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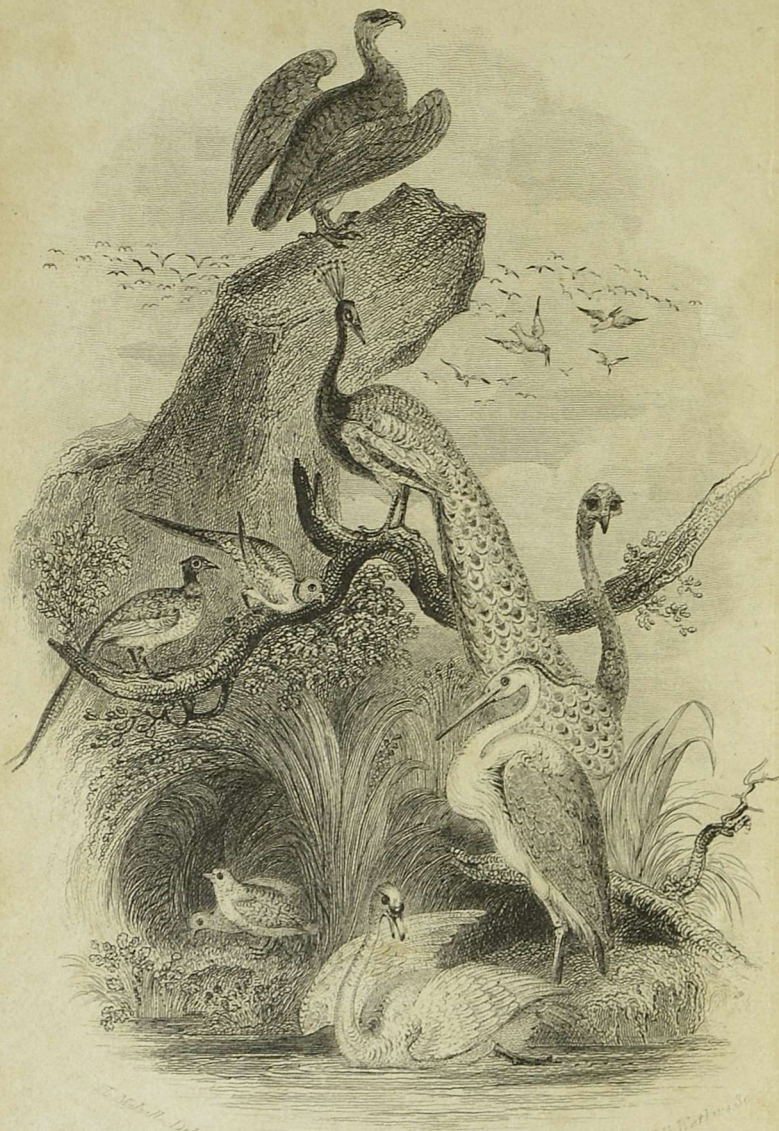

LONDON.

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SKETCHES OF BIRDS,

IN

Short Enigmatical Verses,

FOR THE

AMUSEMENT OF CHILDREN;

WITH

ILLUSTRATIVE ANECDOTES AND DESCRIPTIONS FROM THE BEST MODERN AUTHORITIES.

By SAMUEL ROPER.

LONDON:

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PREFACE.

In devising amusement for my children during the long winter evenings, it occurred to me as one mode of attaining that end, to throw some of the subjects of Ornithology into rhythmical Enigmas; in which, by seizing a few of the most prominent peculiarities of the animal, either as respects its plumage, habits, notes, or localities, ingenuity might be exercised and rewarded without much difficulty, and an acquaintance with Natural History be cultivated and enlarged. Such was the origin of the following Verses; and having found them productive of much amusement, and some instruction to my own family,

am induced to hope that the same effects may attend their wider circulation. In some of these Verses it will be seen that I have adverted to birds not likely to be recognized by children whose reading has been confined to the ordinary books on Natural History, although sufficiently known to the parties for whose use they were originally designed. But the curious characteristics of these wonders of the feathered tribe are calculated to excite attention, and gratify the youthful love of novelty; while the Notes and references annexed will fully explain the peculiar habits of the subject, and may induce a wider range of reading in this interesting study, which the recent writings of Wilson, Audubon, Selby, Rennie, and others, have so greatly illustrated and enlarged.

Copious as the Notes may appear, many of the birds embodied in the Enigmas are still left

unnoticed *there;* and in these cases the reader is referred to the works on Natural History, which usually form an important part of the juvenile library. My object in these Notes was not to give *descriptions* of the animal, but anecdotes of its life and manners—not to satisfy, but rather to stimulate curiosity; and with this view, the information contained in these selections will generally be found of a very amusing character; and such as, in many cases, has not hitherto been brought within the reach of the younger part of the community.

SAMUEL ROPER.

Hackney, Sept. 1832.

SKETCHES, &c.

1.

In summer I haunt the woody glen,
In winter I seek the haunts of men:
I've a Christian name as well as you,
And like Britain's flag is my bosom's hue.

2.

While 'tis light I sit in the thickest tree,
When dark I wander at liberty:
I skim o'er the meadows in search of prey,
And detect it better by night than day.

3.

My back and my breast are of cinnamon hue,
My wings are chequered with black, white, and
blue;
I've a crest on my head, which I heighten at will,
And though harsh is my voice I can mimic with skill.

4.

Of Albion's birds, though least in size,
Strong, merry, and sweet my notes arise;
I carelessly carol the cold winter through,
And in spring *hang* my nest on the fir or the yew.

5.

My plumage is bright, and my flesh is good,
My haunts are the hedgerow, and thickest wood;
To kill me by day even princes delight,
But they're fined and imprison'd who kill me at
night.

6.

My beak is of a saffron hue,
My garb's a mournful one to view;
But yet with joyful notes and clear,
I sing—my much-loved mate to cheer.

7.

I fill the air with a volume of sound,
I build my nest on the furrowed ground;
Alone I rise in the summer's light,
But with flocks in winter I take my flight.

8.

Amongst the high grass, or the standing
corn,
We run from the nest as soon as born;
There unmolested awhile we feed,
Preserv'd for man's pleasure, at last to
bleed.

9.

When the fields in spring's gay robe are drest,
I come, and construct my clay-built nest;
Now twittering I sit, and now rapidly fly,
But when winter approaches I bid you good-bye.

10.

I resemble in colour, in shape, and in flight,
The birds who to build by your windows delight;
But in the tall cliff you my dwelling may see,
And at boring, no miner's more skilful than me.

11.

Unceasingly busy, contentious and loud,
Every spring to our native trees we crowd;
We sometimes reside in the midst of the town,
And strange though it seem, we have built in a *crown*.

12.

In the dirtiest pool, or the muddy lake,
My food I seek, and my pleasure I take ;
I swim round your dwellings, nor cherish a fear,
Though design'd for your table when peas appear.

13.

I'm richly flavoured and goodly sized,
In Rome once honour'd tho' now despised;
For a silly fellow you rarely see,
But 'tis ten to one that you think of me.

14.

The herald of summer I'm happy to be,
I come to announce it from over the sea ;
My message is joyful to country and town,
Tho' with only *two notes* I can make it known.

15.

When nature's tribes have sought their bed,
And soundly sleeps each pillowed head;
Amid the groves *I* raise a voice,
Which makes e'en night herself rejoice.

16.

I've got a long bill, which I plunge in the ground;
By springs, or in marshes, I'm usually found;
I pay you a visit when winter is near,
But I take myself off in the spring of the year.

17.

Amid the gay blossoms I build my nest;
And strut, and whistle, and take my rest;
My plumage so brilliant, my song so free,
Oft cause me to lose my liberty.

18.

The *mourning of China* * and *Europe* you find
In my wings and my back to be always combined;
As a plunderer known, and for chattering so famed,
That persons thus gifted are after me named.

19.

By river, or lake, or a marsh so green,
Reposed on one leg I am often seen:
When hungry, my dinner I seek in the streams,
And then sit in the sun and enjoy my dreams.

20.

The Fox oft snaps me up for food,
The Kite pursues my tender brood:
I am highly esteemed wherever I'm known,
In city or village, by king or by clown.

* *White* is universally worn as mourning in China.

21.

Where the Niger's mysterious torrent runs*
We dwell, with his swarthy and ill-used sons;
Imported from thence, we're in England tame,
And a *Coin once current* has lent us a name.

22.

In tropical climes is my native home,
Though northwards I'm often compelled to roam:
But *there* I'm a favourite with young and with old,
For I scream, and whistle, I chatter, and scold.

23.

With the speed of an arrow *my* flight proceeds,
My haunt the fields, and my provender seeds;
In Europe a present from country cousins,
In America often knocked down by dozens.

* Mysterious now no longer, as Mr. Lander has discovered its termination in the Atlantic Ocean.

24.

My home is the river, the pond, or the lake :
By the side of these my nest I make ;
With neck proudly arching I meet the stream's
force,
And gracefully glide on my watery course.

25.

Wherever man lives, or in country or town,
By palace or cottage, we're equally known ;
We hop round his dwelling throughout the long
year,
And no crumb can escape us when winter's severe.

26.

No feathers have I to cover my back,
My wings are long, and my colour is black ;
I flit in the evening along with the owl,
And its hard to decide if I'm flesh or fowl.

27.

I haunt the ruins, I haunt the steeple,
I cry aloud, and amuse the people;
I sometimes hop about quite tame,
And learn to utter just half my name.

28.

In gluttonous feeding is my delight;
I am usually black, but sometimes white;*
The peasant who travels with laughter and joke,
Grows silent and pale at my ominous croak.

29.

Where the Moslem hears the call to prayer;†
Where the women both turbans and trowsers wear;
Where the Crescent the ensign of state you see;
If you know that land, you've a name for me.

* This is said to be the case in the Polar Regions.

† See Southey's Thalaba, Book viii. Note 1, for an ac-

30.

Tho' nature denies *me* a musical voice,
And I scream most harshly when I rejoice;
Yet such is my brilliant and varied hue,
That I'm always admired when seen by
you.

31.

To strike at our prey as it flies in the air,
We were formerly trained with the utmost
care;
We were hooded and bell'd, and adorn'd with
rings,
Our keepers were lords, and our masters kings.

count of this ceremony, and the reasons which gave rise to it.

"On a still evening, when the Muezzin has a fine voice, which is frequently the case, the effect is solemn and beautiful beyond all the bells in Christendom."—*Lord Byron's Notes to the Giaour.*

32.

I climb up and pierce the tree for food,
With shrieks I startle the insect brood;
And as from their secret recesses they throng,
To escape from my *voice*, they're a prey to my *tongue*.

33.

When for pleasure, or health, to the coast you repair,
Lightly skimming the billows, you meet with me there;
My head and my bosom are white as the snow,
But my back's the most opposite colour you know.

34.

Large, powerful, majestic, the lion of air;
With fierceness like his, and with eyes that so glare;
A faithful companion still follows my flight,
To strike down the quarry, we share with delight.

35.

The leader of Israel was left to float*
On the dangerous flood, in a rush-built
boat;
And like him, in my cradle of rushes I brave,
Among the reeds rocking, both wind and
wave.

36.

By hunger prompted at early morn,
I hunt for my prey, which I hang on a thorn;
There leisurely pick it with sharp-pointed
bill,
And feast on the victim transfix'd by my
skill.

* Exodus, c. ii. v. 3.—Miss H. More, in her *Sacred Dramas*, has finely described the conduct of *Jochebed* on this occasion.

"With invocations to the living God,
Twisting together every slender reed,
And with a separate prayer each osier weaving."

37.

When the Normans in England oppressively trode,
The serf wore a collar to mark his abode;*
Like him, on my neck a bright circlet I wear,
Which tells you my name, though no master I fear.

38.

In my native isles I am drest in green,
But *here*, with a yellow vest I'm seen;
Yet I sing with as lofty and sweet a tone,
As if freedom's green robe were still my own.

* "One part of the dress only remains, but it is too remarkable to be suppressed; it was a brass ring, resembling a dog's collar, but without any opening, and soldered fast round his neck, so loose as to form no impediment to his breathing, yet so tight as to be incapable of being removed, excepting by the use of the file. On this singular gorget was engraved, in Saxon characters, an inscription of the following purport, 'Gurth, the son of Beowulph, is the born thrall of Cedric of Rotherwood.'"—*Ivanhoe*, vol. i. chap. 1.

39.

With a grey-coloured back, and a negro's head,
My bosom displaying the brightest red,
Under skilful preceptors an apt little thing,
All acknowledge, who've heard me pipe "*God save the King.*"

40.

The poets have said that I built my nest
On the storm-vex't ocean, and lull'd it to rest:
'Twas a fanciful thought—'twas a beautiful dream;
For I build not upon, tho' I fish in the stream.

41.

Tho' on Afric's sands I delight to rove,
The ladies of Europe my plumage love;
With the swiftest horse in speed I vie,
And, tho' gifted with wings, I never fly

42.

With feathers like hair, and wings useless for flight;
Legs equally fitted for speed or fight;*
From the opposite side of the world I come,
Yet seem to live here quite as well as at home.

43.

I track the course of eastern war,
The loathsome corpse *discern* from far;
I feed on the slain as long as I can,
Sustained by the follies and crimes of man.

44.

Where for sugar they tap the maple-tree,†
The traveller stops to listen to me;
Still plaintively suing throughout the night,
As if that which pained others was my delight.

