

JOHANN BECHSTEIN

THE NATURAL
HISTORY OF
CAGE BIRDS

Johann Bechstein

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The Natural History of Cage Birds / Their Management, Habits, Food, Diseases, Treatment, Breeding, and the Methods of Catching Them

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

The Natural History of Cage Birds, which I now lay before the public, is a work I have long been solicited to write. There are many people who like to keep birds, who neither know their habits nor the proper treatment or food requisite for them. Even those who are not altogether ignorant of these, often have but very limited, superficial, and, what is worse, sometimes erroneous ideas on the subject. It is for such readers I have given the following Introduction; for professed naturalists will find nothing there but what they have already learnt, either from my own works or from those of other authors on natural history.

If long experience and minute observation on the subject of his work is calculated to gain an author credit, I flatter myself that this will not be denied me, since from my earliest youth I have delighted in being surrounded with birds, and am so accustomed to them that I cannot write at my desk with pleasure, or even with attention, unless animated by the warbling of the pleasing little creatures which enliven my room. My passion is carried so far, that I always have about thirty birds around me, and this has naturally led me to consider the best and easiest mode of procuring them, as well as of feeding and preserving them in health. Few amateurs, therefore, are better fitted than myself to write on this subject; and I hope I have done it to the satisfaction of the public. I ought also to notice in this place the plan of my work, as my book may fall into the hands both of those who might feel a wish to learn more particulars, and of those who may think much less would have sufficed.

I have described all the indigenous European birds with which I am acquainted that are capable of being tamed, and are pleasing in the house. As to foreign ones, I have only spoken of those I have occasionally seen in Germany, and which can be procured without much difficulty.

I have followed the same plan in their natural history which I have pursued in my other works on birds.

Description. – Under this head I have entered into particular details, in order that the amateur may the better satisfy himself in discriminating the species and the sex of the bird before him. This knowledge is exceedingly necessary, as the bird-dealers are not very scrupulous in deceiving their customers, either by selling one species for another, or a female for a male. These descriptions may likewise have the advantage of inspiring a taste for ornithology in the bosom of a mere amateur, who may, by repeated observations, afterwards enrich this branch of natural history with his own remarks.

Habitation. – On forming a wish to possess any particular bird, it is natural to try to discover what situations it frequents in order to find it, and when it has been found and secured, a desire to know the best place to keep it in follows as a matter of course.

Food. – In keeping tame birds it is most important to know what food is best adapted to each species; that is to say, what approaches nearest to its natural aliment. I have therefore divided the directions on this point into two parts; showing in the first the natural food of the bird in its wild state, and in the second what is best for it in confinement.

Breeding. – Many birds succeed best when reared from the nest, which makes it necessary to speak of their manner of being hatched, and the like.

Diseases. – Birds being very tender creatures, on passing from a state of liberty to slavery, in which they lose the means of exercise and proper food, are soon afflicted with many diseases occasioned by this change alone, without reckoning others that naturally follow in their train. Under this head I endeavour to point out these, and their proper treatment; but I confess that this is the most imperfect part of my work, and I wish some clever experienced medical man would take the trouble to render it more correct.

Chase. – On going into the country a wish often arises to procure a bird, and therefore under this head I have described the method of catching such species as may be desired.

Attractive Qualities. – Under this head I have stated the properties which render a bird worthy of our notice, and of being tamed and kept in the house.

The volume ends with an alphabetical index, which will enable a person instantly to find the birds whose history he requires. May my work be as useful as it is my wish to make it, and my intentions will be accomplished.

SECOND EDITION

The call for a second edition is no inconsiderable proof to me that I accomplished my purpose in the first. None of my works have had a more flattering reception, from all classes of readers; but particularly from some of the most distinguished, who have given me repeated proofs of their satisfaction. I have also had the pleasure of assisting many amateurs with my experience, who have honoured me with questions. This pleasure is now increased by being able to render these instructions general, and to perfect this new edition by later observations, some communicated by others, which I judged it right to introduce. If any reader is surprised at not finding in this work many foreign birds seen in France, Holland, or in some of the maritime towns of Germany, it is because I have never had an opportunity of observing them myself: in a word, it is very pleasing to me to feel that my work has increased the number of the lovers of natural history; and I hope to see them still increasing. It is, indeed, my earnest wish that it may contribute more and more to the love of that class of attractive creatures with which the Creator has adorned the earth, and which sing His praises so melodiously and unceasingly!

THIRD EDITION

A new edition of my Natural History of Cage Birds having been called for, I have made many additions and improvements in the work, as will appear on comparison. Some have alleged that I have been too diffuse in my descriptions, and others find fault that I have introduced birds difficult to tame, such as the gold-crested wren and the common wren. In the latter case, at least, the most ample details are excusable, as the birds require more care; yet I know several amateurs who always have one or two wrens flying about a room, or in a cage, and to let loose so delicate a little bird as the gold-crested wren always gives great pleasure. Besides, the minutest detail can never, in such cases, do any harm. I have likewise added some foreign birds, several of which have been but recently introduced in this country by bird dealers.

Dreissacker,

November, 1812.

NOTICE BY THE TRANSLATOR

The work of Dr. Bechstein upon Cage Birds has been so highly esteemed on the Continent that it has passed through several editions, both in the original and in translations. Besides rendering as faithfully as care could effect, the interesting details of the author, numerous notes have been added, as well as several species introduced, which have recently been kept with success in this country by the Hon. and Rev. Mr. Herbert, Mr. Sweet, Mr. Blyth, and others. The mode of management also peculiar to these, and so different in some points from that recommended by Dr. Bechstein, has been given in detail. It is to be hoped that this translation may have similar success, and produce similar effects in increasing the taste for Natural History, which the original has had on the Continent. It is proper to add, that the drawings of cages, which illustrate this edition, were selected by permission of Mr. Cato, Holborn Bridge, from the numerous elegant specimens which his stock contains.

London,

November 1837.

INTRODUCTION

By cage birds, I mean those kept by amateurs, for amusement, in their apartments, generally selected for sweetness of song or beauty of plumage; but the naturalist has other reasons for surrounding himself with these pleasing creatures: they enliven him, and he delights in studying their habits and characters. To attain these objects it is necessary, in the first place, to be able to distinguish readily between the males and females, since the former are generally superior in their powers of song, and therefore preferable. I have, for this reason, made a point, in the following sketch of the history of house birds, of showing the colours and other marks which characterise the two sexes; and, as all birds cannot be tamed, whilst many others offer no inducement to make the attempt, it follows that those about to be spoken of must necessarily be but a small proportion of all the known species of birds.

SONGS OF TAME BIRDS

What is most prized and admired in house birds is undoubtedly their song. This may be natural or artificial, the former being as varied as the species of the birds, for I know of no two indigenous species quite similar in their song; I ought, perhaps, to except the three species of shrike I have given, which, from their surprising memory, can imitate the songs of other birds so as to be mistaken for them: but a naturalist would soon perceive a slight mixture of the song natural to the imitator, and thus easily distinguish between the shrike that copied, and the titlark or red-breast copied from¹. It is so much the more important to be well versed in the different birds' songs, as to this knowledge alone we are indebted for several curious observations on these pretty creatures.

An artificial song is one borrowed from a bird that the young ones have heard singing in the room, a person's whistling, a flageolet, or a bird-organ. Nearly all birds, when young, will learn some strains of airs whistled or played to them regularly every day; but it is only those whose memory is capable of retaining these that will abandon their natural song, and adopt fluently, and repeat without hesitation, the air that has been taught them. Thus, a young goldfinch learns, it is true, some part of the melody played to a bullfinch, but it will never be able to render it as perfectly as this bird; a difference not caused by the greater or less suppleness of the organ, but rather by the superiority of memory in the one species over that of the other.

We distinguish in birds a chirping and warbling, or song, properly so called; besides this, several species, with a large, fleshy, undivided tongue, are able to repeat articulate sounds, and they are then said to *talk*, such as parrots and jays.

It is remarkable, that birds which do not sing all the year, such as the red-breast, siskin, and goldfinch, seem obliged, after moulting, to learn to warble, as though they had forgotten; but I have seen enough to convince me that these attempts are merely to render the larynx pliant, and are a kind of chirping, the notes of which have but little relation to the proper song; for a slight attention will discover that the larynx becomes gradually capable of giving the common warble.

This method of recovering the song does not then show deficiency of memory, but rigidity occasioned by the disuse of the larynx. The chaffinch will exercise itself in this way some weeks before it attains its former proficiency, and the nightingale practises as long the strains of his beautiful song, before he gives it full, clear, and in all its extent².

The strength and compass of a bird's voice depend on the size and proportionate force of the larynx. In the female it is weak and small, and this accounts for her want of song. None of our woodland songsters produces more striking, vigorous, and prolonged sounds than the nightingale; and none is known with so ample and strong a larynx: but as we are able to improve the organisation of the body by exercise and habit, so may we strengthen and extend the larynx of several birds of the same species, so as to amplify the song in consequence, by more nutritive food, proper care, sounds that excite emulation, and the like; chaffinches, bullfinches, canaries, and other birds reared in the house, furnish daily examples of this.

I should not omit mentioning here an observation of Mr. Daines Barington³, which tends to prove the possibility of improving the song of wild birds, by rearing linnets, sparrows, and others, near some good warbler, such as a nightingale or canary, and then setting them at liberty; but, though there is some truth in this assertion, yet it is subject to certain restrictions. I only know of two ways of carrying this idea into execution; one by suspending the cages of the best warblers in the orchard

¹ See reasons for doubting this conclusion in Professor Rennie's Domestic Habits of Birds, Chap. xvii. – Translator.

² This previous recording, as it is termed, is not uniform. Mr. Blyth informs as that he had, in the year 1833, a blackcap which struck up all at once into a loud song. – Translator.

³ Phil. Trans. vol. lxiii. 1773.

where the birds which they are to teach breed; the other, to enclose these warblers in a large aviary of iron wire, in the open air. There let them teach their young ones, which may be set at liberty as soon as they are able to fly: but birds taken very young from the nest, and reared, formed, and educated in the house, would not have instinct to find their food when set at liberty, and must perish of hunger, or at least die in the winter.

The same remarks are applicable to a work published by M. Gambory at Copenhagen, in the year 1800.

I think, indeed, it is better to be contented with possessing in our houses artificial songs than to take so much trouble to alter and spoil the very delightful music of nature⁴.

⁴ Besides, we cannot say that there is a want of variety in this music. I may again quote Mr. Barington (Phil. Trans.): “The death of the male parent, just at the time his instructions were required, will occasion some variety in the song of the young ones, who will thus have their attention directed to other birds, which they will imitate or modify according to the conformation of their larynx; and they will thus create new variations, which will afterwards be imitated by their young ones, and become hereditary, until a circumstance of a similar nature may introduce greater variations. If care was taken there need not be two birds that sung exactly alike: however, these varieties are confined within certain limits.” – Translator.

HABITATIONS OF TAME BIRDS

The space assigned to tame birds varies according to their nature and destination. All are less at ease in a cage than when at liberty in a room, where young pine branches, cut in winter or early in spring, should be placed for their accommodation⁵. Several, however, never sing unless confined within narrow limits, being obliged, as it would appear, to solace themselves, for the want of liberty, with their song; consequently, birds only prized for the beauty of their plumage or their pleasing actions, are best placed in a room. Rather large birds, such as thrushes, should have a room appropriated to them, or be kept in a large aviary, as they give a very unpleasant smell to the place which they occupy, unless carefully cleaned; but their young ones may be allowed the range of any apartment, placing in a corner a cage or branch to rest and sleep on, where they may run and hop freely, seeking a roosting-place for themselves in the evening, on the fir branches placed for that purpose; or in a cage with several divisions, into which they soon learn to retire. Some birds, such as the dunnock and the blue-breast, sing best in this state of liberty. It is necessary to avoid placing them with shrikes or tits, as these often, in the midst of plenty of food, will kill smaller birds, for the sake of eating the brain or intestines. Those that are confined that we may better enjoy the beauty of their song, should have a cage proportioned to their natural vivacity: a lark, for example, requires a larger cage than a chaffinch. The habits of the birds must also be considered, whether they rest on the ground or perch on sticks. Thus, the nightingale must have perches, while the sky-lark never makes use of these.

In the account of each bird I shall point out what shaped cage I have found most suitable.

In every case cleanliness is absolutely necessary, in order to keep birds a long time, as well as healthy and active. In general it is better not to disturb the birds very often; but if not every day, yet every week at furthest, it is necessary to clean even the perches of those that roost, and strew sand where they keep at the bottom. Negligence in this entails many inconveniences, – unpleasant smells from sick birds, gouty feet to some birds, loss of the use of their limbs or all their claws; such sad experience may at length cure the negligent amateur. “We love birds,” they say; “No,” I reply, “you love yourselves, not them, if you neglect to keep them clean.”

In washing the feet of birds they must first be soaked in warm water, or the dirt will be so pasted on the skin that in removing it the bird will be wounded, and the irritation thus excited may soon occasion dangerous ulcers. House birds are generally subject to sore feet, and great attention is therefore necessary to examine them often if they are not attacked; a hair wound round them will sometimes become drawn so tight that in time the part will shrivel up and drop off. Another proof of the necessity of care in cleaning is, that few birds preserve their claws after having been kept some years in the house. It must be confessed, however, that among birds of the same species there is a very marked difference in this respect, some being always extremely clean, whilst others are for ever dirty, and seldom clean themselves. There are also some species in which cleanliness seems an innate quality; among these are yellow hammers, reed buntings, and linnets; the latter especially have always appeared to me patterns of neatness, and though I have had many, I do not recollect being obliged to clean the feet of any, whilst larks and fauvelles have them always dirty, and let them fester with ulcers rather than take the trouble to clean them⁶.

Many amateurs amuse themselves with taming their birds so completely that they can let them fly out of a window and recall them at pleasure. A friend of mine, who tamed not only birds, but also

⁵ If pine and fir branches cannot be obtained, oak, elm, or beech will do, cut in winter; though not green, yet there will be leaves. – Translator.

⁶ This perhaps depends on the peculiar forms of the bills more than on inclination, for the fauvelle and blackcap often attempt to clean their feet without success. – Translator.

adders, otters, weasels, foxes, and the like, knew how to render them so familiar that at the least sign they would follow him anywhere. This method was as easy as it was sure, and I can judge of it from having been an eye-witness to the effect; it is as follows:

When he wishes to accustom a bird to fly out and return, or go out of doors perched on his hand or shoulder, he begins by opening the cage and teasing the bird with a feather. The bird soon pecks at it, then at the finger, and at last ventures outside the cage to fly on the finger presented to it. My friend then caresses it, and gives it something nice to eat, so that it soon becomes accustomed to feed on the hand. When this is attained, he begins to teach it to come at a certain call, and as soon as it will allow itself to be taken, he carries it on his hand or shoulder from room to room, the doors and windows being at first well closed; he also lets it fly about a little, making it return when called. At last, when the bird comes at his call, without hesitation or fear of men or animals, he tries it with precaution out of doors. It thus by degrees becomes so accustomed to him that he can take it into the garden, even in the midst of a large company, without any fear of its flying away.

Great precaution is necessary in spring, and during the pairing season, when taking out old birds that have been thus trained; for, upon hearing the call of their own species, they soon fly off to resume their wild state. Young linnets, bullfinches, and canaries, are the species with which this method succeeds best.

FOOD OF TAME BIRDS

It is very necessary to procure for house birds food which is like, or at least which nearly resembles, what they would procure for themselves in their wild state. This is rather difficult, and sometimes almost impossible, for where can we find in our climate the seeds on which the Indian birds feed in their own country? Our only resource then is to endeavour, with judgment, to accustom these birds to that food which necessity obliges us to give them. There are some birds, such as chaffinches, bullfinches, thrushes, and the Bohemian chatterer, which are so manageable in this respect, that as soon as they are brought into the house they eat without hesitation anything that is given to them; but others, which are more delicate, will absolutely eat nothing, either through disgust of their new food, or despair at the loss of their liberty; with these great precaution is necessary. Dr. Meyer, of Offenbach, writes to me on this subject as follows: "The following is the best method of accustoming newly-taken birds to their change of food, a thing which is often very difficult to accomplish with some species. After having put the bird in the cage it must be left quiet for some hours, without disturbing it at all; it must then be taken and plunged into fresh water, and immediately replaced in the cage. At first it will appear faint and exhausted, but it will soon recover, arrange its feathers, become quite lively, and will be sure to eat whatever is given to it. It is a well known fact that bathing gives an appetite to birds, for the same reason that it does to men."

If, as an exception, one of these delicate birds, among which are most of the songsters, eats with eagerness as soon as it is brought into the house, it is a sign of death, for it seems like an indifference which is not natural, and which is always the consequence of disease. Those birds which retire into a corner, moping for some hours, are the most likely to live; it is only requisite to leave them alone, and by degrees they recover from their sullenness.

In order to give some general rules for the best food for house birds, I have divided them into four classes: —

The first comprehends those birds which live only on seeds, such as canaries, goldfinches, and siskins.

The second are those which feed on both seeds and insects, such as quails, larks, chaffinches, and bullfinches; some of these also eat berries and the buds of trees.

The third are those which seek only berries and insects, such as nightingales, red-breasts, thrushes, and fauvelles.

The fourth are those which eat insects only, such as wagtails, wheatears, stonechats, and blue-breasts.

The species in this last class are the most difficult to preserve; but most of them, having nothing particular in their song, offer no compensation for the trouble and care which they require; but the following is the best method for success. After having collected the flies, which in spring may often be seen in great numbers on the windows of old buildings, they must be dried, and preserved in a jar. When live insects can no longer be found, these flies must be mixed with the paste, hereafter described, which may be regarded as a general or universal food, and given to the most delicate birds, such as nightingales, provided ants' eggs or meal worms are now and then mixed with it.

Recipe for the general food. — In proportion to the number of birds, white bread enough must be baked to last for three months. When it is well baked, and stale, it must be put again into the oven, and left there until cold. It is then fit to be pounded in a mortar, and will keep several months without becoming bad. Every day a teaspoonful for each bird is taken of this meal, on which is poured three times as much cold, or lukewarm, but not boiling, milk. If the meal be good, a firm paste will be formed, which must be chopped very small on a board. This paste, which is very nourishing, may be kept a long time without becoming sour or sticky; on the contrary, it is always dry and brittle. As soon

as a delicate bird is brought in, some flies or chopped worms should be mixed with the paste, which will attract it to eat. It will soon be accustomed to this food, which will keep it in life and health.

