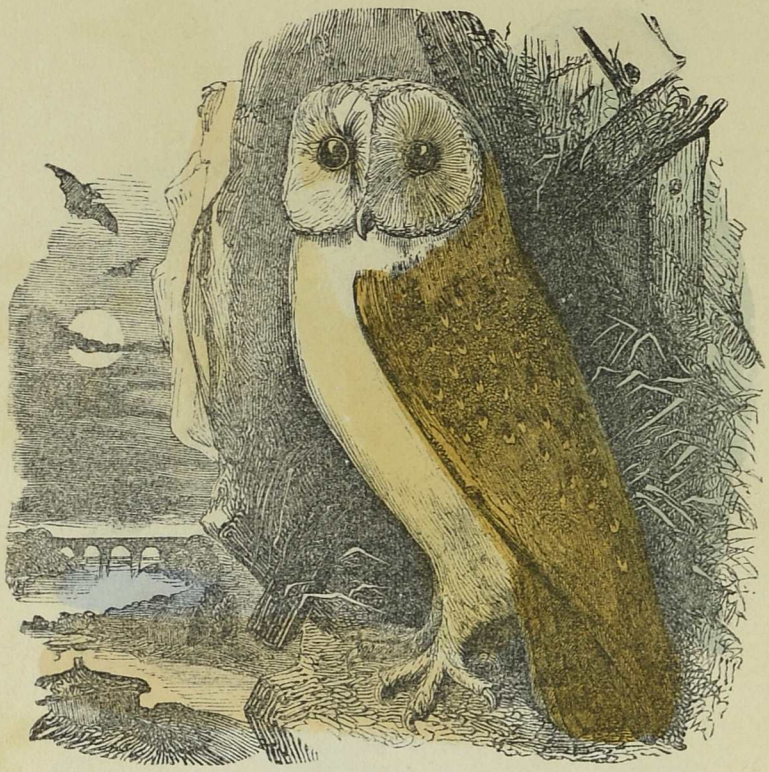


The Hoopoe is seen in many countries of Europe, but seldom visits England. It likes to build its nest on the tops of old decayed willow trees, and feeds on the insects it finds in marshy places. The crest and wings are of a beautiful colour. Its cry is a melancholy sound, from which it takes its name.

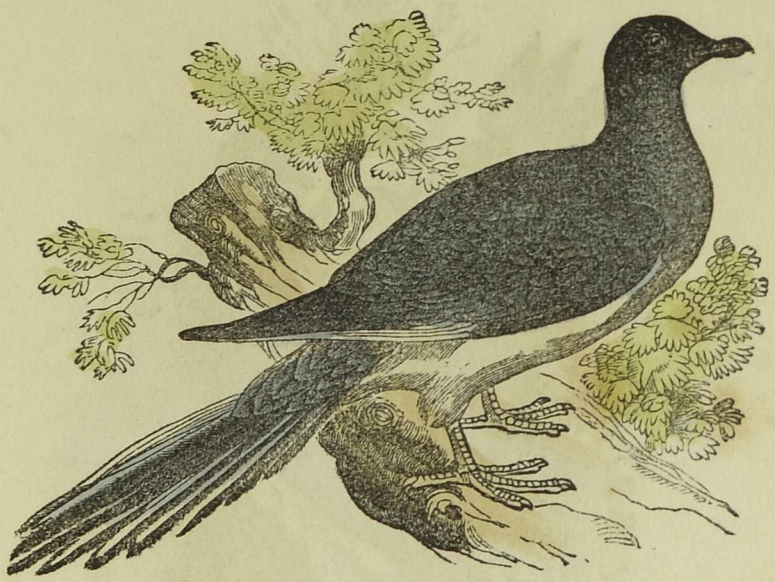


Cockatoos are large white Parrots. In Australia they fly in flocks, and utter such screams that they may be heard a mile off. Sometimes they cover many acres of ground.

