



THE  
AVICULTURAL  
MAGAZINE

VOL. II



THE  
**Avicultural Magazine.**

---

BEING THE JOURNAL OF  
THE AVICULTURAL SOCIETY  
FOR THE STUDY OF  
FOREIGN AND BRITISH BIRDS.

EDITED BY  
C. S. SIMPSON AND H. R. FILLMER,

UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
OF THE COUNCIL.

VOL. II.

NOVEMBER, 1895, TO OCTOBER, 1896.

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FOR THE STUDY OF

FOREIGN AND BRITISH BIRDS.

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## RULES OF THE AVICULTURAL SOCIETY

*As Revised by the Council, September, 1895.*

1.—The name of the Society shall be "THE AVICULTURAL SOCIETY," and its object shall be the study of Foreign and British Birds. Poultry, Pigeons and Canaries shall be outside the scope of the Society.

2.—The officers of the Society shall be elected annually by the members in manner hereinafter provided, and shall consist of a President, a Vice-President, a Treasurer, a Secretary, an Auditor, a Scrutineer, and a Council of 12 members. The Secretary and Treasurer shall be ex-officio members of the Council.

3.—Each member shall pay an annual subscription of 5/-, to be due and payable in advance on the 1st of November in each year. New members shall pay an entrance fee of 2/6. Any member whose subscription or entrance fee shall be four months overdue shall cease to be a member of the Society, and notice of his having ceased to be a member, and of the cause, shall be inserted in the Magazine.

4.—New members shall be proposed in writing; and the name and address of every person thus proposed, with the name of the member proposing him, shall be published in the next issue of the Magazine. Unless the candidate shall, within two weeks after the publication of his name in the Magazine, be objected to by at least two members, he shall be deemed to be duly elected. If five members shall lodge with the Secretary objections to any candidate he shall not be elected, but the signatures to the signed objections must be verified by the Scrutineer. If two or more members (but less than five) shall object to any candidate, the Secretary shall announce in the next number of the Magazine that such objections have been lodged (but shall not disclose the names of the objectors), and shall request the members to vote upon the question of the election of such candidate. Members shall record their votes in sealed letters addressed to the Scrutineer, and a candidate shall not be elected unless two-thirds of the votes recorded be in his favour; nor shall a candidate be elected if five or more votes be recorded against his election.

5.—The Magazine of the Society shall be issued on the first day of every month, and forwarded, post free, to each member. The Secretary shall have an absolute discretion as to what matter shall be published in the Magazine (subject to the control of the Council). The Secretary shall refer all matters of doubt or difficulty to the Council. The decision of the majority of the Council shall be final and conclusive in all matters.

6.—The election of officers shall take place every year between the 1st and 14th of October. All candidates must be proposed by one member and seconded by another member (in writing), before they shall be eligible for election; but this shall not apply to officers willing to stand for re-election to the same office. All such proposals which have been duly seconded must be sent to the Secretary before the 14th of September. The Secretary shall prepare a voting paper containing a list of the candidates, showing the offices for which they are respectively seeking election or re-election, and shall send a copy of such voting paper to each member of the Society,

with the October number of the Magazine. Each member shall make a cross (X) opposite the names of those for whom he desires to vote, and shall sign the voting paper at the foot, and send it to the Scrutineer in a sealed envelope before the 14th of October. The Scrutineer shall prepare a written return of the officers elected, showing the number of the votes recorded for each candidate, and send it to the Secretary before the 21st of October, for publication in the November number of the Magazine. In the event of an equality of votes the President shall have a casting vote.

7.—It shall be lawful for the Council to delegate any of their powers to a Committee of not less than three.

8.—The Council (but not a Committee of the Council) shall have power to alter and add to the Rules, from time to time, in any manner they may think fit.

9.—The Council shall have power to expel any member from the Society at any time, without assigning any reason.

10.—All members intending to resign their membership at the end of the current year of the Society shall give notice of their intention to the Secretary before the 14th of October, and all members who do not so give notice shall continue to be members for the year following, and shall be liable for their subscriptions accordingly.

11.—Neither the office of Scrutineer, nor the office of Auditor, shall be held for two consecutive years by the same person.

12.—The Scrutineer shall not reveal to any person how any member shall have voted.

13.—If any office shall become vacant at any time, other than at the end of the Society's year, the Council shall have power to nominate any member of the Society to fill the vacancy, until the expiration of the then current year.

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# THE AVICULTURAL SOCIETY.

BALANCE SHEET FOR THE YEAR 1894-95.

Receipts.	£	s.	d.		Expenditure.	£	s.	d.
168 Member's Subscriptions at 5/- .. ..	42	0	0		Printing Magazines .. .. .	39	2	6
5 Member's Subscriptions at 2/6 .. ..	0	12	6		Stationery and Miscellaneous Printing ..	7	13	0
65 Entrance Fees at 2/6 .. .. .	8	2	6		Postage .. .. .	10	18	1
Sale of copies of Magazine .. .. .	1	11	6		Sundries .. .. .	0	2	0
Sale of U.K.F.C.B.S.'s Reports .. .. .	0	5	0		Subscriptions and Entrance Fees in arrear ..	1	2	6
Sale of Birds presented by Mr. Phillipps ..	1	10	0					
Trade Advertisements .. .. .	1	17	0					
Members' Advertisements .. .. .	0	17	3					
Treasurer of the late U. K. F. C. B. Society (being profit on Brighton Show of 1893, less deficiency on the late Society's General Fund) .. .. .	9	6	4		Balance in hands of Treasurer .. .. .	7	4	0
	£66 2 1					£66 2 1		

Examined with Vouchers and found correct,

JAMES B. HOUSDEN, *Auditor.*

THE  
Avicultural Magazine,

BEING THE JOURNAL OF THE  
AVICULTURAL SOCIETY.

VOL. II.—No. 13.

NOVEMBER, 1895.

THE BITTERN AND THE HERONS.

By J. LEWIS BONHOTE.

I have found few birds so interesting in captivity as the family of Herons (*Ardeidae*). There are few birds more graceful, or that will become so familiar with their master. Of course they are not cage-birds in the ordinary sense of the word; but anyone with a small piece of ground at the back of his house can easily keep them, and will, undoubtedly, find a fund of amusement in watching them and their habits.

The size of my aviary is 15 feet by 8 feet by 6 feet high, having a pond 3 feet by 2 feet, 1 foot deep at one end. It is provided with two good broad perches.

In this aviary I have kept for some eighteen months, one Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*), one Night Heron (*Nycticorax griseus*) and three Purple Herons (*Ardea purpurea*). I should, however, not advise anyone to keep more than one species in an aviary, as they are very much given to fighting. My birds have their respective portions of the aviary, and any intrusion beyond these imaginary limits is at once strongly resented. The Purple Herons own one end, the Bittern the other, and the Night Heron one perch. The food of these birds in confinement is fish; it is best procured by arranging with the fishmonger for him to let you have the cuttings and cleanings of the fish, for which he will probably make you no charge.

The Bittern was formerly well known in the fens of the Eastern Counties; but it has now become very scarce, partly owing to increased drainage and cultivation, and partly owing to the persistency with which the birds visiting us in winter are shot. There can, I think, be little doubt that, were these winter immigrants unmolested, a few pairs would remain to breed on our islands every year.

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When wild, the Bittern is a very skulking species, remaining motionless all day with its head high in the air, and only wandering abroad at night in search of its food: which consists of frogs, mice, fish, snakes, etc.

In captivity, it is at first shy, then tame, and finally aggressive. I have known mine to run and strike at me with its beak, when feeding it. Let me here warn aviculturists, when handling any of these birds, to be very careful of their long and pointed bill, for they have a habit of drawing in their neck and shooting it out with considerable force capable of inflicting a severe wound. But to return; the Bittern, like all Herons, has no feathers growing from the back of the neck, the feathers in front being elongated and meeting behind: which gives him, when the feathers are ruffled, a large frill in front. The eyes of the Bittern look downwards and forwards, consequently, when his beak is pointing upwards, he can still see comfortably in front of him. We will now suppose a Purple Heron to be innocently walking on the edge of the Bittern's "preserves." The Bittern has been resting in a corner, his beak pointing straight upwards, and his neck drawn into his shoulders. On seeing the enemy, he lowers his beak to the horizontal position, draws up his neck and expands his frill; he then draws in his neck again, ruffles all his feathers, spreads out his wings, shifts about uneasily on his legs, utters a low croak and charges the Heron, shooting out his beak at the same time, and at once assumes his first position with head erect and expanded frill, ready, if necessary, to repeat the movement. The Heron has, until the time of the charge, taken no notice of the Bittern; but now, uttering some hoarse croaks, he deals vigorous stabs in quick succession at his opponent, bringing his other companions to the rescue. Then the Bittern, finding himself attacked on all sides, retires to his corner, and the Herons do likewise. When taking exercise, which is not often, the Bittern has a slow, sneaking walk and holds his head very high.

In the extensive reed-beds of Holland and other parts of Europe, the Bittern makes its nest, generally in April, but sometimes earlier. The nest is composed of dry reeds, etc., and is placed low down among thick herbage. The young are hatched after 25 days incubation, and do not leave the nest until able to shift for themselves. The so-called "boom" of the Bittern is the note uttered by the male bird during the breeding season. The general colour is a pale buff, irregularly marked with black; legs and feet, green.

The Purple Heron is a very rare visitant to our shores,

although it still breeds in considerable numbers in Holland and some parts of France. Like the Bittern, it feeds on fish, etc., chiefly at night, remaining concealed in the thick reeds all day long, with its long snake-like neck drawn close into its shoulders.

In captivity it is a sluggish bird, rarely rousing itself except when called to rescue a friend in distress.

When hungry, the Purple Herons will often stand motionless, looking down into the pond in the vain hope of seeing some dinner. On the arrival of the food, they all stretch out their necks and come round the person feeding them, uttering hoarse croaks. It is astonishing what large pieces they can swallow whole; they have no idea of pulling the fish to pieces, it must go down whole or not at all. Having got a piece of fish well into the mouth, they keep the neck stretched straight up and allow the food to slide slowly down the throat.

Sometimes two of them will seize hold of the same piece of fish, and a regular tug of war ensues, which lasts sometimes for ten minutes, both holding on with great pertinacity. Occasionally, one of these tugs will be commenced at the beginning of feeding-time, and they become so engaged that, were they not separated, there would be no food left by the time their sport is ended.

They are fed once a day, generally about 4.30 p.m.

The Purple Heron cannot stand a very severe cold: so the directors of Zoological Gardens tell us; I, however, carried mine safely through the severe cold of last winter, without any artificial heat. They were kept shut up in a wooden shed, having a floor raised one foot from the ground and thickly covered with sawdust. By the end of the frost they were rather weak, and had it continued would, I fear, have succumbed. In the adult stage they are remarkably handsome birds, and being unable to improve upon the description in Mr. Howard Saunders' invaluable manual, I reproduce it in full: "The crown and long plumes glossy purplish black; cheeks and sides of the neck fawn colour streaked with bluish black; back and wing coverts dark slate grey; elongated filamentous dorsal feathers chestnut; tail grey; neck reddish buff with a line of black down each side, terminating in a mass of chestnut, grey, and black elongated feathers; under-wing coverts chestnut; breast rich maroon red; thighs rufous; bill yellow.

The remaining occupant of the aviary, the Night Heron, is an annual though scarce winter visitant to our shores, and is another of those species which would probably breed occasionally with us, were a little more forbearance used by

those whose only thought, on seeing a strange bird, is to exterminate it as quickly as possible.

Its colonies breed on trees in swamps or among groves, and are especially numerous in China, where they are held sacred. It is the most active of the species I have described, and, were it not so, it would never get a living in its present quarters. It is most amusing to watch it mark a piece of fish from its perch, whence it darts upon it suddenly, seizes it, and is up on the perch again before the Purple Herons have realized what has happened. It is also the tamest, and comes up in a confiding way to feed from one's hand. It had a mate, which was killed by the Purple Herons a few days after it arrived; consequently I should never advise the keeping of it, or indeed any other species, with so pugnacious a bird as the Purple Heron. The sexes are alike in plumage, and the general colour is greenish black above and whitish underneath.

There are several other species of Heron which have been taken in our Islands, none of which, save the Common Heron (*Ardea cinerea*), are of common occurrence. On this last-mentioned species I might be permitted to say a few words, although I have had no personal acquaintance with it in captivity.

It breeds in colonies in almost every county in England, and is far less nocturnal than the other species. The nests are placed on the topmost branches of tall trees in woods, generally in the vicinity of running water whence it procures its food. It is the largest of our British Herons (having a total length of 36 inches) and is also one of the prettiest.

In confinement it is, I am told, exceedingly pugnacious, and will therefore require to be kept by itself; in other respects it adapts itself very well to captivity, and will require the same attention as the other species.

Of the other species visiting England, we have the Great White Heron (*Ardea alba*) and the Little Egret (*Ardea garzetta*), which have, in some places abroad, been nearly exterminated, owing to the ruthless way in which their breeding haunts are ravaged for the sake of the 'aigrettes' for ladies' hats. These aigrettes are the elongated dorsal plumes worn by the adult in the breeding season only.

The Buff-backed Heron (*Ardea bubulcus*) and the Squacco Heron (*Ardea ralloides*), both Southern species, have occurred as irregular migrants; also the Little Bittern (*Ardetta minuta*), the smallest of the family, which has undoubtedly on one or two occasions bred in England, and is very common in some parts of Germany and Holland.

## RARE FOREIGN BIRDS.\*

(SECOND SERIES)

## I.—THE GREY-HEADED SPARROW.

*Passer diffusus* (Smith).

By ARTHUR G. BUTLER, Ph.D.

At the present time there are a few specimens of the Grey-headed Sparrow in the market, they having been sent over with African Weavers and Singing-finches. The male bird, in full breeding plumage, has a smoky grey head with black beak and hazel eye; there is a slight indication of a white moustachial streak from the base of the mandibles below the cheek, but it is only emphasised by the slightly greyer chin and fore-throat; the mantle and shoulders are clear brown; the back, wings and outer tail-feathers redder, almost chestnut-brown; the wing-coverts showing two white shoulder-spots; under parts sordid whitish; legs flesh-brownish.

I find this bird very restless, and somewhat masterful; but it is a pretty bird, and its beak has not the powerful character of that of the English species; so that, as I keep it with Weavers and Buntings, I do not think it likely to do much mischief: it has uttered no sound since it came into my possession.

Dr. Russ speaks of this species as "a genuine Sparrow, with all its failings:—impudence, boldness, and importunity. When caught, he gives utterance in the hand to prolonged, plaintive, melodious sounds, which, at other times, one never hears. Loose in a bird-room, it builds a nest in a bush, charming, Magpie-like, with an over-arched roof of twigs, the cup moulded of Agave-fibres, threads, bents and feathers. Sitting, 4-6 eggs, like those of the House-sparrow. Young plumage: earthy brownish grey; head paler; under-surface whitish grey; wing-bands delicate; beak brown, the base broadly yellow; eyes black; feet flesh-grey. Lays also readily in nests of strangers, and chases away the owners. Spiteful towards small associates. Only arrives in the market by chance, either singly or in a few pairs. Kept alone in a large cage is sure to give satisfaction; but, nevertheless, is not deserving of any special regard."

Although they do not, by any means, equal the so-called Song-sparrows in beauty, either of form or colouring, the true

\* The word "Rare" in this title is to be understood in the sense of "rarely imported," and it is not to be inferred that the birds included in the series are necessarily rare in their native country.

Sparrows are very handsome birds, and the Grey-headed species decidedly not the least of these: its ruddy wings, tail and back, show up strikingly against the nearly white under parts. In the winter its beak becomes yellower, almost like that of our Bramble-finch. In size, the Grey-headed Sparrow is about equal to our Chaffinch.

## SOME DIFFICULTIES OF THE AVICULTURIST.

By CHARLES L. ROTHERA, B.A.

*Hon. Curator of the Nottingham Arboretum Aviary.*

My experience, such as it is, has been gained from the management of a garden aviary, and is therefore limited to such birds as can endure the variations of a proverbially uncertain climate. My object in promoting the aviary, and undertaking its management, was to add to the attractions of one of our public gardens in Nottingham,—our Arboretum,—and I desired to introduce to our people some of the various specimens, beautiful in form and colour, which are imported from other countries and yet are capable of acclimatization in confinement.

Our aviary is divided into three compartments, each having a large flight partly glazed and partly open to the sky, and a sheltered house-place, with boarded and tiled roof, for retirement.

In one of these compartments I keep a collection of small birds, mostly foreigners; there are Green and Grey Singing Finches, various species of Waxbills, Silver-bills, Whydahs and small Weavers, Mannikins, Ribbon Finches, Parson and Diamond Finches &c., &c., with two or three species of British Tits.

In the large centre division we have Cockatiels, Rosellas, Budgerigars, three species of Love Birds, Cardinals, a Virginian Cardinal, Japanese Robins, Blue Robins, a Cross-bill, Turtle Doves, a Military Starling, Californian and Egyptian Quails, Golden Pheasants, and a Blue-and-yellow Macaw on a stand.

In the third compartment we have the British birds,—Buntings, Goldfinches, Bullfinches, Linnets, Redpolls, Siskins, Greater-Tits, Robins, Nuthatches, Hawfinches, &c., &c., with a pair of Saffron-finches for a dash of colour, and a pair of Silver Pheasants for show.

Adjoining this we have a small pool of water with an island and shelving shore, covered in with wire, in which we keep Curlews, Green and Grey Plovers, Ruff and Reeve, an Avocet, a Godwit, a Knot, and a Dotterel, with Wagtails, Reed Buntings, Kingfishers, a Shore Lark, a Snow Bunting, and a pair of Chinese Mandarins.

A very mixed collection and one that takes no little catering for.

And herein lies the first difficulty. "One man's meat is another man's poison" is a true proverb for birds as for men, and we frequently lose the greedy birds, such as the Blue Robins or Virginian Cardinals, from what I suppose is apoplexy, or syncope due to fatty degeneration. They generally drop off the bough when in the pink of condition and are found to be as fat as butter. Of course I shall be told not to give so much soft food, but the difficulty is how to avoid it.

Again, it will often happen that a particular bird will monopolize all the food vessels and prevent the other birds from approaching them. To meet this difficulty I adopted the plan of having a number of trays and boxes about the place, but this is unsightly and gives rise to yet another difficulty, viz. the mice trouble.

I know no bird so prone to take on this dog-in-the-manger spirit as the Pin-tailed Whydah, and I have discontinued trying to keep him in consequence. The last I had, though not so big as a mouse, could keep the whole floor of the large centre compartment of the Aviary clear even of birds as large as a Rosella or Moustache Parrakeet, amongst which I placed him after he had proved himself more than a match for birds of his own size and weight.

A hen American Mocking bird proved equally implacable and had to be dismissed.

But the greatest difficulty arising out of the character of birds is their resentment at the intrusion of strangers; and this seems to be quite instinctive, and not to be dependent in any way on the question of food supply or anything of that sort. I have just tried to introduce a pair of Redfaced Lovebirds. I was fortunate in being able to select, out of a large number, a pair that had more wing than these birds usually have when first imported—why are these alone of the various lovebirds cropped in this way?—but they were still unable to fly without difficulty, and in two days one died, as my assistant told me, simply because the other birds persistently drove it from the food, no matter how freely he scattered it about the place.

So of a pair of Avocets, the male was killed in 24 hours by the Curlews, and a second one, procured to fill the gap, shared the same fate in less time, and this occurred only last week when there could be no jealousy arising out of pairing.

Of a pair of Nightingales introduced last Autumn among

the British birds, the cock was speedily killed by a Nuthatch, while a single Pied Wagtail killed off a whole family of the same species, both parents and three young ones, within a few days, so soon as the weather set in cold in the late Autumn.

The difficulty of breeding among so mixed a collection is great, and we only succeed in rearing a few young birds.

My greatest disappointment this year was connected with two broods of Red-crested Cardinals, both from the same parents. The second clutch of eggs was laid in the old nest as soon as ever the first young ones left it, and before they could feed themselves—and they were very slow in trying to do this. Apparently the effort of feeding them, (there were three), was too much for the father, for he died while the second eggs were incubating and his three charges all died also. Then the second brood was hatched, and, the weather being very favourable, the hen brought them on by herself till they left the nest, but before they could feed themselves they died too.

The second ones proved as slow as the first in "fending" for themselves, and the mother grew tired of her job.

Another difficulty, rather apart from the birds themselves, is that of finding some green shrub or tree that will withstand the incessant whittling of the birds. Amongst the Parrakeets I have found nothing, not even the rank growing, intensely nauseous guelder rose, that will survive, and we therefore have to be content with occasional changes of strong boughs of lime or elm, from which they manage in a short time to strip off every bit of bark.

For the British finches and small foreign birds the ever-green box seems about the only shrub that can thrive at all, and ours have done so well that Linnets and Hedge Accentors have built beautiful nests in them.

Another difficulty is to satisfy the general public that all foreign birds, especially if brightly coloured, do not come from tropical countries, and that it is therefore not cruel to keep them out of doors during the winter. This shows the need for education, the prevailing idea clearly is that the expressions "foreign" and "tropical" are equivalent.

And still another difficulty is to procure specimens of live birds outside the ordinary run of cage birds. I have been trying for several years to get live Dippers and Sandpipers, without success, though one would expect to get them as easily as Kingfishers. So few people seem to understand any other method of getting birds than with the gun, which may answer very well to meet the demands of ladies' detestable fashions, but is not much use to the aviculturist.

## THE PIED WAGTAIL.

## A WARNING.

By JOHN SERGEANT.

For nearly three years I have had in my largest aviary a cock Pied Wagtail, and until recently he has lived on fairly amicable terms with his foreign relations; but about a month ago I noticed that he was developing pugnacious tendencies, and harrassing birds smaller than himself—but as there is plenty of room and any amount of cover I thought no harm could come of it.

After a while he seemed to gain more confidence in his powers, and at last I saw him attacking a particularly large and fine Shâma which I have had for a long time. On noticing this I was rather pleased than otherwise, because I thought he would receive the thrashing that his conduct deserved.

Going down to my aviary three days later, on the eve of my departure from home, I was surprised to find the Wagtail chasing the Shâma, and the Shâma seemed distressed and thoroughly frightened. Had I not been going away I should at once have caught the miscreant and caged him, but not having time I was obliged to leave them, expecting to find a tragedy when I returned.

And I was not disappointed, for my Shâma was dead and the Wagtail was master of the situation.

I immediately caught the murderer and gave him his liberty, although he richly deserved the penalty of capital punishment for his wickedness.

It seems little short of marvellous to me that a comparatively insignificant and very fragile bird like a Wagtail could actually run down and kill a bird three times his own size, and more especially a bird like the Shâma, that held in subjection a Blackbird, a Thrush, a Baltimore Oriole, and a Dyal, all larger birds than himself, and, in addition, a whole aviary of more than forty other birds.

After this experience, I strongly advise any of our members who happen to possess a Pied Wagtail, especially if it be in a mixed aviary, to carefully watch it.

I had always known that Wagtails were very intolerant of the presence of their own and closely allied species, as this particular bird, two years ago, has harrassed into an early grave three Yellow Wagtails; but I had no idea he would extend

his operations and go for larger or more valuable game, or he should have had his liberty long since.

At the same time, we should no doubt be doing the Wagtail family a gross injustice if we put them all down as vicious and dangerous; but it is as well to have before us the fact that high living, and a plentiful supply of mealworms and blackbeetles, may make the best regulated Wagtail develop murderous tendencies.

## REVIEWS.

*Foreign Finches in Captivity*, by Arthur G. Butler, Ph.D., etc., (L. Reeve & Co., 6, Henrietta Street, Covent Garden). Part V.

We have little but praise for the newly issued part of this admirable work, which fully maintains the high level of its predecessors. Dr. Butler continues his account of the Waxbills with a description of the Cordon-bleu, of which a very beautiful and life-like illustration is given. Our experience of this species leads us to believe that it is far more easily kept in confinement than is usually supposed. Dr. Russ says it is "almost the most delicate of all Ornamental Finches. The hens die with the slightest fluctuations of temperature, and in the nesting season, unhappily, frequently from egg-laying." Dr. Butler, too, lost by far the greater number of his specimens. We have, however, kept several pairs of Cordons-bleus and found them, without exception, long lived and healthy; but they were never exposed to a temperature below 45°.

The author mentions the nearly allied species, *Estrilda angolensis*; but we think he is mistaken in saying that it has not been imported as a cage-bird. To the best of our recollection, there was a pair at the London Zoological Gardens in 1893.

That very interesting bird, the Australian Fire-finch or Crimson Finch, is fully described; but it is a pity that the female is not illustrated as well as the male: the sexes of this species differ so much, and the females are so seldom imported, that the absence of an illustration distinctly detracts from the value of the work. On the other hand, both sexes of the Australian Fire-tailed Finch are represented, though male and female are alike. Several very rare species are included in this part, notably the Painted Finch (*Emblema picta*) and the Red-faced Finch (*Pytelia afra*).

Dr. Butler's work is commendably free from the careless and unscientific writing which disfigures so many popular works

on aviculture. "Foreign Finches in Captivity" does not pretend to be a scientific book, but aviculturists may rest assured that they will find in it nothing *unscientific*.

#### *Accidents to Birds.*

An anonymous article in the *Cornhill Magazine* for October, under the above heading, contains some very curious facts about birds.

"It seems almost incredible that a bird should break its wing in mid-air by the mere exertion of flight; yet four such accidents have been reported within the last two or three years. A gentleman, whilst out quail-shooting near the Pyramids, flushed an owl, and mechanically raised his gun, without any intention of firing, when, to his utter surprise, the bird twisted in its flight and fell to the ground as if shot. On examination, the astonished sportsman discovered that the poor owl had broken its wing."

That immense numbers of migratory birds are killed by dashing themselves against the glass of light-houses, is, of course, well known; and also that many birds are killed or injured by flying against telegraph wires. But some of the other accidents recorded are very unusual.

"Although swallows are such wonderfully quick-sighted birds, and can change the direction of their flight with amazing rapidity and ease, it occasionally happens that they either do not perceive the danger lying in their path or are not quick enough to avert it, for I have once or twice, whilst fly-fishing for trout, accidentally knocked down and stunned a swallow. Several instances have been recorded of the poor bird being struck and killed by golf-balls, and in one case at least even by a cricket ball. Petrels and other sea-birds have been known to collide whilst in mid-air and drop into passing boats."

"If the little white-throats happen to cross the Channel on their spring migration whilst there is any 'sea on,' (to use a nautical phrase) they fly so low that many of them are knocked down by the scudding spray and perish."

"Many strange accidents have occurred to birds whilst feeding. An Irish naturalist once observed a Dunlin behaving very curiously on the sea-shore. The bird rose in the air and flew for a short distance, then alighted and shook its head violently in a vain endeavour to detach a round lump observable upon its bill. The encumbrance proved to be a cockle which the Dunlin had found open, and, in innocently attempting to negotiate, had been trapped by it."

"Birds that employ hair in the building of their nests sometimes come to grief by hanging, but I should say very seldom indeed in the following singular manner: A gentleman who had a number of colts upon his farm one day noticed a small bird entangled in the long hair of the tail of one of them. The little creature had evidently been in search of material wherewith to line its nest, and by some unaccountable accident had become ensnared in the unkempt hair of the colt's tail."

"Finally, it may not be unfitting to glance for a moment at the way in which birds regard accidents to each other. I have seen them so devoted

as to try to carry off their dead; and many instances are on record of birds endeavouring to help each other in time of trouble. An observer not long ago reported the fact that he saw a sparrow trying to release another which had become entangled in a piece of horsehair attached to the bough of a tree."

"A party of sportsmen out grouse-shooting in Ireland a year or two back, came upon a pair of grouse, and discovered that the male was totally blind of both eyes, and that his mate, a fine bird, evidently ministered to all his wants—leading him about, bringing him food, and keeping close beside him. Such devotion in a bird is, I should say, almost without a parallel."

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## CORRESPONDENCE.

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### IS GRIT DANGEROUS TO NEWLY IMPORTED PARROTS?

SIR.—I think the following extract, from the letter of a person who has much to do with freshly imported Parrots, will be of interest to some of your readers.

"I never give Parrots grit of any kind. Several Parrots that have died I have opened, and in many cases have found that their gizzard has been full of hard, undigested grit, all caked together, so to speak, and the intestines torn, and in some cases quite pierced, as though the grit, passing through the bird, had torn them; and consequently this, I think, must account for so many cases of inflammation of the bowels in Parrots; and even Cockatoos, the same. In their natural state, they are, I believe, more used to long grasses than grit."

"One thing I do know, the sailors never give them any. And I have had the greatest success with Greys, Amazons, and Cockatoos, when no grit has been used. Fine sand is all right, but no grit."

I do not know that I should altogether draw the conclusions my correspondent does. The Grey Parrot is chiefly in question. It won't do to generalize as to Parrots' food, but I think it is possible sharp grit may be dangerous, and that the Grey, at any rate, does not have much in its wild state.

I shouldn't take sailors' feeding as a model: withholding grit on the voyage may be the cause of the mischief when it is supplied. But I am always glad to get the experience of those who have had much to do with Parrots.

F. G. DUTTON.

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### FEEDING PARROTS ON MICE.

SIR.—Much has been written and said against giving Parrots and Parrakeets meat, but it seems hard to believe that it can be so injurious to them, seeing that they are so fond of it. About five years ago, I had an English Jay in one of my outdoor aviaries in which were four Pennants, a Bloodwing, King and Queen Parrakeets, several Rosellas and Mealy Rosellas, etc., and I always found that as soon as a saucer of chopped lean beef was put in for the Jay, *every bird* immediately went down and secured his share, taking a piece on to the roost, and holding it in one claw, whilst eating it with evident relish. In fact, Mr. Jay had to be very quick over his meal or he would have got short allowance. Now, about a fortnight ago, I had caught one of those pests of aviculturists, a mouse, in a steel trap. The mouse being caught only by one leg, I was about to

kill it, when I noticed a hen Grand Eclectus become very excited in her cage, and, as they are generally such quiet, sedate birds, I wondered what the reason could be, and held the mouse to the cage, when she immediately fastened into its head, crushing the bone and killing it quicker perhaps than I should have done. As she would not leave go, I released it from the trap, when she at once commenced eating it, holding it in her claw the while; nor did she cease until she had eaten the whole of it, bones and all, even chewing the skin, and then throwing down the fur, which is all that can be found after her meal is over. I find the other Eclectuses equally fond of mice, frequently eating two each per day when I have them to give them. Have Mr. Camps, or any other *experienced* aviculturists found the Eclectus Parrots to be fond of mice, and do they find that flesh injures Parrots or Parrakeets?

We read so much now, written by gentlemen of theory, but those who have had years of practical experience seldom put pen to paper.

I must say I am glad to find our Society going on so well and increasing its number of members so fast. I look forward anxiously each month for the Magazine.

CHARLES P. ARTHUR.

#### SILKWORMS FOR INSECTIVOROUS BIRDS.

SIR,—From time to time I have seen it mentioned in the "fancy" press that silkworms are useful for feeding insectivorous birds, so last summer I made the experiment, the result of which I shall now give for the information of the readers of the *Avicultural Magazine*.

Having a mulberry-tree in my garden, I was provided with the proper food for the tiny mites that issued from the majority of the 2,000 eggs I bought. They grew apace, so that they were soon large enough to use, and very soon too large; that is one great objection to them; another objection is that they want continual attention, being tremendous feeders and making a corresponding amount of mess. Besides, on the whole, I found that the birds did not like them too much.

I gave them to the following birds, with these results:—

My Shama was very fond of them; my Pekin Robin and Bulbul also liked them.

My Scarlet and Superb Tanagers, Blackcap and English Robin, did not fancy them very much: besides, they soon became too big for them.

My Dyal Bird would not look at them, although he is very fond of mealworms.

Judging from the above, I do not consider they are worth the trouble of keeping, so I do not think I shall try them another year.

V. CASTELLAN.

#### PERRUCHE INGAMBÉE OF LEVAILLANT.

SIR,—Have any of your readers ever seen the above, or can they give me any information about it? It comes from Australia, is remarkable for the length of its legs, lives on the ground, and seeks its food among the herbage. Illiger placed the species in a genus by itself.

JAMES STOREY.

## BREEDING RESULTS.

SIR,—It would be interesting to the members of the Society to know what breeding results have been obtained this season. I give mine, hoping other accounts will follow.

Seven Saffron-finches: one died; hen nesting again; five eggs. All from one pair.

Four Ribbon-finches: still in the nest. Parents, a young pair purchased a couple of months ago.

Twelve Budgerigars; one died. Three pairs kept. Moults nearly over, and visiting nests again.

Two Virginian Cardinals: both eaten by parents. Three eggs were laid afterwards, but the hen did not sit on them; two were given to the Saffron-finches, both good and one hatched; but the Saffrons failed to rear the young bird. The one given to the Ribbon-finches was sat upon for the full time, but was clear.

Four Redrumps: one died at an early age. All bred by one pair.

Thirteen Rosellas: two nests from same pair; seven from eight eggs, and six from six eggs. Nearly all died young; but a fine young male is still left and capable of looking after himself. Two nests in one year from the same pair is, I think, rare.

Nine eggs, New Zealand Parrakeets, five and four; first nest spoiled through faulty log, discovered too late; second, abandoned before due to hatch, I presume through birds beginning to moult. Same pair laid all the nine eggs. I have successfully bred these Parrakeets till this year, in nests of from two to five.

A. SAVAGE.

## THE ETHICS OF EXHIBITING.

SIR,—As your article under this heading in the October Magazine is chiefly a criticism of mine in the previous issue, I feel sure that you will not object to publishing a short reply from me.

- (1) It is certainly not necessary to exhibit birds in very small cages, but it is much more convenient to do so and is the almost invariable practice. Personally, I dislike cages altogether, and perhaps what I should call a small cage would be called by you a moderately large one.
- (2) Whether the exhibits are sent on long or short railway journeys makes but little difference, probably the birds become, to some extent, injured to the discomforts of travelling after the first hour or two, and the total amount of suffering on a short journey would be almost as much as on a long one.
- (3) It is certainly practicable to maintain an even temperature in the show-room, but it is seldom or never done.

I admit the cruelty involved in the importation of birds, but much of it is preventible. And the aviculturist can scarcely be held responsible for what happens to his birds before they come into his hands. The cruelty is caused chiefly by overcrowding—when birds are carefully imported by amateurs, the cruelty is reduced to a minimum. But many of the most delightful foreign birds can be bred in aviaries in this country, and, if purchasers would be content to pay a rather higher price for aviary-bred birds than for imported specimens, there is no reason why the latter should not be driven out of the market. I hope the day will come when nearly all the foreign birds in England shall be aviary-bred.

SEPTIMUS PERKINS.

[My experience, and that of other amateur exhibitors, does not bear out Mr. Perkins' theoretical objections. I maintain that we are not less careful of the health and comfort of our birds than is the non-exhibitor. I have of course no apology to offer for the professional exhibitor, who sends his birds from one show to another throughout the season, simply and solely as a matter of profit.

The cruelty involved in the importation of birds must, I think, have caused some uncomfortable thoughts to most of us. I cannot for one moment admit the argument that we as aviculturists are not responsible for this, for it is evident that if we did not create the demand for foreign birds, the supply would very soon cease. My own position is logical, because I hold that we have rights over the lower animals, as well as responsibilities towards them. But, if I understand Mr. Perkins rightly, he thinks it justifiable to import birds from foreign countries at the cost of much suffering and many deaths, but unjustifiable to expose them to the short journey and very slight risk incidental to a well conducted show.—C. S. SIMPSON.]

SIR,—Under the heading, "The Ethics of Exhibiting," a very interesting subject has been started in the *Avicultural Magazine*. Most of the writers on this subject in the September number deprecate the showing of birds, and I am in some respects in accord with the sentiments expressed. Englishmen, however, are essentially sportsmen; and, whether they own yachts, animals of any kind from race-horses to fancy mice, or British or Foreign birds, or, in fact, are able in any way to compete with their fellows, they are possessed by a healthy spirit of combativeness which prompts them to endeavour to excel, each in his own particular line.

Competition is good for everyone: even the defeated learn something.

It is exceedingly unfortunate that we exhibitors of foreign birds are so heavily handicapped. In the first place, our pets cannot bear the knocking about which such live-stock as fowls, rabbits, and cats can endure with impunity; and this important fact is quite beyond the comprehension of the average helper at bird shows. Hence the paramount necessity of personally accompanying one's exhibits. To a recent show, I took six cages of foreign birds. On arrival at the station, from which the show was distant about a mile, I found no arrangements whatever made by the Show Committee to meet the trains with covered vans. The porters were all too busy to take my birds, and I had to wait on the platform in a cutting wind, while a boy fetched me a cab from somewhere in the town. I wonder when and how my birds would have been delivered if they had been unaccompanied?

Granted the safe arrival of our exhibits, we are met with the extraordinary fact that we have, in most cases, to submit them to the discrimination of a bagman-judge, who undertakes such classes as poultry, pigeons, rabbits, cats, cavies, fancy rats and mice, and foreign cage-birds. The foreign cage-birds are put into his day's work as a kind of make-weight.

At the show above referred to, the judge (whom I know as an excellent judge of cats) had to adjudicate upon 322 pigeons in 28 classes; 207 Rabbits in 22 classes; 11 Cavies; 27 Canaries in 3 classes; and 13 foreign birds in 2 classes. It is a mercy there were no cats, rats, or mice. The 180 dogs at the same show had five judges and a special secretary all to themselves!

Foreign birds were "judged" at 8 p.m. There were only five entries in the large-bird class, so the judge could not go very far wrong. Even then, he gave first to a Glossy Starling over the fine *Chera procne* which won first at the Crystal Palace in a class of 37 entries! As both birds are mine, I shall not be accused of writing from the disappointed exhibitor's point of view.

The small-bird class contained eight entries, as follows: Cuba Finches, pair; Black-faced Gouldian, cock; ditto, hen; Red-faced Gouldian, cock; Crimson-banded Whydah, cock (I believe the only one ever shown in England, and one of the only two imported for many years); Rufous-tailed Grass-finches, pair; Rufous-backed Mannikin, cock; and a Saffron Finch. As I was an exhibitor, perhaps it will be better to describe the judging rather than to criticise the awards.

At 8 p.m., in a room crowded to suffocation and lighted by the dim religious light of oil lamps, the judge undertook to place these eight tiny birds according to their merits. The exhibits between which he had to discriminate were piled on the top of two tiers of poultry pens, at a height of some seven feet from the floor. The cages were not taken down, but the birds were induced to show themselves by the effective, if somewhat crude, method of drawing a walking stick across the bars of their cages. The Red Gouldian was soon awarded first. The Cuba Finches were so effectively secluded in a primitive wooden box, that even the application of the stick failed to bring them into view. A disinterested spectator kindly took them down and showed them to the judge, who, after remarking that "people should show birds in cages so that they could be seen," awarded them second prize. The Crimson-collared Whydah received third, and the Black-faced Gouldian hen, fourth. The Rufous-backed Mannikin was honoured by the judge's remark that it was a "very nice Spice-bird," and was accorded a V.H.C. The Rufous-tailed Grass-finches he characterized as "a neat pair of Orange-cheeks," and they also achieved the distinction of V.H.C. I ought to mention that, in the matter of condition, there was nothing to choose between the birds, each one being shown in perfect plumage. It was, therefore, only a question of rarity and beauty, and the class could have been judged from a written list of the competitors. I should like to know how near to, or rather how far from, the awards, as given, would be those which would have been given by anyone who really understood foreign birds. The intentions of these judges are doubtless good, but their performances are distinctly weak.

So much for the judging. I have already mentioned that the foreign birds were "staged" seven feet from the ground. Well, upon my arrival at the show on the second day, I found the cage containing the pair of *Bathilda ruficauda* braced round with string, and was informed, in answer to my enquiries, that a fowl had got loose in the morning, and had flown up among the foreign birds' cages. The efforts of the attendants, to recapture the escaped prisoner, resulted in the two unfortunates in question being given a Calcraft drop of seven feet. Excepting for the smashed cage, a matter of some fifteen shillings, no particular damage had been done; but these things set one wondering what happens to the unfortunate exhibits which are entrusted throughout to the tender mercies of railway porters and show officials.

HENRY J. FULLJAMES.

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THE LESSER EGRET AS A PET.

By the Rev. H. D. ASTLEY, M.A.

In a garden, in the midst of which stands a large circular fountain edged around with a broad border of turf and centred by three dolphins twisted together by the tail into a conventional device in stucco, I keep, besides four Spoonbills (about which more, perhaps, may be told some other day) a Lesser Egret. I wonder whether all these small white birds of the Heron tribe are equally tameable. To whistle, if he be at all hungry, means that he will run across the lawn to meet me and follow at my heels; sometimes, but not often or always, uttering a harsh grating cry, which no doubt like all nature's sounds would be pleasing at a distance, and which even at close quarters is not altogether unwelcome to the ear: there is a quaint wildness about it. He is a bird endued with a certain amount of common sense; his yellow eye, set close to the base of his needle bill, being evidently sharp enough in powers of sight to dart at the small fish upon which he would feed, were he able to find them: instead of which he contents himself with pieces of liver chopped up, and holds his own against the broad mandibles of the Spoonbills, as they ladle up the bits thrown down to them.

The Lesser Egret is a bird of complete and snowy whiteness in plumage, with toes of great length for the size of the owner, and of a bright yellowish green colour. In the spring he assumes a slender crest as well as the delicately formed "aigrette" feathers on the back.

Every evening my Egret marches solemnly in to his roosting house (for I fear foxes, etc.) where he will perch himself upon the summit of a sheaf of clean straw, feeling, without doubt, superior to the Spoonbills below him.

Anyone having a good supply of fresh water, a picturesque shallow pond where grow rushes and irises, cannot do better than

wire it in, and turn down such birds as Egrets, Spoonbills, Oyster-Catchers and various things that love to stand on one leg, knee deep, near the margin, uttering whistlings and pipings and croakings of different tones and degrees. Such sounds recall to one days and moments passed in the haunts of birds of marshland and sea and loch, than which, to bird-lovers, there are no surroundings more full of fascination and interest.

Almost, if not quite, the most delightful spot in our Zoological Gardens is the Eastern Aviary, where the pink and white Flamingos, standing on coral stilts, "gaggle" and croak; where the scarlet Ibis dazzles one's eye, where the Egrets and the Spoonbills, the smaller gulls and various waders congregate together in picturesque and varied groups; flying, at times, with free pinions, and thereby shewing themselves to advantage, as many another of their species in captivity is unable to do.

## AN ACCOUNT OF MY BIRD ROOM.

BY MARGARET WILLIAMS.

My bird-room is still in its infancy, having been but recently devoted to its present purpose. Only last year it was a laundry, and when I took it in hand it bore very visible signs of the purpose to which it had been put. It is the front-room—the drawing-room—of an empty four-roomed cottage attached to a coach-house and stable combined. The latter is not used as a stable, but elevated into a rabbitry, and the whole cottage will soon, I hope, be an interesting Zoo in miniature. The birds' parlour is a room about 22 feet by 14 feet, with a double window looking nearly due south, which gets every ray of sun. You enter by the door, as is customary, and in the opposite wall are two more doors, opening on shallow cupboards. The shelves in these contain the birds' larder, but as they are damp, and accessible to mice, being in the outside wall, they are, vulgarly speaking, no great shakes. However, by keeping all the seed, etc., in airtight tins—Lipton's tea tins, multitudes of which were left in the house by our predecessor—I manage to cheat the mice, who cannot get out into the room, the cupboard doors being well fitted.

The room is decorated with ordinary whitewash, mixed with a good deal of yellow ochre and much size, and the walls look bright and clean and do not rub off. The door and cupboards and all woodwork are painted grey. Two aviaries, each about four feet wide and deep are built against the back and door side walls, and run from the ceiling down to within three feet of the ground. They were built up upon flap ironing boards, which

had been fixed against the walls originally; the ironing-board forms the bottom of the aviary, and is supported on two slender rods fastened to the floor, up which mice could not creep; at any rate, not without some trouble. The aviaries are made of white deal tile battens, planed, and left their natural colour; and half-inch mesh wire netting. The perches are of bamboo, which I like, as it is so smooth that the dirt from the birds' feet (and the very cleanest birds, beautifully kept, will sometimes have dirty feet) does not stick to the perch. Besides straight perches, each aviary has in it a large evergreen branch, which will be changed when dirty. I cannot get fir branches, so have to be content with *arbor vite*, and even those were arrived at with considerable difficulty.

Standing with one end close to the window is the small birds' aviary, made of the same materials as the two against the wall, and perched and bushed in the same manner. It is about six feet long, four-and-a-half feet wide, and nearly eight feet high, and is made of batten and wire all round. There are six coconut husks in it, and a very delectable log nest from Paris, most ornamentally covered with beautiful green lichen. The birds, however, inartistic brutes that they are, scorn this high-art residence and much prefer the humble husk. The husks cost sixpence, and the log nest two francs, so after all economy is consulted, if not taste! I find the birds seem to like the bamboo perches much better than either branches and twigs, or ordinary wood perches: probably the varying thickness of the bamboo and the little knots in it help them to hold securely when at roost. On the floors of these three aviaries—perhaps I should call them large cages by rights—I use sand collected from a well rain-washed road. This material is the only alternative to Spratt's threepenny bags, and I found it so very expensive to have such elegant sand for general use that I sent the gardener to get the road sand for floors, while I put a little Spratt's in a tin for eating and gizzard purposes.

The fireplace of my bird-room is occupied by a coke stove, which is very tiresome and which I do not recommend to anyone who can afford oil, or get gas. I found an oil-stove so extravagant—it burnt three gallons of oil in a week, and sometimes more—that, my bird hobby not being my only craze, and having to divide the purse with one or two others, I was obliged to have the cheaper coke stove. It makes dust, and requires attention every two hours; this would not be the case if it were larger, but too large a stove would make the room unwholesomely warm. The great disadvantage of coke stoves is the almost im-

possibility of regulating the heat, which can be so easily done with oil or gas. However, I still use an oil lamp when only a slight warmth is required. The stove, flue pipe, and opening of the chimney are made quite safe by being, as it were, caged in a square cover made of batten and netting, which is very light and is moved aside when the stove is stoked.

The floor of the room is kept covered with fine red sawdust, which looks exactly like sand, and is swept up and sifted whenever it begins to look dirty; the real sand is kept in a shallow box from which the birds can take all they want. The water, seed, and food for the insectivorous birds are at present kept on the floor, well out in the middle and away from perches; should the mice find their way in at any time, I must rig up a swinging tray from the ceiling. In the corners of the room I have masses of branches, forming a dense cover for shy birds, and bamboos here and there between the sides of the fixed aviaries and the walls. I mean to have some box shrubs in pots when I can get them, and put them about in the middle, unoccupied, part of the room.

Outside the door I have a second door of batten and wire, opening in the reverse direction, so that in hot weather the wooden door can stand wide open, and the air find a free passage through the wire one.

At this season of the year the windows do not require to be opened, and they are screened by the wire end of the small birds' aviary. Next summer I mean to build an outside annex to the bird-room. Its windows look on a gravel path and bit of lawn which I shall have enclosed and wired over; and let the birds go in and out of the window. Some rose-bushes growing outside will doubtless suffer, but I rather fancy the birds will enjoy it!

Having described the bird-room, I must give a few words to the occupants. I would rather watch a *few* birds, comfortable, at their ease, and not crowded together, than have the pleasure of possessing a great many: so my bird-room is not very full.

Each aviary contains a pair of Cardinals, in one case red, in the other, green. The latter are very tame, and I hope will breed next season. In the small birds' aviary are Cutthroats, Zebras, Diamond Finches and Saffron Finches; one pair of each; while a few larger birds—Weavers, Troupials, &c., occupy the rest of the room at their pleasure. The small birds do not seem to mind the presence of their large relations in the least, and the

two couples who might be quarrelsome—the Cardinals—are not in a position to make themselves disagreeable.

Outside my bird-room, at the back of the cottage, I have a small garden aviary containing Budgerigars; it is a compact little wooden arrangement, built against a wall, with wire on one side only, and a snug enclosed bedroom. The Budgerigars seem happy; and we can hear them chattering a hundred yards away.

My one sorrow is the want of accommodation for my Pollys. Six poor exiles have to pass the dull days of winter in the kitchen, for want of a nice warm room of their own. In the summer they live in the drawing-room and make excursions into the garden; in the bird-room they would be impossible. I do think, however, that parrots like the company of the world below stairs; or, perhaps, mine are all of low extraction! At any rate, they chatter far more when in the company of the servants than when they are residing in polite society.

I light my bird-room lamp, which hangs on the wall over the mantel-piece, every evening from seven to nine or ten o'clock, and I find nearly all the birds seem glad to feed up to this late hour.

I know that my bird-room arrangements compare very unfavourably with those of some other members who have been good enough to describe their premises, and I cannot help feeling a wee bit envious of their "regardless of cost" palaces, no doubt just as lovely as the Zoo aviaries, with their fascinating streams and plots of grass and bushes. Still, I hope very much, even in a small room, to be successful with a few insectivorous birds. I have done pretty well in former days with the commoner small foreign finches, but the larger insectivorous birds seem to me far more interesting and desirable both as pets and breeding stock.

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## A VISIT TO THE BIRD SHOW AT THE ROYAL AQUARIUM.

OCTOBER, 1895.

By Dr. GEO. C. WILLIAMSON.

I merely strolled in to look at the foreign birds, and a few brief notes that I made may interest aviculturists.

The exhibition room by daylight is not at all a suitable place for studying birds. What it may be by night when well

lighted and heated, I tremble to think. By day, certainly one half of the exhibits are more or less invisible. Each row of cages keeps the light from the next row, and many of the birds could not be seen at all.

I am not interested in Canaries, and did not pay any special attention to them, save to admire the beautiful crests of some of the birds and the rich colouring of the Lizards. I do not admire birds in proportion to their rarity, but for their beauty, and Mr. Dutton's King Parrakeet (1049) pleased me more than any other bird: it was in perfect condition and wonderfully fine plumage.

The Eclectus Parrot (1950), close by, did not look well, and was, besides, so shrouded by a curtain that it was very difficult to see its lovely colour. It was a beautiful bird, but put in a bad position and in a very poor light. The Laughing Jackass (1037) was the largest that I have ever seen, and although rather rough in its plumage, a grand bird. Mr. Castellan's three birds, Honey-sucker, Dyal bird, and Shama, were of considerable interest and great beauty. For glory of colouring, the Toucan (1030), sent by Mr. Arthur, was the most noticeable exhibit. Its bill was in admirable order and betokened the health of the bird, and its colour was clear and brilliant. In English birds, I must confess to being disappointed at the extremely small size of the cages. There were Skylarks and Song Thrushes confined in cages in which they could hardly turn, and their plumage was suffering with every movement. It always seems to me very hard that Skylarks should be kept at all in captivity; but if it must be so then aviaries are, I think, the only suitable places. The bird ought to have room to open his wings.

A fine Woodpecker was exhibited by Mr. Lott (992). Its owner had erected in the cage a piece of virgin cork, at which the bird was industriously working. A rough piece of tree-stem would have been better. It was almost cruel to offer it barren, dry cork upon which to pursue its wonderful and energetic labour.

The Magpies were beauties: Victor (924), as grand a bird as any one could possibly want to see. There was an interesting Corncrake in fine condition, but needing food, I believe. I think amongst the British birds, Mr. Bradshaw's Cornish Chough most delighted me. It appeared to be perfectly healthy and really cheerful, and its lovely red bill and feet were simply delightful in colour.

