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CANARIES :

THEIR REARING AND MANAGEMENT.

By AN AMATEUR.

PART I.

WHEN I was in Germany some years back a lady gave me a canary. He was a charming little bird, answered to his name, "Tommy," and "would oblige the company with a song" when desired to do so. Some time afterwards I left Germany and returned to England. My parting with Tommy was a sore trial; but the best of friends must part, so I gave my sweet little bird to a German girl who I knew would be kind to him. A short time back I had a letter from Germany telling me that "Tommy died worn out with old age." He must have lived over a quarter of a century!

I did not attempt to find a successor to "Tommy" until four years ago, as my time was occupied by attending to pets who were even more precious. Happening, however, to pass a bird-fancier's one day, the old interest revived in me, and I determined again to keep a canary. I will now relate my experience from that day to the present time.

My purchase was a very young bird, and the man could not guarantee that it was a male. I bought it for five shillings, hoping that it was a male, because I wanted it to sing to me. The female is not much given to song, though it is a mistake to suppose that she never sings. My purchase, for instance, though it turned out to be a female, used to sing very prettily in a plaintive warbling manner—only for a short time, however, when the sun was setting.

As soon as I knew that it was a hen, the idea of



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"HE WAS A CHARMING LITTLE BIRD."

procuring a male bird suggested itself to me. I thought that I might possibly succeed in rearing a small family of canaries, so I consulted three friends who I knew kept birds. One of them told me that she had taken the greatest pains, had read all sorts of books upon the subject, consulted bird-fanciers and been most careful about feeding, supplying nesting materials and the latest and most approved kind of cage, in spite of which she had failed to rear even a single bird. Another friend told me that it was quite possible to rear canaries, but that she found it required so much attention and such constant care that she had given up the attempt. A third told me that she had reared a few but that it was no pleasure, because the birds could not bear being looked at, and had to be kept perfectly quiet in a breeding-cage placed in a nearly dark room, and never in any way be disturbed! If spoken to the hen would leave her nest and probably destroy it, my friend added. Now these experiences were far from encouraging, because I did not then perceive the reasons of my friend's failure.

Whether I myself should be considered successful by regular bird fanciers and rearers I do not know, but I have far exceeded my own modest expectations. Within the last three years I have reared over sixty birds from the two pairs with which I started, and all of them are flourishing and healthy. Of course I have sustained some losses; two of the original birds died after the first brood; the female of one pair and the male of the other. I think these misfortunes came about through my want of knowledge how to feed the birds at the critical breeding season, for critical it is, not only for the young birds but also for the parents. The latter must be provided with special food prepared with great care at such times, or they are apt to become exhausted and run down, as the saying is, after their rearing work is over. I have also lost about ten young birds from other causes. Sometimes the young birds are born weak, or the mother nests them clumsily; sometimes the father bird feeds them injudiciously, and their digestions suffer. It requires so very little to kill a bird a few days old.

I took up bird-rearing simply as an amusement, and I can give no information about the rarer kinds of canaries. Girls who want to become learned upon the "points" of high class specimens, pedigree birds, etc., must consult one of the works written upon this subject. It is one which I confess has little interest for me; in fact I rather dislike prize birds. So long as my pets please me, are cheerful, healthy and know me when I talk to them, take their seed from my hand or mouth, get the most enjoyment out of their own little lives, my trouble and the very small expense to which they have put me are amply repaid.

I love to see my little favourites fly about the room provided they do so gently; but never allow them out of the cage if they are at all wild, as a wild canary will almost kill itself by flying against a window-pane or a looking-glass, or hurt itself by struggling against the hand that is raised to put it safely back into the cage. It is a cruelty to let such birds out, especially if other birds are present in the room, as even the tamest of them are liable to take a "scare."