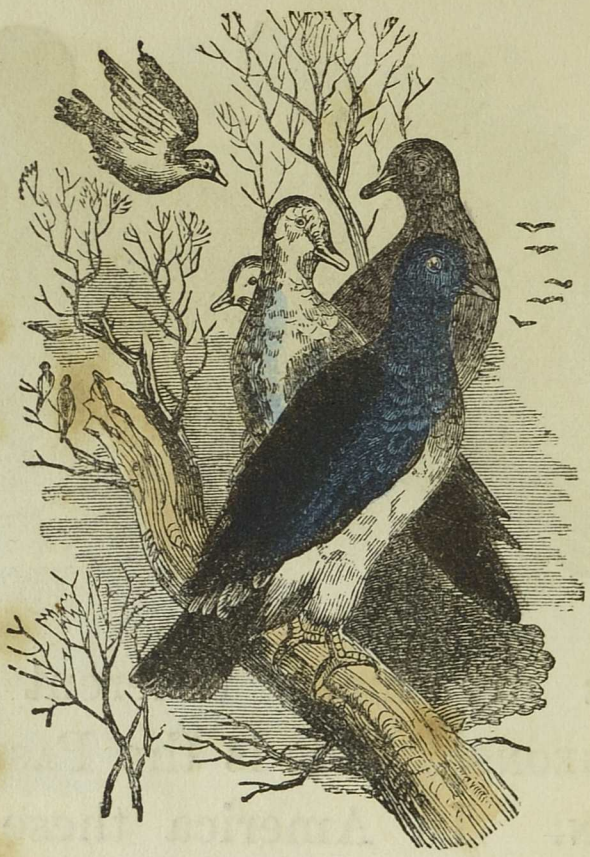
The Cock of the Rock is a native of South America. It is a beautiful bird, of a bright yellow colour, and about the size of a large pigeon. It is of a solitary nature, and only to be seen amidst wild rocks, where it hides up in the day, coming forth in the evening to feed. The crest on the head gives it an imposing appearance.



Tu-whit! tu-whoo!! What voice is that? It is the cry of the Owl sitting in yonder tree. He only comes out at night-time, because his eyes cannot bear the glare of the sun. Owls feed on mice and frogs, and little birds. They build their nests in barns, or in the hollow trunks of old trees.



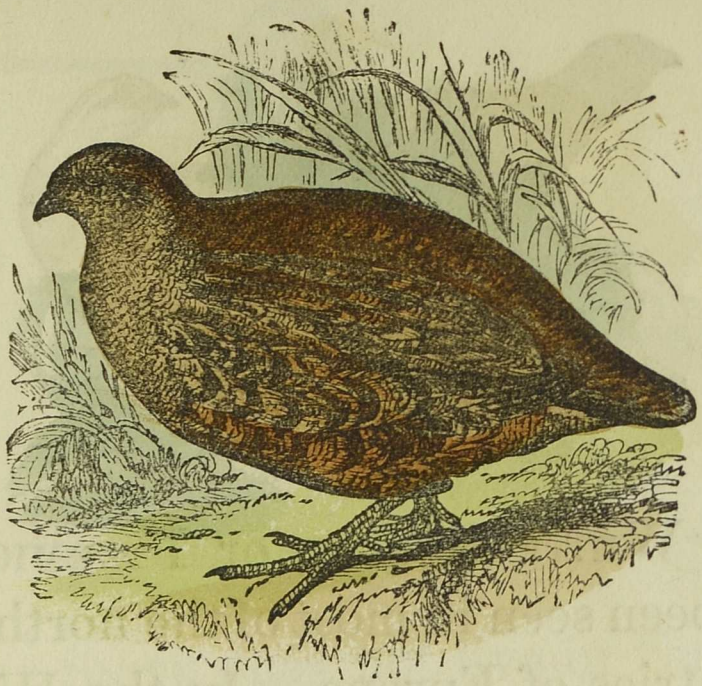
THERE are many different kinds of PIGEONS. This is the PASSENGER PIGEON. In America these birds fly in such immense numbers that the very air is darkened by them, and where they alight and build their nests whole forests are broken and destroyed by their great weight, as they sit together on the branches. The villagers sometimes go out armed with every kind of weapon, and destroy them in large numbers.



