

BIRD PICTURES.

BY

ALICE WHITBY.

ILLUSTRATED

BY

SARA.

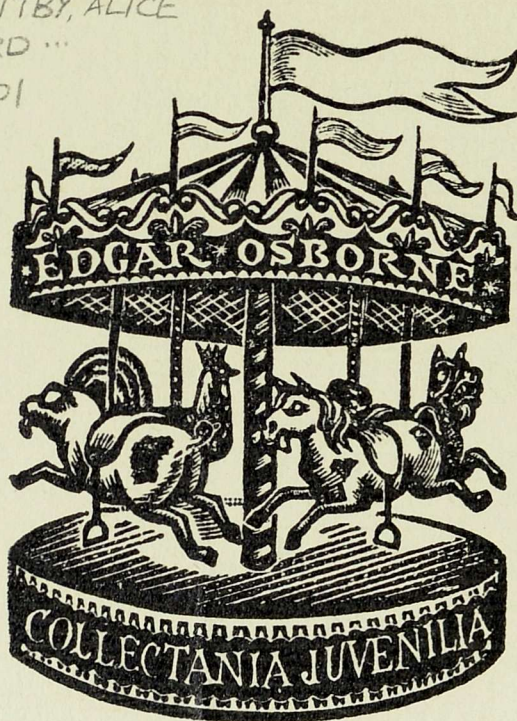
W. CO. FALLON.



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1901



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SARA
W. M.
FALLON.

WITH NOTE BY
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UNIVERSITY COLLEGE BANGOR.

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1901

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

THE title of this little book pleasingly expresses the nature of its contents; and on the page opposite each picture of the bird a word-picture is given, which hits off in a peculiarly happy way the salient features which the picture itself portrays, and at the same time tells us something of the bird's story. The author and artist have evidently spared no pains to make their work both useful and attractive; and the little student of natural history before whom such a book is placed is indeed fortunate.

PHILIP J. WHITE.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE,
BANGOR.

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THE PELICAN.

THE PELICAN.

(AFRICA, ASIA, SOUTH AMERICA, AND SOME PARTS
OF EUROPE.)

THESE three rather odd-looking birds are very clever fishermen. Do you see the bag or pouch hanging from the lower part of each one's beak? That bag will fold up small, or stretch to a great size, and in it the pelican carries food, and sometimes water, for himself and family.

At night a pelican will sink his head, beak, basket and all, on his breast and stand quite still till hunger tells him to wake up and go to market; when he spreads his splendid great wings and soars up above the water, watching for fish with his head on one side. It is wonderful how quickly he sees them and then flies down and fills his pouch.

The next thing is to carry his breakfast safely home,—for he may meet with a thieving hawk, who, by making a great fuss and noise frightens the poor pelican till it opens its beak to scream. In a moment then the basket is emptied! The hawk has a breakfast, but the pelican has none, and must go fishing again.

There are some beautiful colours among the pelican's feathers and also along its great beak, which ends in a crimson hooked point called the nail.

PELICAN



THE DUCKLING.

THE DUCKLING.

VERY likely you have often stood still to admire dear soft yellow ducklings like these. And you like to watch the grown-up ducks in the pond, too, some of them snowy white, and some,—the father birds,—with such beautiful colours, and two little curled feathers in the tail. For among birds, the mothers are almost always plainly dressed, and it is the fathers that are very smart and bright.

