

AN
INTRODUCTION
TO THE
NATURAL HISTORY
OF
CURIOUS AND INTERESTING
BIRDS;

ADORNED WITH
ELEGANT ENGRAVINGS.

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PART III.;  
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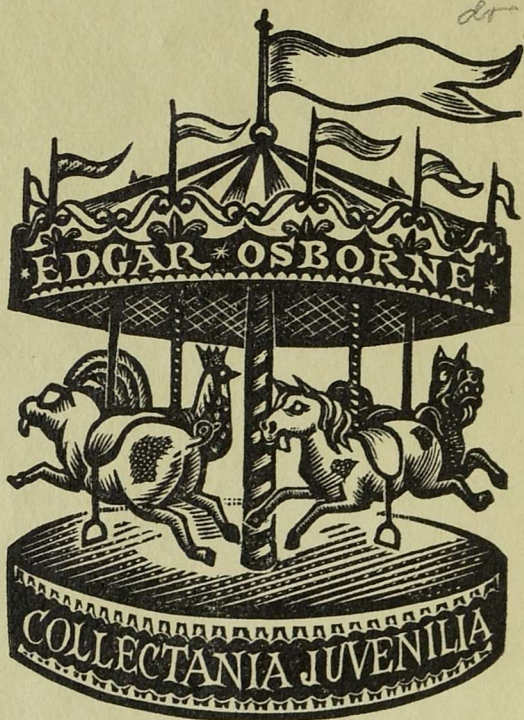
Stockton-upon-Tees,

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1810.

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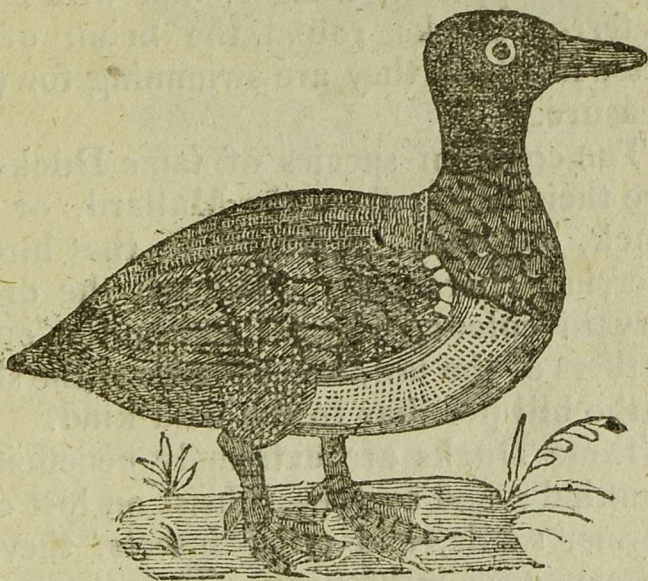
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THE DUCK.

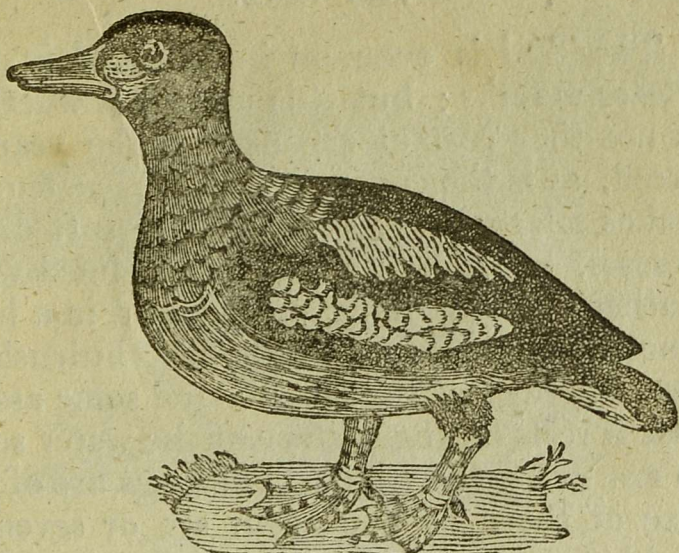
THERE are many species of this genus ; as the tame Duck, the wild, the eider, the velvet, the Barbary or Guinea Duck, the Muscovy, and various others, besides teal and widgeon.