* This bird's only means of defence is by kicking; and it has been known to fracture the skull or jaw of a dog by a single kick. They are easily domesticated, bear the climate of England well, and have been bred in different collections.

† "The sugar-maple is a smaller tree than the maple of this country, and it is not much in repute as timber, although

45.

I skim the dark seas, on the billows I float,
I swim round the ship, or the fated boat,
To shoot me the sailors will never presume,
For fear they should meet some dreadful doom.

from its abundance it is a good deal used in America—the wood for domestic purposes, and the bark as a blue dye, and as an ingredient in the manufacture of ink.

"February, March, or April, according to the state of the season, is the time when the maple is tapped for the preparation of sugar. A perforation is made by an auger, about two inches into the tree, slanting upwards; into this a cane, or wooden pipe is inserted, and a vessel placed to receive the sap. The quantity afforded by a tree varies both with the tree and the season; the most favourable season being when there is the greatest difference between the heat of the day and that of the night. From two to three gallons may be about the daily average afforded by a single tree; but some trees have yielded more than twenty gallons, and others not above a pint. The process by which maple juice is boiled and clarified into sugar, does not differ materially from that used for cane-juice in the West Indies."—*Library of Entertaining Knowledge—Timber Trees*, p. 118.

46.

I plunge in the river, or sea, for my prey,
And usually bear it triumphant away:
A *very long bill* has been given to me,
But a *very deep purse* bears it company.

47.

On the highest rocks of the Western Isles
We sit together arranged in files;
And appear to the sailor pursuing his way,
Like soldiers drawn up for a grand field-day.

48.

When ladies are call'd to attend their queen,
With a splendid train their robes are seen;
But bright and beauteous as their's may be,
I carry two brighter trains with me.

49.

"At the close of the day, when the hamlet is still,"
With my chattering notes the air I fill;
I flit round the *oak* for my insect prey,
Until night drops her curtain and drives me away.

50.

If you look at my bill you might fancy indeed,
That on liquids alone I was destin'd to feed;
But you'd certainly err, for in river or lake,
On frogs, and such small fry, my dinner I make.

51.

Where the Nile or the Niger track their way,
Our flocks are seen in their *scarlet array;*
And while wading or swimming we fish in the streams,
From all danger we're kept by a sentinel's screams

52.

Above the broad ocean majestic I fly,
With wide flapping pinions the winds I defy;
I swim *on*, or constantly float *o'er* the sea,
As if earth had no charms, and no refuge for me.

53.

From the islands of Britain I wander not forth,
My favourite resorts are the moors of the north;
I am prized for the table, and August sets free
The sportsman to search for, and slaughter me.

54.

In Turkey or Holland we walk the street,
Unscared by the passing crowds we meet;
We are highly esteemed for our services' sake,
For we feed on the offal, the reptile, and snake.

55.

I inhabit an isle in the Indian sea,
I'm a dull heavy mass of deformity ;
I fly not—I run not—and yet I'm not tame ;
And *two letters repeated* compose my name.

56.

Where the tropical sun pours its fiercest ray,
Seeking honey from flowers, we constantly
stray,
Like bees in size, but a brilliant band :
We are caught with water, and shot with sand.

57.

Those desolate islands are our resort,
Where winter has fixed his icy court ;
We are valued by man for the *downy nests*
Which are torn from the mantle that covers our
breasts.

58.

Where the Yankees spread their thread to bleach,
I plunder each parcel within my reach;
And the farmer who grafts his slender tree,
Must watch the binds well to secure them from *me.*

59.

To the swamps of the *West*, where those verdant
crops wave,
That with wealth to the planter, bring death to the
slave;
We migrate in myriads, to pluck the white grain,
Which, when ripe for your puddings is sent o'er
the main.

60.

On the Indian fig my nest you find,
Suspended and trembling with ev'ry wind;
And though candles and lamps are unknown to me,
A *light* in my dwelling each night you'll see.

61.

With no tools but my feet and my slender bill,
I can *spin* and can *sew* with such exquisite skill,
That my nest, when secured in its leafy station,
Fills even proud man with admiration.

62.

The surf-washed caves of the Indian sea
Might, surely, be deem'd a safe refuge for me;
But man enters the dangerous and dreary
retreat,
And pulls down my *dwelling*, which *Mandarins*
eat.

63.

Beyond the dark waves of the western sea,
In the boundless forest I wander free;
I repeat every note other birds let fall,
But my own are the *sweetest notes* of all.

64.

Pursuing the haunts of the wandering bee,
I constantly flutter from tree to tree;
Man watches my motions, and follows me still,
To share the sweet plunder disclosed by my skill.

65.

When Winter approaches with frown severe,
From the shores of the Baltic we hasten *here*,
The red-berried hawthorn supplies us with food,
Until spring calls us home to prepare for a brood.

66.

With motionless pinions and forked tail,
In circles repeated, sublimely I sail;
But if a rash chick from its mother should stray,
I stoop in a moment and make it my prey.

67.

Amongst the low grass when it's spangled with dew,
My elegant form you may frequently view;
Black and white is my dress, and my name I've a notion,
I owe to a *train* which is always in motion.

68.

No brilliant plumage do I display;
But when by thicket or grove you stray,
My musical song you must frankly own,
Is the fullest in volume, and sweetest in tone.

69.

Jet black is my plumage, and webb'd are my feet,
I dive in the water when anxious to eat;
As a fisher unrivall'd, and oft I've been taught
To bring to a master the prey that I caught.*

* As late as the reign of Charles I. an officer of the royal household was invested with the charge of these birds, for the purpose of catching fish for the king's table.

70.

When Israel so long through the desert was led,
With *us* were the people by miracle *fed;* *
But, like their forefathers, the Romans delight
To pit us in battle, and bet on the fight.

71.

Deep blue are my pinions, my body is red,
With clusters of crimson adorning my head:
And so splendid the colours, that seen as we fly,
You might think that a rainbow was crossing the sky.

* Vide Exodus, xvi. 13.

ANSWERS.

1. Robin Redbreast.
2. Owl.—See Note p. 37.
3. Jay.—See Note, p. 39.
4. Wren.—See note, *ibid.*
5. Pheasant.
6. Blackbird.
7. Lark.
8. Partridge.
9. Swallow—See Note, p. 41.
10. Bank Swallow—See Note, p. 45.
11. Rook—See Note, p. 48.
12. Duck.
13. Goose.—See Note, p. 49.
14. Cuckoo.—See Architecture of Birds, p. 362.
15. Nightingale.

16. Woodcock.

17. Goldfinch.

18. Magpie.—See Architecture of Birds, p. 325.

19. Heron—See Note, p. 49, and Architecture of Birds, p. 184.

20. Common Fowl.

21. Guinea Fowl.

22. Parrot.—See Popular Zoology, p. 354.

23. Pigeon.—See Note, p. 50.

24. Swan.

25. Sparrow.—See Note, p. 161.

26. Bat.—See Note, p. 61.

27. Jackdaw.—See Cowper's Poems. Article, *Jackdaw*.

28. Raven—See Architecture of Birds, p. 214.

29. Turkey—See Note, p. 62.

30. Peacock.

31. Falcon—See Note, p. 74.

32. Woodpecker.—See Architecture of Birds, p. 140.

33. Black-backed Gull.

34. Eagle.—See Note, p. 75.

35. Reed Bunting —See Note, p. 81.

36. Shrike, or Butcher-Bird.—See Note, p. 82.

37. Ring Ousel.—See Note, p. 83.

38. Canary Bird.—See Note, p. 83.

39. Bullfinch.

40. Kingfisher,—See Note, p. 83.

41. Ostrich.—See Popular Zoology, p. 289.

42. Emu.—See Popular Zoology, p. 299.

43. Vulture.—See Note, p. 85.

44. Whip-poor-Will.—See Note, p. 89.

45. Stormy Petrel.—See Note, p. 92.

46. Pelican.—See Popular Zoology, p. 374.

47. Puffin, or Penguin.—See Note, p. 94.

48. Bird of Paradise.

49. Fern Owl.—See Note, p. 101.

50. Spoon Bill.—See Popular Zoology, p. 336.

51. Flamingo.—See Note, p. 103.

52. Albatross.—See Note, p. 107.

53. Grouse.—See Note, p. 110.

54. Stork.—See Architecture of Birds, p. 192.

55. Dodo.—See Note, p. 112.

56. Humming Bird.—See Note, p. 114.

57. Eider Duck.—See p. 122.

58. Baltimore Starling.—See p. 129.

59. Rice Bird.—See Note, p. 133.

60. Indian Sparrow.—See Note, p. 138.

61. Tailor Bird.—See Note, p. 141.

62. Esculent Swallow of Java.—See Note, p. 143

63. Mocking Bird—See Note, p. 151.

64. Honey-Guide.—See Note, p. 160.

65. Fieldfare.

66. Kite.

67. Wagtail.

68. Thrush.

69. Cormorant.—See Popular Zoology, p. 377.

70. Quail.—See Mrs. Trimmer's Natural History. Article, *Quail.*

71. Maccaw.—See Popular Zoology, p. 345.

NOTES.

THE OWL.

We have had, ever since I can remember, a pair of White Owls, that constantly breed under the eaves of this church. As I have paid good attention to the manner of life of these birds during their season of breeding, which lasts the summer through, the following remarks may not, perhaps, be unacceptable. About an hour before sunset, (for then the mice begin to run,) they sally forth in quest of prey, and hunt all round the hedges of meadows and small enclosures for them, which seem to be their only food.

In this irregular country we can stand on an eminence and see them beat the fields over like a setting dog, and often drop down in

the grass or corn. I have minuted these birds with my watch for an hour together, and have found that they return to their nest, the one or the other of them, about once in five minutes; reflecting at the same time on the adroitness that every animal is possessed of, as far as regards the well-being of itself and offspring. But a piece of address, which they show when they return loaded, should not, I think, be passed over in silence. As they take their prey with their claws, so they carry it in their claws to their nest; but as their feet are engaged in the ascent under the tiles, they constantly perch first on the roof of the chancel, and shift the mouse from their claws to their bill, that the feet may be at liberty to take hold of the plate on the wall, as they are rising under the eaves.

White's Natural History of Selborne, by Jardine, p. 179 and 180.

THE JAY.

The Jay has been known to imitate so exactly the noise made by the action of a saw, as to induce passengers to believe that a carpenter was at work in the house. Another had learned, when cattle approached, to set a cur dog on them, by whistling and calling him by name. The poor Jay, however, at last paid dearly for his mischievous tricks. Having set his quadruped associate upon a cow which was big with calf, the cow was so much hurt that the Jay was complained of as a nuisance, and his owner was obliged to destroy him.

Mrs. Trimmer's Natural History.

THE WREN.

The golden crested Wren, (says Mr. Rennie,) is the only British species, we believe,

that ever suspends its nest like so many of the tropical birds ; for though it is said not unfrequently to build against the trunk of a tree covered with ivy, we have always found it hanging under the broad bough of a spruce-fir, a cedar, or a yew tree, the thick flat disposition of the leaves forming a sort of umbrella over the opening. The materials of the nest are the same as those of the goldfinch and chaffinch, namely, green moss or lichens, felted together very neatly with wool, and lined with the down of willows and other plants, or very soft feathers.

Architecture of Birds, pages 317 and 318.

The Golden-crested Wren, (says Mr. Knapp,) a minute creature, perfectly unmindful of any severity in our winter, and which hatches its young in June, the warmer portion of our year, yet builds its most beau-

tiful nest with the utmost attention to warmth; and interweaving small branches of moss with the web of the spider, forms a closely compacted texture nearly an inch in thickness, lining it with such a profusion of feathers, that sinking deep into this downy accumulation, it seems almost lost itself when sitting; and the young, when hatched, appear stifled with the warmth of their bedding, and the heat of their apartment.

Journal of a Naturalist, p. 172.

THE

WINDOW-SWALLOW, OR HOUSE-MARTIN.

About the middle of May, if the weather be fine, the Martin begins to think in earnest of providing a mansion for its family. The crust,

or shell of this nest, seems to be formed of such dirt or loam as comes readily to hand, and is tempered and wrought together with little bits of broken straws, to render it tough and tenacious. As this bird often builds against a perpendicular wall, without any projecting ledge under, it requires its utmost efforts to get the first foundation firmly fixed, so that it may safely carry the superstructure. On this occasion the bird not only clings with its claws, but partly supports itself by strongly inclining its tail against the wall, making that a fulcrum; and thus steadied, it works and plasters the materials into the face of the brick or stone. But then, that this work may not, while it is soft and green, pull itself down by its own weight, the provident architect has prudence and forbearance enough not to advance her work too fast; but by building only in the morning, and by dedicating the rest of

the day to food and amusement, gives it sufficient time to dry and harden: about half an inch seems to be a sufficient layer for a day. Thus careful workmen, when they build mud-walls, (informed at first, perhaps, by this little bird,) raise but a moderate layer at a time, and then desist, lest the work should become top-heavy, and so be ruined by its own weight. By this method, in about ten or twelve days, is formed a hemispheric nest, with a small aperture towards the top, strong, compact, and warm, and perfectly fitted for all the purposes for which it was intended.

