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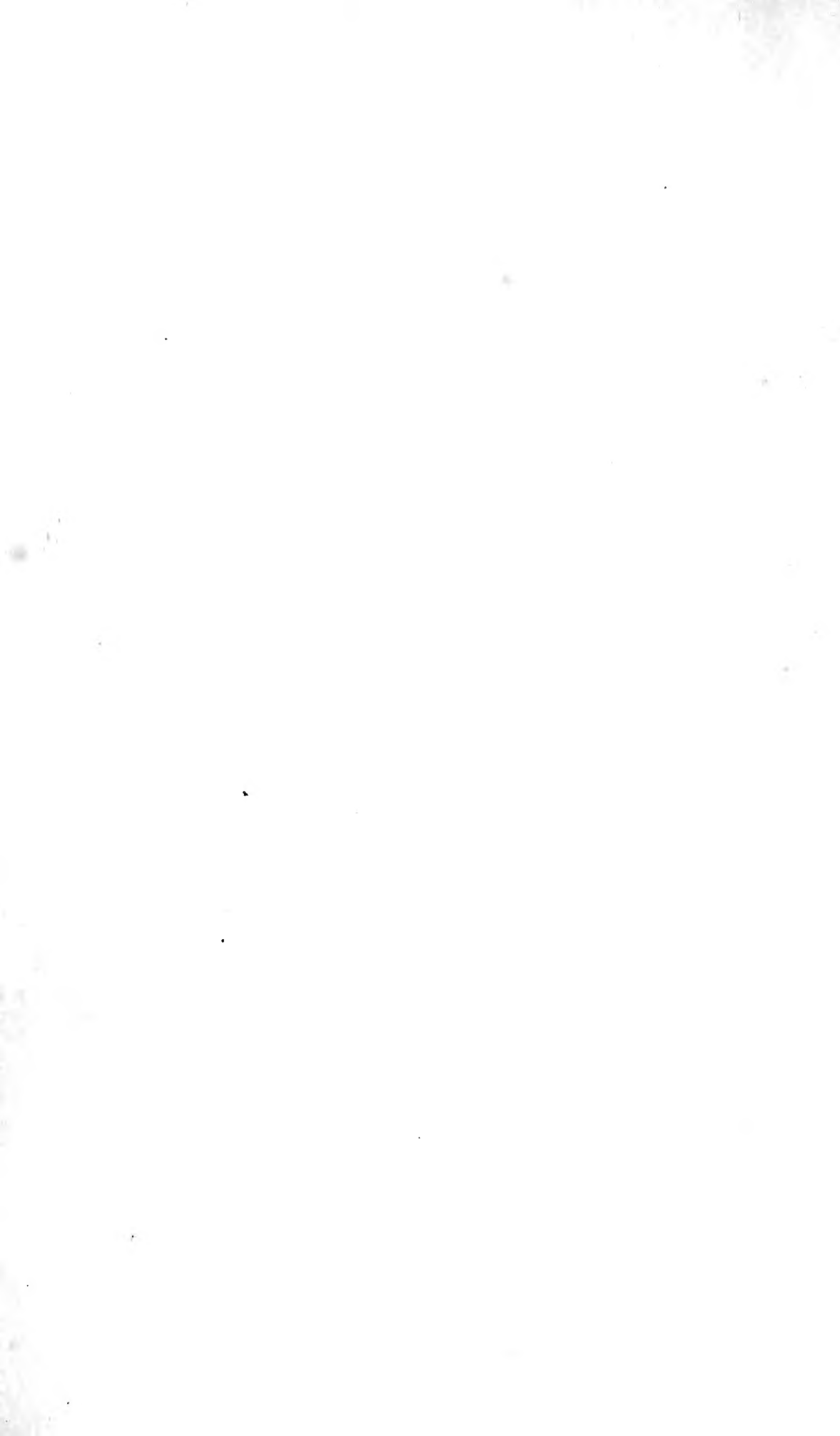
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**BRITISH SONG BIRDS.**

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**BRITISH SONG BIRDS;**

BEING

POPULAR DESCRIPTIONS

AND

ANECDOTES

OF THE

CHORISTERS OF THE GROVES.

---

BY NEVILLE WOOD, Esq.

AUTHOR OF THE  
*ORNITHOLOGIST'S TEXT-BOOK.*

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LONDON:  
JOHN W. PARKER, WEST STRAND.

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TO  
EDWARD BLYTH,  
OF  
TOOTING, SURREY,  
FOR HIS WELL-KNOWN TALENTS AS  
AN ORNITHOLOGIST,  
AND AS A TESTIMONY OF REGARD,  
This Volume  
IS INSCRIBED,  
BY HIS SINCERE FRIEND,  
THE AUTHOR.

Charles 29 Sep 47 Oberholser



## CONTENTS.

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	Page
MISSEL THRUSH, <i>Turdus viscivorus</i> , WILL.....	1
FIELDFARE THRUSH, <i>Turdus pilaris</i> , WILL. ....	12
GARDEN THRUSH, <i>Turdus hortensis</i> , C. T. WOOD .....	17
REDWING THRUSH, <i>Turdus Iliacus</i> , WILL. ....	26
GARDEN OUZEL, <i>Merula vulgaris</i> , WILL.....	30
RING OUZEL, <i>Merula torquata</i> , WILL. ....	36
FALLOW CHAT, <i>Saxicola œnanthe</i> , BECHST. ....	39
WHIN CHAT, <i>Saxicola rubetra</i> , BECHST.....	42
STONE CHAT, <i>Saxicola rubicola</i> , BECHST. ....	45
ROBIN REDBREAST, <i>Rubecula familiaris</i> , BLYTH.....	49
TREE REDSTART, <i>Phœnicura albifrons</i> , BLYTH .....	60
TITHYS REDSTART, <i>Phœnicura Tithys</i> , JARD. and SELBY .	68
BLUETHROATED FANTAIL, <i>Pandicilla Suecica</i> , BLYTH....	71
SIBILOUS BRAKEHOPPER, <i>Locustella sibilatrix</i> , C. T. WOOD	73
SEDGE REEDLING, <i>Salicaria phragmitis</i> , SELBY .....	78
MARSH REEDLING, <i>Salicaria arundinacea</i> , SELBY .....	86
BRAKE NIGHTINGALE, <i>Philomela lusciniæ</i> , SWAINS. ....	89
BLACKCAPT FAUVET, <i>Ficedula atricapilla</i> , BLYTH.....	99
GARDEN FAUVET, <i>Ficedula hortensis</i> , BLYTH.....	105
WHITETHROATED FAUVET, <i>Ficedula cinerea</i> , BLYTH ....	110
GARRULOUS FAUVET, <i>Ficedula garrula</i> , BLYTH.....	114
REDEYED WHINLING, <i>Melizophilus provincialis</i> , LEACH ..	118
HEDGE WARBLER, <i>Sylvia loquax</i> , HERB. ....	125
WOOD WARBLER, <i>Sylvia sibilatrix</i> , BECHST.....	129
WILLOW WARBLER, <i>Sylvia melodia</i> , BLYTH.....	132
GOLDCRESTED KINGLET, <i>Regulus auricapillus</i> , SELBY....	135
FIRECRESTED KINGLET, <i>Regulus ignicapillus</i> , MUDIE....	143
IVY WREN, <i>Anorthura troglodytes</i> , MORRIS .....	146
GARDEN TIT, <i>Parus hortensis</i> , C. T. WOOD.....	156
BLUE TIT, <i>Parus cœruleus</i> , WILL.....	167
MARSH TIT, <i>Parus palustris</i> , GESN. ....	176
COAL TIT, <i>Parus ater</i> , GESN. ....	182
LONGTAILED TIT, <i>Parus caudatus</i> , WILL.....	187
CRESTED TIT, <i>Parus cristatus</i> , ALDROV.....	190

	Page
BEARDED PINNOCK, <i>Calamophilus biarmicus</i> , LEACH.....	192
HEDGE DUNNOCK, <i>Accentor modularis</i> , CUV.....	197
ALPINE ANNET, <i>Curruca collaris</i> , C. T. WOOD .....	206
PIED WAGTAIL, <i>Motacilla maculosa</i> , C. T. WOOD .....	208
GREY WAGTAIL, <i>Motacilla cinerea</i> , WILL.....	214
SPRING OATEAR, <i>Budytes verna</i> , CUV.....	219
BLUEHEADED OATEAR, <i>Budytes cyanocephala</i> , N. WOOD ..	225
ROCK PIPIT, <i>Anthus obscurus</i> , BLYTH .....	226
MEADOW PIPIT, <i>Anthus pratensis</i> , BECHST .....	229
TREE PIPIT, <i>Anthus arboreus</i> , BECHST.....	235
TAWNY LAVROCK, <i>Corydalla fusca</i> , VIG.....	242
SKY LARK, <i>Alauda arvensis</i> , LINN.....	245
WOOD LARK, <i>Alauda arborea</i> , LINN.....	259
SHORE LARK, <i>Alauda Alpestris</i> , LINN.....	271
SNOWY LONGSPUR, <i>Plectrophanes nivalis</i> . MEY.....	275
RUSTY LONGSPUR, <i>Plectrophanes Lapponica</i> , SELBY.....	282
CORN BUNTING <i>Emberiza miliaria</i> , LINN.....	284
YELLOW BUNTING, <i>Emberiza citrinella</i> , LINN.....	292
REED BUNTING, <i>Emberiza schæniculus</i> , LINN.....	304
CIRL BUNTING, <i>Emberiza cirilus</i> , LINN. ....	324
ORTOLAN BUNTING, <i>Emberiza hortulana</i> , LINN.....	327
HOUSE SPARROW, <i>Passer domesticus</i> , ALDROV.....	328
TREE SPARROW, <i>Passer arboreus</i> , BLYTH.....	344
CHAFF FINCH, <i>Fringilla cælebs</i> , LINN.....	346
BRAMBLE FINCH, <i>Fringilla montana</i> , WILL.....	356
SISKIN GOLDWING, <i>Carduelis spinus</i> , STEPH.....	358
→ COMMON GOLDWING, <i>Carduelis elegans</i> , STEPH.....	364
WHIN LINNET, <i>Linaria cannabina</i> , SWAINS.....	371
MOUNTAIN LINNET, <i>Linaria montana</i> , WILL.....	377
REDPOLL LINNET, <i>Linaria pusilla</i> , BLYTH.....	379
MEALY LINNET, <i>Linaria canescens</i> , GOULD.....	382
HAW GROSBEAK, <i>Coccothraustes cratægus</i> , BLYTH .....	384
GREEN GROSBEAK, <i>Coccothraustes chloris</i> , FLEM.....	386
PIPPIN CROSSBILL. <i>Crucirostra vulgaris</i> , STEPH.....	391
PINE CROSSBILL, <i>Crucirostra pinetorum</i> , MEY.....	394
WHITEWINGED CROSSBILL, <i>Crucirostra leucoptera</i> , STEPH.	394
PINE THICKBILL, <i>Densirostra enucleator</i> , C. T. WOOD....	395
HEDGE COALHOOD, <i>Pyrrhula vulgaris</i> , TEM. ....	396
SPOTTED STARLING, <i>Sturnus varius</i> , MEY.....	404

## PREFACE.

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It is frequently a matter of surprise, to those little versed in ornithological science, that, although we have already several works relating to Ornithology, and more especially to that of our own island, yet that others, apparently with a similar aim, are almost continually issuing from the press. “Why,” say they, “should we have the same history so often over?”—Now, though this shallow mode of argument appears sufficiently plausible to the “general reader,” the experienced Ornithologist at once perceives the emptiness and the absurdity of the remark. If each succeeding author *did* tell the same story, surely no one would take the needless trouble of consulting their works. But the fact is, that Nature can never be exhausted, and however long and minute the description of the economy of any bird may be, much yet remains to be added.

The writers of the Linnæan era seem to have supposed that a few lines would comprise all that it was either possible or necessary to say on the habits of any one bird; and they acted accordingly. But the high-spirited and enthusiastic WILSON at once broke through such trammels,

and soared far above all his competitors, with a steady and majestic flight. His bright example has since been followed, with more or less success, by various modern authors, and especially by AUDUBON, whose highly valuable *Ornithological Biography* deserves unqualified praise. In our own country, MONTAGU, SELBY, and others, have laboured with equal zeal, and no small success. But still, to suppose that these worthies have effected all that can be effected, would indeed be a mistaken notion. No work treating of our Ornithology, hitherto published, has been without its due share of errors and defects; and, indeed, all that we can ever hope to achieve, with regard to the habits of the feathered tribes, is to add as much as possible to their biographies.

With this object alone the present volume has been written; and, of course, it contains numerous errors, which I shall most gladly acknowledge and correct, when pointed out to me. Any observations tending to confirm or controvert what I may have advanced, from whatsoever quarter, would likewise receive due attention. Indeed, I conceive there is no more advantageous mode of improving our knowledge in this and other departments of that delightful science, to which we ought all to pay more or less attention, than a correspondence between Naturalists residing in distant parts of the country. Although the natural reserve of the English character doubtless tends greatly to repress such communication, yet, when once entered on, it never fails to impart mutual satisfaction to the parties concerned. And here I gladly seize the opportunity of returning my warmest acknowledgments for the very

liberal manner in which I have been assisted, and the very kind interest which has been taken in my literary labours, by EDWARD BLYTH, J. D. SALMON, Esq., Dr. CHARLES LIVERPOOL, J. D. WESTON, Esq., Dr. JOHN LATHAM, the Rev. W. T. BREE, Dr. SHIRLEY PALMER, EDWIN LEES, Esq., WILLIAM D. BURCHELL, Esq., Dr. NICHOLAS C. PERCIVAL, and many others, whose communications (some anonymous), are mostly printed at the end of the several articles, in order to avoid that admixture of styles which would otherwise have been unavoidable. I may further remark, that where my contributors had employed erroneous names, the proper ones have been substituted, which will prevent all confusion.

In the following pages, I have purposely omitted all dry technical details of plumage, &c., except in the case of the rarer species, as it could serve no useful purpose, to repeat, nearly in the same words, what has been in every worthless compilation, from ARISTOTLE to the present day, respecting the plumage of our common and well-known birds.

Of course it cannot be denied, that much of the information contained in this book, has been included elsewhere; and, from the very nature of the work, this must be the case. But no one fact is herein stated, which has not been observed with my own eyes, excepting where other authorities are referred to, which is, in every case, done openly and fully. And, while I agree with my predecessors in many points, I have found much to correct, and still more to add, to the meagre and unsatisfactory accounts of most of our British Ornithologists.

I will not, like some fawning writers, conclude by invoking the clemency of the reader and the critic, but offer my pages to be duly and thoroughly sifted by both parties, fearing little from the listlessness of the “general reader,” or the severity of the reviewer.

It now only remains to be added, that the following pages are the result of many years close observation and investigation *in the fields*—the only place where the wonderful operations of Nature can be successfully studied; and that the book has been composed in the intervals between less pleasing, and, I may say, frequently less useful occupations.

NEVILLE WOOD.

*Sudbury Hall, Derbyshire.*

April, 1836.

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# BRITISH SONG BIRDS.

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ORDER II.—INSESSORES, VIGORS.

TRIBE II.—DENTIROSTRES, CUVIER.

FAMILY III.—TURDIDÆ, N. WOOD.

SUB-FAMILY III.—TURDINÆ, N. WOOD.

GENUS, TURDUS, ANTIQ.

MISSEL THRUSH, *Turdus viscivorus*, WILL.

---

As patriots guard their country from the steps  
Of some proud tyrant, and his lawless band,  
Who, on the broad arena of the world,  
Like gladiators, fight for prize and plunder,  
“ And spread destruction o'er a smiling land;”  
So dauntless guards the Storm-Cock his lov'd home,  
His mate, his young, his nest, from prowling Hawk.

*Anonymous.*

---

SYNONYMS.—*Turdus viscivorus*, LINN. *Syst.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Analyst*, No. 13.—*Merula viscivora*, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Missel Thrush, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—*Analyst*, No. 13.

THIS large and handsome Thrush remains in Britain throughout the year, and is rather plentifully, and equally distributed over the kingdom; though from its comparatively shy and secluded habits, less is known of its economy than of that of the other British Thrushes. I have taken considerable pains to make myself acquainted with its haunts and habits, and flatter myself that I have not failed in the attempt. The Missel Thrush is far from being a rare bird in Derbyshire, and its habits have afforded me considerable amusement for several years past. Though it is fond of retirement, very thick and

extensive woods do not appear to be its favourite haunts, as is generally to be met with in small woods; and, during the inclement seasons, they congregate in small flocks; occasionally also, though seldom, I have known it associate with the Garden Thrush. Its food is nearly the same as that of the other Thrushes. In summer it subsists on slugs, snails, grubs, and worms; in autumn on blackberries, and on the berries of the mountain-ash; and in winter on the berries of the misseltoe—whence its name—hawthorn, juniper, holly, and ivy, and sometimes, though rarely, on sloes. It does not appear so eminently frugivorous as some others of the genus, and indeed I believe the fact of its eating domesticated fruit at all, has hitherto passed unnoticed, or it has been mistaken for the Garden Thrush. The following anecdote, however, puts the matter beyond a doubt:—

When walking in a garden containing all kinds of fruit trees, in the summer of 1833, the gardener, who, by the way, is by no means more favourable to the feathered race than the rest of his tribe, was prowling about in search of his prey. After a short while, my ears were saluted by the report of a gun from the quarter in which I had, but two minutes before, observed the gardener with his gun. His aim I knew to be fatal, and on nearing him to discover the nature of his prize, was not a little astonished to find it the bird whose habits we are now detailing, and still more astonished on learning that it had been feeding on the red currants to a degree which had evidently greatly excited the destructiveness of the predaceous gardener. I might have doubted the truth of his story, and have taken it to be merely an excuse for destroying the bird, had I not since frequently verified the fact from personal observation. It is in walled gardens, partially surrounded by trees, that its frugivorous\* propensities are most apparent. In such situations, and especially when the young are rearing, its depredations on the garden are very considerable, and currants, gooseberries, rasp-

---

\* When I speak of fruit, I do not include wild berries under the term.

berries, strawberries, and peas, seldom come amiss to the young birds. As long as any individual of the human race is to be seen in the garden, the Missel Thrush will seldom venture its precious life there, but the enemy is no sooner out of sight, than it appears from its retreat, and feasts at its leisure until again disturbed. By sheltering yourself behind a thick currant bush, you will have full scope for observing its frugivorous propensities. The gooseberries and currants it swallows whole, with great composure, always choosing the largest and ripest. The red *currants* are its favourites, and the yellow are only resorted to when their more rosy congeners fail. Of *gooseberries* the smooth kind are selected, and as our garden gives birth to those of the rough or hairy variety chiefly, the depredations I have experienced of these, from the Missel Thrush, are trifling. It is particularly partial to the large yellow gooseberries, and I have sometimes noted five or six of the species—doubtless the family party—making a hearty meal on this large and luscious fruit. Thus we find that the Missel Thrush has not a little of the epicure in it. It likes red currants and yellow gooseberries!—no mean fare either. But although I have known a single bush entirely despoiled of its fairest produce in the course of a week, or less, merely by the voraciousness of this bird, yet, on the whole, fruit forms but a small portion of its subsistence, as it is principally during the time when the young are in the nest that it eats fruit at all. Garden peas appear, however, fully as palatable to it as red currants and yellow gooseberries, and afford it more substantial and more permanent fare. When it can, it will always be happy to insinuate itself among the rabble of House Sparrows that invariably flock around the pea-rows, and, by keeping itself concealed with considerable circumspection, seems willing that the blame should rest on its pert and noisy associates. But, though it may escape the observation of the gardener, yet it will not pass unnoticed by the observing Ornithologist. I have, accordingly, frequently seen it tugging with might and main at the pea-pods, either to pull them off, and open them at

their leisure in a safer place, or to crack them, and devour the delicacies concealed within, on the spot. Nothing is more common than to observe this bird flying off with its booty to a neighbouring wood, where we may suppose its wife and family are anxiously awaiting its return. On its approach to the nest, it is welcomed home with loud and discordant screams, which, discordant though they be to our ears, are without doubt dictated by affection.

The garden is, however, perhaps not the best place for watching the habits of this interesting bird. For although I have been so fortunate as to have observed it frequently in gardens in this neighbourhood, yet, judging from the descriptions of authors, it would seem that it is not generally a visitant of the garden. To the wood, therefore, let us repair without further delay. A thick braky wood (the Paradise of the Warbler family) will not do for our researches in the present case. A grove consisting of tall trees, either beech or oak, will suit us best. Having arrived at the desired spot, let us conceal ourselves behind the shelter of a hedge or thick bush, and, if there be any Missel Thrush's nests about the premises, you have not long to wait before you hear the somewhat unmusical cry of the male bird, which may possibly fly directly over your hiding place. This will give you an idea of its mode of flight, and some of its other habits. But if you wish to observe it still more closely, you must, after having discovered a nest, turn up a piece of ground near the spot, and place a few meal-worms thereon. This done, return to your hiding place, and you will not fail of gaining a tolerably good insight into its habits, though it requires a long course of close and patient observation to become *thoroughly* acquainted with its manners. The best means of observing it in winter, is to conceal yourself near a misseltoe or juniper bush. The berries of these and other bushes it plucks, and devours with avidity, and, when shot in winter, its bill and legs are often stained with the juices of the berries on which it may happen to have been feeding. I have frequently known it trample newly turned up soil in the

same manner as the Peewit Lapwing and other birds, in order to force the unfortunate worms out of their subterraneous retreat. Worms and insects appear to be more exclusively its food than snails, which indeed it does not shell so adroitly as the Garden Ouzel and the Garden Thrush. Though I do not profess to give a satisfactory reason for this, yet the fact I can confidently assert to be true, nor indeed would I have penned it, had I not been certain of its truth.

The flight of the Missel Thrush is rapid, but not smooth, and it is best adapted for short quick flights. When you see it flying from the top of a lofty oak tree, and repairing to a neighbouring wood, its heavy and apparently laborious, though rapid flight, would certainly not lead you to suppose it a Thrush, were you not aware of the fact. It is also considerably larger than the birds with which we commonly associate the name *Thrush*, being about eleven inches from the tip of the bill to the end of the tail. Some individuals measure even more, but I believe eleven inches to be the average.

The song of the Missel Thrush has ever been a disputed point among Ornithologists; some maintaining that it is loud, harsh and disagreeable, while others declare it to be full, rich, and melodious! Now I am by no means inclined to go into either of these extremes. I have frequently heard the song of this bird; and although it certainly does not possess the deep and rich melody of the Garden Ouzel, yet it is far from disagreeable. The merit of the song of birds must, however, always be, in a great measure, matter of opinion. Thus some give the palm to the Garden Ouzel, others to the Garden Thrush, others again to the Black-capt Fauvet, but I believe that all allow each of these delightful songsters to be unrivalled in its peculiar manner. But I am inclined to think that the difference of opinion with regard to the Missel Thrush, rests on other ground. For though there might be difference of opinion with regard to this as well as any other bird, yet I think the conflicting accounts have arisen from the little acquaintance which authors possess with this species. Some

say that it is harsh and disagreeable, because they have heard little more than the undoubtedly discordant scream which it unsparingly utters before a storm, and because it is called by the vulgar, "Holm Screech," "Screech Thrush," and other appellations derived from its screeching; whilst the party in favour of the sweetness of the song have probably mistaken the strains of some other birds for those of the Missel Thrush. In my opinion, the song is decidedly inferior to the clear and open melody of the Garden Thrush, the strains being more desultory, and perhaps not quite so melodious. The song would be far too loud for a room, and, should any of my readers be inclined to keep so large a bird in confinement, they will find it convenient to hang the cage outside the window, or, as BECHSTEIN advises in his admirable *Cage Birds*, in a spacious hall. The Missel Thrush has been observed to sing on the wing, like the Spotted Starling, Ivy Wren, and some others. I have only perceived this habit in a few instances, and such eccentric proceedings are certainly not peculiar to our songster. I have never had the curiosity to keep this bird in a cage, nor am I partial to the practice of captivating any of the Thrushes or Ouzels. They are extremely troublesome in confinement, and neither the song nor habits can, in my opinion, compensate that trouble. There is of course no disputing about tastes, but for my own part, I have not derived one-tenth part of the pleasure from keeping birds in confinement, that I have from observing their unsophisticated habits in a state of nature; and the only caged bird I now possess is a solitary Hedge Dunnock, which at present enjoys the run of a large and commodious aviary. I have in my time kept all kinds of birds in confinement, both foreign and British, from the Barn Owl to the Ivy Wren, and this was undoubtedly what first induced me to commence the study of Ornithology as a science; but now I find far greater pleasure in exploring the hedge, the wood, the field, the lake, and the marsh, in all weathers, at all seasons, and at every hour of the day and night which I can possibly devote to this fascinating pursuit. But to return to

our songster, whose claims for imprisonment we had been discussing before this digression.

Not the least interesting part of the biography of the Missel Thrush is its nidification. Although the fact has not been remarked by authors, yet it may undoubtedly be ranked amongst those birds which return year after year to incubate on the same spot, and on the same tree. I am inclined to suppose that those birds in which this habit is observed, either pair for life, or that the same pair return to the spot each year, there to taste anew the delights of happy wedlock. If the latter be the case, the birds certainly have this advantage over us, that their married state never becomes wearisome. The cause of the Missel Thrush's returning to the same spot for incubation is a full development of the organs of Inhabitiveness and Locality, which same faculties also guide the Swallows without fail each to its own nest. The nest of the Missel Thrush is large, somewhat loose, and not remarkably compact: nor indeed is compactness essential in this case, as the cleft of the tree—its invariable site—fully atones for any deficiency in the structure itself. It consists of dry grass, hay or bents externally, and is lined with grass of a finer texture. This is its usual composition; but it is occasionally *adorned* with wool, paper, rags, and such delectable objects, stuck loosely outside the structure. Though the nest is certainly not a model of symmetry, yet it is admirably adapted to the purpose for which it is intended, the white moss and hay assimilating so closely with the colour of the branch on which it is placed, that although it is generally situated in an open and otherwise conspicuous station, yet it is not always an easy matter to discover it, even if you know whereabouts it is. The eggs, which, according to my experience, are almost invariably five in number and never more, are of a greenish white colour, blotched at the larger end with large patches of reddish brown. The eggs, however, are very subject to variety, so much so, that in many cases, an experienced Ornithologist alone could distinguish the species by a sight of them. The nest never varies, and cannot be mis-

taken for that of any other bird. Not only do the eggs differ greatly in colour, but also in shape and size. I have seen some about twice the usual size, and nearly round. These specimens were taken from a very early nest, and were not double-yolked.

This bird will not quit its nest until you are almost within reach of its tail, but it is extremely quick in escaping from your hand. On one occasion, a friend being in want of a specimen of the nest and eggs of this species for his museum, and also of the bird itself, proposed to me to endeavour to catch the female on the first nest we could find. We accordingly repaired to a neighbouring wood, in which I was almost certain we should discover a nest. We were not disappointed; and perceiving that one of the parents was on the nest, my friend advanced cautiously towards the tree, with an instrument of destruction in his right hand, with the murderous and somewhat unfeeling intention of knocking the bird on the head. He aimed, as he supposed, a deadly blow at the innocent creature; the bird was, however, too quick for him, and escaped unhurt, to relate the adventure to its mate, which was hurrying towards the spot to see how affairs were going on at home. On looking into the nest, we discovered five callow young, and I was indeed rejoiced that the blow inflicted by my friend did not reach the skull of the unhappy mother, as in that case we should have been compelled, however reluctantly, to have *slain* the young birds. I had afterwards the satisfaction of observing this brood following their parents in the wood, and there fed by them. Towards dusk of the same evening, we were sufficiently fortunate to discover a Missel Thrush's nest which had been deserted, and next day I shot a fine male of the former year for my friend.

Although the preceding anecdote proves that the Missel Thrush is in general not easily disturbed on its nest, yet on some occasions I have known it remarkably shy. Both sexes take their turns on the nest, and the male may frequently be heard pouring forth his joyous notes in the neighbourhood of it. Most persons mistake the song of this bird for that of the



Garden Thrush, to which indeed it has considerable resemblance; but the experienced Ornithologist easily detects the difference. The Missel Thrush always pours forth his strains at a very great elevation, on one of the loftiest trees the neighbourhood affords. It commences its song very early in the year, generally in February, but sometimes in January, and at that season, though not so thrilling as that of many other birds, it has indescribable charms to the Ornithologist; and indeed I know few pleasures greater than that afforded by hearing it send forth its melody from a lofty beech tree, on the delighted neighbourhood, and inviting, as it were, the balmy air of spring to spread its genial influence over the earth. I regret to add, however, that in times past I have had no scruple to send after it a charge of No. 5, whilst it was uttering its love song,—a crime of which I hope none of my readers have ever been guilty. Though I think I have a good aim, I never succeeded in killing this bird at the usual elevation at which it sings, but have frequently wounded it; it is also a remarkably strong bird, and though several shots may have entered its body, it will frequently escape the talons, though not the barrel, of its merciless pursuer. Sometimes when I have winged it, it would make good its escape among the long grass, and though I have afterwards shot at and wounded it two or three times, yet could I not catch it; but when its young are just hatched, nothing is easier than to shoot it.

At this period its courage is so great, that few even of the bold and predaceous Falcon family dare attack it, and, though I have never myself witnessed it defending itself against the *Falconidæ*, yet I have never known any of these make too near approach to its nest; I fear, however, that the crafty Magpie too often proves a match for it. When attacked fairly and openly, our bold songster may almost be said to be invincible, but I have witnessed both the Magpie and Common Jay carrying off a young Missel Thrush in triumph, before the parents are aware that an intruder has been invading their premises. In these cases the parents are never apprised of

their loss, as unless they have actually seen one of their darlings carried off, the diminution in the family party is not noticed, and peace continues to reign within the nest. The eggs are hatched in about sixteen days, and the same term renders the young birds fit to make their entry into "life," themselves to become parents in their turn, and to undergo the perils and dangers incident to this nether world.

In addition to, and in corroboration of, my own account of this bird, I feel great pleasure in presenting my readers with the following particulars, communicated to me by my amiable and talent friend Mr. BLYTH, in a letter dated October 3d, 1835 :—

"Very early in the winter, the Missel Thrush associates here in large flocks, which are very often mistaken for Field-fare Thrushes, though the note is very different. This bird, which I consider the type of the Thrush genus, is the most baccivorous of the European species, is fond of worms, slugs, snails, and the like, and fruit; but it does not crack its snails so adroitly as the Garden Thrush. It feeds almost entirely on berries. The large Himalaya species I formerly mentioned to you, exactly resembles it in form and size, and probably in habits, but its plumage is more like that of an immature Missel Thrush."

A correspondent, with whose name and address I am not favoured, thus writes to me :—

"As far as my reading goes, I have not been able to find that authors mention the Missel Thrush as a frugivorous bird. That it does feed on our garden fruit, and that pretty plentifully, I have learnt to my cost. For in the middle of summer they generally resort to my *fruit bushes*, helping themselves to what I had always before considered exclusively my own property. In confinement it does not object to a piece of mealy apple or pear, but I cannot say that I have observed it eating these in its wild state. Perhaps you have?—N. D."

I am much obliged to my anonymous correspondent for this and other communications with which my book will be enriched.

I have never observed this or any other Thrush to eat apples or pears in their natural state.

In a letter dated October the 12th, 1835, Mr. BLYTH writes as follows:—

“Flocks of Missel Thrushes are now plentiful here. The male is distinguished from the female by his spots being darker and larger, especially about the flanks, and by his colours being generally brighter. He does not acquire the fine sulphur tint on the breast till after the second (autumnal) moult; at least they are then far more handsome. All the Thrushes moult but once in the year—in autumn. At this period the Garden Ouzel generally becomes bare about the head. Like other Dentirostral birds, the wing and tail primaries are not shed until the second autumnal moult; and this even holds good in such species as moult twice in the year, as the Wagtails, Oatears, Pipits, &c., which change all their feathers, but the primaries both in spring and autumn. While the Larks, therefore (which I range\* at the extremity of the *Sturnidæ*, close to the American genus *Sturnellus*) change—like the rest of that family, the *Corvidæ* and others which come into my *Insessores*, *Cultrirostres*—all the primaries at the very first moult, the Pipits do not shed their's until the third moult, including the vernal change. The members of the Finch family, and others which range in my *Insessores Conirostres*, resemble in this the *Dentirostres*.

The Missel Thrush is subject to considerable variety, specimens being met with of a light chocolate colour, and others nearly white.

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\* Mr. BLYTH has kindly submitted to me his arrangement of the Order *Insessores* of VIGORS.

FIELDFARE THRUSH, *Turdus pilaris*, WILL.

---

Ye strangers, banished from your native glades,  
 Where tyrant frost with famine leag'd proclaims  
 "Who lingers dies;" with many a risk ye win  
 The privilege to breathe our softer air  
 And glean our sylvan berries.

GISBORNE'S *Walks in a Forest.*

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SYNONYMS.—*Turdus pilaris*, LINN. *Syst.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Analyst*, No. 13,  
*Merula pilaris*, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Fieldfare Thrush, STEPH. *Gen. Zool.*—*Analyst*, No. 13.

THIS bird is not so large as the Missel Thrush, measuring about ten inches; but it is altogether handsomer, has a livelier expression, and richer and darker colours. The breast is remarkably beautiful, with the spots not so square and abrupt as in the preceding species. Its habits are, however, less interesting and do not vary so much as in the Missel Thrush.

Most of our Ornithologists date the usual period of its arrival, in the beginning of October. But SELBY is of opinion that the flocks seen at this time consist of Missel Thrushes, which are taken for Fieldfare Thrushes. This is certainly not the case in my neighbourhood; as the Fieldfare Thrushes generally appear in the beginning of November, and the Missel Thrushes do not congregate till the middle of December, and then they are never observed in such large flocks as the Fieldfare and Redwing Thrushes. On its arrival, the Fieldfare Thrush betakes itself to our fields and meadows, preferring those which are flat and extensive. It is abundant in every part of the country, associating with its congener the Redwing Thrush, and, with these, may frequently be observed to follow the flocks of Barefaced Crows, with the view, it may be supposed, of profiting by the superior judgment of their venerable associates. It generally departs in the early part of April, but sometimes remains much longer.

The benefit which it confers on the farmer must be immense, as it subsists, in moderately mild seasons, entirely on slugs, snails, worms, and various small insects, whose scientific names I am not Entomologist enough to know. With the insects themselves, however, and with the peculiar habits of each, I am perfectly conversant. Though the Fieldfare Thrush is naturally a very shy bird, yet, when in large flocks, they admit of a tolerably near approach, especially if you know how to set about it. When going out with a friend to shoot them, we have always found it the best plan to keep close to the hedge, and to advance slowly and cautiously. In this manner and by commencing the attack judiciously on the rear, a very large number may be killed without causing serious alarm to the great mass of birds, especially as they do not generally keep very close together. In mild winters it roosts on the ground.

These are its habits in mild seasons. During very hard frosts, its mode of life alters considerably. It then keeps in closer masses, resorts to the lanes and roadsides, and even approaches houses, in order to obtain what the fields and meadows are no longer able to supply. As long as the frost continues in its full rigour, berries form its chief support. Those of the holly, ivy, mountain ash, hawthorn, and also blackberries and barberries now form its chief subsistence, and if the frost does not soon relent, it frequently falls the victim of famine, along with its partners in distress, the Redwing Thrushes. In these "bad times" it admits of a very near approach, and the field Naturalist eagerly avails himself of its misfortunes, to gain a clear insight into its habits. In the winter of 1830, I found several Fieldfare Thrushes dead in different parts, though mostly in pretty "good case." Nor was the coldness of the season such as to have caused a material dearth of food; and the only way which I can account for the fact is, by supposing that cockney sportsmen, and boys come home for the Christmas holidays, had been trying their hand at them, and that they had been wounded, though

not in so sportsman-like a manner as to deprive them of life on the spot. Many of my readers may doubtless frequently remember to have found wounded hares and rabbits dead, in woods frequented by poachers. I have, on one or two occasions, found Wood Pheasants which had perished in this ignoble manner, but these were only discovered by mere accident, as they always take care to perform the funeral rites for themselves, before they consign themselves to the arms of Death, by getting into the very thickest and most braky wood that may happen to be at hand. It is far otherwise with the Fieldfare Thrushes, and in very severe seasons the most careless observer can scarcely help finding them dead in the fields or beside hedgerows and sheltered lanes.

This bird is supposed to be the species so admired by the voluptuous Romans as an article of food, and it was by them fed in immense numbers in aviaries or voleries, and when fat, they were sold for a shilling a-piece. So profitable, indeed, was this trade, that there were regular dealers, who did nothing but fatten them. The aviaries were made nearly dark, and the newly-caught birds were placed with those which had been rendered comparatively tame. As soon as they became more reconciled to their lot, they were placed in a second aviary, where they became considerably fatter. After this, they graduated again, being placed carefully in the third and last aviary, there to end their days. When arrived at this important stage of their feeding, great care was taken not to frighten or molest them in any way, and only just enough light was admitted to enable them to find their food, which consisted of the finest figs and flour mashed up into a paste, so that they "fared sumptuously every day," until that fatal hour when a cruel twist of the neck put a period to whatever they may have experienced of happiness or misery. As soon as any of the birds were judged fit for the table, they were taken out of the aviary with great care, in order that the composure of the rest might not be disturbed. This expensive mode of feeding, practised by the ancients, has been equalled, if not surpassed,

in modern times. I allude to the custom of cramming Geese and Turkeys, so commonly adopted by our London poulterers. The article crammed down the throats of the unfortunate wretches, not unfrequently consists of figs.—SELBY says he has found the flesh of this species bitter, but I should think that this depends entirely on the time of year at which it is taken, and on the food on which it had previously subsisted. For my own part, I have never had the curiosity to taste the flesh of this or any other song bird, but some of my friends who have, assure me that at a particular time of the year the flesh is excellent, but that at other times it possesses the bitter taste so peculiar in the Missel Thrush in winter, and more or less at all times. The Fieldfare Thrush is still considered a dainty by our epicures, and thousands which are captured in the country, by nets, are annually sent to London.

The Fieldfare Thrush has never been known to breed in this country, but it is said that in Sweden, Norway, and other Northern countries, it builds in pine and fir trees, laying from three to five eggs of a light greenish blue, spotted with reddish brown. The egg has been figured by my friend HEWITSON, in his exquisitely beautiful *British Oology*, a work which does credit to all who are concerned in its publication. It is unnecessary to describe either the nest or eggs very minutely, as the bird never nidificates in Britain. It seems a little extraordinary, that a bird of such peculiarly ground habits—in our own country at least—should nestle in lofty trees. I can, however, well believe the fact, as in England, they generally pass the night in fir plantations. During the few last remarkably mild and open winters, however, I have generally known them roost on the ground, in which case they do not lie together in one mass, but form themselves into separate groups, thus keeping each other sufficiently warm.

In the winter of 1831, I remember to have witnessed a very curious and notable conflict between a flock of Barefaced Crows and another of Fieldfare Thrushes, in Sudbury-coppice:—In riding rather late one evening (I forget the day, but I shall

never forget the circumstance) along the road which leads from Ashborne to Sudbury, I was struck by the remarkable appearance presented by a flock consisting of hundreds of Fieldfare Thrushes darting down among the trees, and then as suddenly darting aloft into the air, whirling round and round all the time like the Spotted Starling. It would appear that the Barefaced Crows had, like all wise birds, retired early to rest, and that the Fieldfare Thrushes, which had been sitting up rather later than they were wont to do, were in a manner benighted, and had been robbed of their usual resting-place by the *Barefaced* Crows, which appears to have incensed them to such a degree, that they were induced to make the attack above described. This siege was kept up so industriously and for such length of time, that the lazy Barefaced Crows at length rose from the Coppice, mingling with apparent rage amongst the Fieldfare Thrushes, and altogether producing such an uproar as forcibly to recal to my mind the splendid descriptions of the Passenger Pigeon of America, given by those consummate Ornithologists, WILSON and AUDUBON. When the Barefaced Crows were once excited to active measures, the contest was soon concluded by their heavily dropping down again on their warm couches, there to dream of their singular adventure. The vanquished were of course obliged to provide beds for themselves in another quarter. I had the curiosity to visit the spot on the following evening before dusk, and found that the Fieldfare Thrushes had gained experience from their late adventure, and retired early to roost. And this they did on every succeeding night that I visited the coppice. Though I remained till it was quite dark each night, I never found that the Barefaced Crows offered to disturb the rightful owners of the wood, nor have I ever had the pleasure of witnessing a like adventure since that time.

My excellent friend BLYTH informs me, that "the song of the Fieldfare Thrush is very unmelodious—worse than that of the Redwing Thrush, and in fact a mere chatter." I have kept this species in confinement, but never heard it sing. I



once put one which I had winged into a cage; it was remarkably sullen, but neither was it wild, nor did it make any efforts to escape. If you had seen it, you would have supposed it had a very deep project in its head—so wise and solemn did it look. It did not live many days.

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GARDEN THRUSH, *Turdus hortensis*, C. T. WOOD.

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Hark how the air rings!  
 'Tis the Mavis sings;  
 And merrily, merrily sounds her voice,  
 Calling on valleys and hills to rejoice;  
 For winter is past,  
 And the stormy blast  
 Is hast'ning away to the northward at last.

*Minstrelsy of the Woods.*

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SYNONYMS.—*Turdus musicus*, LINN. *Syst.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Merula musica*, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—*Turdus hortensis*, Garden Thrush, *Analyst*, No. 13.

THIS is nearly the smallest of the British Thrushes, measuring but nine inches in length. It is indigenous in Britain, and very plentifully distributed over the kingdom. Although I believe that *all* the Garden Thrushes bred with us remain in Britain throughout the year, yet it is said that immense flocks—the product of more northerly latitudes—visit us in autumn; but in the midland counties these extraneous flocks do not appear, and I believe that they neither penetrate far into the country, nor remain very long with us. Be this as it may, it matters little at present, as in this work I shall only describe what I have myself observed.

The Garden Thrush, though pretty equally distributed over our island, is most partial to fertile and cultivated spots, and more especially to kitchen gardens, where it is seldom at a loss for food. This consists of slugs, snails, earth-worms, and especially the *Helix nemoralis*, in spring and summer, and also in mild winters, but in severe weather it is compelled to become wholly baccivorous, subsisting on the berries of the holly, ivy, mountain ash, and juniper, as also blackberries and

mulberries, which it devours in great numbers. I have remarked that mountain ash trees, situated in woods and plantations, are generally entirely stripped before the end of summer, by the Garden Thrushes and Garden Ouzels, but those close to houses are frequently loaded with fruit till the end of autumn, and a very beautiful sight it is. These trees, however, do not escape in the end, and if you look out of your window on the first frosty morning in December, you will see these and other Thrushes and Ouzels tugging with might and main at the unhappy tree, which will now soon be despoiled of its whole crop. As soon as you are observed, the wary flock will fly off, and will not re-appear for a considerable time afterwards; the Garden Ouzels are always the first to give the alarm. It is a very amusing sight to watch four or five Garden Thrushes scouring the mown grass before the house, in search of the slugs and snails, which form so essential a part of their subsistence,—now darting forward, now looking up, and ever and anon pitching upon an unhappy worm, which, if the bird happens to be in a state of celibacy, it devours on the spot, with much apparent satisfaction. But, should it be married, and have a family to provide for, the unfortunate reptile is instantly borne aloft to the nest, and deposited in the eager and gaping mouth of one of the nestlings.

The Garden Thrush is universally allowed to be one of the finest of our songsters, and to hear it on a clear April morning is certainly very delightful; though, when heard close, and alone, its strains sound desultory, and even harsh. It is entirely devoid of the deep and rich—I had almost said *sublime*—melody of the Garden Ouzel. Its song, however, forms an excellent addition to the vernal chorus, especially if heard in the distance. The most favourable time for hearing it is early in the morning, or late in the evening, when it certainly sounds to great advantage. It sings earlier and later in the day than most of our sylvan choristers, and I never enjoyed its song so much as when waiting for the Brake Nightingale to strike up. Then indeed it is peculiarly delightful even to hear them send-

ing forth their alarm notes, bidding good night as it were to their companions ; when, but a few minutes before, the woods had rung with their charming melody, all is now still, and nothing of the Garden Thrushes is heard but their “good night.” When one individual shouts out this *farewell* from his airy bed, he is answered on all sides by dozens of others, and then for a few minutes deep silence reigns in the woods, until, all vulgar songsters having ended their tales, the Brake Nightingale commences his. And a delightful tale it is, as the moon can well testify,—but of this hereafter. The Garden Thrush continues singing till it is nearly dark, and one or two individuals keep up much later. In the long days it commences at one o’clock in the morning, and I can assure my readers that I have frequently been out at this time on purpose to hear it singing.

The Garden Thrush is a very polite bird, and before it begins the affairs of the day, its *good morning* is proclaimed in its loudest tone, and duly answered by its associates. Very soon after this, they are in full song, and are shortly joined by the rest of the vernal chorus. Charming as is the song of this bird in its native haunts, nothing is, in my opinion, more disagreeable than to hear its tame and mutilated strains in confinement, and indeed there can be no excuse for keeping it in cages, except in large towns and cities. I have often listened with delight to its notes, especially when I have been sojourning some time in London. Indeed, I think I may safely assert, that I have derived at least as much pleasure from hearing birds in cages *in towns*, as I have in their native woods in the country.

I have heard this bird whistle many tunes and waltzes with great precision, and without missing a note. I admired its skill in the execution of these, but would at all times rather hear its own unsophisticated strains, as the others always appear to me artificial and constrained, and it is rarely that you can get them to sing the acquired tunes without an admixture of their own more natural notes.

The nest of the Garden Thrush is composed exteriorly of moss, sticks, and grass, tolerably neatly framed together, but large, and not very compact. The compound of the interior has given rise to many conflicting opinions. Some say that it consists entirely of cow-dung, and this is the generally received supposition. My observations have, however, led me to a different conclusion. All the nests I have examined (of course an immense number) appear to me to have been plastered with a mixture of a light kind of clay and rotten wood. I incline the more strongly to this opinion, because, in breaking up the inner crust of a Garden Thrush's nest, I have always found pieces of wood stuck in at different parts, and because, moreover, before the nest is quite completed, I have generally seen pieces of wood lying at the bottom of the nest. That a coat of cow-dung may *occasionally* be plastered over the inner surface, I am not prepared to deny, but am convinced that it is not *commonly* the case. The nest is mostly situated on a part of the branch where three or four arms meet, and therefore it need not be very compact.

This bird is not very curious in the choice of a situation for building, but generally makes its nest in a low thick bush. I have found the common and Portugal laurels to be favourite bushes, but the nest is also frequently found in holly bushes, hawthorns, or even in hedges. They may likewise be confidently looked for in wall-fruit trees, and especially pears, whose thick foliage afford ample shelter even for so large a nest. On one or two occasions also I have seen it fixed on a horizontal bar, near a running stream; but this I consider a very eccentric situation for the Garden Thrush. A nest that I once knew in such a locality, afforded me considerable amusement, and it was very curious to observe the young birds gaping their wide mouths for food in this strange situation. When this brood was fledged, and ready to fly, I took the opportunity of hiding myself behind a bush, to watch their first flight, as I expected them to depart every minute. I had the satisfaction of seeing the female return to the nest five times, every time

bringing a fat slug or worm to deposit in the mouth of each of its nestlings, and scarcely had it departed for the fifth time, when a boy, prowling in that direction, instantly spied the nest, and doubtless thought it a rare prize. I now determined to watch *his* habits also, and, still remaining concealed, saw him put his hat over the nest, and prepare to carry off the whole family. It was now high time to intercede in behalf of my young friends, and I had the satisfaction of setting at liberty five plump young Garden Thrushes, which, but for my timely interference, had never seen their parent again, or have tasted the sweets of liberty. I never see a boy with a nest of eggs or young birds in his hands, but I remonstrate with him on his cruelty, or cause the nest to be returned to the spot from which it was taken.

Sometimes I have found Garden Thrushes' nests begun so early as the middle of February, but have never known them completed. A few sunny days, in the February of 1835, caused many of these birds to commence building in this neighbourhood, but a frost coming on, every one of them was abandoned, to my great regret. It is not before the end of March that the Garden Thrush begins building in earnest, but its song may be heard, in mild seasons, six weeks before this time. I have known one of these birds dash against a window, and kill itself on the spot, having probably been pursued by one of the unrelenting members of the Falcon family. When the Garden Thrush is first put into confinement, it often becomes very sulky, and, like the Fieldfare Thrush, refuses all food, but in a few days it relents, seeming smitten by the kind attentions of its jailer. If put into a very large aviary, it is a lively, interesting, and even happy bird; but it is despicable to see it pent up in a cage of a foot square, and shameful in those hard-hearted individuals who place it in such a situation. I assure you, kind reader, that I have frequently offered cottagers and others a shilling if they would consent to the release of their captive. Such a proposal has always met with a very cold reception, and with no other answer than a vacant stare, and

I should not wonder, indeed, if on such occasions I am supposed to be a little *cracked!*

But let us turn from this picture of misery, to the Garden Thrush in his native haunts, where he knows no bounds but his own inclination, and those placed by Nature. This bird sometimes sings on a very low tree, but whatever be the altitude of the tree, the top branch is invariably chosen for the vocal performance. You may sometimes approach very close to him without his heeding you, but you must do it very cautiously, and by stealth. As soon as he perceives you, if you keep quiet, he will generally continue his strains, but in a very subdued tone. Sometimes, however, I have known him pluck up sufficient courage to perform his song in his best manner, when I was standing within a few yards of him. But a moment's break in the melody at once cuts short your observations, as you may then know that he is preparing to wish you good bye, and to leave you astonished at the rapidity and abruptness of his departure. To watch it cracking the shell of the *Helix nemoralis* on a stone, is a very amusing sight, and these poor creatures are devoured in such numbers as to leave evident traces of the feasting that has been going on. No less gratifying is it to the Ornithologist to observe it plucking and swallowing the berries of the mountain ash, hawthorn, currant, and gooseberry, though, to the gardener, the latter is a most distressing sight.

MONTAGU is of opinion, that a wet season is fatal to Garden Thrushes, as their nests, from being water-proof, become filled with water, and the eggs are of course spoiled. But for three distinct reasons I am inclined to differ from this eminent and accurate Ornithologist, or, in the words of WILLUGHBY, "I do herein crave leave to dissent from him." 1st, Because I have never observed such to be the case; 2dly, Because the wings of the bird would effectually keep out all wet; and 3dly, Because I never yet met with a Garden Thrush's nest which was water-proof.

Very early in the spring I have often found eggs of this bird

lying on the ground without a shell, having been prematurely laid. On one occasion I have found an egg of this bird in a pear tree against the wall, on a very small portion of moss—just enough to secure it from falling. This egg was never attended to afterwards.

For the sake of experiment, I once added to a Garden Thrush's nest containing five eggs, other five eggs, belonging to a Garden Ouzel in the neighbourhood, whom I had taken the liberty of robbing of her lawful property. Eight of these were hatched, and nearly the whole got safely through their infancy. The parents appeared to have some difficulty in providing for so large a progeny, and, after a few days, one of the young Garden Ouzels died, though I believe it was rather crushed than starved to death. I had the pleasure of seeing this motley brood follow their parents among the long grass and low bushes many days after they had quitted the nest, but observed that after a time they parted company, and the Garden Ouzels were no longer seen. The rest remained with their parents a considerable time (as is their custom), and were fed by them.

On another occasion, I put three House Sparrow's eggs into a Garden Thrush's nest in a pear tree, containing two of her own eggs. On these she sat several days, just as she would have done on her own; but my experiment was cut short by one of the labourers taking the nest. It is very difficult to complete one's experiments in this line, and this is the more to be regretted, as I do not often like to rob birds of their eggs.

When the Garden Thrush is disturbed on her nest, and especially if she has young, she flies round you in great concern, uttering her peculiar alarm note, ruffling her feathers, spreading her tail, snapping her bill with great force, and testifying her rage in every possible manner. She sometimes even pursues you a short way, as if to see you safe out of her territory, and is, not unfrequently, joined in the hue and cry by other birds, especially the Chaffinch, Green Grosbeak, and Common Linnet, and sometimes, also, by the Garden Ouzel. The latter has, however, generally enough to do to defend its own progeny

from its numerous enemies. I have found the Thrushes—especially the Missel Thrush—and Ouzels much more courageous in the defence of their nests than any of the smaller birds. I once caught a female Garden Thrush on her nest, when the young were just hatched. While I had her in my hand, I could see the male, occasionally, running on the top of the wall, and keeping a vigilant look-out at my proceedings. When the captive was released, both parents flew off together with loud cries, and did not return as long as I was in sight. The young birds still continued to be fed, but I could not ascertain whether the *female* ever returned to her charge.

The Rev. W. T. BREE, of Allesley Rectory, Warwickshire, has lately written to me as follows :—

“This summer, during the hot dry weather, the Garden Ouzels and Garden Thrushes were sorely put to it for want of their usual animal food,—slugs, snails, worms, grubs, and the like, and accordingly made unusually free with my gooseberries, currants, and raspberries, to a greater extent than I ever before witnessed. They also, as their custom is in a dry season, stocked up close-growing, tufted, Alpine plants, in search of grubs, &c., that lurked beneath; propensities which, no doubt, you have often remarked.—Sept. 30, 1835.” As during the greater part of the hot and dry weather of the past summer, I was either in London or confined to the house, I had no opportunity of observing the summer birds, or the summer habits of those which are indigenous, Mr. BREE’s remarks, as relating to the preceding season, are therefore peculiarly valuable. I am also informed by my valued friend, CHARLES LIVERPOOL, Esq., M.D., that “in the gardens about London, great havoc was made, during the past summer, by the Garden Thrushes, among the gooseberries and currants,” and that “the large yellow kind were special favourites, many bushes being wholly deprived of their produce, merely by the deprivations of these birds.—Oct. 5, 1835.”

That excellent Naturalist, Mr. BLYTH, has communicated to me as follows :—



“Of the Garden Thrush, the most curious fact I am acquainted with is, that we have, every winter, a considerable accession to their numbers, which differ considerably in their habits from the resident individuals. They arrive at about the same time as the Redwing Thrushes, with which they sometimes, but not very often, associate, and, what is remarkable, they continue in flocks like that species, until long after the resident Garden Thrushes have reared their first broods, leaving us about the middle or close of April—that is, disappearing like the Redwing Thrushes, for I have not the slightest doubt they leave the country. Some remarks on this subject will be found in the long disquisition on migration contained in my description of the Brake Nightingale.” In a subsequent communication the same acute observer says:—“I saw yesterday (Sunday) week a flock of about forty or fifty Garden Thrushes, which I am confident were natives. None of the American spotted-breasted Thrushes, *Philomeloides* (both erroneous names), flock at all, in this resembling the Nightingales, with which latter they also agree in their shy, retiring, Warbler-like habits.”

The following communication corroborates what I have already said with regard to the nest of this bird:—“It surprises me that so accurate an author as MONTAGU should have favoured the opinion (I believe he was the originator of it) of a wet season being destructive to the Garden Thrush, as I never knew such to be the case, and because (though I have not tried it) I consider it extremely unlikely that the nest would retain water. I never knew that such an opinion had been entertained, until I read RENNIE’s edition of the *Ornithological Dictionary*.—H. BARLOW, Cambridge, Oct. 15, 1834.”

REDWING THRUSH, *Turdus Iliacus*, WILL.

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The melancholy days are come, the saddest of the year,  
 Of wailing winds, and naked woods, and meadows brown and sere,  
 Heap'd in the hollows of the groves, the wither'd leaves lie dead—  
 They rustle to the eddying gust, and to the rabbit's tread.  
 The robin and the wren are flown, and from the shrubs the jay,  
 And from the wood-top calls the crow through all the gloomy day.

*Parterre*, Vol. III. p. 245.\*

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SYNONYMS.—*Turdus Iliacus*, WILL. *Orn.*—LINN. *Syst.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Analyst*, No. 13.—*Merula Iliaca*, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Redwing Thrush, PENN. BR. ZOOLOG.—STEPH. *Gen. Zool.*—MUDIE'S *Feath. Tribes.*—*Analyst*, No. 13.

THIS is the smallest of our British Thrushes, and generally arrives before the Fieldfare Thrush, appearing about the middle of October. Its habits and haunts are very similar to those of the latter, with which it not uncommonly associates. It frequents fields and meadows, or indeed any open parts of the country, and, according to my experience, seems to prefer upland districts to the low grounds. In severe and long continued frost, it approaches the lanes and highways, gleaning its daily fare from the hedges and woods. Few of our wild berries come amiss to it, and I have, accordingly, observed it to feed on the berries of the hawthorn, blackberry, juniper, ivy, holly, barberry, mountain ash, and occasionally, though rarely, and only in extremely rigorous weather, on those of the sloe. In ordinary seasons, these berries are sufficiently abundant to sustain it through the winter; but, if the frost and snow are of long continuance, the crop soon fails; the Redwinged and Fieldfare Thrushes then perish in great numbers, and may be found frozen and starved to death, in lanes and woods, and under hedges, in an extremely emaciated state. In the winter of 1831, this was the case. On one occasion, I caged a Redwing Thrush, which I had

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\* See some beautiful papers on the seasons, by WILLIAM COX, in the *Parterre*, Part 16, for October, 1835.

found in a very weakly condition, near a hedgerow. It appeared to have suffered equally from cold and hunger, and I therefore prepared to relieve both as speedily as possible. I placed it near the fire and offered it food. It scarcely moved for about an hour, but after this it speedily recovered, devoured its food with avidity, and, what is remarkable, was extremely thirsty.\* It soon hopped about its cage at perfect ease, and promised to become an interesting pet, when unhappily, in the third day of its captivity, that sworn enemy to all cage birds, Grimalkin, seized it out of its cage, scampered off with the unhappy bird in its mouth, and was out of sight in an instant. I was the more vexed at this, because I particularly desired to have noticed the habits of this species in confinement.

In mild and open winters, its food consists chiefly of insects, slugs, caterpillars and worms, and also the *Helix nemoralis*, which latter it deprives of its shell almost as adroitly as the Garden Thrush. But the localities it frequents are not so favourable to the *Helix nemoralis* as to the common earth worm, and these, accordingly, form its principal support as long as it remains in the dominions of his Britannic Majesty.

It is easy to shoot the Redwing Thrush, by approaching the flock in the rear, and keeping always close to the hedge. If the wind be against you, it will be in your favour; for, paradoxical as this may appear at first sight, yet, when the wind is against you, the report of the gun is greatly deadened before it falls on the ears of the leaders of the flock. Thus, when they associate in very great numbers—which they generally do in hard winters—I have fired for hours in their rear, without causing the main body to take wing, the hinder birds merely flying on till they arrive in front of the troop, and so on. When hard pressed for food, they, like their congeners, the Fieldfare Thrushes, admit of a very near ap-

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\* I have frequently observed with surprise, that frostbitten birds are remarkably thirsty, and have often known them kill themselves by drinking too much at a time. This is probably owing to the ponds and streams being then frozen over.

proach, and the Naturalist and the Sportsman are at full liberty to gratify their respective tastes. But, on the other hand, when the season is mild, and food, in consequence, plentiful, the flocks are considerably smaller, and invariably take wing on the slightest alarm. At such times, it is both a healthy and an amusing exercise to pursue them over hedge and field, with gun in hand. As soon as the birds are apprised of your approach, the hinder ones take wing, and the whole flock soon disappears, leaving you astonished at the rapidity of their departure; but their flight is neither high nor of long duration, as they almost invariably settle a few fields further on. If you approach too openly or abruptly, you will have no chance either of observing their habits, or—which many of my readers will consider a more important affair—of tasting their flesh. For my own part, I am content to confine myself to the former, and to shooting occasionally a specimen for the museum, or for the purpose of noting the changes of plumage, which take place twice a year in the members of the Thrush genus.

With regard to the song of this bird, there appears to be much difference of opinion. SELBY says, “it has a clear and melodious note, and its song, when in its native or summer residence (Scandinavia Lapland, Russia), is said to be scarcely inferior to that of our common Thrush.” BECHSTEIN, on the contrary, affirms that its notes are as unmelodious as those of the Fieldfare Thrush. Mr. BLYTH informs me, that the latter accords with his observation. Without pretending to clear up this point, I may remark that the song is very rarely heard in this country, and only a short time before its departure. And this it is, doubtless, that has caused the uncertainty with regard to its musical abilities.

It is said to be extremely plentiful in the north of Europe, where it remains throughout the year, frequenting wooded and fenny districts, building its nest in a maple, birch, or other lofty tree. It lays from four to six eggs, blueish green, spotted with dark brown. TEMMINCK says:—“*il niche dans les touffes*

*de sureau et de sorbier, dont il mange les baies.*" My friend HEWITSON has hitherto been unable to procure the eggs of this bird, though he has figured those of the Fieldfare Thrush, in his beautiful and valuable *British Oology*.

Widely as the habits of the Garden and Redwing Thrushes differ, their outward appearance is so extremely similar, that the practised eye of the Ornithologist can alone detect the difference. The distinguishing characters of the sexes of the two species are not more apparent. My esteemed friend Mr. BLYTH, thus writes to me on this subject:—"In the male of the Garden and Redwing Thrushes, the spots on the breast are smaller, and better defined than those of the females,—not larger, as in the Missel Thrush. But you may pick out many Garden and Redwing Thrushes, in which the sex cannot be distinguished by external characters. I can, however, generally tell them at a glance."—In a subsequent communication, Mr. BLYTH says:—"The Redwing Thrush comes occasionally into gardens, and is the only other species I know of, that knocks off the shell of a snail in the clever manner that the Garden Thrush does."

"The notes of the Redwing Thrush," says another correspondent, "are extremely desultory, and can scarcely be called a song. But I must do it the justice to say, that I have only heard its song in this country, and that but rarely. The strains it pours forth in its summer haunts may possibly be far superior. It generally sings on the tops of trees, but, as far as my experience goes, does not select very lofty ones for the purpose, like the Missel and Garden Thrushes.—N. D."

It is difficult to assign the exact period of the departure of this bird, as some remain till the latter end of May, and have even been observed in June, but at the end of April few remain, the main body generally taking their course to the north about the beginning or middle of this month. In the midland counties, I have not often observed them after March, but they sojourn awhile in the north of Britain, before their final departure to the countries where they spend the summer.

Varieties, more or less white, are occasionally met with. The usual cry of this bird is a short shrill chirp, uttered at small intervals.

I am informed by a correspondent, that a Himalayan species of Thrush, figured by GOULD, but not yet named, has twice occurred in this country. My informant calls it the Mottled-backed Thrush, but as I know nothing of its habits, I am compelled to confine myself to this cursory notice.

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GENUS MERULA, WILL. OUZEL.

GARDEN OUZEL, *Merula vulgaris*, WILL.

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When snow-drops die, and the green primrose leaves  
Announce the coming flower, the Merle's note,  
Mellifluous, rich, deep-toned, fills all the vale,  
And charms the ravished ear. The hawthorn bush  
New budded, is his perch; there the grey dawn  
He hails; and there, with parting light, concludes  
His melody.—————

GRAHAME'S *Birds of Scotland*.

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SYNONYMS.—*Merula vulgaris*, WILL. *Orn.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.—Analyst*, No. 13.  
—*Turdus merula*, LINN. *Syst.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—Black Ouzel, BEW. *Hist. Br. Birds.*—Yellow-bill Ouzel, *Analyst*, No. 13.

THIS well known bird is resident and common in every part of the British Islands, and is one of our most admired songsters. It pairs early in March, and commences building about the end of that month, generally somewhat before the Garden Thrush. It inhabits such various localities, that it is no easy matter to determine what are its favourite haunts. I think, however, that it is mostly found in walled gardens, and woods near houses, abounding with laurels and other thick bushes. Here it conceals itself in the thickest shades, during the whole day, only rising to the top of the bushes for the purpose of pouring forth its rich melody. It is considerably shyer and fonder of seclusion than any of the other British *Turdidæ*, and only appears in open ground early in the morning, and towards

dusk in the evening. During the rest of the day, it is more heard than seen. If, when it is singing on the top of a low bush, or on a honeysuckle-stand, you attempt to approach it, it instantly drops down amongst the foliage, or flies off, uttering its loud and clear alarm note; and on passing the bush in which it is secluded, you will hear a rustling amongst the dead leaves of the former year—that is the Garden Ouzel hopping about in its retreat. If you beat the bush, it rarely takes wing, but either remains perfectly quiet until you have left the place, or hops into a neighbouring bush, thus eluding pursuit.

It is also frequently found in hedges adjoining low and damp grounds, where its food is most abundant. Here, by approaching very cautiously along the hedge, you may have a chance of observing it, either singly or with its mate, feeding on the berries of the hawthorn and holly. But if you are not very wary, the bird will be aware of your approach long before you perceive it, and suddenly a “black bird” will start out of the hedge, and conceal itself in an adjoining one further on. If in the breeding season, it will shortly be followed by its mate, both sounding their alarm notes. It is a peculiarity with the Garden Ouzel, that it seldom or never takes wing—especially when forced to do so—without uttering this note. Neither does it fly far, and, though it is by no means easy to get very close, yet you may easily follow the same birds a whole morning. It is, in fact, very lazy, and uses its wings very little when not disturbed.

For depth and richness of tone, the Garden Ouzel stands unrivalled amongst the British choristers of the woods, and, in my opinion, its melody is not surpassed by any other bird with which I am acquainted, save the Brake Nightingale. Its strains are not so loud as those of the Garden Thrush, but are infinitely superior to them in mellowness and richness. Its charming notes are mostly uttered in the morning and evening, though in the early part of the season, they may be heard at any time of the day. At noon, in sultry weather, when scarce a note is to be heard in the woods, the Garden Ouzel takes its

siesta; but if, in this state of affairs, the overcharged clouds should disburden themselves on the thirsty earth, the notes of the Garden Ouzel resound from all quarters in an instant. This partiality to rain is observable in many other birds. The domestic Rock Pigeon spreads its wings to receive the full benefit of the shower, and the Thrushes sing in rainy weather. But the peculiarity is not so striking in any other British songster, as in the one whose habits we are now detailing. The Missel and Garden Thrushes sing mostly in storms, but the Garden Ouzel pours forth its exquisite strains in those delightful and refreshing sunny showers which so frequently occur in the months of April and May. I believe JENNINGS is the only author that takes notice of this circumstances.

The nest of this bird is generally situated in a low and thick bush, either in gardens or woods adjoining houses. It is also found, but not so frequently as that of the Garden Thrush, in wall-fruit trees, and especially pears, or trees covered with ivy. It consists of moss, sticks, and fibres of roots, plastered with mud inside, and, finally, lined with dry grass. It varies little, as the substances of which it is composed are easily met with in every part of the country. The eggs, four or five in number, are of a greenish brown colour, mottled all over, but mostly at the large end, with darker spots of the same colour. They are very subject to variety, and it would be difficult to give a typical example of its egg. Some are nearly as large, and of the same hue, as those of the Magpie, but can never be mistaken—at least by the Ornithologist—for those of any other bird. The nest and eggs of this bird are well known to almost every one, and yet I have met with individuals who, having resided all their lives in the country, have pointed it out to me as a rare and curious nest. I once knew it to build in a wood, on the stump of an elm tree, close to the ground. The spot was well concealed by the young and flourishing shoots of the tree, and indeed the long grass reached almost as high as the site of the nest.

It is nothing uncommon for it to build in outhouses, amongst



heaps of pea sticks or dahlia stakes, or if these be left in the open air, they are almost certain to be occupied by a pair of these birds. On one occasion, I remember to have seen its nest in such a situation, with five eggs. I visited the nest every morning, and was surprised to find, that each day one egg disappeared. On the fourth day, the bird continued sitting, though only one egg remained, and, on the fifth day, the nest was filled with bones! The difficulty was now solved. The rats had feasted on the contents of the nest, as long as anything eatable was left, and then converted it into a store house. A second instance of this has fallen under my notice, with this difference, that the eggs were demolished in a single day, instead of five.

The Garden Ouzel is one of those birds which assists—at least with its voice—in scaring away an enemy from the nests of other birds, and especially from that of the Garden Thrush. Thus, if you have the curiosity to peep into the nest of the Garden Thrush, you are assailed not only by the cries of the owners of the tenement, but by those of the Garden Ouzel also, and many smaller birds.

In summer it subsists on insects, worms, slugs, cherries, red currants, and peas, and is therefore a constant inhabitant of the kitchen garden. But, though it commits considerable depredations on the fruit trees, and more especially in very hot summers,\* yet I think it will be found, that the benefits it confers on the gardener, fully atone for the fruit which it devours in time of need. In winter, its food is the same as that of the other British *Turdinæ*, namely, the berries of the hawthorn, holly, ivy, blackberry, mountain ash, &c., to all of which I have observed it to be extremely partial. In very severe weather, it so far overcomes its natural shyness, as to pluck the berries of the mountain ash, close to our windows, or immediately before the house. It has already been observed,

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\* Mr. BREE'S remarks, at p. 24, apply equally to this bird and to the Garden Thrush (*Turdus hortensis*).

that the mountain ash may be seen loaded with berries, till very late in the year, when the tree is situated in the immediate vicinity of houses, while those in the woods, are despoiled of their crop long before the end of summer. But few trees, whatever be their situation, retain their beautiful and ornamental produce, after the frost and snow have fairly set in. For, while the snow remains on the ground, such wild berries as the woods and hedges afford, form the sole support of the *Turdidæ* or Thrush family. These gone, the Thrushes and Ouzels frequently perish in great numbers, or are willing to beg for food at the parlour window, along with House Sparrows, Robin Redbreasts, Hedge Dunnocks, Common Gallinules, and other birds. But the Garden Ouzel is remarkably hardy, and only falls a victim to the weather in extremely severe winters.

According to MUDIE, there is a popular notion—doubtless an error—that some Garden Ouzels remain in sulky celibacy throughout the year. But so far from this being the case, I am of opinion that they pair for life. At least I have ascertained, beyond a doubt, that many of them remain in pairs throughout the winter. And nothing is commoner than to observe the male and female together during the whole year.

This bird is often kept in cages, on account of its song, and is frequently taught to whistle tunes; but, however perfectly it may know its lesson, such artificial strains can never equal its natural notes. Instances have been known of its crowing like a cock in its wild state, clearly indicating a full development of the organ of imitation. I have never myself heard it crow like a cock, but have frequently known it to cackle as a hen does after laying, especially in the neighbourhood of farms, and places where great numbers of Fowls are kept.

Varieties more or less white frequently occur. I have seen a female pied with black and white, which was with egg when it was shot.

SELBY says, that early in November, immense numbers of

Garden Ouzels “make their appearance upon our coasts, from more northern countries. They remain but a few days to recruit, and then resume their flight in a south-westerly direction.”

My indefatigable correspondent, Mr. BLYTH, has made the following interesting remarks with regard to the plumage of this bird:—“A male Garden Ouzel of the preceding year, though coal-black everywhere else, invariably has the wing primaries brown. The female varies considerably; her beak never becomes more than two-thirds yellow, and some are much darker coloured than others, being almost wholly black. Some have the breast confused and smudgy, while in others it is pale, with dark, well defined spots, resembling those of the female Garden Thrush. In nestling plumage, the males are darker, and generally have their markings better defined than the females.”

The Garden Ouzel is very partial to the borders of lakes and slow-moving, muddy streams, where it finds an abundant supply of its favourite food. It is also very fond of washing, and its plumage, though black, is kept remarkably clean and glossy. There are few spots better adapted for observing its habits than a small and muddy stream, bordering on, or flowing through a wood, especially if there be a thick hedgerow close to the stream. In such a hedge it not unfrequently builds its nest. The young are hatched by the middle of April, and at least two broods are reared in the year.

My valued friend, Dr. CHARLES LIVERPOOL, to whom I am indebted for many interesting communications on British Ornithology, informs me that he possesses two Garden Ouzels, in nestling plumage, pure white, and a third with a little black on the top of the head, and also on the breast and wings. He says:—“These curious specimens of *white black*-birds, were sent me some years ago by a friend, who shot them soon after they were able to fly. They all belonged to the same brood, but their parents were of the same coal-black colour as the rest of the species.”

In common parlance, this is the blackbird. In a list of British birds, in the *Analyst*, it is called the "Yellowbill Ouzel." But as many others of the genus possess strikingly yellow beaks, I have thought proper to give it the name of Garden Ouzel, as the least exceptionable I can at present think of.

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RING OUZEL, *Merula torquata*, WILL.

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Joyously  
From stone to stone, the Ouzel flits along,  
Startling the Linnet from the hawthorn bough;  
While on the elm-tree, overshadowing deep,  
The low-roofed cottage white, the blackbird\* sits,  
Cheerily hymning the awakened year.

*Blackwood's Magazine.*

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SYNONYMS.—*Merula torquata*, WILL. *Orn.*—BRISS. *Orn.*—SELEY'S *Br. Orn.*—*Turdus torquatus*, LINN. *Syst.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—Ring Ouzel, WILL. *Orn.*—LATH. *Syn.*—PENN. *Br. Zool.*—BEW. *Br. Birds.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn. Analyst*, No. 13.

THE Ring Ouzel is a regular periodical visitant of Britain, arriving in spring, and departing in autumn, generally about the latter end of October. Its haunts and habits are entirely distinct from those of the rest of the Thrush family,—so much so, that in a classification founded on haunts and habits, it is much to be doubted whether it would gain admittance into the *Turdidæ* at all. But systems based on any one character, † as those of LINNÆUS, CUVIER, VIEILLOT, &c., necessarily contain many flagrant errors. A system, to be natural, must take into consideration, not only the bill or the claws, but also the shape of the wing and tail, the mode of flight, the haunts and general habits, and the internal anatomy. Thus, taking all these things into account, we shall find that the Ring Ouzel

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\* An erroneous name for the Garden Ouzel.

† See the *Ornithologist's Text Book*, p. 29.

ranges perfectly naturally in the family *Turdidæ*, sub-family *Turdinæ*, and genus *Merula*.

In the level parts of the country, the Ring Ouzel is not met with, but it abounds in all the mountainous and rocky districts, where it breeds, and hence its popular names, "Rock Ouzel" and "Tor Ouzel." In the south of England it does not occur, except in the wilder and more uncultivated districts of Cornwall. It is most plentiful in Wales and in many parts of Scotland, on barren heaths and stony grounds.

Like the Chats (*Saxicola*), it is remarkably fond of perching on rocks and stones, and here it generally pours forth a few desultory, but not disagreeable notes, which are often compared to those of the Missel Thrush. I have seen the bird near Dovedale, where it appears to be tolerably abundant. But, from its extreme shyness—in which it resembles the Garden Ouzel—I have been unable to hear its song. Its alarm note is very similar to that of the Garden Thrush and Garden Ouzel, and on this account, I mistook it for the latter bird, when first I met with it. But it differs so widely, in every other habit, from the rest of the family, that no Ornithologist could possibly confound the two species. When seen close, the patch of pure white on the throat distinguishes it at once from all other British birds, even to the most casual observer. It is better formed for flight than the Garden Ouzel, but, from what I have observed, I do not think it uses its wings much during its sojourn with us.

I have never found its nest—though I have *seen* both nest and eggs—but, according to our most accurate authors, it is situated on a steep bank, and concealed by such scanty herbage as the situation may chance to afford—either "a stunted bush, or a tuft of grass or heath; sometimes also in the cleft, or in the shelf of a rock. In form and texture it resembles that of the Garden Ouzel, and the eggs are very similar to those of the same bird, both in size and colour." It is said to be very clamorous if any one approaches its nest, uttering loud cries, and endeavouring to lure the intruder from it, in this re-

sembling most other ground builders, as the Grouse, Lark, Duck, Pheasant, Partridge, Lapwing, &c. In autumn it passes to the southward, where it spends the winter months. Like the rest of the Thrush family, it is a very handsome bird, and of a lively and restless disposition. It is probable that it would not thrive so well in confinement, as the lowland *Turdidæ*, though I am not aware that the experiment has been made in this country. BECHSTEIN informs us, in his admirable *Cage Birds*,\* that it will live from six to ten years in confinement.

DR. LIVERPOOL informs me that he has frequently met with the Ring Ouzel in the neighbourhood of Buxton, and that he has found its nest on the barren uplands which abound in the vicinity of that place. The neighbourhood of Buxton is also favourable to the Rivulet Dipper, and Pied Flycatcher, but the latter occurs very rarely in any part of the country. I do not know that the Ring Ouzel is much subject to variety.

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\* This highly interesting and useful work was translated into English last year (1835), by Professor RENNIE. Every one who keeps birds in cages, should possess a copy of this excellent volume.

FAM. IV.—SYLVIADÆ,\* VIG.

SUB-FAM. I.—SAXICOLINÆ.

GENUS SAXICOLA, BECHST. CHAT.

FALLOW CHAT, *Saxicola œnanthe*, BECHST.

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Young dwellers in Glamorgan's vale,  
 Who listen to my woodland tale,  
 For you, where'er your footsteps rove,  
 O'er moor or mountain, mead or grove,  
 May some sweet wild bird hovering near,  
 Your course with gentle music cheer!

*Minstrelsy of the Woods.*

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SYNONYMS.—*Motacilla œnanthe*, LINN. *Syst.*—*Sylvia œnanthe*, LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Saxicola œnanthe*, BECHST. *Naturg. Deut.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Wheatear, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Whiterumped Wheatear, STEPH. *Gen. Zool.*—Wheatear Warbler, PENN. *Br. Zool.*—Fallow Chat, FLEM. *Br. Anim.*—Wheatear Chat·MUDIE'S *Feath. Tribes.*—Fallow Wheatear, *Analyst.*

THE Chats form a very interesting and well defined genus, but are perhaps less familiar to ordinary observers than any others of the Warbler family, save in those parts where they are most abundant. They are all inhabitants rather of the unfrequented heathy moor, than tenants of the woods and cultivated pastures; and the Fallow Chat, especially, is seldom found elsewhere. In my immediate neighbourhood, I have not very often met with it, but in the more rocky and elevated parts of Derbyshire, and also on extensive commons, bleak moors, and open fields, it is very abundant. Nowhere does it occur so plentifully, however, as on the downs of Sussex, Surrey, and Dorsetshire, where immense numbers are annually caught, by the country people, in nooses, brick traps, &c. It

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\* I pass over the sub-fam. *Myiotherinæ* in the *Turdidæ*, as the Rivulet Dipper and Golden Oriole—the only British birds in the group—are either little noted for their vocal powers, or because I have not much personal acquaintance with their habits. It would have been easy to have compiled an apparently original description from books, but this I leave to RENNIE, and such like.

is a common custom with visitors to these places, to take the bird out of the trap, and leave a penny in its stead. The Fallow Chat also affects church yards, ruined castles, and other desolate places, frequented by Owls, Bats, &c. It is common, too, in those parts of Derbyshire, where stone walls are used instead of hedges, and appears remarkably fond of perching on anything of a stony or rocky nature. It occurs throughout Britain, but is somewhat locally distributed. Frequently also it is met with in extensive fields and fallow lands—whence its name—but these are not so peculiarly its haunts as moors, downs, &c. Here it makes its nest, under the shelter of a stone, or in the hole of an old wall; in the latter locality, I have found it more than once, even in the flat and uninteresting part of Derbyshire in which I at present reside. According to SELBY, it breeds in rabbit burrows in the southern counties, and “on the dry sand-banks that edge various parts of our coasts.” In the midland counties, I have never known it build its nest in rabbit burrows, though I have very frequently met with the bird in the neighbourhood of such conveniences.

The Fallow Chat is the shyest of the genus, and I have always found it extremely averse to the approach of any one of the human race. But when it has a family to provide for, it loses much of its natural shyness, and then is the time to observe its habits. The nest consists of moss and grass, mixed with wool, and lined with hair, or, perhaps, as frequently, with rabbit's fur. Some authors mention that it is lined with wool, but in the nests I have examined, I have always known it to be horse hair or rabbit's fur. I have no doubt, however, but that in other districts, and especially in wild, stony moors, it may use wool for the lining of its nest. Indeed, it is impossible to state positively what are the materials of the nest of any bird, merely from seeing those which are found in any particular part of the country.

The eggs are from four to six in number, and of a pale blueish green colour. On one occasion, I found seven eggs in a



nest, but this I consider very rare, a second instance having never come under my notice.

Its food consists entirely of small insects, slugs, worms, and snails, of which, like the rest of the *Sylviadæ*, it destroys immense numbers. Its note resembles the sound produced by striking two stones together, which might almost induce you to suppose that it actually is engaged in breaking the stones on which it is perched. It closely resembles one of the numerous notes of the Robin Redbreast.

The habits of this bird, like those of the other *Saxicolinæ*, are shy and solitary, and it never associates in flocks, being found, for the most part, singly or in pairs. Nor does it ever approach the dwellings of man, but is altogether a bird of the uncultivated waste. The young birds do not differ materially from the adults. The Fallow Chat appears in the middle of March, and departs so late as the middle of October, thus sojourning with us seven months out of the twelve.—Mr. BLYTH says:—"I suppose the name 'Wheatear,' was originally applied to the Stone Chat, from its note (*wheet-jur, wheet, jur-jur*), and that the term 'Stone Chat' was first affixed to the Wheatear (Fallow Chat), from the noise it makes while hopping about the stones. At any rate, these terms are, in many parts of the country, inversely applied to what they are in books, which bears out my supposition."

WHIN CHAT, *Saxicola rubetra*, BECHST.

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When morning dawns with radiant light,  
 Chasing the shadows of the night,  
 Waking to life each warbling bird,  
 Then let our cheerful hymns be heard;  
 When evening comes with soften'd beam,  
 Let praise be still our grateful theme.

*Minstrelsy of the Woods.*

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SYNONYMS.—*Motacilla rubetra*, LINN. *Syst.*—*Sylvia rubetra*, LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Saxicola rubetra*, MEY. *Tasch. Deut.*—Whin Chat, MONT. *Orn. Dict.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—*Analyst*, No. 13.

THIS is also a summer visitant, but appears about a month later than the Fallow Chat, seldom arriving on our coasts till the middle of April, and is not dispersed over the country till the end of that month, or, in backward seasons, not until the beginning of May. In the midland counties, it may confidently be expected by the 20th of April. Like the rest of the sub-family, it is of a solitary, unsociable disposition, and is said by authors to equal its congeners in shyness. According to my experience, however, I have found it remarkably tame and easy to approach. When riding along a road adjoining an extensive field or common, it will frequently approach within a few feet of you, hopping about the road with the utmost *non-chalance*, and apparently without the slightest alarm.

It is wholly devoid of the lively expression of the Fallow Chat, both as regards plumage, and general appearance, being, in fact, rather a sluggish and inactive bird. Sometimes it will sit on the top of a hedge or whin bush for an hour together, looking half stupid, half melancholy. And then, as if astonished at its own inactivity, begins to make up for lost time, either pouring forth its low but sweet strains, or assisting in the household concerns. SELBY says he has traced it pretty far into Scotland, but we may suppose that it does not extend so

far to the north as the Fallow Chat, as it is not included in Low's useful *Fauna Orcadensis*. It is not so eminently a bird of the stony waste, as the preceding species, but seldom approaches the habitation of man, inhabiting commons abounding with furze or whin bushes.

Here it builds its nest, either in the long grass, or in a low and thick furze bush, and I once found it in a hedge, close to the road. It consists of dry grass and moss, lined with very fine dry grass, and occasionally, with horse hair. Wool, or the fur of rabbits, never form a part of its composition. Now, although nothing is easier than to know whereabouts the nest is situated, yet it is extremely difficult to ascertain its exact site. The male generally takes his stand on the top of an adjoining bush, or hedge, and amuses his mate with his song. If you approach him, he will dart down into the bush, not to reappear until your final departure; but that is not the bush in which the nest is built. This is usually so carefully concealed, that you may frequently search long and closely, and after all depart without finding it. The difficulty, too, is increased by the habit the female has of entering the bush underneath, and thus stealthily creeping to its nest. This habit I have observed so often, that it has become quite familiar to me. The eggs, five or six in number, but more commonly the latter, are of a clear and beautiful blueish green.

There is nothing remarkable about its song, but it is sweet and melodious, though desultory, and uttered in rather a hurried manner. Its strains are, for the most part, uttered from the top of a hedge, or low bush—never from a stone or heap of stones, like the Fallow Chat—but it occasionally leaves its perch, and attempts to “gain the skies,” in the manner of that ineffably sweet songster, the Wood Lark. The essay, however, is but a feeble one, and it seems unable either to remain on the wing for a long time together, or to mount high, while singing. Sometimes, also, it hawks for flies, like the Flycatchers (*Muscicapa*) and others, taking its stand on a low bush, darting at its prey and returning again to its perch. But it is by no

means so well fitted for this manœuvre as the Flycatchers, being what MUDIE would term somewhat "a dumpy bird." For its size, and considering the brisk and blithe expression of most of the Warbler family, it is certainly rather slow and inactive in its movements, and is wholly unable to thread the interstices of the hedges and bushes, with the rapidity of the Garrulous Fauvet, Hedge Dunnock, and many others. It likes, in fact, to be in motion as little as possible, and does not use its wings much. Thus, except when disturbed, it is content to remain nearly in the same spot the whole day.

Its food consists of small slugs, snails, worms, and flies, for which it searches most actively early in the morning, and again towards dusk in the evening, taking its ease in the intermediate time. This holds good in the middle of summer especially, but in chilly, rainy weather, it may be observed foraging the live-long day.

MONTAGU mentions that the Whin Chat rarely occurs in Devonshire and Cornwall, counties, it may be observed, which are never visited by that prince of the British choristers of the woods, the Brake Nightingale. I believe, however, that the Whin Chat is plentifully, though not very equally, distributed, over every other part of the kingdom. Its family cares over, it takes its leave of us in October. BEWICK supposes that it remains in the southern counties, but in this he is certainly mistaken. Neither SELBY, MONTAGU, nor MUDIE—high authorities in such matters—state the time of its departure. I should be inclined to say, the middle of October, but it is not very regular in its time of departure, and appears to be much influenced by the weather. In very mild autumns, I have met with it so late as the beginning of November. My correspondent, Mr. H. BARLOW, of Cambridge, informs me, that during the remarkably mild winter of 1833, he observed the Whin Chat hopping about, near some furze bushes, on a common, in his neighbourhood. He supposes that these individuals must have wintered in Britain, as he observed them each time near the same spot. They were as brisk and lively as in midsummer,

and perhaps more so, being incited by the cold to activity. They were never heard to sing.

Mr. BARLOW remarks:—"It is somewhat singular, that though I visited the common almost every clear day in January and February, yet I never observed the Whin Chat but twice, and each time singly. First, on the 15th of January, and afterwards, on the 20th of the following month. These two individuals (were they two?—perhaps the same bird might have been observed twice) must have spent the winter in Britain, but where can they have quartered themselves, and why did they not remain in their summer haunts?"