One decision I came to, most emphatically, and it was,

never to exhibit under such circumstances. The room was close, dull, and dark; the air loaded with tobacco-smoke, and unhealthy. Many of the cages, especially those of the Parrots, were high up in the heated air and their occupants evidently suffering for want of fresh air. Many of the finest birds were dejected and depressed in appearance, and offered by no means a cheerful sight. I am not an exhibitor, I have no wish to gain prizes; but I do love birds for their own sake, and most sincerely I pitied many of the lovely birds in this Show that were suffering from travel, exposure, confinement, and bad air. I hope Messrs. Kneen and Forsyth will not lose their beautiful Swallow (932) but I doubt whether either of them would have been at all happy, if they love their bird, could they have seen it on the day that I was there, and watched it gasp for breath. There were some fine Song Thrushes, but they were so in the dark that one could hardly see them: and yet this fate was preferable to the heat, smoke, and light in the Aquarium when lit up at night. I find no fault with the managers, they did their best; but I recommend no real bird-lover to go to the Show save as a bird-fancier, for to the naturalist the sight is a sad one, and sufficient to start a very strong theory as to the ethics of bird exhibiting.

The Bullfinches, Goldfinches, Linnets, and Siskins were fairly comfortable and resigned to their lot.

The stronger Parrots would probably not suffer, but the more delicate and sensitive English song-birds do, I am convinced, suffer very much at such shows as the one that I visited.

Many exhibitors had thoughtfully affixed labels to their cages, desiring that the birds should not be fed, or at least fed only on certain food. It is quite useless, certain visitors feed every bird indiscriminately; and nuts, sponge cake, biscuit, apple-peel, orange-peel, currants, buns, sultanas, bread, sugar, and sweets are offered to birds by careless, foolish visitors, just as they fancy, wholly careless of instructions or of knowledge of the bird's proper food. Food is sometimes stuffed into the bird's bill: as, for example, I saw a piece of walnut pressed into the mouth of the Swallow, when all he wanted was air; and the wonder is, that any bird ever survives this indiscriminate feeding, the noisome air, and the intolerable heat.

My notes are scattered and written in haste. The exhibition was interesting, many of the birds of great beauty; but, as I have already said, to one who loves the bird for the bird's sake, it was a very painful and grievous sight.

## THE GROSBEAKS.

By H. R. FILLMER.

I propose in this paper to discuss, more or less briefly, some eighteen species of the sub-family *Coccothraustinae*. I have kept living specimens of ten of these species in my own bird-room, and have had good opportunities for examining living birds of three more species; two other species I have seen alive but have not been able to closely examine; the remaining three species (*Spermophila ophthalmica*, *S. caeruleascens*, and *Phonipara lepida*) I have never seen, and can therefore give only second-hand information about them.

I write as an aviculturist for aviculturists, and I therefore propose to make very little reference to the habits of the birds in a state of freedom, and to deal with them simply as aviary birds.

It is very difficult, if not impossible, to draw a hard and fast line between the Grosbeaks and the True Finches on the one hand, and the Grosbeaks and the Buntings on the other; yet, in spite of this, most of the genera have a very distinctive appearance in consequence of the size and shape of the beak, so that even a novice could at once decide whether an unknown bird belonged to this sub-family. However, there is nothing Grosbeaklike about the outward appearance of either *Phonipara* or *Volatinia*, but Dr. Bowdler Sharpe doubts whether these genera are correctly placed among the *Coccothraustinae*.

From the avicultural point of view the Grosbeaks are a very attractive group, for they include two prime favourites: the Cuba Finch and the Virginian Cardinal, as well as several other birds less generally known, which are especially well adapted for the aviary, some of them being remarkably good songsters.

### THE GREENFINCH (*Chloris chloris*).

Of the two British species of Grosbeak (the Greenfinch and the Hawfinch) this is by far the most common, it is indeed so common that most people do not consider it worth keeping in captivity. It possesses no song, and is not remarkable for beauty, although Mr. Hudson thinks its colours prettier than those of the Chaffinch, and says that "against a background of green leaves, with the sun light on him, he is certainly beautiful." In captivity it is hardy and long lived. It is heavy and clumsy in a cage and should, therefore, always have the range of an aviary. It is readily tamed if caught when adult, but a hand-reared bird is best and makes a delightful pet. It is easily reared from the

nest on hard boiled egg and soaked rape-seed, or some similar food.

THE CHINESE GREENFINCH (*Chloris sinica*).

When a pair of these birds were exhibited at the Crystal Palace a few years ago (I think it was in 1892) many people, especially the very deep ones, thought they were hybrids, one of the parents of which was a European Greenfinch. They are found in Eastern Siberia, Japan, and China, and bear a strong resemblance to our Greenfinch, but the general colour is chocolate brown instead of olive green. I well remember how, at the Show before alluded to, Mr. Abrahams pointed out those birds to me and a good many others who were present, and remarked that they were the rarest birds there. This was very probably correct, but rare birds are not necessarily attractive, and there was nothing very taking about the Chinese Greenfinches. If they were easily procurable at a moderate price, which is the reverse of the case, I do not think they would become popular aviary birds.

In 1893 a bird was exhibited at the Crystal Palace which was described in the catalogue as a hybrid between an "English Greenfinch and a Japanese Finch." Probably the "Japanese Finch" was *Chloris sinica*.

THE BLACK-TAILED HAWFINCH (*Eophona melanura*).

As the first volume of the *Avicultural Magazine* contains two short articles from my pen concerning this bird, I propose to dismiss it here after a very few words, referring my readers to Vol. I, page 12, for a description of its appearance; and to Vol. I, page 104, for an account of its nesting.

Although not brightly coloured the Black-tailed Hawfinch is a handsome bird. When in good plumage it almost rivals the Java Sparrow in sleekness; and, like the Java Sparrow, it is seldom to be seen in bad plumage, except when moulting. But its chief attraction is its song, which is both loud and musical and not at all such as would be expected to proceed from a seed-eating bird. The notes much resemble those of the Blackbird, and can be exactly imitated by the human lips in whistling. Both sexes sing, when together as well as when separate, and my hen sings more loudly and frequently than the cock; but the cock has a sweeter note. My hen sang while building her nest, only ceasing when she commenced to lay.

Although common in its native land very few specimens find their way to this country, and for that reason no young of this species have yet been reared in England, although it is a

somewhat free breeder in captivity. According to Dr. Russ, it has been bred in Germany by Mr. W. Hartwig.

I feed my Black-tailed Hawfinches on canary seed, paddy rice, sunflower seed, German rape, linseed, and occasionally some hemp seed. I also give them very frequently a small quantity of Abrahams' Preserved Egg—they will not eat fresh egg, although they fed their young one on it. They also have a good deal of fruit and green food, but they will not touch insect food in any form.

Considering its handsome appearance, fine song, hardiness, and readiness to nest, the Black-tailed Hawfinch, if regularly imported, would doubtless become a favourite aviary bird. Its greatest fault is its spitefulness towards other birds, which renders it quite impossible to keep it in a mixed aviary. I have tried more than once to keep other birds with my Hawfinches, but have always been obliged to remove them on account of the persecution to which the Hawfinches subjected them, though I am bound to say that I never found that any injury had been inflicted, beyond the loss of a few feathers.

The Black-tailed Hawfinch is sometimes known as the Japanese Hawfinch, but the true *Coccothraustes japonica* is a quite different species. Our bird is a native of China, and is of doubtful occurrence in Japan.

#### THE HAWFINCH (*Coccothraustes coccothraustes*).

This handsome bird is not quite so rare in England as is often supposed, its great shyness making it very careful to avoid observation. It is not much of a favourite as an aviary bird, on account of its spitefulness towards other birds: for this reason it should never be trusted in a mixed aviary of small birds, but it could doubtless be kept with Parrakeets.

I have never kept this species, but it would no doubt thrive on the same diet as its Black-tailed relation.

#### THE YELLOW-BELLIED GROSBEAK (*Phœnicurus chrysogaster*).

This bird is fully as ugly as its name, which is saying a good deal. It is as large as a Virginian Cardinal, very stoutly built, and with a short tail. The general colour of the male is golden yellow very much mottled with blackish; the wings, however, are black or blackish brown, with white spots. The bird looks much like a very large and stout Saffron Finch, without the orange forehead. I have never seen the female, but her general colour is described as ashy brown.

They have had this species at the London Zoological Gardens, and Mr. Swaysland, of Brighton, was recently the happy possessor of two—both of them, I think, young males, although he believed them to be a pair.

The Yellow-bellied Grosbeak seems to be of a very peaceable disposition and differs greatly in this respect from the Hawfinches. He is reported to be a good songster, but the only information which I can obtain on this point is very vague: should this report be correct the species may come into favour, but *Pheucticus chrysogaster* will certainly never be prized for his beauty. He appears to be a tame bird, and readily makes himself at home.

He is a native of South America.

THE DARK-BLUE GROSBKAK (*Guiraca cyanca*).

This handsome bird reminds one of the allied genus *Spermophila*, but is considerably larger than any of the species in that genus. The Zoological Society call it the Brazilian Blue Grosbeak, and some of the dealers give it the absurd name of Brazilian Bullfinch.

The general colour of the male is deep blue, similar to the colour of the Combasou, the forehead and fore part of the crown and the butt of the wing are of a much lighter and brighter blue; the feathers at the sides of the beak and underneath, to the extent of nearly a quarter of an inch from the beak, are black; the flight feathers of the wing are black or nearly so, and the tail feathers the same colour, the bill blackish.

I have never seen the female, but she is described as being of an ochreous brown colour.

It is a somewhat slender bird, although the head and beak are large in proportion to the body. In actual bulk it would perhaps not much exceed the Greenfinch, but it would measure considerably more in length.

From the above description it will be seen that it is a bird of striking appearance, which would add to the attractions of any aviary—but I should be inclined to doubt its peaceableness, and should advise considerable caution in placing it among smaller birds. It has a good song.

The circumstance that Mr. Swaysland has at present two males in his possession has enabled me to describe this decidedly uncommon species.

It is a South American bird.

(To be continued).

## REVIEWS.

*The Royal Natural History.*—Parts 19, 20, and 21. Edited by Richard Lydekker, F.R.S. (Frederick Warne & Co.)

It is eminently desirable that aviculturists should acquire at least an elementary knowledge of the structure of birds, their habits when free, and the principles which underlie the system of classification adopted by ornithologists. The study of these subjects has an important bearing on aviculture, and we therefore make no apology for occasionally occupying the pages of the *Avicultural Magazine* with reviews of books which treat of the natural history of birds, and not of their management in captivity.

Chapter VIII of the "Royal Natural History" describes the Cuckoos and their near relations the Plantain-eaters or Touracos. Some of the Cuckoos are parasitic, while others build nests. Thus the great Spotted Cuckoo lays in the nests of Crows and Magpies, while the Indian Pied Cuckoo lays in the nests of Babbling Thrushes. Of the common Cuckoo, Dr. Bowdler Sharpe writes:

"The variability in the colour of the eggs is well known, and it appears that in each individual the colour of the eggs is hereditary. That is to say, that Cuckoos brought up by Meadow Pipits always select that bird to be the foster-parent of their own young in course of time, the same being the case with regard to Hedge Sparrows, Wagtails, and other ordinary victims of the Cuckoo. The small size of the egg and the extraordinary similarity which it often shows to the egg of the foster-parent render it difficult to distinguish the Cuckoo's egg from those of the rightful owner of the nest; and sometimes a Cuckoo will lay a blue egg exactly like that of the Redstart or Pied Flycatcher, the nest of which it is about to utilize. In the case of eggs laid by the Cuckoo in Wagtails' nests and those of other birds, the resemblance is exact, and when a Cuckoo's egg is found in a nest where the eggs of the foster-parent are different, it is probable that the Cuckoo has not been able to find a nest at the moment in which the eggs belonged to its own hereditary type. The nest of a Sedge-warbler has indeed been found with a Cuckoo's egg in it, which was the exact counterpart of those of the foster-parent; and a few days after, the finder having noticed the female Cuckoo to be hovering about the neighbourhood all the time, found a Cuckoo's egg of the same Sedge-Warbler type in a Reed-Bunting's nest where, of course, it looked thoroughly out of place. From these facts it would appear that a Cuckoo, laying a "Sedge-Warbler" egg, had been unable to find a second Sedge-Warbler and had been constrained to put it into a Reed-Bunting's nest."

Chapter IX deals with the Trogons, which, we believe, have never been successfully kept in Europe; the Colies or Mouse-birds, which are sometimes to be obtained by aviculturists; the Humming-birds, the Swifts, the Nightjars, Todies, Motmots, and Bee-eaters. The Hoopoe has been kept in

confinement, and is said to be a very interesting pet. The Hornbills are familiar to visitors to the Zoological Gardens. A description of the Kingfishers, Rollers, and Frog-mouths concludes this chapter.

Chapter X contains an interesting but too brief account of the Parrots, and here the author ventures on a few quotations from avicultural books; which cannot, however, be said to add to the interest or value of the chapter. The coloured plates representing Macaws and Kaka Parrots are the best that have appeared so far, which is not saying much for them. Chapter XI treats of the Owls, which, we think, deserve more attention from aviculturists than they generally receive. Chapter XII is devoted to the diurnal birds of prey, and Chapter XIII describes Cormorants and Pelicans.

The "Royal Natural History" is issued at a price which places it within the reach of all aviculturists, and our readers will do well to give it a place on their bookshelves.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### THE ETHICS OF EXHIBITING.

SIR,—You and I both agree that man has rights over the lower animals, and that the keeping of birds in captivity is a lawful and justifiable exercise of that right. I admit that the keeping of birds in captivity, which have once known a state of freedom, involves an appreciable amount of suffering; but I hold that we are justified in inflicting that small amount of suffering in order to increase our own knowledge and pleasure. If we are to keep wild birds at all, this suffering is inevitable. But you go a step further and say that, because the keeping of birds involves the infliction of suffering, and yet is justifiable, therefore the wholly unnecessary and purposeless suffering caused by sending birds to Shows is also justifiable. Here I part company with you. The whole thing depends upon the end to be attained. Is man better or happier for this suffering of the birds? I say "Yes" in the case of bird-keeping, but "No" in the case of exhibiting. I believe that man is justified in confining birds for his own pleasure, provided that he does all in his power to make their captivity happy. The exhibitor who shuts his birds up in little boxes called show-cages, and sends them about the country all the winter to Shows, is certainly not doing his best to make their captivity endurable.

SEPTIMUS PERKINS.

### BREEDING RESULTS.

SIR,—Mr. Savage asks, in the November number, for breeding results during the past season. Mine have not been so satisfactory as usual: the small foreign finches particularly having done badly, and I am fast coming to the conclusion that it is unwise to have more than one pair of a kind in the same place, if the best results are desired.

My first young ones were two mules from a male Green Singing Finch and female Grey. They were hatched early in April, and developed into fine sprightly birds, with but a faintly perceptible trace of their father about them. The same pair reared two young ones last year. They are very poor nest builders: making a slight open nest that is very apt to let the young ones fall out before they can fly.

The only other youngster from our small foreign section has been a Zebra Finch, the only one from two pairs.

In previous years we have had Ribbon Finches (4), Parson Finches (4), and St. Helena Waxbills (6).

Of Budgerigars we have had a considerable number from two pairs, I cannot say how many; but the larger proportion of them were from one pair. The Cockatiels were a long time settling down, and ultimately brought out two fine young ones. The White-headed Love Birds have made a great show, but have produced no young; last year they laid some eggs which did not hatch.

Silver Pheasants (6), Golden ditto (3), hatched under Bantams.

The Saffron Finches have reared three fine young ones, making their nest in a hollow log. A first nest was built in a gorse-bush, but nothing resulted. In other years the same log has been used by other individuals of the same species. They generally breed late in the season.

Red-crested Cardinals, six hatched in two nests from same pair; four left the nest, but did not live.

With the British birds, the results this year have been very discouraging, three nests of Greenfinches being the sum total. These birds breed like mice. In previous years we have done well with Goldfinches, Bullfinches, and Brown Linnets; rearing fine, strong young birds.

One year we had young mules hatched from a male Pied Wagtail and a female Grey, but they were not reared. The nest was built in the corner of the husk-tray, beneath a seed hopper from which most of the other birds obtained their food regularly and which the attendant had to replenish frequently. The hen bird was very tame; she disappeared unaccountably soon after being transferred to our new pool aviary, when that was first stocked; probably an early victim to the rats—the greatest of my “difficulties.”

CHARLES L. ROTHERA.

SIR,—It may interest some of the members of the Avicultural Society to hear the result of breeding from Yellow Budgerigars. My Yellow Budgerigars went to nest last month and have reared two very fine young ones, both of a very light yellow colour. One more died in the nest—that also was yellow.

I should like to know if any of the other members have bred from a pair of Yellows, and if so, with what result as regards the colour of the offspring.

I have also reared two fine Peach-faced Love Birds—these are from my Brighton and Palace winners. It is worthy of note that the parents were disqualified at Norwich Show, on the ground that they were two cocks!

My Cherry Finches have brought up one young one—another died in the nest.

J. CRONKSHAW.

SIR,—My breeding results for the year 1895, are as follows:

Ribbon Finches. Thirteen young ones reared by two pairs. Several more died in the nest, including one whole brood, but none were thrown out alive.

Parson Finches. Four young ones from one pair (two broods of two each). No others were hatched.

Black-tailed Hawfinches. One young one hatched, and lived a week.

Bengalese. One young one hatched on two occasions, each time destroyed when a day or two old, either by Ribbon Finches or by the parents.

Dwarf Finches (*Spermestes nana*). One nest of three eggs—none hatched.

Virginian Cardinals. One nest of five eggs—none hatched.

HORATIO R. FILLMER.

#### MEAT FOR PARROTS.

SIR,—I note that Mr. Arthur is asking if any aviculturists have found flesh to be injurious to Parrots. My answer, from experience, is Yes.

I have kept dozens of Parrots and Parrakeets and have never had but two feather-pluckers, and both of these had been fed on meat. I have never seen a good tight-feathered bird fed on meat either raw or cooked

J. CRONKSHAW.

#### PARROTS' PERCHES.

SIR,—I think I can give a useful hint to those members of the Society who are troubled, as I was some months ago, by their Parrots constantly nibbling their perches to pieces.

Oak and other hard wood perches were all destroyed in a very short time by my Grey Parrot; till one day I happened to notice a nice straight branch from a laurel that was being cut down. Thinking it just suitable for a perch, I had it cut the right length, thoroughly peeled, and then placed by the kitchen fire to dry and harden.

At the end of the week it was ready to be fitted into the cage, and from that time I have had no further trouble about perches, as it remains untouched.

I fancy it must be from the taste, as others quite as hard were destroyed.

M. D. SHARP.

#### IS GRIT DANGEROUS TO NEWLY IMPORTED PARROTS?

SIR,—Referring to Mr. Dutton's letter at page 12, my experience—such as it is—teaches me that grit is sometimes dangerous, at any rate to newly imported Parrakeets, and to those newly received from dealers. The withholding of grit, and often unsuitable food given at uncertain intervals, cause indigestion, leave the birds in a weak and disordered condition, and occasionally with an abnormal craving for grit. As soon as grit is placed within their reach, regardless of size or suitability, such birds swallow what first comes to hand, and too much of that, and an internal block occurs, but more often in the crop than elsewhere.

With new birds, my usual practice is to supply only the finest grit, and that very sparingly; but I let them have plenty of crushed egg-shell and cuttle-bone. When well established, I have not myself known a case of Parrot or Parrakeet suffering through having partaken of grit.

REGINALD PHILLIPPS.

## FOOD FOR INSECTIVOROUS BIRDS.

SIR,—Possibly some readers of the *Avicultural Magazine* have experienced a considerable difficulty in getting a supply of suitable insects for their pets, especially in winter. I have, at the cost of no little time and correspondence, collected the addresses of seven or eight people willing to supply cockroaches at a reasonable price, (4d to 5d per 100); and, as these are a most valuable staple for large birds, I think the members of our Society might be glad to know where they can obtain supplies. I will willingly send a list of names and addresses of cockroach vendors to anyone enclosing a stamped envelope for the purpose. Of course I cannot vouch for the character of all those on my list; but I have found those among them who have supplied me quite satisfactory.

M. WILLIAMS.

10, LANSDOWN CRESCENT, BATH.

(MRS. LESLIE WILLIAMS.)

## BUDGERIGARS.

SIR,—It may not be uninteresting to the members of the Avicultural Society to read the following facts regarding a nest of Budgerigars I have had during the past season. I had some fourteen or fifteen in an outbuilding, which I wanted to remove into a large outdoor aviary I had erected, but one pair had a nest of three young ones which I did not wish to disturb. I safely removed about half of them, leaving the parents behind to look after the family, but in removing the second lot on the following night I was not so fortunate, for amongst those I caught were the parents of the young birds. This I did not find out until that night, the following day, and the next night had passed, then I discovered the poor little things were getting no food. I cut down the cocoa-nut husk, took it into the new aviary, cut it open upon the seed table, and awaited the issue. No sooner had I got a fair distance away than the parents flew to the young ones, and there was a most comical scene: such fluttering, and kissing, and chattering, as made it most amusing; but what I think remarkable was the fact that the young had been two nights and a day without food, and yet appeared not to have suffered; the old birds fed on, and they were quickly able to take care of themselves.

NORMAN H. JONES.

## THE RUFIOUS-NECKED WEAVER.

SIR,—Will you tell me the name of a large Weaver (?) bird which I will endeavour to describe accurately?

It is nearly twice as large as an Orange Bishop, with strong black beak, large dark flesh-coloured claws, black head shading off at the neck to something like the dark colour in the front of a Paradise Whydah's neck. The body is yellow with a slight greenish tinge, becoming a little lighter towards the tail, which is light olive-green. The wings are light olive-green with darker markings, somewhat like the wings of a Mountain Finch in the position of the markings. The eyes are red with black or dark-brown pupils. The size is between a hen Cardinal and a Mountain Finch. It is very fierce and quarrelsome.

LUCY E. PHILLIPS.

*The following reply has been sent to Mrs. Phillips:—*

Your bird is undoubtedly the Rufous-necked Weaver, sometimes called the Texter Weaver (*Hyphantornis cucullatus*). I have kept this species in an aviary; its chief interest consists in the marvellous nests which it weaves.

A. G. BUTLER.

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IDENTIFICATION OF RARE DOVES.

By O. E. CRESSWELL.

I have for several years been interested in the Columbine tribe. When first I began my collection of Doves I found it extremely difficult to identify those which I bought of various importers, and even now I do not by any means find it easy to do so, though there are only two or three of my stock about whose correct names I still have doubts. Why dealers should be so specially vague about this genus, I cannot pronounce. Probably it is because the genus is a very large one, and very widely spread over the earth, and that real study is needed to gain anything like accurate knowledge of it. There appears, too, to be no great demand for foreign Doves, and consequently vendors do not find it worth their while to take much trouble about them. For those who may be inclined to try this singularly varied and, as I think, interesting tribe, I may as well relate three ways in which I have traced birds.

1st. By seeing living named specimens in public collections, such as the Regent's Park Gardens, the Antwerp and Cologne collections, and the Jardin d'Acclimatation in Paris.

2nd. From illustrated and descriptive books, such as Selby's volume on "Pigeons," in the series of Jardine's "Naturalists' Library," and the works of Gould, Levaillant, and Temminck.

3rd. By examining stuffed specimens in museums, and especially by looking over some of the large collection of skins at South Kensington, which, by the courtesy of the Curator of the Ornithological Department of the British Museum, I have been allowed to do.

All these three methods of study have, however, some drawbacks. 1st. From the vast number of species in this genus, and the very slight difference between some of them, one finds much diversity of nomenclature in different Zoological Societies ;

hence some perplexity, which is not diminished by the aforesaid ignorance of those who import such birds. With some remarkable and laudable exceptions, they give, unwittingly, most misleading information about their origin. Over and over again I have been offered two birds of different species as cock and hen of the same. In some cases, few I hope, imaginary names are assigned to importations, supposed to be attractive to purchasers. I have quite lately known of an instance in which a large and unattractive importation were for a time advertised as "Bronze-winged Doves from Africa," and subsequently as "Bronze-winged Doves from India." Of course this diversity of nomenclature, both on the part of scientific societies and unscientific vendors, causes much confusion and uncertainty. It may be said that a practical aviculturist takes pleasure in his birds apart from their scientific names; this may be so, but, as I take it, the great object of our Society is to bring together those bird-lovers who are scientific and those who are not. Accurate knowledge of the native climate of any bird helps towards its proper treatment in captivity; not to mention that most of us like to be duly informed of the species we possess.

2nd. The older ornithologists were addicted to giving very fantastic names to their discoveries, some of which have stuck to them. *E.g.*: Levaillant, one of the most interesting travellers and ornithologists of the last century, named a small Dove which he found in Caffre-land and elsewhere in South Africa, the "Emerald Dove," because, when in full plumage, a tiny speck with a green gloss is to be found on its wing. The name survives, but in different collections I have found it attributed to different breeds; this is not very surprising, because Levaillant's own description of it is at variance with his beautiful illustration in the 6th vol. of "Oiseaux d'Afrique."

3rd. Though much information is to be gathered from the study of stuffed specimens and preserved skins, there are often two things lacking, of much importance in the identification of species:

(a) The correct colour of eyes.

(b) That of beak and feet.

In a preserved skin, the former is, of course, entirely lost; and the latter much changed. In the case of many stuffed specimens, the stuffer has little to guide him beyond the skin itself; hence wrong eyes are used, and incorrect colour given to beaks and legs.

From this summary of my general difficulties in correct identification of Doves, I pass to one or two particular enquiries, in case any member of our Society can help me. I should like, first, to get any information about the Emerald Dove (*Chalcopelia afra*) to which I have already alluded. More than three years ago I got a pair of Doves as "Spotted Doves from Brazil," from a great importer. The hen survives now in lovely plumage. They came with various African Doves, and certainly correspond with Levaillant's illustration of the "Emerald," and with a stuffed specimen in the Natural History Museum, but the spots on their wings have a purple, not a green, gloss; and their tails, which Levaillant describes as "*très courte et arrondie*" are certainly neither short nor appreciably rounded. Levaillant, too, describes his Emerald Dove as being one-third less than the Common Turtle: a fairly accurate description of this bird; while much smaller Doves which I have, on the Continent, seen labelled "Emerald," are not half the size of the European Turtle.

Then I have for years possessed a great favourite: a tiny, short-tailed and short-legged Dove, which came in the same lot as the bird I have described, with Tambourines and others. The vendor sent it as a Schlegel's Dove, of which it is not half the size; and when I repudiated this name for it, said it must then be an Emerald Dove, and came from S. W. Africa. I put no great confidence in his knowledge: for when he advertised Emerald Doves, since, and I wrote for some, he only sent me small Brazilian Zenaidas, which I know well, and sent back. This little bird is of a generally bronzy and vinaceous colour, has a bluish head, red beak and feet, and tiny brilliant green spots on the wings. Its figure resembles Levaillant's illustration of what he fantastically calls the *Columbe Caille*. I have never seen but this one, and two others which came with it in miserable condition and soon died.

There is another Dove about which I would say a word. In our own Zoological collection, at Regent's Park, it is called the Vinaceous Turtle—not a very appropriate name for a bird whose hues are chiefly pink and blue. It is the size of a Barbary Turtle, hardy and attractive. All over the Continent it is called the Senegal Turtle: not inaptly, as it seems common in Western Africa. Levaillant has a charming illustration of it as *Tourterelle Maillée*, from the fancied resemblance of its breast-markings to mail. Why it should have been named Vinaceous by our Zoological Society, I should like to know.

Lastly, there is a Dove largely imported from Africa, and sold under many names. In plumage it is almost identical with the Barbary Turtle, though the neck-ring is rather thicker at the back and does not come quite so far forwards. In size it is slightly less; but the real distinction is in the eye, which is large and entirely dark, instead of having the brilliant red iris of the Barbary Turtle. This Dove I have always believed to be the Half-Collared Turtle (*Turtur semitorquatus*); the other names under which I have known them sold are absurd and entirely made up for sale. However, not long ago a distinguished aviculturist, who presumably should know, assured me that some far larger Doves which he had (Cambayan I fancy) were "half-collared." Am I right or wrong in the name which, in all good faith, I have assigned to this Turtle?

## RARE FOREIGN BIRDS.

(SECOND SERIES)

### II.—THE GREEN MALABAR HONEYSUCKER.

*Phyllornis aurifrons.*

By C. S. SIMPSON.

Of the somewhat large number of foreign birds which have at various times lived in my collection, not one was more beloved nor is more regretted than a beautiful specimen of the Green Malabar Honeysucker which I obtained in the summer of 1893, and which came to an untimely end in one of my aviaries a short time ago.

There is indeed no cage bird which combines more charming and attractive traits than this species, which is usually (though wrongly) known in this country as the Green Bulbul.

The Malabar Honeysucker is a native of India; the specimens which reach England are few and far between, and are readily purchased at high prices by amateurs on their arrival: it is therefore very seldom that one is to be seen for sale.

This bird is singularly beautiful in colour, and, unlike many birds of gorgeous plumage, has a very pleasing song; it readily becomes tame and familiar, and with reasonable care will preserve its health and beauty for years in captivity; it is by no means difficult to cater for, and is not very susceptible to changes of temperature. And, since there is no undesirable quality as a set-off to these amiable traits the subject of my article deservedly

occupies a very high rank among the aristocracy of the bird-room.

The Green Malabar Honeysucker measures about seven inches in length, and the prevailing colour of the adult male is a bright grass green; the forehead is bright orange; the chin and throat purple, surrounded by a rather broad band of black, and a small patch of the most brilliant metallic blue appears at the bend of the wing. The body is stout, and the tail short and square, but the head and neck are slender; the beak is long, slender, and gently curved, and the long narrow tongue is admirably adapted for insertion into flowers, and is indeed constantly in use exploring any object which may be presented to the bird. The legs and feet are short, stout, and of a pale grey colour: they are evidently intended for an arboreal life, for the bird hardly ever comes to the ground, and I never saw my specimen either run or hop. It has no crest, thereby differing from the true Bulbuls, all of which are crested.

Though I prefer aviaries to cages as a general rule, there are some birds which appear to adapt themselves more readily to the latter, and among these I should be inclined to class the subject of the present article. My Malabar Honeysucker occupied a large cage for the greater part of the time that I had him, and I shall never cease to regret turning him into an aviary with other birds. A *large* cage, however, is absolutely necessary, for the bird is very active, and as its plumage is peculiarly soft and the feathers easily broken, it requires a good deal of room. Its powers of flight are rather feeble, and as it is somewhat timid and defenceless when attacked by other birds, while it becomes most tame and affectionate towards its owner, it is far happier in a cage in its master's study than in the comparatively free life of the aviary.

The Malabar Honeysucker is very fond of bathing, but never remains in the water splashing about as many birds do: on the contrary it makes a series of rapid dashes through its bath, in at one side and out at the other, the very soft plumage quickly becoming saturated, so that the bird is unable to fly, and is obliged to seek its lowest perch to preen and dry itself, for nothing will induce it to remain on the floor of its cage.

In its diet it is both insectivorous and frugivorous: it will consume quite a surprising quantity of pears, bananas, and other soft fruits, which it prefers in a somewhat over-ripe condition: it is extremely fond of mealworms, which it catches cleverly when thrown towards it: bread and milk is also relished, and

ants' cocoons (fresh when possible) and preserved yolk of egg will complete the dietary.

As I said before a large cage is necessary, and, as with all fruit-eating birds, a metal tray should be used and covered with a good layer of sawdust, which may be renewed daily.

The Malabar Honeysucker has a pleasing song of its own, but it is also an excellent mimic, and in the bird-room it soon learns to mingle the notes of its companions with its natural song. Its disposition is nervous and excitable: it soon becomes tame and confiding towards its master, and may readily be taught to perch on the finger and feed from the hand, but it fears strangers and is easily terrified.

My poor bird came to a sad end: I turned him into a small indoor aviary with some other birds, among which was a black and yellow Troupial. All went well for a few days, but one morning I found the Honeysucker dead and mangled on the floor, and the Troupial eagerly tearing the body of his victim to pieces. The murderer was removed and placed in the Parrakeet's aviary where he lived for some months, but he finally fell a victim to his vicious propensities, for he attacked a Purple-capped Lory with fatal result to himself. Had the Malabar Honeysucker remained in his cage, he would probably be alive and happy now.

## MILLET.

By E. G. SALT, L.R.C.P., Etc.

MILLET—genus "*Panicum*," order "*Gramineae*."

French "*Millet*"—Italian "*Miglietto*," diminutive of "*Miglio*."

Latin "*Mille*," a thousand, in allusion to its fertility.

(1) The true millet generally admitted to be "*Panicum*" (*Setaria*) *miliaceum*—German "*Hirse*" mentioned by Hippocrates and Theophrastus as already cultivated in South Europe in their time. It is an annual, grows in sandy soil, and reaches three or four feet high; characterized by its bristly, much-branched, nodding panicles; a native of India and Africa, but is now extensively cultivated in Southern Europe, Southern States, and N. America. The seed is very small, about the size of a large pin's head, white and very glossy; but though small it is an important article of human food, particularly in Africa, where, with "*Sorghum*" (Indian millet or guinea-corn), it is the principal support of the Negro population.

In India it is chiefly used in a kind of soup or *bouillie*, and is made into cakes. The natives grind it in a primitive manner between two stones, and make it into a diet which cannot properly be called bread, but rather a kind of soft thin cake half baked.

In Java it is called "*Jawa-nut*," and in India called "*Warree*" and "*Rade-kane*."

There are several varieties of this, distinguished by grey, white, red, and black seeds.

This is the smallest seeded variety, but the number of seeds in each ear make up for its small size.

(2) ITALIAN MILLET (*Setaria Italica*) or Great Indian Millet was brought originally from India, where it is called "*Kungoo*" or "*Kora-bang*." It is now cultivated in Egypt, Nubia, and the warmer parts of Southern Europe, and used as an article of food for the poor population, as well as being used for the fermentation of beer. It is also employed for making pastry and puddings, and used for feeding horses and domestic fowls. This plant is an annual and the largest variety; grows in a poor soil but requires a warm climate, not ripening in this country; it reaches from four to six feet high and is most prolific in its produce: one spike yielding as much as two ounces of seed, one stem produces many stalks. Its produce is estimated at from five to ten times more than that of wheat. The seeds are small, round, and white, enveloped in a thin, pellucid skin which is very easily removed. In some parts of the South of France, Italy, and Spain it is largely consumed by the poor: who boil the seeds along with vegetables, add a piece of butter or lard, season with salt and pepper, and thus make an acceptable meal; it is alimentary in this form, but makes a heavy, coarse, and disagreeable bread.

(3) GERMAN MILLET (*Setaria Germanica*) or Mohar—German "*Kolbenhirse*"—probably a less valuable and dwarf variety of the Italian Millet; this is a small-seeded variety, but is extremely productive. Formerly grown in Germany and used as a bread-corn, but its use in this way has been long discontinued. It is largely grown in Hungary as green food for cattle and particularly for horses, who prefer it to all other green food.

The Common, Italian, and German Millet are largely imported to this country, and mostly used as bird seeds.

## MR. O. E. CRESSWELL'S ARTICLE ON HIS PARRAKEETS, IN THE "FEATHERED WORLD."

### A CRITICISM.

By V. CASTELLAN.

No doubt the readers of the *Avicultural Magazine*, who are at the same time readers of the *Feathered World*, have read with much interest Mr. O. E. Cresswell's recent article on his Parakeets. I, for one, have done so with great pleasure, and I think it is a great pity that more of our aviculturists do not come forward and give us their experience of birds they have kept. I am, therefore, all the more sorry to have to find fault with so instructive an article; but Mr. Cresswell has made one rather grave error in classification which I should like to point out. In the third and last portion of his article is the paragraph wherein the error occurs, and which I will quote, with his kind permission. When speaking of his Lovebirds, he says:

"Last, and least in size, but not in interest to me, at least, of all my Parrot flock are the Lovebirds. The genus *Agapornis* is a very large one, and is distributed over South Eastern Asia and the adjacent Islands, East and West Africa, and Madagascar, and one species, at least, is a native of South America. These varieties are fairly common in English aviaries: the Red-faced or West African, the Grey-headed or Madagascar, and the Blue-winged or Passerine Parrot of Brazil. I fancy these three are barely a tithe of the species which have been found. I know not of any collective list of the genus, which would be of great interest."

Mr. Cresswell's mistake is this: he says that the Blue-winged or Passerine Parrot belongs to the genus *Agapornis*; this is wrong, for scientifically speaking this species is not one of the Lovebirds at all, although it bears a close resemblance to them. Whereas the genus *Agapornis*, or Lovebirds proper, belong to the sub-family *Palæornithinæ* of the family *Psittacidae*, on the other hand the Passerine Parrots belong to the sub-family *Conurinae* and to the genus *Psittacula*. Again, he is wrong in his description of their distribution; for the genus *Agapornis* is entirely restricted to Africa South of the Sahara, and Madagascar, although they have been introduced into the Mascarene Islands: and therefore its members are not inhabitants of South America or South-Eastern Asia and the adjacent Islands. The genus *Psittacula* is confined to South America, and the Blue-winged Parrotlets range from Mexico to Bolivia and Brazil.

What Parrots he is thinking of, when referring to Love-birds, whom he mentions as living in South-Eastern Asia and the adjacent Islands, I do not know; unless it is the sub-family *Nasiternine*, or Pigmy Parrots, which live in New Guinea, and which have never been brought alive to England; or the genus *Loriculus*, or Hanging Parrots, which range from India and the Philippine Islands through the Malayan region. Neither of the above two groups have any connection with the genus *Agapornis*.

The members of the latter genus may be distinguished from those of the genus *Psittacula* by their rounded instead of pointed tail feathers. The two genera also differ from one another in their nesting. The Parrotlets nest in holes and lay their eggs on the bare wood; but the Lovebirds take possession of the nests of other birds, such as Weavers, for their own use. Those who have been fortunate enough to breed them in captivity tell us that they line their nests with twigs, bits of straw and bark, etc., which the hens carry up to their nest-boxes by putting them between the feathers of their rump.

The confusion between the two genera has arisen on account of their small size (the Parrotlets being the smaller); and also on account of their both having short tails: in which respect they differ from all the other species in their respective sub-families. Internally they also resemble one another, in that, in the skeletons of both, the furcula is absent.

The genus *Agapornis* only contains seven species, so that it cannot be called a very large one.

There is an interesting fact concerning the Parrotlets, which has come to my knowledge just recently. A gentleman of my acquaintance tells me that he has kept a Blue-winged Parrotlet eighteen months in a cage by himself; whereas, we have been told that these birds will only live in pairs.

I am glad I have had an opportunity of pointing out, and, I hope, correcting these very common mistakes; at the same time, I must again apologize to Mr. Cresswell for having criticised his article, but it is only *pro bono publico*, and for that reason I crave his pardon.

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#### A REPLY.

By O. E. CRESSWELL.

I should like to write a few lines in answer to Mr. Castellau's friendly criticism of a paragraph in my article on my Parrakeets, in the *Feathered World*.

The said article was written under great pressure for time; though eventually cut up by the Editor into a series of articles, it was written by request as one, for a special number, and that almost at a sitting. It was solely intended to be popular for a popular paper; and, barring the Parrot volume of the "Naturalist's Library," I had no books at hand. I quite own that under these circumstances it would have been better not to allude to classification; and I stand corrected by Mr. Castellan's superior scientific knowledge as to the commonly called "Lovebirds" belonging to three, not one, scientific genus. He asks what Parrots I was thinking of as coming from South-Eastern Asia and the adjacent Islands. I was thinking of tiny Parrots which I have personally known at different times, some brought from Ceylon and some from, I believe, the Malay Peninsula, and which, in form and voice, greatly resemble the true African Lovebirds (*Agapornis*).

Mr. Castellan doubtless refers to the newest classification of the Zoological Society of England, which I presume for convenience sake we must all follow. The best collection of small stuffed Parrots that I have ever seen is at Basle, where, according to my notes, a very different classification is accepted. I quite see that in habits there is a real distinction between the Asiatic tiny Parrots and the true African Lovebirds; but though it may be presumptuous for a practical aviculturist to criticise scientific definitions, and I find much inconvenience from such ornithologists as Levaillant and Temminck having despised classification in a scientific sense, still I must say that it seems to me very strange to find the little South American Passerine Parrot placed in a totally different genus from the African Lovebirds. I watch my birds very carefully, and have observed the closest similarity between the Red-headed Lovebird and the Passerine Parrot. Every note, every motion and attitude is alike, and I am told they readily pair together. On the other hand, the Madagascari Lovebird, placed in the genus *Agapornis* with the other Africans, is in voice and manners very different.

I can only repeat what in other words I said in the *Feathered World*, that anything like a complete list of the miniature Parrots would be most interesting; and, with his evident great knowledge of the Parrot tribe, perhaps Mr. Castellan would, in some number of our Magazine, favour us with at least an outline of a list of them, so far as discovery has gone.

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## REVIEWS.

*Foreign Finches in Captivity*, by Arthur G. Butler, Ph.D., etc., (L. Reeve & Co., 6, Henrietta Street, Covent Garden). Part VI.

The present part contains descriptions and coloured plates of some of the most charming and popular of the Grass Finches, commencing with the Parrot Finch, the Pintailed Nonpareil, and the Gouldian Finches. The coloured plates of all these species are excellent, and the letter-press is as interesting and as reliable as that of the preceding numbers. An account of the nesting of the Red-headed Gouldian Finch, from the pen of Mr. Reginald Phillipps, will be read with very special interest. The facts bearing on the true relationship of the Red-headed and Black-headed Gouldians are clearly and intelligently discussed by Dr. Butler, in a style which might well be copied by some of our dogmatic avicultural writers.

The descriptions and illustrations of the Parson Finch and Diamond Sparrow are good: the male of the latter is represented performing his ridiculous love dance. An account of the Ribbon Finch follows (we prefer the old-fashioned and more descriptive name of Cut-throat Finch), and a very pretty plate of the Zebra Finch concludes the number. We think the artist has hardly done justice to the perky, alert appearance of the latter bird.

*Birds, Beasts, and Fishes of the Norfolk Broadland*, by P. H. Emerson. (David Nutt, 270-71, Strand).

This is mainly a book on birds, for the beasts and fishes together occupy less than one-fifth of its four hundred pages.

There is a good deal of truth in Mr. Emerson's condemnation of the illustrations which disfigure most works on ornithology; but his strictures are rather too sweeping—he weakens his case by overstating it.

Our author is very complimentary to Sir Ralph Payne-Galway and the late Mr. Booth; and very severe on Gilbert White, Richard Jeffries, and "A Son of the Marshes." White's reputation is too firmly established to be affected by anything that Mr. Emerson can say, and Jeffries also has, by this time, attained a position almost above criticism—but it seems to us a mistake, in the Preface to a work of this kind, for the author to endeavour to discredit his great predecessors, and rather bad taste to speak disparagingly of a contemporary writer of the same style of literature.

Perhaps we shall best enable our readers to form an idea of this book if we give in full the chapter on the Goldfinch.

We do not for a moment agree with Mr. Emerson's opinion that the Goldfinch is "ill-shapen" and "bad-tempered," nor do we pledge ourselves to any of his other notions.

"The Goldfinch or 'draw-water' is not a bird of graceful build nor sweet song, yet is he dear to the Philistine who loves variegated colours, because he satisfies a rude barbaric taste for colour: for he is a "gay bird," and he is great at parlour tricks, like his lover: for cannot he draw his water and seed to his cage by a simple mechanical contrivance? And so he delights the populace, as do the performing elephant and the contortionist.

"And of our cage-birds he seems most ill at ease, and is perpetually rushing from one side of the cage to the other, and if he be given half a chance he will escape, for he is a quick and swift flyer, and returns to the marsh, where in sooth he is seen at his best; for at a distance, flitting restlessly with quick jumps from thistle to gorse-bush in the bright sunshine, he delights the eye, for 'tis an ever-shifting ball of colour flitting over the sere marsh-crops; but when you come to regard him in a cage, you find him ill-shapen, restless, bad-tempered, an indifferent musician, a mountebank and imitator, and a lover of rude noises, for he sings never so sweetly as when a millman's engine is rattling, pumping forth the marsh water into the rivers.

"However, he has taste when building his nursery, for he generally chooses a fruit-tree, preferably an apple, covered with madder-tinged blossom; for though he pairs very early in the spring, he does not begin to build till the middle of May. In some mossy crook he builds his neat small cradle of moss, and he is a good husband, taking his turn at sitting and feeding the young with flies and maggots.

"Though shy birds, if robbed of their young they are very bold; and I have known them go regularly into a cottage to feed the captive young in a cage; the cage was moved by degrees from the nesting-tree to the cottage table—an interval of a day elapsing between each stage. On the other hand, if captured when old, they will often sulk to death, or "die of sulking," as the fennemen say.

"There is a superstition amongst cottagers, that if the young birds die, the old birds have poisoned them; but the mystery is generally to be explained by looking into the seed-dish, when pure hemp will be found—a seed fatal to young birds.

"In autumn they collect in small flocks, and may be seen beating the thistly marshes, or flashing over the snow in mid-winter, when they look at their best, and indeed are then very tame and can almost be taken by the hand.

"But they are becoming rare in the Broad district, and though they may be seen on the marshlands and in the elms and cars by the river-side, it is not an everyday picture.

"The sentimentalist, whose heart is often better than his head, often raises an outcry against caging birds; but if the young bird is taken from its nest before it recognises its parents, there is no cruelty in the matter, for they never know the doubtful sweets and dangers of bird liberty, and will at times, if they escape, return of their own free will to their "prison." Should you wish to take young birds for the cage, you must watch your brood every day; and so long as these formless creatures upon your appearance stretch forth their ugly necks and open their mouths for food

on your approach, so long they are ignorant of their parents, for 'tis a mere reflex action. For when they begin "to take notice," the ugly maw is no longer opened at your approach. You must not, however, wait for that period of development, but take them just before, when they are fledged. Seize them boldly, forgetful of the sentimentalist, and cage them, placing the cage on a stout branch near the nest, and the old birds will feed them.

"A few hours later you may move them up the whitethorn decorated lane for a couple of hundred yards, and so on up to half a mile, but no farther, in one day—that is a young Goldfinch's infant day's journey. So by degrees you decoy the parents into your garden. When the parents get tired of feeding your captives, make pills of eggs and flour, and give them together with plantain-seeds and thistle tops; and so you shall educate them to sing when you blow your slender fire with the bellows; and, if you be a woman, destitute of human lovers, you may teach the little brown-billed bird to kiss you—but a man's kiss is preferable.

"Unless you wish him to sing another's song, for he is of the mean tribe of plagiarists, keep him, when young, out of the hearing of other birds, as he, like many a human parrot, prefers the songs of others to his own. But for any purpose whatsoever, I do not think his company is worth his keep."

Mr. Emerson's style is attractive in spite of sundry irritating affectations, and he is evidently a diligent student of nature and no mere retailer of second-hand facts. The illustrations are all from photographs, and many of them are exceedingly good.

The author's habit of heading his chapters with the local East Anglian names of the birds, is most confusing. The average reader cannot be expected to know that "Firetail" is Norfolk for Redstart, "Herring-spink" for Golden-crested Wren, "Reed-pheasant" for Bearded-tit, "Spinx" for Chaffinch, and "Gool-finch" for Yellowhammer.

The autumn fights between the old and young cock Robins are well known, but it is new to us to read that in these contests it is almost invariably the father Robin who comes off second-best. The battles frequently end in the death of one of the combatants, and Mr. Emerson has been assured by many an old Broadman that the bodies left on the field are always those of old birds.

It seems that birds on their migration, captured on board fishing smacks, are found to suffer at first from sea-sickness, and throw up their food. But, like human voyagers, they speedily recover from the complaint, and feed heartily.

The following account of the nesting of that rare bird, the Bearded Tit, is in Mr. Emerson's best style.

"You may find as many as nine eggs in a nest, but five is the more usual number; and they will, if robbed, build five or six nests in a season, moreover, and not far from the spot where the first cradle was lodged. Nine days suffice for those little architects to complete a new home, which is

nearly always built of reed-leaf and feather; but I have seen nests built of litter and lined with fine grass. . . . The fennmen who gather the nestlings mow a circle round the nest before the eggs are hatched off, and net the place with an old piece of herring lint; for the birds seldom build over water, though they dearly love a hover that rises and falls with the tide, and perhaps that may account for their long nests. And when the hatchlings are a week old, the bird-catchers drop into the reed-jungle and make a dash for the nest. The young birds tumble out like mice and make for the ground, and the fennmen catch them in the mowed space before they have time to reach the protecting reed-brakes, and afterwards they are reared by hand and kept as cage-birds, and they are wonderfully fast growing birds. Indeed, the eggs are hatched in eight days and the young can fly in a fortnight. . . . In winter the Reed-pheasants gather together in flocks, each numbering fifteen or twenty, and you may see them rise from the reed on a bright winter's day, *chinging*, flying up some yards into the blue, and suddenly throwing themselves down headlong into the yellow reed-bed to feast upon the insects therein. They are cheery companions to the solitary reed-cutter as he works boot-deep in the icy water. He often sees them run along the fallen amber stalks, moving like a Wagtail, with tail held straight out behind, picking insects from the water. And the fennan knows they build close by, for they never wander far from the place where they were bred and born."

The extracts we have given show that Mr. Emerson has no prejudice against keeping birds in captivity, and that he is quite free from the cant and sentiment on the subject with which a good many writers on our native wild birds are afflicted. "Birds, Beasts, and Fishes" is a book which we can heartily recommend to our readers.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### BREEDING GREY PARROTS.

SIR,—Has any one of our Society ever bred Grey Parrots? If so, would they kindly tell me how they set to work? F. G. DURTON.

### GOULDIAN FINCHES.

SIR.—Those of your readers who are interested in the charming Gouldian Finches, of both forms, may care to hear my experiences of the past breeding season.

I turned out two pairs of Black-heads and one pair of Red-heads into an unheated garden aviary, on the 24th June, when they had almost completed the moult, a few head and neck feathers only being in the blood.

One of the pairs of Black-heads had reared young last year in the same aviary, which is well furnished with shrubs, and nest-boxes in the covered portion. A cocoa-nut husk and a small wooden box were presently occupied, and almost filled with dry grass bents, by the two pair of Black-heads. The hen Redhead appeared delicate from the first, and later on, died; while her mate, apparently without exciting any opposition, visited both nests, and indeed, if I missed him, I could generally find him by taking down one or other of the nest-boxes off its nail. As last year, I noticed that the chief burden of incubation, and even of feeding the

young, fell to the male birds' share; the hen starting a second clutch as soon as the young left the nest. Early in August I went from home, leaving a brood of young in each of the two nests. Unluckily, at this time an invasion of mice occurred, and before the offenders were caught, the hen belonging to one nest was killed, and the young were forsaken and died. The nests were out of reach of the little pests; but the cock bird of the second nest was somehow caught (at roost I suppose) and his thigh broken. In spite of this severe injury, the heroic little bird brought up his brood single-handed; his mate going to nest again, though the eggs, as might be expected, proved infertile. As a result, at the beginning of October, I caged, besides the adults, five healthy juveniles in the pretty olive grey of the first plumage.