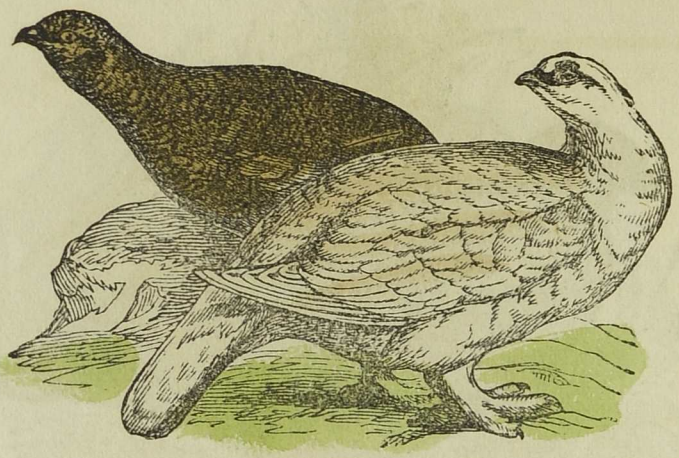
Wild Pigeons, or Stock-Doves, are to be found in most of the woody parts of the country. It is said that they migrate in the summer, and return when the cold weather begins; but many of them are to be found in England all through the summer. They are like tame Pigeons in their habits, and feed on corn and peas.

Rooks are almost as well known to those who live in town as to country people. Every boy and girl has seen their nests, twenty together, on the top of high trees, and has heard their loud cawing as they wake up in the morning, or return to their homes at evening. Rooks are very useful to the farmer, for they destroy thousands of insects which would otherwise eat up his corn. Some people say that Rook-pie is very nice.

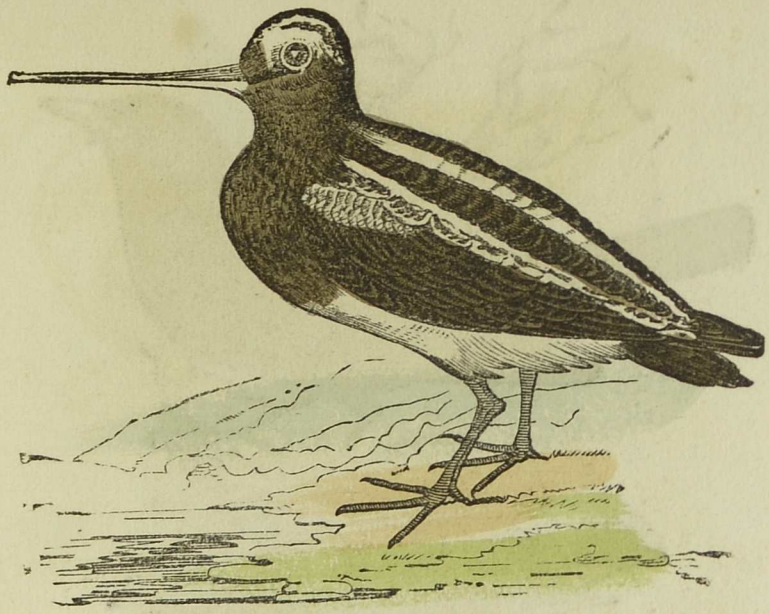
Argus Pheasants are very beautiful birds, which are only found in the South-east of Asia and the adjoining islands. They live in the recesses of the woods, and are scarcely ever seen by mankind.



Partridges live in the fields; they make their nests among the corn, or in the long grass. In the Autumn, men go with guns and dogs to kill them. The dogs find out where the birds are, and make them fly up; and then the sportsman shoots them —that is if he can, for very often he does not aim straight, and then the Partridges fly away. They usually fly in coveys of from four to sixteen.



The White Grouse, or Ptarmigan, has been seen in most of the northern countries of Europe. In the Highlands of Scotland it is frequently met with. The Red Grouse is a similar bird, which is to be found in most of the wild heathy tracts of land in the North of England and in Scotland. In August, every year, great numbers of sportsmen set out for the Moors and the Highlands, on purpose to shoot Grouse. They are considered a great delicacy, and a high price is often paid for them.



THE SNIPE does not live in England all the year round, but in the Spring time flies away to more northern countries. Snipes delight in wet marshy grounds, where they are often sought by sportsmen, who consider them a great delicacy at the table. The Woodcock is a similar bird, but larger. It prefers the woods, and two are seldom seen together. Woodcocks also fly away in Spring time, and return to us in the Autumn.

THE BLACKBIRD is the merriest songster of the woods. All the Spring and Summer long he begins to sing early in the morning, and the last thing of an evening you may hear him warbling his lively music. He is very fond of gardens and orchards, more especially where there are cherry and plum trees, for fruit seems to be his delight. Blackbirds build in bushes and low trees.