The shell, or crust of the nest, is a sort of rustic work, full of knobs and protuberances on the outside; nor is the inside of those that I have examined smoothed with any exactness at all, but is rendered soft and warm, and fit for incubation, by a lining of small straws, grasses, and feathers; and sometimes by a

bedding of moss interwoven with wool. They are often capricious in fixing on a nesting place, beginning many edifices and leaving them unfinished; but when once a nest is completed in a sheltered place, after so much labour is bestowed in erecting a mansion, as Nature seldom works in vain, the same nest serves for several seasons. Those which breed in a ready-finished house get the start in hatching of those that build new, by ten days or a fortnight. These industrious artificers are at their labours, in the long days, before four in the morning. When they fix their materials they plaster them on with their chins, moving their heads with a quick vibratory motion.

White's Selborne, p. 184.

The Swallow, (says Sir Humphrey Davy,) is one of my favourite birds, and a rival of

the nightingale; for he glads my sense of seeing, as much as the other does my sense of hearing. He is the joyous prophet of the year, the harbinger of the best season; he lives a life of enjoyment amongst the loveliest forms of nature. Winter is unknown to him, and he leaves the green meadows of England in autumn, for the myrtle and orange groves of Italy, and for the palms of Africa.

Salmonia, p. 79.

THE BANK SWALLOW.

We have seen, (says Mr. Rennie,) one of these swallows cling with its sharp claws to the face of a sand-bank, and peg in its bill as a miner would do his pickaxe, till it had loosened a considerable portion of the hard

sand, and tumbled it down amongst the rubbish below. In these preliminary operations it never makes use of its claws for digging; indeed, it is impossible it could, for they are indispensable in maintaining its position, at least when it is beginning its hole.

We have further remarked, that some of this Swallow's holes are nearly as circular as if they had been planned out with a pair of compasses, while others are more irregular in form; but this seems to depend more on the sand crumbling away, than upon any deficiency in the original workmanship: the bird, in fact, always uses its own body to determine the proportions of the gallery, the part from the thigh to the head forming the radius of the circle. It does not trace out this as we should do, by fixing a point for the centre, around which to draw the circumference; on the contrary, it perches on the circumference with its

claws, and works with its bill from the centre outwards; and hence it is, that in the numerous excavations recently commenced, which we have examined, we have uniformly found the termination funnel-shaped, the centre being always much more scooped out than the circumference. The bird consequently assumes all positions while at work in the interior, hanging from the roof of the gallery with its back downwards, as often as standing on the floor. We have more than once indeed seen a Bank Swallow wheeling slowly round in this manner on the face of a sand-bank, when it was just breaking ground to begin its gallery.

Architecture of Birds, p. 19 and 20.

ROOKS.

Some years since a small colony of Rooks, probably a detachment from that which had long occupied the trees in St. Dunstan's church-yard, took possession of some lofty elm trees on the parade in the Tower, which they soon filled with their nests; and the shortness of accommodation there, perhaps, led some of them to occupy the *crowns* which are fixed on the tops of the vanes at each turret of the white tower. The remains of the nests may still be seen filling these singular stations. Goldsmith, in his Animated Nature, ture, vol. iii. p. 340, has given an amusing and lively description of the proceedings of the Rooks, which formerly built in the Temple Gardens.

THE GOOSE.

When Rome was besieged by the Gauls, the cackling of some Geese is reported to have saved the Capitol, by giving an alarm to the sleeping soldiers, when the Gauls had silently, and under the cover of the night, actually succeeded in reaching the top of the wall. A golden image of a Goose was set up in memory of this service; and a Goose was every year carried in triumph on a soft litter, finely adorned.

Hook's Roman History, Book ii. Chap. 38.

THE HERON.

The Heron is a very great devourer of fish, and does more mischief in a pond than an

otter. People who have kept Herons, have had the curiosity to number the fish they feed them with into a tub of water, and counting them again afterwards, it has been found that they will eat up fifty moderate dace and roaches in a day. It has been ascertained, that in carp-ponds visited by this bird, one Heron will eat up a thousand store carp in a year; and will hunt them so close, as to let very few escape.

Wilson's American Ornithology, by Jameson, vol. iii. note, p. 29.

THE PASSENGER PIGEON OF AMERICA.

These Pigeons, (says M. Audubon,) have been killed in the neighbourhood of New York, with their crops full of rice, which they

must have collected in the fields of Georgia and Carolina, these districts being the nearest in which they could possibly have procured a supply of that kind of food. As their power of digestion is so great that they will decompose food entirely in twelve hours, they must in this case have travelled between three and four hundred miles in six hours, which shows their speed to be at an average about one mile in a minute. A velocity such as this would enable one of these birds, were it so inclined, to visit the European continent in less than three days.

The multitudes of wild Pigeons in our woods are astonishing; indeed, after having viewed them so often, and under so many circumstances, I even now feel inclined to pause, and assure myself that what I am going to relate is fact: yet I have seen it

all, and that too in the company of persons who, like myself, were struck with astonishment.

In the autumn of 1813, I left my house at Henderson, on the banks of the Ohio, on my way to Louisville: in passing over the Barrens, a few miles beyond Hardensburg, I observed the Pigeons flying from north-east to south-west, in greater numbers than I thought I had ever seen them before; and feeling an inclination to count the flocks that might pass within reach of my eye in an hour, I dismounted, seated myself on an eminence, and began to mark with my pencil, making a dot for every flock that had passed. In a short time, finding the task which I had undertaken impracticable, as the birds poured in in countless multitudes, I rose, and counting the dots then put down, found that one hun-

dred and sixty-three had been made in twenty-one minutes. I travelled on, and still met more the further I proceeded. The air was literally filled with Pigeons; the light of noon-day was obscured as by an eclipse; the dung fell in spots, not unlike melting flakes of snow; and the continued buzz of wings had a tendency to lull my senses to repose.

Before sunset I reached Louisville, distant from Hardensburgh fifty-five miles. The Pigeons were still passing in undiminished numbers, and continued to do so for three days in succession. The people were all in arms. The banks of the Ohio were crowded with men and boys, incessantly shooting at the pilgrims, which there flew lower as they passed the river. Multitudes were thus destroyed. For a week or more the population fed on no other flesh than that of Pigeons, and talked of nothing but Pigeons. The at-

mosphere, during this time, was strongly impregnated with the peculiar odour which emanates from the species.

Let us now, kind reader, inspect their place of nightly rendezvous. One of these curious roosting-places, on the banks of the Green River, in Kentucky, I repeatedly visited. It was, as is always the case, in a portion of the forest where the trees were of great magnitude, and where there was little underwood. I rode through it upwards of forty miles, and crossing it in different parts, found its average breadth to be rather more than three miles. My first view of it was about a fortnight subsequent to the period when they had made choice of it, and I arrived there nearly two hours before sun-set. Few Pigeons were then to be seen; but a great number of persons, with horses and waggons, guns and ammunition, had already established encamp-

ments on the borders. Two farmers from the vicinity of Russelsville, distant more than one hundred miles, had driven upwards of three hundred hogs to be fattened on the Pigeons which were to be slaughtered. Here and there the people employed in plucking and salting what had already been procured, were seen sitting in the midst of large piles of these birds. The dung lay several inches deep, covering the whole extent of the roosting place, like a bed of snow. Many trees, two feet in diameter, I observed were broken off at no great distance from the ground, and the branches of many of the largest and tallest had given way, as if the forest had been swept by a tornado. Every thing proved to me that the number of birds resorting to this part of the forest must be immense beyond conception. As the period of their arrival approached, their foes anxiously prepared to receive them: some

were furnished with iron pots containing sulphur, others with torches of pine-knots, many with poles, and the rest with guns. The sun was lost to our view, yet not a Pigeon had arrived: every thing was ready, and all eyes were gazing on the clear sky, which appeared in glimpses amidst the tall trees. Suddenly there burst forth a general cry of "Here they come!" The noise which they made, though yet distant, reminded me of a hard gale at sea, passing through the rigging of a close-reefed vessel. As the birds arrived and passed over me, I felt a current of air that surprised me. Thousands were soon knocked down by the pole-men. The birds continued to pour in. The fires were lighted, and a magnificent, as well as wonderful and almost terrifying sight presented itself. The Pigeons, arriving by thousands, alighted every where, one above another, until solid masses, as large

as hogsheads, were found on the branches all round; here and there the perches gave way under the weight with a crash, and falling to the ground, destroyed hundreds of the birds beneath, forcing down the dense groups with which every stick was loaded. It was a scene of uproar and confusion; I found it quite useless to speak, or even shout to those persons who were nearest to me; even the reports of the guns were seldom heard, and I was made aware of the firing only by seeing the shooters re-loading.

No one dared venture within the line of devastation. The hogs had been penned up in due time, the picking up of the dead and wounded being left for the next morning's employment. The Pigeons were constantly coming, and it was past midnight before I perceived a decrease in the number of those that arrived. The uproar continued the

whole night; and as I was anxious to know what distance the sound reached, I sent off a man accustomed to perambulate the forest, who, returning two hours afterwards, informed me that he had heard it distinctly when three miles distant from the spot. Towards the approach of day, the noise in some measure subsided: long before objects were distinguishable, the Pigeons began to move off in a direction quite different from that in which they had arrived the evening before, and at sunrise all that were able to fly had disappeared. The howlings of the wolves now reached our ears, and the foxes, lynxes, cougars, bears, raccoons, oppossums, and polecats were seen sneaking off; whilst eagles and hawks of different species, accompanied by a crowd of vultures, came to supplant them, and enjoy their share of the spoil.

It was then that the authors of all this de-

vastation began their entry amongst the dead, the dying, and the mangled. The Pigeons were picked up and piled in heaps, until each had as many as he could possibly dispose of, when the hogs were let loose to feed on the remainder.

Persons unacquainted with these birds might naturally conclude that such dreadful havock would soon put an end to the species. But I have satisfied myself by long observation, that nothing but the gradual diminution of our forests can accomplish their decrease, as they not unfrequently quadruple their number yearly, and always at least double it. In 1805, I saw schooners loaded in bulk with Pigeons caught up the Hudson River, coming in to the wharf at New York, when the birds sold for a cent a piece. I knew a man in Pennsylvania, who caught and killed upwards of five hundred dozen, in a clap-net, in

one day, sweeping sometimes twenty dozens, or more, at a single haul. In the month of March, 1830, they were so abundant in the markets of New York, that piles of them met the eye in every direction. I have seen the negroes at the United States' salines or salt-works at Shawnee Town, wearied with killing Pigeons, as they alighted to drink the water issuing from the leading pipes, for weeks at a time; and yet in 1826, in Louisiana, I saw congregated flocks of these birds as numerous as ever I had seen them before, during a residence of nearly thirty years in the United States.

Audubon.—Ornithological Biography, p. 319.

See also Wilson's American Ornithology, vol. v, p. 207.

White's Selborne, p. 130 and 131, records immense flocks of wood pigeons as formerly frequenting the woods in that vicinity.

THE BAT.

I WAS much entertained last summer with a tame Bat, which would take flies out of a person's hand. If you gave it any thing to eat, it brought its wings round before the mouth, hovering and hiding its head in the manner of birds of prey when they feed. The adroitness it showed in shearing off the wings of the flies, which were always rejected, was worthy of observation, and pleased me much. Insects seemed to be most acceptable, though it did not refuse raw flesh when offered; so that the notion that Bats go down chimneys, and gnaw men's bacon, seems no improbable story. While I amused myself with this wonderful quadruped, I saw it several times confute the vulgar opinion, that Bats, when down on a flat surface, cannot get on the wing again, by rising with great ease from

the floor. It ran, I observed, with more dispatch than I was aware of, but in a most ridiculous and grotesque manner.

White's Selborne, p. 37.

THE WILD TURKEY OF AMERICA.

The great size and beauty of the Wild Turkey, its value as a delicate and highly-prized article of food, and the circumstance of its being the origin of the domestic race now generally dispersed over both continents, render it one of the most interesting birds indigenous to the United States of America.

About the beginning of October, when scarcely any of the seeds and fruits have yet fallen from the trees, these birds assemble in flocks, and gradually move towards the rich

bottom lands of the Ohio and Mississippi. The males, or, as they are more commonly called, the gobblers, associate in parties of from ten to a hundred, and search for food apart from the females; while the latter are seen either advancing singly, each with its brood of young, then about two-thirds grown, or in connexion with other families, forming parties often amounting to seventy or eighty individuals, all intent on shunning the old cocks, which, even when the young birds have attained this size, will fight with, and often destroy them by repeated blows on the head. Old and young, however, all move in the same course, and on foot, unless their progress be interrupted by a river, or the hunter's dog force them to take wing. When they come upon a river they betake themselves to the highest eminences, and there often remain a whole day, or sometimes two,

as if for the purpose of consultation. During this time, the males are heard gobbling, calling, and making much ado, and are seen strutting about, as if to raise their courage to a pitch befitting the emergency. Even the females and the young assume something of the same pompous demeanour, spread out their tails, and run round each other, *purring* loudly, and performing extravagant leaps. At length, when the weather appears settled, and all around is quiet, the whole party mounts to the tops of the highest trees, whence, at a signal, consisting of a single *cluck*, given by a leader, the flock takes flight for the opposite shore. The old and fat birds easily get over, even should the river be a mile in breadth; but the younger and less robust frequently fall into the water, not to be drowned, however, as might be imagined. They bring their wings close to their

body, spread out their tail as a support, stretch forward their neck, and, striking out their legs with great vigour, proceed rapidly towards the shore: on approaching which, should they find it too steep for landing, they cease their exertions for a few moments, float down the stream until they come to an accessible part, and by a violent effort generally extricate themselves from the water. It is remarkable, that immediately after thus crossing a large stream, they ramble about for some time, as if bewildered. In this state they fall an easy prey to the hunter.