And now I come to the point which really suggested this letter. Judging from what occurred last year, the young will not come into full colour until next May or June; but during the first winter slight changes occur, commencing with the appearance of the feathers of the cap. To my surprise, while his companions are shewing a few black feathers on their heads, one little fellow has already assumed such a brilliant patch of scarlet, that there can be no doubt that he will in due course become a Red-head, and also that, like, I believe, three of the other young birds, he is of the male persuasion. How this is to be accounted for, I cannot say; but it seems to point to one of two things: Either the young bird with the red cap is the outcome of something more than a Platonic affection between the black-headed hen, the owner of the nest, and the unattached red-headed cock—in which case the purity of the scarlet seems rather strange—or, if he is really the genuine offspring of parents both black-headed, it goes to prove that both forms may occur in the same brood: which, though I believe is suspected, has, so far as I know, not been definitely proved. That a stray egg was not laid in the nest by the red-headed hen, I feel sure: for she never appeared either to notice her mate, or to show any interest in the nesting operations going on around her, and, as I have above said, she soon drooped and died.

W. H. ST. QUINTIN.

#### IS GRIT DANGEROUS TO NEWLY IMPORTED PARROTS?

Mr. Dutton's correspondent was doubtless right as to his facts, but quite wrong, I venture to think, in the conclusions which he drew from the facts.

I have more than once come across the condition described: the gizzard, on opening the abdomen, presenting the appearance of a solid tumour of stony hardness, filling up the greater part of the abdominal cavity. When laid open, the gizzard was found to be completely filled with a mass of grit and sand welded together into a solid lump, causing, of course, a complete obstruction.

The correct explanation of this condition I believe to be as follows: It is well known that the function of the grit swallowed by birds is to aid digestion, and that want of grit is a common cause of indigestion. Birds deprived of this material during a more or less lengthy voyage, suffer from indigestion, and, when the grit is at length supplied, are apt to swallow it greedily and too freely. It is easy to imagine that an obstruction may thus be caused, and that the discomfort to which this condition gives rise leads the bird instinctively to swallow more and more grit with the object of relieving its suffering, giving rise at last to the condition described above, and the speedy death of the patient.

That grit, in itself, is not injurious to parrots is proved by the fact that they habitually swallow it with only beneficial effects; but it is highly probable that it is injudicious to supply it too freely to birds which have been previously deprived of it for some time. Many experienced aviculturists are fully alive to this fact and supply only very fine grit, and that sparingly, to newly imported birds. This I think is the right conclusion to draw from the facts given by Mr. Dutton's correspondent; not that grit is injurious in itself.

C. S. SIMPSON.

#### THE SONG OF THE GREENFINCH.

SIR,—In his article on Grosbeaks, in the Magazine for December (p. 24), Mr. Fillmer says of the Greenfinch—"It possesses no song." I have written to him on the subject, and he wishes me to contradict him.

I have, from time to time, caught and kept a good many Greenfinches, and their performances have varied considerably; but, if kept alone, I have always found that a cock bird sang in the spring-time. This is also the case when a pair is kept in an aviary; for then the male bird sings to his mate, and there is no difficulty in breeding if an ordinary Canary nest-box is hung up and material provided for the hen to build with. One cock bird which I caught sang out industriously for many months in the year, its song being equal to that of the ordinary Norwich Canary, but more powerful, and interrupted, after the manner of its kind, by the frequent interjection of its harsh and unpleasant call-note: a guttural sort of *churr*.

I have, on several occasions, heard wild Greenfinches, in the open country, sing equally well to that example of mine; and once, in Norfolk, I heard one singing even better.

The worst of keeping Greenfinches in the neighbourhood of Canaries is—that the young Canaries invariably copy the Greenfinch song with all its blemishes. Apart from the call-note, I consider the performance far superior to the chuckling song of the Linnet, or the *weeak, weeak*, song (no pun is intended) of the Goldfinch.

Seeböhm fairly describes it thus: "There is nothing very striking in its music—it is a song which bears some resemblance to that of an inferior Canary; and it is only when several birds are singing in chorus that their notes are at all attractive." I don't quite agree with his last sentence; I think the song, when heard in the country, is very enlivening. Howard Saunders says that "the song is poor," but he admits that, in confinement, it "shows a moderate capacity for learning the songs of other birds."

Two male Greenfinches in the same aviary are usually too much occupied in fighting to think about singing.

A. G. BUTLER.

#### THE BIRD SHOW AT THE ROYAL AQUARIUM.

SIR,—I am very sorry to see Dr. Williamson's account of the Aquarium Show.

I think one good yearly Show for Parrots much to be desired. The Crystal Palace would supply the want, if it were not held in February. I was hoping the Aquarium might do it, and that our Society might help to provide classes. But after Dr. Williamson's report it is quite clear that idea must be given up. No smoking ought to be allowed at any Bird Show.

F. G. DURTON.

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THE LOVE-BIRD.

By REGINALD PHILLIPPS.

I am glad to see that Mr. Castellán has transferred the case of the Love-bird from the *Feathered World* to the *Avicultural Magazine*. There are not a few who seem to call any small member (including the Budgerigar) of the Parrot family, irrespective of genus, colouring, or habits, a Love-bird, so that the title has become meaningless; and I have long felt that it would be better in every way if it were reserved for the *Agapornes*, the genus most entitled to it. The *Agapornes* may claim the title by right of birth, for they inherit it from their forefathers; and although over-truthful people have rudely shaken the popular belief that if one of a pair die the other will follow suit, yet do they not exhibit their tender love and devotion in another way? and should we not ungrudgingly award the title to them as the reward of merit, and as a mark of distinction above their fellows? With possibly only the remarkable exception of the Grey-breasted Parrakeet (*Myopsittacus monachus*), of all the members of the Parrot family the *Agapornes* alone make nests for their young, the others laying their eggs on the bare wood, soil, or stone, and not carrying to their nests even one single twig, straw, or feather, to help to make their babies comfortable.

Of the seven species of the *Agapornes*, living specimens of *Agapornis taranta*, *A. fischeri*, *A. personata*, and *A. swindereniana* are practically unknown to present-day aviculturists. Another, *A. pullaria*, the familiar Red-faced Love-bird, has not, I believe, ever been known to have nested in captivity. In consideration of the importance of the statement made by Mr. Cresswell that he has been told that this bird and the Blue-winged Parrakeet readily pair together, I think we are justified in inviting that gentleman to obtain and furnish particulars of at least one well-

authenticated instance of such an intermarriage having taken place. Of these five, we may expect that they will nest much like the two species which yet remain to be mentioned; and we can only hope that, when their manner of nidification comes to be revealed, it will be found that they have not belied the title which I hope will now be accorded to the *Agapornes*, and to the *Agapornes* alone.

Of the Red-faced Love-bird, the Madagascar, *A. cana*, and the Peach- or Rosy-faced, *A. roseicollis*, I may say that, however spitefully they may behave towards other birds and extra members of their own species, in a suitable aviary they are, as a rule, very loving and affectionate towards their mates; but the last two have also betrayed to us the ingrained devoted and exceptional character of the Love-bird, not only by making right down comfortable nests for their young, but also by carrying the material to the nesting-places in a way which is unique among the feathered creation, and by bestowing an amount of pains-taking and labour upon the work which, being carried on single-handed, eclipses the proverbial industry of the ant and the bee.

I must here pause for a moment to bring to the front a statement of Mr. Castellan which appears in the second paragraph at page 41:—"The Love-birds take possession of the nests of other birds, such as Weavers, for their own use." If the reference to the Weavers' nests had been included in the next sentence, and quoted along with the other unnatural modes of the nesting of the Love-bird in captivity, I could have understood it; as it stands, it is to me incomprehensible; and I should be exceedingly obliged if he will give his authority for the statement. The rest of the sentence I have quoted may have been taken from the Royal Natural History; but I feel strongly that the writer mentioned in that work made the statement under a misapprehension, of which more anon.

It was with a light heart that I took up my pen to write this article, but it has just occurred to me that it might be wise to refer to my bird-journal. Here I find notes on the nesting of *A. roseicollis*, a daily record extending over a period of some two years, so voluminous that I must confess myself nonplused, being quite unequal to the task of putting them into a shape suitable for the *Avicultural Magazine* in the short time that I find at my disposal; I propose, therefore, to hold over the account of the nesting of this bird for a future occasion, and will now confine myself to a few general remarks.

The nesting habits of the Madagascar Love-bird have more than once been described; it is sufficient to say that, on the whole, they appear to be identical with those of the Rosy-face. Some years ago I had three pairs, one mostly in the house, the others mostly in the garden. These birds were wilder and more timid than the Rosy-face, and not nearly so ready to go to nest. When they did do so, they became so savage and aggressive that I was obliged to get rid of them. Those in the garden always roosted in a balsam poplar, the four sitting side by side, when it was most difficult to detect them amidst the green leaves. Unlike the Rosy-face, for nesting purposes these confined their attentions to a lime tree. The cock-of-the-walk sat a good deal alone, singing connectedly and continuously; neither of the other males sang. I should judge that in their native country they would keep in flocks, separating during the breeding season. When going to feed, they fly down one after another, at intervals of a few seconds. Sometimes, both in manner of flight and accompanying call, they reminded me forcibly of the Common Sandpiper. In Mauritius, they are simply known as La Perruche.

The flight of the Rosy-faced Love-bird is like that of an English Partridge, the bird going off strong and straight, and with a whir-r-r when put up, but usually ending with a sail on out-stretched pinions. When first imported, the male has usually more colour on the face than the female; but, when an old well-kept pair are in a small cage, to distinguish the sex with certainty by a cursory examination is often impossible. With *A. cana* and *A. pullaria*, the sexes are readily distinguishable; I refer to this, as an article in the *Feathered World* some months back made a direct statement to the contrary as regards the latter.

Mr. Cresswell refers to a likeness he sees between the Red-faced Love-bird and the Blue-winged Parrakeet. Besides the points of difference mentioned by Mr. Castellan—the pointed tail feathers and the non-loving nesting arrangements of the Parrakeet—I may point out that the bands on the tail feathers of the Red-face are well marked, while they do not appear at all in the Blue-wing. In their habits I have not myself noticed a likeness, excepting, perhaps, when they are kept in small cages; but in large places I notice many points of difference. The voices of my specimens are alike only in the sense that they both consist of little more than gentle and pleasing twitterings. The war notes of my Blue-wings differ from any sound I have ever heard

uttered by the Red-faces; and their ordinary notes when on the wing are much more like those of some of the Wagtails than of those of the Love-bird. The twitterings of a good Red-faced male, when alone with his wife in a *suitable home*, or when head of a flock, are often so connected and so continuous as to be worthy of being called a song; they sing too by artificial light, and even in the dark. They will also climb down and feed when in almost total darkness, while the Blue-wings rarely move from their perches after dusk, even by artificial light. And then we are told as a point of distinction between the Red-face and the Blue-wing that, in the former but not in the latter, the "deep beak has no ridge along the interior surface of the symphysis of its lower mandible." The force of language can no further go: surely this will settle the matter to the complete satisfaction of everybody.\*

## RARE FOREIGN BIRDS.

(SECOND SERIES).

### III.—THE MOORISH HOUSE BUNTING.

*Fringillaria sahara.*

By E. G. B. MEADE-WALDO.

This little Bunting is, I fancy, practically unknown as a cage bird; and probably would not be popular if known, as it is an unobtrusive little bird without any brilliancy of colouring. Its charm consisting principally in its extreme familiarity, both in its wild state and in an aviary; also in that it is a free breeder, rears its young well, and, although a denizen of the burning Sahara, will, in common with most desert species, stand cold well. It is not at all quarrelsome, but, in my experience, will not nest successfully in an aviary, however large, in which any other passerine birds are trying to breed, with perhaps the exception of those which nest on the ground. The range of the House Bunting extends from Saffi on the West Coast of Morocco, throughout the Algerian Sahara, into Tunis and Tripoli and Western Egypt. It frequents the towns and villages and is very partial to the mosques and saints' houses, and is consequently very popular with the inhabitants of the country, who have a

\* I find I have omitted to point out that the seven species of Love-birds may be readily distinguished from every other Parrot by a sub-terminal band of black across the tail. In some species the band is not so fully marked as in others, and in most there are also bands of other colours.—R. P.

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### TESTIMONIALS

The following is from the Editor of *The Exchange and Mart*—

"I herewith return the letters concerning your bird Food. They are very satisfactory; your correspondents speak in no doubtful terms of the success of your Food, and they are apparently speaking from an extended experience."

"By using your Food largely I must tell you I have won 102 prizes with my soft-billed birds this season, and I attribute my success entirely to your Food. I can truly say I cannot get anything like it. *Fur and Feather* says: Mr. Wilkinson must be a past master in the art of keeping soft-bills in show form."

"My nightingale sings beautifully now every day and by lamplight since he has had your Food, which I am feeding him on almost exclusively."

"My birds won't take to any food like yours, and I am very glad I took to it. I am thinking of shewing my thrush at the Crystal Palace, for which I have only your Food to thank, as everybody who sees him tells me to shew him."

The following recommendations by Dr. GREENE, are taken from *The Feathered World*: "American Mocking Bird (G. A. W.) You had better get a packet of Gasparin's Food for soft-billed birds. That will form an excellent dietary for him."

"Prepared food for soft-billed birds (G. A. L.) You had better order some of Gasparin's Food for your soft-billed birds. You will not get any thing better."

W. SWAYSLAND,

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strong dislike to seeing it molested in any way. It comes freely in and out of all houses, and will almost feed from the hand.

The Moorish House Bunting is about the size of a Hedge Accentor. The cock is of an almost uniform chestnut colour above and below, the tail dark brown with the outer feathers edged with chestnut, the head ash grey with a dark line through the eye, the basal half of the lower mandible bright yellow, the legs and feet flesh coloured. The female has the head brown striated with black, the upper parts the same, the chest and abdomen light uniform chestnut. In a wild state the nest is usually placed on the top of a wall under the eaves, or in any crack or cranny. If the space is too large for the nest the Bunting will fill it up with lumps of earth, bones, or any rubbish, and hollow out its nest in one corner and line it with roots, grass, hair, feathers, in fact anything that is handy. In an aviary it will build in an open box, and is also very fond of patching its nest on to a beam. The eggs, three to five in number, are like small strongly marked eggs of the Snow Bunting, and three or four clutches are laid in the year. The young are reared on insects, which are *swallowed* and then disgorged for the young. I have fed mine principally on small green caterpillars, moths, and small mealworms that had just shed their skins; and the old birds also seem to find a lot of food among the heaps of weeds provided daily.

The old birds eat any small seed, but show a preference for the seed of grasses and various weeds. They do not roost on a perch if they can help it, but prefer a retired ledge or cranny; in a cage they frequently roost on the bottom. Mine have stood the cold of the last two winters perfectly well in an open aviary, with the roofed-in portion entirely open on the south side. The cock has a sweet wild song, very frequently uttered. The call note is peculiarly loud for the size of the bird.

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#### IV.—THE BLACK-VENTED BISHOP.

By A. G. BUTLER, Ph.D.

In the autumn of the past year, I had a chance of purchasing a number of Weavers out of colour at a nominal price; and as I hoped to get a fair sprinkling of males of *Pyromelana franciscana* and *P. afra*, I did not let the opportunity of securing the birds slip. As, however, I turned most of them into an unheated aviary, they are extremely slow in developing.

Late in November two Bishops died, which proved on dissection to be both hens; but, on comparing one with the other, I at once perceived that one was *P. franciscana*; the other, I knew not what. I put these birds into the hands of a skilful taxidermist, who made them into two admirable skins. A comparison with the series in the Natural History Museum clearly demonstrated the fact that my second hen was that of *P. nigriventris*, a species but rarely imported; but, nevertheless, bred by Mr. Fritz Schrödter, of Vienna, in 1882.

As Dr. Sharpe has not pointed out the distinctive characters of the female of this bird in his Museum Catalogue, it may perhaps be useful to do so here: The female of *P. nigriventris*, on the upper surface, is marked almost exactly as in that sex of *P. oryx*, the black stripes being very much narrower than in *P. franciscana*, but especially on the crown, where they are more regular, running in slightly divergent lines from the base of the upper mandible. On the under surface the colouring differs widely from that of *P. oryx*, and more nearly resembles that of *P. franciscana*; but, apart from its slightly inferior size and shorter beak, the chin and throat of *P. nigriventris* are pure white, instead of buffish white; the fore chest is crossed by a diffused sandy buff belt, with scarcely perceptibly darker longitudinal streaks; the sides of the chest are, however, more distinctly streaked with smoky brownish: in *P. franciscana* the entire breast is sandy brownish, far more sordid in tint, and is distinctly streaked even in the middle, and much more so at the sides, where some of the streaks are blackish\*; the pure white area of the under surface in *P. nigriventris*, is therefore of nearly double the extent of that in *P. franciscana*; the flanks are of a clearer sandy buff, and not streaked, and the under tail-coverts are of a purer white.

The male in breeding plumage bears a general resemblance to that sex of *P. flammiceps*; but is, if anything, rather smaller than *P. franciscana*: whether any of my males will prove to be this species, I cannot say at present; but I certainly have two species.

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\* The whole breast and sides of *P. oryx* female are heavily streaked.

## THE GROSBEAKS.\*

By H. R. FILLMER.

*(Continued from page 27).*THE GENUS *Spermophila*.

All the birds which I have hitherto treated of belong to different genera, although the Common Hawfinch and the Black-tailed Hawfinch are placed in the same genus by many writers. But now we come to a large group of little birds, all belonging to the same genus; indeed the genus *Spermophila* includes about 36 species, but only eight of these are likely to be met with by the aviculturist, and therefore to these eight I shall confine myself. One species, the White-throated Finch, is fairly common, while all the others are rare in this country. They are all natives of South America, and are imported very intermittently and in small numbers. Notwithstanding their comparative rarity the dealers are generally willing to part with these little Grosbeaks at a moderate price, for their plumage is modest and unassuming and their merits do not lie upon the surface, therefore they seldom command a ready sale. All the species have a strong family likeness, and very little experience is sufficient to enable the aviculturist to identify an unknown bird as a member of the genus *Spermophila*; but the identification of the species is often less easy, even in the case of the adult male, while in the case of the female or immature male it is frequently a matter of the greatest difficulty. Birds of this genus are distinguished from all other very small birds by their powerful conical beaks. The mandibles are very deep posteriorly and the edge of the lower mandible is curved inwards. In short, these little Grosbeaks are very grosbeaklike. Almost all the species possess a spot upon the wing (at the base of the inner or middle primaries) which goes by the name of "alar speculum." All the species here described have an alar speculum, except the Bluish Finch; and it is white in each of these birds, except in the Guttural Finch, where it is yellowish white. In most of the species the immature males much resemble the females, and a bird bought as a hen will often change greatly in plumage at its first moult and prove to be a cock.

Most of these little birds are decidedly hardy. They are peaceable in the aviary towards other birds, but two males of

\* In writing this series of articles, I have been largely indebted to Dr. Butler's "Foreign Finches in Captivity," and all quotations from Dr. Russ are made at second-hand through that work. I have, however, described a number of birds which are not included in Dr. Butler's book.

the same species will sometimes fight, and occasionally males of different species may do the same. Still, it is generally quite safe to keep any number of *Spermophila* together, and always safe to place them among Waxbills and other defenceless birds. They thrive on the same food as Waxbills: that is, canary seed, white millet seed, and Indian millet or spray millet. They are sometimes fond of hempseed, and I believe that a small quantity is decidedly beneficial to them. Some specimens like fruit, particularly pears. They are often very fond of green food, and should have plenty if they will eat it. I have never known them to touch insect food.

#### THE WHITE-THROATED FINCH (*Spermophila albicularis*).

This little bird is about the size of the English Goldfinch. The colouring of the male may be roughly described as follows: General colour above slate-gray, general colour below white; the head, tail and wings black, a band of black across the throat, the beak yellow, the feet gray. The female is a very unattractive brown bird, with a black beak.

There is no recorded instance of the successful breeding of this species in England, but Dr. Butler has had nests built in his aviary.

The male is a bright, cheerful, pretty bird, and has a merry little song which is superior to that of most foreign birds, but is certainly rather "scroopy." Attempts to represent the songs of birds by words are not often successful, but in the case of the White-throated Finch Dr. Butler has been unusually happy in his rendering, which is as follows: *Chee wow, chee wow, chee wow, chee wow; techee, techee, techee; tsowow-tswew, tsowow-tswew; techee, techee.*

It is sometimes called the Grey Singing Finch by English dealers, who also give it the name of Pettykever; indeed, they apply this last name, not only to all the *Spermophila*, but also to other small birds of the true names of which they are ignorant.

The White-throated Finch is a native of Brazil.

#### THE HALF-WHITE FINCH (*Spermophila hypoleuca*).

This species is seldom seen in England. It is larger than the White-throated Finch. The general colour of the male is slate-gray above and white below, as in the White-throated Finch, but there is no black on the head or throat. The beak is darker in colour than that of the White-throated Finch, being a sort of orange-buff. The female is brown in colour.

This bird is described by travellers in Brazil as a "delightful songster"—all I can say on this point is that the specimen in my possession has scarcely sung at all during the two years he has been in my bird-room, although he seems in perfect health. Occasionally he utters a few long-drawn notes, hardly to be called a song, and sometimes he constantly repeats one loud mournful note, much like the note of the Virginian Cardinal. My bird is perfectly peaceable, but he gets strangely excited if any of the birds in the bird-room call loudly to one another. He seems specially excited when he can hear the birds calling, but cannot see them. I suppose the excitement is due to curiosity. It is probably only an individual peculiarity.

It is a native of Brazil.

THE PLUMBEOUS FINCH (*Spermophila plumbea*).

The Plumbeous Finch is one of the least attractive birds of the genus *Spermophila*; it is ashy-gray or lead colour all over, with the exception of a small white mark on the cheek close to the beak. The beak is blackish. In size it resembles the White-throated Finch. The above description applies to the male only. I have seen a bird which was said to be a female of this species, and it may have been what it was represented to be; but if so then the hen Plumbeous Finch is practically indistinguishable from the hen White-throated Finch.

This species appears to be less sprightly in its habits than the White-throated Finch, and is not nearly so pretty.

I once possessed a specimen for a short time, but I did not care for the bird and soon got rid of it. Mine did not sing while in my possession, but I am told by other aviculturists who have kept this bird that it has a very sweet song.

It is found in Brazil and Bolivia.

THE REDDISH FINCH (*Spermophila nigro-aurantia*).

This is one of the smallest and also one of the most beautiful of the *Spermophila*—unfortunately it seems also to be more delicate than its cousins, at any rate when first imported.

The general colour of the male is cinnamon, with a black crown and dark wings and tail. The female is olive-brown above and yellowish-brown underneath.

It is a native of Southern Brazil.

THE SPECTACLED FINCH (*Spermophila ophthalmica*).

This bird seems to be rarer than any of the others of this genus which are here described. My reason for including it in

this article is that Mr. Wiener mentions it in his book on Foreign Cage-Birds. It has been kept at the Zoo.

The colours of the male are black and white, and the bird derives its name from the shape of the white patches on its neck and cheeks—there is also a tiny spot of white below the eye. The female is light brown. It is about the size of the White-throated Finch.

The Spectacled Finch is indigenous to Ecuador.

#### THE BLUISH FINCH (*Spermophila cerulescens*)

Apparently called the Bluish Finch because there is no blue in its plumage. It bears a very strong resemblance to the White-throated Finch, from which, however, it may readily be distinguished by a patch of black immediately below the beak, and by the absence of an alar speculum. The female is brown.

There is some difference of opinion about the song: one writer says "It is possessed of a nice song;" Dr. Russ describes it as "monotonous, chirping, but not unpleasant;" Mr. W. H. Hudson calls this bird the Screaming Finch, and adds, "The male has a loud startled chirp, also a song composed of eight or ten notes, delivered with such vehemence and rapidity that they run into each other and sound more like a scream than a song."

Dr. Butler has possessed this bird, but it is very rare in England, though fairly common (according to Dr. Russ) in Germany.

It is found in Southern Brazil, Paraguay, the Argentine Republic, and Bolivia.

#### THE GUTTURAL FINCH (*Spermophila gutturalis*).

This bird is rather more frequently met with than the last four species. Its colours are sombre, and it cannot be called pretty. The general colour of the upper parts of the male is dull olive green, with a small white spot on the wing; the head, neck, and throat are black, or almost black; the breast and under parts pale yellow. The female is dull olive brown above, and yellowish white below. It is slightly smaller than the White-throated Finch.

I found this bird an active, chattering little creature. My bird had no real song, but it died before it had fully attained adult plumage, so its vocal powers may have been undeveloped. Dr. Butler tells me that he finds it to be "a very fair singer: the song being not unlike that of the White-throated Finch, but less scroopy."

It inhabits Peru and Brazil, and the other South American States which lie to the North of those Republics.

THE LINED FINCH (*Spermophila lincola*).

The upper parts of the male are glossy black, the under parts yellowish white; there is a longitudinal band of white running back from the base of the bill along the crown. The throat is black. The cheeks and ear coverts are white, forming a broad band of white on each side. The band of white along the crown and the bands on each side of the face have a curious appearance. Mr. Wiener remarks that these bands resemble a white cross. In size it is equal to the White-throated Finch. The female is olive brown above and buffy white below.

This species has recently been imported in considerable numbers. Unfortunately it is very seldom to be seen in really good plumage; when in perfect condition it is a handsome little bird.

I have kept this bird for years, and find it rather dull and inclined to mope. It has a really fine song, decidedly superior to that of the White-throated Finch; nevertheless, as an aviary bird I much prefer the White-throated Finch, which is far prettier and more lively.

The Lined Finch is a native of Brazil, Guiana, and Venezuela.

(To be continued).

## SOMETHING ABOUT A FRUIT PIGEON FROM SAMOA.

By the Rev. HUBERT D. ASTLEY.

Not having had an opportunity of visiting the Ornithological Department of the Natural History Museum in South Kensington, I can only write about a pair of Fruit Pigeons which I have had in my possession since last August, from my own experience of the birds, and from what Mr. Albert E. Jamrach has informed me of them, from whom I purchased them. He believes them to be the only living pair in Europe, but of this fact I fancy he is not absolutely certain. He further informs me that their true title is *Ptilonopus apicalis*, and that their habitat is Samoa—a place full of interesting sentiment in connection with the name and life of the great writer, R. L. Stevenson.

Lovely birds they are! stoutly built, and in size about one-third of the wild English Turtle Dove, or perhaps less. The

whole body is a bright yet soft green, the male bird having a lilac crescent, edged with yellow, across the stomach from thigh to thigh. The tail feathers, too, are tipped with yellow. But the chief feature in either sex is a lovely forehead of a colour which is neither pink nor lilac, but an admixture of both of these.

They have moulted since I have had them, and have kept in good health, fed upon boiled potato chopped into small pieces, as well as an occasional apple, and at times a few grapes, treated in the same manner.

In the summer time, the male bird became decidedly fussy when a small open basket, filled with hay, was introduced into the cage, and showed every inclination to nest.

Both birds are perfectly tame, and with studied petting would become extremely so. But I am leaving home for four months, and must in consequence reduce the numbers of my cage-birds, since I cannot carry them with me, hence the insertion of my advertisement in the column used for that purpose, to which I may perhaps be allowed to refer the readers of my notes.

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## CORRESPONDENCE.

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### BREEDING RESULTS FOR 1895.

SIR,—As it is possible that some of the readers of the *Avicultural Magazine* may care to hear of my breeding operations in the past year, I have (at the Editors' suggestion) recorded them, as follows:—

My first nest was from a pair of Java Sparrows bred in 1894: I had put these birds up in a large flight-cage, in January, and four young left the nest on February 15th-16th; a second nest at the end of the same month was a failure, it contained two young which died when about three days old. By the middle of May this pair of birds had produced fourteen young, of which two have died during the present winter. About the same time my Saffron-finches had produced six young ones which had grown up, but four or five others had died in consequence of being taken away from their parents too early; two of these died when only two or three months old, but were replaced in the meanwhile. During the Autumn the parents again went to nest, laid and even hatched, but reared nothing.

Meanwhile, I had many mixed pairs put up, with a view to hybridization; some of these have produced eggs, but none have hatched; thus from Canary and Indigo-finch I had eggs which were constantly upset (and so broken) by the Bunting; from Java-Sparrow and male Ribbon-finch I had, and still have, eggs; from Cordon-bleu and Zebra Waxbill I had two eggs, but the hen would not incubate; from Parson-finch and Zebra-finch only soft-shelled eggs, which almost killed the hen several times.

My Canaries produced twenty-eight young, two of which died in

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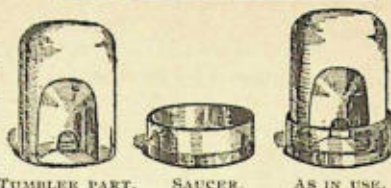
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DR. BRADBURN, Author of British Birds and their successful treatment in captivity, writes, November 14th, 1893:—Dear Sir, I think your improved fountain a distinct advance on anything we have as yet in the shape of aviary fountains; and I mean to use no other. For large cages and aviaries it is invaluable. Kindly forward me another.

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moult, owing to the heat, which caused them to bathe excessively and produced an unhealthy condition of their cage.

A Red-tailed Finch and Zebra-finch built a very cosy nest, but the former unfortunately died in the nest with a ruptured vent (I never discovered the cause); she was not egg-bound.

My Rosa's Parakeets paired, and examined the interior of a log-nest, but the hen did not lay; she was the bird bred in 1894: possibly, if I had left her mother in the aviary and caged her, there would have been some result; but the young one is, by far, the better bird of the two in appearance.

My Green Cardinals built and hatched their second clutch (four eggs) on the 8th June; but insects were scarce, and the hen bird destroyed all her young when they were only a few days old; a third nest of three was almost brought to perfection when one died, a second left the nest and was reared, but died before it had learnt to feed itself, the parents refusing to give it anything but insects, so that it was literally starved by them, the third young one was barely noticed after the second youngster had flown, so that it died in the nest.

A pair of Goldfinches in one of my aviaries went to nest and hatched four young out of five eggs, three of these left the nest on June 4th, and the hen immediately took possession of a second nest prepared for her by the male bird; she began to lay again on June 8th, and produced six eggs, of which five were hatched; the young of the first nest gradually killed these, carrying them out of the nest and dropping them on the sand until only one was left: this I gave to a Canary which reared it, but plucked it so severely when it left the nest that it soon after died.

Late in the year my Java Sparrows in the bird-room went to nest and reared three young, which I removed as soon as they could feed themselves; a second nest of four flew on December 22nd and 24th; a fifth, rather backward, bird was plucked and thrown out of the nest.

On October 18th, five Zebra-finches flew from a nest in my outer aviary; these all passed through their moult satisfactorily and proved to be two cocks and three hens. On January 9th, 1896, one of the hens died from over-filling its crop: it was, in other respects, in perfect health.

Attempts to breed Bengalese produced eggs only; specimens of Sharp-tailed Finches paired with Bengalee, Indian Silver-bill and Spice-finch produced nothing. Chestnut-breast paired with Diamond Sparrow also failed.

The result of the year's breeding may be summed up as follows:—

Java Sparrows, 21; Saffron-finches, 8; Zebra-finches, 5; Green Cardinal, 1; Canaries, 28; Goldfinches, 3. Total, 66. Of these, two Java Sparrows, two Canaries, two Saffron-finches, one Green Cardinal, and one Zebra-finch have since died, leaving a balance of fifty-eight birds still living.

A. G. BUTLER.

#### THE AQUARIUM SHOW.

SIR,—I expected to see, in the January issue of the *Avicultural Magazine*, some reply to the criticism by Dr. Williamson of the recent Bird Show at the Westminster Aquarium; but, as the only answer is that of the Hon. and Rev. F. G. Dutton, who accepts Dr. Williamson's wholesale denunciation, I

am impelled to take upon myself the task of replying. I had some fifty birds at the show in question, and, as I was personally in attendance on my exhibits each day from ten in the morning until late at night, I trust I may presume to write with at least as much authority as Dr. Williamson, who "merely strolled in to look at the foreign birds," and who made "a few brief notes, . . . scattered, and written in haste." Early as I was, each morning, at the show, I never failed to find the indefatigable Mr. S. Cook at work, intelligently attending to the birds entrusted to the Society; and I am glad to take this opportunity of tendering to him well deserved thanks, although my own birds did not need his care.

It would occupy too much of your space to take each paragraph of Dr. Williamson's letter separately; but there is scarcely one sentence that would not admit of criticism. Almost the only sentiment which may be agreed with is the deploring of the bad light in which the birds had to be judged and viewed; and this was to the disadvantage of the judges and visitors, not of the birds. The Aquarium is, in this respect, about the very worst place which could be chosen for a Bird Show. In the day-time there is scarcely any light at all, and at night the gas bill is so economically looked after that each jet suffices only to show where its nearest neighbour is located. So far as the comfort of the birds may be considered, I do not know of any show to which owners might more confidently send their specimens. The "intolerable heat;" "noisome air, loaded with tobacco smoke;" and such like expressions are, to put it kindly, exaggerations due to Dr. Williamson's evident aversion to Bird Shows at Bird Shows.

To every one who visited the Show other inaccuracies will, in nearly every paragraph, be apparent, and the "written in haste" is self-evident throughout the whole article. I can scarcely better illustrate this than to take, for instance, the paragraph referring to the "Eclectus Parrot (1950)," the number evidently a misprint for 1050. This bird was *not* "looking unwell;" was *not* "shrouded by a curtain;" and was *not* "in a bad position."

With regard to the labels requesting "that the birds should not be fed, or at least fed only on certain food," Dr. Williamson seems to be under the impression that these, instead of being instructions to the Stewards, were appeals to the public to regard the inmates of the cages as being somewhat different from the bears and monkeys at the "Zoo," and, therefore, to refrain from making them spontaneous offerings of "nuts, sponge-cake, biscuit, apple-peel," etc., etc., etc. Just as though birds would take such things, even if visitors were to offer them! Such remarks scarcely deserve reply, especially when the writer, as a climax, soberly says that he "*saw* a piece of walnut *pressed* into the mouth of a Swallow," (the italics are my own).\*

HENRY J. FULLJAMES.

#### IS GRIT DANGEROUS TO NEWLY IMPORTED PARROTS?

Since my letter on the above subject appeared after that of Mr. Phillips, and to a certain extent took up the same line of argument, I may perhaps be permitted to explain that it was written before I had seen Mr.

\* We have been obliged to make some alterations in the wording of this letter, as Mr. Fulljames had expressed himself with more energy than the occasion appears to require. —Ed.

Phillipps' letter, and should have appeared in the same issue, but was crowded out for want of space.

While I am sure our readers will readily acquit me of the literary theft of Mr. Phillipps' ideas, it is perhaps desirable in justice to myself that this explanation should appear.

C. S. SIMPSON.

APPROPOS OF BOUGHT FOOD FOR INSECTIVOROUS BIRDS.

SIR,—I wish Mr. Fillmer could see my two Blue Rock Thrushes as well as a Shāma and a Pied Rock Thrush which are fed upon food that Mr. J. Abrahams manufactures and sells for the benefit (mark the word!) of insectivorous birds. In deference to that sold by Mr. Cross (styled Capelle's food) I ought to add that the above birds, that is to say, all but the Shāma, were reared by myself from the nest upon his mixture, and at times are still given it.

The Pied Rock Thrush (both he and the Blue Thrushes are in *magnificent* health and plumage) is now five years old; the eldest of the Blue Thrushes being four years old, and the youngest three years; and these birds are, more often than not, considered delicate to keep. My eldest *Passera Solitaria*, for so the Italians call them, has never ceased singing all the winter, and will do so until the lamps are extinguished, up to 11.0 p.m. and 11.30.

Oh! bye-the-bye, a Blue-throated Warbler has also thriven through November, December, and January upon the foods already mentioned.

Beyond this, these birds receive, as a treat, a few mealworms and some raw beef cut fine.

I have, for many years, kept insectivorous birds most successfully upon these foods, and I therefore consider that it is only fair to speak up for their meritorious value.

I wonder why Mr. Fillmer is prejudiced against "advertised foods," as is evident from his request and stipulation that whosoever will accept the Yellow Wagtail and the other birds that he offers, will not feed them upon such a diet.

One would like to know his reasons; but I am sure he will not object to my taking up the friendly gloves on behalf of such advertised food as has always done my birds a good turn.

HUBERT D. ASTLEY.

SIR,—The above letter from the Rev. H. D. Astley calls for some reply from me.

I should be very sorry for it to be supposed that my advertisement was purposely so worded as to appear to disparage any advertised food or foods. My birds had been accustomed to a diet of soaked ants' eggs and mealworms, and I was anxious that they should not have to endure a change of diet on finding a new home. But as Mr. Astley has now raised the whole question of tinned food *versus* freshly-prepared food, I feel bound to express my opinion upon the subject. I should like, however, first to point out that such birds as Thrushes and Shāmas will survive on a diet which would not suit our delicate native Warblers.

With a few exceptions, all the advertised foods for insectivorous birds now in the market appear to be very much alike in character, the chief differences being that some contain grocer's currants and some do not, and

that the proportions of the various ingredients vary. I do not profess to be able to properly analyse any of these foods, but the use of my eyes, nose and mouth leads me to believe that they consist of a mixture of—1. Abrahams' Preserved Yolk of Egg. 2. Ants' eggs. 3. German paste (or at least some mixture which I am unable to differentiate from that venerable concoction).

The Preserved Egg is a very valuable preparation, though I do not think that it is so nourishing as fresh egg. The ants' eggs are better still, but the proportion of these is usually very small indeed, and being in the dry state they are not so digestible as when properly soaked. The German paste is utterly unsuitable food for any bird. Fortunately most birds pick out the egg and ants' eggs (the only digestible and nourishing parts of the food) and leave the rest—therefore they are not injured by the German paste for the simple reason that they don't eat it.

If there are any readers of the *Avicultural Magazine* who are not acquainted with German Paste, they may like to know that it is a delicious mixture of pea-meal, crushed hempseed, oatmeal, moist sugar, olive oil, mawseed, and other things—but the chief ingredients are usually pea-meal and hempseed, although the various recipes vary greatly.

It is fair to add that there are at least two foods in the market which do not contain German Paste or anything resembling German Paste. I shall be pleased to give the names of the makers of these privately, but I do not think it would be fair to the other makers to publish them here. Neither of them is mentioned by Mr. Astley. Even these foods, however, are very inferior, in my opinion, to freshly prepared food.

The fact that Mr. Astley and other people have kept birds in health for years on the food he mentions by no means proves that it is the best possible diet. Many a man could live and retain his health on a diet chiefly composed of pease pudding and shrimps (the latter eaten skins and all) but nothing would persuade me that such a diet would be desirable and wholesome for mankind, and nothing will persuade me that a diet of pea-meal and crushed hempseed is desirable and wholesome for insectivorous birds.

I hope that the whole question of food for insectivorous birds will now be thoroughly thrashed out in our columns.

HORATIO R. FILLMER.

#### COLOUR OF THE BILL OF THE AUSTRALIAN GREEN-WINGED DOVE.

SIR,—Can any member explain how it is that in the Australian Green-winged Dove (*Chalcophaps chrysochloris*) some specimens have red bills and some yellow? I at first believed the difference to be sexual; but this, apparently, is not so: for two birds of mine, which I am nearly certain are both cocks, differ in the colour of the bill, that of the one being like red sealing-wax, while that of the other is yellow.

I know the yellow-billed one to be a cock; and the one with the red bill was sold to me by a lady-member of our Society as such, and as it is fond of fighting with and driving about the other, I think that lady was right. I have never heard the red-billed one coo, but the other coos frequently.

I have two more of these Doves which I obtained very recently, and these differ in the same way.

D. SETH-SMITH.

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MARCH, 1896.

BRITISH BIRDS AT THE CRYSTAL PALACE.

By J. LEWIS BONHOTE.

Once more the Crystal Palace Show is over, the great event in the cage bird year is passed; hopes of such and such a bird raised by his exhibitor have either been realised or dashed to the ground, and it now remains for us to consider whether those hopes had been rightly or wrongly founded.

The classes were well filled, the quality good, and the judging on the whole fair; although, as we shall see, there were several cases in which the judge did not know his own mind. There was one thing I noticed more this year than in former years, which was that in walking along the rows of cages I could have picked out and gathered together the cages of several exhibitors. One exhibitor put blotting paper at the bottom of his cages; another had his cages painted a peculiar shade; while several had writing relating to the feeding of the birds pasted on the front; another, I suppose that the judge might not recognise his writing, had the notices printed, thereby rendering his cage all the more conspicuous; while lastly, in one or two cases the labels were left attached. Far be it from me to imply that anything was meant by these marks, but, if once allowed, it opens a high road to collusion between judge and exhibitor, which should not be.

The Bullfinches were a good class and difficult to judge, and many of high merit were left unnoticed. No. 1241, which took first, was very good in size and colour, but rather wild, and I preferred the second prize bird, No. 1243, although it had lost some primaries in the left wing. I was delighted to see the third prize awarded to No. 1219, a hen, which was a large good-coloured and steady bird, but would have looked better in a show cage. I hope this marks the beginning of an epoch, when hens, if of good merit, may stand an equal chance with their more brightly coloured mates.

The Goldfinches were not of such good all round quality as the Bullfinches ; 1267, a splendid bird, was not noticed. 1250, the first prize bird, was nice, but far too brown on the flanks, in fact, too dark altogether ; surely the ideal Goldfinch ought to be the one that most nearly resembles the wild ones, and not what they may become by colour-feeding, but on this subject I shall have more to say when we come to the Siskins.

The Chaffinches were a poor class, most of them being far too dark and very wild. I preferred 1307 (second prize) a large bird with good shoulders and steady ; 1329, though a good large bird, was very wild, and 1328 should have been higher. The Linnets were, as usual, a large class. The first and second birds were good and deserved their places, and were respectively of the dark and light type. Which is the ideal ? 1345, third, had the markings on the flanks all blurred, and should not have been where it was. 1363 was remarkable for its size.

The Redpolls were a small class and consisted chiefly of Mealies, cage-moulted birds being conspicuous by their scarcity. 1394 was good all round and deserved his place. 1393, second, was fair, but 1397 was much better. I saw no reason for not noticing 1390, it was a splendid bird in every way ; it was a Lesser Redpoll, but that was not its fault. I should much like to know how some of the exhibitors know the age of their Redpolls. I have never succeeded in moulting one red, nor heard of anyone who has, consequently I take it that most of these Mealies have been caught during the winter, and yet we read in the catalogue such remarks as "cock, 2 years," &c. I am sure the bird did not tell them, and I wonder on what grounds they based the statement.

I may begin my notice of the Siskin class by stating that there was only one bird which was typically marked as a wild specimen should be. That bird, 1401, the only one with a really black chin, and good in every other way, was *not* noticed. About the rest I have nothing much to say, except that they were all colour-fed to an unnatural extent, and with the exception of the one above mentioned, not one approached in colour to a fresh caught wild bird.

The skylarks were conspicuous by their absence, there being only four entries as against eighteen last year. The first prize bird, No. 1416, was a very fine specimen.

The Robins, on the whole, were not up to much, I preferred 1423 (second), as being a larger bird, while otherwise equally good.

The Blackbird Class, 94, and Thrush Class, 95, were of splendid quality throughout, and were rightly judged, except that 1465 ought to have been noticed.

The Starlings were rather dull in colour, and on this score 1478 had to give way to 1474, which was the better bird.

In the Magpie Class 1488 was the best, and was a remarkably large bird. 1490, a Jay, was large and nicely shown, though not very bright. 1494, a Magpie, was rather small, but otherwise a neat, cleanly cut bird.

The Hybrids formed a nice, though by no means remarkable class. No. 1502 (first), a Greenfinch-Bullfinch was a good bird with a nice red rump and breast and a brown head. 1503 (2nd), a Linnet-Bullfinch, ran it close, but was not such a good colour. 1500 (3rd), a Goldfinch-Bullfinch, with a white head, ought not I think to have been noticed. 1499 was much better, being brighter in colour, and having a ring of red stretching partly round the neck.

The Pied or Albino Class brought out some splendid birds, although in a few cases it was hard to see what right the bird had in the class. The pure Albino Blackbird took first prize, and was in splendid trim; I suppose the pink eyes gave it its place, for 1525, a White Hawfinch, is a far rarer bird, and was in equally good feather. 1520, a Silver-grey Starling, well deserved its place (second). It was of a delicate silver grey all over, but retained all its markings. 1518, a White Blackbird, dirty and badly shown, took fourth, which place should, I think, have been given to 1516, a very nice specimen of a pied Goldfinch, showing a good deal of white.

Class 100. A.O.V. British Bird not larger than a Woodlark, was made into a sad mess. To start with, three Grey Wagtails were marked "wrong class." Why? The Grey Wagtail is to be found in some parts of the British Isles all the year round. To make matters worse, the same judge gave a Grey Wagtail first, and another one V.H.C., in precisely the same class at last year's show. Then, again, we find six Bramblings, which are truly migratory birds, being only winter visitants to this country, *not* marked "wrong class," and actually taking prizes. No. 1540 also, a Tree Pipit, is a migratory bird, and should also have been marked "wrong class." Of the Grey Wagtails, 1532 was the best, being a splendidly long and slim bird. 1555 was also in excellent condition. I sympathise deeply with those gentlemen who were wrongly disqualified. The first prize was taken by a Golden Crested Wren, which

was a very bright and clean bird and in the pink of condition. A Bearded Tit took second: it was a nice bird, but rather dirty, and I was glad to see it noticed. The fourth was a Reed Bunting, rather a small bird, but in nice summer plumage.

In the A.O.V. larger than a Woodlark, a Cornish Chough, with bright red legs and bill and in nice feather takes first; a very good Ring Ousel, second; and a talking Raven, third. The fourth prize was given to a Greater Spotted Woodpecker, in good health and condition, which ought, I think, to have been second.

I hope the authorities will see their way another year to giving separate classes for Hawfinches, Bramblings, and Missel Thrushes, as there were several splendid birds of these species shown.

This year the Nightingale and Blackcap class was remarkably well filled, and the birds were all fine specimens in excellent condition. 1589 (first), a Nightingale, was a nice bird in good feather, but rather small. 1591 (the second prize bird), was larger, but a little bit out of condition. Third prize went to a very good large Blackcap, while 1599, a fair Nightingale, but badly shown and with, if I mistake not, part of his tail missing, took an extra third. 1585 (fourth prize), a Nightingale, was a good bird and in better condition than many.

In the A.O.V. migratory bird class a Grey Wagtail, in its wrong class, gets noticed. The same judge (not the one who disqualified them in class 100) gave a Grey Wagtail second in the A.O.V. class (*not* migratory) at the Aquarium last year. A bird cannot be in its right place in two classes, and if it was right at the Aquarium it was wrong here and vice-versâ. A Crossbill, a bird *resident* in Scotland, was also noticed in this class. A very good Swallow, in the pink of condition, but wanting his left outer tail feather, took first. The cage was painted rather too dark inside. Second was a Willow Wren, a perfect beauty in every way, and very bright; third, a Lesser Whitethroat, also in very fine feather; while fourth was a nice bright Redstart, nicely shown. There were also two very good Redwings, a nice Spotted Flycatcher, slightly rough, a good cock Whinchat, a very fair Shorelark, and a Cornerake, which, I speak feelingly, had severely hurt itself on the journey.

The show contained many birds of remarkably fine quality, and, with the exceptions above stated, the judging was good.

## FOREIGN BIRDS AT THE CRYSTAL PALACE SHOW OF 1896.

By C. S. SIMPSON.

The number of entries in each department, Canaries, British birds and Foreign birds was less than in 1895, the drop being most marked in the British classes.

In the classes provided for Foreign birds the number of entries in the classes provided respectively for the small finches and the insectivorous birds was almost precisely the same as last year: there was an increase in the number of Doves exhibited, and a diminution in the number of Cardinals and Virginian Cardinals: it is worthy of note, however, that the large entry of the latter birds in 1895 was quite exceptional, and therefore could not fairly justify the retention of a class usually so poorly filled. The number of Parrots and Parrakeets was practically the same as last year. The alterations in the classification of the section judged by myself have been the cause of a good deal of criticism, both adverse and favourable, and I may therefore perhaps be pardoned if I allude briefly to the subject. •

The modern aviculturist is becoming alive to the fact that aviculture has been too long divorced from scientific ornithology, and that an elementary knowledge, at least, of the latter science, adds an infinity of interest to the former pursuit. We no longer tolerate the careless and inaccurate writing which characterized even the most popular of avicultural works a very few years ago. It therefore seems desirable that we should at our principal shows adopt a classification which, at any rate in its broader outlines, should indicate the real relationship of the birds, instead of merely sorting them out according to size. My twelve classes therefore are divided as follows: four are allotted to the great family Ploceidæ (weaving finches): four to the Fringillidæ (finches, grosbeaks and buntings): one to be Columbidae (doves): of the remaining three classes, one is allotted to the Crows, Starlings, and Mynahs: one contains the Tanagers and Bulbuls: and the last is a refuge for any other species. Of course an arrangement which brings together Tanagers and Bulbuls is frankly unscientific, but it seems impossible to place the former with their true relatives, the finches.

It was distinctly encouraging to find that the arrangement appeared to be understood by most exhibitors, and that very few birds were entered in wrong classes.

The great majority of the birds were in excellent condition and health, and the exhibits were on the whole of greater interest than last year.

Perhaps the most difficult birds to judge fairly are the Gouldian finches: they appear to be more upset by a journey than any other birds and rarely show to advantage on the judging day: it would have been difficult, however, to beat the first and second prize winners in class 105: Mr. Fulljames' Parrot finch was unfortunately moulting. An interesting exhibit was Mr. Housden's bird in class 107, which, I think, was a hen Yellowish Weaver (*Sitagra luteola*). Mr. Swaysland's exhibit (1042), which was in the winter plumage, was probably *Penthetria flaviscapularis*. A very nice Pin-tailed Whydah (1043) in full colour, was hopelessly crippled.

The Rufous-tailed Grassfinch, a species which made its *debut* last year, was remarkably well represented, no less than four good pairs being exhibited: Mr. Dewar's pair were far and away the best, and were indeed the finest specimens I have seen.

Miss Sturt's Cordons-bleus, five years in their owner's possession, were in exquisite trim and spoke well for her care and skill: the Cordon-bleu is not a very easy bird to keep in first-rate condition. A beautiful pair of Lavender finches were well shown. A pair of the rare Rufous-backed Mannikins were not in the best of plumage, or would have taken a higher position. The Goldfinches and Bullfinches were, on the whole, hardly up to the average, many being loose in feather, possibly due to the very mild weather.

There were no Saffron-finches, Serin-finches, or Alarios. Mr. Castellan's Black-headed Siskin was a beauty. A splendid pair of White-breasted Mannikins (*Munia pectoralis*) were, most unfortunately, exhibited in the wrong class. Surely so experienced an aviculturist as Mr. Dewar might have avoided this mistake. There was an unusually large number of Doves: the Columbidae are not a popular family with aviculturists and are poorly represented at shows as a rule. Perhaps the most interesting exhibit was an Australian Green-winged Dove, sent by Mr. Seth-Smith. Visitors who, guided by the catalogue, expected to see Mr. Arthur's Blue-winged Green Bulbul, must have been disappointed to meet with a Superb Tanager: a good bird which, evidently suffering from the effects of its journey on Friday, looked much better on Saturday.

Mr. Housden exhibited a magnificent pair of Red-vented Bulbuls, and a Scarlet Tanager, the latter not so rich in colour as

other specimens in the class. There was one specimen (and a very good one it was) of the Green Bulbul, the most delightful of all cage birds in my experience.