The Ring Ouzel is a little larger than the Blackbird, which it much resembles. Its colour is a dull black, and the breast of the male has on it a crescent of pure white feathers, which is not so apparent in the female. Ouzels are chiefly found in wild and mountainous districts, which they visit in the summer months only. They build their nests amid the moss in the rocks.

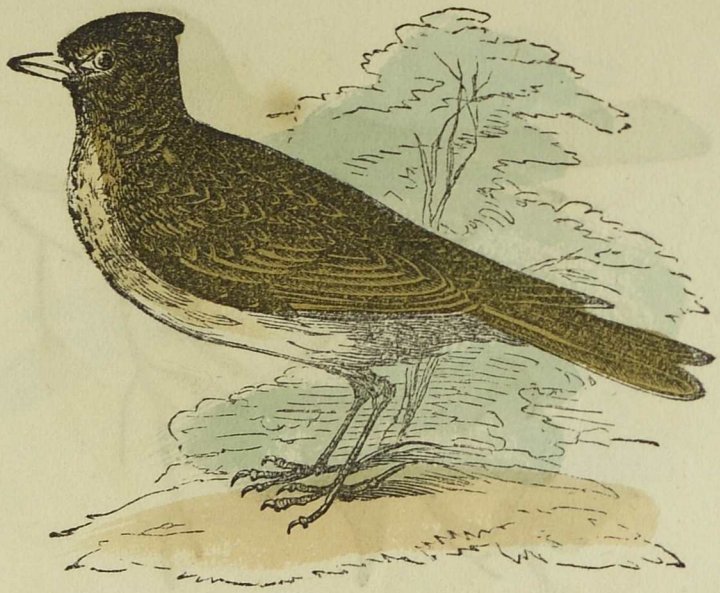
Cuckoo! Cuckoo!! When we hear that "well-known voice" we are sure that Spring-time has come, and that the sweet flowers will soon appear in all their beauty. Do you know, —the Cuckoo is the only bird that does not make herself a nest. She always lays her eggs in the nest of the hedge sparrow or other bird. Is she not a lazy thing?

The Nightingale is the sweetest singing bird that we have in England. He never gives us his song till the evening, when it is beginning to get dusk; and then, when other birds are asleep in their nests, he pours out his melodious notes till the whole air is filled. The Nightingale is of a rusty brown colour, with a white throat and belly.

The Kingfisher is a little bird of very beautiful plumage, which is often seen flying near the banks of streams; for it delights to feed on fish, which it seizes as they swim near the top of the water. In olden times, the Kingfisher was called the Halcyon.

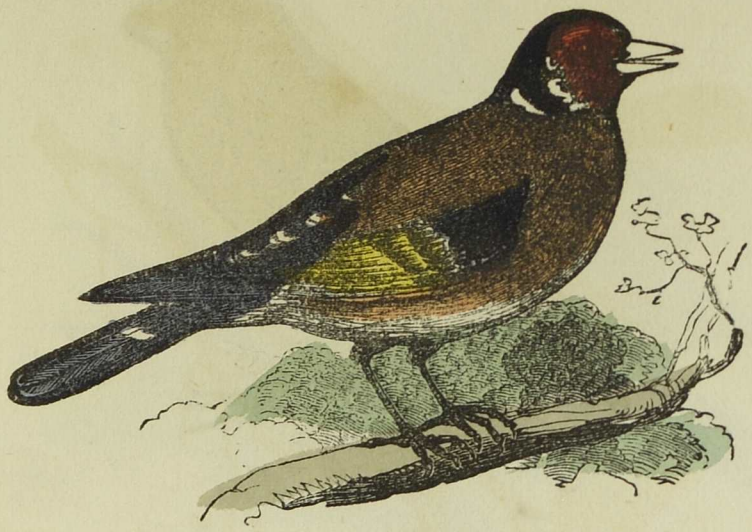
The Blue-bird is as dear to children in America as the Robin is to us. Its back is of a beautiful deep blue colour mixed with purple. It sings a sweet song, and flies about houses and barns, just like our Robin, and builds its nest in old apple trees. It is a very tame bird, and often comes to the windows or hops through the open doors of cottages in search of food.