It is probable that they resorted to the warm and sheltered downs of the southern counties, where it is supposed that a few remain every year, after the departure of their brethren.

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STONE CHAT, *Saxicola rubicola*, BECHST.

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Bird of the desert, I too have a song,  
 A hymn of joy, as I travel along;  
 The fairest flowers that my pathway adorn,  
 Spring up in the shade of some rankling thorn.  
 Strains of thanksgiving and praise be mine,  
 For blessings more lofty and lasting than thine.  
 My spirit is glad while I listen to thee;  
 There are songs in the wilderness also for me.

*Minstrelsy of the Woods.*

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SYNONYMS.—*Motacilla rubicola*, LINN. *Syst.*—*Sylvia rubicola*, LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Saxicola rubicola*, BECHST. *Naturg. Deut.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Stone Chat, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—MUDIE'S *Feath. Tribes.*—*Analyst*, No. 13.

CLOSELY as the Stone Chat resembles the other British members of the genus *Saxicola*, in most of its habits, and also in general appearance, yet it differs in this particular, that it remains in Britain throughout the year, whereas the others are periodical visitants, arriving in spring, and departing in autumn. Like the Whin Chat, it frequents open commons,

abounding with furze. It is not so handsome a bird as the Fallow Chat, but has a much livelier and brisker expression than the Whin Chat. I believe it is met with throughout the kingdom, but, like the rest of the genus, always remains single, or in pairs. I am inclined to favour the supposition of MONTAGU and SELBY, that a partial migration takes place in autumn. The latter Ornithologist is of opinion, that the young birds leave their summer haunts, on the approach of winter, while the adults remain in the same spot throughout the year. Be this as it may, certain it is, that many of the Stone Chats, in the midland counties, do disappear in winter. It is probable, however, that they never leave the country entirely, but merely resort to the warm and sheltered downs in the southern counties, where they pass the inclement seasons.

In Derbyshire, I have chiefly met with the Stone Chat near Boilston, and likewise in the neighbourhood of Bentley Carr. It is abundant also in many parts of Staffordshire, frequenting extensive moors and furzy commons, where it breeds. Its habits are extremely similar to those of the Whin Chat, and the haunts of the two species are nearly the same. In some parts of Derbyshire, I have heard it called the "Furze Bunting," though its habits and general appearance certainly do not warrant the appellation. But the Corn Bunting (*Emberiza miliaria*) which is *the* Bunting with the vulgar, is not met with in my neighbourhood, and therefore, I suppose, to supply the vacancy, the Stone Chat comes in for the name of *Bunting*! But we may make great allowances for the errors of the vulgar, when we find scientific Ornithologists upholding such names as "Goat-Sucker," "Hedge-Sparrow," "Reed Wren," and others equally absurd and erroneous. Such designations are not only unscientific, but they serve to perpetuate vulgar errors, and should, therefore, never find a place in the catalogue of the philosophic Ornithologist.

The song of the Stone Chat is very similar to that of the

Whin Chat, being soft, rather low, and sweet. But almost any notes would sound sweet in those bleak moors, which are the peculiar haunts of this bird. In my opinion, there is little intrinsic merit in the desultory strains of this bird, and it is probable, that were it brought into competition with the Hedge Dunnock, or any of the humbler songsters of more frequented places, its song would be considered but a sorry performance. It sings either perched on the top of a furze bush, or hovering over it on the wing. The latter habit is more frequently observed in this bird than in the Whin Chat, but neither of them either mount high, or remain long on the wing, while singing.

It pairs early in March, and commences building towards the end of that month; and from the time of pairing to the hatching of the eggs, it makes itself particularly conspicuous, either pouring forth its melody from the top of the bush, or, as before mentioned, hovering over it, in the manner of the Whitethroated Fauvet. The nest is situated near the bottom of the furze, and occasionally, though very seldom, in a hedge, adjoining a furzy common. It is composed of moss and dry grass, lined with horsehair and feathers. It is not so artfully concealed as that of its near neighbour—both in systems and in haunts—the Whin Chat, nor am I aware that it approaches its tenement in the stealthy manner mentioned in the description of that bird. But the nests of furze-builders are always more or less difficult to find, and the birds themselves more or less fond of seclusion. The eggs, generally five or six in number, are of about the same size, shape and colour as those of the Whin Chat, but differ in being speckled, at the larger end, with minute spots of a reddish brown colour.

About two years ago (I do not remember the day, but I shall never forget the circumstance), a labourer, knowing that I was curious in ornithological matters, informed me that he had found a Bunting's nest. Now, as the Corn Bunting never occurs in my immediate neighbourhood, and as no other bird

of the genus here gets the name "Bunting,"\* I was in hopes that the nest of the Corn Bunting had actually been discovered. On arriving at the spot, however, all my hopes vanished, for the nest proved to be that of the Stone Chat! The labourer who conducted me to the place, informed me that he had always known the bird by the name "Bunting;" and I have since frequently heard it so called. The food of the Stone Chat is the same as that of the preceding species,—worms, small slugs, and insects. After the latter, it frequently darts into the air, often uttering at the same time a shrill scream. When it catches its prey in this manner, it perches, for the most part, on the top sprig of a hedge, or furze bush. For some time after the young leave the nest, the whole family, consisting of father and mother and four or five of their offspring, may be seen together, but, when the young birds have arrived at "years of discretion," each departs its own way, and they are afterwards only observed singly.

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\* The Derbyshire folks call the Yellow Bunting the "Gold Finch," and the Reed Bunting here goes by the name of "Reed Sparrow." The latter designation is far from being confined to my neighbourhood.



## GENUS RUBECULA, BRISS. REDBREAST.

ROBIN REDBREAST, *Rubecula familiaris*, BLYTH.

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Come, sweetest of the feather'd throng!  
 And soothe me with thy plaintive song;  
 Come to my cot, devoid of fear,  
 No danger shall await thee here:—  
 No prowling cat, with whisker'd face,  
 Approaches this sequester'd place.

Dr. JENNER.\*

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SYNONYMS.—*Motacilla rubecula*, LINN. *Syst.*—*Sylvia rubecula*, LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Erythaca rubecula*, SWAINSON.—*Rubecula familiaris*, BLYTH in *Field. Nat. Mag.*—*Analyst*, No. 13.—Redbreast Warbler, PENN. *Br. Zool.*—STEPH. *Gen. Zool.*—Robin Redbreast, *Analyst*, No. 13.

FEW of the warbler family enjoy a better reputation, or are more protected by the lords of the creation, than the Robin Redbreast; and yet, perhaps, few have less title to our respect, unless, indeed, excessive pugnacity, and the most deadly animosity towards each other, be recommendations. But the evil dispositions of this bird are almost wholly unnoticed by the ordinary observer, and I believe that few persons, residing in the country, are aware of its quarrelsome habits, so entirely disregarded, are even the commonest occurrences in nature, save by the professed Naturalist! To the vulgar, the bright side is alone apparent. And the Robin Redbreast has certainly many redeeming qualities, and has ever been a popular favourite in the countries it inhabits, from its familiarity with man, during the inclement seasons. It is resident in Britain throughout the year, and long after the summer visitants have winged their airy course to warmer climes, and left the groves

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\* These lines, and the continuation of them, which, for want of space, I am compelled to omit, appear to me to be characterized by that simplicity and love of Nature, that was ever observable in the immortal discoverer of vaccination.

almost songless, the Robin Redbreast cheers us during the drizzling rains of "semi-suicidal November" and the dreary blasts of stern winter, with its soft, mellifluous, and melancholy strains. In summer, when the woods resound with the notes of a thousand voices, the humble song of our little chorister is little noticed, and still less admired; but, in lack of other music, its notes sound remarkably sweet, and in autumn especially, they seem to "breathe a delightful melancholy around."

When the frost begins to relent on the ground, and the ice to melt, the Robin Redbreast gradually withdraws itself from the hospitable mansion, and the humble threshold of the cottager, and betakes itself to the budding woods, where it joins the vernal chorus. It now loses much of its familiarity with man, and its habits become fully as shy and secluded as the rest of the sylvan choristers. Still, however, though it seldom enters our houses during the summer months, yet it evinces its attachment for the dwellings of man, by frequenting, chiefly, such woods as are in the neighbourhood of them. Thus, if you enter the heart of an extensive wood, you are not likely to meet with it; but as you advance to its skirts, and especially where there are houses, you are sure to be saluted with its "wood-notes wild." Like the House Sparrow, it is not met with in uninhabited places, bleak moors, extensive commons, &c., but occurs, and that plentifully, near the dwellings of man.

Thus far, certainly, it has claims on our protection; but when, on the other hand, we look to its pugnacious and relentless habits, its revengeful and vindictive propensities, one would almost feel inclined to close one's door against it in the time of need. The whole summer is spent in quarrelling, and this warfare is carried on without regard to either sex or age. Like game cocks, the young Redbreasts begin to fight as soon as they leave the nest; nor do they pay more respect to their own relations, nothing being commoner than to see the adults pursuing even their own offspring, with unrelenting ardour, amid the very bushes perchance, where, but a few days ago,

they had been so fondly cherished and protected in the nest. So much for the parental affection of this apparently lovely and innocent bird. But, kind reader, if you will only have patience, I can tell you some more tales about your favourite :—tales, too, which you might verify any day with your own eyes, if you would just take the trouble of strolling through the grove adjoining your house, in summer.

My esteemed correspondent, Mr. BLYTH, says he has seen two of these birds fight in his garden until one was killed ; and though I have never known their battles come to that extremity, yet I have, on many occasions, observed them skirmishing with such relentless ferocity, and unabated ardour, that had I not interposed, fatal consequences must inevitably have ensued to one party. On one occasion, especially, I remember to have found two of these birds engaged in such glorious conflict, under a laurel bush, that neither of the combatants observed my approach ; or at all events they heeded it not, and both of them fell into the hands of the “ prying Naturalist.” On putting them into a cage, capacious enough to have held a dozen birds of a more peaceful nature, to my no small surprise they renewed the combat as fiercely as ever. I now released one of my prisoners, and each of them instantly poured forth its song in defiance of the other—the one within the wires, the other at full liberty. The next day I set my other captive at liberty, and, on the evening of the same day, found the champions again at their post, fighting each other “ tooth and nail.” I now separated them for third and last time. This is what one would call carrying the spirit of revenge rather too far. The organ of Destructiveness must be very fully developed in this bird.

I have often taken advantage of the extreme pugnacity of the Robin Redbreast, for the capturing others of its species. The method alluded to is as follows :—if you tie a Robin Redbreast, by the leg, inside a small cage, and leave the door open, many minutes will not elapse before another of its kind, attracted by its fluttering, approaches the cage, hops round it two or three

times, uttering its note of menace, and, lastly, boldly rushes into the cage, and enters into close combat with the unfortunate captive. How the battle might terminate, if the birds were left to themselves, I know not, but, suffice it to say, that the new comer may be captured, and, in his turn, be tied to the cage, as a lure for its brethren. But it is unnecessary even to use a cage for this purpose. The birds may be tied, as soon as caught, to a stake, or anything that is at hand. For the Robin Redbreast, when intent on destroying one of its fellow-creatures, is little mindful of any danger that may threaten itself. Whether or not that dreadful enemy to birds, the wily cat, would have any influence on them at such times, I am not aware, but, so far as I have observed, man has not. It may also be captured by smearing the edges of a vessel filled with hemp or canary seed, with birdlime, but this is apt to soil its delicate plumage to such a degree, that the bird is scarcely "fit to be seen" afterwards. If it were worth while, however, it might be wiped off with sand or dry earth. There are many other ways of capturing the Robin Redbreast, but these it is unnecessary to detail, for, whatever excuse there may be for keeping other birds in cages, there surely can be none for confining this, as it may be both seen and heard at all times and all seasons, with very little trouble.—While it requires the enthusiasm of a WILSON, an AUDUBON, a MONTAGU, or a MUDIE, to investigate the habits of the feathered inhabitants of the rock, the mountain, the swamp, and the river, the ways of our familiar songster are always open to the view of the most careless observer. And this it is which has caused it to become so general a favourite, in all the countries it visits or inhabits.

The song of the Robin Redbreast is not very loud, but is remarkable for its sweet, soft, and melancholy expression. In summer, as I have before observed, it is little noticed, but in autumn it is peculiarly delightful, though I am certain of the truth of SELBY'S supposition, that the notes which are heard in autumn and winter, proceed from the throats of the

young of the year. Nor do I ever remember to have heard the adult bird singing, in its natural state, during the inclement seasons. But when confined to the house, or in a cage, both old and young will carol away "right merrily." In sweetness and softness, I think the song of the Robin Redbreast is unexcelled by any of our other sylvan choristers, though, as a whole, it is surpassed by many. Witness, for instance—leaving the Brake Nightingale, the "leader of the vernal chorus" out of the question—the ethereal strains of the Garden Fauvet, the Blackcap Fauvet, the Wood Lark, and many others. But none of these, no, not even the Brake Nightingale itself, possesses that ineffably sweet expression, which we must pronounce to be peculiar to our humble favourite.

The localities in which the nest is found, are very numerous. Authors mention, that it commonly chooses the roots of a bush or tree, in well shaded woods. But I have seen it, at least as frequently, in holes of walls covered with ivy, in ivy-clad trees, in the thatched roofs of outhouses, and occasionally, though very seldom, at the top of a low bush. The nest consists, for the most part, of moss and sticks, and sometimes oak leaves, exteriorly, and is lined with horse hair, and, according to some, with feathers. The latter, I think, I have never known to enter into its composition, but I cannot now speak positively on this matter. The eggs are from five to seven in number, of a dusky ash colour, mottled with reddish brown spots. This is the usual tint, but I have seen specimens of a pure white, and others of a tawny red colour. They are not very subject to variety, and I consider those mentioned above to be of extremely rare occurrence. For figures of the egg of this bird, I refer my readers to HEWITSON'S beautiful and correct *British Oology*, No. 24, for November, 1835.

The Robin Redbreast conceals its nest with great care, and this is especially the case with regard to the grove-builders. It is at all times a difficult matter to discover it, and indeed the only way to succeed, is to watch the female to the nest. For this purpose you must, when you know whereabouts the nest

is, dig up a small piece of soil with a spade, or place a few worms in an open spot. Then carefully concealing yourself behind a thick bush, the parents will shortly be attracted, by the delicious fare you have laid for them, and will carry off the greater part to the nest; by tracing them with your eye, you will generally succeed in your purpose. Of course this can only hold good in cases where the young are hatched, though sometimes, when the female is sitting, the male will carry food to her. In a few instances, I have known the nest to be so successfully concealed, that, even when I had observed the female fly from the nest, I have, after a long and close search been obliged to go away without finding it; and have discovered it a few days afterwards, by mere chance, when strolling near the spot. Those birds which build in the woods are always much shyer than the wall breeders, and those which make their nests near houses, often choose a very open and unsequestered situation. The structure itself, also, is less warm and neat, as the shelter, afforded by a hole in a wall or thatched roof, sufficiently atones for all such defects. A nest which I once found at the top of a low bush—rather a rare occurrence—exactly resembled, in composition, those which are built on mossy banks, or at the roots of trees.

I once exchanged the eggs of this bird for those of the Hedge Coalhood, and was anxiously awaiting the event of so singular an experiment, when, to my great mortification, the merciless gardener, regardless alike of the feelings of the parents, and of my experiment, in an evil hour carried off both nest and eggs, doubtless exulting the while at the signal benefit he had conferred on next year's crop of fruit. I think there can be no doubt, but that if these eggs had been hatched, the Robin Redbreasts would have been able to rear them; and am the more inclined to this opinion, from some other experiments that I have, at different times, made in the same line. On more than one occasion, I have exchanged the eggs of this bird for those of the Chaffinch and Whin Linnet, and the young have been hatched and reared successfully, on both

sides. It is very interesting to observe these young Finches and Linnets following their slender-billed parents, after they leave the nest ; but, though the imposture apparently goes unperceived for a time, the young and old birds part company much sooner than they would have done, had the affairs been carried on in the usual manner. Such experiments clearly prove, however, that success in rearing young birds, depends rather on the quantity than the quality of the food administered. The manner of feeding is also of great importance. But I confess that I am no adept in the feeding and rearing of young birds, having neither time nor inclination for such a task. And I would rather watch the habits of one bird in its native haunts, than possess fifty in confinement, as, in my opinion, neither song nor anything else, can compensate for the generally dull and tame plumage, and still duller spirit, of cage birds. That others think very differently, is manifest, from the great attention that is paid to birds in a state of confinement. They are, truly, charming creatures, wherever they be, and great allowances may be made for confining them in large towns and cities, but in the country, where every wood, field, river, and swamp, teems with the delicate forms and charming melody of the feathered tribes, there can be no excuse for depriving them of their liberty.

The notes and chirps of the Robin Redbreast are so extremely numerous and varied, that it would require the patience of Job to enumerate even half of them. Nor do I consider it of much use to attempt to describe the notes of birds in writing ; because, in the first place, there are no consonants in the notes of birds, and secondly, almost every one would give them a different sound,—that is, no two persons would agree as to the sound of most of the notes of birds. Who, for instance, could form any idea of the song of the Brake Nightingale, from the words given by BECHSTEIN in imitation of it? In my description of that bird, I intend to give a specimen of its notes, as they stand in BECHSTEIN'S *Naturgeschichte der Vögel Deutschlands*, and I ask my readers, what idea of the strains

of the Brake Nightingale could be obtained from such a table?

As soon as many-coloured autumn, with its golden tints, begins to shed its leaves, the Robin Redbreast quits its sequestered haunts in the woods, and once again approaches the parlour window, and the cottager's brick floor, to seek that sustenance which the wood and the garden are now barely able to supply. When it has once gained admittance, it is unwilling again to trust itself to the dreary blasts of winter, and is content to make the dwelling of man its hyemal retreat. But, though its wants are here fully provided for, yet it is by no means freed from the dangers and calamities incident to this nether world. Such evils are twofold. First, then, it is at all times liable to become the prey of fierce and relentless Grimalkin, and secondly—for which the bird alone is answerable—it may invade the sacred territory of the household gods, and destroy itself by flying into the fire. The readiest method of preventing the occurrence of such mishaps, is to cage such individuals as may place themselves under our protection, as long as the frost and snow continue. It may easily be preserved through the winter, by keeping it warm, and feeding it as much as possible on animal food, such as worms, flies, raw meat chopped small, and the like. The bottom of the cage should be strewed with fine sand, and, on a remarkably fine day, it might be allowed to wash. The vessel which contains its water must be so shaped that it cannot wash, as by too frequent bathing in winter, it is apt to kill itself. As soon as it has washed, the basin must be removed. With this treatment, it will live in good health as long as the severe weather continues; but, no sooner does the frost begin to relent on the ground, than it becomes impatient of confinement, and shortly dies, lacking its natural food, and panting to join the vernal chorus. Therefore I hope, kind reader, that on the first mild day in March, you will release your little captive. Scarcely has he reached the nearest tree, than he will pour forth his soft and sweet warble, thanking you for your



kind attentions in time of need, and for his delivery when he no longer required your support. In a cage, it frequently sings throughout the winter. Its best food in confinement is bruised hemp seed and bread, mixed with boiling milk, which, however, must be strained off before the mess is placed before the birds, as otherwise it is apt to scour them.

In summer, the food of the Robin Redbreast consists almost entirely of worms, and also different kinds of insects and grubs. It takes the precaution of beating the worms to death before it devours them, and the necessary delay dependent on this operation, is frequently the cause of a violent dispute. I have seen two individuals of this pugnacious species, tugging might and main at a large worm, one at each extremity, until the body of the unfortunate reptile, unable to stand such harsh usage, snaps in sunder, leaving the combatants each with a fair share of the spoil! In long and dry summers, when the worms dive deep into the soil for the sake of moisture, it also helps itself largely to red currants, and occasionally, though not very often, feeds its young with them. Few of the best authorities on these matters take any notice of this habit, but it has not escaped the observation of my intelligent friend, CHARLES LIVERPOOL, Esq., M. D., who says:—"I have always found the Robin Redbreast remarkably fond of fruit, and especially of red currants; but have never known it subsist so exclusively on fruit, as during the present remarkably hot and dry summer. Perhaps this is caused by the extreme difficulty with which worms and grubs are found after a long continuance of sultry weather; I cannot find that any of the ornithological writers of the present day have noticed the fact of its eating fruit at all, but I doubt not it has long been familiar to you."

The Robin Redbreast possesses many peculiar habits. In advancing along the ground, it proceeds not by a continuous series of hops, but hops two or three times, darts its bill close to the ground, halts suddenly, and tosses up its head into the air, as if startled at something it had met with in its progress;

and so on. It does not condescend to be constantly picking up minute insects on the ground, like the Hedge Dunnock, but, no sooner does it spy a worm, than it darts upon it with a shuffle of the wing, as is the habit of the Garden Thrush, Garden Ouzel, and others of the Thrush family. It has also a kind of bowing motion, accompanied by an upward flirt of the tail, and a loud *tsit, tsit*. Two males may often be seen singing by turns on different trees, the one taking up the strains the instant the other ceases. When the first severe frost sets in, the Robin Redbreast soon begins to droop, ruffling up its feathers, uttering a plaintive chirp, and looking in at the parlour window, for food, and shelter from the wintry blast. If this be refused, it not unfrequently falls a prey to the severity of the weather, and, during long continued frosts, I have found as many as six or seven, in a single day, lying dead near lanes, under hedge-rows, and in the neighbourhood of houses.

This bird is by no means easily disturbed on its nest, and, especially when this is built in holes of walls, it will frequently allow itself to be handled, without deserting. On one occasion, especially, I remember to have caught a female on her nest six times in a single day, and I even went so far as to cage her for a few minutes, and yet she hatched her eggs successfully. My friend Dr. LIVERPOOL informs me (in a letter dated Oct. 14, 1835), that he has “known this bird to sit so close, as to allow herself to be removed with her nest and eggs into a cage, where she continued sitting until she died,” from starvation. “From this,” continues Dr. L., “I infer that she had been accustomed to be supplied with food on the nest, by the male.”

Each of these birds has its peculiar beat or haunt, into which it will suffer none but its own mate to enter. “A Robin Redbreast” says Mr. BLYTH, “that frequents a limited district in my garden, is amazingly tame, following us about for food, which he takes readily from the hand. Another, which occupies another part, is less so, but he also comes to be fed. Of course in my limited domain, the feathered race are much encouraged, so that we have plenty of pensioners, and not a few

of those impudent creatures, the House Sparrow. Now one of these Robin Redbreasts will descend among a flock of House Sparrows, and put them all to flight in an instant; and sometimes both the former will together attack the House Sparrows, and then fall to fighting themselves.—That the two should act in concert against the House Sparrows is curious.” In my neighbourhood, all the Robin Redbreasts are very tame in winter, but, during the summer months, the adults become extremely shy, though the young of the year will freely feed out of the hand at all times. When sitting out of doors, it will perch on the back of your seat, or on your shoulder, and, if you happen to be writing, will frequently take greater liberties with your *escritoire* than you are willing to allow, throwing about the pens and pencils, and annoying you to the best of its power. Yet, for all this, I never could find it in my heart to drive the sweet creatures away, but rather, on the contrary, repaid them good for evil, giving them a fly or other insect, or some crumbs of bread. I was not, however, at all times ready to bear their familiarities in good part, and, when they came to search my hand for food, I would offer them a wasp. They soon manifested their disapproval of so gross an insult, and flew off in evident displeasure.

This bird is rather subject to variety, and is met with more or less white. Professor T. GRIFFITHS, of the Royal Institution, informs me that he has seen one pure white, in a private collection in London. Another, with white wings and tail, has lately been observed in this neighbourhood. The young birds have the breast mottled, and do not acquire the red on the throat till after the autumnal moult.

## GENUS PHÆNICURA, SWAINS. REDSTART.

TREE REDSTART, *Phœnicura albifrons*, BLYTH.

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In yon bright world, th' angelic throng  
Sing, day and night, their heavenly song;  
From earth let feebler notes arise,  
To join the chorus of the skies.

*Minstrelsy of the Woods.*

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SYNONYMS.—*Motacilla phœnicurus*, LINN. *Syst.*—*Sylvia phœnicurus*, LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Phœnicura ruticilla*, SWAINSON.—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—*Phœnicura albifrons*, BLYTH.—Redstart Warbler, PENN. *Br. Zool.* STEPH. *Gen. Zool.*—Tree Redstart, *Analyst*, No. 13.

THE Tree Redstart is tolerably plentiful in every part of England, except in Wales, where, according to MONTAGU, it rarely occurs. It arrives towards the commencement of April, and is soon spread over those parts of the kingdom where it is observed at all. In the north of Scotland, I believe it is considered a rare bird, and it is nowhere so abundant as in the midland and southern counties of England. In Derbyshire, it is very abundant in its peculiar haunts, and is known to the common people by the names "Redtail," "Firetail," "Brand-tail," and other appellations derived from the colour of its tail. On its first arrival, it makes itself known by perching on lofty trees—usually pollards—and pouring forth its sweet strains, in order to attract the attention of the gentler sex. After it has selected a mate, it sings in much less conspicuous situations, and it is little seen, except by the prying Naturalist. And he, too, must go very cautiously to work, or he will have little chance of observing the habits of a bird of so secluded and shy a nature.

It is most commonly met with in districts which abound with walled orchards, decayed trees, deserted outhouses, and old

walls. Its partiality to old walls is so striking, that it was named by BUFFON—a Naturalist of little real merit—"Ros-signol de Murailles," or *Wall Nightingale*. But how absurd to call a bird a Nightingale, which has no other resemblance to that genus, than by being a good songster! TEMMINCK accordingly discarded the name given by the French writer—for I will not call him a Naturalist—and called it the "Becfin de Murailles," a perfectly proper appellation, according to the system of that Naturalist. But I find myself entering unawares on that subject, which I had intended studiously to avoid in this work. Leaving, therefore, the systematic portion of our subject to a future opportunity, let us proceed with the investigation of the habits of this interesting woodland chorister.

The song of the Tree Redstart is remarkably soft and melodious, though somewhat desultory. The nest is situated in the hole of a wall or decayed tree, also in the thatched roofs of unfrequented outhouses, and has even been found, like that of the Robin Redbreast, in an unused watering-pot. During the past summer, also, two or three instances of its building in flower-pots, have come to my notice. It does not appear, like the preceding species, to be partial to ivy-clad trees and walls, but I have more than once found its nest amongst the herbage on the walls of Tutbury Castle,—distinguished in history by MARY QUEEN of Scots having for some time been confined therein. The nest consists mostly of moss exteriorly, and is lined inside with horse-hair and feathers. The eggs, from five to eight in number, are of a taper shape, and pale blue colour. The shell is generally very thin and easily broken, in this differing essentially from that of the Hedge Dunnock, whose shell is thicker than that of most others of the Warbler family. The Tree Redstart is a remarkably shy species, and is said by authors to desert its nest on very slight causes. WILLUGHBY—the father of British Ornithologists—in particular, speaks very decidedly on the subject. He says:—"This is the shyest of all birds, for if she perceive you to mind her when she is building, she will forsake what she hath begun, and if you touch an

egg she never comes to her nest more: and if you touch her young ones, she will either starve them, or throw them out of the nest and break their necks, as I found by experience more than once.”—Now, though I am by no means prepared to deny the truth of the statements of WILLUGHBY in those particular cases which he relates, yet my own experience has led me to conclusions entirely different from those drawn by our illustrious author. I will relate a few of the instances which have come to my notice:—

In the summer of 1834, I found a Tree Redstart’s nest in the thatched roof of an outhouse, containing six eggs. As I did not then possess a specimen of the nest and eggs of this bird in my collection, they were forthwith transplanted into the museum. Happening to pass the spot on the following morning, I was not a little surprised to see a Tree Redstart fly from the very hole where the nest had been built. Astonished at so unexpected a circumstance, I instantly procured a ladder, mounted to the nest, and found an egg in the hole, laid on the bare thatch. The bird of course never returned to the spot again.—On communicating the above occurrence to my excellent friend, Mr. HEWITSON,\* he remarked on it as follows:—“I have found it quite a common circumstance for a bird (before the full number of eggs is laid), when robbed of its eggs, to lay another in the nest; and if the nest is pulled out, either to lay one in the hole which it occupied, or to drop it from the branch where the nest was situated.” Mr. HEWITSON says, “I have found it quite a common circumstance for *a bird*,” &c.; but I was not surprised that “*a bird*” should do so, but that such a remarkable instance of boldness should have been observed in the Tree Redstart. Yet, though it is undoubtedly an extremely shy species, this coyness is much less apparent, during incubation, than most authors seem to suppose.

On another occasion having discovered a nest containing eight

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\* Author of the *British Oology*.

eggs, in the hole of an old wall, for the sake of experiment I withdrew six of these. Circumstances prevented my visiting the spot for upwards of a week, but, when at length I repaired thither, I found two callow young, in a flourishing condition. I now added three nestling Whin Linnets (*Linaria cannabina*) to the family party. The new comers were a trifle less advanced than the legitimate offspring, but the whole brood was fed with great assiduity. In about a week the young Redstarts left the nest, but the three Linnets still remained. These were fed as usual, and in due time escaped. I never afterwards had the pleasure of observing this motley brood, though I diligently searched the neighbourhood for them.

Again, in a nest containing six eggs, I inserted six pebbles, carelessly covered with blue paper, at the same time withdrawing the true eggs. On revisiting the spot some days afterwards, I found the female sitting on my six pebbles, and discovered, moreover, that she had laid two more eggs. I then withdrew the whole lot, with the exception of two of the pebbles. These I removed after she had sit on them three days, and gave her, in their stead, five Hedge Dunnock's eggs, which she hatched and reared successfully—a tolerably good proof that the Tree Redstart is not so easily caused to desert its nest as is commonly affirmed by book Naturalists. MUDIE is of my opinion, and so is SLANEY. The latter writer, in his amusing *Outline of the Smaller British Birds*, has an anecdote much to the same effect as one of those related by myself.

But, while the Tree Redstart is thus faithful to its offspring, it is far from willing to expose itself to any personal danger, and accordingly quits its nest on the slightest alarm. By ordinary observers, it is very rarely seen either on or near the nest, and even the wary Ornithologist may frequently be disappointed in his endeavours to catch a sight of it. During the past summer, I remember to have witnessed a very ludicrous circumstance. Wishing to capture, if possible, a female on a nest I had discovered the previous evening, in the hole of a wall, I succeeded in approaching my hand within a foot of the

nest, when the watchful bird, in its hurry to escape, darted out, carrying along with it one of the eggs, which had somehow been fastened by a horse hair to the bird's leg, or rather *tarsus* ! The egg was soon dropped, and of course broken.

In the part of Derbyshire where I reside, it mostly affects walled orchards where the trees are sufficiently old to afford a convenient site for its nest within their venerable trunks. The neighbourhood of Boilston—a place remarkable for the number of its orchards—is therefore peculiarly favourable to this bird ; and, shy as is the Tree Redstart, it is impossible to enter any of the Boilston orchards without seeing it. It almost invariably chooses the hole of a tree for its nest, but in localities where decayed timber is scarce, I have found it in the *cleft* of a tree, where two branches meet. The spot is usually, in these cases, well concealed with foliage. I believe it never occurs on open branches, or in bushes, like those of the Finches (*Fringilla*), Linnets (*Linaria*), &c., though the species is rather whimsical in the choice of a situation for its structure, and will occasionally make use of spots which no Ornithologist would have thought of searching, for the nest of the Tree Redstart.

The food of this bird consists of different kinds of insects, and also of caterpillars, grubs, currants, raspberries, elderberries, and other animal and vegetable substances. But I think it is rather an insectivorous than a frugivorous bird, as it is not so much observed in gardens as in orchards, containing fruit which are of course unattainable to its tender beak. Though its depredations on our garden fruit in no way equal those committed by the Fauvets (*Ficedula*, Antiq.), yet, in extraordinary dry seasons, it is obliged, like the Robin Redbreast, to become considerably more frugivorous than is its usual custom. The temperature has, however, considerably less to do in the regulation of the food of this bird, than it has with that of the Robin Redbreast. For while the principal food of the former is worms—which are very difficult of access in sultry weather—that of the latter consists also of different kinds of winged in-



sects, which abound most in warm seasons. Still, however, during the ardent heat of a long and dry summer, it seems to require food of a more succulent nature than insects, and, in defect of worms and caterpillars, seeks to quench its thirst with the juice of the red currant and raspberry. These the gardener—ignorant of his real interest—grudges, and accordingly scares his benefactors away. And the country squire, in a state of equally blessed ignorance with his gardener, but too frequently issues a general order, that all *Sparrows*'\* nests be taken without mercy! But the philosophic Ornithologist, perfectly aware that the depredations committed by these "Sparrows," are amply compensated by their beneficial services, willingly allows them to take such a portion of the harvest as they may desire, in reward for their labours. And for my part, I cannot reflect without pity and indignation, on the sordid views of those individuals who grudge even the smallest portion of their plenty, to the labourers who have been mainly instrumental in procuring, or at least in preserving it. Surely the labourer is worthy of his hire! And this, as a principle, is just as applicable to the feathered as to the human race.

In confinement, the Tree Redstart is as sullen as it is restless and active in its natural state. Neither BECHSTEIN nor SWEET could succeed in preserving it any length of time, as it is liable to *diarrhœa* and *atrophy*. One that I once winged and put into a cage, refused all sustenance, and starved itself to death in the midst of plenty. Another that was caught soon after it had left the nest, devoured almost anything that was offered to it, but died in a few days, from some unknown cause. With great care, however, it may be preserved three or four years; but it seldom repays this trouble, always remaining sullen, and singing but little. At the periods of migration, in spring and autumn, it becomes remarkably rest-

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\* Under the term "Sparrow" are usually confounded all the birds described in the present work!

less, fluttering backwards and forwards at the side of the cage day and night, almost unceasingly. This disposition lasts about a fortnight each time, and then gradually subsides. This restlessness at the time of migration is more or less observable in all non-resident birds, in confinement, but in none is it so apparent as in the Common Quail and the Tree Redstart.

When perched, and especially when it alights on a tree, the Tree Redstart shakes its tail with a rapid and tremulous motion, and so quickly that it is not always easy to see whether the tail is moved up and down, or laterally. It is supposed, by an accurate and original writer,\* that the name “Redstart” is derived from this peculiar habit of shaking the tail. I should rather incline to the opinion, however, that *start* signifies *tail*. But, be this as it may—and it is probable that the point will never be satisfactorily settled—the name is equally applicable, in either sense of the word. The Tree Redstart departs about the middle of September, at least it is not observed in the midland counties after this time, but, according to authors, it remains in the southern counties till the end of the month.

“A Tree Redstart,” says a correspondent, “that I once possessed, and which had been reared from the nest, was so remarkably tame and familiar, that when its cage-door was left open, it would hop on my knee or shoulder, and, especially when hungry, would utter a plaintive cry, and search my hand for food. If I had nothing for it at the time, it would fly to any other person who happened to be in the room, and so on, till it succeeded in attaining its purpose. It seemed more attached to the individual who fed it, than to any one else, though it almost invariably flew on the head or shoulder of any person who happened to enter the room. My bird was a very healthy one, and was never subject to the diseases mentioned by Drs. HANDEL, BECHSTEIN, and others. After I had kept it about five years, it was starved to death, by an unpar-

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\* See *Feathered Tribes*, Vol. i. p. 321.

donable act of negligence in its keeper, and to my sincere regret. This happened about a month since, and I thought I could not do better than immortalize my favourite, by transmitting you a short account of it, for your *British Songsters*.—  
CHARLES LIVERPOOL, M.D.”

The above anecdote is a peculiarly instructive one; as, besides its intrinsic interest, it clearly proves that this bird is not always so sullen in confinement, as is stated by authors. Dr. LIVERPOOL has since informed me that his pet was a male, and sang sweetly almost the whole year, and that very frequently, on entering the room where it was kept, after a midnight visit to a patient, it would commence singing just as if it had been mid-day. Another correspondent has lately written to me as follows:—

“ I now possess a male and female Tree Redstart, which were caught in a trap in the summer of 1833. When they were first brought to me, I had little hopes of being able to preserve them. On the first day, they refused all sustenance, and were constantly endeavouring to escape. In about a month, however, they became remarkably tame, and even seemed to enjoy their confinement. They are now so extremely familiar, that they will eat out of my hand, and appear to be greatly attached to me, fluttering at the side of their cage as soon as I enter the room. Last spring they constructed a nest, in a box which I had furnished for the purpose, but, for some unknown reason, the female never laid. Scarcely was the nest completed, when both male and female set to work to pull it to pieces,—a labour effected much sooner than the building of it. I consider it a remarkable fact, that a bird naturally so shy as the Tree Redstart, should become so perfectly contented in confinement, as my birds did. I attribute it, however, entirely to my management of them at first. I shall be curious to see whether my birds will build again next year. The male sings both in the day-time and at night, and is in full song nearly the whole year. Just now (November), however, he is mute.—H. BARLOW.”

The adult male of this species is readily distinguished from the female and young, by his forehead being white,—whence the name *Phœnicura albifrons*. I am not aware that the Tree Redstart is much subject to variety, having never observed any variation from the usual tints.

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TITHYS REDSTART, *Phœnicura Tithys*, JARD. and SELBY.

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Young wanderers by the mountain streams,  
 Whose days are all like sunny dreams,  
 To you, from woodlands far away,  
 I come, with legend and with lay;  
 Songs of many a tuneful bird,  
 Amid your own green valleys heard;  
 Warblers whose strains are full of glee,  
 Blithe as your own blithe songs can be;  
 And tale, and sketch, and song I bring,  
 Of birds who wave the glossy wing,  
 And sing their tiny broods to rest,  
 In the deep forests of the west.

*Minstrelsy of the Woods.*

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SYNONYMS.—*Motacilla Tithys*, LINN. *Syst.*—*Sylvia Tithys* and *S. Gibraltariensis*, LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Phœnicura Tithys*, JARD. and SELBY'S *Ill. Orn.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—*Tithys Redstart*, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—*Analyst*, No. 13.

THE *Tithys Redstart* is a very rare bird in Britain, being only known as an occasional visitant. It was first discovered in the south of England, by GOULD, the author of that magnificent work, the *Birds of Europe*. As I have never had an opportunity of observing the habits of either this or the following species, in a state of nature, I shall be obliged, however reluctantly, to resort to *compilation*,—to me an odious task, though perfectly excusable in the present case. Thus far, I flatter myself that my information has been original (though not always *new*), and in those few instances where the descriptions are compiled, the selection is invariably made from authentic sources.

The food and habits of this bird appear, as far as the

meagre accounts of continental writers will allow us to judge, to agree in most points with those of the preceding species, though it is more partial to rocky places. Like the Tree Redstart, it frequents old walls, and decayed trees, picking the minute insects from the crevices of the bark. It is more abundant in mountainous districts than in extensive plains, and is, accordingly, rare in Holland. In Germany, and many parts of Asia it is very abundant, but, like the rest of the genus, is confined to the Old Continent. BECHSTEIN observes, that though it is now remarkably plentiful in Thuringia, it was considered a rare bird in that district some years back.

Its food consists of flies, caterpillars, and different kinds of fruits and berries. Its song is said to be very inferior to that of the Tree Redstart, though it is by no means chary in the use of it. It is a gay and active bird, and possesses the peculiar lateral motion of the tail, noticed in the preceding article. The nest is situated in the hole of a wall or rock, often in the lofty walls of old and deserted castles, or on the timbers of barns.

According to a German Ornithologist, it is seen in great numbers on chalk hills, and in woods situated on rocks, and "frequents towns and villages, perching on the highest buildings, towers, steeples, churches, and castles.—It possesses one quality not common among singing birds, that of singing all the year, or, at least, whilst in our country (Germany), however cold and stormy the weather may be."—For the description of the plumage of this bird, I cannot do better than present my readers with that given by BECHSTEIN, in his admirable *Cage Birds*, from which volume most of the preceding particulars have been extracted.

"Length five inches and one quarter, of which the tail alone measures two and one quarter. The beak is five lines long, very pointed and black, the inside and corners yellow; the iris is dusky; the shanks are nine lines high, and black; the upper part of the body is dark blueish, or blackish grey; the rump is red; the cheeks, throat, and breast, are black; the belly and sides are of the same dark colour as the back, but tinged with

white; the vent is reddish yellow; the wing-coverts are blackish, with whitish edges; the quill-feathers are dark brown, edged with white, in the secondary this border being so wide, that it forms an oblong spot on the wings when folded; the tail-feathers are red, rather inclining to orange, except the two middle ones, which are dark brown.

“The upper part of the body in the female is dusky ash grey; the under part ash grey, with a reddish tinge; the border to the quill-feathers is narrower.

“The colours of this bird vary during the first eight years; the oldest ones, with the exception of the tail and wings, are in general black, but deeper on the under part than the upper; the very oldest have a greyish breast.

“Those a year or two old very much resemble the females, having the upper part of the body ash grey, but the under rather more of a reddish colour; the quill-feathers have a more decided border. After two years the depth of the colour gradually increases. Several birdcatchers, and, from them, some authors, have considered these birds of different ages as different species.”—*Cage Birds*, p. 350.

## GENUS PANDICILLA, BLYTH. FANTAIL.

BLUE-THROATED FANTAIL, *Pandicilla Suecica*, BLYTH.

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Awake! and sing,  
 For the joyous spring,  
 Is hanging green wreaths on the forest trees,  
 And shedding sweet odours on every breeze.  
 Wake, birds of song!  
 Why linger so long?  
 Wake! wake! and rejoice with our merry throng.

*Minstrelsy of the Woods.*

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SYNONYMS.—*Motacilla Suecica*, LINN. *Syst.*—*Sylvia Suecica*, LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Phœnicura Suecica*, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—*Pandicilla Suecica*, BLYTH in PARTINGTON'S *Cyclop. Nat. Hist.*—*Analyst*, No. 13.—Blue-throated Warbler, LATH. *Syn.*—Blue-throated Redstart, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Blue-throated Fantail, *Analyst*, No. 13.

THE materials for the biography of the Blue-throated Fantail, are even more meagre and unsatisfactory than those of the preceding species. It has only occurred once or twice in Britain, being, like the Tithys Redstart, merely an occasional visitant,—probably a straggler. SELBY mentions that an individual was shot on a common near Newcastle-upon-Tyne, some time since. The following particulars are taken from STEPHENS'S *General Zoology* :—

“ This beautiful species is nearly the size of the Robin Redbreast : the upper parts of its plumage are greenish : the eyebrows white : the throat, and fore-part of the neck, are of a bright azure blue : beneath which is a black border, then red : the belly, thighs, and vent, are dusky white : the tail is brown, with the base of all but the two middle feathers orange-red : the female has the throat white : across the neck a band of blue, edged with one of black beneath : in other respects she resembles the male : in some specimens of the male there is a beautiful silvery spot in the middle of the blue on the front of the neck : the young do not obtain the blue breast till some

time after leaving the nest; that part is then spotted with brown, and, when confined, that colour disappears after the first moult.

“ Common in many parts of Europe from Sweden to Gibraltar; it frequents marshy places, fixing its nest on willows:\* it is often eaten, and is esteemed very good: it has an agreeable song, which is often uttered in the night.” The eggs are greenish blue, and five or six in number. It feeds on worms, insects, and the like. In addition to the above imperfect account of the Blue-throated Fantail, I now present my readers with a few remarks on the species, which appeared originally in a Magazine, erroneously called the *Field Naturalist*. The observations are from the pen of my zealous friend Mr. BLYTH:—

“ The Bluebreast (*Motacilla Suecica*, LINN.) has always been classed with these birds (the Redbreasts and Redstarts). LATHAM placed it in his extensive genus *Sylvia*; and TEMMINCK also makes it a *Sylvia*, placing it between the Redbreast and the Redstart; and in the continuation to SHAW’S *General Zoology*, where the term *Sylvia* is, strangely enough, restricted to the Redstart genus, the Bluebreast is termed *Sylvia Suecica*; in Mr. GOULD’S beautiful illustrations of European birds, it is called *Phœnicura Suecica*, being still arranged with the Redstarts and the Redbreast. This beautiful bird has lately been added to our list of accidental stragglers, and it is probable that, during their autumnal migration, some are annually compelled by easterly winds to take shelter on the British shores when attempting to cross from the southern point of Norway. When first I saw the Bluebreast *alive*, in Mr. RENNIE’S aviary at Lee, I was not a little surprised to perceive, that the bird which has been placed by every writer in the same genus with the Redstarts and the Robin Redbreast, belonged most obviously to a very different group, to the Wagtail sub-family (*Motacillinæ*). Nothing can more strongly show the diffi-

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\* According to TEMMINCK, in the holes of decayed trees.—N. W.



culty of arranging birds from mere cabinet specimens, and the necessity of studying living Nature, than this placing of the Bluebreast in the genera *Sylvia* and *Phœnicura*; I think I may confidently assert, that no Naturalist who has thus arranged it, had ever seen the living bird. The tail of the Bluebreast is partly red, but, with the exception of this very trivial particular, there is no resemblance whatever between this bird and the Redstarts. Even in a stuffed specimen, the form of the head will show its proper situation. The Bluebreast does not hop, like the Redstarts, but *runs* about in the manner of the Wagtails and Pipits; it has a remarkable habit of continually spreading its tail; and should there not be already a genus of foreign birds, in which this beautiful species could be placed, the term *Pandicilla* (expressive of the peculiarity) might be given to it for a generic designation."—I must here close my necessarily imperfect account of the Bluethroated Fantail.

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SUB-FAM. II. PHILOMELINÆ.

GENUS LOCUSTELLA, JOHNSON. BRAKEHOPPER.

SIBILOUS BRAKEHOPPER, *Locustella sibilatrix*, C. T. WOOD.

SYNONYMS.—*Sylvia locustella*, LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Salicaria locustella*, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—*Locustella sibilatrix*, *Analyst*, No. 13.—Grasshopper Warbler, LATH. *Syn.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Sibilous Brakehopper, *Analyst*, No. 13.

THE Sibilous Brakehopper was, I believe, first discovered as a British bird, by JOHNSON, and by him communicated to RAY, the former having met with it in some of the southern counties. It has since been frequently observed in the north of England, and has even been traced pretty far into Scotland. In Derbyshire, it is not found; at least not in the flat parts of that county. It is a regular periodical visitant, arriving in the south by the middle of April, but is not distributed over the kingdom till the beginning of the ensuing month. By the

older authors it was called a Lark, and afterwards a Warbler, but its proper situation in the system, appears to be in the sub-family *Philomelinæ*, immediately before the genus *Salicaria*, to which it has a direct affinity.

It is very locally distributed, but is extremely abundant in many places where it is observed. The males—as is the case with many others of the Warbler family—arrive about ten days before the female. Previous to the appearance of the latter, the male perches himself conspicuously on the top of a furze bush, uttering his singular sibilous note; but after this, he is seldom seen, though constantly heard. It always frequents the thickest and most impenetrable brakes, and is so excessively shy, that it is far from easy to get a sight of it, and is very difficult to shoot.

It has no song, but its chirp is a very curious one. This is said closely to resemble the note of the mole cricket and grasshopper, for which, indeed, it is often mistaken by the common people. WHITE, in his *Natural History of Selborne*, makes the following interesting remarks on the note of this bird:—

“The Sibilous Brakehopper\* began his singular note in my fields last Saturday. Nothing can be more amusing than the whisper of this little bird, which seems to be close by, though at an hundred yards distance; and, when close at your ear, is scarce any louder than when a great way off. Had I not been a little acquainted with insects, and known that the grasshopper kind is not yet hatched, I should have hardly believed but that it had been a *Locusta* whispering in the bushes. The country people laugh when you tell them that it is the note of a bird. It is a most artful creature, skulking in the thickest part of a bush; and will sing at a yard’s distance, provided it be concealed. I was obliged to get a person to go on the other side of the hedge where it haunted; and then it would run, creeping like a mouse, before us for an hundred yards toge-

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\* In the original, it is called the “Grasshopper Lark;” but I could not possibly introduce so flagrant an error into my pages.

ther, through the bottom of the thorns; yet it would not come into fair sight: but in a morning early, and when undisturbed, it sings (or rather *chirps*, for it has no regular song) on the top of a twig, gaping and shivering with its wings. Mr. RAY himself had no knowledge of this bird, but received his account from Mr. JOHNSON, who apparently confounds it with the *Regulus auricapillus*,\* from which it is very distinct."—4to. edit. p. 46.

The note of this bird is thus described by Mr. BLYTH, in a very interesting paper on the British summer birds of passage, published in the *Magazine of Natural History*, vol. vii. p. 341:—

“April 10th.—Heard, for the first time, this morning the long trill of the Grasshopper Warbler (*Sylvia locustella*), or, as it is better named by the peasantry in these parts, ‘the Cricket Bird,’ or the ‘Rattlesnake Bird;’ the former, of course, from the similarity of its cry to that of the mole cricket (*Gryllotalpa*), and the latter (by which term it is here most generally known) from the equally close resemblance which it bears to the rattle of the *Crotalus* (rattlesnake): though it is difficult to imagine how this should be sufficiently well known (in England) to give rise to a provincial name. April 10th was also the day on which I heard it for the first time last year. I did not this season again notice it till the 17th, about which time they appeared in considerable numbers. On the first arrival of this curious species, it sedulously hides in the very densest furze or bramble coverts, rarely emits its strange sibilous rattle, and even then its voice hardly ever seems to proceed from the true direction. This ventriloquizing faculty (as it is absurdly called) is well known. The bird can, at pleasure, send forth (as it were) its voice to the distance of two or three yards; so that, by merely turning round its head, the sound often appears to be shifted to double that distance. The same effect is produced also in the Meadow Crake, and in precisely the same

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\* In the original, *reguli non cristati*.

manner, by a mere turn of the head. As soon as the (erroneously called) *cricket birds*, however, have fixed their abode, and the females begin to arrive, the males cease for a time to exercise this faculty, and for a very obvious reason; otherwise, were five or six of them to be emulously trilling in a furze brake, as is frequently the case, the female would often be sent in a wrong direction, and might, it is not unlikely, introduce herself to one of the rivals: but this the males take care to prevent, not only by ceasing to ventriloquize, but by sitting exposed on the topmost twigs of the bushes, and rattling so loudly that they may be heard at a very great distance. They are then so bold, that, even if shot at and missed, they fly only for two or three yards, and then recommence immediately, as if nothing had happened. No sooner, however, are they paired, than their habit of close concealment returns, and also their deceptive mode of uttering their cry. Having lately procured a considerable number of these birds for different friends, I have observed that they vary somewhat in plumage, some being much spotted on the breast, while others are spotless, and the colour of the upper parts also varying a little in different individuals; but there is no fixed difference between the plumage of the sexes. I have often been surprised at the great strength of the muscles of the leg in this species, which are partly ossified, as in gallinaceous birds."

It is a very difficult matter to discover the nest of the Sibilous Brakehopper, so carefully is it concealed amongst the furze. In the Supplement to BEWICK'S *British Birds*, Mr. WINGATE of Newcastle makes the following observations:—"Having long wished to get the egg of this bird, to add to my collection, I at length, in June, 1815, after much watching, succeeded in *eyeing* it to the distant passage on the top of a whin bush, by which it entered and left its nest. Its curious habitation I found was built at the bottom of a deep narrow furrow or ditch, overhung by the prickly branches of the whin, and grown over with thick coarse grass, matted together year after year, to the height of about two feet. Before I could

find the object of my pursuit, I searched until I was wearied; and at length found that there was no other plan left but that of taking away the grass by piecemeal, which I was obliged to do before I succeeded in obtaining the prize." "The nest," says MONTAGU, "is of a flimsy texture, like that of the Whitethroat Fauvet, composed of dried stalks and goosegrass, lined with fibrous roots. The eggs are of a *spotless* (?) blueish white, four or five in number, weighing about twenty-one grains. From the scarcity of the bird, and the artful manner in which it conceals its nest, it is rarely found; nor has any author noticed it." I believe that MONTAGU was mistaken as to the eggs being *spotless*. HEWITSON says, in a work that should be in the hands of every British Naturalist, that "the eggs are four or five, and very beautiful from the extreme minuteness of the dots, with which they are closely covered towards the larger end. The usual time of breeding of this bird, is May and June." The young are said to quit the nest even before they are fledged; but I should think that this early departure from the cradle, is probably owing to the nest having been frequently visited, and I think that, were the birds left to themselves, they would not make their entry into the world until they were fully fledged. At least I have found this to hold good with many of the shy individuals of the Warbler family. The Sibilous Brakehopper departs in autumn;—the exact time is not ascertained. Though I have seen many stuffed specimens of this bird, in different collections, yet I do not feel myself qualified to describe its plumage from recollection, and therefore present my readers with the details given by SELBY, in his *Illustrations of British Ornithology* :—

"*General Description*.—Upper parts of the body deep oil-green; the centres of the feathers, except upon the rump, dusky, or yellowish-brown. Throat white, bounded by a circle of small oval brown spots. Breast and flanks pale oil-green, passing into greenish-white on the middle of the belly. Under tail-coverts greyish-white, the shafts of the feathers being black. Quills dusky, margined with pale oil-green; tail the

same, and very wedge-shaped. Legs and feet pale yellowish-brown. Claws hooked and strong.

“*The female* is not distinguishable from the male bird in the tints and formation of her plumage.”

There is a good wood-cut of this bird in the Supplement to BEWICK'S *British Birds*, taken from a drawing sent him by Mr. R. R. WINGATE, of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The coloured representation given by SWEET, though not *scrupulously* exact, is one of the best figures in the *British Warblers*.

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GENUS SALICARIA, SELBY. REEDLING.

SEDGE REEDLING, *Salicaria phragmitis*, SELBY.

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Thou dost not mock, but copiest well  
 The Warblers that around thee dwell;  
 And when the traveller near thee strays,  
 Thou giv'st him freely all thy lays;  
 For this, a pilgrim's blessing be,  
 Bird of a thousand songs, on thee!

*Minstrelsy of the Woods.*

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SYNONYMS.—*Motacilla salicaria*, LINN. *Syst.*—*Sylvia salicaria*, LATH. *Ind. Orn.*  
 —*Sylvia phragmitis*, BECHST. *Naturg. Deut.*—*Salicaria phragmitis*, SELBY'S  
*Br. Orn.*—*Analyst*, No. 13.—Sedge Warbler, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Sedge Reedling,  
*Analyst*, No. 13.

IN general appearance, the Sedge Reedling has a great similarity to the Sibilous Brakehopper, with the exception, however, of the streak of white which passes over the eye of the former; the tail of the Sibilous Brakehopper is also more fan-shaped. But in habits and haunts, the two species differ entirely—so much so, that in a system founded wholly on habits and haunts, they could not possibly come together. And as it is, it has been found necessary to place them in different genera, though SELBY has not yet separated them.

The Sedge Reedling is widely spread over Britain, having

been traced to the northern parts of Scotland. It is, however, most abundant in the midland, eastern, and southern counties of England, arriving about the 20th of April; but in some seasons, not till the beginning of May. Though I believe the fact is not mentioned by authors, yet I am inclined to think that the males arrive some time before the females, to prepare, as it were, their summer haunts for the reception of their mates. I never remember to have shot a female in the month of April, but have frequently killed the male so early as the 15th of that month. For about ten days after their arrival, they skulk about the hedges and amongst the reeds, and remain entirely mute. At this time, also, they are seldom seen, and nothing is more difficult than to have a shot at them. By the first of May, however, all their shyness seems to vanish, and they are in full song, perching constantly on the top of a hedge or low tree. Now is the time both to observe their habits, and to obtain specimens for the museum. But, no sooner do they pair, than all their shy and secluded habits return, and little more is seen of them, except by the Ornithologist, for the rest of the season.

Its favourite resorts are marshy woods, fens, sedgy streams, the borders of muddy lakes or rivers, or streams flowing through woods. In such localities it may be looked for almost to a certainty, as, during its stay in Britain, it abounds in these and similar situations. With the vulgar—who *hear* rather than *see* it—I have almost invariably found it to go by the name of the “Reed Sparrow,” though it has no one point of resemblance to the Sparrows. The Reed Bunting also receives the name “Reed Sparrow.” Thus the Sedge Reedling and Reed Bunting are, by ordinary observers, confounded under the same appellation, being, in fact, supposed to be synonymous. The reason of this is sufficiently obvious. For while the Reed Bunting perches himself conspicuously on the topmost sprig of the hedge or bush, the Sedge Reedling is sedulously concealed beneath the foliage, singing all the time. It is merely this simple fact which has caused the confusion.

Every one knows the Reed Bunting at a glance, but, of the Sedge Reedling, the song alone is familiar to them, and this universally passes, with the uninitiated, for the performance of the former species. Though this circumstance has been noticed by many authors, yet I can assure the reader that I have not retailed it from hearsay, but from personal experience. If a person sees a Reed Bunting, he immediately exclaims, "there's a Reed *Sparrow!*" and if he hears the song of the Sedge Reedling, he supposes that to proceed from the throat of his friend the "Reed *Sparrow.*"

Now, though I have all along spoken of the *song* of this bird, yet its notes scarce deserve the appellation. It is true that nothing can be more varied than its strains, but the tone is harsh, and the whole is uttered in so hurried and confused a manner, as to leave but a very slight impression on your organ of Tune; and, when you quit the banks of the sedgy stream, you have some difficulty in recalling its song to your recollection. It has been supposed, by some, to possess the notes of the House Sparrow, Chimney Swallow, and many other birds, but I have not been able to discover that this is the case. The bird is a polyglot, but the varied sounds which it produces, with such unwearied assiduity, appear to me to be original. It does not, like some bipeds, "shine in borrowed plumes." But it has, certainly, this resemblance to the *conglomerates* of certain compilers of the present day, that it leaves but a slight impression on the mind, and is of no permanent value.

The song of the Sedge Reedling is, perhaps, more heard, by those who choose to listen to it, than that of any other of the British choristers of the woods. For it carols from morning till night, and from the dusk of the evening till the dawn of day, with little intermission, not ceasing even at noon in mid-summer, when every other throat, save this babbling one, is silent. Indeed, it is easy to imagine, that the nature of the localities which it frequents, would, in a great measure, shelter it from the ardent rays of a mid-day sun. Often, when I have



thrown a stone into the bush where it was roosting,\* it would commence its clatter with renewed ardour, as if endeavouring to make up for lost time. And if, after it has commenced singing, other stones be hurled at it, it only flies to a few yards distance, and instantly commences afresh.

Though there is little melody in the song, yet, on a calm night in June, I have listened to it for hours together, with delight little inferior to that produced by the exquisite strains of the Brake Nightingale. In fact, I think that Ornithologists admire the song of birds, more on account of the associations linked to them, than for their actual melody. Thus, that excellent Naturalist, the Rev. W. T. BREE, of Allesley Rectory, Warwickshire, says (in a letter dated Oct. 31, 1835), "the Wall Swifts (*Cypselus murarius*) are charming creatures to my mind, and I love their harsh scream, perhaps, almost as well as I do the melody of the Brake Nightingale." And I am perfectly of Mr. BREE's way of thinking. Any song, or even scream, from the throat of a bird, has peculiar charms for the Ornithologist, in the night season; and, at that time, the several cries of the Peewit Lapwing, Meadow Crake, Common Gallinule, and Barn Owl, though alike destitute of softness and melody, are all equally welcome to him, and delight him, perhaps, as much as the diurnal chorus of the woods. This may appear strange to the ordinary observer, but the field Ornithologist will at once comprehend it.

My immediate neighbourhood is tolerably well stocked with reedy marshes, and at night, throughout the spring, the air resounds with the hurried and confused strains of this songster. It puzzles me not a little to find out when they take their repose, as they appear to sing the live-long day, and night too, to boot. I have actually discovered, that at least some males do continue singing the *whole* night; for in spots where I am certain there was but one pair, I have visited the place at in-

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\* This I have also found to be the case with some other song birds. See Art. "Brake Nightingale."

tervals of an hour, throughout the night, and have always heard its notes. Hard by, and perchance in the adjoining field, his neighbour, the Meadow Crake, furnishes a perpetual thorough-bass, to the shriller strains of the Sedge Reedling. The Common Gallinule, also, occasionally sends forth a loud scream, and sometimes, though much less commonly, the "hoarse gowk" drops a "cuckoo" from the lofty elm-tree! I have also heard the notes of the Garrulous Jay, Mag Pie, and some other birds, at night, but this I consider but a rare occurrence. These have their tales out in broad daylight, and appear to enjoy a sound repose in the night season. *They* are perfectly ignorant of midnight serenades and intrigues, and, except perhaps in the event of a frightful dream, remain perfectly mute during the season of darkness, and, in the morning, awake to their cackling with renewed vigour!

The Sedge Reedling is by no means nice in the choice of the nights on which he intends to show forth his musical talents, and, were I asked, what weather seems most favourable for its song, I should say, that neither rain, storm, wind, nor anything else, not even the burning rays of mid-day sun, appear to come amiss to our songster. Go at any hour and in any weather, in spring and the early part of summer, beside the reedy marsh or sedgy stream, and you will not fail to hear its ridiculously rapid strains. To hear the Brake Nightingale, you must be very particular in the choice of your nights (though it sometimes sings in the day too), but with regard to the Sedge Reedling, consult only your own convenience. When once you have heard its song, you will ever afterwards recognise it when it again meets your ear, though you may perhaps not carry away a very distinct reminiscence of the exact notes.

The nest is situated either in a low bush, or amongst aquatic plants, and willows, and, according to some authors, it is occasionally suspended between three or four reed stems, though I have not myself found it in the latter situation, and cannot, therefore, vouch for the fact from personal observation. I can confidently assert, that, in this neighbourhood, it has never

been found fixed between reed stalks, though I have frequently known it attached to a bunch of rushes, near the ground, especially in marshy boggy grounds, which, perhaps, none but the keen sportsman, or the prying Naturalist, care to enter. We have, however, no reason to doubt that the nest of the Sedge Reedling is occasionally, and in some parts of the country, found between reed stalks, as the fact is mentioned by no less an authority than SELBY. And indeed, as before stated, it is impossible to determine, with accuracy, either the locality or the materials of nests, from observations made on a single district, so widely do these differ according to circumstances.

The structure consists of dry grass exteriorly, and is lined with the same inside, but of a finer quality, and sometimes a few horse-hairs. SELBY mentions moss, as entering into its composition, but I should be inclined to consider this rather an uncommon occurrence. It is of slight construction, and somewhat resembles that of the Whitethroated Fauvet, but is more substantial. The eggs, from four to six in number, are of a wood brown colour, mottled all over with very small specks of the same, but of a darker shade. There is also a deep brown streak towards the larger end, forming a kind of collar round the egg. This streak is likewise observable in the egg of the Marsh Reedling, and in that of the Sibilous Brakehopper. The eggs vary little, either in colour or size; and indeed I have long remarked, that aquatic birds, and those that frequent the neighbourhood of waters and marshes, are much less liable to varieties of plumage, than the species which inhabit dryer and more cultivated spots. The same observation applies also to the eggs of birds. This remark is very strikingly illustrated at the British Museum, where, amongst the great numbers of varieties of birds, only one is an aquatic species—the Wood Snipe (*Scolopax rusticola*). And even this bird, though ranked in systems amongst water birds, is not typically aquatic, as it only inhabits marshes and bogs, and often extensive woods.

The nest of this bird is generally so carefully concealed, that, whatever be its locality, it is far from being an easy matter to

discover it. And often, when I have ascertained that there was a nest in some particular spot, I have searched for it day after day, without finding it, and have at length been compelled to fasten a worm to a bush, or on a willow stem, and then to lie down on the ground. In this manner, you will seldom fail in your object, for, no sooner do the parents spy your worm, than they seize it, and carry it to the nest, which you will now have no difficulty in discovering. To observe the habits of this bird, and to gain a competent knowledge of its way of life, it is likewise necessary to lie down, amongst the grass and aquatic plants, as the Sedge Reedling is so extremely shy and timid, that the moment you enter within its territories, it darts down, into the midst of the thickest foliage the place affords, and is no more seen as long as you remain near the spot, though it will favour you with its *song*, even if you approach within two or three yards of the bird. It is true that it may not be very pleasant to lie down on one's back, for half an hour, in the marshy places frequented by these birds, while the Sedge Reedling is—unknown to itself—teaching you its habits and food! But it is one of the many inconveniences, which the field Ornithologist must undergo, in order to become familiar with the various ways of the feathered tribes. And, though it might appear preposterous to a common person, quietly to *sit down in a marsh*, merely to observe the habits of a bird, yet the Ornithologist considers it no inconvenience, and indeed scarce bestows a thought on his situation, when engaged in studying the manners of his feathered friends.

The young of this species, like those of all aquatic or marsh-frequenting birds, quit the nest very early, especially if their habitation be frequently visited. They are often so young when they leave it, that they are obliged to pass the night on the ground, the whole family, both old and young, squatting close together, like a covey of Grey Partridges (*Perdix cinerea*), in order to keep each other—or rather *themselves*—warm. The nightly repose of these family groups is often disturbed by weasels, water-rats, and other voracious nocturnal plunderers, and

few of the birds survive to see daylight. In the nesting season, I have frequently found a great number of the feathers of this bird, which had evidently been plucked off by *four-footed Ornithologists*, and, on other occasions, I have actually seen the quill feathers of the Sedge Reedling—generally of young birds—in the nest of the water-rat. The nest of the Sedge Reedling is also frequently plundered of its contents, both eggs and young birds, and, on the whole, this species has certainly far more to fear from quadruped than from biped enemies. It is curious to observe, how carefully Nature has provided against the inordinate increase of any of her productions. The Sedge Reedling, and other birds of the marsh, can, from their habits of close and constant concealment, sustain little injury from man, but their numbers are considerably thinned by water-rats, weasels, and other vermin. While, on the other hand, the species which build on the tops of trees, as the Mag Pie, Ring Pigeon, Garrulous Jay, and many others, which are easily attainable to the human—or rather, in this particular, *inhuman*—race, are free from the dangers incident to the marsh-frequenting birds. And it is by a similar provision, carried throughout the extensive range of animated Nature, that so beautiful an equality is preserved in every part.

The food of the Sedge Reedling consists chiefly of worms, slugs, and aquatic insects of various kinds, which latter I have occasionally known it seize from the surface of the water, hovering over the fluid. In general, however, it finds its sustenance amongst aquatic plants, willows, and low bushes. It is not in general a remarkably active bird, but sometimes displays great agility in the capture of its prey. It is easily kept in confinement, and may be fed with hemp-seed and bread, mashed up together, and occasionally flies, spiders, and other insects. In winter, it must not be allowed to wash, for—as I have found with others of the Warbler family—this invariably proves fatal to them. In summer, a basin of water may be left in its cage all day, bathing in warm weather being as necessary to it, as it is prejudicial in the inclement seasons. My correspondent

N. D. informs me, that he has found this bird partial to a piece of mealy apple or pear, in confinement, and especially in winter; but I do not know that it ever feeds on fruit in its wild state. Probably any thing of a more succulent nature than its ordinary food would be welcome to it, in domestication. It leaves us in the first week in October, though I have occasionally seen it so late as the 16th and 20th of that month.

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MARSH REEDLING, *Salicaria arundinacea*, SELBY.

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As some lone bird at day's departing hour,  
Sings in the sun-beam of the transient shower,  
Forgetful, though its wings be wet the while.

BOWLES, *Sonnet to Time*.

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SYNONYMS.—*Motacilla arundinacea*, GMEL. *Linn.*—*Sylvia arundinacea*, LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Salicaria arundinacea*, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—*Analyst*, No. 13.—Reed Warbler, PENN. *Br. Zool.*—STEPH. *Gen. Zool.*—MUDIE'S *Feath. Tribes.*—Marsh Reedling, *Analyst*, No. 13.

THE Marsh Reedling closely resembles its congener, the Sedge Reedling, in habits and appearance, but the former is more exclusively an inhabitant of the marsh and the fen, and the pale streak over the eye is less distinct. The whole plumage is also more dingy, though the bird is, perhaps, taken altogether, handsomer and more lively. According to the accounts of authors, it is only found, in Britain, in the southern and eastern counties of England, and SELBY mentions that he has not met with it further north than Nottinghamshire. But it constantly occurs in the flat and swampy parts of Derbyshire, though nowhere so abundantly as the preceding species. It arrives about the beginning of May, and departs at the commencement of September, about a month earlier than its congener, the Sedge Reedling.

Its song bears considerable resemblance to that of the Sedge Reedling, and it is likewise a serenader, though not so vigilant a one as the other. The notes are uttered in the same hurried

manner, but are of a sweeter expression, and more worthy of the name of a song. The nest, which is often mistaken for that of the Reed Bunting, is fastened between three or four reed-stalks, with spiders' webs and lichens. It is composed, outside of dry grass, lined with grass of a finer texture, and the seed-bearing parts of reeds. It is generally carefully concealed amidst a profusion of long grass and aquatic plants, amongst willows, or sometimes—though that is not its usual locality—under the shelter of a thick bush. The structure is remarkably deep, so that, let the winds and storm rage as they will, the eggs and young are perfectly safe from the fury of the blast, and the female sits as quietly, and is probably as much at ease, as she would be in the stillest day in summer. The eggs are from four to six in number, of a dirty green, blotched with obscure patches of brown, and green of a darker hue. HEWITSON has figured it some time since, in his *British Oology*. The egg is nearly the same size and weight of that of the Sedge Reedling, and varies little either in tint or markings. The nest is difficult to find, and requires a long and close search. Two or three pair breed here every year, and the bird can by no means be said to be rare in Derbyshire. In many parts of Staffordshire also, and especially near Tutbury, it frequently occurs. I have met with it on the banks of the Dove, but it is less partial to running streams than the Sedge Reedling, more commonly frequenting fenny inclosures, abounding with reeds, rushes, and other aquatic herbs. It is also found amongst willows, where it frequently nestles, is as fond of retirement as the Sedge Reedling, but is considerably less shy than the generality of marsh-frequenting birds, and admits of a very near approach. Its habits are, consequently, open to the observation of all those who choose to study its economy, and mode of life. It seldom sings from the top of a tree or bush, but, like the Sedge Reedling, pours forth its rapidly-delivered strains from amongst the thickest foliage. The young depart early from the nest, often before they are fully fledged. The young of the year differ little from the adults, but are of a somewhat

darker colour, and more mottled. The white streak over the eye is very faint till after the first general moult. The two sexes are wholly similar, and cannot be distinguished by external signs.

The food is the same as that of its congener,—worms, slugs, and insects of various kinds, which it takes, either amongst the aquatic plants, on the branches of trees (which it searches with unwearied assiduity), or hovering over the surface of the water. The latter method of seizing their prey is, however, not commonly resorted to, by either of the Reedlings. The tail is somewhat longer and less wedge-shaped than that of the Sedge Reedling. MUDIE mentions, in his admirable *Feathered Tribes of the British Islands*,\* that it occasionally approaches houses, before it takes its final leave of us, but, though we have of course no reason to doubt the accuracy of the statement, yet I have hitherto been unable to verify the circumstance from personal observation. The bill of this bird is rather longer than that of the Sedge Reedling, and wider at the base.

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\* For a notice of this truly valuable and classical work, and also for a specimen of MUDIE's descriptions, see the *Ornithologist's Text-book*, by NEVILLE WOOD, Esq., lately published.



## GENUS PHILOMELA, SWAINS. NIGHTINGALE.

BRAKE NIGHTINGALE,\* *Philomela luscinia*, SWAINS.

Beautiful Nightingale, who shall pourtray  
 All the varying turns of thy flowing lay!  
 And where is the lyre, whose chords shall reply  
 To the notes of thy changeful melody!  
 We may linger indeed, and listen to thee,  
 But the linked chain of thy harmony  
 It is not for mortal hands to unbind,  
 Nor the clue of thy mazy music to find.

Thy home is the wood on the echoing hill,  
 Or the verdant banks of the forest rill,  
 And soft as the south wind the branches among,  
 Thy plaintive lament goes floating along.

*Minstrelsy of the Woods.*

SYNONYMS.—*Motacilla luscinia*, LINN. *Syst.*—*Sylvia luscinia*, LATH. *Ind. Orn.*  
 —*Philomela luscinia*, SWAINSON.—BLYTH in *Field Nat. Mag.*—*Analyst*, No. 13.  
 —Nightingale Warbler, STEPH. *Gen. Zool.*—MUDIE'S *Feath. Tribes.*—Brake  
 Nightingale, N. WOOD, in *Analyst*, No. 12.

OF the habits and manners of the Brake Nightingale, little is as yet known beyond mere conjecture. The reasons for this are obvious; as, besides being mostly a nocturnal bird, it is one of very retired habits, hiding itself in thick braky woods, which it seldom leaves. It arrives in the middle of April, and commences singing about the twenty-sixth of that month, or, should the season be late and the weather unsettled, as in the present year (1835), it remains silent until the beginning of May. Like most other songsters, it ceases singing after the young are hatched.† The females—as is the case with many other members of the Warbler family—arrive eight or ten days later than the males, at which time the latter commences singing. They leave us at the end of August.

The Brake Nightingale is a very local bird—that is, it is

\* With a few alterations, the following article appeared originally in the twelfth number of that admirable periodical, the *Analyst*, vol. ii. p. 394.

† The Yellow Bunting (*Emberiza citrinella*) is one of the few exceptions to this rule.

only partially distributed over the countries it visits or inhabits; thus in England it has never been heard further north than Doncaster;\* nor does it occur in any part of North Wales. The limit of its western range is Somersetshire, beyond which it has never been met with. The reason of this is by no means well explained, and indeed it would *seem* to be perfectly arbitrary, as some of the counties which are not favoured by its melody, are remarkable for balminess of climate and softness of air; its favourite food, and the thick tangled underwood and rank luxurious vegetation, to which it is so partial, are also at least as plentiful in these parts, as in the counties to which it chiefly resorts; nor can it be the coldness of the climate, in the northern counties, that prevents its visiting these, as it is found in much more northern latitudes in other countries.† It appears, however, generally to prefer inland districts to those which are on the coast. Leaving this yet unsettled question for further investigation, let us now proceed to consider those points of our songster's economy which are better understood.

A small wood near Foston Hall, abounding with underwood of a rich and luxuriant growth, has, for several years past, been a favourite spot with a pair of Brake Nightingales, which there find a safe asylum in a thick clump of firs, situate on a rising ground; the surrounding parts are somewhat damp and marshy, which is also favourable for this bird of night. The spot is, in short, perfectly adapted for a pair—and probably not more—of Brake Nightingales, and, indeed, I know of no place so well suited for this bird many miles round; except,

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\* Since writing the above, I have heard that it has occurred two or three times near York.

† Since this article appeared in the *Analyst*, Mr. BLYTH informs me that he has discovered the cause of the partial distribution of the Brake Nightingale. But, as my friend has not yet enlightened me on the subject, I am compelled to leave the above passage as it stands in the original. When writing this paper, I was of course fully aware that there *was* a cause for it, as was indeed implied by the word “*seem*” being in italics, but I then was, and still am, ignorant of that cause. My excellent friend, Mr. HEWITSON, in quoting the passage to which this note refers, omitted to put the word “*seem*” in italics, thus, unknowingly, perverting my meaning.

perhaps, a small clump of firs near Doveridge Hall, the seat of Lord WATERPARK, which was visited by a pair of these birds a few years ago: they were, however, soon caught and caged by a neighbouring bird-catcher, and died from the want of that food to which they had so long been accustomed—the fate of by far the greater number that are captured in the course of the year. Almost every one must have heard and admired the song of the Brake Nightingale; I will, however, attempt to describe it for the benefit of those who have not yet enjoyed that treat. The strains are loud, rich, mellow, silvery, and clear, and so far from being a *miserabile carmen*, as sung by Virgil and other classic poets, I know few songs which are its equal in sprightliness and vivacity, with the exception, however, of one part, consisting of three or four lengthened notes, beginning very *piano*, and gradually rising to *crescendo* and *forte*, which are certainly of a peculiarly melancholy character. The song of this bird does not equal that of the Garden Ouzel in mellowness, nor that of the Garden Thrush in loudness, but it certainly excels all others as a whole—at least all other *British* birds, for AUDUBON says it is absurd to think of comparing the song of the Brake Nightingale to that of *Orpheus polyglottus*.\* In my opinion, there is only one drawback upon the song of our British chorister, and that is, the unconnectedness of the strains. This defect is, however, obviated when several are singing together. Beautiful as is the song, it doubtless owes much to the time at which it is heard, and the silence and stillness of the hour. In the words of SHAKESPEARE:—

The Nightingale, if he should sing by day,  
 When every Goose is cackling, would be thought  
 No better a musician than the Wren.

*Merchant of Venice*, Act V. Sc. I.

I cannot, however, fully subscribe to this, as I have frequently listened to and admired the song of the Brake Nightingale in broad daylight, when the finest choristers of the

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\* See AUDUBON'S highly interesting *Ornithological Biography*, vol. i. p. 113.

woods were carolling on all sides. Its strains may be recognised whilst hundreds of other birds are singing, even by the most listless observer; nor indeed is it possible to mistake them, when they have once been heard. That the fact of the Brake Nightingale singing in the day as well as at night, was well known to the ancients—though VIRGIL is the only ancient poet who mentions it—is proved by the following passage, which occurs in PLINY'S *Natural History*:—"This bird, which, for fifteen days and nights, hid in the thickest shades, continues its song without intermission, deserves our attention and wonder." The term of fifteen days, given by PLINY in the above quotation, is probably not incorrect, for, though the song does not entirely cease at the end of this period, yet it is heard much less frequently after the female has commenced incubation. The young are hatched about the beginning of June, when the male invariably discontinues his melody; should the female be killed, or the nest destroyed, the male again renews his strains, and in places where they abound, as in many of the southern counties, one or two individuals may generally be heard throughout the season. These are males which have either been unable to procure a mate, or have been deprived of her by some accident.

A rainy night does not prevent it from singing, as I have frequently found from personal observation. It seldom commences its song in the evening until all other birds are silent, or if it does, it is only for about ten minutes, when it again ceases. Scarcely have the Garden Thrushes retired to rest, sounding their loud and peculiar alarm notes, than Philomel takes up his *dismal* tale. It rarely sings on dark windy nights; but if, in this state of affairs, the moon should appear, it instantly begins warbling, and, once commenced, almost invariably continues the whole night, not ceasing till two or three hours after sunrise. This I know from actual observation, having more than once remained out of doors nearly the whole night, purposely to discover whether the bird or the Naturalist would first be wearied! If on a dark and windy night it does not sing, it

may generally be roused by imitating its strains; if this be done on a *favourable* night, it will commence *instantly*, but on a cold and chilly night it is sometimes very difficult to rouse, though I have seldom been so unfortunate as to fail entirely. The shutting of an adjoining gate, the striking of a church clock, the passing of a cart or coach—if near a road—or even the hearing passengers walking along the hard turnpike, will frequently cause it to commence singing! the very incidents which, one might have *supposed*, would disturb so shy a bird. It is, however, probably on the same principle that Canaries and other cage birds sing when a noise is made, or when they hear the sound of music. When once our songster has fairly entered upon his strains, it is extremely difficult to disturb him. I have frequently, for the sake of experiment, thrown a stone into the very bush where he was performing, apparently without producing the slightest effect, though, if the same insult were practised upon him *before* the song was commenced, he would probably remain silent the whole night. I have also approached within two or three feet of the branch on which he was perched, without his appearing to heed me in the least; on making a nearer approach, however, the song ceased for a few moments, and then recommenced at the distance of about ten yards off.

When disturbed in this manner, the peculiar guttural note is frequently emitted, as if the bird was scolding you for intruding on his sacred solitude. Little seems to have been ascertained with regard to this sound. PENNANT says (*Brit. Zool.* vol. i. p. 496), that when the young first come abroad, and are helpless, the old birds make a plaintive and jarring noise, with a sort of snapping, as if in menace, pursuing the passengers along the hedge. According to KNAPP, (*Journ. of a Nat.*) “the croaking of the Brake Nightingale, in June and the end of May, is not occasioned by the loss of voice, but by a change of note—a change of object.” BECHSTEIN, in his excellent *Cage Birds*, informs us, that “in anger, jealousy, rivalry, or any extraordinary event, he (the Brake Nightingale)

utters hoarse, disagreeable sounds, somewhat like a Jay or a cat." It is much to be regretted, that those consummate Ornithologists, MONTAGU, SELBY, and MUDIE, are silent on this subject. Now it appears to me extremely doubtful, whether this croaking sound does proceed from the male, as seems to be the opinion of BECHSTEIN and KNAPP. At all events I am certain of this, that it is not made by the male alone; having more than once heard the male singing in one bush, whilst the female was uttering its frog-like croak at the distance of many yards from its mate. Some authors have supposed that this guttural noise is not heard until the end of May; this, however, my own experience enables me to contradict, having frequently noticed it before the song commences, so early as the end of April.

I one night started a Ring Pigeon (*Columba palumbus*, LINN.) close to the tree in which the Brake Nightingale was singing; the loud rustling of the Pigeon's wings did not, however, in the least disturb Philomel in his *miserabile carmen*, who seemed well aware that he had nothing to fear from so gentle and harmless a creature. The Brake Nightingale is by no means the only bird whose notes are heard in the night time; there is one other nocturnal songster amongst the *Sylviadæ* (Warbler family), whose strains, though far inferior to those of the Brake Nightingale, are by no means monotonous or unpleasant. I mean the Sedge Reedling (*Salicaria phragmitis*, SELBY). If a stone be thrown into a bush where one of these birds is roosting, it will—as already observed (see Art. "Sedge Reedling")—immediately begin to sing. The other "birds of the night" are the Fern Nightjar, the Peewit Lapwing, the Meadow Crake, the Common Gallinule, the Barn Owl, the Marsh Reedling, and occasionally, though seldom, and only on clear moonlight nights, the Grey Cuckoo. The Ring Duck (*Anas boschas*) and Canada Goose\* (*Anser Canadensis*, WILL.) are

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\* The Canada goose is not a native of Britain, but is almost naturalized in many parts of England. It frequents the lakes of Derbyshire, and breeds near the water. It sometimes flies at a considerable height, and in small flocks of twenty or thirty individuals.

also—like most of the Duck family—very active and clamorous in the night season. But to return to the subject of the present article.

The Brake Nightingale, as before stated, is very rarely to be seen, either in the day-time or at night, its habits being extremely shy and retired. When forced to leave the tree on which it is singing, it does not fly across to the tree on which it intends to alight, but flutters round through the bushes, and ascends the tree by hopping upwards, thus, in most cases, eluding observation. My zealous correspondent, Mr. BLYTH, informs me that it sometimes flies close to the ground, in the manner of the Robin Redbreast. I have never found the nest of this species (though I have often seen both nest and eggs in public and private collections), nor, indeed, is it an easy matter to discover it, as its colour assimilates so closely with the surrounding leaves, which had fallen the preceding autumn. It is composed of oak leaves of the former year, lined with dry grass, and is placed on the ground, in the midst of a thick brake, at the roots of trees, or under a hedge. The eggs, from four to six in number, are of an olive brown colour, and nearly elliptical. They are spotless. HEWITSON has figured the egg in the twenty-fourth number of his beautiful *British Oology*, and LEWIN has given a tolerably good representation of it in his *Birds of Britain*.

A friend informed me last summer, that some years ago only one Brake Nightingale was heard in Kensington Gardens, which are annually visited by six or seven; and this individual was at length discovered to be a man imitating the song of that bird, and who had mingled with the crowd every night, carolling, as he walked along, the well known strains of sweet Philomel! All the other birds of the species had been caught and imprisoned by the neighbouring bird-catchers. I have also lately heard of a man who travels about the country, gaining a livelihood by imitating the song of the Brake Nightingale, Sky Lark, Garden Ouzel, and other birds! all of which he imitates so successfully, that, had he been stationed in the

woods, the notes might have been supposed, even by an Ornithologist, to have proceeded from the birds themselves. The organ of Imitation was doubtless very fully developed in this person.

Some Ornithologists have supposed that there are two distinct species—and some, two *varieties*—of Nightingale, confounded under one name. One has been called the *Common Nightingale*, and the other the *Greater Nightingale*. Those who are of this opinion, say that the latter, besides being larger than the Common, or more properly the *Brake* Nightingale, “has a much stronger, louder, and deeper voice; but it sings more slowly and more unconnectedly; it has not that astonishing variety, those charming protractions, and harmonious conclusions of the Common Nightingale; it mutilates all the strains; and, on this account, its song has been compared to (that of) the Missel Thrush, to which, however, it is superior in softness and pureness. The Common Nightingale is superior in delicacy and variety, but inferior in force and brilliancy. The Greater Nightingale sings generally in the night, so that it is the real night-singer; while among (Common, or rather *Brake*) Nightingales this is rather uncommon. Its voice is so loud that it is almost impossible to bear it in a room. It is necessary to keep it always outside the window, either by hanging its cage there, or by opening it a sort of passage into which it may remove.”—BECHST. *Cage Birds*, p. 310. Such is the account of an eminent Ornithologist,\* who, during a great number of years, kept all kinds of cage birds with great success, and from his knowledge in this line, wrote a most useful and interesting volume, which has gone through many editions, and from which the above quotation is taken.

It is possible that two *varieties*† of Nightingales may exist in Britain, but I think it extremely improbable that two *species*

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\* For a notice of the *Cage Birds*, and for a specimen of the enthusiasm of its author, with regard to birds, see the *Ornithologist's Text-book*, p. 15.

† Though a permanent variety is a very rare occurrence in Nature, yet there are instances of it, as, for example, in the Grey Partridge (*Perdix cinerea*).—See a very interesting paper on varieties, in LOUDON'S *Magazine of Natural History*, for January, 1835.



should have been so long overlooked, when we consider the great attention that has always been paid to these birds, in consequence of their superior vocal powers. As to the Greater Nightingale being the only night-singer, that is quite erroneous; the same birds being commonly known to sing both by day and by night, a fact which was remarked even in the days of PLINY. The individual which visits my neighbourhood, is both a day and a night singer. BECHSTEIN draws up the following ludicrous synopsis of the notes of this bird, in his *Naturgeschichte der Vögel Deutschlands*; or, *Natural History of the Birds of Germany*; the dashes serve to point out where each strain begins and ends:—

“Tiuu tiuu tiuu tinu—Spe tiu zqua—Tiō tiō tiō tio tio tio tio tix—Qutio qutio qutio qutio—Zquo zquo zquo zquo—Tzü tzü tzü tzü tzü tzü tzi—Quorror tiu zqua pipiquisi—Zozozozozozozozozozozo zirrhadng!—Tsisisi tsisisisisisisi—Zorre zorre zorre zorre hi—Tzatn zatn zatn zatn zatn zatn zatn zi—Dlo dlo dlo dlo dlo dlo dlo dlo dlo—Quio tr rrrrrrr itz—Lü lü lü lü ly ly ly li li li li—Quio didl li lülyli—Ha gürr gürr quiquio!—Qui qui qui qui qui qui qui gi gi gi gi—Gollgollgollgoll gia hadadoi—Quiqui horr ha diadiadillhi!—Hezezezezezezezezezezezezezezezeze quarrhozehoi—Quia quia quia quia quia quia quia ti—Qui qui qui io io io io ioioio qui—Lü ly li le lä la lö lo did io quia—Higaigaigaigai-gaigaigai gaigaigaigai—Quior ziozio pi.”—*Naturg. Deut.* vol. iii. p. 514.