Tame Ducks are reared with great facility, and as frequently by hens as by their own kind. Yet this does not alter any of their habits: for no sooner are they able to walk, than they desert their foster-dam, and direct their course to their favourite element; while she in vain tries to recal them from the apparent danger, and with marks of terror clucks round the brink of the water in which they are swimming for their pleasure.

The common species of tame Ducks derive their origin from the Mallard, or wild Duck, and may be traced to that bird by unerring characters. Though the drakes vary in colour, they all retain the curled feathers of the tail, and both sexes the shape of the bill peculiar to the wild kind.

Tame Ducks are extremely beneficial to mankind; and as they subsist on lost corn, worms, snails, and other insects, they are not expensive in keeping. They lay a great number of eggs annually, and may be fattened with ease and expedition.

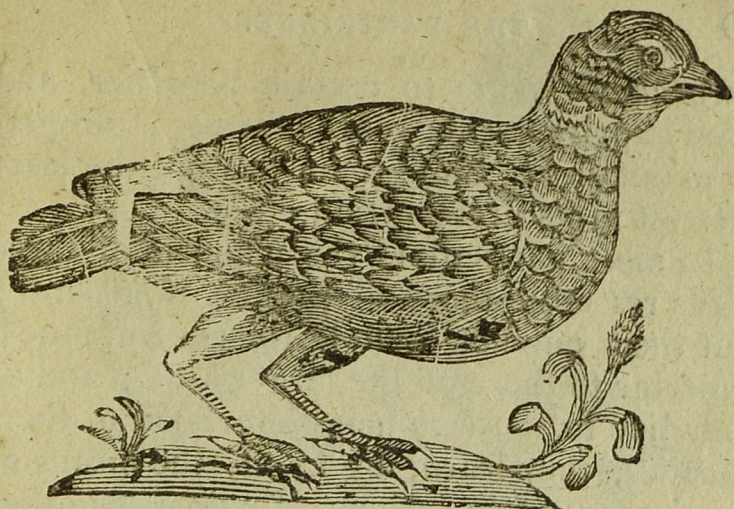
The principal difference between wild and tame Ducks arises from their size, and the nature of those places from which they derive their subsistence.



THE TEAL.

THIS beautiful little Duck seldom exceeds eleven ounces in weight, or measures more, stretched out, than fourteen inches and a half in length, and twenty-three and a half in breadth. The breast and belly are of a dirty white or grey colour; the back, and the sides under the wings, are curiously varied with lines of white and black; the wings are all over brown; the tail is likewise of a brown or dusky colour; and the feet and legs are of a dirty lead colour. The female, which is less than the male, is prettily freckled about the head and neck with brown and white.

The Teal is common in England in the winter months; but it is uncertain whether or not they remain throughout the year to breed, as is the case in France. The female makes a large nest, composed of soft dried grasses, and the pith of rushes, lined with feathers, and cunningly concealed in a hole among the roots of reeds and bulrushes, near the edge of the water; and some assert that it rests on the surface of the water so as to rise and fall with it. The eggs are of the size of those of a pigeon, six or seven in number, and of a dull white colour, marked with small brownish spots; but it appears that they sometimes lay ten or twelve eggs, for Buffon remarks that that number of young are seen in clusters on the pools, feeding on cresses, wild chervil, &c. and no doubt, as they grow up, they feed, like other Ducks, on the various seeds, grasses, and water-plants, as well as on the smaller animated beings with which all stagnant waters are so abundantly stored. The Teal, for the delicate taste of the flesh, and the wholesome nourishment it affords the body, doth deservedly challenge the first place among those of its kind.



THE PARTRIDGE.

THE Partridge is found in every country and climate; as well in the most northern regions, as under the tropical circles: and wherever it resides, it seems to adapt itself to the nature of the climate. In Greenland it is brown in summer; but in winter it becomes white, and is clothed with a warm down beneath.

Though the Partridge cannot be tamed, it lives no less under the protection of man (at least in this country) than if it were private property. It may change its master, indeed; but is always supposed to belong to persons of a certain rank. If any one *not qualified* (that is, a poor man) should kill it,

he becomes liable to certain penalties, and even imprisonment: yet the farmer is obliged to maintain it, though he has not the least interest in its preservation.