And here is our dear little Robin! Who does not know him, and love him too? In the cold winter time, when all other songsters have flown to warmer lands, the Robin stays with us and sings us his charming song. Is he not a brave fellow?



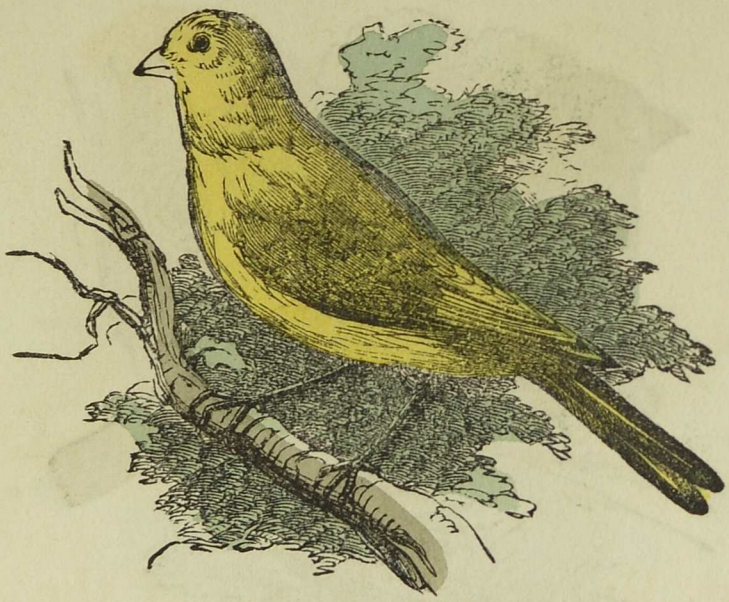
WHERE is there a little boy or girl who does not know the LARK? Who has not seen him soaring in the blue sky, filling all the air with his beautiful song; and who has not seen him imprisoned in a narrow cage, and singing even there—as though his little heart would break—in praise of the green fields? It is a cruel thing to imprison a Lark who is always trying to escape—ever trying to rise towards the warm sun.

The Dartford Warblers are not very often met with; for they are so fond of retirement and seclusion, that they seldom approach the dwellings of men. They often build their nests in the middle of furze bushes; and in walking over a country common you may frequently hear their warbling song, without being able to discover them. They are of a deep brown colour, with the throat and breast of a reddish purple.



The Goldfinch is the prettiest of little English birds, and though his coat is so smart, he can boast of more than the Peacock or the Pheasant—he can sing a good song. He is a vain little fellow, fond of looking at himself in the glass—he is easily tamed, and may be taught many little tricks. Goldfinches build a very neat little nest, which they line with soft moss. The eggs are very pretty; they are of a whitish colour, marked with purple spots.

The Bullfinch is one of the most mischievous birds that ever comes into our orchards—for he will eat fruit ripe or unripe. He sings a very pleasing song, and can be made to imitate the notes of many other birds. The breast and throat of the Bullfinch are of a bright crimson colour; the back is lead colour; and the head and wings are black. Bullfinches build their nests in hedges. The eggs are of a bluish white colour, marked with spots.



The Canary is too well known to need description. You cannot enter many homes without finding one of these lively pets, pouring out his song from his cage by the window. These birds first came from some islands in the Atlantic, called the Canary Islands, where they fly about as wild and as plentiful as Sparrows in England. In their native place, Canaries are of a dusky grey colour.

Sparrows are found in almost every part of Europe and Asia, but not in America. They are the boldest of all little birds, hopping about under our very feet in the streets of cities, and sitting on our window-sills in the country, or eating our fruits in the garden, or our corn in the fields. They build large loose nests of straw and twigs, often under the eaves of stables and barns, or on high trees.