I think it would have exhausted the patience of any one but a German (setting aside JOB, as rather antiquated) to have composed such a nursery ditty as the preceding! What earthly notion, I would ask, can such a laboured description give of the song of a bird? It would be utterly impossible to convey any idea of it, even by writing down the actual notes, and playing them on a flute. This has indeed been tried, and of course failed. At all events, such a table as the above would not produce a very *favourable* impression of the song. A few words more and I will conclude.

Much as I admire the song of the Brake Nightingale, I certainly cannot agree with MUDIE in the latter part of the following passage, taken from his delightful work, the *Feathered Tribes of the British Islands* :—“To hear it in the morning, especially for the first time, and to be awakened by it upon one of those balmy mornings in May, when every leaf is freshness, and every breath young perfume, is indescribable—worth more than a whole musical festival; but yet it owes much to the time, and the absence of other sounds.” This clearly proves, not that the song of the Brake Nightingale is “worth more than a whole musical festival,” but that the organ of Tune is very deficient in MUDIE. A person with a moderate organ of Tune, but large Ideality—which I take to be MUDIE’S case—may admire the song of this or any other bird, but will not be able to appreciate more definite and scientific strains.

The Rev. W. T. BREE, of Allesley Rectory, thus writes to me, in a letter dated October 31, 1835 :—“We have the Brake Nightingale constantly among the woods on the further side of the parish, and occasionally a pair will breed near the house; but more commonly they stay on the premises here only a very short time on first arriving, paying us a transitory visit, for one day, or perhaps two, and then off for the woods.”

The female resembles the male in every respect, but the young of the year are mottled with yellow.

## GENUS FICEDULA, ANTIQ. FAUVET.

BLACKCAPT FAUVET, *Ficedula atricapilla*, BLYTH.

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Oh! fair befall thee, gay Fauvet,  
 With trilling song and crown of jet;  
 Thy pleasant notes with joy I hail,  
 Floating on the vernal gale.  
 Far hast thou flown on downy wing,  
 To be our guest in early spring;  
 In that first dawning of the year,  
 Pouring a strain as rich and clear  
 As is the Ouzel's\* mellow lay,  
 In later hours of flowery May.

*Minstrelsy of the Woods.*

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SYNONYMS.—*Ficedula*, ALDROV.—WILL. *Orn.*—RAY'S *Syn.*—*Motacilla atricapilla*, LINN. *Syst.*—*Sylvia atricapilla*, LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Curruca atricapilla*, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—*Ficedula atricapilla*, BLYTH in *Field Nat. Mag.—Analyst*, No. 13.—Blackcap Warbler, PENN. *Br. Zool.*—STEPH. *Gen. Zool.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Blackcapt Fauvet, *Analyst*, No. 13.—*Mag. Nat. Hist.* vol. viii. p. 617.

THE Blackcapt Fauvet is a very common bird throughout England, but, according to SELBY—an indubitable authority—is more locally distributed in Scotland; and indeed the rugged climate of that country is little suited to any of the more delicate members of the Warbler family, though some of them extend to its most northern limits. The present species arrives in the middle or towards the end of April, according as the season varies. Last spring (1835) I observed the first individual on the sixteenth of April, and by the twentieth they were abundant in every copse and wood. I should be inclined, however, to consider this an unusually early appearance, having generally first met with it on the twenty-fifth or twenty-sixth of April. In Derbyshire, it is as abundant as elsewhere, and it is almost impossible for the Ornithologist to avoid seeing it in his solitary walks, though, from its shy and retiring habits, it is scarce noticed by the ordinary observer.

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\* The Garden Ouzel (*Merula vulgaris*, WILL.) is here alluded to.

Its favourite haunts are thick braky woods, in which localities it always abounds; it is also a frequent visitant of the garden, committing considerable depredations on the red currants, which they swallow whole, and with much apparent satisfaction. And so intent is it on its pilfering, that this is the best time for observing its habits, as it then admits of a much nearer approach than at any other period of its sojourn with us. The raspberries it is unable to swallow entire, and its bill is often stained with the juice of this berry, when the bird is shot in the breeding season.

The song of the Blackcapt Fauvet is, perhaps, not surpassed by any other of the family, with the exception, however, of those of the Brake Nightingale and Garden Fauvet. It is loud, rich, clear, and rapid, and, in its way, almost equals that of the leader of the vernal chorus, the Brake Nightingale. It sings more constantly than any of its congeners, and indeed it is much more frequently heard than seen. If, however, you will sit upon a mossy bank, shaded with bushes and trees, near the spot from which the song proceeds, it will not be long before you obtain a sight of him, as, when undisturbed, he generally sings on rather a conspicuous station, at the top of a tree. But if you approach incautiously or hastily, it instantly darts down into the midst of the thickest brake the spot affords, where it will patiently wait your departure. In the mean while, however, for the sake of employment, it will renew its strains, even though you be standing within a few yards of it. Indeed all birds of the brake or furze appear to be fully aware that they are perfectly safe, as long they are under the shelter of these, and will sing even while you are in the act of beating the very bush in which they are concealed. This peculiarity I have especially remarked with regard to the Nightingale (*Philomela*) and the Fauvets (*Ficedula*), though I have no doubt but it would apply equally to all brake birds, in a greater or lesser degree.

The present species does not usually sing amongst brakes or in hedges, nor on very lofty trees, generally preferring the top

sprig of one of moderate height. It chiefly frequents small oak and beech woods, and is also partial to orchards; but in the midst of extensive forests, it is not found, remaining on the outskirts of these. Neither is it a bird of the uncultivated waste, or the bleak heathy common, but occurs most frequently in gardens and groves adjoining houses, farms, &c.

Though its colours are plain and uniform, it is a very handsome bird, and has a brisk lively expression, especially while singing, when it appears to exert itself to its utmost; this exertion cannot, however, be very considerable in reality—if it were, it could not possibly sing so continuously as it does. However excited birds may appear to be while singing, I think the constrained positions assumed by them—and by the Blackcapt Fauvet and Canary in particular—must be more mechanical than is generally supposed. Some author (MUDIE, I believe) informs us that the Blackcapt Fauvet may be incited to sing, by imitating its strains, in the manner described in the article Brake Nightingale. I never myself made the experiment, with regard to this bird, but, though I have no doubt of the accuracy of the statement, there is little or no necessity for resorting to such means, as it generally continues its ineffably sweet and dulcet strains from early dawn till close of day, leaving little time for you to put in *your* whistle! While the female is drawing towards the expiration of her term of incubation (about a fortnight), the male sings less frequently and in a more desultory manner, in this resembling that prince of British choristers, the Brake Nightingale. And to this period the remark of the able Ornithologist above alluded to, may possibly apply.

In confinement, it is a very gay, lively, and interesting species, is easily preserved, and sings as unceasingly as in its natural state, and for a much longer period, having then no *incumbrance*. It may be fed on bruised hemp seed and bread, as its ordinary fare, but it is impossible to keep it in health, for any length of time, without giving it a regular supply of worms, insects, caterpillars and grubs of various kinds. In

summer it should also have cherries, raspberries, and currants, and in winter a piece of mealy apple or pear, or some roasted apple. With this treatment, it will be both cheerful and contented, singing nearly the whole year, except, of course, at the period of moulting, when all birds lose their song.

The nest consists of dry grass, or something of a similar nature, and is lined with fine fibres of roots, and sometimes, though not often, with a few horsehairs. The structure is very slight, but is firmly and compactly put together. It is generally situated in a low bush, but frequently also in brambles, thick brakes, and even, like that of the Whitethroated Fauvet, amongst nettles. It is probable, however, that the latter is not a very common occurrence;—at least it is not in this neighbourhood: but it very frequently builds *near* the ground. The nest is also found in gardens, in raspberry and currant bushes, in which case it finds but little difficulty in supplying the wants of its offspring, this being, in such instances, effected at the expense of the owner of the garden, who accordingly issues orders for the destruction of all “*Sparrows*’” nests!—though I think I may safely affirm, that the death of any one singing bird, causes the ignorant squire, and his equally unenlightened gardener, to lose a certain portion of their fruit, and there would undoubtedly be *no* fruit, were it not for the unceasing labours of these lovely little creatures.

The food of the Blackcapt Fauvet, in its natural state, consists of various kinds of insects, which it finds chiefly on the bark of trees, especially orchard trees; and also the larvæ of insects, raspberries, red currants, and probably some other kinds of berries. In capturing—or rather in *discovering*—its tiny insect prey, it exhibits considerable adroitness, and still more agility, searching every branch and sprig with the utmost minuteness and rapidity; and, like all birds of the covert, it threads the interstices of the thickest brakes or hedges—when it frequents the latter—with the greatest ease and celerity. It is, in fact, a very lively bird, and in constant motion. Though this renders it a somewhat difficult matter to gain a clear view

of it in its native woods, yet it makes it a doubly amusing bird in confinement. If "caught young," it frequently becomes very tame, feeding out of its keeper's hand, but when taken old, it seldom loses the characteristic shyness of the family, turning its liveliness into a constant and troublesome fluttering. It is very partial to bathing, but must not be allowed to do so in winter, except on very mild days.

I have always found this bird very jealous of any liberties being taken with its nest. If the nest be visited even once, before an egg is deposited, it is almost sure to be deserted! and, even after incubation has commenced, the parents will not admit any great freedom with their architecture to go unnoticed. The reader may probably remember the accounts I have given, in various parts of this volume, of my experiments on the transposition of eggs. These have been extended to the present species, but with very different results from those previously recorded. I have taken away one or more of the eggs, changed them for those of another species, giving the same number as the bird had laid, and have transposed callow young of Blackcapt Fauvets, Whin Linnets (*Linaria cannabina*, Sw.), and Chaff Finches, of exactly the same age; and in every instance the result has been, the desertion of the nest. Now, I do not think that this was owing to the parents having discovered the difference in the number, size, and colour of the eggs; as, when I transposed the contents of two Blackcapt Fauvets' nests, the result was precisely the same. It seems more probable that the bird is caused to desert its nest, merely because it perceives that some officious intruder has been meddling with its property. And this supposition is greatly strengthened by the fact of its frequently deserting when the nest has been visited but once.

The eggs, four or five in number, are of a wood brown colour, with a very slight tinge of red. Upon this ground are ill-defined markings or blotches of the same colour, but of a darker hue. They are not much subject to variety, but of course specimens differ somewhat in depth of shade. With regard to its

size, I have more than once met with individuals of less than half the ordinary dimensions.

My amiable friend, Dr. LIVERPOOL, thus writes to me, in a letter dated November 5, 1835 :—“ I have at this time two or three Blackcapt Fauvets flying about my room. One of these was taken old, in a trap-cage; the others were reared from the nest, by a neighbour of mine, from whom I lately procured them. The former is extremely shy and distant, and is continually banging itself against the window, and its endeavours to effect its escape are as unceasing as they are fruitless. But when I hide myself behind an old cupboard which stands in the room, all three will frequently come down to their food, and appear perfectly contented, and even happy. On emerging from my retreat, the two young birds immediately fly upon my head or shoulder, uttering a soft and plaintive chirp, and the adult again takes his post in the window, once more to renew his fluttering. I think the two young ones are both males, and if so, I shall fully expect to hear their sweet warble next spring. If my sulky old bird turns out to be a female, or if it abates not a little of its present wildness, I shall certainly *punish* it by setting it at liberty, as soon as the warm weather returns. The Blackcapt Fauvet would probably answer very well in confinement, if there were some furze branches or thick shrubs and herbage introduced into a corner of the room or aviary in which it is kept. I have found all birds to be very partial to anything of this kind, and more especially the wilder species, and those that are fond of seclusion. I invariably give my birds herbage of some kind or other, and was, accordingly, glad to see the subject noticed in one of the numbers of the *Field Naturalist's Magazine*, which you sent me.”

In the female, the crown of the head is of a rusty brown, instead of jet black, as in the male—a circumstance which appears to have been overlooked by my generally accurate correspondent, Dr. LIVERPOOL. The female is also a trifle larger. Both sexes take their turns on the nest, and the male frequently sings while sitting, by which means the nest is often discovered.



GARDEN FAUVET, *Ficedula hortensis*, BLYTH.

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While April skies to grove and field,  
 Alternate shade and sunshine yield,  
 I hear thy sweet and mellow strain,  
 And give thee welcome once again.  
 Come build within my hawthorn bower,  
 And shade thy nurslings with its flower;  
 Or where my wreathed woodbines twine,  
 Make there a home for thee and thine.

*Minstrelsy of the Woods.*

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SYNONYMS.—*Sylvia hortensis*, BECHST. *Naturg. Deut.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Curruca hortensis*, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—*Ficedula hortensis*, BLYTH in *Field Nat. Mag.*—*Analyst*, No. 13.—Garden Warbler, STEPH. *Gen. Zool.*—MUDIE'S *Feath. Tribes.*—Garden Fauvet, *Analyst*, No. 13.

WE are indebted to the venerable Dr. LATHAM for the discovery of the Garden Fauvet as a British bird; the first specimen having been received from Lancashire. MONTAGU has since met with it in almost every part of England, and SELBY mentions having seen it to the north of the river Tweed, which MONTAGU had previously stated to be its northern limit. It arrives at the same time as the preceding species, about the end of April or the beginning of May, and disappears in September. It is considerably more locally distributed than the Blackcap Fauvet, but is perhaps not less abundant in places where it does occur, as in the southern and some of the midland counties.\* It seems somewhat remarkable, that so common a bird should have been wholly unknown to British Ornithologists before the time of LATHAM, though its plain unobtrusive plumage, and secluded habits, may in some measure account for the fact, especially as the number of ardent followers of Natural History was then so limited. But it is not a little extraordinary that it should have escaped the notice of that assiduous Ornithologist, WHITE, as the bird is found to

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\* I have nowhere met with it so abundantly as the Blackcap species; and in many districts it is much rarer.—E. BLYTH.

be plentiful in the neighbourhood of Selborne, the field of his researches.

In Derbyshire, it is not so common as in the south and south-eastern counties, nor is it so abundant as the Blackcap species, but it can by no means be said to be rare. Thus in this central position—as regards England—we are cheered by the sweet, rich, and varied strains of the three finest songsters of the Warbler family—the Brake Nightingale, and the Blackcap and Garden Fauvets. Of the three, I certainly prefer the unrivalled notes of the first, and the delightfully sweet and mellow song of the Garden Fauvet is more to my taste than the wild and rapid, though clear and joyous, melody of the Blackcap Fauvet. In variety and execution, the latter undoubtedly takes the lead, but as regards sweetness and mellowness it is inferior. The song of the Garden Fauvet bears considerable resemblance to that of the Garden Ouzel, but is destitute of that exquisite richness and depth of tone, which appear to be almost peculiar to the notes of the latter. Neither is it so loud, though by no means wanting in power.

It mostly inhabits small groves, thick braky woods, in the neighbourhood of houses,\* and is a frequent visitant of the garden, though its services here are little appreciated, except by the Naturalist. It generally sings in the midst of the thickest and most impenetrable brakes, where it has leisure to pour forth its exquisitely sweet strains, alike secure from the gun of the prying Naturalist, and the stone of the idle schoolboy. Often, however, it appears to abandon its usual shy and skulking habits, and, like the preceding species, sings near the top of a moderately lofty tree. I have also observed another habit, which does not appear to have been noticed by any preceding Naturalist, with whose works I am acquainted. And that is its darting into the air to catch insects, in the same manner as the Spotted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa grisola*), often taking its

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\* It is commonly found in gardens, but quite as abundantly in copses and "braky woods" at a distance from all human habitations, whence, however, it comes in autumn into shady orchards.—E. BLYTH.

stand on a dahlia stake, watching for its prey, darting aloft with inconceivable rapidity, with its bill upwards, catching the fly with a loud snap of the bill, and immediately returning to its station, again and again to renew the same process, with similar success. Often as I have observed this interesting manœuvre—especially last summer—I do not remember a single instance in which it missed its prey. I dare say that some future closet Naturalist or compiler, on reading this, may suppose that I have mistaken the Spotted Flycatcher for the Garden Fauvet.\* Now, to satisfy all such sceptical gentry on the subject, I beg leave to state, that I have observed the above-mentioned fact at least three weeks or a month before the arrival of the Spotted Flycatcher, which does not usually appear till the end of May. Whilst thus engaged in procuring its food, moreover, it admits of a pretty near approach, so that it is impossible for any one who has “eyes in his head” to mistake the bird. In two or three instances I have observed this circumstance in the Brake Nightingale and Sedge Reedling, and have occasionally—though but seldom—known both these birds rise in the air from their perch, singing all the while, in the manner of the Wood Lark, Sedge Reedling, and Whitethroated Fauvet. The instances, however, were “few and far between,” and the birds neither rose very high into the air, nor remained long on the wing. It is very probable that if the Garden Fauvet “tuned his merry throat” in the *night season*, the notes would be considered little inferior to those of the Brake Nightingale, though they do not possess that astonishing variety which is observable in the song of the latter. Each of the Brake Nightingale’s strains is different from the last, and it is as impossible to conjecture what will come next, as it is to keep all the notes in one’s recollection. The melody of the Garden Fauvet, on the other hand, though far from being destitute of variety, cannot boast of the interminable changes of the other, and is easily re-

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\* Essentially as these two species differ in almost every respect, and easily as they are distinguished by the field Ornithologist at a glance, I doubt not but they are frequently confounded by ordinary observers.

membered, after it has once been heard. Indeed so remarkable is it for the exquisite sweetness of its expression, that it is not easily forgotten, and cannot fail to strike those who pay the smallest attention to the beauties of Nature.

The nest consists of some kind of grass (according to SELBY, it is the *Galium aparine*),\* mixed with a small quantity of moss, and lined with horsehair and very fine fibres. It is fastened to the branches with cocoons, spiders' webs, or some such substance. The structure is as slight as that of the Blackcap Fauvet, to which it bears a considerable resemblance. The eggs are four or five in number, of a yellowish brown colour, spotted, or rather blotched, with darker patches of the same, and most thickly set at the large end. The nest is generally built in a low bush or thick brake, and sometimes also on the ground, amongst nettles and other plants, and not unfrequently in a forked branch, four or five feet from the ground. It mostly nestles in small woods and copses, but occasionally in gardens, and very near houses. Its shy disposition causes it to desert its nest on very slight grounds; even during nidification, or after the young are hatched, it is seldom seen, and, like most of our other choristers, is then never heard. By approaching the spot very stealthily, however, I have not only observed the female on her nest, but have, in two or three instances, very nearly succeeded in capturing her. Though, after such an affront, the female has invariably deserted, and though, in the end, the nest has been entirely deserted, yet I have sometimes found that the male would continue on the nest for a few hours. But at length, admonished by his mate of the danger of sojourning there any longer, they for ever quit a spot so little likely to afford a safe asylum for their young brood. The nest of this bird very commonly escapes detection altogether, from the extreme caution with which it is concealed, and I have, in autumn and winter, frequently discovered its nest in spots where I had in vain searched for it throughout the spring and

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\* The exterior of the nests of the Fauvets always consists of the goose grass (*Galium aparine*).—J. D. SALMON.

summer months. And this remark applies equally to the nests of the other Fauvets, and even more so to the Blackcapt species, as that is more abundant in most parts of the country.—Mr. BLYTH is of opinion that both sexes take their turn on the nest.

It feeds on different kinds of insects and grubs, and also, like the preceding species, draws largely on the raspberries, red currants, cherries, particularly the Kentish sort, and other garden fruit. I have sometimes been quite astonished at the extent of the ravages which it commits in our gardens, whilst it is rearing its young,\* but then I have had an eye to the incalculable benefits it confers upon us by ridding the garden and trees of their insect pests. The loss of a small portion of fruit by insectivorous birds, is in every instance amply repaid, as without them the whole tree, roots, branches and all, would shortly be overrun with millions of insects and larvæ, and must, sooner or later, fall a victim to the devastations of these little, but, by reason of their numbers, formidable creatures.

The young birds quit the nest rather early, especially when any one comes near, in this resembling the other Fauvets, and the Reedlings. Sometimes on approaching a nest containing four or five fully fledged young, the whole brood has darted out by common consent, and though I have frequently searched for them with the utmost diligence, yet I could seldom succeed in discovering them, as they squat down and lie perfectly quiet amongst the long grass, like the young of the Grey Partridge, until the intruder leaves the spot. Mr. BARLOW informs me, that in the neighbourhood of Cambridge, this bird is extremely abundant, being there known, in common with the Blackcapt Fauvet, by the provincial name of “nettle-creeper.”—The sexes differ very slightly, but the young of the year are more inclined to a yellowish hue than adults.

“In Kent and Surrey,” writes Mr. BLYTH, “the term *nettle-creeper* is applied, by those who distinguish the different

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\* I was not aware that the old birds fed their young with fruit.—J. D. SALMON. It is, nevertheless, a fact.—N. W

species, to the Garrulous Fauvet. The Garden Fauvet is termed the 'Nightingale's mate' and 'Billy Whitethroat,' in contradistinction to 'Peggy White-throat.' Many suppose that the Garden Fauvet is the Blackcap Fauvet, and say in consequence that the female of that species sings. The sexes of the former may *generally* be distinguished by the more rufous colour of the male under the wing."

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WHITETHROATED FAUVET, *Ficedula cinerea*, BLYTH.

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To thee a song of praise is due,  
 For thou art faithful, fond, and true,  
 Affection warm and firm as thine,  
 Which knows no varying nor decline,  
 The false and fleeting love might shame,  
 Of those who bear a nobler name;  
 And lordly man might learn from thee,  
 A lesson of fidelity.

*Minstrelsy of the Woods.*

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SYNONYMS.—*Motacilla sylvia*, LINN. *Syst.*—*Sylvia cinerea*, LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Curruca cinerea*, BECHST. *Tasch. Deut.*—*Ficedula cinerea*, BLYTH in *Field Nat. Mag.*—*Analyst*, No. 13.—Whitethroated Warbler, PENN. *Br. Zool.*—STEPH. *Gen. Zool.* MUDIE'S *Feath. Tribes.* Whitethroated Fauvet, *Analyst*, No. 13.

THOUGH this bird is extremely abundant in most parts of Britain, the ornithological reader will be surprised to learn, that it is seldom met with in Derbyshire, and that instances of its breeding in my immediate neighbourhood have seldom come to my notice. In my ornithological researches in the vicinity of Sapperton, however, I have observed it in two or three instances, and also, somewhat more frequently, near Rolleston and Boilston, where it breeds regularly. It is probable that many years ago it was as plentiful here as elsewhere, but that it has been driven away by the constant cutting and clearing of the woods, which has of late years been carried on most unremittingly round about. These labours, however *profitable* they may be to those engaged in them, entirely destroy the Ornithologist's sport, and I fear that if they are kept up with

equal assiduity for a few years to come—of which there seems to be every chance—we shall lose also the Brake Nightingale, the Fauvets (*Ficedula*), and other charming vernal choristers, which we can ill afford to spare. But if the Derbyshire farmers can but get plenty of long-horned cattle, what do they care about “cock-robins” and “cock-sparrows!” Although our insatiable wood-cutters (might they not repair to the back woods of America? they would have business enough on their hands there) have deprived us of our humble little songster, the reader need not fear either that I shall have nothing to say about it, or that I intend to present him with a musty closet-fabrication, from other authors. For during rides in various parts of Staffordshire, and towards the more elevated portion of Derbyshire, I have had ample opportunity for observing its habits and general economy.

It arrives at the end of April, or sometimes at the beginning of May, according to circumstances, and immediately resorts to braky woods, thick hedgerows, and kitchen gardens. It is much more a bird of the hedge than the two preceding species, and is always abundantly met with in the above mentioned localities, in those parts of the country which it frequents at all. But though, like the Robin Redbreast, it may be seen in every hedge, yet—in which also it resembles that bird—it is far from being gregarious, and, except in the breeding season, always occurs singly. On the arrival of the females—which takes place ten or twelve days after the appearance of the other sex—the males, which had before skulked about amongst the hedges and brakes, are now seen perched on the tops of the bushes, uttering their “pleasing but cursory” song, and occasionally pouring forth their sweet notes while ascending to a considerable height in the air. This manœuvre is performed in a singular and indescribable manner, and very differently from the sober upward flight of the Wood Lark (*Alauda arborea*). The notes are very inferior to the rich and varied strains of the two preceding Fauvets, but are nevertheless very pleasing in their way, and, though few and often

repeated, are remarkably sweet, and far from being monotonous. It is by no means chary of its song, commencing at early dawn, and generally continuing till the setting of the sun; I have likewise sometimes heard it pouring forth its oft-repeated strain long after the other diurnal songsters have retired to rest. Even in the middle of the day—when most other birds are mute—the well-known notes of the Whitethroated Fauvet are still heard. Like the Garden Ouzel and others of the Thrush sub-family (*Turdinæ*, N. WOOD), it often sings during light April-like showers, but not in heavy continuous rains or thunder-storms. When singing, the feathers of the head and neck are erected, and the bird appears greatly excited, as is also the case with the next species.

The nest resembles those of the preceding species, both in materials and general appearance, being of a very slight construction, and so thin that the eggs may almost be seen through the sides. It is, nevertheless, firm, compact, and well woven, and is mostly built amongst nettles, long grass, or tall weeds, but likewise in brambles, and occasionally in a low bush.\* Near Sapperton, where two or three pair breed annually, I have sometimes found the nest in a thick hedge, beside a steep and mossy bank, but the outer part of a bush concealed by herbage appears to be the favourite site, whence the provincial name “nettle-creeper.” This appellation is also applied to the Blackcap and Garden Fauvets; but, though all the Fauvets will occasionally breed amongst nettles, the nests of the other species are, I think, more commonly met with in brambles, low bushes and brakes. The eggs, four or five in number, are of a light ash colour, spotted with dark grey and brown. They are little subject to variety. The bird is fully as shy as its congeners, and is very easily caused to desert, before it has commenced laying, but after the young are hatched, it is “faithful, fond, and true.”† The young leave the nest very early,

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\* The woodbine is a common situation for the nests of the Fauvets.—J. D. SALMON.

† See the lines at the head of this article.



especially if this be much frequented. Sometimes, on approaching the nest, I have known the whole brood scramble over the sides, and make good their escape amongst the long grass, when one would have thought that another week's nursing in the cradle might be beneficial to them! And so perhaps it might, but when fear is in the way, when once the organ of caution is fairly excited, there is little time for considerations of this nature. Three broods are commonly reared in the season.

Its first food, during its stay with us, consists of insects and caterpillars, of which it destroys immense numbers, and it is particularly serviceable in clearing the hedges of the swarms of caterpillars which infest them in spring. Afterwards it subsists in great part on fruit and berries, as currants, cherries, raspberries, and elderberries, of which it has certainly full right to a pretty large share, in consideration of its previous services. It leaves us towards the end of September.

In a late communication from Dr. LIVERPOOL, I find the following remarks:—

“Although the Whitethroated Fauvet is not so great a devourer of fruit, as the Garden and Blackcap species, yet it does considerable damage\* in gardens, amongst the currant bushes, as I have frequently found to my cost. I at this time possess two young birds which could, I verily believe, be preserved in good health entirely on fruit. They are little inclined to the ‘universal paste,’ but greedily devour almost any kind of insect food, especially caterpillars. The common house fly they will not touch, unless it be alive, and they always prefer a fat spider, or any of the softer insects. One of them has already commenced ‘recording,’ and I expect he will be in full song by the middle of *December!* Were I to judge by the musical efforts of this bird, I should certainly agree with you in considering the song of birds innate, as, about a week ago, he had not the

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\* Though it does some damage, if we consider the fruit alone, yet, on the whole, it is as beneficial as almost any other insectivorous bird. It is, besides, scarcely fair to look only to the dark side of the question.—N. W.

slightest notion of his notes, and he is now making them out entirely by himself. I doubt not but in a short time he will be able to sing as perfectly as any wild bird, and I shall be curious to observe whether he will utter his song on the wing, in the room in which they are confined. Even Sky Larks and Wood Larks often make the attempt—however futile it may be—in their little cages. My two Whitethroated Fauvets are extremely shy and distant, always hiding themselves amongst the branches which I provide for my birds, when any one enters the room. I have never succeeded in bringing this wary species to feed out of the hand, even when they were reared from the nest: for although they may appear to be tame for a time, yet they afterwards gradually grow less and less familiar, until they become almost as wild as newly caught individuals. Their ‘organ of caution’ (as you Phrenologists would say) must be very large!”\*

The female and young are more of a rust colour than the adult males.

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#### GARRULOUS FAUVET, *Ficedula garrula*, BLYTH.

SYNONYMS.—*Motacilla curruca*, LINN. *Syst.*—GMEL. *Linn.*—*Motacilla dumetorum*, LINN. *Syst.*—GMEL. *Linn.*—*Sylvia curruca*, LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—TEMM. *Man. d’Orn.*—*Sylvia dumetorum*, LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Curruca garrula*, BRISS. *Orn.*—SELBY’S *Br. Orn.*—*Sylvia sylvicola*, LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—MONT. *Orn. Dict.*—*Ficedula garrula*, BLYTH in *Field Nat. Mag.*—*Analyst*, No. 13.—Babbling Warbler, LATH. *Syn.*—PENN. *Arct. Zool.*—Brake Warbler, MUDIE’S *Feath. Tribes.*—Garrulous Fauvet, *Analyst*, No. 13.

THE Garrulous Fauvet (or “lesser whitethroat,” as it is often erroneously termed) is found in most parts of England, but has not yet been met with in Scotland, † though it is possible enough that it does visit many parts of that country. In Derbyshire it is far from abundant, being about as rare as the Whitethroated Fauvet. I have, however, found its nest

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\* I have found no difficulty in taming this species.—E. BLYTH.

† Professor RENNIE thinks he has seen it in Ayrshire, but the authority of the worthy Professor, on these matters, is at best doubtful; though, for aught I know, he may be personally acquainted with this species.

several times, and few years pass without my observing two or three pair of the birds. It is easily distinguished from the preceding species, being smaller and more slender. The time of its arrival and departure appears to be about the same as that of its congeners. It is by no means an easy matter to get a clear view of it in its natural state, or to obtain a specimen for the museum, as it is extremely shy and retired in its habits, hiding itself in the midst of the thickest hedges and most impenetrable brakes, which it threads with almost inconceivable rapidity, and seldom quits. All the other Fauvets occasionally occur in open spots or near the tops of trees, but brakes, brambles, and low thick bushes, appear to be the exclusive haunts of this bird. At least I never met with it elsewhere.\*

The song—if indeed it deserves the name—consists of two or three somewhat harsh notes often repeated, but without variation. This is generally uttered from beneath the bushes, rarely while perched on the top of them, and not very often on the wing, in which it differs essentially from the preceding species. It might appear extraordinary at first sight, that a group so eminent for its musical powers as the Fauvets, should include the present species, whose notes are of little worth. But then we must remember, that the Garrulous Fauvet is not one of the typical species, and, moreover, that the degradation, is perfectly gradual, the deterioration being very evident in the Whitethroated Fauvet, and also in many nearly allied foreign species. *Ficedula* is by some considered the typical genus of the *Sylviadæ* or Warbler family, deciding perhaps from the vocal powers of its members; but I agree with SELBY and others in believing the genus *Sylvia* of this work (or “*hujus operis*” as the *learned* would say) the pre-eminently typical group.

The nest of the Garrulous Fauvet bears a close resemblance to those of the other Fauvets, being open and of slight con-

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\* Mr. BLYTH says it “comparatively seldom descends into bushes,” but, in this neighbourhood, it is positively and undoubtedly a brake bird. What it is elsewhere, I can only judge from the descriptions of authors and of compilers.

struction, but, as might be supposed from the size of the bird, is considerably smaller. It may also always be distinguished by being lined with small roots. It is situated in low bushes, brambles, thick hedges or brakes, generally near the ground, but sometimes several feet above it. I believe it seldom or never builds amongst nettles, but I have known it breed in osier beds, quite close to the water, in two or three instances, and here I have frequently observed the parents feeding their young, by lying down on the ground, as described in the article "SEdge REEDLING." The eggs, four or five in number, are of greenish white colour, spotted with small dots of brown at the larger end. They are hatched in the same time as those of most other small birds—twelve or fourteen days—and the young quit the nest early, though, when undisturbed, I have found them in the nest, fully fledged. Immediately after the young have left the cradle, is the best time for observing this bird, for, when engaged in the care of its offspring, it loses much of its naturally shy and secluded habits.

Its food consists of different kinds of insects and their larvæ, with which it supplies its young in great abundance. I have not been able to find that it feeds on fruit, but this is probably owing to its comparative scarcity in this county, and the consequently few opportunities which the Naturalist can have of watching its habits.\*

Up to the time of the zealous and indefatigable MONTAGU (whose *Dictionary* should be in the hands of every Ornithologist) that species appears to have been confounded with the Whitethroated Fauvet, chiefly, it would seem, on account of its shy and secluded habits, which prevents its being generally known, or its economy and plumage accurately defined.

"In this neighbourhood (Halifax)," says a correspondent, "the Garrulous Fauvet is by no means so rare as is represented by the Ornithologists with whose works I am ac-

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\* I have repeatedly seen it feed on fruit, and have noted as many as eight or ten together, feeding on elder-berries. It is particularly partial to cherries.—E. BLYTH.

quainted. It is, however, much less commonly *seen* than the Whitethroated Fauvet, and, as far as I know, it has not received a provincial name hereabouts, nor can I find that the birdcatchers have observed it. It is, nevertheless, sufficiently abundant in thick braky woods, and in hedgerows, where it conceals itself so sedulously and constantly, that I believe I should myself have overlooked it, had it not been for its somewhat remarkable call-note and song. It was a long time before I could discover from what throat these sounds proceeded, as I have sometimes waited for hours before it would rise to the top of the bushes, and I have, from this cause, rarely been able to procure a specimen. It is perhaps not so common as its congener the Whitethroated Fauvet, but of this it is difficult to judge with any accuracy, on account of the hidling disposition of the Garrulous Fauvet. The bird is of course well known to you.—N. D.”

From this it would appear, that the species possesses the same hidling habits in Yorkshire as I have observed in these parts.

Of the Garrulous Fauvet Mr. BLYTH says, in a recent communication :—“ It is a remarkably garrulous and tyrannical species in confinement, attacking birds more than twice its size. I have seen it driving away its congener, the Whitethroated Fauvet, in its natural state. The latter is everywhere commoner than the other.”

## SUBFAM. III.—SYLVIANÆ.

GENUS MELIOPHILUS, LEACH. WHINLING.

REDEYED WHINLING, *Melizophilus provincialis*, LEACH.

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In the lonely wild thou hast made thy nest,  
 And the thorny gorse is thy place of rest,  
 Yet dost thou sit on its branches and sing,  
 Making the waste with thy melody ring.  
 Bird of the desert, who cheerest my way,  
 There's a lesson for me in thy joyous lay,  
 There are golden flowers on the thorny tree;  
 There are songs of the wilderness also for me.

*Minstrelsy of the Woods.*

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SYNONYMS.—*Motacilla provincialis*, GMEL. *Linn.*—*Sylvia Dartfordiensis*, LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—MONT. in *Linn. Trans.*—*Sylvia provincialis*, TEMM. *Man. d' Orn.*—*Dartford Warbler*, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—MUDIE'S *Feath. Tribes.*

THIS bird was first added to the British Fauna by Dr. LATHAM. It is very locally distributed, being only found in a few of the southern counties, and especially in Kent.\* As it does not occur in any part of Derbyshire, and as I have had no opportunity of observing its habits in its natural state, I cannot do better than present my readers with the admirable account of MONTAGU :—

“ This species is rather larger than the Common Wren, and much longer, by reason of its tail, which is one half its length nearly ; the weight is about two drams and a half : length five inches and a half. Bill black, at the base of the under mandible whitish ; the upper mandible a little curved ; irides and eyelids yellow. The whole upper parts are of a dusky brown ; cheeks dark cinereous ; throat, neck, and breast fine deep ferruginous ; sides the same, but not so bright ; middle of the belly white ; quills dusky, slightly edged with dark

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\* It is nowhere more abundant than upon the commons where the counties of Surrey and Sussex meet.—E. BLYTH.

cinereous on the outer webs, those next the body and coverts with dark ferruginous brown; at the bend of the wing, under the *alula spuria*, is a spot of white: the tail is considerably cuneiform, the outer feather is tipped with white, and edged with the same on the exterior web; the next slightly tipped with white; the remainder of these, and all the others, dusky; the middle ones edged with cinereous: legs yellowish. In some the throat is speckled with white. The female and young are of a lighter colour, and more rufous.

“It is called the Dartford Warbler (now Redeyed Whinling), from having been first discovered in England near that place; it is, however, a scarce species, rarely noticed in this country. Dr. LATHAM seems to have been the first discoverer of this bird in England, and communicated it to Mr. PENNANT, who first published it in his *British Zoology*, a pair having been killed on Bexley Heath, near Dartford, on the 10th of April, 1773. Since that time, Dr. LATHAM informs us, several were shot in the winter of 1783, on a common, near Wandsworth, in Surrey, now in the Leverean Museum; from which circumstance that author very justly observes, that if it is found here only as a winter migrant, he cannot reconcile the circumstance of its breeding in France (which has been said to be the case), as all migratory birds go northward to breed, not to a warmer climate. In the month of September, 1796, we observed many of these birds about Falmouth, in Cornwall, frequenting the furzy hills, and killed several of them from that time to the 24th of December, when a sudden fall of snow that covered the ground for some time, drove them from that part. Many of these birds, on their first appearance, were in their nestling feathers, from which some hopes were entertained of their breeding in those parts; but with the most diligent search, not one was to be found the following summer; nor indeed did they ever return after the snow had driven them away.\*

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\* I have known this species evince the migratory impulse as forcibly, in confinement, as any other members of the family.—E. BLYTH.

“My opinion that this species bred with us, was greatly strengthened, by a letter which I received from a scientific friend in Cornwall, well known in the literary world, Mr. STACKHOUSE, of Pendarvis, who assured me that his brother had observed these birds for several years to inhabit the furze, near Truro; that last year, as well as the present, they were plentiful during the summer season; and that he had not only seen them every month in the year, but had observed young ones soon after they had left the nest, though his search for the nest and eggs had been in vain.

“This information redoubled, if possible, my ardour, and I visited a large furze common in my neighbourhood, where I had seen several the preceding autumn; and upon close search, on the 16th of July, three pairs of old birds were observed, two of which had young evidently, by their extreme clamour, and by frequently appearing with food in their bills.

“On the 17th my researches were renewed, and after three hours watching the motions of another pair, I discovered the nest with three young: it was placed among the dead branches of the thickest furze, about two feet from the ground, slightly fastened between the main stems, not with a fork.

“On the same day, a pair were observed to be busied in carrying materials for building; and by concealing myself in the bushes, I soon discovered the place of nidification, and upon examination found the nest was just begun. As early as the 19th the nest appeared to be finished, but it possessed only one egg on the 21st, and on the 26th it contained four, when the nest and eggs were secured.

“The nest is composed of dry vegetable stalks, particularly goose grass, mixed with the tender dead branches of furze, not sufficiently hardened to become prickly; these are put together in a very loose manner, and intermixed very sparingly with wool. In one of the nests was a single (Grey) Partridge's feather. The lining was equally sparing, for it consists only of a few dry stalks of some fine species of *Carex*, without a single leaf of the plant, and only two or three of the panicles.



This thin flimsy structure, which the eye pervades in all parts, much resembles the nest of the Whitethroated Fauvet. The eggs are also somewhat similar to those of the Whitethroated Fauvet (*Ficedula cinerea*), but rather less, weighing only twenty-two grains : like the eggs of that species, they possess a slight tinge of green, and are fully speckled all over with olivaceous brown and cinereous, on a greenish-white ground ; the markings becoming more dense, and forming a zone at the larger end.

“The young were considered no small treasure, and were taken as soon as the proper age arrived for rearing them by hand ; which is at the time the tips of the quills and the greater coverts of the wings expose a portion of the fibrous end.

“By experience, grasshoppers (which at this season of the year are to be procured in abundance) are found to be an excellent food for all insectivorous birds ; these, therefore, at first, were their constant food, and after five or six days, a mixture of bread and milk, chopped boiled meat, and a little finely powdered hemp and rape-seed, made into a thick paste, were sometimes given to wean them from insect food by degrees ; this they became more partial to than even grasshoppers, but they afterwards preferred bread and milk, with pounded hemp-seed only, to every other food ; the smaller house or window flies excepted.

“Before these birds left their nest, I put them into a pair of scales, and found that they weighed about two drams and a quarter each. At this time they ate, in one day, about one dram and a quarter each, so that in two days each consumed more than its own weight. Such a repletion is almost incredible, and doubtless greatly beyond what the parent birds could usually supply them with, which by observation appeared to consist of variety, and not unfrequently small moths (*Phalæna*) ; their growth, however, was in proportion to the large supply of food.

“This interesting little family began to throw out some of their mature feathers on each side of the breast, about the middle of

August, and the sexes became apparent. At this time they had forsaken their grasshopper food, feeding by choice on the soft victuals before mentioned. The nestling attachment of these little birds was very conspicuous towards the dusk of the evening, for a long time after they had forsaken the nest; they became restless, apparently in search of a roosting-place, flying about the cage for about half an hour, or until it was too dark to move with safety, when a singular soft note was uttered by one which had chosen a convenient spot for the night, at which instant they all assembled, repeating the same plaintive cry. In this interesting scene, as warmth was the object of all, a considerable bustle ensued, in order to obtain an inward berth; those on the outside alternately perching upon the others, and forcing in between them.\* During this confusion, which sometimes continued for a few minutes, the cuddling note was continually emitted, and in an instant all was quiet.

“Nothing can exceed the activity of these little creatures; they are in perpetual motion the whole day, throwing themselves into various attitudes and gesticulations, erecting the tail and crest at intervals, accompanied by a double or triple cry, which seems to express the words *cha, cha, cha*. They frequently take their food while suspended to the wires, with their heads downwards, and not unusually turn over backwards on the perch. The males, of which there were three out of the four, began to sing with the appearance of their first mature feathers, and continued in song all the month of October, frequently with scarcely any intermission for several hours together. The notes are entirely native, consisting of considerable variety, delivered in a hurried manner, and in a much lower tone than I have heard the old birds in their natural haunts. The song is different from anything of the kind I ever heard, but in part resembles most that of the Stone Chat.

“The Dartford Warbler, like the Whitethroated Fauvet,

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\* This may be observed amongst other cage birds, and also with the young of the Common Fowl.—N. W.

will sometimes suspend itself on wing over the furze,\* singing the whole time, but is more frequently observed on the uppermost spray, in vocal strain for half an hour together.

“BUFFON, who appears to have been the first, if not the only person on the continent, who knew anything of the Dartford Warbler as a Naturalist, seems to have known very little more than that such a bird existed, and that it had been found in Provence (as his name of *Pitchou de Provence* evinces), but he knew nothing of its habits. If he had not figured it in the *Planches Enluminées*, 655, fig. 1, it would scarcely be conceived that the history given by that author could be intended for this species.

“These birds are not, as we at first supposed, confined to the south of Devonshire, contiguous to the coast, but have been observed in the more central parts of that county. In the autumn of 1809, several were noticed by Mr. COMYNS, at least fifteen miles north of Exeter, amongst furze, one of which was shot and sent to us for examination.

“We find, by recent observation, the Dartford Warbler is rather an early breeder, so that they either breed twice in the summer, or some accident must have caused their breeding so late as that before mentioned. In 1805, we observed a pair of these birds carrying food in their bills early in the month of May; from which, and their continual vociferations, there could be no doubt of their having young, and it was also evident the young had quitted their nest, and were skulking amongst the thick furze. Carefully did we examine every part for the nest, where the birds were most clamorous, but in vain; but there was no doubt that the young were frequently very near, by the temerity of the parent birds. The artifices these little creatures made to induce us to follow them, in order to entice us from the spot, were highly amusing. The usual cry was changed into a scream of distress; they would almost

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\* This habit is common to most brake birds, as the Whitethroated Fauvet, and even the Sibilous Brakehopper.—E. BLYTH.

suffer the hand to touch them, and then fall from the spray, and tumble along the ground, as if fluttering in their last struggle for existence.”

My excellent friend, the celebrated Dr. LATHAM, informs me that the Redeyed Whinling “has frequently been met with near London, and very lately about Andover in Hampshire.”

I have been favoured with the following additional information, by Mr. BLYTH :—

“The vicinity of Godalming is described, in the *Magazine of Natural History*, as a favourite locality with the species, where it is known by the name of *Furze Wren*. Its manners, in the wild state, exactly resemble those of the Whitethroated Fauvet, but in the cage they approach more to those of the Garrulous Fauvet, to both of which it is closely allied by direct affinity, the character of its song, habits, eggs, &c., being the same; it has also the same continuous, hurried warble. A continental species intimately connects it with the latter, having the form of the Garrulous Fauvet, but the plumage of the Redeyed Whinling. It is sociable and gentle in confinement, like the Whitethroated Fauvet; but its activity, peculiar actions, and attitudes, and many similar minutiae that I could point out, intimate its affinity with the Garrulous Fauvet. Like this species it sometimes climbs up the wires of its cage—a habit observed in none of the other Fauvets. The present species is likewise frugivorous—at least it is so in confinement—and very hardy and healthy. When it flies to a bush for protection, it is absolutely impossible to drive it out. I have already mentioned that it exercises the migrative instinct in confinement, which renders it probable that some at least leave the country in winter, as I know to be the case with the Stone Chat.”

## GENUS SYLVIA, AUCT. WARBLER.

HEDGE WARBLER, *Sylvia loquax*, HERB.

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Thou fairy bird, how I love to trace  
 The rapid flight of thy tiny race;  
 I look from my lattice the branches among,  
 And see thee flit like a shadow along.  
     For the wild bee does not wave his wing  
     More lightly than thine, thou fairy thing.

*Minstrelsy of the Woods.*

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SYNONYMS.—*Motacilla hippolais*, LINN. *Syst.*—GMEL. *Linn.*—*Sylvia hippolais*, LATH *Ind. Orn.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—*Sylvia loquax*, HERBERT in RENN. *White.*—Pettichap Warbler, STEPH. *Gen. Zool.*—Hedge Warbler, MUDIE'S *Feath. Tribes.*—*Analyst*, No. 13.

THIS handsome little bird is tolerably equally distributed over England, but, like most of the *Sylviadæ*, is most plentiful in the southern counties, and is, I believe, rarely met with farther north than Northumberland. SELBY mentions its being abundant in the midland counties; in Derbyshire, however, it is much less common than the two following species, though it can by no means be said to be rare.\* It usually arrives at the end of March, long before any others of the family, and soon spreads itself over the country. MONTAGU and other accurate Ornithologists have conjectured that it may possibly pass the winter in England; but, though I have more than once observed individuals on the 25th of February, and even earlier,† yet I am convinced that it regularly retires from here in due season, to an individual (or “to a *man*,” as an Irishman would say), and is not again seen till the approach of spring. There can be no doubt but one or two may occasionally

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\* It is throughout England the rarest of the three, and is much less common here than the others. The 2nd or 3rd of April is the usual time of its appearance.—E. BLYTH.

† In the present year (1836), I heard the first Hedge Warbler on the 5th of February, and others on the following days.

winter in the south of England, but this circumstance is no more conclusive of its being resident with us, than the Brake Nightingale's having been heard to sing, in its natural state on Christmas day, which has actually been known to be the case.

Immediately on its arrival, its clattering note—which goes by the name of a *song*—is heard in almost every hedge, and afterwards in the pea-rows. This note or song—call it which you please—has been likened to the words *chiff chaff, chiffy chaffy*; but, though there is no accounting for the extent to which people's *imagination* will carry them, I can discern little or no resemblance between the song and the words. The analogy must be in a great measure imaginary, as the notes of birds—that is, singing birds—are wholly devoid of consonants; and, moreover, I can confidently affirm that no one, unacquainted with the song of this or any other bird, would, on hearing it, recognise it, from having been told the words which it was supposed to resemble. Let any two persons note down the song of some bird, and see how far the two accounts will agree. We have, in fact, an instance of this in the song of the Brake Nightingale. The English bird-catchers liken the notes to the words *whitlow, whitlow, sweet jug, pipe rattle, water bubble*, and many others, which it would be alike tedious and unprofitable here to repeat, while BECHSTEIN gives the ridiculous table which is extracted from his *Naturgeschichte Deutsche*, in my article “BRAKE NIGHTINGALE.”

The unmusical and oft-repeated ditty of the Hedge Warbler is almost unceasingly uttered from the time of its arrival to the period when the young burst the shell, and it is, in fact, one of the most unwearied songsters with which I am acquainted, with the exception, however, of the Sedge Reedling, Whitethroated Fauvet, and a few others, which sing both in the day and at night. Small as is the intrinsic worth of the notes of the Hedge Warbler, they are hailed with delight by the field Ornithologist, as it is the first migratory member of the family whose strains are heard in this blessed land; and because, moreover, it gives notice of the approach of more joyous and beauteous songsters. But if

the notes are not worth listening to—at least as regards their melody—the bird itself is very amusing and pretty, and its quick, lively motions cannot fail to attract the attention of the Ornithologist, though the bird, from the very circumstance of the rapidity of its movements, and from its small size, may pass wholly unnoticed by the ordinary observer.

The nest is often placed at the bottom of a hedge, and sometimes in a pea-row, but perhaps more commonly on the ground, in a thick tuft of grass, and very often in a certain herb, with a sweet-smelling flower, whose name, unfortunately, is unknown to me. This plant appears to be a particular favourite with the Warbler\* genus, and I have seldom searched a tuft, or rather a *bed* of it in vain. I have also found it on the stumps of trees overgrown with moss and other herbage. It is at all times a difficult nest to discover, as the bird very commonly conceals its little tenement with a profusion of moss and grass, which are placed artfully—though apparently carelessly—on the top. If this *second roof* be removed, it will quickly be renewed, even three or four times, but afterwards, if all its efforts are baffled, the spot is forsaken altogether. The next consists of dried grass and moss exteriorly, and occasionally a few dead leaves; inside it is lined with a warm coating of feathers; the hole is at the side, near the top. The eggs, which are five, six, or even seven in number, are white, spotted with purple at the large end, with a few very minute specks of the same over the whole. They are somewhat subject to variety, and I have seen a nest containing five eggs of the usual colour, and the sixth pure white. Indeed, both nests and eggs of the British Warblers resemble each other so closely, that, as my friend HEWITSON informs me, little dependence can be placed upon their eggs unless the female is caught on her nest. The nest is a much surer mark of distinction than the eggs, but the bird itself best of all. The nest

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\* When I speak of the *Warblers*, of course only the members of the genus *Sylvia*, as now restricted, are alluded to.

occurs most frequently in woods, but sometimes in walled gardens.

As the three Warblers are often confounded by those little versed in ornithological pursuits, I shall subjoin a description of the plumage, in order that they may not be mistaken in future.

“Length between four and five inches. Upper parts oil-green, tinged with yellowish-grey. Between the bill and eyes, and over each eye, is a narrow, faint, yellowish-white streak. Wing-coverts pale yellowish-brown, margined with yellowish-grey. The whole of the under parts, including the *under tail-coverts*, pale primrose-yellow. Legs and feet *blackish-brown*.”—SELBY.

In young birds, the under parts are of a brighter yellow than in adults. The sexes do not differ materially.

As the Hedge Warbler arrives before any of the other summer visitants, so also it is the last to retire, commonly departing about the third week in October, and often later. It subsists entirely on insects, which it finds in the hedge and pea-rows. It is a very useful bird in the garden, being wholly insectivorous.

Mr. BLYTH says:—“The Hedge Warbler frequently repeats its note upon the wing, and I have heard it vary its song in a most singular manner, uttering its usual cry five or six times in succession, and then alternating it with a very curious note, which I know not how to express in writing. It has also a plaintive cry—*hui*, emitted when any one is near the nest, and which almost exactly resembles that of the Willow Warbler. The greater number leave us in September.”



WOOD WARBLER, *Sylvia sibilatrix*, BECHST.

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Now thou art seen in the woodbine bower,  
 Gracefully gliding from flower to flower ;  
 Now climbing the stem of the asphodel,  
 Or the tall campanula's snowy bell.  
 And the wild bee does not wave his wing  
 More lightly than thine, thou fairy thing.

*Minstrelsy of the Woods.*

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SYNONYMS.—*Sylvia sylvicola*, LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—LINN. *Trans.*—*Sylvia sibilatrix*, BECHST. *Naturg. Deut.*—ID. *Tasch. Deut.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Wood Warbler, PENN. *Br. Zool.*—STEPH. *Gen. Zool.*—MUDIE'S *Feath. Tribes.*

THIS elegant species appears to have been first noticed, as a British bird, by Mr. LAMB, in the *Linnæan Transactions*, but it has since been found to be very plentiful, and has been described by every succeeding author. It appears to be a much commoner bird than the Hedge Warbler ;—at least it is in these parts. It arrives much later, generally at the end of April.

Though the Hedge Warbler and Wood Warbler bear considerable resemblance to each other in general appearance, their haunts and habits differ essentially. In the hedge and the brake—the favourite locality of the preceding species—it will be vain to seek for the Wood Warbler. I have met with it very frequently in woods, where the desolating influence of the woodman's axe is unknown ; but in my immediate neighbourhood (that is, about Foston), where the rage for wood-hewing now appears to be at its height, it does not occur. It seems, moreover, to prefer single and lofty trees, or three or four in a group, to a regular wood, and beech and oak are, according to my experience, its peculiar favourites. In Sudbury Park, and in many parts of Needwood Forest, it is very abundant, but I cannot find that it has acquired a provincial name in this county. The song appears to be fully as unme-

ludious as that of the Hedge Warbler, but the singularity of the note cannot fail to attract the attention of the Ornithologist. It consists of one note uttered several times together, in a hurried and tremulous manner, but not very loud. MONTAGU mentions that it has a shuffle of the wing whilst singing; but this I have not been able to verify, as the bird is shy, and seldom seen but at the tops of very lofty trees.

It seems somewhat remarkable, that a bird so partial to tall trees as the Wood Warbler, should build on the ground; the circumstance, however, is "no less strange than true," and I never remember to have seen the nest even in a low bush, but have occasionally found it on the stump of an old tree overgrown with moss, and so has SWEET. The usual situation is a tuft of grass or other herbage, in woods, but never in gardens, in which it differs materially from its congeners. The nest greatly resembles that of the Hedge Warbler, both in shape and composition, and, like it, is loose and easily torn to pieces. The materials are grass and moss, intermixed with dead leaves, lined with grass of a finer texture, and a few horse-hairs. It is difficult to conceive why two birds, so nearly allied as the Hedge and Wood Warblers, should employ such different materials for the lining of their nests, the one invariably using feathers, and the other nothing but fine dry grass and one or two horsehairs. It is obvious that feathers must be much warmer than dry grass; and what is the reason of the difference? Surely the one cannot be so much more delicate than the other. Rather, indeed, the contrary; for the Hedge Warbler arrives much earlier, and departs considerably later than the present species, and has even been observed in England in mid-winter.

The eggs, five or six in number, are white, spotted all over with purple, but most thickly at the larger end. The eggs of all the Warblers are extremely beautiful and delicate, and are of a lovely pale pink before they are blown, but afterwards become snow-white.

The Wood Warbler subsists entirely on insect food, which

it finds chiefly amongst the leaves of trees. These lovely birds, and their congeners, are of more service to man, than any others of the family ; for, whilst they destroy thousands of insects and small caterpillars daily, they never touch fruit or berries of any kind. Thus, though their song is of little worth, yet their delicate shape and plumage, and their insectivorous labours, render them peculiarly deserving of our protection. As this species seldom approaches houses or gardens, it is less known to casual observers than the Hedge Warbler, but is, nevertheless, much more abundant.

*Plumage.*—“ Top of the head, and all the upper parts, sulphur-yellow ; the lower (or root) half of the feathers tinged with ash-grey. Forehead, and eye-streak (which is large and well defined), sulphur, inclining to gamboge-yellow. Cheeks, throat, front of the neck, marginal ridges of the wings and thighs, pale sulphur-yellow. The rest of the lower parts, and the under tail-coverts, pure white. Tail slightly forked, hair-brown, margined with sulphur-yellow, except the outer feather, which is of a uniform hair-brown colour. Legs pale yellowish-brown. Bill, having the under mandible pale yellowish-brown, the upper rather darker. Wings reaching as far as the extremity of the upper tail-coverts, or two-thirds of the length of the tail. Both sexes are similar in plumage.”—SELBY.

Length of the male five inches and a half. The female is, according to MONTAGU, a trifle larger, and weighs about three drams. Those parts which are yellow are brighter in young birds than in adults, in which it resembles the Hedge Warbler. SELBY mentions that this bird frequently sings on the wing, but this has hitherto escaped my observation, though I have frequently heard the other Warblers singing whilst flying from tree to tree. It departs in September.

The following observations are from the pen of my correspondent, EDWARD BLYTH :—

“ I have often observed this bird within four or five feet of the ground, and witnessed the shiver of the wings you allude to. It frequently continues to emit the sound *tzit*, for a con-

siderable time without stopping, at which time it will always be found to be on the wing, but no sooner does it settle than the note is gradually repeated quicker and quicker, till it ends in a kind of trill; then it is that the shivering of the wings is observed. The note is never so prolonged when the bird is perched. It has also another and remarkably mournful cry, which is emitted at intervals, and which is very peculiar. It is a very bold species when any one approaches the nest, uttering a most dolorous note, which may be expressed by the sound *tee-ip*, the stress being laid chiefly on the first syllable."

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WILLOW WARBLER, *Sylvia melodia*, BLYTH.

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Come, fairy bird, with the glancing eye,  
 And graceful form, to my garden fly:  
 Thou com'st not to steal the nectar away,  
 But to search the stems for thy insect prey.  
 And the wild bee does not wave his wing,  
 More lightly than thine, thou fairy thing.

*Minstrelsy of the Woods.*

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SYNONYMS.—*Motacilla trochilus*, LINN. *Syst.*—*Motacilla acredula*, LINN. *Syst.*—*Sylvia trochilus*, LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Yellow Warbler, STEPH. *Gen. Zool.*—PENN. *Br. Zool.*—*Analyst*, No. 13.—Willow Warbler, MUDIE'S *Feath. Tribes*.

THE Willow Warbler is by far the commonest and most equally distributed of the genus, in Britain. In habits and haunts it partly resembles the other Warblers, being found amongst brakes and hedges, as well as in lofty trees; but it is seldom found in gardens, the species that inhabits these being the Hedge Warbler. It is plentiful in Derbyshire, arriving about the first week in April, soon spreading itself over the country, and is met with in almost every hedge, wood, and furze brake. About Sapperton and Broughton (places very favourable to the researches of the Ornithologist) it is remarkably abundant, much more so than in the immediate neighbourhood

of my residence, and it is almost impossible to enter a wood near either of these places without both hearing and seeing it.

The song possesses little variety, and is confined to a few low clear notes, but, on the whole, forms a very pleasing melody. Though the strains are far from being loud, yet they may be heard at a considerable distance, and contribute not a little to the general harmony of the groves. It is often uttered from the top of a lofty oak or beech tree, and occasionally on the wing, whilst flying from tree to tree.

The nest is composed of moss and dry grass, mixed occasionally with dead leaves, and lined with feathers, but much more sparingly than that of the Hedge Warbler.\* The nest is much firmer and more compact than those of the other Warblers, and is of a flatter shape. It is not near so high, and bears little resemblance to the nests of its congeners in form, though the materials of the exterior are the same. It is always placed on the ground, amongst tufts of grass or other thick herbage, under which it is carefully concealed. It is mostly found in woods. The eggs are from five to seven in number, of a very pale pink before they are blown, and spotted all over with confused specks of reddish brown, most thickly set at the large end. They are smaller, more elliptical, and more inclined to a pinkish hue, than those of the Hedge Warbler.

The female sits very close, and I have often watched the male feeding her on the nest. Whilst this is going on, they make a low chattering kind of intercourse, as if consulting on their family affairs. During the middle of the day the male sometimes takes his turn upon the eggs for a short time, but this is not always the case. His mate may then be seen darting about the branches and foliage of the trees, every now and then catching an insect with a loud snap of the bill. The food is the same as that of the other Warblers,—insects and their larvæ.

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\* I have never observed much difference in this respect.—E. BLYTH.

Dr. LIVERPOOL informs me that he has found this species very interesting in confinement, and easily tamed, even when caught old. "Three or four," says my intelligent correspondent, "that I now possess, are the most amusing little pets I ever had. After they had been with me about a month, they entirely lost their natural shyness, and immediately on my entering the room, they all flock upon my head and shoulders, as also do several of my other birds. I feed my Willow Warblers almost entirely on bread and milk—of which they are very fond—giving them occasionally, as a change, a spider, or some insects. I have had two of them three years, and they are all in excellent health. I know not what those who speak about the cruelty of keeping birds in confinement, would say, were they to take a peep at my aviary. Here fluttering is unknown, and nearly my whole flock will feed out of my hand. A few, as the Redeyed Whinling and Sibilous Brakehopper, are, it is true, little inclined to familiarity with me, but they are to all appearances perfectly happy and contented. When I approach, they generally conceal themselves amongst the furze branches, to which they seem very partial. The wildest species, when put into my aviary, soon becomes tame, being surrounded by so many domesticated birds. You may depend upon it, my dear Sir, that those who speak about the cruelty of caging birds, know nothing at all about the matter."

*Plumage.*—"Head and upper parts of the body pale oil-green with a cinereous or grey shade. Lesser wing-coverts and margins of quill feathers pale sulphur-yellow. From the base of the bill a streak of primrose-yellow proceeds over the eyes; but not so well defined as that of the Wood Warbler. Cheeks and throat primrose-yellow, passing into sulphur-yellow on the breast. Middle of the belly pure white. Under tail-coverts primrose-yellow. Quills and tail hair-brown, the latter slightly forked, and the margins of the feathers yellowish-white. Wings reaching half the length of the tail. Legs yellowish-brown. Bill having the lower mandible yellowish, the upper brown."—SELBY.

The sexes do not differ, but the yellow in the young of the year is brighter than in adults.—It departs in September.

“All the Warblers,” says Mr. BLYTH, “will take insects on the wing in the manner of the Flycatchers, but chiefly the Willow Warbler; this is most commonly observed in autumn, at which time the young of the Hedge and Willow Warblers are extremely quarrelsome, and drive away with great spirit any birds that come within their hunting ground. I have not noticed this in the Wood Warbler, the young of which, besides, has not the bright yellow breast of the immature birds of the other species. They acquire this yellow plumage after having once moulted, and I suspect that it gradually fades away.”

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GENUS REGULUS, CUV. KINGLET.

GOLDCRESTED KINGLET, *Regulus auricapillus*, SELBY.

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Gem-like bird, with thy golden crest,  
 Like lovely visions rarely seen,  
 Seldom we find thy place of rest,  
 Shrouded beneath the foliage green.  
 'Mid the dark groves of fir and pine,  
 Where chiefly thou lovest to dwell,  
 Sweet is that fairy note of thine,  
 As the chime of a silver bell.

*Minstrelsy of the Woods.*

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SYNONYMS.—*Motacilla regulus*, LINN. *Syst.*—*Sylvia regulus*, LATH. *Indl. Orn.*—*Regulus cristatus*, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Goldencrested Warbler, PENN. *Br. Zool.*—Common Goldcrest, STEPH. *Gen. Zool.*—Goldcrested Kinglet, *Analyst*, No. 13.—*Mag. Nat. Hist.*, No. 55.—N. WOOD'S *Orn. Text-book.*

THIS is the smallest of European birds, and is perhaps more equally distributed over Britain, than any other members of the family to which it belongs. It is also one of the few species which remain with us throughout the year, regardless alike of the ardent heat of summer, the “semisuicidal” fogs of

autumn, and the dreary blasts of rugged winter. Unlike most of the *Sylviadæ*, it is at least as plentiful in Scotland as in the south of England, inhabiting the vast pine forests in the north of Britain. It is very abundant in every part of England, but nowhere more so than in Derbyshire, where they may be seen in swarms in every fir and oak plantation, and in every hedge. It is a remarkably lively fairy-like bird, and in many particulars greatly resembles the Tits. Like them, it frequently clings to the twigs with its head downwards, while searching for its minute insect prey. Its dexterity in clinging to the trunks of trees is very remarkable, and I have seen it running up the trunk of an oak tree, with as much ease and celerity as a mouse would scale the sides of a corn-bin. It never *descends*, and the ascent is seldom made in a straight line, but usually in a sloping direction. From the extreme rapidity with which this movement is effected, I have known ordinary persons to mistake it for a mouse, but the field Ornithologist distinguishes it at a glance.

Its motions are so quick, that after observing them for a time, even the blithe Chaff Finch and the gay Whin Linnet appear dull and heavy. In briskness of expression, it even exceeds the Coal and Marsh Tits, which it much resembles in shape, though not in colour. It usually catches its prey whilst darting about the branches and foliage of the trees, often extracting the insect concealed under the crevices of the bark, with a shuffle of the wing. Frequently also it seizes its food hovering over or under the branches, on which I have observed it to dart in the manner of the diurnal birds of prey, and have repeatedly seen it catch insects on the wing. Sometimes when a *pack* of them has been busily engaged in exploring a wood, on a frosty morning in December, I have known the whole flock suddenly take wing, flying off with the greatest precipitation, uttering their somewhat harsh alarm note; and, on looking up to discover the cause of their alarm, beheld a Sparrow Hawk (*Accipiter nisus*) hovering aloft, directly over the wood where the birds had been feeding. But they are little



afraid of the larger members of the Falcon family, and show no kind of concern if a Buzzard (*Buteo*) flies over them, well aware, probably, that he is too indolent to make a stoop for such tiny prey. Indeed, I think the Goldcrested Kinglet falls a prey to the insatiable appetite of the Falconine\* plunderers much less seldom than most other small birds.

It is by no means a bird of the brake,† always haunting woods, mostly those of fir, larch and oak, and also isolated trees. It is not, however, partial to very lofty trees, like the Wood Warbler, but rather prefers young plantations and copses, where it may almost invariably be found. In winter, it is much more plentiful than in summer, large flocks arriving about the beginning of November, and spreading themselves over the country. It is not a little surprising, that the smallest, and apparently the most delicate, of the Warbler family, should arrive here just at the time when the rest of its brethren are taking their departure for more genial climes. The circumstance is altogether a very remarkable one, and I confess my utter inability to account for it. In confinement it is a very tender species, as is proved by the following anecdote, related by the Hon. and Rev. W. H. HERBERT:—

“ I once caught half a dozen Goldcrested Kinglets at the beginning of winter, and they lived extremely well upon egg and meat, being exceedingly tame. At roosting time there was always a whimsical conflict amongst them for the inside places, as being the warmest, which ended of course by the weakest going to the wall. The scene began with a low whistling call ‡ amongst them to roost, and the two birds on the extreme right and left flew on the backs of those in the centre, and squeezed themselves into the middle. A fresh couple from the flanks immediately renewed the attack upon the centre, and the con-

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\* The word *Falconine* is here used in a strictly scientific sense, to denote the members of the subfamily *Falconinæ*.

† In many districts it is not a brake bird, but thousands may be seen on our commons and furze-brakes, and I have taken the nest in a furze bush.—E. BLYTH.

‡ See the Art. “REDEYED WHINLING,” p. 122.

flict continued till the light began to fail them. A severe frost in February killed all but one of them in one night, though in a furnished drawing-room. The survivor was preserved in a little cage by burying it every night under the sofa cushions; but having been one sharp morning taken from under them before the room was sufficiently warmed by the fire, though perfectly well when removed, it was dead in ten minutes."

Though it can, in ordinary winters, keep itself warm by being in constant motion, yet in severe seasons, I am convinced that numbers of them do perish, having, on several occasions, found five or six of them huddled together in outhouses, holes of trees, &c., where they had evidently assembled for the sake of warmth, and, the frost having continued, had died; they were generally in good case, but sometimes very thin. In mild and open seasons they do not perish in great numbers, but only single individuals. Even last winter (1834) I found several dead at different times; but these had fallen a victim to the *warmth* of the season, and from a superabundance of food, being generally very fat, and having the caudal gland much swollen. A moderately severe season is always much more healthy for the feathered race than very mild ones, the extremes of either warmth or cold being almost equally noxious to them.

The song of the Goldcrested Kinglet is very soft and rather sweet, but uttered in so extremely low a tone as to be scarcely audible unless you are quite close to it. It is heard very early in spring, or rather very early in the year, generally commencing about the beginning or middle of February, but sometimes so soon as the end of January, especially if the weather be fine. In autumn and winter it betakes itself to the hedges, where it often admits of a very near approach, and is easily shot. From the circumstance of its frequenting hedge-rows during the winter months, I have frequently heard it called the "hedge wren," which is applicable as far as *hedge*, but the bird has obviously but little connexion with the genus Wren (*Anorthura*). In one habit which it possesses, that of making

an occasional bow and cock of the tail, it certainly resembles the Ivy Wren, but in everything else the species are entirely dissimilar. This bowing motion is not very commonly observed in the Goldcrested Kinglet, but most so in the breeding season, though I have seen it occasionally at other times.\*

Its call-note is single, very low, and weak, and constantly uttered while the bird is engaged in gleaning its scanty fare from the trees. In winter it is a very pleasing sight to the Ornithologist to watch a pack of these sprightly and interesting birds playing about the trees, and enlivening the whole wood with their oft-repeated and plaintive chirp. In summer they mostly conceal themselves amongst the gloomy shade afforded by the larch and fir, but in winter the bare hedges and branches of the oak and elm appear to hold out a better chance of a livelihood, and here the Naturalist may watch them for hours sporting about the naked twigs of the young trees.

In cold weather it has much less the appearance of being cold and starved than many birds of a stouter make, as the Robin Redbreast, Hedge Dunnock, and others. Indeed it appears to sustain the animal heat within its tiny and delicate frame by rapid and unceasing motion; but, when the raging blasts and the full rigour of winter do come, the business is soon done, and dozens of them fall a victim to the severity of the climate. When the cold is very intense, they approach much nearer to houses than they commonly do, and frequently beg for food along with the Robin Redbreast, House Sparrow, Chaff Finch, Garden Ouzel, Common Gallinule (*Gallinula chloropus*), and others. I have also found them dead in the holes of the thatched roofs of out-buildings, and in holes of walls covered with ivy. Sometimes too I have known it take shelter in the warm and mossy cell of the Ivy Wren, during a storm or severe gale.

The Goldcrested Kinglet generally sings from a perch, either

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\* When two of them fight, which they do desperately in spring, they bow away at each other at a famous rate.—E. BLUTH.

in a fir-tree, or in a thick hedge, but sometimes also suspended on the wing, or while flying from tree to tree. In this it intimately resembles the Warblers (*Sylvia*), to which, indeed, it is closely allied, both in habits and general appearance.

Whilst singing, it seldom remains long on the wing, nor does it, at any time, during its stay with us, indulge in long-protracted flights. From seeing its irregular, and apparently weak flight in passing through the air on a stormy day, you would consider it but ill calculated for winging its way over the sea, to distant climes; but that it does perform such journeys, is too well known to admit of a doubt. They are, certainly, often much fatigued by the exertion, especially in rough weather, but such fatigue is, and must be, experienced, in different degrees, by all migratory birds, and even by the most powerfully winged species, as the Swallows (*Hirundo*) and the swifts (*Cypselus*). It is probable that the British-born individuals never quit us, but the migratory part of them disappear before the breeding season. No author mentions the time of their departure for the north, but, from what I have observed, I should be inclined to fix it somewhere in February, having found their numbers greatly to decrease about the end of that month, though those that remain are easily seen till the leaves come on the trees, when there is often much difficulty in getting a sight of them.

The companies or packs break up about the middle of February, when the males commence their low and somewhat plaintive song, and are now often seen perched on the top sprig of a hedge, or hovering over it on the wing. No sooner have they paired, than all their shy summer habits return, they entirely forsake the neighbourhood of houses and gardens, and retire into the thick, gloomy, and impenetrable shade of the pine and larch woods, where they prepare for the important business of incubation, and once more resume their family cares.

The nest is usually attached to the under side of the branches of the fir and larch, with great ingenuity, being sometimes

fastened on with cocoons, spiders' webs, and similar substances, but perhaps more commonly with nothing but green moss. The size of the nest corresponds to that of the bird, is very deep, and consists of green moss, intermixed with a few lichens, and occasionally with spiders' webs. Inside, it is lined with a profusion of feathers, which often render it difficult to perceive the contents of the nest, or whether or not it be occupied at all. The nest is very difficult to discover, as its colour so closely assimilates with that of the branch to which it is suspended. Were it not for this circumstance, nothing would be easier than to take the female while sitting, for, notwithstanding the noise that may be made in finding it, she seldom flies away until you have almost touched her.

The eggs, from six to ten in number, but most commonly eight, are of a reddish brown colour, and very small. They vary somewhat in tint, but not in size. The eggs are often (by compilers and book Naturalists) said to be of the size of a pea; and some even go so far as to say a *small* pea. This, however, is manifestly absurd, and could not possibly be maintained by any one who had ever seen the objects thus sagaciously compared—viz. the egg of the Goldcrested Kinglet and a pea!—Take the largest pea you can find, and see if the egg is not at least as big again as the pea. I never myself weighed the eggs, but SELBY mentions that they weigh from nine to ten grains each.

The nest is sometimes found in the midst of a thick holly bush, occasionally, amongst the foliage of young oaks, and also, though much more rarely, and only in lack of more favourable localities, at the tops of lofty hedges. It does not limit itself to any particular height, sometimes building near the summit of a lofty fir tree, and at other times only two or three feet from the ground. The circumstance mentioned by one of our first field Naturalists (MUDIE), of the eggs of this bird being frequently deserted, is, I should think, only of casual occurrence, being occasioned by the nest having been disturbed. Some nests also were, I am convinced, never intended to contain eggs.

Many birds, and especially the Garden Thrush and Ivy Wren, appear to make nests in the early part of the season merely for the sake of practice. These essays are seldom finished, and are probably the work of yearling birds, unexperienced in the architectural line.\*

The food of this species consists of small insects, which it seeks diligently and continually amongst the branches and trunks of trees, and also larvæ. They often associate in winter with the Coal and Marsh Tits, and likewise with the Blue and Longtailed Tits, but much less commonly with the latter than the former. Generally, however, they are met with by themselves, in companies of twenty or thirty, and I know nothing more delightful, in the whole range of ornithological observation, than to watch these charming little fairies sporting about in all directions, with an endless variety of movements, and filling the air with their chirp of joy. They are little afraid of man, and when they conceal themselves amidst the dense foliage of the fir, it is not so much the shyness of their disposition, as the abundance of their favourite food, that induces them to spend their summer days amongst those trees. If you only remain quiet for a few minutes near a tree where you observe them to be feeding, they will shortly show themselves, and may possibly perch within two or three yards of you, amusing you with their soft whispering strains. In winter, no precautions are necessary for observing them, as they then chiefly haunt the naked branches of oak and elm trees, where they will sometimes stay for hours together, and then suddenly dart off in a body, in the manner of the Tits, to which, as has already been observed, they bear considerable resemblance, but are altogether much more slender and delicate.

Mr. BLYTH informs me that he has seen a yolkless egg of the Goldcrested Kinglet, which was lent him by a friend, and which he states to be of the size of *rather a small pea!* and

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\* The young make a loud sibilous noise when nearly ready to fly, by which I have often been enabled to trace out the nest.—E. BLYTH.

Dr. LIVERPOOL mentions the same circumstance. The bird itself is also occasionally subject to variety.\* At the British Museum is a white individual, with pale orange colour on the crown of the head, and very pale yellow on the back, scarcely perceptible at the tail. This remarkable specimen is now of a dirty white, but I should imagine that it was bright coloured when alive. My Cambridge correspondent, Mr. H. BARLOW, writes me word that he has seen one with the tips of the wings and tail white, the crest yellow, and the rest of the body of the ordinary colour. Mr. B. saw this specimen in an aviary, belonging to a gentleman near Cambridge, in whose possession it had been three years.

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FIRECRESTED KINGLET, *Regulus ignicapillus*, MUDIE.

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Small as thou art, thou gem-like bird,  
 Yet thou hast made thy nest on high ;  
 And there thy warbling voice is heard,  
 Singing thy children's lullaby.  
 Lovely bird, with thy golden crown,  
 A kind and tender nurse art thou,  
 Making thy nest of moss and down,  
 And hanging it on the bending bough.

*Minstrelsy of the Woods.*

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SYNONYMS.—*Sylvia ignicapilla*, TEMM. *Man. d'Orn.*—*Regulus ignicapillus*, MUDIE'S *Feath. Tribes.*—*Analyst*, No. 13.—Roitelet huppé, VIEILL. *Ois d'Amer. Sept.*—Roitelet triple-bandeau, TEMM. *Man. d'Orn.*—Firecrested Kinglet, *Analyst*, No. 13.—N. WOOD'S *Orn. Text-book*.

THE Firecrested Kinglet was wholly unknown to the older Ornithologists, and even to the celebrated Naturalists LINNÆUS and LATHAM, having been confounded, till about fifteen or sixteen years ago, with the Goldcrested Kinglet, of which it was also supposed, by some authors, to be a variety. But as there is

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\* They vary much in the degree of brightness of the crown, and that not according to age. Out of a thousand, however, a regular variety is seldom met with.—E. BLYTH.

no such thing, in the whole range of Zoology, as a fixed or permanent variety, it at length became obvious that it must be a distinct species, and it was, accordingly, characterized as such, by M. BREHM, and, after him, by TEMMINCK, in the second edition of his *Manuel d'Ornithologie*.

It has probably inhabited Britain as long as its Goldcrested congener, but has, here as elsewhere, been confounded with that bird, their general appearance almost warranting such a conclusion, unless the two species are compared, and then the specific distinction is sufficiently obvious, to the experienced Naturalist. According to TEMMINCK it inhabits "pine and fir forests; frequently also gardens; rarely occurs in Germany and in the east, whilst it is abundant in France and Belgium. In winter it is constantly seen amongst the pine and fir trees at the Jardin du Roi, at Paris." This is all that I have been able to glean on the habits of this bird, the descriptions of the few authors who notice it at all, being meagre and unsatisfactory in the extreme. I should think, however, that its economy does not differ materially from that of the Goldcrested Kinglet. SELBY makes no mention of the bird, but I refer my readers, for an interesting account of its discovery as a British species, to MUDIE'S *Feathered Tribes*, a work which should be in the hands, if not in the head, of every British Ornithologist. As the Firecrested Kinglet is so little known, I shall translate TEMMINCK'S description of its plumage, in order that my readers may be enabled to identify the species, should they ever be fortunate enough to obtain a specimen.—

*Plumage.*—On the cheeks are three longitudinal stripes, two white, and one black; the crest of the male bright orange; bill compressed, rather strong at the base.

Upper parts olive green, which melts on the sides of the neck into a large yellowish patch; feathers of the head and occiput long, and streaked with very bright fire colour; these are enclosed on each side with deep black feathers which unite on the forehead, where they form a transverse band; above and beneath the eyes, runs a white stripe, and across the eye is a



narrow blackish streak ; feathers of the forehead reddish ; on the wings are two stripes, which fringe the quills in the same manner as in the preceding species. The colours of the lower parts, irides, feet and bill are the same (as in the Goldcrested Kinglet.)

*The female* has the same stripes as the male, only the white is less pure, and the black not so deep ; the feathers of the crest orange, appearing faded ; the large black stripe at the side of the crest, is of a deep black, but not shining : the space on the sides of the neck, which is yellowish in the male, is olive green in the female.

I make no doubt but this species will henceforth be found to be at least as plentiful as the Goldcrested Kinglet, having received several reports of it from different parts of the country. By ordinary observers it will still be confounded with its congener, but it is to be hoped that the exertions of Ornithologists will shortly bring to light its now obscure history. My valued friend and correspondent, EDWARD BLYTH, says:—"I am very much mistaken indeed, if I did not discover the Firecrested Kinglet, in the neighbourhood of Worcester, among the aboriginal yews, which twisted their antique boughs in sombre grandeur upon a sandstone precipice overhanging the Severn. Unfortunately, I had no gun with me, so failed in the endeavour to procure a specimen ; but the locality is noted for the future."

Dr. LIVERPOOL informs me he is confident he has shot the bird in Kent, but it was many years ago, and he then supposed it to be merely a variety of the Goldcrested Kinglet.

## GENUS ANORTHURA,\* RENNIE. WREN.

IVY WREN, *Anorthura troglodytes*, MORRIS.

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Within thy warm and mossy cell,  
Where scarce 'twould seem thyself could dwell,  
Twice eight, a speckled brood we tell,  
Nestling beneath thy wing!

And still unwearied, many a day,  
Thy little partner loves to stay,  
Perched on some trembling timber spray,  
Beside his mate to sing.

*Anonymous.*

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SYNONYMS.—*Motacilla troglodytes*, LINN. *Syst.*—*Sylvia troglodytes*, LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Troglodytes Europæus*, CUV. *Règne Anim.*—*Anorthura troglodytes*, MORRIS'S *Cat. Br. Birds.*—*Analyst*, No. 13.—Common Wren, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Ivy Wren, *Analyst*, No. 13.—N. WOOD'S *Orn. Text-book.*

THE Ivy Wren is little superior in size to the Goldcrested Kinglet, and is common and indigenious in every part of Britain, being an extremely hardy little creature. Its bill is longer, and its tail shorter, than those of most other members of the family, and the prevailing colour of the body is dark brown. The tail is often held at a right angle with the body, and is always more or less *cocked*.

The haunts, habits, and general appearance of this species are wholly distinct from those of the birds we have hitherto described. Most of the true *Sylviadæ* (Warbler family) are inhabitants of the woods, or of furzy commons and extensive heathy wastes. The Ivy Wren, however, frequents outhouses, heaps of wood, dead hedges, and other localities assimilating closely with its own colour. In such places it conceals itself sedulously throughout the year, being mostly observed singly or in

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\* Though I think, with SELBY, that the natural station of *Anorthura* is not amongst the *Sylvianæ*, I am compelled to place it here in this work, in order to include it among the British Songsters.

pairs. It is not a very shy bird, but is fond of seclusion, always keeping close to the ground, flying low,\* and rarely perching on trees. It is extremely expert in threading the small interstices of the thick hedges and tangled brakes which are its favourite haunts, and is on that account difficult to be seen, though, when it *does* sally forth from its retreat, it often admits of a very near approach. The bowing of the head observed in some birds, may also be seen in this, not so commonly as in the Robin Redbreast, but much more frequently than in the Goldcrested Kinglet; it is most common in the breeding season, or rather when the males are in song, which is the greater part of the year.

I am inclined to think that our tiny songster pairs for life, having frequently observed the same pair near a particular spot for days together, in the middle of winter, and, on shooting one of these, the other has been seen hopping about the place alone, uttering without ceasing a shrill mournful note, as if wailing for its deceased partner. It is probable that many of our resident birds, as the Robin Redbreast, Ivy Wren, Chaff Finch, and others, which have hitherto been supposed to choose a fresh mate every year, pair for life. At least, I am certain of this, that many of the pairs remain attached through the winter; but with regard to their coupling for life, it is impossible to speak with any certainty.

The song is short in stave, shrill, and remarkably loud in proportion to the size of the bird. It may perhaps be ranked amongst the most trivial of our feathered choristers, but the notes are more prized than they would otherwise be, on account of their being frequently heard in mid-winter, when a mere scream would almost seem sweet, especially if it proceeded from the throat of so tiny a bird as the Ivy Wren. And thus, insignificant and humble (with regard to musical merit) as are its strains, I always listen to them with delight in the

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\* It flies in the same manner as the Dipper and Kingfisher, with a smooth even motion, constantly fluttering with the wings.—E. BLYTH.

dreary seasons, though we are apt to overlook them altogether in fairer times. In fact, interesting as are some of the habits of this species, it always conveys to one's mind the idea of cold, and of winter faggots, even in the midst of summer. It often commences singing so early as January, mostly taking its stand on a heap of sticks, a log of wood, a hedge abounding with dead under-wood, or a currant-bush. Were it not that the bird is generally so conspicuous, it would be difficult to believe that the notes proceed from a creature of such small dimensions, so loud and clear are they. It often sings also whilst flying from bush to bush, in the manner of the Warblers, and I have even known a male bird sing while pursuing one of its kind. The usual call note is also harsh and garrulous. As a song bird, I do not think it worth keeping in a cage, especially as it is very difficult to preserve. With a little care, however, I have no doubt it would bear confinement very well, having myself kept one in a cage nearly three weeks. This bird, which was caught in an outhouse, during a severe storm in the winter of 1831, fed readily on bruised hemp-seed and bread, with the occasional addition of a few insects. It was not so wild as might have been expected, but remarkably active, and in constant motion. Having thus ascertained that it might be preserved in confinement without much difficulty, I turned it loose, and had the satisfaction of seeing it come to be fed almost every morning in the winter, which convinced me that it was not displeased with the liberty I had taken, of caging it for a few days.

The Ivy Wren pairs in February, and the nest is sometimes commenced so early as the end of March, though if the spring be a backward one, not till the beginning of April. The nest is a curious and beautiful structure, and has engaged the attention of all who take the slightest interest in Ornithology. The exterior usually consists entirely of green moss, with a few small twigs round the entrance; the inside is generally, though not always, lined with feathers. The places in which it may be sought for are, the thatched roofs of outhouses, where it

makes use of the holes of House Sparrows and Spotted Starlings, ivy-clad walls and trees, mossy banks, or low bushes. These are its usual sites; but the bird is not very nice in the choice of a situation for its nest. I have found it on the branches of wall-fruit trees, at the tops of raspberries and honeysuckles, amongst the dense foliage of the fir, in hollow trees, on the luxuriant clematis on the tops and sides of arbours, in hop trellises, and also, though not very frequently, at the corners of hay-lofts, granaries, and similar places; I have likewise seen it under the thatch of hay and corn-ricks. Few birds build in such a variety of localities, and fewer still display so much diversity in the structure itself. It has already been observed, that moss is the principal material of the nest in ordinary localities. It will be necessary, however, to notice some of the varieties to which the structure is subject.

Of the above-mentioned deviations from the usual locality, I have found the building in raspberry bushes to be the most common, and in such I have had frequent opportunities of observing the method in which the little domicile is framed. It is a curious, and, to Naturalists, a well known fact, that this bird varies the materials of its nest according to the situation in which it is placed; and, accordingly, those built in ivy-clad walls or trees, and in mossy places of any kind, invariably consist almost wholly of green moss outside. But when it builds in raspberry bushes, scarce a particle of green moss is used, the whole structure, both externally and internally, being composed of the *leaves of the raspberry*. This is one of the most extraordinary departures from the ordinary mode of nest-building, with which I am acquainted; and, though three or four instances of it have fallen under my observation, it appears to have been noticed by no writers on British Ornithology, whose works I have consulted.