Experience teaches me that a mixture of crushed canary, hemp, and rape-seed, is the favourite food of canaries; goldfinches and siskins prefer poppy-seed, and sometimes a little crushed hemp-seed; linnets and bullfinches like the rape-seed alone. It is better to *soak* it for the young chaffinches, bullfinches, and others; in order to do this, as much rape-seed as is wanted should be put into a jar, covered with water, and placed in a moderate heat, in winter near the fire, in summer in the sun. If this is done in the morning, after feeding the birds, the soaked seed will do for the next morning. All of them ought to have green food besides, as chickweed, cabbage leaves, lettuce, endive, and water-cresses. Sand should be put in the bottom of the cages, for it seems necessary for digestion⁷.

Amongst those of the second class, the quails like cheese and the crumbs of bread; the lark barley-meal, with cabbage, chopped cress, poppy-seed mixed with bread crumbs, and in winter, oats; the chaffinches, rape-seed, and sometimes in summer a little crushed hemp-seed. Too much hemp-seed, however, is hurtful to birds, and should only be given as a delicacy now and then, for when they eat too much of it they become asthmatic, blind, and generally die of consumption. Yellowhammers like the same food as the larks, without the vegetables; the tits like hemp-seed, pine-seed, bacon, meat, suet, bread, walnuts, almonds, and filberts.

The birds of the first class are easily preserved in the house, at least if not taken during the pairing season, for then the loss of their liberty affects them so much that they become sullen, and die of hunger.

Although the notice of a universal remedy is generally rather suspected, I cannot refrain from here recommending one or two sorts of paste which I have always used, and which agreed so well with all my birds, excepting those which I keep in cages on account of their beautiful songs, that it may justly be termed general or universal food: it is not only very simple and cheap, but also prevents great loss of time to those who possess a great many birds.

The universal paste. – To make the first paste, take a white loaf which is well baked and stale, put it into fresh water, and leave it there until quite soaked through, then squeeze out the water and pour boiled milk over the loaf⁸, adding about two thirds of barley-meal with the bran well sifted out, or, what is still better, wheat-meal; but, as this is dearer, it may be done without.

For the second paste, grate a carrot very nicely (this root may be kept a whole year if buried in sand), then soak a small white loaf in fresh water, press the water out, and put it and the grated carrot into an earthen pan, add two handfuls of barley or wheat meal, and mix the whole well together with a pestle.

These pastes should be made fresh every morning, as they soon become sour, particularly the first, and consequently hurtful. For this purpose I have a feeding-trough, round which there is room enough for half my birds. It is better to have it made of earthenware, stone, or delft ware, rather than wood, as being more easily cleaned, and not so likely to cause the food to become sour.

The first paste agrees so well with all my birds, which are not more than thirty or forty, at liberty in the room, that they are always healthy, and preserve their feathers, so that they have no appearance of being prisoners. Those which live only on seeds, or only on insects, eat this food with equal avidity; and chaffinches, linnets, goldfinches, siskins, canaries, fauvelles, red-breasts, all species of larks, quails, yellowhammers, buntings, blue-breasts, and redstarts may be seen eating out of the same dish.

Sometimes, as a delicacy, they may be given a little hemp, poppy, and rape-seed, crumbs of bread, and ants' eggs. One of these is necessary for the birds of the third and fourth class.

⁷ See Rennie's "Faculties of Birds," Chap. V., for experiments on the subject. – Translator.

⁸ The reason of this union of vegetable and animal food may be easily seen; the bread supplies the seed for the birds of the first class, and the milk the insects for those of the second, while the third and fourth here find their mixed food; and thus it ought to agree with all. Besides, the birds of the first class do not confine themselves exclusively to seeds; in their wild state they eat many insects, and some even feed their young entirely with them; this proves that animal food is sometimes useful and beneficial to them. – Translator.

Every morning fresh water must be given to the birds, both for drinking and bathing. When a great many are left at liberty, one dish will do for them all, about eight inches long and two in depth and width, divided into several partitions, by which means they are prevented from plunging entirely into the water, and in consequence making the place always dirty and damp⁹. A vessel of the same size and shape will do for holding the universal paste, but then it must have no partitions. Quails and larks require sand, which does for them instead of water for bathing.

Some birds swallow directly whatever is thrown to them: great care must be taken to avoid giving them anything with pepper on it, or bad meat. This must be a general rule. I shall also remark, that food sufficient for one day only must be given to birds kept in cages, for they are accustomed to scatter it about, picking out the best, and leaving only the worst for the next morning; this makes them pine, and puts, them out of humour.

Mr. Sweet's food for soft-billed birds (*sylviadæ*). – The birds of this sort, though the finest songsters and most interesting of all the feathered tribe, have been less known or noticed than others, probably owing to the greater number only visiting us in summer, when the trees are so densely clothed with foliage that birds are not easily seen, and when heard sing are generally considered by those who hear them to be either blackbirds or thrushes, or some of the more common singing birds. When they are seen the greater number of them receive the general appellation of white-throat, without distinction, though this is rather singular, since they are all very distinct when examined, and their songs are all very different. If you speak to a bird-fancier or bird-catcher about any of them, you might as well talk of a bird in the wilds of America, for they know nothing of them. Many of them are therefore difficult to be procured in the neighbourhood of London, though most of them are plentiful there.

With care, the whole of them may be preserved in good health through the year, and many of them will sing through the greater part of the winter if properly managed. They require to be kept warm; the room in which they are should never be allowed to be below temperate, or they will suffer from it, particularly the tender sorts; at first the cold will make them lose their sight, after which they seldom recover. The redstart and nightingale are most subject to this; it sometimes also happens to the fauvette, and also to the whinchat.

When in a wild state, the birds of this sort feed principally on insects or fruit, and berries of various kinds. None of them are seed birds, so that they must be managed accordingly. The general food which I give them is hemp-seed, bruised up in boiling water, as small as it can be made; I then put to this about the same quantity, or rather more of bread, on which is also poured boiling water, and then the whole is bruised up together into a moist paste, particular care being required that there be very little or no salt in the bread; for should there be rather much it will kill the whole of the birds. The food should also be mixed up fresh every morning, as it soon spoils and turns sour, in which case the birds will not touch it, and sometimes it will make them go off their food altogether. When given to the birds, some fresh, raw, lean meat ought to be cut up small enough for them to swallow, and mixed with it I generally put about the same quantity of meat as paste, and sometimes they will peck out the meat and leave the paste; at other times they will eat the paste and leave the meat; but in general they eat it all up together, particularly where several different species are kept together in the same large cage, a plan which I consider by far the best, as they amuse each other, and keep one another warm in cold weather. Besides the above food, an egg should be boiled very hard, the yolk taken out and crumbled or cut in small pieces for them; the white they will not eat. One egg I consider enough for twenty birds for one day, with their other food, it being only intended as a change of diet, which they will not continue well in health without.

⁹ If a rather large, flat, and not very deep vessel be used, in which the birds can bathe at their ease, it will make them more healthy and clean. – Translator.

The sorts, which feed on insects when wild, should have some of these preserved for them through the winter, except where they can be procured at all seasons. At a baker's shop, for instance, there are always plenty of meal-worms, crickets, and cockroaches, of which most of these birds are very fond: when those are not to be procured, a good substitute is the large white grubs that produce the cockchafers, which in some years are very plentiful, and may be kept in pots of turfy earth through the winter, as may also the maggots of the bluebottle fly, if procured late in the autumn; and they may be generally had as late as December. A quantity of these, kept in a pot of turfy earth in a cellar, or any other cool place, where they may not turn into flies too soon, is, I think, one of the best sorts of insects, and easiest kept and procured, for such birds through the winter. They will not touch them until they are well cleaned in the mould, but are then very fond of them, and a few every day keeps them in excellent health, and provokes them to sing.

Hon. and Rev. W. Herbert's food for soft-billed birds. – Milk, which Mr. Sweet recommends, I have found very fatal to many of the soft-billed birds, and I never give it; but the blackcaps do not seem to suffer from it. They are very fond of a boiled carrot mashed and moistened, or beet-root boiled and mashed. A boiled carrot will keep fresh many days, in a basin of cold water, and is an excellent substitute for fruit in feeding them. Boiled cabbage, cauliflower, green peas are good for them; all sorts of puddings; a very little roast meat minced, I give them every day, and a little yolk of egg when it suits, but it is not necessary. The standard food is hemp-seed ground in a coffee-mill, and bread crumbs scalded and mashed up together, and fresh every day. They are very fond of ripe pears and elderberries (but elderberries stain the cage very much), currants, cherries, honeysuckle, and privet-berries.

Professor Rennie says, "I have more than once given the blackcap and other birds a little milk by way of medicine when they appeared drooping or sickly, and with manifest advantage¹⁰."

¹⁰ White's Selborne, 8vo. edit. 1833.

BREEDING OF TAME BIRDS

House birds, being most of them reared like canaries, can only be made pair with great difficulty. When this object is accomplished, all of them require a large quiet place, a whole room if it can be had, in which branches of pine should be put, – a place, in fact, as much as possible resembling their natural abodes. But should you succeed in this respect, as you can never procure the materials which form the general base of their nests, it is better to give them artificial ones, made of the bark of the osier, straw, or even turnings of wood, in which it is only to put the soft stuff for lining, such as wool, the ravelings of silk, linen, or cotton, and the birds will take possession of it.

It is of consequence that the food for paired birds, and for the different ages of their young ones, should be chosen with judgment. I shall mention what must be done in this respect, in the articles relating to the different species of birds which I am going to describe in this work.

I must not omit two interesting observations which were communicated to me by a lady of my acquaintance. It sometimes happens, during a dry season, that the young birds are not hatched on the proper day, or are in danger of not being hatched at all; if, in this case they are plunged for one minute in water about their own warmth, and then replaced under the bird, the effect will be as quick as it is successful¹¹.

For the same reason, sometimes the young birds remain without their feathers beyond the proper time; a tepid bath removes with such success the dryness of their quills, that in twenty-four hours after replacing them damp in their nest they are in general covered with feathers. I shall end this paragraph with showing at what time it is best to remove young wild birds from their nest when intended to be reared. It is when the quills of the tail feathers are come out, and the other feathers are begun to grow, the eyes not being quite open. If removed earlier, their stomach will be too weak to support their new food; if taken later, it will be very difficult to make them open their beaks to receive a food which is unknown to them. There are some species, however, that are so easily reared, that any time will answer.

¹¹ See Rennie's "Habits of Birds," p. 13. – Transl.

DISORDERS OF TAME BIRDS

All tame animals are much more subject to disease than wild ones; and birds so much the more, as they are often shut up in very small cages, where they can take no exercise. It is often supposed that birds, in their natural free state, have no diseases; but people who will take the trouble to observe, will soon perceive the falsehood of this assertion. I have often found hedge-sparrows full of pimples, particularly in the naked parts, the feet, and round the beak. Their diseases are often increased by the delicacies of all kinds which are given them, such as biscuits and sugar, which injure the stomach, and cause a slow decay.

The principal diseases and their cures, according to my experience, are as follows; not, however, that different birds do not require, according to their food, different treatment.

I shall mention, under each bird, what must be done to cure those diseases which are peculiar to it, when general remedies fail.

THE PIP

This is a catarrh, or cold, by which the nostrils are stopped up, and the membrane covering the tongue is hardened by inflammation. In large birds it is common to remove this skin, taking it off from the base to the tip: by this means this part can again perspire, the saliva necessary for digestion can flow, and the taste and appetite returns. A mixture of fresh butter, pepper, and garlic, generally cures this catarrh. It is a good thing, also, for the birds to drink the pectoral infusion of speedwell; and the nostrils may be opened by passing up a small feather. The ruffling of the head, the beak often open and yellow at its base, and the tongue dry, are the most decisive indications of this disease.

THE RHEUM

The symptoms of this disease are frequent sneezing and shaking of the head. Some drops of pectoral elixir in the infusion of speedwell, which the sick birds must be made to take, appears to me to be the most efficacious remedy. I have given fowls even twenty drops of the elixir in a glass of the infusion.

When it is merely hoarseness, Dr. Handel, of Mayence, gave to his birds for several days, as their only drink, a very diluted decoction of dry figs, sweetened with a little sugar, and afterwards purged them for two days following, with the juice of carrots.

ASTHMA

This is a very common disease among house birds. Those attacked with it have their breath short, often open their beaks as if to gasp for more air, and, when agitated or frightened, keep them open for a long time.

The cause of this disease may doubtless be found in the mode of life which these birds lead. Their food is generally too dry and heating, being principally hemp-seed, which is very injurious, but liked by all; and is the more hurtful, as it inclines them to eat too much. If to this be added the unchanged air of the rooms, particularly those which have stoves instead of chimneys, and the great heat which is kept up during winter, it is plain that there is much to injure the delicate lungs of these birds.

A moist and refreshing regimen and some aperients, more or less often, according to the violence of the disease, appears the most appropriate remedy. A favourite linnet and goldfinch, when attacked with very bad asthma, were relieved and preserved for several years by the following method.

The first thing was to leave off hemp-seed entirely, confining them solely to rape-seed; but giving them at the same time abundance of bread, soaked in pure water, and then pressed; lettuce, endive, or water-cresses, according to the seasons, twice a week, giving them boiled bread and milk, about the size of a nutmeg. This is made by throwing a piece of the crumb of white bread, about the size of a nut, into a teacupful of milk, boiling it, and stirring it all the time with a wooden spoon till it is of the consistency of pap. It must be quite cold before it is given to the birds, and must always be made fresh, for if sour it will prove injurious.

This paste, which they are very fond of, purges them sufficiently, and sensibly relieves them. In very violent attacks, nothing but this paste ought to be given for two or three days following, and this will soon give the desired relief.

When the disease is slight, or only begun, it is sufficient to give the bread and milk once in three or four days. When employed under similar circumstances, this treatment has cured several very valuable birds. It may not be useless here to renew the advice of always giving the birds an opportunity of bathing every day, by putting in their way a saucer, or any other small shallow bath, filled with water, which should never be too cold, and in winter always milk-warm.

One thing which is very injurious to the lungs of birds, and which too often occurs, is the fright occasioned by tormenting them, or by seizing them too suddenly; for the poor little things often rupture a blood-vessel in the breast while beating themselves about: a drop of blood in the beak is the sign, and a speedy death is the general consequence. If this do not happen, the breathing is not the less difficult and painful; and recovery is rare, at least without the greatest care and attention.

Birds which eat insects and worms, occasionally, by accident, swallow some extraneous substance, which, sticking in their throat, stops their respiration, and stifles them. The only remedy is to extract the foreign body, which requires much skill and dexterity.

When asthma is brought on by eating seeds which are too old, spoiled, or rancid, Dr. Handel recommends some drops of oxymel to be swallowed for eight days following. But the best way is to change the seed, and be sure there is none but good seed in the trough.

ATROPHY, OR WASTING

This is caused by giving unnatural food to the bird, which destroys the digestive power of its stomach. In this case it disgorges, ruffles its feathers, and does not arrange them, and becomes thin very fast. The best thing is to make it swallow a common spider, which purges it, and put a rusty nail into its water, which strengthens the intestines, giving it at the same time its proper and natural food. Green food, such as lettuce, endive, chickweed, and particularly water-cresses, is the safest remedy. A very great appetite is a sign of this disease. A siskin, that was dying of atrophy, had nothing but water-cresses for three days following, and on the fourth he sung.

CONSUMPTION, OR DECLINE

This disorder may be known by the extreme thinness of the breast, the swelling of the lower part of the belly, the total loss of appetite, and similar symptoms. As a cure, Dr. Handel recommends the juice of the white turnip to be given to drink instead of water.

COSTIVENESS

This disease may be discovered from the frequent unsuccessful endeavours of the bird to relieve itself. Aperients will be of use. If a spider does not produce the desired effect, anoint the vent of the bird with the head of a pin steeped in linseed oil; this sort of clyster generally succeeds; but if the disease attacks a bird which eats meal-worms, one of these, bruised in sweet oil and saffron, is the most certain remedy, and the bird will swallow it without the least hesitation. Boiled bread and milk is generally of great use.

DIARRHŒA

This is a disease to which birds that have been caught recently are very subject, before they are accustomed to their new food. Most of these die of it: they continually void a white calcareous matter, which sticks to the feathers round the vent, and being very acrid causes inflammation in that part and in the intestines. Sometimes chalybeate water and the oil clyster produce good effects; but it is better, if possible, to procure for the bird its most natural food. Some people pull out the feathers from the tail and vent, and then rub these parts with fresh butter, but this is a very painful and cruel operation. They also mix the yolk of an egg boiled very hard with their food, but I have never found this succeed very well. If there be any hope of curing this disease it is by attacking it at the beginning, before inflammation is violent; boiled bread and milk, a great deal of lettuce, or any other similar green refreshing food, in general completely cures them.

In a case of chronic diarrhœa, which almost reduces the birds to skeletons, Dr. Handel prescribes chalybeate water mixed with a little milk for their drink, which, he says, is an easy and certain cure.

THE BLOODY FLUX

This is a disease with which some parrots are attacked. The best remedy is to make the birds drink a great deal of boiled milk, or even very fat broth; for their intestines, which are very much irritated, require something soothing to protect them from the acrid discharges, which, at the same time, must be corrected by healing food. Birds in this state generally do nothing but drink, therefore plenty of boiled milk should be given them, as it nourishes them, as well as acts medicinally, but should it appear to turn sour in the stomach it must, at least for some time, be discontinued.

OBSTRUCTION IN THE RUMP GLAND

This gland, which is on the rump, and contains the oil necessary for anointing the feathers, sometimes becomes hard and inflamed, and an abscess forms there. In this case the bird often pierces it itself, or it may be softened by applying fresh butter without any salt; but it is better to use an ointment made of white lead, litharge, wax, and olive oil, which may be had at any good chemist's. The general method is to pierce or cut the hardened gland, in order to let out the matter, but if this operation removes the obstruction it also destroys the gland, and the bird will die in the next moulting, for want of oil to soften the feathers¹².

The gland is known to be obstructed when the feathers which surround it are ruffled, the bird never ceasing to peck them, and instead of being yellow it becomes brown. This disease is very rare

¹² This, though the common opinion, seems incorrect. See Rennie's "Habits of Birds," p. 4. – Translator.

among wild birds, for, being exposed to damp, and bathing often, they make more use of the liquor in the gland, consequently it does not accumulate sufficiently to become corrupted, sour, or cancerous. This confirms the necessity of giving them the means of bathing as often as instinct would induce them, as nothing can be more favourable to their health.

Dr. Handel, after piercing the gland, recommends a little magnesia to be mixed with the bird's drink.