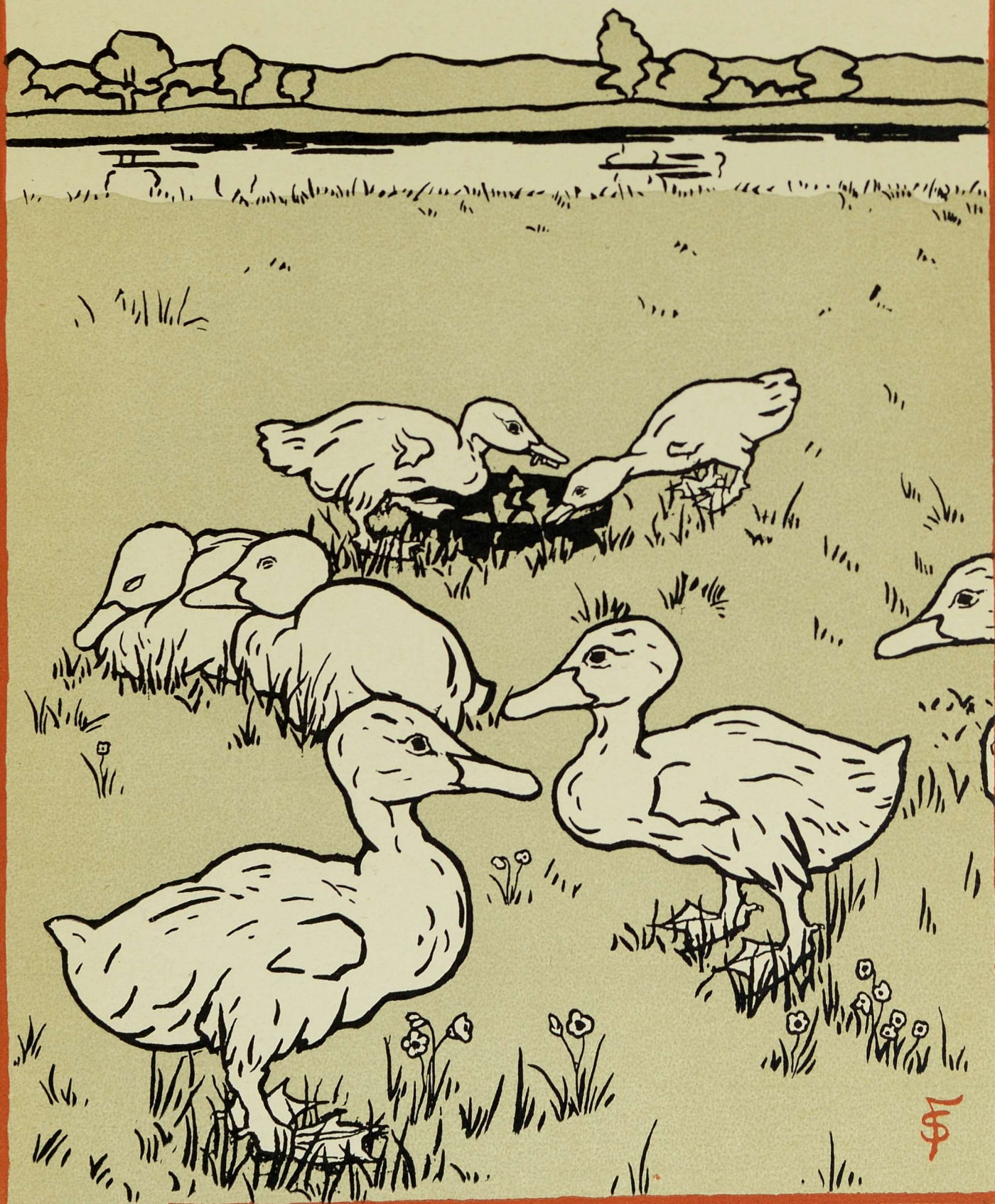
How different a duckling's feet are from a chicken's ! They have a sort of skin spread from toe to toe, which is a great help to them in swimming ; and by this kind of foot, " webbed," as it is called, you may always know a water-bird.

The duck's flat beak is just the shape for searching in mud for its food. It is rather softer and has more power of feeling than sharp beaks ; and by a flattish beak you may generally know a mud-feeding bird.

A baby bird's beak is not strong enough to break its shell ; so there is always a tiny horny cap on it which enables the young creature to chip the round hole that lets it out into the world,—and once out the little tool is done with and falls off.

Birds take a great deal of pains to keep their feathers in good order ; having no comb and brush, they use their beaks and toes for this. It is called " preening."

DUCKLING



THE NIGHT HERON.

THE NIGHT HERON.

(EUROPE, ASIA, AFRICA, AND AMERICA.)