The course taken by this bird in building its curious nest, is accurately, though not very minutely related, by SELBY. First a kind of cup, shaped like an ordinary nest, is made; next the sides and roof or "*dome*" are erected, and the whole exterior

rendered smooth and even, leaving a small opening towards the top, and twining a few slender twigs round the entrance, to make the whole firm. The last operation consists in establishing a feather-bed inside, for the reception of the nestlings. When composed of leaves, however, it is lined merely with a few horse-hairs, which is remarkable enough, as the leaves must obviously be much less warm and comfortable than soft moss; but the fact is certain. The raspberry leaves, when first laid, are always fresh and green, but become quite brown and autumnal in the course of a few days.

In the case of the Ivy Wren building in raspberry bushes, with the leaves of the same shrub, the colour of the nest was certainly singularly well adapted to its locality. In one instance, however, I remember to have found the nest between two of the dense *flakes* of foliage (so to speak) of the fir tree, and composed entirely of beech and oak leaves, with the usual intermixture of moss and slender twigs, which was evidently but ill calculated to conceal the structure. This specimen was loosely put together, and never contained more than three eggs, after which it was (not unwisely) deserted. In cutting off the branch on which it rested, the nest—like a house built on the sand—fell to pieces. It was lined with horse-hair and a few feathers. One that I once saw in a pear tree against the wall, was composed of the usual materials. It very frequently builds in the hollows and clefts of trees, or in banks, where the entrance is often so small as scarcely to admit even an Ivy Wren, and such situations generally conceal the snug little tenement from the keen eyes and merciless claws of the truant schoolboy.

But perhaps the most remarkable locality of the nest of this bird, which has come to my notice, was inside that of a Chimney Swallow (*Hirundo urbica*), under the eaves of a roof. The nest had evidently contained young, but these had escaped, when the *double nest* was dislodged, towards the latter part of April. I have frequently seen this remarkable specimen, and, if I remember rightly, an account of it has lately appeared in

the *Magazine of Natural History*, but I cannot now refer to the exact place. There was nothing remarkable about the nest itself.

In other instances, I have known it build under the thatch of hay stacks, where it was composed of the usual green moss, but mixed with hay, and *sparingly* lined with feathers. The whole is well concealed from view, being covered over with stalks of hay, without which precaution it must be a very conspicuous object. Twice also have I found it in hay lofts, amongst heaps of faggots and other wood collected for winter use. Both of these nests came to a singularly unhappy fate. In one, the usual number of eggs was laid, but, just when the female was on the point of hatching, the loft happened to be shut up for several days together; and, as there was no hole large enough to allow even an Ivy Wren to pass, the necessary consequence was, that the bird was starved to death. When the room was re-opened, I visited the nest, and, on putting my finger into the snug little structure, found the female sitting. Unwilling to disturb her, I instantly withdrew my hand, but, to my no small surprise, she continued sitting. It was now clear that all could not be going on right, and, on extracting the little creature, found that it was in its *last sleep*. Just at this instant, the male entered at the recently opened door, and flew around me with the most evident signs of concern and distress. The female was in tolerably "good case," but her death was evidently owing to starvation. The young birds, five in number, and very lately hatched, were quite dead. Three eggs, one of which was addled, remained in the nest. The other nest, also built amongst faggots, in a hayloft, was converted by the mice into a storehouse for half-chewed corn, bits of apple, cheese, and sundry other dainties; the eggs, seven in number, having been duly devoured or ejected, and the dome of the nest almost torn off. This is a parallel case to that related in the article "Garden Ouzel," of the rats taking possession of the nest of that bird.

It is one of the disputed points in Ornithology, whether the

Ivy Wren does, or does not, line its nest with feathers. The solution of this question is sufficiently easy, and the only wonder is, how any one could entertain the slightest doubt as to the true state of the case. The fact is, that the nest is generally lined with a profusion of feathers, but there are many which do not contain a single feather. I do not pretend to make any subtle reasonings on this circumstance, but merely present my readers with the plain fact, which almost any one may verify for himself.

The Ivy Wren often builds nests which never contain eggs ; these are called "cock nests" in some parts of England, being supposed to be the work of the male : here, however, they are more commonly known by the name of "fallow nests." It is also the opinion of some *writers*, that these "cock" or "fallow nests" are built by the male, for the purpose of drawing away the attention of nest plunderers from the real structure. This might be a plausible theory enough for the closet speculator and compiler ; but as, in the biographies of birds, facts are of infinitely more weight than hypotheses, I shall proceed to state my objections to the above-mentioned supposition.

First, then, though I have often discovered these "fallow nests" near those which contained eggs or young, yet I have observed that such have invariably been the first architectural attempts of young birds of the year, or else that they have been built as a winter retreat. Secondly, I have found from personal observation, that *both* birds assist in building the nest.\* And, in the third place, they are always constructed at the beginning, or towards the end of the breeding season. For these reasons, I confidently deny that the untenanted nests are built by the males, whilst the female is sitting. And, indeed, I may be allowed to ask, why should this bird alone possess so extraordinary an instinct for the preservation of its nest? I say *preservation*, because it has

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\* In all birds, I believe the male collects the material, and the female arranges them. I have particularly noticed this in the Ivy Wren and Longtailed Tit.—  
E. BLYTH.



been supposed that they are built with the view of preventing the discovery of the *furnished* or inhabited apartment; but I am of opinion that it would have exactly the opposite effect, namely, that of stimulating the bird-nester to continue his researches. Success naturally stimulates to farther exertion, and so, if I am not greatly mistaken, it would be in this case. Accounting for the circumstance by supposing these nests to be the productions of young and inexperienced architects, we find many parallel cases in other species. Nothing is commoner than to find half finished or clumsily constructed nests of the Garden Thrush, Garden Ouzel, Hedge Dunnock, Goldcrested Kinglet, and many others, which are invariably commenced very early in the season, as none of these birds make any use of their nests but in the breeding time. But the Ivy Wren often builds itself a dwelling in Autumn, and lodges in it on cold nights. These nests are mostly constructed in the usual localities, though I once found one situated inside an old Garden Thrush's nest, in a Portugal laurel. Frequently, also, the nests in which one or two broods had been reared in the summer, are tenanted every night throughout the winter,—whether by the old or the young birds, is a question more curious than easy to determine, on account of the difficulty, almost amounting to impracticability, of catching the birds at night. This I have repeatedly endeavoured to effect, with a view of settling the point, but without success.

I have already expressed an opinion, that the Ivy Wren may possibly pair for life; and this supposition is greatly strengthened by the fact of *two* birds generally (always?) assisting in constructing the winter nests. I have never known an instance in which the tenement was fabricated by *solitary labour*, and I am enabled to speak the more positively on this point, from having frequently observed the operations of the skilful little architects from behind a bush or tree. The winter nests seldom or never contain feathers, but in other respects they agree with the usual structures. I do not think it is a *very* common occurrence for this bird to build in autumn or winter, as, if it

can have its summer nest to lodge in, there is no necessity for constructing a duplicate, but, in this neighbourhood at least, it is not very rare.

One point regarding the nidification of this little songster, yet remains unnoticed. However its nest may differ in other particulars, it always agrees in this, that, around the entrance, moss and small twigs are invariably woven. Without this precaution, it is probable that the nest, being composed almost wholly of moss, would soon lose its beauty and symmetry, from the constant ingress and egress of the parent birds. This is so prominent a feature in the structure, that almost every one who is at all interested in this delightful branch of Natural Science, must have remarked it, though I believe it is mentioned by none of our ornithological writers.

The eggs, from five to eight in number, are of a pure white, or sometimes dusky, spotted with reddish brown at the larger end. The circumstance mentioned by the older Ornithologists, and still echoed by the compilers of the present day,\* of the Ivy Wren's laying eighteen or twenty eggs, is wholly incorrect; eight being, according to my experience, the usual number; there are sometimes fewer, but, I believe, never more. How this mistake with regard to the number of its eggs could possibly arise, it passeth my understanding to determine; not only has it been repeated by authors of good repute, however, but most sagacious reflections have likewise been made on the circumstance, to wit, how so small a bird should be able to support so large a family, without ever missing an individual, and feeding them all in order, also as to the wisdom of Providence, and so forth—all which sage and profound observations were founded on what has never taken place. If half the time that is spent in drawing such pseudo-philosophic conclusions from unproved assertions, were employed in observing and recording new facts, our acquaintance with the habits and general economy

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\* I know not what the *Prince* of Compilers may have pasted into his "faulty Dictionary" on this subject, as I never take the needless trouble of referring to his unskilful botchings and hashes, but some other book Naturalists are still enueavouring to perpetuate this error to the best of their ability.

of the feathered race would be much more intimate and accurate.

The Ivy Wren displays not a little pugnacity in its disposition, and, like that of all other birds, this is most observable in the breeding season. I well remember, that whilst walking with a friend in a solitary wood, some years ago, a violent rustling of the leaves in a neighbouring bush arrested our attention. On peering into the shrub, we found two of these birds in such close and fierce combat, that nothing would have been easier than to have made them both prisoners. On parting them, one of them appeared glad enough of a chance of escape, and skulked amongst the thick bushes, whilst the other, perched on a neighbouring tree, poured forth the joyous song of victory. After the lapse of a few minutes, however, the vanquished was furiously chased through bush and brake, and the pursuit continued as far as the eye could penetrate. The conquered party appeared to have received some injury in one of its wings, and flew with difficulty. Probably it had been relieved of some of its quill feathers in the late conflict.

Though a very hardy bird, usually braving the rigours of our northern winters, yet, in extremely severe seasons, great numbers do perish, equal victims to hunger and cold. It is said to have been sometimes found dead in holes of thatched roofs and other places, and that several stow themselves into the same retreat, in order to keep each other—or rather themselves—warm; but I have never discovered more than one in a hole, though that pretty frequently. It often chooses its own nest for its sepulchre, but perhaps as commonly selects the first cosy spot that offers itself. I have generally found them in a hard and frozen state, and though they may have lain in the grave several months, yet—provided the frost has not relented—the bodies do not exhibit the slightest symptoms of putrescence.

It is worthy of remark, that the Ivy Wren is a pretty constant attendant on the Coal and Marsh Tits and the Gold-crested Kinglet, especially the latter, and that where the one is, the other is almost sure to be also. Thus, whilst the Gold-crested Kinglet is exploring the branches and twigs of the

mighty oak and the lofty pine, the Ivy Wren is equally busily employed in the humbler task of scouring the brakes and bushes beneath. Both species are remarkably active and in constant motion.

The food of the Ivy Wren consists of various insects and their larvæ, and frequently also—which is not noticed by authors—of red currants, which it sometimes devours in great plenty in sultry seasons. Insect food, however, forms by far the greater portion of its subsistence, and fruit is probably only resorted to when its favourite fare becomes scarce, and difficult to procure.

I am not aware that this species is subject to variety; and the female resembles the male so closely, as to be distinguished only by the practised eye of the Ornithologist. Mr. BLYTH, however, informs me that he has seen two or three pale, semi-albino specimens.

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SUBFAM. IV. —PARIANÆ.

GENUS PARUS, ANTIQ. TIT.

GARDEN TIT, *Parus hortensis*, C. T. WOOD.

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It is the very carnival of Nature,  
 The loveliest season that the year can show!  
 When earth, obedient to her great Creator,  
 Her richest boons delighteth to bestow.  
 'The gently-sighing breezes, as they blow,  
 Have more than vernal softness: and the sun  
 Sheds on the landscape round a mellower glow  
 Than in the summer splendour he has done,  
 As if he near'd his goal, and knew the race was won.

BERNARD BARTON'S *Poems*.

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SYNONYMS.—*Parus major*, LINN. *Syst.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Parus hortensis*, *Analyst*, No. 13.—Great Tit, MUDIE'S *Feath. Tribes.*—Garden Tit, *Analyst*, No. 13.

THE Garden Tit is the largest British species of the genus, and, like its brethren, tarries with us throughout the year, being abundantly distributed in every part of the kingdom,

but most so in the wooded and enclosed districts. Though considerably larger and bulkier than the other British Tits, yet in habits and general appearance it so closely resembles them, that I think even the most inveterate genus-makers could scarcely have the face to shove it out of its now somewhat dignified station (not only at the head of its *genus*, but also of its *subfamily*), parting it, like the African slaves, from its nearest and dearest connexions, and leaving it to shift for itself in a new and isolated settlement! At present, however, we have little to do with its *family concerns*, and will therefore pass on to the investigation of its habits as an individual, though not as a *bachelor*, for it is at all times a friendly and companionable bird, but approaches less towards being *gregarious* than the Coal and Marsh Tits, or even than the Blue Tit—its immediate neighbour.

In Derbyshire, as elsewhere, it is very abundant, and easily met with at all times of the year, either in woods or little-frequented gardens, especially kitchen gardens, where, as we shall presently find, it is a most unwelcome intruder.

The Garden Tit possesses no song,\* nor has it such a variety of chirps at its command as some of its relatives. One or two of these, however, deserve attention, though they have little more to recommend them, in a *musical* point of view, than the grunt of a pig, or the sharpening of a saw. And to the latter sound, in fact, has one of its notes been compared, though, to say the truth, the resemblance is not very obvious. It is more like the noise produced by passing a file slowly over a block of iron, but it is not exactly similar to this, nor perhaps to any other sound with which we are acquainted. This is, however, by no means its commonest note, nor to be heard every day,

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\* This is a mistake; I have since frequently heard it sing. The strain somewhat resembles the monotonous ditty of the Hedge Warbler, and it sings as diligently as that bird when once it does begin, though in general it is by no means a continuous or garrulous songster. Its song consists only of two notes, repeated alternately, and in rapid succession. The notes are at the interval of a major third from each other.

except where the bird is extremely abundant. On ordinary occasions it uses the usual short Tit-like chirp; and has one note exactly resembling the *twink* or *pink* of the Chaff Finch, which is immediately followed up by two or three shorter and more *original* notes. I say "more *original*," because, if one did not suppose the *twink* to come from the throat of the Chaff Finch, one might at least reasonably imagine the bird to have obtained it second-hand, and, like a certain Professor, of Alphabet celebrity, to have presented us with property not its own! An ordinary observer might think that the note proceeded from two throats, and that the instant the blithe Chaff Finch had sounded his bell, the Garden Tit furnished a chiming interlude, as much inferior (to compare small things with great) to the *text*, as are the "pig's tail ornaments" of the organist to the solemn grandeur of the psalm-tune.

But the Ornithologist soon discovers that there must be something at the bottom of this seeming mystery, and, repairing to the well-known haunts of the Garden Tit, is not long before he finds out that the aforesaid note, so far from belonging to *two birds*, may in fact be considered *one note*, as the two seldom or never part company. For the rest, the subject of our present memoir has little to boast of on the score of musical capability.

The nest is usually deposited in the hole of an old wall or castle, and frequently under the eaves of houses and in the holes of trees. When it breeds in the last-mentioned locality, SELBY is of opinion that the hole is fitted for the reception of the nest solely by the labours of the parent bird. I am, however, inclined to favour a somewhat different conclusion. From all that I have observed, I think I may say, that it either selects a hole ready made, or else fits up one only partially adapted to its purposes. That it possesses considerable powers of excavation, with its short and strong beak, I am well aware, but am of opinion that it could scarcely achieve so great a labour as the digging a hole of the ordinary depth and breadth at which the nest is found. This is not, however, a reflection hatched

and prepared for the press, in the closet; for after witnessing (as I have done) the wonderful excavating powers of the Bank Swallow (*Hirundo riparia*, ALDROV.) scarcely anything would appear marvellous, but, though I have paid considerable attention to everything concerning the nidification of the Garden Tit, I have never been able to discover that it engages in so hopeless and thankless a task as scooping itself a hole in a sound tree. In this neighbourhood, where—thanks to the wood-cutters!—timber of any kind is so scarce, it is little likely that, were SELBY'S opinion right, the fact would have escaped my observation, and in places where large trees, both sound and rotten, abound, one can hardly imagine that the former would be selected. Thus, though I have frequently witnessed the first attacks of the Garden Tit on the spot chosen for incubation, I never saw, and never expect to see, a sound tree (*i. e.* an unexcavated one) singled out for the purpose.

The organ of Secretiveness is probably amply developed in this species, as it commonly conceals its nest with great circumspection, often beyond the reach of the schoolboy, and is very jealous of being observed near the nest, or carrying materials for the structure, or food for the callow young. On one occasion a pair of these birds built their nest so far up in the eaves of a house, between the rafters, that, though I removed a considerable portion of the wooden barrier, the nest could not be obtained, the female continuing on her nest, during these uncourteous proceedings, with exemplary perseverance, and hissing all the time like a snake, whilst her mate, hovering about the roof, above my head, signified his displeasure by unceasingly uttering his jarring note—grinding his teeth at me, as it were, in the manner of the Monkey family (*Simiadae*). And this nook has been found so convenient a site for the rearing of their offspring, that the same pair have now built in it for three successive seasons, and will probably continue to do so for many more.

The materials of the nest are moss, feathers, and horsehair, the two former in great profusion, and the whole mass put

together loosely, and apparently carelessly, but not without an eye to comfort. All nests built in holes of walls or trees, or in thatch, are constructed with little art, as the situation makes up for the deficiencies in the architecture itself. Look, for instance, at two nests of the House Sparrow, the one situate in a hole, and the other at the top of a bush or low tree; the first is a mere loose mass of feathers and hay, carelessly thrown together, while the other plainly proves that the organ of Constructiveness is by no means deficient in this “radically plebeian” bird.

The eggs, from six to ten in number, are of a beautifully clear white, speckled all over with small reddish brown dots. My esteemed friend, Mr. HEWITSON, of oological celebrity, says that the eggs are sometimes laid on the fine particles of rotten wood, in the holes of trees, and, though the fact has not hitherto fallen under my notice, yet I have of course no reason to doubt the accuracy of the statement. With regard to the number of eggs, the accounts of authors vary considerably; SELBY says from six to eight, HEWITSON from seven to eleven, and, if we are to believe TEMMINCK, it lays “de huit jusqu’à quatorze et même vingt œufs.” But, to say the truth, I feel little inclination to trust to the authority of TEMMINCK in matters appertaining to field researches, and therefore reject his score of eggs without further comment. I have found eight to be the usual number, but have known some nests to contain so few as six, and others as many as ten—exactly half the worthy Dutchman’s basket full! Had M. TEMMINCK assured us that he had himself seen twenty eggs in the nest with his own eyes, one might have supposed that the Professor’s imagination had doubled each egg!—If we take the smallest number mentioned by SELBY (six), and the largest recorded by HEWITSON (eleven), we shall be much nearer the *maximum* and *minimum*, than if we set the hapless bird to stock a market with its ovarian delicacies!

It subsists chiefly on small insects and their larvæ, which it is almost incessantly seeking amongst the foliage and branches



of trees, in woods and gardens. Whilst engaged in exploring the branches for their hidden treasures, it is much less quick and active in its movements than the smaller Tits, but, in these and many other habits, it closely resembles its congeners. During the chilly months it adds various kinds of grain, and, according to SELBY, nuts, to its daily fare. It evinces the same partiality as the Blue Tit, though in an inferior degree, to suet and bone-pickings of any kind, and, for these and similar dainties, it frequents the scullery, dog-kennel, and pig-sty, indiscriminately, though I have known more than one instance of its paying the forfeit of its life, for its impertinence, by a sudden spring and *gentle* gripe from the soft paws of the ever-watchful Grimalkin. It would, however, be well for the reputation of the Garden Tit if its thievings ended here. But, like an honest and impartial biographer, I must report its evil as well as its good deeds. And what can we say to the well-known fact (well-known to gardeners, if not to Naturalists), that peas are one of the best baits for ensnaring the bird? What can we plead in extenuation of its apivorous propensities? And, lastly, what shall we say to the murders of smaller and weaker birds, with which the "prisoner at the bar" has occasionally been charged?

Why, we will do our best—and "man can but do his best!"—to make a thorough and impartial investigation of this apparently desperate case. In the first place, then, with regard to its pea-swallowing capabilities, I am compelled to own that it occasionally joins the posse of the feathered race amongst the pea borders, but its depredations in that line are, I am confident, comparatively small and unimportant, nor will it ever make a meal there, if choicer viands be *come-at-able*. This, if true, is good hearing for the market gardener; but now let us repair to the bee-hives, and, hiding ourselves behind a tree or other shelter, observe the Garden Tit's proceedings, for a few minutes, in another point of view. Scarcely are you fairly concealed, than the bird, darting down with inconceivable rapidity, from the branch of a neighbouring tree, makes off

with a fat bee, from the hive-stand, almost unnoticed by the other bees ; and this is repeated so many times, that you begin to think that the whole hive must be shortly depopulated. But here again I have an excuse for my feathered client. For I have long been of opinion that those birds which eat bees select only the drones, and leave the working portion of the population. And my supposition is supported by the comparative laziness of the drones, which of course renders them more obnoxious to their enemies, than their provident and industrious brethren. This, however, is only hypothesis, and *may* not be true. But, even supposing the insects to be destroyed indiscriminately, I do not think the hive will ever suffer any serious diminution from this cause—not to be compared to the effects produced by the battles which not unfrequently take place between two hives.

Thus we find that the Garden Tit occasionally pilfers a few peas and bees, but scarcely enough of either to render it a marked bird to the gardener. The third accusation, that it has been detected in the act of killing small and weak birds, next claims attention. Now this, though actually the weightiest charge of the three, is considered of little consequence by the ignorant gardener, or probably escapes his notice entirely. But perhaps *this* is no proof of his non-observance of Nature ; for the instances of the Garden Tit's *killing* other birds, are "few and far between." I have never "caught it in the fact," but have frequently observed the smallest birds, as the Warblers and the Goldcrested Kinglet, sporting amongst the branches, without the slightest demonstrations of alarm, whilst the Garden Tit has been in the immediate neighbourhood. With *dead* birds it soon begins to make free. For the sake of experiment, I have frequently placed young House Sparrows and Robin Redbreasts (dead of course) on the top of a wall, or in some such conspicuous station, and, in the course of a few hours, have found the poor creatures *brained*, and often sadly mangled. Sometimes the cat has made off with my "experiment," but I have many times witnessed the clever manipula-

tions of the Garden Tit in this line. In some instances the operator softens its victim by a fall from the top of a wall, but more commonly the business is effected so adroitly, that the operated scarce moves a pace from its original locality.

On one occasion I tied a young Robin Redbreast\* by a thread to the bare branch of a tree. The first day it remained unmolested; but on repairing to the spot the following morning, I found two or three Garden Tits darting at the young bird by turns, from an adjacent branch, and sometimes, as if astonished at the little progress made (about as little as schoolboys usually make in "*the classics*," under the tuition of the narrow-minded pedagogue †), all three directed a simultaneous dart at the luckless wight, but with equally little effect. After many fruitless efforts, the disappointed trio departed one after the other, leaving their victim in much the same plight as they had found it. I left the Robin Redbreast to swing at his leisure on the branch, but no more attacks were commenced on it, though I observed various species of Tit viewing it from time to time with a wistful eye. On another occasion, I repeated the same experiment, with this difference, that the dead bird was hung from the eaves of an out-building, instead of from the branch of a tree. This time I could not find that the bait attracted any of the feathered race, but I afterwards learnt that the cat (cunning rogue!) had been seen to make repeated springs at the bird from the ground, and finding this mode to be ineffectual, that she had mounted on the roof of the building, and having drawn up my "experiment" by the string, had devoured it in her usual leisurely manner.

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\* I beg to inform the reader (though I sincerely hope my pages may escape the scrutiny of those worthless gentry, the "*Publisher's Readers*") that these young birds, which formed the basis of my experiments, died a natural death, and were not *slain*, as is but too frequently the case, to establish the truth of some useless theory.

† For an exposition of the incompetency of Greek and Latin to form a principal—I might almost say *any*—part of a really liberal education, I refer my readers to SIMPSON'S *Popular Education*, *Bubbles from the Brunnens of Nassau*, BULWER'S *England and the English*, the *Phrenological Journal*, *Educational Magazine*, and *Analyst*.

Thus it would appear that the Garden Tit is at all times a willing feeder on carrion or dead meat of any kind, but I should imagine the instances of its destroying living creatures to be extremely rare—much more so than amongst our own species! Perhaps the cases alluded to by SELBY, were observed in caged individuals, and, if so, it is scarcely fair to brand the species with a general charge of this nature, as the habits of domesticated animals are wholly different from those observed in their natural state, and cannot, therefore, properly be said to belong to the species. On the whole, this well-formed and beautiful bird commits very few depredations on our property, and these few are infinitely recompensed by its insectivorous services, various kinds of insects and their larvæ forming by far the greater proportion of its subsistence, throughout the year. In confinement, it may be fed with hemp, the seeds of the sunflower, and corn, with insects, chopped meat, and suet, as a variety. The shells of seeds it breaks by hammering on the outside with its short and powerful beak, instead of the crushing mode employed by the Finch family (*Fringillidæ*); the food is also commonly held in the claw, whilst the beak reduces it to a state proper for swallowing. It is probable that nuts undergo the same kind of manipulation, though, from the size, and general appearance of the bird, one would scarcely conceive it capable of so arduous a task.—I cannot do better than conclude this article with the following particulars, kindly supplied me by a friend and correspondent:—

MY DEAR SIR,—As I am vain enough to fancy that you will always be glad to receive any ornithological gleanings from me, for your *British Songsters*, I am induced to *trouble\** you (as is the cant expression) with a few recent observations on our feathered friends. To commence then with the “Garden Tit,” as you are pleased to designate it. This “species” has

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\* A Naturalist is always glad to hear from a Brother Naturalist—at least from a true Naturalist, whether of the field or closet class, provided he be not a mere bookworm and compiler. Such communications as those of Dr. LIVERPOOL are anything but *troublesome*.—N. W.

always been a distinguished favourite with me [KNAPP informs us that the Hedge Dunnock is *his* "prime favourite,"] on account of the beauty of its plumage, the elegance of its shape, and the variety and sprightliness of its habits. For several years past I have kept a tolerably large posse of these birds, and have often been much amused by the singular and apparently strained attitudes into which they frequently throw themselves.—You doubtless remember Mr. BLYTH'S interesting paper on the British Tits.\* My observations accord, in most particulars, with those of that talented Naturalist. In one point, however, I differ from him, namely, as regards the shyness of the Garden Tit in confinement. My birds, now seven in number, are at present the sole occupants of rather a small room. Four of them are perfectly habituated to their condition, but the rest are as yet novices. Now, the preponderance being on the right side, I can easily sit in a corner of the room (provided I remain perfectly still), without causing any serious alarm to my prisoners. The instant I move an arm or a foot, the triple novice dart off to their perches or to the window, and the more sedate quartett follow, though not without evident manifestations of astonishment at the precipitate retreat of their companions. A few months ago I had six Garden Tits, all perfectly tame, and these would take their food whilst I was walking about the room. But though I have, without much difficulty, brought the Garden Tit to this stage of familiarity, I have never been able to induce it to feed from the hand, notwithstanding that I have frequently reared it from the nest, in order to gain this point. The favourite food of this bird appears to be—anything that falls in its way, and it is a plentiful but not an expensive feeder.

“ With regard to nuts,† I have found them to be as partial to the chopped kernel of the common nut, walnut (entirely

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\* I feel great pleasure in referring my readers to the excellent article alluded to by Dr. L., in the *Field Naturalist's Magazine*, vol. i. p. 262—9.—N. W.

† I requested Dr. LIVERPOOL to inform me, whether he had ever observed the Garden Tits in his possession to eat nuts; and, if so, how the cracking of the shell was effected.—N. W.

divested of the skin), and chesnut, as to anything else I have hitherto laid before them, but if the nuts are offered to them whole, they never take the trouble of cracking them, and indeed I should consider the attempt rather a ruinous speculation for their beaks. They seem generally to prefer animal to vegetable food in confinement, though perhaps not in their natural state. \* \* \* \* \* I remain, my dear sir, yours, &c.,  
CHARLES LIVERPOOL, M. D.”

LEWIN has figured a remarkable variety of this bird, with a crossed bill.

Since penning the above article, I have received the following remarks, from that acute and accurate observer, J. D. SALMON, Esq., relative to this species:—

“Your arguments (p. 161) in favour of the Garden Tit's only destroying the drones, are not very tenable. I profess to be an apiarian, and I can assure you I have looked with a very evil eye on his paying my hives a visit. If he only took the drones, the injury would not be great, but unfortunately his greatest depredations are committed when the drones are not in existence, these not making their appearance till the end of May, and are all extirpated before the close of July. It is during the winter and early spring months, when the warmth of the sun is sufficient to arouse the inhabitants to a state of activity, that he commits the greatest depredations, and at a time when the commonwealth is least able to spare any of its numbers. It is, therefore, only my being an ardent admirer of the feathered race that prevents me from inflicting summary justice on his head, when I have detected him feasting upon my favourites. With regard to peas, may not his object be to extract the lurking maggot (larva) that is within the pod?—  
J. D. S.”

The above proves incontestibly that the Garden Tit does not feed *entirely* on the drones, though it is probable that it does so in every possible case. At all events, from what I have observed, I must still consider the damage it commits amongst the hives to be inconsiderable.—There can be little

doubt but it would greedily devour any unhappy maggot that might come in its way, whether in a pea-pod or elsewhere, but peas at no period form a staple article of its food, though it has no kind of objection to them occasionally.

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BLUE TIT, *Parus cœruleus*, WILL.

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Ye swains now hasten to the hazel bank ;  
 Where, down yon dale, the wildly-winding brook  
 Falls hoarse from steep to steep. In close array,  
 Fit for the thickets and the tangling shrub,  
 Ye virgins come. For you their latest song  
 The woodlands raise; the clustering nuts for you  
 The lover finds amid the secret shade.

THOMSON'S *Seasons*.—Autumn.

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SYNONYMS.—*Parus cœruleus*, WILL. *Orn.*—LINN. *Syst.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Blue Tit, MUDIE'S *Feath. Tribes.*—*Analyst*, No. 13.

LIKE the species with which we have just parted company, this beautiful little Tit is plentifully and equally distributed over his Britannic Majesty's dominions, and, though surpassed by none of his Majesty's other feathered subjects in loveliness of form and plumage, is but little admired by his said Majesty's most loving subjects of the human race, save perhaps by a small circle of field Naturalists. On the contrary, it is branded, by the ignorant and presumptuous, as one of our greatest pests; whereas, were our sagacious gardeners, and their yet more sagacious employers, to take the trouble of investigating the truth of the complaints preferred against it, they would, if not wholly destitute of the organ of Benevolence, feel no small remorse at the merciless persecution with which they have been pleased to visit this innocent and lovely little creature. We shall presently proceed to investigate its claims to our protection, and will now follow it into its native haunts.

It resembles its congeners in being, throughout the year, more or less a bird of the grove; but, with the exception of

the Garden Tit, the vicinity of houses, stable-yards, farms, gardens, &c., are more congenial to it than to its other brethren. Its food, consequently, exhibits a corresponding deviation, though insects form the principal means of subsistence with the whole genus. In winter, and especially in severe and long-protracted winters, it frequently joins the flocks of Coal and Marsh Tits; but, during the greater part of the season, the species remains distinct, assembling in small *packs* in autumn, and breaking up their flocks on the approach of spring, each individual selecting a mate, and the happy pair repairing to some snug spot, convenient for the rearing of their *encumbrance*, and there sojourning till the falling of the leaves again reminds them that "Christmas is coming."

With regard to song, the Blue Tit, like the rest of its unmusical relatives, enjoys a perfect sinecure,\* though it possesses an almost inexhaustible variety of single notes or chirps. These I make no attempt to record, for reasons given in the articles "Robin Redbreast," "Brake Nightingale," and other places. My friend Mr. BLYTH, in a paper already alluded to, "On the British Tits," in the first volume of the *Field Naturalist's Magazine*,† has endeavoured to convey some idea of a few of the principal notes of these amusing birds, but it is my candid opinion (and I trust my intelligent friend will excuse my saying so) that he has failed. I challenge any one, be his organ of Tune large or small, to identify the notes on hearing them, from any written description, not excepting even the "*pink*" or "*fink*" of the Chaff Finch; a word which (with all due deference to our Ornithologists, who one and all maintain that its note resembles the word *pink*) I can confidently assert that the Chaff Finch, in its natural state, neither does nor can pronounce. But to return to the subject of our present memoir.

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\* This again is a mistake; I have since heard its song, which is harsh and little varied, but by no means so monotonous as that of the Garden Tit.

† This magazine, which was edited by Professor RENNIE, is now defunct, having perished with its sixteenth Number. It had much better have been termed the *Book Naturalist's Magazine*, the papers of Mr. BLYTH being the only communications of any value or originality, in the whole series.



Its common note is a short single chirp, but in the breeding season, and occasionally at other times, it utters a very peculiar, though not unpleasant, chatter, greatly resembling the chatter (but not the song) of the Sedge Reedling, for which it may easily be mistaken by an inattentive observer.\* When a Hawk (*Accipiter*), or Falcon (*Falco*) appear overhead, the whole flock—if in winter—suddenly disperse, sweeping along the ground, and emitting a shrill kind of scream, which appears to be their alarm note. In summer, however, it has less to fear from the Falcon family (*Falconidæ*) than most small birds, the dense shades which it frequents, and seldom quits for any considerable length of time, being in general a sufficient defence from those reckless tyrants of the air. But in winter, when the trees are bare, and covert is scarce, I have frequently witnessed, with regret, the successful pounces of these Falconine murderers, amongst a troop of Blue Tits, and that too in the near neighbourhood of houses, where, had a gun been at hand, nothing would have been easier, and I may here add *pleasanter*, than to have brained the too successful foe of all small birds. But the little Blue Tit will not always thus tamely submit to be butchered, and I remember on more occasions than one, to have observed it soaring above its enemy, and darting down on its now confused persecutor in perfect security, until poor *Falco*, unable to resist or prevent the attacks of its puny assailant, thinks itself well off if it can escape from so unwearied a pursuer. This mode of attack is very commonly resorted to by the Swallows (*Hirundo*), and by some other high-spirited birds.

The Blue Tit does not affect extensive forests and lonely isolated spots, but appears particularly partial to the immediate neighbourhood and dwellings of man, inhabiting the borders of groves and cultivated localities. In Britain, wherever there are houses or farms, there our lively and elegant little companion, the Blue Tit, is sure to be also, and that, too,

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\* In spring it has also a musical ringing cry, very similar to that of the Long-tailed Tit.—E. BLYTH.

in great abundance, notwithstanding the strenuous efforts of ignorance, seconded by cruelty, which have for centuries been directed, without the slightest cause, to the destruction of one of the loveliest of the feathered race, and one of the most useful. Its movements are inconceivably rapid and elegant, and, except when nipt by a severe frost, it is in constant motion, continually seeking its minute insect prey on the bark and branches of trees, in the manner of the Warblers and the Gold-crested Kinglet, often clinging to the sprays with the head downwards. It holds with the greatest ease on the smooth trunks of trees, and also on walls and window-frames, where it frequently seeks its insect food.

The nest is composed of moss exteriorly, sometimes intermixed with wool and similar substances, lined with a warm coating of feathers and horsehair. It is usually built in the holes of old trees and walls, or in the hinge of crazy or unused doors; and, not uncommonly, under the eaves of houses, and cow-sheds. As is the case with the Garden Tit, authors differ considerably with regard to the number of eggs laid by the Blue Tit; some mentioning eighteen or twenty, and others (as SELBY) from six to eight. Now I never remember to have found so many as eighteen eggs in a single nest, nor so few as six, when the number was completed, though I have seen *deserted* nests containing three, four, or five eggs. The usual number appears to be from eight to twelve, and, I believe, never more. During the last season (1835) I have met with three nests containing eleven eggs, one with ten fully fledged young (all of which were caged), and an addled egg; and another with as many as twelve eggs. Dozens of others that fell under my inspection at various times, had respectively from eight to eleven eggs, and hence I conclude this to be the average number. That there may often be fewer than eight, I do not dispute, but I am certain that twelve is the maximum limit—or, at all events, that if instances are known of more having been found, these must be considered rather as exceptions than the rule.

On referring to HEWITSON'S beautiful and accurate *British Oology*, I find that one of that author's correspondents (T. C. HEYSHAM, Esq., of Carlisle) mentions the number of eggs laid by the Blue Tit as being from seven to eighteen. Mr. HEWITSON observes:—"I have always been accustomed to receive with jealousy and caution any of those reports in which most bird-nesters seem so much to delight, regarding the great number of eggs laid by some of our smaller birds, never having myself met with a nest containing more than eight or nine eggs: it is, however, a curious fact, that the Blue Tit will lay twice that number, as in the instance given by Mr. HEYSHAM. I have one, from authority upon which I can place dependence, in which the nest contained eighteen eggs." Here we have indubitable authority for its occasionally laying considerably more than twelve eggs, but, from the extreme rarity of such an occurrence, we must, as before, consider them in the light of extraordinary exceptions. And I may here remark, that we cannot be too careful in condemning, as improbable or absurd, any facts related by modern authors of repute, or even by the older writers; for those circumstances, though they may be of rare occurrence, and though they may not have been proved to us by "ocular demonstration," may yet happen once in a way, as in the above instance of the Blue Tit's eggs.

Besides the localities already mentioned, the nest may be met with in old stables and cow-houses, in the mangers, inside decaying out-buildings, under the tiles and slates of roofs, and also, but rarely, in the moss-grown walls of old castles. In a snug corner of Tutbury Castle, covered thickly over with moss, ivy, and other luxuriant herbage, a pair of these birds build every year, exactly in the same spot; and I have twice found the nest in the deer-house in Sudbury Park, a locality well suited to these birds, and much frequented by them. In districts where old trees, orchards, and walled gardens abound, they occur much more plentifully elsewhere, and consequently, though everywhere of common occurrence, the neighbourhoods of Boilston, Foston, and Scropton are more congenial to it than

Sapperton and Broughton, where, however, it is far from being rare.

During the spring and summer months, groves and copses are its favourite haunts, and there, indeed, it may be met with throughout the year. But the rigours of a severe winter usually drive the main mass of them to the more immediate neighbourhood of houses and farms, in order to obtain, with greater facility, the necessaries and comforts of life. And hence the popular notion that they are commoner in winter than in summer. The field Ornithologist is never at a loss where to find them, and he well knows that they only approach our dwellings, during the inclement seasons, with the view of subsisting on the refuse of our plenty. And a very little suffices for it,—a few crumbs of bread (which it shares along with numerous other small birds), a bone, hemp or sun-flower seed, corn, bits of suet, and many other things, which it is unnecessary to mention. If it fail in its endeavours to attract the attention of the inmates of the parlour, it frequently taps at the window, in the manner of the Robin Redbreast, though it has not, like that bird, any desire to approach the household gods, or even to pass the threshold, food being evidently its chief desideratum. Of cold it is little susceptible, except in extraordinarily severe seasons, and, whilst the Robin Redbreast and Goldcrested Kinglet are starving in the immediate neighbourhood of our dwellings, the blithe little Blue Tit is frisking about, in high glee and spirits, in the wood, the garden, or the stable-yard, just as it may happen to suit its inclination. When it approaches the house in quest of food, you cannot perceive in it that appearance of misery and chilliness so common in the Robin Redbreast, and also, though in a less degree, in the Hedge Dunnock, and other thin-billed birds. In hardiness it far exceeds even the Ivy Wren, and I never remember, in a single instance, to have found it dead, even during the most intense cold; whilst even ordinary winters usually destroy considerable numbers of the few members of the Warbler family that brave the rigours of our northern winters.

During the greater part of the year, it subsists almost entirely on insect food, which it seeks, with unwearied assiduity, on the branches and sprays, or amongst the foliage of trees and shrubs. Fruit, peas, bees, &c., remain untouched by the Blue Tit, though it has been accused of destroying the buds of various trees when they first make their appearance in spring. But, though I have repeatedly "caught it in the act" of demolishing the buds of trees, and have likewise seen these lying about under the trees, yet I have never found that the circumstance was productive of the slightest injury, either to the fruit or foliage. On the contrary, I am of opinion, that we have every reason to be grateful to our diligent and indefatigable labourer, for its invaluable services; as I have little doubt but that the buds selected invariably contain some minute insect pest, which, if allowed to remain, would undoubtedly work the complete destruction of the crop. And this is no opinion echoed and re-echoed from author to author, but minute and patient observation in the field of Nature, tend greatly to corroborate my supposition. For I have invariably remarked that no part of the bud is devoured by the bird, but that these, being allowed to drop through, on each side of the mandible, may be seen scattered on the ground, underneath the bush or tree on which the calumniated birds have been operating. If you watch it whilst in the act of cracking its buds, you will find that the *whole* of the vegetable part is rejected, and we have thus more than *presumptive* evidence of the truth of my supposition. And, moreover, if it be for the sake of feeding on the buds themselves, why are not all the buds destroyed indiscriminately. This would undoubtedly be the case, were the vegetable portion of the bud the desired object, but I have observed—and that too frequently to admit of a doubt of its accuracy—that some trees are passed over without being deprived of any of its produce, while others are destined to lose only a few buds, and others again are not quitted until the whole crop be demolished. Surely there must be some cause for such a selection! and may we not presume

that the insects or larvæ, lurking within, are the probable guides in this selection? We have every reason to believe that it is, and I have as yet heard no successful, or even plausible, arguments on the opposite side of the question.

It is difficult to imagine, with MUDIE, that this destruction of buds may be useful as serving to prune the trees, as it were. For the trees, singled out as the scene of the Blue Tit's operations, are not always the most profusely covered with buds. I have known it attack trees which possessed but a very scanty crop of buds, and these are often wholly denuded, *all* the buds being doubtless infested with insects.

But I think enough has been said, to give all but proof positive that its bud-eating, or rather bud-*cleansing*, labours, are wholly beneficial to us. And, if the facts and arguments above adduced be correct—which it is possible they are not—what then can we say of the merciless and shameless persecution of these lovely, interesting, and, at the least, *harmless*, little creatures? In many parishes ignorance still so far prevails over Causality and Benevolence, as to allow a price to be fixed on the head of the Blue Tit; and accordingly, dozens fall every day, an equal prey to cruelty and avarice. When will man open his eyes to his own interests? If our country Squires would pay half as much attention to the operations of Nature, as they do to their often futile (because blinded by ignorance and prejudice) attempts to acquire riches, these latter would come of themselves. At present, almost the only wild animal with which our country gentlemen are acquainted, is the *fox*, and that only with the view of hunting and persecuting it! I am not, however, one of those who consider hunting a “barbarous sport,”—at least with regard to cruelty, in which sense the word “barbarous” is usually employed when applied to hunting; though it is undoubtedly a vestige of barbarity, and a sign of the low state of the mental culture of our nobility and gentry at the present day.

According to SELBY, the Blue Tit attacks and destroys other small birds, but I should be inclined to consider this of rare

occurrence, though it may doubtless happen occasionally. In confinement, I believe it often treats its companions somewhat harshly, but, in their natural state, they live at perfect peace amongst themselves. The only means of observing the habits of this species successfully in summer, is by patient watching in the woods, where they mostly seek their food at the tops of thick trees, and are, accordingly, seen with difficulty. In winter, however, they are easily observed; for not only are the trees denuded of foliage at that period, but the birds constantly court our notice, hopping about before the house, and close to the windows. Their mode of feeding, as well as various other amusing habits, are best observed by fastening a piece of suet or a bone, or a dish of almost any kind of seed, close to the window, in a conspicuous spot. It commonly holds its food with its claws, and seeds it breaks in the same manner as the Garden Tit.

I had previously omitted to remark, that when any one approaches the nest of this bird, it ruffles up its feathers, emits a snake-like hissing, and even bites the hand that offers to lay hold of it, and that with such severity as to cause the intruder to withdraw his hand hastily. The same circumstance is observable in the Garden Tit, but neither of these birds venture to remain on their nest, if approached, when the nest is in an open, ill-concealed locality, as the hinge of a door, &c.; and I have not observed the hissing noise to be uttered at all until incubation has commenced. After the young are hatched, the parents become extremely clamorous, constantly making a chattering note, and, though the situation of the nest is frequently discovered by this circumstance, yet, in other instances, I have in vain searched for the spot where I was certain there must be a nest. A large progeny, of from eight to twelve individuals, keeps the parents in constant employ during the breeding season. The Garden and Blue Tits roost in holes of walls or trees, or often in an ivy-clad wall, where they are easily caught at night.

MARSH TIT, *Parus palustris*, GESN.

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It is the season when the green delight  
 Of leafy luxury begins to fade ;  
 When leaves are changing daily to the sight,  
 Yet seem lovelier from each deepening shade,  
 Or tint, by autumn's touch upon them laid ;  
 It is the season when each streamlet's sound,  
 Flowing through lonely vale, or woody glade,  
 Assumes a tone more pensive, more profound ;  
 And yet that hoarser voice spreads melody around.

BERNARD BARTON.

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SYNONYMS.—*Parus palustris*, WILL. *Orn.*—LINN. *Syst.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*  
 —SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Marsh Tit, MUDIE'S *Feath. Tribes.*—*Analyst*, Nos. 13,  
 14.

THE Marsh Tit, according to SELBY, "is not so abundant as the preceeding one," but "is very generally dispersed throughout the kingdom." Now, the remarks of my ornithological correspondents, in various parts of the country, and my own observation, induce me exactly to reverse this statement. I should say, then, that the Marsh Tit is not so equally, and perhaps not so widely, distributed over the British islands as the Blue species ; but that in those places where it does occur, it is at least as plentiful as the other, and in many districts even more so. It is, however, so exclusively a bird of the grove, that it passes for being a much rarer species than it really is, and is probably wholly unnoticed and unknown by the majority of persons residing in the country, or, if seen, doubtless passes for a House Sparrow ! The latter bird is in fact, a most convenient cloak for ignorance, and, accordingly, all birds of a certain size and colour, are resolvable into the House Sparrow. But the Marsh Tit is nowhere rare, in Britain, and is, in most places, as commonly met with as any others of the genus, by the Ornithologist. In Derbyshire it is particularly abundant, though there can be little doubt but that



it is more so in some of the wooded districts of the south. Dr. LIVERPOOL informs me that in the northern counties, and especially in Durham, he has met with it in great abundance, though SELBY mentions it as somewhat rare, judging probably from his own immediate neighbourhood. Like the rest of the genus, it resides with us throughout the year, and appears to vary its abode but little with the changes of season and climate. Its note is the usual short chirp of the Tits, and it has no song, or at least nothing worthy of the name, though it occasionally attempts a *chiffy-chaffy* sort of ditty: and this is sometimes heard in winter—especially if the weather be mild—as well as in the breeding season. The Marsh Tit frequents woods and thickets along with its congeners, with which it frequently congregates, during the winter months. But, similar as are the general haunts and habits of all the British Tits, yet much diversity is observed, by the acute Ornithologist, in the minutiae of their manners; and this is the case with regard to the Marsh and Coal Tits, which resemble each other so closely, in outward appearance, as to be commonly confounded, by the vulgar, as one and the same bird—if indeed they are noticed at all. The Marsh Tit usually occurs in woods and thickets, but its favourite haunts are swampy grounds, abounding with osier beds and aquatic herbage: though it is not so thoroughly a bird of the marsh as the Reedlings, and may often be met with in the higher grounds, near houses, farms, &c., along with the Blue, Coal, and Longtailed Tits. In company with these, in fact, a great part of the winter is passed, though, in mild and open weather, the species separate, and the Marsh Tit betakes itself to the margins of streams, swampy woods, rushy marshes, and osier beds. As long as the running streams are frozen, it uniformly forsakes these, and repairs to the high grounds, but no sooner does the frost begin to relent, than it immediately returns to its pre-eminently favourite haunts.

The nest is built, like that of the Blue Tit, in holes of old trees, in marshy situations, and very frequently in ancient

willow trees, quite close to the edge of a running stream or river. SELBY mentions that it *excavates* a hole for the reception of its nest, but I have never found this to be the case with any of the genus. It almost invariably cuts away portions of the rotten wood inside the hole, in order to suit it to its taste, but I have not met with a single instance of its *making* the hole itself. In fact, these have always the appearance of having been scooped out by time, and I can scarcely imagine that the little Marsh Tit could effect so great a labour with its own bill; nor do I conceive that any of the genus have strength sufficient for the task. It is more than possible, however, that I may be mistaken. Though by far the most usual site of the nest is in an old tree, that is not its invariable locality. Twice have I found it near the ground, on a willow stump, and two or three instances of its building on the stump of an oak or elm tree, have come to my notice. The spot was well concealed by moss and various luxuriant aquatic herbage and brushwood. But I should be inclined to consider these in the light of rare occurrences, *eccentricities* as it were, and scarcely as forming an essential part of its biography, though it is both useful and interesting to be acquainted with every fact relating to its economy. Indeed the description of such facts as may be deemed extraordinary, form the chief interest and utility of such works as the *Magazine of Natural History*. And I may here be allowed to observe, that every field Naturalist must witness with unfeigned regret the lamentable decrease, both in quantity and quality, of the "Short Communications" in that magazine. The work, I believe, barely pays the expenses of paper, print, &c., and no wonder, seeing how grievously Mr. LONDON disappoints his subscribers with regard to the quality of the matter inserted. Many of the most able contributors to the work appear to have withdrawn their services, and, in some numbers, there is not a syllable about birds. The Editor should at least give a fair hearing to every department of Natural History, and surely out of the superabundance of matter he must have collected, excellence in the quality of the

material might easily be ensured. We would recommend Mr. LOUDON, for his own sake, to attend to these circumstances, especially as it is in contemplation, in various parts of the kingdom, to start other periodicals of a similar nature. But to return to the subject of the present memoir.

The nest of the Marsh Tit generally consists of moss and the soft seed-down of the willow intermixed, and lined with the latter material, and occasionally a few horsehairs. I believe SELBY is right in stating that the nest is mostly lined with the down of the willow, or at least my observations tend to confirm his remark; but I have seen two nests in which the lining consisted of willow down. Both of the latter were late nests. The eggs, from six to nine in number, are white, with reddish brown spots, most thickly set at the larger end; the small end is entirely destitute of them. They are little subject to variety, and, though extremely similar to those of the Coal Tit, the practised eye can at once distinguish them.

The usual food of the Marsh Tit is insects of various kinds, and larvæ, which it mostly seeks in low marshy grounds, amongst willows, and on the borders of sedgy streams, where it frequently meets—but never associates with—the Sedge Reedling. When the ponds and running streams in the neighbourhood are frozen, it often finds a difficulty in obtaining water, and may be seen hovering about the edges of the lake, along with the Blue Tit, Coal Tit, Robin Redbreast, Ivy Wren, and others.\* It is, indeed, difficult to imagine where they can obtain a supply of water, during a long continuance of frost. Snow would probably be as prejudicial to them as it is to ourselves in a similar predicament, and this scarcity of water, in long and severe winters, is doubtless one of the many causes of the mortality amongst the feathered race, in such seasons. I have more than once found the Marsh Tit dead in the hollows of trees. These were not discovered till the commencement of

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\* I have seen the large species hammering away at the ice, in the endeavour, I suppose, of quenching its thirst with it.—E. BLYTH.

spring, but I have no doubt but they had been killed by a severe frost in winter. And this supposition is strengthened by the fact that these individuals were hard, and perfectly free from putrescence—a circumstance which, I believe, always holds good with regard to frost-bitten birds.

In winter, however, and especially in inclement winters, when insect food becomes less abundant, and less easy to procure, the Marsh Tit is content to subsist on bone-pickings, bits of fat, and other refuse, and becomes almost as omnivorous as the Blue Tit. I have also observed it to devour corn, hemp, and sunflower seeds, which had been scattered for other birds. Nearly all the Tits are seed-eaters—as their powerful bills sufficiently indicate—but the present species invariably prefers animal food of any kind, to grain and vegetable substances, when the former is to be had. But the Tits are seldom at a loss for sustenance, on account of their ability to suit themselves to the various kinds of food which are procurable at different times of the year. I believe the Marsh Tit does not stand accused of killing and braining small and weak birds.

By the kindness of my ornithological friends and correspondents, I am enabled to present my readers with the following interesting particulars, relative to the Marsh Tit, which will, I am convinced, be perused with pleasure, by the lovers of Nature. My Chester correspondent, J. D. WESTON, Esq., Surgeon of that town, thus writes to me:—

“ The Marsh Tit is as abundant with us as you say that it is in Derbyshire, although the *immediate* neighbourhood of Chester does not much abound with its well-known favourite haunts. But, within a few miles of the town, the swampy woods, and reed-grown marshes literally swarm with them in winter. In summer also they are tolerably plentiful, but much less so than during the inclement seasons,\* and I have often

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\* I think my intelligent correspondent is mistaken with regard to this fact (and I trust he will excuse my saying so); all the Tits are less easily observed in summer than in winter, and hence the prevailing opinion that they are then less abundant. Their summer haunts are thick woods, copses, and trees, in the neighbourhood of marshy grounds.—N. W.

wondered where they can betake themselves in spring, for the nest is not often met with in these parts, though I have found it, amongst willows and in old trees. You ask if I have ever observed any of the Tits scoop holes for their nests in trees; I cannot say that I have, and doubt not but you are perfectly right in supposing that they merely separate particles of rotten wood from holes already made."

With regard to the latter question, Dr. LIVERPOOL has communicated to me as follows:—

"I think that what authors (and especially SELBY) say, with regard to the excavating powers of the Tits, may be partially and occasionally true, though my experience leads me to believe that it is not commonly so. Old and decayed trees abound in many parts of this county (Gloucester), and there are many trees in which the Garden Tit, or even the Blue, Marsh and Coal Tits, might bore a hole without very great difficulty; but you may easily imagine that holes ready made are preferred, and in such, accordingly, I have usually known them to build. If you refer to MUDIE's *Feathered Tribes* (vol. i. p. 351), you will find that he says:—'if the tree be in a state of decay, so that it can be chiselled by the stroke of their bills, they trim, and probably sometimes wholly excavate, nesting places for themselves.' This quotation relates to the Garden Tit, and might be said of the others also. But entire excavation is not a common occurrence."—Like the other Tits, it generally, but not always, roosts in trees at night; in this neighbourhood, I think it as frequently roosts on the branches of trees, as inside hollow ones.

The following observations on the Marsh Tit have lately been communicated to me, by my Norfolk correspondent, J. D. SALMON, Esq.:—

"I am perfectly satisfied that the Marsh Tit does occasionally excavate a situation for its nest, having in several instances found it in a decayed willow tree, which, from the fresh appearance of the cavity, must have been done by the bird. In all the cases that have come under my observation,

the wood has been in that stage denominated *touchwood*. I have never found the nest of this species on the ground, but always at an elevation of a few feet, and in a decayed tree. I cannot help suspecting that the nest of the Marsh and Coal Tits are often mistaken for each other. The eggs are very distinct, those of the latter being much smaller, and the markings more minute than those of the former.”

That the nests and eggs of these two species are frequently confounded by compilers, I have no doubt; but I should scarcely think that any genuine field Ornithologist could mistake them. Mr. SALMON must, however, bear in mind, that situation alone will not always determine to what species the nest belongs; that of the one being sometimes found in the usual locality of the other, and *vice versú*.

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COAL TIT, *Parus ater*, GESN.

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Hoarser gales are round us blowing,  
 Clouds obscure the sky,  
 Day's brief span is shorter growing,  
 Darker nights draw nigh;  
 Morn and eve are chill and dreary,  
 Songs have lost their mirth,  
 Whisp'ring leaves—of converse weary,  
 Silent sink to earth.

BERNARD BARTON.

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SYNONYMS.—*Parus ater*, WILL. *Orn.*—LINN. *Syst.*—LATH. *Gen. Hist.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Cole Tit, MUDIE'S *Feath. Tribes.*—Coal Tit, *Analyst*, No. 13, 14.

THE Coal\* Tit is said not to be so plentiful in England as the Blue and Marsh Tits; but in Derbyshire I think it is at least as common. The resemblance between this and the preceding species is so close, as to have induced some Ornithologists to suppose them to be synonymous. To those accustomed to observe them in their native haunts, however, the difference, both of general appearance, habits, notes, and

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\* This word is often improperly written *Cole*.

nidification, is sufficiently obvious. While the Marsh Tit is engaged in exploring the low, swampy, reedy grounds, the present species remains in the dry upland districts, exhibiting, at the same time, that partiality to thick woods and copses, which is observable throughout the genus. In these upland districts, almost any thick grove will suit it, but I have ever observed the oak to be its favourite tree. Either in plantations of young oaks, or among isolated trees of a larger growth, it is almost sure to be met with, and also, but not so commonly, in pine and fir woods.

Thus, though an intimate resemblance exists between the *general* haunts of all the Tits, an evident difference may be perceived between them. The Blue Tit commonly frequents woods in the immediate neighbourhood of houses; the Marsh Tit willow beds and trees in marshy localities; the present species thick and little frequented groves and forests; and the Longtailed Tit associates with man less than any of its congeners, occurring chiefly in the midst of large forests, or in places where the holly is abundant, though it sometimes does approach gardens and houses along with its congeners. The Garden Tit appears to partake of the haunts of all the rest, and I cannot say in what kind of locality I have found it most abundant. Mr. BLYTH says, trees rising out of a hedge-row, where certainly they are frequently observed, but perhaps as commonly elsewhere. But to return to the species under consideration.

The Coal Tit is not more musical than the rest of its brethren, though, like the preceding species, it possesses a kind of chatter, sometimes dignified with the name of song.\* All the Tits can get up a few notes by way of song, when they please, but their musical abilities are scarcely worthy of notice, as regards intrinsic melody, however interesting they may be in

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\* This is first heard early in February, and is uttered with little interruption, throughout the day and the season, whilst the bird is engaged in fluttering amongst the sprays, and seeking its minute insect prey. In summer it is far from easy to get a clear view of the bird, except with the assistance of a small pocket telescope.

an ornithological point of view. The Marsh Tit occasionally utters the *pink pink* of the Chaff Finch, but not so frequently as the Garden Tit. It has also the chattering note peculiar to the genus, and likewise the short Tit-like chirp. These and the alarm note, uttered at the appearance of a Hawk (*Accipiter*), Jay (*Garrulus*), Pie (*Pica*), and some other enemies, comprise the whole of the vocal powers of the Marsh Tit.

The nest is situated in the hole of a decayed tree, and sometimes, though not commonly, in an ivy-clad wall. It consists of moss and wool intermixed, and is lined with horsehair, and often with a few feathers. A very deep hole is usually selected, and when the female is near hatching, she will hiss and bite in the same manner as the Blue, Marsh, and Garden Tits; but, on the whole, it is considerably shyer and more wary. Like these, also, it often removes particles of decayed wood inside the cavity in which it purposes to build, but never excavates a hole, as some of the Tits have been said to do. Though, as before stated, it occasionally nidificates in the holes of ivy-clad walls, yet, for the most part, it retires into the deepest recesses of woods and forests, for the purposes of incubation. The eggs, from six so eight in number, are white, spotted at the larger end with reddish brown. They closely resemble those of the Marsh Tit, but are easily distinguished by the practised eye of the Ornithologist.

The Marsh Tit subsists on various kinds of insect food, and may at all times of the year be seen seeking, with indefatigable assiduity, its minute insect prey on the bark and sprays of trees, where nothing living is visible to our coarser vision. It is in constant motion, and though, like all the Tits, it often hangs with the head downwards, yet this position is not so frequently observed as in the Blue Tit. Its monotonous and oft-repeated note, *che-chee, che-chee, che-chee*, may be heard at a considerable distance, and then frequently sounds as if quite close, and the next moment again appears to proceed from a totally different direction, so that it is often difficult to discover their hunting ground. Like the other Tits, they generally



remain a long time in one spot, and then suddenly dart off in a troop by common consent, as if they had exhausted it of their favourite food. In severe weather, likewise, they may be seen to frequent dog kennels and similar places, in quest of bone-pickings, bits of fat, and other carrion. But insect food, when it is to be had, is always preferred, and the above mentioned refuse is only resorted to in times of need. I have never known it kill small and weakly birds, as mentioned by some authors.

My Cambridge correspondent, HENRY BARLOW, Esq., has communicated to me the following particulars, relative to this species :—

“ In Derbyshire, you mention the five British Tits\* as being all equally abundant in their several localities. The case is very different in my neighbourhood. The Blue Tit is here by far the most plentiful species. The Garden Tit is also sufficiently common, but the Marsh and Coal Tits much less so ; the latter, especially, being of comparatively rare occurrence, and even when it is met with, is so shy as to preclude the possibility of observing their habits to advantage. In an excursion that I lately made in several parts of Lincolnshire, I did not find the Coal Tit of more frequent occurrence than near Cambridge ; but the Marsh Tit, † as you probably well know, abounds in the fenny districts of Lincolnshire. I have frequently endeavoured to shoot this species, but never could succeed, though I at present possess two stuffed specimens, which were sent to me in the winter of 1831. These came into my hands alive, having been taken in a trap baited with a bit of suet—a successful mode, I believe, of catching all the Tits. The Garden and Blue Tits may easily be captured by the common slate trap used by gardeners for catching mice.”

I have often employed the latter method, mentioned by Mr. BARLOW, with success ; but the Tits may easily be caught in

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\* The Garden Tit, Blue Tit, Marsh Tit, Coal Tit, and Longtailed Tit. The Crested Tit is rarely observed in the British islands.—N. W.

† The fens of Lincolnshire are well-suited to the Marsh Tit, especially where they are interspersed with woods.—N. W.

almost any kind of trap, baited with various kinds of animal and vegetable matters.

“ I have often,” says another correspondent, “ found the nest of this bird in the holes of water-rats, by the sides of streams and ponds, and also occasionally in the holes of walls covered over with ivy.\* These appear to me such remarkable deviations from the usual locality of the nest of the Coal Tit, that I cannot but think they may be of some value to your forthcoming work. For the rest, I know little that is worthy of your consideration, with regard to this bird, except its partiality to suet and raw meat. After having been fed on hemp and other seeds for a considerable time, in confinement, it greedily devours almost any kind of animal food that may be offered to it, though, in its natural state, carrion appears to be much less eagerly sought after, by this species, than by the Blue Tit.—N. D.”

The female resembles the male, and the young of the year do not differ materially from the adults.

The following passage occurs in a letter from J. D. SALMON, Esq., of Thetford, Norfolk, dated Feb. 6, 1836 :—

“ My experience does not exactly correspond with your remarks (p. 184) regarding the nidification of the Coal Tit. Although the bird is not very plentiful in this district, I last year had the pleasure of inspecting three nests belonging to this species, one of which was placed in a hole in a sloping bank, in a plantation, apparently occasioned by a mole (*Talpa Europæa*) leaving its subterranean retreat. It was situated about two feet from the entrance, the exterior composed of moss, and the interior lined with a profusion of rabbit's down; it contained only four eggs when I took it. I had previously watched the old birds building it. The second was in a chalk-pit, and placed in a hole in the interior of the chalk; it was composed of precisely the same materials,

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\* I suspect that the nests mentioned as situated in rat holes, must have belonged to the *Marsh Tit*, as the *Coal Tit* never builds so close to the water as mentioned by my correspondent. I have seen the nest of the *Coal Tit* in ivy-clad walls and trees.—N. W.

and contained six eggs. The third was situated in a decayed fir tree. The lining of this was the down of rabbits, but likewise a large quantity of matted hair.”

Mr. SALMON has kindly forwarded me the first of the nests above described. It is chiefly remarkable for the abundance of rabbit's down with which it is lined, and it is interspersed with the seeds of various plants. I saw a specimen somewhat similar some time since, in Lord VERNON's park at Sudbury, at the entrance of a rat-hole; but its most usual locality appears to be the holes of decayed trees, where it is sometimes, though not very frequently, lined with a few feathers. In the above instance it was lined with *black* down, Sudbury-park being stocked with a curious breed of black rabbits.

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LONGTAILED TIT, *Parus caudatus*, WILL.

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Oft let me wander o'er the russet mead,  
 And thro' the saddened grove, where scarce is heard  
 One dying strain to cheer the woodman's toil.  
 Haply some widowed songster pours his plaint,  
 Far, in faint warblings, thro' the tawny copse.  
 While congregated Thrushes, Linnets, Larks,  
 And each wild throat, whose artless strains so late  
 Swell'd all the music of the swarming shades,  
 Robb'd of their tuneful souls, now shivering sit  
 On the dead tree, a dull despondent flock.

THOMSON'S *Seasons*.—Autumn.

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SYNONYMS.—*Parus caudatus*, WILL. *Orn.*—LINN. *Syst.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Longtailed Tit, MUDIE'S *Feath. Tribes*.

THIS beautiful and somewhat remarkable looking bird, is equally widely and abundantly distributed throughout the British islands with the four preceding species, but appears to be but little noticed except by the Ornithologist, on account of the nature of its haunts—the midst of extensive woods and forests, abounding with thick shrubs and trees. Its favourite trees appear to be the holly and the fir, and amongst these—especially the former—it may confidently be looked for, even in the neighbourhood of houses. But in open unconcealed

spots, or in gardens, it occurs much less frequently than its congeners, though it occasionally mingles with these in severe winters.

I am not aware that this bird possesses even the shadow of a song, and its only note is loud, shrill and clear, and has, not unaptly, been compared to the sound of a bell, though the notes are perfectly distinct, and by no means uttered in a hurried manner. It is audible at a considerable distance, and, when once heard, is not easily forgotten.

The nest of the Longtailed Tit is a most extraordinary piece of architecture, and often requires a long time to complete, though, in cases of emergency, I have known the whole structure to have been erected in less than a week. It is usually situated in the holly or hawthorn tree, where two or more branches meet, and also, though not so frequently, in fir trees; I have likewise seen one in a thick hedge in an unfrequented spot.\* It consists of various kinds of lichens, moss, wool, and other substances, lined with a warm coating of feathers. When completed, it is a perfect model of symmetry, and is of an oval shape, with a small hole near the top. The whole surface is studded over with white lichens, and sometimes with spiders' webs, or some substance of a like nature, which gives a beautiful finish to the structure, and renders it more similar to the branches on which it is situated, than it would otherwise be. It is so firmly fixed on the branches, that it would be impossible to take down the nest without cutting also the twigs on which it is fastened. In a museum it is a very handsome object, with the holly branch on which it was situated, but, if torn off from this, its beauty is entirely spoilt.

According to SELBY, there are two holes in the structure, through one of which it protrudes its long tail. Now though I am by no means inclined to doubt that it may occasionally be found (and of course SELBY has seen such specimens), yet I am convinced that they are of extremely rare occurrence.

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\* I have seen one beautifully situated on the thickly-blossomed branch of a wild crab.—E. BLYTH.

Mr. BLYTH informs me that he never met with a nest of this description, nor have I, amongst the great number that I have examined—both on the bush and in museums—ever seen more than one hole, and that but a small one. My learned correspondent, SHIRLEY PALMER, M.D., of Birmingham, is also of opinion that two holes seldom or never occur.

RENNIE and others designate this species by the vulgar name “ Bottle Tit,” on account of the nest being occasionally found in the shape of a bottle; and a specimen, of this description is figured in RENNIE’S popular compilation, the *Architecture of Birds*, p. 332. It is, however, much more frequently met with in a plain oval shape, without any neck, and with a hole near the top. *Longtailed Tit*, is, consequently, a far more correct appellation.

Unlike most of the other British Tits, it is entirely insectivorous, being never observed to feed on carrion of any kind. It seeks its insect prey amongst the branches and foliage of trees, with the same assiduity as its congeners, hanging on the under sides of the twigs, and frequently running up and down the branches, in the same manner as the Goldcrested Kinglet. Sometimes it associates with the Blue and Coal Tits, but is more commonly observed in flocks of twelve or fourteen, probably constituting the family party. Its flight, though never continued for any length of time, is straight and rapid. The eggs, from nine to twelve—and sometimes even more—in number, are very small, and white, spotted at the larger end with reddish brown dots.

“ I have often endeavoured,” says Dr. LIVERPOOL, “ to preserve the Longtailed Tit in confinement, but have never yet succeeded. A pair of old birds, which I once caught in a trap cage, were extremely shy and obstreperous, and would eat nothing but insects. As it was soon found to be impossible to supply them with a sufficiency of this food, they did not long survive. I have had no better success with individuals taken from the nest, and the species appear little fitted for confinement.”

The covering of the Longtailed Tit looks more like hair than feathers ; and this, as well as its small size, renders it a difficult matter to stuff it in a satisfactory manner. Country bird-stuffers, indeed, will hardly undertake the task.

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CRESTED TIT, *Parus cristatus*, ALDROV.

SYNONYMS.—*Parus cristatus*, WILL. *Orn.*—LINN. *Syst.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Crested Tit, MUDIE'S *Feath. Tribes.*—*Analyst*, No. 13.

LITTLE is known of the Crested Tit as a British bird, and the account here given of it will, consequently, be brief, the materials of its biography being meagre and unsatisfactory. Dr. LATHAM informs us that he received a specimen from Glenmore, and we are assured on the authority of Sir WM. JARDINE, that it has been met with in some plantations near Glasgow, where also it annually breeds. The following description of it, though short, and destitute of interesting detail, is the best that I have to present to my readers, and is taken from BECHSTEIN'S amusing *Cage Birds*:—

“This bird is four inches and a half in length, of which the tail measures one and one third. The beak is four lines, and black ; the shanks are seven lines high, and lead blue ; the head is adorned with a crest, composed of feathers nearly an inch long, which the bird can erect at pleasure in a conical form. It is black, tipped with white ; the forehead is spotted with black and white ; the cheeks are pale ash grey, bordered on the lower and back parts with black ; a broad reddish white streak extends from the corners of the beak to the nape of the neck, on which there is a black spot which stretches round the neck like a collar, and unites on the breast with the black of the throat ; the back is rusty grey ; the wings and tail are greyish brown.

“When wild, these birds frequent all the pine and fir woods in Thuringia, but are not so numerous as the other species.

They fly about low bushes, and therefore delight in places where juniper bushes abound.

“In the house they require the same treatment as the Blue Tit, and even greater attention; they can rarely be tamed when taken full grown.\* In a wild state it feeds in the same manner as the Coal Tit.—In the house it must be first fed on ants’ eggs, flies, and meal-worms. It will afterwards eat nuts and hemp-seed, like the other Tits, but it seems to require insects occasionally.

The nest is formed like that of the Coal Tit, and placed in the hole of a tree, amongst some stones, or in large forsaken nests.† The brood consists of from six to ten snow white eggs, spotted with bright red. The young must be reared on meal-worms cut small, and ants’ eggs.

“The mode of taking it is the same as that adopted for catching the Coal Tits. Its call is ‘gørrky.’ Its song is not striking, but its form and habits are very pleasing.”—It is much to be regretted, as its habits are, according to BECHSTEIN, so ‘pleasing,’ that that author should not have furnished us with some account of them, that we might have participated in the pleasure experienced by our author in observing its ways. Even the cage habits of birds, widely as they differ from the natural ones, are at least interesting as facts, though they may add but little to our knowledge of the species in its native haunts, and in the full enjoyment of LIBERTY.

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\* “I have, however, seen one old Crested Tit that was tamed as easily as any other bird. After passing the winter in a cage, it refused its liberty in the spring. It was then placed in the garden near the house, where it remained till evening, having hopped about all day, uttering restless anxious cries. Its mistress, fearing some accident befalling it during the night, held the cage towards it, into which it immediately jumped with pleasure. Since then it has been allowed to range three adjoining rooms. It is always lively, coming when its mistress calls, and perching on her finger, and seeking in her half-closed hand the flies she may have there. It made a nest in a window-curtain, into which it would glide secretly in the evening, but would never go whilst any eyes were turned on that side, and seized a favourable moment so quickly, that for some time no one knew where it retired; when it was discovered, the curtains were never touched.”  
—TRANSLATOR.

† In England, the House Sparrow frequently builds inside the deserted nests of the Mag Pie, but I do not remember to have observed this habit in any of the Tits.—N. W.

## GENUS CALAMOPHILUS, LEACH. PINNOCK.

BEARDED PINNOCK, *Calamophilus biarmicus*, LEACH.

SYNONYMS.—*Parus biarmicus*, LINN. *Syst.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—*Laniellus biarmicus*, BLYTH in *Field Nat. Mag.*—*Calamophilus biarmicus*, LEACH.—Bearded Tit, MUDIE'S *Feath. Tribes.*—Bearded Pinnock, *Analyst*, No. 13.

THIS exquisitely beautiful bird is extremely locally distributed in England, but is sufficiently plentiful in many parts where it does occur. As it is not met with so far north as the midland counties, I have had no opportunity of observing it in its native haunts, and am consequently compelled to draw my information from other authors. It appears to be confined to the southern counties, and is only found in a few even of these. In the *Magazine of Natural History*, vol. ii. p. 222, we find the following interesting account of this bird:—

“ Bearded Pinnocks inhabit the marshes bordering on the Thames, both in Kent and Essex. I was told, in December last, that some had been lately seen in a large piece of reeds below Barking Creek; and being desirous and determined, if possible, to see and observe them in their haunts, I went accompanied by one person and a dog, to the above-named place on a cold windy dull morning, weather by no means favourable for my purpose; but the reed-cutters having even then commenced their operations, I was fearful of deferring it, lest my game should be driven away. Arrived on our ground, we traversed it for some time without success; and were about to leave it, when our attention was roused by the alarm cry of this species, and looking up, we saw eight or ten of these beautiful little creatures on the wing, just topping the reeds over our heads, uttering in full chorus their sweetly musical note, which resembles (if it may be likened to a word) the monosyllable *ping*, *ping*; pronounced at first slow and single, then two or three times in a more hurried manner: it may be compared to the music of very small cymbals; is clear and ringing though soft,



and corresponds well with the delicacy and beauty of the form and colour of the bird. We saw several flocks during the morning, or, what is more probable, the same flock several times. Their flights are short and low, only sufficient to clear the reeds: on the seedy tops of which they alight to feed,\* hanging, like most of the subfamily, with the head or back downwards. If disturbed, they immediately descend by running, or rather by dropping. The movement is rapid along the stalk to the bottom, where they creep and flit, perfectly concealed from view by the closeness of the covert and the resembling tints of their plumage.

“ We could hear, but not see, our dog hunting; and we thought he was of service in pointing out to us whereabouts the birds were. His being near them, however, did not make them easily take wing; they seemed to follow him, hovering and crying about him. I question if we should have seen, or even heard, a single bird without his assistance. We were fortunate enough to shoot one (a male) in fine plumage. I held it in my hand when scarcely dead. Nothing could exceed the beauty of the eye; the bright orange of the iris, nearly surrounded as it is by the deep glossy black of the mustachios and streak above, receives additional brilliancy from the contrast, and struck me as a masterpiece of arrangement in colour and neatness. The bill also was of a fine clear delicate orange; but this too, soon became dull and opaque. I would here ask if you, Sir, or any of your correspondents can guess of what use the long feathers, called the mustachios of this bird, are. We may fairly suppose that Nature does not give her creatures useless appendages, for mere ornament; but I own I am at a loss to imagine their purpose, unless it be to aid the wearer in its passage through so thick a covert.

“ I am told that the males and females keep distinct during

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\* Another correspondent mentions that it feeds on various small *Mollusca*, and not on the seeds of reeds. The *Mollusca* are swallowed entire, and are triturated in the stomach, with the aid of small sharp stones, which it swallows.—N. W.

the winter. This is not improbable; WHITE says the same of the Chaff Finches, in his *Natural History of Selborne*. I had no opportunity of deciding on the day in question. I have heard also that the families of old and young birds are sometimes seen together in the months of August and September. This I hope to witness; at present I am rather sceptical."

For an account of the nidification of this interesting species we shall extract further from the (formerly) valuable *Magazine of Natural History*. At Vol. III. p. 328, we find the following observations, by an acute observer of Nature—J. D. Hoy, Esq., of Stoke Nayland, Suffolk :—

"I have a few remarks to offer to you on the habits of the Bearded Pinnock, which may be acceptable to some of your readers; and I think your correspondent on this subject (Vol. II. p. 222) will be pleased to hear something farther of its history. The borders of the large pieces of fresh water in Norfolk called Broads, particularly Hickling and Horsey Broads, are the favourite places of resort of this bird; indeed it is to be met with in that neighbourhood wherever there are reeds in any quantity, with fenny land adjoining. During the autumn and winter they are found dispersed, generally in small parties, throughout the whole length of the Suffolk coast, wherever there are large tracts of reeds. I have found them numerous, in the breeding season, on the skirts of Whittlesea, near Huntingdonshire, and they are not uncommon in the fenny district of Lincolnshire; whether they are to be met with farther north I have had no means of ascertaining, but they do not appear to have been noticed north of the Humber. It begins building in the end of April. The nest is composed on the outside with the dead leaves of the reed and sedge, intermixed with a few pieces of grass, and invariably lined with the top of the reed, somewhat in the manner of the nest of the Marsh Reedling (*Salicaria arundinacea*), but not so compact in the interior. It is generally placed in a tuft of coarse grass, or rushes near the ground, on the margin of the dikes, in the fen; also sometimes fixed among the reeds that are broken down, but never sus-

pended between the stems. The eggs vary in number from four to six, rarely seven; pure white, sprinkled all over with small purplish red spots, intermixed with a few small faint lines and markings of the same colour; size about the same as those of the Garden Tit, but much more rounded at the smaller end. Their food during the winter is principally the seed of the reed, and so intent are they in searching for it, that I have taken them with a birdlime twig attached to the end of a fishing-rod. When alarmed by any sudden noise, or the passing of a Hawk, they utter their shrill musical notes (which your correspondent has well described), and conceal themselves among the thick bottom of the reeds, but soon resume their station, climbing the upright stems with the greatest facility. Their manners in feeding approach near to the Longtailed Tit, often hanging with the head downwards, and turning themselves into the most beautiful attitudes. Their food is not entirely the reed seed; but insects and their larvæ, and the very young shell-snails of different kinds which are numerous in the bottom of the reedlings. I have been enabled to watch their motions when in search of insects, having, when there has been a little wind stirring, been often within a few feet of them, quite unnoticed, among the thick reeds. Was it not for their note betraying them, they would be but seldom seen. The young, until the autumnal moult, vary in plumage from the old birds; a stripe of blackish feathers extends from the hind part of the neck to the rump. Your correspondent has been informed the males and females keep separate during the winter, but I have always observed them in company; they appear to keep in families until the pairing time, in the manner of the Longtailed [and other] Tits; differing in this respect, that you will occasionally find them congregated in large flocks, more particularly during the month of October, when they are migrating from their breeding places."

"In this bird," says BECHSTEIN, "are united beautiful plumage, a graceful shape, and sprightliness. Its song re-

sembles that of the Blue Tit,\* but its call is very different. It is a pity it is so difficult to obtain. BUFFON says that all of this species that are found in England, sprung from a pair the Countess of ALBERMARLE suffered to escape; but most likely they had not been seen before from want of attention.”

To the above account I have little or nothing to add, and I regret that my correspondents have not supplied me with any information regarding this interesting species.

Since writing the foregoing account, my zealous friend Mr. EDWARD BLYTH, has informed me that he can at all times procure as many of these lovely and innocent creatures as he wishes; but he does not state whether or not they are abundant in his neighbourhood—Tooting, Surrey. The same gentleman has likewise forwarded me a proof of a beautiful and accurate engraving of this species, which will embellish the first number of a work now in preparation for publication.† The male, female, and young, are exquisitely figured in this plate.

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\* If so, it scarce deserves the name of song.—N. W.

† See the *Ornithologist's Text-book*, p. 97.

## GENUS ACCENTOR, BECHST. DUNNOCK.

HEDGE DUNNOCK, *Accentor modularis*, CUV.

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And I have wander'd far, since the bright east  
 Was glorious with the dawning light of day;  
 Seeing, as that effulgence more increas'd,  
 The mists of morning slowly melt away:  
 And, as I pass'd along, from every spray,  
 With dew-drops glistening, evermore have heard  
 Some feather'd songster chaunt his roundelay;  
 Or bleat of sheep, or lowing of the herd;  
 Or rustling of fall'n leaf, when morning's breezes stirr'd.

BERNARD BARTON.

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SYNONYMS.—*Motacilla modularis*, LINN. *Syst.*—*Sylvia modularis*, LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Curruca sepiaria*, BRISS. *Orn.*—*Accentor modularis*, CUV. *Règne Anim.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Hedge Dunnock, *Analyst*, No. 13.—N. WOOD'S *Orn. Text-book.*

THE Hedge Dunnock is resident and common with us throughout the year, and, though of plain and unobtrusive plumage, its habits are far from being uninteresting. Its favourite haunts are hedgerows, the skirts of woods, gardens, and the neighbourhood of houses, farms, and other buildings. In lonely uninhabited spots, it does not occur, nor in the midst of extensive woods and forests. In summer it is much less seen than in winter, as it then mostly conceals itself amongst bushes, brakes, and thick hedges. No sooner, however, do the cutting blasts of winter set in, than our humble songster forsakes its hidling habits, and hops close under the windows in quest of food. But, though equally familiar with its pugnacious neighbour, the Robin Redbreast, it seldom or never passes the threshold of our dwellings, being content to glean whatever may happen to be scattered on the outside. It is, in fact, a remarkably hardy species, and is one of the few *Sylviadæ* that ventures to brave the rigours of our northern winters. In extremely severe seasons, and in the event of a

long protracted frost, however, it soon begins to droop, and numbers perish under the hedgerows and bushes, and in the immediate neighbourhood of houses. But long before the matter is driven to this extremity, its starved and ruffled appearance, languid eye, and mournful chirp, all bespeak, to the intelligent observer, the nature of the approaching destiny; though even this would appear to be rather the effect of hunger than cold. For, if you open the window or door, the little sufferer will seldom enter, but, throw him a few crumbs of bread or bruised seed of any kind, and he appears revived almost immediately.

The song of the Hedge Dunnock, though unobtrusive as its plumage, is remarkable for the sweetness of its expression. It is, however, short, and deficient in power. By the careless observer, it probably passes wholly unnoticed, though it certainly deserves the consideration of the bird-fancier. But it appears to be little prized as a cage bird, being rarely kept in confinement. It is included in BECHSTEIN'S *Cage Birds*, and is mentioned by that author as a gay and amusing bird in confinement, and easily tamed; which I can assert to be perfectly true, having frequently kept three or four for a considerable period, of which further mention will be made hereafter. In the mean time, let us return to the discussion of his musical abilities.

The notes are usually uttered from the middle or top of a hedge or low bush, and occasionally from the lower branches of trees. The whole song appears to consist of but two passages, and these are commonly uttered without a pause. At a short distance it is inaudible, but, when heard close, forms a very pleasing melody, especially when listened to at early dawn, or towards the dusk of evening. Though it forms no part of the vernal chorus,\* the true lover of nature always hails it with delight, especially as it is one of the first of the family†

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\* Both its haunts, and the limited power of its voice, entirely forbid this.

† The Goldcrested Kinglet and Ivy Wren are before it.

to break the universal silence which had prevailed during the dreary and monotonous winter months. The song is frequently heard so early as the middle of February, and towards the close of the following month, the happy pair proceed to prepare for the business of incubation.

The nest consists exteriorly of sticks, moss, and wool, rather loosely woven together, and lined with horse and cow hair. I may here observe that SYME (in his *Treatise on British Song-Birds*) is quite mistaken when he says that birds only use hair of a white or grey colour, for the lining of their nests. I have seen many nests wholly lined with black hair, and others with all colours intermixed, and I do not think any one colour can be said to occur most frequently, though some birds (as the Whin Linnet) commonly use white or light coloured hair, and others (as the Robin Redbreast), according to my experience, usually employ black hair. I may, however, be wrong in these instances, or at least exactly the opposite of what is above mentioned, may possibly take place in some parts of the country. With regard to the present species, two of its nests, now in my possession, contain hair of different colours.

The usual site of the nest is a hedge or almost any kind of low bush, and here it is not unfrequently deposited before the buds are sufficiently expanded to afford a satisfactory shelter to the structure; and hence, during the early part of the season, few of the nests remain to perform their duty. Nor, indeed, is the Hedge Dunnock at any time very solicitous as to the locality of its structure, but appears to take possession of the first unoccupied\* spot that is at hand. On this account, and the consequently immense number of nests that are robbed, it is almost surprising that the species is still so plentiful, though, certainly, a tolerably large proportion of nests in sequestered spots, or in gardens where bird-nesting is (happily) unknown, do escape uninjured. The second and third broods, moreover,

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\* I presume most of my readers are aware that none of our smaller British birds (the Field Thrush excepted) will build in a tree or bush which already contains a nest, whether that nest be deserted or not.

are invariably—both with this and other species—better concealed than the first; and, accordingly, during the latter part of the breeding season, the nests are often so carefully concealed, near the bottom of a stiff and thick bush or hedge, as to render it, in many cases, an extremely difficult matter to discover them. Sometimes I have in vain searched a bush which I was all but certain contained a Hedge Dunnock's nest, and was at length compelled to abandon the place; but, happening to pass by some time afterwards, discovered it by mere chance, by seeing the female fly from the exact spot where the nest was concealed.

The Hedge Dunnock rarely builds in outhouses, though two or three instances of it have fallen under my observation. Of these, one was amongst some bushes of various kinds, which had recently been rooted up and thrown into a corner of the garden-house. In this situation, the female had hatched her young; but, when they were about a week old, the garden-house was, contrary to order, locked up on Saturday evening, and remained closed till Monday morning, when I found that the female had been excluded, and, of course, that the young brood had perished. Another nest was built in a bundle of pea-sticks, in an out-building, and the young were hatched and reared successfully. I have likewise found the nest fixed on the stone of an iron garden-roller, which had long lain in a little-frequented spot, unused. This happened in 1833; but, though the same roller has remained in the same place, during the two succeeding summers, it has not been again thus singularly tenanted. I had fully expected that the same pair of Hedge Dunnocks would have built again in the roller, as it frequently returns many successive years to breed in the same spot, especially if the last brood had been reared successfully. Possibly, however, the old birds had perished by some accident.

Another still more remarkable circumstance regarding a nest I once knew in a lavender bush, is as follows:—

Visiting one evening, towards the close of May, 1835, the



nest above alluded to, to my no small surprise I discovered a fat and full-grown animal, usually called a *frog*, gravely seated on five Hedge Dunnock's eggs. Wishing to discover its motives for undertaking so extraordinary a charge, I did not at the time dislodge the reptile, which sat staring me full in the face, evidently viewing me in the light of an interloper. But, on returning to the spot a few hours afterwards, I found it still in the same snug berth, and in precisely the same position as before. Considering it now high time to investigate the state of the case, I shoved the corpulent reptile over the sides of the lodging it had so impudently appropriated to itself, when it hopped away just as if nothing particular had happened. What inducement could there possibly have been for it to remain in so preposterous a situation? But the question is more easily proposed than answered, and I leave the solution of it to my readers. At first it struck me that the frog must have been set on the eggs by some wag, but the nest was in a spot little likely to have been frequented by such gentry; and probably the saucy creature would not have remained had it been placed there. I imagine I need scarcely inform my readers that the rightful owners of the nest never returned to their charge.