EPILEPSY

This is a disease with which house birds are very often attacked. What I have found to be most useful in this case is to plunge the sick birds every now and then into very cold water, letting them fall suddenly into it, and cutting their claws, or at least one or two, short enough for the blood to run.

From bleeding giving so much relief one would think that this disease is a kind of apoplexy, occasioned by want of exercise and too much food. Bullfinches and thrushes are more subject to it than any other birds, and bleeding always cures them. I have seen this done with great success in the following manner, but much delicacy and skill are required, as there would be great danger of laming the bird: – a very small hole is made on the surface of the claw, with a lancet or very sharp penknife; it is then plunged in lukewarm water, and if the operation be well done the blood runs like a thread of red silk; when removed from the water the bleeding stops: no bandage or dressing is required.

TYMPANY

In this disorder the skin on one part of the body, or even the whole body, rises and swells to so great a degree that it is stretched like a drum. It is generally sufficient to pierce it with a pin, so as to let the air escape, and the bird will be cured. I had some larks attacked with this disease, which began again to sing a quarter of an hour after the operation.

DISEASE IN THE FEET

House birds are often subject to bad feet. From the second year they become pale, and lose their freshness. They must be frequently cleaned, taking care to remove the skin; the thick loose scales ought also to be taken off, but with all possible precaution.

The gout occasions the feet to swell, they are also so scaly and painful that the poor little bird cannot support itself without resting on the points of its wings. Dr. Handel prescribes a warm fomentation with a decoction of soapwort. If a foot should be bruised or broken, he advises that the diseased bird should be shut up in a very small cage, the bottom of which is very smooth and even, without any perches, or anything which would tempt them to hop, and put in a very quiet and solitary place, out of the way of anything which might produce agitation. In this manner the bird will cure itself in a little time, without any bandage or plaster of any kind.

I am persuaded that the principal cause of bad feet is want of bathing. The scales, contracting from dryness, occasion great pain; in order to remove them with ease, and without danger, the feet must be softened in lukewarm water. I have seen the following method used with a bullfinch: – its cage was made with a moveable tin bottom, which being half or three quarters of an inch deep, could hold water, which was put in tepid, to bathe the bird; the perches were then removed, so that the bird was obliged to remain in the water, where it was left for half an hour, sometimes throwing it hemp-seed to amuse it. After repeating the bath once or twice the bird became very fond of it; and it was remarked that its feet became, if we may say so, quite young again. The scales being sufficiently softened, the middle of each was cut lengthways without reaching the flesh, this made the sides easily

fall off. It is better to remove only two scales a-day, that the bird may not be wearied. By continuing the bath three times a week the feet become healthy and supple, and the bird is easy.

SORE EYES

The juice of red-beet for drink, and also as a liniment, greatly relieves this disorder. Dr. Handel recommends washing the eyes, when disposed to blindness, with an infusion of the root of white hellebore.

TUMOURS AND ULCERS

As to the tumours and ulcers which come on the heads of the birds, Dr. Handel touches them with a middling-sized red hot knitting-needle. This makes the watery humour run out, the wound afterwards dries and heals. To soften the pain a little liquid black soap is used. If, from the softness of the tumour, matter seems to have formed, it should be rubbed with fresh butter until it is come to a head; it may then be emptied, and opened by a few drops of essence of myrrh. During all this time the bird must have nothing but beet juice to drink.

Ulcers in the palate and throat may be cured by making the bird drink the milk of almonds for several days, at the same time lightly touching the ulcers several times a-day with a feather dipped in a mixture of honey and borax.

MOULTING

Though natural, is generally accompanied with disease, during which the birds ought to be taken great care of. Their food should be changed, but without giving any heating delicacies, which are very injurious.

It has been observed that birds always moult at the time when their food is most abundant; the forest birds may then be seen approaching fields and cultivated places, where, having plenty of insects and seeds, they cannot suffer from want; indeed, the loss of their feathers prevents their taking long flights, and the reproduction of them occasions a loss of flesh which must be repaired. An abundance of food is therefore necessary, and, following this rule, during moulting some additional food must be given to house birds, appropriate to the different species – millet or canary seed, a little hemp-seed, white bread soaked in water, and lettuce, or endive, to those which feed on seeds; with a few more meal worms and ants' eggs to those that eat insects: all should have bread soaked in boiled milk, warmth, and baths. Nothing has succeeded better than this regimen: all the birds which I have seen treated in this manner have passed their moulting season in good health.

GIDDINESS

This, without being properly a disease, is rather common, and is occasioned by the trick which the birds of the first class have, of turning their head and neck so far round that they fall head over heels. They may be easily cured of this trick by throwing a covering over the top of the cage, which prevents their seeing anything above them, for it is with looking up that this *giddiness* comes on.

PAIRING FEVER

A disease which may be called the *pairing fever* must not be forgotten here. House birds are usually attacked with it in May, a time when the inclination to pair is greatest. They cease to sing,

become sorrowful and thin, ruffle their feathers, and die. This fever generally first seizes those which are confined in cages: it appears to arise from their way of life, which is too uniform and wearying. I cured several by merely placing them in the window, where they are soon so much refreshed that they forget their grief, their desire for liberty or for pairing, and resume their liveliness and song.

I have observed that a single female in the room is sufficient to cause this disease to all the males of the same family, though of different species. Removing the female will cure them directly. The males and females at this season must be separated, so that they cannot see or hear one another. This perhaps is the reason that a male, when put in the window, is soon cured.

AGE OF TAME BIRDS

The length of a bird's life very much depends on the care which is taken of it. There are some parrots which have lived more than a century; and nightingales, chaffinches, and goldfinches have been known to live more than twenty-four years in a cage. The age of house birds is so much the more interesting, as it is only by observing it that we can know with any degree of certainty the length of birds' lives in general. Thus house birds are of importance to the naturalist, as giving him information which he could not otherwise acquire. It is worthy of remark, that the quick growth of birds does not prevent their living much longer than quadrupeds. The length of life with these is estimated to be six or seven times longer than the time which they take to grow: while birds live fifteen, twenty, and even thirty times longer.

This length of life is sometimes attributed to the substance of which the bones are composed being much more loose and light, and consequently remaining porous longer than those of quadrupeds. Some swans have lived three hundred years.

BIRD CATCHING

We are furnished with house birds by the bird catchers and bird sellers; the latter procure foreign birds, and teach them, the former the indigenous ones. A good bird catcher ought to know not only the different modes of taking birds, but also all the calls for attracting the different species and sexes: the call notes vary very much among house birds, according to their passions and wants; thus the common chaffinch, when calling its companions, often repeats *iack, iack*; when expressing joy, *fink, fink*, which it also does when angry, though louder and more quickly; whilst its cry of sorrow is *treef, treef*.

The science of bird catching consists in studying these different languages well, and it will ensure success.

As each species of bird requires a different mode, I shall mention the various methods in the course of the work, and shall here only speak of bird catching in general. The first thing to know is the proper time to take birds. For birds of passage, impelled by cold and want of food to change their climate, nets should be spread in spring and autumn; erratic birds, which change their place merely in search of food, may be taken, some in winter, some in spring, and others in autumn; those birds which never quit their native place may be taken at any season, but more easily in winter, when they assemble in small flocks.

Autumn is the time for taking birds in nets; some, attracted by a call-bird, or by food, come of their own accord into the trap; others, as the different species of larks, must be driven to the net; but spring is the best season for employing the decoy, or call-birds, concealed in cages, and also for catching the northern birds on their return from the southern countries to their own. It is the best time for observing the different sexes of these birds, for the males always arrive some days, or even a whole week, sooner than the females; hence it happens that at first the bird catchers take only the former, while the latter are caught afterwards. March and April are the best months for this sport, which should always be made in the morning from the break of day till nine o'clock, as afterwards the birds are too much engaged seeking their food to listen to the call of the decoy birds.

As most of the house birds of the first class, are caught in the net, I shall describe the simple manner in which it is done in Thuringia. Some rather strong branches of oak and beech are chosen with their leaves on; about the space of a foot is cleared of leaves, a foot and a half from the top of the branches, and in this space notches are made for fixing lime twigs: the bush, when thus prepared, must be placed on an eminence in the most frequented part of the birds' path, for birds of passage have fixed roads which they always follow, and in which numbers may be seen, whilst about four hundred paces distant not one can be met with. These tracks generally follow the mountains which border on valleys. It is on these mountains then that the decoy bush must be placed; it must then be garnished with lime twigs, placed in an inclined position, and beneath on the ground must be put the decoy birds, covering their cages with branches of fir or any other tree, so that the birds cannot see one another, as that would prevent the birds of passage from stopping, and the others from calling.

Decoy birds taken wild are preferred to those reared from the nest, for these never know the call note well, or at least do not repeat it often enough.

One of the best modes of catching is by what is called the *water-trap*; all kinds of birds may be caught by it, and there is always a choice. This sport is very agreeable in the hot summer days, for you have only to sit quietly under the thick shade of the foliage by the side of a running stream. A net of three, four, or six feet long, and three or four wide, according to the size of the place, must be spread over a trench made on purpose to receive the water. Some sticks of about an inch thick must be put into the trench level with the water, to which hoops are fixed to prevent the net from getting wet by falling into the water; the rest of this little canal must be covered with branches. If the place

be well chosen it will be surrounded during the day with numbers of different birds. This sport may be carried on from the 24th of July till October, from the rising to the setting of the sun.

When the *water-trap* can be set near a forest, in a grove of pines and firs, near quickset hedges and gardens, or in the middle of a meadow, wood or field-birds may be caught at the same time. For the sake of convenience, small cages are made which can be folded up and put into the pocket. They only serve, however, for the tamest kinds of birds, such as goldfinches, siskins, and linnets; those which are very wild and violent, as chaffinches and larks, should be put into a small bag made of linen, the bottom of which must be lined with felt. When brought to the house the violent species must be immediately put into a dark place, and their cages covered with branches or anything else, that they may not injure themselves, or spoil their plumage. A little attention to the birds' actions in such cases will point out what is best to be done, for amongst birds of the same species there is nothing regular in this respect.

BIRDS OF PREY

Birds of prey are so called from feeding only on animals: they have a hooked beak, strong feet, and very sharp claws.

Some birds of this group are used in falconry, so called because several species of falcon are employed in the sport: others, as the owls, are used to attract small birds to the barn-floor trap, and rooks to the decoy-hut. There seems little probability that bird-fanciers should wish to keep such birds as these in the house. Two species, however, appear to merit distinction, the kestrel and the little owl.

THE KESTRIL

Falco Tinnunculus, Linnæus; La Cresserelle, Buffon; Der Thurmfalke, Bechstein

Its size is that of a turtle-dove, its length fourteen inches, including the tail, which measures six, and two-thirds of which is covered by the folded wings. The wax, the irides, and feet are yellow. In general this is a handsome bird; but the male, as in all birds of prey, differs from the female, not less in the body being a third smaller than in the colours of his plumage. The top of the head is of a fine light grey, the back and the lesser wing coverts are of a red brick colour spotted with black; the belly is reddish, and streaked with black; the feathers of the tail dark brown spotted with white, ending in a broad black border.

The back and wings of the female are of a rust red crossed with many black lines; the head is of a light reddish brown streaked with black; the tail of the same colour, and terminated, like that of the male, with a broad black border; the extremity, however, of each is pale¹³.

Habitation. – In its wild state the kestrel falcon may be found throughout Europe, preferring mountainous places, where there are walls of rocks or ruined castles. It is a bird of passage, which departs in October with the larks, and may then be seen hovering over them, or pouncing at mice; it returns in the following March.

In the house, if taken when old, it must be kept in a wire cage; but if caught and trained when young it may be left quite at liberty, provided its wings are kept clipped; in that case it will neither quit the house nor lodging assigned it, especially when become familiar with the dogs and cats.

Food. – In its wild state it preys on small birds and mice, pursues sparrows to the house-top, and even attacks birds in their cages; it is nevertheless contented with cockchafers, beetles, and grasshoppers.

In confinement it is fed on birds, mice, and a little raw meat; when given only the fresh offal of pigeons, or the lights and livers of sheep, it becomes so tame, that even if taken when old it never appears to regret the loss of its freedom.

Breeding. – The kestrel falcon builds its nest in the fissures of rocks, high towers, old castles, or some aged tree. It lays from four to six eggs of a reddish yellow colour, spotted with red and brown. The young ones, which are at first covered with a simple white down, may be easily reared on fresh mutton.

Mode of Taking. – Lime twigs placed over the nest will easily secure the old ones when they come to feed their young; or a bird of prey's basket, with a lark or mouse put in it as a lure, may be placed where these birds are most frequently seen. This machine is raised on four stakes, and somewhat resembles a common safe, having a lower shelf as large as a moderate sized table, with four upright posts, to which are fastened the partitions of net or wire; on the top and sides are fixed two iron rods; on these, by means of rings, there runs a net which covers the whole.

Attractive Qualities. – Its fine plumage, its sonorous notes *kle, kle*, which it sometimes repeats in continued succession, and its amusing actions, must make it a favourite with most amateurs; it cannot, indeed, like other species of falcon, be trained to the chase; but if taken when very young, and fed with the food before mentioned, it may be taught to fly to some distance and then return, even in the midst of the largest cities.

¹³ There are varieties in this species: that with the head grey is rare, but when quite white is still more so. – Translator.

THE LITTLE OWL

Strix passerina, Linnæus; La Chevèche, ou Petite Chouette, Buffon; Die Zwergeule, Bechstein

The feathers of this bird make it appear larger than it really is. Its length is from eight to nine inches, of which the tail measures at least three; the folded wings almost reach the extremity; the beak is ten lines in length, brown at the base, and yellow at the point; the iris is yellow in summer, and meadow green in winter; the claws blackish; the upper part of the body is light brown, with round white spots, which are largest on the back and shoulders; the lower part is white, spotted with dark brown and a little orange; the quill feathers dark brown, with white spots; the tail lighter, with red spots, which may almost be taken for transverse bands. The colours are less brilliant in the female.

Habitation. – In its wild state this small species of owl frequents old buildings, towers, and church walls, where its nest is also found¹⁴.

In the house it must always be kept in a cage, which may be hung in the window, for if permitted to mix with the other birds it would kill them.

Food. – When wild its general food is mice and large insects; I have also found in the indigested remains which this, like other birds of prey, discharges from its stomach, a considerable quantity of the fruit of the red cornel tree (*Cornus sanguinea*, Linnæus). This proves that it also feeds on berries.

In the cage it may be kept for some time in good health, without having its excrements tainted, if fed on dried mutton: the skin, fat, and bones must be removed, and the meat left to soak in water for two days before it is eaten. Three quarters of an ounce a day of this meat dried will be sufficient, particularly if now and then some mice or birds be given it, which it swallows, feathers and all; it can devour as many as five mice at a meal. It begins to wake up at about two in the afternoon, and then becomes very lively, and soon wants its food.

Breeding. – The female lays two white eggs, which the male takes his turn to sit upon; the young ones may be very easily reared on fresh meat, particularly on pigeons. Before the first moulting the head is of a soft reddish grey clouded with white. The large round spots on the back become gradually more marked, and the reddish white of the under part by degrees acquires long streaks of brown on the breast and sides.

Diseases. – If great care be not taken sometimes to give it mice or birds, the fur and feathers of which cleanse the stomach, it will soon die of decline.

Mode of Taking. – When the place of its retreat during the day is discovered, it cannot fail to be taken if a net in the form of a bag or sack be placed over the mouth of the hole, for the bird will by this means entrap itself when endeavouring to come out for the evening.

Attractive Qualities. – This bird, which is very cleanly, always deposits its dung in one particular spot. Its singular motions are amusing, but its harsh cry, and restlessness, particularly during the season of copulation, are rather disagreeable. It is much used on the continent as a decoy, to entrap small birds.

¹⁴ It is rare in Britain. – Translator.

PIES

The birds of this group have the beak a little flat, more or less hooked, generally in the form of a knife, and of a middling size. The feet are in general strong and short; the lower part, being much divided, may be used for walking or climbing. Their food consists of insects, worms, the flesh and remains of animals, seeds and fruit. In a few species the note is pleasing; several may be taught to speak; and some are admired for their handsome plumage.

THE GREAT BUTCHER BIRD

Lanius Excubitor, Linnæus; Der gemeine Würger, Bechstein; La Pie-Grièche grise, Buffon

It is a little larger than the Redwing (*Turdus Iliacus*, Linn.) Its length is nine inches, of which the tail measures three and three-quarters; the wings, when folded, cover one-third of the tail. The beak is eight lines in length; the iris is very dark brown; the shanks iron grey. All the upper part of the body is of a fine ash colour, shading off to white above the eyes, on the forehead, the shoulders, and the rump. The tail is wedge-shaped, white at the point, and black in the middle.

Habitation. – When wild, this species generally frequents groves, thickets, and the borders of forests; it is also found among brambles, and on lonely trees, always perched on the top. It never quits the abode it has once chosen, either in winter or summer. When caught it must be kept in a large wire cage. Its liveliness and desire for prey prevent its being permitted to mix with the other birds.

Food. – In its wild state, it feeds in summer on grasshoppers, crickets, beetles, and other insects, even lizards, and small adders, and when those fail, on mice and small birds; these, with mice, moles, and the like, form its winter food. When pursuing its prey, the shrike makes a particular movement, in order to seize it on the side; but it does not always succeed, as it cannot use its claws like birds of prey, and often only carries off a beakful of feathers.

In the cage, if the bird be taken when old, some mice, birds, or living insects, may be thrown to it, taking care to leave it quite alone, for as long as any one is present it will touch nothing; but as soon as it has once begun to feed freely it will eat fresh meat, and even become accustomed to the universal paste, described in the Introduction. This shrike eats very much for its size, at the least one ounce of meat at a meal. It likes to have a forked branch, or crossed sticks in its cage, across the angles of which it throws the mouse, or any other prey which has been given it, and then darting on it behind from the opposite side of the cage, devours every morsel, let it be ever so large. It bathes freely.

Mode of Taking. – Although it flies very swiftly when pursuing its prey, it may easily be taken if a nest of young birds, crying from hunger, be suspended to some lime twigs. In autumn and winter, it will sometimes dart on birds in cages which are outside the window. It may then be easily caught, if the cage be put into a sort of box, having the lid so placed that the bird by the least touch would cause it to fall upon itself. These means must be employed by those who wish to possess birds which they can let go and come at will.

Attractive Qualities. – Its cry somewhat resembles the *guir, guir* of the lark; like the nutcracker, it can imitate the different notes, but not the songs, of other birds. Nothing is more agreeable than its own warbling, which much resembles the whistling of the grey parrot; its throat at the time being expanded like that of the green frog. It is a great pity that it only sings during the pairing season, which is from March to May, and even then often spoils the beautiful melody of its song, with some harsh, discordant notes. The female also sings. As some of its tones resemble the human voice, it might probably be taught to speak.