WOULDN'T you like to see some of these birds alive, with their three long slender feathers waving behind them as they step daintily along by the side of a marsh or on the river's edge? Their many pretty tints, too, would look so beautiful in the sunshine,—soft grey shading into black on the back and head, and into buff and white on the under side, and then their greenish yellow legs! But you will not see them in the sunshine, for these herons are night-birds, and very seldom come to England at all.

There is a saying, "No song, no supper," but we should be more likely to say to this bird, "No supper if you sing," for it must be owned that his voice is a very ugly one.

When evening comes, he leaves his nest and his neighbours,—for they like to live near each other, and build in trees or on cliff-rocks,—and tuning up as he goes, he walks about searching busily for insects, slugs, frogs or fish.

A heron is very quick with his beak and can hurt an enemy badly with it, especially as he always aims at the eyes.

The mother bird does not wear any of those pretty white streamers; she has to take care of three or four white eggs, instead of dressing smartly.

BERON



THE CASSOWARY.

THE CASSOWARY.

(NORTHERN AUSTRALIA, NEW GUINEA, AND
NEIGHBOURING ISLANDS.)

HERE are three Cassowaries taking a nibble at the juicy plants and grasses until they can find some fruit and eggs. You might almost think they are covered with hair, for their dark feathers are all very slender and drooping, except five strong quills on each wing. Like their cousins, the ostriches, they can run very fast indeed, and cannot fly at all. On their breast is a bare hard place which they rest against the ground when lying down. Their neck is nearly bare too, but brightly coloured with blue and scarlet, and having two blue and scarlet ornaments, called "caruncles" hanging from the lower part of it. On the top of their head is a bony helmet.

Their temper is not of the gentlest ; they are said to dislike the sight of red as much as bulls do, and even raggedly dressed persons make them angry, when they will give a backward kick or two with their very strong legs. The claws on their toes make these kicks dangerous, and one claw, that on the inside toe, is so strong and sharp that it is often used by savages as a point for their spears.

CASSOWARY



THE FLAMINGO.

THE FLAMINGO.

(ASIA, AFRICA, AMERICA.)

WOULD you like to eat with your head upside-down? It seems an awkward plan, but it is quite a good one for these flamingoes. Their beak is curved sharply downwards in the middle so that it is best to lay the upper part of it on the ground when looking for something to eat. At the same time they keep moving and stirring up the mud with their feet, the better to find their food.

A great many of them may be seen feeding together along the edge of the water, and at each end of the line a sentinel is posted, who puts off his own dinner-time and gives his whole attention to watching lest danger should come near.

They turn their necks about very gracefully, and can "preen" their feathers with the greatest ease. They are not fond of swimming, but their webbed feet serve to keep them from sinking into the soft ground.

They generally fly in a flock, arranged in the shape of a V, and then look most beautiful, their plumage flashing now pure white, now bright rose-colour, as they move their wings.

Their nests are little hillocks of mud which they are said to pile up with their feet.

FLAMMINGO



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THE WHITE DOMESTIC TURKEY.

THE WHITE DOMESTIC TURKEY.

(FROM NORTH AMERICA.)

I KNOW a little boy who says: "There seem to be two sorts of turkey; I like best the brown kind that has gravy and no feathers!"

However the turkey in the picture has plenty of feathers and they are all white. But hanging down from the top of his head and from both sides of his bare neck are some bright red ornaments. And this is rather odd, for he cannot bear the colour red, and will get into a terrible rage at the sight of it. So it is a comfort for him that he cannot see himself as others see him. At three years old, he gets another ornament, a beard or tuft of long black hair growing downward from his breast.

When he is angry or excited he raises his tail as you see in the picture, droops his wings till they trail on the ground, and makes a queer noise called "gobbling."

The mother turkey lays her eggs in as quiet a place as possible and goes to her nest by different paths, for sad to say, she has reason to fear that father turkey would break them if he found them.

TURKEY



THE PARROT.

THE PARROT.

(SOUTH AMERICA.)

HAVE you ever been in the Parrot House at the Zoological Gardens? If you have, I am sure you remember what splendid colours you saw and what ugly sounds you heard!

This Macaw in the picture is as gorgeous and unmusical as any other parrot. The largest Macaws are scarlet, with wings of bright blue, green, yellow and red.