The eggs of the Hedge Dunnock are four or five in number, and of a somewhat deeper blue than those of the Tree Redstart, and also more elliptical. They vary little, and the number never exceeds six.

The Hedge Dunnock is almost wholly a ground or bush bird, being seldom observed on trees except during the breeding season, when any one is near its nest. The hedge is likewise one of its favourite haunts, and the interstices of the thickest of these it threads with ease and agility, in quest of its food. Its flight is low, and never long protracted; and, in flying from bush to bush, a loose shuffle of the wings and tail is frequently observed, and especially in summer, whence the expressive popular name "shufflewing," by which the bird is known in many parts of the country. Whilst singing, also, the same kind of quivering motion of the wings and tail is employed, as

well as in darting on a worm or caterpillar on the ground. In hopping along the ground, likewise, it has a peculiar habit of flirting up its tail, and turning quickly from side to side, ever and anon picking up minute insects invisible to our naked eyes. The Robin Redbreast's mode of capture is usually effected by darting on its prey from the branch of a tree, but this is much seldomer observed in the Hedge Dunnock, which appears to prefer gaining its livelihood in a quieter and less obtrusive manner. All its habits are, in fact, simple and unaffected, inasmuch that it either passes wholly unnoticed by the ordinary observer, or is mistaken for the House Sparrow. I verily believe that by far the greater number of persons residing in the country, do make this latter mistake, and probably they have anything but a distinct idea even of the House Sparrow. This to the Ornithologist may appear impossible, but so many instances of the kind have come to my notice, that I am scarcely astonished at any remark on our most common birds, that may fall from the lips of an ordinary observer.

The food of this bird consists of various kinds of insects and larvæ, and also of the seeds of different grasses, to which latter it is very partial. It never eats green food, such as groundsel (*Senecio vulgaris*), chickweed, &c., but in winter, when food is scarce, it greedily devours crumbs of bread, potatoes, or almost anything that may be thrown to it. From fruit it abstains altogether, and is, accordingly, *entirely* beneficial to the gardener, though the latter is seldom aware of its services, and destroys its nest whenever he meets with it, as unmercifully as he would those which he, in his purblind wisdom, considers most detrimental to his narrow views and interests. Every gardener should have a perfect knowledge of the commoner British birds and insects, in order to succeed in his profession, though it is by no means necessary, or perhaps even desirable, that he should be a scientific Ornithologist or Entomologist. But to return to our sombre little songster.

In the article "MISSEL THRUSH," I mentioned that the only bird I then had in confinement, was a solitary Hedge Dunnock,

who enjoyed the run of a large aviary. The same individual is still (January the 3rd, 1836) in my possession, but it is no longer in a *solitary* cell, having three companions, to wit, another Hedge Dunnock, and two of those implacable enemies, Robin Redbreasts. Now, though the Hedge Dunnock is by no means a quarrelsome bird by nature, yet the two in question have become much more so since their confinement and intercourse with their gentle-looking companions of the red breast. Before, they appeared—to my vision at least—perfectly happy and contented, both with their situation and with each other; but, since the addition of the aforesaid Robin Redbreast, there has scarce been a moment's peace in the aviary. All is discord and hatred. Sometimes on placing their food before them, after a short fast had furnished them with the best of sauces, a general scramble took place amongst the parties concerned; nor were they satisfied with pecking at their food, but must needs have a bite at each other, and frequently all four make a simultaneous dash at each other, and I, the jailor, leave them to make up their quarrel as they can! These bickerings generally terminate by the defeat of the poor Hedge Dunnedocks, though these frequently make three or four efforts before they abandon their purpose.

But by far the most virulent conflicts take place between the two Robin Redbreasts. Both of them invariably assist in vanquishing the Dunnedocks, but, this accomplished, they commence single combat between themselves, and this species of warfare knows no termination. To those acquainted with its habits in its wild state, this is by no means surprising, though it is remarkable, that the individual which usually has the ascendancy, has lately become quite ragged, and has lost a considerable portion of its *head dress*; whilst its companion, a somewhat larger bird, is sleek and in excellent feather. Until I had duly investigated the merits of the case, I always considered the plump bird as the victor, but a few minutes observation of their conduct, quickly convinced me of the contrary.

The more peaceful Hedge Dunnedocks seldom go to such ex-

tremities as their relentless companions,\* and their chief bone of contention is their food. They are mostly harmless and inoffensive, but sometimes maintain a tough struggle for superiority, with the Robin Redbreasts. Few species sooner become inured to confinement, or require less care. If their companions be tolerably tame, a week's time will suffice to render it perfectly familiar and contented; it is also fully as hardy as any of the *Fringillidæ* (Finch family), and its cage may hang with impunity in an outhouse, where the thermometer is so low as fourteen or sixteen degrees below the freezing point. And this confirms my opinion, expressed in a former part of the article, that it is hunger, and not cold, that causes such numbers to perish in severe and long-protracted winters.

In spring and summer, its best food is bread moistened with water, and mixed with worms, slugs, flies, or almost any kind of insect food. In autumn the seeds of various kinds of grasses may advantageously be added, and, when the first frost sets in, bruised hemp and carraway seed must be beaten up with crumb of bread and a little milk or water, and mashed up into a fine paste. The warming nature of this food will enable it to outlive the rigours of the hardest winters, even in an open outbuilding. The bottom of the cage should be thickly covered with sand, and a large basin of water may constantly remain in its cage, both winter and summer, and must be renewed every day. It is both a dusting and a washing bird, but the former is usually resorted to in winter, and the latter in summer, so that there is no fear of its washing itself to death, as the Reedlings, Redstarts, Warblers, and other imprudent birds not unfrequently do.

To complete the list of its conveniences—*necessaries* I might almost call them—sprigs of its favourite bushes may be introduced into the aviary. Evergreens are, however, the best, on

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\* I know not whether Deville possesses the skulls of these two species, in his beautiful and extensive collection, but it would be curious to examine their phrenological development. If I am not greatly mistaken, a striking difference would be found in the relative size of their organs of Combativeness and Destructiveness.

account of their requiring to be renewed much seldomer ; and, if your birds are kept in a room, different kinds of bushes and brushwood may be heaped up in a corner. In these the Hedge Dunnock will roost at night, each individual taking up its abode in exactly the same spot each night, as they do when wild. The bushes also serve as a refuge in the daytime, in case of any danger. Nothing conduces more to the health and happiness of cage birds than these branches, and it is surprising that no mention of them should occur in BECHSTEIN'S treatise on the subject. If they were always employed, I am convinced that the very frequent complaint of sore and *gouty* feet, would be of much rarer occurrence than is at present the case.

Upon the whole, few of our common indigenous birds possess more interesting and diversified habits than the humble Hedge Dunnock, yet perhaps few have attracted less attention, either from the Ornithologist or the ordinary observer—doubtless on account of its plain and unobtrusive manners and plumage. In a state of nature, its endless habits are well deserving of study, and in confinement it is gentle, familiar, and confiding.

The sexes are scarcely distinguishable, but the plumage of the young of the year is considerably darker and more mottled than that of adults. Varieties sometimes occur, and in its wild state it frequently dies of swellings about its nostrils and head.

## GENUS CURRUCA, BECHST. ANNET.

ALPINE ANNET, *Curruca collaris*, C. T. WOOD.

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Far, far above, piercing the infinite sky,  
 Mont Blanc appears, still, snowy, and serene—  
 Its subject-mountains their unearthly forms  
 Pile round it, ice and rock; broad vales between,  
 Of frozen floods, unfathomable deeps,  
 Blue as the overhanging heav'n, that spread  
 And wind among the accumulated steeps;  
 A desert, peopled by the storms alone.

SHELLEY.

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SYNONYMS.—*Motacilla Alpina*, GMEL. *Linn.*—*Sturnus Moritanicus* and *S. collaris*, GMEL. *Linn.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—STEPH. *Gen. Zool.*—*Accentor Alpinus*, BECHST. *Naturg. Deut.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—*Curruca Alpina*, *Analyst*, No. 13.—*Collared Stare* and *Alpine Warbler*, LATH. *Syn.*—*Alpine Accentor*, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—*Alpine Stare*, *Analyst*, No. 13.—*Alpine Annet*, N. WOOD'S *Orn. Text-book*.

It would appear that a single specimen of this bird, shot in the garden of King's College, Cambridge, and now in the possession of the Rev. Dr. THACKERAY, is the only individual which has been met with in Britain. It was mentioned in the *Zoological Journal*, Vol. I. p. 134, and must, therefore, have been killed about twelve years ago. Dr. LATHAM informs me that he has a stuffed specimen of it in his collection, which he believes to have been killed in Britain, but that he cannot speak with any certainty on the subject, on account of the numbers of individuals he has, at various times, received from Gibraltar, where it is sufficiently plentiful.—There is a beautiful wood-cut of the Alpine Annet in the "*History of the Rarer British Birds*, being a continuation of BEWICK, by T. C. EYTON, Esq.," but the description there given is extremely meagre and unsatisfactory. As it would be of little use for me to hash up an apparently original account of the bird from other authors, I make no apology for transcribing that which appears in SELBY'S invaluable *Illustrations of British Ornithology*, Vol. I. p. 247 :—

“ In form and general appearance, it resembles our indigenous species, the Hedge Dunnock (*Accentor modularis*), but exceeds it considerably in size, and differs in the disposition and colours of its plumage. It is an inhabitant of the mountainous regions of Europe, and particularly affects those districts which are of an abrupt and rocky character. Upon the Swiss Alps it is very common (as its name implies), and may always be seen by travellers in the environs of the Convent upon Mount St. Bernard. In summer it ascends to very elevated stations, where it breeds in holes, and under ledges of the rocks, laying four or five eggs of a fine greenish-blue colour. As winter advances, and the snow begins to accumulate upon the rocky steeps, it descends towards the valleys and middle regions of the mountains, where it subsists upon the seeds of Alpine grasses and plants; which at this time constitute its principal support. In summer, however, in addition to its vegetable diet, it destroys grasshoppers and other insects, and their larvæ.

“ *General description.*—Bill strong, straight, and fine-pointed; the upper mandible brownish-black; the lower one orange-yellow, except the tip, which is black. Head, nape of the neck, rump, and breast, pale hair-brown, tinged with grey. Back the same; with the centres of the feathers blackish-brown. Scapulars and tertiaries deeply margined with pale reddish-brown. Lesser and greater wing-coverts black; each feather being terminated by a triangular white spot. Quills hair-brown, tipped and margined with greyish white, margined with yellowish white. Flanks and abdomen orange-brown, margined with yellowish-white. Tail hair-brown; the exterior feathers terminating in a large reddish-white spot upon the inner webs. Legs and feet strong, pale reddish-brown; hind claw very strong, and much arched.”

There is a representation of the Alpine Annet, natural size, in SELBY'S splendid plates.

## SUBFAM. V. MOTACILLINÆ.

## GENUS MOTACILLA, LATH. WAGTAIL.

PIED WAGTAIL, *Motacilla maculosa*, C. T. WOOD.

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The children's shouts of glee  
 Were heard on the daisied green,  
 When the ebony and ivory  
 Of thy glossy plumes were seen ;  
 Like thine their joyous bound,  
 And the bright, quick glancing eye,  
 And bird-like voices, of silver sound,  
 Were hailing thee merrily.

*Minstrelsy of the Woods.*

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SYNONYMS.—*Motacilla alba*, LINN. *Syst.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*  
 —*Motacilla maculosa*, *Analyst*, No. 14.—Pied Wagtail, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—  
 MUDIE'S *Feath. Tribes*.

THIS species is indigenous in the south of England, but is a periodical visitant in the northern counties, appearing in February and departing in October. In the midland counties it is met with throughout the year, but is much less common in winter than in summer, from which we may infer that numbers migrate, on the approach of the inclement seasons, to the south, whence they again return towards the end of February.

In places where it is indigenous, and also in the districts where it is only known as a periodical visitant, it is extremely abundant, and, indeed, it occurs plentifully in every part of Britain, ranging so far north as the Orkneys. Its favourite haunts are the margins of running streams, and meadows intersected by clear pebbly brooks ; it also frequents the neighbourhood of houses, and may constantly be seen running on the grass or gravel before the house, sporting about in a thousand different ways, now darting on its prey, and wagging its long tail, now singing on the ledge of the roof, or on the iron railings, and making a dozen other pleasing little manœuvres,



which the intelligent observer of Nature and her beauties, cannot fail to notice. Indeed the Pied Wagtail forms one of the most delightful features of the country, and nothing can be more amusing than to watch half a dozen of these lively and elegant little creatures, sporting about the meadows, or along the margins of the clear, rippling stream.

The song is not powerful, but is far from being monotonous or destitute of melody. It is soft and sweet, short in stave, and is mostly uttered on the ground, from the roof of a low building, or, occasionally, while suspended on the wing. The latter, however, is not a common occurrence, nor is the bird by any means a continuous or garrulous songster, on which account it is little known to the vulgar in its musical capacity. The strains are not, perhaps, sufficiently excellent to render it desirable to preserve the Pied Wagtail in confinement, especially as it is a difficult matter to maintain it in health for any considerable period, on artificial food, but, when heard in the peculiar haunts of the species, they are far from being despicable. It frequently utters a shrill cry in running along the ground, or when in the act of seizing its prey, and this is its usual call-note.

The localities in which the nest is found, are various. Stony spots, are, however generally preferred, and the holes of ivy-clad walls or trees are the usual sites. It also occurs amongst heaps of large stones, and, according to some, at the tops of old pollard trees, though I never myself saw it in such a situation. I once knew a pair build in a flower-pot, in a little-frequented garden; it was, however, deserted before any eggs were laid, in consequence of curiosity having tempted me to visit the spot too frequently. The following year, the flower-pot was purposely established in the same place, but the birds never returned, though a pair of House Sparrows did. A far more curious instance, however, is the following:—

A rat-catcher in the neighbourhood informed me last year, that having accidentally left an old wooden rat-trap in an outhouse for a few days, with one of its sliding sides missing, to

his great surprise he one day perceived a Pied Wagtail fly out, with a bit of moss in its bill. A Brown Rat and a Pied Wagtail could scarcely be making love together! but it struck the shrewd rat-catcher that *something* extraordinary must be going on within his rat-catching, money-catching trap, and on peering into it, found neither more nor less than the half finished nest of a bird, in one of the further corners. Strange to tell, the fellow—laying aside for once his murderous, destructive propensities—left the nest untouched, and the birds, finding themselves in safe quarters, proceeded rapidly with their architectural operations. About this time, I chanced to be riding that way, and the man called me to see his “curiosity.” It now contained five eggs, and we found the female sitting. Our near approach nowise alarmed her, nor did she fly away when I looked in at her. Nothing would have been easier than to have made her prisoner, and I doubt not but she would have continued sitting had she been handled, in the manner related of the Robin Redbreast, as detailed in that article. In general, I should be inclined to consider the Pied Wagtail rather a shy species during incubation, and it is impossible to adduce any satisfactory reason for the above singular departure from its usual habits. Possibly, however, it might be on account of the paucity of old walls, in which to nidificate, in the immediate neighbourhood. And I may here remark, that the Pied Wagtail, as well as the Robin Redbreast, has its peculiar beats or haunts, and, as it seldom strays far from these, in defect of the ordinary conveniences for nest-building, an unusual locality must be resorted to.

But this species does not often deviate from its common routine of nidification. For amongst many dozens of nests that I have examined, only a very few have exhibited any singularity, either in their composition or in their sites. Once or twice, however, I have known it to occur on the branch of a low laurel or other thick bush, and here the structure displayed much more art and ingenuity than is usually observed in the nest of this bird. Indeed the loose and careless manner in which hole-

builders commonly frame it, would but ill suit so open and unsheltered a site as a bush or tree, and, therefore, the nests of birds will mostly be found to vary their labours according to the localities selected by them for nidification.

The nest consists chiefly of moss and wool, mixed with grass, and frequently also with fibrous roots. In one or two instances, likewise, I remember to have seen nests in which twigs, mixed with moss, were the principal materials. Such, however, I have only known to occur once in a way, and the circumstance was accounted for by the nest being situated in a laurel bush, instead of the usual hole of a wall; and, probably, the structure would scarcely have held together if it consisted merely of soft substances, as wool, moss, &c. The inside is lined with horse and cow hair. On the whole, the structure is warm, commodious, and well adapted to its purposes, but the species appears to be little aware of the advantages of the "felting" line of business!—The eggs are four or five in number, of a very light ash colour, speckled all over with small brown dots. They greatly resemble those of the Grey Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*, LINN.), but are a trifle smaller, less inclined to the elliptical, and of a somewhat lighter hue. The similarity is, however, so close, as to induce the Cuckoo frequently to deposit its eggs in the nest of the Pied Wagtail. But, if the eggs of these two birds bear an intimate resemblance to each other, no two eggs can differ more widely than those of the Cuckoo and Hedge Dunnock, and the nest of the latter is at least as frequently selected as that of the Pied Wagtail. Therefore something besides the similarity of the eggs, must guide the Cuckoo in its choice. What that "something" is, we cannot at present stop to discuss. The future investigations of the very many talented field Naturalists of this country, will doubtless do much towards the elucidation of the yet somewhat obscure history of this interesting and remarkable bird.

The food of the Pied Wagtail consists of various kinds of insects and larvæ, and also minute *Mollusca*, in search of which it is constantly and unceasingly employed, displaying

the most lively and pleasing motions. Few birds possess more interesting habits, or a more active and cheerful appearance, than the Pied Wagtail, and its brisk sprightly manners cannot fail to attract the attention of every one residing in the country, who does not wholly shut his eyes to the beauties of Nature, so constantly before him, and presented, too, in such an infinite variety of shapes.—The Pied Wagtail frequently catches its insect food in the air, either darting from the ground, or from the tops of gates, railings, &c., but it does not make a regular business of this, in the manner of the Fly-catchers, adopting this method only occasionally, or by chance. Numerous aquatic insects are likewise seized while sporting over the surface of the water, and in the more immediate neighbourhood of houses, these indefatigable birds may be seen running about in all directions, with the utmost celerity, occasionally uttering a shrill but pleasant cry, and wagging their tails, as if anxious to testify their inexpressible joy in every possible way. It seldom remains long on the wing, being, in fact, mostly a ground bird, and thus indicating, sufficiently obviously, the approach to the Larks, which is effected through the Oatears and Pipits. The Hedge Dunnock and Alpine Annet are likewise in a great measure ground birds, but considerably less so than the Wagtails.

According to some Ornithologists, before departing in Autumn to the southern counties, they assemble in small flocks, frequenting the margins of pools and streams. That such may be the case in some parts of the kingdom, I have no doubt, but have never observed it to take place in this county, though many of the individuals bred here, do depart in due season, to the south. I have, however, occasionally known small troops, of fifteen or twenty individuals, pass my immediate neighbourhood, without staying to rest themselves in the least. During its migrations, it seldom flies at any great elevation, and probably only remains on the wing for a short time.

The Pied Wagtail, as might be expected, from its aquatic

habits, is extremely partial to washing, usually selecting for this purpose a clear, shallow, and pebbly stream, where it enters the water, and commences a brisk fluttering, which effectually throws the fluid over its whole plumage. If kept in confinement—and that would be possible enough—its cage should be spacious, though it need not be lofty, and a large basin of water, frequently renewed, should be constantly left in the aviary.

Fond as is the Pied Wagtail of the vicinity of water, it is little partial to dank, stagnant pools and muddy lakes, or to boggy, marshy grounds, covered with rushes, or woods, and here, accordingly, it will be vain to look for it. Nor does it occur in the dry upland districts and sheep walks, that are the favourite haunts of the Spring Oatear; meadows or lawns intersected by clear running streams, or gravelly spots in the neighbourhood of houses, being the most likely localities to find it, though of course it will occasionally be met with elsewhere.

A friend informs me that he has seen an individual of this species whose whole plumage was pure white, and I have myself met with specimens more or less white. It is perhaps more subject to variety than any other British bird, individuals nearly black, and others as nearly white, having frequently fallen under my notice, in their wild state. A correspondent thus remarks on this subject:—

“ I have now, in my collection, two remarkable varieties of the Pied Wagtail, and have lately given away another not less curious. One of these was of a dusky black all over, with spots of white on the head and neck. The second was of the usual black and white colour, but spotted instead of pied; and the third was pure white, with the exception of a few black specks on the wings, and under the tail. All three were shot by myself at various times, and I hope you will consider them worthy of being recorded. I do not think I ever met with any other varieties of this bird, nor do I consider it subject to deviations of plumage.—N. D.”

The above instances, detailed by my intelligent correspondent, are extremely remarkable, but it is surprising that he should not consider the species "subject to deviations of plumage," seeing that he has met with three most curious varieties, within (as he informs me) three or four years. Mr. BARLOW, of Cambridge, likewise alludes to varieties of the Pied Wagtail, in a recent communication, but I regret that he makes no particular mention of them. I never myself observed deviations so striking as those communicated by N. D., but every one must have noticed the extreme diversity which takes place in different specimens, and that from no changes of sex, age, or season, but regular varieties.

"In autumn and winter," says SELBY, "the black upon the throat and breast gives place to pure white, and the upper parts also incline to blackish-grey; rendering the male bird, at this season of the year, scarcely distinguishable from the female."—Of course I had noticed this seasonal change, but, from not possessing specimens in the different states, could not have described it with the accuracy so desirable and essential in works on Natural History.

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GREY WAGTAIL, *Motacilla cinerea*, WILL.

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Still, gently as breeze-borne flowers,  
 Thou art flitting across the lawn;  
 But the playmates of former hours,  
 Where are they with their light steps gone?  
 Thou art here the same gay creature,  
 But they, on the wide world thrown,  
 Are changed in form and feature,  
 And with voices of deeper tone.

*Minstrelsy of the Woods.*

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SYNONYMS.—*Motacilla cinerea*, WILL. *Orn.*—*Analyst*, No. 14.—*Motacilla boarula*, LINN. *Syst.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Motacilla melanopa*, GMEL. *Linn.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Motacilla sulphurea*, BECHST. *Naturg. Deut.*—Grey Wagtail, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—MUDIE'S *Feath. Tribes.*

THIS beautiful, sprightly and elegant bird much resembles the preceding species in shape, but is longer and more slender,

with a tail somewhat more produced. The whole of the under parts are of a bright and lovely yellow, and the head and back are yellowish green, which not unfrequently causes it to be confounded with the Spring Oatear, and it has, even by some Ornithologists, been termed the "Yellow Wagtail," the name by which the Spring Oatear is usually known in books. The latter was, however, separated from the true or typical Wagtails, by CUVIER, and is very properly termed the Spring Oatear in the fourteenth number of that admirable Journal of Science, Literature, Natural History, and the Fine Arts, THE ANALYST.

In the south of England, it is only met with in winter, but it spends the summer in the northern counties, appearing about the middle of April, and departing at the close of September. In Derbyshire and Staffordshire, however, we are gladdened with its presence throughout the year, though it is perhaps most abundant in the spring and summer months, indicating that some individuals take their departure for the south, on the approach of the inclement seasons, accompanying, probably, its northern brethren in their migrations.

Like the Pied Wagtail, it frequents the borders of clear, pebbly streams, flowing through lawns or meadows, where it may constantly be seen running about with the utmost agility. It likewise resembles its pied congener in searching for insects and small Molluscous animals in the water, into which it may frequently be observed to wade a considerable way, especially if the stream be clear and shallow; and in this, doubtless, originated the popular and erroneous notion that it is able to swim,—a feat for which it is nowise calculated. In the immediate vicinity of houses, it is met with much less frequently than the Pied Wagtail, and it is, consequently, less familiar to the common observer, or, if seen, probably mistaken for the Spring Oatear; but in its own peculiar haunts it is sufficiently abundant. It is, however, neither so widely distributed, nor so common, as the Pied Wagtail; and the localities frequented by it are much less varied than those of that bird. To pebbly

streams, it displays a similar partiality with its congener, but meadows and the banks of lakes are not so exclusively its haunts, as with the Pied Wagtail. It often frequents the lower and more marshy grounds, and may commonly be met with, especially in winter, in sheltered lanes, ditches, stagnant pools, reed-grown tracts, and flooded fields, where the Pied species seldom or never occur.

With regard to vocal powers, the Grey Wagtail has no claims on our attention; but this deficiency is amply compensated by the beautiful and elegant shape, chaste and lovely tints, and sprightly habits of the bird in its natural state. A bird can charm us much more by attractions of plumage, form, and habits, than it can by its song, be that song as pretty as it may.\* There is little *musical* merit in the song of any bird, though nothing can be more delightful, in its way, than to listen to the vernal chorus, on a balmy morning in May. It is the *tout ensemble*, mingled with the associations that spontaneously arise at that period of the year, and at that time of day, that constitutes the chief charm of the melody of the feathered race. And, though the thorough-bred bird-*fancier* (who has been the innocent cause of bringing much derision on the study of birds) doubtless listens with a certain satisfaction to the strains of his prisoners, yet this feeling is for the most part a sordid and selfish one, and is not to be compared to the pure and lofty delight experienced by the true lover of Nature, in listening to the thrilling melody of the groves. And, even then, association has doubtless much more to do in the matter than is generally supposed. But to return to the unmelodious subject of the present memoir, whom we have somewhat uncourteously detained in the ante-chamber, whilst making the above reflections, suggested by the want of musical ability on the part of the Grey Wagtail. Its nidification next demands our attention.

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\* I am not here to be understood to allude to the Brake Nightingale, as one of the chief charms of the strains of this bird consists in the time at which it recounts its "dismal tale." A proof of this is the fact of the disregard of authors and observers to the circumstance of its singing in the day as well as at night.



The nest consists of moss and dry grass, and, occasionally also, fibres of roots; it is lined with hair, and, in some instances, with a few feathers, though by far the greater number that I have inspected, contained no feathers, or only one or two, which might have dropped from the body of one of the parent birds. It is usually situated in the shelving and stony banks of rivers. In this neighbourhood it breeds in many places,—beside the lake flowing through Foston, and in many parts of Boilston, but nowhere so abundantly as in the neighbourhood of Scropton, which appears, in fact, to be the *rendezvous* of the species in these parts. Here numbers breed annually, on the banks of the undulating Dove river. The Grey Wagtail seldom or never builds in the vicinity of houses, and the localities in which the nest is found vary but little. And this remark holds good with all birds that breed in wild unfrequented spots, as compared with the more domestic and familiar species; for the latter must accommodate themselves to the changes effected by the “lords of the Creation,” or are induced to build in unusual spots by the artifices of man, whilst the bird of the free uncultivated wild is subject to no such constraint.

The food of this species is the same as that of the Pied Wagtail—insects and larvæ, and likewise small *Mollusca*. In the capture of these, the same rapid, elegant, and fantastic movements are observable as in its congener, and it takes its prey in a similar manner. In spring and summer the plumage is of a lovely bright yellow, but this becomes considerably paler in winter. The black patch on the throat gives place, at that period, to a very light yellow, in both sexes. The tints of the female are less bright than those of the male, and the tail is a trifle shorter. In other respects they are similar.—The Grey Wagtail is extremely partial to washing, and it is extremely pleasing to watch it, on a hot summer’s day, fluttering in the clear and pebbly stream, and then repairing to the top of a bush or low tree, where the sun’s rays, and its own effective beak, soon dries its plumage, rendering it, if possible, more brilliant than it had previously been.

“The Grey Wagtail,” says my indefatigable correspondent, CHARLES LIVERPOOL, Esq., M.D., “is one of the few small British birds which I never endeavoured to preserve in confinement. I intend, however, shortly to make the trial, on the plan you suggested, which will doubtless succeed, at least if proper care be taken of the birds. When I have made the experiment, I will write you word of my success. I cannot, with you, consider it a pity to cage even these birds,\* because I think that almost any species may be rendered perfectly tame, and contented with their station; and long and extensive experience has hitherto borne out my assertion. Much more depends on the management of the person who has the care of the birds, than on the dispositions of the birds themselves. But to preserve birds successfully, a man must not be a mere bird-*fancier*—a most despicable race—but must possess an intimate acquaintance with the feathered tribes—in other words, he must be a true field Ornithologist, and an acute observer of Nature.”

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\* Most birds may, by proper treatment, be rendered comfortable and happy in confinement; but a caged Lark or Wagtail must necessarily be a miserable object.—N. W.

## GENUS BUDYTES, CUV. OATEAR.

SPRING OATEAR, *Budytes verna*, CUV.

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Still thy visits their bright looks bring,  
 And our prayers ascend the while,  
 That the Guide of thy feeble wing,  
 On the children's path may smile.

*Minstrelsy of the Woods.*

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SYNONYMS.—*Motacilla flava*, LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—*Budytes verna*, *Analyst*, No. 14.—Yellow Wagtail, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—MUDIE'S *Feath. Tribes.*—Spring Oatear, *Analyst*, No. 14.

THE habits and haunts of this species being totally distinct from those of the Wagtails, I entirely agree with CUVIER in the necessity of removing it from that genus, and propose to designate it the Spring Oatear,\* a name by which it is known in many parts of the country, and than which a more appropriate appellation could scarcely be selected.

The Spring Oatear arrives towards the end of March or the beginning of April, and, though by no means so common as the Wagtails, is pretty generally distributed over the kingdom, and can nowhere be said to be rare. It appears, however, most partial to extensive pastures and flat open commons, and seems to be fond of company, as it generally resorts to those fields which are well stocked with cows and sheep, and, indeed, I seldom remember to have met with it in unoccupied pastures, or in fields even temporarily deserted by the flocks. Thus the application of CUVIER'S generic name *Budytes*, or *cattle attender*, is sufficiently obvious.

It may, however, well be doubted whether it feeds in company with the cattle from pure *love* of them, but rather, I

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\* I first hinted that this species should be termed the Spring Oatear, but I am happy to find that my friend S. D. W. (see *Analyst*, Nos. 13 & 14) has been beforehand in the publication of it.

opine, on account of the immense number of flies and other insects, with which the cows and sheep are incessantly tormented. Thus the cows and the Oatears are of mutual service to each other; the former furnishing food to their tiny benefactors, at the same time that they are eased of their insect pests; and the birds are of singular service to the cattle just in those dry upland districts which are the favourite haunts of the Oatear, and where, for want of streams or pools of water, life would otherwise be insupportable to the patient animals. It is almost a wonder that the Spring Oatear—like many other birds which actually do good where they are *supposed* to be most mischievous—has not been charged with some evil design against the cow, as it may constantly be observed to run between her legs, and close to her head, ever and anon picking up the minute insects which there abound; and it is probably only its small size and *apparent* insignificance that has saved it from such calumnies, to which almost all benefactors are obnoxious. The Fern Nightjar\* (*Vociferator melolontha*) has from time immemorial been accused of sucking the milk of cows and goats, merely for performing by night the same benefit as our indefatigable Oatear does by day. But then much is doubtless owing to the suspicious time at which the Nightjar appears, and to its actually leaping up at the cows' udders and legs, in order to obtain the insects and larvæ lodged in the poor animal's skin, or preparing to deposit their eggs there. Ornithologists have long since renounced the idea of their sucking the milk of the cows—that being totally impossible—as an absurd superstition, but most inconsistently and unaccountably preserve "Goatsucker" and *Caprimulgus* as classical names!—I have actually witnessed a gentleman, at the British Museum, pointing out the innocent Nightjar to his sons as "*the bird which sucks the milk of cows and goats at night, in summer!*" and hence the evil of continuing the terms

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\* *Fern* Nightjar is scarcely exclusive enough to be a good appellation; but at present I know of no better.

“Goatsucker” and *Caprimulgus*. There are doubtless many persons who, like Mr. STRICKLAND (see *Analyst*, Vol. II. p. 317—18), would prefer remaining in error all their lives, to making any change for the better, however slight and easily effected that change might be; but it is to be hoped, that the mass of intelligent and *unprejudiced* Ornithologists will, ere long, discard appellations so replete with absurdity and so apt to deceive. To return, however, to our little *Budytes*, whom we left feeding amongst the cattle, in the pasture.

This bird has received the popular designations “Oatear” and “oatseed-bird,” not, as some suppose, on account of its feeding on oats or any other corn—for it is wholly insectivorous—but because those extensive upland districts, which it frequents, are more favourable to the growth of oats than to that of any other kind of grain, and because, moreover, it resorts to these corn fields on its first arrival in Britain.

Although you must not look for the Spring Oatear near the margins of running streams—where the Wagtails may invariably be met with—as its favourite haunts, yet it enjoys a bath on a hot summer’s day fully as much as the true Wagtails, and I have frequently seen it, especially about the time of corn-harvest, refreshing itself on the brink of a clear pebbly stream, and afterwards preening its feathers on a clear sunny bank. A *Wagtail* would retire, for this purpose, to the topmost sprig of a tall bush, or the ledge of a house. Thus we find that its habits differ essentially and entirely from those of the Wagtails:—it is not so partial to the neighbourhood of water, seldom or never perches, and its elongated hind claw clearly indicates it to be a grass bird. It is also considerably shy and more difficult of approach, which, in conjunction with the loneliness of its haunts, accounts for its habits being much less known than those of the Wagtails, to which it is closely allied, though it forms a distinct and well-marked genus.

Even MUDIE seems less familiar with this species than with most other British birds, but his description of it is, as usual, entirely correct in every particular. It is most active in the

middle of the day in June and July, and then it is that they are most busily employed in ridding the cattle of their insect pests. A little before dusk they are relieved by the Nightjars, who keep watch almost the whole night; and the cows are evidently aware of the service, as they never attempt to molest the birds. The nightly capture of the flies by the Fern Nightjar (vulgarly "Fern Owl," "Goat-sucker," "Night Hawk," &c.) is, in England,\* by no means a common sight, but with a little attention to the haunts of the Spring Oatear, this bird may be seen at almost any time between March and September. If you go expecting to see a "Yellow Wagtail," it is more than probable you will be disappointed, as what is termed the Yellow Wagtail (Spring Oatear) has decidedly more of green than yellow about it;—the *Motacilla cinerea* would be more properly termed the Yellow Wagtail, and the subject of the present article, if a Wagtail at all, and if named after its colour, the *Green* Wagtail. This, however, might cause confusion—the Grey Wagtail must, therefore, retain its present appellation, and *Budytes verna* receive that which I have here given it. The Grey Wagtail is a much handsomer bird, both as regards elegance of shape and brightness of colour, than the species now under consideration.

I have little doubt but that the correspondent in the *Analyst*, Vol. II. p. 426, who signs himself "Querist," has mistaken the Grey Wagtail for the Spring Oatear—an error into which even the accurate WHITE of Selborne fell—the second bird he mentions being doubtless the species whose habits I am now detailing. "Querist" appears to be little conversant with the haunts, habits, and general economy of this bird—if he were, he would never have mistaken it for a Lark, though it doubtless indicates a distant affinity to that genus, by its lengthened hind claw, and by its frequenting ploughed fields and pastures.

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\* In America nothing is commoner than to see the various members of the Nightjar family (*Vociferatoridæ*) performing this feat; for an account of which, see WATERTON'S *Wanderings in South America*.

in which localities its near neighbours—in systems at least—seldom or never occur.

Though the Spring Oatear is not a typical *Motacilla*, yet it does nevertheless wag its tail; it has not, however, so long a tail to wag, and altogether shows a decided departure from the true Wagtails. Almost every one who lives in the country, and whose thoughts are not too deeply engrossed by the soul-absorbing desire of amassing wealth to observe Nature, must have remarked that the tail is not merely moved up and down, but that it is accompanied by a kind of lateral motion, or at least that the tail is partially spread at the time of wagging, which gives it a flirting unsteady appearance.

The Spring Oatear is entirely devoid of musical genius, having only a sharp shrill note at its command, which it utters chiefly when in active motion on the ground, or in flying from place to place.

The nest is formed of moss and bents or dry grass, and lined with hair. The eggs, from four to six in number, frequently the latter, are of a wood brown colour, marked with reddish brown spots, distributed equally over the whole surface. The nest is generally situate in an open field, mostly grass fields, but sometimes in corn and even peas; if in the first, under the shelter of a tuft of grass, and, according to MUDIE (see his exquisite *Feathered Tribes*, Vol. I. p. 280), at the root of a tree, but this I have not hitherto been able to verify. SELBY says it has two broods in the year (in this resembling the Grey Wag-tail), and this I consider very probable, having occasionally found the nest, with eggs, so late as the end of July, and even in the beginning of August, in stubble fields. It is possible that these late broods are compelled to remain with us the whole year, as individuals are sometimes met with even in mid-winter. Some of my readers may perhaps be surprised that these late broods should not follow their brethren over the seas, as soon as they are capable of the exertion; but the instinct which induces them to emigrate, only lasts for about a fortnight, and the very late broods most likely feel no inclina-

tion to leave the country, by the time that their powers are fully matured. Indeed it is very probable that half a dozen of any migratory species of the Warbler family, if turned loose a month or six weeks after the usual period of their departure, would make no efforts to quit the country.

This species is more easily preserved in confinement than the Wagtails, on account of its less aquatic habits. Notwithstanding, however, that it inhabits higher up than the Wagtails, yet it frequently descends to the low grounds, approaches the margins of streams, and searches for insects along with its congeners,\* and *then* it is noticed by the casual observer, but only as a rare or "curious" bird. It departs in September, assembling for some time previous in small flocks of fifteen or twenty, in those localities in which their nests had been constructed. It is supposed by some accurate Ornithologists, that a few remain in the warm downs, through the winter, but it is more than probable that these are birds of a late brood, which were not fully fledged when the rest of the species took leave of our bright and blessed shores.

*Description ; Male.*—Head and upper parts yellowish olive ; under parts pale gamboge yellow, lightest at the vent. Wings dusky black ; coverts marked with light yellow. Middle tail feathers margined with bright yellow ; the two outer feathers almost entirely white. Tarsi and claws dark wood brown ; hind claw long and nearly straight. Over the eye is a pale streak of gamboge yellow.

*Female.*—Disposition of the colours the same, but more dusky.

*Young.*—Dusky oil-green, with very little yellow.

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\* The word *congener* is not here to be understood in its literal sense, as the only other British species of the genus is extremely rare. The species immediately allied to it, the Wagtails, *Motacilla*, are alluded to.



BLUEHEADED OATEAR, *Budytes cyanocephala*, N. WOOD.

SYNONYMS.—*Motacilla flava*,\* Gmel. *Linn.*—*TEMM. Man. d'Orn.*—*Motacilla verna*, BRISS. *Orn.*—*Motacilla chrysogastra*, BECHST. *Naturg. Deut.*—*Motacilla neglecta*, GOULD'S *Birds of Europe.*—*Gelbe Bachstelze*, MEY. *Tasch. Deut.*—*Geele Kwickstaart*, SEPP'S *Nederl. Vog.*—*Bergeronnette de printemps*, BUFF. *Ois.*—*GERARD. Tableau Elém.*—*Bergeronnette printanière*, *TEMM. Man. d'Orn.*—*LESS. Man. d'Orn.*—*Cutrettola di primavera*, *Stor. Ucc.*—*Grey-headed Oatear*, *Analyst*, No. 15.—*Blueheaded Wagtail*, *JENYNS'S Man. of Br. Vert. Anim.*

CONSIDERABLE confusion has hitherto existed with regard to this species, owing partly to the specific name *Spring* having been given, in several languages, to this as well as the preceding Oatear. Thus in English we have the “Spring Wagtail,” in French “*Bergeronnette printanière ou de printemps*,” in Italian, “*Cuttretola di primavera*,” &c. The specific designation “Yellow” has likewise been given to the two birds, as *Geele Kwickstaart*, *Gelbe Bachstelze*, *Yellow Wagtail*, &c., and *Motacilla flava* has been applied to both species. Now, to obviate this confusion—having established that the species are perfectly distinct—I have quoted all the synonyms properly belonging to the Oatears, for the first time, and propose, moreover, entirely to abandon the name *flava*, as calculated to increase the confusion already existing; and have given to the Spring Oatear (the Yellow Wagtail of British authors) the name *Budytes verna*, and to the Blueheaded Oatear (the *Bergeronnette printanière*, *Geele Kwickstaart*, and *Gelbe Backstelze* of the Continent) *Budytes cyanocephala*. No one who has seen the two species, or who glances his eye over the description of the plumage of the present one, can possibly mistake the two Oatears.—The following is taken from *JENYNS'S Manual*, p. 116:—

“Entire length six inches.

“Closely resembling the last species, from which it scarcely

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\* TEMMINCK is in error when he quotes *Motacilla flava* of LATHAM, and the “Yellow Wagtail” of EDWARDS, as synonyms of this species, those referring of course to the *Budytes verna* of this work.

differs excepting in the colour of the head and streak above the eye: the former, instead of being olivaceous like the rest of the upper parts, is of a fine lead grey, approaching to blue; the latter, as well as a second streak beneath the eyes, is white. The *female* has the colours paler, and the eye-streaks indistinctly marked. Eggs, 'greenish olive, with light flesh-coloured blotches.'"

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GENUS ANTHUS, BECHST. PIPIT.

ROCK PIPIT, *Anthus obscurus*, BLYTH.

SYNONYMS.—*Alauda obscura*, LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Alauda petrosa*, Linn. *Trans.*—*Anthus rupestris*, NILS. *Orn. Suec.*—*Anthus aquaticus*, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—*Anthus petrosus*, FLEM. *Br. Anim.*—Dusky Lark, LEW. *Br. Birds.*—DON. *Br. Birds.*—Rock Lark, MONT. *Orn. Dict.*—Sea Lark, WALC. *Syn.*—Rock Pipit, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—*Analyst*, No. 14.

I AM informed, on the authority of that acute Ornithologist Mr. BLYTH, that the Rock Pipit of Britain is wholly distinct from the *Anthus aquaticus* of TEMMINCK, BECHSTEIN, and other Continental writers, though the two species are doubtless very closely allied. And, under this impression, I am induced to omit the names given by foreign Ornithologists to the *Anthus aquaticus*, and have designated the British bird, at the suggestion of Mr. BLYTH, *Anthus obscurus*.

As the Rock Pipit does not occur in the midland counties, I shall, for the second time, have recourse to MONTAGU'S highly interesting and accurate *Ornithological Dictionary*:—

“The length of this species is six inches and three quarters; weight about seven drams. The bill is dusky, near seven eighths of an inch long, from the apex to the corner of the mouth; irides hazel: upper part of the head, back of the neck, and tail coverts, are of a dark brown; back and scapulars of the same colour, obscurely marked with dusky strokes; above the eye and beneath the ear is a lightish-coloured stroke; the throat whitish; breast and belly yellowish white, the former blotched with large dusky spots; the sides marked with strokes

of the same ; under tail coverts light brown ; the two middle feathers of the tail dark brown, the others dusky ; outer one of a dirty yellow, white on the interior of the web and the point of the exterior ; in the second feather the light colour is just visible at the end ; the quill-feathers and coverts are dusky, slightly edged with light brown ; legs and toes dusky ; claws black ; hind claw four tenths of an inch long, and somewhat crooked.

“ Both sexes are alike.

“ The young birds are not maturely feathered till after the winter of the first year ; till then the upper parts have a tinge of olivaceous ash-colour ; beneath the lighter parts are yellowish, and the coverts of the wings more deeply margined with light brown ; the base of the under mandible and legs less dusky.

“ We discovered these birds in great plenty on the coast of South Wales, where it was known by some of the natives by the name of Rock Lark ; and afterwards found it not uncommon on all the coasts from Kent to the Land’s End in Cornwall, where the shores were abrupt ; and have no doubt it inhabits most of the rocky shores throughout the kingdom. It seems wholly confined to the neighbourhood of the sea, and is never found, even in winter, more remote than in the contiguous marshes within the occasional influx of the tide, depending chiefly on marine insects for its subsistence, and has never been observed to be gregarious.

“ The song, the manner of flying, and its habits in general are so like those of the Meadow Pipit, that it is probably owing to this circumstance it has remained so long in obscurity.

“ It begins breeding early in the spring. The nest is made of dry grass, marine plants, and very little moss externally, and lined with fine grass, with a few long hairs. This is generally placed on the shelf of a rock near the sea ; sometimes at a considerable height, where there are a few scanty bushes or tufts of grass. It lays four or five eggs, of a dirty white, sprinkled with numerous specks of brown, darker and confluent

at the larger end, so as to appear on that part wholly of that colour; in size they rather exceed those of the Meadow Pipit, weighing about thirty-six grains."

From the communications of scientific correspondents in various parts of the kingdom, I gather that the Rock Pipit is by no means rare or locally distributed. According to SELBY, it occurs plentifully in Northumberland, and I am informed, by CHARLES WATERTON, Esq., of Walton Hall,\* that it is common at Flamborough Head. Towards the close of the year 1835, Mr. BLYTH obtained a live specimen, and on the 21st of Nov., 1835, that gentleman thus writes to me:—"My Rock Pipit is still doing well, and has already become tame, or rather fearless; but most birds very soon lose their wildness when placed in a cage containing several tame companions. It seems likely to live, at least as long as I shall want it, and when I have become a little more acquainted with its cage manners, I will send you some account of the habits of my amusing little prisoner. The Rock Pipit of British and Continental authors are now determined to be distinct species, and therefore you had better describe the former under the name *Anthus obscurus*, in order that it may no longer be confounded with the *Anthus aquaticus* of BECHSTEIN and TEMMINCK."

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\* I imagine that most of my readers have met with the highly interesting account of the park of Walton Hall, by JAMES STUART MENTEATH, Esq. Those who have not, I refer to the *Magazine of Natural History*, Vol. VIII. p. 28.

MEADOW PIPIT, *Anthus pratensis*, BECHST.

Bird of the happy, heaven-ward song!  
 Could but the Poet act thy part,  
 His soul, up-borne on wings as strong  
 As thought can give—from earth might start,  
 And with a far diviner art  
 Than genius ever can supply,  
 As thou the ear, might glad the heart,  
 And bring down music from the sky.\*

BERNARD BARTON.

SYNONYMS.—*Alauda pratensis*, † LINN. *Syst.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Alauda campestris*, LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Anthus pratensis*, BECHST. *Naturg. Deut.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Meadow Pipit, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—MUDIE'S *Feath. Tribes*.

THE Meadow Pipit is the commonest and most familiar British species of the genus, being met with, equally plentifully, in the "high and dry" districts, in extensive and dreary heathy wastes, and in the more cultivated meadows and lowlands. It is resident in Britain, and, though a partial migration takes place in some parts of the country, with the fluctuations of season and climate—at least so our authorities inform us—I have met with it, and that abundantly, throughout the year, in the principal field of my ornithological researches—Derbyshire and Staffordshire. Perhaps the name *Meadow Pipit* is not the most applicable that could be found; for though the bird is doubtless frequently met with in fields and meadows, yet bleak and open commons, and hilly or mountainous districts are its favourite haunts, and are, indeed, the only localities in which they may be looked for in abundance, and with certainty. But while I maintain that these are the places in which it is most commonly found, yet I would by no means pronounce

\* The poem from which this stanza is extracted is addressed, in the original, to the Sky Lark (*Alauda arvensis*), but it is equally applicable, perhaps, to the subject of our present memoir, the Meadow Pipit.

† SELBY has, by mistake, quoted this name from WILLUGHBY and RAY.

them to be its *exclusive* haunts, having myself seen it in almost every variety of situation, from the most hilly and open spots, to the lowest and most marshy grounds. It is, however, by no means a bird of the bog, only occurring there once in a way, and never sojourning long in such damp unwholesome spots, though it may occasionally “*stay dinner.*” It seldom approaches gardens or houses, and appears to view the progress of cultivation with an evil eye, although I have found its nest, in one or two instances, in the immediate vicinity of farm-houses.

The song of the Meadow Pipit bears some resemblance to that of the Sky Lark, being rather monotonous. In power, however, it is greatly inferior to that “bird of the heaven-ward song,” being scarce audible except when heard close; but the strains are, in my opinion, somewhat superior in melody to those of the Sky Lark, though they will not bear a moment’s comparison with the delightfully sweet notes of the Wood Lark. Probably few will be found to agree with me as to the superiority of the song of this bird over the highly-lauded melody of the Sky Lark, but I think the reasons given, in the account of that bird, for this apparently universal opinion, may probably be considered a satisfactory explanation of the circumstance. To the common observer, moreover, the Meadow Pipit, from the nature of its haunts, is a bird little known, and few perhaps have ever heard its song, except those who devote themselves exclusively to ornithological pursuits; or, if noticed, by the traveller pushing his weary way over the bleak and trackless moor, is mistaken for the Sky Lark. The latter, however, is exclusively a bird of the cultivated lands, and is never met with in the desolate waste. Such a mistake could not possibly have been committed by the merest tyro in Ornithology, or by anyone who had perused such a work as the *Feathered Tribes* \* of

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\* If there be any one of my readers who possess not a copy of this invaluable work, I would recommend him to procure it without further delay, as the best work, describing the habits, haunts, nidification, plumage, &c., of British birds, in existence.

the zealous and indefatigable MUDIE. I think it would be well worth-while to cage this species, in consideration of its musical powers, but, on the other hand, when we reflect how little calculated it is for the narrow limits of a wire cage, no one with an active organ of Benevolence would consent to deprive it of its liberty, merely for the selfish gratification of listening to its song.

The flight of this bird, like that of the other Pipits, and that of the Wagtails and Oatears, is interrupted and *jerky*, and it seldom remains long on the wing, except when singing, and then for a considerably shorter period than the Sky Lark. The Meadow Pipit usually pours forth its melody whilst rising perpendicularly in the air, which is performed with a singular quivering action of the wings. It seldom mounts so high as to escape observation, but, having attained a reasonable altitude, begins to think it high time to return from its aerial excursion, and descends, retracing its steps in a perpendicular line. Now it is singular, that the song is not commenced until the bird begins its descent; or rather, it hovers for a few instants at the top of its flight, singing all the time, while the Sky Lark offers its "grateful tribute" in its ascent as well as in descending. And thus it is impossible for any one who has "eyes in his head," to mistake the two species. In the first part of the descent, the tremulous motion of the wings is still observed, but, as the bird approaches the ground, it becomes less and less apparent, until it at length ceases altogether, and the wings and tail are held motionless, in order to receive the breeze and break the fall; when about to alight, it flies in a sloping direction. It usually carols right above the nest, frequently mounting and returning many times during the course of a single hour. The song is commenced early in the morning, ceases for the most part at noon, and is again continued towards the cool of the evening. On a clear evening, it sometimes sings long after dusk, though it then mounts to a very inconsiderable height.

One curious circumstance appears to have been wholly over-

looked by authors, and that is, that the Meadow Pipit, though mostly an aerial songster, is not exclusively so. I have many times known it sing on the ground, on a stone, or, occasionally, on the top of a low bush. The circumstance is not of very rare occurrence—at least it is not here, and probably not elsewhere—and it is surprising, that it should hitherto have passed unnoticed. Towards the early part of the season, and again at the close of it, are the periods at which I have observed it most frequently, and therefore it may possibly be the first effort of young birds, yet incapable of “gaining the sky;” this, however, is only conjecture, and therefore of comparatively little value—but to the *fact* I invite the attention of the observing Ornithologist.

The Meadow Pipit is a ground builder, constructing its nest mostly in meadows or commons, in a thick tuft of grass, amongst heath, or under the cover of a low stunted bush. Here it establishes a somewhat loose and untidy piece of architecture, consisting chiefly of dry grass and other herbage, and lined with the same substance, but of a finer texture; a few horse-hairs neatly woven within, completes the whole. The eggs are of a dark brown, obscurely spotted all over with specks of a darker hue. The usual number of eggs is five, but I have frequently seen six, and likewise four. According to my experience, they are little subject to variety, and I am happy to find my testimony supported, in this instance, by my able oological friend, Mr. HEWITSON.

A grassy open spot, “over the hills, and far away” from the dwellings of man, is commonly selected as the fittest locality for incubation, but it may be found elsewhere, if vigilantly sought after. I have seen it in a field of tares, quite close to a farm house, in this neighbourhood. Day after day had I witnessed the aerial excursions of the male, exactly at the same spot each time, well knowing that there must be a nest somewhere, and for hours did I search for it with the utmost vigilance, yet could I never succeed in discovering it, until, happening to stroll by the suspected locality one evening, I spied the female making



off from her nest, amongst the tares, with the utmost precipitation. Following her with my eyes, I perceived the herbage rustling as she passed along, but, though I watched for a considerable time, I could not find that she had recourse to her wings. And this was doubtless the artful method in which she had previously escaped me. Having marked the exact place from which she flew, or rather fluttered, I had now no difficulty in finding the nest, which was sedulously concealed amongst the tares, with grass wound round the top of the nest—an artifice to which many of our smaller ground builders have recourse, and which had doubtless greatly increased the difficulty of discovering the spot. It is highly interesting to watch the cunning tricks to which birds frequently have recourse, when they incubate in an unusual locality. There was nothing remarkable in the construction of the nest itself, which contained four young birds, very recently ushered into life.

Two or three other instances of its building nearer to houses and other buildings than is its wont, have fallen under my observation; the one in a tuft of grass in a walled garden, and the other on the out-skirts of a small wood, close to the village of Scropton. In both these instances, however, the nests were built in little-frequented spots (the garden being almost deserted), and were, however, carefully concealed. I believe I should never have discovered either of them, had it not been that the male was constantly observed, especially in the morning, hovering aloft in exactly the same place, ascending, as usual, in perfect silence, but bringing melody along with it in its descent. The nest situated in the deserted garden was despoiled of its contents by some four-footed plunderer, and for days afterwards the unhappy birds were seen about the place, either perched on the wall, or on the roof of a neighbouring out-house, keeping up a continual and doleful chirping, the meaning of which could not be mistaken. Nor did their grief subside—at least their dismal chirping did not—for above a week, when the inconsolable pair finally quitted the odious garden.

It is curious to observe the different degrees in which the various species of birds are affected by the loss of their nests and young ; and the feelings even of individuals of the same species vary considerably. Rob the blithe Chaff Finch, or the gay and lively Whin Linnet of their progeny, and they fly away from the spot never to return, seeming to consider the affair by no means a serious one, but do likewise to the Brake Nightingale, Meadow Pipit, the grave and sombre Green Grosbeak, or even to the pert and noisy House Sparrow, and the result will be very different. And this variety of character will be found to depend on the comparative development of the organ of Philoprogenitiveness. To the same principle, likewise, may be referred the different degrees of attachment displayed by different birds to their nestlings, when the latter are caged. Every farmer's wife must have remarked the great variety which prevails amongst the sitting Fowls, and I have no doubt but a practical Phrenologist might detect the partial deficiency of the organ of Philoprogenitiveness in the unsteady sitters, and, of course, a correspondingly full development in the close sitters. It is by no means a difficult matter to determine some of the leading characteristics of birds by an examination of the head. In the Carrier Pigeon the organ of Locality is particularly prominent ; in the Spotted Starling, Caution ; in the dog—which, by the way, is not a bird!—Adhesiveness, &c. But we must, however reluctantly, tear ourselves from this most interesting subject, and hasten to the conclusion of the biography of the Meadow Pipit, with due speed.

Its food alone remains unrevealed. To the meadow then let us repair, and endeavour to discover the nature of its sustenance. Flies appear to form a considerably smaller part of its daily fare than with the Wagtails and Oatears, and I do not remember ever to have seen it dart into the air in pursuit of winged insects, in the manner already related of the above-mentioned birds. It feeds chiefly on worms, caterpillars, and various kinds of small slugs, in seeking which it often turns up small stones on the commons it frequents ; beetles, centi-

pedes, and different crustaceous insects, are likewise devoured with avidity, whenever they are unfortunate enough to fall in the way of the famished Meadow Pipit, whose hunger—"the best of sauces," and, I may add, the only good one—moreover, is greatly sharpened by the cold and bracing wind of the high grounds and bleak extensive moors which are its favourite resorts. In winter, they are less at a loss for food, in the event of severe and long protracted frost, than many birds of the cultivated and sheltered lowlands, and, probably, a far smaller proportion of Meadow Pipits fall a prey to either hunger or cold, than our friendly—especially friendly in times of need—and familiar neighbours, the Hedge Dunnock, Ivy Wren, Robin Redbreast, Goldcrested Kinglet, and many others, whose numbers are annually thinned to a considerable extent, by the unrelenting rigours of our northern winters.

The plumage of the Meadow Pipit becomes far brighter after the autumnal moult, and hence I would advise collectors to procure their specimens in the winter months, though it is of course necessary to have specimens of both stages.

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TREE PIPIT, *Anthus arboreus*, BECHST.

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I hear thee again in the early morn,  
 Like the earth's own matin lay  
 When the Lark upsprings from the waving corn,  
 With blithe carol, away, away!

Miss TWAMLEY'S *Poems*.

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SYNONYMS.—*Alauda trivialis*, LINN. *Syst.*—GMEL. *Linn.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Alauda minor*, GMEL. *Linn.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Anthus arboreus*, BECHST. *Naturg. Deut.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Tree Pipit, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—MUDIE'S *Feath. Tribes*.

THE hind claw of the Pipits is more elongated than that of the Oatears, and the bill, in some of the species, a trifle longer, indicating, in a beautiful and obvious manner, the gradual approach of the Wagtails to the Larks, through the agency of

the Oatears and Pipits, which, in British birds, form the intermediate genera, and, consequently, the connecting links. Mr. BLYTH has advised me to remove the Larks entirely from the *Fringillidæ*, and proposes to arrange them in the *Sturnidæ* (Starling family), close to the exotic genus *Sturnella*. I can, however, by no means consent, even on the authority of my talented friend, to tear the Lark genus (*Alauda*) from its immediate and obvious affinities in its present station, closely allied on the one hand to the Pipits, on the other to the Longspurs, and, through these, to the Buntings. I have, therefore, preferred adopting the arrangement of SELBY, in the present instance as well as elsewhere. We must, however, now turn our attention exclusively to the Tree Pipit.

The Tree Pipit, though occasionally mistaken for the Meadow Pipit, is easily distinguished from it by a practised eye, the specific characters being sufficiently obvious. Unlike the previous species, it is migratory, appearing at the end of April or the beginning of May, and departing in the middle of May. It is nowhere so abundant as the Meadow Pipit, and the haunts of the two species differ considerably; but it is distributed as equally and widely in Britain as that bird, and is, I think, nearly as plentiful in my neighbourhood, though it is less easily seen, and consequently less noticed by the careless observer. As the formation of its hind claw indicates, it is much less of a ground bird than the preceding species, and more partial to low and cultivated districts, mostly frequenting *ploughed* fields or the outskirts of woods. In meadows and pastures it occurs much more rarely, in heathy commons or barren open wastes never. In the low and cultivated part of Derbyshire where I reside, there is a considerable portion of arable land, and the country is, for the most part, warm and sheltered; and here the Tree Pipit occurs abundantly, but I am informed, on good authority, that it is extremely rare towards the Peak, being little met with in the stone wall country round about Buxton, near the elevated and romantic Matlock, and in the picturesque neigh-

bourhood of Dovedale. The extensive and dreary moors are equally unfavourable to it, but, on the whole, it is far from rare in the midland counties. In the vicinity of Boilston—which may be termed the aviary of Derbyshire\*—it is particularly plentiful, and it is here chiefly that I have been enabled to become intimately acquainted with its habits, though I have also frequent opportunities of observing it in my more immediate neighbourhood.

The Tree Pipit commences its song soon after its arrival, and, having selected a mate, shortly proceeds to the business of incubation. The notes bear little or no resemblance to those of the Meadow Pipit (though SELBY finds some points of similarity between them), but are of longer duration, more varied, and perhaps more melodious; but they have undoubtedly less character and spirit than the very pleasing strains of the Meadow Pipit. Unlike the latter, the Tree Pipit frequently sings on the top of a hedge or young tree, but frequently also on the wing. This manœuvre is performed in much the same manner as by the Meadow Pipit, singing only on the descent. The ascent, however, is not conducted in perfect silence, a kind of twitter being emitted during its upward course, as if congratulating itself on the progress it was making in its heavenward journey. Having attained a proper altitude, it flutters a few moments in the same place, commences its melody, and sets off on its return for the “dull tame earth.” In descending, the wings are used less vigorously than in ascending, and at about half way the wings and tail are held expanded to receive the wind and break the fall, and the few last feet of its flight are performed obliquely, as has already been observed in the preceding article.† The flight—though not the song—of this

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\* For many a mile round Foston—the common centre of my ornithological rambles—I know of no place so well suited to the researches of the field Ornithologist as Boilston, on account of the abundance, both of species and individuals, of the feathered race. Rolleston and Sapperton are likewise good, but greatly inferior to Boilston.

† Of course this can only hold good in cases where the bird does alight on the ground; but the aerial journey frequently terminates on the top of a tree or bush, and that much more commonly than with the preceding species.

bird greatly resembles that of the Meadow Pipit, but is more regular, and is not broken by those peculiar consecutive "leaps" so apparent in the upward course of the above-named species. The song, likewise, is less desultory and interrupted.

The nest consists of dry grass and fibres of roots, with the addition of moss, which latter article at once distinguishes it from that of the Meadow Pipit; the lining is the same—fine dry grass and horse-hair. The structure is placed on the ground, in a thick tuft of herbage, or sometimes under a low bush. This is the usual site, and indeed it is seldom met with elsewhere, though I once had a specimen brought to me, by a labourer, which was situated on the lowest branch of a small thick bush. Luckily, the branch on which it rested was cut off, but I unfortunately left it in an outbuilding, and having forgotten it at night, never saw it more. My informant said that he was little versed in such matters, having for many *lustrums* discontinued the bird-nesting line of business, but he supposed it was the property of a "Bull Finch!"\* After such an hypothesis, I had truly no difficulty in believing his assertion, that he was *little versed in such matters!* Frequently, however, I have found the labouring class to be acute observers of Nature, and the above ludicrous mistake may well be excused, when we find (as I have done), that those undefinable personages who term themselves *gentlemen*, scarce know a House Sparrow from a Hedge Dunnock, though they may, peradventure, have advanced so far in Natural History as to distinguish a cabbage from a rose!

The Tree Pipit builds much nearer houses than the Meadow Pipit, and I have, not uncommonly, seen its nest quite close to a much frequented walk, though well concealed from the "public gaze," by the surrounding herbage. I particularly remember to have found one, a few years ago, close beside the

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\* This name is usually joined (bulfinch), but that only makes the matter worse, as a generic name once appropriated to one group, can be given to no other genus, under any combination whatever.

walk attached to the new Pump Room, at Leamington, the female continuing to sit whilst crowds of ladies and gentlemen were continually passing and repassing. For a considerable time, I believe I was the only individual acquainted with the situation of this structure, and probably I should never have discovered it, had it not been for the indefatigable ardour with which the male prosecuted his musical labours near the spot. In the middle of the day the male, as is the case with most of the smaller singing birds, took his turn on the nest for about an hour, but he was considerably more coy than his mate. The moment I stopped opposite the nest, and cast a glance at it, he was sure to betake himself to his wings with the utmost precipitation, which was the original cause of my finding the nest. The female, however, was far more prudent and *judeecious*, allowing me to make a very near approach to her domicile, and when she did depart, effecting her escape in the most careful manner imaginable, creeping silently out of her nest, making her way through the long grass, and, having arrived at a suitable distance from the place, took to her wings, but even then only skimmed along the surface of the ground, until I lost sight of her in the distance. In the first instance we perceive mere Caution, and in the second Caution combined with Secretiveness and Philoprogenitiveness. The prudent mother hatched her young in due season, but, having occasion to quit Leamington for the country a few days afterwards, I never ascertained whether the brood escaped in safety.

The eggs are four or five in number, ash coloured, marked with brownish purple spots all over. In some specimens the ground colour is the same as that of the spots, but of course of a much lighter shade. They are of a handsome shape, but taper little, and are somewhat larger than those of the Chaff Finch. The Tree Pipit appears to be jealous of any liberties that the experimental Ornithologist may happen to take with its nest; at least I have twice known immediate desertion to be the result of extracting one or more of the eggs, or of substituting them for those of another species, even though the

eggs inserted bore a considerable resemblance to those extracted. I intend to renew my researches on this head, at the earliest opportunity, though I have little hopes of succeeding with so shy a bird as the Tree Pipit.

All the Pipits are more at their ease on the ground than when perching, on account of the more or less elongated hind claw, and they run with ease and celerity on the grass. The Tree Pipit, however, possesses a shorter and more curved hind claw than the Meadow Pipit, and, accordingly, it is frequently observed to perch on trees and bushes, and even on railings and the ledges of houses, when it approaches the immediate neighbourhood of these, which does not occur very frequently, its shy and retired habits leading it to shun, as much as possible, the dwellings of man. But, whilst it studiously conceals itself, for the most part, from our notice, yet it inhabits much nearer our houses than the generality of individuals residing in the country have any notion of; and, in these parts at least, I seldom take a walk, in any of the nearest woods, without meeting with several of them, though the researches, even of the Naturalist, after this species, must be carried on as silently as possible. Otherwise, the somewhat timid objects of your pursuit well know how to elude observation, flying close to the ground—if in a ploughed field—or, if in a copse overgrown with underwood, frequently squatting down until you are passed, as in the following instance, which happened in the autumn of 1833:—

Strolling through a thick grove one beautiful evening in November\* with a sporting friend—in search of rare birds, but not BIRDS *par excellence*—we could scarce meet with a single creature worth the cost of a charge of powder and shot. But at length, in tearing our way, to the best of our ability, through some stubborn and thickly-matted briars, a small bird

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\* It seems almost contradictory to speak of a *fine* day in the gloomy and suicidal month of November; but the November of 1835 was a remarkably bright month, as a meteorological table kept by myself, for some time past, abundantly testifies. In that year, December appeared to have usurped the place of November.



started, on our violently cudgelling the perverse bushes. I instantly cocked and fired, and our prey proved to be a fine Tree Pipit, which had just completed its autumnal moult, and was in beautiful plumage. Now we had traversed the very spot where this secretive creature lay at least a dozen times, violently beating the herbage all the while, and yet it stirred not. Had it preserved its station but a few moments longer, it had probably escaped its doom for a time. My friend termed the bird a Lark, seeing that it had an elongated hind claw—very well it was not a Sparrow!

Its food consists of worms, insects, grubs, and larvæ of different kinds, and its prey, which is found entirely in the animal kingdom, is almost entirely captured on the ground, whilst the lively little bird is running along the grass, or on the gravel walks. I have, however, occasionally known it hunt for insects on the branches of trees, but this does not appear to be a common occurrence; and, when resorted to, we perceive none of that agility and ceaseless activity which so eminently characterize the Tits and the Goldcrested Kinglet, in performing the same manœuvre. In fact, it then seems but ill at ease, and probably rather quits its ground hunting from necessity, than from any other cause.

## GENUS CORYDALLA, VIG. LAVROCK.

TAWNY LAVROCK, *Corydalla fusca*, VIG.

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I would not merely dream my life away  
 In fancied rapture, or imagined joy:  
 Nor that a perfum'd flower, a dew-gemm'd spray,  
 A murmuring brook, or any prouder toy,  
 Should, for its *own* sake, thought or song employ;  
 So far alone as Nature's charms can lead  
 To thee who fram'd them all, and canst destroy,  
 Or innocent enjoyment serve to feed;  
 Grant me to gaze and love, and thus thy works to read.

BERNARD BARTON.

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SYNONYMS.—*Alauda Lusitanica*,\* LATH. *Gen. Hist.*—*Anthus Richardi*, VIEILLOT in *Dict. d'Hist. Nat.*—TEMM. *Man. d'Orn.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—*Anthus fuscus*, *Analyst*, No. 13.—*Corydalla Richardi*, VIG. in *Zool. Journ.* No. 7.—*Corydalla fusca*, *Analyst*, No. 14.—Richard's Pipit, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Tawny Lavrock, *Analyst*, No. 14.

LITTLE further is known of the Tawny Lavrock, as a British bird, than that two or three specimens have, at different times, been shot in this country. One that was killed about fifteen years since, near London, came into the hands of that excellent systematic Ornithologist, Dr. VIGORS, and is, I believe, now in the Museum of the Zoological Society. As I cannot, of course, pretend to know anything of its habits, from my own observation, I present my readers with SELBY'S description, Vol. I. p. 264:—

“The capture of two or three specimens in the southern parts of Britain, within the last few years (and subsequent to the publication of the first edition of this work)†, entitles this species to be included in the list of our fauna as an occasional

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\* This synonym is referred to the present species on the authority of SELBY, though this author writes it *Lusitania*; on turning to LATHAM'S last work, I find *Lusitanica*.

† The first edition of SELBY'S *Illustrations of British Ornithology* appeared in 1825.—N. W.

visitant. In size it is superior to any of the other previously described species, and appears to connect them more immediately with the *Larks*, and the genus *Megalurus* of HORSFIELD; on which account it has, by Mr. VIGORS, been made the type of a genus which he names *Corydalla*, in his "Arrangement of the Genera of Birds." (*Zool. Journ.* No. 7.)

"Its habits and manners are stated to be similar to those of the Pipits. It is generally seen upon the ground, where it runs with great rapidity in pursuit of flies, grasshoppers, and other insects; and, like the Wagtails and other members of this sub-family, is in the frequent habit of raising and depressing its tail, accompanied at the same time by a lateral expansion of the feathers.

"It is met with in the warmer parts of Western Europe, but not numerously; and is supposed to be a native of Northern Africa. *Alauda Lusitana* of LATHAM, as far as can be judged from his very brief description, appears referable to this species."

The following particulars, from the able pen of Dr. VIGORS, and published in the *Zoological Journal*, Vol. I. p. 411-12, will, I am sure, be perused with interest:—

"Although the above species has been recently described by M. VIEILLOT, and admirably figured in the *Planches Coloriées*, I am induced to have it represented in the present number of this journal, as it forms an interesting addition to the Ornithology of the British Islands. The specimen, from which the accompanying figure has been taken, was captured alive some time since\* in the neighbourhood of London, and is now in my collection. It is a young bird, and nearly in the same state of plumage as the bird figured by M. Temminck (in the *Planches Coloriées*); the adult bird is distinguished by the greater strength of the colouring in general, and more particularly of that of the spots on the breast. The species is at present included in the genus *Anthus*; but the intelligent observer will at once detect a striking deviation from the type of that group, in the

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\* This was written in 1824.—N. W.

length of the legs and the hinder claw. In the former character the bird seems to correspond with the *Megalurus* of Dr. HORSFIELD, in the latter to approach the true *Alauda* of authors. I have laid a more detailed account of this [then] recent addition to the British Fauna before the Linnæan Society, to which I must refer the reader for further particulars, and a more enlarged description."

The representation of the Tawny Lavrock, alluded to by VIGORS in the above quotation, is beautifully and correctly executed, by that excellent artist, JAMES DE CARLE SOWERBY. It is likewise figured by SELBY, in his *Illustrations of British Ornithology*, plate c. fig. v.—MUDIE makes no mention of the bird, in his admirable *Feathered Tribes of the British Islands*, probably from his very laudable repugnance to compilation.—TEMMINCK acquaints us with its habits and general economy in his usual cursory manner, and it is much to be regretted that hitherto no Naturalist has published a satisfactory account of its manners. That of VIEILLOT, in the *Dictionnaire d'Histoire Naturelle*, article "PIPI" is probably the best that has yet appeared, and to this, accordingly, I now refer my readers, for a more minute description of the Tawny Lavrock, and to the *Planches Coloriées* or *Zoological Journal*, for coloured figures of it.

TRIBE III.—CONIROSTRES, CUV.

FAM. I.—FRINGILLIDÆ, VIG.

SUBFAM. I.—ALAUDINÆ.

GENUS ALAUDA, ANTIQ. LARK.

SKY LARK, *Alauda arvensis*, LINN.

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Songster of sky and cloud! to thee  
 Hath Heaven a joyous lot assign'd;  
 And thou, to hear those notes of glee,  
 Would'st seem therein thy bliss to find;  
 Thou art the first to leave behind  
 At day's return this lower earth,  
 And soaring as if on wings of wind  
 To spring whence light and life hath birth.

BERNARD BARTON.

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SYNONYMS.—*Alauda vulgaris*, WILL. *Orn.*—*Alauda arvensis*, LINN. *Syst.*—*SELBY'S Br. Orn.*—Sky Lark, *SELBY'S Br. Orn.*—MUDIE'S *Feath. Tribes.*

THE Sky Lark is one of the commonest and most familiar of our British songsters, being plentifully distributed over the British Islands, even so far northward as the Orkneys, for we find it included in Low's useful and excellent *Fauna Orcadensis*. It likewise possesses an extensive geographical range in foreign lands, but at present we shall consider it only as a British bird. It is resident with us throughout the year, though less observed in winter than during the breeding season, on account of its skulking and even hidling habits at that period, and because, moreover, the highly-lauded song is seldom or never heard, by ordinary persons, except in the spring and summer months. In autumn, indeed, after it has charmed us through the balmy seasons with its vernal melody, it becomes better known by the epicure, on the table, than as a songster, thousands being caught in nets, or shot, at this time, and sold at a

considerable price in the London markets. By far the greater number are captured by the London bird-catchers, with ground nets, and Dunstable has ever been famous for its Larks and claret, both of which might, in my opinion, well be dispensed with, as mere superfluities. Indeed we may observe, that the Lark-eating mania, even at Dunstable, is rapidly on the decline, and as we advance northward, and proceed further and further from the Lark-loving epicures, the custom is less and less in vogue, and I am happy to say that—as far as I have been able to learn—it has no supporters in these parts.

But a practice yet more to be depreciated than the slaughter of Larks,\* is the keeping it in confinement; inasmuch as in the former far less cruelty is exercised than in the latter. In merely killing the birds, but a moment's pain is experienced, but one would think every one ought to have a decided repugnance to feeding on song birds,† though if John Bull, with his characteristic Firmness,‡ is determined stoutly to maintain his *right* to feed on Larks, there is no disputing the matter. But, as regards the poor imprisoned wretches, Benevolence and Causality ought surely to teach us the impropriety of confining within the limits of a small wire cage the “songster of sky and cloud!” As, however, our own selfish gratification is usually of more weight than reason, and as it leaves the feelings of *others* out of the question, we shall probably continue to cage Larks as long as the sun rises in the east, asserting that the restless fluttering and banging against the top and sides of the cage, or the still more frequent settled gloom and despon-

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\* They are called *Larks*, but very frequently the good people of Dunstable are treated with *Buntings*, which they doubtless find equally “good eating;” though, were they aware of the circumstance, the supposed Larks would soon begin to taste rather *bitter*!

† In Italy and other southern countries, not only are singing birds, as Brake Nightingales, Ortolan Buntings, Canaries, and others, eaten, but a separate dish is likewise made of their ‘*tongues*!’ In so sultry a climate as that of Italy, however, there is some excuse for this custom, as the most delicate food is required by the inhabitants of such climates; but John Ox, one would think, needs no such extravagant resources.

‡ When these epithets commence with a capital letter, the organs of the brain are alluded to.

dence, are signs of happiness ; and, so long as such absurd arguments suit our purpose, they will not, you may depend upon it, be abandoned.

In this case, again, I am sorry to observe, that the Dunstable folks stand pre-eminent as prisoners of Larks, and more especially of the species under consideration. In passing through Dunstable, you will be astonished at the number of cages hanging up on either side the street, and these, for the most part, each contain a solitary and miserable Sky Lark. Every cottager seems to consider it indispensably necessary to possess a Sky Lark at the door of his tenement, regardless alike of the fluttering of his unhappy captive, its wretched and forlorn aspect, and dirty drooping plumage. And these poor unhappy creatures are kept in the worst manner imaginable. Rarely do you see a cup large enough for the bird to wash in, sometimes none at all, or the water is so muddy (from being left too long in the cage), as to render it almost worse than nothing. They are fed, for the most part, with bruised hempseed and bread, and a clod of earth is placed at the bottom, which only serves to remind them of their native haunts. Yet these birds do sing ; but their very song is poured forth as if in despair, and one can easily imagine them to be reproofs to their merciless jailors, for their inhuman conduct—and this, forsooth, is the music these deluded mortals love to hear ! Birds only sing, as MUDIE well observes, when they are merry, but this must be understood to apply more especially to the feathered race in their native haunts ; for it is impossible to conceive that the Sky Larks, as above described, can be merry, or even contented, with their hard lot. What a wretched sight it is to watch these poor birds banging against the top of their cage, in a vain and fruitless endeavour to “ gain the sky,” and then falling exhausted on the ground, as if astonished that any barrier should be opposed to the motions which their instinct gives them a secret and irresistible impulse to perform. Even experience cannot teach them that it is impossible for them to follow their natural inclination, and, ac-

cordingly, the effort is made to the end of their short lives, each time with equally little success.

To caging most of the individuals included in the Warbler and Finch families, I have no kind of objection, as, with judicious treatment, these may be rendered as happy and lively as in their wild state, and we see frequent instances of birds, which had been deprived of their liberty, refusing to escape from confinement when opportunities have occurred.\* This is especially the case where the cage is airy and commodious, and where the little captives are on familiar terms with their keeper; but to confine a Lark within the narrow limits usually assigned to it, is almost as bad as caging an Eagle. Both are alike birds of the sky and cloud, and are equally averse to any restraint that may be placed on their free and buoyant spirits:—

Once he loved on the sun to gaze,  
But now he shuns the dazzling blaze;  
His eye is dimmed, and a feebler light  
Suits best the captive Eagle's sight,  
Oh! were he free, his glance would dare  
The vivid lightning's fervid glare.  
Break, break, the kingly Eagle's chain,  
And give him to the skies again.

*Minstrelsy of the Woods.*

I have seen some Sky Larks in good feather and apparently tolerably contented, in confinement, but such instances are not of frequent occurrence, or extraordinary pains had been taken with the favourite. How absurd it is to bestow such misplaced care upon a single bird, and all that care often conspiring to render the unhappy captive doubly wretched, whilst a walk of half a mile's extent into the fresh and verdant country, and there listening to a single Sky Lark, hovering aloft on bold and fearless wing, would give infinitely more pleasure, than hearing the feeble and constrained voices of all the Larks in Dunstable. There is, however, doubtless much in the *possessing* the Lark, and the power to call it "my own," to which the "lords of

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\* See the article "CRESTED TIT," p. 191, note, for a remarkable instance of this kind.



the Creation" in general, and the English in particular, are so partial. Thus it is, that though it would not only be delightful, healthy, and practicable, even in towns, for every one to take a walk into the country in the course of the day, they are not satisfied without robbing the hapless songster of its liberty; and this—thanks to the humane "lords of the Creation!"—is all the benefit a very large portion of this devoted race derive from their musical abilities. Dunstable is, apparently, the grand centre of the Lark-keepers, but every town and village has its Larks. As stated in a previous part of this volume, I have occasionally offered a cottager a shilling if he would release his prisoner, but this idea was scouted in a trice, as quite monstrous and unreasonable; and as to the feelings of the *bird*, those are never dreamt of, being entirely out of the question. Indeed it was perhaps well that my unheard-of proposal met with so little success, as it is very doubtful whether the Larks, after such long and close confinement, would be fitted for active exertion, in their native haunts. But perchance the reader may be wearied with this lengthened disquisition, in the consideration of which I may, perhaps, have been carried beyond due bounds, but the subject is certainly not without interest. For the present, suffice it to say, that these poor Sky Larks seldom live long; but little account is made of their demise, as nothing is easier than to supply the loss by a fresh individual, recently imported from the fields, in its turn to go through its shortlived career, and to die overwhelmed with lice, and other delectable vermin. Let us now turn to the far pleasanter occupation of recording its *Natural* History, leaving to the good Dunstable folks the pleasures of Lark-keeping, and all its delightful accompaniments.

Even considered as a song bird, I by no means think the Sky Lark a fit object of the *bird-fancier's* fancies, its song appearing to me harsh and monotonous in the extreme. It usually springs up from a clod of earth, rises to an immense altitude, hovers for a considerable time at the portals of heaven, and then slowly descends, generally in a perpendicular line,

but sometimes in a slightly oblique manner, employing the wings less than in the ascent, leaving them motionless towards the close of the heavenward journey, expanding the tail, and at length alighting on the ground in a sloping manner, as with the Pipits, in order to break the downward impetus which must necessarily have been acquired in descending from so great a height. One would imagine that all this was labour enough of itself; but our aerial chorister makes nothing of it, and, during the whole of the manœuvre, pours on the ravished earth a continuous strain of melody, frequently remaining a full hour on the wing. But, splendid a theme as this doubtless forms for the Poet, I am far from willing to chime in with the unbounded and extravagant praise bestowed on the notes, on account of their supposed melody. If you go into the fields, wholly unprejudiced, and devoid of any pleasurable associations (though I by no means wish to *deprive* any one of these), I think you will agree with me in considering them harsh and monotonous.

When heard early on a May morning, the notes have a charm of which it would then be difficult to divest them, and when the Sky Lark is caged, the song is still admired, though, perhaps, more because it is the custom to do so, than from any intrinsic merit in the melody. If the Sky Lark sang as most other birds do, from a bush, brake, or tree, the strains would never have obtained the praises that are now accorded to them, and Poets would, probably, scarce have heard its name. What numbers of songsters, whose habits are detailed in this work, have never had their praises sung by Poets, even though they may be as common as the present species, and far superior songsters. Look, for instance, at the Blackcap and Garden Fauvets, whose very existence is wholly unknown to by far the greater number of our sagacious countrymen, simply because they are *hidling* songsters, and neither the Poet nor the casual observer are willing to trouble themselves about songsters which shun rather than court our notice. The notes of the Sky Lark, in my opinion, rank very low in the scale, and when divested of all associations, they are a wretched concern. In a closed

room they sound much too loud, and they are heard to little better advantage when the luckless prisoner is placed outside the window; because the strains, though tolerable as regards *execution*, appear to me wholly devoid of melody.

The reader may, perhaps, suppose that I express so unfavourable an opinion of the song of this highly-lauded aerial chorister, on account of my aversion to the very prevalent practice of depriving it of its liberty; but I can assure you I have told you my real sentiments on the subject, with which I think any unprejudiced person, hearing the bird in a cage, would agree.

It is mentioned, in a late number of the *Magazine of Natural History*, as a remarkable occurrence, that the Sky Lark should have been heard to sing, in its wild state, in mid-winter. This I have found to be by no means a rare circumstance, and have especially observed it very frequently during the late extremely mild and open winters. At this period, however, it rises to a comparatively small altitude, and seldom remains long on the wing, its spirit being, apparently, then soon exhausted. Sometimes, also, I have known it sing on the ground, in the manner of the Meadow Pipit; but this is mostly the case with young birds, lately fledged, or in winter. I have likewise observed it early in spring. When the Sky Lark carols on a fine day in winter, little heed is taken of the strains, and, on such occasions, I have with surprise witnessed dozens of persons trudging by, on the adjacent turnpike, without bestowing even a passing look at our merry songster—a most convincing proof, to my mind, of the little estimation in which the song, *devoid of all associations*, is held. That people admire, or force themselves to admire, the notes of caged Sky Larks, is notorious enough, but that is only because they are Sky Larks, and because it is the custom to admire their song.

The favourite resorts of this species are rich arable lands, where it is met with abundantly throughout the year, by those who take the trouble to search for it. In summer it is almost impossible to take a walk in the fields, in suitable localities,

without observing it spring from its grassy couch on all sides, and then nothing is easier than to shoot it, but, the breeding season over, few birds are more difficult of access, except to the wary Naturalist or the experienced sportsman. They then skulk along on the ground, seldom taking to the wing, but run along before you, and their colour assimilates so closely with the clods of earth or autumnal herbage, as to render it an extremely difficult matter for a common eye to distinguish any living object. With practice, however, one learns to perceive a Sky Lark on the brown grass, even at a considerable distance, as easily as the sportsman does a Red Grouse (*Lagopus Britannicus*) in the brown heather, on the wide and trackless moor. I believe few people know what becomes of the Sky Larks in winter, or perhaps they suppose that it leaves the country on the approach of the inclement seasons, as is the case with nearly the whole of that very *musical family* the *Sylviadæ*. They think, at all events, that, because *they* see it not, it cannot remain in their neighbourhood. In the north of England, it is true, it congregates in considerable numbers, and resorts to the south, or to the sea coast. The reason of this partial migration is not at present very satisfactorily ascertained, but the fact is certain. In Derbyshire and Staffordshire, many individuals quit us at the close of the breeding season, but we are far from being at any time left *Lark-less*, or destitute even of its song, which is certainly not "in season" in winter, though by no means a rarity. For some years past I have paid considerable attention to this point, with a view of determining whether the Sky Lark leaves us entirely at any time; but I have never yet known an instance of such a desertion, either in the mildest or the most severe seasons. And, probably, it will be found that *total* desertion takes place in no locality, not even in the most northern parts of Britain, though in some places but a few individuals may remain. Our ornithological writers—as far as I have at this moment consulted them on the subject—appear to pass over this interesting topic in a very cursory manner.

The nest is constructed of dry grass or other herbage, lined with the same substance, but of a finer texture. Its most usual site is amongst corn, but frequently also in flourishing meadows, and even—as I have two or three times seen it—in pea or bean fields. The very late nests are sometimes built in stubble fields, and I once remember to have found one in a cart rut, in a path through a field. There are two broods in the year, but the period at which the first and second nest is made, varies so much, that it is impossible to determine with accuracy the time at which they may be expected. It is not a very early breeder, the first nest being seldom finished before the end of May, though some individuals will, of course, breed much earlier. Like all ground-builders, it fabricates a loose and artless structure, taking little pains in the weaving of the materials. The eggs, to the number of four or five, are of a dark purplish brown, spotted all over with obscure markings of a deeper hue. If I remember rightly, SELBY mentions the ground colour as being *light green*, but I never met with eggs of the Sky Lark of such a tint.

Were it not for the destructive sickle, no bird would be safer during incubation than our present songster; for, though the situation is generally indicated by the unceasing melody of the male, directly above the spot, yet the idle schoolboy, with all his daring and cunning, seldom or never ventures to trespass in “Farmer Dobson’s” corn fields. Therefore, if the brood be lucky enough to escape before the sickle is applied to the corn, all is safe; but, unfortunately, its nest is but too frequently constructed immediately before the time of corn harvest; in that case it is of course destroyed, and could scarcely be saved even if the men wished it. As it is, perhaps as great a proportion of the nests of the Sky Lark fall a sacrifice to various accidents, as of any other bird; and the circumstance of its being situate on the ground renders it still more liable to accident, from weasels, rats, and other vermin, which prowl about in the night season, “seeking whom they shall devour.” Probably, also, these animals sometimes plunder the nests in

the day time, when the female leaves the nest at noon. I have good reason to believe that the male sometimes takes his turn on the eggs, but of this I am by no means certain. The males of nearly all the *Turdidæ*, *Sylviadæ*, and *Fringillidæ*, do occasionally sit in the nest, and that mostly in the middle of the day, and I think, but am not quite sure, that I have seen the male of this species on the nest.