Mr. Housden's Wandering Tree Pie, like all that gentleman's exhibits, was shown in a large and well-lighted cage, an example which other exhibitors would do well to follow as far as possible.

A pair of Red-sided Japanese Tit-mice, exhibited by Mr. Fulljames, attracted much notice on account of their rarity; probably very few of the visitors had ever seen the species before. Some Blue-cheeked Barbets, not in first-rate condition, were exhibited, and Miss Bamford's delightful little White-eyes were worth a journey to the Palace alone. Mr. Cronkshaw's Cape Coly had suffered much from its journey, and looked so ill on Friday that I quite expected to see its place empty when the show opened. Fortunately it appeared better on Saturday: whether it survived until the close of the show I have not heard.

A Blue-throated Warbler, a pair of Laughing Kingfishers, and a Dial bird (a very poor one, by the way) were among the more noticeable exhibits.

The classes provided for Parrots and Parrakeets were, to those in search of novelties, distinctly disappointing. I left the show under the impression that there was no species new to me exhibited. I find, however, on referring to my catalogue, that I must have most unaccountably overlooked two birds catalogued as a Green-naped Lorikeet, and a Ruby Lorikeet respectively.

The Lovebirds were not a particularly interesting class. Mr. Cronkshaw's Peach-faced birds seem to be invincible. Budgerigars again, though charming birds in an aviary, are dull in cages, from which, however, they show some ingenuity in escaping. First prize fell to a fine pair of Yellow, belonging to Mr. Dewar. I must say that I think the Green much more attractive. When shall we see a Blue Budgerigar in England?

The class for Rosellas only attracted four entries, but there was a splendid display of King and Crimson-winged Parrakeets. I was sorry to see a pair of Crimson-wings the hen of which was actually laying, and surely deserved better of her owner than to be sent to a show at a time when she was needing extra warmth and quiet. The poor thing laid an egg on Friday, but on Saturday was looking very ill and miserable. The first prize was awarded to a grand King and Queen, and there were no less than thirteen entries in this class.

Among the Ring-necked Parrakeets, a fine Malabar, belonging to Mr. Fulljames, was noticeable: also three specimens of the Malaccan Parrakeet (*Palwornis longicauda*), a species often confounded with the Lucian (*P. modesta*).

Twelve Lories and Lorikeets put in an appearance, including no less than four Ornamented Lorikeets, and a ragged looking lot the latter were. I could not refrain from mentally comparing them with a pair of brilliantly coloured, dapper little acrobats, which occupy one of my small aviaries, and whose performances are a constant delight to my household. Mr. Housden's Ceram Lory is a grand bird, and well deserved his first prize, won three years in succession. A very shabby Red Lory and a Purple-cap, still in moult, were exhibited. I have already apologized for my omission to notice the two Lorikeets, exhibited by the London Fanciers' Supply Association. A Tabuan Parrakeet, catalogued as a Shining Parrakeet, was in poor condition, and should, I think, have given way to a lovely specimen of the Pileated Parrakeet, a bird we should like to see oftener at shows. The Pennants were poor in colour, and Messrs. Bottomley's Many-coloured looked more washed-out than ever. The survivor apparently, of a pair of Parrakeets exhibited in former years as *Trichoglossus pyrrhopterus* (they are certainly not *Trichoglossi*, however), looked but sadly.

A fairly good Red-rump, a nice Turquoise and a couple of the quaint Patagonian Conures were also present.

There were six Grey Parrots, a remarkably good class, considering the small prizes offered, but none seemed to be very talkative, at any rate when I was present.

The class for Amazons contained nothing new. Mr. Dutton's Double-fronted, an old acquaintance, was first. Mr. Martin's Green-cheeked was deposed from the first place, which he has occupied for four years, and a bird catalogued as Yellow-fronted, was third. This was, however, a Yellow-cheeked (*Chrysotis autumnalis*).

A Cuba Parrot, which was awarded first in class 128 (any other species) was a nice bird, but would have been more correctly entered among the Amazons. The Cockatoos were not particularly interesting classes, and most of the birds were remarkably dirty. Would it not be possible to raise the entry fees and double the prize money in these classes, in order to secure more entries? Cockatoos require strong and heavy cages, and the cost of their carriage is considerable.

## FOREIGN FINCHES AT THE CRYSTAL PALACE.

By H. R. FILLMER.

Excluding Foreign Bullfinches and Goldfinches, which are of interest only to a very few, the Foreign Finches at the Crystal Palace Bird Show of 1896 were divided into six classes, containing between them 70 entries. Last year there was the same number of classes, but they contained 85 entries. It is disappointing that the greatly improved classification should thus have apparently led to a decrease in the entries, and this, taken in connection with the fact that a somewhat large number of entries were made in the wrong class, speaks badly for the ornithological knowledge of the average exhibitor. While, however, in 1895, no less than 15 entries in the Foreign Finch classes were "absent" (doubtless on account of the severe weather), this year only three were absent, so that the number actually competing was only 3 less than last year. Moreover the decrease in the Cardinals, of which an unusually large number were exhibited last year, would alone account for the drop in the number of entries.

Class 105 (Gouldian Finches, Parrot Finches, Pintailed Nonpareils, and Cuba Finches). The first three species go well together in a class, because they are all Grassfinches, and all very brightly coloured, and they are, moreover, birds which compete somewhat unfairly with more soberly attired birds. Cuba Finches are probably put in this class because of the controversy about their true classification, but it must be confessed that they seem somewhat out of place there. There was only one pair of Cuba Finches (belonging to Mr. Fulljames), but they were decidedly good and well deserved the fourth prize which they received. There was, likewise, only one Parrot Finch (also the property of Mr. Fulljames), and this was awarded third—it would, doubtless, have been higher if it had not been in the midst of a moult. A common (Bunting) Nonpareil, had found its way into this class by mistake. There were 8 entries of Gouldian Finches—4 red and 4 black.

Class 106 (Java Sparrows). Here were 6 entries, 4 pairs of grey, 1 pair of white, and 1 pair pied. The first prize was awarded to Dr. Butler's handsome Greys, his own breeding, and themselves the parents of 14 young in his aviary in 1895. Mr. H. B. Smith received the second prize for his pair of White Javas.

Class 107 (Weaver or Whydah Birds). In spite of the fact that most of these are hopelessly out of colour in February this

class secured 8 entries, of which, however, 2 were absent. Mr. Housden took first with a bird which he calls a "Yellowish Weaver," though Mr. Abrahams told me that he believed it to be the female of *Passer luteus*. I was disposed to think, at the time, that it was one of the true Sparrows and not a Weaver at all, but have since come round to the opinion that it was really *Sitagra luteola* (a female). Mr. Swaysland received the second prize for a bird which was so far gone out of colour that its identification was a matter of considerable difficulty. My own belief is that it was *Penthetria albonotata*, and if I am right, then it was a very rare bird, possibly the rarest in the show. There were besides a good Pintailed Whydah in nearly full colour, a shabby Rufous-necked or Textor Weaver, a rather poor Napoleon, and a pair of Common or Russ's Weavers, quite out of colour.

Class 108 (any species of Grassfinch, Mannikin, or Waxbill, not previously mentioned). This was a large class of 27 entries, only one of which was absent. It would have been better to divide the birds in this class into at least two classes. It is remarkable that no less than 4 pairs of *Bathilda ruficauda* were exhibited; all of these were good, but Mr. Dewar's, which received first prize, pre-eminently so. There were three entries of Chestnut-breasted Mannikins and two of St. Helena Waxbills—no other species was represented by more than one pair. The second prize fell to an excellent pair of Cordon Bleus. The third was awarded to some nice Lavender Finches. Mr. Cronkshaw received the fourth prize for his pair of *Bathilda ruficauda*. The only other noteworthy birds were, Mr. H. B. Smith's Rufous-backed Mannikins (*Spermestes nigricaps*), and the female Australian Crimson-finch (*Neochmia phacton*), and pair of Magpie Mannikins (*Amauresthes fringilloides*) all belonging to Mr. Fulljames.

Class 111 (any species of Cardinal—including the Virginian Cardinal). Last year these mustered over 20, this year there were only 9. Three entries consisted of Green Cardinals, three of Red-crested Cardinals, and two of Virginian Cardinals. The remaining entry was a very rare bird, unfortunately shown in a very dark cage, where it no doubt passed, with ninety-nine out of a hundred of the visitors to the show, as a hen Cardinal. I myself took it for a hen Virginian until the peculiar shape of the beak was pointed out to me. I believe the bird to be *Pyrrhuloxia sinuata*, the head of which species is figured by Dr. Bowdler Sharpe. It is a pity that the fine Virginian which gained the second prize should have been exhibited in such a very small cage.

Class 112 (any species of True Finch, Bunting, or Grosbeak, not previously mentioned). This was a most disappointing class. There were only 9 entries, and no less than 4 of these were in "wrong class." Where were all the Singing Finches, Alario Finches, and Saffron Finches (not to mention rarer birds), which I expected to see in this class? The first prize was awarded to Mr. Castellan's beautiful Black-headed Siskin, which he informed me was the same bird as that exhibited last year at the Palace by a dealer, and upon the then shabby condition of which I remarked in my notes on the show. Miss J. E. Sturt received the second prize for her pair of Nonpareils—these were in beautiful condition, but the cock had no trace of red or orange in his plumage—I think they must have been hand-reared birds. The third prize was awarded to Mr. Housden's South American Grosbeak, which I took to be a specimen of *Guiraca cyanea*. It was in splendid condition. The fourth prize was withheld, so the rarity exhibited by Mr. Swaysland received only H.C.—what that little bird is no one at the show appeared to know, and I cannot even guess. Of the birds entered in this class by mistake, some were worthy of note, viz.: a pair of Red-headed Finches, exhibited by Mr. H. B. Smith (not in good plumage), and a pair of *Munia pectoralis* exhibited by Mr. Dewar. Gould named the latter bird *Donacola pectoralis*, but I should like to know Mr. Dewar's authority for calling it *Estrelda pectoralis*.

On the whole, the show of Foreign Finches was somewhat disappointing. Mr. Swaysland's Weaver and Mr. Davis's Cardinal were rare birds, but not very attractive, and this year's show does not compare well with last year's, when the eyes of many of us were gladdened with the first sight of *Bathilda ruficauda*, *Spermestes nigriceps*, and *Munia pectoralis*.

From the social point of view, however, the usefulness of the Palace Show was well maintained, and once again it was the meeting-place of many aviculturists who have no chance of meeting elsewhere.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### THE SLENDER-BILL COCKATOO AT THE CRYSTAL PALACE.

SIR,—I was not at the Crystal Palace Show, but I have been amusing myself by looking through a catalogue. I am surprised to see that a Slender-bill Cockatoo, entered in the class for "Any other variety of Parrot," was marked wrong class, while a Macaw in the same class was V.H.C. I presume that the Judge thought the Slender-bill ought to have been

entered in one of the Cockatoo classes; but, oddly enough, those classes are expressly reserved for certain specified species of which the Slender-bill is not one, and the bird could not have been properly entered in either of them. Are we then to understand that, according to the Crystal Palace authorities, the Macaws are Parrots but the Cockatoos are not? Or what are we to understand? Really the Judge should explain.

SEPTIMUS PERKINS.

#### THE AQUARIUM SHOW.

SIR,—I am very much interested in Mr. Fulljames' letter in your issue of February, but regret that he has shown animus in his comments and has written in such vigorous style. I am fully aware that the labels as to food were instructions to the Stewards. I am equally certain that they were read by the public, and my desire was that they had been more carefully read. I *saw* the birds offered each of the items of unwholesome food that I mentioned. I *saw* the food accepted by the birds. I *saw* the piece of walnut given to the Swallow, and I have good eyesight and am not easily mistaken. The larger birds, in almost every case, *did* take the food offered to them; and I expostulated warmly, to at least three persons, on the cruel way in which they were offering dangerous food to the birds.

I have not my catalogue handy to refer to and may therefore have passed a misprint as to the number of the Eclectus Parrot, but an Eclectus Parrot *was* shrouded by a curtain, *was* in a very bad position, and was painfully suffering from the tobacco smoke. I am a smoker and do not mind smoke; I had three companions with me when I visited the Show, and all of us complained of the very bad smoke-laden air of the stuffy Aquarium, and pitied the birds that were exposed to it.

I write with no authority, I am not interested in the Aquarium, nor would I do it the least damage by my words; but I merely stated what I saw, and to my opinion I adhere. The atmosphere was that of a London Music Hall, or of a booth at a country fair.

GEORGE C. WILLIAMSON.

#### INSECT FOOD.

SIR;—I am glad to see that the question of soft and insect-food is to be discussed in our pages. Of the latter there is one which I have found very helpful in rearing small birds: it is the larvæ of the clothes moth. With the help of these insects I reared nest after nest of Diamond Sparrows, one season.

In order to keep up a supply, my plan is to stock several boxes—such as the Hudson's soap box—with materials that are attractive to these moths; then put the boxes away in an out-house, with the covers slightly open, and leave them undisturbed for a month or two.

The things I have found most attractive are the cleanings-out of the bird cages, with layers of flannel, or any old woollen stuff, between. In another box I have bran between the flannel. The moths that frequent the latter are bigger, and the larvæ seem longer in coming. In taking out the little white worms for use, be careful not to disturb the contents of the box more than can be helped. When the supply in one box is exhausted set it aside, and by the time the last of the four or five boxes have been used, the first opened will be found ready with a fresh supply.

I am sorry to find, from the paper enclosed in the *Avicultural Magazine* for this month, that our Society is to be associated with a Cage-Bird Show.

M. D. SHARP.

#### BREEDING KESTRELS.

SIR.—It seems hard to account for what, I believe, is a fact, that the *diurnal* branch of the Raptores, or Birds of Prey, while not unfrequently making nests, and even laying eggs in our aviaries, seem to be somehow affected by confinement to such an extent that they very rarely hatch their young. Amongst the owls, I believe, besides the noble Eagle Owl, so long-lived in captivity, and a free breeder, and the beautiful Snowy Owl, which, though requiring much more care, has hatched young in at least three collections in this country to my knowledge, the Barn, Tawny, Scops, Little Owl, and perhaps others have been successfully bred. But of the *diurnal* Raptores which have hatched young, I cannot myself recall an instance of any other species than the subject of this letter, and the Great S. American Condor, of which there is an unfledged nestling labelled "Hatched in the Zoological Gardens," amongst the stuffed birds at the Natural History Museum in the Cromwell Road.

A female Kestrel, which shared an aviary of mine with a pair of Red Kites, on the eggs of the latter being taken away after having as usual proved unfertile, took possession of the vacant nest; and, on my return home after a short absence, I found her sitting on a clutch of her own eggs in a neat little cup which she had excavated amongst the wool and hair of the great untidy structure. Before the next spring I had provided her with a mate in the adult plumage, and, both that season and the next, they reared several young ones. When the young were clamouring for food, it was very pretty to see even the male, who was at other times rather shy, snatch meat from the hand and hurry with it up to the nest, which was on a shelf in the covered part of the aviary. As I did not require the young, they were by degrees allowed their freedom, and though they hung about for some considerable time, they gradually disappeared.

W. H. ST. QUINTIN.

#### FOOD FOR INSECTIVOROUS BIRDS.

SIR.—The subject of food for insectivorous birds has always been one of particular interest for me, and the wording of many of the advertisements has been a source of much amusement, because an universal food for insectivorous birds is necessarily an anomaly. There are, if I may use the term, many "grades" of insectivorous birds; and food on which a Thrush or Blackbird would thrive would go a very little way, towards keeping a Blackcap, a Nightingale, or a Wren alive even, leaving condition out of the question. Manufacturers of bird-foods seem to be content with placing a food on the market that will keep life in our birds without bringing the feathers off them: that is "bird keeping," but it is not "aviculture." The food has yet to be invented that will maintain the delicate velvety suppleness of feather that one finds on fresh-caught specimens. To more fully explain what I mean, I recommend any aviculturist to handle a fresh-caught bird and note the quality of the feathers and the elasticity of the quills; then, a month or six weeks later, go through the process again and it will be found that the quills have lost, in some degree, their elasticity and the web will be more brittle, while the body feathers generally will not have the bloom on them they previously had.

This can be obviated to some extent by a plentiful supply of live food, but, in the case of caged birds, much discretion is required in the administration of such live food as the average aviculturist gets hold of; mealworms being the alpha and omega as a rule, but as they are stimulating rather than nourishing they cannot be given with impunity.

Then there are individual peculiarities in birds to cope with: some will eat and thrive on food that others of the same species would obstinately refuse. A Robin I had, never did so well on my theoretically rational food as he did on the bread crumbs and crushed hempseed of his former owner, and I could quote many such instances.

I have no desire to disparage any brand of ready-made food; many are much better than the novice would make for himself, but none are perfect: as a fact, in nine cases out of ten, the sponsor of a bought food says, "On this, and mealworms and meat occasionally, my birds thrive." Exactly! and to what extent, I would seek to know, are they indebted to these very tit-bits, which are so extremely nourishing that but little is required? Aviculturists would do well to adopt the motto, "Little and good," in dieting their charges. They would then get a deal more song—if song they wanted—than they do where a bird has to eat a large quantity of food in order to obtain sufficient nourishment to maintain life, or has to spend its time picking over a heap of food in search of the only ingredients it cares for or, as a rule, requires.

I wish it to be understood that I allude entirely to the feeding of British Birds, and more especially to that of the smaller Warblers. A tablespoonful of paste made of ants' cocoons and yolk of egg is much more acceptable to them neat, than the same ingredients diluted with a handful of bread crumbs which they seldom partake of, and which, I cannot help feeling, robs the paste by absorption of some portion of its nutritive qualities.

T. MARSHALL.

#### THE ETHICS OF EXHIBITING.

SIR,—Although perhaps late in the day, I may be allowed to trespass on the ground already gone over. Opinions are sure to differ, but if we draw the line within reason, surely sending our birds *occasionally* to Shows will not be considered cruelty, neither will it be detrimental to their health. But to go farther than this, as some exhibitors do, whose ambition it is to show their birds almost unceasingly throughout the season, and who no sooner receive them home from one Show than they dispatch them to another, must, I admit, render the poor creatures' lives not worth living. Exhibitors such as these surely can have but little love towards their feathered friends, but certainly must be studying what financial gain may be obtained.

I have won hundreds of prizes with Foreign Birds, but it has invariably been my practice to be at the Shows with my birds during the greater part of the time, that I may see that the Stewards do not feed them with poultry-foods, which I have seen done at some exhibitions. It is most necessary that exhibitors should personally attend, to see to the well-being of their pets, and not leave them in the hands of those who have no knowledge of their requirements. Perhaps, with some who exhibit, the journeying to the Show would be impossible: then I would recommend them to send only within reasonable distances.

I have some specimens which I really think enjoy an outing:

particularly a Great Salmon-crested Cockatoo, whose delight it is to set up a cry louder than any other exhibit, and one might as well try to still the tempest as attempt to quiet him when beyond concert pitch. This is his way of showing his pleasure—unfortunately it is not always appreciated by the audience gathered round him.

In my opinion, two or three well-managed Shows annually, (Summer preferably to any other season, when our foreigners would not suffer from the cold) should find favour with all true fanciers. They are the grandest of all sights in my estimation, and must necessarily help us as aviculturists, and have for many years been a great attraction to thousands.

H. T. T. CAMPS.

#### TITS AND NUTHATCHES.

SIR,—While spending my Christmastide at a country rectory I was much delighted with the tameness of the birds. Outside one of the windows of the drawing-room, under the verandah, a piece of suet was suspended in a little network bag. To the feast thus provided came continually, all day long, a Great Tit, a Blue Tit, a Marsh Tit, and a pair of Nuthatches. The Nuthatches were also furnished with a little store of nuts in a hollow log, to which they did full justice, as may be supposed. The birds were within four or five feet of the window, and did not mind being looked at by the people in the room. They could be far better observed than if they were in an aviary.

It seems to me we have here a "branch of aviculture" which most of us are too apt to neglect.

It is generally admitted that the Tits are not suited for captivity, and will not live long in confinement, even under the most favourable conditions; but they can be easily induced to approach close to the house, and can then be well observed from the windows—surely it is better to content ourselves with thus observing them, and give up, once for all, all attempts to keep them in either cage or aviary.

HORATIO R. FILLMER.

#### BREEDING RESULTS.

SIR,—We have had, in several numbers of the Magazine, the particulars of the breeding results of various members during 1895. I, for one, have read them with pleasure and interest. Thinking it may be interesting to know what starts have been made this year, I send you the following notes of the eggs and young obtained in my aviary up to February 17th, and hope other amateurs will favour us with theirs.

Three Ribbon Finches, from five eggs, hatched about a fortnight ago, fledging and doing well. Two unfertile eggs.

Two Budgerigars, three hatched from four eggs, one died young; about three weeks old and will soon leave the nest—two fine nestlings. Hen about to lay again.

Another pair sitting on five eggs, several are darkened and appear good.

Another pair continually in nest and hen expected to lay daily.

Five New Zealand Parrakeets' eggs laid at various times, but all broken almost immediately, and never two in the nest together. Hen appears out of condition, which is doubtless the cause.

Several nests built, and some half dozen eggs laid by a pair of Zebra Finches, no young reared—one hatched, but disappeared almost immediately.

I rarely succeed with these birds.

A. SAVAGE.

## FANCY FEATHER AND BIRD SKIN SALES.

SIR,—Perhaps the enclosed cutting about a sale which took place a few days ago, and which takes place about every fortnight during the year, will interest some of our lady readers.

If the fair sex could only be persuaded of the thousands upon thousands of extremely rare birds that are slaughtered every year for the decoration of their bonnets, etc.: of the enormous waste of feathered life: and eventually the total extinction of birds which were at one time plentiful, I am sure they would club together and make a promise never to wear a feather of any sort.

There is a Society working with this end in view now, but what can a few do against the thousands who think more of their personal adornment than of the breath fleeing from the poor little bodies of the birds which are either trapped, poisoned, or shot to effect this adornment.

What these birds' skins must cost abroad, when we see them offered at one-thirty-second part of a penny per skin in the London markets, cannot be imagined.

A. BERTLING.

*The following is a copy of the cutting enclosed in Mr. Bertling's letter:—*

(From Messrs. Lewis and Peat's Report, Feb. 11th).

FEATHERS.—There was a good attendance of buyers at these—the opening sales of the year. Competition, throughout, was very keen, and a considerable rise in values took place for nearly everything offered. Osprey feathers of all sorts obtaining very high prices. White Paddy no change. Gray Paddy were about 15 to 20 per cent. on last sales' very high prices. The total supply of all descriptions of Osprey, &c., feathers was 13,163 ozs. against 20,137 ozs. in the December sales. Bird skins, in good supply, sold steadily on the average; but Birds of Paradise were in large supply, well competed for, and sold at much dearer rates. Impeyan Pheasants, in small supply, sold well. Parrots and Kingfishers, considering the quality, sold at an advance.

BIRD SKINS.—There was a large supply at these sales to-day, and they passed off well. Birds of Paradise, in large supply, were well competed for, and sold at much dearer rates. Impeyan Pheasants, in small supply, sold well. Parrots and Kingfishers, considering the quality, sold well at an advance. Other skins, in good supply, sold steadily.

East Indian: Impeyan Pheasants, 5s. 3d. to 7s. 3d., black argus, 3s.; Birds of Paradise, female round, 14s. 6d. to 24s. 6d., rifles, 4s. 5d. to 5s. many wires, 5s. 9d. to 8s., black, 15s. 6d. to 17s. 6d., long tails, 7s. to 7s. 9d., black and white, 11s. 6d., new description, 40s. to 61s.; pigeons, crested, 2s. to 5s., bronze, 3s. 3d. to 3s. 6d.; bee eaters, 3d. to 1d.; owls, small, 3d. to 3½d.; jays, 1½d. to 2½d., parrots, medium, 1d. to 2½d., ringnecks, 1½d. to 3½d., blackheads, ½d. to 3½d., roseheads, 1½d. to 5½d., large 1½d.; kingfishers, flat, 2½d. to 3½d.; quails, ½d., starlings, ½d.; jungle cocks, flat, 2s. 1d. various birds 1-32d. to ½d. per skin.

West Indian: Humming ½d. to 2d., various ½d. to 1½d., ruby 2½d. to 5d., emerald, 2½d., ditto large 2d. to 2½d., ditto small, 1½d. to 2d., Bonaparte, 6½d., amethyst, 1½d. to 2½d., blue throated, 2½d.; tanagers, red, 4d. to 5½d., yellow and black, 7½d.; chattering, blue, 4s. 8d. to 5s. 3d., trogons, 2s. 9d., various birds, 1-16d. to ½d.; osprey skins, with cross feathers, 1s. 8d. to 6s. 6d. per skin.

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MY AVIARIES AND THEIR INMATES.

By R. A. TODD.

Perhaps the experiences of my first season as an aviculturist may be of some interest to other members of our Society who are also beginners in this fascinating hobby.

I started operations in May, in an octagonal open-air aviary of about nine feet in diameter and ten feet to the apex of the roof. Years ago, this had accommodated an Eagle, but was now tenantless and quite out of repair. I covered it with half-inch wire netting, boarding in the sides and top towards the north and east, placing various nesting appliances on the boarded sides among branches of box, fir, and yew—these, however, lost their leaves and became bare and thin very early in the season. I have seen furze recommended for this purpose and shall try it next season, it will no doubt form a denser cover. A cement basin in the centre held the water for bathing and drinking; a pipe from a twenty-gallon cistern, outside, filled every morning, permitting of a fresh supply being turned on at intervals during the day, a second pipe carrying off the surplus; I found a good scrubbing out necessary two or three times during the hot weather, to keep the cement clean. Round this basin I planted a ring of grass about a foot wide: birds seem very fond of grass, besides probably finding many small insects among it, and I consider it a very important feature of the aviary.

Here, on the 11th of May, I turned out sixteen pairs of Ornamental Finches. The cold weather that followed was fatal to Cordon Bleus and Bengalese, but Waxbills (including the Sidney Waxbill) Nuns, Zebra, Ribbon, Parson and Saffron Finches were unharmed. I subsequently added a cock Nonpareil and Indigo Finch. Among the original occupants were also a pair of Budgerigars: the hen was soon killed, as I imagined by the cock, and as the latter seemed spiteful to the smaller birds, I had to remove him.

Probably owing to insufficiently dense cover, my breeding results have been meagre, consisting of five Zebra Finches and two Ribbon Finches. Two of the Zebras were hens, and, after attaining full plumage, died from egg-binding in the Autumn. The same fate overtook the old hen with her third nest; a hen that I bought to replace her soon followed her to the grave. The young cocks and the Ribbon Finches, which were both cocks, are still strong and healthy.

With Parson Finches, I have been as unfortunate as Dr. Butler: my pair, after making various desultory pretences to commence housekeeping, only settled down to serious work late in October, when the hen promptly succumbed to egg-binding. Mr. Abrahams kindly presented me with another hen, which, in a short time, met with a similar fate.

During the season I had several other losses, mainly from diarrhoea, probably from leaving green food in the aviary after it had lost its freshness.

On the North side of this aviary I have built a house about five feet square and six feet high. The walls are formed of half-inch boards inside and out, with roofing felt between; the roof has the felt outside; a skylight and windows on each side give the necessary light. In this house I have hung up several small travelling cages, substituting for the wire fronts pieces of cardboard with a small hole in the centre, and fixing a perch in front; filled with hay, these cages afford a warm refuge for my birds on cold nights.

For the winter, I have only left in this aviary Zebra, Ribbon, Parson, Saffron, Nonpareil, and Indigo Finches; with the help of a few mealworms about three days a week, these have, so far, stood the inclement weather perfectly.

For a bird-room, I have made use of a greenhouse about twenty feet long by fifteen feet wide. On benches round the sides are arranged six cages, three feet long, two feet wide, and nearly three feet high, three of these are box cages; there are also six smaller cages. On a centre bench are three small aviaries, about five feet square, and five feet and a half high. The chief fault with this house is that it gets rather too warm in bright sunny weather, in spite of free ventilation and an outside blind; I hope to obviate this difficulty in future by having a much thicker blind on the south side, raised some inches from the roof to allow the air to play between it and the glass. To economise fuel, I have covered the glass on the east end with felt and fixed mats round the sides for the winter. I have

omitted to mention that the house is fitted with a good supply of hot water pipes.

I have had no breeding results here yet, the arrangements being only completed late in the autumn.

At present one aviary is occupied by a collection of Waxbills and the smallest Finches. Another by Zosterops, Superb and Scarlet Tanagers, Persian and Red-vented Bulbuls, and Pekin Robins. The third contains several Weavers, Cardinals, and a cock Black-tailed Hawfinch. A Chinese Laughing Thrush (whose song, especially early in the morning, is almost deafening) and a Blue-winged Green Bulbul, each have a cage to themselves. The Bulbul was originally in the soft-billed birds' aviary, but had to be removed on account of his quarrelsome disposition. A Shâma also has a cage to himself: the merits of this bird are so well known that I need not describe them.

Conspicuous among the occupants of the other cages is a pair of Parrot Finches. Contrary to Mr. Fillmer's experience, my birds will not touch paddy rice. Although they do not behave as affectionately to each other as many of the small Finches, I have often noticed them sitting close together on the same perch. They have lately shown a disposition to nest, but I have not thought it advisable to encourage them at this unfavourable season of the year.

A small cage, in a warm corner, holds a pair of Orange-breasted Waxbills which should have bred, but they have shown no disposition to do so. I have given them a basket nest in a small bush, and tried to stimulate them with ants' eggs and yolk of egg, but all in vain: they never touch anything but the usual seeds.

A pair of Red-headed Gouldian Finches in one of the large cages, which I have had since April, have also never attempted to nest, though supplied with everything needful. They are in perfect health. I consider the song of the cock bird very pleasant, though low it is very sweet; his love-dance, which I have only observed on one occasion, consists of a series of perpendicular hops up and down on the perch.

Among the Cardinals, is a Texan or Small-billed Cardinal. Though perhaps not so striking in colour as his congeners, his dark grey plumage touched with red, and red-suffused breast, make him a rather handsome bird; his crest is grey, also tinged with red, and is more constantly carried erect than is the case with the other crested Cardinals. He is extremely fond of

cockroaches, and though rather shy, will at once come down from his perch when I put a panful of the coveted delicacy in the aviary.

I find all the larger Finches are fond of oats, though I do not remember to have seen this grain recommended by aviculturists. In the summer I collected a good supply of grass in seed as it ripened, also plantain; the small Finches take very kindly to the former, but will not touch the plantain. Hips and haws are also useful food; soft-billed birds eat the flesh, Tanagers being especially greedy after it: the Finches pick out the seeds, and then eat the fleshy parts as well.

I think it best to have as many of my birds as possible in the open air in the summer, but it is no doubt useless to expect to do much good in the way of breeding, with a large number in one aviary. I am, therefore, planning a new outside aviary, fourteen feet long and ten feet deep, with a house at the back, four feet deep, for shelter in bad weather. I shall divide this into two compartments, in each of which I think three pairs of small Finches should find sufficient accommodation to rear their families without interfering with each other. I propose having the greater part of the ground of grass, and only gravel under the perches; I suppose it would not do to have the whole grass. By means of this aviary I hope to considerably increase my young broods next summer.

## RARE FOREIGN BIRDS.

(SECOND SERIES).

### V.—THE CRIMSON-BANDED WHYDAH.

By H. J. FULLJAMES.

It is as difficult to keep the name of our friend Mr. Joseph Abrahams out of any article on Foreign birds, as it was to keep King Charles's head out of the memorial of the immortal Mr. Dick. I therefore make no apology for commencing by stating that in all Mr. Abrahams' experience he has seen but two Crimson-banded Whydahs, one of which is mine.

In all the works upon Foreign birds that are in my possession, I have only found one reference to the species. This occurs in Part I of "Birds of Western Africa," by W. Swainson, forming Vol. XI of "The Naturalists' Library." The Latin name of the bird is therein given as *Vidua rubritorques*: but when, by the courtesy of Dr. Butler, I was shewn over the unique collection of foreign bird skins at the Natural History Museum at South Kensington, I found the skin of the species

labelled *Penthetria ardens*. The former seems the better name, as it indicates both the group to which the bird belongs and its "crimson" throat band. In my own specimen, however, the band is decidedly not crimson, but of an orange-yellow color. I append the description given in the work above mentioned, as it accurately describes the bird, with the exception that the tail of my bird is fully ten inches in length, instead of six as mentioned :

"The entire plumage, both above and below, is deep and glossy black; paler and inclining to brown on the wings, where the tertials have a pale fulvous external margin. The bright orange - scarlet band is situated across the upper part of the breast, or rather at the lower part of the throat.

"Total length, from the bill to the tip of the wings, four and one-tenth inches; tail beyond, six; bill, from the gape, half; wings, three; tarsus, eight-tenths; middle toe and claw, one; hinder ditto, eight-tenths."

It may be of some interest to explain how I became possessed of this *rara avis*. In the late summer of 1894, there was established at the Westminster Aquarium a bird stall at which I was a frequent visitor. One evening I saw two birds in a cage together, one of which I readily identified as a cock pintail Whydah just coming into color. The other was the subject of the present chapter. The manager of the stall offered them to me (at the price of one guinea) as a pair of "Cut-throat Whydahs." He certainly got very near to the name of one, as the bird is marked very similarly to the "Cut-throat" or Ribbon Finches. After a little bargaining, I bought the "pair" for twelve shillings and sixpence, thus making the cheapest acquisition that has ever fallen to my lot. I have since been offered ten pounds for the one bird.

The principal beauty of the Crimson-banded Whydah is in his tail. While the ornamental part of the tail of the Pintail and Paradise Whydahs consists of four feathers only, in this bird the whole tail becomes elongated, and when it is at its best each of the ten feathers of which it is composed becomes wavy, and appears of a spiral form, the result being that his tail is an exact counterpart in miniature of the magnificent appendage possessed by the Giant Whydah.

I bought my bird in full plumage in August, 1894, and he kept in condition until May, 1895. In that month he cast his tail, without changing plumage, and a new tail grew immediately. At the end of October he moulted throughout, the strange part of the proceeding being that, while his new body and wing plumage came "out of color," yet his new tail grew black from

the commencement, excepting that, for the first week or two, each feather was tipped with the narrowest possible band of the "fulvous" color which margins his wings when in full plumage.

As is the case with most of the Whydahs and Weavers, my bird is exceedingly pugnacious, and at first I was afraid he would injure some of his companions in the aviary: so I caged him separately in a specially made cage. This did not by any means answer, as during the first week of his solitary confinement he had two fits, out of which he was only brought by immersion in hot water. After getting him out of his second fit, I concluded to turn him into the larger birds' aviary, and let the other occupants take care of themselves. I soon found that his "bark was worse than his bite," for beyond driving about for a few minutes, occasionally, any bird that will make way for him, he does not do any mischief. It is most amusing to see his look of astonishment when he finds anything to face his attack. He stands for a minute with every feather on end, and hisses with all his might at his opponent. If the other bird still refuses to move, the Whydah will glance round for fresh quarry, and immediately give chase. The aviary, however, being 9ft. by 9ft. by 4½ft. deep there is plenty of room for exercise of this description, and, as he is somewhat handicapped by the weight of his tail, any fugitive fleeing from his assault has considerably the best of it: therefore no serious harm results from his apparently vicious disposition. At the same time, I would certainly not trust him with small Waxbills and Finches. He is exceedingly fond of his bath, and as the bath in my aviary consists of a zinc tray some twenty-one inches long by six inches wide he can drench himself to his heart's content. It is bad luck for any bird to approach him when he is so engaged. After he has thoroughly wetted himself there is peace for a time, for when he has with some difficulty clambered to a perch, his subsequent toilet is a matter of great importance, and occupies his entire attention for a considerable while.

Although he has access to fruit, soft food, and various sorts of seeds, I have never seen him take anything but canary and millet, with the exception of a daily mealworm of which he is very fond.

Mr. Cronkshaw has the only other specimen of which I have heard, and I should be obliged if he would let our members and myself know, through the Magazine, whether his experience coincides with mine. It would be also interesting if some of the experienced aviculturists who are members of our

Society would kindly say if I am correct in claiming such extreme rarity for the Crimson-banded Whydah.\*

## VI.—THE DESERT TRUMPETER BULLFINCH.

*Erythropsiza githagina.*

By E. G. B. MEADE-WALDO.

This charming little bird is certainly amongst my greatest favourites, both in its wild state and as an aviary bird, possessing, as it does, many good qualities, viz., extreme hardihood, amiability, readiness to breed, beauty of appearance, and a most remarkable voice. I am not aware that it has been described as an aviary bird by anyone except Dr. Bolle, but am open to correction on this point. This Desert finch has a very wide though interrupted range, extending from the Island of Fuertaventura on the west, to Southern Afghanistan on the east, when it is replaced by *E. obsoleta*; further again to the east, in the Gobi desert another form, *E. mongolica*, occurs. It is a bird of the true desert but always frequents parts of a stony character, and where pink limestone is more or less frequent: its own rose colour harmonizing in a remarkable degree with its surroundings. It is of great power of flight, and must travel immense distances for water.

In its wild state and in breeding plumage, it is a most beautiful bird. In the male, the thick and powerful beak is bright coral red, the feathers of the crown of the head stone colour edged with rose-pink, the back the same, rump and upper tail coverts bright rose-pink, tail dark isabelline edged with rose, wings the same but with scapulars edged with brilliant rose-pink, the whole of the under parts suffused with rose colour, the legs orange. The female is a very dingy edition of her mate. In the autumn and winter both sexes are of a sand colour but slightly suffused with rose, and the beak is but pale red. In a state of confinement the full colour is never reached, but the male of a pair that I have had since 1888, is nearly as good as a wild bird. The young in their pure isabelline dress are very interesting. This Bullfinch is about the size of the common Linnæus.

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\* Since the above was written, another of these beautiful birds has been imported, and I have been fortunate enough to get possession of him. I am, however, compelled to keep him in a separate cage, as there would be war to the death if I turned him into the aviary with the other, and I am afraid to trust him with my collection of small birds.

The call note is a peculiarly metallic twang-twang, but the breeding song of the male is most remarkable. It commences with a great deal of show of singing—throat puffed out, head turned from side to side, etc.—but very little sound is the result; then the head is drawn back and a clear metallic blast is given, sometimes quite prolonged, strongly resembling the sound of a toy trumpet. When first heard in a wild state this sound is most puzzling, and the little pink bird, sitting most probably on a pink stone, is practically invisible. They nest very early in the year; the nest is slightly built, outwardly of dry weeds, and lined with goat's or camel's hair; it is placed in a fairly open cranny of a rock or under a stone, occasionally in a wall, and usually contains five or six eggs of a beautiful pale blue lightly spotted with dark purple specks. In an aviary, the Trumpeter Bullfinch is perfectly hardy, and although a bird which can know nothing but cloudless skies and great heat throughout the greater part of its range, appears perfectly indifferent to the greatest cold we ever have in this country. Some of mine were wintered for me by a friend and endured the greatest severity of the winter of 1895, in a peculiarly cold aviary open to the *north*, and nothing could possibly look more perfectly healthy than they did—singing all through February. Of course all birds of the desert must be accustomed to great and sudden variations in the temperature. All seeds are eaten, canary and spray millet being the greatest favourites. They are partial to the seeds of many grasses and weeds, and shepherd's purse is very popular. No insect or egg food is touched. They are fond of the green of dandelion. The young are fed on the seeds of grasses and weeds disgorged from the crop. They prefer an open box to build in, placed under cover and on a beam or ledge. The female pulls the lining of her nest over the eggs until she commences to sit. They are extremely fond of salt, and are always nibbling lime in some form or other.

Although, as I said before, this is a very amiable little bird and not at all inclined to be pugnacious, still, as far as my experience goes, it will not breed successfully in an aviary with other small birds: for as soon as the young are big enough not to require brooding during the day time, the parents will spend a great part of their time driving away any other bird that approaches their nest, and thus neglect to feed the young often enough.

## THE PALACE SHOW.

By REGINALD PHILLIPPS.

Mr. Bonhote's remarks on the Grey Wagtails and other birds raise the question as to where the line, for judging purposes, should be drawn between migratory and non-migratory species, for there are not a few that we commonly regard as non-migratory of which a number of the members troop off to the Mediterranean, Algeria, &c., and the remainder move far away from their summer resorts: those members of the different species which pass the warmer months in our southern counties going still farther south at the approach of winter, their places being taken by hardier specimens which have been breeding, and probably were bred, more to the north, or possibly in Northern Germany, Denmark, or even Scandinavia. In just a few species it may be that every member which passes the summer in this country goes abroad; but the absence of these individuals is not noticed, for we see numbers about, which we think the same, but which are immigrants from colder climes, like our familiar friends the Fieldfare and Redwing.

Now all these are "migratory" species, so far as the Palace Show is concerned, some of the members of the several species being likewise Birds of Passage; and, consequently, not only the Grey and Piel Wagtails (for the latter also migrate in the narrow sense of the word) but many another so-called "resident" species should be exhibited in the migratory classes so long as the latter are erroneously headed "Birds of Passage and Migratory Birds."

The uncertainty prevailing as to how birds will be judged must keep away many an exhibit from the shows: Mr. Bonhote brings a few eccentricities in judging under notice. And uncertainty also occurs in connection with Waxwings, Bearded Tits, &c. This year not a Waxwing appeared; and no wonder if its previous treatment at the Palace be considered. Last year several very good Bearded Tits were exhibited in the A.O.V. British, and also in a migratory, class; they were not marked Wrong Class in either, but were ignored because (so I was told) they were foreigners. This year they were received and noticed in the A.O.V. British class; and yet I think I may venture to assert as a fact that not only these individual birds but all the Bearded Tits and Waxwings ever exhibited in this country have been foreigners.

It will be seen therefore that, in respect of migratory and foreign "British" birds, it is impossible, from the nature of things, for any judge to judge always correctly; but that is not

any reason why judges, as a body and as individuals, should not judge consistently, and therefore satisfactorily, which they certainly do not now succeed in doing, the contradictions in the judging, and the grumbling, going on year after year in a manner by no means creditable to those responsible for the management.

Surely it would not be a *very* difficult matter for the Palace and other large show authorities to decide, and to print in their schedules, in what classes well-known doubtful species should be placed, and thus save many a sneer at their expense, and inspire a sense of confidence among exhibitors.

My visit to the show this year was very hurried; and I did not get through one-third of the classes; but a glance at the catalogue seems to expose other birds in wrong classes besides those mentioned by Mr. Bonhote. The Ring Ouzel is one of our regular Birds of Passage; and yet at show after show, as I pointed out last year, it is received and honoured in a non-migratory class; and the Great Shrike, exhibited in the same class, is, as a rule, a winter visitor only. A Crossbill was exhibited in class 101 and another in No. 104, yet neither was rejected.

Dr. Simpson has referred to the Red-sided Tit as a rare bird. Last year, in a moment of weakness, I ventured to infer the same of Mrs. Palmour's Orange-flanked Parrakeets, *Brotoperys pyrropterus*, from South America, which (or one of them) she still persists in calling *Trichoglossus pyrropterus* from the Sandwich Islands. Yet hardly had the words appeared in print than I obtained a pair myself; and during the year a few more pairs arrived. Last spring I thought I really had secured a rare bird, a specimen of what appeared to be Wallace's Lory, *Eos wallacci*; but during the summer a few more trickled over; and later such a number reached this country that they became common. But I may well add here that at the Zoo one was obtained and named the Purple-breasted Lory, *Eos riciniata*. On referring to the N.H.M. Catalogue, I find reference made to a third, *Eos insularis*, the three differing apparently only in the extent of the purple patch on the crown, occiput, and nape. When the flood of these birds came over, I found the purple in all stages, on some connected with the purple collar, on others not, on others again with hardly a trace of purple on head or nape. These specimens were in poor plumage for the most part, and were probably immature; but one could hardly help feeling that the three were probably but one species in reality. *Mais à nos moutons*: I have been told that the Red-sided Tits, *Parus varius*, have not been seen in this country for twelve years; but in the late autumn

large numbers arrived, of which the majority, I fear, have since died. Some years ago I gave a substantial sum for a pair of Ornamented Lorikeets; several have come over since; and late last autumn they arrived in shoals. Really I am not exaggerating *very* much, but one cannot help feeling the reverse of sweet-tempered sometimes; and none the more sweet was I when letters came in offering some of these "great rarities" at *very* fancy prices, although for a time almost any number of the Lories and Lorikeets mentioned and to be mentioned were obtainable at 20/- a head, and the Tits for a very small sum. One feels inclined to say that one will never give a high price for a bird again, no matter how "rare."

The class for Lories and Lorikeets (excluding the strangers, for the Yellow-naped Parrakeet was a good bird) was chiefly noticeable for the general bad plumage of the exhibits—quite a number appearing in the travel-worn dresses in which they reached this country recently—and for the presence of a rare species which seems to have been pretty generally overlooked. Of the "Ruby Lorikeet" of the catalogue, it will suffice to say that it was an ordinary specimen of *Eos rubra*, the common Scarlet Lory. But Mr. H. B. Smith's "Lory," No. 1827 if I mistake not, was a new species at the Palace, and one I never saw, that I know of, before December last, when some few arrived along with the other Lories and Lorikeets already referred to. This was Forsten's Lorikeet, *Trichoglossus forsteni*, from the Island of Sumbawa; I only glanced at the "Green Nape Lorikeet," but it appeared likewise to be a bird of this species. If not particularly noticed, Forsten's might readily be taken for an Ornamented Lorikeet; but a closer examination reveals several points of difference. In a bad light the head seems dark brown, but, under more favourable conditions, the front is found to be strongly tinged with dark blue-purple, which changes into a dark red-purple at the back. What, for the sake of convenience, I will call the collar, in the Ornamented is of a bright yellow on the sides, but of a bright red behind. In Forsten's Lorikeet, the collar is well-defined, and of a greenish-yellow colour. Behind this comes a dark, ill-defined, purple yoke, followed by some red, which, on examination, proves to be an irregular extension of the bright red breast. It is larger than its Ornamented brother, but, in call and movements, not unlike it.

I am not fond of criticising the critics, but cannot forbear remarking that, before I went to the Palace, I read in one of the daily papers an account of the show, in which, among other "rare" birds, a Brazilian Hangnest was mentioned, a *black* bird

with a wonderful nest (fully described) which, by some mistake, had not been exhibited in the cage with the bird. Being fond of the Hangnests, I wondered to myself what species this would be, and made a point of inspecting the class. It turned out that the "black" Hangnest was a timid Shâma, which I found crouching in a corner of its cage, only the black feathers being exposed to view. It is sad that even a critic, and the critic of so important a journal, should have been led into error by so simple and common a blunder as the mixing up of the numbers of the exhibits. The Hangnest was only two cages removed from the Shâma! So much for the critics, including of course the most humble of your servants.\*

## REVIEW.

*Foreign Fancy Birds for Young Fanciers*, by Dr. W. T. Greene, M.A., F.Z.S. ("Pigeons & Cage Birds" Office).

This is an unpretending little sixpenny pamphlet written in Dr. Greene's well-known attractive style, and likely to be of considerable use to the novice in aviculture, if only by introducing him to the subject and leading him on to the study of larger works.

We cannot help thinking the title to be singularly inappropriate—the word "Fancy" is quite inapplicable to foreign birds, which are not bred for fancy points like poultry, pigeons and canaries; and we protest against aviculturists being called "fanciers."

We have noted several of the author's statements with which we are unable to agree, but as a whole this little book is much freer from inaccuracies than some other of Dr. Greene's later works, and he has wisely refrained from expounding his favourite scientific heresies, which are made rather too obtrusive in some of his books. Perhaps this is partly explained by the fact that in *Foreign Fancy Birds* scientific names are conspicuous by their absence, and no sort of classification is attempted.

According to Dr. Greene, "it is quite certain that an aviary, even on a small scale, can, if properly managed, be

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\* Since writing the foregoing, I have come across a pair of Forsten's Lorikeets which appear to be in adult plumage; and the difference between them and the specimens I had previously seen is marked. The most striking point in the bird I find is the magnificent bright-red, unbarred, breast, shining out in contrast with the rich purple of the abdomen and the curious wavy yellow-green breeches. It is a remarkably handsome creature.

made to 'pay.'" We are afraid that there are very few members of the Avicultural Society who have found this to be the case, however carefully they may have followed Dr. Greene's advice.

Dr. Greene has often declared that only True Finches feed their young from the crop, and that this regurgitation "is the crucial test of a finch," yet now, in *Foreign Fancy Birds*, in the section devoted to the Zebra Finch, he tells us that "both parents attend to the young, whom they feed assiduously with softened seed brought up from their crops." We are very glad to find that Dr. Greene has at last recognised the fact that not only True Finches, but all, or almost all, small birds which feed their young on seeds, partially digest the seed in the crop before giving it to their young.

*Foreign Fancy Birds* contains many useful hints about aviaries and the management of birds, and our readers will find it well worth its very small cost, for it is really a marvel of cheapness.

The illustrations are of very varying merit.

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## CORRESPONDENCE.

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### IS GRIT DANGEROUS TO PARROTS?

SIR,—With reference to the above subject, it would be interesting to know if it has been proved by *post-mortem* examination whether wild Parrots and Parrakeets eat grit in a natural state.

In India I believe all the members of the Parrot family are Parrakeets. The natives of this country are very fond of keeping Parrakeets, and they never, by any chance, give them grit. In India, I think Parrakeets are never seen picking their food off the ground, although they may themselves be on the ground to feed off a low crop like "gram." Parrakeets in this country, when they feed on grain, do so when it is on the stalk and in a more or less soft condition. When caged, in India, they are generally fed on soaked "gram," which is soft enough to cut with the nail. It may be that if Parrots are fed on soft food, in accordance with nature, they do not require grit, but do require it to enable them to digest unnaturally dry food.

CHAPRA-SARAN,

INDIA.

C. HARRISON.

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### SOME RARE BIRDS.

SIR,—The following notes may interest some of our members, as well as be the means of getting at the proper names of the birds.

With reference to the Yellowish Weaver shown at the Palace—Class 107, No. 164—I have had four pairs of them, but only one hen lived. The first two pairs cost about 10s. 6d. a pair, the others 7s. 9d. a pair. The first I bought as Indian Bottle-nosed Weavers; the others as Golden Sparrows, which name suits the birds better, as the cocks are a deep rich

yellow, except the flights, which have the feathers almost black, giving the appearance of a black saddle when at rest. They have the same dash as newly-imported Weavers, and no doubt this was the cause of their death, through being hurt in their wild career. The cock put me in mind of the Queen of Bavaria Parrakeet, illustrated in Dr. Greene's "Parrots in Captivity,"—of course in colouring only.

Now about a pair of birds which came with some Aurora Finches or Crimson-wing Waxbills. I had three, one died. They were sent as female Aurora Finches, but are totally unlike them in every way. About as large as an Avadavat and of similar shape, but not nearly so long in the tail, in fact, with a very stumpy tail. The bill is like red wax, eye-ball black, iris nut-brown; legs and feet, grey; head and frontlet, black; back, wings, and upper tail coverts, blackish; breast, chestnut with greyish-white bars straight across from under wing coverts, from breast to abdomen, and thence to under tail coverts gradually the colors and markings tone down till they loose themselves in an ashy-grey. The deepest color is on the sides just under the wings. They are a true pair, I am sure, as the cock sings an inaudible song and struts about so as to show his superiority. One peculiarity is that they have never perched, either in a cage or in the room where they have moulted and been, now close on two years. The one I take for a hen is not quite so bright in color, but in every other respect exactly like the cock.