In most particulars the manners of these birds resemble those of poultry in general; but their cunning and instincts seem much superior to those of the larger kind; and as they live in the very neighbourhood of their enemies, they learn, by habit, the means of evasion or safety. Hence if a dog, or other formidable animal, happen to approach their nest, the female puts all her little arts in practice to draw him from the spot. She keeps just before him, pretends to be incapable of flying, and never goes so far off as to discourage her pursuer, till she has drawn him to a convenient distance; but she then suddenly takes wing, and leaves him to gaze after her in despair.

Partridges make no nests, properly speaking, but lay their eggs upon any spot of ground adapted to their purpose. A covey generally consists of from ten to fifteen; and it is supposed a Partridge will live about fifteen years.

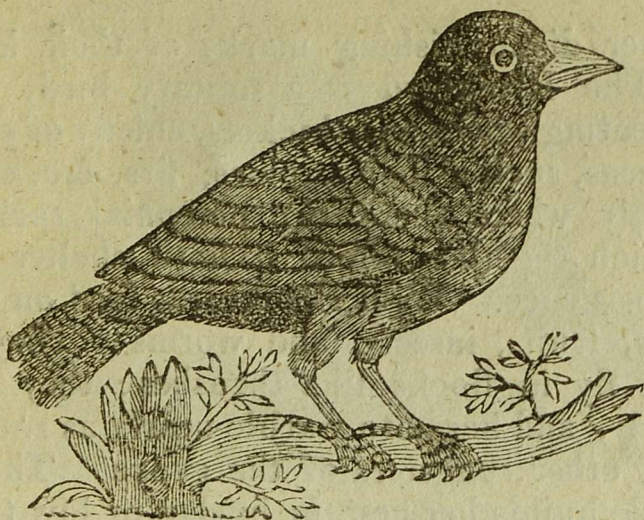


THE THRUSH.

THE Thrush is distinguished among our singing birds by the clearness and fulness of its note: it charms us not only with the sweetness, but variety of its song, which it begins early in the spring, and continues during part of the summer. This bold and pleasing songster pours its melody from the top of some high tree; but when about to form its nest, it descends to some low bush or thicket. The nest is composed of dried grass, with a little earth or clay intermixed, and lined with rotten wood. The female lays five or six eggs, of a pale blue colour, marked with dusky spots.

Although this species is not considered with us as migratory, it has, nevertheless, been observed in some places in great numbers during the spring and summer, where not one was to be seen in the winter; which has induced an opinion that they either shift their quarters entirely, or take shelter in the more retired parts of the woods. This bird is migratory in France: M. de Buffon says that it appears in Burgundy about the end of September, before the redwing and fieldfare, and that it feeds upon the ripe grapes, and sometimes does much mischief to the vineyard. The females of the Thrush kind are very similar to the males, and differ chiefly in a less degree of brilliancy in the colours.

This species of the Thrush kind feed on insects, and berries of the holly and mistletoe; and during severe snowy weather, when there is a failure of their usual diet, are observed to scratch up the roots of arum, or cuckoo-pint, from the hedges; a plant remarkably warm and pungent, and well adapted for the season.

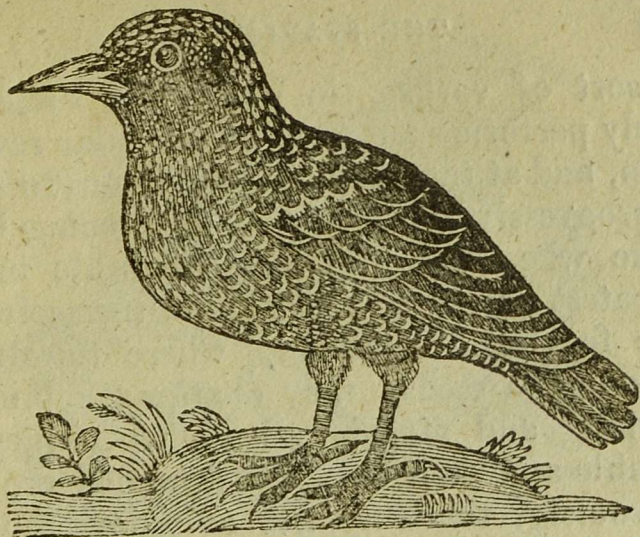


THE BLACKBIRD.