When the Turkeys arrive in parts where the mast is abundant, they separate into smaller flocks, composed of birds of all ages and both sexes, promiscuously mingled, and devour all before them.

This happens about the middle of November. So gentle do they sometimes become

after these long journeys, that they have been seen to approach the farm-houses, associate with domestic fowls, and enter the stables and corn-cribs in quest of food. In this way, roaming about the forests, and feeding chiefly on mast,* they pass the autumn and part of the winter.

About the middle of April, when the season is dry, the hens begin to look out for a place in which to deposit their eggs. This place requires to be as much as possible concealed from the eye of the crow, as that bird often watches the Turkey when going to her nest, and waiting in the neighbourhood until she has left it, removes and eats the eggs. The nest, which consists of a few withered leaves, is placed on the ground, in a hollow

* The term *mast*, in America, is used as a general name for all kind of forest fruits, including even grapes and berries.

scooped out by the side of a log, or in the fallen top of a dry leafy tree, under a canopy of sumach or briars, or a few feet within the edge of a cane-brake, but always in a dry place. The eggs, which are of a dull cream colour sprinkled with dots, sometimes amount to twenty, although the more usual number is from ten to fifteen. When depositing her eggs, the female always approaches the nest with extreme caution, scarcely ever taking the same course twice; and when about to leave them, covers them carefully with leaves, so that it is very difficult for a person who may have seen the bird to discover the nest. Indeed, few Turkey's nests are found, unless the female has been suddenly started from them, or a cunning lynx, fox, or crow has sucked the eggs, and left their shells scattered about.

The mother will not leave her eggs, when

near hatching, under any circumstances, while life remains. She will even allow an inclosure to be made around her, and thus suffer imprisonment rather than abandon them. I once witnessed the hatching of a brood of Turkeys, which I watched for the purpose of securing them together with the parent. I concealed myself on the ground within a very few feet, and saw her raise herself half the length of her legs, look anxiously upon the eggs, cluck with a sound peculiar to the mother on such occasions, carefully remove each half-empty shell, and with her bill caress and dry the young birds, that already stood tottering and attempting to make their way out of the nest. Yes, I have seen this, and have left mother and young to better care than mine could have proved—to the care of their Creator and mine. I have seen them all emerge from the shell, and, in a few mo-

ments after, tumble, roll, and push each other forward with astonishing and inscrutable instinct.

Before leaving the nest with her young brood, the mother shakes herself in a violent manner, picks and adjusts the feathers about her belly, and assumes quite a different aspect. She alternately inclines her eyes obliquely upwards and sideways, stretching out her neck, to discover hawks and other enemies, spreads her wings a little as she walks, and softly clucks to keep her innocent offspring close to her. They move slowly along, and as the hatching generally takes place in the afternoon, they frequently return to the nest to spend the first night there. After this, they remove to some distance, keeping on the highest undulated grounds, the mother dreading rainy weather, which is extremely dangerous to the young in this ten-

der state, when they are only covered by a kind of soft, hairy down, of surprising delicacy. In very rainy seasons Turkeys are scarce, for if once completely wetted, the young seldom recover. To prevent the disastrous effects of rainy weather, the mother, like a skilful physian, plucks the buds of the spice-wood bush, and gives them to her young.

In about a fortnight the young birds, which had previously rested on the ground, leave it and fly, at night, to some very large low branch, where they place themselves under the deeply curved wings of their kind and careful parent, dividing themselves for that purpose into two nearly equal parties. After this they leave the woods during the day, and approach the natural glades or prairies in search of strawberries, and subsequently of dewberries, blackberries, and grasshoppers, thus obtaining abundant food, and

enjoying the beneficial influence of the sun's rays. They roll themselves in deserted ant's nests to clear their growing feathers from the loose scales, and prevent ticks and other vermin from attacking them, these insects being unable to bear the odour of the earth in which ants have been.

While at Henderson, on the Ohio, I had, among many other wild birds, a fine male Turkey, which had been reared from its earliest youth under my care, it having been caught by me when probably not more than two or three days old. It became so tame, that it would follow any person who called it, and was the favourite of the little village. Yet it would never roost with the tame Turkey, but regularly betook itself at night to the roof of the house, where it remained until dawn. When two years old, it began to fly to the woods, where it remained for a consi-

derable part of the day, to return to the enclosure as night approached. It continued this practice until the following spring, when I saw it several times fly from its roosting place to the top of a high cotton-tree, on the bank of the *Ohio*, from which, after resting a little while, it would sail to the opposite shore, the river being there nearly half a mile wide, and return towards night. One morning I saw it fly off, at a very early hour, to the woods, in another direction, and took no particular notice of the circumstance. Several days elapsed, but the bird did not return. I was going towards some lakes near Green River to shoot, when having walked about five miles, I saw a fine large gobbler cross the path before me, moving leisurely along. Turkeys being then in prime condition for the table, I ordered my dog to chase it, and put it up. The animal went off with great

rapidity, and as it approached the Turkey, I saw, with great surprise, that the latter paid little attention. Juno was on the point of seizing it, when she suddenly stopped, and turned her head towards me. I hastened to him, but you may easily conceive my surprise, when I saw my own favourite bird, and discovered that it had recognized the dog, and would not fly from it, although the sight of a strange dog would have caused it to run off at once. A friend of mine happening to be in search of a wounded deer, took the bird on his saddle before him, and carried it home for me. The following spring it was accidentally shot, having been taken for a wild bird, and brought to me, on being recognized by the red ribbon which it had around its neck. Pray, reader, by what word will you designate the recognition made by my favourite Turkey, of a dog which had long been associated with it

in the yard and grounds? Was it the result of instinct, or of reason,—an unconsciously revived impression, or the act of an intelligent mind?

Audubon.—Ornithological Biography, p. 1, et seq.

See also Sketches of Persia, vol. i. p. 93, for a ludicrous proof of the rarity of these birds in that country.

THE FALCON.

The duke of St. Albans is hereditary Grand Falconer to the king of Great Britain, and as such always keeps some of these birds in readiness, should his Majesty wish to enjoy the amusement of Falconry.

THE WHITE-HEADED EAGLE.

Mr. Audubon's description of this inhabitant of the Western Continent is too animated to be omitted.

To give you, kind reader, some idea of the nature of this bird, permit me to place you on the Mississippi, on which you may float gently along, while approaching winter brings millions of water-fowl, on whistling wings, from the countries of the North, to seek a milder climate in which to sojourn for a season. The Eagle is seen perched, in an erect attitude, on the highest summit of the tallest tree, by the margin of the broad stream. His glistening but stern eye looks over the vast expanse. He listens attentively to every sound that comes to his quick ear from afar, glancing now and then on the earth beneath,

lest even the light tread of the fawn may pass unheard. His mate is perched on the opposite side, and should all be tranquil and silent, warns him by a cry to continue patient. At this well-known call, the male partly opens his broad wings, inclines his body a little downwards, and answers to her voice in tones not unlike the laugh of a maniac. The next moment he resumes his erect attitude, and again all around is silent. Ducks of many species, the teal, the wigeon, the mallard, and others, are seen passing with great rapidity, and following the course of the current; but the Eagle heeds them not: they are at that time beneath his attention. The next moment, however, the wild trumpet-like sound of a yet distant but approaching swan is heard. A shriek from the female Eagle comes across the stream,—for, kind reader, she is fully as alert as her mate. The latter

suddenly shakes the whole of his body, and with a few touches of his bill, aided by the action of his cuticular muscles, arranges his plumage in an instant. The snow-white bird is now in sight: her long neck is stretched forward, her eye is on the watch, vigilant as that of her enemy; her large wings seem with difficulty to support the weight of her body, although they flap incessantly. So irksome do her exertions seem, that her very legs are spread beneath her tail, to aid her in her flight. She approaches, however. The Eagle has marked her for his prey. As the swan is passing the dreaded pair, starts from his perch, in full preparation for the chase, the male bird, with an awful scream, that to the swan's ear brings more terror than the report of the large duck-gun.

Now is the moment to witness the display of the Eagle's powers. He glides through

the air like a falling star, and, like a flash of lightning, comes upon the timorous quarry, which now, in agony and despair, seeks, by various manœuvres, to elude the grasp of his cruel talons. It mounts, doubles, and willingly would plunge into the stream, were it not prevented by the Eagle, which, long possessed of the knowledge that by such a stratagem the swan might escape him, forces it to remain in the air by attempting to strike it with his talons from beneath. The hope of escape is soon given up by the swan. It has already become much weakened, and its strength fails at the sight of the courage and swiftness of its antagonist. His last gasp is about to escape, when the ferocious Eagle strikes with his talons the under side of its wing, and with unresisted power, forces the bird to fall in a slanting direction upon the nearest shore.

It is then, reader, that you may see the

cruel spirit of this dreaded enemy of the feathered race, whilst, exulting over his prey, he for the first time breathes at ease. He presses down his powerful feet, and drives his sharp claws deeper than ever into the heart of the dying swan. He shrieks with delight, as he feels the last convulsions of his prey, which has now sunk under his unceasing efforts to render death as painfully felt as it can possibly be. The female has watched every movement of her mate; and if she did not assist him in capturing the swan, it was not from want of will, but merely that she felt full assurance that the power and courage of her lord were quite sufficient for the deed. She now sails to the spot where he eagerly awaits her, and when she has arrived, they together turn the breast of the luckless swan upwards, and gorge themselves with gore.

Ornithological Biography, p. 160.

In Scotland, where Eagles are more numerous than in England, pairs have been observed to nestle in the same cliffs for centuries. One of these places is Lochlee, at the head of the North Esk, in Forfarshire. That lake lies in a singular basin, between two perpendicular cliffs on the north, and high and precipitous mountains on the south. A pair of Eagles inhabit each side, so that three may sometimes be seen floating in the air at once; but those that have their abode in the inaccessible cliffs on the north, seem to be lords of the place, as the south ones do not venture to beat the valley while these are on the wing. The pair, though they drive off their young, and every creature but man, whose haunts they shun, are closely associated together; when one is seen for any length of time, the other is sure not to be far distant; and the one may often be seen flying low and

beating the bushes, while the other floats high in air, in order to pounce upon the frightened prey.

British Naturalist, p. 68.

THE REED BUNTING.

The nest of these birds is placed amongst rushes, or ingeniously fastened to three or four reeds: and in this floating cradle, though rocked by the tempest, the hen securely sits without fear or dread.

Syme's British Song Birds, p. 46.

There is a specimen of these nests in the British Museum, suspended between three stems of reeds. They are generally formed of rushes.

THE SHRIKE, OR BUTCHER-BIRD.

SPEAKING of that singular habit of this bird, which is recorded in the text, Mr. Selby says, "I had the gratification of witnessing this operation of the Shrike upon a hedge-chanter which it had just killed, and the skin of which, still attached to the thorn, is now in my possession. In this instance, after killing the bird, it hovered with it in its bill for a short time over the hedge, apparently occupied in selecting a thorn for its purpose. Upon disturbing it, and advancing to the spot, I found the chanter firmly fixed by the tendons of the wing at the selected twig."

Illustrations of British Ornithology, vol. 1. p. 141.

THE RING-OUSEL.

Mr. White frequently mentions these birds. He describes them as larger than blackbirds, with rings of white round their necks.

Natural History of Selborne, p. 68.

THE CANARY BIRD.

Humboldt states, that in the Canary Islands these birds are invariably of a *green colour.*

Personal Narrative.

THE KING-FISHER.

"Nature," says Montaigne, "has honoured no other animal so much during its sitting and disclosing, for that the whole ocean is

stayed, made stable, and smoothed without waves, without winds or rain, whilst the halcyon broods upon her young—which is just about the winter solstice; so that, by her privilege, we have seven days and seven nights, in the very heart of winter, wherein we may sail without danger." The poets have successfully employed the ancient fiction. Theocritus, and Petrarch, and Tasso, equally avail themselves of it. The notion that the stormy waves are calmed for the sake of one pretty bird, belongs to the empire of poetry, however it may be rejected by the truth of natural history. We may laugh at the conceit, and yet admire the sweet lines of one of our old writers:

> Blow, but gently blow, fayre wind,
> From the forsaken shore,
> And be, as to the halcyon, kind,
> 'Till we have ferried o'er.—W. Brown.
>
> Architecture of Birds, p. 49 and 50.

THE VULTURE.

MANY of my young readers will have seen, in the Zoological Gardens in the Regent's Park, the magnificent bird of prey, called the *King Vulture*. It is a native of South America. Mr. Waterton, among many curious remarks respecting this bird, has the following anecdote. He had killed in the forest a large snake, which becoming putrid, attracted about twenty of the common Vultures, who came and perched on a tree in its neighbourhood. Then the "King of the Vultures" came too; and I observed that none of the common ones seemed inclined to begin breakfast till his majesty had finished. When he had consumed as much snake as nature informed him would do him good, he retired to the

top of a high mora-tree, and then all the common Vultures fell too and made a hearty meal.

Waterton's Wanderings in South America.

ON THE VISION OF BIRDS OF PREY.