W. OSBALDESTON.

#### THE SLENDER-BILL COCKATOO AT THE CRYSTAL PALACE.

SIR,—I do not pretend to be "infallible;" nevertheless, my friendly critic, Mr. Septimus Perkins, seems to infer, and wish one to believe, that the Slender-bill, *Licmetis tenuirostris*, is not a Cockatoo. Then if not, pray what is it? Are we to call Cockatoos Parrots, and *vice versa*?

If the Slender-bill is not a representative of the Cockatoo tribe, our worthy authorities who have written so much on avicultural subjects have made a gross error. Not long ago, my collection contained no less than eleven different kinds of the Cockatoo family, and after having kept these species for upwards of 20 years, I fail to see my way to include the Slender-bill under any other category than amongst the Cockatoos.

In my opinion the only possible class to which the Slender-bill Cockatoo could be admitted, was 130; granting at the same time that the bird cannot lay claim to possessing much of a crest, such as adorns many of the other Cockatoos; nevertheless, he is evidently proud of what nature has granted to him, which is a rounded white crest in miniature, the feathers at the base being rosy or orange-tinted, thus giving him a claim to associate with others eligible to compete in the above class.

With regard to the Macaws, the Palace authorities have for some years past seen reason for discontinuing a class for these birds, owing to insufficient support from exhibitors. When the Crystal Palace Schedule has been perfected, we shall probably have fewer complaints. The one who has the responsibility of adjudicating upon the Parrot classes has, hitherto, done his duty to the satisfaction of many; but to please everyone would be impossible. *Quot homines tot sententia.*

H. T. T. CAMPS.

[If we understand Mr. Perkins correctly, what he complains of is that while both Macaws and Cockatoos are Parrots in the wider meaning of the

term, Macaws are allowed to compete in the class for "any other species of Parrot" while Cockatoos are not. Mr. Camps replies by pointing out that classes are specially provided for Cockatoos while they are not so provided for Macaws; and that the wording of class 130, "Cockatoos, Lemon, Salmon, White, or Orange Crested," is descriptive of plumage and not indicative of species. Probably many exhibitors understand class 130 to be limited to four named species, and if this is not so it would be better expressly to make the class one for "any other species of Cockatoo." It would also seem desirable to make class 128 read "any other species of Parrot or Macaw." There seems to be an unwritten law by which Macaws are admitted into class 128 and Slender-billed Cockatoos into class 130. These little subtleties are well known to experienced exhibitors; but they are puzzling to the novice and also to the outside public, and it would be well if they could be avoided.]

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### THE SHOW CIRCULAR.

*To the Editors of the Avicultural Magazine.*

DEAR SIRS,—As a member of the Avicultural Society I wish most respectfully to take exception to the circular of the British and Foreign Bird Show, inserted in the current issue of our Magazine.

I cannot see my way to subscribe to the proposed prize fund for the Show. Am I to be therefore considered as not appreciating at its true worth your arduous labours in the editing of the Magazine? It is because I do value highly your work in our Society, that I venture now to protest against the wording of this circular. In one place, attention is drawn to the fact that "it is the only occasion on which the members have been asked to contribute to any special Fund." If it should be considered desirable that members should be so asked, it would be much more desirable to raise the annual subscription to the Society: to which I would gladly assent.

Taking this opportunity of thanking you for the great interest you have always taken in aviculture, I am, yours respectfully,

ARTHUR A. SLATER.

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SIR,—I take the sole responsibility for the circular to which Mr. Slater takes exception, and I am willing to admit that it is not perhaps very happily worded. Nevertheless I must state that a copy of it was sent to each member of the Executive Committee before it was issued with the Magazine.

It was certainly not for a moment present to my mind that it would be supposed that there would be any sort of reflection on those who did not contribute to the prize fund, and I am astonished that anyone should take that view of it.

As to my remark that it was the only occasion on which the members had been asked to contribute to any special fund, it is a statement of a fact, and in my experience of similar Societies a very unusual fact. I see no reason for raising the subscription, and I am sure that such a course would lead to a falling off in our membership, which has hitherto steadily increased.

I should like to take this opportunity of repeating in the most emphatic manner that the Show has nothing whatever to do with the Avicultural Society. As, however, a Show is being got up the exhibitors at

which are to be (practically) limited to members of the Society, it seemed to me that the members might fairly be appealed to to contribute towards the prize fund. The offending leaflet was sent round with the Magazine just as any advertisement might have been sent. There has been no reference to the Show in the Magazine itself, and it has never been brought officially before the Council.

I am as strongly opposed as it is possible to be to our Society ever holding a Show; I am moreover not myself an exhibitor. Still, we must recognise that our Society is largely supported by exhibitors and I would deprecate a policy of hostility towards Shows. Shows undoubtedly have their uses, and even those who most loudly denounce them are often to be seen at Shows apparently enjoying themselves. I cannot help feeling that some of the opponents of Shows are actuated chiefly by the idea that Shows are "vulgar." Hitherto our Society has carefully abstained from pronouncing officially for or against Shows, and I believe that to be a wise policy. I am not sure however whether it would not be worth while for the Society to interest itself in the appointment of competent judges, and also occasionally to offer special prizes to be competed for by members only (the cost of such prizes *not* to come out of the general fund). This is a question for the Council to consider, and I should not urge such a course if there were any general opposition to it. So far as the discussion in these columns on the "Ethics of Exhibiting" can be said to have led to any conclusion, it tended to show that the general feeling was rather favourable to the practice of exhibiting, if properly conducted. So long as a thing is not shown to be in itself evil, it is surely better to try to influence it for good rather than ignore it altogether.

In conclusion, I may perhaps be allowed to explain that my motive in organising this Show is to raise funds for the object for which it is held, and not enthusiasm for exhibiting.

HORATIO R. FILLMER.

#### SEEDS FOR FOREIGN FINCHES.

SIR,—Is not the distinction which we draw between British and Foreign Birds a very artificial one? and is it not a distinction without a difference which may incidentally lead to very grave errors in treatment?

The popular notion, encouraged by many writers on foreign birds, is that while British birds should be fed on a variety of seeds, most of which are of a more or less oily nature, foreign finches require nothing but canary and millet seed. I believe that, so far at least as the *Fringillidae* are concerned, this is a mistake.

I have a bird-room aviary devoted to foreign *Fringillidae* and containing at present a Half-white Finch, Green and Grey Singing Finches, a St. Helena Seed-eater, three Alario Finches, Serin Finches, and several similar birds as to the exact species of which I am doubtful. These I have for some months been giving, in addition to unlimited canary-seed and a small quantity daily of white millet and Indian millet, German rape-seed almost *ad lib.*, linseed occasionally, and a small allowance of hemp-seed nearly every day. At present this treatment seems to be highly successful, though of course it has not yet been tried long enough to properly test it.

I do not think that the *Plucidae* will eat oily seeds, nor do I think they require them or would benefit by them.

HORATIO R. FILLMER.

THE  
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AVICULTURAL SOCIETY.

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A FEW NOTES ON BREEDING SOME  
AUSTRALIAN PARRAKEETS.

By JOHN SERGEANT.

What can be prettier, more attractive, or more interesting than an aviary of the lovely Australian Parrakeets? And when one reflects that, given suitable surroundings, some of them will breed in confinement almost as readily as the domestic Pigeon, and, at least, with no more trouble, it is surprising that a greater number of people do not keep them.

Since I became interested in foreign birds I have bred in my aviaries Rosella, Pennant, Turquoise and Elegant Parrakeets, and, it is almost needless to say, the Budgerigar. Amongst these the ubiquitous Budgerigar, of course, comes first as the species that adapts itself most readily to its surroundings, next is the Red Rosella (the Mealy species, for some reason or other, is rather capricious and troublesome), Turquoisines and Elegants follow, and, lastly, the gorgeous Pennant and the Mealy Rosella.

Budgerigars are so well known and so universally kept that I will not take up space by giving any hints on their treatment when breeding.

This almost applies to the Rosella, but as it has not yet, perhaps, become quite so common and well-known, I will devote a few lines to it. From my experience of the Rosella, I think it is invariably necessary to wait until your birds are about two years old before you can expect them to nest. So that in buying birds it is best to select the largest you can find and those that are in the most brilliant plumage, as being presumably adults. It is not very difficult in the case of the Rosella to discover the sexes, as the hen is always lighter in colour, smaller and flatter in the head, and has altogether a more feminine look about her. Rosellas are not so intolerant of the presence of other birds as other members of their family, and they can be safely turned into any aviary that is not overstocked with birds. A nesting log (the best are

procurable at Abrahams') should be hung high up in a well-lit situation, either in the inner aviary or in a sheltered position in the outer aviary. They generally commence nesting in the early spring months, although some imported birds I have had persisted in nesting in winter, with, naturally, no result; but after a time they came to the conclusion that they had better fall in with the vagaries of the new climate, and have since always nested in summer. When after some days you have missed the hen from her usual perch, do not on any account allow your zeal to outrun your discretion by permitting yourself to take the log down to look inside, or you will in all probability make her forsake her eggs. During incubation, and subsequent rearing of the young, I give an occasional dish of bread sop, and a few oats, with plenty of hard fruit, in addition to hemp and canary seed. The hen lays from three to five eggs, and they hatch generally in about twenty-one days, and the young appear in about thirty days. After the young are hatched the cock takes almost sole charge of them, and is most assiduous in feeding them. When the youngsters are once out of the nest they usually thrive apace, and grow almost as big as their parents in a surprisingly short space of time.

These notes on the Rosella apply equally well to the other *Platycerci*, viz., the Mealy Rosella and the Pennant, except that I have never been able to induce these birds to breed in an aviary containing any other members of their own family.

Pennants I consider the most interesting and, at the same time, the most beautiful of the very lovely family of Broadtails, but, unfortunately, like the Mealy Rosella, they are most particular about being molested by the presence of other birds. I should say that anyone who really wished to breed Pennants should devote a small aviary to a pair, and then he would have much more likelihood of success than if he proceeded as I have advised for the Rosella.

Barnard's, another species of the *Platycerci*, I have kept, but never could induce them to breed, although they had an aviary to themselves.

All the *Platycerci* are very hardy, and may, if first turned out in the spring and allowed time to get gradually acclimatized, be kept out of doors all the year round, without any fear of our winter affecting them. I have frequently seen my birds fly down to the fountain as soon as I have broken the ice on a winter's morning, and, entering the water, have thoroughly enjoyed a good bath.

Turquoisines and Elegants have been so much in demand lately that, like some mining shares, you might almost say there has been a "boom" in them. But it is not surprising when one knows the birds, for they are the most fascinating of all the Australian Parrakeets that are known to aviculturists in this country. They, like the Pennant and Mealy Rosella, will not nest so readily unless given an aviary to themselves, although I have reared two broods of Turquoisines and one brood of Elegants in my large aviary, tenanted by nearly fifty other birds. Still, I consider this an exceptional experience and one I could not repeat with any other birds, because these two pairs were very tame, and then, again, they had a very quiet corner all to themselves in which I hung their nesting logs, which were entirely hidden by heather. Given aviaries to themselves, these Parrakeets are no trouble to the aviarist, and, although not so prolific as one could wish, considering their desirability as pets, they will rear at least one brood regularly each year. These little Parrakeets require a quantity of green stuff, and if they can be turned into an aviary where there is a nice lawn they will do all the better. I never give mine any addition to their seed diet, except a soft biscuit each day when they have young. Although several of my Turquoisines and Elegants have wintered out of doors, I am never going to repeat the experiment, as I lost three last winter but one, during the severe frost, and it is evident they are not quite as hardy as other Australian Parrakeets. Turquoisines and Elegants sit about eighteen days, and the young appear in about twenty-eight days. They seem to be subject to no adverse influences when once fledged, and rapidly reach maturity.

I should mention that all the *Platyceri* that I have ever kept were very fond of mealworms, and I always give them a daily supply during the early days of nesting, but discontinue them when the hen disappears and commences to sit. Fruit in season my birds always have, grit should always be supplied and plenty of green food, but if you have grass in the aviary this is generally sufficient.

These notes, which I must now close, are necessarily very incomplete, as I am writing against time; some time, perhaps, if no one more capable takes up the subject, I may go into the matter of breeding Parrakeets more fully, and describe my ideal Parrakeet aviary.

## THE GROSBEAKS.

By H. R. FILLMER.

*(Continued from page 59).*THE CUBA FINCH (*Phonipara canora*).

There seem to be great doubts about the classification of the genus *Phonipara*. Dr. Sharpe places them among the Grosbeaks, but adds that they are very probably Buntings. Dr. Butler, on the other hand, leans to the opinion that the genus is allied to the *Ploceidæ* or Weaver Finches, and places it between the *Fringillidæ* and the *Ploceidæ*. Whichever view we adopt, we are surrounded with difficulties. This paradoxical little bird differs from the *Fringillidæ* in building a domed nest like a Weaver, and differs from the *Ploceidæ* in laying speckled eggs like a Finch. The fact which to my thinking tells most in favour of this bird being allied to the *Fringillidæ* rather than to the *Ploceidæ* is that it is an inhabitant of the New World, from which, so far as I am aware, the *Ploceidæ* are entirely absent. Nevertheless, even this fact is not conclusive, for in the Opossum we have a solitary example of a marsupial inhabiting the Western Hemisphere, and if such a remarkable exception to a general rule can be found among mammals, we cannot deny its possibility among birds, whose powers of locomotion are so much greater.

The Cuba Finch is about the size of the Avadavat, but stouter in proportion to its length. The colours of the male are as follows:—Back of the head, back, wings, and tail, green; forehead and face, black; on each side of the neck a crescent-shaped patch of yellow, meeting on the throat; breast, blackish grey, fading to a dingy white on the abdomen; beak and legs, black.

The female has a brown, instead of black, face; the yellow collar is less bright; and the breast is lighter.

If I could keep one pair of small birds, and one pair only, I should most certainly choose Cuba Finches; and I think most aviculturists would make the like choice. There is a charm about these little birds which is possessed by no other species. They are not so gorgeously coloured as the Gouldian Finch, not such good singers as the Grey Singing Finch, not so graceful in form as the Waxbills, not so tame and confiding as the Alario Finch. They have a fair share of these various desirable qualities, and may be called good all round birds; but it is difficult to say in what their charm lies, unless it is in their

bright, cheery disposition. They are ever on the move, hopping merrily about in an inquisitive Robin-like style, and with every jump giving a lively chirp, while the cock constantly breaks forth into his pretty chattering song. There is not much music, perhaps, in this short song, but all true bird-lovers delight in it—it is such a bright, good-tempered, unpretentious little song.

The French call the Cuba Finch *Chanteur de Cuba*, while the Zoological Society of London, followed by Mr. Wiener and Dr. Butler, call it the Melodious Finch. It does not deserve these names, and I feel sure the unassuming little bird would never think of claiming them. But Dr. Russ goes quite to the other extreme when he says "It has no song."

The Cuba Finch has often been bred in Continental aviaries; in England it has hitherto been very rare, consequently few aviculturists have been able to experiment with it. I have been unable to find any account of its successful breeding in this country, though probably it has been reared more than once. An interesting account of the nesting of a pair of Cuba Finches belonging to Dr. Simpson will be found on page 11 of Vol. I of the *Avicultural Magazine*—but though one young bird was hatched it died very soon afterwards.

Mr. Wiener remarks on the facility with which Cuba Finches breed, and adds, "To breed them is very amusing, for they will build a nest nearly as cleverly as any Weaver-bird, and very similarly constructed. Branches of arbor vitæ or firs are most to their taste, and to these they will fix a nest about the size and shape of a Goose's egg, with a tube opening downwards attached to the side, which serves as a door. . . . Male and female are frequently found sitting together." I infer, from Mr. Wiener's phraseology, that this bird had not been bred in his own aviary.

Dr. Russ was very successful in breeding this bird, both in a cage and loose in his bird-room. He describes the nest as being built "in a thick tangle, a purse with a long entrance tube running obliquely to and below it, only rarely an open cup, of agave- and cocoa-fibre, strips of bast, wool and hair artistically felted together; completed in six to eight days." He states the plumage of the young to be "brownish-olive green; collar pale yellow, in the male already distinct; face and breast blackish brown; underside dusty grey; little beak dusty brown. Up to the first moult in dull plumage, then the blackish mark shows itself, continually getting darker, moreover, the colouring of the breast and simultaneously the previously narrow yellow stripe

becomes gradually broader. The production of a brood takes four weeks. Each pair yearly produces from three to as many as seven broods."

The eggs appear to vary somewhat in colour and markings, but are usually white with a faint bluish tint, and are thickly spotted with fine reddish brown marks. They are five-eighths of an inch in length.

Mr. Wiener calls Cuba Finches "quarrelsome little birds" and "veritable fighting cocks." Dr. Russ says: "Disposition showing great likeness to that of the Astrilds. Not spiteful, but in the immediate vicinity of the nest very snappish towards larger birds." Both Russ and Wiener state that the young must be removed as soon as their parents build again, otherwise there is a risk of their being killed by the male bird. Perhaps when breeding the Cuba Finch may be rather short tempered. When I possessed a pair I always kept them by themselves, but my solitary male bird has lived for more than a year in a mixed aviary with Waxbills and other small birds, and always behaves in a most amiable manner to all his companions. At one time he struck up a close friendship with a hen Dufresne's Waxbill, and the pair were constantly to be seen sitting side by side, preening each others' heads. When kept in pairs these little birds show much affection for one another.

The favourite food of the Cuba Finch is spray millet, and on either this or Indian millet, with white millet, he will live long and happily. He is fond of mealworms, but is much better without them. A little egg occasionally, for a treat, does him good and is much appreciated. In summer-time let him have plenty of green food and a turf. Egg and soaked ants' eggs would probably suffice for the rearing of the young, and the parents should be accustomed to this food before hatching.

Considering its diminutive size, the Cuba Finch is by no means sensitive to cold.

The Cuba Finch has a variety of English names: that of Melodious Finch has already been mentioned, Cuban Finch is another. Some old writers give it the curious name of Brown-cheeked Grosbeak, and it will be found under that name in Bechstein.

This bird is a native of Cuba.

*(To be continued).*

## MIGRATORY BIRDS.

By CHARLES L. ROTHERA, B.A.

Probably nothing in the whole range of natural history is more wonderful, or requires still further elucidation, than the subject of the migration of birds. But it is not so much the questions of the overpowering impulse that seizes our feathered visitors at definite periods, nor the amazing powers of flight they display, nor the prodigious rate at which their long journeys are performed that I propose to refer, but rather to relate, my experience with some of them as inmates of the out-door aviary I described in the Magazine for last November, and so to touch on the general question of acclimatization.

The first migratory bird I tried to keep was one of the White-throats. I caught it in a snap cage in my garden in the late summer, and in the hope of catching another I kept it for several days in the lower portion of the cage and fed it frequently with small green caterpillars from the geraniums, but no other bird was decoyed to the trap, and ultimately I removed the captive to the aviary where it lived peaceably with the small foreigners. Here it was fed on insectivorous food and got its share with the Tits of ant's eggs and mealworms. The ensuing winter and spring were of quite average severity and dulness, with a good deal of frosty fog and rime, but my little friend shewed no signs of discomfort and was conspicuous among the briskest and sleekest of the birds in the section until early autumn when it died.

My next experience was with a hen Nightingale, the survivor of a pair of which the cock was killed by a Nuthatch. I found it necessary to part the two birds, which were hand-reared from the same nest, because one persistently drove the other from the food and would soon have caused its death by starvation, and the hen was put with the little foreigners. She behaved just like the White-throat, lived on the same kind of food with the addition of some finely chopped raw meat, and was so tame that she would run up to the keeper and take food, especially a mealworm, from his fingers. She got through the spring moult without difficulty, but died in the autumn.

A Ray's Wagtail lived a long way into the winter, but did not get quite through, and Wheatears I have never been able to keep from one year to another. Meadow Pipits reared by hand from the nest survive the winter without any trouble or extra attention.

It would seem, therefore, that given reasonably suitable food, several species of migratory birds can readily endure the rigours of our winter, and this suggests that their emigration is induced or impelled either by the difficulty of obtaining food, or by a love of change that was initiated when the conditions of life were different from the present and has since become ingrained as an instinct.

I have no knowledge of the habits of foreign birds in this respect, but I find no difficulty in keeping the Waxbills, particularly the St. Helena, for years, and I have kept a hen Cordon Bleu through one very severe winter, no provision whatever being made by lamps or otherwise for warmth or to enable the birds to feed during the long dark nights. The black and white-headed Nuns, Alario Finches, Parsons, White-throated Finches, Whydahs and various small Weavers all do perfectly well.

Though the Indigo bird lives year after year, I have never been able to winter the Nonpareil, which in most respects appears to resemble it so closely.

The Blue-winged and White-headed Love-birds live well with us, as also the Red-faced when once a pair can be established, but I have found these birds go off, even when kept indoors with every possible care, after the manner of the Grey Parrot. Four pairs purchased at different places, and in two instances personally selected for their bright, sleek, healthy appearance, died off during last year within a few weeks of purchase, though I have kept them easily before.

I am especially interested in the subject of keeping migratory birds, as I have to keep them out of doors, and shall be glad of hints and notes from others' experience.

## RARE FOREIGN BIRDS.

(SECOND SERIES).

### VII.—THE PECTORAL RAIL.

*Rallus pectoralis.*

By D. SETH-SMITH.

The subject of the present article is, I venture to think, worthy of a place under the above heading, being very seldom seen amongst aviary birds.

I obtained my pair in September last from a well-known aviculturist, who had recently received several from North-East Queensland; but of the distribution of this species in its native country, and of its habits in a wild state, I know nothing, not

having been able to find any mention of it in the works on foreign birds at my disposal, which, by the way, are few.

In size the Pectoral Rail about equals our Landrail; the beak is, however, slightly longer and more pointed.

The prevailing colour is brown, prettily speckled with white, underparts striped black and white. There is a band of light-brown on the breast, and a streak of white passes over the eye to the back of the head.

When viewed closely this Rail is decidedly handsome, its striped and speckled plumage being very pleasing.

It can run very fast indeed, but very seldom flies. It loves shallow water in which it can wade and bathe, but will not take to deep water unless compelled to do so, although able to swim well. In one of my aviaries there is a pond of about a foot in depth, and when first the Rails came into my possession I was anxious to see if they were good swimmers, so I placed a piece of wire netting in such a way as to prevent their reaching the opposite side of the aviary without crossing the pond, I then drove them towards it, but, after trying in vain to find some way round, they simply flew over. However, the next time I placed another piece of netting but a few inches above the surface of the water, so that the birds would have to swim to get under it, so, finding themselves compelled to do so, they both took to the water and swam across, just as a Moorhen would have done. The reluctance with which this species takes to deep water seems to show that it is more closely allied to *Crex pratensis* than to *Rallus aquaticus*. Their food consists of chopped raw meat and bread crumbs, varied with eggs and bread crumbs, scalded cockroaches, worms, slugs, snails, and numerous other insects, which they find for themselves in the outer portion of their aviary. They also peck up a good deal of seed that the other inmates of the aviary throw down.

One, the smallest, and probably the male, is quite tame, and will readily pick up mealworms or cockroaches tossed to it, but the larger of the two is somewhat shy.

I am in hopes that they may breed in the spring, but I fear it is doubtful.

This species, in common, I believe, with all the Rails, has the peculiar habit, so noticeable in the Moorhen, of jerking the tail at almost every step.

It would not be wise to keep a bird like this, with so strong a beak and with a partiality for raw meat, in a small aviary in which there were very small birds, but, given plenty of

room, it makes a very delightful aviary inmate, and its pretty ways and graceful movements have made it a great favourite of mine.

## DANGEROUS BIRDS.

By CHAS. L. ROTHERA, B.A.

The young aviculturist, anxious to extend his collection beyond the few pet Canaries which are certain to form its nucleus, probably searches the readily accessible books for information as to what birds are likely to prove a desirable acquisition; and he is pretty sure to find a word of warning against one or another species on account of their habitual cross grain.

My experience, gleaned from observations extending over a good many years, of birds in a very mixed collection, leads me to believe that it is unfair to brand a whole race as villains because an odd individual may have displayed aggressive tendencies.

Thus, I found myself at the outset warned by one authority against the Virginian Cardinal and the Red-crested Cardinal, but I have kept both in the same division of the aviary, sometimes pairs of each, sometimes odd ones, and never had any trouble—well, hardly ever. I must admit that I had rows when I put a new, brilliant cock Virginian into the aviary where an old, dull, cripple-winged cock was established; but owing to the inability of the old one to get about freely, nothing serious ensued. This, however, does not prove that the Virginian is generally troublesome, but only that two cocks may disagree even in the absence of a hen: for I was at that time wanting a hen. So, too, I have found Red-crested Cardinals perfectly harmless, except on one or two occasions, one of which at least was peculiar. I had, what I believed to be, a pair. A nest was built, and eggs were laid and carefully incubated by the two birds alternately. But when it became apparent that no young ones were forthcoming, I took down the nest and found eight eggs in it, in two very distinct clutches. These being removed, the two birds, which had hitherto lived in perfect amity, set on and fought like Whitechapel termagants until one was killed; when the victrix, not content with her success, actually stood upon the dead body of the vanquished and stripped it of half its feathers. On the introduction of a cock bird, nesting was successfully undertaken and no further trouble

ensued, except such as was perfectly reasonable and proper for the due protection of the nest.

As the hen birds of both these species sing as freely and as well as the cocks, I regard them as very desirable inmates of a mixed aviary.

Again, the Greater or Ox-eye Tit is held up to reprobation, and is particularly accused of being partial to the brains of smaller birds. I have never found them so, and I am seldom without representatives.

English Robins, too, have a bad reputation. I have no personal experience that will justify this, except as among themselves. I find it impracticable to keep two together, though I am very desirous of establishing a pair if I can. A friend of mine had some Canaries and small foreign birds killed by a Robin, who was caught *in flagrante delicto* after several deaths had been attributed to mice. I am of opinion that it had not a sufficiently liberal allowance of animal food, and so was led to murder to satisfy its natural cravings.

I have found the various Weavers terrible fellows among themselves when in colour, but at other times they appear to be inoffensive, and at all times they are indifferent to other species of birds.

I have already recounted my experience of the Pin-tailed Whydah; he is, when in colour, a Turk among Armenians.

The Rosellas seem dangerous: a fine Mealy (a cock bird) proving himself a perfect hawk, and a hen Red Rosella showed all the same propensity, but through being injured in one wing she could not become formidably aggressive. By the way, she has just died, the oldest bird in the aviary, having been introduced in 1889.

The mode of attack of the Parrot tribe is peculiar. The aggressor creeps quietly up behind its victim and seizes it by the leg, which, with a single nip it either breaks or bites off altogether. This is apparently only the playfulness of the tribe, for they indulge in the joke on any bird that is careless enough to allow them to approach, and without any indication of personal antipathy. Young birds fresh out of the nest fall an easy prey to this method of attack. Budgerigars, Grey- and Red-headed Love Birds, Rosellas, and Ringnecks (all of which I class under the general name of Parrots) all amuse themselves in this way; but I have not observed it in the Cockatiels—which are absolutely inoffensive—nor in the Moustache Parrakeets.

I have heard the Hawfinch charged with precisely the same offence, but have not found the charge justified. I have two pairs at the present time.

The Thrush tribe are universally dangerous in my experience, and a strong cock Skylark in full song will attack a Turtle Dove or even a Pheasant, and will show fight to a Rosella.

My advice is: Do not keep two cocks of one species together in the presence of a hen or hens if peace is desired.

## THE ASPECT OF THE BIRD ROOM.

By H. R. FILLMER.

This is a matter of considerable importance to the aviculturist, although perhaps it is not often that he has any choice in the matter. Usually there is only one room in the house which can be appropriated to the exclusive use of the birds, and their owner has to take that or nothing. Still, some are more fortunately situated, and many on removing to a new house can select one which possesses a room suitable for a bird-room.

For foreign birds a southern aspect is undoubtedly the best, as it secures a maximum of sunshine during the winter, when it is most needed. Moreover, it is sheltered from the winds which blow from colder quarters, and in the middle of the summer when the heat is apt to be excessive even for foreign birds, the sun's rays, in consequence of the great elevation of the sun at midday, do not penetrate far into the room. A room facing north is too cold, and is also very frequently damp; still, good results are often obtained in such a room, and undoubtedly direct sunshine is not so necessary as it is sometimes supposed to be. An eastern aspect is also too cold, but it has the advantage of the morning sun, and if a south room cannot be obtained perhaps an east room is the best alternative. A west room will answer admirably in the winter on account of its warmth, but it is very unsuitable in the summer, for it then becomes intensely hot in the afternoon and evening, while the temperature falls rapidly during the night, and is at its lowest in the morning when the birds especially need warmth. In the summer a west window admits much more direct sunshine than a south one, as the rays of the afternoon sun shine horizontally through it, therefore it becomes overheated in the latter part of the day. This high temperature would suit the birds if it could be maintained, but it cannot, and nothing tries them more than rapid changes of temperature.

A *regular* rather than a *high* temperature is desirable for foreign birds. If you have to put up with a west room you must be careful to have a sun blind outside the window.

### THE PARROTS AT NORTHREPPS HALL.

"The Gurneys of Earlham," by Augustus J. C. Hare, is a work which by no means specially appeals to the aviculturist, nevertheless, the following extracts from letters published therein, and which were written by Richenda Buxton from Northrepps Hall in 1855, will be found interesting by our readers.

"The Scarlet Lowry\* flew down to greet us from his stand opposite the drawing room window when we reached home; the other Parrots and Cockatoos were flying about in great glee. A pair of Cockatoos are sitting on their two eggs in the box near the chimney; whenever the hen bird leaves the nest her mate takes her place. The young Cockatoos are delighted to follow us about the garden.

"The hay is being made and the school-children are coming to play in it, and an express was sent to Cromer for plenty of strawberries and milk for their supper. This has been spread on the lawn, and, as usual, has quickly attracted the Parrots. The Scarlet Lowrys are in the acacia, two Cockatoos on the grass, and stealing bread and butter from the children; many others are walking and screaming around.

"I sat some time under the chestnut tree, much amused by watching five Cockatoos in full gambols in the beech tree; apparently the beech-nuts must be ripening by the attraction they seem to have."

The fact that Parrots and Cockatoos were allowed their freedom in the grounds at Northrepps, is, of course, well known, but we do not remember to have read any detailed account of the results of these experiments in acclimatization. Unfortunately, "The Gurneys of Earlham" contains nothing on this subject beyond such incidental references as those which we have quoted.

### CORRESPONDENCE.

#### THE PALACE SHOW.

SIR,—If we could get a few experienced aviculturists to write such letters as that of Mr. Phillipps in the April number of our Magazine, we might reasonably hope, firstly, that the Palace and other Show Committees would take steps to prevent the recurrence of such mistakes as those mentioned; and, secondly, that newspapers professing to report important Shows would send representatives who would at least know a Shâma from a

\* Apparently an eccentric way of spelling "Lory."

Hangnest. The ridiculous error referred to was caused not exactly by a fault of my own, but by an accident. When I received the labels there was nothing whatever enclosed to guide me as to which cage each belonged to, excepting the price, and as each of the two birds in question had been entered at the same selling price, I had to put the labels on the cages at random. Perhaps the Secretary of the Crystal Palace Show will accept the hint; and when, in future, an exhibitor makes more than one entry in a class of equal prices, he will inform such exhibitor beforehand as to the correct respective numbers.

I am sorry that just at the moment when Mr. Phillipps was looking at the Shama the bird was "crouching in a corner of his cage." At home he is finger-tame, and if I had to part with all my birds except one, this particular bird is the one I should elect to keep as a pet.

I can fully sympathize with Mr. Phillipps in his reference to the rarity, for the moment, of individual birds which suddenly become common, and the pair of Red-sided Tits which occasioned his remarks are a good case in point. In the late autumn of last year I received a letter from a prominent dealer to the effect that he had a pair of very rare birds that he should like me to see, his letter concluding with the remark, "When I tell you that I have never before seen the variety, you will easily understand that they are rarities." I was, of course, at his establishment at the earliest possible moment, and bought the birds for three pounds. The very next day I was offered, and accepted, the choice of eighteen birds of the species at one pound the "pair." A week after they were advertized in the fancy papers at twelve shillings and sixpence per pair! I am certain that the original dealer acted quite *bona fide*, and he has since assured me that he himself paid fifty shillings for the pair. Notwithstanding that I paid very much more for my birds than their real value, I am very pleased to possess them. They are charming little things, and perfectly tame. For some time I kept the four together in a large cage furnished with virgin cork, but, as they were so exceedingly fond of a bath that it was impossible to keep clean drinking water in their cage, I turned them into the small birds' aviary. Here they are in their element, and climb about with all the acrobatic perfection of our British Tits, and hammer at a hemp-seed or sunflower-seed in exactly the same manner. A mealworm will at once bring them all to my hand.

To refer again to Mr. Phillipps' letter. The anomaly is therein mentioned of Bearded Tits being entered in 1894 in two separate classes, and ignored in both, and in 1895 being awarded a prize in the A.O.V. British Class. One of the reporters of a fancy paper, presumably inspired by the judge, remarked of this class (the quotation is from memory, but correct substantially) "A Bearded Tit took second; a more brightly-coloured specimen being passed as a foreigner." The "more brightly-coloured specimen" was my own, and, as it happens, I have the written guarantee of the vendor that it is a *bona fide* British nestling. I exhibited the same bird early last year, and he was similarly "passed." After the judging I found the bird *under the bench*, so I asked the judge if he had seen the bird, or if it had been misplaced by accident. He told me that he had "passed" the bird as being too good to be British, but that, if he had known it to be really British, it would have been in the money. If one shows a Siskin, Redpoll, Linnet, or a representative of many other so-called "British"

birds, the judge does not require a guarantee as to the country of its birth, but, on the contrary, gives the prize to the individually best bird in the class, with the almost certain knowledge that it is a "foreigner." This is a state of affairs that should not exist at the present day, and the sooner some distinct understanding is come to the better for all concerned.

HENRY J. FULLJAMES.

#### BUDGERIGARS.

SIR,—There seems to be a general impression that imported Budgerigars are brighter in colour than aviary bred ones. Last year I left some young ones in my aviary until they got their adult plumage, and when I came to separate them I found, on closely examining them, that they were both larger and brighter than their imported parents, which I consider are very fine ones. My aviary is a very large, open, outdoor one. I made a very convenient nest by nailing half a husk on to a board about an inch thick. In this board I cut a groove for the birds to enter by, and a good large hole about 2½ in. in diameter over the nest part. On the top of this board is a thin board screwed at one corner, so that it can be slipped round when you wish to see inside. The whole is then fastened to the ceiling by L hooks, so that it can easily be slipped out if you wish to look at the nest. The bird does not much mind strangers looking at her nest. She had six eggs, but I hear some young ones now.

I should be glad to know if two cock Virginian Nightingales would be likely to agree, with plenty of room and no hens present.

A. A. THOM.

[No. Two cock Virginian Cardinals would not be likely to agree.]

#### THE RED-SIDED TIT.

SIR,—From Mr. Phillipps' remarks, it would appear that aviculturists have not been very successful with this delightful little bird. I have a very healthy individual which has been in my possession since the 25th December. Its diet consists of a little Abrahams' food, ants' eggs, and a small quantity of hemp-seed daily; also one or two Barcelona nuts with the shell cracked. One or two small cockroaches or a mealworm now and again are also relished.

I think an important point is a cosy resting-place for the night. In one corner of the cage I have hung up a hollow log with a very small entrance hole; to this my bird always retires long before dark.

It is an amusing bird, very lively and active, taking a special pleasure in climbing rapidly along the top of the cage head downwards. The only song I have heard consists of a few very low, rather sharp, notes.

R. A. TODD.

#### THE DWARF FINCH.

SIR,—I quote from the latter part of a paragraph in the April number of the *Avicultural Magazine*, re "The Palace Show," by Reginald Phillipps.

"One feels inclined to say that one will never give a high price for a bird again, no matter how rare."

I know that it pays to wait—unless you have the purse of a Rothschild.

Some years ago, the late Mr. Anton H. Jamrach, knowing my love for the smallest of the foreign imported birds, would write to me when he had any rare consignment. It was early in 1884 he asked me to call and see some tiny Finches from Madagascar. He had never seen them before, and did not know their name. I found on my arrival at his place, two pairs of wee, broadly-built Finches, distinguished by a circular mark about the size of a three-penny piece on the throat, that looked as black as an ink-spot in the dimness of the travelling cage. He asked four guineas a pair. I was afraid to risk this sum for them, and brought back with me a pair of Bourke's Parrakeets for the same money.

On the 30th April, 1884, I again heard from Mr. Jamrach as follows:—  
“Enclosed is the name of the Madagascar Finch, *Spermestes nana*; habitat, Madagascar. I don't think I shall ever get them again, as it was by chance from an orchid collector who was in the interior of Madagascar. . . .”

In November, 1893—nearly ten years after—a dealer advertised “Black-Throated Finches from Zanzibar,” 7/6 per pair. I at once secured a pair which proved to be *Spermestes nana*, and they are still in as good condition as when they were purchased.

This proves that “Everything comes to the man who waits.”

W. T. CATLEUGH.

#### “AMONG BRITISH BIRDS IN THEIR NESTING HAUNTS.”

SIR,—I send you a prospectus of a forthcoming book on the eggs of British Birds, entitled “Among British Birds in their Nesting Haunts.” Illustrated by the Camera, by Oswin A. J. Lee.

The prospectus seems to hold out much promise of a work on British Oology, unique in the fidelity of its illustration. Most of us possess books on the eggs of British Birds, more or less beautifully and elaborately illustrated, but in all that I know great latitude has been given to the artist's fancy. Mr. Lee has the unusual advantage of being at once an ornithologist and photographer and a daring climber, and to judge from a specimen illustration there seems every prospect of his book being a treasure to every lover of British Birds and their eggs. I must say that I should have preferred some scientific order in the arrangement of the plates.

O. ERNEST CRESSWELL.

#### THE QUAIL FINCH.

SIR,—The bird Mr. Osbaldeston seeks to know the name of in the April number of the *Avicultural Magazine* is the Quail Finch.

J. ABRAHAMS.

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THE ANATIDÆ.

By D. SETH-SMITH.

The group of birds known as the *Anatidæ* or swimmers comprises a large number of species, some of which make most delightful and interesting studies for the aviculturist. In a large garden aviary where there is plenty of covert and a small pond, one pair of ornamental ducks may be kept with ease; and few birds will call forth the admiration of visitors sooner than a pair of gorgeous Mandarins or Summer Ducks. No mention has been made as yet in our magazine of this family, although it includes many lovely and rare species, well worthy of the aviculturist's attention.

This branch of aviculture would, I feel sure, be more popular were it better known how hardy most of the foreign ducks are, and how very easily they may be kept, and how readily they will breed in a confined space. Mandarins will often breed, if fairly tame, in an enclosure but six feet square or less, and no doubt many other species would do likewise, while a very small amount of water satisfies them. It should, however, be remembered that many newly imported specimens are very timid at first, and it is therefore advisable to give them as large an enclosure as possible, with plenty of covert.

Those who are fortunate enough to have a stream passing through their gardens would find little difficulty in making a perfect paradise for ornamental ducks: probably with a small amount of trouble and expense it could be opened out so as to form a fair-sized pond, through which fresh water would be continually flowing. The banks might be thickly planted with rushes or any plants that would produce thick covert, under which the ducks would make their nests. The enclosure should be formed by a fence, five or six feet high, formed of wire netting nailed to wooden posts, and let into the ground to a depth of a foot. At the top of this another piece of netting should be

fastened so as to lean outwards at an angle of 45°, to prevent cats or foxes from climbing over. There should be a plot of grass within the enclosure, as many kinds of ducks, and especially geese, are very fond of grass.

The best food for almost all the foreign ducks is a mixture of buckwheat, barley and wheat, and plenty of green food such as duckweed, lettuce, cabbage, etc. If there are very many ducks in an enclosure together and some appear to be quarrelsome, it will be as well to take the eggs away from any very valuable duck and hatch them under a light hen. The food of the young ducks may at first consist of hard-boiled egg chopped fine and mixed with breadcrumbs and chopped lettuce; also oatmeal and vermicelli, that has been scalded, are good. When the ducklings are a week old, ants' eggs should be given in addition, and in a short time they will eat soaked seeds.

All the ducks must, of course, be pinioned unless they are to be kept in a small place that is wired over the top. The ducklings should be pinioned when about six or eight weeks old, by cutting off the first joint of the left wing with a sharp pair of scissors, and when properly done there will be very little pain, and often no loss of blood. It is most important that the same person should always attend to the birds and that no dog should be allowed to approach their enclosure, as ducks take fright very easily. The nest of any foreign duck should never be approached, unless indeed the eggs are to be taken altogether with a view to hatching them under a Bantam or other light hen. Any alteration in the surroundings would in all probability cause the duck to forsake her nest entirely.

There should be at the disposal of the aviculturist a large wooden shed, well lighted, into which he can drive the more delicate species in cold weather, especially such as have recently been imported, and are consequently not thoroughly acclimatised. The floor of this shed should be covered with straw, and the ducks should be kept very clean and supplied with plenty of water. Perhaps it will be as well to give the names of a few of the most desirable exotic ducks, for the benefit of any member who may think it worth his while to go in for this branch of aviculture:—Mandarin (*Aix galericulata*), Summer or Carolina (*Aix sponsa*), Bahama (*Dasila bahamensis*), Chilian Pintail (*D. spinicauda*), Spotted Bill (*Anas paxillorhynca*), Rosy Bill (*A. pposaca*), Japanese Teal (*Querquedula formosa*), Chiloe Widgeon (*Marca chiloensis*), Ruddy Shelduck (*Tadorna casarca*). And, of course, many others, as well as many charming and interesting species of

geese, which, of course, require a larger place and a great deal of grass.

Personally, I can only keep one pair of ducks at a time, the space at my disposal being very limited. At present I have a pair of Summer ducks, usually known to dealers as Carolinas; they are exquisitely pretty and very hardy. At the present time (May 15th) they are busily searching for a nesting place; they are quite tame, but know a stranger at once.

In conclusion, let me say that I know of one book only on this subject, and that should be in the possession of all interested in the *Anatida*; the title is "Ornamental Waterfowl," and it is written by the Hon. Rose Hubbard, who, by the way, is a member of our Society.

## A CHAFFINCH SINGING MATCH.

By ALBERT RETTICH.

Some years ago, when writing for some foreign weeklies, I gave an account of a London Chaffinch Singing Match, which met with some approval, and it has occurred to me that a translation might perhaps be of interest to the readers of the *Avicultural Magazine*.

The natural song of the Chaffinch, in spite of its brevity and consequent iteration, finds many admirers in all countries. Man, however, is constantly endeavouring to improve upon Nature, and although in some directions his efforts had better not have been made, yet it must be admitted that the song of many wild birds can be trained to please the human ear better than Nature's teaching.

Scarcely any two wild Chaffinches sing alike; the caged nestlings are therefore trained to imitate the songs of two or three different old birds, neither of whose strains resembles the others. Clever youngsters learn to sing each of the several songs in turn, thus combining in one bird the vocal powers of them all. Such accomplished songsters as these are greatly appreciated by the amateur; but they are not used in singing matches, points in such competitions being awarded only for the frequency with which the bird repeats the one strophe of his natural song; and a champion "battler" at singing matches would by no means be a desirable cage-bird: the objectionable reiteration of only one short strophe having been encouraged to such an extent, that a really good "match-singer" will repeat the same "lay" some 250 times in a quarter of an hour, which is the ordinary time limit of singing matches.

My foreign readers had the account of one match inflicted upon them, which ran somewhat as follows :

A match arranged between "Costermonger Joe" of Bricklane, and "Long Bill" of Kingsland, is announced by the landlord of the "Cock and Bottle" of Shoreditch, to come off, say, on Saturday week.

The "fraternity" know the combatants "Shoreditch Bobby" and the "Kingsland Roarer" to be "stunners;" all love a good match, especially when it becomes known that the winner will "stand" a gallon or two of beer to his friends who grace the meeting with their presence. The stakes of a sovereign each are already handed over to the genial host, and the time for the finches to be "on the nail" is fixed for eight p.m. precisely.

At last the long expected hour approaches. The bar is full, and the parlour nearly so. There are a few women enjoying their "quarterns," some carrying the inevitable baby, and a crowd of men whose short, black pipes are not likely to get cold again that evening. Many of them are holding one or two square parcels wrapped in coloured handkerchiefs, from which issue the songs of various birds—Linnets, Goldfinches, Mules and Chaffinches. Possibly some more singing contests are now being fixed, between the proud possessors of "stars."

In the parlour all the gas-jets are lighted, but have some trouble to penetrate the fumes of tobacco, beer, etc. At last the contesting parties enter, each dressed in his Sunday best. The host conducts them through the welcoming crowd to two reserved tables and attends personally to the wants of the honoured guests. Then, with much noise and unnecessary reiteration, order is requested. Naturally, the various songsters before mentioned, excited by the general hubbub, have been noisier than ever, and are now relegated to darkness in another room to quiet them: only the two principals remain, closely covered up.

The two markers take their places, and as the clock strikes the two cages are uncovered and hung up. The battlers look around for a moment, shake their plumage, whet their beaks and one may take a grain of seed, but before it is cracked he hears a familiar sound uttered by his opponent. Immediately he replies by a full strophe of his song, to which the other answers with fuller power. Before each marker is already a stroke of his chalk, and now the combat is fairly "started." The chalks are busily employed to mark each properly delivered strophe, and keep pace with each other for a time, until "Bobby" takes it into his head to betake himself to the food trough.

Meanwhile, the "Roarer" continues steadily to pour out his heart, and gains considerably in chalk marks. "Costermonger Joe" is getting very uneasy and cannot understand this "trick" of his much-renowned bird. Never before did he think of food while in the presence of an opponent. In order to draw his bird's attention upon himself and from the food trough, he moves uneasily in his seat and ventures at last to cough aloud.

It must be understood, that while a match is proceeding no words of encouragement are allowed; no whistling or other means may be resorted to, to recall a truant to his duty. Fair play is rigorously enforced. Coughing cannot be stopped.

At last, Joe can stand it no longer: *accidentally* his beer glass gets knocked over and falls on the floor with much clatter. Bobby peers across the room to ascertain the cause of the unusual disturbance and catches sight of his master, and immediately he resumes his battle-cry. The ruse has succeeded, although there is a tumbler to pay for.

The chalk marks on the tables are getting very numerous. The Roarer has challenged without a fault for thirteen minutes and is forty points ahead of Bobby, but now he feels rather "dry." He stops working, takes a drink of water and—hops to the food box. But "Kingsland Bill" does not give his bird time to lose ground by feeding like the other. In a moment he whips out the brightly-colored handkerchief the Roarer knows so well, and pretends to wipe the perspiration from his anxious brow. His finch takes the hint, and gallops through the remaining two minutes of the appointed fifteen in grand style. Bobby also had tried hard to make up for the precious time he had lost so wantonly, but could not recover all of it. Although credited with 212 marks, the Roarer beat him by 28 strokes.

Immediately protest is entered by Costermonger Joe, fair play having been violated by the use of the coloured cloth. Bill retorts by calling into question the fairness of the beer glass episode. One word leads to another, the spectators mingle in the strife, expressions of opinion and sympathy with either party are getting more and more select, and battle of another kind seems imminent. Joseph declares he has won, but Long William insists on "fighting" him for the stakes. This mode of settling the question being declined by Joe, the landlord is called upon to exercise his functions of umpire. With characteristic disinterestedness he declares the whole match null and void, and orders a fresh match to be sung for the same stakes that day week and *on the same spot*.

The original publication of the above description of a Chaffinch Singing Match was with the object of illustrating some of the means resorted to, to induce the birds to sing at their best. Ordinarily, birds are encouraged by whistling or speaking to them; but such highly-trained specimens as the two mentioned are recalled from any lapse of duty by certain signs or movements of their masters.

## RARE FOREIGN BIRDS.

(SECOND SERIES).

### VIII.—THE MADEIRAN CHAFFINCH.

*Fringilla maderensis.*

By A. G. BUTLER, Ph.D.

This species is strictly confined to Madeira, and when fully adult is decidedly more beautiful than our British species; but when in its first plumage, though slightly larger than our bird, can hardly be considered finer in colour though somewhat greyer and paler.

My colleague, Mr. W. R. Oglivie Grant, who visited Madeira a year or two ago, brought home a fine series of adult skins of this species, and I was so much struck with their beauty, that I put a note in my "Foreign Finches in Captivity," p. 16, suggesting the advantage of importing it as a cage-bird. Acting upon this suggestion, our enterprising member, Mr. J. Abrahams, immediately wrote for specimens and (having secured them) very generously gave me a pair.

The birds received are evidently quite young, and therefore do not answer to the scientific description in the Museum "Catalogue of Birds;" Mr. Grant, to whom I spoke about them, informed me that he had seen similar examples in Madeira and considered them to be birds of the year (that is, not over a year old).

I find this species tamer than our British bird, less excitable, but also less inclined to be friendly to its mate. The hen is decidedly afraid of the cock bird and gets out of his way as soon as he snaps his beak at her. I placed my pair in a flight-cage, 4 feet by 2, and 16 inches from front to back, hung up a small Canary nest box at the back, and covered it with fir sprays. At first the female spent nearly the whole of her time in the box, the male contenting himself with occasionally driving her out and taking her place. I put in nesting material, but it was entirely ignored until about the first week in May, when

both sexes began to play with it; but at the time of writing this note, no attempt has been made at the serious preparation of a nest.

The male bird, Mr. Grant tells me, sings like our British bird, and this I can quite believe; for, in the second week in May, he began to record his song precisely in the fashion of *Fringilla caelebs*; and now I am looking forward to hearing him sing, as I wish to discover whether his performance will be more like the Kentish or Essex vocalist of our country. The call-note is not like that of *F. caelebs*: it is more musical, not so shrill, and is rapidly repeated four or five times in succession.

Speaking of Chaffinches, it may interest our members to know that I have divided a clutch of five English Chaffinch eggs between two hen Canaries; and, should they rear them, next year I hope to pair the birds with Canaries, in order to breed the so-called impossible mule.

## THE BIRD SHOW AT BRIGHTON.

By H. R. FILLMER.

To Mr. Housden belongs the credit of first providing a Bird Show as an attraction to a Bazaar; and he has sent his birds to many Bazaars in aid of charities in which he is interested. But Mr. Housden's exhibitions have been "Loan Collections," and not Bird Shows proper, the element of competition being absent; so that I think it may be fairly claimed that the Show of British and Foreign Birds which was held in the Royal Pavilion, Brighton, on the 2nd, 4th and 5th of May, 1896, in connection with a Bazaar in aid of the Building Fund of St. Augustine's Church, Preston Park, Brighton, was the first Exhibition of its kind which has ever been held.

The available space at the Pavilion is limited, therefore only two rooms could be spared for the Show; so that a very large Show was out of the question. In order to restrict the number of exhibits, it was decided to accept entries only from members of the Avicultural Society and their friends and from residents in the immediate neighbourhood. The result was that there were only 243 entries, but these were quite as many as could be properly shown in the space available. The British Birds, Mules, and Canaries were judged by Mr. J. H. Verrall; and the Foreign Birds by Dr. C. S. Simpson. Messrs. J. Hills, A. F. Hudson, D. Seth-Smith, J. Storey, and W. Swaysland acted as Stewards, and to their most efficient help the success of the Show was entirely due. Where all worked so well it seems

invidious to select one name for special mention, still, I feel that the hardest of the work fell upon Mr. Storey, and that it was he who was the Secretary's chief assistant, and without his aid the Show could scarcely have been held.