THE LITTLE SHRIKE

Lanius minor, Linnæus; Der graue Würger, Bechstein

It is about the size of the sky-lark, being eight inches in length, of which the tail measures three and a half, the folded wings cover one-third. The beak is black, and seven inches in length; the iris brown; the legs of a lead-colour; the forehead black; a broad streak of the same colour passing from the beak across the eyes and over the cheeks; the tail is wedge-shaped; the exterior feathers are white, with a black spot.

The female only differs from the male in being a little smaller, the streak on the cheeks is shorter and narrower, and there is generally only one white feather in the tail.

Habitation. – Wild, it is a bird of passage, departing the first of September, and returning the beginning of the following May¹⁵. It generally frequents woods, orchards, and the hedges of fields. Always perched on the tops of trees, it rarely descends into the lower bushes. It feeds on insects.

In the house, it must have a large wire cage like the larks, but with three perches. It is not safe to let it mix with the other birds, as it would soon kill them.

Food. – In its wild state it feeds on beetles, cockchafers, crickets, breeze-flies, and other insects; when these fail, in consequence of a long continuance of rain, it sometimes seizes young birds.

In the house, if an old bird and lately taken, as soon as it is put in the cage, some living insects, or a small bird just killed, must be thrown into it. After some time, it will be satisfied with raw or dressed meat; but it is not always an easy task to get it to eat this food, for it will sometimes take eight successive days, during which meal worms and other insects are added; but as soon as it is accustomed to meat, it becomes so tame that it will feed from the hand, and if the cage door be opened it will even perch on the wrist to eat. Notwithstanding all my care, I have only been able to preserve those two years, which have been taken wild, they have all died of decline¹⁶; those, on the contrary, which have been reared from the nest, do not require so much attention, being contented with any kind of common food.

Breeding. – This bird generally builds in a tree on the edge of a wood, or in a garden, the nest being rather large and irregular. The young are fed on beetles and grasshoppers. In order to rear them, they must be taken from the nest when the tail begins to grow, and fed at first on ants' eggs, and afterwards on white bread soaked in milk.

Mode of Taking. – When the particular brambles and branches have been observed, on which this bird watches for its prey, it is not difficult to catch it; for notwithstanding its great quickness, it is not the less imprudent, for it allows itself to be caught in the bird-lime in the most stupid manner.

Attractive Qualities. – This species has no particular song: the female has none at all; but the male imitates, with wonderful facility, the songs of other birds, not only the detached parts, but the whole notes, so correctly that it would not be difficult to mistake it. Thus it imitates exactly, and in order, all the variations of the song of the nightingale, though more feebly, and like an echo, its notes not being so full and clear: it imitates equally well the song of the lark, and similar birds. This wonderful power of imitation cannot fail to please amateurs, and make them wish to possess this interesting bird. I have observed that it likes best to repeat the call of the quail. One of this species which I had among my collection, always stopped its song, however lively, when it heard that of the

¹⁵ It is not a native of Britain. – Translator.

¹⁶ Perhaps from not having been given now and then feathers, the fur and skin of animals, or even beetles, to cleanse the stomach. – Translator.

quail, for the purpose of imitating it; the latter, before it was accustomed to this, became very jealous, and as soon as it heard it, ran about in every direction, furiously endeavouring to fight its fancied rival.

THE WOODCHAT

**Lanius erythrocephalus. Lan. Collurio, rufus, et pomeranus, Linnæus;
La Pie Grièche rousse, Buffon; Der rothköpfige Würger, Bechstein**

This is smaller and more delicate than the former species, being only seven inches long, of which the tail measures three and a half; the folding wings cover one third; the beak is eight lines in length, and black; the iris greyish yellow; the shanks bluish black; the forehead black, from the base of which a band of the same colour extends over the eyes. The tail feathers are also black, but the outer ones only so to the middle, the rest being white.

The female only differs from the male in its colour being less brilliant.

Habitation. – When wild it is a bird of passage, arriving at the end of April, and departing about the middle of September¹⁷. It inhabits mountains, forests, and wooded plains, but prefers enclosed pastures where horses are kept day and night.

In confinement it requires the same treatment as the preceding.

Food. – In its wild state it prefers beetles, the dung of cows and horses, maybugs, grasshoppers, breeze-flies, and other insects; it often also darts upon lizards and young quails.

In a state of confinement it is fed like the preceding; but being more delicate it is better to rear it from the nest, feeding it on raw meat. If an old bird be taken, it is impossible to preserve it unless it be constantly fed on live insects.

Breeding. – The woodchat commonly builds its nest on the thick and bushy branches of large trees, and makes it of small sticks, moss, hogs' bristles, wool and fur. The female breeds twice, laying each time six reddish-white eggs, marked particularly at the large end with distinct red spots, mixed with pale ones of a bluish grey. The young ones are hatched in fifteen days; their colour, before the first moulting, is on the upper part, dirty white, spotted with grey; the under part is also dirty white, clouded with pale grey; the wing coverts are bordered with rust colour; the quill feathers and tail are black.

Mode of Taking. – A cruel method, but the surest, is to place bird-lime on its nest, this being the most wary species of shrike; but as it bathes freely it may be taken about the middle of the day at its washing place, if near hedges. It is often found drowned in large ponds.

Attractive Qualities. – Although this species appears endowed with as good a memory as the preceding, its notes are less agreeable, not being so soft, and it introduces some stanzas of its own shrill and harsh warbling into the songs that it imitates, which are those of the nightingale, linnet, redstart, and goldfinch. But this bird is most admired for its beautiful plumage.

¹⁷ It is doubtful as a native of Britain. – Translator.

THE FLUSHER

Lanius spinitorquus, Bechstein; Lanius Collurio, Linnæus; L'Corcheur, Buffon; Der rothrückige Würger, Bechstein

This pretty species seems to form a connecting link between the pies and the singing birds, so much does it resemble the latter in its different qualities. Its length is a little more than six inches, of which the tail measures three and a quarter. The wings, when folded, cover one third. The beak is black, and the iris of the eyes light brown; the legs, bluish black.

In the male, the head, the nape of the neck, the tail coverts, and the thighs, are grey. This colour is lighter on the forehead and above the eyes. A black band extends from the nostrils to the ears. The beak and wing coverts are of a fine red brown; the rump and under part of the body white, slightly tinged with pink on the breast, sides, and belly; the centre tail feathers are entirely black, the others white at the tip.

The colours in the female differ considerably from those of the male. All the upper part of the body is dirty reddish brown, slightly shading into grey on the upper part of the neck and rump; there is a scarcely visible shade of white on the back and shoulders; the forehead and above the eyes is yellowish, the cheeks brown, the throat and belly dirty white; the under parts of the neck, breast, and sides, are yellowish white, crossed with waving brown lines; the quill feathers are dark brown, the outer ones edged with white, the others to the four centre ones have only a white spot; the tail dark brown, with some shades of orange.

Habitation. – When wild it is one of the latest birds of passage, as it does not arrive till May. It is sometimes found in woody valleys where cattle graze, more commonly in hedges, and fields with bushes in them, or in inclosed pastures where horses and cows are kept. It is one of the first migratory birds to depart, which it does in August, in families, even before the young ones have moulted.

In the house, it must be treated like the former, and kept in a wire cage, for it would soon kill its companions, as I experienced some years ago. The bird I refer to had been three days without eating, although I had given him a great variety of dead birds and insects. On the fourth day I set him at liberty in the room, supposing him too weak to hurt the other birds, and thinking that he would become better accustomed to his new food if I left him at liberty. Hardly was he set free than he seized and killed a dunnoek before I had time to save it; I let him eat it, and then put him back into the cage. From this time, as if his fury were satisfied, he ate all that was given him.

Food. – In its wild state, it eats large quantities of beetles, maybugs, crickets, and grasshoppers, but it prefers breeze-flies, and other insects which tease the cattle. It impales as many of these insects as it can catch for its meal on the thorns of bushes. If, during a long continuance of rain, these insects disappear, it then feeds on field-mice, lizards, and young birds, which it also fixes on the thorns.

When confined, its food is the same as the preceding species. Some insects, mixed with the nightingales' paste, make it more palatable for it. A little raw or dressed meat may also be given it from time to time.

Breeding. – When the season is favourable this species breeds twice, and generally chooses a large hawthorn bush in which to build its nest, roots and coarse stubble forming the base of it, then a layer of moss interwoven with wool, and the finest fibres of roots lining the interior. The female lays from five to six greenish white eggs, spotted all over, especially at the large end, and speckled with red and grey; the male takes his turn with the female to sit during fourteen days. Before moulting, the young ones resemble the female in colour. The back and breast are greenish grey, streaked with several waving brown lines; the belly is dirty white. They can be easily reared by feeding them at

first with ants' eggs, then with dressed meat, and afterwards with white bread soaked in milk: this last food it always likes if early accustomed to it.

Mode of Taking. – As soon as this bird arrives in May, the bushes on which it most frequently perches must be observed; these are very few, and on them the lime twigs must be placed; it is often entrapped within a quarter of an hour. Success is more certain if a beetle, maybug, or breeze-fly, be fastened near the lime twigs with horse hair, by two feet, so that it can move its wings. As soon as the bird is stuck in the bird-lime it is necessary when taking it to avoid its beak, as it pecks very hard.

Attractive Qualities. – This bird does not rank low among the singers; its song is not only very pleasing but continual. While singing, it is generally perched on a lonely bush, or on the lower branches of a tree, but always near its nest. Its warbling is composed of the songs of the swallow, goldfinch, fauvette, nightingale, red-breast, and lark, with which, indeed, it mixes here and there some of its own harsh notes. It almost exclusively imitates the birds in its immediate neighbourhood; it very rarely repeats the song or call of those which merely fly past it; when it does, it seems only in mockery. There are, however, some songs which it cannot imitate: for instance, that of the chaffinch and yellowhammer, its throat not seeming to be sufficiently flexible for these. In the house, its song is composed of the warbling of those birds whose cages are hung near it. It is very lively, and its plumage is handsome.

If a room is to be cleared of flies, one of these birds set at liberty in it will soon effect it; it catches them flying with great skill and agility. When a thorny branch is given it, it impales all its flies, making at the same time the drollest and most singular movements. This species easily and quickly learns to whistle airs, but it forgets them with the same facility, in order to learn new ones.

THE RAVEN

Corvus Corax, Linnæus; Le Corbeau, Buffon; Der Kolkkrabe, Bechstein

This and the three following species ought not to be reckoned among house birds; but as they are easily taught to speak, and are often reared for that purpose, I must not neglect to mention them here.

The raven is well known. Its length is two feet, of which the tail measures eight inches and three quarters. The colour, which is black, in particular lights reflects a violet tint on the upper, and green on the lower part of the body, of the wings and tail. The throat is of a paler black.

Of all the birds of this genus, distinguished by having the beak in the form of a knife, and the base furnished with strong bristles which extend forward, the raven, on account of the size of its tongue, is the best fitted to articulate words; hence, in Thuringia, people are often saluted, on entering an inn, with some abusive language from one of these ravens, confined near the door, in a large cage like a tower. When it has been reared from the nest (which must be done in order to teach it to speak) it may be left at liberty; it will come when called by name to receive its food. Everything which shines must be put out of its way, particularly gold and silver, as it does not fail to carry it off, like the other birds of its kind. One, which was brought before Augustus, had been taught to repeat, *Ave Cæsar, victor, imperator*, in order to salute him on his return from victory.

Some people are accustomed to cut what is called the nerve of the tongue, supposing that it would make them better able to articulate sounds; but it seems most probable that this cruel practice is of little use, and, like many others, only a vulgar prejudice, for I have heard ravens speak perfectly well without having the tongue touched.

This bird was very much prized at a time when divination made a part of religion. Its most minute actions, all the motions of its flight, and the different sounds of its voice, were carefully studied; in the latter, people pretending to discover even sixty-four different modulations, besides many shades still more delicate and difficult to determine. This must certainly have required an excessively fine ear, as its croaking is particularly simple. Every alteration, let it be ever so slight, had its particular signification. Impostors were not wanting, who pretended to understand, or dupes who easily believed, these idle fancies. Some have carried their folly to such a pitch as to persuade themselves that by eating the heart and entrails of the raven they would acquire its gift of prophecy.

Habitation. – This species only inhabits the wooded parts of a country; it there builds its nest on the highest trees. Its eggs, from three to five in number, are of a dirty green, streaked with olive brown. If the young ones be taken in order to instruct them, they must be removed on the twelfth day after bursting the shell, when they have only half their feathers. They are fed on meat, snails, worms, and bread soaked in milk; after a little time they will eat bread, meat, and any refuse from the table. In its wild state the raven eats leverets, birds' eggs, mice, young goslings, chickens, and snails, and even pears, cherries, and other fruit; this shows us that it is rather hurtful as well as useful.

THE CARRION CROW

Corvus corone, Linnæus; La Corneille, Buffon; Die Schwarze Krähe, Bechstein

It only differs from the preceding in its size, and in the tail being rounded instead of wedge-shaped. Its whole length is eighteen inches. Its plumage is black, with some tints of violet on the upper part of the body.

Peculiar Qualities. – The carrion crow is one of the commonest birds; in the groves, which it likes best, it congregates in such numbers that twenty nests have been built on the same tree¹⁸; the eggs are spotted with grey or olive brown on a green ground. The young may be taken from the nest in the month of March, or even earlier if the winter be mild they are treated and fed like the former species. The carrion crow is even more easily tamed, for I have seen old ones, which have been taught to go and come, and others in their wild state, which have regularly fed in the yard going in the spring to breed in the woods, and returning at the beginning of the winter to pass that season in a domestic state. Insects, worms, mice, fruit, and grain form its principal food in its wild state.

Mode of Taking. – The easiest and most usual method is with paper cones, at the bottom of which is put a bit of meat, and bird-lime on the inner edges. It may also be caught with lime twigs placed in the yard, or before the house, on horse dung and among scattered grain.

¹⁸ The rook, (*Corvus frugilegus*, Linnæus,) seems here to be confounded with the carrion crow. I say nothing about this species, as I have never heard of one being tamed or instructed. It is about the size of the carrion crow, and chiefly differs from it in the base of the beak being naked, and having a rough scabrous skin. – Translator.

THE HOODED CROW

**Corvus Cornix, Linnæus; La Corneille
Mantelée, Buffon; Die Nebelkrähe, Bechstein**

This species, a little larger than the preceding, is grey, with the head, throat, wings, and tail black. In the winter it is found over almost all Europe, but during summer it inhabits more northern parts, where it builds in groves and orchards near open fields: its eggs are bright green streaked and spotted with brown.

If taken young it is tamed and taught to speak more easily than the carrion crow.

THE JACK-DAW

Corvus Monedula, Linnæus; Le Chocas, Buffon; Die Dohle, Bechstein

This bird is naturally half tame, and if reared from the nest it will voluntarily remain in the yard with the poultry. It makes its nest in old buildings, houses, castles, towers, and churches: its eggs are green, spotted with dark brown and black. It is not so much to teach it to speak that people like to rear young jack-daws, but to see it go and return at call. Even old ones that are taken in autumn may be accustomed to this, cutting the wings at first, and again in the spring, so that as they grow again the bird learns by degrees to come to a certain call. During winter it will always come into the yard. The size of the jack-daw is that of the pigeon, thirteen or fourteen inches in length. The back of the head is light grey, the rest of the body black. When in winter it eats wild garlic, in the fields it smells very strongly of it, and does not lose the scent till it has been a week in the house.

THE JAY

Corvus glandarius, Linnæus; Le Geai, Buffon; Der Holzeher, Bechstein

I have often, during my youth, seen this beautiful species of bird among the peasants of Thuringia confined in cages, and taught to speak. It is about the size of the preceding bird. Its black beak is in shape like that of the carrion crow. The feet are brown, with a slight shade of flesh colour. All the smaller feathers are soft and silky. A purple grey is the most predominant colour; the throat is whitish, the eyes are reddish blue, the rump white; the large coverts have the outer side of the feathers ornamented with small but very brilliant bands, alternately bluish white, light blue, and bluish black, which softly blend one into the other, like the colours in the rainbow, and are a great ornament to the bird.

The only difference in the female is that the upper part of the neck is grey, whereas in the male it is much redder, and that colour also extends to the back.

Habitation. – When wild, the jay frequents woods; above all, those in which there are firs mixed with other trees.

In the house it must be kept in a large cage in the form of a tower, or in any other shape; it is too dirty a bird to be let range at liberty.

Food. – In its wild state it prefers worms, insects, and berries, when acorns and beech-mast fail: it makes great havoc among cherries.

In the cage, it soon becomes accustomed to bread soaked in milk, but it will eat almost any thing, bread, soft cheese, baked meat, and all that comes from table; acorns and beech-mast however are its favourite food. It must be kept very clean, otherwise its soiled and dirty plumage would make it look to great disadvantage. It is better to feed it entirely on corn; it becomes by this means less dirty, and its excrements are not so soft or foetid. It may be preserved for several years on this food. It must always have fresh water given it, as much for drinking as for bathing.

Breeding. – The jay builds in beech-trees, oaks, and firs. Its eggs are grey spotted with brown. The young which are to be taught to speak must be taken from the nest after the fourteenth or fifteenth day, and fed on soft cheese, bread, and meat: it is easily taught and domesticated. Those which are caught when old cannot be tamed; they are always frightened when any one approaches them, hiding and fasting for several hours afterwards rather than reappear.

Mode of Taking. – Should anyone wish to catch these birds, he must seek in autumn for a lonely tree, about five or six paces from the other trees of the wood, which the birds frequent most; on it lime twigs must be placed. In order to effect this, most of the branches are cut off in such a manner as to form a kind of spiral staircase, commencing about ten or twelve feet from the ground, and extending to within six of the top. After having shortened and reduced the branches to five or six spans in length, the lime-twigs are fixed to them; under the tree must be placed a hut, made of green branches, large enough to contain as many persons as wish to conceal themselves; on the top of this hut is placed a live owl, or one made of clay; even the skin of a hare arranged so that it may be moved, will suffice. Nothing is now wanting to attract the jays but a bird-call, which is made of a little stick with a notch cut in it and a little piece of the bark of the cherry-tree inserted, another bit serving for a cover. On this instrument the voice of the owl, the great enemy of the jays, may easily be imitated; and as soon as they hear it they come from all sides, while their cries must be repeated by the people in the hut, which makes them assemble in still greater numbers. They are soon entangled in the bird-lime, and fall pell mell into the hut, their weight easily dragging them through the slight covering. Many other birds also collect on hearing the deceitful call, and, wishing to assist their brethren, are themselves

entrapped. Thus, in a few hours many jays and a great number of other birds may be caught, such as magpies, thrushes, woodpeckers, red-breasts, and tits. Twilight is the best time for this sport.