It has always appeared to us most extraordinary, indeed unaccountable, that birds of prey could scent carcasses at such immense distances as they are said to do. We were led to scepticism on this subject, some twenty years ago, while observing the concourse of birds of prey from every point of the horizon to a corpse floating down the river Ganges, and that during the north-east monsoon, when the wind blew steadily from one point of the compass for months in succession. It was extremely difficult to imagine that the

effluvia from a putrefying body in the water could emanate in direct opposition to the current of air, and impinge on the olfactories of birds many miles distant. Such, however, were the dicta of natural history, and we could only submit to the general opinion. We have no doubt, now that we know the general opinion to be something wrong, that it was by means of the optic, rather than the olfactory nerves, "that the said birds smelled out their suit."

The Toucan is a bird which ranks next to the Vulture in discerning, whether by smell or by sight, the carrion on which it feeds. The immense size of its bill, which is many times larger than its head, was supposed to present, in its honeycomb texture, an extensive prolongation of the olfactory nerve, and thus to account for its power of smelling at great distances; but on accurate examination, the

texture above mentioned is found to be mere diploe, to give the bill strength. Now, the eye of the bird is somewhat larger than the whole brain; and it has been ascertained, by direct experiments, that where very putrid carrion was inclosed in a basket from which effluvia could freely emanate, but which concealed the offal from sight, it attracted no attention from Vultures and other birds of prey, till it was exposed to their view, when they immediatly recognised their object, and others came rapidly from different quarters of the horizon, where they were invisible a few minutes before. This sudden appearance of birds of prey from immense distances, and in every direction, however the wind may blow, is accounted for by their soaring to an altitude. In this situation their prey on the ground is seen by them, however minute it may be; and therefore their appearance in

our sight is merely their descent from regions of the atmosphere within the scope of our optics. The Toucan in India generally arrives a little in the rear of the Vulture, and remains till the larger bird is glutted; while smaller birds of prey, at a still more retired distance, pay similar homage to the Toucan.

Dr. J. Johnson.—Medico-Chirurgical Review.

THE WHIP-POOR-WILL.

On or about the 25th of April, if the season be not uncommonly cold, the Whip-poor-will is heard in Pennsylvania, in the evening, as the dusk of twilight commences, or in the morning, as soon as dawn has broke. The notes of this solitary bird, from the ideas which are naturally associated with them, seem like the voice of an old friend, and are

listened to by almost all with great interest. At first they issue from some retired part of the woods, the glen, or mountain: in a few evenings, perhaps, we hear them from the adjoining coppice, the garden fence, the road before the door, and even from the roof of the dwelling-house, long after the family have retired to rest. Some of the more ignorant and superstitious consider this near approach as foreboding no good to the family—nothing less than sickness, misfortune, or death to some of its members. Every morning and evening, his shrill and rapid repetitions are heard from the adjoining woods; and when two or more are calling at the same time, as is often the case in the pairing season, and at no great distance from each other, the noise, mingling with the echoes from the mountains, is truly surprising. Strangers, in parts of the country where these birds are nu-

merous, find it almost impossible for some time to sleep; while to those long acquainted with them, the sound often serves as a lullaby to assist their repose. The notes seem pretty plainly to articulate the words which have been generally applied to them, "whip-poor-will," the first and last syllables being uttered with great emphasis, and the whole in about a second to each repetition; but when two or more males meet, their whip-poor-will altercations become much more rapid and incessant, as if each were straining to overpower or silence the other. When near, you often hear an introductory cluck between the notes. At these times, as well as almost at all others, they fly low, not more than a few feet from the surface, skimming about the house, and before the door, alighting on the wood-pile, or settling on the roof. Towards midnight they generally become silent, unless in clear moon-

light, when they are heard with little intermission till morning.

Wilson.—American Ornithology, vol. v. p. 73.

THE STORMY PETREL.

THERE are few persons who have crossed the Atlantic, that have not observed these solitary wanderers of the deep, skimming along the surface of the wild ocean; flitting past the vessel like swallows, or following in her wake, gleaning their scanty pittance of food from the rough and whirling surges. Habited in mourning, and making their appearance generally in greater numbers, previous to or during a storm, they have long been fearfully regarded by the ignorant and superstitious, not only as the foreboding messengers of tempests and dangers to the hapless mariner,

but as wicked agents, connected, some how or other, in creating them. "Nobody," say they, "can tell anything of where they come from, or how they breed, though (as sailors sometimes say) it is supposed that they hatch their eggs under their wings as they sit on the water." This mysterious uncertainty of their origin, and the circumstances above recited, have doubtless given rise to the opinion, so prevalent among this class of men, that they are in some way or other connected with the prince of the power of the air. In every country where they are known, their names have borne some affinity to this belief. They have been called Witches, Stormy Petrels, the Devil's Birds, and Mother Cary's Chickens, probably from some celebrated ideal hag of that name: and their unexpected and numerous appearance, has frequently thrown a momentary damp over the mind of the hardiest

seaman. It is the business of the naturalist, and the glory of philosophy, to examine into the reality of these things: to dissipate the clouds of error and superstition, wherever they darken and bewilder the human understanding, and to illustrate nature with the radiance of truth.

Wilson's American Ornithology, vol. vii. p. 95.

See also Architecture of Birds, p. 29, for the probable reasons which induce these birds to seek the shelter of a ship during a storm, and a full account of their habits, &c.

THE PENGUIN.

This day we visited what they call a "Penguin Rookery." The spot of ground occupied by our settlers is bounded on each end by high bluffs, which extend far into the sea,

leaving a space in front, where all their hogs run nearly wild, as they are prevented going beyond these limits by those natural barriers; and the creatures who, at stated periods, come up from the sea, remain in undisturbed possession of the beaches beyond our immediate vicinity. The weather being favourable, we launched our boat early in the morning, for the purpose of procuring a supply of eggs for the consumption of the family. We heard the chattering of the Penguins from the rookery long before we landed, which was noisy in the extreme, and groups of them were scattered all over the beach; but the high, thick grass on the declivity of the hill, seemed their grand establishment, and they were hidden by it from our view. As we could not find any place where we could possibly land our boat in safety, I and two more swam on shore, with bags tied round our

necks to hold the eggs in, and the boat with one of the men lay off, out of the surf. I should think the ground occupied by these birds (if I may be allowed so to call them) was at least a mile in circumference, covered in every part with grasses and reeds, which grew considerably higher than my head; and on every gentle ascent, beginning from the beach, on all the large grey rocks, which occasionally appeared above the grass, sat perched groups of these strange, uncouth-looking creatures; but the noise which arose up from beneath baffles all description. As our business lay with the noisy part of this community, we quickly crept under the grass, and commenced our plundering search, though there needed none, so profuse was the quantity. The scene altogether well merits a better description than I can give: thousands, and hundreds of thousands of these lit-

tle two-legged, erect monsters, hopping around us, with voices very much resembling in tone that of the human; all opening their throats together; so thickly clustered in groups, that it was almost impossible to place the foot without dispatching one of them. The shape of the animal, their curious motions, and their most extraordinary voices, made me fancy myself in a kingdom of pigmies. The regularity of their manners, their *all sitting in exact rows, resembling more the order of a camp than a rookery of noisy birds*, delighted me. These creatures did not move away at our approach, but only increased their noise, so we were obliged to displace them forcibly from their nests; and this ejectment was not produced without a considerable struggle on their parts; and being armed with a formidable beak, it soon became a scene of desperate warfare. We had to take

particular care to protect our hands and legs from their attacks; and for this purpose each one had provided himself with a short, stout club. The noise they continued to make during our ramble through their territories, the sailors said was, "*Cover 'em up, cover 'em up.*" And, however incredible it may appear, it is nevertheless true, that I heard those words so distinctly repeated, and by such various tones of voices, that several times I started, and expected to see one of the men at my elbow. These little creatures appear to keep up a continued warfare with each other. As the Penguins sit in rows, forming regular lanes leading down to the beach, whenever one of them feels an inclination to refresh herself by a plunge into the sea, she has to run the gauntlet through the whole street, every one pecking at her as she passes without mercy; and though all are occupied

in the same employment, not the smallest degree of friendship seems to exist; and whenever we turned one off her nest, she was sure to be thrown amongst foes, and besides the loss of her eggs, was invariably doomed to receive a severe beating and pecking from her companions. Each one lays three eggs; and after a time, when the young are strong enough to undertake the journey, they go to sea, and are not again seen until the ensuing spring. Their city is deserted of its numerous inhabitants, and quietness reigns till nature prompts their return the following year, when the same noisy scene is repeated, as the same flock of birds returns to the spot where they were hatched. After raising a tremendous tumult in this numerous colony, and sustaining continued combat, we came off victorious, making capture of about a thousand eggs, resembling in size, colour, and

transparency of shell, those of a duck; and the taking of this immense quantity did not occupy more than one hour, which may serve to prove the incalculable number of birds collected together. We did not allow them sufficient time, after landing, to lay all their eggs; for had the season been further advanced, and we had found three eggs in each nest, the whole of them might probably have proved addled, the young partly formed, and the eggs of no use to us; but the whole of these we took turned out good, and had a particularly fine and delicate flavour. It was a work of considerable difficulty to get our booty safe into the boat—so frail a cargo—with so tremendous a surf running against us. However, we finally succeeded, though not without smashing a considerable number of eggs.

Earl's Travels in New Zealand.

THE FERN-OWL, OR GOAT-SUCKER.

This bird, says White, is most punctual in beginning its song exactly at the close of day; so exactly, that I have known it strike up, more than once or twice, just at the report of the Portsmouth evening gun, which we can hear when the weather is still. It appears to me past all doubt, that its notes are formed by organic impulse, by the powers of the parts of its windpipe, formed for sound, just as cats pur. You will credit me, I hope, when I assure you that, as my neighbours were assembled in an hermitage on the side of a steep hill, where we drink tea, one of these Fern Owls came and settled on the cross of that little straw edifice, and began to chatter, and continued his note for many

minutes; and we were struck with wonder to find that the organs of that little animal, when put in motion, gave a sensible vibration to the whole building. This bird also sometimes makes a small squeak, repeated four or five times; and I have observed that to happen when the cock has been pursuing the hen in a toying manner, through the boughs of a tree.

Selborne, p. 74 and 75.

On the 12th of July I had a fair opportunity of contemplating the motions of the Caprimulgus, or Fern Owl, as it was playing round a large oak, that swarmed with scarabæi solstitiales, or fern-chafers. The powers of its wing were wonderful, exceeding, if possible, the various evolutions and quick turns of the swallow genus. But the circumstance that pleased me most was, that I saw it dis-

tinctly, more than once, put out its short leg while on the wing, and, by a bend of the head, deliver somewhat into its mouth. If it takes any part of its prey with its foot, as I have now the greatest reason to suppose it does these chafers, I no longer wonder at the use of its middle toe, which is curiously furnished with a serrated claw.* These peculiar birds can only be watched and observed for two hours in the twenty-four, and then in a dubious twilight, an hour after sunset, and an hour before sunrise.

White's Selborne, p. 109, &c.

THE FLAMINGO.

When the flocks of these birds are fishing in the rivers, they are said to have one of their

* Mr. Dillon has recently controverted this opinion: his observations leading him to suppose that the serratures are

number always on watch, who, at the slightest appearance of danger or interruption, gives notice to his companions by his screams.

Latham's Synopsis.

The appearance of this bird has led to many misconceptions. During the French revolutionary war, when the English were expected to make a descent upon St. Domingo, a negro having perceived, at the distance of some miles, in the direction of the sea, a long file of Flamingoes, ranked up, and preening their wings, forthwith magnified them into an army of English soldiers; their long necks were mistaken for shouldered muskets, and their scarlet plumage had suggested the idea of a military costume. The poor fellow accordingly started off to Gonaïves, running

employed by the bird to comb its whiskers.—London Magazine of Natural History, vol. ii. p. 31.

through the streets, and vociferating that the English were come. Upon this alarm the commandant of the garrison instantly sounded the tocsin, doubled the guards, and sent out a body of men to reconnoitre the invaders; but he soon found, by means of his glass, that it was only a troop of red Flamingoes, and the corps of observation marched back to the garrison, rejoicing at their bloodless expedition.

Descourtilz, Voyage d'un Naturaliste, vol. ii. p. 218, quoted in Architecture of Birds.

Dampier gives the following curious account of Flamingoes observed by him at Rio de la Hacha, at an island opposite Curaçoa, and at the Isle of Sal. "They make their nests, he says, in the marshes, where they find plenty of slime, which they heap with their claws, and form hillocks, resembling little

islets, and which appear a foot and a half above the water. They make the base broad, and taper the structure gradually to the top, where they leave a small hollow to receive their eggs. When they lay or hatch, they stand erect, not on the top, but very near it, their feet on the ground and in the water, leaning themselves against the hillock, and covering the nest with their tail. Their legs are very long, and as they make their nest on the ground, they could not, without injuring their eggs or their young, have their legs in the nest, nor sit, nor support their whole body, but for this wonderful instinct which nature has given them."

Dampier's Voyage, vol. i. p. 70.

THE ALBATROSS.

Captain Basil Hall states that he has seen specimens of these birds, which, when their wings were fully expanded, measured twelve feet from tip to tip, and that he has heard a well-authenticated account of one that measured sixteen feet.

Fragments of Voyages and Travels, 2d Series.