A short time back one of my younger birds got his nails entangled in the wires of the cage and fluttered about for some time before he could be released. This caused a regular panic, not only amongst the birds in his own cage, but also amongst the birds in five other large cages that were in the neighbourhood. It may be useful to state what I have found the best thing to do when a panic of this kind occurs during the night. I uncover the cages and turn up the gas so as to give as much light as possible (of course, if there is no gas, candles might be lit), then I talk gently to the birds. When they are still and settled I lower the gas and as quietly as possible cover over the cages. These panics amongst canaries are very common if many birds are kept, and often it is impossible to discover the cause of them. I am much inclined to think that these little creatures suffer from nightmare. So serious are these night panics that I have known birds who have been seized by them to break their wings and even to kill themselves. During these panics strangers should never be called into the room, for their presence would render the birds still more excited and frightened.

I have said that on one occasion a panic was caused by a bird getting his nails entangled with the wires, and this leads me to another point. Now however objectionable it may be for a human being to bite his or her nails, it is quite right that canaries should do so. Indeed, if they do not, their nails must be cut for them. When this is necessary, take hold of the bird and hold him in your hands, then get your sister or some other girl whom it knows to cut the nails with a sharp pair of scissors—but never below the "quick." Be careful to hold down the wings of the bird, so that he cannot flutter, but do not squeeze him, for canaries are such tender little mites. Sometimes, also, they get cotton or nest materials tangled round their feet. Remove these in the same manner.

Occasionally, when you look at the cages in the morning, you will find a poor little bird dead at the bottom of the cage. His death has been due either to one of these night panics, to apoplexy, consumption or poison. Remove at once the dead bird and all the food in the cage. Canaries are poisoned by some impurity in their food, mildew, etc., so you should carefully examine the food before giving it to them.

Now as to the food itself, I have found that canary seed, rape, millet and hemp agree with them best. The canary seed and rape may be mixed together in equal quantities and a small portion of millet added to them; but the hemp must be placed in a separate vessel, or the birds will throw out all the other seed to get at it. Hemp should only be given in very small quantities. The seed pods of the wild plantain (*Plantago major*) should be given. This you can pick up on the banks of canals and small streams and sometimes by the roadside in September. Pick large quantities of it and store some for the winter. Don't shake the seed out, but give it to the birds in long tails, as they like to pick it out for themselves. Don't give it green, but keep it until it has turned brown. It will keep through the winter; but be sure to put it in a dry place. Lettuces well-washed, groundsel and water-cress may be given fresh and green, and in the winter apple occasionally, also cuttle-fish, lump sugar, and very plain sweet biscuit, but no luxuries. Pray do not give chocolate "goodies," nuts, luscious fruits nor preserves, as all these things cause digestive troubles and shorten the lives of these little creatures. Probably the poor are more successful in rearing birds than the rich, because they keep them to a simpler and plainer diet.

Of the diet of breeding-birds I shall have to speak later on. Be very careful about the water, both for drinking and for bath. Whenever you let the birds out of the cage provide them with a bath full of water and place it in full sunlight if possible. All birds love water and love of all things the sun, so never hang your cages in a dark place. If, however, the light is very fierce place a handkerchief over the top of the cage.

Caged birds are very sociable and like company. Their cages should be placed in some window looking into a street or cheerful garden. But they must be covered over after dark, as the birds will then sleep better and be preserved from draughts. They should always be kept reasonably warm. Talk to the birds, and if you can give them names and call them by their names. This is sometimes difficult when you have sixty or seventy birds pretty much alike. Still, you will find some of them will possess distinctive marks or peculiarities by which you may know them, or they may be named after their parents. Thus I have a hen whom I named "Aunt Anne" after a relation of mine, and her brood were named Antonia, Antoinette, Antonina, Andrew and Anna Maria. All these playful little jokes increase the sympathies between you and your little pets and help to tame them. Remember that birds like cheerful people and appreciate attention, so however sad your heart may be, try to smile when you address your little favourites.

(To be concluded.)

"IF LOVING HEARTS WERE NEVER LONELY—";

OR,

MADGE HARCOURT'S DESOLATION.

By GERTRUDE PAGE.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN WHICH IMPULSE SWAYS.