In the month of July jays may also be taken in the *water-trap*, where young ones, with their tails only half grown, are most frequently caught; these may yet be taught and tamed.

Attractive Qualities. – Although it is easy to teach the jay to speak, it will in general only repeat single words; but it imitates passably well little airs on the trumpet and other short tunes. Its beautiful colours are a great attraction. It may also be taught to go and come, if in the country: but in the city it is not so easily taught this as crows and ravens.

THE NUT-CRACKER

Corvus Caryocatactes, Linnæus; Le Casse-noix, Buffon; Der Tannenbeher, Bechstein

Its length is twelve inches, of which the tail measures four and three quarters; the wings, when folded, reach the middle. The beak and feet are black; the iris is reddish brown. Though speckled like the starling, its general colour is blackish brown, lighter above, and darker underneath the body. The tail feathers are black, but white at the tip.

The general colour of the female is a redder brown than that of the male.

Habitation. – In its wild state it inhabits, during summer, the depth of woods, near which there are meadows and springs, and it does not quit this retreat till autumn, when it frequents those places where it can find acorns, beech-mast, and nuts. During hard winters it may sometimes be seen on the high road, seeking its food amongst the horse-dung.

In the house it is kept like a jay.

Food. – In its wild state, having a very strong beak, it can open the cones of the pine and fir, peel the acorns and beech-mast, and break the nut-shells. It also eats different sorts of berries, but prefers animal food and insects, in short, any thing it can get.

In confinement it must be fed like the jay; but it is more easily tamed, and accustomed to use different words. It is so fond of animal food, that if a live jay were thrown into its cage it would kill it and eat it in a quarter of an hour; it will even eat whole squirrels which have been shot, and which other small birds of prey fly from with disgust.

Breeding. – Its nest, placed in a hollow tree, generally contains five or six eggs, with transverse brown streaks scattered on a dark olive grey ground. The young are reared on meat.

Mode of Taking. – It may be taken in autumn by a noose, hanging service berries to it; success is more sure if some nuts be put near. It may also be taken in the *water-trap*.

Attractive Qualities. – Its actions are as amusing as those of a shrike; it imitates the voice of many animals, and chatters as much as the jay. To judge from the form of its tongue, it seems possible to teach it to speak, if attempted when young.

THE MAGPIE

Corvus Pica, Linnaeus; La Pie, Buffon; Die Elster, Bechstein

As the magpie generally frequents places near the abode of man, it is well known. It is eighteen inches in length, of which the tail alone measures ten. It may be called a handsome bird, although its plumage is only black and white, for these colours are perfect in their kind, and the tail, near the end, shines with a purple tint, gradually shading into steel blue.

Habitation. – The magpie builds its nest on trees which are near towns and villages; its eggs are pale green, speckled with grey and brown. In autumn the young ones assemble together in small parties.

Food. – When wild, the magpie lives on worms, insects, fruits, or roots, and sometimes eats eggs and young birds in their nest.

In the house, it likes bread, meat, and anything that comes from table; in short, when once tamed it does not fail to enter by the window at meal times to take its share. If it obtain too much, it hides what it does not eat for another time. This propensity is seen in young ones as soon as they can feed alone.

Peculiar Qualities. – Although in its wild state the magpie is so suspicious that it is difficult to catch it, it is, however, more easily tamed than any other bird; it will let itself be touched and taken in the hand, which even the most docile of other birds will seldom suffer. When reared from the nest it learns to speak even better than the raven, and becomes as domestic as the pigeon. It gets so fond of raw meat, bread, and other refuse of the table, that it does not wish any other food; this is the cause of its frequenting dwelling-houses: if it find any worms or insects it only eats them as dainties.

The time of taking magpies in order to bring them to this point is fourteen or fifteen days after coming out of the shell: this is the principal thing to remember with respect to any bird which is to be taught to go and come. It must be given at first bread soaked in milk or water; by degrees a little chopped meat is added, afterwards it will eat anything from the kitchen, even apples and baked pears, and any refuse. As soon as the young birds begin to fly high enough to rise to a neighbouring tree they may be let do so when they have had a good meal, soon calling them back again to the place fixed for their habitation; this practice may be repeated till they have all their feathers, and can fly well, when some of their wing-feathers must be cut, till the winter, a season in which they may be pulled out. Whilst the feathers are growing again, they become so well accustomed to the house and their master that they may be let go for several hours together without any danger of their wandering or not returning. If they speak they will only be the more agreeable.

Old magpies, which may easily be taken in winter with lime-twigs placed near some bits of meat, can be taught to remain in the yard by keeping the wings cut till the following autumn, when they may be let grow; from this time there is no fear of their not coming with the poultry, and in spring they will not fail to build near the house, and seek food for their young in the kitchen. I must repeat again that nothing shining must be left in the way of these birds, as they will carry it off immediately, and hide it with great care, let them have as much food as they like besides.

I have lately received a letter from one of my friends, in which he expresses himself thus: – “I have reared a magpie which comes like a cat to rub itself against me until I caress it. It has learnt of itself to fly into the country and return. It follows me everywhere, even for more than a league, so that I have much trouble to rid myself of it, and when I do not wish its company in my walks and visits I am obliged to shut it up: though wild with any other person, it marks in my eyes the least change in my temper. It will sometimes fly to a great distance with other magpies, without however connecting itself with them.”

THE ROLLER

**Coracias Garrula, Linnæus; Le Rollier
d'Europe, Buffon; Die Mandelkrähe, Bechstein**

This bird resembles the jay in size and form, and is twelve inches in length, of which the tail measures four and a half; the beak is blackish, before and behind the eyes is a blackish triangular spot, formed by the naked skin; the iris of the eye is grey; the whole of the head, the neck, the throat, the breast, the belly, the large wing-coverts, and all the under-coverts, are of a beautiful bluish green; the tail is of a dusky blue green near the base, becoming gradually lighter towards the end.

The female and young ones of the first year have the head, neck, breast, and belly of a reddish grey tinged with bluish green; the back and the last quill-feathers are of a light greyish brown; the rump is green, tinged with indigo; the tail blackish with a tint of blue green; the rest like the male.

Habitation. – In its wild state the roller may be found in Europe and the northern parts of Africa; it only frequents a few spots in Germany, and prefers forests and sandy plains to high mountains; elsewhere it is only seen during the time of its passage¹⁹.

In the house it may be let range at will after the wings are clipped.

Food. – When wild, its principal food is insects and worms; it also eats small frogs, bulbous roots, acorns, and grains of corn.

Breeding. – The nest, placed in the hole of a tree, is made of small twigs, hay, feathers, and bristles. It lays from four to seven white eggs, on which the male takes his turn to sit during eighteen or twenty days. The young ones do not acquire their fine colours till the second year; previous to this period the head, neck, and breast are of a whitish grey.

I had till lately thought that this bird was untamable; but Dr. Meyer of Offenbach has convinced me to the contrary, having himself reared them several times, and kept them in his room. This is his method:

The young ones must be taken from the nest when only half grown, and fed on little bits of cow's heart, or any other meat which is lean and tender, till they can eat alone; small frogs, worms, and insects may then be added. The means which it takes to kill and swallow these insects are curious enough; it begins by seizing and crushing them with its beak, and then throws them into the air several times, in order to receive them in its throat, which is very capacious. When the piece is too large, or the insect still alive, it strikes it hard against the ground, and begins again to throw it in the air, till falling not across, but so as to thread the throat, it may be easily swallowed.

After having been fed thus long enough, a little barley-meal may be mixed with the meat. I have even brought it to eat bread, vegetables, and softened oatmeal, but it always prefers cow's heart. I have never seen it drink.

It knows the person who takes care of it, comes at his call to eat from his hands, without however letting itself be caught: but it never becomes quite tame, and often defends itself with its beak. It makes very few movements unless to seek its food, and generally remains quite still in the same place. If it ever hops about the room it is in an awkward and cramped manner, on account of its short feet; on the other hand, it flies very well; but it must not be left completely at liberty in the room, or quite shut up in the cage, because it is so easily startled, and in its fright gives itself such violent blows on the head as would soon kill it. The best way is to clip one wing, and then let it range the room. These

¹⁹ It appears that in its course from Sweden to Algiers it does not range beyond a degree in longitude, and is rarely found in Britain. Few birds of this group, as far as has hitherto been observed, wander to the right or left during their migration. The roller frequents shady and solitary woods, and its character is well adapted to them. – Translator.

birds quarrel with one another, particularly in the evening, for their places on the perch. I have kept them for some time in a large aviary with small and great birds, and once with my pigeons which I kept shut up; generally I have them in my room, where they mix with several other birds: but whether alone or with companions they appeared equally healthy and active.

Attractive Qualities. – They have few other attractions besides their beautiful plumage, for their voice is only a harsh croaking “*crag, crag, craag*”²⁰.”

²⁰ I once saw one of these birds drink, after swallowing dry ants’ eggs; it then eat greedily of lettuce and endive. Another, which I kept, liked the outside of lettuces and spinach after having eaten insects, especially beetles, which are very heating. To judge from what I have observed, the roller is by nature wild and solitary; it seldom changes its situation, except to seek its food or to hide itself from strangers. It is a good thing, whether kept in a cage or let range, always to have a box in its way, in which it may take refuge when frightened; it will not fail to hide itself there, and by this means will not be tempted to beat itself violently, which it does when it cannot fly from the object of its fright. It knows its mistress very well, lets her take it up, comes near her, and sits without any fear on her knees for whole hours without stirring. This is as far as it goes even when tamed. It is neither caressing nor familiar; when frightened it utters harsh cries, softer ones when its food is brought, but “*crag, crag, craag,*” at the same time raising its head, is the expression of its joy or triumph. – Translator.

THE GOLDEN ORIOLE

Oriolus Galbula, Linnæus; Le Lorient, Buffon; Der Pirol, Bechstein

This species, the male of which is very beautiful, is about the size of a blackbird. Its length is nine inches, of which the tail measures three and a half, and the beak one. The head, neck, back, breast, sides, and lesser wing-coverts, are of a brilliant golden yellow; the wings and the tail are black, with yellow gradually increasing to the outer feathers.

The female is not so brilliant, the golden yellow is only visible at the tip of the olive feathers in the tail, and in the lesser and under wing-coverts. All the upper part of the body is of the green colour of the siskin, the lower part greenish white with brown streaks, and the wings grey black.

Habitation. – When wild, it generally frequents lonely groves, or the skirts of forests, always keeping among the most bushy trees, so that it is rarely seen on a naked branch; it always frequents orchards during the time of cherries. It is a bird of passage, departing in families in August, and not returning till the following May²¹.

In the house, if it cannot be let range at pleasure, it must be confined in a large wire cage.

Food. – When wild, its food is insects and berries. In confinement, and if an old one be caught by means of the owl, like the jays, it must be kept at first in a quiet and retired place, offering it fresh cherries, then adding by degrees ants' eggs, and white bread soaked in milk, or the nightingale's food. But I confess there is great difficulty in keeping it alive, for with every attention and the greatest care, I do not know a single instance of one of this species having been preserved for more than three or four months.

Breeding. – The scarcity of the golden oriole arises from its breeding but once a year. Its nest, hung with great art in the fork of a small bushy branch, is in shape like a purse, or a basket with two handles. The female lays four or five white eggs, marked with a few black streaks and spots. Before the first moulting, the young ones are like their mother, and mew like cats. If any one wishes to rear them they must be taken early from the nest; fed on ants' eggs, chopped meat and white bread soaked in milk, varying these things as their health requires, and as their excrements are too frequent or too soft. In short, they may be accustomed to the nightingale's food. I must here remark that a very attentive person alone can hope to succeed²².

Attractive Qualities. – I have seen two golden orioles that were reared from the nest, one of which, independent of the natural song, whistled a minuet, and the other imitated a flourish of trumpets. Its full and flute-like tones appeared to me extremely pleasing. Unfortunately the fine colours of its plumage were tarnished, which almost always happens, above all if the bird be kept in a room filled with smoke, either from the stove or from tobacco. One of my neighbours saw two golden orioles at Berlin, both of which whistled different airs.

Its note of call, which in the month of June so well distinguishes the golden oriole from other birds, may be well expressed by “ye, puhlo²³.”

²¹ It is rarely found in Britain. – Translator.

²² These young birds like to wash; but it is dangerous for them to have the water too cold, or to let them remain too long in it, as cramp in the feet may be the consequence. In one which we possessed, the accident was more vexatious as the bird was otherwise in good health, having followed the above mentioned diet. – Translator.

²³ The natural song is very like the awkward attempts of a country boy with a bad musical ear to whistle the notes of the missel thrush. – Translator.

THE HOOPOE

Upupa Epops, Linnæus; La Huppe, Buffon; Der gemeine Wiedehopf, Bechstein

The length of this bird is twelve inches, of which the tail measures four, and the bill, which is black, two and a half.

The iris is blackish brown. The feet are black and very short. There is a tuft on the head like a fan, formed of a double row of feathers, all of them tipped with black.

Habitation. – In its wild state, the hoopoe remains, during summer, in woods near meadows, and pasture land. In the month of August, after hay-harvest, it goes in flocks into the plains; it departs in September, and does not return till the end of the following April. It is more frequently seen on the ground than perching²⁴.

In the house, it is not kept in a cage, but let range at will; it is very chilly, at least it is so fond of warmth that it is constantly on the stove, and would rather let its beak be dried up than come away from it.

Food. – When wild, it may be continually seen in fields, searching for its favourite insects among cow dung and the excrements of other animals. Some people put it into their granaries to clear them of weevils and spiders; this has succeeded very well, but to say that it also eats mice, is certainly an error.

In the house, it may be easily reared on meat, and white bread soaked in milk, to which meal worms must be added from time to time.

Breeding. – The hoopoe lays from two to four eggs; its nest, placed in the hole of some tree, is a mixture of cow dung and small roots. The young are easily reared on the flesh of young pigeons; but they cannot pick it up well, because their tongue, about the size of half a bean, and heart-shaped, is too short to turn the food into the throat. They are obliged to throw their food in the air, holding the beak open to receive it.

Mode of Taking. – In the month of August, when a field has been observed which the bird frequents most, a small well-limed rod of about eight inches in length must be placed on a mole-hill, having two or three meal worms fastened to it by means of a thread about three inches long. As soon as the hoopoe sees the worms it darts upon them, and thus makes the lime twig fall upon itself, which embarrasses it. But these birds, whether taken young or old, can very rarely be preserved.

Attractive Qualities. – Independently of its beauty, its droll actions are very amusing. For instance, it makes a continual motion with its head, tapping the floor with its beak, so that it seems as if it walks with a stick, at the same time shaking its crest, wings, and tail²⁵. I have had several of them in my house, and have always been diverted by their singular grimaces. When any one looks at them steadily, they immediately begin their droll tricks.

The following is an extract from a letter written by M. von Schauroth on the hoopoe, which I think it is well to insert here:

“With great care and attention, I was able last summer to rear two young hoopoes, taken from a nest which was placed at the top of an oak tree. These little birds followed me everywhere, and when they heard me at a distance showed their joy by a particular chirping, jumped into the air, or as soon as I was seated climbed on my clothes, particularly when giving them their food from a pan of milk, the cream of which they swallowed greedily; they climbed higher and higher, till at last they perched on my shoulders, and sometimes on my head, caressing me very affectionately: notwithstanding this,

²⁴ It is not common in Britain. – Translator.

²⁵ It may be added that it also walks very gracefully. – Translator.

I had only to speak a word to rid myself of their company, they would then immediately retire to the stove. Generally they would observe my eyes to discover what my temper might be, that they might act accordingly. I fed them like the nightingales, or with the universal paste, to which I sometimes added insects; they would never touch earth-worms, but were very fond of beetles and May-bugs, these they first killed, and then beat them with their beak into a kind of oblong ball; when this was done, they threw it into the air, that they might catch it and swallow it lengthways; if it fell across the throat they were obliged to begin again. Instead of bathing, they roll in the sand. I took them one day into a neighbouring field, that they might catch insects for themselves, and had then an opportunity of remarking their innate fear of birds of prey, and their instinct under it. As soon as they perceived a raven, or even a pigeon, they were on their bellies in the twinkling of an eye, their wings stretched out by the side of their head, so that the large quill feathers touched: they were thus surrounded by a sort of crown, formed by the feathers of the tail and wings, the head leaning on the back, with the beak pointing upwards; in this curious posture they might be taken for an old rag. As soon as the bird which frightened them was gone they jumped up immediately, uttering cries of joy. They were very fond of lying in the sun; they showed their content by repeating in a quivering tone, "*vec, vec, vec;*" when angry their notes are harsh, and the male, which is known by its colour being redder, cries "*hoop, hoop.*" The female had the trick of dragging its food about the room, by this means it was covered with small feathers and other rubbish, which by degrees formed into an indigestible ball in its stomach, about the size of a nut, of which it died. The male lived through the winter; but not quitting the heated stove, its beak became so dry that the two parts separated, and remained more than an inch apart; thus it died miserably."

"I once saw," says Buffon, "one of these birds which had been taken in a net, and being then old, or at least adult, must have had natural habits: its attachment to the person who took care of it was very strong, and even exclusive. It appeared to be happy only when alone with her; if strangers came unexpectedly it raised its crest with surprise and fear, and hid itself on the top of a bed which was in the room. Sometimes it was bold enough to come from its asylum, but it fled directly to its beloved mistress, and seemed to see no one but her. It had two very different tones; one soft, as if from within, and seemed the very seat of sentiment, which it addressed to its mistress; the other sharp, and more piercing, which expressed anger and fear. It was never kept in a cage by day or night, and was permitted to range the house at pleasure: however, though the windows were often open, it never showed the least desire to escape, its wish for liberty not being so strong as its attachment.

"This pretty bird accidentally died of hunger. Its mistress had kept it for four months, feeding it only on bread and cheese."

THE CUCKOO

Cuculus canorus, Linnæus; Le Coucou, Buffon; Der gemeine Kukuk, Bechstein

Although it is not larger than the turtle-dove, its length is fourteen inches, but seven of these are included in the tail, three quarters of which are covered by the folded wings. The beak, black above, and bluish beneath; the feet have two claws before and two behind. The head, the top of the neck, and the rest of the upper part of the body are of a dark ash colour, changing like the throat of the pigeon on the back and wing-coverts.