THIS beautiful and well-known bird is one of the first that proclaims the genial spring, and his note, when heard at a distance, is the most pleasing of all the grove; though it is rather unpleasant in a cage, being loud and deafening. The plumage of the male is of a coal-black colour: that of the female is mostly brown, inclining to rust colour on the breast and belly; its song is also very different, so that it has sometimes been mistaken for a bird of a different species. Male Blackbirds, during the first year, resemble the females so much as not easily to be distinguished from them; but after that, they assume a yellow bill, and

other distinguishing marks of their kind.

The Blackbird is a solitary bird, frequenting woods and thickets, chiefly of evergreens, such as holly, pines, firs, &c. especially where there are perennial springs, which together afford it both shelter and subsistence. Wild Blackbirds feed on berries, fruits, insects, and worms. They do not fly in flocks like thrushes; they pair early, and begin to warble nearly as soon as any other songsters of the grove. The female builds her nest in bushes or low trees, and lays four or five eggs, of a bluish green colour, marked with dusky spots. The young birds are easily brought up tame, and may be taught to whistle a variety of tunes. They are restless and timorous birds, easily alarmed, and difficult of access; but Buffon observes that they are more restless than cunning, and more timorous than suspicious, as they readily suffer themselves to be caught with bird-lime, nooses, and all sorts of snares. They are never kept in aviaries; for when shut up with other birds, they pursue and harass their companions in slavery unceasingly, for which reason they are generally confined in cages apart. In some places this bird is called the Ouzel.



THE STARLING.

FEW birds are more generally known than the Starling, or Stare, it being an inhabitant of almost every climate; and as it is a familiar bird, and easily trained in a state of captivity, its habits have been more frequently observed than those of most other birds. The female makes a nest of straw, small fibres of roots, &c. and lays four or five eggs of a pale greenish ash colour. She commonly builds in the hollows of trees, rocks, or old walls, and sometimes in cliffs overhanging the sea. In the winter season these birds fly in vast flocks, and may be known at a great distance by their whirling mode of flight, which Buffon compares to

a sort of vortex, in which the collective body performs an uniform circular revolution, and at the same time continues to make a progressive advance. The evening is the time when the Starlings assemble in the greatest numbers, and betake themselves to the fens and marshes, where they roost among the reeds; they chatter much in the evening and morning, both when they assemble and disperse. So attached are they to society, that they not only join those of their own species, but also birds of a different kind, and are frequently found in company with redwings, fieldfares, and even with crows, jackdaws, and pigeons. Their principal food consists of worms, snails, and caterpillars; they likewise eat various kinds of grain, seeds, and berries, and are said to be particularly fond of cherries. In a confined state they eat small pieces of raw flesh, bread soaked in water, &c. are very docile, and may be taught to repeat short phrases, or whistle tunes with great exactness, and in this state acquire a warbling superior to their native song.



THE NIGHTINGALE.

ALTHOUGH the Nightingale is common in this country, it never visits the northern parts of our island, and is but seldom seen in Devonshire and Cornwall. It leaves us sometime in the month of August, and returns in the month of April; it is supposed during that interval to visit the distant regions of Asia: this is probable, as these birds do not winter in France, Germany, Italy, Greece, &c. neither does it appear that they stay in Africa, but are seen at all times in India, Persia, China, and Japan: in the latter country they are much esteemed for their song, and sell at very great prices. They are spread throughout Europe, even

as far north as Siberia ; and in Sweden they are said to sing delightfully.

Nightingales begin to build about the end of April or beginning of May ; they make their nest in the lower part of a thick bush or hedge : the female lays four or five eggs of a greenish brown colour. The nest is composed of dry grass and leaves, intermixed with small fibres, and lined with hair, down, and other soft and warm substances. The business of incubation is entirely performed by the female ; whilst the cock, at no great distance, entertains her with his delightful melody : as soon, however, as the young are hatched, he leaves off singing, and joins her in the care of providing for the young brood. These birds make a second hatch, and sometimes a third ; and in hot countries they are said to have four.