The situation of the nest varies little; and indeed the nature of its haunts admit of but small variety, either in the situation or materials of the nest. Sometimes, however, I have found it in bare pastures, under the shelter of a thick tuft of grass, and, in one instance, amongst some close herbage under a hedge. Whatever be its locality, it is invariably concealed in a dense mass of herbage of some kind, and is often very difficult to discover, though the aerial melody points out *whereabouts* it is, sufficiently obviously. When disturbed on the nest, it sometimes takes to the wing, but perhaps as frequently escapes, like the Tree Pipit, by running along the ground, through the corn. This is effected with ease and celerity, and often without causing the slightest motion of the corn. In case you are willing to watch the habits of the bird, at the expense of a little corn, you may lie down until the return of the female. If well concealed you will see her cautiously approaching, and, having discovered, to her perfect satisfaction, that all is safe, she once more resumes her post on the eggs, but not without ever and anon casting a furtive glance around, as if fearful of further evil. This done, she suits the nest, with great care, to her dimensions, with her legs—or, if you will, *tarsi*—as you may have observed in the Common Fowl or Ring Duck (*Anas boschas*, LINN.)

Having now seen all that you wish to see, you must creep off with the utmost circumspection, lest you frighten her, and cause her to desert. This I have more than once known to be the case, where incubation had only continued a few days; a second alarm, within so short a time, being apparently but ill relished. Or, if the term of incubation be nearly concluded,

it is probable that desertion would seldom take place, but the female seldom returns until she is quite satisfied that you are departed out of what she considers, for the time being, her domains. If I may be permitted to risk any suppositions on the facts adduced, I may observe, that the habit which the Sky Lark, Tree Pipit, and several other ground builders have, of escaping along the ground when disturbed, has this disadvantage, that it is impossible for the birds to ascertain with certainty, whether or not the intruder has departed : while the Garden Thrush, Chaff Finch, Whin Linnet, and others, either remain in the tree, above your head, during the inspection of their property, or view you at leisure over a garden wall. In examining the architecture of a Garden Thrush, it is curious to watch the parent bird running to and fro on an adjacent wall, mostly out of sight, but every now and then advancing to the edge and reconnoitring your proceedings. But the ground builders, even when they do take to their wings, can with difficulty get a sight of you, after they have alighted on the ground. Some birds, it is true, hover around you as long as you remain within sight, but, even then, they can never view you so leisurely as the tree builders. In general, the Sky Lark is not easily disturbed on its nest, but, like most other species, commonly deserts if its tenement be much frequented before incubation has commenced.

The young are hatched in about a fortnight, but do not quit the nest until fully fledged. I once visited a nest in an open field, containing five young Sky Larks quite ripe for flight, but, on returning three days afterwards, still found them in the cradle. Like the Ivy Wren and some others, the young return to the nest at night, long after they have quitted during the day time ; and at this period considerable havoc is made, amongst both old and young, by rats, weasels, and similar prowling creatures. Nothing is commoner than to see the feathers of the Sky Lark—mostly nestling feathers—in stubble fields and pastures, and sometimes they are carried off to a neighbouring wood, to be devoured at leisure. This is a very

common habit with the quadrupeds of which I am speaking, and weasels almost invariably bear off their prey—whether eggs or birds—to some wood or thicket, even though this may happen to be at a considerable distance from the spot where the depredation is committed. Water rats usually prowl very near home, either on the banks of running waters, or in some reedy marsh; and it is nothing uncommon to see it seize a duckling by the leg, whilst swimming, drag it under the water, and bear it off in triumph to its hole, on searching which, I have more than once found the remnants of bones, fur, feathers, &c., and, amongst a variety of other things, the primaries of the Sky Lark. The water rat seldom makes any attempt to escape when its nest is undergoing this unceremonious examination, and is easily killed, whilst lurking at the bottom of its retreat, by any terrier, ferret, or rat-catcher's dog. But to return from this short digression.

The Sky Lark subsists, in summer, on insects, caterpillars, and worms, especially the latter, to which its haunts are very favourable, and I have occasionally witnessed it stamping on the ground, near worm-casts, in order to induce the reptile to show himself. When the worm has oozed half way out of its retreat, the bird darts on it with inconceivable rapidity, and generally draws out the reluctant creature entire, but, if the prey be very obstinate and selfwilled, it generally gets broken in two for its pains, and the remaining part is left for the beak of some future Sky Lark, or, perchance, for the relentless ploughshare. Such is the delectable life and death of the common earth-worm!

In mild and open winters, the Sky Lark appears to feed entirely on animal substances, but on the approach of frost, and especially in the event of a long-protracted one, corn and various kinds of seed are in request; for this purpose, also, the farmer's stacks and yards are put into requisition, and his plentifully stored domains shortly become the *rendez-vous* of all the commoner seed-eating birds in the neighbourhood. Amongst others, the Sky Lark may be seen by the dozen about



the farm yards, and though, by reason of its lengthy hind claw, it is but ill calculated for perching on the ricks, it manages to glean a pretty plentiful harvest. The worthy farmer need, however, be in no alarm as to the safety of his superabundant stores ; for the Sky Lark is but an occasional visitant of the barn door, and is of incalculable service, in “ better times,” in destroying, daily, thousands of little creatures which, if allowed to remain, would soon work the sore discomfiture of the honest grumbling farmer. Depend upon it, our ethereal chorister would rather be elsewhere than amongst the corn ricks, and will take care to be only there in times of trouble.

Mr. BARLOW writes to me in the following manner, relative to this species :—

“ What you say as to the partial migration of the Sky Lark in Derbyshire, is, according to my limited experience,\* perfectly applicable to the bird in Cambridgeshire. In spring and summer it is as abundant as elsewhere, but, about the middle or end of autumn, I have, for many years past, observed its numbers to decrease materially, although, as you state to be the case in your own neighbourhood, the disappearance of the whole never takes place ; and we have always at least a few of the species in these parts, though—as you observe—its hidling habits, during winter, may have caused me to suppose it to be scarcer at that period than it really is. But, at all events, I have good reason to believe, that a considerable portion of Sky Larks do disappear in winter ; for, although I have not myself witnessed their migration, I have often observed them assemble in large flocks at the end of autumn, as mentioned by SELBY and other authors. I cannot say that I ever observed it to sing in winter, but of course I have no reason whatever to doubt the accuracy of your statement on this subject. Next winter I shall pay particular attention to this and the other

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\* My amiable correspondent modestly terms his experience “ limited,” but his letters prove him to be a close and accurate observer of Nature, and an able Ornithologist, both practical and scientific.—N. W.

circumstances, regarding its economy, which you so kindly suggested, and which I had hitherto but little thought of.”

The above is a reply to some queries I had proposed to my friend. Much interesting and important matter may be elicited by questions, and I have always found it the best way with my ornithological correspondents.

The sexes of this species do not differ, but the young are darker coloured and more mottled than adults.

It may be well here to mention one of the principal varieties of this species, commonly known by the name of the Red Lark, under which denomination it has been either figured or described by LATHAM, EDWARDS, LEWIN, MONTAGU, FLEMING, and others. These authors state that a few specimens have been killed in the neighbourhood of London, and a correspondent in the *Analyst*, No. 12, has seen individuals which he supposes to have been the Red Lark (*Alauda rubra*, Auct.); in the same journal, No. 14, this hypothesis is likewise confirmed. But it appears most probable that this supposed species is merely an accidental variety of the Sky Lark, and that the real Red Lark (*Alauda Pennsylvanica*, BRISS.) has never been met with in this country, being, in fact, an exclusively Transatlantic species. Neither SELBY nor MUDIE make any mention of the Red Lark, and it may, therefore, fairly be concluded that it has no right to a place in the British Fauna. The Rev. L. JENYNS, in his excellent *Manual of the British Vertebrate Animals*, includes it, but only as a doubtful species, and Mr. BLYTH positively informs me that it is a mere variety. All the other Larks mentioned by the older Ornithologists, except the Larks and Pipits described in this volume, are either varieties or different stages of plumage, of the species here included.

WOOD LARK, *Alauda arborea*, LINN.

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Then fly to the grove where the Wood Larks sing,  
 Rejoicing once more in their vernal glee.  
 The spring time is come, the winter is past,  
 And the Wood Larks' songs are cheerful once more:  
 Their sorrows have fled with the wintry blast,  
 And soft-flowing lays through the woodlands they pour  
 Forgetful how lately the winter wind blew,  
 And they sung the sad notes of their plaintive *lu-lu*.  
*Minstrelsy of the Woods.*

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SYNONYMS.—*Alauda arborea*, LINN. *Syst.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*  
 —*Alauda nemorosa*, GMEL. *Linn.*—*Alauda cristatella*, LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—  
 Wood Lark, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—MUDIE'S *Feath. Tribes.*

THE Wood Lark is neither so abundantly distributed, nor so plentiful in the localities in which it does occur, as the preceding species; but its sweetly melodious strains have rendered it almost as familiar to the Poet and the ordinary observer, as that bird. Its praises are, however, on account of its comparatively limited distribution, much less frequently sung. It is said to abound mostly in the southern and southwestern counties of England, and we are told by MONTAGU, in his *Ornithological Dictionary*, that he has found it most plentiful in Devonshire. It would appear to be extremely rare in the north of England, for SELBY informs us, as a remarkable occurrence, that "a fine specimen of the Wood Lark was killed near Twizell, on the 24th of November, 1827." In Derbyshire and other midland counties, we are, however, much more happily circumstanced in this respect, the species being here by no means rare or seldom met with, though, like most other birds, it seems to be but little noticed by the Derbyshire gentry. Like the Sky Lark, it is resident in Britain throughout the year, and is perhaps most easily observed in winter, on account of the nudity of the woods and trees at that season. It is at all times a shy species, and, were it not for the sweet and varied melody of its strains,

it would doubtless pass, even amongst practical Ornithologists, for a much rarer bird than is really the case. As it is, it is much oftener heard than seen, even in spots where it is most abundant, and it is no easy matter to become intimately acquainted with its various habits by personal observation; and books, whether compiled or original, will, in general, add but little to our knowledge on this head. MUDIE has the power to give us a *volume* on its economy, or on that of almost any of the other commoner British birds, but, unfortunately, the limits of his *Feathered Tribes* were but ill calculated to permit him to do justice to his extended and varied abilities.

The song of the Wood Lark is infinitely more to my taste than the harsh, incoherent, and unmusical—but nevertheless poetical—strains of the previous species. Its mellifluous notes are scarcely inferior to those of the Brake Nightingale or Garden Fauvet, in sweetness and richness, though in variety, and perhaps in execution, it must yield the palm to those unrivalled choristers. As a song bird it stands, in my estimation, fifth on the list of our British songsters; the Brake Nightingale, Garden Fauvet, Blackcap Fauvet, and Garden Ouzel, and perhaps these alone, deserving a higher rank. As often as it can be procured by the bird-fancier, it is zealously imprisoned, and preserved, in a state intermediate between life and death, either to amuse its cruel owner with its notes, or to give instructions in music to its less gifted feathered brethren. The spirit of the Wood Lark, however, is less exalted and aspiring than that of its garrulous-tongued congener, and therefore it suffers less from confinement than that species; but though it cannot exactly be termed a “songster of sky and cloud,” yet, as we shall presently find, it too has its aerial and heavenward excursions, and, accordingly, we most grossly mistake its nature in penning it up in a small, dirty, perchless cage, where it may be seen in many of our towns and villages—though by no means so commonly as the other—either sulking on the ground, or fluttering its plumage to pieces against the hard unyielding wires.

By far the greater number of caged Wood Larks that we see in shops and elsewhere, have been reared from the nest, or by the easier method of allowing the parents to feed them; thus they generally become tame, or at least stupid, and we consider them—if we take the trouble of thinking at all about the matter—contented and happy. But a very slight knowledge of its natural habits, and a very small exercise of Causality, would soon destroy such an error. A bird which merely flies straight forward, hops amongst the branches of trees, and is but little on the wing, may easily, with good management and plenty of food, be rendered contented and lively in its imprisoned state, and not unfrequently refuses its liberty when offered; but to enclose a creature, accustomed to soar aloft on airy pinion, from its earliest days, within the narrow limits of a wire cage, betrays either a most profound ignorance of Nature, or, which is worse, but a very small share of Benevolence. Animals are as impatient of slavery as Man, but, if the lord of the creation can but be free himself, he appears, in general to care but little about what he proudly deems his inferiors. Let him, however, consider, that though the brute creation is inferior to us in reasoning powers, yet that it is at least equal to him in the acuteness of what are termed the *Animal Sentiments*. Nothing can argue worse of the *use* which man frequently makes of his reflective faculties, and of what are vulgarly called his “better feelings,” than his ill treatment of the inferior animals; it would indeed be well for him if the cruelty he so unfeelingly and unthinkingly practises upon them, were occasionally exercised upon himself. Thus the man who, without a cause, beats his horse, might, as a lesson, be doomed to the same drudgery as his useful inoffensive beast; and the bird-*fancier* might be shut up in an apartment which would but just contain him, and be fed, by his *admiring keeper*, on tallow and grease. If he should happen to show any uneasiness or desire to escape, from his *Lark’s cage*, that might, and with justice, be regarded as an indubitable sign of the high estimation in which he held his eligible situation! But, even then,

he might not be cured of his evil propensities. He might, indeed, during his confinement, show signs of amendment, but, having himself escaped, again resume his former practices. Such are a few of the inhumanities which creep into human nature. But it is probably about as useless to endeavour to prove, to that nondescript race of beings, *bird-fanciers*, the folly of the custom of which we have been speaking, as to explain to a Derbyshire peasant the advantage of ploughing with two horses instead of with four,\* and therefore we will now pass on to consider the nidification of our sweet chorister.

The materials of the nest differ little from those employed by the Sky Lark, namely, dry grass, stalks of various plants, and especially hay and straw, though of the latter only a small proportion. The structure and its composition vary somewhat with its locality, and this is more liable to change than we found to be the case with the preceding species; the architecture also displays a little more art, though, from its usual situation, it would neither be expected nor required to be so firm as that of a tree builder. The nest is always built on the ground, and, like that of its congener, is commonly found in a thick tuft of herbage, or under a low bush. It seldom occurs very near houses, and is not met with, like that of the Tree Pipit, amongst long grass in woods and copses, but more commonly in pastures on the outskirts of woods, or in groves where the ground-herbage is not luxuriant, but rises here and there into tufts and patches; in these—in districts where the species is plentiful—you may confidently search for its grassy couch, though I would by no means say that every one of them contains a nest.

I have already observed that the Wood Lark is tolerably

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\* Some years ago it was the invariable custom of the Derbyshire farmers to plough, both on light and heavy land, with a string of four or five horses. About eight years ago, however, an enlightened bailiff, who came to reside near here insisted on employing *two* horses, abreast. The ploughmen for a long time refused to comply, but the bailiff persisting, it has now become universal amongst the neighbouring farmers to plough with two horses abreast—such is the force of example.

abundant in my neighbourhood, and its nest is, consequently, a familiar object to me, both the bird and its architecture having occupied a considerable portion of my attention for several years past. I once, and only once, remember to have found the nest on the stump of an aged oak tree, which had but recently felt the stroke of the woodman's axe. It was constructed in a slight cavity, excavated by time, and the spot, as is usual in such cases, was duly concealed by grass and other herbage. The fallen monarch of the forest lay, in fact, in some tall grass, close by a hedge, near the road side, but in a field. Notwithstanding that the nest and eggs (the latter were then two in number), exactly resembled ordinary specimens in every particular, yet, from the situation of the nest, I was utterly at a loss to conceive to what species it appertained, and I never for a moment dreamt that it could belong to the present species. To determine this point to my entire satisfaction, I left orders with an intelligent man in the neighbourhood, to capture the female at night, and then make off with the nest and eggs. On returning next day, I found that my instructions had been punctually attended to, and discovered, to my inexpressible surprise, that the dubious structure was, or had been, the property of a Wood Lark. As the nest had nothing remarkable about it, either in shape or composition, except that it was somewhat more compact than usual, and as I could not well introduce the fallen oak tree into my museum, I did not preserve the specimen, though, from the singularity of the locality, I think it well deserved it.

Other instances of the Wood Lark's building in remarkable spots have, at different times, fallen under my notice. Of these, it may not be amiss to mention a few :—

At the bottom of the lawn, before my residence, in passing a low sheep-shed, my attention was arrested by what I conceived to be a bird of some kind, lying dead near the railings. On approaching the object, the dead bird made off through the long grass, and then flew away to a considerable distance! I immediately knew, both by the flight of the bird, and by the

appearance of the nest and eggs, that the creature, which had just risen from the dead, was neither more nor less than a Wood Lark. The spot was tolerably well concealed by the surrounding herbage, excepting on one side, which proved to be the entrance ;\* and the bird was rendered doubly conspicuous by the contrast between her light straw-coloured plumage, and the bright fresh green of the grass. I will trouble my readers with the recital of another of the deviations I have observed :—

A second nest, discovered soon after the above-mentioned specimen, was in a somewhat similar situation, namely, almost close under a dead fence in Sudbury park. It was built on a mossy bank, in the usual tuft of grass, and contained a small proportion of moss—the only instance of such a circumstance, which has ever come to my notice. It was near a spot where the woodman's destructive axe was unceasingly heard, and the labourers had constant occasion to pass quite close to the site of the nest ; and yet I observed that she never quitted her charge on such occasions. This confidence was, however, but ill requited, for I one day found, much to my regret, that the nest had disappeared ; and, on making inquiries, learned that it had been robbed by one of the labourer's children, who had certainly far better have been under the care of the village demagogue, even though it had been to learn the Greek verb ! The eggs, five in number, had been hatched three days previous to this occurrence.

The eggs, four or five in number, are pale yellowish brown, spotted, or rather blotched, more or less all over, with dark grey patches, sometimes inclining to sepia, and I have seen specimens of a light straw colour, wholly destitute of markings of any kind. Of these there were five in the nest, and I regret that they were so nearly ready to hatch, as to render it utterly

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\* Ground-builders usually form their nests in a tuft of grass ; but an entrance is, for the most part, left on the most sheltered side ; but in some cases, the female opens and shuts the door, so to speak, at her pleasure, weaving the stalks about her when she enters the nest, and removing them when she is about to depart.



impossible to blow them. One upon which I attempted to operate, is, however, still in my possession, though the contents, having long since become rotten, the surface of the egg is so discoloured, as to be of little further value. Mr. HEWITSON has not yet figured the egg in his *British Oology*, and the coloured representation, from the pencil of our worthy countryman LEWIN, will convey but a poor idea of it. At least in my copy the figure is a wretched one, but, I regret to say, that in almost all works with coloured plates, the different copies vary so much, as to prevent the possibility of judging of the merit of the figures in general, or of any one in particular, without seeing a great number of copies. Thus many persons have expressed great surprise at the manner in which the *Birds of Britain* is noticed in the *Ornithologist's Text-book*: but I certainly never saw, nor desire to see, a more accurate and lovely figure than that given by LEWIN of the Blue Tit, and several others which might be mentioned. None of AUDUBON'S showy plates in any way come up to it, and I cannot think that it is surpassed—though it may be equalled—by a single figure in GOULD'S magnificent and unrivalled *Birds of Europe*—a work which cannot fail to place its talented and amiable author at least on a *par* with the ornithological painters of this or any other country. But enough of this for the present. Let us now look a little further into the habits of our woodland chorister.

I had previously omitted to remark the curious mode of flight observed in the present species. The Sky Lark, as must be familiar to almost every one, ascends perpendicularly, or nearly so, into the air, whilst “hymning its Creator's praises;” but the Wood Lark adopts a totally different course. The latter proceeds, indeed, a short way in a nearly straight line, but as it gets further and further on its journey, it prosecutes its heavenward mission in a spiral manner, gradually enlarging its circles as it ascends. When arrived at its extreme altitude, it either continues flying in circles at the same height, or flutters on one spot for some time, in the manner of the Sky Lark, and

then slowly descends, still describing large circles, as before. From what I have observed, I do not think that it generally remains near so long on the wing as the preceding species, though SELBY informs us that it often continues in the air for an hour together, and thus we have undoubted authority for believing, that, at least sometimes, it sings for a considerable period at a time.

The Wood Lark usually springs into the air from the ground, either from a clod of earth or from a low bush, and it frequently pours forth its sweet melody whilst perched on a tree, and that much more commonly than is mentioned by authors. The tree usually selected is a large isolated elm or oak, situate in the midst of a ploughed field, but I have likewise known it sing in the midst of a thick grove. Sometimes, too, it rises into the air from the top of a low tree growing out of a hedge, bordering on a small copse, and I have even observed it hawking for flies in the manner of the Spotted Flycatcher, though this is far from a common occurrence.

This species may be observed with equal advantage at every time of the year, and it becomes particularly lively and interesting in winter, when it is sometimes hard put to it for sustenance, though I have not been able to find that any mortality prevails amongst the species at that season, as we found to be the case with some of our other resident birds. During the spring and summer months, it partakes equally of ground and woodland habits, but it is in the inclement seasons that the propriety of the name Wood Lark becomes most obvious. At that period it mostly leaves the fields, and repairs to the low and sheltered—but not marshy—grounds, abounding either with isolated trees, or interspersed with thick continuous woods and groves. But, whilst it courts the shelter of the trees, it still retains much of its former ground habits, and may constantly be observed seeking its food under the bushes. Indeed its feet are little formed for hopping amongst the branches, or for active entomological researches in the interstices of the bark; accordingly, by far the greater portion of its sustenance

is procured on the ground. Though I never heard this bird make any attempt at a song in winter—reserving this for fairer times—yet it frequently practises its circular evolutions amongst the bare and whistling branches, flying round and round, in the same space, for half an hour together, as if for mere amusement, or for the sake of keeping itself warm.

At the approach of severe weather they assemble in small flocks, and haunt the outskirts of woods, but the species always remains distinct, and they never congregate in great numbers. During the cold weather they keep very close, but a gleam of sunshine, even in midwinter, disperses the band in all directions, and the individuals may then be met with separate or in pairs, on the high grounds, and in the arable lands; but no cold, however intense, ever induces them to resort to the immediate neighbourhood of houses, though the bird is by no means shy, or alarmed at the sight of man, nor are its habits of so crouching and hidling a nature as those of the Sky Lark at that time. No sooner, however, does the relentless frost, with all its attendant evils, again make its appearance, than the scattered forces immediately assemble, as if by common consent, at a well-known *rendez-vous*, and the troop is again seen diligently scouring the ground beneath the trees, and foraging in a compact and apparently indissoluble body.

But the first mild day in March again disperses the forces, and each male, having selected itself a mate, resorts to some favorite spot, where the pair resides—if no evil befalls them—for the season. Indeed the Wood Lark never materially shifts its quarters at any period. In breeding time, the same pair is observed throughout the spring and summer, and in autumn the flocks are only formed of the inhabitants of the immediate neighbourhood. At least this is the case in the midland counties, where the bird is tolerably abundant, though it probably does not hold good in localities less favourable to, and consequently less favoured by, the species. In the north of England, or at least in those parts of the north where it occurs at all, these small flocks are probably collected from distant parts.

But the Wood Lark only remains congregated while it is absolutely necessary, and, considered as a British bird, it is far from being gregariously disposed. We are informed that it occurs in many parts of the Continent, and that it is migratory in Russia and other northern countries, but I cannot ascertain, from the extremely meagre account given by TEMMINCK, whether it is gregarious, though he mentions that it is migratory in the north of Europe. According to BECHSTEIN, however, they assemble in flocks of ten or twelve, at the close of the breeding season, in which, therefore, it precisely resembles the habits of the species in this country. Soon after the dissolution of these little winter bands, the males commence their song, which generally takes place in the early part of March. SELBY says soon after Christmas; but this I never found, and consider it extremely improbable, especially as it would seem that SELBY enjoys but few opportunities of observing its habits in his northern station. This talented Ornithologist is accurate wherever he has had opportunities of observing for himself, and of course he is not answerable for the opinions and remarks of others, on which, like myself (in the rarer species), he has frequently been compelled to rely. But SELBY is no compiler, though he has received the title, from an individual who ought to have known better. See the third volume of TEMMINCK'S *Manuel d'Ornithologie*, where the *Illustrations of British Ornithology*, is, strangely enough, termed "une compilation fort bien faite!" SELBY is at least as original an observer as the worthy Dutchman—both are equally good in their way; TEMMINCK is a systematist, and a compiler as regards habits, and SELBY equally at home in all departments.

The Wood Lark is more exclusively insectivorous than the Sky Lark, and subsists throughout the year on insects, their larvæ, and worms, which it seeks either in high arable lands, or in the sheltered woods, according as the season and climate vary. It has already been observed, that the prey is occasionally taken in the air, darting either from the ground or from the top of a low bush; but the usual method is to search

for it on the ground, which, like the preceding species, and indeed like the Larks in general, it effects while walking or running along the ground,—in the breeding season amongst the fields, but in winter in more sheltered spots. And though it has not the activity and the graceful motions of the Wagtails, its manners are by no means inelegant. It is less a bird of cultivation than the Sky Lark, and appears to prefer an intermediate station, between the stony heathy moor, and the rich, arable lands, rather inclining, however, to the latter than the former.

But although it is insectivorous as long as it is possible for it to be so, yet in the event of severe frost, it has little objection to vegetable food, and is, in fact sometimes obliged to subsist on it for a considerable period, especially when the snow lies deep and long on the ground ; then the seeds of such grasses as are procurable, come into requisition, and now it is, chiefly, that we may confidently search for the species in small woods and plantations ; I have also even known it take shelter, on the sudden approach of a storm, in a thicket of firs. This happened towards the close of December 1835, the Wood Larks and myself taking shelter in the same wood. The storm being, however, of short duration, and followed immediately by a gleam of sunshine (such as it is at that period), the birds, to the number of about twenty, instantly sallied forth, as if desirous of proving that their concealing themselves there was a matter of necessity, not of choice. I think I may safely assert, that this was the most numerous flock of Wood Larks I ever beheld.

In winters so extraordinarily mild as those we have, for some years past, experienced in England, there is little necessity for resorting to vegetable food, but in winters such as they used to be, the “ case is altered,” and the Wood Lark not unfrequently joins the rabble of House Sparrows in the farm and stable yards, in the search for grain, “ grains,” or anything of the kind that is within reach. But I have reason to believe that this species does less damage than even the Sky Lark, and my

Cambridge correspondent, H. BARLOW, Esq., informs me, that its visits to his farm yards are, in his neighbourhood, "few and far between." In these parts, I remember but a single instance of the circumstance, during a continuous frost in 1831, when several individuals were shot in a single day, both at Foston and elsewhere. Dr. LIVERPOOL says he has opened several Wood Larks that were shot on his farm, and found very little corn in their crops. It had been recently swallowed, and had evidently been bruised before it had been devoured. From this Dr. L. very justly concludes, that it would willingly abstain from such food altogether, were it possible, and that corn is only resorted to from sheer necessity. And my observations have hitherto supported this supposition. Examine the crop of a House Sparrow, a Corn Bunting, or a Yellow Bunting, at the same period, and you will find it as full of corn as it can well hold. Indeed, supposing the Larks to be extremely partial to grain, their feet are but ill calculated for assisting them to procure it by holding to the sides of the ricks, as the typical perchers do with the greatest ease. Consequently, the Wood Lark is as beneficial to man as any of the Warbler family, and much more so than many of them, as it feeds on nothing that can be of any service to us. Its labours, nevertheless, go unheeded by the dull plodding farmer, and are appreciated only by the observing and intelligent Ornithologist, though he has, perhaps, little immediate or personal interest in the matter, as far as regards the "crops."

Upon the whole, few of our songsters, whether resident or migratory, possess more varied, pleasing and interesting habits than the gay Wood Lark; it is surpassed by none in the benefits it unceasingly confers on the produce of our fields, and I always feel peculiar delight in watching its manners, either soaring aloft in extensive circles, trotting along the ground, or whizzing past me strolling solitary in the cold and leafless woods. It is ever active, ever busy, and appears, from its unceasing assiduity, never to be at a loss for wherewith to satisfy the cravings of hunger. Such do we behold it in Nature, and

in the perfect enjoyment of one of the greatest blessings of life—liberty; but no sooner is it deprived of this, and doomed, by its merciless captor, to end its days in prison, than its happiness and its liberty are alike irretrievable, and it pines away for a few short months, a picture of misery, until death kindly relieves it from its wretched situation. It sometimes essays a song, but it is laboured and of short duration.

Mr BLYTH informs me that “Wood Larks never breed in the neighbourhood of Tooting in Surrey, but are found there occasionally in small flocks during the winter.”

The sexes resemble each other, and are scarcely distinguishable, but the young birds are darker and more mottled than adults.

The Larks are dusters as well as washers, and may frequently be seen rolling in the middle of the road, on a hot summer's day.

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#### SHORE LARK, *Alauda Alpestris*, LINN.

SYNONYMS.—*Alauda Alpestris*, LINN. *Syst.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—WILS. *Amer. Orn.*—TEMM. *Man. d'Orn.*—*Alauda flava*, GMEL. *Linn.*—*Alauda cornuta*, SW. & RICH. *North. Zool.*—Shore Lark, PENN. *Arct. Zool.*—LATH. *Syn.*—EYTON'S *History of the Rarer Br. Birds.*—N. WOOD'S *Orn. Text-book.*

As the Shore Lark is only known in Britain as a mere straggler, my account of it will be extracted from various authentic sources, given, as usual, in the words of the different writers. In the first number of Mr. EYTON'S useful *History of the Rarer British Birds*, we find the following description of the Shore Lark:—

“The title of this bird to be admitted into our indigenous lists, rests upon a notice by WILLIAM YARRELL, Esq. (which will be found in the fourth volume of LOUDON'S *Magazine of Natural History*, page 116), of a specimen, killed on the beach near Sherringham, in March, 1830, which passed into the hands of Mr. SIMS, of Norwich, by whom it was preserved; and it is now in the collection of EDWARD LOMBE, Esq., of Great Milton.

“ This bird inhabits the northern parts of Europe, Asia, and America. An account of it is given in PENNANT’S *Arctic Zoology* ; in the *Fauna Boreali Americana*, by Messrs. RICHARDSON and SWAINSON, under the name of *Alauda cornuta* ; and in WILSON’S *American Ornithology*. It breeds far north, and is found in the United States, during the winter, in considerable abundance.

Of the habits of this bird, WILSON says :—

“ This is the most beautiful of its genus, at least in this part of the world. It is one of our winter birds of passage, arriving from the north in the fall ; usually staying with us the whole winter, frequenting sandy plains and open downs, and is numerous in the southern States, as far as Georgia, during that season. They fly high, in loose scattered flocks ; and at these times have a single cry, almost exactly like the Sky Lark of Britain. They are very numerous in many tracts of New Jersey ; and are frequently brought to Philadelphia market. They are then generally very fat, and are considered excellent eating. Their food seems principally to consist of small round compressed black seeds, buckwheat, oats, &c., with a large proportion of gravel. On the flat commons, within the boundaries of the city of Philadelphia, flocks of them are regularly seen during the whole winter. In the stomach of these, I have found, in numerous instances, quantities of the eggs or larvæ of certain insects, mixed with a kind of slimy earth. About the middle of March they generally disappear, on their route to the north. FORSTER informs us, that they visit the environs of Albany fort, in the beginning of May ; but go further north to breed ; that they feed on grass seeds, and buds of the sprig birch, and run into small holes, keeping close to the ground ; from whence the natives call them *chi-chuppi-sue*. The same species appears also to be found in Poland, Russia, and Siberia, in winter, from whence they also retire farther north on the approach of spring ; except in the north-east parts, and near the high mountains.

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“ There is a singular appearance in this bird, which I have never seen taken notice of by former writers, viz. certain long black feathers, which extend, by equal distances, beyond each other, above the eyebrow ; these are longer, more pointed, and of a different texture from the rest around them ; and the bird possesses the power of erecting them, so as to appear as if horned, like some of the Owl family. Having kept one of these birds alive for some time, I was much amused at this odd appearance, and think it might furnish a very suitable specific appellation, viz. *Alauda cornuta*, or Horned Lark.\* These horns become scarcely perceivable after the bird is dead.” And this is, doubtless, the reason of the circumstance having escaped the notice of other Ornithologists. “ The head is slightly crested.

“ Shore Lark and Sky Lark are names by which this species is usually known in different parts of the Union. They are said to sing well, mounting in the air, in the manner of the song [or rather Sky] Lark of Europe ; but this is only in those countries where they breed. I have never heard of their nests being found within the territory of the United States.”

I am convinced that my friend BLYTH is wrong when he says, in a letter dated Aug. 11, 1835,—“ *Alauda Pennsylvanica* is now better known by the appellation *A. Alpestris*, and has two or three times occurred in this country. I know a bird-catcher who once took one.” *A. Pennsylvanica* appears to me to be an exclusively Transatlantic species, though it is supposed to have been met with two or three times in Britain—especially near London—and was termed by the older British Ornithologists the Red Lark, whose history I have already presented to my readers, at p. 258 of this work ; it is, therefore, unnecessary to repeat it here.

Another correspondent has written to me as follows :—

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\* The names above proposed, both Latin and English, are, no doubt, preferable to the present appellations, but the change is not worth making, and would probably cause confusion, besides destroying all claims of priority, which must ever be an important consideration.—N. W.

“ Another species, *Alauda rupestris*, a very thick-billed bird, has once occurred in Lincolnshire, and will, I believe, be mentioned in Mr. JENYNS’S forthcoming *Manual of British Vertebrate Animals*.” But as JENYNS takes no notice of the species, and as I have never heard further particulars of it from other quarters, I am unable to give any account of it, and shall conclude this article with the specific characters of the Shore Lark, translated from TEMMINCK’S *Manuel d’Ornithologie*, Vol. I. p. 279 :—

“ *Male*.—Throat, eyelids, and space behind the eyes, clear yellow ; streak above the eyes, whiskers, and a large patch at the top of the breast, deep black ; upper parts, wings, and sides of the breast, reddish ash colour ; tail feathers blackish, those in the middle margined with white ; outer tail feathers deep black, bordered with white on the exterior ; lower parts of the breast and flanks reddish white ; belly and vent pure white ; bill and feet black. Length, six inches and ten lines.

“ *The Female* has the forehead yellowish ; head black and brown ; the black varied with fine yellowish streaks ; patch on the breast smaller, and the black tail feathers margined with a narrow whitish border.

“ It varies according to age, the black of the whiskers and patch on the neck being more or less decided ; the yellow of the eyelids and breast more or less bright, and the outer tail feathers of more or less intensity.”

Of the habits of the Shore Lark, it would doubtless have been possible to have gleaned a longer and more minute description, from some of the continental writers, but I conceive it to be unnecessary to offer my readers very detailed accounts of the economy of birds of which so little is known, or likely to be known, in this country, it being, as stated in the Preface, my aim to give, as much as possible, the result of my own observations, and not those of *others*.

I may observe, that, in many parts of the country, the Rock Pipit, *Anthus obscurus*, is termed the “Shore Lark.” This

circumstance is, however, little calculated to mislead, there being no kind of similarity between the species. But it has been, until lately, the custom to call almost every bird with a long hind claw, a Lark, and still is the custom with the vulgar, throughout the kingdom. But authors now invariably restrict "Lark" to *Alauda*, and very properly award "Pipit" to the genus *Anthus* of BECHSTEIN.

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GENUS PLECTROPHANES, MEY. LONGSPUR.

SNOWY LONGSPUR, *Plectrophanes nivalis*, MEY.

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O from the sounding summits of the north,  
 The Dofrine Hills, thro' Scandinavia roll'd  
 To farthest Lapland and the frozen main;  
 From lofty Caucasus, far seen by those  
 Who in the Caspian and black Euxine toil;  
 From cold Riphean Rocks, which the wild Russ  
 Believes the stony girdle of the world.

THOMSON.—Autumn.

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SYNONYMS.—*Emberizanivalis*, LINN. *Syst.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Emberiza glacialis*, LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Emberiza mustelina*,—GMEL. *Linn.*—*Emberiza montana*, GMEL. *Linn.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Plectrophanes nivalis*, SW. & RICH. *Fauna Amer. Boreal.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Snow Bunting, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Tawny Bunting, MONT. *Orn. Dict.*—Mountain Bunting, LATH. *Syn.*—MONT. *Orn. Dict.*—Snowy Longspur, *Analyst*, No. 14.—NEVILLE WOOD'S *Orn. Text-book.*

THE extraordinary number of synonyms which attach themselves to this bird, are owing to the species having been divided into three, by every writer previous to TEMMINCK, who had the honour of first setting the matter in its proper light, though it would seem that SELBY perceived the true state of the case, before he had met with the opinions of the Dutch professor, on the subject. It has now been long satisfactorily determined, that the "Mountain Bunting," "Tawny Bunting," and "Snow Bunting," are synonymous. As I never met with this species in my ornithological rambles, I am induced to present my readers with MUDIE'S article "SNOW BUNTING," with which

liberty I hope that able writer and acute observer will not be offended :—

“The Snow Bunting, ‘snow-bird,’ ‘snow-flake,’ and many other names by which it has been called, has been a sad stumbling-block in the path of those who do not combine a little knowledge of the principles of Ornithology with the mere observation of individual birds. It has got various trivial names expressive of differences of colour, and specifically it has been called a Lark and also a Finch.

“Now the fact is, that it is a polar bird, inhabiting the arctic zone in both continents, and though not a mountain-top bird like our [White] Ptarmigan, yet subject, from the higher latitudes of which it is a native, to greater extremes of seasons than that, it is subject to similar change in its plumage. And farther, as though it does not migrate very far to the southward, it is a wandering bird; it does not change its plumage so regularly, or so completely in the flocks that migrate, as the [White] Ptarmigan does, which summer and winter on the same mountain-top.

“The storms in the polar regions set in with very considerable differences of time in different seasons; and when they do set in, they lay the native pastures of the bird completely under snow, which lies, and renders food inaccessible for many months. They often come so suddenly, and with so little prelude of cold, that the bird is sometimes caught by them in its summer plumage, or with that plumage barely beginning to change. In that state it is least able to endure the cold, and consequently it makes its way farther to the south than when it is caught later and more prepared for the cold. Thus it is the Tawny Bunting, Pied Finch,\* Snow-flake,† or White Lark, according to the time of the year at which it happens to be caught in the storm and carried away from the regions of the north.

\* This name is likewise applied to the Chaff Finch in Derbyshire and other parts of the kingdom.—N. W.

† In the *Analyst*, Nos. 13 & 14, the appellation Snowflake is very properly given to *Nyctea cinerea* (STEPH.) and it is termed the “Grey Snowflake.”—N. W.

“ In the summer it inhabits the rocky and mossy places of the north, where there are no trees, and few bushes ; and picks up its food from the seeds of the *Carex*, and stunted rushes and hard plants which grow and ripen seed there ; and its long and produced hinder claws adapt it for walking on the mossy, boggy, or otherwise loose surfaces upon which these grow. When it migrates to our shores, whether at one time and in one tint of plumage, or at another time and in a different tint, it frequents those places which are most analogous to its native pastures, shunning alike the wooded and the cultivated places, and resorting to the open wilds—the uplands of the south, if it comes early, and the level wastes near the shores in the north, if it comes later.

“ The young, of early broods, if their wings are matured in time, are the first to migrate southward ; and instances have been already mentioned in which the young have an autumnal migration to the south while the old ones continue in the breeding places. There are various reasons why that should be the case. The old ones have to undergo the renovation of their plumage, after they have worn it in providing for the young till these were fledged. The old ones are also better tempered to the weather than the birds of the first year, which have experienced no cold. Besides, though the young are sufficiently fledged for flight in their first or nestling plumage, they have to get the winter additions, which all birds partially or generally resident in very high latitudes or very cold places, acquire at that time ; and the probability is, that they do not get their additions so early in the season as the old ones, in which the autumnal change is, with the exception of such feathers as have been injured, more an addition to their covering than a displacing and renewal of it. The worn feathers are of course those of the wings and the tail, which have been entirely employed in the labours of the summer, and the ones which are thickened by an additional supply without a general loss of the old ones, are those which merely clothe the body of the bird ; and hence though the old birds are better clothed for the

polar climate than the young ones, they are much less capable of flight, and consequently of migration.

“ There is another trait in the Natural History of birds, which although it may be observed in them all, resident as well as migrant, is yet so conspicuous in the Snowy Longspur, that this is the proper place for noticing it. The male is the most sensitive to heat, and the female to cold. That difference appears, whether the result of the action of heat, be change of place, or change of plumage. The males of all our summer visitants arrive earlier than the females;\* and in all resident birds the change of plumage and voice of the male are among the first indications of the spring, taking precedence of most of the vegetable tribes, for the [Robin] Redbreast and the [Ivy] Wren sing before the snowdrop flowers appear.† It seems, too, that the song and the attentions of the male, are necessities in aid of the warmth of the season, to produce the influence of the season upon the female; and even as the season advances, the female remains a skulking and hidling bird throughout the season, at least until the young have broken the shell and require her labour to feed and her courage (which she sometimes acquires to a wonderful degree at that time) to protect them. Whether it be that instinct leads the female to husband her heat for the purpose of hatching her eggs, or simply that the thinning of the under plumage which takes place at that time, and is the more conspicuous the more closely that the bird sits, it is certain that the female of most birds avoids the sun, and that all cover their eggs from its light during the period of incubation.

“ One can understand why the eggs should be covered,‡ inasmuch as the germs of life, whether animal or vegetable, do not perform their first action unless in the dark, or at least in

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\* This fact is of course familiar to every Ornithologist, but the reason here assigned for it, will probably be new to many of my readers.—N. W.

† The notes of the Robin Redbreast may be heard throughout the year.—N. W.

‡ All birds do not cover their eggs, and they frequently leave them exposed to the rays of the sun for a considerable period.—N. W.

the shade. The sunbeams bring all living things to what may be considered as their highest state of development and perfection; but it is too powerful for the first or rudimental stages; and if life continues in what we are accustomed to call a rudimental state, as in an earth-worm, an oyster, or the moss which grows on the walls of ruins, the clear and full light of day is too much for it.

“ In the female bird there is thus an avoiding of the solar influence as well as a want of excitability by it, and the one of these may be the cause of the other; and the two together, though their effect would at first seem to take the other way, show why the female should be the first to follow the sun in his southward destination in the autumn. If a bird is perched on a bush or stump that rises above the snow, the rays of the slanting sun beat more ardently upon it than if they came perpendicularly, while it perched on the succulent leaf of a tropical plant. They are augmented by reflection from the snow, and they strike the bird lower down, and not so much on the back, which from its gloss is the best calculated for deflecting off the heat. The hidling bird, on the other hand, would necessarily be subject to the excess of cold that prevails in the shade.\*

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“ The male in the winter plumage, which is the only perfect plumage in which it appears in Britain, is pure white with the exception of the back, the middle coverts, and partially the quills and central feathers of the tail, which remain black; but the change to white, like that in the Ptarmigan, is more or less complete according to circumstances. They come in great numbers to the northern isles and north parts of the highlands of Scotland, always white in proportion as the winter is more advanced. They come during, and apparently driven by, the violent north-east winds which precede or accompany the heavy falls of snow. On their arrival, they are sadly exhausted and

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\* Two paragraphs are here omitted for the reason adduced in my *Ornithologist's Text-book*, Supp. Art. I. in the article “GOLDEN EAGLE,” extracted from the same work.—N. W.

emaciated ; and, if caught in the *snow-drift*, many of them are whelmed in the *wreaths* and perish. But when the storm abates, those that are in the low countries near the sea—Shetland, Orkney, Caithness, and similar places, soon get very fat, as they also do upon the coasts of Lapland, when the storms drive them from the mountains. The latter people capture them in great numbers for the table, and they are highly prized.

“ In summer the plumage alters, the white on the head, the breast, partially on the rest of the under part, and the margins of the feathers above, gives place to pale tawny orange, mixed on some parts with pale grey ; and an additional portion of the upper feathers brown black.

“ The young are still darker, except in the black on the upper part, which is not so pure, and the females do not acquire the intense snowy whiteness of the other sex.

“ The young birds and females reach the south of England, and are probably more numerous in the middle latitudes of that country than in the north of Scotland ; but the males in winter plumage are most numerous there, very numerous indeed if the winter is severe. The males that come early and with the plumage partially changed, and also the females (for females do come there) are birds of evil omen to the hill farmers, as they often foretel but too truly, that the snow will come before the late oats are gathered in, and the potatoe crop out of the ground ; and those who are weather-wise quicken the hand of their industry, when they see the Snowy Longspur early, with his pale tawny gorget, especially if on those halcyon days which are so treacherous in the autumn of high latitudes.

“ They even remain and breed in the extreme north. But as they are naturally mountain birds, they are found in the main-land rather than in the isles. That dreary ridge of mountains which extends from the end of Caithness to Cape Rath, and which almost seems too cold and sterile for heath and bog-myrtle, is the place to look for them ; and any one who had the hardihood to summer and winter upon its bleak



north side, would, duly employed, find something to add to the Ornithology of our *ultima Thule*. He might make sure of the nest of the Snowy Longspur and the Grey Snowflake [*Nyctea cinerea*, STEPH.], and he might search the crags for the Jer Falcon's nest; and the few low sandy tracts at the heads of the little wild creeks, for that of the [Collared] Turnstone;—and if he should (as who does not when safe upon the trusty rock) love to look upon the deep in storms, he would have ample scope for knowing how sublimely the angry north can thunder; or again, how soundly the arctic tide can sleep, and how gaily it can glitter, at that season when its night is more illuminated than noon in the southern fogs.

“In nesting time, the Snowy Longspurs are very solitary and retired. Their nests are in the clefts of inland rocks, constructed of grass and feathers, and lined with down, or with the fur of the arctic fox or the northern hare. The eggs do not exceed five; they are nearly spherical, with reddish white grounds, and lines and dots of reddish brown. They do not breed in inhabited, or even in habitable places; and they breed late. The male, which though a feeble songster, is a much more pleasing one than any of the Buntings, begins his song about the middle, or towards the end of May; and he continues it till the latter part of July. His note of invitation is pleasant; but that of alarm is harsh and shrill, and rings among the crags. In the breeding-time the birds are very industrious, resting little in the night, and the male takes his turn in the incubation. They run fleetly, but never perch, for which indeed their feet are not so well adapted.

“In the statements of authors, there is some confusion in the accounts of the changes of plumage in the Snowy Longspur, which probably arises from the late period of the season to which it wears the winter plumage, and the moult being perhaps gradual.”

Mr. BLYTH informs me that he has kept one of these birds alive for a considerable time, and that “it used to be very

lively and interesting, running along the ground very quickly, but now, poor thing, it has broken its leg, and it is almost a pity to keep it any longer." Dr. LIVERPOOL has likewise, at different times, had several in confinement, and though somewhat wild—having been taken in traps—they were amusing, and by no means difficult to preserve. They would feed on hemp and other seeds, which they cracked with ease, but they always preferred the seeds of grasses, and were partial to some kinds of insects. They could never be induced to eat oats, or indeed any other corn, though it is probable that, in their wild state, and when pressed by hunger, they do resort to it. Dr. L. at one time possessed five or six of these birds in a small room, and he found that they always passed the night on the floor.

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RUSTY LONGSPUR, *Plectrophanes Lapponica*, SELBY.

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Oh! bid me not roam  
 From my mountain home;  
 The rich harvests that load the fertile plain,  
 With the luscious fruits and the golden grain,  
 Are less to my mind  
 Than the berries I find,  
 Waving on high in the keen mountain wind.

*Minstrelsy of the Woods.*

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SYNONYMS.—*Fringilla Lapponica*, LINN. *Syst.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Fringilla montana*, BRISS. *Orn.*—*Fringilla calcarata*, PALLAS.—*Emberiza calcarata*, TEMM. *Man. d'Orn.*—*Plectrophanes Lapponica*, SELBY in *Linn. Trans.* and *Br. Orn.*—Lapland Finch, LATH. *Syn.*—Lapland Bunting, SW. & RICH. *North Zool.*—Lapland Longspur, BONAP. *Orn.*—Rusty Longspur, *Analyst*, No. 14.

THE Rusty Longspur is only known in Britain as a rare occasional visitant. SELBY says:—"The figure given of this species upon one of the supplementary plates, is from an individual that was found some years ago in Leaden Hall Market, amongst some Larks sent up to London from Cambridgeshire, and which specimen is now preserved in the collection of the Zoological Society. A second, caught alive in the neighbour-

hood of Brighton, was kept caged for some months, as a variety of Lark, and after death passed into the hands of Mr. YARRELL of Ryder Street, in whose collection it remains. Both of these were young or immatured birds; and no instance of the capture of the adult male, distinguished by a marked and well contrasted plumage, has yet come to my knowledge."

BECHSTEIN'S *Cage Birds* will supply the rest of the present article:—

"This [bird] would be mistaken for a Lark at first sight, as much from its plumage as from the length of its spur. We should also see them much oftener in Germany if the bird-catchers, who catch them in their Lark's net, did not take or kill them both indifferently. Their decoys are the same as the Buntings (*Emberiza*, LINN.), for though we cannot observe them much while alive, we cannot be deceived as to their pairing with Finches (*Fringilla*, LINN.), Buntings, and Larks. They are about the size of the Yellow Bunting, six inches and a half in length, of which the tail measures two. The beak is yellow, with a black tip; the feet dark brown; the head blackish, spotted with reddish white, sometimes quite black; a white line passes from the base of the bill above the eyes, down each side of the neck, curving towards the breast; the upper part of the body is red, with brown spots; the throat and breast are pale red; some males are black in the middle of the lower part; the belly, thighs, and lower tail coverts are white; the lesser wing coverts are pale red, the middle ones black, with yellow border and white tips, which form a white bar on the wings; the quill feathers, and those of the forked tail, are black, bordered with yellow.

"The female is paler in its colours; its breast is spotted with grey and black; in fact, its plumage resembles the Field Lark's.

"This bird is always found in the north, both in the old and new world, and goes towards the south in winter. It is met with by us on its arrival with the Larks, and on its return

with the Snowy Longspur, but it is oftenest taken with Larks. Its call is a kind of shrill whistle, and its song is very similar to the [Whin] Linnet's; the female also warbles, but only in the Hedge Coalhood's style. It ranges the room like the Lark, and if in a cage hops about its perches like the Chaff Finch. It is fed on rape, hemp, and poppy seed, which appear to agree with it very well. It may be fed at less expense on the universal paste, and it also likes meal worms. I think that in its wild state it lives, like the Chaff Finch, on seeds and insects."

The nest, according to Dr. RICHARDSON, "is placed upon a small hillock, among moss and stones, and is composed externally of the dry stems of grass, interwoven to a considerable thickness, and lined very neatly and compactly with deer's hair." SELBY adds,—“The eggs are usually seven in number, of a pale ochre-yellow, spotted with brown. . . . It feeds upon the seeds of various grasses, as well as those of the alpine fruits, as the *Arbutus alpina*, &c.”

It is possible that this bird has been met with in England much more frequently than is at present supposed, but that it has been mistaken, as in Germany, for a Lark!

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## GENUS EMBERIZA, LINN. BUNTING.

### CORN BUNTING, *Emberiza miliaria*, LINN.

SYNONYMS.—*Emberiza miliaria*, LINN. *Syst.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—*Miliaria canescens*, *Analyst*, No. 14.—Common Bunting, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Tawny Seedling, *Analyst*, No. 14.

THE Corn Bunting is the largest British species of the genus, and is resident and common in almost every part of the British islands, extending so far to the north as the Orkneys, where, according to Low's *Fauna Orcadensis*, it is as plentiful as elsewhere. I say that it is abundant in *almost* every part of Britain, because, strange as it may seem, I have only twice met with it in my ornithological rambles in Derbyshire; and this circumstance is even more inexplicable than the non-appearance of the Whitethroat Fauvet amongst us, inasmuch as there was

a reason, or an apology of a reason for that. Now the Corn Bunting, as every tyro in Ornithology well knows, is most partial to, and most abundant in, cultivated and fertile districts, qualities in which the flat portion of Derbyshire is by no means deficient, every spot of ground being turned to good account by our industrious farmers, and presenting, in goodly succession, meadows, corn fields, peas, beans, turnips, and numberless other "crops," which it would be alike tedious and unprofitable here to describe. Suffice it to say, however, that there is not an acre of waste ground for miles round, and that our fertile valley, or rather plain, presents, towards the close of summer, a most inviting aspect from the summits of the surrounding hills.

Yet, notwithstanding all this, and that its congener—in haunts as well as in systems—the Yellow Bunting, of which anon, is fully as abundant as elsewhere, the present species keeps aloof from us. On one occasion, when returning from a short ride, one lovely evening in the summer of 1834, my journal informs me that I saw a single male Corn Bunting perched on the top of a hedge, and uttering its song or "skirle." The sounds indeed were by no means sweet, and might have induced a superficial observer to quicken his pace and hasten from the spot; but I stood gazing at it and watching its motions as long as it remained in sight, astonished as I was at the sight of a Corn Bunting hereabouts! Its neighbour the Yellow Bunting appeared likewise to partake of my surprise, and four or five were fluttering about in an adjacent bush, with evident signs of wonder at so unexpected a visit from the *Common Bunting*.

And here we have a remarkable instance of the inappropriateness of the specific appellation *common*. It cannot, in fact, be appropriate for any bird or any animal whatever. For what folly and ignorance it is to call a bird "common" just because it is so in the spot where the nomenclator happens to reside. *Common* is even worse as a specific designation than *European*, *American*, &c., inasmuch as the latter may, in some cases, and

for a certain period, be correct, though they are ever liable to become erroneous ; but *common* can *never* be admissible.

The other instance alluded to, of the Corn Bunting's having occurred here, was in December 1835, when a small flock alighted in some fields near Sudbury, remained for a few days amongst the farm-yards in the neighbourhood, and then took their departure for more favourite spots. I confess myself wholly at a loss to account for the rarity of this species in Derbyshire, but the fact is certain, and has been noticed by many accurate observers with whom I have conversed. The circumstance has, however, escaped the notice of Ornithologists ; and this is scarcely to be wondered at ; for a resident Naturalist in this fox-hunting neighbourhood is a very rare animal, and Ornithologists who visit Derbyshire from afar, betake themselves to the Peak, and the hilly picturesque parts of the county, in search of the Golden Eagle (*Aquila aurea*), Rivulet Dipper (*Cinclus lutans*), Pied Flycatcher (*Muscicapa luctuosa*), and other rare and precious game.

In the vicinity of Tutbury, on the borders of Staffordshire, I have met with it occasionally, and likewise with its nest, and it becomes much more plentiful as we advance from here on the road leading to Burton-on-Trent, but is not so common even there as in the neighbourhood of Derby, where this and the following species are about equally abundant. In most parts of Staffordshire it occurs very frequently, but only in cultivated spots, and not on the extensive moors and heathy commons, which cover a considerable portion of that country. Thus, though the species is rare in my more immediate neighbourhood, yet a short three-mile walk or ride conveys me to localities where it abounds, and, therefore, I rejoice to say, I am enabled to present you with a history of its habits fresh from the fields, which will be much more satisfactory, both to the reader and myself, than if I were to ransack my library for an account of it.

Like the Yellow Bunting, it is a bird of the hedge, being mostly met with in corn fields, or in hedges by the road-side.

Barren wastes, trackless moors, uninhabited places of any kind, and elevated grounds, are not the localities to look for it. On the contrary, it prefers the low and cultivated districts, in the vicinity of dwelling-houses, farms, &c., which rarely fail to be frequented by it. It seldom takes lofty or long-protracted flights, except when a small flock passes from one district into another, an occurrence which I have occasionally known to take place, during a continuance of frost, and when the snow lies deep on the ground. In such cases, the partial migrations are carried on in perfect silence, and at such a height as renders it useless to attempt to shoot at them. If, however, a Sparrow Hawk appears, they instantly disperse, uttering harsh screams, and rushing, like the Coal and Marsh Tits on a similar occasion, in a downward direction. Should the voracious plunderer make a stoop amongst them, one unhappy victim is usually singled out and borne aloft; but, no sooner is the danger out of sight, than the scattered forces collect, and again mounting aloft into the air, resume their journey in peace, until again molested by their vigilant enemies. Such partial migrations of the Corn Bunting have only thrice come under my notice, and twice, out of this limited number, have I known their ranks thinned by the Sparrow Hawk—a most abundant species in this neighbourhood, and remarkably bold.\*

The Corn Bunting is by no means a shy species, scarcely so much so as the Yellow Bunting, and this circumstance, added to its abundance, and its haunts, conspire to render it one of the most familiar of birds, though, as I have already observed, they are often palmed off on *epicures* for the Sky Lark. In many of its habits it is closely allied to the Longspurs, and indeed the gradation from the Pipits, through their numerous links and affinities, to the Buntings, is most beautiful and obvious, and would be equally so in the whole range of Ornitho-

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\* A few years ago, a Sparrow Hawk broke a pane of glass in a window of my residence, and flew in, with the view of pouncing on a caged Canary. I had him caught, however, and to this day it figures in my museum. It was a male bird, and in fine plumage.

logy, and indeed throughout Nature, could we but become acquainted with all her endless and varied forms. Until this is the case, all attempts at systems must be abortive, or, at all events, they can only be perfect in certain parts, where the chain is least broken. The Quinary System is the nearest approach to a rational classification, and though at present it only serves to point out our deficiency in knowledge of species, yet there is every reason for supposing—despite the sneers and ridicule of its opponents—that it will eventually prove to be *the* natural system. But to resume the “ thread of our discourse.”

From its familiarity, and the domesticity of its haunts, the present species is at all times open to observation. Like the other Buntings it moves along the ground by hopping, and is as much seen on the ground as on bushes and hedges, but it never mounts to a high perch, its habits being intermediate, in this respect, between those of the Longspurs and the more typical members of the Finch family. Like the Larks, the House Sparrow, the Hedge Dunnock, the Common Fowl, &c., it is a duster, and may sometimes be seen rolling in the road in a hot summer's day. But dusting would not seem to be a constant habit with it, and I think I have found that it prefers washing in a running stream, in its wild state. My friend, Dr. LIVERPOOL, informs me that he has frequently observed it dusting itself in confinement, but he was not aware that it would wash, until I advised him to try the experiment.

The song of this species might perhaps more properly be denominated a “ skirle,” as it consists only of five or six notes, and only of two tones. The strain exceeds that of the Yellow Bunting, and indeed that of any other songster with which I am acquainted, in harshness, being wholly destitute of that sweetness and melody which constitutes the chief charm of the notes of many of our woodland choristers. This monotonous strain is repeated throughout the day, with little intermission, from early dawn to the setting sun, when, however, it instantly ceases. It usually pours forth this oft-repeated ditty from the top sprig of a hedge or bush, as is indeed the custom with the



rest of the genus, and, being a large bird, it is then remarkably conspicuous. Whilst singing, it commonly *sits* upon the sprig which supports it, as if to point out to its auditors how easily it effects this portion of its labours. How different is this from the manner in which the Brake Nightingale, the Fauvets, and others of the Warbler family, deport themselves, on a similar occasion. See how they stand erect on their perch, raise the feathers of their head, and ruffle those of their little throats! They appear as if another exertion would burst their delicate forms. Yet, when we reflect on the matter, we may fairly conclude that the degree of fatigue, experienced by the Corn Bunting and the Garden Fauvet, is nearly equal, both being in fact mechanical. The animal heat is doubtless about as ardent in the one species as it is in the other; and singing is probably equally little exertion to both.

Of the nest of the Corn Bunting I have hitherto only met with a single specimen in this county, and even that was on the borders of Staffordshire; in the latter county, however, it breeds abundantly in the cultivated lowlands. About Tutbury, on the confines of Staffordshire, three miles from my residence, the nest is rarely found, and indeed I have only heard of a single instance of it. The specimen here alluded to, is now in the possession of my friend Mr. HELDENMAIER, to whom, as that gentleman informs me, it was brought as a rare object, and so in truth it is in these parts. Near Marston-on-Dove and Rolleston, especially on the other side of these villages, the nest frequently occurs.

The structure consists of straw and dried grass, matted together in the manner of the other Buntings, and is lined with fine fibres and horse-hair. It is large and thick, but not very compact, nor so firmly matted as the nests of the Yellow and Reed Buntings; and for the obvious reason that it is usually placed on the ground, under the shelter of a tuft of grass, sometimes in the middle of a field, but often on the declivity of a tall bank, beside a little-frequented lane, or also under a hedge. I have likewise found it elevated a foot or so from the ground,

and situate amongst brambles or other thick, braky herbage, under a hedge, where the structure exhibited somewhat more art than is usually employed by this bird. The eggs are commonly from four to six in number, rarely three, and are of a pale cream colour, streaked with reddish brown, and here and there marked with spots of the same tint. The eggs of the Buntings are at once distinguishable from those of all other birds, by the streaks by which they are invariably characterized. The eggs of the present species are considerably subject to variety, as regards the ground colour, which is sometimes of a light purple, and sometimes nearly white; the lines and dots appear, however, to be always disposed of in the same manner. They are figured in the first number of the *British Oology*, of my friend HEWITSON, and to this work, accordingly, I now refer my readers.

The food of this bird consists, for the most part, of corn, and the seeds of various plants and grasses; for the bruising of which it is eminently well calculated. The hard knob observable in the roof of all the Buntings' bills, is more marked in this species than in any other, being apparent, at first sight, and to the most careless observer. I believe that insects and worms constitute no part of its food. On the approach of severe weather they congregate in large flocks, and are amongst the most destructive of the pillagers of the farmer's corn-ricks. During the day-time they associate with Yellow Buntings, House Sparrows, Chaff Finches, and other birds, but at night they retire to their sleeping grounds, in the neighbourhood of farms, roosting either on the ground, or in bushes and hedges, according to the state of the weather. Occasionally they will pass the night in an ivy-clad wall, but their most favourite roost appears to be a tall holly bush rising out of a hedge, where I have observed them to retire in dozens at about dusk. At this time, a common bat-fowling net might easily capture the whole flock.

The Corn Bunting is a large bird, being little inferior in size to the Garden Thrush. It is by no means a handsome species,

either as regards colour or shape, and its habits are neither so varied nor interesting as those of the Yellow and Reed Buntings; and, from its exclusively granivorous habits, it is more prejudicial to the interests of the farmer than any other of our small birds. The House Sparrow partly counterbalances its corn-eating, stack-pillaging propensities, by the immense number of worms and caterpillars which it destroys during the breeding season, and it may, therefore, well be doubted whether farmers would not be doing themselves a greater service by destroying the Corn Bunting, than by directing all their energies against the House Sparrow; but one could as soon remove a mountain from its place, as convince the worthy farmer of his error in this and numerous other particulars, relating equally to farming and to Natural History.

This species is somewhat subject to variety, individuals more or less white being occasionally met with. I now possess the skin of one which is nearly white, with the exception of a few indistinct markings of brown, in various parts. It was shot in Yorkshire, some eight or ten years ago, but I know nothing of its history. A short time since, I forwarded the specimen to my friend Mr. BLYTH, who made the following observations on it:—

“ The bird which you sent me is unquestionably a Corn Bunting, and a very remarkable specimen it is, inasmuch as, contrary to the usual course of Nature in the case of white variations, it is moulting, and the *new* feathers are mostly coming white, in the place of coloured ones, which were being shed. Pale or white varieties of birds in nestling plumage, more commonly become pied when they moult the first time, and of the natural colour at the second change of plumage. But this bird was undergoing at least the second moult—as the old feathers on the back are not nestling feathers—and would have had much more white on the new plumage than on the old.”

Some authors mention varieties of this species, but I never saw or heard of so remarkable a one as that above described.

YELLOW BUNTING, *Emberiza citrinella*, LINN.

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See! her mate, as nigh the tree,  
 Chaunting oft at break of day,  
 Still proclaiming, merrily,  
 Merrily, his roundelay!

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SYNONYMS.—*Emberiza flava*, GESN. *Orn.*—WILL. *Orn.*—BRISS. *Orn.*—*Emberiza citrinella*, LINN. *Syst*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Yellow Bunting, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—MUDIE'S *Feath. Tribes*.

THIS species, like the preceding, is indigenous in Britain, and is extremely plentiful in every part of the kingdom. The curious fact of the Corn Bunting's rarely occurring in Derbyshire, or at least in some portions of it, has already been noticed; and this circumstance is rendered the more remarkable by the great abundance of the present species, which is nearly related to it in haunts and manners. In most parts of the country the two species are about equally common, and in some localities the Corn Bunting predominates, but here, whilst the latter seldom or never appears, the Yellow Bunting abounds in almost every field, hedge, and high road. Both birds are familiar, and little prone to concealment, and are, therefore, easily seen and observed by even the most careless observer, though they are, on this very account, but little noticed. None of our other small birds can boast of such beautiful and delicate tints and shades as the Yellow Bunting; its shape is elegant, and its motions light and graceful; but, happily for it, its voice is harsh and unpleasant, and therefore it escapes the barbarous wire prisons of the bird-fancier, though it is much more fitted for confinement than the Sky Lark, and other more melodious songsters. When first caught and caged, it is very wild, and is constantly endeavouring to escape, but it becomes, ere long, accustomed to its prison, and hops about as gently and blithely as a Canary. If caged in the breeding

season, and especially if its young are hatched, it frequently refuses all food, and, unless suffered to escape, soon perishes.

A Yellow Bunting that I winged and gave to a friend some time since, was allowed to fly about a small parlour, and soon became so tame and familiar as to feed out of the hand. At first, however, it was sulky, refused all sustenance, and usually skulked behind the window-curtains, or under the sofa, but after a few days it would occasionally come out of its hiding place to be fed, though if any one made the slightest movement of his hand or foot, off it would go again. By degrees, however, it became quite fearless, picked crumbs and seeds from our feet, and at last from our hands; this was only a fortnight after I had shot it. Frequently it would fly on our heads and shoulders, and it was becoming a most amusing pet, when it one day met the fate of all such creatures, and was killed by a cat. I have seen other individuals perfectly contented and happy in confinement, and singing the whole day, though they had been captured or shot but a short time before. A Yellow Bunting that I caught two years ago, was placed in an aviary containing several other birds, but died at the end of the second day, having taken no food. This was in the breeding season, which was probably the cause of its death, the other individuals having been taken in autumn or winter, which is, in fact, the proper season for catching them.

It may be captured at night, with a bat-fowling net, which must be set about the hedges, though it sometimes passes the night on the ground. It may also be taken with bird-lime, though bird-catchers seldom consider it worth their while to employ this method with so common a bird. But after all, though it is doubtless a lively and interesting bird in confinement, I think it far more satisfactory to observe it in its natural state, and at perfect liberty, when its colours are far brighter, and its spirit more cheerful than they can ever be in cages; for it is a well-known fact that long confinement considerably detracts from the lustre of its tints, and I have found even a short period of imprisonment, as a month or six weeks'

to have some effect in this particular, as will be evident to any one who compares a caged individual with one freshly caught. Even in its wild state, on sultry dusty days, its plumage becomes tarnished as it were, but a single flutter in a neighbouring brook, at eventide, adds fresh beauty to its lovely colours.

Beautiful as is the Yellow Bunting, it is marvellous to perceive how listlessly the common observer passes it over, without even bestowing on it a passing glance. Happening to be riding, one beautiful summer's day, with a very intelligent friend, I pointed out to him the lovely tints of a fine male of this species, perched on a gate-post. But, not being a Naturalist, he looked at me with surprise, and asked me if I had never seen a Yellow Bunting before! Common objects, however beautiful or wonderful they may be in themselves, are seldom duly appreciated, and I dare say that few of my readers are fully aware of the exquisite, though simple, colouring of the Yellow Bunting, which, common though it be, is not, in my opinion, surpassed in this particular, by any rarer species that visit our islands. Had the Yellow Bunting been a rare bird, or had it—unluckily for itself—been gifted with the voice of the more melodious woodland choristers, its praises would have been sung by every Poet, and acknowledged by every Naturalist and compiler, from ARISTOTLE to the present day.

The song of the Yellow Bunting is little superior to that of the preceding species, to which, indeed, it bears a considerable resemblance, being short, harsh, and monotonous, and consisting only of one oft-repeated strain, comprising two or three tones, the first occurring several times, with a kind of confused turn at the end. This unmelodious ditty is usually poured forth from the topmost sprig of a hedge, or from some projecting spray of a young tree, where the bird may be seen perched, in the same position, for half-an-hour together. Though not remarkable for power, the notes are audible at a very considerable distance, and indeed they fall almost as indistinctly on the ear from afar, as they do when quite close, of which circumstance

we find numerous parallel cases in other birds. Whilst singing, this bird appears to exert itself but little, usually sitting on its perch, with the feathers of the head and throat almost motionless; and the bill exhibits none of that rapid vibratory action so evident in the Blackcap Fauvet, and other species.

Sitting, indeed, appears to be a very favourite posture with this species, being commonly assumed immediately on alighting from the wing. In winter it might be supposed that this was for the purpose of keeping its feet warm, and canting, thoughtless individuals, would at once triumphantly point out the "wisdom of Providence" in this circumstance, without reflecting that the bird does just the same in the dog days as in mid-winter; and that there is no essential difference between the foot of the Yellow Bunting and the House Sparrow, that the one should be so much more susceptible of cold than the other. It would be far more rational if such gentry would endeavour to amass new facts, than, as many now do, attempt to philosophise on an ill-grounded assertion, or a total error, and remind us, at every turn, of the "goodness of Providence," as if that were a proposition yet to be proved!

Although the present species is far from being highly-gifted with musical abilities, it is a most diligent songster; for the notes are first heard in April, and, which is remarkable, generally continue throughout the breeding season. Most birds, as is well known, cease their melody as soon as the young burst the shell, but the Yellow Bunting, on the contrary, sings most unceasingly at that period, and its labours are not remitted till late in the summer. Some persons with whom I have conversed on the subject, are of opinion, that only those males which have, by some accident, lost their young, are heard to sing so late in the season. But this is not the case. For I have, in numberless instances, seen the male carolling beside a nest containing fledged young, and subsequently whilst followed by the young brood, amongst the thick foliage; for at this time he is more seen than heard.

The male, like that of most other members of the order *In-*

*sessores*, or Perchers, frequently takes his turn on the eggs, for about half-an-hour at noon. And even here, as if unwilling for a moment to intermit its everlasting ditty, it sometimes utters it while sitting in the nest. During an ornithological ramble on the other side of the Dove, on a beautiful morning in May, I was struck by the sound of the Yellow Bunting's song, at the bottom of a hedge, instead of at the top, as is usually the case, and, on peering into the bush, out started a Yellow Bunting from its nest, where, it seems, it had been amusing itself with its unmusical voice. I regularly visited the spot, in the middle of the day, for some time afterwards, always approaching with great caution, and seldom failed in hearing the male recapitulating its strains. Desirous of discovering how long this lasted each time, I one day waited for above an hour near the spot, namely, from a quarter before twelve till one, in a convenient place for observation. I awaited the result with as much anxiety as I have frequently done, at the same hour of the night, for the Brake Nightingale to strike up, but nothing very satisfactory was ascertained. This day, the notes were first heard exactly as a neighbouring church clock struck twelve, and continued, with little intermission, till twenty minutes before one; though it is more than probable that the male and female must have changed places twice during my stay, yet could I not, with the utmost vigilance, perceive any occurrence of the kind, and was thus unable to discover the exact period of the male's sitting, though the commencement and cessation of the notes indicated whereabouts it was. After the young were hatched, the male no longer took his turn on the nest, but frequently amused his mate with a song on the top of the bush, or occupied himself with providing food for her, which he either laid down at the edge of the nest, or deposited in the beak of the female. After a few days, however, their assiduities in some measure decreased, and both the parents joined in foraging for their brood. The nest had been constantly visited, by myself and others, and the young therefore disappeared on the ninth day after they were hatched, and



were not seen afterwards. I have only known one other instance of the Yellow Bunting's singing on its nest, but my researches on this head will be renewed next spring.

In autumn and winter this species is invariably silent—except as regards its call-note—but I learn from a correspondent (WM. D. BURCHELL, Esq., of Edinburgh), that it often sings throughout the year in confinement, except during the moulting time, and I have myself heard it singing in December in a cage. Mr. BURCHELL says:—"Whilst walking in a back street in Edinburgh, in the early part of January 1834, I heard the well-known song of the Yellow Bunting, in a bird shop, on the other side of the way. On entering the house, I saw, amongst numbers of other singing birds, four of this species, which appeared to be all males. The man informed me that they sang the livelong day, and almost throughout the year, but that they invariably cease a little before dusk, and artificial light never causes them to commence afresh," as is the case with the Brake Nightingale, Tree Redstart, and others. This species is rarely kept in confinement, melody of song being invariably preferred, by the true bird-*fancier*, to sprightliness of motion, brilliancy of plumage, or any other merit. The Yellow Bunting is not remarkable for liveliness in its wild state, often remaining perched on the same spray for ten minutes or a quarter of an hour together, keeping its head stiff and motionless, and its tail hanging down loosely and almost perpendicularly. Often, however, its movements are sprightly and graceful, and it forms a beautiful ornament in a cage hung near the window, where it never fails to furnish its keeper with an abundant supply of its music, such as that is.

The nest is composed of dried grass and the stalks of various plants exteriorly, matted and woven in a very artist-like manner, and lined with horsehair. It is compact, heavy for its size, and much superior in neatness to that of the previous species, and is situated near the bottom of a hedge, amongst brambles and brakes, or on the ground, under the shelter of a

bush or tuft of herbage. It may likewise be sought for in the sides of dry banks, where I have known it build at the entrance of the deserted hole of a water rat, which had quitted its old haunts ever since the ditch had dried up. It is far from being an easy nest to find, being usually most sedulously concealed, and before I had become thoroughly acquainted with its mode of breeding, I could never discover a single nest, although the birds were constantly seen in the neighbourhood. Bird-nesting boys, however, contrive to get immense numbers of its eggs on their strings, and not unfrequently kill one or both the parents with stones. The provincial name of the Yellow Bunting in this quarter is "Gold Finch,"—"Bunting" and "yellow-hammer"\* being here unknown.

The situation of the nest varies but little, and I do not at present remember having observed a single deviation from the usual localities. The eggs are from three to five in number, rarely six, are of a pale purplish white, streaked and spotted with light red, or sometimes with purple. Like those of its congener, the Corn Bunting, they vary little, except in the intensity of the ground colour, but my friend Mr. BLYTH informs me that he possesses a Yellow Bunting's egg (which he found in a nest containing three ordinary ones) "which never had a yolk, and is smaller than a Goldcrested Kinglet's egg. The circumstance of this bird's frequently laying only three eggs, is not a little remarkable; as most others of the order either lay four or five, or a greater number. Though a late breeder, I am inclined to think that it hatches two broods in the season. On one occasion, at least, I know this to have been the case, where an instance fell under my notice of the same pair breeding twice in the same nest, in one summer. The second brood departed so late as the beginning of August, during which time the male had continued his song with unceasing assiduity. I had frequent opportunities of seeing

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\* The provincial term "*Yellow Hammer*" is by no means so absurd as some people are apt to suppose; the "*Hammer*" being obviously derived from *Ammer*, which is the German name for the Bunting.

the young birds following their parents along the hedges, and in the stubble fields, and fed by them, but I observed that they parted company much sooner than they would have done, had they been hatched at an earlier period. The young birds, as is common in such cases, remained together for about a week, roosting close together at night, and appearing perfectly capable of providing for themselves; but after awhile they separated, and I saw no more of them.

This bird subsists chiefly on corn, the seeds of grasses and other plants, but not, if it can help it, on animal substances. It cannot be denied that it commits considerable damage, along with other granivorous species, to the corn fields, immediately before harvest time, and even during that operation, but then the number of noxious weeds which it destroys, by devouring their seeds, must not be forgotten, and it must be evident to any one who takes the trouble of reflecting on the matter, that the land would be soon overrun by baneful vegetables of various kinds, which it is beyond the farmer's power to subdue, were it not for the unceasing labours of these much calumniated birds. The Yellow Bunting is seldom pressed for food, the spring and summer months affording a constant and varied source of food; and in winter, whilst the snow and frost prevent their obtaining food from the ground, they flock in thousands to our farm yards, and join the motley group constantly assembled round the corn-ricks. Here they consume an immense quantity of grain, and the farmer may now use his gun as freely as he pleases, though there is perhaps no need of wasting shot in killing the birds, as it will terrify them sufficiently to fire amongst them several times in the course of the day with a powder-loaded gun.

When thus disturbed, the whole flock, consisting of many hundreds, and often of thousands, betakes itself to a neighbouring wood or shrubbery, waiting patiently till the danger be over, when they again charge the poor farmer's ricks most unmercifully. In extremely severe weather, these and other birds infest the stack-yards in such immense numbers, that the tops

and sides of the ricks look like one mass of birds, and on taking wing, which they usually do simultaneously, it almost appears as if the outer crust (so to speak) of the stack were giving way, and leaving the farmer to lament the volar powers of his stores! So greatly indeed do these pilferers annoy the farmers of the smaller sort, that I have known instances of their finding it necessary to cover the stacks with sail-cloth, which, being held down at the sides with large heavy stones or bits of lead, effectually preserve the corn. In riding home from Uttoxeter one stormy evening in December 1832, I particularly remember observing several men employed in thus covering the stacks, at a small farm, and on enquiring the reason of so strange a procedure, I found it to be as above stated. In two or three other cases, the practice has been followed by other farmers in the neighbourhood.

Some admirers of the feathered race, very naturally desirous of finding an excuse for the extensive depredations of these beautiful birds, say that but little damage can accrue from this cause, as the birds can only obtain the corn from such ears as are sticking out of the sides; and, were this true, the injury would be comparatively small. But justice compels me to declare, that when hard pressed, they can obtain the object of their search from the very heart of the stack, by pulling out the long straws one by one, and devouring the grain at their leisure, either swallowing it on the spot, or, which is frequently the case, flying away with it to some place of safety. Those who have watched that insidious rogue the Garden Tit, plucking out the straws from a thatched roof, will easily believe what is stated with regard to the present species; or if they have any doubts about the matter, let them only repair to a farm yard in the neighbourhood, in winter, whilst snow is on the ground. A very short time will suffice to remove all scepticism on the subject, and the cold they will in the mean time experience, may perhaps serve to impress it more forcibly on their organ of Eventuality!

As long as the Yellow Bunting finds its food at the expense

of the farmer, it passes the night in an adjoining thicket, roosting for the most part in the leafless hedges—at this time rarely on the ground. Sometimes it lodges in gardens and shrubberies, or in ivy walls, amongst rabbles of noisy, ill-bred House Sparrows, where I have sometimes succeeded in catching a few with a large bat-fowling net (as it is termed by bird-catchers); but such cases are not of common occurrence, and it would seem that the individuals which pass the night apart from the main flock, had merely missed their way, having perhaps sat up so late as to render it a difficult matter to find their usual resting place. Persons unacquainted with their habits, or who pay little attention to Ornithology, frequently wonder where these birds can repair to at night; for in a spot where hundreds may be observed a little before dusk, not an individual is to be seen in a few minutes time; and whether they plunge into the lakes and rivers, conceal themselves in the holes of trees, or “wander on the banks of the Styx,” is equally unknown and little cared for by the greater part of those worthy gentry termed farmers.

About two years ago, in the winter season, when Yellow Buntings were busily engaged in pillaging the rick-yards, a farmer applied to me to know where these birds roost at night. Before initiating him into this secret, however, I asked him why he wished to obtain this information, and on his replying that he intended to catch them at night in nets, I determined to evade the question, and professed my inability to satisfy his desire in this respect, though I verily believe, that had the interest of the farmer been as much at heart as the welfare of these lovely creatures, I should at once have pointed out the place of their roosting. I was not at that time aware of the exact locality which the Yellow Buntings had chosen for their resting-place in that neighbourhood, but it would have been nothing difficult to have discovered it.

Though this species is rarely met with in gardens and the immediate neighbourhood of houses, it will occasionally approach them both in summer and winter, being sometimes attracted by the savoury odour of “grains,” or some such deli-

cacy. I have frequently observed them in the stable-yard behind my residence, after a brewing process had been going on, and have watched them "gloating" over the soft sweet grains. But I never saw more than two, and usually only one individual at a time.

Varieties of this bird occasionally occur, more or less white or light coloured. When riding in a field about twenty miles from here, in the summer of 1833, with a friend, I perceived, at the top of a hawthorn tree, a Yellow Bunting with a white head. Thinking, however, that I might be mistaken, and that this effect might be caused by the sun's shining upon the bird's head, I stopped to have a more favourable view of it. But, no sooner did it discover that it was an object of curiosity, than it flew off to a considerable distance, and alighted on a hedge; here I followed it, and being permitted to approach sufficiently near to perceive its colours distinctly, I found that the opinion previously formed of it was perfectly just, the head, neck and throat being of a pure snowy white, with one or two spots of madder brown on the top of the head. The rest of the body in no way differed from ordinary individuals. This remarkable specimen had no companion, but, as it was a male, it is possible that its mate may have been sitting, especially as he was unwilling to fly to any great distance. Unfortunately I had no gun with me at the time, nor would it have been easy to have procured one, and therefore with some regret I bade him adieu. I may remark, that whilst I had been watching this curious variety, my friend, who was no Ornithologist, had ridden on, wondering what there could possibly be to gaze upon at the top of a whitethorn, and his surprise would probably have been by no means diminished, had I informed him that I had been "gazing" at so common a bird as the Yellow Bunting.

Though it has been observed, that this species commonly congregates in large flocks at the close of autumn, yet this is not always the case. For the last few years, mild open winters have been in fashion, and, in this neighbourhood, the Yel-

low Buntings have become considerably less sociable during the dreary seasons ; extensive groups of them being much less frequently observed than formerly, though considerable numbers sometimes meet in the farm yards, as a rallying point, where they pick up corn amongst the Fowls, or gather it at the fountain-head, from the stacks. But even these latter now suffer comparatively little ; for as long as the ground is clear from snow and frost, they usually prefer seeking their food in the fields.

The Yellow Bunting is one of those birds which frequently remain in pairs throughout the year ; during the past winter, and likewise the preceding ones, I have mostly met with it in pairs, or sometimes in parties of from five to eight—doubtless the parents and the young brood of the previous year. Indeed, when they do assemble in large flocks, it is probable that the pairs for the most part keep together, as I have observed amongst wild Ring Ducks (*Anas boschas*, LINN.). I have found that though the latter congregate in great numbers in winter, yet that each male knows his own female, and attaches himself to her, the same pair thus breeding together each succeeding year. And the same holds good amongst tame Ring Ducks ; for although the domesticated male will attach himself to eight, ten, or more females, yet he invariably singles out one female as his special favourite, even though they may be kept amongst a large troop of Ducks ; and the same may possibly take place amongst Yellow Buntings.

REED BUNTING, *Emberiza schæniculus*, LINN.

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And sweet it is by lonely meres  
 To sit, with heart and soul awake,  
 Where water-lilies lie afloat,  
 Each anchored like a fairy boat  
 Amid some fabled elfin lake:  
 To see the birds flit to and fro  
 Along the dark-green reedy edge;  
 Or fish leap up to catch the fly;  
 Or list the viewless wind pass by,  
 Leaving its voice amid the sedge.

MARY HOWITT.

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SYNONYMS.—*Passer arundinaceus*, TURNER.—*Passer torquatus*, WILL. *Orn.*—RAY'S *Syn.*—BRISS. *Orn.*\*—*Emberiza schæniculus*, LINN. *Syst.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—TEMM. *Man. d'Orn.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—*Emberiza arundinacea*, GMEL. *Linn.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Emberiza passerina*, LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—GMEL. *Linn.*—Reed Bunting, MONT. *Orn. Dict.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Passerine Bunting, LATH. *Syn.*†

THE Reed Bunting, though plain and unassuming in its manners and plumage, is scarcely inferior in beauty and elegance to the preceding species, the jetty black head of the male, its ring of white round the neck, and the tasteful distribution of the tints in every part, being lovely in the extreme, and few of our more gifted songsters can, in my opinion, vie with it in the richness of its colouring, though their plumage may be brighter and more striking; and a fine male, of the second year, standing erect on the tops of the reeds and sedges, is certainly a most beautiful sight, and highly gratifying to the Ornithologist. The females, however, are of much plainer hues, and wholly destitute of the black crown of the male, but are, nevertheless, handsome birds. The young resemble the female in most re-

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\* It must be owned that these synonyms from TURNER, WILLUGHBY, RAY, and BRISSON, are ridiculous enough; and they are only given to rectify the mistake made by SELBY, in quoting them.

† Passerine Bunting and *E. Passerina* are synonyms of the young male and adult female.



spects, but are a trifle smaller, and not so matron-like ; nor do the males acquire their full beauty until the spring of the second year, when their plumage attains the tints above described. The Buntings have always been great favourites with me, and though I am more or less partial to all our singing birds—and who is not?—yet I know no birds whose habits and appearance interest me more than those of the Buntings. The Nightingale, the Fauvets, the Reedlings, the Finches, the Siskins, &c., are all lovely in their way, yet there is a peculiar charm about those familiar and homely creatures, the Buntings.

This species, like the two previous ones, is resident and abundant in every part of the kingdom, being met with, equally plentifully, in the north of Scotland and the south of England. But though it is distributed over the whole of Britain, yet, from the nature of its favourite haunts, it is perhaps more local ; and I have reason to know, that in some parts of England, it does not occur at all. It frequents the borders of lakes and sedgy streams, and likewise rushy grounds and osier beds, but is less partial to ponds and sluicy marshes. On the banks of the Dove, and in nearly all the sheltered rushy streams in the neighbourhood, especially where a hedgerow rises beside the rivulet, it is extremely common, and appears to be familiar to the most ordinary observer, by the vulgar provincial name of “ Reed Sparrow,” which has, very judiciously, been abandoned by all modern writers.

But, plentiful though it be in most parts of England, I have found it to be less known to unornithological persons than either the Corn or the Yellow Buntings, on account of its more sequestered habits, though it is by no means a *hidling* bird. The two preceding species are commonly met with in the hedges and highways, where it is impossible for individuals passing along the road, to overlook them. But the Reed Bunting is seldom seen here, remaining, for the most part, in the low wet grounds, where they are observed by the Naturalist alone. It is, however, far from being a true inhabitant of soft oozy marshes, and it is considerably less shy than most quagmire

birds, nothing being easier than to approach within two or three yards of them, especially in the breeding season, when the male is singing in the vicinity of the nest; and thus its economy is open to the observation of all who take an interest in these pursuits.