In the female, which is smaller, the upper part of the body is of a dark brown, with dirty brown spots, which are scarcely visible. The under part of the neck is a mixture of ash grey and yellow, crossed with dark streaks. The belly is of a dirty white, with dark transverse lines.

Habitation. – When wild, it is a bird of passage, which arrives in April and departs in September, and even much sooner, according to an English observer.

In the house, it may be let run about, or confined in a large wooden cage.

Food. – When wild, it eats all sorts of insects, particularly caterpillars on trees.

When confined, it is fed with meat, insects, and the universal paste made of wheat-meal.

Breeding and Peculiarities. – Every one knows that the female cuckoo never sits upon her eggs, but intrusts that care to other birds, particularly those which feed on insects, laying one or two eggs in their nest.

In order to tame a cuckoo, it must be taken from the nest: I never tried myself, but several of my friends have. As this is a curious bird, and most bird-fanciers like to have it in their room or aviary, I shall here insert some observations on this subject, by M. von Schauroth, who was before quoted.

“The cuckoo possesses hardly any qualities which would render it fit to be a house bird: if old, it is too obstinate and voracious, generally it is furious, sullen, and melancholy. I have reared several; the last was taken from the nest of a yellowhammer: its eyes were not opened when I took it, yet it darted at me with fury. Before I had had it six days it would swallow in a passion everything that came near it. I fed it on bird’s flesh, and was obliged to continue this food for a long time before it could feed itself. Its motions were so quick in jumping or moving that it would overthrow any cups of food which happened to be in its way. Its tail grew very slowly. It was never entirely tamed; it would dart at my hands and face, attacked every thing which came too near it, and even the other birds. It ate the poultry paste in great quantities, and discharged in proportion, which made it very dirty; I have even seen it, like the ostrich, eat its own excrements. Its short and climbing feet are so awkward that it cannot walk; it makes two or three jumps, but flies very well.”

“Though cunning and solitary,” says Buffon, “the cuckoos may be given some sort of education. Several persons of my acquaintance have reared and tamed them. They feed them on minced meat, either dressed or raw, insects, eggs, soaked bread, and fruit. One of these tamed cuckoos knew its master, came at his call, followed him to the chase, perched on his gun, and if it found a cherry tree in its way it would fly to it, and not return till it had eaten plentifully; sometimes it would not return to its master for the whole day, but followed him at a distance, flying from tree to tree. In the house it might range at will, and passed the night on the roost. The excrement of this bird is white, and in great quantities; this is one of the disagreeables in rearing it. Great care must be taken to keep it from the cold from autumn till winter; this is the critical period for these birds, at least it was at this time that I lost all which I had tried to rear, besides many other birds of a different species.”

THE MINOR GRAKLE

**Gracula religiosa, Linnæus; Mino ou Mainate,
Buffon; Der Mino oder Plauderer, Bechstein**

This bird is the size of a blackbird, ten inches and a half long, of which the tail measures three, and the beak one and a half. The feathers on the side of the head are short, like velvet, but on the top, descending towards the back of the head, they are the general length; on both sides of the head there is naked skin, which begins under the eyes, and extends to the back of the head, but without uniting; its breadth is uneven, near the eyes it is wide and yellow, but when the bird is pleased or is angry this colour varies. Black is the predominant colour of the body, with some tints of purple, violet, or green, according to the different light it is in; the feathers of the tail have a white streak.

Observations. – The minor grakle is found in both the Indies, in Jamaica, as well as in the islands beyond the Ganges, as far as Java. Their food is vegetable: those which are brought to Europe willingly eat cherries and raisins; if these be shown them without being given directly they begin to cry and weep like a child. They become exceedingly tame and confiding; they whistle exceedingly well, and chatter better than any parrot. The Chinese ladies are very fond of them; they are sold very dear in Java. In the inland parts of Germany nothing is so rare as one of these birds.

LARGE BEAKED BIRDS

The general characteristics of this group are, a beak large, but varying in size, very hollow, light, raised above, and hooked before; in the species immediately following, the legs are short, strong, and the feet formed for climbing; they are furnished with a tongue, thick, fleshy, and rounded like the human tongue, which renders articulation easy to them. All these birds are foreign, and ought to be reared from the nest when intended for speaking.

THE RED AND BLUE MACCAW

Psittacus Macao, Linnæus; L'Lra Rouge, Buffon; Der rothe Aras, Bechstein

The beauty of their plumage, and the facility with which they repeat words, are the two principal reasons for the introduction of parrots into parlours. Some imitate the songs of other birds and warble very sweetly. We have observed, that in order to speak distinctly the tongue must be thick, rounded, and the muscle loose enough to permit the requisite motion; hence it happens that parrots, above all those with a short tail, pronounce so very distinctly. The ravens, jack-daws, and jays come next to them; but the starlings and blackbirds surpass them in the formation of the larynx.

The red and blue maccaw is one of the largest of the parrot tribe, being two feet eight inches in length. The hardest stones of the peach cannot resist the strength of its beak, the upper mandible of which is very much hooked. The claws are directed forward, and two backward. The naked cheeks are covered with a wrinkled whitish skin. The head, neck, breast, belly, thighs, top of the back, and the upper wing-coverts are of the finest vermilion. The lower part of the back and the rump are light blue. The scapulars and large wing-coverts are a mixture of blue, yellow, and green.

The colours sometimes vary, especially in the wings and tail, but the species will not be the less easily known on that account.

The female very much resembles the male.

Habitation. – When wild it inhabits South America, and may be found in Brazil and Guiana, in damp woods, and always in pairs. In the house it may be let range at will, giving it a roost with several rings placed across. Like its fellows, it may be kept in a very large strong wire cage, high and wide enough to let it move with ease, and preserve its handsome tail in all its beauty.

Food. – In its native country the fruit of the palm tree is its principal food; our fruit it also likes, but white bread soaked in milk agrees with it better; biscuit does not hurt it; but meat, sweetmeats, and other niceties are very injurious; and though at first it does not appear to be injured, it becomes unhealthy, its feathers stand up separate, it pecks and tears them, above all those on the first joint of the pinion, and it even makes holes in different parts of its body. It drinks little – this is perhaps occasioned by its eating nothing dry. Many bird-fanciers say that the best food for parrots is simply the crumbs of white bread, well baked, without salt, soaked in water, and then slightly squeezed in the hand. But though this appears to agree with them pretty well, it is however certain that now and then something else ought to be added. I have observed, indeed, that parrots which are thus fed are very thin, have hardly strength to bear moulting, and sometimes even do not moult at all; in that case they become asthmatic, and die of consumption. It is clear that feeding them only on this food, which has very little if any moisture in it, is not sufficient to nourish them properly, at least during the moulting season, and while the feathers are growing again. I never saw a parrot in better health than one which belonged to a lady, who fed it on white bread soaked in boiled milk, having more milk than the bread would absorb, which the parrot drank with apparent pleasure; there was also put into the drawer of its cage some sea biscuit, or white bread soaked in boiling water; it was also given fruit when in season. It is necessary to be very careful that the milk is not sour.

Some young maccaws are fed on hemp-seed, which must always be of the year before, as the new would be too warm and dangerous. Yet they must not be fed entirely on this food, but there must be added white bread soaked in milk or water, as has already been mentioned, some fruit and nuts, but never bitter almonds, as they will infallibly kill all young animals. In all cases the excrements of the bird will indicate the state of its health, and whether the food ought to be changed or not.

Although maccaws rarely want to drink, as their food is very moist, yet they must not be left without water, which is generally placed in one of the divisions of their tin drawer. It is also a good

thing to entice them to bathe, nothing is more favourable to their health, or better facilitates the painful operation of moulting, or keeps their feathers in better order. A little attention to these favourites, deprived of their liberty, their natural climate, and food, cannot be too much trouble to amiable persons who are fond of them, and to whom these pretty birds become greatly attached.

Breeding. – The red and blue macaws build their nests in the holes of old decayed trees; they enlarge and make the hole even with their beak, and line it with feathers. The female, like that of the other American parrots, breeds twice in the year, laying two eggs each time, which are exactly like those of the partridge. In Europe the females also lay well, but the eggs are generally unfruitful; when they are not so it is very difficult to make the mother sit; there are, however, a few examples of the female macaw being so well inclined to perform this office, that she will sit on pigeons' and hens' eggs, which are hatched in due time.

The macaws which we have in this country have generally been reared from the nest, particularly those which speak, for the old ones would be too savage and untractable, and would only stun one with their unbearable cries, the faithful interpreters of their different passions.

Diseases. – Amongst those to which macaws are particularly subject, declines are the most frequent. Some cures for this are mentioned in the Introduction, which it would be well to employ. During the moulting season attention must be redoubled, not only to keep them in health but to preserve their beautiful plumage.

Attractive Qualities. – As macaws are very dear they are generally only found in the possession of rich bird-fanciers. In the centre of Germany one costs from fifty to a hundred rix dollars, and in the maritime cities thirty or forty. Their beautiful plumage forms their principal attraction. They also learn to repeat many words, to go and come, and also to obey the least signal from their master. I confess, however, that their awkward walk, their heavy movements, and their constant inclination to help themselves along with their beak, added to their great uncleanness, does not appear very agreeable. They are sometimes very wicked, taking dislike to some people, and may do great injury to children if left alone with them. Owing to their dung being very liquid, abundant, and foetid, they must be cleaned regularly every day.

THE BLUE AND YELLOW MACCAW

Psittacus Ararauna, Linnæus; L'Lra Bleu; Der Blaue Aras, Bechstein

This species, which is about the size of the former, appears to me much more beautiful, though the colours of its plumage are not so striking. Its beak is black, the feet dark grey; the cheeks flesh-coloured, streaked in the form of an S, with lines of short black feathers. The iris is light yellow; the throat ornamented with a black collar; the forehead, to the top of the head, the sides, and small wing-coverts are of a dark green; the rest of the upper part of the body is of a fine blue; all the colours are apt to vary.

Habitation. – Being, like the preceding one, a native of Surinam, Guiana, and Brazil, its way of living and qualities are much the same. It does not, however, learn to speak so easily, and cannot pronounce the word *maccaw* so distinctly; but it imitates perfectly the bleating of sheep, the mewing of cats, and the barking of dogs. Its custom of only drinking in the evening seems extraordinary.

THE ILLINOIS PARROT

Psittacus pertinax, Linnæus; La Perruche Illinoise; Der Illinesische Sittich, Bechstein

This is a species which almost all bird-sellers have. Its length is nine inches and a half. The beak is light grey, the eyes surrounded with a naked greyish skin, the iris is deep orange. The feet are dark grey. The principal colour on the top of the body is green, that under is yellowish grey. The forehead, cheeks, and throat are of a brilliant orange; the top of the head is dark green; this colour is lighter and yellowish on the back of the head; the top of the neck is greenish grey; there are some orange spots on the belly.

In the female, the forehead only is deep yellow, and there is no other mixture of yellow either on the head or belly.

Habitation. – This parrot is also a native of the hottest parts of South America, frequenting savannas, or any other open places, and building its nest even in the holes of the Termites (*Termes fatalis*, Linnæus.) These birds are so sociable that they may be seen in flocks of five or six hundred.

In the house, they must always be kept in pairs, and generally in cages. They show the tenderness of their attachment to each other by their continual caresses; this is in fact so great, that if one die the other soon languishes from grief.

Food. – When these birds go forth to steal chestnuts, acorns, peas, and similar fruits, which form their food, they always place a sentinel to warn them of the approach of an enemy: at the least alarm, they fly away, uttering loud cries. When confined, they are fed with nuts, and bread soaked in boiled milk.

Attractive Qualities. – Their handsome plumage, their affectionate and confiding ways, and the tenderness of attachment which these pretty birds have for each other, make them great favourites; but they learn scarcely any thing, and their continual cries are sometimes very annoying.

THE LONG-TAILED GREEN PARRAKEET

**Psittacus rufirostris, Linnæus; Le Sincialo,
Buffon; Der rothschnäblige Sittich, Bechstein**

The length of this species is twelve inches and a half, but the tail alone measures seven inches and a half. This bird is not larger than a blackbird; the folded wings only cover one quarter of the tail, the centre feathers of which are nearly five inches longer than the exterior ones. The upper mandible of the beak is of a blood red, with the point black; the under one is entirely black. The circle of the eyes, the naked membrane of the beak, and the feet, are flesh-coloured; the irides are orange. The rest of the body is yellowish green, with the wings bordered with light yellow. There are varieties of different shades of green, the tail feathers of which are blue at the extremity.

This species inhabits the hottest part of South America. Its cry is noisy and frequent; it soon learns to speak, whistle, and imitate the sounds of most animals as well as birds. In the cage, where it cannot have much other exercise, it chatters and squalls so incessantly, that it is often very disagreeable. It must be treated like the preceding species, but does not appear so delicate.

THE BLUE-HEADED PARROT

Psittacus cyanocephalus, Linnæus; La Perruche à tête bleu, Buffon; Der Blauköpfige Sittich, Bechstein

This beautiful species is not more scarce than the preceding, and is about the size of a turtle dove, although its length is eleven inches and a half, six of which being included in the tail, half of this is covered by the folded wings. The naked skin round the eyes is yellow; the upper part of the body is green, the under part yellowish. The forehead has some tints of red; the head is blue; the throat violet, with a grey tint.

This parrot comes from India, and is only prized for its beauty, for it cannot learn to speak. It must be treated like the preceding species.

THE YELLOW PARROT

**Psittacus solstitialis, Linnæus; La Perruche
jaune, Buffon; Der gelbe Sittich, Bechstein**

The whole length of this bird is eleven inches and a half. The tail is wedge-shaped, and the folded wings cover one-third of it. The beak and feet are green. The throat, the naked membranes of the beak, and the circle of the eyes, are light grey; the iris is yellow. The general colour of the body is orange, with olive spots on the back and wing coverts.

This parrot comes from Angola, and easily learns to speak. The food and treatment must be the same as the preceding.

THE AMBOINA PARROT

**Psittacus Amboinensis, Linnæus; Le Lory Perruche
tricolor, Buffon; Der Amboinische Sittich-Lory, Bechstein**

This species somewhat resembles the Ceram lory, a variety of *Le Lori Noir* of Buffon (*Psittacus garrulus auroræ*, Linnæus); owing to this resemblance the French also call it *l'urore*. Its length is sixteen inches, of which the tail, which is round, measures half. The beak is nine lines in length; there is no naked membrane, and the nostrils are in front; the iris is of a golden hue. The head, the nape of the neck, and all the lower part of the body, are the colour of vermilion. A ring of sky blue, very indistinct, surrounds the neck; all the feathers on the top of the body are of a beautiful green, with a fine edge of blue, or some dark colour.

In the female, the head is green; the throat, the under part of the neck, and the breast, are the same, but having a reddish tint. The small tail-coverts are dark green, edged with red; the tail itself is tinged with green. The beak is horn brown, with a reddish tint above and below.

Observations. – A pair of this beautiful species were sold to his Highness the Duke of Meiningen as coming from Botany Bay, but they are really natives of Amboina. Timid and wild, this bird has a sharp whistle and a cry like “*gaick*,” but cannot speak. The feathers are so loose that they generally come off in the hand when touched; but they grow again very quickly. It is kept and treated like the others.

THE PURPLE PARROT

Psittacus Pennanti, Latham; La Purpure; Der Pennantsche Sittich, Bechstein

In the male, which very much resembles the sparrow-hawk, the prevailing colour is a reddish purple, from which it derives its name among bird-sellers. The head and rump are dark crimson; the throat, as well as the small outer wing-coverts, and the centre pen-feathers, are of a most beautiful sky blue; all the under part of the body is bright crimson, shading to bluish on the thighs. The tail is of a deep blue.

In the female, which the bird-sellers pass as a different species, under the name of the *Palm-tree Parrot*, the prevailing colour is greenish yellow; it resembles the male sparrow-hawk in make. The head, the sides of the neck, and half the breast, are of a bright crimson; the throat pearl blue, shading a little to sky blue on the edges; the top of the neck, the back, shoulders, and last quill-feathers, are of a velvet black. All the feathers are edged with greenish yellow, except the scapulars and the feathers of the neck, the edges of which are the colour of sulphur. The rump and part round the vent are of parrot green, the long lower coverts of the tail crimson, edged with greenish yellow; the knee bands have a shade of sky blue. The under part of the body is of a brilliant yellow, with some irregular red dashes and spots, which show its relation to the former bird. The base of the tail is green, like the neck of the water-duck; the rest of the wings and tail are like the male.

Observations. – I have seen several of this superb species, which belonged to his Highness the Duke of Meiningen. It is a great pity that they are so wild, timid, and difficult to teach. Their note is a kind of chirping, which is rarely heard. Their feathers are as loose as the preceding species. They come from Botany Bay, and are very dear. Being more delicate, they require more attention than the other parroquets.

THE WHISKERED PARROT

Psittacus bimaculatus, Sparrmann; Perruche à Moustache; Der Zweyfleckige, Sittich, Bechstein

The length of this very beautiful parrot is fourteen inches, of which the tail measures more than half; its size is that of the turtle-dove, but very slender. The beak is large, orange-coloured, or pale blood red; the head of a fine ash colour, tinted with green on the top, and having a narrow black band on the forehead; the part near the eyes is naked, and pale flesh-coloured; the forehead light yellow; an almost triangular spot extends from the base of the beak across the cheeks to the throat; all the top of the body is meadow green, spotted with black. The under part of the body is of a deep rose colour.

There is a variety of this species with a black beak.

In the female, or what is supposed to be so, the forehead, the throat, the sides of the head and neck are pale orange colour; an oval black streak descends from the corners of the beak towards the throat; the nape, the top of the neck, the shoulders, back, rump, and upper part of the tail, are meadow green. The breast and belly, to the extremity, are of a fine green.

Observations. – This bird is very docile, amiable, and talkative. Its mildness is very pleasing, and it is extremely affectionate and caressing. Its cry is “*gaie, gaie, gaie.*” It comes from the Islands of the Southern Ocean and Botany Bay.

THE CARDINAL PARROT

**Psittacus erythrocephalus, Linnæus; La Perruche
cardinale; Der Cardinal Sittich, Bechstein**

The length of this species is twelve inches, of which the tail, which is very wedge-shaped, measures six and three quarters. The beak is peach blossom, and the naked membrane ash coloured, the iris orange, and the feet grey. All the head is violet, tinted with blue and red; a black band surrounds the neck; the throat is black, the upper part of the body dark green, the under part light green.

In the female, the beak is yellow; the head of a dark blue ash-colour, without the ring round the neck; but the place of it is marked by a slight yellow tint. The young ones also have no ring, and the colour of the head is not marked; it varies from rose red to green.