It is satisfactory to be able to report that the Show achieved its object, and undoubtedly attracted to the Bazaar a large number of people who would not otherwise have attended: the "gate-money" was thereby considerably increased, and it was not the fault of the Stallholders in the Bazaar if the money expended by every visitor did not largely exceed the fee for admission. It is to be feared that the enjoyment of those who came simply to see the birds was considerably marred by the Bazaar element, and especially by the touting for subscriptions to raffles for articles which were invariably useless and not always ornamental. The pertinacity of a few of the ladies, although perhaps creditable to their perseverance, provoked some unfavourable comments, and must have tended to drive away visitors. One visitor from a distant county remarked that he had always believed that touting at Bazaars in ——shire was carried to the extremest point, but that he found it still worse in Brighton! Although there was a very fair attendance and over 1,000 people paid for admission in the three days, still there were not nearly so many there as there ought to have been. I lay the blame for the comparatively small attendance partly upon insufficient advertising and partly upon the deterrent effect of the Bazaar. After all, it requires more moral courage than most of us possess to walk through a Bazaar, however much we may want to see the birds. This makes me all the more grateful to those who did attend. A good many members of the Avicultural Society were present: for in addition to those acting as Stewards I had the pleasure of seeing Miss Hopwood, Mr. Frostick, Mr. Fulljames, Mr. Norman H. Jones, and Mr. Maxwell, and possibly some others whom I have for the moment forgotten.

After this long preface, I propose to put down a few notes about the birds exhibited.

Class 1 (Goldfinches) contained eleven entries. One bird was disqualified as a foreigner; and another marked "wrong class" because it was a Cheverel, the Judge being of opinion that it should have been exhibited in the Class for Pied, Albino, and Rare-feathered specimens. The Cheverel Goldfinch is such a well-known variety that it seems to me it can scarcely be considered a rare-feathered bird; moreover, in my opinion, as the Class was open to all British Goldfinches, even an Albino might

properly have been entered in it—and I cannot see that the fact of there being a special class for Rare-feathered birds made any difference. Still, such experienced exhibitors as Mr. S. Cook, Mr. Storey and Mr. Swaysland agreed with the Judge's decision, so that no doubt he had good authority for the course he took.

Class 2 (Bullfinches) contained seven birds. The second prize-winner, a large bird (hand-reared) was cheap at the Catalogue price (10/6) and was sold on the second day of the Show. A bird exhibited by the London Fanciers' Supply Association was a most industrious piper, but his musical performance proclaimed him to be no Britisher.

Class 3 (Linnets, Redpolls and Siskins) was well filled, containing 19 entries, 7 of which were Siskins, 6 Linnets, 5 Redpolls, and 1 a Twite. All the Redpolls were Mealies. Miss A. Morgan's 1st prize Siskin was a magnificent specimen, and obtained the Special given for the best British bird.

Class 4 (All other species of Finches, Grosbeaks and Buntings) also contained 19 entries. Here were 6 Hawfinches, 2 Greenfinches, 3 Bramblings, 2 Chaffinches, 2 Crossbills (male and female), 1 Reed Bunting, 1 Cirl Bunting, 1 Lapland Bunting, and 1 Ortolan Bunting. The members of the Avicultural Society were more successful in this class than in the other British classes, for they secured three of the four prizes. Mr. Storey's beautiful Cirl Bunting well deserved its position as first prize winner.

Class 5 contained 2 Missel Thrushes, 3 Song Thrushes, 2 Blackbirds, and a Ring Ouzel. The first prize Blackbird was a beauty.

Class 6 (Migratory Birds) contained a Whinchat, a Yellow Wagtail, a Blackcap, a Pipit, a Shorelark, and 2 Nightingales: the 1st prize being awarded to Mr. Fulljames' Yellow Wagtail, and the 2nd to Mr. S. Cook's Nightingale. I was surprised that the 1st prize should have been secured by the Yellow Wagtail, as I have found that species easier to keep in good condition than the other species shown, but possibly my experience has been exceptional. Miss Hopwood's Whinchat had always been fed on Gasparin's food, and certainly did credit to its diet, but I found by experiment that although it had been fed for months solely on that food (and mealworms) it preferred egg and ants' eggs when it got the choice. The bird was pronounced by competent judges to be a female.

Class 7 (All species not included in the above). This Class was of necessity somewhat of a mixture, and contained a

Cornish Chough, 3 Starlings, a Jay and a Robin; a Great Tit entered by Mr. Bonhote was unfortunately absent. The first prize was awarded to a Starling, the Chough coming second. The Chough was a most voracious creature, and I am glad that I had to board him for a few days only; nothing came amiss to him and although his very large food-tin was replenished several times a day he was always screaming for food. As I hear that he reached home without his prize-card I suppose he ate it on the journey.

The seven Classes for British Birds contained 78 entries, only one of which was absent. All the Classes were fairly filled and made a nice little Show in the Saloon. Coming now to the Foreign Birds, for which 20 Classes were provided, we find a less satisfactory state of affairs: for several Classes had to be amalgamated with others, and some were very poorly filled.

Class 8 (Budgerigars) was amalgamated with the Love Bird Class.

Class 9 (Ring-necks) contained 5 entries. The first prize was gained by Mr. Maxwell's really magnificent Pink-checked Parrakeet, the other exhibits being Malabars and Lesser Ring-necks. Mr. Swaysland's Malabar received an extra first prize. One of the Ring-necks was the winner of the Talking Bird Competition.

Class 10 (Kings and Crimson-wings) contained a pair of each species and three single Kings. The First prize was awarded to the London Fanciers' Supply Association's very fine King, and the second to Mr. Doherty's Crimson-wings.

In Class 11 (A. O. V. Parrakeets), with which the Class for Lories and Lorikeets was amalgamated, the first prize was awarded to Mr. Housden's beautiful Ceram Lory, and the second to Mr. Swaysland's Tui Parrakeet, which obtained the cup offered for the rarest Parrot in the Show and which unfortunately died at the Show on the Sunday. The Class contained besides, an Adelaide Parrakeet, a specimen of *Conurus parva* in perfect feather, a Patagonian Conure, a Pennant, and an Ornamented Lorikeet.

Class 12 (Love Birds), with which the Budgerigars were amalgamated, contained only 4 entries, one of which was absent. There were two good pairs of Budgerigars, and some handsome Blue-winged Love Birds belonging to Mr. Storey, which were remarkably steady and well shown, but they appeared to be two cocks. The only prize was awarded to Mr. Maxwell's grand Peach-faced Love Birds.

Classes 13 and 14 (Greys and Amazons) also had been amalgamated, and contained together only 5 entries, one of which was absent. There were two Grey Parrots, neither of them remarkably good; a passable Blue-fronted Amazon; and the prize-winner, a splendid Double-fronted Amazon belonging to the London Fanciers' Supply Association, which was claimed on the first day of the Show.

Class 15 (Cockatoos) contained a good show of those objectionable Slenderbills, there being no less than 4 (two singles and one pair), but the prize was awarded to the only other exhibit, a fine Leadbeater belonging to Mr. Maxwell.

Class 17 (All other species of Parrots) contained seven entries, one being absent. The first prize was awarded to Mr. Swaysland's pair of Eclecti, which were in perfect condition and shown in a roomy and handsome cage. Mr. Gibbins' Illiger's Macaw received the second prize. The Class contained besides, a cock Eclectus belonging to Mr. Storey, which was superior in size and colour to Mr. Swaysland's, but slightly rough in one wing; a Black Parrot belonging to Mr. Gibbins, which was more remarkable for rarity than beauty, and shown in a very unsuitable cage; a good Senegal Parrot belonging to Mr. Swaysland; and an Illiger's Macaw belonging to the London Fanciers' Supply Association, which many considered to be a better bird than the winner of the second prize.

Class 18 (Doves) contained 8 entries, 3 absent. The first prize went, as a matter of course, to Mr. Housden's celebrated pair of Australian Crested Doves, shown, or rather concealed from view, in an immense, awkward, wicker cage. The London Fanciers' Supply Association secured the second prize with their pair of Diamond Doves. Mr. Storey exhibited a first-rate pair of Australian Crested and a rather mournful Green-winged. Mr. Swaysland sent a pair of South American Doves of some species not known to me.

Class 19 (Whydahs and Weavers) was a good class of 13 entries, the only absentee being Mr. Fulljames' Giant Whydah. That exhibitor's Crimson-throated Whydah, which was in perfect health but not quite in full colour, secured the 1st prize and also the cup awarded for rarity in the "small foreign" Classes. Mr. Fulljames also showed a Napoleon Weaver, a Half-masked Weaver, an Abyssinian Weaver, a Madagascar Weaver, a Grenadier Weaver, and a Lesser Grenadier Weaver (indistinguishable, in my eyes, from the ordinary Grenadier or Oryx Weaver). Mr. Housden's Yellowish Weaver obtained second. Is this bird a Weaver, or is Mr. Abrahams right in saying it is a

Sparrow? Although sorry to differ from Mr. Abrahams, I incline to the opinion that it is a Weaver: for I cannot identify it with any species of Sparrow. Mr. Swaysland's Whydah, which obtained the 3rd prize, was catalogued as a Yellow-shouldered Whydah; but it was so out of colour that it was difficult to identify; it appeared, moreover, to be badly crippled. Mr. Swaysland also exhibited a Pin-tailed Whydah and an Oryx Weaver.

Class 20 (Gouldian Finches) contained 5 entries, but the only bird which put in an appearance was a single cock of the Black-headed sort, and he felt his loneliness so acutely that he soon drowned himself in his water-tin. The prize was withheld.

Class 21 (Waxbills and Grassfinches). Eleven entries, one absent. Here all the entries but two belonged to Mr. Fulljames, who obtained 1st for his Sydney Waxbill, and 2nd for his African Fire Finch. He also exhibited a pair of St. Helena Waxbills, a female Crimson Finch, a Cherry Finch, a Lavender Finch, and a pair of Parson Finches. Mrs. W. A. Hammond's fine Parson Finches received the 3rd prize, the only other exhibit being a poor pair of Diamond Sparrows.

Class 22 (Java Sparrows) contained 6 entries, but no less than 4 were absent. Neither of the entries which put in an appearance was of much merit.

Class 23 (Mannikins). Nine entries. Mr. Fulljames had, through an unfortunate accident, sent a specimen of the common Bronze Mannikin along with one of his rare Rufous-backed Mannikins, instead of the other of the pair of Rufous-backs: consequently the exhibit was disqualified. He exhibited besides a pair of Bronze Mannikins; a pair of Three-coloured Nuns, which received 2nd; a specimen of the rare Masked Finch, which, being a Grass-finch, should have been in Class 21, but which received a special prize; a pair of Chestnut Finches; and a pair of Nutmeg Finches. Mr. Maxwell's *Munia pectoralis* was 1st, and the L. F. Supply Association's Chestnut Finches 3rd. The only other entry was another pair of Chestnut Finches. It was strange that the 1st prize winner should have been catalogued as *Estrela pectoralis*, for the owner must have known that the bird is a Mannikin or he would not have entered it in a Mannikin Class, and if a Mannikin, how *Estrela*?

Class 24 (Grosbeaks, True Finches, and Buntings). Eight entries, one absent. Mrs. W. A. Hammond's lovely Indigo Bunting was easily first, being an unusually brilliant specimen. Miss Jackson's Green Cardinals were 2nd. Miss Jackson's

celebrated Grey Cardinal is at last showing signs of age, and was scarcely in show condition. A pair of Pileated Finches, another Grey Cardinal, a pair of Saffron Finches, and another good Green Cardinal, completed the Class.

Class 25 (Tanagers, Bulbuls, Sugar Birds, and Zosterops). Mr. Housden's Red-vented Bulbuls were 1st, thus occupying the same position as at the last Palace Show. The rare Blue-winged Honeysucker shown by Mr. Fulljames was not in show condition. The only other entries which put in an appearance were two excellent Tanagers, belonging respectively to Mr. Maxwell and the L. F. Supply Association.

Class 26 (Crows, Jays, Starlings, &c.) Mr. Arthur's splendid Mexican Jays were 1st, and Mr. Swaysland's Green Glossy Starling 2nd. Here were besides, a Brazilian Hangnest, a Brazilian Blue-bearded Jay, two seed-eating Troupials, and a Siberian Nutcracker.

Class 27 (All species not included in the above). Mr. Seth-Smith received the 1st prize for his Pectoral Rail, a rare and pretty bird, in perfect feather and well shown—the same bird received the special for the best in Classes 25, 26, and 27; Mr. Fulljames' Red-sided Tit was second—my own choice for the second place would have been the same exhibitor's Sulphur Tyrant, which is by far the finest specimen of its species that I have ever seen. There were two Shâmahs, of which the one belonging to Mr. Fulljames received the 3rd prize, but there seemed little to choose between them. Mr. Maxwell's Shâmah which did *not* get the prize, was a lively, healthy bird, and a perpetual singer. The Class also contained two pairs of Pekin Robins, one pair of which was very good. Here were nine entries, two absent.

The Classes for Foreign Birds contained 122 entries, of which no less than 23 were absent, so that there were actually 99 at the Show.

The Classes for Canaries and Canary Mules were fairly well filled, but those birds being beyond the province of our Society I will say nothing about them.

Class 31 (Non-Canary Hybrids). Mr. Vale's Goldfinch-Bullfinch did not arrive, so that the only two competitors were Mr. John Robson's Siskin-Redpoll and Mr. Vale's Goldfinch-Greenfinch, of which the first took the prize.

Class 32 (Pied, Albino, and Rare-feathered Specimens). Most of the entries could only be called Rare-feathered by

courtesy, and the prize went to a Redpoll with a small patch of white on the back of his head.

Class 34 (Collections of not less than 4 birds). Mr. Swaysland obtained the prize for "Six Mixed Foreign"—they were certainly very mixed. He also sent six Weavers and six Canaries. Mr. Storey showed five Cordon Bleus, which were unfortunately somewhat affected by the cold of the night before the judging, otherwise they would no doubt have been the prize winners.

In the Gift Class Mr. Gale's Canary was first and Mr. Storey's Starling second. There was a pretty Blossom-headed Parrakeet given by Mr. O'Reilly, and there were three entries of small Foreign Birds.

The special prize for "most points throughout the Show" was won by Mr. Swaysland, who obtained a few points more than Mr. Fulljames. But for the unlucky mistake about the Rufous-backed Mannikin, and the entry of the Masked Finch in the wrong class, Mr. Fulljames would undoubtedly have won this prize.

## REVIEWS.

*Foreign Finches in Captivity*, by A. G. Butler, Ph.D., etc.  
(L. Reeve & Co.) Parts VII. & VIII.

This valuable work is approaching its conclusion. The parts now under consideration conclude the description of the Grassfinches, deal with the Mannikins, and commence the Whydahs. Illustrations are given of the male Bicheno's and Cherry finches: we wish that it had been possible in all cases where the sexes differ to illustrate both. In the case of the Silverbills the difference could hardly have been shewn on paper. An acute observation of Mr. Abrahams' referring to the Silverbills, but which may be extended to a good many other species where the sexes are very much alike, is that "in trying to distinguish the sexes of a pair of this bird, it is only the first glance that enables you to appreciate the difference, for if you gaze at them for a little time, so much are they alike, that you cannot tell one from the other."

Dr. Butler regards the Bengalee as a cross between the Striated Finch and the Indian Silver-bill. The resemblance to *Uroloncha striata* is, of course, very obvious, but we must confess that the hybrid theory appears to us rather far-fetched.

The Sharp-tailed and Striated Finches, the three varieties of the Spice Bird, and the Chestnut and Three-coloured Mannikins

are illustrated and described. Two species we should like to have seen included, are omitted, namely, the Rufous-backed Mannikin (*Spermestes nigriceps*), and the White-breasted (*Munia pectoralis*).

It is impossible in the space available to do justice to the author's untiring industry: we can only advise our readers to get the book before it is out of print. In Part VIII, are included illustrations and descriptions of the Black, and White-headed Mannikins, the Java Sparrow, the Magpie, Bronze and Two-coloured Mannikins, the Combasou, and the Pin-tailed Whydah.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### TITS NESTING IN A LETTER-BOX.

An interesting case of the nesting of a pair of Tits in a letter-box is reported from a village in the South of England. The hen remained on the nest while the box was being used. Our informant wishes his name and address to be suppressed, in fear that its publication might lead to the taking of the nest.

### WASHING COCKATOOS.

SIR,—I am most anxious to know the opinion of experts upon washing Cockatoos. Is soap injurious to the powdery substance in their plumage? My birds, through staying so long in town, are in a most unrepresentable condition; and their daily ablutions, or shower baths from the watering-pot, do not cleanse them in the least. I have washed them with soap, but it certainly leaves the feathers in rather a dry condition.

My Parrots look in splendid condition, but then they bathe almost as frequently as Jackdaws.

EDITH HAWTHORN.

### PROBLEMS IN BIRD BREEDING.

SIR,—Various specimens shown at our Bird Shows clearly demonstrate that among British birds kept under suitable conditions it is possible to obtain mules, one of the most conspicuous among such exhibits being the cross-bred Goldfinch and Bullfinch.

What the conditions are, under which such mules are raised, I am not aware. Generally speaking, mules of which the Canary is one of the parents are the product of the hen Canary; and this is naturally so, because the hen Canary will more readily sit in confinement than will a British bird, and so the cock Goldfinch or Linnet or Siskin is usually put with her. Probably the British mules we see at the Shows are bred from a hen Goldfinch or Linnet which has been hatched by a Canary, and so having been raised in a cage from birth, has become familiar and steady enough to sit.

But in a large aviary of mixed British birds, though more or less breeding goes on, never within my experience has a cross occurred naturally. One season, a cock Goldfinch and hen Brown Linnet appeared desirous of making a match, but nothing resulted except an

abortive nest. The constancy of birds to their own species is remarkable, and it is extremely interesting to observe the alacrity with which a lonely bachelor will greet a mate of his own kind when she is turned in among the general crowd. What excitement he displays! How he drops his wings and spreads his tail and raises his crest, sidling up to her with a manifest determination to make the most of himself!

But why will some birds breed so much more readily than others? The Greenfinch makes a very early start, and follows with a second and third nest before the preceding brood is off hand, turning out three or four each time. The Goldfinch generally breeds successfully, the cock bird being attentive and the hen sitting steadily; but in confinement they are apt to build a slight nest which may come to grief and let the young ones through the bottom. The Brown Linnet and Redpoll will also breed, and one season we reared two nests of Bullfinches from one hen; but have had no success since. Last year the hen—not the same one—seemed anxious to build, making a start now in one place now in another, and dropped an egg among the gorse, but never settled down to steady business. Last year the Goldfinches were a failure. But the Chaffinches have never made any attempt at nesting—why is this? The birds are very steady, the cock sings lustily, suitable material is supplied: but nothing results. Last year we thought we were going to have a nest, and indeed one was constructed by the hen, but no egg was laid. The Tits, too, Marsh, Blue, or Oxeye, show no disposition to breed, though the first are extremely familiar and seem immortal. Only once have I seen anything like love passages, and these occurred between a pair of Blue Tits; but they never approached nest-building, though several suitable places were provided. Is it a question of food? In a perfectly wild state, the Blue Tit is most fearless in selecting a position for her nest, a favourite place in towns being down a street gas lamp post, the bird finding its way down the standard at the point where the gas pipe passes out at the top just inside the head of the lamp. I have known several lamps occupied in this way. Why then will they not breed in an aviary?

Returning for a moment to the subject of cross-breeding, I have found the Pied Wagtail pair readily with a hen Grey Wagtail. Their nest was built in the corner of the husk-tray suspended below the seed-box, probably the most exposed and disturbed position she could have found in the whole place; but she sat steadily and hatched two young ones, which, however, she failed to rear. Both parents had been caught wild, the preceding Autumn. Why do not such crosses occur frequently in nature?

I have an interesting problem to solve, before me now; perhaps some of the members of the Society can suggest a solution. I keep five game Bantam hens for the purpose of rearing fancy Pheasants and Quails: three of these I keep in one pen, two in another, in my garden. Of the three, one has already sat and brought up a brood, another is now sitting, the third has shown no disposition to sit and is laying very sparingly. Of the other two, neither has yet laid an egg, much less become broody, though both sat last year. I know nothing of their ages. I bought them when broody, on the 27th of May, last year, and now they look fresh and healthy, but are worse than useless. All five are fed alike, principally on mixed corn, with cabbage, lettuce leaves and chickweed.

CHARLES L. ROTHERA.

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\* THE NESTING OF THE ROSY-FACED LOVE-BIRD.

*Agapornis roseicollis.*

By REGINALD PHILLIPPS.

In taking up this subject, it will be well to give a brief sketch of my bird-room and aviary, so that my Love-birds' surroundings may be understood, as birds, even the same individuals, will oft-times act very differently under different circumstances. My cages are large, the smallest being four feet by two feet by two feet high. My garden is covered over with wire-netting, and can be opened as one aviary or divided into two. All round there are various sheds, shelters, nest-boxes, and the like, which are altered and re-arranged from time to time according to the various natures of the occupants. The part farthest from the house is as full of living trees and shrubs as the ground will bear, the latter being also sown with grass, rape, wheat, nasturtiums, peas, and various flowers and plants, according to fancy: I aim at making this portion of the garden a miniature wilderness. The other part of the aviary comes up to and against the house, and into this the window of my regular bird-room opens; and in warm weather this window is usually left open, so that the birds can fly backwards and forwards as they please. Everything is done to make the garden as natural as possible, so that the instincts and habits of each species may have free development. At the time that I had my Rosy-faces, I had several large Parrakeets, and various foreign Crows and Pies; the presence of these large birds may or may not have affected the nesting instincts of the Love-birds.

At first I kept my Rosy-faces in a cage; afterwards, and for the space of nearly two years, they flew about where they liked, and seemingly behaved as in their natural state; and their

\* This article is a continuation of Mr. Phillipps' article on the Love-bird which appeared in the Magazine for February last (pp. 49-52), and should be read in connection therewith.

behaviour during the latter period was so conspicuously different from their behaviour while caged that I may well divide the remainder of this paper into two parts.

#### I.—THE NESTING OF THE ROSY-FACES IN CAPTIVITY.

In the cage already alluded to, there was but one nesting-place, a log-nest placed on its side but slightly slanting upwards. The Rosy-faces very soon commenced nesting; all the fore-part of the log was strewn with bits of hay, straw, etc., but at the extreme end there was a very nice little nest, lined with pieces of hay and bark which had been chewed up by the female until exceedingly soft and pleasant to the touch. The female (never the male) carried up the materials for the nest among the feathers of her thighs, and lower back or upper tail-coverts, but as often as not in her beak. And it is, I think, only when in captivity that these birds make use of various strange nesting materials, and carry much, or even any, of it to their nesting places in their mouths. During the closing winter and early spring, over one dozen eggs were laid at various times, but were destroyed by the male; possibly the female may have lent a helping hand, but I had not any proof that she did. They did not throw much energy or zeal into their work, neither did they betray any signs of uneasiness on the approach of anyone; beyond being a little more spiteful than usual towards some birds in other cages, they behaved much as usual; in short, they nested in that half-hearted way that birds in captivity often do.

Even when caged, the female preferred bark to any other nesting material, hay and straw cut up into short lengths coming next; but on these failing she would take strips off the perches, or almost anything that came in her way. When she had not any boughs to peel, her delight was to squat herself down in the midst of a tump of hay, and chew away at it for nest-lining.

I cannot say whether the eggs laid at this time were fertile or otherwise.

#### II.

#### THE NESTING OF THE ROSY-FACES IN THEIR NATURAL STATE.

Whilst flying about loose in the garden, these birds seemed to be perfectly at home, and to behave so naturally that I have ventured to adopt a rather bold heading for this section of my paper. Neither in bird-room nor garden did the Rosy-faces associate with any of the other birds, but kept to themselves, and seemed supremely happy in their own company. The female, at any rate, in season and out of season, seemed to be filled with

but one thought—how best to increase and multiply the species; and she pursued her self-appointed task with so much zeal and perseverance that, if she had had a proper mate, my aviary would have been well-nigh filled with Rosy-faces. She never now carried nesting materials in her beak or amidst the feathers of the thigh; she never made use of any material for her nest but the bark of living trees, so long as she had the run of the wilderness; and when shut off from her chosen trees she fell upon those in the other aviary as far as they would go, occasionally taking tiny strips from the perches, but never touching hay or straw, nor picking up any stuff of any kind from the ground. Artificial nesting places of every kind—logs, barrels, cocoa-nut husks—all were ignored; and for many a day did the pair pursue their hunt for a suitable spot in which to build, evidently attaching the greatest importance to this point. The cracks and crevices they squeezed themselves into and explored were marvellous; for a time a chink between two cages in the bird-room, where a slight ledge afforded walking space for a mouse, seemed to be the nearest approach to what they desired—but as there was not anything to lay the eggs upon, just a clear drop of some three feet to the floor, the place was reluctantly abandoned; but not until after the happy pair had passed several very uncomfortable nights hanging on by their eyelids did they wholly desert it. Eventually they found a spot in the garden, which in some respects evidently pleased them. Between the ceiling and roof of one of the sheds there was an empty space several feet in length and breadth, and some three or four inches high along the highest part. Into this they managed to force an entrance through a hole barely large enough to admit a mouse or a Blue Tit, and there during the summer the busy little lady gathered together a large mass of prepared bark. During the colder months, when confined to the house at night, they found a very similar place in the bird-room, with an entrance hole no other bird could make use of, and there, also, the lady piled up a marvellous stock of material; for on most days in the autumn and spring they were let out into the garden for a fly, and also during the winter on mild days; but, of course, this second and more permanent nesting-place had not been sought out and adopted until after I had closed up the entrance to the first. They seemed to have a decided predilection in favour of making use of the same nest time after time; but as the female practically never ceased working, even when sitting rarely failing to carry home a load when returning from a fly, the size of the nest was ever on the increase. I may mention that I never succeeded

in finding a trace of mite or insect amongst this material, which was in regular use for considerably over a twelvemonth. In both places, the tump seemed to consist wholly and solely of strips of bark, although a few strips from the perches must have been there somewhere.

I have seen it stated, or have been told, that these birds build a dome-shaped nest. Not in any case did my birds do so; moreover, I cannot conceive it possible that a dome, however nominal, could be constructed out of such limp material without external support such as is usually present in some form or another with the nests of the Long-tailed Tit and the Common Wren. Of the chewed bark, as used by the Rosy-faces, not a single piece has sufficient strength to bear its own weight. The nests were shallow cup shaped, with a lot of loose material attached externally, much like those of a Redstart or Spotted Flycatcher when placed on a ledge or beam.

When nesting, the female flies on to a young bough of a growing tree, bites off—by passing her beak along sideways, nipping away as she goes—a strip of bark some three or four inches long, doubles it, by giving a nip about one third of its length from one end until the two sides form an acute angle, and tucks the piece, at the angle, under one or more of the feathers of the lower back or upper tail coverts, leaving both ends sticking out. This performance is repeated until some half-dozen pieces have been hooked on, though the number varies according to the time occupied in obtaining the bark; she then flies off in anxious haste to her nest. In my garden, the bark was almost always taken, if obtainable, by the Rosy-face from a Balsam Poplar (*Populus balsamifera*); the Madagascar Love-birds, by the way, preferred the Lime tree. Dr. Greene recommends the Willow, a tree I have not tried; but these busy little fellows set a grand example to the British workman, for if they cannot get what they like, they like what they can get, and make the best of it. When on her nest, the female employs her time in passing the strips of bark backwards and forwards between her mandibles, mumbling away at them until they are beautifully soft and nice.

However much the instincts of my Rosy-faces may have been sharpened by the enemies surrounding them, the anxiety they betrayed to find a nesting-place secure from attack—a large hole with a tiny entrance such as a rat would select—was so marked, and the search so thorough and prolonged, in each case the hole found having been previously unknown to me, that it could hardly have been exceptional, but seemed rather a natural

and normal instinct; and in this I think we may find an answer to a question I have often seen asked but never answered: Why do these birds, of all the birds in the world, carry the material to their nesting-places tucked away under their coat tails as it were, instead of in their beaks like the rest of the feathered creation? Many and many a time, as I watched these mouse-like creatures nesting, did I answer this question to my own satisfaction. My birds could not fly straight to the aperture of their nesting places as a Tit or a Starling usually can, but had to fly on to the side of the building and then climb up a few inches, lift themselves up into the aperture by means of their beaks, and then creep in like mice. As everyone knows, a Parrot, when climbing, uses its beak as a third hand; and I could see that if these birds had not any other means of carrying the stuff than in their beaks, their task would never have been accomplished; it is doubtful even if they could have carried anything into the hole at all. As it was, however, having their mouths free, they could carry their loads home easily, and I may say safely, for when there was plenty of green bark available they rarely dropped a piece; it is the Love-bird in captivity that drops its unnatural collections about the place, not the free bird. The female alone sat on the eggs; but whenever she came off the male duly received and waited upon her, and escorted her back to the doorway on her return, in the most gallant manner. He always slept near her at night, but whether actually in the nest or not I do not know.

The female seemed to lay from five to seven eggs at a time, and many were laid, but not an egg was ever hatched, and I cannot say that any were fertilized; the mate was unquestionably a male, albeit a miserable, feather-eating creature. On the flat wood, in a large hole, the nests took a very considerable time to make; and owing to the abruptness with which the birds were transferred from one place to another (for others had to be considered before them), and the long delay which occurred in finding a nesting-place, many eggs were laid before a nest was formed, and, being on the flat, rolled about and came to nought, so that at first the birds had not a fair chance; but this will not account for the clear eggs laid at a later period. The number of eggs laid and wasted during the first few months may well have caused weakness—or else the male was useless.

The male eventually died very suddenly while the female was laying. At the time I supposed that he had been killed by another bird, for he had received a suspicious-looking blow on the forehead, which I judged had been inflicted before death;

but likely enough he had a seizure, and his condition invited a tap from the Blue Pie's beak. I am the more supposed to think that the bird may have had a fit from a very similar case which has recently occurred in my bird-room whilst a female Parrakeet was laying. The latter was a strong robust bird full of health and strength, but her mate, like the Love-bird, was an old, long-caged, well-exhibited specimen; and a sudden seizure carried him off before I knew he was ill.

On missing her husband, the Love-bird made two or three wild flies around, calling loudly for him; and then she returned to her nesting-place, where she stayed for some forty-eight hours. She forsook the nest after this, and came into the garden looking queer; and not long afterwards I found she was paralysed. With careful nursing she came round, and, after the lapse of some weeks, became as strong as ever, saving only that she never recovered the use of about two toes of one foot. But thenceforth she was a regular vixen, attacking, and sometimes breaking the leg of any bird that approached her nesting-place, of which she once more took possession, and to which she occasionally carried pieces of bark. She lost no time in vain regrets or outward demonstrations of sorrow. She wanted a husband, and was perpetually calling and looking out for one. She had become like the fat cook in *Punch* who gave up her place in order to be married; "not that she was exactly engaged, but she felt that amiable that she could fall in love with any man." For a time she kept company with a Red-faced Love-bird; but he was not of much account, and she gave him up as hopeless before many weeks had passed.

Mr. Castellan, at p. 41, writes that "Love-birds take possession of the nests of other birds, such as Weavers, for their own use," and mentions statements of others that "they line their nests with twigs, bits of straw and bark, etc., which the hens carry up to their nest-boxes by putting them between the feathers of their rump." Unfortunately he does not tell us which species of Love-bird takes possession of the nests of other birds, such as Weavers, in their natural state. I find it somewhat hard to believe that the Rosy-face does so. The references to the twigs and straw apply to the Love-bird in captivity; but even so a Love-bird who *lined* her nest with twigs would soon have broken eggs; and twigs could hardly be carried to the nest-boxes between the feathers, or otherwise than in the beak.

I notice that in the "Royal Natural History," at p. 129 of Vol. IV. the following words appear in connection with this

species. "Andersson writes that these Love-birds are common in Namaqualand, and are met with in small flocks, never far removed from the vicinity of water. Their flight is rapid; and while on the wing they utter their sharp cry. Their food consists of berries and large berry-like seeds. Instead of making nests for themselves, they take possession of those of other birds; but Andersson was unable to ascertain whether they did so by dispossessing the rightful owners, or whether they were content with deserted domiciles. The number of eggs is not mentioned." I feel very strongly that Andersson was mistaken in supposing that the Rosy-face takes possession of the nests of other birds. He was probably unaware that the members of the *Agapornis* genus of Parrots construct their own nests; and, finding the eggs of these birds in their own nests, he doubtless jumped to the conclusion that the nests were those of other birds. Unfortunately I have not been able to get hold of "Andersson" to obtain further particulars.

### A ROUNDABOUT PAPER.

By Mrs. LESLIE WILLIAMS.

Do any of the readers of the *Avicultural Magazine* remember the "essay days" which came round so regularly at school, I wonder? Do they recollect how the subject which was chalked up on the blackboard for juvenile wits to sharpen themselves upon, invariably proved so rough and gritty a piece of paving-stone that the axe of intellect resolutely refused to put on an edge, no matter how perseveringly scraped and moistened and ground thereon?

Like unto those bad old days was the day when the order arrived *per carte postale* from our honoured Secretary to the writer, for an article wherewith gaping pages should be filled. Behold me, most anxious to oblige, sitting down to think the matter out. Immediately ideas in plenty occur to me about dogs, but they, of course, would be inadmissible; about cats—but no, in *this* paper that dread subject is trebly taboo; about birds—not one single fact can I recall that has not been told before, not one spicy anecdote that did not appear in last week's *Feathered World*, not even the hatching of an egg that has not been already entered upon the *Avicultural Register*. Yet stay, one of my Pigeons laid an egg yesterday. Foiled again! (with great stress on the vowels, and a stamp of one foot, to which the carpet, like the stage, responds with a cloud of dust) the *Avicultural Magazine* does not admit Pigeons within its sacred arcana.

The shrieks of three Parrots, getting the primal airing of summer in the garden outside the window where I sit, ought to suggest a few good stories of the witticisms uttered by the dear, clever creatures; but no, for they have been all the winter in the kitchen, half torpid, wholly gorged, and stupidly silent. With the buttercups and daisies their voices are coming back, but apparently not their wits, for their speech is all inarticulate, though there is plenty of it. If they lose conversational powers, though, they learn toleration and good *camaraderie* in the basement regions. Happening to look into the kitchen to-day, about the dinner hour, I saw two plates filled with "bits" touching one another on the table, at one of which the cat was busily engaged, while at the other Polly No. 3 was sorting out the choice morsels. Now and then, both choices feil on the same fragment: then the cat pulled and the Parrot pulled, and the comestible decided the question according to its elasticity, but all was done in perfect amity. Night after night four cats and three *Psittacidae* (please revise the orthography of this word, Mr. Secretary) sleep the sleep of the just and the satiated, divided only by a few impotent wires between feathers and claws, in my kitchen. Day after day the green trio promenade at will, and even tweak the unwary tails of the variously coloured quartette, and peace and harmony still reign unbroken. On one point only do they disagree—the cats want to sleep in the day when the Parrots are widest awake and readiest with their beaks; and the Polls feel tired and ready for bed at the hour when the tide of life leaps highest in feline veins. They are still arguing the question, and I shall be told when a settlement is arrived at. Meanwhile it is most important that mice should not get a footing in the dresser drawers, and the kitten of five tender weeks must be introduced to cockroaches by its three doting elders, so that night and day are alike lively in the kingdom of saucepans.

My bird-room proper is a desert, occupied only by mice and two Pekin Nightingales, who hugely appreciate the absence of winged company. "The fewer the Pekins the more the grub for the Pekins that remain" is their motto, and though there is a flaw in the arrangement somewhere, I cannot detect it, for it takes the yolk of one egg every day to feed the pair in possession, just as it used to take the yolk of one egg every day to feed the birds when the room was full of them. Perhaps the mice know something about this, but if they do they are very careful to keep their information to themselves, and regularly sweep up all traces of their presence from around and about the food tins.

I was watching the Pekins wash one day, and it reminded me very much of my youth, to strike again the keynote in which this roundabout article was first pitched. Their bath is an oval baking tin about three inches deep and eight inches long, and they went in at one end and out at the other as fast as the eye could follow them; but in one little matter their practice differed from what I remember of mine—they went through under the water, while I should have gone as much as possible over it; and then came out very wet, wherein is no parallel. In about five minutes they were dry again, and repeated the performance, and at the end of a hot day the two quarts or so of water which the bath holds, are mostly bestowed on the floor all round, and only the sediment of the *Leiotriches* remains. (Please do not, Mr. Secretary, alter this latter word when you are looking over my proof. The proper scientific name of the Pekin Nightingale is *Leiothrix*, which comes from the Greek *leios*, smooth, and *thrix*, hair: and my husband, who is a profound Greek scholar, says the proper scientific plural of the Pekin Nightingale's name is *Leiotriches*. Perhaps some people may find it difficult to believe this, and in fact one or two have kicked at it before now: but none of them were Greek scholars, and so I am very proud of it. I am the only person in the Society who knows the proper plural, and I will not be done out of it.)\*

The *Leiotriches* then, are very fond of making nests, but they are not extravagant over it, for the same material can be used over and over again. They have made at least six since February, and have taken us in with every one of them. "My last attempt" says the hen, coming out of the muddled heap of hay and withered leaves, "was unfortunately abortive: this time, I assure you there is no mistake. In fact, I am in a position to guarantee a new laid egg for to-morrow," and we always believe her, and tell one another in whispers that the Pekins are really and truly nesting this time. They once did get so far as to have an undoubted egg in one nest, but how it got there I could not say: it was a Cutthroat's egg, and rattled inside when shaken.

The very latest nest has a much more business-like air about it than any of its predecessors: it is not so boldly self-assertive and does not rock about so much, and it is also much tidier and better finished off, and the cock has tied two branches together very ingeniously, so that they make a nice hall or

\* In Latinizing the name it becomes *Liothrix*; would not, therefore, the plural of the Latinized word be *Liothriges*? Genera are usually derived from the Greek and Latinized.—ED.

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entrance. I have great hopes from this nest, but can only give them a fortnight to develop, for after that time the room will be wanted for a kitten-nursery. What the Pekins will do then, is not settled yet. They would not be happy in a cage, and two broody hens have taken the out-of-door aviary, the only other place where they could have been accommodated, so perhaps they will have to pay twopence and take their choice of a new home in the advertisement columns of this Magazine. I shall be very sorry to part with them, but Persian kittens go off pretty well at a guinea each, while there does not seem to be a very quick market for *Leiotriches*, delightful and amusing pets though they are.

### BREEDING IN THE OPEN AIR IN 1896 AT MICKLEFIELD VICARAGE.

By the Rev. C. D. FARRAR.

I venture to think that my success, so far, will afford both pleasure and encouragement to our many members. I keep the great majority of my birds in a very large outdoor garden aviary; here they live all the year round in the most perfect health and plumage, and a death hardly ever occurs except from old age or accident.

The size of the aviary I cannot give exactly, but its extent may be judged when I mention that it is full of large growing bushes and shrubs 6ft. and 7ft. high, in which some of the birds prefer to build. To show, in passing, how utterly fallacious many of the so-called Amateur Guides are, I may remark that birds do not eat shrubs, though we are told by one self-styled authority, "that birds and trees are not compatible;" and many of the so-called delicate birds are not a bit tender. By way of proof, I may say that I had out all last winter, African Red-checked Waxbills, Cherry Finches, Diamond Sparrows, Bib Finches, Blue Robins, Green Avadavats and many others which are supposed to require hot house treatment. Now for my breeding results, so far.

I. I will take the Blue Robins; they are a grand pair, and were out all last year. They began to nest in March; selecting a cigar box as their future home. In this receptacle the hen formed a beautiful little cup-shaped nest: very small for the size of the bird. The cock did nothing more than select the site; the hen did all the building.

During the time of incubation, the cock was most attentive to the wants of his partner, taking her all the meal-

worms he could find, and living on Abrahams' egg-food himself. The youngsters appeared in due course and were very ugly little wretches; something like young Sparrows, of a dull, livid colour, naked, and with fearsome mouths. They kept the old birds busy from morn till eve in supplying their wants; but they grew splendidly, and at the end of about twelve days they one morning appeared on a branch outside. Beauties they are, not a bit like the old ones; but rather like a thrush, grandly speckled on the breast, and with a lovely shading of blue on the wings and tail. They are long since full grown and able to scrat for themselves, and ever on the look out for mealworms and "black clocks." I am very proud of my success, as it is so seldom that Blue Robins are raised to maturity.

The "authority" I have before referred to, tells us that mealworms are "too stimulating;" I guess that but for mealworms and clocks, those youngsters would now be stiff and cold.

II. A nest of Bib Finches.\* I believe this is almost, if not quite, an unique event—I mean the rearing of the young. Eggs, I know, have been laid before, but I have never heard of any young being reared. My Bibs built a snug nest in a cocoanut husk in the quietest corner of the aviary, and the first intimation I had of a family was the voice of the young being fed. The peculiar call note attracted me, and on going to the husk, out bounced the fully fledged young. They are just like the old birds, except they have no "bib" and are rather yellow round the beak.

III. A nest of Bengalese (Yellow and White); these built in a travelling box and reared three youngsters. They are now busy with their second lot of young: a good lot too, by the row they make at feeding-time.

IV. A nest of Silverbills, out some four weeks since, hatched in a cocoanut husk. A second lot of three has come off this week; and the old pair are sitting again somewhere, but they are very sly over their movements.

V. A nest of Green Avadavats. This is their second nest this year, out of doors. Is not this phenomenal? They build a lovely nest like a ball in some bush, of bass lined warmly with feathers, and lay about five eggs each time; but so far, although they sit splendidly, they have not hatched. I think it has been too cold. They are now at it again. Let us wish them good luck and a large and bouncing family! I do.

VI. Cutthroats. Two pairs with youngsters in cocoanut husks. I find them most harmless birds in my aviary.

\* *Spermestes nana*. Dwarf Finch is the commoner English name. ED.

I see my Cherry Finches and Diamond Sparrows are both busy prospecting. I think the latter have a nest in a quiet corner, but I shall not look. Last year I reared a fine nest of Red Avadavats out of doors; is not this rare?

VII. About twenty Zebra Finches, so far, and a lot more on the way. I bred about forty last season.

The Blue Robins have hatched again and have three fine youngsters half grown.

In March, my Pekin Robins built a lovely nest, like a Blackbird's, in a large elder bush; but, unfortunately, just at the critical stage, the poor cock died.

VIII. A curious cross: a hen Common Waxbill has paired with a Pheasant Finch cock, and they have a nest full of young ones.

I have just put up my Turquoisines to breed, and also a pair of Kings. The man at the shop pulled the Queen's tail out, catching her, so they may not breed yet.

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## CORRESPONDENCE.

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### BREEDING COCKATOOS.

SIR,—Having but recently returned to England, after many years residence abroad, I am glad to see by the interesting contents of the Avicultural Society's Magazine, that the number of lovers and breeders of foreign cage birds is increasing in this country, that my former efforts are still kindly remembered by some few persons, and that the notes I published years ago relating my successes and failures in keeping and breeding birds, have, in some instances, been of use to a new generation of amateurs.

What was once my aviary, tenanted by several hundred foreign birds of almost every description, has, I believe, been converted by a subsequent tenant of my former residence into greenhouses, or ferneries or vineries. In constructing that aviary I had the great advantage of the friendly advice of an unequalled aviculturist, the late Mr. Vekemaus, many years managing director of the Zoological Garden at Antwerp.

Those readers of the Magazine who think of building an aviary, would do well if, when travelling on the Continent, they paid a visit to the Antwerp Gardens. More ideas as regards the suitable housing of birds can be gathered there, than in any other Zoological Garden I have ever visited.

Of my former collection, only one specimen remains, a small Lemon-crested White Cockatoo, purchased more than 25 years ago for a very few shillings. When I bought him he was not a young bird, and I had no family, he is now the playmate of a grand-daughter; and I hope that he will live to be the pet of grand-children of my grand-daughter.

This bird had been in my possession perhaps a dozen years, when the supposed "he" astonished us by laying a series of eggs. At intervals of several years the same thing has happened since.

It may be that the change from London to a more sunny climate had something to do with this; but I have often asked myself whether Australian Cockatoos do breed every year, and whether they breed at all during the first few years of their life.

Considering the very few natural enemies these powerful birds have in their native country, their numbers would have increased prodigiously if they bred very freely in freedom, and we should have heard more of their destructiveness.

I believe it would prove a highly interesting study to attempt breeding these easily-tamed birds in confinement, and success should not be difficult to attain for those who have patience. Unfortunately, I cannot tell how to select a pair, male and female being so much alike. I should select a healthy specimen at hazard, and, when the bird is thoroughly domesticated and in perfect condition, let him or her see a number of other specimens of the same species, when our bird would soon tell us which mate would be suitable. Allowing two to occupy the same cage will always be a little risky at first. Love-making between birds often begins with a fight, in which case interference by their owner might end in scratches and bites; non-interference, in one of the birds being injured. A case has been reported to me where a quarrelsome pair of Parrots were soothed and made very affectionate towards each other, by a small drop of aniseed oil being rubbed on each wing. This essential oil is sometimes used by pigeon-breeders, to bring newly-purchased stock back to the Pigeon-house. As it proved useful as regards one kind of Parrots, it might be tried on cockatoos, and could do no harm.

But I should only try the smallest kind of White Cockatoo, the larger kind are so powerful that nothing but steel bars and cast iron seems able to resist their beaks.

The very pretty Leadbeater might be tried also, for he is comparatively gentle.

The Rose-breasted I found a stupid bird, his plumage always of a dingy tint, and if bred, his progeny would neither have value nor easily find friends.

AUG. F. WIENER.

#### BUDGERIGARS.

SIR,—Mr. Thom is quite right about aviary-bred Budgerigars. They are larger, better coloured and better marked; the necklace especially coming out better than in the imported birds.

Where are the Australian birds that could compare with the birds I have shown at the Crystal Palace for some years? And they were all bred in my aviaries, winning 1st, 1893; 1st, 1894; 2nd, 1895; and 2nd and 4th, 1896. The 1st and 3rd in 1896 were yellows, consequently my *natural coloured* ones would have been 1st and 2nd had the yellows been absent. I do not care for the yellows, they look too washed out. The two I bred once were *pure* yellow albinos with pink eyes. I have 36 pairs breeding this year, and have about 50 young on the wing, with about the same number in nests. A dealer has contracted to take all I breed this year; but I have heard that it is doubtful if he will get a sale for them all, as he is in a small way of business. Some persons doubt about an aviary being made to pay, but I find breeding Budgerigars can be made very profitable with proper management.

CHARLES P. ARTHUR.

## DANGEROUS BIRDS.

SIR,—Following up Mr. Rothera's most interesting article on this subject, I should like to give my experience.

First, I must agree with him that, in many instances, a whole family of birds has been branded dangerous because of the peculiar temperament of perhaps one specimen under observation; and, in the few notes I am going to jot down, I wish it to be understood that of the birds I shall mention I have had many different specimens and have watched them closely.

I think the varying accounts one hears from time to time as to the savage propensities or otherwise of different birds is, in many instances accounted for by the small size of the aviary they are kept in. Bird generally are much better tempered when kept under more natural conditions; and are much less likely to fill up their time by bullying other birds when they have sufficient space to fly about and exercise themselves in. Of course this does not apply to all birds, and when you find that many different individuals of any given species are always dangerous in a large aviary, then I say it is time to discontinue keeping them in mixed company.

I have always found the English Robin ready to fight all comers on the slightest provocation; and when he has had nothing better to do, he has stood on the food pot or near the water and had a tussle with every bird that came to eat or drink: this generally ended in the death of some bird.

American Mocking Birds are exactly the same, only with increased bulk you have increased wickedness and pugnacity.

The English Thrush, when given a large aviary, will very seldom do more than snap his bill at any other bird. I have had no experience of him in a small aviary, but should think he would become dangerous.

Blackbirds, I have found, will do no more harm than steal the other birds' eggs, which of course, makes them undesirable inmates of any aviary where you have breeding-birds.

The Pied Wagtail I have already written about, but even he may remain *sans reproche* for months, and then break out all at once into cold blooded and premeditated murder.

The Greater or Ox-eyed Tit has always been sadly maligned, and I am only too glad to join Mr. Rothera in helping him to regain his fallen character: I have always found him harmless.

Shamas and Dials are generally harmless to other birds, but will fight to the death among themselves; but, as Mr. Phillipps has already told us, if you have two well-matched male Shamas, it is almost worth while risking everything to hear them sing against one another: it is simply sublime.

If you introduce a pair of Virginian Cardinals into an aviary already containing a pair of Red-crested Cardinals, or *vice versa*, you will generally have trouble; but if the two pairs be introduced simultaneously, they will settle down amicably.

A cock Virginian will occasionally murder his spouse, especially if she happen to be a good singer and rival him.

The Pintail Whydah is an absolute nuisance wherever he is. I have had many, and there is not a pin(tail) to choose among them.

I think it unwise to keep Parrots and Parrakeets in a mixed aviary: as Mr. Rothera says, they are not so much vicious as they are mischievous, and therefore should be kept in aviaries by themselves, where a knowledge of the family weakness will stand the weaker members in good stead when they see a larger brother eyeing their legs and sidling up to them in that confiding and innocent way that they have.

In these few lines, if I have seemed sometimes to contradict Mr. Rothera, I hope he will forgive me and not think that I am criticising his article. He has given his experience and I am giving mine, and if the readers of the *Avicultural Magazine* can pick up any information from either experience that will be of use to them, we shall both have accomplished our object.

JOHN SERGEANT.

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#### CITRIL FINCHES.

SIR,—I should be greatly obliged if any member of the Avicultural Society could give any information on the Citril Finch (*F. Citrinella*) in confinement. I have never seen this bird alive, but judging from the plate in Gould's "Birds of Europe" I should imagine it to be a very pretty aviary bird.

I bought two birds last autumn, advertised as Citril Finches, but I was quite sure on receiving them that they were not the true species. I gave one of these to my friend, Mr. Verrall, of Lewes, who informed me it was the same kind as some he bought twelve years ago from Mr. Abrahams, as Brazilian Finches, and that their scientific name was *Sycalis luteiventris*. They are rather uninteresting birds and only worth keeping for their very peculiar song.

Two birds I got this spring, advertised as Citron Finches, were bright-plumaged Serins (*S. serinus*).

Mr. Abrahams is the only dealer I have spoken to who seemed to know the true kind; and I hope he or some of our importers may, before long, let us have a look at *F. Citrinella*.

G. C. SWAILES.

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SIR,—I, also, purchased two of the so-called Citril Finches referred to by Mr. Swailes. They were both cocks. I afterwards obtained from Mr. Swaysland a true pair of the same species. The hen made a nest in a cigar box, a few weeks ago in my aviary, but unfortunately died suddenly just as I hoped she was going to lay. These birds are near relations to the Saffron Finch; there are several species, or rather sub-species, which very closely resemble one another, but so far as I can make out, my birds are *Sycalis arvensis*, and undoubtedly Mr. Swailes' were the same. Some months ago, Mr. Swaysland had several specimens of a smaller species (probably *S. minor*).