WHEN Guy came in to dinner that evening, he was most curious to know how the visit had gone off. He was a little anxious, too, for he had not yet experienced how Madge took details of this kind. The drawing-room was

empty, and he was just going in search of her, when she appeared, clad all in white. He looked at her eagerly and said, "Well, how did you get on?"

She did not answer for a moment, but stooped over a flower-vase and rearranged the flowers.

Then she said slowly, "I don't think

Miss Ermytrude Redfern will call again."

Guy laughed, for her voice had a touch of humour in it which was a great relief to him, and he took a stride which brought him to her side.

Resting his arm lightly across her bent shoulders, he continued in a bantering tone, "Oh, and so you don't

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PART II.

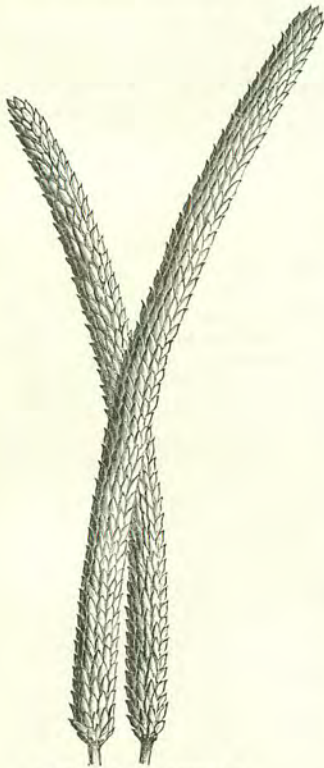
I NOW come to the question of rearing birds, and this requires some judgment. It is not always the handsomest birds that are the best for the purpose. The best plan is to place the female in a cage alone, and then to put perhaps two male birds in separate cages near at hand. It is better that the female should be rather older than the males; but neither should be less than a year old; they should be between two and five years of age.

You will soon see whose attentions the female bird prefers, and after about a week let the favoured one become her mate and admit him to her cage. It is absolutely necessary that the birds should take a fancy to one another. The *mariage de convenance* does not obtain with canaries, and however handsome or highly-bred either may be, all is of no use unless nature gives them an attraction for each other.

Canaries must not be paired before the middle of April or after the middle of August.

I have always found open wire cages by far the best. They should be placed in a light situation and not covered over except of a night.

The old-fashioned breeding cages are, I



THE WILD PLANTAIN.

believe, a mistake, as canaries always build in the lightest places, and avoid making their nests in anything like a night-box, however elaborately constructed.

The hens usually lay from three to six eggs before they begin to sit. They should not be left solitary. Talk to them gently; hang their cage in a cheerful position, so that they can look out of window, as they are a little inquisitive and like to know what is going on in the world around them. To put them in a dark room or in a heavy lugubrious



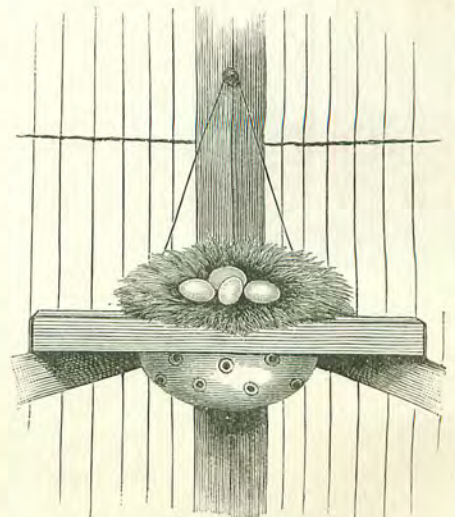
cage makes them melancholy and dispirited. But it is better not to allow strangers or noisy persons—schoolboys for instance—to go too near the hen when sitting. Of course the birds are caged and cannot get out to collect materials with which to build a nest; these must be provided for them, therefore, and arrangements made to attach the nest to the cage and support it. A spur should be constructed in one corner of the cage, if the latter is square, or a small frame if the cage is round. Upon the supports thus provided insert one of the porcelain nest-basins (which may be bought for 4½d.) with a movable lining of thin white felt (I bought mine at the Crystal Palace). When placed in position it will be like sketch.