VARIETIES OF THE CARDINAL PARROT

1. The Blossom-headed Parrakeet, Latham; *Psittacus erythrocephalus*, Linnæus; Perruche à tête rouge de Gingi, Buffon; Der Rothköpfige Sittich aus Gingi, Bechstein.

The head is red, having on the back a mixture of light blue. A narrow black line passes from the chin to the nape of the neck; another line, of light green, below the former, forms with it a ring round the neck. The rest of the plumage is green, but the under part of the body has a tint of light yellow. The tail is green above, having the inner border light yellow.

2. The Rose-headed Ring Parrakeet, Latham; *Psittacus erythrocephalus Bengalensis*, Linnæus; Petite Perruche à tête couleur de rose longs brins, Buffon; Der Rothköpfige Sittich aus Bengalen, Bechstein.

The upper mandible is light yellow, the lower black, the membrane brownish. The top of the head and cheeks are rose coloured, the back of the head blue, the throat and ring like the preceding variety, as well as the red spot on the wing-coverts; the two centre feathers of the tail are blue, the others green, edged with blue.

3. The Borneo Parrakeet; *Psittacus erythrocephalus Borneus*, Linnæus; Perruche à tête rouge de pêcheur de Borneo; Der Rothköpfige Sittich aus Borneo, Bechstein.

The upper mandible is red, the under black, the membrane ash-coloured, the iris the same; the whole head is peach-blossom, with a green tint on the forehead; there is a black line between the eyes, near the membrane of the beak; another extends from the lower mandible obliquely on each side of the neck, widening on the back. The upper part of the body to the tail is light green, shading to light yellow towards the middle of the wing-coverts; all the under part from the chin is peach blossom, tinged with chestnut colour; the feathers of the thighs, the tail-coverts, and the middle of the belly, are green; the feathers of the tail are the same, but the centre ones are rather brown, and all are spotted with white.

Observations. – This parrakeet, so easily distinguished by its plumage, is lively, fearful, and its cry is frequent. It learns nothing of itself, and it is with great difficulty that it can be made to repeat a few words. I have seen it, with the preceding and following species, among the beautiful collection of birds belonging to his Highness the Duke of Meiningen.

THE RED-HEADED GUINEA PARRAKEET

**Psittacus Manillensis, Bechstein; Perruche à collier
couleur de rose, Buffon; Der Manilische Sittich, Bechstein**

This beautiful species, whose colours are soft and the feathers thick and silky, is hardly larger than the thrush, though its length is from fourteen to fifteen inches, two-thirds of which are included in the tail. The naked membrane is flesh-coloured, the eyelids very red. The plumage is, in general, light green. From the black throat there extends a ring round the neck, which is black at first, and afterwards pale rose colour; the back of the neck in old birds has a blue tint.

In the female the black of the throat is not so wide, there is no rose-coloured ring, and the under part of the body more nearly approaches yellow.

Observations. – This species, which is very mild, tame, and beautiful, is a native of the Philippines, particularly Manilla; some say that it is also very common in Africa. It is very pleasing, certainly, but rarely learns to speak, and then only a few words. It must be treated like other delicate species.

THE PAVOUAN PARROT

**Psittacus Guianensis, Linnæus; La Perruche
Pavouane, Buffon; Der Guianische Sittich, Bechstein**

This species is only twelve inches in length, including the tail, which measures six and a quarter, and has the two centre feathers three inches longer than the others. The upper part of the body is dark green, the under lighter. The cheeks are not spotted with bright red till the third year.

Observations. – It is a native of Guiana, Cayenne, and the Caribbee Islands. Bird-sellers in Germany are generally provided with them, as they are not delicate or difficult to carry about. They must be treated like the former species.

“This,” says Buffon, “is, of all parrots from the new continent, the most easily taught to speak; nevertheless it is only tractable in this particular, for even after a long captivity it still preserves a native wildness and ferocity, and is sometimes stubborn and ill-humoured. But as it has a lively eye, is neatly and well formed, it is admired for its shape.”

THE ROSE-RINGED PARRAKEET

Psittacus pullarius, Linnæus; La Perruche à tête rouge, Buffon; Der Rothköpfige Guineische Sittich, Bechstein

Bird-sellers give the name of *Guinea-sparrow* to this little parrakeet, which is not larger than the common crossbill. The beak is red, but pale at the tip, the membrane at the base ash colour, as well as the circle round the eyes. The feet are grey, the iris bluish; the front part of the head and throat are red; the edge of the wings and rump blue. The upper side of the tail feathers is red, the under has a black streak, the tip is green; the two centre feathers are entirely green, like the rest of the body.

In the female, the colours are the same, though lighter, and the lower part of the wing is yellow.

These birds may be found in any part of the torrid zone in the old world, from Guinea to India. As most of them died on the voyage, there were formerly very few of them in Europe, but as the means of preserving them is now better known, most bird-sellers have them. Though they cannot learn to speak, and their cry is rather disagreeable, yet one cannot help admiring them as much for their beauty as their great mildness. They are so much attached to each other that they must always be had in pairs, and if one dies the other rarely survives it. Some people think that a mirror hung in the cage, in which the survivor may imagine that it still sees its lost companion, will console it. The male remains affectionately near the female, feeds her, and gives her the most tender caresses; she, in her turn, shows the greatest uneasiness if she be separated from him for an instant. In the countries which this species inhabits, it makes great havoc among the corn. In Europe it is fed on canary seed, millet, and white bread soaked in boiled milk.

THE CAROLINA PARROT

**Psittacus Carolinensis, Linnæus²⁶; La Perruche à tête jaune,
Buffon, pl. enl. 499; Der Carolinische Sittich, Bechstein**

This bird is about the size of a turtle-dove; its length is thirteen inches, of which the tail measures at least half. The beak is as white as ivory, the membrane and naked circle of the eyes, as well as the feet and claws, greyish white; the front of the head of a beautiful orange, the back, the nape of the neck, and the throat, light yellow; the rest of the neck, the back, breast, belly, and sides, are green; the tail is green, and very wedge-shaped.

Observations. – A native of Guiana; this pretty parrot also breeds in Carolina, and sometimes even penetrates into Virginia in large flocks during the fruit season, making great ravages among the nuts, of which it only eats almonds, rejecting all others. It is frequently brought to Europe; and in Paris it is the species of parrot which costs the most. It is fed, says Buffon, on hemp seed; but it is better to add white bread soaked in water, or boiled milk which is not sour, wheat, Indian corn, and the like. Its cry is frequent; it is rather wicked, and does not speak; but it well makes up for this by its beauty, the elegance of its form, its graceful movements, and its strong and almost exclusive attachment to its mistress; it likes to hang by the beak, even while sleeping, and will let itself be carried thus every where without moving for a very long time.

²⁶ It appears that the *Psittacus Ludovicianus*, Linnæus, *Perruche à tête aurore*, Buffon, is the same species.

THE LITTLE BLUE AND GREEN PARRAKEET

**Psittacus passerinus, Linnæus; La Perruche passerine
été, ou Toui été, Buffon; Der Sperlingsparkit, Bechstein**

Its size very little exceeds that of the sparrow. A beautiful light green is the predominant colour of its plumage; but the rump is blue, the large wing-coverts are the same; the small ones, again, are green. The beak, the membrane at the base, the circle of the eyes, and the feet, are often orange; it sometimes varies, however, to yellow, ash colour, and flesh colour.

Observations. – This species is as social and affectionate as the preceding, but much more rare and dear. It is a native of Brazil, and cannot speak. It must be fed on canary seed, millet, and hemp.

THE GREY-BREASTED PARROT

Psittacus murinus, Linnæus; La Perruche à poitrine grise, Buffon; Der grünbrustige Sittich, Bechstein

This pretty parrot, distinguished by its silvery grey colour, is about the size of a turtle-dove. Its ruffling the feathers of its head, particularly on the cheeks, added to the smallness and peculiar way in which it holds its bill, which is always buried in its breast, gives it somewhat the appearance of a small screech owl. Its length is ten inches, of which the wedge-shaped tail measures half. The beak is three-quarters of an inch in length, pearl grey, or whitish. The forehead, to about the middle of the top of the head, the cheeks, throat, breast, and half the belly are of a light silvery grey, with shades appearing like grey stripes; the upper part of the body and tail are of a brilliant siskin green.

Observations. – This species is very mild, speaks but little, and even seems to be of a melancholy turn. Its call, which is “*keirshe*,” is loud and sonorous. It is the same species which is mentioned in the Travels of Bougainville, by Pernetty. “We found it,” says he, “at Montevideo, where our sailors bought several at two piastres a-piece. These birds were very tame and harmless; they soon learnt to speak, and became so fond of the men that they were never easy when away from them.” The general opinion is, that they will not live more than a year and a half if kept in a cage; this prejudice is completely refuted by the bird from which this description is taken, and which may be seen in the collection of his Highness the Duke of Saxe Meiningen.

THE RED AND BLUE HEADED PARRAKEET

**Psittacus canicularis, Linnæus; La Perruche à front
rouge, Buffon; Der rothstirnige Sittich, Bechstein**

This species, which is rather common among us, is ten inches in length, of which the tail measures half, of which the folded wings cover one third; the forehead is scarlet, the top of the head a fine sky blue, paler at the back; the upper part of the body meadow green, the under lighter.

The forehead is orange, and the circle of the eye pale yellow may be peculiar to the female.

Observations. – This parrot is handsome, but does not speak. Although a native of South America, is not very delicate or difficult to preserve. The food as usual.

THE RED-CRESCENTED PARAKEET

***Psittacus lunatus*, Bechstein; Der Mondfleckige, Bechstein**

This species, which I have not found described by any author, may be seen in the collection belonging to his Highness the Duke of Saxe Meiningen. Its length is eleven inches and a half, of which the tail measures six. The beak, one inch in length. The forehead is deep red, a crescent of the same colour extends towards the upper part of the neck, ornamenting the top of the breast; the upper part of the body is leek green, becoming a little darker on the head. The under part of the body is light green, slightly tinted with red on the breast; the under part of the pen and tail feathers is dirty yellow.

Observations. – I do not know of what country this parrot is a native. It appears very lively, cries often and very loudly “*goeur, goeur,*” speaks prettily and distinctly, and appears very healthy. The bird from which the description is taken is certainly a proof that this species will attain a great age, for it is very old.

THE GREAT WHITE COCKATOO

**Psittacus cristatus, Linnæus; Kakatoes à huppe
blanche, Buffon; Der gemeine Kakatu, Bechstein**

The size of this bird is that of a barn-door fowl, and its length seventeen inches. The beak is blackish, and the membrane at the base black; the iris is dark brown, the circle of the eye white. The whole of the plumage is white except the large quill-feathers and the exterior feathers of the tail, the inner beards of which are primrose-yellow to the centre. The tuft, which the bird raises and sinks at will, is five inches in length.

Observations. – At present, this species is only found in the Moluccas. The general custom in Germany is to give it a spacious cage in the form of a bell, from the top of which is hung a large metal ring, in which it likes to perch.

The food of the cockatoo is the same as that of the other large species of the same family; however, it appears to be very fond of vegetables, farinaceous grains, and pastry. For its qualities, I cannot do better than quote Buffon:

“Cockatoos,” says he, “which may be known by their tuft, are not easily taught to speak; there is one species which does not speak at all; but this is in some measure compensated for by the great facility with which they are tamed; in some parts of India they are even so far domesticated that they will build their nests on the roofs of the houses: this facility of education is owing to their intelligence, which is very superior to that of other parrots. They listen, understand, and obey; but it is in vain that they make the same efforts to repeat what is said to them: they seem to wish to make up for it by other expressions of feeling and by affectionate caresses. There is a mildness and grace in all their movements, which greatly adds to their beauty. In March, 1775, there were two, a male and female, at the fair of St. Germain, in Paris, which obeyed with great docility the orders given them, either to spread out their tuft, or salute people with a bend of the head, or to touch different objects with their beak and tongue, or to reply to questions from their master with a mark of assent which clearly expressed a silent *yes*: they also showed by repeated signs the number of persons in the room, the hour of day, the colour of clothes, &c.; they kissed one another by touching their beaks, and even caressed each other; this showed a wish to pair, and the master affirms that they often do so even in our climates. Though the cockatoos, like other parrots, use their bill in ascending and descending, yet they have not their heavy disagreeable step; on the contrary, they are very active, and hop about very nimbly.”

THE LESSER WHITE COCKATOO

**Psittacus sulphureus, Linnæus; Kakatoes à huppe
jaune, Buffon; Der gelbhäubige Kakatu, Bechstein**

The length of this species is fourteen inches and a half. The beak, the naked membrane, and feet are blackish; the circle of the eye is rather white, and the iris inclining to red. The general colour of this species is also white, with a primrose-yellow tint on the wings and tail, as well as a spot of the same colour under the eyes. The tuft, which is pointed, and composed of soft thread-like feathers, is of lemon-colour.

It comes from the same country as the preceding, to which it yields neither in elegance, intelligence, docility, nor mildness. It is fond of caresses, and returns them with pleasure: all its motions are equally full of grace, delicacy, and beauty. There are two varieties of this species, which only differ in size.

THE GREAT RED-CRESTED COCKATOO

Psittacus Moluccensis, Linnæus; Kakatoes à huppe rouge, Buffon; Der rothhäubige Kakatu, Bechstein

This species is a little larger than the common cockatoo, its size being almost equal to that of the red and blue maccaw. Its beak is bluish black, the membrane black, the circle of the eyes pearl grey, and the iris deep red. The feet are lead colour, the nails black. White, tinged with pale rose-red, is the prevailing colour; the tuft, which falls back on the head, is very large, most of the feathers being six inches in length; of which the under side is of a beautiful orange. In the side tail feathers, from the base to the centre of the interior beard, the colour is primrose-yellow; the under part of the pen-feathers has a tint of the same.

Observations. – This beautiful bird has a noble air; and, though often tamed, it is rarely so caressing as the common cockatoo; its cry, like that of the other species, is its own name; it also cries “*tertingue*” very loud, and like a trumpet, and imitates the voice of several animals, particularly the cackling of fowls and the crowing of cocks. When it cries it flaps its wings.

Though a native of the Moluccas, it is neither delicate nor difficult to rear.

THE RED-VENTED COCKATOO

Psittacus Philippinarum, Linnæus; Le petit Kakatoes des Philippines, Buffon; Der rothbäuchige Kakatu, Bechstein

This species, the size of the grey parrot, is but thirteen inches in length. The beak is white, or of a pale flesh colour, and grey at the base; the circle of the eyes is yellowish-red; the feet are of a silver-grey; the general colour of the body is white; the head is ornamented with a tuft, in which there is nothing remarkable but its raising it in the form of a shell.

Observations. – It is a native of the Philippines. Its beauty and great docility are its chief merits; for it cannot speak, and it also appears of a jealous nature, being angry when it sees the other parrots caressed, and making the unpleasant cry of “*aiai, miai!*” but never “*cockatoo.*”

THE BANKSIAN COCKATOO

Psittacus Banksii, Linnæus; Le Kakatoes Noir, Buffon; Der Banksche Kakatu, Bechstein

This certainly is the handsomest, rarest, and most precious of all the cockatoos. It is as large as the red and blue maccaw, its length being from twenty-two to thirty inches. The beak is thick, yellowish, and black at the point; the iris red, and the feet black. Black is the prevailing colour of its plumage; the tuft is rather long, but in a state of tranquillity lies flat on the head, as in the preceding cockatoo; each feather has a yellowish spot exactly on the tip; the wing-coverts are also terminated with a similar spot.

Varieties. – Of this beautiful species there are several varieties.

1. Those with the beak lead-coloured; the tuft of a moderate size, black mixed with the yellow feathers; the throat yellow; the sides of the neck spotted with yellow and black; the tail as above; all the rest black, without any streaks on the under part of the body.

2. Those with the beak bluish grey, plumage olive, or black, with a yellowish tint on the sides of the head, but having no feather with a yellow tip. The belly of one colour, without streaks; tail as above. This may possibly be a young one.

3. Those with the beak raven-grey; the head, the neck, and the under part of the body of a dark dirty brown colour. The feathers on the top of the head and nape of the neck are bordered with olive: the upper part of the body, the wings and tail, of a brilliant black; the centre feathers of the latter are of one colour; the others scarlet in the middle, but without streaks. This is perhaps a female.

Observations. – This noble and handsome bird is still rather rare in England, and still more so in Germany. It may be found in many parts of New Holland; its motions resemble those of the common cockatoo and the manner of treating it is the same.

THE ASH-COLOURED PARROT

Psittacus erithacus, Linnaeus; Le Perroquet cendré, ou le Jaco, Buffon; Der Gemeiner aschgrauer Papagay, Bechstein

This parrot and the following are the most common and docile that we possess. Its length is nine inches. The beak is black, the membrane at its base, and the circle of the eyes have a powdered appearance. The feet are ash-coloured, the iris yellowish. A fine pearl grey and slate-colour tinges the whole body; the feathers of the head, neck, and belly are edged with whitish grey; the tail, which is short, and of a vermilion colour, terminates and relieves this shining and watered plumage, which also has a powdered appearance. The male and female are alike, and learn with equal facility. Most of the birds of this species are brought from Guinea, but they also inhabit the interior parts of Africa, as well as Congo and the coasts of Angola.

Food. – In its native country it lives on all kinds of fruit and grain; it will also become quite fat on the seed of the safflower, which to man is so violent a purgative. Here it eats any of our food; but white bread soaked in boiled milk, and fruits, are what it likes best. Meat, of which it is very fond, brings on diarrhoea, as in other parrots, and that kind of green sickness which makes it peck itself and tear out its feathers, &c.

There are some instances, when treated with care, of their having lived for sixty years.

Breeding. – In its native country this species builds in high trees. This is the first of this group of birds which has bred in Europe. “M. de la Pigeonnière,” says Buffon, “had a male and female parrot in the city of Marmanote, in Angenois, which used to breed regularly every spring for five or six years; the young ones of each brood were always reared by the parent birds. The female laid four eggs each time, three of which were fruitful, and the other not so. In order that they may breed at their ease, they must be placed in a room in which there is nothing but a barrel, open at one end, and partly filled with saw-dust; sticks must be placed inside and out of the barrel, that the male may ascend them whenever he likes, and remain near his companion. Before entering this room the precaution must be taken to put on boots, that the legs may be guarded from the attacks of the jealous parrot, which pecks at everything which approaches its female.” The P. Labat also gives an account of two parrots which had “several broods in Paris.”