They make their nests in the hollows of trees and can peck away the rotten wood to make them larger when they wish. They love to perch in branches and can climb as well as they can fly. When they climb, they use their strong hooked beak first, sticking it firmly into the tree and then planting their feet on the trunk.

They also use their claws, which have the toes placed two in front and two behind, for holding their food to their mouth.

They eat fruits and seeds and are terrible robbers of the corn-fields. While they are stealing the maize corn, they set one of their number to watch from some high place near, and he screams out a warning to them if he sees danger coming.

Parrots can be easily tamed, and often live to be very, very old.

PARROT



THE CONDOR.

THE CONDOR.

(SOUTH AMERICA.)

IF the ostrich is the largest bird that walks, condors are the largest birds that fly. With their great wings spread out, as wide as a small room, sailing through the air, they look very grand, and some of their habits are grand too, for they live as high up as possible, laying their eggs on mountain ledges, and they fly far, far above the clouds.

They need a great deal of food, and are useful in clearing away dead bodies of animals, etc. These they spy from above, being able to see a long way off, and as one condor drops down to feed, another far away sees him do so, and flies to the spot,—another and another comes, each guided by the movements of their fellow-birds, till there are quite a number greedily devouring the dead body.

Their feathers are grey when young, becoming blacker as the bird gets older; at the neck is a broad white downy ruff above which the skin is bare, except for a crimson comb and wattles on the head.

We can hardly think this bare neck pretty, but it is suited to their habits, and when they are standing, they sink it between their shoulders and it cannot be seen.

CONDOR



THE MAGPIE.

THE MAGPIE.

(ALMOST EVERYWHERE.)

WE may call the magpie a monkey of a bird ! It is so like a monkey in its quickness, curiosity, and love of fun and mischief. It is fond of carrying away spoons, brooches, and other bright things and hiding them, a trick that has caused much trouble, some person being supposed to have stolen these things when after all it was only a lively little bird.

Magpies have long tails which they whisk up and down merrily, and their black feathers have a gloss of blue, green or purple which looks lovely against their white feathers.

These two in the hawthorn bush are perhaps planning their nest ; for they like to weave it of thorny sticks into an egg-shaped nursery with its doorway in the side. Then they make the inside warm and strong with plaster and soft with hay and fibres. They build in the tops of high trees, choosing when they can a place where several branches meet without many branches below, so that it may be difficult for boys to climb up and steal their eggs.

Magpies are easily tamed, and in Norway where they are very kindly treated, even wild ones are less shy than those in our country.

MAGPIE



THE NICOBAR PIGEON.

THE NICOBAR PIGEON.

(PHILIPPINE ISLANDS.)

PERHAPS you have seen many kinds of pigeons, for there are a great many sorts, but you are not likely to have seen any like these. For they live chiefly in some warm islands very far away, where they can find plenty of fruit, which is their favourite food.

Their feathers are very lovely, soft and drooping, and of a bright greenish colour which changes to bright blue or brown as they move about ; but the tail is snowy white. They have pretty feet and a dainty way of walking, and are graceful in all their movements. They can fly strongly and quickly, too, and the rushing sound of their moving wings is pleasant to hear.

At one time of the year a funny fleshy knob begins to appear on the upper part of the beak ; you can see it in the picture. This lump grows larger and larger and then gradually disappears. Pigeons are gentle friendly birds, liking to live in companies, and very kind to their two little ones.

Have you ever heard about Mahomet's pet pigeon ? He used to pretend that it brought him messages from Heaven, and certainly everybody could see the bird close to his ear as if it were whispering to him. But now we think he used to put peas in his ear for the bird to peck out !

PIGEON



THE COCK.

THE COCK.

HERE is the fellow that sets us all such a noisy example of early rising and cheerfulness! Look at him on his fence, up before the sun, singing as best he can out of the gladness of his heart.

But there are other things about the cock that deserve our praise. He is very kind to the hens and chickens under his care; often he busies himself in finding worms for them, and can scarcely be coaxed to take his own meal, till he sees them all eating around him.

I do not know whether to like him or not for being so ready to fight! But at least we can admire his courage of which he has plenty. Do you see the spurs on his legs? They and his beak are his weapons, with which he wounds his enemies.