The Nightingale is a solitary bird, and never unites in flocks like many of the lesser birds, but hides itself in the thickest part of the bushes, and sings generally in the night : its food consists principally of insects, small worms, eggs of ants, and berries of various kinds. Nightingales, though timorous and shy, are easily caught ; snares of all sorts are laid for them, and succeed.



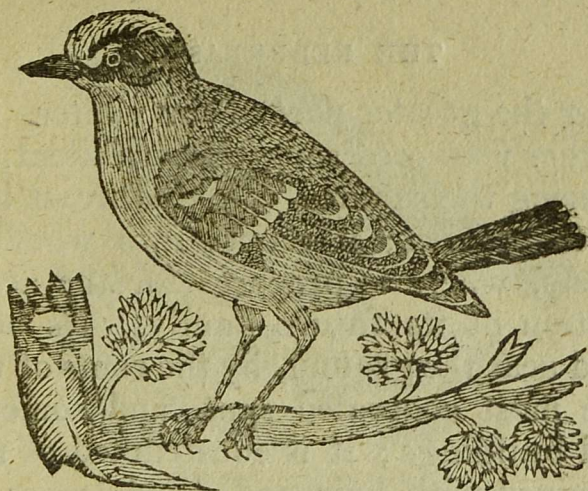
THE CANARY.

THIS beautiful little creature was originally a native of the Canary islands, from which it receives its name; but has been domesticated in Europe for at least two centuries, and is a frequent ornament of the parlour or the hall. In its native islands, which are equally famed for the beauty of their landscapes and the harmony of their groves, the Canary bird is of a dusky grey colour, very different from those seen in Europe. With us they have that variety of colouring usually resulting from long domestication; some being yellow, some mottled, some elegantly shaded with green, &c.

But they are chiefly esteemed for their music; having a high piercing pipe, capable of long extension, and enriched with much fascinating variety.

The Canary will breed with other birds of the same genus, particularly the goldfinch; it likewise proves prolific with the linnet, but not so readily; and admits also the chaffinch, yellow bunting, and even the sparrow, though with still more difficulty. In all these instances, the pairing succeeds best when the female Canary is introduced to the male of the opposite species.

The breeding and rearing of these charming birds form an amusement of the most pleasing kind, and afford a variety of scenes highly interesting and gratifying to innocent minds. In the places fitted up and accommodated to the use of the little captives, we are delighted to see the workings of nature exemplified in the choice of their mates, building their nests, hatching and rearing their young, and the impassionate ardour exhibited by the male, whether he is engaged in assisting his faithful mate in collecting materials for her nest, in providing food for her offspring, or in chaunting his lively songs during the important business.



THE REDBREAST.

OF all birds this is the most familiar, and therefore it is in a manner consecrated to the domestic affections. The beauty of its form, the sprightliness of its motions, and the confidence it seems to repose in man, all unite to secure it from annoyance. Added to this, several popular prejudices operate in its favour, and seem to prevail in every country where it is known. It feeds on insects; eats crumbs of bread when its usual food fails; and while other birds are ready to perish with cold and hunger, seeks the shelter of a house or cottage, in which it is generally a welcome guest. The song of the Redbreast is remarkably soft and sweet; and is the more to be valued as we enjoy it

during the greater part of the winter, when the other feathered songsters are silent.

During the summer the Redbreast is seldom to be seen; it retires into woods and thickets, where it prepares for the accommodation of its future family. Its nest is placed near the ground, by the roots of trees, in the most concealed spot, and sometimes in old buildings; it is constructed of moss, intermixed with hair and dried leaves, and lined with feathers: in order more effectually to conceal it, the bird covers its nest with leaves, leaving only a narrow winding entrance under the heap. The female lays from five to nine eggs, of a dull white, with reddish spots. During the time of incubation, the cock sits at no great distance, and makes the woods resound with his delightful warbling: he keenly chases all the birds of his own species, and drives them from his little settlement; for it has never been known that two pairs of these birds, who are as faithful as they are amorous, were lodged at the same time in the same bush.