*Sycalis arvensis* is extremely like a Green Canary in appearance, but in disposition resembles the Saffron-finch. Like the Saffron-finch, it is rather quarrelsome, though mine have never done any damage, and its love-antics are of the same boisterous and unloverlike character. Like Mr. Swailes, I do not care for the bird. I have never seen the true Citril Finch, but I understand that it differs from the Serin chiefly in the shape of its beak, which is sharper and more Siskin-like. The Citril Finch is placed

among the Siskins by modern ornithologists. It will be remembered that Bechstein considered the Citril Finch and the Serin Finch to be the same species.

HORATIO R. FILLMER.

#### A STRANGE FOSTER-MOTHER.

SIR,—In June, last year, I had occasion to make a journey to Brazil.

The R.M.S. *Nile* stopping but a few hours at Lisbon, there was only time for a very short visit to the town. I find that on such occasions a visit to the market-place of a foreign town is time well spent, for there one can see at a glance a good many of the ways and habits of life of the people, and occasionally something quite new.

In the Lisbon market, amongst the many stalls for the sale of fruit and vegetables, eggs and fowls, butter and cheese, etc., there was also a bird-dealer's shop, which, at first sight, seemed to contain nothing at all new or striking, until my eye fell on a young Cuckoo in a square wire cage.

On the top of this cage there was placed a little Parrot-stand, to the perch of which was attached, by a leg-chain, a common Grey-breasted *La Plata* Parrakeet. This little fellow climbed about as far as his chain allowed him to do. Whilst watching him, I heard the young Cuckoo give a little screech. The Parrakeet climbed down, as I thought, from mere curiosity; but, much to my surprise, the young Cuckoo came up to the bars of his cage, opened his beak wide, and the Parrakeet fed him most tenderly and copiously out of his crop. The Cuckoo had evidently called his neighbour and temporary foster-parent, and visibly enjoyed the meal he gave him.

A Cuckoo must evidently have a strange power over other birds to make them thus supply his wants.

Had I not seen this strange spectacle with my own eyes in the Lisbon market-place on June 16th, 1895, I should have thought such a thing next to impossible.

AUG. F. WEINER.

#### BREEDING CORDON BLEUS.

SIR,—I was hoping to send you an account of the rearing of a family of Cordon Bleus, but alas! after living for ten days the little ones were found dead this morning. The parents were the occupants, with ten other small Finches and Waxbills, of a waggon-cage, 26in. in length and 16in. in width. As the hen had laid five eggs on some chickweed and grass, I put a nesting-basket at the top of the cage, which she at once took to, and shortly again began to lay.

I need not tell you how greatly disappointed I feel at this failure. This is the first time that a Cordon Bleu has ever laid whilst in my possession, yet for seventeen years I have had a great many of these pretty creatures.

W. T. CATLEUGH.

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MY PASSERINE PARRAKEETS.

By O. E. CRESSWELL.

The progress which aviculture has made in the last few years is evidenced by nothing so much as by the number of birds which breed in European aviaries, some even in cages, which twenty years ago had never been known to nest in captivity. There always seems to me a double pleasure in inducing my pets to breed; for, firstly, it is interesting to every lover of birds to watch their method of building, incubation, and rearing their family; and, secondly, the fact of their breeding is a pretty good proof that the birds are comfortable, happy, and healthy.

For this reason, I think the story of the breeding of a pair of Passerine Parrakeets (commonly called Blue-winged Love-birds) in a bell cage, 21in. high and 13in. in diameter at the base, may not be uninteresting to some members of our Society. There may be some who have no regular aviary and are obliged to keep their birds in cages, who are glad to know what species may possibly in such circumstances reproduce their kind.

In the summer of 1892, I bought a pair of these sweet little Parrakeets. It never occurred to me that they might breed in a cage, and, so far as I can recollect, I never gave them a cocoonut husk till the following year. Their cage, through the winter, was kept in a comfortable bird-room, but its inmates were very quiet and undemonstrative. Through the lovely summer of 1893 I changed their residence, and the cage was daily carried out into the garden. They became very lively and were specially excited at hearing the sound of Swallows overhead, whose chattering much resembles their own; and I saw some signs of breeding. However, in the middle of September, I went abroad, but heard, later on, that the hen had laid an egg.

She laid five and sat well ; but soon after my return in October she was disturbed, and deserted the nest. Examination showed that her eggs were all fertile, and ought to have hatched. The birds then showed no signs of breeding again, and spent the winter as before. The summer of 1894 was far less hot, and it was only in the later summer months that the cage was carried out of doors. They then at once showed signs of breeding, and actually incubated while the cage was carried in and out ; but no eggs hatched, though several were fertile.

In 1895, I had their daily outdoor airing begun earlier, and the result was that the hen laid her first egg in July. At irregular intervals she laid seven, but one was thin-shelled, and broke, and I had to regularly overhaul the nest—this she now allows me to do with perfect composure—I took away three clear eggs and left three apparently good. In due time one was hatched, and, exactly a week after, another ; by this time the first-born had grown immensely and I fancy suffocated the younger, which was soon found dead. The survivor, in its earlier stages, was certainly a most hideous little creature. Its head was about the size of the rest of its body, and that looked like a lump of raw meat. For four weeks it showed no sign of down, then all at once specks of green appeared, and the feathers developed so fast that in another fortnight it was fledged and scarcely distinguishable from the mother. All through the time of incubation the cock diligently fed the hen, and at night slept in the cocoanut with her ; and both parents fed the baby. Before it emerged from the cocoanut, I heard cracking, which I discovered to be that of hemp which, apparently, the parents had carried up whole. I used to throw in more, and the nestling quickly ate it. A tiresome stage ensued, when the little creature used to scramble down to the ground and could not climb up again ; but this only lasted three or four days. Then the trio lived happily together for about three weeks, and very pretty they looked in a flowery verandah. An evil day arrived when the mother wished to nest again, and the father continually chased the poor baby round the tiny cage. I was obliged to remove it to a separate one, and, as ill luck would have it, just then some chilly autumn weather came on, and, stupidly, I did not remove the cage to warmer quarters : the little thing grew feeble and was heard to wheeze at night. I removed it to the equable and warm temperature of an invalid's room. It became the tamest and most interesting of feathered creatures I ever knew. It grew weaker, but always tried to twitter cheerfully, and seemed to thank for being lifted up to its cocoanut when too

feeble to climb. At last it succumbed to lung disease at the age of about three months. The mother's desire to nest increased to a perfect mania; batch after batch of eggs was laid, which came to nothing, and the extraordinary thing was, that when I removed clear ones she immediately replaced them by laying more. On one occasion, when she had seven and could not cover them, I took two out; this was in the morning, and in the afternoon of the next day she had laid two more. She sat and laid continuously from July till March, by which time she had laid nearly forty eggs. Naturally she seemed exhausted; but nothing seemed to stop this production of eggs but the entire removal of the cocoon.

I hope I have related enough of the doings of this little pair to encourage other aviculturists to try their race. They cost 8/6, and when once shown at a County Exhibition, paid for themselves by winning a first prize of 10/6.

## AVICULTURE A HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

BY C. S. SIMPSON.

The literature of aviculture is but scanty, and the pursuit, fascinating though it is, can hardly be said to have a history. A book in my possession, published in 1806, is entitled, "The Naturalist's Cabinet, containing interesting sketches of animal history, illustrative of the natures, dispositions, manners, and habits of all the most remarkable quadrupeds, birds, fishes, amphibia, reptiles, etc., in the known world": it is in six volumes, two of which are devoted to birds. It is possible that a few extracts which throw some little light on aviculture as practised a hundred years ago may be of interest to readers of the *Avicultural Magazine*.

A very large number of species are described, and with considerable fullness and accuracy. I think, therefore, we may fairly assume that those which are omitted were unknown, or at any rate, but little known at that time in England. As may be supposed from the comparatively scanty and infrequent intercommunication of those days few species of foreign birds were kept as pets.

The Parrots known to our author (I forgot to mention that the book is by the Rev. Thomas Smith) appear to be four only in number. These are the "Ash-coloured Parrot" (of course our old friend Polly Grey), the "Ethiopian or Guinea

Parrot" (Red-faced Love Bird), the "Yellow-Winged Parrot" (apparently the Yellow-shouldered Amazon), and the "Green Macaw" (which from the description I judge to be Illiger's Macaw).

Of these four species, the "Ash-coloured Parrot" is said to be "the species now most commonly brought into Europe," and the "Guinea Parrot" is described as being "so common in this country that it does not meet with that degree of admiration which is due to its superior elegance." Of the "Yellow-winged Parrot," it appears that very little was known, and the "Green Macaw" is called "this rare and beautiful bird."

The account of the Grey Parrot consists almost exclusively of stories of its talking powers: We are told of the "Guinea Parrot" that "these birds abound not only in Ethiopia and Guinea, but also in Java, where they are seen in immense flocks. The trading vessels continually bring away considerable numbers in cages; but they are so tender that most of them die in their passage to our colder climates. It has also been remarked that many of them have dropped down dead through timidity at the firing of a vessel's great guns. Should they survive their voyage, they live a long time if kept together in pairs, and have even been known to propagate."

With reference to the proper treatment of Parrots in confinement, our author is for the most part discreetly silent, but we are told of the "Yellow-winged Parrot:" "The food commonly given him consists of hemp seed, nuts, fruits of every kind, and bread soaked in wine: he would prefer meat, but that kind of aliment has been found to make him dull and heavy and to cause his feathers to drop off" while the Green Macaw "eats almost every article of human food: it is particularly fond of bread, beef, fried fish, pastry and sugar": Poor Green Macaw!

The Toucan (by which is apparently meant the Ariel Toucan), is described as being easily tamed, and was presumably therefore known as a cage-bird. The "Icteric Oriole" (Brazilian Hang-nest), we are told "feeds on insects, for the purpose of killing which, the Americans keep it in their houses."

The "Grenadier Grosbeak" (Oryx Weaver) is described, but does not appear to have been known as a cage-bird, but the "Weaver Oriole" (presumably the Oriole Weaver) was known, for "two females having been brought (from Africa) and kept together in a cage, it was observed that they entwined some of the stalks of the pimpernel, with which they were fed, in the

wires: some rush stalks were put into the cage; on which they presently made a nest large enough to hide one of them, but it was as often deranged as made, the work of one day being spoiled the next. This evinced that the fabrication of the nest in a state of nature was the work of male and female, and that the female is not able to finish this important work by herself."

The Cardinal Grosbeak seems to have been well known to our grandfathers, but none of the other Cardinals are mentioned; the Mocking-bird and "Blue-bird" (Blue Rock Thrush) were very highly esteemed as cage-birds, and these practically exhaust the list of foreign cage-birds known to our author. From this scanty list, Australian species are altogether absent: indeed no Australian species is mentioned in the book at all. The Canary was, of course, known, and held a well-established position as a cage-bird; the author remarks, "they appear to have been brought into Europe about the fourteenth century, but they are now so commonly bred in our own country that they may be easily procured. It is about five inches and a half in length; the plumage in general yellow, more or less mixed with grey and in some with brown on the upper parts. . . . Buffon enumerates 29 varieties, and many more might probably be added to the list. . . . The Canary will breed freely with the Siskin and Goldfinch; it likewise proves prolific with the Linnet, and also admits, but unwillingly, the Chaffinch, Yellow Bunting and even the Sparrow."

Turning to British birds, most of those species which are now kept as cage-birds were popular a hundred years ago. Meat seems to have been the staple diet for soft-billed birds, but mealworms, chopped egg, and ants' eggs were also used. The following directions for feeding Nightingales are given: "Their food should always be sheep's hearts or other raw flesh meat chopped fine, and it should always be mixed with hens' eggs boiled hard; they should have ants' mould; they must be kept very clean, for otherwise they will have the cramp and perhaps the claws will drop off. In autumn they will sometimes abstain from their food for a fortnight and sometimes longer, unless two or three mealworms be given them two or three times a week, or two or three spiders in a day; they must likewise have a little saffron in their water. Figs chopped small among their meat will help them to recover their flesh. When their legs are gouty, to which they are very subject after having been kept in a cage, they should be anointed with fresh butter or capon's fat, three or four days together. If they grow melancholy, white sugar candy should be put into their water, and they should be fed with

sheep's heart, with three or four mealworms in a day, and a few ants with their eggs and some of their mould at the bottom of their cage, among which, some hen's egg boiled hard and chopped very small, should be strewed, and some saffron put into their water." White sugar candy and sheep's heart would be very likely, one would think, rather to increase than to cure the poor bird's melancholy, but the stimulating effect of mealworms seems to have been well known. Indeed, if we omit the raw meat, the diet of ants' eggs, mealworms and hard boiled egg has not been much improved upon in the present day.

The following story, which is related with the utmost simplicity as sober fact, is, I must confess, more amusing than credible. Our author is quoting from a correspondent :

"While I was at Ratisbon," says this correspondent, "I put up at an Inn, where my host had three Nightingales. The Nightingales were placed separately, so that each was shut up by itself in a dark cage. It was usual then, about midnight when all was dark in the house, to hear the two Nightingales jangling and talking with each other and plainly imitating men's discourse. The third hung more remote, so that I could not so well hear it as I lay a-bed. But it is wonderful to tell how these two provoked each other : and, by answering, invited and drew one another to speak. Besides the daily discourse of the guests they chanted out two stories, which generally held them from midnight to morning : and that with such modulations and inflections, that no man could have taken to come from such little creatures. One of their stories was concerning the tapster and his wife, who refused to follow him to the wars, as he desired her. There was a long and earnest contention between them, and all this dialogue the birds repeated. They even repeated the unseemly words which were cast out between them and which ought rather to have been suppressed and kept a secret. But the birds not knowing the difference between modest, immodest, honest and filthy words, did out with them."

Apparently the "Nightingale story" of our grandfathers was the forerunner of the modern "Parrot story."

The diet and treatment advised for other insectivorous birds is practically the same as for the Nightingale, sheep's heart being considered, apparently, the most important item.

Linnets are to be reared on "rapeseed soaked in water, scalded and afterwards bruised ; to this should be put twice as much white bread that has first been soaked in water and afterwards boiled in a little milk, mixing them together in a kind of

soft paste, and which should be prepared fresh every day, as sour meal is very fatal to all kinds of birds."

This is very well, but our author goes on to recommend the same diet for young larks: the proper food for adult larks, we are told, is "bread, egg and hempseed." It is curious that the tradition of hempseed as the orthodox food for larks has survived, and holds its own among modern aviculturists.

## FOREIGN FINCHES IN CAGES.

By AUG. F. WIENER.

After a long interval, during which I had not kept any birds, it occurred to me that I would try to keep a few foreign finches in an ordinary cage in my library. Formerly I had kept my birds in a large specially constructed aviary; the attempt, therefore, to keep foreign finches during winter in an ordinary family room, and to maintain them in a state of perfect health, was, in some respects, a new departure for me. As I succeeded beyond my most sanguine expectations, I may perhaps be able to give some of our readers a few useful hints.

In my former aviary I had a little fountain in each compartment, the jet of which fell into a flat cement basin, forming a miniature pond about an inch deep. I had observed that the small finches were so particular about the purity of their drinking-water, that they always drank from the jet as it issued from the pipe, and used the miniature pond for bathing only, though it was thoroughly cleansed with a hard brush and emptied once a day.

In my cage I used a syphon glass, placed in such a position that there was practically no possibility of any dirt falling into the water. This glass was carefully and thoroughly washed every day. I much prefer glass drinking fountains, as they show any impurity at a glance; reveal it at once if forgotten to be attended to; and cannot leak.

As a bath, I used a cheap little zinc trough of oval shape, about six inches long, three or four broad, and one-and-a-half or two deep. At first the birds were shy to use it; the metal bottom frightened them, as it gave no kind of foothold they did not venture to splash, and jumped out of the bath as quickly as they got in. My putting a handful of fine sea sand into the bath produced surprising results. The birds jumped in at once, sometimes three or four at a time, in fact as many as the tin

would hold. Their splashing stirred up the fine particles of sand, which evidently produced a gentle friction very much relished by the birds, who came again and again, sometimes bathing as often as four, five, and six times within an hour of the bath tub being supplied, and were afterwards busy for a long time completing their toilet, which work, in turn, gave them a good appetite. I found that these grains of sand must have acted on the plumage much like a curry comb and a brush act on the coat of a horse. I never saw finches, anywhere, in better plumage and with a more perfect gloss on their feathers; and only regret that this very simple idea of imitating the puddle in which Sparrows delight to bathe did not occur to me years ago, when I had an opportunity of trying it on a greater variety of birds.

Sea sand, and by preference such as contains particles of small broken shells, in the drawer of the cage, and renewed daily, cannot be too much recommended.

Except for the most delicate tropical finches, such as Cordon Bleus and Fire-finches, I believe the warmth of an ordinary living-room quite sufficient to keep foreign finches in health during winter, if they be well fed. I never troubled about the temperature falling during the night. Even in the tropics there are sometimes cold nights.

What we must try to give to our birds, is as much light and sunshine as possible, but on no account a draught. I shudder when I see a poor bird's cage hung in the window, just in a line with the cutting draught, at the place where the two window-sashes meet, and in a line with the fireplace.

If we bear in mind that a bird eats an astonishing quantity of food in comparison with his small size, and that he assimilates his food very rapidly, we can understand at once that during the eight hours daylight in winter, a tropical finch cannot eat enough. His constitution is adapted to the eleven to thirteen hours daylight and feeding-time of the tropics, for a bird will feed almost all day except during the mid-day siesta.

When the lamp was lighted in the room where my bird cage was, I put a simple paper shade in such a position that the cage was somewhat shaded. About ten in the evening I had this shade removed, when the birds would wake up, just have about fifteen or twenty minutes feeding, and then return to their perches and their slumber.

I always gave plenty of good ripe millet in the ear. The

work entailed in pulling out each grain seems to delight the birds and to give their appetites a great zest. Perhaps there is some truth in the theory that the husk of the millet contains a little silica which is lost by the ears being threshed, and that this silica is very beneficial to the digestion and to the growth of the feathers. I also gave ordinary white French millet and Canary seed; but never sugar, meat, eggs. Sometimes a little greenment, never fruit.

My little lot of Indian Amaduvades and African Green and Grey Singing-finches and Orange-checked Waxbills were pictures of health, and beautiful indeed; they lived for years.

## THE SERIN FINCH.

By SEPTIMUS PERKINS.

This charming little creature is reckoned as a British Bird by the ornithologists, because a few stragglers have been occasionally taken in this country. It is common in Germany and throughout Southern and Central Europe. In colour it is a pleasing mixture of quiet greens and browns and yellows, the yellow being much more prominent in the adult male than in the female and immature male. The female is, in fact, a plain little brown bird. In size and form the Serin Finch seems to me to be midway between the Canary and the lesser Redpoll. Perhaps some hypercritical people will tell me that I am all wrong, and that the bird is yellow and brown, but not green—all I can say is that he looks green to me, and I think he makes what I may call a "green impression" on most people.

The Serin Finch is not expensive to buy, but is not always to be obtained when wanted. A good many, however, are generally brought over from Germany in the autumn, and it is then that the wary aviculturist will purchase a pair or two, with which he may hope to breed the following year.

Canary and German rape seed, with the daily addition of a little hemp, suit the Serin Finch best as a diet. I have always found him most inoffensive towards his companions in the aviary, a tame, confiding little bird, and, to my mind, singularly attractive, in spite of his sober colours.

My pair of Serins were bought in the autumn, when they were in very shabby plumage and not the best of health. In due time they improved greatly in both respects, but became, unfortunately, a great deal too fat. In May of the following year the hen began to build, selecting a corner of the aviary, on

the floor of the room, as a nesting place; although the aviary abounded with more suitable spots, there being nesting boxes of various sorts and abundance of bushes. The nest was a neatly formed but flimsy edifice, rather hastily put together, and the three pretty eggs rolled out one by one upon the floor a day or two after the hen began to sit. She stuck to her nest so long as an egg remained in it, but when the last rolled out she gave up in despair. No other nest was built. It cannot, surely, be natural for this bird to build on the ground? Why mine did so I cannot imagine.

The eggs were very like those of a Canary, which is now considered by some writers to be only a variety of the Serin Finch. It ought to be easy to prove or disprove this by ascertaining whether the offspring of a cross between the two are capable of perpetuating their kind.

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## THE GROSBEAKS.

By H. R. FILLMER.

(Continued from page 101).

### THE JACARINI FINCH (*Volatinia jacarini*).

The male of this species has a superficial resemblance to the Combasou in full colour, the general colour being a very similar blue-black. There is a silky white spot on the shoulder, and the under wing-coverts are also white. The winter plumage is different, for the under surface of the body then becomes covered with feathers having a whitey-brown edge, and these give the bird a speckled look.\* The beak is black, the legs horn colour. The female is described as brown in colour.

I have said that the male has a superficial resemblance to the Combasou, but the resemblance is in colour and size only, for while the Combasou is a stout, short-tailed bird, the Jacarini Finch is exceedingly graceful, with a rather long tail widening somewhat towards the end.

The Jacarini Finch, being very active and prettily shaped, is a welcome addition to an aviary of small birds, but hitherto it has been so very rarely imported that but few aviculturists have even seen it. In the spring of 1894, two or three specimens

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\* This change of plumage is, however, very uncertain in extent, some specimens change so much in colour that they look like brown birds, while others (of which my own is one) only become slightly speckled on the breast.

were offered for sale by Mr. W. Swaysland, of Brighton, and I became the owner of one of them; this year he has received a few more. These are the only specimens that I have ever met with. There has been one specimen at the Zoological Gardens in Regent's Park. This bird is found throughout Central America and South America to Brazil, Peru, and Bolivia, specimens from different localities differ considerably in plumage.

Dr. Bowdler Sharpe remarks that this bird is probably a Bunting. To me it seems very unlike a Bunting, for it will eat nothing but seed, while all the Buntings are passionately fond of insects.

It appears to be absolutely without song.

Until a few days ago I should have described this as a most peaceable and inoffensive bird, but my specimen has lately taken to chasing some of the other birds in the aviary, so I fear that I may have been somewhat hasty in giving him a good character.

THE THICK-BILLED CARDINAL, (*Pyrrhuloxia sinuata*).

This is an extremely rare bird in captivity. One was exhibited at the last Crystal Palace Show, and that is the only specimen that I have seen. Indeed, I can scarcely say that I saw that bird, for it was in a box cage, and the light inside the Bird Show tent at the Palace is by no means good. The impression on my mind after my very imperfect sight of the bird is that, in colouring, it much resembled the female Virginian Cardinal. For a detailed description of the plumage I must refer my readers to the British Museum Catalogue. There also they will find a drawing of the head of this species which they can compare with the drawing of the head of *Cardinalis cardinalis*: they will then see how greatly the beak differs in shape from that of the Virginian Cardinal, both mandibles being strongly curved, especially the upper. The beak is much like that of some of the little *Spermophile*.

I know nothing of the habits or character of the species.

Its range is described as being from the "Southern border of the United States, from the valley of the Rio Grande westward and southward into Mexico."

(To be continued).

## CORRESPONDENCE.

## "AUTHORITIES" AND THEIR CRITICS.

SIR,—Your contributor the Rev. C. D. Farrar, speaks somewhat sneeringly of the opinions of others, and though he is much to be congratulated on his success, the conditions under which it was obtained are so near those of nature as to be totally different from such as are open to the common run of aviculturists, for whom the opinions he refers to were probably expressed.

Will he try placing a pair of Budgerigars, perhaps the amateur's favourite bird, in an enclosure, say eight feet square, (a very ordinary sized aviary for those despised persons to have, who cannot or will not afford one which encloses a whole garden,) with a bush of any shrub he likes to name, except possibly elder? All the birds he mentions are either soft-billed birds, or tiny finches, and even self-styled authorities (where and when did they style themselves, I wonder?) know that such birds as these are not, as a rule, very mischievous, although in a small aviary the shrubs and bushes would soon become so dirty as to be an eyesore, and "incompatible" for that reason. If the Kings and Turquoisines have been put in the aviary at Micklefield Rectory, large as it is, they may probably effect a little damage. And will he read carefully the most interesting article of Mr. R. Phillipps on the "Nesting of the Rosy-faced Love Bird," in the same issue of the Magazine as his own article? This may give him an insight into the destructive powers of certain birds (for *Agapornis roseicollis* is not the only member of his family kept in aviaries—though he is rare, the Red-face is not) which might help him to understand why amateurs, starting small aviaries or bird-rooms, have been advised not to fill them with shrubs.

Further, birds almost in a state of nature, as Mr. Farrar's seem to be, can obtain a variety of food for themselves which might counteract the evil effects of a too liberal supply of mealworms. But in a state of captivity, as they are generally kept, the same birds would certainly suffer from over-stimulation.

MARGARET WILLIAMS.

SIR,—I think that the Rev. C. D. Farrar is a little too sweeping in his remarks. If it be a disputable statement to make that "birds and trees are not compatible," his own remark that "birds do not eat shrubs" is even more open to criticism. It all depends upon the kind of birds. That many foreign species are very destructive to shrubs is well known to all experienced aviculturists, so well known indeed that I do not care to take up space by proving it. As to British birds, Mr. J. H. Verrall writes to me, "Let Mr. Farrar put in his aviary a pair of Redpolls and a Bullfinch—I do not care how large the aviary may be—with these inmates he will think and write differently. The only shrub that I could get to live and increase was Butcher's Broom (*Ruscus aculeatus*). Elders, ivy, and grass I had to renew occasionally. Mine was a large aviary, and never had many birds in it, as birds will not breed successfully if there are many inmates."

HORATIO R. FILLMER.

SIR,—Mr. Farrar tells us that Cherry Finches, Diamond Sparrows, and Blue Robins are "supposed to require hot-house treatment." I should like to know who supposed anything of the sort? Does Mr. Farrar imagine that he has been the first to discover the hardness of these and many similar birds? Mr. Farrar might have found many blunders in some of the little hand-books to which he refers, but he has been unfortunate in the points which he has selected for criticism.

SEPTIMUS PERKINS.

#### PROBLEMS IN BIRD BREEDING.

SIR,—In his letter under this heading in the June Magazine, Mr. Rothera says, that "probably the British mules we see at shows are bred from a hen Goldfinch or Linnet, which has been hatched by a canary, and so having been raised in a cage from birth has become familiar and steady enough to sit in it." It appears that this is not the case, for in a letter which I received a few weeks ago from that veteran breeder of hybrids, Mr. J. H. Verrall, he says:—"The first Bullfinch mule or mules were bred from wild caught hens. All the "finch and finch" hybrids that I have bred were from wild caught hens. I prefer young wild caught hens to caged nestlings, and so do other breeders." This shows how greatly practice may differ from theory.

HORATIO R. FILLMER.

#### TANAGERS AND HONEYSUCKERS.

SIR,—Though I was fairly successful in keeping and breeding foreign finches, Tanagers, and other soft food tropical birds, were invariably a source of disappointment to me.

The mixed food on which the tribes of Thrushes and Starlings thrive admirably, was evidently too coarse for them. Feeding these delicate birds entirely on mealworms and spiders would not do, and the finest dessert fruit obtainable in a London suburb in winter proved slow poison. I, therefore, gave up trying to keep these beautiful birds.

When I had an opportunity of tasting the sweetness of fully ripe oranges in Bahia, of pine apples fully matured in Pernambuco and of really ripe bananas at Rio de Janeiro, I could understand why birds whose constitution is adapted to such fruit would go wrong on the seemingly ripe fruit, full of acidity, which I would offer them in London. Very sweet, almost over-ripe, William pears, were the nearest substitute to their natural food that I ever found, but they are obtainable but for a very short time.

Whilst travelling on the Continent one day I became acquainted with a gentleman who told me he had some tropical birds, and invited me to inspect them. He showed me some Seven-coloured Tanagers which he had kept FOUR YEARS, and which were simply marvellous. The birds were as beautiful as they are in their wild state.

The fortunate owner of these birds most willingly disclosed to me the secret of his successful treatment. He fed them on a kind of sponge or Madeira cake and fresh cream. To obviate all danger that the cream should turn sour, he fed his birds three times a-day, every time on newly-washed

dishes. This kind of luxury a rich bachelor can afford, if he is willing to keep a servant to attend to his birds.

But the theory of thus feeding Tanagers has pre-occupied me for years. I think the cream might be replaced by condensed Swiss milk. This would not be liable to turn sour in twenty-four hours. Perhaps it would require diluting with its volume or half its volume of warm water. A mixture of condensed Swiss milk and sponge or Madeira cake should contain all the elements of food, both animal and vegetable, which the most delicate Tanager or Honeysucker could require.

This food would be exceedingly cheap, easily obtainable everywhere, and could not possibly disagree with the birds.

If some of your readers would try it, and publish the results, it would be very interesting indeed.

It would be indeed delightful if this idea proved to be of practical utility, and the gorgeous Tanagers could be kept in cages without too much difficulty.

AUG. F. WIENER.

#### STRAY NOTES FOR JULY.

SIR,—Since writing my last letter, the three young Blue Robins have fully fledged and are doing grandly. I was amused the other morning while watching the birds, to see the young Blue Robins of the first nest busily feeding their latest brothers and sisters, just as well, in fact, as the two old birds. Is not this a new feature in Blue Robin life, as I know how passionately fond young Blue Robins are of mealworms and clocks? It argues a very large amount of self-denial and fraternal love on their parts to forego these dainties.

I have a nest of Cutthroats just ready to come off, and some more Zebra Finches are out since last month.

The birds enjoy this lovely weather intensely; but during the hot part of the day they keep in the deepest shade. People put their wretched caged birds right out in the hot sun; birds, when at liberty, never sit long in a broiling heat.

I once saw in some Amateurs' Guide that Diamond Sparrows never bathe. It is pure fiction. They delight in a good tub as much as any other bird; only they are very shy, and always come to the bath from some shelter and when they consider the coast is quite clear.

I was fortunate enough this year to get a real genuine Indigo hen. Nearly all the so-called hens that come over are young cocks in their nest feathers. I see that my Indigos are busy courting. The cock has a most curious habit of hovering in the air in front of the hen; somewhat like a lark soaring. A cock Combasou will do the same when ready to breed; and if there be no hens of his own kind present, with any female, to their evident indignation and embarrassment.

While I think of it, I should like to ask the Avicultural Society what constitutes an "acclimatized bird?" It seems to me to signify a bird that has been over some months and is in perfect plumage. So far as I can learn my ideas are all wrong. An "acclimatized" bird means one that has been bought cheap in quantity at some dealers; kept a week or ten days; and

then it is advertised as thoroughly acclimatized. I speak feelingly, as only lately I bought a pair of so-called acclimatized Diamond Sparrows. Well, if they are acclimatized, appearances are against them—this is putting it mildly. As they were quite naked on the sides and underneath, I should (in my simplicity) have denominated them “very newly come over.” I suppose this shows my ignorance! So far as I can gather, it takes ten days to “thoroughly acclimatize.”

I am beginning to seriously question very much what is put down in Amateur Guides. For example, we are always told that Cutthroats and Diamond Sparrows are most dangerous birds amongst others. All I can say is that I have never had one such, and I have had a good lot in my time. Cutthroats will nest time after time in the same box; and as for Diamonds, I have seen a Green Avadavat order them to move on; and they have promptly done so.

I have just now six beautiful young Gouldian Finches in their nest feathers, and I am anxiously watching to see if they will turn out Red-heads or Blackheads. The young cocks sing all day long, though their song is hardly audible a few yards away.

It is most advisable at this time of year to give plenty of flowering grass; all little finches like it above any other sort of food. I laid in a large stock last week before my hay was cut.

The present time is a very bad one for mealworms, as many of the worms have turned into beetles. I am going to try wasp grub as a substitute, till times are better.

I see that my Parson Finches are building. These, if you like, are quarrelsome birds. No other bird is ever allowed to approach the side of the aviary they fancy, but I think their bark is worse than their bite. The song of the cock is the funniest sound you ever heard; just like a miniature bugle.

C. D. FARRAR.

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#### DANGEROUS BIRDS.

SIR,—It seems to me unsafe to characterise any species as either safe or dangerous, for many species which are usually accounted safe produce most dangerous specimens, and many so-called dangerous species produce perfectly harmless birds.

Some years ago I possessed a Silverbill which was a torment to his companions. This year I have been compelled to remove a pair of St. Helena Waxbills from an aviary in which they were persecuting some Parson Finches. My Pin-tailed Whydah has lived for nearly two years among a collection of Waxbills, and has never attacked one of them: on the other hand he was chased about and nearly killed by a cock Combason, which is most peacefully disposed towards all other birds.

Parson Finches vary greatly in character. Last year I reared three young cocks of this species. Two of these were from the same nest, and were so much alike that I could not tell them apart. This spring I placed one of these with a hen, but he became so spiteful to the other birds in the aviary that I removed him and substituted his brother, who is perfectly gentle towards all his companions. The hen is now sitting. My old cock Parson Finch, the father of the young cocks, is likewise quite harmless—

last year he reared two broods in an aviary containing Ribbon Finches, Bengalese, Bronze Mannikins and Dwarf Finches.

Ribbon Finches have never been troublesome in my aviaries. Last year more than a dozen were reared by two pairs, each pair in a different aviary. Neither pair did any harm to the weaker birds around them.

Birds will often live peaceably in an aviary for a year or two and then suddenly turn spiteful. But I never knew a spiteful bird become good tempered.

HORATIO R. FILLMER.

#### BREEDING REDRUMPS IN A CONFINED SPACE.

SIR,—The July number of the Magazine contains some very interesting reading, including "The Nesting of the Rosy-faced Love Bird," by Mr. Phillipps. The few notes I am sending form, as it were, the counterpart to his very interesting article. His Love Birds had often almost unlimited space, a garden covered with wire netting—a perfect paradise for birds; while my Redrumps have bred most successfully in a comparatively small box-cage, three feet six inches long and rather under two feet wide and two feet high. I lodged the pair in this box-cage rather late last season. The first nest, then, produced three fine females, successfully reared and disposed of. Another nest succeeded, quite late in the season, but the parents came into moult and the eggs, nearly all good, were eventually abandoned. The pair passed the winter in their box-cage, in the garden, and the first egg was laid this season on March 1st; the clutch consisted of five. We had some rather cold weather during the month, but two young were hatched, and I have them still—male and female. A second nest followed in due course, of which the first egg was laid on May 1st; six eggs formed this clutch, and four hatched, successfully reared—three males and one female—I have them still. The hen is now sitting again on five eggs, the first of which was laid on July 4th; they appear mostly good, having darkened, and, bar accidents and moult, I expect another lot of nestlings. I think this a very good performance for birds in such limited space. The pair are unrelated: the hen I bred myself four years ago, and the cock, about her age, was purchased.

Their box-cage is fitted with two nest boxes, one at each of the back corners; lids are made to them, and to the cage to correspond, so that the goings-on can be seen from outside: I get a peep, now and then, when the hen is off, feeding. The cage is, of course, wired at the front, but half the wiring has a piece of felt tacked over, for privacy.

These few notes tend to show that great space is not always necessary for keeping and breeding birds, even when as large as Redrumps. If their cage were rather larger, it would not perhaps be a disadvantage; but it is as it is, and as long as they do so well in it I shall not change it. The old birds, and all the young, are in perfect health and plumage, and could not look better if they were in an aviary twenty times the size. The young are taken away from the parents as they get old enough to feed themselves, and are placed in similar cages. They are quite tame.

A. SAVAGE.

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**OUR BRITISH DUCKS.**

By J. LEWIS BONHORE.

In the *Avicultural Magazine* for June, there appeared an able article on the *Anatidæ*, by Mr. D. Seth-Smith, with which I was very much interested. There were, however, certain members of the family to whom, if my memory serves me right, he made no allusion. I refer to those ducks which may be found in or around the British Isles during most seasons of the year, and I shall hope to point out one or two features of interest, which might easily be studied by anyone keeping a few of these birds. They are some of the most beautiful and brilliantly-coloured of our indigenous birds, and are for the most part easily kept in captivity, in which state many breed freely. Our British ducks may be broadly divided into two classes, the surface-feeding and the diving ducks. This latter class may easily be distinguished by the presence of a web on the hind toe, and the position of the legs, which are placed further back on the body than is the case in the other class.

The chief requisite for keeping ducks in health is a pond, which need not by any means be large or deep, though, of course, the larger it is the better. The staple food for ducks of any kind is meal and a little soaked grain; in addition to this the Diving Ducks must have a little chopped fish or frogs frequently, if they are to be kept in really good health. I am, of course, supposing that the owner has had to make his own pond; if, however, he have a fair-sized natural one containing plenty of small fish the ducks will help themselves.

The easiest ducks to keep, however, and those which I should especially recommend to the aviculturist, are the Surface-feeding Ducks, of which we have eight species in Britain, namely, Sheldrake, Mallard, Gadwall, Shoveller, Pintail, Teal, Garganey, and Widgeon.

From an aviculturist's point of view, these birds are

especially interesting for two reasons: (1) because of the assumption during the summer by the male bird of a plumage more or less resembling that of the female; (2) because of the comparative ease with which hybrids may be bred from them; most of the hybrids being, I believe, fertile *inter se*. As showing the interest attaching to judiciously bred hybrids, there was one bred several years back at the Zoological Gardens between the Ruddy Sheldrake, an Eastern bird, whose breeding range extends from China to the Black Sea, and the Australian Sheld-duck. The result of this cross was a bird very much resembling the New Zealand Sheldrake, being evidently a throw back to a primitive type. This is perhaps an extreme case, as many hybrids have been bred, showing no special features of interest; nevertheless, for anyone with a convenient pond and a taste for aviculture, a large field for the careful and judicial study of hybridisation is open.

With regard to the first point, much remains to be studied. The change of plumage may be best noticed in the common Mallard. In this species, the male bird towards the end of May begins to change into a brown plumage, similar, but not the same as, that of the duck. This point, which was noticed by Mr. Castellán in the *Field*, a few weeks back, appears to have been curiously overlooked, and I can find no description of the bird in this plumage; most of the books on the subject content themselves with the remark, "During the summer the male assumes female plumage," without attempting to describe the plumage. I may mention that the Mallard *always* retains, a yellow bill while the feathers on the rump are of a uniform dark brown with no light edging. As soon as this change is nearly complete, about the third week in June, it simultaneously loses all its primaries and becomes temporarily unable to fly; by the end of July, it has, however, regained its full powers of flight.

The first signs of the winter dress appear again about the beginning of August, though it is not completed till the middle of October.

A change similar to this is undergone by the males of all true British Surface-feeding Ducks, except the Sheldrake, where the plumage of the sexes is practically identical; but whether this species moults in summer as well as in autumn, or becomes incapable of flight, I am unable to say.

With regard to the Diving Ducks, I have had no practical experience, and am unable to find much in the literature on the subject.

Apparently the Tufted Duck undergoes a change and also the Eider Duck.

The Long-tailed Duck (*Harelda glacialis*), a scarce visitor in adult dress to our southern shore, has, according to Dr. A. S. Elliot, a very peculiar change, both sexes undergoing a complete moult in spring *before* moving up to the Arctic Regions to breed.

A few more remarks on the Mallard, before I end. This species is commonly said to be polygamous in captivity and monogamous in a wild state. This statement, as far as it goes, is true, but requires qualifying. It is certainly monogamous in a wild state, but, as I saw stated somewhere, and know from my own experience, the drake at the beginning of the season pays court to several ducks, finally choosing his spouse from amongst them. In captivity it is still, provided there be equal numbers of both sexes, monogamous; although if a drake be kept with three or four ducks all the eggs will be found fertile.

The ducks themselves seem to have a good deal to do with choosing their husbands; in any case, when once they are chosen, they refuse to allow another bird to approach them, warning the intruder off with a peculiar motion of the head and neck, uttering at the same time a low guttural note.

I was lucky enough to witness the crisis in the pairing up of two pairs of my Mallards this year, a perusal of which may not prove uninteresting to my readers.

I have in my aviaries a small pond, about 12ft. by 10ft., having a wire netting partition across the centre to protect some reeds; on this pond among some Sea Gulls I keep two pairs of Mallards. In December last, one of the ducks was sent away by mistake, and by the end of January one of the drakes, whom for simplicity we will call A, had paired; and the other, B, used to wander about by himself, never, however, fighting with A. On the 7th February, the other duck returned, and was at once appropriated by A. This was apparently rather too much for B's feelings, for he now frequently tried to approach one of the ducks; but alas! they would only shake their heads at him and draw closer up to A, who would then advance towards his rival. That was quite enough, and B in vulgar parlance would "take his hook." About a week later, on the 15th February, all the ducks were on the pond, A, with his two *fiancées* on one side, and B alone on the other side of the wire netting. A was very lively, swimming vigorously about with his tail vibrating rapidly from side to side. Every now and then he would rise up from the water, lower his head till his beak

touched the water, and utter a short whistle. At this sound B manifested great anxiety to be at him. At other times A would first raise his body and then his tail, lay his neck at full length flat on the water, and swim rapidly about. At this both the ducks would swim quickly towards him, and thus manifest in the manner above described their dislike at the proceedings. Finally B thinks matters are becoming serious, so getting out of the pond, he enters it again on the other side and goes to the attack. A drives him off, but he returns again and again, and at last a hand-to-hand conflict begins. Into the details of this battle, as to how B got A's head under his wing, and how A pushed B under water, it is unnecessary to enter, suffice it to say that after about five minutes, B, being rather 'pumped,' retires with a slow majestic waddle to the other side of the pond, followed closely, *not* by A, who stayed behind to wipe the sweat from his brow, but by a duck. From that day to this they have always been in pairs, having carried on their matrimonial arrangements with varying success.

I have related this true anecdote for two reasons, firstly, as showing that the Mallard is *not* usually polygamous in confinement, and secondly, as giving us an insight into the habits of birds, about which I feel sure no true aviculturist is ever tired of hearing.

## NOTES ON THE TREATMENT OF NEWLY-IMPORTED GOULDIAN FINCHES.

By W. H. ST. QUINTIN.

In reply to a question as to the treatment which I have found most suitable for the two species or varieties of the Gouldian Finch on their first arrival in this country, I am afraid I have nothing very special to suggest, at any rate to the more experienced of our readers; but there are one or two points on which I would offer a remark or two. In the first place, though the summer and early autumn are favourable to the newly-imported birds, and offer less contrast to the climate which they have been used to in their own country than winter and spring, there is one matter which must not be forgotten. The days are rapidly shortening, and there is less and less daylight during which the birds can seek their food. If one of these birds be at all amiss, it will eat very little at a time: it is therefore important to do everything to induce it to visit the seed-tray at short intervals throughout as great a portion as possible of the twenty-four hours. I always, in the duller

months of the year, place a light near my Gouldians' cages for an hour or so in the evening, generally from eight to ten. It is interesting to see the birds wake up, stretch themselves, and one after the other go down to the seed and return to their perches after a hearty meal. This is not an original suggestion, but I am sure it has an important bearing on the management of exotic birds at certain times of the year. Draughts, of course, must be studiously avoided. I never find my Gouldians show discomfort if the temperature do not fall below 50 degrees or thereabout. But if I expect a cold night, I generally, on going to bed myself, move the Gouldians' cages (waggon-headed ones) to a corner of the downstairs room, near the fire-place, well out of all draughts, where the temperature will not fall so quickly as in their usual position near (but not opposite) some window. If there be an invalid, his cage is generally taken up to my bedroom so as to be quite safe from the housemaids. I am convinced that many and many a valuable and delicate bird owes its death to the cold blasts to which it is exposed, perhaps before the sun is well up or the fire well burning, during the period considered necessary to "air the room."

As to green food, I am particular not to give any green food which shows the least symptom of being "frosted," or which is in a damp condition. Green food in this state must be objectionable in the case of birds which have been on hard food, perhaps for months. But, when I dare not offer leaves of any kind, I often give my birds a tuft of grass, from the roots of which most of the earth has been shaken. They find much satisfaction in picking out minute portions of grit, and also eat the delicate and succulent roots of the grass itself. There has been, from time to time, correspondence in our columns on the question of grit. I have, more than once, noticed that Gouldian Finches of mine, newly-imported, apparently in good health, have quickly gone amiss and died, when they found themselves in the presence of unlimited grit and coarse sand at the bottom of their cage. A horse will drink much less water in the day if it be always before him, than if it be offered him occasionally. In the same way, cage birds which have for a long time always had grit before them, will take a little at intervals while eating their seed, and, of course, with most beneficial results. A newly-imported cage-bird, which has had to endure the most unnatural conditions for weeks or months, suddenly finds himself in a well-kept cage with an unlimited supply of an item of his diet of which he has been long deprived, and as is likely enough to happen, he takes an excessive quantity.

Such a bird may be seen for minutes together, swallowing grit, which probably sets up inflammation in the enfeebled digestive organs. At any rate, I have often had such birds die, and from no other assignable cause. I avoid shell-grit and coarse sand for some time, scattering only fine sand on the cage-trays, and give plenty of cuttle bone, and a little earth at the root of grassy tufts, as I have said above.

I cannot think of anything else worth mentioning, except that I am a believer in a variety of food, and, if possible, get my Gouldians to eat Canary seed as well as white and spray millet. I have never seen them eat any other seed than the above. When acclimatized, both in cages and aviaries, I always give an abundance of green food, grass in flower and seed, chickweed, and shepherd's purse.

## THE GROSBEAKS.

By H. R. FILLMER.

(Continued from page 154).

### THE VIRGINIAN CARDINAL (*Cardinalis cardinalis*).

This truly magnificent bird is too well known to require description, everyone is well acquainted with the brilliant crimson plumage of the male, and the more sober colour of the hen. An old writer very accurately describes the female as being "brown, with a tincture of red."

I follow Dr. Butler in calling this bird the Virginian Cardinal, and that name seems likely to be generally adopted. The name of Cardinal Grosbeak, used by the Zoological Society and by Mr. Wiener, is accurate, but somewhat pedantic, and has never become popular; while that of Virginian Nightingale is absurdly inappropriate.

Whatever may be the merits of the Virginian Cardinal as a songster in a state of freedom, aviculturists are agreed that when in captivity in England he does not rank very high as a musician. In the spring he sometimes gives voice to a rather pretty song, though the notes are few, but during the greater part of the year his song consists of the repetition of one or two very loud monotonous notes, which become rather irritating after a time. His song is not only vastly inferior to that of the Nightingale, but also to that of the Thrush, the Blackbird, and many other British favourites. Among Foreign birds the Black-tailed Hawfinch is greatly his superior, not to mention the Shama and other insectivorous birds, and the Grey Singing Finch, Alario Finch, and other small birds.

Still, I do not wish to unduly depreciate the notes of the Virginian Cardinal, they are far more tuneful than those of the Bunting Cardinals; and, indeed, when we consider the feeble musical powers of most Foreign birds, and compare the Virginian Cardinal's music with the gurglings which pass for song among the Weaver Finches, we shall be disposed to give the Red Bird a fairly good place as a songster. Dr. Russ found that this bird sang at night in his bird-room; mine never did this, but he began very early in the morning, before it was really light. A female of this species, when kept singly, will generally sing like a cock, and some aviculturists have observed hen birds singing at the beginning of the breeding season, even when in the company of the male bird.

The food of the Virginian Cardinal should consist largely of canary seed, white millet, and sunflower seed, and to these may be added paddy rice and maize, and occasionally a few hemp seeds. He should have green food daily, and plenty of ripe fruit when in season. Green peas are highly appreciated. In addition, some kind of soft food should be given at least every other day, and a few mealworms, for this species is partly insectivorous and will not thrive on a purely vegetable diet. On the other hand it is not desirable that he should have access to an unlimited supply of soft food, and an average of two mealworms per day should not be exceeded. It is a good plan to give each Virginian Cardinal two mealworms every other day, and on alternate days a small quantity of egg food and soaked ants' eggs—but, of course, in a mixed aviary such careful feeding is impracticable.

The Virginian Cardinal is an extremely hardy bird, and when suitably fed will endure unharmed the cold of our severest winters—therefore he is a bird specially adapted for the outdoor aviary, where he is much more likely to preserve the rich hue of his crimson coat. Unfortunately, it very frequently happens that the plumage of the male bird changes to a brick-dust colour after the first moult. It has been asserted that this is due to an insufficient supply of insect food, but that is certainly not always the case, though it may be so in many cases. Then, again, it has been suggested that want of fresh air may be the reason—but this loss of colour has been noticed in specimens kept in large out-door aviaries. Undoubtedly, a bird in an out-door aviary, liberally fed, has a far better chance of retaining his good looks than one kept indoors; and any attempt to convert the Virginian Cardinal to vegetarianism, whether in the open air or in the house, will have a bad effect on his colour; but for

the preservation of colour I am disposed to think that green food and fruit are quite as important as fresh air and animal food.

When kept in a cage and petted, the Virginian Cardinal will often become bewitchingly tame, but he is naturally a timid bird, and even when familiar with his master or mistress will generally be greatly afraid of strangers.

Individuals of this species differ greatly in their behaviour towards other birds. Some will prove very dangerous in an aviary of small birds, while others are perfectly gentle, even when nesting. My own pair took no notice of their small companions, even when the hen was sitting, and I think they might have been safely trusted among the smallest Waxbills. I believe that most specimens are of this peaceful disposition towards other species, but it must be remembered that should a Virginian Cardinal turn spiteful, he would not content himself with merely pulling out a few feathers, but would probably murder his victim outright. Therefore he should not be placed amongst any but the commonest small birds until his character has been well tested, and I should never trust very rare or valuable birds within reach of his beak. No attempt should be made to keep two cocks or two hens of this species in the same aviary, they would probably fight to the death in the spring.

Dr. Russ gives the following account of the nesting of this species in captivity. "The hen builds the nest openly in a bush, on a thickly branched horizontal bough, on a groundwork of bents and moss, strips of paper, &c., with rootlets, bast-fibres, threads, &c., carefully lined with agave-fibre. More rarely in a Hartz cage open above, or a little basket woven of birch-twigs. The love antics of the male consist in extraordinary dancing and singing. The hen incubates alone, usually not fed by the male, the latter, however, guards the hatch. Time of incubation fourteen days. Young fed by both parents; leave the nest in about twenty-two days, commonly sooner. Breeding season five to six weeks. Laying four eggs, bluish, greenish, or yellowish white, with dark spots. Nestling down bluish. Young plumage duller than that of the female, without red; beak black-brown. Change of colour:—In the fifth week the reddish tint shows up more strongly, the red characters appear, the beak changes through dull yellow and yellowish red into red; a young male first becomes fully red and his beak coral red in the third year. Usually peaceable, but at nesting time malicious, especially towards its own kind; in the bird-room devours the young out of other nests, also kills old weakly birds, sometimes its own young; the latter occurs from the want of some kind of food, or

the pair is not sufficiently secure and undisturbed. It is best to breed them in single pairs and separate the young as soon as a new brood commences. Unassuming, vigorous; must not be kept too warm, otherwise convulsions."