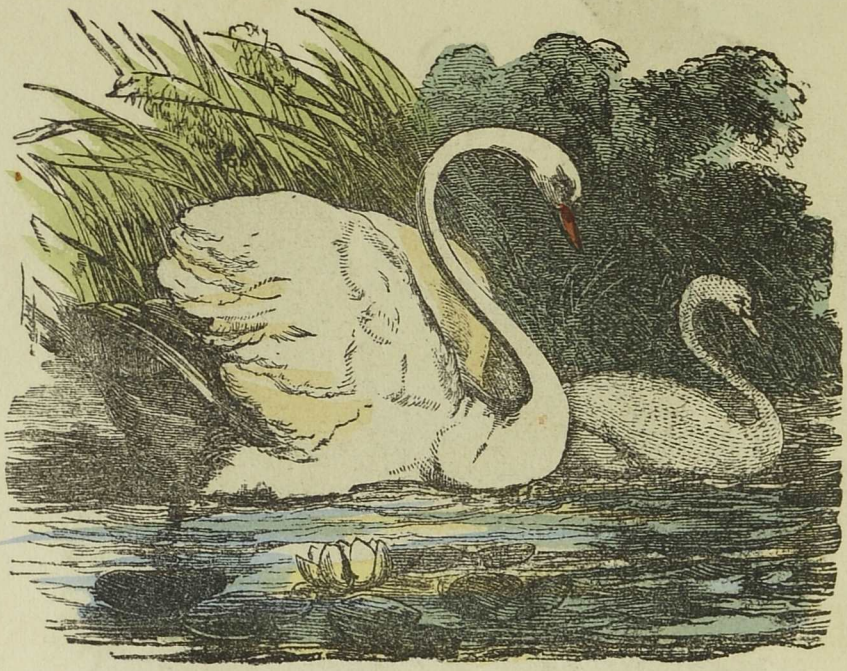
The Thrush is another famous songster. His note is not so loud as the Blackbird's, but perhaps it is more sweet and varied. He is very fond of fruit, and you may constantly see him hopping about the flower-borders in search of insects. Blackbirds and Thrushes build their nests in trees, and lay pretty eggs. In Scotland and many parts of England the Thrush is called the Mavis and the Blackbird the Merle.

The Titmouse is a pretty active little bird, that is found in almost every garden. The Titmouse family are celebrated for the clever nests they build at the end of branches of trees, often overhanging the water, where no reptile can get near them. The Wren is a smaller bird than the Titmouse. He sings a sweet little song, and stays with us all the Winter.

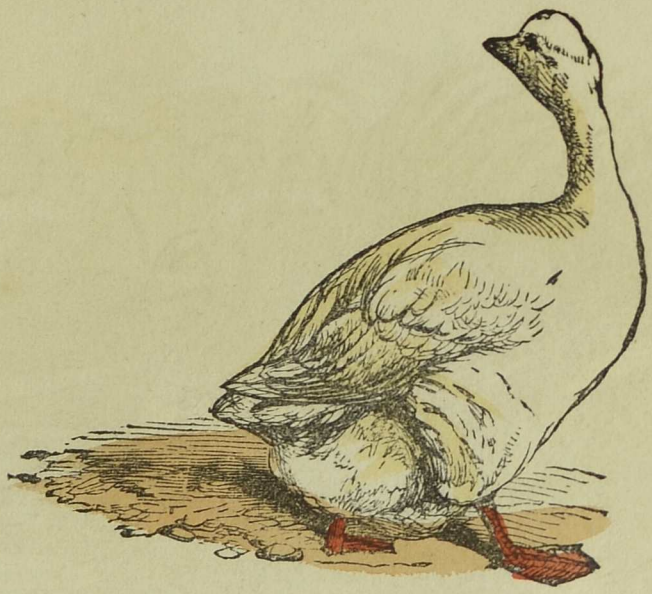
The Peacock is the most beautiful of large birds. When you see him strutting about upon a green lawn, spreading out his fine tail in the sun, he looks as proud as an emperor. Nothing can be more splendid than his plumage. His voice is nothing more than a scream.

THE TURKEY is a fine bird, and when a flock are walking across a field, with their heads all up and their tails outspread, they look very grand. At Christmas time there is sad havoc made among the turkeys, for almost every one who can afford it buys one for a Christmas dinner; and who wishes for a better?