But, notwithstanding its abundance, and the ease with which a knowledge of its habits may be obtained, much confusion has arisen in the accounts of authors, from want of that accuracy which is so essential in the practical part of Natural History. Thus both its song and its nest have frequently been mistaken, by the earlier Ornithologists, for those of the Reedlings (*Salicaria*, SELBY), a group with which the Buntings have no manner of affinity or analogy. With regard to the song, we shall first have occasion to speak. The notes of the Reed Bunting have almost invariably been described—by authors who doubtless never heard them—as sweet and varied in the extreme, having taken their description from the Marsh Reedling. Others again, hearing that this statement was incorrect, mention it as harsh and monotonous, which, according to my observation, is equally erroneous; and it surprises me not a little, on referring to SELBY's *Illustrations*, to find this author favouring the latter opinion.

The strains of this handsome bird are perfectly familiar to me, having had constant opportunity of listening to them at a time when all other throats were silent, and within a very short distance of the little musician. Often whilst reposing in a sultry day towards the end of June, on a moss-grown bank beside a rippling, sedgy stream, a fine male would start up from the hedge, and commence his sweet warble, as if purposely for my benefit. And my judgment is, that the song is far from being varied, consisting only of a single strain, but then the notes composing that strain are mellifluous and sweetly blended, having nothing of that stiff, harsh, monotonous, *ear-cracking* character so peculiar to the oft-repeated ditty of the other species. If any one will merely take the trouble of repairing to any rush-grown lowland in his neigh-

bourhood, I think he will admit my estimate to be a true one. Let him not, however, expect to be greeted with such a masterpiece as the Brake Nightingale or some of the Fauvets could furnish. If so, he will most assuredly be disappointed; but if he be satisfied with an humble song, "short but sweet," he will admire the solitary strain of his black-headed friend. Like its congeners, it carols on the topmost sprig of a hedge or low bush, and when its nest is near, it not unfrequently remains on the same perch for an hour together, amusing its mate with its simple melody. Nor is it easily disturbed at such times. Most marsh-frequenting birds dart down into the midst of the impenetrable brake on the slightest suspicion of alarm, and remain concealed until the danger is entirely over; but you need be in no fear of walking close by the present species, for he will sing away until you almost fancy you could lay hold of him, when a sudden but short and graceful flight conveys him to another sprig, where he will immediately commence afresh.

Widely different, however, is the case if you have a gun or any other offensive weapon in your hand. All birds can at once distinguish between the three classes of mortals, as regards themselves:—1st. the ordinary observer or "common person;" 2dly, the harmless observing Naturalist; and 3dly, the cockney sportsman. To the first of these "three distinct classes," most of the feathered race pay little or no attention. Of the second some species are rather suspicious, being unwilling to be "gazed at;" and from the third, all flee away or conceal themselves, with the utmost precipitation and care. And so it is with the Reed Bunting. If you pass one of these birds in a hedge, without looking at it, you may approach within two or three yards of it; if you attempt to watch its habits, it begins to be alarmed, and flies off while you are yet at some little distance; but take a gun with you, and conceal it as you will, you will scarce meet with a single Reed Bunting in the course of your morning's walk,—so alive are these little creatures to their interests, and so well can they provide for their safety.

But if you are bent on *braining* one or a pair of these elegant birds, you may, nevertheless, find means of outwitting them, and of taking them unawares. The best method is to seat yourself amongst some long grass or other tall thick herbage, and partially conceal yourself, in some reedy ground, beside a stream which these birds are observed to frequent, laying your gun down under the grass, so as effectually to cover every part of it. Here you may perhaps have to wait half an hour or so on the damp oozy ground, and perhaps after all depart without seeing a single bird. But, if you are a true Ornithologist and sportsman, such disappointments will be familiar to you, and the next morning will find you again at your post. In summer, you can only hope to obtain two specimens, but in winter a small flock may perhaps approach. If you lie perfectly still, they will seldom be alarmed, and sometimes I have known a bold individual come within two yards of my face, as if I were a curiosity set there to be stared at by every passing "Sparrow," or as a Crow (*Corvus*) might reconnoitre a man similarly situated, in hopes of his being carrion. At this moment, with a double-barrelled gun, considerable execution may be made amongst the flock. A friend informs me, that he once obtained twelve with his two barrels, by means of this stratagem, and though I never used my gun on an occasion of this kind, yet I have no doubt of its success, having frequently posted myself amongst the reeds and rushes, with a view of ascertaining how far it might be practicable. For those who are desirous of obtaining an intimate knowledge of its habits, especially if they are short-sighted, this method might be advantageously employed, though a small pocket telescope would answer as well.

The nest is composed of dried grass, the stalks of plants, and a small portion of moss, lined with horse-hair. It is woven on the exterior somewhat in the manner of those of the other Buntings, but the structure is less compact, and not so thick and heavy. The weaving of the outer layer is not so conspicuous as in the nest of the Yellow Bunting, and none of the

broad, matting-like substances observable in the architecture of that species, are found in the nest of this bird. Most birds which line their nests with hair at all, select horse-hair for the purpose, but the Reed Bunting sometimes adds cow-hair, and I have even seen rabbits' down, though that only once, and in the immediate neighbourhood of a rabbit warren, all the inhabitants of which were black. This, however, was but a solitary instance, and was doubtless only resorted to on account of the scarcity of the common material. Birds will usually employ those substances which are most abundant and easily obtained, in the immediate vicinity of the spot chosen for incubation, as is rendered obvious by observing birds building in confinement. These commonly make use of the materials which they would have employed in their native haunts, but, in defect of these, whatever happens to be most plentiful, or whatever is most similar to the favourite substance. It is, however, impossible to take a correct estimate of the habits of the feathered race from observing them in confinement, as their manners frequently undergo a complete change as soon as they are imprisoned in the limited space of a common wire cage.

But at no period is the alteration in the habits of caged birds more obvious than during incubation; and the manner in which they will suit themselves to their unnatural state, fully proves that they have at least some reason, and are not entirely guided by mere mechanical instinct. Thus, though they usually form their nests of the same materials as they would have done in their wild state, and construct them with similar art, yet, when kept in a very warm room, and furnished with boxes to breed in, sometimes scarcely any nest will be made, and the lightest and coolest materials will be used. This I have repeatedly found to be the case. Some birds of various kinds which I used to keep in a warm hall, close to a stove, with boxes to build in, constructed a very loose nest, just enough to cover the wood; whilst next year, these selfsame individuals, situated in a cool and open spot, liable to the constant changes of the weather, built firm and compact structures, ex-

actly as they would have done if wild, and with precisely the same materials. And I believe this will invariably hold good, with regard to caged birds. Next to these, the species which frequent the immediate neighbourhood of our dwellings, are most apt to vary the composition and locality of their architecture; and there is no end to the instances of strange and unaccustomed situations in which these will frame their nests, as a single glance over the pages of the *Magazine of Natural History*, or any other popular work on birds, will clearly point out. The inhabitants of wild, solitary, and unfrequented spots, as moors, commons, mountains, &c., are rarely found to vary their nests in any respect, and these accommodate themselves, in this particular, to confinement with far greater difficulty than more domestic species. Many birds, in fact, absolutely refuse to breed unless they possess their natural conveniences. Thus the Greenheaded Sheldrake (*Tadorna vulpina*) has been kept many years in confinement without attempting to propagate, until, an artificial burrow being provided, they forthwith tenanted the holes, and proceeded to the business of incubation, without further delay.\* But I have been led further into this interesting discussion than my limits, and the nature of the present work, can well justify. Let us, therefore, proceed with the subject in hand.

The nest is, by many writers, described as being attached between three reed stems, immediately above the water; but such authors have most assuredly never seen the nest of the Reed Bunting; having, most probably, confounded it with that of the Marsh Reedling; or else have copied their descriptions from preceding Ornithologists, without troubling themselves to ascertain the correctness of what they thus publish to the world, at fifth or sixth hand. With them such drudgery appears not only useless, but out of the question. "Why," they will say, "should we search for facts when we have them all before us?" This method of pursuing Natural History,

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\* See the Rev. EDWARD STANLEY'S *Familiar History of Birds*, Vol. ii. p. 193.

however, will not do for me, and we will, therefore, leave it to those feeble minds who are fit for nought else.

According to my experience, the present species commonly constructs its nest in a low bush, at the bottom of a braky hedge, in a tuft of grass, and likewise amongst rushes, either in low damp situations, or in the higher grounds, in osier beds, plantations, or hedges bordering on lakes and running streams, where one seldom searches in vain for its humble structure. It is not, however, always an easy matter to discover its architecture, as considerable skill is sometimes employed in the concealment of the little domicile. But the localities in which it builds, are various; they mostly prefer marshy spots, such as are frequented by their noisy neighbours the Reedlings, and although it is far from uncommon to meet with them in the more upland districts, yet they seldom or never encroach on the peculiar or *typical* (if I may so speak) haunts of the Corn and Yellow Buntings. On some occasions, in sequestered and little-frequented spots, even in the higher grounds, it builds in very open places, and the nest is often visible at some distance, without the trouble of searching for it. But in meadows, corn-fields, and localities in the neighbourhood of our dwellings, it often requires a long and close search to discover it; and so successfully is it sometimes concealed, that I have spent hour after hour, for several successive days, and have at last failed in finding it, or have only rooted it out by carefully cutting away all the surrounding tangled herbage, and briars, at the bottom of which it was safely lodged.

In one instance, particularly, some years ago, when walking with a friend, I remember seeing two of these birds in an osier bed, the male perched erect at the summit of a willow stem, and his mate remaining beneath, or only occasionally coming within view. On our entering the osiers, they both flew around us in great alarm, mostly in silence, but sometimes uttering a low mournful kind of note, at the same time darting suddenly about the hedge and willow stems, as if impatient for our immediate departure; and their manners were so

different from those commonly observed in the species, that we were convinced there must be a nest thereabouts. I was well aware of the difficulty of finding its little tenement in a situation of that kind, and accordingly we both of us began to move in different directions, in order to discover, by the actions of the birds, where their treasure lay. My friend traversed one side of the osier bed, and myself the other, but still the loving and faithful couple remained in precisely the same spot, where the junction of two hedgerows formed a corner; and we therefore concluded, naturally enough, that in that spot all their hopes were centred. But a close and minute investigation of the whole corner, during which time we had laid the ground completely bare, revealed nothing to us; we however continued the search, though in a more superficial manner, over about half of the osier bed, which was divided by a small fish-pond. At length, a full hour after the commencement of our labours, I hit upon the nest by mere chance, at exactly the opposite end to that at which the Reed Buntings had been, and still were, prosecuting their whinings and manœuvres, which now proved beyond a doubt, what I had never before suspected, that the birds had been all the time endeavouring to attract our attention towards them instead of towards their nest; and the stratagem would probably have succeeded with a less zealous student of Nature. As it was, all our labours (at least I can answer for myself) were amply repaid, for I had learned a new fact in the economy of the species.

Indeed it would appear that this artifice is very commonly practised by the Reed Bunting, and the faculty which induces it to do so, must be superior to instinct. It is an occurrence which I have noticed in a few other species, as the Garden Ouzel, Sky Lark, &c. In the Chaff Finch I have observed a somewhat similar circumstance, but not exactly the same. It is certainly extraordinary for a bird to pretend that its nest is in a totally different situation from what it really is; and though I do not mean to say that the stratagem above related is



always employed, yet in this neighbourhood, where the Reed Bunting is perhaps persecuted more than any other bird, I have noticed the circumstance too frequently to admit of a doubt being entertained on the subject.

On visiting one evening the nest of a Reed Bunting, which I had discovered the day before, I found the female on her post ; but no sooner did she observe me, than she skulked off amongst the briars, and flew away on the other side of the hedge. She was shortly joined by the male, and both remained at some little distance, evidently endeavouring to distract my attraction from the nest. As long as I remained near this, they remained silent, but as I advanced towards the spot where they had settled, they began to flutter around me in a very grotesque manner, letting one wing drop, falling on the ground, and uttering the low mournful note which they are accustomed to employ on such occasions. On frightening them, the male flew off to some distance, but the female renewed her gesticulations with double vigour. I was well aware that there was no nest in or near the place where we were standing, and therefore I made no search for it. On other occasions, however, I have repeatedly ransacked spots which, from the actions of the birds, *appeared* to contain the nest, but without success ; though I have sometimes found it by accident, at a considerable distance, when on the point of giving up the search in despair.

Nevertheless, the nest of the Reed Bunting, as already mentioned, is not always thus difficult to discover, nor is the above-related stratagem for the concealment of it invariably resorted to. Indeed, from what has fallen under my observation, I scarcely consider it probable that this is a natural habit of the bird, but merely an artifice which it has been compelled to adopt, by the constant robbing and pillaging of its property, especially in districts where it breeds in the more immediate vicinity of houses. Thus in the plain or flat portion of Derbyshire, where it mostly builds in the higher grounds, by the margins of weedy ponds and lakes, it almost without exception

employs the artifice above noticed. But towards Ashborne, and in other hilly parts of the country, where the upland grounds are too elevated for it, I have observed the nest to occur only in low marshy localities, either in rush-grown tracts, or in braky woods and hedge-rows bordering on streams, or even on stagnant pools. And here the structure is framed in any tuft of rushes, or at the bottom of a hedge, with little or no care in the concealment of it; and for the obvious reason that these wet oozy tracts hold forth but few attractions to the bird-nesting schoolboy, just escaped from the "mysteries of *τυπτω*," or indeed to any one else; therefore the birds which frequent such situations, have little to fear from man, and act accordingly.

Indeed we have many similar instances, of birds altering their habits to circumstances, as well in individual cases as with whole species. All my readers must remember the account WILSON gives of an American Swallow, which formerly built in the holes of trees, but which, since numbers of woods have been levelled, and houses placed in their stead, have abandoned their ancient haunts, and now lodge their nests under the eaves of houses and similar places. I write this from recollection, and therefore the *minutiæ* of the case may not be correctly stated, but the spirit of it is. Occurrences of a similar nature are likewise recorded of various British birds, and I may refer my readers to one towards the end of the second volume of STANLEY'S *Familiar History of Birds*,\* relating to some member of the Gull family (*Laridæ*), the circumstances of which cannot conveniently be introduced here, though the instance is a striking case in point. From what has been said of the haunts of the Reed Bunting, it will be perceived, that they are about on a level, in all parts of the country; being

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\* I have elsewhere expressed a favourable opinion of this little work. I may, however, be allowed to notice one great objection to it, namely, that the author seldom acknowledges whence he has obtained his information, especially where this is taken from ornithological works. This may escape the observation of the tyros for whom the volumes are intended, but it will not pass unnoticed with the Ornithologist.

chiefly the lower grounds in elevated districts, and *vice versá*. But of course it is not to be understood that this is an invariable rule, and without exceptions ; for various circumstances, and more especially changes of climate, and abundance or scarcity of food, will often combine to drive them from their favourite and peculiar localities.

With regard to the propagation of this beautiful and interesting bird, the eggs alone remain to be described. Like those of the preceding Buntings, to which they bear a considerable resemblance, they are usually streaked, instead of spotted or blotched, as is the case with the eggs of most birds. The ground colour is a kind of chocolate, but they differ much in intensity. They cannot well be mistaken for those of the Yellow Bunting, being somewhat inferior in size, and less elliptical ; the lightest specimens are, moreover, of a darker hue than any of the Yellow Bunting's that I ever saw, and many are of a purplish brown. They are four or five in number, and I think I never remember to have seen so few as three, when the set was completed. In this, as in most other particulars, it differs essentially from the Yellow Bunting, which as often lays three eggs as four or five. The streaks are of a dark reddish purple, some being so fine as to be scarcely visible, whilst others are thick and heavy, or terminate in blotches. But in this respect an endless variety is observable, and it would be absolutely impossible to attempt to give a general description of the egg from any one individual. They may, however, easily be noted with sufficient accuracy for all practical purposes, and I do not think an attentive observer could mistake them for those of any other bird.

In exposed situations, and when the nest is much frequented and disturbed, the young quit it early, or sometimes, if suddenly approached before they are completely fledged, the whole brood rushes out, each individual making off as well as it can. Occasionally one will be intercepted by an intervening branch, and there remain concealed, or if they reach the ground in safety, they lie so still and close, that half-an-hour's search

will frequently not find you in possession of a single individual. But, should you particularly desire to capture them, this may be effected by sheltering yourself behind a bush, until the parents return ; as soon as the latter commence leading them away, is the time for issuing forth, and rushing, "hat in hand, to the capture." If I may be allowed to judge from a single individual of this species, which I once kept in confinement, I should pronounce the Reed Bunting to be a lively and interesting cage bird. Mine, however, had but just dropped its nestling quills when it came into my hands, having been captured in the manner related above ; and was of course destitute of the jetty black which adorns the head of the male, after the spring of the second year ; but the shape of the bird, whatever be its tints, is always elegant, and its manners pleasing.

In a small Canary\* cage, it frequently becomes dull, or else flutters inordinately against the wires, spoiling the beauty of its plumage, and especially of its long tail. It thrives best in an aviary, or large airy cage, but prefers being alone, or in company with those of its own species. It should be furnished with a large basin of water, and fresh rushes and other aquatic plants to which it is most partial, should be frequently supplied, together with the seed-tops of any kinds of grasses, on which it may be preserved almost without any other food ; though it is fond of hemp, canary, rape, rice, poppy, sunflower, and many other seeds, which it cracks with the greatest ease. It washes frequently, but, I believe, never dusts, as the House Sparrow, the Larks, and the Hedge Dunnock, are well known to do ; but, after a meal on seeds, I have often seen it pick up small stones, both in confinement and at large. The nob in the bill is by no means so distinctly marked or so large as in the Corn and Yellow Buntings, nor indeed can it be considered

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\* In the case of the "Canary-bird," I am compelled to depart from my usual plan of employing a generic and specific English name, not being aware in what genus it ranks. It is nearly related to the Grosbeaks (*Coccothraustes*), but cannot be included amongst them.

a typical species. In no British individual of the genus is this so obvious as in the Corn Bunting; in the Yellow Bunting less so; and I much doubt whether a common observer could determine the present species to be a Bunting from this particular. Of course it is perfectly visible when closely examined, but not at a distance.

Dr. LIVERPOOL informs me that he has had a pair in confinement upwards of five years, but that they have never attempted to build, although reared from the nest, and supplied with every convenience for the purpose. I have, however, heard of its breeding in a small cage, and under very remarkable circumstances, namely, a female of this species paired to a male Yellow Bunting. Both these birds were reared by hand, having been taken from the nest when scarcely a week old. For about two years they were kept together in a small cage, and on the spring of the third year of their life, the female laid an egg on the ground. This being observed, a box was fixed at one side of the cage, and the nest of some bird put in, as there would not have been time for the birds to build one themselves. Next morning, the Reed Bunting, after some pulling and tugging at its newly-gotten nest, settled herself in it and laid another egg. In a few days, the nest contained four eggs, and then the female began to sit. In due time the young appeared, and were fed entirely by the female, on hard egg, insects, and meat chopped small, to which were afterwards added the seeds of grasses and other plants, though not until the brood had quitted the nest. During the whole proceeding, the Yellow Bunting took no part in the affairs of the female, and indeed he had never appeared to take much notice of his mate; and now that his children were coming out into the world, he looked upon them with rather an evil eye, constantly fluttering against the wires of his confined prison,—which he had never before been known to do.

But the careful mother fully made up for this indifference on the part of her husband, attending to the wants of the nestlings with the most indefatigable perseverance, and feeding them for

months after they had learned to perch. It is now ten months since these birds were hatched, and three of them are still alive and flourishing. They bear considerable resemblance to female Reed Buntings, but the males—of which there are two—have a good deal of yellow about the head and neck. They are yet in their minority (at least as regards the plumage of the Reed Bunting), but I should imagine the males will never acquire any black on the head. Of the four which were hatched, one—probably a female—died about six months ago, and was sent to me stuffed, for inspection. I have since seen the other three, which were allowed to fly about a small room, with their two parents. I suggested to their owner, that the old birds should be caged in March, in order to ascertain whether they would breed again; when I saw them, the Reed Bunting and the three young birds were very partial to each other's company, and it struck me that the female, if left in the room, would prefer attaching herself to one of the young males, to again pairing with the "old and cold" Yellow Bunting, though it is impossible to say whether or not these mules would prove productive. At present it would seem that they have no song, nor are they likely to acquire one. The call-note which I heard, was similar to that of the Yellow Bunting. At a future opportunity, I may possibly have further particulars to communicate to my readers, on this subject.

Most of the above information has been supplied by a gentleman residing in this neighbourhood; I do not feel myself at liberty to disclose his name, and indeed he especially begged me to give the whole in my own words, which has accordingly been done; though I could not possibly have published it as my own, as suggested by my friend. One of the male birds has, I believe, lately been presented to PHILIP ASHTON, Esq., of Cambridge, the other two still remaining in the possession of the friend who transmitted their history to me.

The circumstance of two distinct species of Bunting breeding together, is certainly remarkable, and, so far as I am aware, there is not another instance of it on record. A still more ex-

traordinary circumstance, however, is the pairing of the Reed Bunting and House Sparrow, which is said to have taken place, though I do not know that there is any well authenticated mention of it. Almost any of the British *Fringillidæ* will attach themselves to the Canary, and, this being the case, there is no reason why a union should not be effected between species belonging to the same genera. And probably there *would* be no barrier to it, if the experiment were made. The crosses and double crosses with the Canary, Common Goldwing (*Carduelis elegans*, STEPH.), Whin Linnet (*Linaria cannabina*, SWAINS.), and other abundant and well-known species, are endless; but others, as the Buntings, &c., though lively and handsome in the extreme, pass unheeded by the bird-catchers and fanciers. It would be a curious matter, for any one fond of keeping birds in confinement, to try various experiments in this line; nor would it be a mere object of curiosity, as circumstances of this nature might, if judiciously and scientifically made, tend to elucidate many points of classification. For my own part, I far prefer observing the endless variety of habits displayed by the feathered race in the haunts to which each are adapted, to seeing them pent up in little wire prisons, where their sordid keeper considers one and all to possess precisely the same manners; and so perhaps they do in a place where they have scarce room to move. Even when kept in an aviary or room, they are usually so crowded and surrounded by birds totally distinct from them, and are compelled to subsist on food so different to what they would have had at large, that little of their natural spirit remains; and no wonder if their lives are short!

That birds might be kept so as to enjoy their unnatural state, however, is undoubted; and when preserved in commodious quarters, properly fed, and observed with the keen eye of the Ornithologist, like the aviaries of BECHSTEIN, or of my friend Dr. LIVERPOOL, much advantage may be derived, though implicit reliance cannot, generally, be placed on habits observed in caged birds. The only method of observing birds to much advantage in confinement, is that adopted by Dr. LIVERPOOL.

He has several small high rooms, without ceilings, entirely dedicated to birds, and in each of these, the species most nearly allied to each other, are alone introduced, and every bird is supplied with the food, bushes, or even tree, to which it is found to be most partial in its natural state. This way succeeds equally well with all birds, British and foreign, which have hitherto come under Dr. L.'s care, and little or no variation can be perceived in their habits and economy. With him almost every species breeds freely, and he has the satisfaction of liberating, every year, numbers of young birds. Some few species, it is true, he has been unable to familiarize, or to preserve long, but the number of these is very small, the majority of his large and prosperous family being remarkably healthy and long-lived. Many individuals have "died of mere old age," but comparatively few from sickness. The Reed Bunting, amongst numerous other birds, he has found lively and amusing; but, as it is part of his plan to keep the species as separate and distinct as possible, he has as yet made no experiments in cross-breeds.

The food of the Reed Bunting, in its natural state, consists of the seeds of almost any plant growing in the neighbourhood of marshes and wet places, and is by no means confined to the seeds of rushes, as supposed by some authors; these indeed form a comparatively small portion of its subsistence, as being by no means procurable at all times or in all localities. But any small seeds are welcome, and the bird appears very intent while picking them. Before harvest time, it often joins the Yellow Bunting and other upland birds in pillaging the corn fields, and a severe, protracted frost will induce it to borrow a few grains from the farmer's abundance, but on the whole it is decidedly beneficial. It is much more insectivorous than the Corn and Yellow Buntings, and frequently feeds on insects, but not very abundantly except in the breeding season. The quantity of corn it devours is very inconsiderable, especially as it is seldom met with in large flocks, and the noxious insects and no less hurtful seeds, which form so large a proportion of its daily fare,



more than atone for its petty granivorous offences ; and accordingly the farmers and labourers (in this neighbourhood at least) never view it with an evil eye, nor do they appear at all desirous of destroying it, notwithstanding its popular designation of “ Reed Sparrow.” Indeed it is difficult to imagine how so elegant and handsome a bird, could ever get branded with the same name as that pert, noisy and ill-bred fellow, everywhere known as *the Sparrow*.

The young remain a considerable time with their parents, sometimes till the ensuing spring. They pass the night in wet marshy tracts, amongst rushes, or in water-meadows, but do not lie close together, a small flock sometimes scattering itself over an acre of ground. During the day they frequent the margins of running waters, where they are easily observed hunting for their food, one standing erect on the topmost spray of a hedge, some fluttering amongst the bushes, and others clinging on the under side of a twig, or attaching itself to a reed or willow stem, where it perches with facility, often assisting its motions with its tail. When approached cautiously, it generally continues its avocations, but when suddenly disturbed, by a prowling sportsman or stone-throwing thoughtless school-boy, the little family takes a simultaneous flight, either up or down the stream, or else betakes itself to a meadow or bed of reeds, where each drops amongst the herbage, and usually remains quiet until the danger be over. But should they be traced to this hiding place, they once again take flight (whilst their disappointed enemy is seeking for them in the grass), sometimes returning to the spot from whence they had been originally started.

For my own part, I have never been at a loss to know how to approach these interesting little creatures ; and to shoot them—were I so inclined—would at all times be an easy matter. But I have known individuals, unacquainted with their habits, hunt about for them a whole evening, without succeeding in shooting a single bird ; for although the Reed Bunting seldom flies far, yet it can discern an enemy at a considerable

distance, and flies off to some sheltered spot, where, if pursued, it either flits on and on by degrees, or travels backwards and forwards between two favourite haunts,—a method which, while it seldom fails to annoy and discourage the gunner, proves an almost certain safeguard to itself. This manner of escaping from danger I have myself repeatedly witnessed; and it has likewise this advantage, that while many other birds may be driven “over the hills and far away,” the Reed Bunting always remains at home. The Garden Ouzel, for instance, if chased along the hedges, will fly for miles out of its usual territory, and, though an easy flight will at all times convey it back in a short time, yet the Reed Bunting’s clever mode is certainly superior to it.

I now close this long, and I fear tedious, biography of one of my “prime favourites” amongst the British songsters, with a few observations from the pen of J. D. SALMON, Esq., of Thetford, Norfolk, in a letter dated February 6, 1836:—

“You appear to think that the name *Reed* Bunting is very appropriate (see *Analyst*, vol. ii. p. 239). Now I consider that used by BEWICK (*Blackheaded* Bunting) much better, for, according to my experience, it is anything but a *reed* bird. I have generally found its nest situated on the side of a hassock (*Carex paniculata*) or one of the allied species (see *Mag. Nat. Hist.* vol. viii. p. 505). Its principal resort in this district is by the sides of rivers, ditches, and other wet places. If the haunts or nidification are to determine the specific name, I should call it the *Carex* Bunting; for when it is taken into consideration that there are sixty-three species of *Carex*, and only a solitary species of the *Arundo*, I think it is going too far to name it after the latter. I make no doubt but those unacquainted with Botany, often confound the sedges and rushes (*Juncus*) with the reed, in their descriptions. For these reasons I certainly prefer BEWICK’s name, and as his inestimable work is in the hands of so many individuals, I would not willingly alter the English specific name, unless a good reason is given. For, after all, they must be in a great measure pro-

vincial, and, bearing in mind that where there is one *scientific* Naturalist residing in a district, there are an hundred others who only know the birds by their provincial names, I think these names should not be altered on slight considerations. With regard to the *Latin* specific appellations, they are the immediate province of the scientific Ornithologist, and must necessarily, as science advances, be subject to various changes."

The appellation *Blackheaded* Bunting is, certainly, quite as appropriate (considering British birds alone) as that adopted in this work, but I cannot perceive that it has any *advantages* over *Reed* Bunting. Both appear to me equally good, and it is difficult to say which is most widely known. But as the greater number of modern Ornithologists have adopted the latter, I have followed their example. *Carex*, or rather *Sedge*, Bunting, is also an unobjectionable designation; but as *Reed* is not intended to apply to any particular species of plant, but rather to almost every kind of herbage growing in marshes, the term cannot be discarded on this account, though of course in a scientific description, it is of the greatest importance to keep the distinction between the *Arundo* and the various species of *Carex*.—BEWICK'S *History of British Birds* is only valuable on account of its unrivalled wood-cuts, and is no authority in matters of science.

I never saw or heard of any varieties of the Reed Bunting, and it is probable, from the nature of its haunts, that such are of extremely rare occurrence, though the plumage differs somewhat with age and other circumstances.

CIRL BUNTING, *Emberiza cirrus*, LINN.

SYNONYMS.—*Emberiza cirrus*, LINN. *Syst.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*  
—*Emberiza elcathorax*, BECHST. *Naturg. Deut.*—Cirl Bunting, LATH. *Syn.*—  
MONT. *Orn. Dict.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*

THE Cirl Bunting never occurs within the range of my observation, and I regret my consequent inability to say anything novel or original on the species. I shall, however, make little apology for having recourse to MONTAGU'S admirable *Ornithological Dictionary*, as I conceive that by so doing, I shall only be giving in the words of that author, what others would have offered in their own, and perhaps on their own authority. Which is the fairest and most honourable mode of proceeding, I leave my readers to determine.

“ The length of this species is six inches and a half ; weight about seven drams. The bill is of a bluish lead-colour above, paler beneath ; irides hazel. The crown of the head, nape of the neck, and upper part of the breast, is of a fine olive-green, the first streaked with dusky ; from the upper mandible through the eye, a dusky stroke ; above and beneath the eye a bright yellow one ; throat black, slightly tipped with brown, running into a bar under the yellow on the cheek ; beneath this is a gorget of beautiful bright yellow. The back and scapulars are of a fine chesnut-brown, the former marked with dusky streaks, the margin of the feathers with olive ; rump olive-brown ; upper tail coverts inclining to chesnut : the smaller wing coverts olive-green ; greater coverts dusky, their outer webs chesnut brown ; greater quills dusky, edged with green on the exterior webs ; smaller quills chesnut, dusky down their middle. Across the breast is a band of chesnut, mixed with yellow ; belly and under-tail coverts yellow, the latter dusky on the shafts ; sides more inclining to brown ; the under-wing coverts bright yellow ; the two middle feathers of the tail chesnut-brown, the rest black, except the two exterior on each side, which have an oblique bar of white from the tip half way ; and the outmost feather is white throughout

the whole of the exterior web; the legs are brown; claws dusky.

“ *The female*, in general, weighs half a dram less than the male. The upper part of the head is olivaceous brown, streaked with dusky; over the eye a dull yellow streak, passing down the side of the head; cheeks brown, on which is a yellowish spot; on each side of the lower mandible is a broken streak of dusky, passing downwards; chin and throat dull yellow, the latter streaked with dusky; the back part and sides of the neck and breast olivaceous-brown, with dusky streaks; belly and sides pale yellow, with large dusky streaks on the latter; the upper part of the body and wings like the other sex, but the colours less bright.

“ We first discovered this species near Kingsbridge, in the winter of 1800, not uncommon amongst flocks of Yellow Buntings and Chaff Finches, and procured several specimens of both sexes, killed in different places six or seven miles from that place. They are indigenous to Devonshire, but seem to be confined to the southern parts of that county contiguous to the coast, having found them extending as far as Teignmouth, at both which places we found their nests; but have never observed them far inland. It generally builds in furze, or some low bush; the nest is composed of dry stalks, roots, and a little moss, and lined with long hair and fibrous roots. The eggs are four or five in number, cinereous white, with irregular long and short curved dusky lines, terminating frequently with a spot at one end; size rather inferior to those of the Yellow Bunting, to which it bears great resemblance. These birds pair in April, and begin laying early in May. Insects we found to be the favourite food of the young, especially the common grasshopper. When they could peck, small seeds, particularly canary, were acceptable. Oats they greedily devoured, after dexterously depriving them of the outer husk. The monotonous song of the male was incessant, shrill, and piercing; so much resembling the vociferous call notes of the Garrulous Fauvet, that it requires considerable knowledge of

their language not to mistake the one for the other. We are assured by Mr. AUSTIN, that he shot a male of this species, in 1803, near Bridgewater, and in April, 1805, we observed a pair between Bridgewater and Glastonbury. Another specimen, in the collection of Col. GEORGE of Penryn, was shot near that place. According to continental authors, it is abundant in the warmer parts of France, in Italy, and on the shores of the Mediterranean; but is not found in the colder regions.

“ The female might readily be mistaken for that sex of the Yellow Bunting at a little distance, but is materially different when compared, especially in the chesnut-colour of the upper parts of this bird. The note is simple and plaintive, similar to that of the Yellow Bunting, but shorter, not so shrill, and the latter part not drawn out to such a length.

“ It is remarkable that so common a bird as the Cirl Bunting seems to be in the West of England, should have so long escaped the notice of British Naturalists; but in all probability this has been occasioned by their locality. It is said to be only found on the continent in the warmer parts of France and Italy; so with us it seems confined to the mildest parts of England; but the winter of 1800, which was severe in Devonshire, did not force them to seek a warmer climate, but, on the contrary, they continued gregarious with other small birds, searching their food amongst the ploughed lands.”

The only specimen of the Cirl Bunting I ever saw, was that in the British Museum, and which was probably presented by MONTAGU. It greatly resembles the Yellow Bunting, and, being more nearly allied to that species than to the Reed Bunting, they should be placed together in the system. This, however, I leave to the erudite in such matters, having at present little to do with system, though on a future occasion I may perhaps be induced to publish my opinions on the subject.

ORTOLAN BUNTING, *Emberiza hortulana*, LINN.

SYNONYMS.—*Emberiza hortulana*, LINN. *Syst.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—*Emberiza chlorocephala*, GMEL. *Linn.*—*Emberiza Tunstalli*, LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—Ortolan Bunting, PENN. *Arct. Zool.*—LATH. *Syn.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Greenheaded Bunting, LATH. *Syn.*—LEW. *Birds of Brit.*—BEW. *Br. Birds.*

THE synonyms appended to the history of this bird, will sufficiently identify the species, and a minute description will not be necessary for those who possess the works above referred to, where it is either described or figured. It would appear that only two or three specimens, met with at distant periods, have occurred in Britain.

SELBY says :—“ In Italy, where it is very common, and in parts of France, it is highly esteemed for its fatness and the flavour of its flesh. It breeds in thickets, corn-fields, low hedges, &c., and lays four or five eggs of a greyish-white, tinged with a pinkish black, and marked with streaks or veins of brown.—It feeds on millet and other grain, and in summer (previous to the ripening of the grassy seeds) on insects and larvæ, on which the young are also principally reared. According to TEMMINCK, this species is subject to great variations of plumage, specimens being occasionally met with entirely white; others with a great admixture of that colour; and some again of a uniform blackish-brown, which he attributed to their feeding upon hemp-seed, a diet known to have the same effect upon Hedge Coalhoods, and other *Fringillidæ*, when kept in a state of confinement.”

It would be useless to give a detailed and dry description of the plumage of this species, as that may be found in any compilation. Suffice it to say, that, according to SELBY, it closely resembles the female Yellow Bunting, and might be mistaken for it by a casual observer.

SUBFAM. II.—FRINGILLANÆ, SWAINS.

GENUS PASSER, AUCT. SPARROW.

HOUSE SPARROW, *Passer domesticus*, ALDROV.

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Ye cupids, close your silky wings,  
 Drop from your heads the festive curl;  
 Let freely flow the lucid pearl,  
 That from the heart of sorrow springs;  
 My Lesbia's bird no longer sings;  
 He's gone, the favourite of my girl!

*Anonymous.*

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SYNONYMS.—*Passer domesticus*, WILL. *Orn.*—BRISS. *Orn.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—*Fringilla domestica*, LINN. *Syst.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.* House Sparrow, MONT. *Orn. Dict.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—N. WOOD'S *Orn. Text-book.*

FEW birds are so common or so universally met with as the pert, mischievous, thieving House Sparrow. It occurs abundantly in all the cultivated and inhabited parts of Britain, frequenting alike the noisy and dusty streets of towns and cities, villages, and the neighbourhood of houses of all kinds, regardless whether the inmates be lords or peasants. Every farm in the kingdom swarms with them, and we shall presently come to discuss whether, on the whole, it may be considered beneficial or hurtful to the farmer; in the meantime let us consider the haunts and habits peculiar to the species.

The House Sparrow has never been a favourite with me, and, looking at its bold, vulgar and impudent aspect, one would scarce imagine it to rank in the same family as the Common Goldwing, the Hedge Coalhood, the Buntings, or in short, with any of the other British *Fringillidæ*. Indeed its "radically plebeian" manners go very far to justify the train of maledictions poured upon its hapless head by the eloquent and illustrious, but faulty BUFFON. It everywhere carries with it a bad reputation, though of course its ex-



tensively frugivorous propensities, and its voracious appetite, weigh infinitely more—and perhaps justly—with the multitude than any defects in plumage, manners, or even voice. Wherever man is (in our own country at least), there will be his constant and inseparable attendant, the House Sparrow, and *vice versâ*. A single cottage, however humble, situate in the midst of a lonely forest, in a fertile vale, or a bleak common, will have its House Sparrows; so likewise will the more aristocratic mansion of the squire, the farm, the rick-yard, the village, and the city, each in proportion to its size, and the wealth of its inhabitants. For let not the haughty lord of the Creation suppose that his plebeian friend or enemy—call him which you please for the present—thus vigilantly hunts him out for mere love of his company, but rather to partake of his plenty or his scarcity, just as the case may be.

This familiar and detested creature is by far the most plentiful in the immediate vicinity of farms, and here, especially if there be ivy-clad walls and other conveniences in the neighbourhood, it flocks by hundreds, and probably by thousands, where the premises are extensive. Every little farm in this county teems with them, at all seasons and in all weathers. It is likewise a constant frequenter of large breweries, or of gentlemen's houses, where it is the fashion to brew at home, for the sake of the sweet and luscious "grains," which are periodically ejected from the brewhouse, and which serve to feed many a hungry bird (and beast too to boot, for I have seen rats and mice filling their bellies with them), ere they reach their final destination. In large open fields and lawns it is seldom met with,—in barren, stony, uninhabited commons never. The former, however, it may be induced to frequent under some circumstances, and more especially when they are undergoing the manuring process, or for a short period before harvest-time. With these exceptions, it clings close to the houses, or to trees and bushes near houses, and, rather than quit them when suddenly disturbed, it will take refuge in holes of trees and walls, and amongst thatched roofs, on the slightest suspicion of danger.

From these strong-holds, it would, I believe, be no easy matter to drive it, especially as it is so shy and cunning as to be well able to protect itself, in most cases, from its numerous enemies.

If only song birds found their way into this little volume, the House Sparrow, with all its impertinence and wily tricks, had never been admitted here. They are, as every one knows, or should know (for I would not stand up for the ornithological knowledge of John Bull), even less gifted, as regards musical abilities, than the Buntings, their only notes being a kind of chatter, and an incessantly-repeated and tiresome "yelp;" the latter is by far the most favourite note with it, the other being chiefly employed by the male, especially when he is impatient for the departure of some prying individual from his nest or feeding-ground. The chatter, though there is nothing particular about it, might easily be borne as a warm and comfortable sound (so to speak); but its "yelping concerts," as they are well termed by RENNIE,\* are an intolerable nuisance, and for this offence alone, I should, without the smallest objection, see the bird exterminated from the land, though I would myself steer clear of the bloody deed. Oftentime, on a beautiful July morning, when one's happiness might have been complete, as far as it can be so in this nether world, and the choristers of the groves were carolling their joyous lays in the distance, with the rich deep strains of the Garden Ouzel resounding through the garden, a parcel of rude House Sparrows would settle on a neighbouring tree, and, scrambling and sprawling up and down the sprays, commence their barbarous jumble, all chirping together, and each apparently endeavouring to outdo the other, in their unceremonious gabblings. And in this manner they will frequently remain on the same tree for an hour together, uttering their single "yelp."

So great a disturbance have I occasionally deemed these

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\* This epithet most admirably denotes the common note of this bird; but I believe that in this as in other instances, the worthy professor is merely following up his well-known habits, WILSON having employed the same phrase in reference to an American species.

noisy convocations, and so entirely discordant do they seem with the rest of Nature, during the spring and summer months, that, though perfectly amicably inclined towards the rest of the feathered race, I have frequently issued forth with a net at night, and, repairing to the well known roosting places of these birds, have, with an assistant, taken many dozens in a single night, not one of which ever yelped again. By day-traps it is found to be extremely difficult to capture them, and though, for the sake of experiment I have tried every method I could devise, yet could I never, by these means, catch a single individual. But a bat-fowling net, placed against an ivy-clad wall in which they are observed to roost, makes great havoc amongst them; though even then they will frequently escape at the top of the nest, or, when supposed to be perfectly secure in the tail of the nest, not uncommonly scramble their way out. Where there are no ivy-clad walls or trees in the immediate neighbourhood of houses, the surrounding hedges form roosting-places for the birds, though these are by no means favourite resorts with them.

The nidification of this species is a remarkable part of its economy. The most usual sites of the nest are, under the eaves of houses, in the thatch of roofs, or in any kinds of holes in walls and outhouses. It is by no means particular in the selection of its locality, but always chooses some warm and cosy nook, protected from winds and rain. It consists of a mass of hay and feathers, loosely and carelessly put together, but with an evident view to warmth and comfort. The thickest thatch is the most favourite locality; in dwelling houses, they generally build underneath the skirts, but in unused outbuildings, the whole thatch, underneath the roof, is full of holes, and each contains a nest. From the extreme shyness of the species, it is no easy matter to observe their architectural proceedings, but I have occasionally had this gratification. Before this, I had wondered where the straws, which were extracted, were taken to; but I found that each straw was carried out singly, and conveyed away to a considerable distance. In many parts,

especially where the thatch is thin or worn away, the holes for the nests are carried through the roof, and where this happens frequently near the same spot, a large portion of the roof is sometimes quite open.

In many parts of the country, a large quantity of common flower-pots are fastened to the walls of outhouses and gardens, and immediately under the thatch, which, if they are in sufficient number, generally prevent the birds from damaging the thatch, as the trouble of building in the pots, is infinitely less than scooping holes in the straw. When the eggs are laid, these are, without exception, destroyed, but a still better plan is to wait till the young are hatched, or nearly fledged, as there is then less chance of the old birds breeding again, which they will do two or three times after their nests are taken, but never twice in the same hole. I once knew an instance of a House Sparrow's building four times in a single season, and, as this was effected with the greatest ease, there can be little doubt but it frequently builds at least three times a year. The method of ascertaining the circumstance was as follows:—

Very early in the season, I discovered a single domicile, under the thatched roof of an out-building. I had often observed a bird flying out at a certain hole, and determined to examine the premises. On thrusting my hand in, a bird fluttered in my hand, which, by its strength and thickness, I instantly knew to be a House Sparrow. After tying a little bit of red ribbon round one of its legs, I suffered it to escape, but pillaged its nest. For three or four days afterwards, this individual was observed flying about, amongst a troop of its companions, and it was at length reported to be building a second nest in the same outhouse, but in a different hole. Apprehending that there would be some difficulty in catching it again, I repaired to the spot after dusk, and made it prisoner with ease. It had three eggs, which I broke, and again set the bird at liberty. For three weeks, it was constantly seen about, when I for the third time observed it building under the eaves of an adjoining stable. It was now remarkably shy and

coy, and flew out on the slightest alarm, and every effort of mine to capture it, proved ineffectual; a servant, however, brought it to me one day as a "curiosity," and five young birds, nearly fledged, escaped, and were fed by the male, but were not seen for many days, during which period I had retained the ribboned female in confinement, when for the third time, she got away, through a hole in the cage. Here my experiment closed, or at least so I thought; and I was satisfied with ascertaining that the species would breed thrice in the season. I was, however, mistaken, having been informed that a House Sparrow had been seen at a neighbouring farm, with a red ribbon. No sooner had I learned this, than I again renewed my observations on the unfortunate bird, which had been entirely driven off its old premises. After watching it three days, I at last traced it to an ivy wall, where there were dozens of other nests. Here it was out of the question to endeavour to catch it, and my experiment of course terminated, after I had taken the fourth and last nest. About a week or ten days subsequent to this, I found this self-same House Sparrow dead in the farm yard, with part of the ribbon still about its leg.

But at least as favourite localities for building as thatch, are the eaves of houses, where, however, clusters of nests are never met with; each individual selecting for itself an establishment perfectly separate from that of any other. Here the structure is somewhat firmer and more compact, though the quality of it depends on circumstances. Holes of walls, in farms, dwelling houses, or gardens, are likewise often resorted to, and sometimes the nest is situated two or three feet in the wall. On one occasion, particularly, I remember seeing a pair of House Sparrows constantly flying in and out of a wall near a dove-cot, and though I felt in the hole with the full length of my arm, the tips of my fingers did not reach the nest; nor could it be obtained by pulling away part of the bricks from the wall. It is not often that such deep holes are to be had, but when they are, they are always preferred.

I once found a nest in a small hole immediately over a passage, amongst some offices, where servants were constantly passing and repassing. Having taken out the eggs, six in number, I replaced them by an equal number of Garden Thrush's eggs, which, notwithstanding their large size, were duly hatched. After this, I visited the spot every day, but three of the young birds died in succession, having been either squeezed or starved to death. Two now remained, and I saw them till they were fully fledged, when they disappeared, and probably escaped in safety. I was very desirous of seeing how the young birds were fed, but never succeeding in attaining this object.

This species likewise frequently builds in Pigeon-houses or dove-cots; and, though the convenience of the situation is doubtless the chief incitement, yet the Pigeons themselves appear to form a considerable part of the attraction; for wherever Pigeons are allowed to breed in a few boxes on the side of a wall, there the House Sparrows are sure to be more numerous than in any other parts of a farm or dwelling-house, either building in the Pigeon-boxes themselves, or as near to them as they can procure lodgings. In dove-cots they commonly build in the same nests as the Pigeons, which induces me to believe that the latter never receive any damage from their officious neighbours, or they would otherwise quickly be sent to the right-about. According to many writers, the Sparrows open the crops of the young Pigeons, and devour the contents. Now, as this serious charge is at present, as far as I know, only reported through the medium of compilers and book-makers, it is difficult to believe it on that authority. From the well-known audacity of the bird, the circumstance is by no means improbable, but, so far from confirming it myself, what I have observed only goes to discountenance it. In the first place, either the male or female Pigeon are almost invariably in the nest until the young begin to get their first feathers, after which they are fierce and strong enough to defend themselves; and secondly, amongst hundreds of young Pigeons that I have at various

times examined, of all ages, not one had its crop opened or at all injured. For these reasons, it appears probable that the House Sparrow never actually injures the young Pigeons, though I would by no means answer for the safety of the latter, if left unguarded for a moment: but this is sufficient to prove, that, as matters stand, the owners of Pigeons need be in no fear from this cause.

The eggs, from five to seven or even eight in number, are of a very pale dirty blue, marked all over with long brownish-black spots. But nothing is more difficult than either to describe or figure the eggs of this species, on account of the immense variety which occurs amongst them. Few eggs are more subject to deviations of colour, and indeed scarcely any two are precisely similar; even those in the same nest commonly exhibiting considerable difference in their tints. The character of all is, however, so similar, that it is impossible to mistake them. The ground-colour varies from white to very dark brown, and the spots alter as materially both in number and hue. The only characters which are never effaced, are, size much larger than those of the Green Grosbeak; form elongated and oblong; spots thickly set, placed in a parallel manner, and usually very dark; HEWITSON has figured them in the *British Oology*, but as, from various untoward circumstances, my copy of this work is now either mislaid or burnt, (Reader, do not be alarmed!) I am unable to say in what manner they are there represented or described. Nor can I at present refer to MONTAGU or SELBY,\* and as to the rest of our worthies, they are far better on the bookseller's shelf than any where else.

It is probably familiar to most persons, that this bird generally breeds two or three times in the course of the season, and thus the preparations for pairing commence so early as the end

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\* In the description of every species, I have referred to SELBY, and sometimes to MONTAGU; but, let it be distinctly understood, that these have been opened merely for the purpose of *comparing* them with my own notes; and that *nothing* has been copied without a direct acknowledgment.

of February. Their movements at this period are remarkably interesting, and though, while in flocks during the autumn and winter, its manners are pert and vulgar in the extreme, they now become entirely reversed, and if not very chaste and bird-like, are at least comfortable and pleasing. Each male is then observed on the top of a roof, spreading out its wings, pluffing out its plumage, slowly waving its head up and down, bringing forth its best chirp, and essaying as good a song as it is able to muster. These proceedings immediately attract the females, the love-compact is soon sealed, and the happy couple shortly go to work to select a locality for the nest; this is before long completed, and in six or seven days the full number of eggs is laid. The young leave the nest rather late,—usually not until long after they are fledged, and well able to fly. Scarcely are these capable of taking care of themselves, when they are attended by the male alone, and the female again prepares for incubation. But she is soon joined by the male, as the first brood keeps in a pack, and remains about the premises, haunting farms and large houses, and roosting at night in ivy-clad walls or hedges, along with whatever other individuals happen at that time to be free from family cares. The second and third batch are managed in the same manner, and it is astonishing in how short a time an immense flock of young birds is accumulated.

Indeed, although the House Sparrow is not commonly considered gregarious, yet they are comparatively seldom seen single, or in pairs. For even the adults, during the period of incubation, are generally observed in flocks, and whilst the females are sitting at night, the males roost together in some adjoining wall; and though they are a good deal about the nest in the day-time, yet they invariably seek their food in flocks, and frequent farm and rick-yards in great numbers.

Few birds are more careful of their young than the present species, and fewer still, of our small birds, take such effectual means of preserving them. The parents will follow their caged young to any distance, and, if they happen to be absent at the



time of the capture, scent them out in an incredibly short space of time. I remember, on one occasion, caging four young birds, from a nest in the thatch of a cottage. They were instantly carried off to a distance of about two miles, in the absence of the parents, and were imprisoned in a small outhouse, where their cries, if they made any, could not possibly be heard by the old birds. Scarcely had they been there five minutes, however, when the parents arrived, and made their way to the young captives through a broken pane of glass. As soon as they had been fed and fondled, the parents departed, in search of more food, as the young birds were by no means satisfied. I now carried them to quite a different part of the house, and lodged them in a kind of cellar, with but one small aperture for light and air. Here they made no noise, but lay perfectly still, and must have been very hungry. For some hours the old Sparrows were observed flying about in all directions, in search of their young. At length I perceived them fly over the very spot where they were concealed, when the prisoners instantly set up loud cries. This acted like an electric shock upon them; they dropped down as if "thunderstruck," but, recovering their wings before they reached the ground, a few minutes found them feeding the young birds, which were now allowed to escape. This proves how great is the affection of the House Sparrow for its young, and how sagacious it is in searching them out when lost.

But, partial as we thus find it to be to building in house-eaves, walls, and other domestic situations, it often breeds near the tops of tall bushes and young trees. It would seem, however, that such localities are only resorted to from necessity, when every hole and corner about the house is occupied. For by about the middle of the breeding season, every nest-building convenience is tenanted, and until then I never remember to have observed any of its tenements in bushes. But at about that period, this occurrence becomes more frequent, and, as the season advances, the tree-nests continue to

increase in number. Their size and architecture are not a little remarkable.

It has already been observed, that the species only breeds in such situations from mere necessity, and, as it is naturally a wall-builder, the method of constructing the nest must of course be materially altered, as no structure, framed within a hole, could possibly stand in the fork of a tree. The materials are still the same,—a jumbled mass of hay and feathers, the greater part of the exterior consisting of hay, and the inside resembling a feather-bed cut down the middle and opened. The whole is of about the size of that of the Common Gallinule, and is situated in the cleft of a branch, or where three branches meet. The largest I ever saw was at the top of a flourishing beech tree. It was completely covered with foliage, and was only discovered by the incessant chirping of the young birds. On climbing the tree, and probing the dwelling, nothing could be felt, and I concluded that the brood was fully fledged, and had escaped. But, having thrown it to the ground, I found four birds just hatched, completely concealed under the feathers. This structure was at least twice as large as an ordinary one of the Common Gallinule. But, though the materials never vary, the size is greatly subject to deviation; and this appears to depend chiefly on the nature of the tree or bush on which it is situated. In oak, elm, beech, or any loose-foliaged trees, it is of the largest dimensions, but in hollies, boxes, &c., considerably smaller. These bush-built nests of course occasion infinitely more labour and trouble to the architects, than the thatch. For here—except in cases where a new cavity is to be excavated—nothing more is necessary than to line the bottom and sides with hay and feathers, which is sometimes in no great quantity.

Another circumstance, with regard to these two diametrically opposite modes of building, still remains to be noticed; namely, that the time occupied in constructing the bush-nests, entirely prevents their usual number of broods being reared. It will

be observed, moreover, that such nests are built either by yearling birds, which had commenced propagation late, or by individuals which had already occupied nests in thatch or holes of walls. In either case, it is impossible that more than two broods can be raised;—in the former instance only one, and in the latter not more than two. Of this I am certain, having invariably found that the bush-nests take up the entire attention of the parents for the rest of the season. Under any circumstances, the young make an incessant chirping, and the adults become extremely clamorous when approached, but never endeavour to mislead intruders from the spot, this being obviously impracticable, from the very large size of the structure. The young birds resemble the adult females, but are somewhat smaller. They soon learn to feed themselves, when they join any flock that may happen to frequent the neighbourhood. In the spring of the following year, the males acquire some of the adult plumage, but do not attain their full beauty till the spring of the second year.

The House Sparrow may be termed an omnivorous feeder, as it greedily devours almost anything that presents itself. The greater portion of its sustenance consists of insects, grubs, snails, and various kinds of animal substances, with which the young are almost entirely supported. But at harvest-time, and during the autumn and winter months, it becomes wholly granivorous; and, with all my partiality to the feathered race, I am compelled to give it as my sincere opinion, that the services performed by the present species, are by no means equal to the injuries. The number of insects and grubs which it destroys in the breeding season, and even partially at other times, is certainly very great, but then its corn-eating propensities must be opposed to these benefits; and having compared the two, we must endeavour to determine, as accurately as possible, whether, on the whole, the bird is generally beneficial or injurious.

During the early and middle portion of the breeding season, there can be no doubt but it performs considerable service, especially in kitchen gardens, and fields in the neighbourhood

of farms and houses ; and at that time neither the birds nor their nests should be disturbed. But the difficulty is during the inclement seasons, when insects and animal matters form little or no portion of its sustenance ; and at harvest-time it is equally granivorous. The only method of mitigating its depredations—for it is impossible to *prevent* them—is to station boys at various parts of the fields and rick-yards, to drive them off, and at night to take them in bat-fowling nets, in hedges, ivy-clad walls, and similar localities, where they may be captured by the dozen. I have myself frequently assisted in these nightly excursions, and have known ninety to have been taken in a single day. It would almost appear, however, that there is no end of these voracious plunderers ; for very frequently, after many dozens have been killed every day for a fortnight, the surrounding fields and farms abound with them to the same extent as prior to the capture.

It is well known to every schoolboy, that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to take a single bird in any kind of day-trap ; but by night-nets, as we have already found, they may be destroyed in immense numbers ; it is, however, questionable, whether much advantage is derived from such a proceeding ; for, unless a price were set on their heads, in every part of the kingdom, the birds would immediately be replaced. The only method, therefore, is to keep the plunderers from the premises ; and this it is impossible to effect so as entirely to prevent their depredations. Taking all these circumstances together, the House Sparrow cannot be otherwise than detrimental to the interests of man. By the men of science and the agriculturists of the last century, it was universally considered as vermin, and destroyed as such, until the time of BUFFON. But in BEWICK'S *History of British Birds*, this opinion was entirely and boldly controverted, on the strength of a calculation regarding the number of caterpillars which the old birds convey to their young in a single day.

This opinion, delivered as it originally was, in one of the most popular works ever published, was of course reiterated by

every succeeding compiler, with the advantage of some sagacious and truly *original* reflections,—of course closet-hatched. To echo this notion, would be sufficiently easy, but my observations lead me to an entirely opposite opinion. With regard to the frugivorous members of the Warbler family, I think there can be no doubt; as, with the exception of a short period of sultry weather, they subsist almost wholly on insects, and are merely termed *frugivorous*, because they are more partial to fruit than the rest of the family. Without the *Sylviadæ*, no kind of vegetation could possibly be preserved. Some of the aberrant individuals of the Finch family are scarcely less beneficial, but the hard-billed and more typical members, which subsist for the most part on corn and seeds, are considerably more hurtful, though even between these a great distinction must be made. The Common Goldwing, for instance, feeds chiefly on the seeds of the groundsel, chickweed, poppy, charlock, and other noxious weeds; seldom or never attacking the more substantial grain, as oats, wheat, barley, &c., or approaching the stores of the farm-yard. But the House Sparrow rarely troubles itself to search for the seeds of grasses and other small plants, living, in fact, entirely—with the exception of insects in the breeding time—on the labour of man, and consuming his goods as fast as they are provided. In summer, the flocks seldom stick very close to the ricks, but in severe frosts they never quit them, unless compelled with guns and other weapons, and even then they sometimes only move off to the opposite side of another stack, or to the top of an adjoining dove-cot or farm-building, where they sit yelping in patience until again left by themselves.

In various parts of this article, much has been said of the awkward and vulgar manners of this species, and of its depositions on our stores. This is perfectly true; but I must complete its history with a few remarks of a somewhat more favourable nature. It must be observed, then, that the plumage of the adult male in spring, is far from destitute of beauty; for the colours, though plain and unobtrusive, are

arranged with extreme taste, consisting mostly of black and rich browns, intermixed. At a distance, the tints are scarcely noticed, and the individuals that pass their lives in towns and villages, are wholly destitute of them, the males being, in most cases, undistinguishable from the females. In the country alone the freshness of the hues can be seen in their full beauty, and nothing can be more pleasing than to examine a recently-killed specimen. But hardly one person in a hundred is aware that the House Sparrow has anything about it deserving of admiration ; and I have frequently found, that even when the attention of ordinary persons is directed to the circumstance, they are unwilling or unable to appreciate its beauties.

In confinement the House Sparrow is wild and untractable, constantly fluttering against the bars of its prison. Even when taken from the nest early, and kept in a sitting-room, they never become familiar or even tame, and I have hitherto failed in my endeavours to render it contented with its situation. And I may here notice an error frequently committed by Ornithologists, and into which even Mr. BLYTH has fallen, in the *Field Naturalist's Magazine* ; namely, that those species which are most tame and familiar in their natural state, are the most shy and boisterous in cages. But my experience by no means confirms this circumstance, which could indeed scarcely hold good, if we consider the matter a moment.

The subject of the present article, for instance, is usually supposed to be one of the tamest and most familiar of our indigenous species, and many unreflecting, unobserving persons find it extremely wild in the aviary. From this and a few other similar instances, a generalization is made, without further consideration. This, however, is far from the case. The House Sparrow, it is true, is coy and distant in confinement, but then, as might be supposed, it is likewise in its wild state ; few birds are more difficult of approach, or, when approached, more desirous to escape from view. Only stroll beside a manure field (if there be no objection to the situation) in the

neighbourhood of a farm, and compare the manners of the various species assembled to partake of the delicacies prepared. The Whin Linnets repair to a tree rising out of the hedge, or calmly fly off in a flock, and are no more seen. The Chaff Finches occupy the tallest trees, scattering themselves over the premises. These are perfectly tame, and stick close to the branches without moving, even while you are walking under the trees. You are no sooner passed, than they return to their occupation in a quiet and orderly manner. The Bare-faced Crows either remain on the ground, or move heavily into the adjoining field. But only look at those vulgar, shuffling, noisy House Sparrows in the hedge. You may follow them, but only at a distance; for no sooner do they perceive themselves pursued, than they make off in the utmost haste and disorder. But while little regularity is apparently observed by them, their cunning tricks do not here forsake them. As you advance along the hedge, the group scuffle round the same manure field, and when you are arrived at the opposite side of the field to that on which you commenced, the whole troop suddenly leaves you in the lurch, and finds its way to that spot, and continue feeding, though with some trepidation. On such an occasion, I once remember just peeping over the hedge, and beheld the House Sparrows instantly leave their work, and betake themselves to some farm buildings in the neighbourhood; which, while it proves the extreme vigilance and shyness of the bird, points out at the same time the acuteness and extent of its vision. It is now perfectly clear that the present species is at least consistent in its wildness, retaining this character equally in its natural and captivated state.

The notion of its familiarity is easily accounted for, as every bird or animal which is constantly seen near the dwellings of man is supposed to be tame and familiar, and here the range of the observation of ordinary persons terminates. But I think that in most instances the contrary will hold good. It is a well-known fact that animals inhabiting remote, uncultivated spots, are less alarmed at man than those frequenting

situations in the immediate vicinity of our dwellings, the latter having acquired cruel experience of the domination of the tyrants of the Creation; and so it is with this species. But we must now take our leave of the House Sparrow, having already occupied more space with its biography than the reader perhaps thinks it deserves. But, while I fully admit the extensive depredations of this bird, and its irreparable injuries, I will here conclude by requesting the reader to examine, in hand, a country-bred adult male of the second year, and let him then form an opinion of its personal appearance.

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TREE SPARROW, *Passer arboreus*, BLYTH.

SYNONYMS.—*Passer montanus*, RAY'S *Syn.*—BRISS. *Orn.*—*Fringilla montana*, LINN. *Syst.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Loxia Hamburgia*, GMEL. *Linn.*—Tree Sparrow, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*

THE Tree Sparrow is nowhere abundant, being extremely local, but indigenous. According to authors it is most plentiful in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, and is occasionally met with in Lancashire. It would appear, however, that it sometimes occurs in other parts, as I have seen a pair in a collection of birds shot in Staffordshire. They were killed by a gentleman's servant, and were first seen by me in the museum of a friend at Tutbury. Others, obtained in various parts of the midland and southern counties, have also, at different times, come to my knowledge. Whether it is found at all in the eastern and western counties, I am unable to determine, and as the habits of the species are not personally known to me, my description will be taken from other authors.

According to SELBY, "it is a bird of retired habits, and is never found to frequent villages or other dwellings like the common species, but is generally to be met with where old trees (particularly pollards, hollowed by decay) are abundant, as in the holes of these it finds a congenial retreat, and proper situation for its nest, of which the materials are hay and straw intermixed, with a lining of feathers.



“ The eggs are four or five in number, similar in colour to those of the House Sparrow, but rather smaller.—The food of this species consists of various seeds and grain, and the buds of trees ; but during the breeding season it destroys quantities of larvæ, moths, and others of the insect tribe, on which its callow young are principally supported.—Its form is more slender than that of the preceding bird, and its motions full of spirit and activity ; like it also, the Tree Sparrow possesses no song, and its usual note is somewhat similar in tone to that of the former, but rather shriller.

“ It is plentiful in France, Holland, and other parts of the Continent, extending its range southward to Spain and Italy.

“ *General Description.*—Crown of the head and nape of the neck deep chesnut-brown, with a tinge of grey. Space between the bill and eyes, spot behind the ear, throat, and under part of the neck, black. Sides of the neck, and collar on the nape of the same, white. Under parts greyish-white. Upper part of the back having one web of the feathers black, and the other pale chesnut, inclining to yellowish-brown. Wing-coverts, chesnut-brown, with the tips of the greater and the lower row of the lesser ones white, and forming two bars across the wings. Quills and secondaries blackish-brown, margined with yellowish-brown. Lower part of the back, and rump, yellowish-grey. Tail hair-brown, margined paler. Legs pale or wood-brown.”

The above description of feathers, is minutely exact, but my readers will perhaps form a better idea of the bird, if it is mentioned that its general appearance much resembles that of the House Sparrow, but its expression—judging from stuffed specimens—is gayer and more lively. The House Sparrow often carries its tail on one side, and is constantly jerking it up as if to keep it in its place ; but the present species is far more compact and bird-like. The distribution of the colours of the two species, is however somewhat similar.

## GENUS FRINGILLA, LINN. FINCH.

CHAFF FINCH, *Fringilla cœlebs*, LINN.

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Where the Chaff Finch rests its wing,  
 'Mid the budding trees so gay,  
 Still, anon, it loves to sing,  
 Merrily, its roundelay.  
 Lo! on yonder branchlet hoar,  
 Twin'd with honeysuckle round,  
 Curiously bestudded o'er,  
 Lurks a nest by ivy crowned.

*Anonymous.*

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SYNONYMS.—*Fringilla cœlebs*, LINN. *Syst.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—*Fringilla spiza*, RENNIE'S *Montagu.*—*Analyst*, No. 14.—Chaff Finch, LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—MONT. *Orn. Dict.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*

THE Chaff Finch may safely be considered as the commonest of our indigenous songsters. The House Sparrow, the Reed Bunting, and other familiar species, are only plentiful in particular localities, as the immediate neighbourhood of houses, in marshy reedy grounds, &c.; but, go where you will, you meet with the gay, blithesome Chaff Finch, as well amid the thickest forests, and on the lofty peak, as in the vicinity of our dwellings. On the whole, however, it is a bird of cultivation, and its extreme abundance depends rather on the state of the lands and the crops than on the number of houses in the district. But although it occurs in forests, bleak moors, or indeed in almost any other locality, yet it appears to be found chiefly on the *borders* of these; it likewise abounds in roads, lanes, and gardens or groves adjoining houses. It is, however, more difficult to specify where it does not, than where it does occur, it being scarcely possible to find any spot unfrequented by Chaff Finches.

In the middle of March, while the winds are still loud, boisterous and constant, the Chaff Finch commences its merry and oft-repeated strains. This consists of but a single bar, of

short rapid notes, and in a high key. It is a pleasant lively song, and the more so on account of the early time of year at which it is first heard; but if it long remained our chief songster, the notes would soon become wearisome and monotonous; and indeed in backward seasons, when the musical Warbler family are not yet arrived, I have frequently found this to be the case. But it forms an agreeable variety to the rest of the feathered choristers, though but few are heard when the woods are in full chorus, as it is an early breeder, and consequently discontinues its notes before the greater number of the *Sylviadæ* have advanced far with nidification. In England this species is scarcely known in its musical capacity, and is rarely kept in confinement; nor is it often taken by the London bird-catchers. In Germany, however, it is one of the favourite song birds, so large and extravagant a sum as five guineas being sometimes given for remarkably fine males; and cows being commonly exchanged for them.

The German bird-fanciers teach it to sing airs, and likewise the notes of other birds; those that whistle wine songs are considered the best; but I am little versed in the artificial songs of birds, and therefore refer such of my readers as are desirous of learning further particulars on the subject, to BECHSTEIN'S *Cage Birds*, where a complete account of the mode of managing it will be found. Indeed the longer biographies in that pleasant publication, consist of little more than dissertations on the songs of birds, the author being chiefly a bird-fancier, though he doubtless possessed a good ornithological knowledge in addition.

As a song bird, the Chaff Finch would certainly not be worth keeping in cages, especially as it sings much less, and for a considerably shorter time in the year, than in its natural state: but its vivacity and lively motions in my opinion fully compensate any musical defects, and render it one of the most pleasing of cage birds. It would, however, be necessary to rear it from the nest, for, when caught old, it loses not its innate wildness and freedom of spirit for two or three years.

But there is much difference in individuals, and from five or six which I have had at various times, I am inclined to believe that the females are more docile and tractable than the males. Several instances of this have fallen under my observation, but the principal is the following :—

A pair of Chaff Finches, male and female, were taken in a trap and placed in an aviary, containing birds of various kinds. For some months, both fluttered and battered themselves constantly against the wires of the cage, little difference being observable in their dispositions. But after about half a year, the female entirely altered its habits, and became perfectly tame, and even familiar, feeding without alarm within a few feet of where I was standing. The male remained precisely the same, keeping as shy and distant as ever, though it seldom fluttered if no one was near, and thus I could easily watch the pair by hiding myself behind a door. After their imprisonment, they paid little attention to each other, and the male never sang, nor do I believe it ever does, unless confined by itself. They remained with me about two years, but never attempted to build. Their motions in confinement are easy and graceful, and they hop rather than walk, but in a smooth manner, so that at a distance it is difficult to determine how it progresses on the ground. Others that I have reared from the nest, and which were fed by the parents, still retained somewhat of their natural shyness, but never fluttered or appeared alarmed at the sight of man. They refused fruit of all kinds, and were most partial to seeds, either hemp, rape, canary, or the various grasses. House flies and other insects were likewise acceptable, though animal food is never necessary to the members of the Finch family ; groundsel, chickweed, and all green leaves, which form the chief subsistence of the Common Goldwing and others, remain unmolested by the present species. After the old birds deserted them, they became much tamer, on account of their never seeing others at liberty ; still, however, they knew their interests, and at last all escaped through a small hole in the cage, which I should scarcely have consi-

dered large enough to admit any bird. They were never seen afterwards. The Chaff Finch never dusts in confinement, but is extremely partial to washing. Two or more males, in the same cage, will fight desperately at the water or seed pan, but it seldom molests any other species.

The nest of the Chaff Finch is a most beautiful and elegant structure, and not inferior in appearance to the undomed architecture of any British bird. The exterior consists of moss and wool, spangled over with lichens, which gives it a gay and elegant aspect. It is little liable to deviation as regards materials, though the look of the whole varies considerably, and scarcely any two specimens agree precisely. The kind of locality selected for nidification of course exercises considerable influence over the composition of the structure, but as much, or even more, appears to depend on the skill and age of the architects. The beautiful and compact form is one of its principal characters, and is always observed in a greater or less degree. Those framed by yearling birds are somewhat looser and larger than those of adults, and those built in an unfavourable locality as regards materials, are usually unexceptionable in shape, but deficient in the materials which form the chief ornaments of the structure. The interior is lined with horse and cow hair, "felted" in with a little wool, rabbit's fur, or other warm and soft substances.

So great a difference in the appearance of the nest does a very slight deviation make, that although each individual out of two dozen may consist of precisely the same materials, there is considerable difficulty in determining which to select as a specimen for the museum. And even if you can, you may perhaps scarcely have lodged it in its place, when another, with new beauties, will present itself to your notice. This I have myself repeatedly found to be the case, and you may go on for a whole season in this manner.

Let us now proceed to the consideration of the localities in which the nest is found. These, as might be expected, from the extreme abundance of the bird, are very various, but not so

much so as many others of our common indigenous birds, as the Ivy Wren, &c. It occurs in almost any kind of bush or young tree, especially hawthorns. The reason of its partiality to the hawthorn is, the number of clefts which this tree affords. It is, however, rarely met with in hedges of any kind, but chiefly in single trees, situate in gardens or pleasure grounds. It is perhaps as often seen in woods and groves, in the neighbourhood of dwellings, but much less seldom in the midst of large forests, though the bird itself occurs there. It were a difficult matter to determine where it most commonly builds, but the above-mentioned are the most usual localities. Strangely enough, the Chaff Finch generally selects the cleft of a tree for nidification. One would have imagined that so firm and compact a piece of architecture might have been placed anywhere, but the little architects think differently, and take good care to lodge it in a cosy cranny, where even the *feather-bed* of the House Sparrow would be secure. Such, however, is the case, and if the cleft of a tree be at hand, other situations will not be sought after. In districts where the hawthorn is little introduced into gardens, any low bush will suffice; in woods and copses, the summit of a leafy stump of a beech or elm tree, where it is amply concealed by the leaves. Woods or forests consisting chiefly of large trees, are little frequented by this species, especially where the woodman's axe is little known, but in copses almost every stump is occupied, those covered with lichens being generally preferred. Ivy-clad trees likewise occasionally afford an asylum for the nest; and this reminds me of a remarkable circumstance, which runs as follows:—

In a large ivy-clad tree in a garden behind a house belonging to a friend of mine, was found the nest of a Chaff Finch; I was in the habit of repairing to this little domicile every day, but after about a week discontinued my visits. One day I went out shooting with my friend, and seeing a bird on a tree, just within gun-shot, shot at it; it was a female Chaff Finch; nothing was thought of this, and we walked on. A few days afterwards I was informed that the male Chaff Finch had been

found dead in the nest in the ivy tree. At first I was considerably surprised at this occurrence; but, recollecting that the female had been shot within fifty yards of the nest, it soon struck me that we must have killed the female that was sitting in the ivy tree; that her mate had waited on the nest, and, finding that she never returned, pined to death. The parent was perfectly stiff and dry, and had four young birds under its outstretched wings. My friend had this curiosity preserved in the position we found it, and I believe it still remains in his possession.

This species likewise occasionally builds in holly bushes and fir trees, often placing it on the middle stem of a flake of the latter, where it is easily discovered, on account of the discrepancy of the colour of the fir or larch and the lichen spangles. It is difficult to see the female sitting, though I have both seen it, and caught it on its nest. As soon as this is approached, the female flits off to a neighbouring tree, where it is quickly joined by the male and others of the species, all sounding their gay sprightly note, which has been likened to the words *pink*, *fink*, *wink*, *veet*, &c. In these cases of danger, a troop of these birds frequently collect round the spot, and set up a loud chirping. Sometimes, however, the two parents—at least such I have always supposed them to be—remain in charge of the nest, while a third, invariably a male, uses its utmost endeavours to lead the intruder from the nest. This circumstance has never been noticed by authors, which is remarkable enough, as the fact is perfectly familiar to me. I have frequently observed troops of small birds of various kinds collecting round the nests of Garden Thrushes and Garden Ouzels, when the latter are disturbed, and vociferating in a very clamorous manner. But with the Chaff Finch the case is different, as it would appear that each pair has one regular attendant, which is ever ready to protect its employers or their family. When any one approaches the snug little tenement, this officious creature flits in great precipitation to the spot, continually uttering its lively call-note; but in such cases it can be of little service, though

it has frequently drawn me away from the nest by its artifices. Of course I was well aware that I should not discover the nest by following this bird, but I was desirous of making myself acquainted with its ways. It acts in much the same manner as a Pheasant or Partridge would do on a similar occasion, except that it flits from tree to tree, instead of fluttering along the ground, and seldom affects lameness or any other bodily defect. As soon as it has led you to what it considers a sufficient distance, it rises to some height in the air, and suddenly departs, flying in a direct line to the place where the nest is concealed. If you are aware of the site of this, you may return and visit it, but your guide will, probably, not be there; for no sooner has it settled its business to its satisfaction, than it leaves the domicile to the care of the owners, though it will shortly return if you tarry near the nest. These attendants are most likely bachelors, or individuals that have been unable to procure a mate, as birds which themselves possessed nests, would have enough to do to take care of their own families.

The eggs, four or five in number, are of a dirty white, or reddish white, blotched with the same colour, but darker. They are nearly elliptical, and have the appearance of rottenness. The male, like most other members of the family, takes his turn on the nest, and both sit very close, though they are extremely sharp in escaping when in danger. I once remember catching a female on a nest containing five eggs, which had been incubated about nine days, with the view of ascertaining whether the male would pine for her, but he never returned, and I suffered my captive to escape. In some instances, however, when I have taken the male on the nest, at noon, the female has continued sitting through the day and night, but afterwards deserted. If the male disappears by any accident after the young have been hatched some days, the remaining parent continues to take charge of the brood; but if the same loss happens when the nestlings are recently hatched, the domicile is deserted for ever.

When I resided at Scampston Hall, near Malton, in York-



shire, an instance of this kind came under my notice. A friend of mine had shot a male Chaff Finch near his house, which he afterwards discovered to be the father of a family. Next morning my friend discovered a nest containing four young birds, apparently in a starving state; these he took home and nursed, until they were ready to fly, when they became remarkably tame, refusing their liberty when they had numerous opportunities of escaping. How they ended their days I know not.

Lively as is the Chaff Finch, it has nothing pert, vulgar, or Sparrow-like in its manners; it never twitches up its tail in the singular mode that the House Sparrow is observed to do, and it sometimes sits, for half-an-hour together, on the branch of a tree, behind which, if slopen, it frequently endeavours to conceal itself when noticed, remaining almost motionless. It however keeps a vigilant look-out, constantly turning about its little head with a brisk and rapid motion. In winter, or rather in autumn, it assembles in considerable flocks, associating with Whin Linnets, Yellow Buntings, and other gregarious species, and with them frequenting the highways and cultivated fields, where it never fails to procure a sufficiency of food. These flocks in many countries consist entirely either of males or females, and so they do in some parts of England. In Derbyshire the flocks are mostly composed of males, which proves that the majority of the other sex leave us in the autumn. And hence the application of LINNÆUS'S specific name *cælebs*, or bachelor.

But although the name *cælebs* is good as a general rule, it is not without exceptions, and the specific name has, on this account, been objected to, and altered by some, but, in my opinion, with little reason. No rule is without its exceptions, and so I take it to be in the present case. Few winters pass without my noticing several pair of Chaff Finches, which had evidently remained attached ever since the breeding season. Indeed it would appear, that all the few females that remain in this part of the country through the winter, keep with the males. A greater number of instances of this occurrence have

fallen under my observation during the late mild and open winters, than in the bleak, *old-fashioned* seasons: The flocks of males have likewise considerably decreased in number for some years past.

The Chaff Finch feeds in great part on insects and larvæ, especially in spring, and during the breeding season. Almost any small insects are acceptable, and the young are supported on little else; but in early spring it becomes an object of detestation to the gardener, and is destroyed in great numbers. At this period it certainly commits some damage amongst flower-seeds in gardens and pleasure grounds; but as its depredations are for the most part confined to this time, we have not only no right to kill it, but are going against our interests in so doing. In the beginning of April it may be observed destroying some of the choicest of the flower-seeds, but it is easily driven away, being apparently aware that it can only obtain its favourite food by stealth. Indeed if the gardener and his men are always at their post, our gay little songster seldom ventures to approach. When the labourers are at dinner, however, I have seen several descend from the trees in various parts of the garden, and feed on the plants. But these petty depredations continue for a very short time in the year, and while the gardener or his men are absent, a boy might be stationed on the premises, or scarecrows stuck up in different places to frighten them away; nothing more would be requisite.

This species is likewise partially granivorous—but not *graminivorous*—in autumn and winter, approaching houses and farms even more closely than it had done before, and feeding either on grain, or on the various kinds of refuse that abound in such localities. At this period, though it is not exactly beneficial to our interests, it is by no means injurious; for although it frequents the rick-yards along with other *Fringillidæ*, it seldom takes the trouble of pulling out the straws and plucking the corn, but, as its name denotes, is commonly content to glean a scanty subsistence amongst the chaff beside the barn door, or feeding on the brewer's "grains," to which it is ex-

tremely partial. I am the more inclined to the opinion that it feeds but little on corn in its wild state, from the circumstance of my having, on two or three occasions, preserved a pair of these handsome birds for several successive days on grains and chaff, in a cage ; to wheat and barley, likewise, I have observed it to be little partial. Oats are preferred to these, but will at all times be left for hemp, and even for canary, rape, rice, &c. In its natural state it also feeds on the seeds of grasses and other plants, and would probably do so in confinement. In this it resembles the Hedge Dunnock, and, like the House Sparrow, will eat bread, potatoes, and various other substances. Few birds may be preserved more easily or at less expense, in an aviary, and if "caught young," it retains little of natural shyness, though it never loses its vivacity.

The females return from their migrations about the middle of March, and pair soon afterwards ; but even then they keep a good deal in flocks, foraging together in the fields. They are easily disturbed when approached, but remain on the neighbouring trees with great pertinacity, until the intruder is entirely out of sight, when they again descend and continue their researches. The flight of all the *Fringillidæ* is buoyant and bounding, but that of the present species, which is the typical member of the whole family, is considerably more so than that of any other British individual of the family, and its shape and colour are beautiful and elegant. The tints of the male in the breeding season, are scarcely surpassed in our native Ornithology, and their motions are lively, easy, and graceful. The plumage of the other sex is plain and unobtrusive, but she too is very chaste and handsome in her way. Her colours resemble that of the exterior of the nest, and of the lichen-clad trees, to which they are so partial.

The Chaff Finch has two principal chirps. First, that which it is the custom of Ornithologists to liken to *fink* or *pink* ; and secondly, a shorter note, to which our writers have as yet assigned no word. The former is chiefly employed in the breeding season, and is rarely heard in autumn and winter ; the

latter is constantly uttered on the wing, throughout the year, and whilst on the perch during the inclement seasons. Upon the whole the present is an extremely interesting species, both in habits and appearance. With regard to the latter, individuals vary greatly with age and season. Until the spring moult, the sexes resemble each other, but they then acquire their red, blue, and grey tints, though by no means in full beauty. At the spring of the second year they attain additional brilliancy, but still great difference will be observed between two-year-old males, scarcely any two agreeing precisely. As the season advances, the tints become more and more beautiful, but after a time they begin to fade, and the head and breast grow perfectly pale about the middle of autumn, in which state they remain until the ensuing spring. The plumage of the female varies little, except that it is somewhat darker after the spring moult, than it had previously been.

I am not aware that this species is subject to variety, having never met with or heard of any deviations of plumage, excepting of course the changes caused by season or age, which, as has already been observed, are considerable.

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BRAMBLE FINCH, *Fringilla montana*, WILL.

SYNONYMS.—*Fringilla montana*, WILL. *Orn.—Analyst*, No. 14.—*Fringilla montifringilla*, LINN. *Syst.*—ID. *Faun. Suec.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—*Fringilla Lulensis*, GMEL. *Linn.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—Mountain Finch, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.—Analyst*, No. 14.

THE Bramble Finch has never fallen under my observation in its natural state, though I have seen a pair alive at the gardens of the Zoological Society, of London; and one which was shot near here about seven years ago, is now preserved in my collection. The manners—judging from the above-mentioned caged birds—are gay and lively, much resembling those of its congener, and its common call-note is similar. This is often repeated at particular times, but sometimes the bird remains mute for a considerable period, in which it again re-

sembles the Chaff Finch; like it, also, it is constantly wiping its beak on its perch, in a brisk and lively manner. In Britain, we are informed that the present species is a periodical visitant, a few being observed every winter, though varying in numbers according to weather and other circumstances. British Ornithologists appear to be little familiar with its habits, and their accounts of these are far from satisfactory. SELBY says:—

“The Bramble Finch is a bird of handsome appearance, and rather superior in size to the Chaff Finch, which in habits and manners it closely resembles. During its residence with us, it frequents the stubble lands, associating often with the Chaff Finch and other granivorous birds; and I have observed that it always roosts in fir or larch plantations, if any such are in the neighbourhood of its haunt. The usual call-note of this species, though not unlike that of the Chaff Finch, can be easily distinguished by a practised ear; but I am unable to say whether its notes vary in the spring, or whether it possesses any *proper song*. It builds in lofty pine and spruce trees, and its nest is formed of moss and wool, lined with feathers and hair. It lays four or five white eggs, spotted with yellowish-brown.”

Dr. LIVERPOOL informs me that he has frequently shot the Bramble Finch in the vicinity of Cheltenham and Leamington, and likewise in many of the southern counties. The following description of its plumage, will serve to identify the species, in case any of my readers should be fortunate enough to meet with it. It is extracted from SELBY'S *Illustrations*:—

“Head, cheeks, nape of the neck, and upper part of the back black; having the feathers margined and tipped with yellowish-grey, or yellowish-brown. Throat, breast, scapulars, and lesser wing-coverts pale reddish-brown. Coverts of the secondary quills black, tipped with pale reddish-orange. Greater quills black, with a white spot at the base, and the margins of the outer webs primrose-yellow. Rump, belly, and under-tail coverts yellowish-white. Sides inclining to buff-orange, spotted with black. Tail black, edged with grey,

and the exterior web of the outer feather white. Base of the bill inclining to lemon-yellow; the tip black. In summer the head, neck, and back are of a deep black, without any of the yellowish-brown that distinguishes these parts in winter; and the bill becomes of a dark bluish-grey.

“ *Female*.—Crown of the head hair-brown. Cheeks and nape of the neck ash-grey. Above the eye is a streak of brownish-black. Throat and breast reddish-orange. Back blackish-brown, margined with yellowish-brown. Wings brownish-grey.

“ *The young* of the year resemble the female, except that the throat is usually white.”

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GENUS CARDUELIS, AUCT. GOLDWING.

SISKIN GOLDWING, *Carduelis spinus*, STEPH.

SYNONYMS.—*Fringilla spinus*, LINN. *Syst.*—ID. *Faun. Suec.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Carduelis spinus*, STEPH. *Gen. Zool.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Siskin, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Siskin Goldwing, *Analyst*, No. 14.

I AM convinced our Ornithologists are mistaken in supposing the Siskin Goldwing to be a rare occasional visitant, only appearing in Britain in extremely severe winters. It is also represented as only approaching our shores at distant and uncertain periods; but this is by no means the case, as many years' observations, in a district by no means favourable to the species, has proved to me beyond a doubt. Even in Derbyshire I should almost be inclined to consider it indigenous, as future investigation will probably find it to be in many of the fir forests of Scotland. It would appear that few British Ornithologists who have described the bird, have studied its habits in its native haunts, though I think it will be found to be plentiful in many parts of England, where as yet it has scarcely been heard of, except in the neighbourhood of the metropolis, where the bird-catchers occasionally take them in considerable numbers.

During the last remarkably mild and open winter, I have seldom taken a walk, in places at all favourable to the bird, without meeting with it. It may possibly be true that it only visits Britain in very large flocks in severe seasons, but certainly no winter passes without its occurring at all. It is, however, probable, that in mild weather they are less inclined to congregation, as is well known to be the case with other gregarious species; this would satisfactorily account for its being less observed in mild than in severe winters. Even during the present year (1836) it is abundant in many of the southern counties, as Surrey, Kent, Somersetshire, &c., and likewise in Gloucestershire, Derbyshire, and Staffordshire. An adult female was lately sent me by Mr. BLYTH, and Mr. BARLOW represents it as by no means rare in the vicinity of Cambridge. Mr. WESTON shot a pair in Cheshire in the early part of February, and Dr. LIVERPOOL has seen it in various parts of England.

In my own immediate neighbourhood, by far the greater number of Siskin Goldwings are periodical visitants; but it is neither very abundant, nor very regular in its migratory movements. The first are usually seen in November, and it departs before the approach of spring. It is here generally met with in small flocks of from twelve to twenty, and it frequents alders, willows, &c., hanging underneath the branches, and feeding on the catkins, much in the manner of the Redpoll Linnet. It occurs less frequently in bleak upland grounds, than in lower and more sheltered situations, where I have observed it to be especially partial to woods, osier beds, or even single trees, bordering on lakes and streams, but never near muddy, stagnant pools or marshes. It is fond of retirement, rarely approaching gardens, houses or farms, and shunning, as much as possible, the more cultivated and inhabited grounds. It is, however, by no means shy, or alarmed at the sight of the lord of the Creation, often admitting of a very near approach. They are gay lively creatures, and seldom remain long in one place, excepting where they find unusually "good accommodation."