Mr. Gedney thus relates the story of the nesting of his Virginian Cardinals in an outdoor aviary. "Towards the end of the month of April, the hen was busily engaged in carrying twigs about in her beak, flying hither and thither as if in search of a suitable retreat in which to deposit them. Taking the hint, I put up a bundle of birch spray in one corner of the aviary, made a snug hollow in the centre, and carefully packed therein a large handful of fine sticks as a foundation for a nest. Then I threw into the aviary a lot of the same material and a bundle of hay bands cut into lengths of about eight inches and well picked to pieces. She took the idea. Piling the fine sticks one upon another, she formed a solid circular foundation like a basin, and then wove an inner lining of hay with marvellous neatness and accuracy, leaving a receptacle for the eggs about the size of a breakfast cup, and giving to the whole a finish as fine and complete as any blackbird; her mate meanwhile attending and examining the structure with a critical eye, though he shared in none of the labours. The nest, thus formed, was only three feet from the ground, admitting of free inspection from without; and I was greatly entertained by the antics of the cock, who spent several hours ensconced in it, looking as important as if he were responsible for the whole affair, and as if it were he for whom the snug place was specially prepared. Next morning, however, Mrs. N. was found upon the nest, and when tempted to leave it, by the offer of a piece of cooked meat, I saw that the first egg had been deposited. Four others were laid at irregular intervals, eight days being occupied in the laying of the five, the hen showing very little desire to incubate until the hatch was complete. During her absence from the nest, Mr. N. never left it for an instant, but, perched at the entrance, kept zealous guard against all intruders, singing lustily meanwhile; and there he remained during the whole period of hatching, except that at such times as his better half indulged in a bath he occasionally settled down upon the eggs until her return. The period of incubation extended to fourteen days from the laying of the last egg, and the young when hatched were quite naked, resembling somewhat those of the common house sparrow. The eggs, too, were similar in colour and markings to those of the bird referred to (dirty white, thickly covered with olive blotches), though equal in size to that of the Song Thrush. The young

fledge rapidly, and in favourable weather leave the nest at the age of five weeks. Although there is great similarity in the colouring of the two sexes, the nest feathers being very rusty in appearance, yet the cocks are easily distinguished both by their superior size and by a shading of red upon the breast. When the first brood are reared before mid-summer the parents invariably go to nest immediately they get the youngsters off their hands, and although they sometimes interfere with the arrangements, especially when the old nest is repaired and used a second time, yet I fancy that the presence of the progeny is a source of satisfaction to the parent birds, and that it gives them a greater sense of security in their future proceedings." It is evident that the first part of this interesting account, down to the hatching, is derived from actual observation, but from the change of tense and other "internal evidence," I draw the inference that Mr. Gedney's young birds were not reared. In any case his statement that the young remain in the nest until five weeks old must be a mistake. I am not aware of any bird of the Finch Family the young of which remain in the nest longer than three weeks; the usual time with such birds is some days under three weeks.

The Virginian Cardinal will usually nest in an aviary, either indoors or outdoors, if sufficiently free from interference. Matters generally proceed smoothly until the eggs are hatched, but then troubles come, and the proportion of young birds actually reared is very small indeed to the number hatched. The difficulty in rearing is due to the half-insectivorous habits of the bird. Live insects are usually considered necessary for the rearing of the young, and if a constant supply of these could always be obtained, success would be comparatively easy. But live insects, in quantities, are difficult to procure regularly, and the Virginian Cardinals after once feeding their young on this diet will often decline to give them anything else, and either kill them outright or allow them to perish rather than feed them on soaked ants' eggs, egg, or other substitute. It is better to dispense with mealworms entirely while the birds are nesting, for they are very stimulating, and their use may lead to the destruction of the young by the parents. Probably blackbeetles or cockroaches are the best form of insect food. Gentles might be used. But after all, I am by no means sure whether soaked ants' eggs and egg, with a plentiful supply of fruit and green food (not forgetting green peas, of which the birds are extremely fond), would not be the best diet, without any live insects.

Mr. John Sergeant, of Southport, who has succeeded in

rearing two broods to fledging, tells me that he adopted the anti-insectivorous diet above described, giving also bread and milk. His young birds did not live to grow up—the first brood being killed by a storm, the second by other birds—but he came nearer to success than any other English aviculturist that I can hear of. I have had no opportunity of experimenting personally, as this species has never hatched in my aviary, although my hen laid and sat her full time.

Mr. Sergeant's birds were kept in a very large outdoor aviary; they "built in a spruce fir, a neat structure of small pine branches, roots, &c., lined with beech leaves." Mine laid in a strawberry basket. In fact this bird will build almost anywhere.

Newly-imported Virginian Cardinals often die from injuring their heads against the top of the cage when startled, and when kept in a cage, tame birds will sometimes kill themselves in the same way. If it be necessary to cage a bird of this species, it should, unless quite tame and reconciled to a cage, be kept in a cage with a canvass top.

If suitably fed, the Virginian Cardinal is a healthy bird in captivity, and sometimes attains a very considerable age. It is indifferent to cold, and will live out of doors through the severest winters.

The habitat of the true *Cardinalis cardinalis* is said to be the "Eastern United States, north to New Jersey, and the Ohio Valley (casually further), west to the plains." Three very similar species, sub-species, or varieties are found in California and Mexico, the males being indistinguishable from *Cardinalis cardinalis*, but the females differing somewhat from the common species.

THE END.

## REVIEWS.

*Foreign Finches in Captivity, Parts IX. and X., by Arthur G. Butler, Ph.D., F.L.S., F.Z.S., F.E.S. (L. Reeve and Co., 6, Henrietta Street, Covent Garden.)*

These two parts treat of the remaining species of Whydahs and the Weavers, and bring the work to a conclusion. We need say very little more than that the expectations raised by the earlier parts of "Foreign Finches" have been fully realized, and that the concluding parts show no falling off either in the quality of the letterpress or of the illustrations. The birds described in Part IX. are the Paradise, Long-tailed, Red-throated, and Yellow-backed Whydahs, and the Yellow-shouldered and Napoleon Weavers.

In Part X. we have the Crimson-crowned, Oryx, Orange, Russ', Red-billed, Madagascar, Comoro and Baya Weavers. While in many respects the illustrations of these species could hardly be improved upon, the distinctive points of the females seem to us in one or two cases not to be well indicated; it may be that the illustrations were taken from specimens which were hardly typical. For instance, the hen of the Grenadier (Oryx) Weaver is a darker and more heavily streaked bird than is here represented, and the hen Madagascar Weaver which is illustrated as a light olive-brown, is in reality darker, and of a more decided greenish colour. Dr. Butler doubts whether the change of colour in the Weavers takes place by a complete moult, as stated on the authority of some travellers. As far as we have been able to observe both in Whydahs and Weavers in captivity, the change from winter to breeding plumage takes place by a moult, the brightly coloured feathers growing up between the duller ones, which gradually fall out. When the winter plumage is assumed, however, the change takes place partly by the coloured feathers turning brown; but some of the coloured feathers, for instance the long tail feathers of the Whydahs and the long tail coverts of the Orange Weaver, fall out.

This work has been reviewed in these pages as it appeared in parts from the press, but now that it is at last completed, and the handsome bound volume lies before us, we feel that it demands some further notice—for the publication of "Foreign Finches in Captivity" marks an era in the history of avicultural literature.

We have already in this Magazine bestowed the highest praise upon both the author and the artist, and we can now only say again that the work of both is of the very highest merit and that each is worthy of the other.

The literature of aviculture, at least in our own language, is by no means voluminous. There are only two books in the English language which treat of the smaller foreign cage birds in anything like an adequate manner—these are Mr. Wiener's portion of "Cassell's Canaries and Cage Birds," and Dr. Butler's "Foreign Finches in Captivity." Mr. Wiener's book has been for many years the standard work upon the subject, and will always remain of great value to the aviculturist on account of its accuracy; but it is now many years since it was written, aviculture has greatly advanced in the interval, and many birds which are now common aviary pets were unknown to Mr. Wiener when he wrote his book; moreover, the chromo-lithographs in

"Canaries and Cage Birds," though useful for giving a general idea of the birds, are neither artistic nor correct.

"Foreign Finches in Captivity" has, therefore, made its appearance at a time when it was greatly wanted, its only rivals being a smaller and less pretentious work quite out of date, and a number of cheap handbooks intended for beginners in the art. The time was ripe for a work of the highest class, well-illustrated, and such a work Dr. Butler has given us.

There is probably no other man living who could have done what Dr. Butler has done: for no one else unites in one person an equal knowledge of scientific ornithology and practical aviculture. Mr. Frohawk's illustrations add greatly to the value of the book; for every bird described by Dr. Butler is represented in life size in the plates, which are coloured by hand. About eighty species are described and figured, and many other species are dealt with incidentally.

We cannot help wishing that an even larger number of species had been figured, but that would, of course, have increased the size and expense of the book.

The time for an adequate criticism of Dr. Butler's work has not yet arrived. Ten years hence it will be more possible. It is not probable that Dr. Butler's readers will agree with all his conclusions: for in aviculture similar causes often appear to produce different results, and the scope which it affords for amicable controversy is one of its greatest charms. But there can be no doubt that "Foreign Finches in Captivity" deals with its subject in such a masterly and exhaustive manner that it is not likely to have any competitors in the same field for many years to come, and that, in spite of its somewhat high price, no one who pretends to anything beyond the most superficial knowledge of foreign seed-eaters can "afford to be without it."

We offer our hearty congratulations to Dr. Butler on the successful completion of this important work.

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*Lloyd's Natural History.*

This much advertised work is, we understand, a reprint of "Allen's Naturalists' Library." Those parts of it which treat of birds are from the pen of the Editor, Dr. R. Bowdler Sharpe. Unfortunately that eminent ornithologist does not shine as a popular writer, and does not appear to possess much personal knowledge of living birds. The consequence is that he has written a rather dull book. The illustrations, which the publishers have the hardihood to describe as "magnificently coloured

steel plates," are simply beneath contempt. Aviculture is, of course, entirely disregarded, but, considering the author's ignorance of the subject, it is doubtless better so.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### THE TREATMENT OF NEWLY-IMPORTED GOULDIAN FINCHES.

SIR.—This is the best season (June to August) for the importation of Gouldian Finches, and no doubt a good many of these lovely birds will be purchased by members of the Avicultural Society. Could not a member of the Society, well versed in the treatment they require for acclimatization, give us an article upon the subject? It would be most interesting and valuable, for so many die through improper treatment.

A. SAVAGE.

[Mr. St. Quintin's article in this month's Magazine has been written by him in response to this request. Mr. St. Quintin has been exceptionally successful in keeping and breeding Gouldian Finches.]

### TANAGERS AND HONEYSUCKERS.

SIR,—I was interested by Mr. Wiener's letter about the food for Tanagers, because, some while ago, I was looking at some very good Poë-birds in Leadenhall Market, and on asking upon what they were fed, was surprised to be told "Biscuit and condensed milk."

As I have always understood that the food was the difficulty in keeping Poë-birds, it would be good news to many a bird lover, if a successful food could be found.

F. G. DUTTON.

### ALARIO FINCHES.

SIR—I think many members of our Society will be interested in hearing that a pair of Alario Finches belonging to me have reared two young ones. They were hatched on the 19th or 20th of July and left the nest on the 2nd of August. They were reared mainly on crushed hempseed, lettuce, and chickweed, with the addition of egg-food while in the nest. Very little, if any, egg was eaten after the young left the nest, and they, like their parents, now feed chiefly on German rape-seed.

I can scarcely suppose that this is the first time that such comparatively common birds have bred in this country, but I can find no recorded instance of their nesting successfully in England, or, indeed, in Europe. Dr. Russ, quoted by Dr. Butler, says distinctly, "have not themselves been bred." They have, of course, been crossed with the Canary several times, both here and in Germany. There is certainly no difficulty about breeding the species, and only the scarcity of hens can have prevented its frequent occurrence.

HORATIO R. FILLMER.

A WARNING TO PURCHASERS OF INSECTIVOROUS  
BRITISH BIRDS.

[The following letter appeared in the *Feathered World* of the 31st July. The writer, who prefers to remain pseudonymous, is a well-known member of the Avicultural Society. The letter is here reprinted at the request of several members, with the consent of both the author and the Editor of the *Feathered World*.]

SIR,—I venture to hope for your powerful support in a matter which must appeal to all lovers of birds. Some little cruelty is, unfortunately, inseparable from every attempt to keep in a cage a bird that has been born in its natural freedom. Although this is so, yet some kinds of birds so easily adapt themselves to confinement, that, with discretion, the cruelty is reduced to a minimum; and if our little prisoners be intelligently looked after, they soon forget that they have ever been free, and become quite as happy in a suitable cage as though they had never known a different life. Fanciers of British birds, however, know, of course, that we very seldom see in bird-shops specimens of Wagtails, Willow-wrens, Wood-wrens, Chiffchaffs, Wheatears, Whinchats, Stonechats, Flycatchers, Sedge-warblers, or Redstarts. This is entirely due to the exceeding difficulty of "meating off" these charming little creatures. The bird dealers will not be troubled with them, not from any consideration for the birds, but because of the fact that they die off before they can be disposed of. The professional bird catchers, therefore, do not find it worth their while to keep those which accidentally come in their way. For the past three seasons I have noticed in the Fancy papers advertisements, mostly emanating from one individual living near King's Cross, offering these birds at prices ranging from 3s. to 5s. each. From the repeated appearance of the advertisements, and from the prices asked, I ultimately concluded that the advertiser was a man who made a speciality of caging these birds; but I fortunately paid a visit to the establishment instead of sending a P.O. What I saw there was sufficient to touch the heart of any mortal soul but a bird catcher. Scores of these delicate creatures were in stock from the previous day's catching; and, while I was in the shop the proprietor came in with a fresh lot. Then I found how this inhuman being got his living. In reply to his advertisements he received daily applications for birds, and the prices were such as to make it worth his while to go out especially to catch the birds written for. It is needless to state that upon such expeditions "all was grist that came to the mill." Nothing was set free, every unfortunate captive being brought home in the hope that it might be sold while yet alive. The certainty that scarcely one in a hundred of those sent away would live for twenty-four hours made no difference to the advertiser, nor did the fact that those he succeeded in selling did not represent a tithe of those originally caught and sacrificed. There is little doubt that, unless steps be taken to prevent it, the inhuman practice will sooner or later find imitators, as it will be evident from the continued appearance of the advertisements that the game is a paying one; and my hope in writing this letter is, in the first place, to induce the Editors of the various Fancy papers to forego a few pence weekly with a view of preventing, by closing the market, the wholesale massacre of our summer migrants; and, in the second place, to caution fanciers that they are buying, at the price of "meated off" specimens, birds

that in the majority of cases are not even caught until after the receipt of their orders, and which will most probably not even reach them alive.

YARET.

#### BIRDS AT BAZAARS.

SIR,—Mr. Fillmer kindly mentions my name as first providing a Bird Show as an attraction to a Bazaar. I have sent my collection to several local Bazaars and Flower Shows, as an additional attraction; on several occasions over 1,000 persons have paid for admission (to see the birds, in addition to other charges). I have always been struck by the attraction that live foreign birds have for all classes, from Royalty downwards. Last month I lent them to a Bazaar in Kent (some miles from my home) in aid of the Re-endowment Fund of Guy's Hospital—this Bazaar was opened by H.R.H. the Duchess of Albany, to whom I had the pleasure of explaining all the birds on view. In addition to raising large sums in this way for local and other charities, I think the interest in foreign birds is extended by this means; only since this last Bazaar several ladies have written asking information respecting foreign bird keeping.

In writing of Class 18, at the recent Brighton Bird Show, Mr. Fillmer says, "The first prize went, as a matter of course, to Mr. Housden's celebrated pair of Australian Crested Doves, shown, or rather concealed from view, in an awkward wicker cage." This is not quite correct: I entered my prize-winners; but just before the show, I was having my aviaries painted, and the cock bird escaped into the newly-painted aviary—the result was that it would have passed for a Green-crested Dove; the pair sent was a pair of their last year's young, almost as fine as the parent birds, although not quite so tame.

Respecting the Yellowish Weaver (*Sitagra lutcola*), shown in Class 19, I certainly thjnk with Mr. Fillmer that it was a true Weaver. Its ways and note were very similiar to those of the other Weavers in the aviary. I am sorry to say it died shortly after coming back from the show.

I had the misfortune to have a visit paid me by some very unwelcome visitors a few nights since, my aviary being broken into by thieves: they lowered themselves through one of the sky-lights into the aviary, a distance of 15 feet; the worst part of it was that, in addition to a number of birds being stolen, several aviary doors were left open, also the skylight, consequently many escaped before I discovered that the aviary had been broken into. A number were flying about in my garden, and Dr. Butler informs me he saw two in his garden, some distance away.\* A few days after three young men were arrested in the neighbourhood for burglary, who proved to be the thieves—it is some satisfaction to know who the thieves were, although I only succeeded in tracing three of the stolen birds, and recapturing one of those that escaped.

JAMES B. HOUSDEN.

\* I do not believe that the birds which I caught a glimpse of, but could not see distinctly enough to recognize, were from Mr. Housden's avairies, the song (of one at any rate) was new to me, that of the other was suspiciously like the late song of the Blackcap.

A. G. B.

THE

# Avicultural Magazine,

BEING THE JOURNAL OF THE  
AVICULTURAL SOCIETY.

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OCTOBER, 1896.

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## REPORT OF THE COUNCIL OF THE AVICULTURAL SOCIETY FOR THE YEAR 1895-6.

The Society has made quiet but steady progress during the past year, adding considerably to its membership, and also, we believe, to its position and influence.

Forty-four new members have been elected, and the total number of members is now two hundred and ten.

Comparatively few matters have this year engaged our attention as a body; but the work of the Executive Committee has been, as always, very heavy; and the Society is most deeply indebted to the three gentlemen, forming that Committee, who have so indefatigably discharged their very onerous duties.

The substantial balance in the Treasurer's hands enables us to make arrangements for increasing the attractiveness of the Magazine in the coming year. A plate, prepared by Messrs. Brumby and Clarke, Limited, from a drawing by Mr. F. W. Frohawk, will appear in the November issue, and in those copies which will be sent to the members the plate will be coloured by hand. The subject of the drawing is a bird which will, we believe, be of interest to all members of the Society, whether they are more especially attached to British or to foreign birds. This hand-coloured plate has been prepared at considerable expense, and is of the highest class of workmanship. It is hoped that the funds of the Society may justify the production of a plate every three months during the year. If our membership were doubled it would be possible to give a plate every month. It would be well for all to bear in mind that every additional member adds to the spending power of the Society, and, therefore, to the value which it can give in return for the subscription.

We have decided to offer a prize of one guinea for the best article on the nesting in captivity of some common species of foreign bird, and a like prize on the nesting in captivity of some British bird. The articles may also treat generally of the habits of the species in captivity and in a state of freedom. The rules for the competition will be found on page 191.

We also offer a medal to each member who shall, during the year commencing 1st November, 1896, succeed in breeding any species of bird which has not hitherto been known to breed in captivity in this country. Any member wishing to obtain this medal must send a detailed account to the Secretary within eight weeks from the date of hatching of the young, and furnish such evidence of the facts as the Executive Committee may require. The medal will only be awarded in cases where the young have lived to be old enough to feed themselves—but the Committee shall have power to relax this rule in special cases. All members are eligible. In every case the decision of the Committee shall be final.

It is important that the members should not forget that the success of the Society depends upon themselves. We trust that all will do their utmost in the coming year to still further extend our membership, and also, by writing for the Magazine, to lighten the labours of the few who are regular contributors to its pages. We believe that there are very many members who might, if they were disposed, contribute either articles or letters which would prove of interest to the readers of the Magazine. One of the purposes of our Society is the accumulation of facts; and we would urge all who have facts to record to communicate them to the Editor, who will, if desired, gladly undertake the work of arranging them for publication.

To all who have in various ways helped in the work of the Society, we tender our most hearty thanks.

HUBERT D. ASTLEY, F.Z.S.	O. E. CRESSWELL.
J. LEWIS BONHOTE.	LUCY C. D. LLEWELYN.
HENRY SOMERVILLE BOYNTON.	R. PHILLIPPS.
ARTHUR G. BUTLER, Ph.D.	JOHN SERGEANT.
H. T. T. CAMPS, F.Z.S.	W. SWAYSLAND.
V. CASTELLAN.	GEO. C. WILLIAMSON, D.Lit.

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## THE BREEDING SEASON OF 1896.

By J. LEWIS BONHOTE.

This year's breeding season being completely over, one is able to look back and reflect more calmly on one's successes and failures; and to see the cause of the failures, and, perhaps, by the experience gained to discover a remedy. Personally, my failures have been far more numerous than my successes; this may, however, partly be accounted for by the fine weather which we had at the beginning of the year causing many birds to pair up, which, under ordinary conditions, would have made no attempts to breed. I will, however, briefly run through the events in rotation.

On the 21st of March, my Wild Ducks began to lay, being a good fortnight earlier than last year. Ten eggs were laid, on which the old duck sat well, her drake being in constant attendance near her. The nest was a hollow in the centre of a common rush, and was lined with hay, down being subsequently added as incubation proceeded.

Two pairs of Black-headed Gulls paired up towards the end of March. They were continually running round each other holding their heads either high up in the air or near the ground, and incessantly uttering a hoarse cry. They did not, however, nest; nor did a Herring Gull, which paired up with a Lesser Black-backed Gull.

Two Green Plovers also paired up about this time; they were both very pugnacious towards the other birds in the aviary, jealously guarding a small mound. Whenever one was engaged in a fight his (or her) mate would invariably come up and give assistance. The cock would frequently go to the mound and call the hen; on her approach he would squat, spread out his wings and tail, and pluck up the grass, throwing it over his back. The hen would occasionally pick up the grass, and after toying with it throw it away. What the result might have been I was not destined to know, as the rats shortly afterwards killed the male bird and the hen did not long survive him.

On the 1st of April, the Bearded Tits were observed to be very busily carrying about the tops of the reeds which are in their aviary. They hollowed out a cup-shaped hole in the ground and lined it with reed-tops. The building was entirely carried on by the hen, while materials were brought by the cock. On the 14th the first egg was laid. The clutch contained seven eggs, and as they refused to sit I removed the eggs and placed them under a Canary. During April and May, they had two

more nests of six and five eggs respectively, but they refused to sit and the eggs were wasted—I hope, however, for better things next year. Of those set under the Canary several hatched; they had no down of any kind and were quite black, very much resembling young Reed Warblers. By the way, would this similarity be due to the fact that they are hatched under precisely similar conditions, as they are certainly not closely related? For the first week they thrived well, growing apace, when they suddenly all went off within 24 hours, just as they were shooting their quills. They were fed by the Canary on hard boiled egg and ants' eggs, and were hand-fed in addition with green caterpillars and gentles.

The 21st of April found the Barn Owls sitting; both sexes took part in the incubation. The eggs, however, proved infertile.

Among my small birds I was not very successful. Greenfinches had nest after nest, but failed to rear beyond ten days. The Tree Sparrows had several nests, and ended by rearing two birds. I took, however, no trouble to successfully breed any of these birds, and supplied them with nothing beyond ordinary seed and greenmeat.

I lost the cock of a pair of Great Tits while catching him for the Brighton Show. A few days after the hen laid an egg, which she, however, broke.

Towards the end of May, a pair of Quails hollowed out a lovely cup-shaped nest in the grass, but no eggs were ever laid in it.

On April 22nd, I placed a pair of Corncrakes in their summer quarters out of doors. In a couple of days the cock was to be heard craking vigorously, and it was soon evident that they were pairing up; the cock craking incessantly, walking about on tiptoe, and generally showing himself off. At this time he would often chase the hen, who would run away dragging both wings on the ground, and as soon as she stopped, would be driven on by a sharp peck at the back of the head. Indeed, so persistent was he with his pecks that the back of her head was soon bare. In the middle of May, a hole was scratched out but not lined, and on the 12th of June the first egg was laid. On the night of the 11th of June, the cock was craking most vigorously up to 11 p.m., which was the last time I heard him crake. Six eggs were laid, two of which the cock broke by rolling them about like marbles; indeed, he seemed to take far more interest in the matter than the hen, for when she used to go on to

lay he would come every five minutes to see how matters were getting on, and, as soon as she had laid, turn her off the nest and play with the eggs!

They would not, however, sit, and I removed the eggs on the 22nd. The next day, the cock had recommenced craking. On the 24th, a new nest was hollowed out and lined with bents, dry grass, etc. On the 28th, they began to lay a second clutch of eight eggs, and the cock ceased to crake. On the 23rd July, eight young were hatched, incubation, which lasted 17 days, having been entirely carried on by the hen. During the first few days after the young were hatched, the cock was not allowed to approach them, but was relegated to a small corner of the aviary; the young were attended with great care by the hen, who fed them from her beak with egg, ants' eggs, and live ants, but not until they were four days old did I see them attempt to pick up food for themselves. On the fourth day, I was greatly surprised to see the cock and hen lying side by side and brooding the young together; thenceforward, they have both undertaken the parental duties, the young attaching themselves equally to either. If, however, I show them a Hawk, the hen at once retires to the farthest corner of the aviary with all the young, while the cock, with outstretched wings and ruffled feathers rushes to the attack, biting the wire and uttering a piercing cry not unlike that of a Hawk itself.

For a fortnight matters went on well, when all the young were seized with a disease—about which I should be glad of information, if any member could give it to me. Their mouths became choked up with a yellowish cheesy matter like a deposit of tubercle. They were so small at the time that at first I dared not meddle with them, but after losing five of them in the course of a week, I tried cleaning out the mouths of the remainder, morning and evening, and then washing them out with 'Sanitas,' and thus succeeded in curing two of them, which are now seven weeks old and fully feathered birds. The old male bird suffered from the same disease last year, when full grown. Can it be hereditary?

This is, I believe, the first known instance of Cornerakes breeding in confinement; but should members know of other instances, I should be glad if they would inform me.

Such is my breeding season. In some ways it is a disappointing one, but were there no difficulties to be overcome the pleasure of aviculture would, in my opinion, be greatly diminished.

## REVIEW.

*British Birds, their Nests, and Eggs.* By Various Well-known Authors. (Brunby & Clarke, Limited, Hull).

We cannot too prominently bring under the notice of our members and their friends this new popular work on British Birds. Books on British Birds are numerous; but to the aviculturist, or would-be aviculturist, the majority are of but little value. Well do we remember—it is ancient history now—the publications of Morris' two grand works, "British Birds," and "Nests and Eggs of British Birds," how we looked forward to the issue of each part, and the eagerness with which we examined and criticised its contents. Now the young—and true aviculturists are ever young—of this country have a chance which has not occurred for a generation, and may not come round again for many a day. The above named work has already been started in weekly parts at sixpence each; and monthly parts at two shillings each will appear, doubtless, before these lines are printed. The whole work is to be new, which will be something novel indeed in the bird-book line, as most aviculturists know only too well. And the book is to be unique in another way. Not only are we promised the usual information which we naturally look for in a large work, but it is to tell us about our feathered friends when in captivity; moreover, every bird, and the egg of every bird breeding in the British Isles, are to be illustrated. The plates of the eggs are to be coloured; and when a bird's eggs vary much illustrations of several typical specimens are to be given. The first plate has appeared; and the eggs are not the meaningless daubs one usually sees but are "life-like." The hapless lot (so far as worldly profit is concerned) of the publisher of Morris' Birds may well have hindered the publishers of this work from giving coloured plates of the birds themselves, and nothing can adequately take their place; nevertheless, the illustrations which have already come out are works of art, and of real value. Different portions of the work will be written by different authors; to the study of live birds may well be adapted the familiar proverb, *On peut plus fin que les autres, mais pas plus fin que tous les autres*: no matter how clever a man may be, he cannot know everything about every bird; so each author will take up the group with which he is most intimately acquainted. The parts now coming out are being written by our fellow aviculturist, Dr. Butler, of the Natural History Museum; but our readers need not fear that because he comes from a Museum he must needs be an old fossil; not only has he thousands of birds' skins at the Museum to fall back upon

for examination, but he is himself a birds'-nester, egg-collector, and naturalist, and the owner of extensive well-stocked aviaries; and, being thus well stocked himself, he cannot but give us most interesting and valuable information.

Discarding precedent, the work begins with the Thrushes, and at once touches a soft place in the hearts of thousands upon thousands of the inhabitants of these Islands. Commencing with the princely Missel Thrush, we are treated to much useful matter; the illustration of the bird is good, although the position savours too much of the Song Thrush, and fails to exhibit the magnificence of the adult wild male. We are very glad Dr. Butler does not tell us, as some naturalists do, that this bird does not sing. Of wild birds, it is quite one of our favourite songsters; not that the song is very excellent, but the bird is about the earliest songster of the year, and from being the wariest of the wary becomes at this season comparatively trustful and confiding. Credit for its song is far too often given to the Blackbird and the Song Thrush, even by those who have spent their lives in the country. When Morris' "Missel Thrush" appeared, the reference to its singing "Perched on the topmost bough of some tall tree" produced a warm and animated discussion among us. About the place were many magnificent elms; and we all were familiar with soul-inspiring songsters perched on their tops in early spring,—but were these Missel Thrushes? Some said aye, and some said no; but when the season came round the point was soon settled. At break of day one early-spring morning, our gun, which seldom went otherwise than straight in those youthful days, went off, and from the tip-top of an elm came tumbling down, from bough to bough, our favourite songster—and a Missel Thrush it was sure enough. It was a cruel act, which we have never forgotten, and which we try and atone for by always jealously standing up for the song of the Missel Thrush. When singing in an ash or oak, this bird perches high, but not on the top of the tree.

We by no means agree with Dr. Butler that the Missel Thrush does not attempt to conceal its nest; repeatedly we have seen nests which have been admirably concealed, and quite safe from detection by the ordinary passer-by. If sheep be near, some of their wool is often used for the outside of the nest, and some is artfully stuck on to a bough or two near, unquestionably by the bird, and for the purpose of drawing attention from the nest. The instance quoted of this bird's nest having been found within three feet of the ground, presumably in a district where there were suitable nesting-trees, is very remarkable. Frequently

we have found them so low that we could *almost* touch the outside by standing on tip-toe, and once within easy reach of a tall man, but never in such a position that the inside could be inspected without a climb, although often a very tiny climb. Four specimens of the egg are illustrated, but we miss the most beautiful which these birds lay and which we have occasionally taken—of an intensely red-brown colour, the blotches as it were so bountifully “running” as to stain the entire surface with a rich deep red.

Passing on to the Song Thrush, Dr. Butler gives some interesting particulars of the movements of the bird, movements familiar enough to any of our country cousins who may happen to have a bit of a lawn in front of the breakfast-room window; and yet how few of us are sufficiently close observers to be able to describe in writing what we have so often seen! Concerning the nests commenced early in the spring, we hardly feel inclined to agree that they are pulled to pieces by the birds (the original builders) themselves, or that the birds are playing at nesting. The nest is more or less completed; and then the birds wait for a longer or shorter time according to the season—sometimes for so long that one may naturally regard it as forsaken; but one day an egg appears, and all goes well if there be not undue meddling on the part of the watcher. We have not ever known an early nest deserted without special cause; but these are often built conspicuously in a thorn hedge or similar place, before a single leaf has come out to hide them, and idle hands are carelessly thrust in, the nest injured or too frequently inspected, and consequently deserted. An almost certain find for an early nest in some counties (and positions of nests of many birds vary exceedingly according to the opportunities offered) not mentioned by Dr. Butler, is a young holly bush consisting of a single upright stem some seven or eight feet high, in a plantation of deciduous trees, growing near to or actually in the boundary hedge.

In the Bird Papers, the unfortunate gentlemen who are asked times without number how to feed a Thrush in captivity have to answer the question over and over again until they seem to be on the verge of despair, or of losing their tempers; Dr. Butler comes to the rescue, and by recommending a food will doubtless lighten their labours, and let us hope save the lives of a few out of the thousands of birds which are annually slaughtered by the administration of improper food. We have ourselves tried crumb of bread as a basis of the food for our insectivorous birds generally, and we feel moved to make two

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remarks respecting it. (a) What is it made of? if not made entirely from potatoes too small for the green-grocer, what are the other ingredients besides alum? (b) What is to be done with the crust? we tried very hard to devour it both as it was and in puddings; but there was too much of it—and we object to wholesale waste. Nevertheless, where only a few birds are kept, with the other foods mentioned by Dr. Butler added, it will do very well.

The artist, in endeavouring to picture the singing male and the sitting female in the same plate, has, we think, hardly kept quite true to nature. We have seen a Thrush's nest high in a tree sometimes; but it is quite unusual for the nest to be so high or the singing bird so low that the two are practically at the same elevation. The female is represented as being "at home;" should any cause for alarm arise, the bird shrinks into her nest pressing the neck and throat against the inside, the actual head being no longer visible. Five different specimens of the egg are illustrated, graduating from the rare unspckled to the opposite extreme.

Thousands upon thousands of our fellow creatures scattered far and wide over the Empire will regard Dr. Butler's strictures on the song of the Thrush as rank blasphemy; and so far as the song of the free bird is concerned we heartily sympathise with them, for surely every Britisher looks upon the song of the Thrush as part of his birthright, and outside the range of criticism.

In every one who has ever been a country boy, the mention of the Redwing and Fieldfare must ever awaken pleasing reminiscences of the Christmas holidays, the frost and snow, the favourite old gun, and the spoils of the chase served up so much more toothsome than was ever a Partridge in later years. Dr. Butler tells us of none of these things, and hurts our feelings accordingly. We doubt if shooting at higher game when we grew older and more satiated ever produced the same real pleasure as did the sport afforded by the Fieldfare and Redwing with an occasional Missel Thrush, Wild Pigeon, and the like, except, indeed, when we were given a terrier of our very own and were allowed to hunt the hedge-rows for rabbits. Of the two, the Redwing has been by far the most common in every part of the country we have visited during the winter months; compared with the Fieldfare, moreover, it is a tame bird; and it happened, consequently, that we used to "pocket" (we cannot say "bag," but then we had *proper* gamekeeper's pockets) quite

a number of the pretty little Redwings to every one of the wary Fieldfares that fell to our gun.

Dr. Butler favours us with various details of the lives and habits of these two birds both in their summer haunts and when in their winter quarters in these Islands, but thinks it necessary to defend a statement of his own that he once saw a flock of Redwings on a thorn hedge feeding on the haws, and, as we understand him, limits the feeding-time of these birds on haws to the twilight soon after their arrival in this country. Not only is the Redwing particularly fond of thorn trees and hedges with their haws at all times, but a tall thorn hedge is one of its favourite roosting-places, and a place where a roosting Fieldfare will never, we think, be found. But here we may raise the question, Where does the Fieldfare roost? on this point we are, unfortunately, not enlightened. Some say it roosts on the ground; certainly we never found it roosting in the hedges or shrubberies, nor yet in the ivy-mantled elms or oaks along with the Missel Thrushes, Wild Pigeons, Cuckoos, etc. We were surrounded, however, by large woods, in which any number of Fieldfares may have roosted unobserved. In our aviary, a favourite roosting-place of one of these birds was a beam some seven feet from the ground, where, on a moonlight night, it could be plainly seen from the house; this beam was in a very exposed position, and, being smooth, did not afford any hold to the bird's feet; and yet during a heavy gale we have seen it squatting on this beam, head to the wind, as securely and immovably as if it formed a part of it; where the others roosted we cannot positively say. We have had not less than five, and might have had many more, and all from a man who used to net in the fen country, from whom we received Snipes, Woodcocks, Thick-knees, and other ground birds, but never a Redwing, so probably the Fieldfares were netted on the ground; but it never occurred to us to ask the question, and we have since lost sight of the man.

Dr. Butler has been more successful with his caged Fieldfare than many people, for the captives of the latter are often dirty and tailless. We have never tried a Fieldfare in a cage; but in our garden aviary they did well, and were handsome additions, particularly in the winter when the foreigners were mostly in the house; their familiar cry was ever a source of delight to us, but they never distinguished themselves with their song. It must be borne well in mind that they are by nature wild and timid, and, although quiet enough in a small place, will dash about wildly in an *unsuitable* large one. You must cut

your aviary to suit your bird with other species besides the Fieldfare, or it will knock itself about and be a nuisance. With this and some species the bird may be cut to suit the aviary by rounding the tips of the wings with a pair of scissors. As a rule, a very little need be taken off, and both wings should be cut the same, and of course only the flights should be touched, never the coverts. If done judiciously, the birds can fly about the aviary as freely as ever, and the cut is not noticeable; but they seem to know they have lost the great power of their flight, and cease to be disturbers of the peace. The same course may be adopted sometimes most successfully with quarrelsome birds which will hunt others to their death, half-an-inch off the tip of the longest primary in each wing being usually sufficient; of course we are referring to birds in large aviaries. The usual custom of cutting one wing is, according to our experience, an abomination and a blunder, and with some ground birds we could mention it is usually followed by fatal results. We hope it is unnecessary to add, however, that, as a general rule, in a proper aviary, except with a few ground birds when first introduced, the wings and feathers of birds should never be tampered with. A fine Fieldfare is a remarkably handsome bird; we well remember some men who were "doing up" the next house coming into the adjoining garden to have a peep at the birds; from their remarks they evidently were not unacquainted with the show-bench; the rare and bright-coloured foreign birds for them had no attractions: they had eyes but for one bird, a grand old Fieldfare in perfect trim, whose bold markings entranced them—but they thought it was a Song Thrush.

We wholly fail to see why it should be inferred that the likeness of the flight of the Fieldfare to that of the Missel Thrush is such that they cannot be distinguished from one another when on the wing; the likeness is more apparent than real; and a trained eye can tell the one from the other at a glance.

Interesting details of the nesting habits of the two birds are given, but the somewhat Blackbird-like eggs are not illustrated. The illustrations of the birds are mostly good, especially the foremost Fieldfare; but Redwings in hard weather do not seek their food in the open fields as represented so much as under trees, especially little clumps in parks, where they may be seen busily employed turning over and hunting amongst the dead leaves for insects, pupæ, etc.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

## WHAT IS A BRITISH BIRD?

SIR.—There seems to be much difference of opinion amongst both ornithologists and aviculturists as to what really constitutes a British bird.

Dr. Butler, writing in the Magazine for March, 1895, in a report of the birds at the Crystal Palace Show, referring to the Mealy Redpoll being exhibited in a class for British birds, says "The Mealties carried the prizes, the English birds being only represented by two or three recently-caught examples. By-the-way, should birds which do not breed in Great Britain be admitted?" Now, with all respect to so high an authority, I think it would be a most unfair rule to exclude from our list of native birds all which do not breed in this country—such well-known birds as the Fieldfare, Grey Shrike, Mealy Redpoll, and Jack Snipe would have to go; while many strangers, such as the Sand Grouse (which, though occurring each time in great numbers, has only paid us three visits in half-a-century) would be included. I possess two clutches of eggs of this species, taken by my late brother in Yorkshire, and the young having been found in Moray, the fact of their nesting in this country is placed beyond doubt.

At exhibitions of cage birds great confusion exists, and in the British bird classes at the Crystal Palace Show I have noticed a bird passed as foreign one year and a prize-winner the next; such birds as the Bearded Tit and Waxwing causing much trouble.

It would be well if the promoters of Cage Bird Shows could be induced to follow the example of the last show at Brighton, and give a list of the birds eligible to compete in each division; and probably it would be beneficial if the opinion of the Avicultural Society were given in the matter, and, if possible, a rule passed as to what should be the status of a British bird as recognised by them. The only definition of a British bird which I have read, and which in my humble opinion is logical, is "A bird which has at least once been taken in a truly wild state in this country;" and if even this rule were accepted we should find authorities differ: for instance, Seebohm includes in his magnificent work the Canary Finch, this being omitted by Howard Saunders, Yarrell, and others; but the difficulty might, perhaps, be met by agreeing to accept any bird as British which is so described by any one of three or four chosen writers.

While it may be a difficult task to describe what really constitutes a British bird, I hope the Avicultural Society, which studies both British and foreign birds, will at least endeavour to agree upon a definition acceptable to its members.

GEORGE C. SWAILES.

[The question raised by Mr. Swailes is one of great interest, and we should be glad of the opinion of the members upon it. It ought to be possible to agree either upon a definition, or upon a list of species].

## "AUTHORITIES" AND THEIR CRITICS.

[Further correspondence upon this subject is held over until next month].

## JOTTINGS FOR AUGUST.

SIR.—Since last month, I have had another nest of Zebra Finches fly off. The old birds built a lovely nest in a bush. Another nest of four got drowned in a heavy thunderstorm. A pair of Bengalese brought off one youngster. Let me warn our readers against meddling with nests. It is only requisite to touch a Zebra Finch's nest to cause the birds to desert it promptly. The great secret of success is to pretend never to notice a nest.

I see that my Aurora Finches have a most curious liking for aloe-fibre; they will eat up every bit they can find.

My Diamond Finches have built a sung nest in a box, and I hope, before long, that the hen will lay.

The young Blue Robins are coming into color and are in the pink of health and condition.

I see that another pair of Bengalese are building, and have eggs.

Let me advise people of delicate feelings not to use wasp-grubs. Birds like them very much; but the awful work of getting them out of the comb! You have to pick each grub out separately, and it has a horrible clammy death-like body and a sickening habit of coming in halves, with a result better imagined than described. No more wasp-grubs for me.

Has anyone often seen a Combassou in *full* feather? I rather doubt it; as I have one now with a tail the centre of which is quite four inches long. I never saw such a tail on a Combassou before, and I have had many. I fancy this must be the adult tail.

C. D. FARRAR.

FOOD FOR INSECTIVOROUS BIRDS; THRUSHES; THE CAPE CANARY; THE SONG OF THE WILD CANARY.

SIR,—Will you, or some of our members, kindly answer the following queries:—

(1). What is the name of a caterpillar, with greyish body and brown head, about three-quarters of an inch long, found in dried-up cow pats? I have found them to be much relished by my birds. As I have never read or heard of them as being used as food for insectivorous birds, their existence cannot be very generally known. I would strongly recommend anyone who keeps delicate insectivorous birds to look for these caterpillars, if he can get into a field where cows are grazed. If in turning over a dried-up cow pat these caterpillars be not found, some slug or an earthworm may reward the searcher.

(2). In a small book on British Birds, I have seen it stated that there are two varieties of the Song Thrush; one I think described as the Wood Thrush, and the other as the Heath Thrush. The song of the latter being described as superior to that of the former. Are these varieties and difference in song generally recognised?

(3). What is the scientific name of the Cape Canary?

(4). Does the song of the Wild Canary of the Canary Isles resemble that of the domesticated bird, and which has the better song?

C. HARRISON

The following Reply was sent to Mr. Harrison:—

(1). The grubs are probably larvae of rove-beetles (*Staphylinidae*): the so-called Devil's coach-horse is a member of the group: many insectivorous birds feed on grubs of beetles, and upon the beetles themselves, which are to be found in manure.

(2). In small books on British birds a good deal of nonsense is often printed, as (for instance) that the brown, the grey, and the red Linnets are distinct species.

The only Thrushes commonly met with in Great Britain are the true Song-Thrush, the Red-wing, the Fieldfare, the Missel-Thrush, the Ring-Ouzel, and the Blackbird. White's Thrush, sometimes called the "Golden Thrush," is an occasional visitor, and single specimens of one or two others, which may have escaped from confinement, have been shot in the British Isles.

The common Song-Thrush is neither confined to woods nor to heaths, and its song varies immensely in quality, in different individuals.

(3). The scientific name of the Cape Canary is *Serinus canicollis*.\*

(4). The song of the Wild Canary is inferior to that of the domesticated bird, as might be expected after centuries of careful training and selection; but this statement must be accepted with reservations, for some Canaries are far better singers than others, and hand-reared Canaries make wretched singers, unless taught by good performers: lastly, to my ear, the song of a wild bird, if not (strictly speaking) so good as that of its domesticated product, may be, as a whole, more pleasing, more abounding in quaint surprises, than the stereotyped phrases which one always expects to hear from the descendants of cage-birds. With the exception of the Hartz-mountain Roller, most tame Canaries sing a good deal alike.

A. G. BUTLER.

#### BUDGERIGARS.

SIR,—I have some 22 or 23 pairs of Budgerigars in my aviaries, and my breeding results have, so far, been very satisfactory, so much so that I cannot count the young ones accurately—but somewhere between 150 and 200 have already left the nests, and the old ones are busy hatching out their third set of eggs.

Twice, a couple of hens nested in the same husk; once rearing successfully seven young ones, and the second time deserting the nest when five young ones were not fully fledged. In another husk two hens reared a nest of eight. In both these cases the two hens seemed to agree well together.

I have had several nests of eight reared by one hen.

In most cases the young leave the nest in full plumage, but in three or four cases the parents pluck the crowns of the young ones bare each nest, and they leave the nest bald-headed, but soon regain full plumage.

\*The name of "Cape Canary" has however been indiscriminately, but incorrectly, given to the St. Helena Seed-eater, the Sulphur Seed-eater, and the Alario-finch or Mountain Canary of the Boers: possibly Mr. Harrison may mean one of these.

A. G. B.

One pair of old ones are not satisfied with plucking the feathers, but also bite the skin and sometimes even kill the young ones. Once, when examining the nests, I found a young one (the sole occupant of a husk) about a week old, with no trace of feathers at all, and a week later it was still quite bare. Eventually it left the nest and was found running about the floor of the aviary without the least trace of a feather except round the beak. I took him into the house and put him in a cage for a few days till the feathers began to grow, and now he is again running about the aviary almost fully feathered, but not quite able to fly. Have any members of the Avicultural Society experienced this sort of thing? I presume it is the parents that do the mischief, seeing that each nest of the same pair is treated in the same way.

At one time I had serious trouble with mice, and found they were killing and eating the young Budgerigars almost every night. A little vermin-killer, placed outside the aviary in their runs, soon stopped the mischief.

The young Budgerigars are full of fun and mischief, and they lead some of the other inmates of the aviary a fine dance: pulling the tails of the Cockatiels and Pennants, and riding on the backs of the Doves.

J. C. POOL.

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#### INSECTIVOROUS BRITISH BIRDS IN CAPTIVITY.

SIR,—I am at once glad and sorry to see "Varet's" letter in the Magazine for September. Sorry that such cruelty should be practised, and glad that it should be exposed.

I notice that "Varet" mentions such birds as Wagtails and Redstarts, along with Willow-wrens, Chiffchaffs, and Flycatchers, as if they were equally delicate in captivity, and I am surprised at this. I have always found Wagtails and Redstarts fairly easy birds to keep—easy that is for small insectivorous birds; but I have never succeeded in keeping Willow-wrens and Chiffchaffs for more than a few weeks, and I never knew anyone who did. He also mentions Wood-wrens, but the Wood-wren is not a cage bird at all. I have never seen a Wood-wren in a cage, and I doubt whether "Varet" has.

Willow-wrens, Chiffchaffs, Flycatchers, and Sedge-warblers should, in my opinion, never be captured. It is practically impossible to keep them alive for more than a very short time, and to condemn any bird to certain death within a few weeks, or months at the outside, seems to me unjustifiable cruelty, and not legitimate aviculture. I have, in years gone by, tried to keep these birds, but I would never do so again. •

Wagtails and Redstarts are quite different, for with proper treatment they may live for many months, and indeed for years. I do not think it cruel to keep such birds, provided they are properly fed. At the same time I do not think that they are really suitable birds for the aviary, or that their capture should be encouraged. They are very much the reverse of hardy, and do not take kindly to the artificial food with which we provide them. I think it would be better for aviculturists to content themselves with seed-eaters and the larger insectivorous species.

SEPTIMUS PERKINS.

## RESIGNATION OF THE SECRETARY.

It is with very much regret that I am compelled by the pressure of other duties to resign the office of Secretary, which I have held (not, I hope, altogether inefficiently) since the formation of the Avicultural Society.

It is of great importance to the well being of the Society that this office should be held by one who is willing to devote to it a considerable amount of time and labour; more indeed than I am likely to be able to afford in the future. I feel, therefore, that it is only fair to the Society that another should take up the work, and I have the great satisfaction of proposing as my successor Mr. H. R. Fillmer, whose devotion to the work of the Avicultural Society is too well known to need any comment from me.

I have to offer my most hearty thanks to the officers and members of the Society, and especially to the Executive Committee, for their unvarying forbearance, kindness, and courtesy to me during my term of office.

May I, in conclusion, express the hope that I may still be permitted to serve the Society, though in a less onerous position?

CHARLES S. SIMPSON.

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 RULES FOR THE PRIZE ARTICLES.

(See page 177.)

1. The articles should contain from 1,500 to 2,000 words.
  2. The prizes will be awarded by the Executive Committee, whose decision shall be final, and who shall have power to withhold either or both prizes.
  3. The competition will be limited to those members of the Society who do not hold office.
  4. The articles must reach the Secretary before the first of December, 1896. They must not be signed, but should be distinguished by a motto or *nom de plume*, the name of the writer being communicated to the Secretary in an accompanying letter signed by the competitor.
  5. The names of the competitors will not be communicated to the Executive Committee until after they have made their decision.
  6. Both prizes will not be awarded to the same competitor, but both may be competed for by the same member.
  7. The prize articles will appear in the Magazine, and the right is reserved of publishing, in the Magazine, all or any of the unsuccessful articles.
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ERRATA.

Page 32, two lines from bottom, *for* Texter Weaver *read* Textor Weaver.  
 Page 158, eight lines from top, *for* what *read* that.



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am impelled to take upon myself the task of replying. I had some fifty birds at the show in question, and, as I was personally in attendance on my exhibits each day from ten in the morning until late at night, I trust I may presume to write with at least as much authority as Dr. Williamson, who "merely strolled in to look at the foreign birds," and who made "a few brief notes, . . . scattered, and written in haste." Early as I was, each morning, at the show, I never failed to find the indefatigable Mr. S. Cook at work, intelligently attending to the birds entrusted to the Society; and I am glad to take this opportunity of tendering to him well deserved thanks, although my own birds did not need his care.

It would occupy too much of your space to take each paragraph of Dr. Williamson's letter separately; but there is scarcely one sentence that would not admit of criticism. Almost the only sentiment which may be agreed with is the deploring of the bad light in which the birds had to be judged and viewed; and this was to the disadvantage of the judges and visitors, not of the birds. The Aquarium is, in this respect, about the very worst place which could be chosen for a Bird Show. In the day-time there is scarcely any light at all, and at night the gas bill is so economically looked after that each jet suffices only to show where its nearest neighbour is located. So far as the comfort of the birds may be considered, I do not know of any show to which owners might more confidently send their specimens. The "intolerable heat;" "noisome air, loaded with tobacco smoke;" and such like expressions are, to put it kindly, exaggerations due to Dr. Williamson's evident aversion to Bird Shows at Bird Shows.

To every one who visited the Show other inaccuracies will, in nearly every paragraph, be apparent, and the "written in haste" is self-evident throughout the whole article. I can scarcely better illustrate this than to take, for instance, the paragraph referring to the "Eclectus Parrot (1950)," the number evidently a misprint for 1050. This bird was *not* "looking unwell;" was *not* "shrouded by a curtain;" and was *not* "in a bad position."

With regard to the labels requesting "that the birds should not be fed, or at least fed only on certain food," Dr. Williamson seems to be under the impression that these, instead of being instructions to the Stewards, were appeals to the public to regard the inmates of the cages as being somewhat different from the bears and monkeys at the "Zoo," and, therefore, to refrain from making them spontaneous offerings of "nuts, sponge-cake, biscuit, apple-peel," etc., etc., etc. Just as though birds would take such things, even if visitors were to offer them! Such remarks scarcely deserve reply, especially when the writer, as a climax, soberly says that he "*saw* a piece of walnut *pressed* into the mouth of a Swallow," (the italics are my own).\*

HENRY J. FULLJAMES.

#### IS GRIT DANGEROUS TO NEWLY IMPORTED PARROTS?

Since my letter on the above subject appeared after that of Mr. Phillips, and to a certain extent took up the same line of argument, I may perhaps be permitted to explain that it was written before I had seen Mr.

\* We have been obliged to make some alterations in the wording of this letter, as Mr. Fulljames had expressed himself with more energy than the occasion appears to require. —Ed.