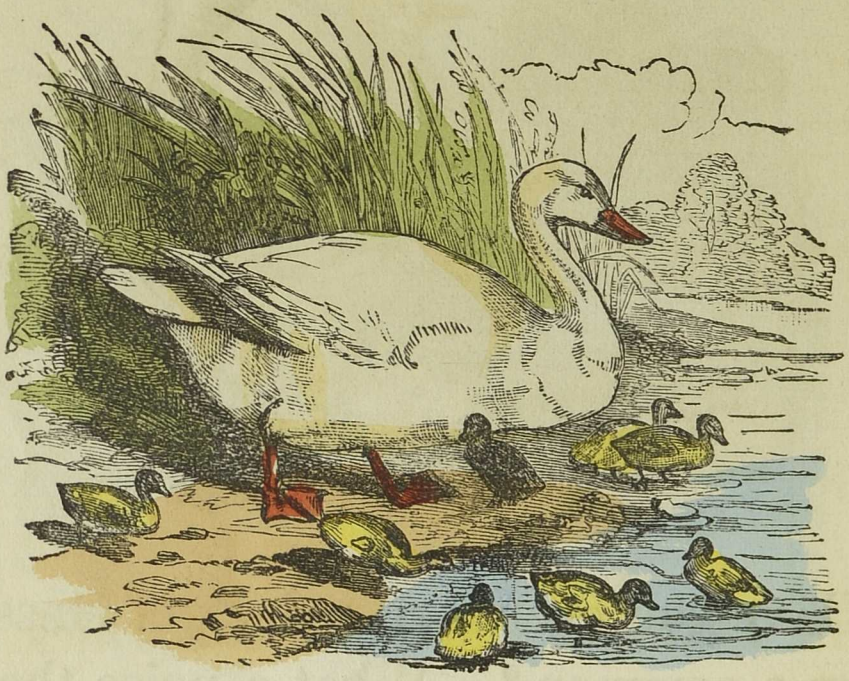
COCK-A-DOODLE-DOO! Here's a fine-looking fellow, with his head up as though he were King of the Farmyard, with his twenty wives,—the Hens,—and his fifty children,—the chickens. The COCK crows at sunrise, to wake up the household and tell them it is time to be at work, and that he wants his breakfast.



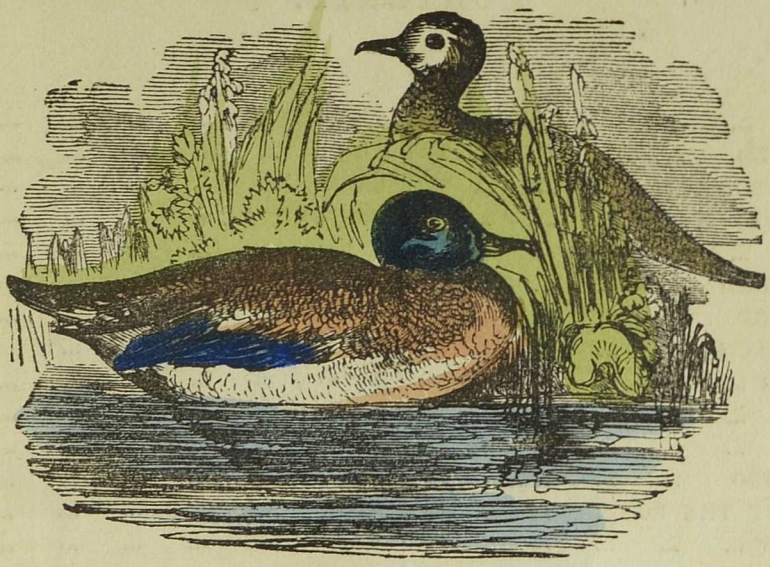
WHAT graceful bird is this? It is a SWAN, with her young one. See, how she bends her long neck and spreads out her great wings to catch the breeze. Swans pass almost all their time swimming in the water. They cannot walk well upon the ground, because their feet are webbed, like a Duck's. A young Swan is called a Cygnet.



HAVE you ever seen a flock of GEESE on a common? What a noise they make, hissing and cackling when any one goes near them. They are very useful birds. The beds we lie on are usually made of their feathers; the pens we write with come from their wings; and a goose, you know, gives us a capital dinner. In some countries there are thousands of Wild Geese, which live in marshy places, and by lakes and rivers.



QUACK! quack!! What have you to say, Mrs. DUCK? Oh, I am only calling to my little ones to come and take their morning bath. The dear little creatures, see how well they swim! there never were such good children as mine. I dare say not, Mrs. Duck; by and by, when they grow older, we will try some of them.