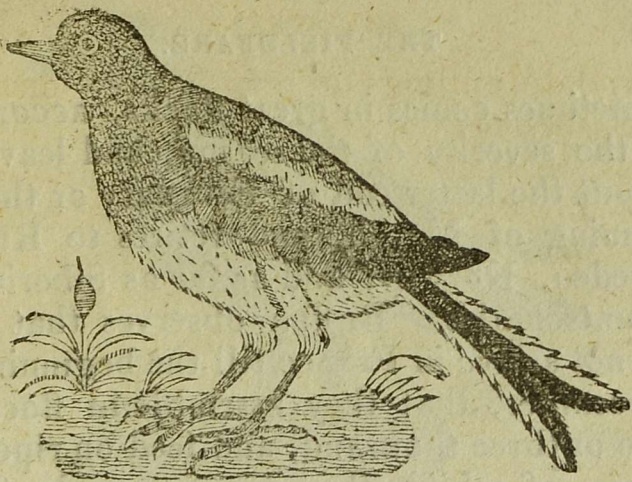


THE WREN.

THIS bird, which weighs no more than three drachms, and is only three inches and a half in length, from the point of the bill to the end of the tail, is admired for the loudness of its note, compared with the little body whence it issues ; and even when confined in a cage, it has sometimes been known to sing as strong as in its native fields, and with equal freedom and mellowness of song. It commonly creeps about hedges or trees, in the vicinity of farm yards, and sings very late in the evening ; though not like the nightingale, after the landscape is enveloped with darkness.

This active little bird is very common in England, and braves our severest winters, which it contributes to enliven by its cheerful note. During that season it approaches

near the dwellings of man, and sometimes takes shelter even in the roofs of houses and barns, and not unfrequently continues its song during a fall of snow. In the spring it betakes itself to the woods, where it constructs its nest close to the ground, in a low bush, and sometimes on the turf, beneath the trunk of a tree, or in a hole in a wall: its nest is constructed with much art, being of an oval shape, with one small aperture in the side for an entrance: it is composed chiefly of moss, and lined within with feathers: the female lays from ten to sixteen or eighteen eggs; they are white, thinly sprinkled with small faint reddish spots at the thicker end.



THE FIELDFARE.

THIS bird is somewhat larger than the common thrush; being about ten inches in length. The bill is yellow; each corner of the mouth is furnished with a few black bristly hairs; the eyes are light brown; the top of the head and back part of the neck are of a light ash colour, the former spotted with black; the back and coverts of the wings are of a deep hoary brown; the throat and breast are yellow, spotted with black; the belly and thighs of a yellowish white, and the tail brown.

The Fieldfare is only a visitant in this island, making its appearance about the beginning of October, in order to avoid the rigorous winters of the north, whence it

sometimes comes in great flocks, according to the severity of the season, and leaves us about the latter end of February or the beginning of March, and retires to Russia, Sweden, Norway, and as far as Siberia and Kamtschatka. Buffon observes that they do not arrive in France till the beginning of December, that they assemble in flocks of two or three thousand, and feed on ripe cerevices, of which they are extremely fond: during the winter they feed on haws and other berries; they likewise eat worms, snails, and slugs.

Fieldfares seem of a more sociable disposition than throstles: they are sometimes seen singly, but in general form very numerous flocks, and fly in a body; and though they often spread themselves through the fields in search of food, they seldom lose sight of each other, but when alarmed fly off, and collect together upon the same tree. In the northern climates, where these birds enjoy their season of music and pleasure, they sing most delightfully, among the vast forests of maples with which those countries abound. They build in hedges, and their eggs are of a bluish green colour, spotted with black.