A cock's tail is not like other birds' tails. It is, as it were, folded together. The middle feathers, at the fold, are longer than the rest, and curve very gracefully.

No doubt you have often noticed the crimson ornaments on his head and neck, called the "comb" and the "wattles."

COCK



THE CHOUGH.

THE CHOUGH.

(CORNWALL AND OTHER PARTS OF ENGLAND; EUROPE,
ASIA, AND PARTS OF AFRICA).

Look at these three dear choughs on the top of a cliff. Most likely you have often seen some relations of theirs that are a little like them,—crows, rooks, and jack-daws. But a chough is a far handsomer bird than these, with his beautiful red legs and beak and his bright eyes and glossy feathers.

He is very good to Mrs. Chough and loves her all her life. She likes to have just five children, and perhaps she thinks it healthy for them to live “at the sea-side,” for their nursery, a nest of sticks, rather rough outside, but warmly lined with wool and hair, is almost always built on rocky cliffs beside the sea.

When the little ones are hungry, they get perhaps one a grasshopper, another a spider, while the others may have to be content with wild berries, corn, barley or shell fish.

Choughs will sometimes follow the plough as rooks and crows do, looking for insects in the freshly-turned earth. It is easy to tame them and they are then very amusing pets.

The eggs are white, spotted with light grey and brown.

CHOUCLO



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THE SPOONBILL.

THE SPOONBILL.

(EUROPE, ASIA, AFRICA.)

You will guess from this bird's name that it has a curious bill. Yes, the spoonbill's beak is widened out at the end like a shallow spoon, and of a yellow colour, though the rest of the beak is black. No doubt this spoon is useful to its owner as he searches in the mud, like a duck, for his food of fish, frogs, shrimps, crabs, sandhoppers, and the roots of some water-plants.

He can also tidy himself with his beak; you see two in the picture "preening" their feathers and standing on one leg to do it. This does not tire him at all, for the bones of many long-legged birds are so made that they can easily stand in that way. These long legs help to keep his pinkish-white feathers out of the mud. Round his neck is a ruff of pale buff feathers and just at his throat you see only naked yellow skin.

After his damp day spent in wading through the mud he likes to fly to the top of a tall tree, for there is his nest and generally a good many neighbours' nests.

Spoonbills' eggs are white, spotted with brown and about the size of those you eat for breakfast.

SPOONBILL



THE EAGLE OWL.

THE EAGLE OWL.

(RUGGED MOUNTAINS AND FORESTS IN EUROPE, ASIA,
AND AFRICA.)

THESE two big birds, nearly a yard long, were once inside white roundish eggs not much larger than those we eat.

One of them looks something like a cat, sitting up straight with that wise thoughtful look in its large yellow eyes, and those two tufts of feathers sticking up like pussy's ears. It can see in a dim light too, as pussy can, and its feet are soft like her paws, for they are thickly covered with feathers. They have four strong sharp claws, and whenever the owl likes, it can move one toe, and have three in front and one behind "like other birds," or it can put two on one side of the bough and two on the other, in a fashion all its own.

The owl's wings are so softly feathered that it can fly very quietly indeed,—and can pounce down,—oh! what a disagreeable surprise!—on any poor rabbit, partridge, or hare that has stayed out too late in the evening. For owls cannot bear bright light, and stay at home through most of the sunny day, though this kind, the largest and fiercest of all owls, hunts a little by day as well.

In France it is called "Le Grand Duc."

OWL



THE MARABOU STORK.

THE MARABOU STORK.

(BRITISH CENTRAL AFRICA.)

WHEN little folks chatter very fast we sometimes tell them they take no time for thinking. Now the stork has no voice at all ; no wonder that he looks wise and serious and thoughtful !

Storks are so gentle,—or else so lucky,—that they have always been liked and taken care of by the people near whom they live. Some kind of Storks,—the Ibises,—were once held sacred : and those who build on rooftops in Holland are much loved and thought to make the home fortunate. The people even put out boxes on purpose to hold their nests.