The motions of this species are gay and elegant, and though the plumage, even of the adult male, is far from showy, it is a lovely and beautiful bird, and quite as much to my taste as its more brightly-tinted congener. It is a most interesting cage-bird, and very easily tamed, even when caught old. It never falls into the extreme of the Common Goldwing, of either fluttering about all day, or moping motionless on the perch, with its head buried in its shoulders. On the contrary, it is as gay, lively and contented as the Canary, hopping about in a quick and elegant manner, and often climbing up the wires with bill and claws. On the ground it advances by hopping.

The shape of the Siskin Goldwing is neat and tidy, and the tail short and considerably forked. The tints of black and green are beautifully variegated in the male; of this ordinary observers and even practical Ornithologists appear to be little aware. Indeed our writers seem to be little acquainted with the bird, except as a dried skin, when both the size, shape and colour are usually considerably altered. In confinement it may be fed on various kinds of small seeds; and, as I am informed by a London bird-catcher, it is partial to the catkins of the alder and willow. When kept in an aviary or small room, it should be provided with the branches of any tree to which it is observed to be partial. It will then thrive much better than if the room were merely "furnished" with dry perches, and it frequently lives several years in perfect health. One instance of its living so long as ten years, has come to my notice; this individual was reared from the nest, and appeared to die of old age, as it seems to have no malady to the last. This cannot of course determine the length of its life in its natural state, for birds never live half so long in cages as in their native haunts. The Common Goldwing is said to have lived so long as twenty years in a cage, though not perhaps on very good authority; it is however certain, that the Canary has been preserved ten, fourteen and sixteen years, and on this account we may infer that many of our small birds attain a considerable age in their natural state.



The song is short, low, and unvaried, but by no means unpleasant or monotonous. In confinement it sings seldom, especially if it be kept in a room or aviary with other birds; and even when solitary, its notes are much less constantly heard than those of its congener. Like the latter, I have occasionally heard it sing, on a fine winter's day, in its natural state. In character the song somewhat resembles that of the Common Goldwing, being sprightly and rather sweet; but it is much inferior in melody, power and execution. It has a kind of twitter while flying, but, as far as I have observed, it never employs the swinging motion that the latter frequently does when pleased. Nor indeed is it so lively on the whole, though the manners of the two species are very similar. Like its congener it frequents large single trees, and, like that bird, often remains on one tree for hours together, singing all the while. This, however, mostly takes place towards spring, when it is less restless than it had previously been.

The nest I have never seen, and authors in general appear to be little acquainted with it, chiefly, it would seem, on account of the great altitude at which it builds, or is supposed to build. It has been ascertained to breed in several parts of Scotland, and JARDINE and SELBY have seen it in pairs in the month of June, near Killin. Mr. GARDINER has likewise found it to breed in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh. But I have heard of no authentic instance of its breeding in England, though it will probably be found to do so in various parts. In Derbyshire a pair of these birds were seen to frequent a wood behind Foston Hall in the spring and summer of 1831, and though I never discovered the nest, they must have bred somewhere in the immediate neighbourhood. This was the first time I had seen it after the month of March, but in subsequent seasons I have noticed it both single and in pairs, throughout the spring and summer, which proves beyond a doubt that the species is resident and breeds in this county. A friend informs me that he is convinced he has seen two nests belonging to the Siskin Goldwing, and which were found in 1832, in

laurel bushes, about seven feet from the ground. But as my friend is no Ornithologist, and as the situation is widely different from that represented by the continental writers, little reliance can be placed on this information. No efforts on my part have been spared to discover the nest, but as yet in vain. It is, however, a great point gained, to have ascertained beyond a doubt that it does breed in the middle of England, or at least in parts of Derbyshire and Staffordshire, where in winter it is met with much more frequently than many birds considered abundant by Ornithologists, as the Corn Bunting, Whitethroated Fauvet, &c. On the continent it is said to build at the tops of lofty pines, laying four or five bluish white eggs, spotted with purplish red.

Its food consists of the seeds of the fir, alder, birch, elm, willow, &c., which it seeks with great avidity, tapping at the catkins with its beak, or hanging on the under side of the twig, and pulling out the seeds. Whilst feeding, it is easily approached, and might doubtless be caught, like the Redpoll Linnet, with a fishing-rod smeared with birdlime. According to my observation, it is not insectivorous, and probably it is not so, as its congener is wholly granivorous and graminivorous. But I have seen it feeding with great relish on the leaves and seeds of the chickweed and groundsel, to which it appears to be equally partial with the Common Goldwing.

The Siskin Goldwing flies in a light and bounding manner, but it seldom remains long on the wing, during its sojourn with us. The main flock disappears suddenly on the approach of spring, though I have met with several so late as the third or fourth of April, and a few appear to remain with us throughout the year, though, from their shy retiring habits at that season, they are little seen or noticed. I possess a fine male of this species, and numbers of others have at various times passed through my hands; but as I have not at present access to either a recent or stuffed specimen, I shall have recourse to MONTAGU for a description of its plumage:—

“ The Siskin Goldwing nearly resembles the canary termed

the green variety, only it is a little less, the tail being rather shorter in proportion. Size of the Redpoll Linnet, or between that and the Whin Linnet. Length rather more than five inches; bill reddish-white, tipped with blackish-brown; eyes, umber-brown; head, greenish-black; over each eye a pale streak of dingy primrose-yellow; neck, back, wings, and tail, oil-green; paler, and more yellow, on the lower parts of the back towards the tail-coverts. The feathers of the back and wings are streaked down the middle with a tint formed of blackish-green and hair-brown; sides of the head, throat, breast, and under parts, pale wax-yellow, inclining to sulphur-yellow; middle of the parts below the breast very pale wine-yellow, passing into white; across each wing are two bands of primrose-yellow, and between them one of black; part of the quills and tail edged with pale gamboge-yellow; legs and feet pale flesh-red. The head of the female is of a brownish colour, inclining to grey where the male is black; cheeks and side of the neck siskin green or oil-green; and all the rest of her plumage is of a more dingy colour than in the male."

I never met with any regular varieties of the Siskin Goldwing; but its plumage alters considerably with age and season.

COMMON GOLDWING, *Carduelis elegans*, STEPH.

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Hid among the op'ning flowers  
 Of the sweetest vernal bowers,  
 Passing there the anxious hours  
     In her little mossy dome,  
 Sits thy mate, whilst thou art singing,  
 Or across the lawn seen winging,  
 Or upon a thistle swinging,  
     Gleaning for thy happy home.

*Anonymous.*

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SYNONYMS.—*Fringilla carduelis*, LINN. *Syst.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Carduelis elegans*, STEPH. *Gen. Zool.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Gold Finch, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*

FEW of our British birds, whether migratory or resident, possess more beautiful plumage, or more pleasing manners, than the Common Goldwing, and it is extremely abundant in every part of the country. In many districts, however, a partial migration takes place. Thus in Derbyshire the main mass take their departure about the middle of autumn, few individuals being observed between this time and spring. Early in April, or at all events some time during the month, however, they again make their appearance, and soon become plentiful. They depart in flocks of from twenty to thirty, but almost the whole are paired by the beginning of April, the rest arriving in packs of four or six. It is not usually considered a gregarious species, though it is generally met with in small troops in autumn and winter. These flocks, however, seldom exceed thirty or forty, and usually consist of a considerably smaller number.

It is most abundant in wild uncultivated fields, covered with weeds and thistles, and is little partial to highly-cultivated lands and corn districts, though it frequents gardens and the neighbourhood of houses throughout the year. In many parts of Britain it is wholly resident, and I believe it never entirely quits our shores, though in some counties, as the flat portions of Derbyshire and Staffordshire, the greater number depart for

the south in autumn. On the whole, it prefers dry elevated districts, to the low marshy grounds bordering on lakes and streams, though at certain times it is met with in these and various other localities. To woods it is little partial, and it occurs most frequently in open unsheltered situations.

The song, like the bird, is gay and lively, and is surpassed by that of no other member of the family in sweetness and melody, though it may be exceeded by many in depth, richness, and execution. It is not so regular a song as that of the Whin Linnet, Wood Lark, &c., being somewhat more of a twitter, but it is of an exceedingly pleasing character. Its chirps or call-notes are numerous and varied, and whilst uttering them, especially when it is pleased, it turns its body rapidly from side to side on the perch—a habit which I have observed in no other British bird. Its beautiful song, elegant plumage, and interesting manners, cause it to be in great demand as a cage bird; and, abundant as it is in every part of the kingdom, a fine male usually sells for five or six shillings, though when first caught they may be had for much less.

The greater number of Common Goldwings that are seen caged in the country, have been reared from the nest, or put into a cage when just fledged, and fed by the parents, which take the greatest care of their offspring, and testify their anger in every possible way when the cage is approached. Their endeavours to release the brood are unceasing, as I have had frequent opportunities of witnessing, when watching their motions from some place of concealment. Like the Tits they will diligently search every cranny of the prison, and if any gap be stopped up with string, or paper, I have more than once known the old birds overcome this barrier, lead the brood off in triumph, and forthwith leave the place, probably never to return. As long as any one is within sight, they seldom make any attempts to extricate their young, though they will not unfrequently feed them in your presence.

In confinement it is tame and familiar, especially if reared from the nest. But its manners are less adapted to a cage than

those of the Siskin Goldwing and the Linnets, and although it it soon becomes inured to its state, even when caught old, yet it is almost always either fluttering against the sides and top of the cage, and biting the wires, or sitting on the top perch, with its head buried between its shoulders. The best way to cure it of fluttering, is to confine it for a week in a small trap cage two or three inches square, and then place it in a larger one. It is a hearty feeder, and often kills itself by eating too much hemp-seed. Sometimes it is seized with apoplectic fits, which commonly terminate fatally, but more frequently the illness approaches gradually, and the caudal gland becomes considerably swollen. Even then it is by no means an easy matter to cure it, and, even when cured, it is afterwards even more liable to sickness than before. When almost on the point of death, it continues feeding on the hemp-seed with great greediness, and thus considerably hastens its death, unless the seed-trough be withdrawn. During sickness it should be supplied with canary-seed in small quantities, and likewise with plenty of groundsel, chickweed, and lettuce, to the leaves and seeds of which it is very partial. In my opinion, however, a sick bird is in no way worth so much trouble, especially as its place is at all times easily filled. A sick bird is a most miserable object, and it appears especially so to me, as I have rarely known instances of their recovering. Frequently they remain ill several years, and at length perish in a wretchedly meagre state, but the business is generally finished in a much shorter time with the present species. The pricking of the caudal gland will occasionally effect a cure, but not unless the operation be performed in the early stage of the disease.

In the neighbourhood of the metropolis, immense numbers of Common Goldwings are annually caught in nets, and sold to the London dealers, who purchase the males at a low price, and suffer the females to escape, as song is the chief aim with them. Few birds are more easily captured, or may be taken in a greater variety of ways. If wished to be caught in great numbers, ground nets are the best, but it is easily procured

with limed twigs, placed in any hedge, or in a garden, on the top of a bush. I have ensnared many by this simple method, and in many parts of England men make a regular trade of it, travelling about the country, and sitting under the hedges while their traps are taking effect. I should imagine this would be a pretty profitable speculation, as a single man frequently catches as many as two dozen in one day, and purchasers are always readily found; they are usually sold at a shilling a-piece. These persons often carry on the business on their own account, but sometimes they are employed by the bird-sellers in the neighbouring towns, and are paid either by the day, or by the number of birds caught. This species may likewise be taken in trap cages, with a good call-bird confined in the lower part of the cage, and hung in a conspicuous spot. When first caught, it is as wild as any other bird, but soon becomes perfectly tame if confined in a small cage without perches, and with wires only on one side. I have known it feed from the hand three weeks after it was taken, but have never endeavoured to teach it those childish tricks of which bird-fanciers appear to be so proud, as considerable cruelty must necessarily be inflicted on the innocent little creatures, before they can learn to perform such feats.

The nest is a beautiful little piece of architecture, and scarcely inferior in appearance to the snug little tenement of the Chaff Finch, to which, indeed, it bears some resemblance. The exterior consists of moss, wool and very fine dry grass, covered on the outside with lichens, which are thinly scattered over the whole structure; it is lined with horse or cow hair, the down of the willow, groundsel or thistle, and sometimes with a little wool. It is not so elegantly spangled, nor so compact, as the lovely little domicile of the Chaff Finch, though it must be owned that there is considerable difference in a number of specimens, scarcely any two being precisely similar; the character, however, is always the same. The lining, and sometimes the exterior, often varies with the locality; thistle-down being usually employed in the fields; that of the willow near osier beds, and groundsel in gardens, shrubberies, and the neigh-

bourhood of houses. In Sudbury park, where all the wild rabbits are black, I have seen the nest partially lined with the fur of that animal—rather a remarkable circumstance, especially when we consider that the lining usually consists of light coloured substances.

The nest is generally situated in a bush or low tree, in small woods, gardens or orchards. The apple is a very favourite tree, but, in defect of these, almost any other will suffice. I have seen it in tolerably large beech trees, but much more commonly at the tops of bushes, especially hollies and raspberries. It breeds at least twice in the year, some not being hatched until the beginning of August, or even later. The same pair frequently returns several successive seasons, but never during the same season, or while the old nest is remaining. A young beech tree close to a wall, in a yard behind my late residence,\* is a great favourite with the species, two nests having been built in it, in exactly the same places, for the three last years. These were generally removed before the following spring, but one year, just before the time at which the birds usually appear, I placed a nest loosely on the branch where one of the individuals used to build, in order to ascertain how it would act. On visiting the place a few days afterwards, not a vestige of the old nest remained, either in the tree or on the ground underneath, the whole having, apparently, been carried off to a distance. A new structure had been commenced, and was shortly completed. If the old nest had been firmly fixed on the branch, the birds would probably have been unable to remove it, and as it was, there must have been considerable difficulty in conveying it to the distance which they did. The eggs, four or five in number, are blueish white, marked with reddish brown.

The Common Goldwing has perhaps more enemies than almost any other of our British songsters. Boys seek for its

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\* Whilst this work has been in progress, Foston Hall has been burnt down, excepting the bare walls, which are still standing; and the birds have free access to the desolate apartments of the Ornithologist!



nest with great eagerness, and sell the young for a few shillings when they are fully fledged; and the tenement is frequently pillaged by cats. Half wild cats are very destructive amongst the young birds, and I have often seen them watching early in the morning, in gardens and orchards, climbing the apple trees, and bearing off the young birds. This circumstance is generally pointed out by the nest being scattered about on the ground, underneath, or hanging from the branches.

The Common Goldwing breeds freely in confinement, and it crosses readily with the Siskin Goldwing and Canary, particularly the latter. I have likewise seen a cross between this species and the Whin Linnet, mostly resembling the latter. The crosses are said to succeed best when the Common Goldwing is male, and the Canary of the other sex. Of the accuracy of this statement I cannot speak with any certainty, but it may be well to mention, that I have known the cross to answer equally well, when the reverse is the case. When I visited the bird-room of a dealer at Scarborough, some ten or twelve years ago, I found a female of the present species, which had paired to a Canary, sitting on five eggs; and three similar instances have since fallen under my observation. One remarkable circumstance regarding the pairing of birds of different species, must not be overlooked; namely, that the building of the nest, the incubation, and the rearing of the brood, usually devolve wholly on the female, the male appearing to pay no kind of attention to the affairs of propagation. That such is *always* the case, I am not prepared to say, having had comparatively little experience in cage birds, but it held good in all the instances of cross breeds that I have known.

In the spring of 1834, I placed a male Goldwing and a female Canary in a spacious room. They appeared to take little or no notice of each other, but in due time the female built a nest and laid five eggs. She sat her time, and at length hatched; but the whole business was conducted by the Canary, while the male was constantly fluttering about, or satisfying his hunger. During incubation, the Goldwing had never molested

his mate, but he seemed perfectly astonished at the young birds, and used every endeavour to lead the female from the nest. The progeny lived but a few days, which was most probably owing to the jealousy of the male.

It feeds on the downy seeds of the thistle, groundsel, dandelion, &c., and on the leaves of the chickweed, without which it cannot long be preserved in health in confinement. It is likewise partial to the seeds of grasses, and will feed on almost any kind of small seeds, as hemp, canary, rape, mustard, &c.

In a cage it is fond of washing, and a large flat basin should be placed in the middle of the cage, at noon, in the spring and summer months. In the midst of winter it will also wash freely, but, except on remarkably warm days, must not be allowed to do so, as it frequently catches cold and dies from using the water on frosty days. The drinking vessel must be so framed as to prevent its washing in it, and the cage should be hung in a warm room in winter, in order that the water may not be frozen. The seeds and leaves of the chickweed and groundsel it devours with avidity, and not unfrequently drives away much larger birds if they offer to disturb it while feeding on it. Whether in its natural state or in confinement, the Common Goldwings are constantly quarrelling amongst themselves, and very virulent conflicts take place between the males in spring.

This species does not attain the bright adult tints in full beauty until the spring moult of the following year; at this stage they are termed "greypates." It is subject to considerable varieties, and not unfrequently turns perfectly black. The brightness of the tints varies considerably, and the female is somewhat more dusky than the male. The tip of the bill is sometimes horn-colour and sometimes black.

## SUBFAM. III.—COCCOTHRAUSTINÆ, SWAINS.

## GENUS LINARIA, SW. LINNET.

WHIN LINNET, *Linaria cannabina*, SW.

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The Lintie,\* on the heathery brae,  
 (Whare lies the nest among the ferns)  
 Begins its lilt at break o' day,  
 And at the gloaming hails the sterns.

*Anonymous.*

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SYNONYMS.—*Fringilla linota*, LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—GMEL. *Linn.*—*Fringilla cannabina*, LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—GMEL. *Linn.*—Common Linnet, LATH. *Syn.*—Grey Linnet, BEW. *Br. Birds.*—Brown Linnet, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*

THE Whin Linnet, though of plain and unobtrusive plumage, is a handsome bird, the shape, especially of the adult male, being extremely elegant, and the tints beautifully laid out. The head is remarkably round and innocent, and the eye bright and beaming—so to speak—with benevolence. The bird stands considerably more upright on the perch than most other members of the family, and its manners, though elegant, varied and pleasing, are much less quick and lively than those of the Common, or even than the Siskin Goldwing. It is resident in Britain, and extremely abundant in every part of the country; though, as with the preceding species, partial migrations take place in some districts. These migrations, however, are not prosecuted with the regularity observable in the motions of the Common Goldwing, the whole number taking their departure in some seasons, while in others they are resident throughout the year. In the autumn of 1833, not an individual was seen after the sixth of November, in my neighbourhood, but in the succeeding seasons I have not been able to ascertain that any such migrations have taken place. It is difficult to assign any

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\* The Scotch name for the Whin Linnet.

reason for this circumstance, as the few last winters have been about equally mild, and there can have been no scarcity of food in these parts, in the year that the species so suddenly and unaccountably quitted us.

The Whin Linnet abounds mostly on furzy commons, and frequents bleak, stony and trackless moors, though it always prefers those that are covered with furze, or, as they are called in Scotland, "whins," whence the English specific name which I have thought proper to confer on it. In spring it approaches gardens, shrubberies, and the immediate neighbourhood of houses, where considerable numbers pass the summer months, and in autumn again retire to the open unsheltered tracts, which appear to form their more exclusive haunts at all seasons. But though it is a bird of the furze and the brake, it is by no means a hidling species, but on the contrary may constantly be seen standing erect on the tops of the bushes, or sporting over them on the wing. When disturbed, it flies off, to some distance and at a considerable height, rarely dropping into the bush for concealment, as is the case with most inhabitants of brakes and thick sheltered groves. In the breeding season, however, and especially when the young are recently hatched, I have occasionally known it resort to this expedient; and then, beat the bushes as much as you will, you will seldom succeed in dislodging it from its retreat.

The present species is celebrated for its song, which is sweet, extremely varied, and far from destitute of power. But there is much difference between individuals; some singing in a continuous manner, while others are continually pausing, and "mutilate all the strains." The latter may probably be young birds, and I am the more inclined to this opinion, from having observed, in the domesticated birds, that the males improve in their song the second year, and some even in the third year. Notwithstanding the general melody of the notes, some few are extremely harsh and unmusical, and these, when repeated often, entirely destroy the beauty of the song. As a whole, however, it is surpassed by that of no other member of the family, and is

well deserving of the high encomiums it has received from the Ornithologists of every country in which it occurs. This species is easily taught the notes of other birds, and might doubtless easily be induced to whistle artificial airs and tunes. Indeed such is the flexibility of its vocal organs, that it has even been said to pronounce words with perfect distinctness, though on what authority I know not, and cannot, therefore, vouch for the fact.

The nest is constructed of moss, fine twigs and fibres, interwoven with wool, and sometimes with bits of blotting-paper and other substances. The inside is lined with horse and cow hair, but not, as mentioned by SELBY, with feathers; at least I do not remember to have met with a nest thus lined in this neighbourhood. In addition to the horse hair, it is occasionally lined with fine fibrous roots. The eggs, from four to six in number, are of a blueish white, marked all over with reddish brown spots, most thickly at the large end. The usual number is five, but I have often seen so few as four, and on one occasion so many as seven. They are rather elliptical, and vary little, except as regards the intensity of the ground colour.

The nest is generally situated in a low bush, mostly furze. In gardens the *laurustinus* is a favourite bush, but in lack of this, almost any other will suffice. It is constructed on a twig, and in the most leafy part of the bush. It is seldom met with in trees, but I once found one at the top of a tall thick holly bush. Another, that I have seen in a plantation near a furze-common, was fixed at the top of a bare gate-post, in an unfrequented locality. About three years ago, I discovered one in the leafy stump of a beech tree, with considerably more moss and less twigs and wool than is usual in the structure. The Whin Linnet rarely constructs its nest in out-houses, though I have seen it in a low bush growing close to a saw-pit, and in fact adjoining the wooden walls of the building. The above instances are very remarkable, and may indeed be considered in the light of deviations from its usual habits; but it very commonly breeds in wall fruit trees, and especially pears.

All birds that build in wall fruit trees usually select the pear, as affording thicker and closer foliage than almost any other tree. On the whole, the present species exhibits little deviation either in the formation or locality of its nest, though the zealous observer may doubtless meet with a few in the course of his researches.

The young seldom leave the nest until they are fully fledged, when they are of a somewhat darker colour than adults, and the sexes are scarcely distinguishable. But though the young Whin Linnets commonly remain in the cradle until their strength is fully matured, yet in emergencies they can act very differently. Last spring I caused a nest which had been taken by the gardener, near my residence, to be replaced. The young birds, though but five days old, managed to make their escape the same day. On another occasion I caged five Whin Linnets, whose age I guessed to be about a week, leaving them in the tenement in which they were hatched. By some chance the door was left open; through this the parents constantly entered and fed their offspring for some hours, after which the latter departed, and were never seen afterwards. Now in both these cases it is probable that the young birds were carried away by the parents, it being obviously impossible for them even to stand at that early age, but how the matter is managed, I never had an opportunity of ascertaining.

By the older Ornithologists the present species was divided into two, on account of the great difference between the plumage of the young and adult birds, and likewise between the summer and winter plumage of the adults. Before the spring moult of the second year, they were termed "Grey" or "Brown Linnets," and afterwards "Redbreasted Linnets." The true state of the case appears to have been known to LINNÆUS, but the circumstance was first placed beyond all doubt by our own acute Ornithologist, MONTAGU. The supposed Redbreasted species was, by LEWIN, said to be somewhat smaller than the Grey Linnet; but if there be any difference, the contrary must be the case. This question has, however, been long satisfactorily

settled. Before the spring moult of the second year, the young of both sexes bear considerable resemblance to the adult female, except that they are a trifle smaller. The young females are readily distinguished from the other sex by having the breast of a paler colour, and the spots fewer, larger, and more distinctly marked. The female always remains the same, except that her whole colour becomes somewhat lighter after the first spring moult. The male does not acquire its adult tints till the spring of the second year, and seldom attains its full beauty till the third year of its life. Nothing can then be more lovely than the bright red scarf on the head and breast, especially when the sun shines on them.

It is probable that the Whin Linnet lives considerably longer than many other small birds, at least if we may judge from the length of time which it takes in acquiring its adult plumage. It would, however, seem that the individuals with red head and breast are much scarcer than the young birds. It is difficult to account for this circumstance, but the fact is certain. Out of many dozens that I have killed in a single summer, only a very small proportion of the males have had red on the head and breast; and out of the great numbers that annually breed in these parts, only one amongst them is red-headed. I have observed a difference between the offspring of the young and adult birds; those of the latter being somewhat larger and darker than the others; but the difference is only such as might be effected by the age of the parents. In the autumn the male loses its scarlet hues, which disappear gradually. The red colour, from some unknown cause, never adorns the birds reared in confinement, and even when the adult male, in summer plumage, is caged, it soon loses them, and never regains them. In May 1833 I caught and imprisoned an adult male, in mature plumage. In about a month it had scarcely any red on the breast, though the head was almost as bright as when the bird first came into my possession. This was doubtless owing to its constantly banging itself against the wires of its cage; but a fortnight longer destroyed the lustre

of the head also. Numbers of birds that I have at various times reared from the nest, and kept for several years, always remained in their immature plumage.

If reared from the nest, the Whin Linnet is a pleasing and familiar cage bird, and very easily preserved. It will pair with the Canary, but less readily than the Common Goldwing; and a London bird-seller informs me that he once obtained a cross between the Siskin Goldwing and the present species; but though he has frequently since tried the same experiment, yet could he never succeed a second time, as even the same individuals refused to pair the following year. The method taken to ensure success, was as follows:—

A Common Goldwing and Whin Linnet, whose sexes had previously been ascertained, were taken from the nest, and confined separately, their cages being hung in rooms where no other birds were within sight. After they had been thus treated for eight or ten months, it will readily be imagined that they would be glad enough to have a companion; and so it happened; for scarcely had they been in the same cage a week, when they paired, and the female shortly afterwards built a nest. This she often pulled to pieces, as is a common practice with cage birds; but at length she laid five eggs, incubated them, and in due time three young birds were hatched. Two of these were reared successfully, and I saw one of them when I was in London, in July 1835. It most resembled the Whin Linnet, which was the male, and sang very much like that bird, but in a sweeter and more continuous manner. In all crosses between birds of different species, it will be observed that the progeny are more similar to the male than the female; and in the above instance, as usual, the male took no part in the affairs of propagation, though in their natural state the males of almost all Insectorial birds assist both in building the nest, hatching the eggs, and rearing the young.

The food consists of various small seeds, and it is especially partial to rape, turnip, flax, hemp, canary, thistle, rice, &c.; but the latter can of course only be procured in confinement in



England. In winter it will likewise feed on “hips and haws,” and in severe winters, when the snow lies long and thick on the ground, I have even known it devour with avidity the berries of the ivy, holly and mountain ash, which it divides before swallowing. These, however, by no means form a part of its usual subsistence, and are only resorted to in times of need. It is also partial to the leaves and seed of the chickweed and groundsel, with which it should be plentifully supplied in confinement. In a cage it is of a quiet and peaceable disposition, and rarely quarrels with its fellow-prisoners.

Its flight is light and bounding, and it frequently remains a considerable time on the wing, ascending to a much greater height in the air than is usual with the members of this family. Towards the close of autumn it assembles in large flocks, and scours the country in great numbers. The size of these flocks varies according to the inclemency of the winter, being comparatively small in mild seasons. Unlike many other gregarious species it remains in the wilds in winter, or rather it resorts to them at that season. It rarely frequents farm and rick yards, and, so far as I have observed, it does not feed on corn at all. It confers considerable benefits on the farmer, destroying great numbers of weeds, by devouring the seeds, and I am not aware that it is in any way injurious to man, though the ignorant gardener destroys its nest equally with those of the House Sparrow, Chaff Finch, and other noxious species.

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MOUNTAIN LINNET, *Linaria Montana*, WILL.

SYNONYMS.—*Linaria montana*, WILL. *Orn.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—*Fringilla montium*, GMEL. *Linn.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—Mountain Linnet, PENN. *Br. Zool.*—LATH. *Syn.*—BEW. *Br. Birds.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*

THIS species is much rarer and more locally distributed than the Whin Linnet, and occurs mostly in the mountainous and elevated portions of Britain. I am informed that it is abundant in the Peak of Derbyshire, and it cannot be considered rare even in the flat part of that county. In this neighbourhood it

frequents tall trees, especially poplars, and is often met with towards Hanbury, where I have shot several individuals, and have more than once found its nest near that place. Its habits much resemble those of the preceding species, but its motions are somewhat more brisk and lively. As is the case with the previous species, the red on the rump disappears, or at least becomes faded in autumn, as I have ascertained by examining specimens killed at various times of the year.

I have never heard this species utter any song, and probably it has none, as authors make no mention of it. According to British Ornithologists its common chirp or call-note resembles the word *twite*, but I can discover little or no similarity between the sounds. It is a single cry, chiefly uttered when any one is near, and especially when it is suddenly approached and disturbed. But this note is only employed on the perch or the ground, the same chuck being used on the wing as by the Whin Linnet. Like that species it often flies at a considerable height, and remains long on the wing. In summer it is seen single or in pairs, but in winter I have met with it in small parties of ten or twelve. At other times it mingles with Whin Linnets, Chaff Finches, Yellow Buntings, and various other gregarious species, and, along with them, frequents the neighbourhood of dwelling-houses, farms, &c. More frequently, however, the species keep distinct, and remains in the high grounds, being apparently only induced to approach the immediate vicinity of houses by the example of the birds with which it assembles. It often frequents furzy commons, on the top of which it may be seen perched, and uttering its note. It stands less upright on the perch than the Whin Linnet, but more so than the Goldwings.

The nest is situated in a thick furze bush, or amongst the heath, and consists of dry grass and the dead tops of the heath, lined with fibrous roots, the flowers of the heath, and occasionally with wool. I have only found its nest three or four times in my immediate neighbourhood, but much more frequently on the borders of Staffordshire, and on the hills

beyond Tutbury, in that county. The eggs, four, five, or even six in number, are of a pale apple green, spotted with light reddish brown.

It feeds on the seeds of various plants, as turnip, flax, thistle, groundsel, &c., with which it should likewise be supplied in confinement. According to SELBY, "it leaves the mountains in autumn, assembling in flocks, which associate and travel with the Whin Linnet." In winter it is certainly less abundant than at other times, but I have seen it here in the middle of December and the beginning of January.

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REDPOLL LINNET, *Linaria pusilla*, BLYTH.

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I wadna gie the Lintie's sang,  
 Sae merry on the broomy lea,  
 For a' the notes that ever rang  
 Frae a' thè harps o' minstrelsy!  
 Mair dear to me whare buss or breer  
 Among the pathless heather grows,  
 The Lintie's wild, sweet note to hear,  
 As on the ev'ning breeze it flows.

*Anonymous.*

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SYNONYMS.—*Fringilla linaria*, LINN. *Syst.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Fringilla flavirostris*, LINN. *Syst.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Linaria minor*, RICH. & SW. *North. Zool.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—*Linaria pusilla*, Alder Linnet, *Analyst*, No. 14.

THIS handsome little creature is resident throughout the year in the midland counties, or at least the greater number remain with us at all seasons, though I believe some do retire in summer. It is everywhere commoner than the preceding species, and less locally distributed, but it is considerably shyer and of more retired habits than the Whin Linnet, and appears to be little known even in the places where it is most common. Thus in the flat portion of Derbyshire it is as plentiful as the Whin Linnet, especially during the inclement seasons, though it is little noticed by the ordinary observer. Its haunts differ from those of either of the other British species, but approach nearest

to those of the Mountain Linnet. Throughout the year it frequents woods and groves bordering on streams, and is partial to hilly localities. Its manners, however, greatly resemble those of the Whin Linnet, and it is therefore unnecessary to give a detailed account of these.

The song is short and sweet, but by no means powerful. It is seldom uttered on the top of a bush, or on the wing, but usually from the upper branches of large trees. I have frequently heard it sing in the middle of January, whilst they yet remain in flocks, and the whole troop will sit singing on the same tree for hours together. At these times they are difficult of approach, the whole flock taking wing simultaneously on the slightest suspicion of alarm. But when feeding, it may be approached within a few yards, and is sometimes taken with a fishing rod smeared with birdlime.

The nest consists of dry grass, intermixed with a small portion of moss, and lined with the soft catkins of the willow and other trees, which are "felted" in a very beautiful manner. It is situated in low bushes, and even in trees, where it is often placed in the fork of a branch. A very favourite site is amongst the leaves at the bottom of osiers, where I have seen five or six in a single bed. In the garden belonging to Foston Hall, I have only known one instance of its building, at the top of a young oak tree; this nest was taken, and the species has never built since in those grounds. Indeed it seldom enters gardens at any time, and very rarely in summer. But in winter it is abundant in almost every wood situate on a rising ground, bordering on, or intersected by, lakes or running streams, which it frequents in small packs. The largest flock I ever saw, was near Hilton in Derbyshire, about two years ago, towards the end of February, which I watched for a considerable time, wheeling round the village. At length they alighted in an extensive wood near which I was standing, but soon took wing, and were not seen afterwards. Subsequent to this no Redpoll Linnets were observed in this neighbourhood for two months, but in the middle of April they again made

their appearance, and spread themselves throughout the country, where they remained plentiful throughout the year. It is most probable that the large flock seen near Hilton had been joined by all the birds in the county, and had made a partial migration; and that on the dispersion of the forces, the deserters returned to their old quarters. A few were indeed treated as deserters, and shot.

The eggs are four or five in number, of a pale apple green, spotted at the larger end with reddish brown.

Its food consists of various kinds of seeds, in seeking which it hangs on the under side of the branches, in the manner of the Tits, the Kinglets, &c., which it greatly resembles in manners, though it is perhaps less quick and lively in its motions. It likewise feeds on the buds of forest trees, though I am not aware that it commits any extensive depredations in this line; or at least the trees which thus afford it sustenance, never appear to be injured by the process.

The call-note of this species differs from that of the Whin Linnet, though when perched it occasionally utters the same chuck. Like the latter species, it chirps at regular intervals while on the wing.

In confinement it is easily preserved, and soon becomes tame and familiar. One that I saw in London some years ago, would feed out of its keeper's hand, and refused its liberty when it had numerous opportunities of escaping. The person who possessed it, wrote to me in July 1835, to say that it had reared a flourishing brood, which were all as tame and fearless as the parent, although but little pains had been taken to render them so. When about six weeks old, the cage containing the whole family was placed in the garden, with full liberty to escape. The old male first hopped out, and no sooner did he find himself free, than he flew away and was never seen afterwards. But even this example was not followed by the rest of the family. The female then led forth her progeny, and they flew to some tall trees in the garden. The cage was now withdrawn, and the windows of the house were

shut, in order to observe how the birds would act. For several hours they continued gaily hopping about amongst the trees, but a little before dusk they betrayed great eagerness to obtain admittance into the house. Finding this impracticable, they settled on the head and shoulders of their keeper, but would not suffer themselves to be captured, though they fed readily from the hand. Soon afterwards the cage being brought, the whole family entered and were shut in. These birds are still in good health, though in the end they will probably go the way of all pet birds, and fall into the jaws of Grimalkin.

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MEALY LINNET, *Linaria canescens*, GOULD.

SYNONYMS.—*Linaria canescens*, GOULD'S *Birds of Europe*.—EYTON'S *Continuation of Bewick*.—Mealy Redpole, GOULD'S *Birds of Europe*.—EYTON'S *Continuation of Bewick*.

OF this species Mr. EYTON says:—"GOULD is the first Naturalist who has noticed this bird as being distinct from the Redpoll Linnet. The first mention of his discovery is made in his work on *The Birds of Europe*. The points in which he states that it chiefly differs, are the following:—Its superiority in size, its conspicuous greyish white rump, the broad band across the wings, the light stripe across the eye, and the mealy appearance of the plumage. The description in the *Fauna Boreali Americana*, he states to be identical with his Mealy Linnet.

"WILSON omits to give any description of the Redpoll Linnet; and Professor JAMESON, in his edition, to fill up the vacancy, gives the description of some birds obtained by himself in the winter of 1812-13, which I have little doubt were Mealy Linnets.

"The practical bird-catchers near London, GOULD informs us, have been always in the habit of regarding the Mealy Linnet as distinct from the lesser one. But GOULD, notwithstanding what has been stated above, does not consider the species as established; for, at the conclusion of his account, he says,

that a further knowledge of this bird, and especially of the changes which it undergoes, will, at a future period, determine whether or not the specific name of *canescens* must eventually stand or fall.

“ The bird is not very uncommon about London, and other places. It has occurred to ourselves in Shropshire. Its habit is similar to that of the Redpoll Linnet.”

In addition to the above account, I have much pleasure in offering to my readers the following original information, from the pen of my friend BLYTH :—

“ With regard to the Mealy Linnet, I am now pretty well convinced of its distinctness from the Whin Linnet, though when last I wrote to you, I believe I expressed some doubts on the subject. The fact is, that I had not seen a specimen of the smaller one for some time previously, and so closely does *L. canescens* resemble it in form and plumage, in its manners, and even in its notes—though the latter are certainly louder—that, from not having *compared* the two species, I had imagined the difference to be less than it actually is. At a friend’s house, however, I happened to see a caged pair of the common species, which immediately struck me as being remarkably small; and on these being, by my desire, sent to my residence, to be compared with my larger bird, the latter was found to be so superior in size as to preclude all possibility of its being a mere variety, however similar may be its plumage. There is, I now find, a very slight appearance of red on one or two of the feathers of the rump, but the conspicuously whitish plumage of this part generally, furnishes, in conjunction with its greater size, a ready means of distinguishing it from the Redpoll Linnet. The following is a curious and interesting indication of the superior size of the Mealy Linnet; both are very fond of hempseed, but the smaller species, as you may have observed, hardly ever manages to crack one, on account of the small size of its beak, and consequently, unless you give them some already bruised, it is obliged to leave them untouched, with the exception of an unusually small sized one. But the Mealy

Linnet would feed exclusively on hemp, if I suffered him to do so, and shell, with the utmost facility, the very largest of them. I greatly desire to raise a brood of hybrids between the two species ; for if the mules refuse to pair with each other, an excellent proof will thus be obtained of their being perfectly distinct species. As yet I have not heard the Mealy Linnet sing."

In a subsequent communication, the same writer says :—

" I have now repeatedly heard the song of the Mealy Linnet, which differs from that of the species with which it has been confounded. Its call-note is precisely similar to that of the Redpoll Linnet, but its song less resembles that of the Common Goldwing. The call-note is introduced equally often, but is intermingled with a low harsh note, somewhat like that of the Mountain Linnet, but not nearly so loud. It is the most musical of the four British species."

I may refer my readers to EYTON'S *History of the Rarer British Birds*, for a beautiful representation of the Mealy Linnet, and likewise to GOULD'S *Birds of Europe*.

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GENUS COCCOTHAUSTES, BRISS. GROSSBEAK.

HAW GROSBEAK, *Coccothraustes cratægus*, BLYTH.

SYNONYMS.—*Loxia coccothraustes*, LINN. *Syst.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Fringilla coccothraustes*, TEMM. *Man. d'Orn.*—*Coccothraustes vulgaris*, FLEM. *Brit. Anim.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—*Coccothraustes cratægus*, Haw Grosbeak, *Analyst*, No. 14.

THIS large and rare species has never fallen under my observation in its live state. It is said to be chiefly confined to the southern counties, subsisting on the berries of the white-thorn, " the stones of which it breaks with the greatest ease, by means of its strong and massive bill. In its native haunts, the seed of the platanus, kernels of cherry-stones, almonds, and other stone-fruit, furnish its principal support. In this country, we are informed, it is never seen in large flocks, though it is probably gregarious in its more favourite localities."



Mr. JESSE has the following remarks in his amusing *Gleanings*:—

“ In opposition to these remarks [the opinions of authors], I can express my conviction, not only that the [Haw] Grosbeak stays with us all the year, but that it breeds in this country. Being a rare bird, it is shot at whenever it is seen, for the purpose of being preserved, and sold to collectors; and this circumstance alone would account for so little being known respecting it. The nests of this bird are, however, frequently found amongst the hornbeam pollards in Epping Forest, and the bird may be seen there at all periods of the year. It has also bred for some years past in the grounds of Lord Clifden, at Roehampton, and may be seen there all the year through: at this time (March, 1835) there are two pair of them; and a nest, with four young ones, was taken last summer, and is now in the possession of the lodge keeper, the birds being preserved. The nest was built at the extremity of the branch of an horse chesnut tree, near the lodge, and was composed chiefly of the twigs of the privet and birch, and lined with hair and fine grass. BEWICK says it is made of small dry roots, none of which, however, are to be seen in the nest in question. I should add, that the nest is shallow, and the twigs are loosely put together, something like that of the Wood Pigeon. The birds do not appear to be either shy or solitary, as they frequent the neighbourhood of the lodge, where they may be seen almost daily. It does not sing, but has a plaintive note, something like that of the Robin [Redbreast]. It generally settles on the high dead branches of trees.”

GREEN GROSBEAK, *Coccothraustes chloris*, FLEM.

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Up—let us to the fields away,  
 And breathe the fresh and balmy air;  
 The bird is building in the tree,  
 The flower has opened to the bee,  
 And health, and love, and peace are there!

MARY HOWITT.

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SYNONYMS.—*Loxia chloris*, LINN *Syst.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Fringilla chloris*, TEMM. *Man. d'Orn.*—*Coccothraustes chloris*, FLEM. *Br. Anim.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Green Grosbeak, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*

THE Green Grosbeak, though thick in shape and rather heavy in appearance, is nevertheless a handsome bird, the tints of the adult male being beautifully bright, but those of the female are of a dull brown. The look of the male may almost be said to be *fierce*, though that of the female is mild and pleasant. The species is indigenous and extremely abundant in every part of the country, though it appears to prefer flat and well-wooded localities to the more bleak and elevated districts. It is likewise partial to places abounding with holly trees, and is frequently seen in gardens and the immediate neighbourhood of houses, where it roosts in great numbers in autumn and winter, in almost any kind of large thick bush, but especially holly, box, and Portugal laurel. Sometimes also it passes the night in ivy-clad trees, along with the flocks of House Sparrows, but this, I believe, is not a common occurrence.

About the middle of autumn, or at the commencement of winter, the Green Grosbeaks collect in very large flocks, and approach the farm and rick yards, in company with Chaff Finches, Whin Linnets, Yellow Buntings, House Sparrows, and other birds. More frequently, however, the species remains single, that is, it keeps distinct from the other species, and is much less destructive to the interests of the farmer than the above-named birds. At this season they are easily caught at

night, with bat fowling nets, by which method I have taken many dozens in a single night. The most prolific bushes—so to speak—are hollies and Portugal laurels, in which great numbers are frequently captured. In these nocturnal excursions I have observed a very remarkable circumstance, namely, that in twenty or thirty birds only one will be a male; and I have often remained out for several hours in this pursuit without taking a single male. From this we may infer that the sexes separate on the approach of the inclement seasons; and that the males either quit the country entirely at that period, or make a partial migration. Which of these is the case, I can at present only conjecture, but the fact might easily be ascertained, by collecting the observations of Ornithologists in various parts of the country.

That the males are as abundant as the females, I think there can be no doubt, and I never remember to have seen an adult female in the breeding season, unpaired. Another remarkable circumstance is, that each nest usually contains birds of the same sex. Whether or not this is always the case, I cannot positively say, though it very frequently holds good; and the same may be said of the Chaff Finch and a few others of the family.

The call-notes of the Green Grosbeak are two in number. The first and commonest, which is uttered at all seasons, is a kind of chuck, somewhat similar to that of the Whin Linnet. It usually flies in silence, but occasionally utters a short sharp chirp. But the most remarkable is the note resembling—as near as it can be expressed in writing—*peewit*, though of course the consonants cannot be pronounced. It is a lively, pleasant sound, chiefly heard in the breeding season, but occasionally also at other times. This is employed by both sexes, but most commonly by the male, especially when any one is at or near the nest. At this time the female usually joins in the hue and cry. In its natural state the male will sometimes sit for hours together on a railing or honeysuckle stand, uttering this *peewit*, which, though pleasing at first, becomes, when thus constantly heard,

monotonous and tiresome in the extreme. But in confinement it chiefly uses the chuck, which consists of several short notes, blended into one long trill. Even when the males are caught in May or June, they immediately discontinue their *peewit*, when caged, though I have occasionally heard an individual, thus situated, calling to its mate, when no one was near, and the bird supposed itself unnoticed.

The song is perhaps more trivial than that of any of our other choristers, consisting only of a few harsh notes often repeated. One or two are softer and sweeter than the rest, but the majority are loud and unmelodious, and the whole forms such a confused, stuttering jabber, as to render it wholly unworthy of the attention of the bird-fancier. This species commences singing rather late, usually about the middle of April, but earlier or later according to circumstances. It is not a continuous or garrulous songster, and is rather a silent bird in confinement.

According to some writers, it may be induced to feed from the hand ten minutes after its capture, by taking it into a dark room, stroking it with the finger, gradually letting in the light, and then offering it hemp or canary seed. That this method has never answered, I am not prepared to assert; but I have myself tried it several times without success. Without going to such an extremity, it will be sufficient to observe, that the Green Grosbeak is of a tame and familiar disposition, and though it flutters considerably when first taken, yet it becomes perfectly reconciled to its lot in about a fortnight. It is remarkably fond of washing, and, when thus occupied, will suffer no other bird to approach it, though it is usually peaceably inclined.

The Green Grosbeak breeds rather late, the first eggs being laid about the middle of May, and not at the end of that month, as mentioned by SELBY. Some nests, indeed, are built much earlier, and I have, in one instance, seen young birds, several days old, at the commencement of May, and have twice found eggs so early as the end of April. These, however, it

must be observed, occurred in remarkably mild springs, and, on the whole, this species must be considered as one of the latest breeders of the family.

The materials of the nest are moss, wool and sticks, loosely woven together, and forming rather a large and straggling structure. It is lined with horse and cow hair, feathers, and sometimes a few fine fibres of roots, though the latter do not form an essential part of the nest. Its usual site is a low thick bush, especially the holly and Portugal laurel, to which it is extremely partial. I have known three instances of its building in ivy-clad trees, and have once found it in an ivy-wall, close to a farm-house, where there were several nests of the House Sparrow. In the latter locality, however, it had little success, as the tenement was broken into and plundered, early one morning, by a "strange cat," which had seized a lucky opportunity, when no one was near, and the parents were departed in search of food. I have likewise seen its nest near the end of the arm of a large elm tree, and several times at the top of the trunk of lofty forest trees, where the arms begin to branch out. Until about two years ago, I was not aware that it ever built in trees, but have since met with so many instances of it, that it can scarcely be considered an extraordinary occurrence.

It pays remarkable attention to its progeny, and though it never attempts to lead the intruder from its nest, the parents make the most unceasing wailings when any one is near, or when the young are carried off, sometimes fluttering close to your head, and endeavouring to annoy you in every possible way. The young do not quit the cradle until fully fledged, and often dart out simultaneously when any one approaches. They are mostly fed on green caterpillars and small insects, of which the species destroy immense numbers at this period. It would appear that authors are wholly unaware of its insectivorous habits, and in PARTINGTON'S *Cyclopædia of Natural History*, article "FRINGILLIDÆ," it is expressly stated that the young of the Green Grosbeak are fed entirely on seeds,

which is quite a mistake. The young birds are by no means noisy or clamorous, either in the nest or afterwards, but generally lie very still, even when the parents approach with food in their bills. And this often proves an inconvenience to them; for when caged, and lodged in a place distant from the nest, the parents have frequently great difficulty in discovering them, and indeed the latter sometimes perish in the mean time. But, on the other hand, it is perhaps as frequently advantageous to them, as the nest can never be disclosed by means of their chirping.

The eggs, four, five, or sometimes six in number, are of a pale blueish white, spotted at the larger end, and very thinly all over, with irregular markings of reddish brown. They are large and rather sharp at the small end; they vary considerably, but mostly in the number, distribution, and colour of the spots. In a nest brought to me last year, there were three ordinary eggs, and one of about half the usual size, without markings of any kind. On another occasion I have seen one which was apparently double yolked, but I left it in the nest with the view of ascertaining whether it would be productive, and omitted to return to it afterwards.\*

The motions of the present species are considerably slower than those of most other *Fringillidæ*, though its manners are pleasing, and even varied. Early in spring, or as soon as the warm weather begins to set in, the flocks break up and disperse, and pair soon afterwards. At this period fierce battles take place between the males, for favourite females, and a female may frequently be seen pursued amongst the trees, by two or even more males. This I have observed late in the season, and therefore there can be no scarcity of males.

The food consists of various kinds of seeds and corn, and likewise insects and their larvæ, but I cannot say to which it is

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\* Double yolked eggs are generally supposed to be unproductive; this, however, is a mistake; as I once broke a tame Ring Duck's egg which contained two birds, nearly ready for hatching, and other instances of a similar nature have since fallen under my observation.

most partial. In winter, when it assembles in considerable flocks, it feeds mostly on corn, associating with other granivorous birds; in autumn on the seeds of various plants and grasses, and in spring and summer on insects, which, however, are only taken in addition to seeds and grain. It likewise feeds on the seeds and leaves of the groundsel and chickweed, in which it is very serviceable to the gardener and farmer, though these benefits are partly counterbalanced by its granivorous propensities. But on the whole it may be considered beneficial to our interests. In autumn I have seen it eat the berries of the hawthorn, and it is particularly partial to those of a curious species of thorn, bearing large, double-stoned fruit, which are favourites with all the baccivorous birds in the neighbourhood. In confinement it subsists on almost any kind of oily seed, and on corn.

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SUBFAM. IV.—PYRRHULINÆ, VIG.

GENUS CRUCIROSTRA, MEY. CROSSBILL.

PIPPIN CROSSBILL, *Crucirostra vulgaris*, STEPH.

SYNONYMS.—*Loxia curvirostra*, LINN. *Syst.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—*Crucirostra vulgaris*, STEPH. *Gen. Zool.*—MEY. & WOLFF, *Tasch. Deut.*—*Crucirostra malum*, *Analyst*, No. 14.—Common Crossbill, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Pippin Crossbill, *Analyst*, No. 14.

IN no part of England can the Pippin Crossbill be said to be plentiful, and it often appears at long intervals. In Derbyshire I never met with it till the winter of the present year, when I saw a small flock in a fir plantation near my residence; but they tarried but a short time, and there was no opportunity of observing their habits. It can only be considered in the light of an occasional visitant. It probably breeds in Britain, though I believe the fact has not yet been ascertained to be the case. SELBY says:—

“ Many of the females that I killed showed plainly, from the denuded state of their breasts, that they had been engaged in

incubation some time previous to their arrival ; which circumstance agrees with the account given of the early period at which they breed in the higher latitudes. \* \* \* \*

“ In the southern parts of the kingdom, during their occasional visits, they commit great havoc in the apple and pear orchards, by splitting the fruit in halves, for the sake of the inclosed pips. Their principal support, however, is derived from the seeds of the various firs, which they easily obtain by the lateral expansion of their bill, when inserted between the scales of the cone.

“ The manners of these birds are interesting when in a state of confinement, as they strongly resemble the Parrot family in climbing along the wires of the cage in any direction, by means of their bill and claws. The call-notes of the [Pippin] Crossbill are a kind of twitter, which it constantly repeats when feeding ; and a louder one, uttered when on wing, not unlike that of the Green Grosbeak, but rather shriller. According to WILLUGHBY, and the older authors, it also possesses a pleasant song, only heard during the winter months, or season of incubation.

“ The Pippin Crossbill is of a thick form ; its legs are strong, but short, and with long and hooked claws, well adapted for taking firm hold.

“ The muscles attached to the bill are very powerful, giving a large and disproportionate appearance to the head. The crossing of the mandible is not always on the same side, as I have repeatedly observed in the specimens killed, and have accordingly thus represented in the plate.”

Amongst various communications from Mr. BLYTH, I find the following observations relative to the present species :—

“ I have procured a live male Crossbill, and also a dead female, which I have stuffed. Their chirp is very loud,—a sort of *chipp* ; my bird has also a pleasing song.”

In another letter he says :—

“ My Crossbill continues well and hearty, and is a very amusing bird, but at times rather annoying, from the loudness



of its chirping. I keep it in a strong and large cage, in company with a Tree Pipit and Garden Fauvet, with which it agrees very well. It climbs about with its bill, like a Parrot, and is very mischievous in destroying the perches, picking them to pieces by means of its curious and powerful bill. It is a very strongly built bird, and more allied to the Goldwings and Linnets than one would imagine from only seeing stuffed specimens. When lively it swings its body about in the manner of those birds. It is remarkably tame and fearless. When I first had it, it was in nestling plumage, resembling much that of a female Siskin Goldwing, or Redpoll Linnet, longitudinally streaked. It is now nearly all over red. Its song is of a chirping or rather warbling kind, low and not unpleasing. It feeds mostly on hemp, rejecting the other seeds which are usually given to the *Fringillidæ*, and it is very fond of nut, almond, walnut, and the like, the shells of which it readily splits with its bill, if I first make a very slight hole in them. It is a most ceaselessly active species, and has no kind of affinity to the Hedge Coalhood."

On Nov. 21, he thus writes to me:—

"On Sunday morning my poor Crossbill was found dead in his cage. It died of apoplexy, induced by its having become over fat, and just as it was undergoing an interesting change of colour, the progress of which I should like to have observed. However, it lived long enough to afford me much information on the peculiar habits of the species, on its various notes, song, &c.—information which could never have been so thoroughly acquired by observing them in their wild state, much less from an inspection of stuffed specimens. The quantity of fat this bird had accumulated, is really astonishing, yet when alive he was always remarkably active; it rendered him extremely difficult to skin, so as to keep the grease away from the feathers."

PINE CROSSBILL, *Crucirostra pinetorum*, MEY.

SYNONYMS.—*Loxia pytiopsittacus*, BECHST. *Tasch. Deut.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—*Crucirostra pinetorum*, MEY. *Vög. Liv. und Esthl.*—*Analyst*, No. 14.—Parrot Crossbill, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Pine Crossbill, *Analyst*, No. 14.

THE Pine Crossbill is an extremely rare species in Britain, only two or three specimens having, at distant periods, been met with. It is figured by SELBY, from an individual sent him by Sir WILLIAM JARDINE. "In its manners," SELBY says, "it resembles the other species of this singular genus (the Pippin Crossbill), and, like them, inhabits the pine forests of the Arctic regions. According to TEMMINCK, it visits Poland, Prussia, and other parts of Germany during the winter months, and breeds at that season. The eggs are stated to be four or five in number, of an ash-grey colour, marked at the greater end with large irregular spots of blood-red, and over the rest of the surface with minute specks of the same."

A description of the plumage may be found in the works of all the Ornithologists who have noticed the bird; it will, therefore, be unnecessary to repeat it here, especially as I have nothing new or original to add.

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 WHITEWINGED CROSSBILL, *Crucirostra leucoptera*, STEPH.

SYNONYMS.—*Loxia leucoptera*, GMEL. *Linn.*—EYTON'S *Contin. of Bew.*—*Crucirostra leucoptera*, STEPH. *Gen. Zool.*—N. WOOD'S *Orn. Text-book.*—*Curvirostra leucoptera*, WILS. *Amer. Orn.*—Whitewinged Crossbill, STEPH. *Gen. Zool.*—WILS. *Amer. Orn.*—EYTON'S *Contin. of Bew.*—N. WOOD'S *Orn. Text-book.*

IN MR. EYTON'S *History of the Rarer British Birds*, we find the following account of this species:—

"The Whitewinged Crossbill appears, from the account of WILSON, to be of much rarer occurrence in America than the Pippin Crossbill (*Crucirostra vulgaris*), though found frequenting the same places at the same seasons. We are told, in a

work lately published,\* that this bird inhabits the dense white-spruce forests of the fir countries, feeding principally on the seed of the cone, which the form of its bill is particularly adapted to extract. In the same work, also, we are told, that it ranges through the whole breadth of the Continent, and, probably, up to the sixty-eighth parallel, where woods cease; though it was not observed higher than the sixty-second. In winter it retires from the coast into the interior. An account of a specimen of this bird, shot near Belfast in January 1802, in the *Linnean Transactions*, is our authority for introducing it into the British Fauna.

“The general colour of the plumage of the male White-winged Crossbill is deep crimson; tail, black; wings also black, with two bars of white; vent white; frontlet and cere, brown; length, five to five-and-a-half inches; bill, horn colour. The general colour of the female is greenish brown, with a yellow rump. The young, before they moult, resemble the female.

“The above woodcut is taken from a specimen in the collection of WILLIAM YARRELL, Esq., of a male bird in the plumage of the second year.”

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GENUS DENSIROSTRA, C. T. WOOD. THICKBILL.

PINE THICKBILL, *Densirostra enucleator*, C. T. WOOD.

SYNONYMS.—*Loxia enucleator*, LINN. *Syst.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Coccothraustes Canadensis*, BRISS. *Orn.*—*Pyrrhula enucleator*, TEMM. *Man. d'Orn.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—*Densirostra enucleator*, *Analyst*, No. 14.—Pine Grosbeak, PENN. *Br. Zool.*—Pine Thickbill, *Analyst*, No. 14.

PENNANT appears to be the only Naturalist who has met with this species in Britain, and its claims to our notice are, accordingly, very slight. In England it has never been known to occur.

“I have,” says SELBY, “made many inquiries respecting

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\* The *Fauna Boreali Americana*, by RICHARDSON and SWAINSON.

these birds, during excursions in Scotland, but cannot learn that the nest has ever been found; and indeed from the intelligence obtained from gamekeepers, and those most likely to have made observations connected with Ornithology, it appears that they are very rarely seen, and can only be regarded as occasional visitants.

“They inhabit the regions of the arctic circle, and are very plentiful in Sweden, Norway, and similarly situated countries of Europe, Asia, and North America, living in the pine forests, which there cover immense tracts.—Their food consists of the seeds of the various firs and pines, as well as other alpine seeds and berries, and the buds of trees.—They build in trees, but not far from the ground, and the nest, formed of dry sticks and small twigs, lined with feathers, contains generally four white eggs.”

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GENUS PYRRHULA, BRISS. COALHOOD.

HEDGE COALHOOD, *Pyrrhula vulgaris*, TEMM.

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It was a curious mossy cell,  
Woven with twigs, and grass, and hair,  
And, 'mid the moss six nestlings dwell,  
Concealed by apple-blossoms fair.  
“ 'Tis Bully's nest !” Bethia said,  
“ His head of glossy jet I spy,  
His downy breast of softest red ;  
Poor bird ! I hear his whooping cry.”

*Anonymous.*

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SYNONYMS.—*Loxia pyrrhula*, LINN. *Syst.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—*Pyrrhula vulgaris*, TEMM. *Man. d'Orn.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—*Pyrrhula modularis*, *Analyst*, No. 14.—Bull Finch, MONT. *Orn. Dict.*—Hedge Coalhood, *Analyst*, No. 14.—N. WOOD'S *Orn. Text-book*.

THIS beautiful and well-known bird is common throughout Britain, but most so in the sheltered and well-wooded districts, where it inhabits the depths of the thickest and most impenetrable forests, but likewise small woods, groves, and copses,

whence it often comes into gardens and the immediate neighbourhood of houses, in search of food.

Few authors have taken notice of the song of this bird, and are probably not aware that it possesses any in its wild state. That such is the case, however, is very certain, though the notes are so low and soft, that it is perhaps no wonder they should have escaped the observation of our Ornithologists. The strains are unconnected, but are sweet, varied and melodious, though the whole forms a somewhat desultory song. In confinement it seldom retains it in its native purity, and unmixed with artificial notes. It is easily taught to whistle tunes, and every one must have heard the "piping bulfinches" which are annually imported from Germany. Many are taught in London, and even in several of the provincial towns of England; but the best are brought from Germany, the natives of that country being, from their remarkable patience, eminently well fitted for the task.

When I was in London in the summer of 1835, a German advertised himself in the newspapers as having lately brought over a fine stock of piping Coalhoods, which he offered for sale. Being somewhat interested in these matters, I accordingly called on him next morning, and was shown into a room hung all round with small cages, each containing a male Hedge Coalhood. They appeared to be in excellent health and feather, but were extremely hungry and had nothing in their seed-drawers. As I walked round and surveyed them, each bird opened its beak at me, and screamed for food, forming altogether a pretty loud "piping." Whether or not they were capable of better music, I know not; for on calling on the man to let me hear one of his birds, he replied, "will you buy one?" I told him that I certainly would not before I had heard it sing. He appeared somewhat sullen, and refused to make his flock sing unless I promised to purchase one, and I therefore left him to settle his affairs as he best could. How this person would get on in Germany, I cannot determine, but in England I think it little likely that he would dispose of many of his birds.

The common call-note of this bird is a short, sweet, and plaintive chirp, constantly uttered whilst on the perch. It is beautifully alluded to by THOMSON in the following line—

“ The mellow bullfinch answers from the grove.”

It is delightful to follow the Hedge Coalhood amongst the shady groves to which it is so partial, and its shyness and difficulty of approach only serves to increase the ardour of the true Ornithologist in his researches after it. Early in spring, when it enters our gardens and orchards, and seeks its food amongst the shrubs and wall fruit trees, is the best time for observing it, as it then becomes considerably tamer than at other periods, and may easily be approached within a very short distance. But of course the Naturalist will not be contented with being acquainted with its habits only at one season ; and in winter, when the snow lies thick on the ground, it again issues forth from its summer retreats, and is common in every hedge and highway, flitting but a short way before the traveller, as he heedlessly passes along the road. But during the greater part of the spring and summer months, it requires the enthusiasm of the professed Ornithologist successfully to hunt it out in the recesses of the woods, where it must be followed day after day, and week after week, to gain a competent knowledge of its habits. At this period it would be even less noticed than it is, were it not for its pleasing and plaintive call-note, which, though not remarkable for power, is heard at a considerable distance, owing to the clear and ringing nature of the cry. It never flies far, but passes from tree to tree in quick succession, when it finds itself pursued. Its organ of Secretiveness is considerably developed, and though, when undisturbed, it mostly keeps in the trees, yet, when approached in an unwary manner, it drops down into the bushes or brakes beneath, where it seems aware that it is perfectly secure. And so it might be, were it not for its almost incessant chirping, which it is unwilling to intermit for even the shortest time. But even here the Naturalist finds means of observing it, which he effects by sitting down amongst the long grass, in which he may partially, or sometimes wholly

conceal himself. If you lie quite still, the birds will shortly rise to the top of the bushes, casting fearful and furtive glances around. But if you move not, they testify no kind of alarm at your presence, though the slightest motion on your part, sets the whole party on the wing. The adult female is almost always the first to make its appearance, but, if she gives a favourable report, the rest will shortly join her, and you have before you the charming sight presented by a family of these truly lovely birds. They are usually met with in troops of six or seven, consisting of the parents and their offspring. At the approach of spring, however, the families break up and disperse, the old male and female again undertaking the cares of incubation, and the young birds pairing as soon as they can select suitable mates. The males do not acquire their delicate adult tints till about two months after they leave the nest, and attain their full beauty and vigour in the spring of the third year. It is probable that they begin to decline about the eighth or ninth year, but of this I cannot speak with any certainty. Immediately on quitting the nest, the sexes precisely resemble each other, and are of a uniform brown colour. But in about seven or eight weeks' time, the brown on the head gives place to a bright and glossy purplish black, and the other hues, which at all times distinguish the adult male, shortly displace the dull colour which had before prevailed.

The manners of this species are not remarkably brisk and lively, nor even varied, but they are social and pleasing, and nothing can, in my opinion, be more delightful than to follow them in their native haunts, and there become acquainted with their peculiar habits. In the distance, the sound of the male's voice is soft and mellow; that of the female greatly resembles it, though they are readily distinguished by a practised ear. Whilst uttering this, a smart twitch of the tail may be observed, and when the female is on the nest, her mate frequently sits for hours together on a neighbouring branch, sounding his plaintive note, or amusing her with his curious whining song. Unless you see him singing, you miss the best part of the per-

formance. But it is at all times difficult either to see or hear him—though I have achieved both—and therefore you must be satisfied with what you can get. While singing, it puffs out its plumage, and makes strange contortions with its head. I have frequently watched this interesting manœuvre; but no sooner does the bird find himself observed, than he shrinks to his ordinary size, alarms his mate, and with her flies to a distant tree, where they remain out of sight, but within hearing, waiting the event, and sounding their mellow note.

There can be no doubt but the Hedge Coalhood pairs for life, as is the case with many other non-gregarious species, and the young brood remain with their parents until the succeeding spring. It breeds rather late, the nest being seldom finished before the beginning of June, and, unless the nest meet with some accident, it never builds a second time.

The nest is composed of slender twigs, lined with fine fibrous roots. It is a loose and shallow structure, and little art or labour appear to be expended in framing it. It varies little, though I have occasionally met with remarkable specimens. Twice I have seen a considerable portion of moss mixed with the sticks on the exterior, when the nest was deeper than is usual, and the whole was more compact than in ordinary individuals. This, however, is an extremely rare and remarkable circumstance, and I am unable to adduce any reason for the deviation, as both the nests were brought to me, and there were no means of ascertaining in what kind of bush or tree they had been situated.

The most favourite localities for building in, are the stumps of beech trees which have been cut down, or almost any kind of low thick bush, the middle of the latter being invariably selected. I have likewise seen it in the cleft of a low tree. It prefers those woods and groves which abound with bushes and braky herbage beneath the trees, to young plantations and copses, where it never tarries long. To extensive forests it is extremely partial, though a pair will frequently take possession of a sequestered grove, bordering on a lake or running stream,



where it breeds and passes the summer. It seldom builds in gardens, but very commonly in thick shady shrubberies, even in the immediate neighbourhood of houses, where it sedulously conceals itself throughout the season, rarely falling under the notice of the ordinary or casual observer. The female sits very close, though she quits her charge on the slightest alarm, and is rarely to be seen on the eggs. The male takes his turn for an hour or two every day at noon, and he is less easily disturbed than his mate. But I have observed, that when he *is* disturbed, and caused to fly away, the nest is almost invariably deserted by both parents.

The eggs are four or five in number, of a pale blue, spotted at the larger end with black. They are never more than five, are nearly elliptical, and vary little, either in shape or colour.

In confinement the Hedge Coalhood breeds readily, notwithstanding the strange assertion to the contrary in STEPHENS'S *General Zoology*, a compilation of little merit as regards the ornithological department. It will likewise pair with the Canary, and I have seen mules, thus obtained, in the possession of Mr. PEACH, of Tutbury, in Staffordshire. They mostly resembled the male, which was the Hedge Coalhood, but were weak, and lived but a short time. This, however, was probably owing to their having been improperly treated, as some birds, similarly crossed, that I once saw at a bird-seller's, were in perfect health, and three years old. This species is easily preserved in a cage, if properly managed, and allowed to wash sufficiently often. For want of the latter precaution, their feet shortly become dried up, and frequently drop off. Two piping Coalhoods that were once brought to me, about four years ago, had their feet in the state above described, and, from the loss of most of their claws, the unfortunate birds had great difficulty in standing on the perch. I purchased one of these individuals, and kept it about eighteen months, at the end of which time its claws became much moister and cleaner, though they would never have recovered entirely. Its constitution apparently remained good to the end, but one morning it fell into an apo-

plectic fit, and was dead in less than ten minutes. The first indications of illness were a violent panting and opening of the mouth. It was soon unable to stand on the perch, and after a few violent struggles it breathed its last.

It is also easily injured by being handled, and I have often known instant death to ensue after catching it, though it was in the hand but a few moments. According to my experience, it is much more liable to fits than the Common Goldwing, and in many individuals these come on periodically, and though they often pass away, yet, perhaps as frequently, they prove fatal. Such birds as are liable to fits should be kept in a warm place, and fed sparingly with hemp, and other stimulating seeds; they must be plentifully provided with chickweed and groundsel, to which they are extremely partial. In spring, likewise, they may be supplied with the buds of the hawthorn, plum, cherry, gooseberry, &c.—if, indeed, the gardener is willing to spare any of the latter.

It is disputed by Ornithologists, whether or not the Hedge Coalhood is pernicious to the interests of the gardener, by destroying the buds of the fruit trees. In the *Ornithologist's Text-book*, p. 61, I have expressed an opinion in favour of our lovely songster, and subsequent researches have only served to confirm that opinion. That the birds do devour a tolerably large portion of the buds of our fruit trees, there can be no doubt; but then it is most probable that only those buds which are infested with insects, are attacked; and if so, its services in the gardens must be incalculable. In confinement it will eat *any* buds, but in its wild state, it will be observed that the vegetable portion is rejected, and the inclosed insect or grub is the desired object of their search. That such is the case, I have ascertained almost to a certainty, from finding that some trees are passed over without the slightest injury, while others are not quitted as long as a bud remains; and others again undergo a selection. I have repeatedly observed it examining the buds with great care, and am convinced that they do not indiscriminately destroy the produce of the trees. It has been

remarked by some, that the finest trees are usually selected as the scene of its depredations. But this, if anything, is in favour of my argument, as the insects may reasonably be supposed to make their choice as well as the birds, and that the birds only attack such trees as are infested by these insect pests.

Even supposing that these birds were as baneful to our fruit trees as has been represented, I could not bear to make war upon them, but, on the contrary, would propose that every nobleman and gentleman should set apart some trees purposely for the birds, while the rest could easily be protected by the usual methods. That such a proposal would be scouted by all parties, I am well aware, though it is probable that by far the greater quantity of fruit that is produced in the gardens of the nobility and gentry, is either wasted, or sold for the benefit of the sordid gardener. By this plan these beautiful and ornamental birds might be rendered perfectly tame and familiar, instead of, as at present, shy, secluded, and rarely seen. In these matters, however, it is always best to leave people to their own ways, especially as they are usually little willing to alter old customs and opinions. But, after what has been said, it must not be supposed that its chief food consists of buds. Indeed it is obvious that this can form but a small portion of its subsistence; during the summer and autumn it feeds on various kinds of seeds, and likewise on the leaves of the chickweed, groundsel, &c.

This species is very subject to variety, individuals more or less white being frequently met with. But I never heard of a specimen *entirely* white until presented with one about two years ago, by a friend; it was shot in a hedge, where it was hopping about alone. In confinement it often turns black, a circumstance commonly attributed to feeding too profusely on hemp seed. A caged individual of this kind that was once offered to me by a bird-seller at Derby, met with a singularly unhappy fate. It was quartered in an adjoining house, whence it was brought for my inspection, tied up in a handkerchief.

The man opened his parcel with great pomp, when lo ! the bird was dead, which, but a minute before, had been valued at half-a-guinea. In addition to his other remarkable qualities, the reverend sire was extremely loyal, and his favourite songs were "God save the King" and "Rule Britannia." His health, however, must have been weak, and he had probably been improperly treated.

I have somewhere either read or heard that this bird does not occur in Ireland, but I cannot speak from my own experience in this particular.

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FAM. II.—STURNIDÆ, VIG.

GENUS STURNUS, ANTIQ. STARLING.

SPOTTED STARLING, *Sturnus varius*, MEY.

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"I can't get out!"—Poor bird ! has man's hard heart  
 Not field enough to wreak its cruelty  
 On fellow man?—but he in wantonness  
 Of power, must seize on thee. "I can't get out!"  
 Poor captive! No, thy prison-bars are hacked  
 With instinct (Nature's) efforts to escape;  
 While sweep the Swallows pass in airy rounds,  
 Brushing with sportive wing thy prison-grate:  
 The while thy little heart beats strong, and pants  
 For Nature's gracious boon—SWEET LIBERTY.

*Anonymous.*

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SYNONYMS.—*Sturnus vulgaris*, LINN. *Syst.*—LATH. *Ind. Orn.*—SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*  
 —*Sturnus varius*, MEY. *Tasch. Deut.*—*Analyst*, No. 14.—N. WOOD'S *Orn. Text-book.*—Common Starling, SELBY'S *Br. Orn.*—Spotted Starling, *Analyst*, Vol. III.  
 —N. WOOD'S *Orn. Text-book.*

THE Spotted Starling is equally and very plentifully distributed over the British Islands, and is well known to every-one. It is most abundant in fenny flat districts, and in places where reeds are plentiful. In these it frequently nestles at night, and—though I have not myself ascertained the fact—it is said to "perform various manœuvres in the air, the whole frequently describing rapid revolutions round a common centre."

But though I have not seen the Spotted Starling whirling in this manner over its nestling place, yet I believe that these evolutions, which BUFFON compares to a vortex, are always observed more or less in the flight of this bird.

In autumn and winter the Starlings congregate in immense flocks, but are most numerous in those extensive fens which are so favourable to its food. In the dry upland districts, the flocks are considerably smaller, and only a few remain in small detachments near houses, farms, &c. Here they are far from being welcome visitors, as they frequently employ themselves, along with their pert and noisy associates the House Sparrows, in making holes in thatched roofs. Thus they become the object of eager pursuit with the inmates of such houses, and, though they are certainly very difficult birds to shoot, yet many dozen frequently fall by the hand—or rather the *barrel*—of the skilful sportsman, during the inclement seasons.

Though the regular song of the male is not heard throughout the year, yet the Starlings do give concerts even in midwinter, and indeed this would seem to be the season for their vocal concerts, as at other times of the year each male sings in private, or only in a small and select company of its particular friends. These concerts are generally performed at the top of a lofty tree, where each voice contributes towards the general harmony. One or two are placed as sentinels on the topmost sprig of the tree, in order to give notice of the approach of any intruder. No sooner has the sentinel sounded his alarm note, than all the performers betake themselves to flight, chattering and revolving round each other, as if angry at the unwelcome intrusion. But they generally alight within sight, and, having fixed on another tree by common consent, the whole flock is soon settled, and in full song. I call it a *song*, because, though if each told its tale separately, it would be a mere chatter, yet, taken altogether, the sounds are far from disagreeable.

If not disturbed, the Starlings will remain on the same tree for hours together, but they seldom admit of a near approach—at least by those unaccustomed to the ways of birds. The pry-

ing Naturalist, however, well knows how he is to pay his respects to them, though he too may be disappointed for a considerable time. Sometimes on a cold December morning, I have been employed for hours in hunting them up over hedge and field, at the time when those of the red coat were pursuing animals of a larger growth. And a very healthy exercise it is; for as our little musicians take alarm on very slight causes, it becomes no easy matter to make so near an approach to them as an Ornithologist would wish. The best way is to conceal yourself behind a hedge or tree. In such a situation you may watch their proceedings at leisure; but, should curiosity tempt you to peep out a little further than is dictated by propriety, the singular whinings cease for an instant, and then the whole flock suddenly takes wing, leaving you, wingless biped, in the lurch, astonished at the rapidity of their departure. Sometimes, however, when thus disturbed, they fly off singly, or only in small detachments, those which remain continuing to sing to the last, and I have known two or three individuals practising most sedulously by themselves, when the rest of their party had settled on another tree; and, strange to say, these solitary individuals are much less easily disturbed than the whole flock. Thus, when the majority of the birds are gone, you may safely come out of your hiding place, and may even approach close under the tree, without disturbing the birds that remain. These individuals may frequently be seen hopping briskly about the branches, as if to keep themselves warm, whilst they utter the whining notes peculiar to the species at that season.

Early in spring the Starlings break up their congregations, pair, and proceed to the important business of incubation. At this time three or four males may be seen at the top of a tree, or on a chimney top, pouring forth their sweet but somewhat desultory strains. They are now in full beauty, and fine specimens may be procured for the museum. The Starling is indeed a very handsome bird, both as regards elegance of shape and brightness of tint.

It builds in chimneys, on the tops of pipes, in holes of trees, in ivy-clad churches, and other ruinous or little-frequented places. Here it constructs a somewhat loose but warm nest, consisting of hay and feathers. The eggs, four or five in number, are of a light and clear blueish green colour, "without spot or blemish." I have frequently known the nest and eggs completely drenched in a wet season, when situated at the top of a pipe; and though the old birds are of course compelled to abandon their nest in such cases, yet they often build it in another pipe, again to be washed away, or, at the best, placed at the mercy of the weather. The young are hatched in about sixteen days, and the same period renders them fit for entering on the joys and miseries incident to this nether world. Before the autumnal moult, the young birds are of a light brown or chocolate colour, without any spots, and in this state it has been described by MONTAGU, SYME, and other authors, as a distinct species, under the name "Solitary Thrush, *Turdus solitarius*." This is the more surprising, as, though the colour differs greatly from that of the adult birds, yet the unerring characters of the genus *Sturnus* would prevent its being confounded with the Thrushes, whatever the tints of the plumage might be. It is probable that the Starling has two or even three broods in the course of the season, but of this I am not certain.

In confinement, this species is very interesting, and, from the flexibility of its voice, may be taught to pronounce words and whistle tunes with great precision. But though it may be amusing to hear it sing artificial strains, and pronounce words, yet, for my own part, I far prefer following it in its native haunts, and to hear it whistle its own simple and unsophisticated notes in its natural state, where it knows no bounds but its own inclination, and the restrictions placed on the species by Nature. The habits of animals can seldom be successfully elucidated by keeping them in confinement, as their manners are then so completely altered, by artificial food, treatment, &c., that they cannot properly be said to be the habits peculiar

to the species. Descriptions taken from animals in a domesticated state are, therefore, in great part erroneous, however well reconciled those animals may appear to be to their imprisonment.

It may here be observed, that the singular evolutions performed by the Starlings in the air, are only noticed in the autumn and winter, when they assemble in flocks. At other times the mode of flight is straight forward and rapid, but not smooth. When a pair of these beautiful birds passes over your head, you might almost foretel, by their shuffling uneven flight, that they had some sinister design in view; and your conjecture would not be false, for these excursions are made with the intention of robbing the farmer of a portion of his property, either hay, straws from thatched roofs, or corn.

Its food consists of insects, worms, grubs, and seeds of various kinds, and, according to Low, it feeds in winter on the *Oniscus marinus*, or sea louse.

In a lecture delivered, some time since, before the members of the Worcestershire Natural History Society, by E. A. TURLEY, Esq., it is mentioned that the organ of Caution is strikingly developed in the head of this bird; and its manifestations certainly coincide with its organization.

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# A SYNOPTICAL TABLE

## OF THE

# BRITISH SONG BIRDS.

### ABBREVIATIONS.

I. Indigenous.                      P. V. Periodical Visitant.  
O. V. Occasional Visitant.

ORDER.	TRIBE.	FAMILY.	SUBFAM.	GENUS.	ENGLISH NAMES.	LATIN NAMES.	ABBREVIATIONS.
2	2	3	1	28	Missel Thrush .....	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i> .....	I.
					Fieldfare Thrush.....	———— <i>pilaris</i> .....	P. V.
					Garden Thrush .....	———— <i>hortensis</i> .....	I.
					Redwing Thrush.....	———— <i>iliacus</i> .....	P. V.
				29	Garden Ouzel .....	<i>Merula vulgaris</i> .....	I.
					Ring Ouzel .....	———— <i>torquata</i> .....	P. V.
		4	1	32	Fallow Chat .....	<i>Saxicola œnanthe</i> .....	P. V.
					Whin Chat.....	———— <i>rubetra</i> .....	P. V.
					Stone Chat.....	———— <i>rubicola</i> .....	I.
				33	Robin Redbreast.....	<i>Erythaca rubecula</i> .....	I.
				34	Tree Redstart .....	<i>Phœnicura albifrons</i> .....	P. V.
					Tithys Redstart .....	———— <i>Tithys</i> .....	O. V.
				35	Bluetthroated Fantail..	<i>Pandicilla Suecica</i> .....	O. V.
			2	36	Sibilous Brakehopper..	<i>Locustella sibilatrix</i> .....	P. V.
				37	Sedge Reedling.....	<i>Salicaria phragmitis</i> .....	P. V.
					Marsh Reedling .....	———— <i>arundinacea</i> ....	P. V.
				38	Brake Nightingale....	<i>Philomela luscinia</i> .....	P. V.
				39	Blackcap Fauvet ...	<i>Ficedula atricapilla</i> .....	P. V.
					Garden Fauvet.....	———— <i>hortensis</i> .....	P. V.
					Whitethroat Fauvet ..	———— <i>cinerea</i> .....	P. V.
					Garrulous Fauvet ...	———— <i>garrula</i> .....	P. V.
			3	40	Redeyed Whinling....	<i>Melizophilus provincialis</i>	I.
				41	Hedge Warbler.....	<i>Sylvia hippolais</i> .....	P. V.
					Wood Warbler.....	———— <i>sibilatrix</i> .....	P. V.
					Yellow Warbler .....	———— <i>melodia</i> .....	P. V.
				42	Goldcrested Kinglet ..	<i>Regulus auricapillus</i> .....	I.
					Firecrested Kinglet....	———— <i>ignicapillus</i> .....	I. ?
			4	43	Garden Tit.....	<i>Parus hortensis</i> .....	I.
					Blue Tit.....	———— <i>cœruleus</i> .....	I.
					Marsh Tit .....	———— <i>palustris</i> .....	I.
					Coal Tit.....	———— <i>ater</i> .....	I.
					Longtailed Tit.....	———— <i>caudatus</i> .....	I.
					Crested Tit .....	———— <i>cristatus</i> .....	I.

A SYNOPTICAL TABLE.

ORDER.	TRIBE.	FAMILY.	SUBFAM.	GENUS.	ENGLISH NAMES.	LATIN NAMES.	ABBREVIATIONS.
				44	Bearded Pinnock.....	<i>Calamophilus biarmicus.</i>	I.
				45	Hedge Dunnock .....	<i>Accentor modularis</i> ....	I.
			5	46	Alpine Annet.....	<i>Curruca collaris</i> .....	O. V.
				47	Pied Wagtail.....	<i>Motacilla maculosa</i> .....	I.
					Grey Wagtail .....	————— <i>cinerea</i> .....	I.
				48	Spring Oatear .....	<i>Budytes verna</i> .....	P. V.
					Blueheaded Oatear....	————— <i>cyanocephala</i> ..	O. V.
				49	Rock Pipit.....	<i>Anthus obscurus</i> .....	I.
					Meadow Pipit .....	————— <i>pratensis</i> .....	I.
					Tree Pipit .....	————— <i>arboreus</i> .....	P. V.
				50	Tawny Lavrock .....	<i>Corydalla fusca</i> .....	O. V.
	3	1	1	51	Sky Lark .....	<i>Alauda arvensis</i> .....	I.
					Wood Lark .....	————— <i>arborea</i> .....	I.
					Shore Lark.....	————— <i>Alpestris</i> .....	O. V.
				52	Snowy Longspur.....	<i>Plectrophanes nivalis</i> ....	P. V.
					Rusty Longspur .....	————— <i>Lapponica</i>	O. V.
				53	Corn Bunting .....	<i>Emberiza miliaria</i> .....	I.
					Yellow Bunting .....	————— <i>citrinella</i> ....	I.
					Reed Bunting .....	————— <i>schœniculus</i> ..	I.
					Clirl Bunting.....	————— <i>cirlus</i> .....	I.
					Ortolan Bunting.....	————— <i>hortulana</i> ....	O. V.
			2	54	House Sparrow .....	<i>Passer domesticus</i> .....	I.
					Tree Sparrow .....	————— <i>arboreus</i> .....	I.
				55	Chaff Finch .....	<i>Fringilla cœlebs</i> .....	I.
					Bramble Finch.....	————— <i>montana</i> .....	P. V.
				56	Siskin Goldwing.....	<i>Carduelis spinus</i> .....	I.
					Common Goldwing....	————— <i>elegans</i> .....	I.
			3	57	Whin Linnet.....	<i>Linaria cannabina</i> .....	I.
					Mountain Linnet.....	————— <i>montana</i> .....	I.
					Redpoll Linnet.....	————— <i>pusilla</i> .....	I.
					Mealy Linnet .....	————— <i>canescens</i> .....	I.
				58	Haw Grosbeak.....	<i>Coccothraustes cratægus.</i>	P. V.
					Green Grosbeak .....	————— <i>chloris</i> ....	I.
			4	59	Pippin Crossbill .....	<i>Crucirostra vulgaris</i> ....	O. V.
					Pine Crossbill .....	————— <i>pinetorum</i> ..	O. V.
					Whitewingd Crossbill	————— <i>leucoptera</i> ..	O. V.
				60	Pine Thickbill.....	<i>Densirostra enucleator</i> ..	O. V.
				61	Hedge Coalhcod .....	<i>Pyrrhula vulgaris</i> .....	I.
		2		62	Spotted Starling .....	<i>Sturnus varius</i> .....	I.

# INDEX.

---

	Page.		Page.
Alpine Annet.....	206	Mountain Linnet.....	377
Bearded Pinnock.....	192	Ortolan Bunting.....	327
Blackcap Fauvet.....	99	Pied Wagtail.....	208
Blue Tit.....	167	Pine Crossbill.....	394
Blueheaded Oatear.....	225	Pine Thickbill.....	395
Bluethroated Fantail.....	71	Pippin Crossbill.....	391
Bramble Finch.....	356	Redpoll Linnet.....	379
Brake Nightingale.....	89	Reed Bunting.....	304
Chaff Finch.....	346	Redeyed Whinling.....	118
Cirl Bunting.....	324	Redwing Thrush.....	26
Coal Tit.....	182	Ring Ouzel.....	36
Common Goldwing.....	364	Robin Redbreast.....	49
Corn Bunting.....	284	Rock Pipit.....	226
Crested Tit.....	190	Rusty Longspur.....	282
Fallow Chat.....	39	Sedge Reedling.....	78
Fieldfare Thrush.....	12	Sibilous Brakehopper.....	73
Firecrested Kinglet.....	143	Siskin Goldwing.....	358
Garden Ouzel.....	30	Shore Lark.....	271
Garden Fauvet.....	105	Sky Lark.....	245
Garden Thrush.....	17	Snowy Longspur.....	275
Garden Tit.....	156	Spring Oatear.....	219
Garrulous Fauvet.....	114	Stone Chat.....	45
Goldcrested Kinglet.....	135	Spotted Starling.....	404
Grey Wagtail.....	214	Tawny Lavrock.....	242
Green Grosbeak.....	386	Tithy's Redstart.....	68
Haw Grosbeak.....	384	Tree Pipit.....	235
Hedge Warbler.....	125	Tree Redstart.....	60
Hedge Coalhood.....	396	Tree Sparrow.....	344
Hedge Dunnock.....	197	Whitewinged Crossbill.....	394
House Sparrow.....	328	Whitethroated Fauvet.....	110
Ivy Wren.....	146	Whin Chat.....	42
Longtailed Tit.....	187	Whin Linnet.....	371
Marsh Reedling.....	86	Willow Warbler.....	132
Marsh Tit.....	176	Wood Warbler.....	129
Meadow Pipit.....	229	Wood Lark.....	259
Mealy Linnet.....	382	Yellow Bunting.....	292
Missel Thrush.....	1		

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# APPENDIX

TABLE I

Summary of the results of the experiments

TABLE II

TABLE III

TABLE IV

TABLE V

TABLE VI

TABLE VII

TABLE VIII