The Teal is a small kind of Duck, which is often found on inland lakes, ponds, and marshy grounds, in the winter-time. In the summer Teals emigrate to colder climates. They are much sought for by sportsmen, who esteem them a great delicacy for the table. They build their nests amid the roots of rushes by the water's edge, and the female lays about a dozen reddish-white eggs, of the size of a Pigeon's.

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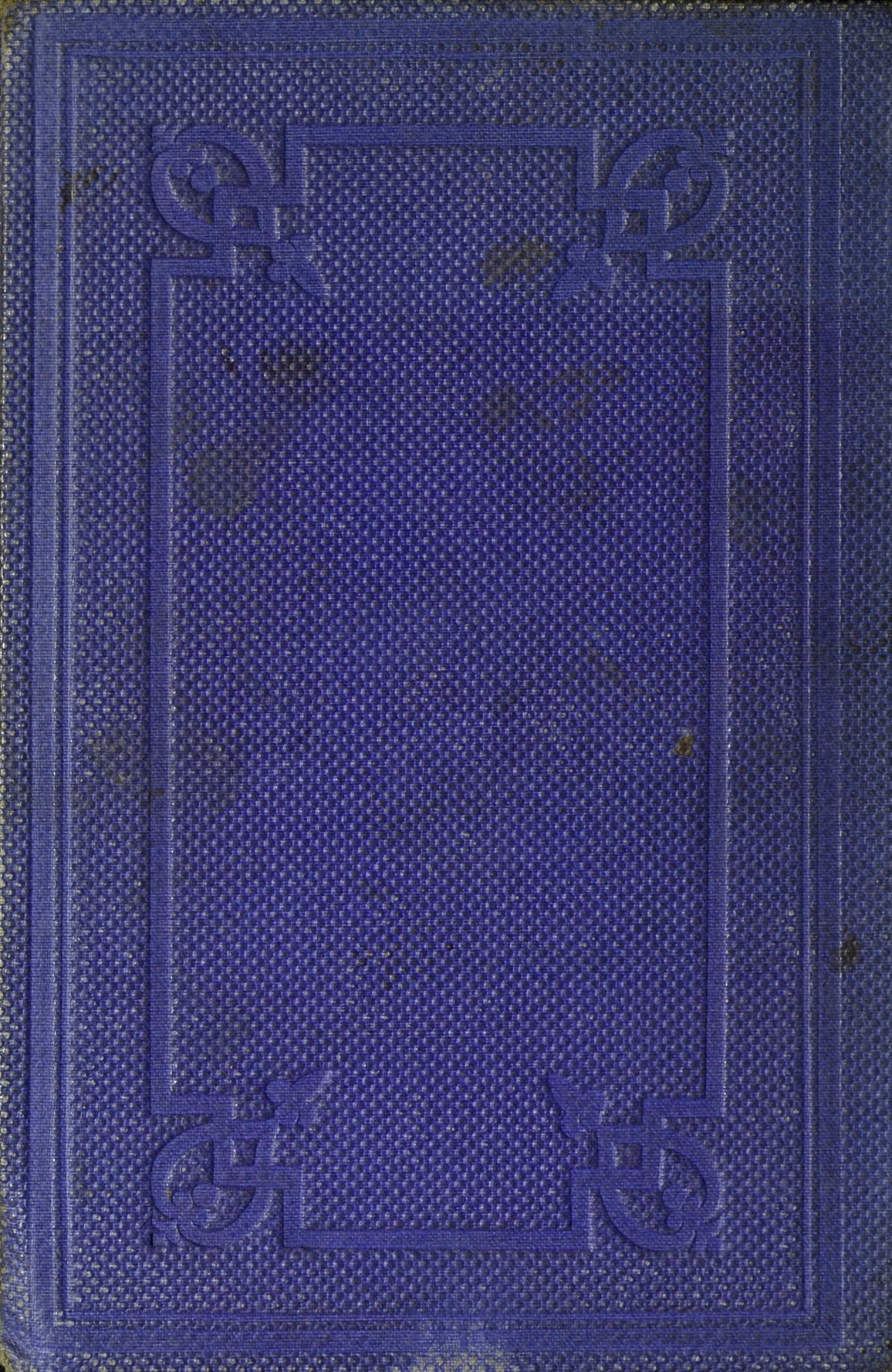
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