Nesting materials can be bought anywhere, but it is advisable to add a little feather-grass and some clean small feathers if you have any at hand. You will probably find a little squabbling going on between the male and female birds over the building of the nest, as they often take different views of the matter; but if you leave them alone after pulling it to pieces three or four times, the female, who is really the "master builder," will get her own way. I remember on one occasion the male bird was determined to insert one large feather in the nest, and the female was equally determined not to have it there, and the controversy over that feather lasted about three days. Whenever the hen bird went down to find some fresh building materials, the male hopped into the nest and placed this feather where he thought it looked well, but directly the lady architect returned it was ignominiously thrown out. Finally it was rejected.

Some birds are lazy over their building and others are so fastidious that the first egg

is laid before the nest is completed. Some young birds will lay the first egg on the floor of the cage without building a nest. In this case the egg should be taken away as it will simply get trodden to pieces and cannot possibly be hatched.

Our girls must not be frightened if domestic differences take place between the birds, who are often very quarrelsome and even pugnacious. I was once afraid that I should have to separate one couple, but a working man who was in the house at the time said to me, "Take my advice, ma'am, and don't separate them birds. They are just like human beings, and if they 'as their differences, they'll soon



NEST BASIN

make them up and be none the worse for them."

This reminded me of the old saying, "The falling out of faithful friends, renewal is of love." So I let the pair alone, and when their chicks were hatched, they became most attentive parents, and brought up a brood of five, all of whom are fine birds. One thing, however, I must point out. If the two birds show complete indifference to each other and appear to be morose and miserable, keeping at different parts of the cage, then separate them and let them choose other mates.

When birds are sitting, keep them plentifully supplied with water for drinking and bathing, as it is not well that they should bathe in their drinking water, which they will do if none other is provided.

Keep the cage scrupulously clean, but do not interfere with the nest, nor attempt to wash the birds. Let them have their own way, feed them well, and leave the rest to nature.

And now I come to a most important matter, and that is the food to be given them at these times. There are many and various theories upon the matter; but I have found the following the best recipe:

Take one dessert-spoonful of rape seed and simmer it in water for six minutes, one egg boiled hard (it need not be a new-laid egg), three Swiss biscuits. Pound the whole together in a mortar. This will be sufficient for four days for a couple of birds after the young ones are hatched. The parent birds must, of course, have their usual food in addition, and perhaps a little watercress. One thing is very important. The egg-food must not be allowed to get sour, or it will kill the young birds. Perhaps more are lost by this than by any other means. Let me advise

our girls always to mix this food and give it themselves to the birds.

The bird sits thirteen days; but do not remove the unhatched eggs for three or four days later, because, of course, the eggs are not all laid on the same day, and the later eggs may require a longer time. When the female leaves the nest, which she does about three times a day, the male bird generally takes her place and sits on the eggs, but this is not always the case. The two should not be allowed to sit on the eggs together. If this is attempted the male bird should be driven off.

Some writers advise that the first egg should be placed in bran until all are laid, and an imitation egg placed in the nest. But this I have not found necessary.

Although I am very fond of canaries, I cannot say that they are pretty when first hatched. In fact, for four or five days, they are repulsive objects, consisting of a beak, a long scraggy neck and a raw-looking body covered with a kind of down, looking like mildew, which gives them the appearance of very old wizen little men. After a few days, however, they begin to be pretty. Remember both parents feed the young.

The small birds will leave the nest on their own account after about a fortnight when they are strong enough to get on to the perches. If you find the mother begins to peck them or pull out their feathers, you must remove them into a different cage, as this is a sign that the hen wants to lay again and rebuild her nest. Before she is allowed to do this, clean out the cage and wash the nest basin.

Sometimes the parent birds are a little exhausted after bringing up a brood, and should be fed and attended to with extra care, especially when they have brought up three broods in the same season.