But the stork in the picture has a more lonely life as far as people are concerned. No doubt, though, he has a wife and family somewhere. If so he loves them all dearly and takes the greatest care of them. Perhaps at this moment he is watching to catch their dinner ; and they are not at all particular what they eat, but will enjoy whatever he takes them.

STORK



THE KING PENGUIN

THE KING PENGUIN.

(ISLANDS OF THE ANTARTIC OCEAN.)

PENGUINS are large birds about a yard high, and as their legs are placed a long way back and they have no tail to speak of, they are obliged to stand very upright or they would lose their balance and tumble over. They have often been mistaken at a distance for people, sometimes for soldiers, for they like to arrange themselves in rows and in very exact order. They have short stiff feathers which keep them warm and dry when swimming, and their wings are then useful too, but are of no use for flying. They generally walk upright in a kind of shuffle, first one side and foot forward, then the other; but if you frighten or hurry them, they drop down and use their wings as legs, when you might easily mistake them for four-footed animals.

The little penguin is always "an only child," and perhaps something of a spoilt child! At any rate the parents are exceedingly kind and careful: and when they have caught a good fish meal and made it soft in their crops, the little bird is allowed to peck it out from their open mouths. In this way it soon gets extremely fat, while its parents become unusually thin.

PENGUIN



THE OSTRICH.

THE OSTRICH.

(AFRICA AND ARABIA.)

OSTRICHES' eggs have a thick strong shell and are about the size of a baby's head. They are laid in a shallow hole in the sand, and always placed on end. By day the sunshine is warm enough for them, but during the cold nights Father Ostrich and Mother Ostrich take it by turns to sit on them and keep them cosy. When fully grown up, ostriches are taller than a tall man, and very strong for running, though not able to fly. They are hunted in all sorts of ways for the sake of the white feathers of their wings and tail, and perhaps they would generally escape as they can run faster than horses, only, unfortunately, they run in circles, so the hunters know how to "take a short cut" and catch them. Then they can only try one thing more,—they can kick,—and kick they do, so strongly that one kick has often killed an enemy.

They eat grass and seeds, and often quench their thirst with juicy melons and gourds, which it is said lions too are often glad to find. The voice of an ostrich is much like a lion's roar.

OSTRICH



THE CROWNED CRANE.

THE CROWNED CRANE.

(SOUTH AFRICA.)

THE first thing to notice about these cranes is that they have golden crowns on their heads! That large tuft of yellow and white bristle is very handsome, and just below it towards the beak are some velvety black feathers. Near the eye is a patch of bare skin, red and white, and on the throat is a scarlet "wattle." On their wings are some beautiful feathers, which they can raise up, or leave to fall on the tail as they please.

They like to soar very high up, and can fly both fast and far. Just now however they all seem hungry and in search of roots, seeds, or bulbs, with now and then a small animal, such as may be found in wet and muddy places.

We should like to see them playing some of their funny games and antics. Sometimes they will run races with each other, and give a great shout at the end, just as two boys might do. Sometimes they sit down with the greater part of their long legs stretched out in front of them. Often they stand on one leg for a long time, and now and then they will have a regular dance, moving their feet most daintily and funnily, and bowing their heads this way and that.

Their nest is generally a heap of earth with a hollow at the top, so that the parents can sit comfortably on the eggs.

CRANE



THE GREAT BUSTARD.

THE GREAT BUSTARD.

(EUROPE, CENTRAL ASIA AND AFRICA.)