A recent traveller in the Island of Tristan d'Acunha, thus describes these birds.

The huge Albatross appeared here to dread no interloper or enemy; for their young were on the ground completely uncovered, and the old ones were stalking around them. This bird is the largest of the aquatic tribe, and its plumage is of a most delicate white, excepting the back and the tips of its wings, which are grey. They lay but one egg, on the ground,

where they form a kind of nest, by scraping the earth around it. After the young one is hatched, it has to remain a year before it can fly: it is entirely white, and covered with a woolley down, which is very beautiful. As we approached them, they clapped their beaks with a very quick motion, which made a great noise: this, and throwing up the contents of the stomach, are the only means of offence and defence they seem to possess. The old ones, which are valuable on account of their feathers, my companions made dreadful havoc amongst, knocking on the head all they could come up with. These birds are very helpless on the land, the great length of their wings precluding them from rising up into the air, unless they can get to a steep declivity. On the level ground they were completely at our mercy, but very little was shown them; and in a very short time the plain was strewn

with their bodies, one blow on the head generally killing them.

Five months afterwards, on a second visit, Mr. Earle relates, "These birds were still sitting on their nests, and had never moved away from them. They remain there for a year before they can fly, and during that long period they are fed by the mother: they had greatly increased in size and beauty since my first visit to them. The semblance of the young bird, as it sits on the nest, is stately and beautiful; the grey down, which is its first covering, giving place gradually to its natural grey plumage, leaves half the creature covered with down; the other half is a fine compact coat of feathers, composed of white and grey, while the head is of a dazzling silvery white. Their size is prodigious, one of them proving a tolerable load. Upon skinning them, on our return, we found they were

covered with a fine white fat, which, I was told, was excellent for frying, and other culinary purposes, and the flesh was quite as delicate, and could scarcely be distinguished in flavour from lamb."

Earle's New Zealand.

THE GROUSE.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF BIRDS.

Birds, notwithstanding their great locomotive powers, form no exception to the general rules of distribution already laid down; but in this class, as in plants and terrestrial quadrupeds, different groups of species are circumscribed within definite limits. We find, for example, one assemblage in the Brazils, another in the same latitudes in central Africa, another in India, and a fourth in New

Holland. But some species again are so local, that in the same archipelago, a single island frequently contains a species found in no other spot on the whole earth, as is exemplified in some of the parrot tribes. In this extensive family, which are, with few exceptions, inhabitants of tropical regions, the American group has not one in common with the African, nor either of these with the parrots of India.

Another illustration is afforded by that minute and beautiful tribe, the Humming Birds. The whole of them are, in the first place, peculiar to the New World; but there, although some have a considerable range, as the *Trochilus flammifrons*, which is common to Lima, the island of Juan Fernandez, and the Straits of Magellan,* other species are

* Captain King found this bird at the Straits of Magellan, in the month of May, the depth of winter, sucking the

peculiar to some of the West India islands, and have not been found elsewhere in the western hemisphere. The ornithology of our own country affords a no less striking exemplification of the same law; for the common Grouse occurs no where in the known world except in the British Islands.

Lyell's Geology, vol. ii. p 100.

In the preliminary chapters of Dr. Prichard's "Physical History of Mankind," will be found a sketch of the leading facts, illustrative of the geographical distribution of animals, drawn up with the author's usual clearness and ability.

THE DODO.

This singular bird is generally figured in the common books of natural history; but as a species it has long been extinct. It was first seen by the Dutch, when they landed on the

flowers of the large species of fuchsia, then in bloom in the midst of a shower of snow.

Isle of France, at that time uninhabited, immediately after the discovery of the passage to the East Indies by the Cape of Good Hope. It was of a large size and singular form: its wings short, like those of an ostrich, and wholly incapable of sustaining its heavy body, even for a short flight. In its general appearance it differed from the ostrich, cassowary, or any known bird.

Many naturalists gave figures of the Dodo, after the commencement of the seventeenth century; and there is a painting of it in the British Museum, which is said to have been taken from a living individual. Beneath the painting is a leg, in a fine state of preservation, which ornithologists are agreed cannot belong to any other known bird. In the museum at Oxford, also, there is a foot and a head, in an imperfect state; but M. Cuvier doubts the identity of this species with

that of which the painting is preserved in London.

This bird was never heard of in any other part of the world than in the island where it was originally discovered; and amongst some fossil-bones which have been recently sent from thence to the Paris Museum, M. Cuvier has found the head, sternum, and humerus of the Dodo.

Lyell's Geology, vol. ii. p. 151.

THE HUMMING BIRD.

No sooner has the returning sun again introduced the vernal season, and caused millions of plants to expand their leaves and blossoms to his genial beams, than the little Humming Bird is seen advancing on fairy wings, carefully visiting every opening flower-cup, and,

like a curious florist, removing from each the injurious insects that otherwise would, ere long, cause their beauteous petals to droop and decay. Poised in the air, it is observed peeping cautiously, and with sparkling eye, into their innermost recesses; whilst the etherial motions of its pinions, so rapid and so light, appear to fan and cool the flower, without injuring its fragile texture, and produce a delightful murmuring sound, well adapted for lulling the insects to repose. Then is the moment for the Humming Bird to secure them. Its long delicate bill enters the cup of the flower, and the protruded double-tubed tongue, delicately sensible, and imbued with a glutinous saliva, touches each insect in succession, and draws it from its lurking-place, to be instantly swallowed. All this is done in a moment; and the bird, as it leaves the flower, sips so small a portion of its liquid

honey, that the theft, we may suppose, is looked upon with a grateful feeling by the flower, which is thus kindly relieved from the attacks of her destroyers.

The prairies, the fields, the orchards and gardens, nay, the deepest shades of the forest, are all visited in their turn, and every where the little bird meets with pleasure and with food. Its gorgeous throat, in beauty and brilliancy, baffles all competition. Now it glows with a fiery hue, and again it is changed to the deepest velvety black. The upper parts of its delicate body are of resplendent changing green; and it throws itself through the air with a swiftness and vivacity hardly conceivable. It moves from one flower to another like a gleam of light, upwards, downwards, to the right, and to the left. In this manner it searches the extreme northern portions of our country, following with great pre-

caution the advances of the season, and retreats with equal care at the approach of autumn.

The ruby-throated Humming Bird has a particular liking for such flowers as are greatly tubular in their form. The common jimpson-weed, or thorn-apple, and the trumpet-flower are among the most favoured by their visits; and after these, honey-suckle, the balsam of the gardens, and the wild species which grows on the borders of ponds, rivulets, and deep ravines; but every flower, down to the wild violet, affords them a certain portion of sustenance. Their food consists principally of insects, generally of the coleopterous order; these, together with some equally diminutive flies, being commonly found in their stomach. The first are procured within the flowers, but many of the latter on wing. The Humming Bird might,

therefore, be looked upon as an expert fly-catcher. The nectar or honey which they sip from the different flowers, being of itself insufficient to support them, is used more as if to allay their thirst. I have seen many of these birds kept in partial confinement, when they were supplied with artificial flowers made for the purpose, in the corollas of which water with honey or sugar dissolved in it was placed. The birds were fed on these substances exclusively, but seldom lived many months ; and on being examined after death, were found to be extremely emaciated. Others, on the contrary, which were supplied twice a day with fresh flowers from the woods or garden, placed in a room with windows merely closed with musquitoe gauze-netting, through which minute insects were able to enter, lived twelve months ; at the expiration of which time their liberty was granted them,

the person who kept them having had a long voyage to perform. The room was kept artificially warm during the winter months; and these, in Lower Louisiana, are seldom so cold as to produce ice.

The Humming Bird does not shun mankind so much as birds generally do. It frequently approaches flowers in the windows, or even in rooms when the windows are kept open, during the extreme heat of the day, and returns, when not interrupted, as long as the flowers are unfaded. They are extremely abundant in Louisiana during spring and summer; and wherever a fine plant of the trumpet-flower is met with in the woods, one or more Humming Birds are generally seen about it, and now and then so many as ten or twelve at a time. They are quarrelsome, and have frequent battles in the air, especially the male birds. Should one be feeding on a

flower, and another approach it, they are both immediately seen to rise in the air, twittering and twirling in a spiral manner until out of sight. The conflict over, the victor immediately returns to the flower.

If comparison might enable you to form some tolerably accurate idea of their peculiar mode of flight, and their appearance when on wing, I would say, that were both objects of the same colour, a large sphinx or moth, when moving from one flower to another, and in a direct line, comes nearer the Humming Bird, in aspect, than any other object with which I am acquainted.

Having heard several persons remark that these little creatures had been procured with less injury to their plumage, by shooting them with water, I was tempted to try the experiment, having been in the habit of killing them either with remarkably small shot, or

with sand. However, finding that even when within a few paces, I seldom brought one to the ground, when I used water instead of shot, and moreover was obliged to clean my gun after every discharge, I abandoned the scheme, and feel confident that it can never have been used with material advantage. I have frequently secured some by employing an insect-net; and were this machine used with dexterity, it would afford the best means of procuring Humming Birds.

Audubon.—Ornithological Biography, 248, et seq.

Some idea may be formed of the advance which has been made in zoological pursuits of late years, (especially since the immense continent of the New World has been opened to European research,) by the following fact. Goldsmith, in his Animated Nature, published about sixty years since, speaking of the

Humming Bird, says: "Of this charming little animal there are six or seven varieties, from the size of a small wren, down to that of an humble bee." There are at this moment, in the possession of that eminent nurseryman, Mr. Loddiges of Hackney, no less than one hundred and seventy distinct species of this "charming little animal."

THE EIDER DUCK.

In size this bird approaches nearer to the goose than to the Duck, being above two feet long, and weighing about seven pounds. Its native country extends from about 45° north to the highest arctic latitudes hitherto explored, both in Europe and America—the Farn Islands of the coast of Northumberland, and the rocky islets beyond Portland, in the

district of Maine, being the southern boundary of their breeding places; but they are only very plentiful in Behring's Straits, Labrador, Greenland, Iceland, and other arctic regions. Selby thinks, however, that they might be greatly increased in the Farn Islands, by proper attention. According to M. T. Brunnich, who wrote an express treatise on the natural history of the Eider Duck, their first object, after pairing, is to procure a suitable place for their nest, preferring the shelter of a juniper-bush, where it can be had, and where there is no juniper, contenting themselves with tufts of sea-grass, bundles of sea-weed cast up by the tide, the crevices of rocks, or any hollow place which they can find. Some of the Icelandic proprietors of breeding grounds, in order to accommodate them, cut out holes in rows on the smooth sloping banks, where they would

not otherwise build; but of which they gladly take possession when thus scooped out. It is not a little remarkable, that like several other sea birds, they almost always select small islands, their nests being seldom, if ever, found on the shores of the main land, or even of a large island. The Icelanders are so well aware of this, that they have expended a great deal of labour in actually forming islands, by separating from the main island promontories joined to it by narrow isthmuses.

The reason of this preference of islands seems to be, security from the intrusion of dogs, cattle, and other land animals, to whose vicinity they have so great an aversion, that the Icelanders are careful to remove these, as well as cats, to a distance from their settlements.

" One year," says Hooker, " a fox got over upon the ice to the island of Vidoe, and

caused great alarm: he was, however, though with difficulty, taken, by bringing another fox to the island, and fastening it by a string near the haunt of the former, by which means he was allured within shot of the hunter." The Arctic fox is traditionally said to have been introduced in Iceland by one of the Norwegian kings, to punish the disaffection of the inhabitants.

Both the male and the female Eider Ducks work in concert in building their nest, laying a rather coarse foundation of drift grass, dry tangle, and sea-weed, which is collected in some quantity: upon this rough mattress the female Eider spreads a bed of the finest down, plucked from her own breast, and by no means sparingly; but, as Brunnich informs us, heaping it up so as to form a thick puffed roll quite round the nest. When she is compelled to go in quest of food, after begin-

ning to sit, she carefully turns this marginal roll of down over the eggs, to keep them warm till her return. It is worthy of remark, that though the Eider Duck lays only five or six eggs, it is not uncommon to find more than even ten or upwards in the same nest, occupied by two females, which live together in perfect concord.

The quantity of down in each nest is said, by Van Troil, to be about half a pound, which, by cleaning, is reduced one half. By Pennant, who examined the Eiders' nests in the Farn Islands off Northumberland, it is only estimated, when cleansed, at three quarters of an ounce, and this was so elastic as to fill the crown of the largest hat. The difference of quantity in these two accounts, theoretically ascribed by the translators of Buffon to difference of climate, may have arisen from the one being the first, and the other the second or

third nest of the mother duck; for if the first nest be plundered of its down, though she immediately builds a second, she cannot furnish it with the same quantity as before; and if forced to build a third time, having then stripped her breast of all she could spare, the male is said to furnish what is wanting, which is recognised as being considerably whiter than the female's. When the nest is not robbed, it is said that he furnishes none.

The extraordinary elasticity of the down appears from the fact we have mentioned, of three quarters of an ounce filling a large hat. It is worthy of notice, however, that it is only the down taken from the nests which has this great elasticity, for that taken from the dead birds is much inferior, being, as Pontoppidan says, "fat, subject to rot, and far from as light as what the female plucks to form a bed for its young." The cause of the difference has been attributed

either to the down being in greater perfection at the breeding season, or to the bird's plucking only her finest and most delicate feathers.