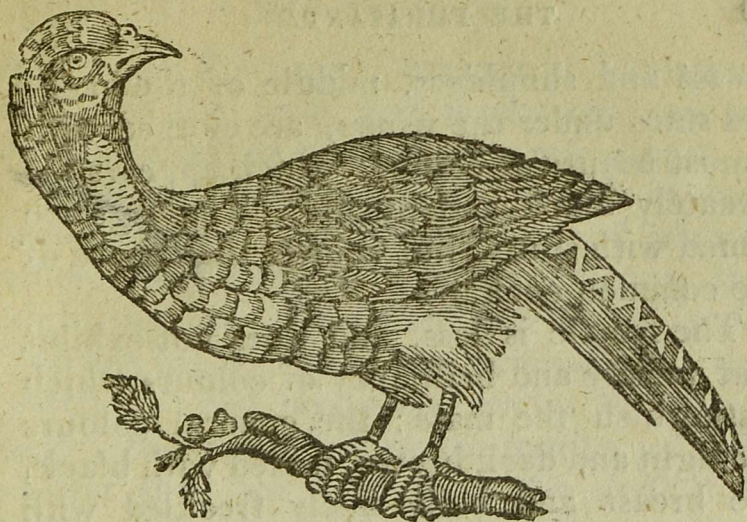


THE TURTLE DOVE.

LENGTH somewhat above twelve inches. The bill is brown; eyes yellow, encompassed with a crimson circle; the top of the head is ash colour, mixed with olive; each side of the neck is marked with a spot of black feathers, tipped with white; the back is ash colour, each feather edged with reddish brown; wing coverts and scapulars reddish brown, spotted with black; quill feathers dusky, with pale edges; the fore part of the neck and the breast are of a light purplish red; the belly, thighs, and vent white; the two middle feathers of the tail are brown, the others dusky, tipped with white: the legs are red.

The note of the Turtle Dove is singularly tender and plaintive: in addressing his mate, the male makes use of a variety of winning attitudes, cooing at the same time in the most gentle and soothing accents; on which account the Turtle Dove has been represented, in all ages, as the most perfect emblem of connubial constancy and attachment. The Turtle arrives late in the spring, and departs about the latter end of August: it frequents the thickest and most sheltered parts of the woods, where it builds its nest on the highest trees: the female lays two eggs, and has only one brood in this country, but in warmer climates it is supposed to breed several times in the year. Turtles are pretty common in Kent, where they are sometimes seen in flocks of twenty or more, frequenting the pea-fields, and are said to do much damage. Their stay with us seldom exceeds more than four or five months, during which time they pair, build their nests, breed, and rear their young, which are strong enough to join them in their retreat.

According to vulgar tradition, when one of these birds dies, its mate remains ever after in solitude.



THE PHEASANT.

NEXT to the peacock the Pheasant is the most beautiful of the winged tribes ; both for the vivid colour of its plumes, and their delightful mixture and variety. No efforts of the pencil can produce any thing so brilliant ; nor can any thing charm the eye with a greater richness and variety of ornament than this beautiful creature. The crown of the head, and upper part of the neck, are tintured with a dark green, shining like silk. The sides of the neck and the throat are of a shining purple colour. The feathers under the chin, and at the corners of the mouth, are black, with green borders ; below the green, the rest of the neck, the

breast and shoulders, middle of the back, and sides under the wings, are clothed with a most beautiful colour, which appears alternately black and purple. The legs are armed with spurs, but shorter than those of the common cock.

The female is less, and does not exhibit that variety and brilliancy of colours which distinguish the male: the general colours are light and dark brown, mixed with black, the breast and belly finely freckled with small black spots on a light ground; the tail is short, and barred somewhat like that of the male; the space round the eye is covered with feathers.

The Ring Pheasant is a fine variety of this species; its principal difference consists in a white ring, which encircles the lower part of the neck; the colours of the plumage in general are likewise more distinct and vivid.

There are many varieties of Pheasants, of extraordinary beauty and brilliancy of colouring: in many gentlemen's woods there is a kind as white as snow, which will intermix with the common ones. Many of the gold and silver kinds, brought from China, are also kept in aviaries in this king-

dom: the Common Pheasant is likewise a native of the East, and is the only one of its kind that has multiplied in our island.

Pheasants are generally found in low woody places, on the borders of plains, where they delight to sport: during the night they perch on the branches of trees. The hen breeds upon the ground, like the partridge, and lays from twelve to fifteen eggs: the young follow the mother as soon as ever they are freed from the shell. In the breeding season the cock will sometimes intermix with the common hen, and produce a mixed breed.

J. Appleton, Printer.

FINIS.