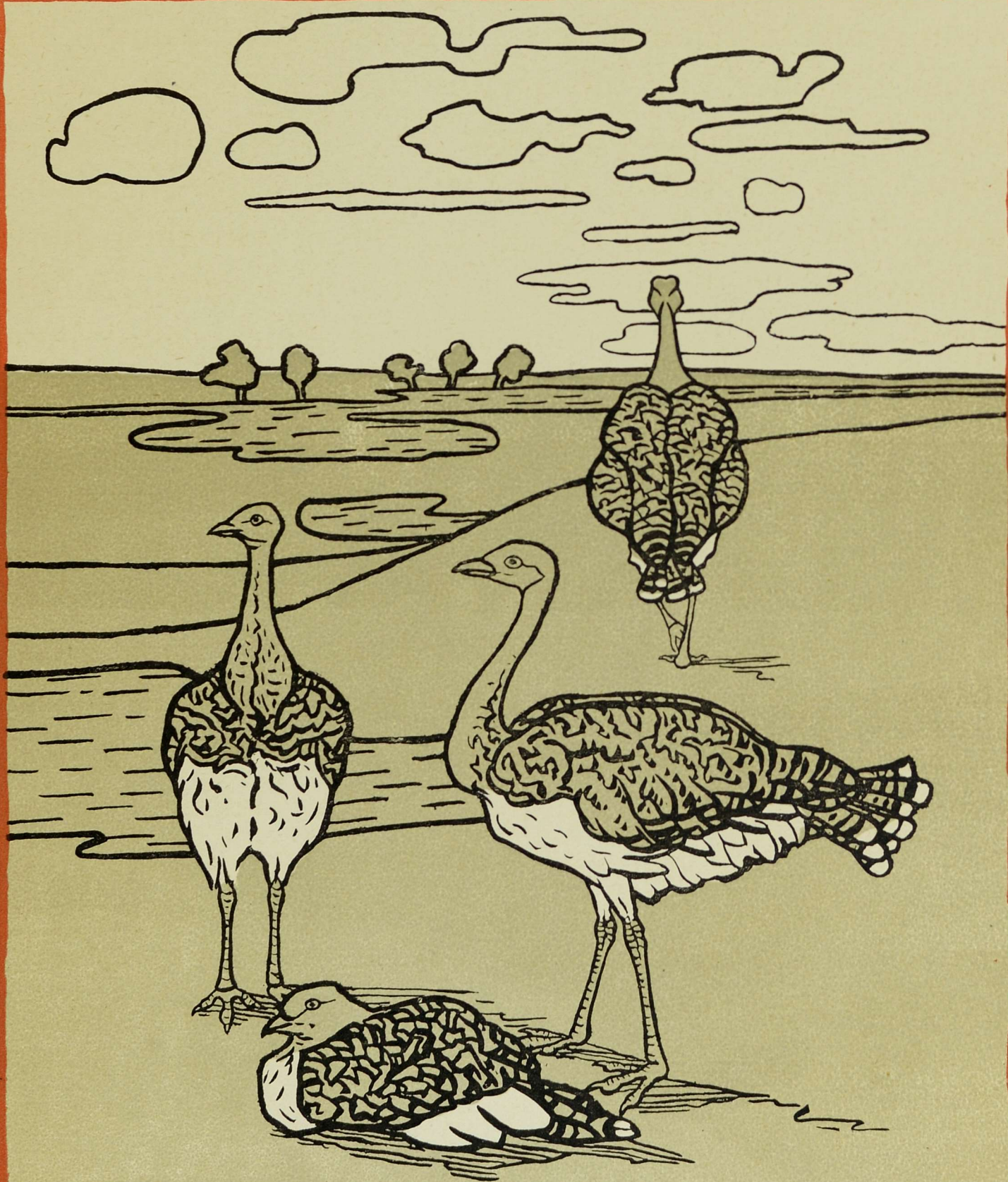
A GOOD many years ago, perhaps about the time when your Grandfather was a little boy, two beautiful big birds like these in the picture flew over some quiet English fields thinking where they should make their home. At last they folded their wide, wide wings and settled down in a very lonely place. Here, with their short, strong, three-toed legs, they soon scooped out a shallow hole for their eggs, and brought up some healthy little bustards.

The Father bird marched about proudly in his fine feathers of brown and black and white, with his dignified white whiskers falling down on each side of his neck. He had to find food for himself and family, and luckily they were not hard to please, but enjoyed young green shoots of plants, or may-be a few worms and field mice.

The Mother, much smaller than the father, was busy and happy with the children. Then somebody came along that way and this somebody had a gun. He happened to kill the very last bustard in this country, so now we never see them here except when they come on a short visit from other places, and wisely fly away again.

There are some things about bustards to remind us of the ways of ostriches, for their nest is only a shallow hole in the ground. These birds too can run very fast and even tire out horses and dogs, their strong legs being helped by their wings.

BUSTARD



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