The down taken from the nests becomes a valuable article of commerce, being sold, when cleaned, for twelve shillings per pound. In 1750 the Icelandic Company sold down, amounting in value to eight hundred and fifty pounds, besides what was sent directly to Gluckstadt. Little or none of it is used in the country where it is found. In that rough climate, as Buffon remarks, the hardy hunter, clothed in a bear-skin cloak, enjoys in his solitary hut a peaceful, perhaps a profound sleep; while, in polished nations, the man of ambition, stretched upon a bed of Eider-down, and under a gilded roof, seeks in vain to procure the sweets of repose.

Architecture of Birds, p. 71—75: the different authorities are quoted there.

The thought in the last sentence has been beautifully used by Shakspeare in king Henry's reflections on sleep.

Vide King Henry IV. Second Part, Act. iii. Scene 1.

THE BALTIMORE STARLING.

Almost the whole genus of Orioles belong to America, and, with few exceptions, build pensile nests. Few of them, however, equal the Baltimore Starling in the construction of these receptacles for their young, and in giving them, in such a superior degree, convenience, warmth, and security. For these purposes he generally fixes on the high bending extremities of the branches, fastening strong strings of hemp or flax round two forked twigs, corresponding to the intended width of the nest: with the same materials, mixed with quantities

of loose tow, he interweaves or fabricates a strong, firm kind of cloth, not unlike the substance of a hat in its raw state, forming it into a pouch of six or seven inches in depth, lining it substantially with various soft substances, well interwoven with the outward netting, and lastly finishes with a layer of horse-hair; the whole being shaded from the sun and rain by a natural pent-house, or canopy of leaves. As much difference will be found in the style, neatness, and finishing of the nests of the Baltimore, as in their voices; some appear far superior workmen to others, and probably age may improve them in this as it does in their colours. I have a number of their nests now before me, all completed and with eggs: one of these, the neatest, is in the form of a cylinder, of five inches diameter, and seven inches in depth, rounded at bottom. The opening at top is narrowed by a horizontal cover-

ing, to two inches and a half in diameter. The materials are flax, hemp, tow, hair, and wool, woven into a complete cloth, the whole tightly sewed through and through with long horse-hairs, some of which measure two feet in length. The bottom is composed of thick tufts of cow-hair, sewed also with strong horse-hair. This nest was hung on the extremity of the horizontal branch of an apple tree, fronting the south-east, was visible a hundred yards off, though shaded from the sun, and was the work of a very beautiful and perfect bird.

So solicitous is the Baltimore to procure proper materials for his nest, that in the season of building, the women in the country are under the necessity of narrowly watching their thread that may chance to be out bleaching, and the farmer to secure his young grafts; as the Baltimore, finding the former, and the strings

which tie the latter, so well adapted for his purpose, frequently carries off both; or should the one be too heavy, and the other too firmly tied, he will tug at them a considerable time before he gives up the attempt. Skeins of silk, and hanks of thread have been often found, after the leaves were fallen, laying round the Baltimore's nest; but so woven up and entangled as to be entirely irreclaimable. Before the introduction of Europeans no such material could have been obtained here; but with the sagacity of a good architect he has improved this circumstance to his advantage, and the strongest and best materials are uniformly found in these parts, by which the whole is supported.

Wilson's American Ornithology, vol. i. p. 179.

THE RICE BIRD.

Rice seed is sown in Carolina in rows, in the bottom of trenches. The sowing is generally performed by negro women, who do not scatter the seed, but put it carefully into the ground with the hand, so as to preserve the perfect straightness of the line. The sowing is for the most part completed by the middle of March. The water, which until then has been kept back by means of flood-gates, is at this time permitted to overflow the ground to the depth of several inches, and things remain in this state for several days, generally about a week. The germination of the seed is promoted by this flooding; and the water being then drawn from the surface of the land, the plants sprout, rising, in about four weeks, to the height of three or four

inches. At this time the flood-gates are again opened, the fields are once more overflowed, and remain in that state during about sixteen days; one good effect of this second flooding being the destruction of the grass and weeds which may have sprouted at the same time with the rice. The land is allowed, after this, to remain without further irrigation until the middle of July, being repeatedly hoed during the interval, as well to remove any weeds at the moment of their appearance, as to loosen the soil about the roots of the rice, adapting thus, in all its principal parts, the drill system of husbandry. At the time last mentioned, water is again admitted, and remains covering the surface until the grain is actually ripened.

The rice harvest, in the United States, usually commences at the end of August, and extends through the entire month of September, or even somewhat later. The reaping is

performed with a sickle by male negroes, and these are followed by females, who collect the rice into bundles.

This cultivation has been found to be extremely unhealthy to the negroes employed in its prosecution. The alternate flooding and drying of the land, in so hot a climate, where natural evaporation proceeds with great rapidity, must necessarily be prejudicial to health. To avoid exposure to this unwholesome atmosphere, the whole white population abandon the low grounds to the care of negro cultivators. The mortality thus occasioned among the labourers in the rice districts is so great, that while the great increase of population in the States exceeds by far that realized in the older settled countries of Europe, fresh supplies of negro slaves must continually be brought to repair the waste of life, from the more northern slave states of the Union.

The cultivators of rice in America suffer severely from the depredations of the *Rice Bird.* This is about six or nine inches long; its head and the under part of its body are black; the upper part is a mixture of black, white, and yellow; the legs are red. Immense flocks of these birds are seen in the island of Cuba, where the rice crop precedes that of Carolina; but when, from the hardening of the grain the rice in that quarter is no longer agreeable to them, they migrate towards the north, and pass over the sea in such numerous parties, as to be sometimes heard in their flight by sailors frequenting that course. These birds appear in Carolina while the rice is yet milky: their attacks upon the grain, while in this state, are so destructive as to bring considerable loss upon the farmers. The birds arrive in the United States very lean; but thrive so well upon their favourite

diet, that during the three weeks to which their visit is usually limited, they become excessively fat, so as to fly with difficulty, and when shot to burst with the fall. So soon as the rice begins to harden here, they retire to other parts, remaining in one place only so long as the rice continues green. When this food entirely fails, they have recourse for their subsistence to insects, until the maize begins to form its grains, and then the milky substance which these contain, is devoured with the same avidity that marks their attacks upon the rice plants. Extensive flocks of the Rice birds are found, during the spring and summer, in New York and Rhode Island; there they breed, quitting, with their young, for the southward, in time for the tender rice grains of Cuba. It is remarkable, that the males and females do not migrate in company, the females being always the first to perform their

voyages. These birds are eaten as a great delicacy, and the song of the male is said to be melodious.

Library of Entertaining Knowledge. Vegetable Substances. Article, *Rice*.

THE INDIAN SPARROW.

This bird (says Sir William Jones) is exceedingly common in Hindostan. He is astonishingly sensible, faithful, and docile, never voluntarily deserting the place where his young are hatched; but not averse, like most other birds, to the society of mankind, and easily taught to perch on the hand of his master. In a state of nature he generally builds his nest on the highest tree he can find, especially on the palmyra, or on the Indian

fig tree; and he prefers that which happens to overhang a well or a rivulet: he makes it of grass, which he weaves like cloth, and shapes like a bottle, suspending it firmly on the branches ; but so as to rock with the wind, and placing it with its entrance downward to secure it from the birds of prey. His nest usually consists of two or three chambers, and it is popularly believed that he lights them with fire-flies, which he is said to catch alive at night, and confine with moist clay or with cow-dung. That such flies are often found in his nest, where pieces of cow-dung are also stuck, is indubitable ; but as their light could be of little use to him, it seems probable that he only feeds on them.

This circumstance, however, has been recently confirmed by a gentleman long resident in India, as follows.

Desiring, he says, to ascertain the truth of

the current belief that the bird employs the glow-worm for the purpose of illuminating its nest, I adopted the following method. Taking advantage of the absence of the birds, about four o'clock in the afternoon, I directed a servant to prevent their return, while I examined their nest; which I cut open, and found in it a full-sized glow-worm, fastened to the inside, with what is in India called morum, a peculiarly binding sort of clay. Having sewn up the division, I replaced the nest; which on the following evening I again examined, and found another smaller sized glow-worm, with fresh clay, a little on one side of the former spot. I subsequently tried the experiment on three other nests, in two of which the same results were elicited, and in the third the fresh clay was fixed, but no glow-worm. That the insect is placed in the nest as food, is, I think, rendered extremely doubtful, by the

fact of its being fixed in the clay, a useless labour for that purpose; and from the little likelihood there is that a bird, which, as I believe, never quits its nest after roosting, which delights in sunshine, and which is never known to take any food during the night-time, should be of such a greedy disposition as to be unable to retire to rest without providing food for a future occasion.

Vide Architecture of Birds, pp. 151 and 152.

THE TAILOR BIRD.

Equally curious with the Baya, (says Mr. Forbes,) in the structure of its nest, and far superior in the variety and elegance of its plumage, is the Tailor Bird of Hindostan, so called from its instinctive ingenuity in forming its nest. It first selects a plant with large

leaves, and then gathers cotton from the shrub, spins it to a thread by means of its long bill and slender feet, and then, as with a needle, sews the leaves neatly together to conceal its nest. The Tailor Bird resembles some of the Humming Birds at the Brazils, in shape and colour; the hen is clothed in brown, but the plumage of the cock displays the varied tints of azure, purple, green, and gold, so common in those American beauties. Often have I watched the progress of an industrious pair of Tailor Birds in my garden, from the first choice of a plant until the completion of the nest, and the enlargement of the young.

Forbes's Oriental Memoirs, vol. i. p. 55, where an engraving of the nest in question is given; and also in Architecture of Birds, p. 160.

There is a nest of this bird in the British Museum.

THE ESCULENT SWALLOW.

The composition of the *nests* of these birds, (which are so highly esteemed in China as a restorative,) is involved in much obscurity. While by some writers they have been stated to be formed of a substance secreted by the birds, others have asserted that they are composed of a species of fucus common in the eastern seas. If the latter be the case, it seems certain that they are cemented with salivary gluten. Mr. Crawford has given the fullest account of the manner of collecting them in Java, and of their value as an article of commerce.

The best nests are those obtained in deep, damp caves, and such as are taken before the birds have laid their eggs. The coarsest are those obtained after the young have been

fledged: the finest nests are the whitest, that is, those that are taken before the nest has been rendered impure by the food and fæces of the young birds. The best are white, and the inferior dark-coloured, streaked with blood, or intermixed with feathers. It may be remarked, however, that some of the natives describe the purer nests as the dwelling of the cock-bird, and always so designate them in commerce. Birds' nests are collected twice a year, and if regularly collected, and no unusual injury be offered to the caverns, will produce very equally, the quantity being very little, if at all, improved by the caves being left altogether unmolested for a year or two. Some of the caverns are extremely difficult of access, and the nests can only be collected by persons accustomed, from their youth, to the office. The most remarkable and productive caves in Java, of which I superintended a

moiety of the collection for several years, are those of Karang-bolang, in the province of Baglen, on the south coast of the island. There the caves are only to be approached by a perpendicular descent of many hundred feet by ladders of bamboo and rattan, over a sea rolling violently against the rocks. When the mouth of the cavern is attained, the perilous office of taking the nests must often be performed with torch-light, by penetrating into recesses of the rock, when the slightest trip would be instantly fatal to the adventurers, who see nothing below them but the turbulent surf making its way into the chasms of the rock. The only preparation which the birds' nests undergo, is that of simple drying, without direct exposure to the sun, after which they are packed in small boxes, usually of a picul, (about a hundred and thirty-five pounds.) They are assorted for the Chinese market into

three kinds, according to their qualities; distinguished into first or best, second, and third qualities. Caverns that are regularly managed, will afford, in one hundred parts, fifty-three and three-tenths parts of those of the first quality; thirty-five parts of those of the second; and eleven seven-tenth parts of those of the third. The common prices for birds' nests at Canton are, for the first sort, three thousand five hundred Spanish dollars the picul, or £5. 18s. 1½d. per lb.; for the second, two thousand eight hundred Spanish dollars the picul; and for the third, no more than sixteen hundred Spanish dollars. In the Chinese markets a still nicer classification of the edible nests is often made than in the island: the whole are frequently divided into three great classes, under the commercial appellation of paskat, chi-kat, and tung-tung, each of which, according to quality, is subdi-

vided into three inferior orders, and we have consequently prices varying from twelve hundred Spanish dollars per picul, to four thousand two hundred; these last, therefore, are more valuable than their weight in silver.