Diseases. – This parrot becomes more subject to the different diseases in proportion as it is fed on choice food. Gout in the feet is the most general, and the specifics used for the bird are not more certain in their cure than those used for man. It is not difficult to prevent this evil by great cleanliness, and giving it no meat or other niceties.

Attractive Qualities. – This parrot, like the following, learns not only to speak and whistle, but also to make all kinds of gestures; and it even performs some tricks which require skill. It is particularly distinguished by its pleasing and caressing behaviour to its master. As an example of the talents of this species, Buffon gives an account of one which, “being instructed on its voyage by an old sailor, had acquired his harsh, hoarse voice so perfectly that it was often mistaken for him. Though it was afterwards given to a young person, and no longer heard the voice, it never forgot the lessons of its old master; and it was exceedingly amusing to hear it pass from a soft pleasing voice to its old hoarse sea tone. This bird not only has a great facility in imitating the voice of man, but it also seems to have a wish to do so, and this wish is shown in its great attention, the efforts which it makes to repeat the sounds it hears, and its constant repetition of them, for it incessantly repeats any words which it has just learnt, and endeavours to make its voice heard above every other. One is often surprised to hear it say words and make sounds, which no one had taught it, and to which it was not even suspected to have listened. It seemed to practise its lesson every day till night, beginning again on the next

morning. It is while young that it shows this great facility in learning; its memory is then better, and the bird is altogether more intelligent and docile. This memory is sometimes very astonishing, as in a parrot which, as Rodiginus tells, a cardinal bought for one hundred crowns of gold, because it could repeat correctly the Apostles' Creed; and M. de la Borde tells us of another which served as chaplain to the vessel, reciting the prayer to the sailors, and afterwards repeating the rosary.”

THE CERAM LORY

Psittacus garrulus, Linnæus; Le Lori Noir variété dite de Ceram, Buffon; Der geschwätzige Lory, Bechstein

It is of the size of a pigeon, its length being from ten to eleven inches. The colours vary very much; but the following are the most common. Beak orange-coloured, naked membrane at its base, and the circle of the eyes grey; the iris deep yellow, and feet brown. The predominating colour of the body is bright red; but the small wing-coverts are a mixture of green and yellow.

It comes from the Moluccas, and is treated like the preceding, which it equals in docility.

THE BLUE-CAPPED LORY

**Psittacus domicella, Linnæus; Le Lory demoiselle,
ou à collier, Buffon; Der blauköpfige Lory, Bechstein**

This magnificent species is of the size of a pigeon, and ten inches and a half in length. The beak is orange, the membrane blackish, as well as the circle of the eyes. The top of the head is purple black, or rather black shading to purple, on the nape of the neck; a crescent of light yellow, more or less visible, ornaments the under part of the throat. The outer edge of the quill-feathers, and the small wing-coverts, are of a deep blue, shading to sky blue; the others of a meadow green. The tail is slightly wedge-shaped, and of a bluish purple, tinged with red brown.

In the female, which is smaller, the crescent is either not visible or only faintly marked; the blue on the head is very slight; the border of the wing is a mixture of blue and green; this is all the blue which there is in the wings.

Variety. – The lower part of the back and belly, the rump, and the thighs are white and rose colour; the upper and under tail-coverts red and white; the wing-coverts green, with a mixture of light yellow; the beak light yellow; the rest as usual.

Observations. – This species has the same attractions as the other lories, and to judge from the specimen which I have seen among the collection of the Duke of Meiningen, it appeared to be the mildest, most endearing, and amiable; in short, the most docile and talkative of all the parrots. It cries *lory*, and chatters incessantly, but in a hollow voice, something like that of a man who speaks from his chest; it repeats everything whistled to it in a clear tone; it likes to be always caressed and paid attention to; its memory is very good.

This delicate species, being preserved with difficulty during the voyage, is also very rare and dear; it is a native of the Moluccas and of New Guinea; it requires to be taken great care of, to be kept warm; and to have its food changed when necessary.

THE BLACK-CAPPED LORY

**Psittacus Lory, Linnæus; Lory des Philippines,
Buffon; Der schwarzkappige Lory, Bechstein**

This is about the size of the preceding. Its beak is orange; the membrane and circle of the eyes of a dark flesh colour; the iris orange. The feet are black; the top of the head the same, with a blue tint; the whole body is scarlet, except a blue spot between the back and neck, and another below the breast; both of these spots have a few red feathers; the wings are green above.

Observations. – The black-capped lory is still more scarce in Europe than the preceding, therefore it is dearer, but appears to possess all its good qualities.

THE WHITE-FRONTED PARROT

Psittacus leucocephalus, Linnæus; Perroquet Amazone à tête blanche; Der weissköpfige Amazonenpapagey, Bechstein

This is one of the most talkative parrots usually kept. Its beak is whitish, the circle of the eyes white; the iris nut brown; the feet are dark brown. The top, or rather the back of the head, is light blue in the male, and green in the female. The general colour is green, but the edge of the feathers is brown, particularly in the front part of the body. The red edge of the wing is the distinguishing characteristic of the male in Buffon's family of amazons.

This parrot is found in St. Domingo, Cuba, and even in Mexico. It is very mild and talkative, and imitates the cries of cats, dogs, and other animals to perfection.

It must be kept very clean, and not let suffer from cold.

THE BLUE-FACED PARROT

**Psittacus autumnalis, Linnæus; Le Crick à tête
bleue, Buffon; Der Herbstkrickpapagey, Bechstein**

This is about the size of a pigeon. The beak is horn colour, with a long streak of orange on each side of the upper mandible; the whole circle of the head and the throat are blue; the top of the head and under part of the neck to the breast are red; the rest of the body is green, except the large quill-feathers, which are blue; some, however, are red, with a blue tip.

Varieties.— 1. The head, instead of being red and blue, is red and white.

2. The forehead scarlet, the top of the head blue, an orange spot under the eyes, the upper border of the wings light yellow.

3. Forehead and throat red behind, and under the eyes blue, the top of the head greenish yellow, the lower border of the wings red, the end of the tail pale light yellow.

4. All the body blackish except the breast, the feathers of which are edged with dark brown and red.

Observations. — These birds inhabit Guinea, learn very little, and continually cry “*guirr, guirr.*”

COMMON AMAZON PARROT

***Psittacus æstivus*, Linnæus; Der gemeine Amazonenpapagey, Bechstein**

This species is imported in so great numbers that it is found at every bird-seller'r, and is one of the cheapest. Its varieties are numerous. The following are the general colours: beak blackish; feet ash-coloured; iris golden yellow; forehead bluish, as well as the space between the eyes; head and throat yellow, but the throat-feathers are edged with a blue green; the body a brilliant green, inclining to yellowish on the back and belly.

This bird is common in the hottest parts of America, learns to speak, is very docile, sociable, and requires only common attention.

THE YELLOW-HEADED AMAZON PARROT

Psittacus nobilis, Linnæus; Psittacus ochrocephalus, Gmelin; Amazone à tête jaune, Buffon; Der gelbköpfige Amazonenpapagey, Bechstein

The length of this species is fifteen inches, of which the tail measures five; the beak one inch, the sides of the upper mandible and base of the lower are red, the rest of the beak is raven grey; the iris golden yellow; the feet greyish flesh colour, and claws black. The top of the head is golden yellow, the forehead yellowish green; the colour of the body is green, dark above, and more yellow under; the tail is but slightly wedge-shaped; but Linnæus considered it sufficiently so to class it among the long wedge-shaped tails.

Observations. – This bird is very mild, and sometimes chatters and utters a few dull sounds, but at other times it speaks but little.

Its native country is South America: it is treated like the preceding.

THE YELLOW-BREASTED TUCAN

Ramphastos Tucanus, Linnæus; Toucan à gorge jaune du Brésil, Buffon; Der Tukan oder Pfeffervogel, Bechstein

Tucans are distinguished by the great size of their beak, which is convex above, hooked towards the point, hollow, light, and toothed on the edges like a saw. The feet have two claws before and two behind. In summer these birds are brought from South America to England and Holland, whence they are taken to Germany, though not often. They eat fruit, berries, grapes, bread, meat, and in general any of our food. In order to swallow anything they throw it into the air, catching it in their throats. They are generally reared from the nest, which is placed in the hole of a tree, and only contains two young ones, which in a short time are domesticated, and become very attractive.

Of the nine inches, which is the whole length of this tucan, the beak alone measures five, and is grey at the base and black at the point. The upper part of the body is of a green black; the cheeks, throat, and front of the neck are orange, with a crimson band across the breast. The stomach is of a fine red, the belly and sides blackish, as well as the pen-feathers and tail. The upper tail-coverts are of a sulphur colour, the under ones are crimson; the feet and claws lead colour.

THE BRAZILIAN TUCAN

**Rhamphastos piscivorus, Linnæus; Le Toucan à gorge blanche
du Brésil, Buffon; Der Brasilische Pfeffervogel, Bechstein**

This species is twenty inches in length, of which the beak measures six; the upper mandible is yellowish green, with the edges orange coloured and toothed; the under mandible is of a fine blue, and the points of both are red. The iris is light brown; the circle of the eyes greenish yellow; the top of the head, the neck, back, belly, wings, and tail are black; the throat, the breast, and sides yellowish white; the part about the stomach is ornamented with a beautiful red crescent.

It is a native of Cayenne and Brazil.

THE PREACHER TUCAN

Rhamphastos picatus, Linnæus; Le Toucan à ventre rouge; Der Prediger Pfeffervogel, Bechstein

The whole length of the bird is twenty inches, of which the beak measures six; the point is red, and all the rest is yellowish-green. The prevailing colour is a brilliant black, with tints of green before, and grey ash colour on the back part of the body. The breast is of a fine orange; the belly, sides, thighs, lesser tail-coverts, and the tips of the feathers, are of a lively red. This Toucan inhabits Africa and Brazil; its long and incessant cry has given it the name of *Preacher*. It is as easy to tame as to feed, for it will eat any thing.

WOODPECKERS

The birds in this group in general have the beak rectangular, in a few instances very slightly hooked, never thick nor very long.

THE GREEN WOODPECKER

***Picus viridis*, Linnæus; Le Pic vert, Buffon; Der Grünspecht, Bechstein**

The length of this bird is twelve inches and a half, but four and a half of these are included in the tail, almost half of which is covered by the folded wings. The beak, an inch and a half in length, is triangular, very pointed, and of a dark grey; the iris is grey; the tongue is five inches long, and furnished, like that of the other woodpeckers, with a horny tip, and strong hairs on each side, so as to be useful in catching and piercing insects. The top of the head to the nape of the neck is of a brilliant crimson; a black streak, which in old birds is often tinged with red, descends on each side of the neck; the upper part of the body is of a beautiful olive green, the under part of a dusky greenish white: some transverse lines may be seen on the belly, which become more distinct on the sides.

In the female the colours are paler, and there is less red on the head, which, when it is young, is only grey.

Habitation. – When wild, the green woodpecker, during summer, frequents woods and orchards which are near these, but when the air becomes cold, and the snow begins to fall, it approaches villages, and flies from one garden to another; it passes the night in the holes of trees; when it finds dead, decayed, or worm-eaten ones, it pierces them on all sides with its strong beak, in order to find the insects they conceal. It never attacks a healthy tree, therefore it is not right to kill it as being mischievous; it only taps the bark of trees to make the insects come out, and its strokes are then so quick that they resemble a humming.

In the house its fierce and impetuous character makes it necessary to keep it in close confinement.

Food. – In its wild state it constantly seeks the insects which live under the bark and in the wood of trees; it also eats ants, and in winter will even take bees from the hive.

In the house it is fed on nuts, ants' eggs, and meat.

Breeding. – The female lays three or four perfectly white eggs in the hole of a tree; if the young are to be tamed they must be taken from the nest when only half fledged; it is impossible to tame adults or old ones; we cannot even make them eat.

Attractive Qualities. – The beauty of its plumage is all that can be said of it; for it is so fierce, quick, and stubborn, that it can only be kept by means of a chain. I know no instance in which every kind of attention has rendered it more docile and agreeable: it is always untractable. One or two of these chained birds, however, do not look bad as a variety. It is curious to see them crack the nuts.

THE GREATER SPOTTED WOODPECKER

**Picus major, Linnæus; L'Lpeiche, ou Pic varié,
Buffon; Der Grosser Buntspecht, Bechstein**

This bird is rather larger than a thrush, nine inches long of which the tail measures three and a half, and the beak one. The legs are three lines high, and of a bluish olive; the iris is bluish, with a white ring; the forehead yellowish brown; the top of the head and the back black; the nape of the neck crimson; the shoulders white, the wings and tail black, and streaked with yellowish white; the belly of a dirty reddish white, the part about the vent crimson.

The female has no red on the nape of the neck.

Habitation and Food. – This woodpecker continually ranges woods and orchards in search of its food, which consists of insects, beech-mast, acorns, nuts, and the seed of pines and firs. In order to crack the nuts, it fixes them in the clefts of the trees. The female builds its nest in the hole of a tree, and lays from four to six white eggs. Before moulting the head of the young ones is red. They must be taken early from the nest if they are to be tamed. They are fed and treated like the green woodpecker.

THE MIDDLE SPOTTED WOODPECKER

**Picus medius, Linnæus; Le Pic varié à tête rouge,
Buffon; Der Mittlerer Buntspecht, Bechstein**

This is only distinguished from the former by being rather smaller: the beak is more slender, and very pointed. The top of the head is crimson, and the region of the vent rose-coloured. It is, besides, less common, and the young which are reared are not so untractable, though never very docile²⁷. They are generally kept in a cage, and fastened by a little chain.

²⁷ I have, however, seen a woodpecker of this species which was reared by a lady, to whom it seemed very much attached. It had learnt of itself to go and return, knocking hard at the window if it was shut out. It was very amusing to see it climbing nimbly over its mistress till it had reached her mouth; it then asked her by light strokes of its beak for the food which she was accustomed to give it; this was generally a little meat. It disappeared one day, without any one's knowing what accident had befallen it. – Translator.

THE LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER

**Picus minor, Linnæus; Le Petit Epeiche,
Buffon; Der Kleiner Buntspecht, Bechstein**

This bird is the size of a lark, five inches and a half in length, two of which are included in the tail, and the beak measures seven lines. The feet are of a greenish black; the rump is white; the top of the head crimson; the nape of the neck black; the back white, with transverse streaks of black; the under part of the body is of a reddish white grey, and the sides are streaked with black.

The female had no red on the head.

Habitation and Food. – This rare species inhabits forests of beech and oak, skilfully catching the insects under the bark and moss of these trees; it even flies to the ground to seek the same food among the grass. While rearing the young ones, they must be kept in a cage.

THE WRYNECK

Yunx torquilla, Linnæus; Le Torcol, Buffon; Der Gemeiner Wendehals, Bechstein

Though it is six inches and a half in length, it is not larger than our lark, because its tail includes three inches and a quarter, and its beak nine lines. The iris is of a brownish yellow, the feet, two claws of which are before and two behind, are short, strong, and lead colour. The head is ash-coloured, speckled with small rust-coloured spots mixed with some white ones. The top of the head and half of the back are divided lengthwise by a broad black streak, edged with rust colour; the rest of the upper part of the body is of a fine grey, streaked and speckled with black, white, and rust colour. In the female the belly is paler than in the male.

Habitation. – When wild, it is a bird of passage, which departs during the first fortnight of September, and does not return till the end of April, frequenting groves and orchards. In August it goes into gardens and fields planted with cabbages and other vegetables.

In the house it is better to let it run about at will than to keep it in a cage, where it would soil its feathers, particularly those on the belly and breast, while playing.

Food. – In its wild state, the wryneck lives on insects, for catching which it has a very long cylindrical tongue, with a hard point, that can be insinuated into all the chinks and fissures of trees. Ants' eggs are a very favourite food, and it does not dislike the ants themselves. Towards autumn, when the latter fail, it is contented with elderberries till the time of its departure which never varies.

In the house it must be first given ants' eggs; and then by degrees the universal paste, to which it soon becomes accustomed; but, as it is delicate, in order to preserve it for some time, the nightingales' food agrees better with it. It is very amusing to see it search all the cracks and crevices of the room for insects; and if a few ants' eggs were now and then put there, it would give it the greatest pleasure.

Breeding. – Its nest, which it places in the hole of a tree, is formed of moss, wool, hair, and straw. It lays eight eggs, which are white, and very smooth. The adults and old ones are difficult to preserve and tame; but the young ones may be easily reared on ants' eggs, and the universal paste, made of the crumb of white bread.

Mode of Taking. – In general it is caught by putting lime twigs round the nest; but if the weather be stormy, as in spring, when it is busy searching the bushes for insects, it may even be taken by the hand. The one I now have was brought to me by a little boy who had taken it in this manner.

Attractive Qualities. – Independently of its beautiful plumage, it is very amusing to see it make those movements which have given it its name of wryneck. It lengthens its neck, and turns round its head, so that the beak points down the back. Its general position is quite straight; the feathers of the head and throat very smooth, and the tail spread like a fan, at the same time bowing low. If it be irritated, or even if its food be brought, it slowly leans forward, raising the feathers on its head, lengthening and turning its neck, rolling its eyes; it then bows, spreads its tail, and murmurs some harsh sounds in its throat; in short, it puts itself in the most singular attitudes, and makes the most ridiculous grimaces. At other times it seems to have a melancholy disposition. In spring the male often cries in a full tone, *gui, gui, gui, gui*, to call its female.

M. de Schauroth informs me that two wrynecks which he reared became so tame, that they would hang about his clothes, and begin to warble as soon as they heard him, or saw him even at a distance. One day, being wearied and teased with its incessant cries, he drove one out of the window; but having called it towards evening, it immediately replied to his voice, and permitted itself to be taken. One of these birds, which he let range about at will, having perched on a neighbouring tree, he had only to hold out and show it the box containing its food, and it returned immediately.

THE TOURAKO

Cuculus Persa, Linnæus; Le Tourako, Buffon; Der Turako, Bechstein

This Bird, which is about the size of a magpie, has been placed among the cuckoos by Linnæus, and those who have copied him, only because its cry is *couc, couc*; for in no other respect does it belong to this genus. Its beak is short and thick, and resembles that of the pigeon in shape; the upper is bent over the lower, and of a reddish brown; the nostrils are covered with feathers; the iris is nut-brown; the eyelids are edged with small red warts; the opening of the throat is wide, extending to the back of the ears; the nails of an ash grey; the head, throat, neck, top of the back, with the upper wing-coverts, the breast, upper part of the belly and sides, are covered with soft silky feathers, of a beautiful deep green; the feathers on the top of the head gradually lengthen into a large triangular tuft, which the bird raises at will, and the tip of which is red. The green in the tuft is sometimes mixed with white.

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