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## THE NEW AVIARY AT THE "ZOO".

OR,

### WILD FOWL AT HOME



"THE GRAND AVIARY."

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F birds can in any way be considered happy when in confinement, surely the fate of our feathered friends at the 'Zoo' may be so styled. They have to my mind always been "in

clover," there supplied not only with their natural surroundings, but with every comfort besides.

And how charming these little enclosures are! The months of June and July exhibit the ponds to the greatest advantage. If any of my young readers on entering the south gate will only devote a little time to the most charming of all the pieces of water in the grounds, I am sure he or she will find much to interest them. As a rule with visitors the prevailing notion appears to be that they must see all they can in as short a space of time as possible; but I am sure there will be many amongst my readers who are fond of bird life, and here it can be studied in a way which it would be impossible to do in a state of nature, for most birds are timid, and hence the difficulty in approaching them. Here the little things have no fear of that cruel gun, and are inclined to look upon all visitors as friends.

The one great disadvantage which all the feathered tribe have had to put up with for years past, has been the inability to use their wings; not only has this been felt as a sad deprivation of their natural mode of life, but it has seriously affected their health. The cutting



CHILIAN PINTAILS.

the flight feathers of one of the wings has naturally deprived the bird of a comfortable coat, and as a matter of course, all the vital parts of the body have been exposed to the cold on one side. The wings of a bird keep it warm, when not in the act of flying, and in health during the winter especially.

Thanks, however, to the happy thought of the society, this has been done away with to a great extent, and the grand aviary, as shown in our picture, has been opened. We may now witness one of the most beautiful sights and interesting features of the Zoological Society's Gardens: herons, storks, ducks, sea-gulls, all on the wing (the best time to see this will be feeding-time). Hours may be delightfully spent watching their various habits, and to show how it is appreciated by the birds themselves, since the enclosure has been built a couple of sacred ibises have been hatched, the mother ibis having made a comfortable nest in one of the shrubs in a retired corner of the aviary. Two quiet corners have been provided for the shy birds, as some birds are naturally shy, especially at certain periods of the year; but one can watch them making their nests, and leading the life natural to them in their own distant homes, without in the least disturbing them, as the space is considerable. Now I think you will agree with me, when you see some of these beautiful creatures, hitherto received with such passing notice as "What ugly birds!"—and will admire them when you see them on the wing.

The herons, for instance, and the beautiful white egrets, can now sport about without fear or hindrance, occasionally fighting, but very rarely doing any harm to themselves. The stupid flamingoes are particularly amusing; watch them eating and jabbering amongst themselves; we can't call it quarrelling, as they never by any chance hurt each other, but desperately interfere with each other's dinner; then in the middle of it the comic demoiselle crane makes her appearance, takes enormous delight in scattering them right and left, opening her wings, and appearing to dance round them. My space, however, will not allow me to give a detailed account of all I have seen, and which I must leave to my readers to study for themselves, but I can assure them that a great treat is in store for them now that the happy sunny days of June have come again. I have made a few sketches of a portion of the grand aviary, and of some of its pretty inhabitants, so that our readers may have some slight idea of the pleasures to come.

Before concluding this little sketch, I should, however, like to call their attention to one or two of the most interesting birds. Take, for instance the sacred ibis. This was held in great reverence by the Egyptians, and is often seen sculptured upon their monuments. There are several species of this bird; perhaps the most beautiful is the scarlet variety (*Ibis rubra*) of North America; but the most interesting, no doubt, is the one pictured. So sacred was this bird held, that no boy dare rob its nest, or naturalist capture a specimen or steal one of its eggs without all sorts of horrors being heaped on his head by the Arabs; but in the present day he has lost his sacred mission, and leads, I am afraid, a very prosaic life indeed.

#### THE FLAMINGOES.

These curious birds are sometimes classed amongst the *anatida* or ducks, but really osteologically they come between the storks and herons. There are eight specimens known, which mostly inhabit the tropical and temperate portions of the old and new worlds. They chiefly frequent brackish lagoons and salt water lakes, and as a rule wade for food, but being web-footed can swim well, but with a peculiar action on account of their long legs, so that at first they are easily taken for swans by the inexperienced.

#### THE PURPLE HERON.

These birds are seen to much greater advan-



SPOTTED-BILLED DUCKS (INDIA) AND VARIEGATED SHELDRAKE.

tage on the wing, except when in the act of fishing. No conception can be formed of them from the often huddled up figures seen in an ordinary enclosure; they are really most graceful in flight. The heron gets his living in the water; his food is fish, and a wonderful angler he is. Observe him standing knee-deep in the water; he suddenly makes a dart, his bill striking the water brings out a fish, throws his head back, swallows the dainty, and prepares for the approach of another silly little fish; but they always build in trees overlooking the water.

The egrets are closely allied with the herons, and are constantly seen together; they are shy birds, but the white specimens are very pretty, when you can get a peep at them amongst the reeds; but in the aviary they have gained confidence.

#### THE WHITE STORK

is a very beautiful bird, seldom if ever seen in this country, although he migrates to Europe and is visible in Holland. The peasants encourage these storks to build on their houses, as they have a belief that where the stork builds no fire will occur. The stork is a native of Africa, and almost every Moorish hovel has its stork's nest.

I have given a few sketches of ducks. One very pretty little duck is the pintail; another the ruddy sheldrake; but of all pretty ducks, what can be prettier than the Mandarins. They are quite unique—such a variety of colour and form; but I am sure, after this little descriptive notice, my readers will be only too anxious to study ornithology for themselves, so I bid them take every opportunity of doing so at the "Zoo."

One thing always attracts and amuses visitors—that is the impudent sparrow who takes possession of the food provided for his bigger brethren. The little field mice are very pretty; very often you see a white one, with his pretty little pink eyes peeping out at you from the grass. They both have a happy time of it. If some of the black city sparrows only knew what a happy home there is not many miles off, methinks they would soon put in an appearance.

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