Of the quantity of birds' nests exported from the Indian islands, although we cannot state the exact amount, we have data for hazarding some probable conjectures respecting it. From Java there are exported about two hundred piculs, or twenty-seven thousand pounds, the greater part of which is of the first quality. The greatest quantity is from the Suluk Archipelagos, and consists of five hundred and thirty piculs. From Macassar there are sent about thirty piculs of the fine kind. These data will enable us to offer some conjecture respecting the whole quantity; for the edible swallow's nests being universally

and almost equally diffused from Junkseylon to New Guinea, and the whole going to one market, and that only by one conveyance, the Junks, it is probable that the average quantity taken by each vessel is not less than the sum taken from the ports just mentioned. Taking the quantity sent from Batavia as the estimate, we know that this is conveyed by 5,300 tons of shipping, and therefore the whole quantity will be 1818 piculs, or 242,400lbs, as the whole quantity of Chinese shipping is 30,000 tons. In the Archipelago, at the prices already quoted, this property is worth 1,263,519 Spanish dollars, or £284,290. The value of this immense property to the country which produces it, rests upon the capricious wants of a single people. From its nature it necessarily follows that it is claimed as the exclusive property of the sovereign, and every where forms a valuable

branch of his income, or of the revenue of the state. This value however is, of course, not equal, and depends upon the situation and the circumstances connected with the caverns in which the nests are found. Being often in remote and sequestered situations, in a country so lawless, a property so valuable and exposed, is subject to the perpetual depredations of freebooters; and it not unfrequently happens that an attack upon them is the principal object of the warfare committed by one petty state against another. In such situations the expence of affording them protection is so heavy, that they are necessarily of little value. In situations where the caverns are difficult of access to strangers, and where there reigns enough of order and tranquillity to secure them from internal depredation, and to admit of the nests being obtained without other expence than the simple labour of collecting

them, the value of the property is very great. The caverns of Karang-bolang, in Java, are of this description. These annually afford 6810lbs. of birds' nests, which are worth, at the Batavia prices of 3200, 2500, and 1200 Spanish dollars the picul, for the respective kinds, nearly 139,000 Spanish dollars; and the whole expence of the collecting, curing, and packing, amounts to no more than eleven per cent. on this amount. The price of birds' nests is therefore a monopoly price, the quantity produced being by nature limited, and incapable of being augmented. The value of labour expended in bringing birds' nests to market is but a trifling portion of their price, which consists of the highest price which the luxurious Chinese will afford to pay for them, and which is a tax paid by that nation to the inhabitants of the Indian Islands. There is, perhaps, no production upon which

human industry is exerted, of which the cost of production bears so small a proportion to the market price.

Crawford's Indian Archipelago, vol. iii.

Various specimens of these valuable nests may be seen at the British Museum.

THE MOCKING BIRD.

It is in Louisiana that you should listen to the love song of the Mocking Bird, as I at this moment do. See how he flies round his mate, with motions as light as those of the butterfly! His tail is widely expanded, he mounts in the air to a small distance, describes a circle, and again alighting, approaches his beloved one, his eyes gleaming with delight; for she has already promised to be his and his only. His beautiful wings are gently raised, he bows to his love, and again bouncing upwards, opens his bill, and pours forth his melody,

full of exultation at the conquest which he has made.

They are not the soft sounds of the flute or of the hautboy that I hear, but the sweeter notes of nature's own music. The mellowness of the song, the varied modulations and gradations, the extent of its compass, the great brilliancy of execution, are unrivalled. There is probably no bird in the world that possesses all the musical qualifications of this king of song, who has derived all from nature's self. Yes, reader, all.

No sooner has he again alighted, and the conjugal contract has been sealed, than, as if his breast was about to be rent with delight, he again pours forth his notes with more softness and richness than before. He now soars higher, glancing around with a vigilant eye, to assure himself that none has witnessed his bliss. When these love-scenes, visible only

to the ardent lover of nature, are over, he dances through the air, full of animation and delight, and, as if to convince his lovely mate that to enrich her hopes he has much more love in store, he that moment begins anew, and imitates all the notes which nature has imparted to the other songsters of the grove.

For a while, each long day and pleasant night are thus spent; but at a peculiar note of the female he ceases his song, and attends to her wishes. A nest is to be prepared, and the choice of a place in which to lay it is to become a matter of mutual consideration. The orange, the fig, the pear-tree of the gardens are inspected. The thick briar patches are also visited. They appear all so well suited for the purpose in view, and so well does the bird know that man is not his most dangerous enemy, that instead of retiring from him, they at length fix their abode in his vicinity, per-

haps in the nearest tree to his window. Dried twigs, leaves, grasses, cotton, flax, and other substances are picked up, carried to a forked branch, and there arranged. The female has laid an egg, and the male redoubles his caresses. Five eggs are deposited in due time, when the male having little more to do than to sing his mate to repose, attunes his pipe anew. Every now and then he spies an insect on the ground, the taste of which he is sure will please his beloved one; he drops upon it, takes it in his bill, beats it against the earth, and flies to the nest to feed and receive the warm thanks of his devoted female.

When a fortnight has elapsed, the young brood demand all their care and attention. No cat, no vile snake, no dreaded hawk is likely to visit their habitation. Indeed, the inmates of the next house have by this time become

attached to the lovely pair of Mocking Birds, and take pleasure in contributing to their safety. The dew-berries from the fields, and many kinds of fruit from the gardens, mixed with insects, supply the young, as well as the parents with food. The brood is soon seen emerging from the nest, and in another fortnight, being now able to fly with vigour, and to provide for themselves, they leave the parent birds, as many other species do.

The musical powers of this bird have often been taken notice of by European naturalists, and persons who find pleasure in listening to the song of different birds whilst in confinement or at large. Some of these persons have described the notes of the nightingale as occasionally fully equal to those of our bird. I have frequently heard both species in confinement and in the wild state, and without prejudice have no hesitation in pronouncing the notes of

the European Philomel equal to those of a *soubrette* of taste, which, could she study under a Mozart, might perhaps in time become very interesting in her way. But to compare her essays to the finished talent of the Mocking Bird, is, in my opinion, quite absurd.

The Mocking Bird is easily reared by hand from the nest, from which it ought to be removed when eight or ten days old. It becomes so very familiar and affectionate, that it will often follow its owner about the house. I have known one raised from the nest by a gentleman at Natchez, that frequently flew out of the house, poured forth its melodies, and returned at sight of his keeper. Good singing birds of this species often bring a high price. They are long lived, and very agreeable companions. Their imitative powers are amazing, and they mimic with ease all

their brethren of the forests, or of the waters, as well as many quadrupeds. I have heard it asserted, that they possess the power of imitating the human voice; but I have never met with an instance of the display of this alleged faculty.

Audubon's Ornithological Biography, p. 108.

The Mocking Bird (says Wilson,) loses little of the power and energy of his song by confinement. In his domesticated state, when he commences his career of song, it is impossible to stand by uninterested. He whistles for the dog; Cæsar starts up, wags his tail, and runs to meet his master; he squeaks out like a hurt chicken, and the hen hurries about with hanging wings and bristled feathers, clucking to protect its injured brood. The barking of the dog, the mewing of the cat, the creaking of a passing wheelbarrow, follow with

great truth and rapidity. He repeats the tune taught him by his master, though of considerable length, fully and faithfully; he runs over the quiverings of the Canary, and the clear whistlings of the Virginia nightingale, or red bird, with such superior execution and effect, that the mortified songsters feel their own inferiority, and become altogether silent, while he seems to triumph in their defeat by redoubling his exertions.

This excessive fondness for variety, however, in the opinion of some, injures his song. His elevated imitations of the brown thrush are frequently interrupted by the crowing of cocks; and the warblings of the blue-bird, which he exquisitely manages, are mingled with the screaming of swallows, or the cackling of hens; amidst the simple melody of the robin, we are suddenly surprised with the shrill reiterations of the whip-

poor-will; while the notes of the kill-deer, blue jay, martin, baltimore, and twenty others, succeed with such imposing reality, that we look round for the originals, and discover, with astonishment, that the sole performer in this singular concert is the admirable bird now before us. During this exhibition of his powers he spreads his wings, expands his tail, and throws himself around the cage in all the ecstacy of enthusiasm, seeming not only to sing, but to dance, keeping time to the measure of his own music. Both in his native and domesticated state, during the solemn stillness of night, as soon as the moon rises in silent majesty, he begins his delightful solo; and serenades us the livelong night, with a full display of his real powers, making the whole neighbourhood ring with his inimitable medley.

Wilson's American Ornithology, vol. ii. p. 93.

THE HONEY-GUIDE.

The Honey-guide, so far from being alarmed at the presence of man, appears anxious to court his acquaintance, and flits from tree to tree with an expressive note of invitation, the meaning of which is well known both to the colonists at the Cape of Good Hope and to the Hottentots. A person invited by the Honey-guide seldom refuses to follow it onwards till it stops, as it is certain to do, at some hollow tree containing a bee-hive, usually well stored with honey and wax. It is probable that the bird finds itself inadequate to the attack of a legion of bees, or to penetrate into the interior of the hive, and is thence led to invite an agent more powerful than itself. The person invited indeed, always leaves the

bird a share of the spoil, as it would be considered sacrilege to rob it of its due, or in any way to injure so useful a creature.

Insect Architecture, p. 145.

THE HOUSE-SPARROW.

The fondness of these birds for warmth, during the winter season, is thus noticed by Mr. Rennie.

"On a chimney-top, which can be seen from my study window, I have remarked the whole of a neighbouring colony of Sparrows contest by the hour the warmest spot on the projecting brick ledge, which was in the middle. Here the sun shone strongest, the kitchen-fire below sent its most powerful influence, and here the middle bird was best

sheltered from the frosty wind, which swept by its more unlucky companions that had been jostled to the two extremities of the row. But none remained long in quiet; for as soon as the cold air pinched them on the exposed side, off they popped to the middle, scolding and cackling most vociferously; and as those who held the best places refused to give them up, the new comers got upon their backs, and insinuated themselves between two of the obstinates, wedge-fashion, as you thrust a book into a crowded shelf. The middle places were thus successively contested, till hunger drove the whole colony to decamp in search of food."

Journal of Royal Institution, vol. i. p. 506.

CONCLUSION.

The following delightful sketch of the awakening of our British Birds, and of the early morning of England, will form an appropriate conclusion to this little work: and may tend to foster habits of early rising, and attentive observation of nature; which again will almost necessarily fill the mind with worthy thoughts of that beneficent Creator, who,

> "Not content
> With every food of life to nourish man,
> Has made all nature beauty to his eye
> And music to his ear."

"At one period of my life, being an early waker and riser, my attention was frequently drawn 'to songs of earliest Birds;' and I always observed, that these creatures appeared abroad at very different periods, as the light

advanced. The Rook is perhaps the first to salute the opening morn; but this bird seems rather to rest than to sleep. Always vigilant, the least alarm after retirement rouses instantly the whole assemblage, not successively, but collectively. It is appointed to be a ready mover. Its principal food is worms, which feed and crawl upon the humid surface of the ground in the dusk, and retire before the light of day: and roosting higher than other birds, the first rays of the sun, as they peep from the horizon, become visible to it. The restless, inquisitive Robin now is seen too. This is the last bird that retires in the evening, being frequently flitting about when the Owl and the Bat are visible, and wakes so soon in the morning, that little rest seems required by it. Its fine large eyes are fitted to receive all, even the weakest rays of light that appear. The worm is its food, too, and few that move

upon the surface escape its notice. The cheerful melody of the Wren is the next we hear, as it bustles from its ivied roost; and we note its gratulation to the young eyed-day, when twilight almost hides the little minstrel from our sight. The Sparrow roosts in holes, and under the eaves of the rick or shed, where the light does not so soon enter, and hence is rather a tardy mover: but it is always ready for food, and seems to listen to what is going forward. We see it now peeping from its penthouse, inquisitively surveying the land; and, should provision be obtainable, it immediately descends upon it without any scruple, and makes itself a welcome guest with all. It retires early to rest. The Blackbird quits its leafy roost in the ivied ash; its *chink*, *chink*, is heard in the hedge; and mounting on some neighbouring oak, with mellow, sober voice, it gratulates the coming day. 'The plain-

song Cuckoo gray,' from some tall tree now tells its tale. The Lark is in the air; the Martin twitters from her earth-built shed; all the choristers are tuning in the grove; and amid such tokens of awakening pleasure, it becomes difficult to note priority of voice. These are the matin voices of the summer season; in winter, a cheerless chirp, or a hungry twit, is all we hear; the families of voice are away, or silent—we have little to note, and perhaps as little inclination to observe.

"During no portion of the day can the general operations of nature be more satisfactorily observed than in the early morning. Rosy June! The very thought of an early summer's morning in the country, like enchantment, gives action to the current of our blood, and seems to breathe through our veins a stream of health and enjoyment. All

things appear fresh and unsoiled. The little birds, animated and gratulous, are frisking about the sprays; others, proceeding to their morning's meal, or occupied in the callings of their nature, give utterance, by every variety of voice, to the pleasures that they feel. The world has not yet called us; and with faculties unworn, we unite with them, partake of this general hilarity and joy, feel disposed to be happy, and enjoy the blessings around us. The very air itself, as yet uninhaled by any, circulates about us, replete with vitality, conveying more than its usual portion of sustenance and health; 'and man goeth forth unto his labour.' Night-feeding creatures, feeling the freshness of light, and the coming day, are all upon the move, retiring from danger and observation; and we can note them now unhidden in their lairs, unconcealed beneath the foliage in the hedge;

the very vegetation, bathed in dew and moisture, full fed, partakes of this early morning joy and health, and every creeping thing is refreshed and satisfied. As day advances, it changes all; and of these happy beings of the early hour, part are away, and we must seek them; others are oppressed, silent, listless: the vegetable, no longer lucid with dew, and despoiled of all the little gems that glittered from every serrature of its leaf, seems pensive at the loss. When blessed with health, having peace, innocence, and content, as inmates of the mind, perhaps the most enjoyable hours of life may be found in an early summer's morning."

Journal of a Naturalist.

THE END.

Joseph Rickerby, Printer, Sherbourn Lane.