I remember two charming canaries I once had, and I will tell you their tragic history. They were named "Yellerino" and "Stig-gerepino." These two little creatures were an attached couple. They selected each other, and were inseparable. We thought the little female bird delicate, and chose another mate for Yellerino; but he would not look at her, and seemed to pine for his first love. So we allowed them to come together again.

They hatched and brought up four nice little birds; but the female became so weak afterwards that he used to feed her and tend her most gently. It was, however, no use, for, after a few days, she fell off the perch dead.

We thereupon removed poor little Yellerino into another cage with companions to cheer him; but day after day he would stand upon a perch looking out with such a longing look—sometimes singing very plaintively, but generally silent. Always so gentle, he would come on to my hand and look up into my face as if he would ask what had become of his mate. He got thinner and thinner until one day when I put my hand into the cage he laid his little head on my hand and gently passed away.

What I have here written is the result of my own experience of canaries. I have simply related what has happened to birds which I have kept or reared, sixty of whom are alive and many of them singing lustily at this moment. I have no theories to advance, or methods to advocate, neither have I given much time to the study of bird literature. In fact, my birds are simply my amusement with which I beguile my spare hours in a life which is occupied by the calls of a very large though, I thank God, an obedient and affectionate family.

WHAT TO COOK, AND HOW TO COOK IT.

PART V.

MILK, EGG COOKERY, BUTTER, SUET, LARD, ETC.

"Trifles forgot, to serious mischief lead."



Do not appreciate the real value of milk, we must regard it as a food, not drink. Though we drink it from a cup or tumbler, as soon as it reaches the stomach it becomes a solid, and the process of digestion quickly separates its component parts, one-third only of which being water is readily absorbed into the system.

As fully two-thirds of the components of milk are solids, we should bear in mind that the drinking of milk by children does not lessen their need for water wherewith to quench natural thirst. Babies and very young children often suffer acutely for want of a draught of water—nurses supposing that the child's supply of fluid food had been ample when its "bottle" was emptied.

Why milk is pre-eminently the food of the young of all species is because it is itself a

type, in the most easily digestible form, of all foods. It contains all the essentials for growth of muscle, nerve, bone and tissue; hence for adults also, when the digestive powers have become weakened from any cause, milk establishes itself as a perfect food.

The process of sterilising milk as we obtain it at some dairies is rather a process preventive of disease than one touching digestion, although many people put faith in it. Sterilised milk may be safely taken when going on a journey, and, indeed, if the milk is liable to be carried far, it is well to use home sterilisation—or scalding—as well.

The addition of a tablespoonful of lime-water to a pint of milk is invaluable for delicate children and invalids; soda-water, again, is an improvement when milk is taken as a beverage by adults or by children.

A tumblerful of milk brought up almost to boiling-point and drunk at once is an excellent restorative after great exertion or exposure. The same, either with or without the addition of a tablespoonful of stimulant, is an excellent specific for colds in the head. It should be taken just before getting into bed.

A pinch of powdered borax stirred into milk and cream will prevent them turning sour for several days. Borax is the charm on which the purveyors of cream as sold in little brown stone-ware jugs rely; the cream in these may be trusted to keep, when unopened, for a month without its turning sour.

Milk baked in a stone jar in the oven for an hour becomes much enriched, tasting indeed like cream. It makes a better supper

for children than if simply boiled. If, however, in addition to baking it, a handful of Scotch oatmeal be put into the jar, the result is even more satisfactory.

Milk that has become stale or clotted has by no means lost its virtues. It is a shame to waste even a single spoonful of good milk.

To make good *Scones*, it is necessary that the milk be decidedly "lobbered," to use an Americanism. When so, a half-teaspoonful of bicarbonate of soda well stirred in will quickly make it froth, and the scones made from this will be sure to be light. It is essential to make scones and cakes well that the milk shall be of thoroughly good quality—if poor, they will be tough and flavourless.

Supposing that the milk which has turned sour is also thin and poor, it may be turned to good account as a cleanser. For washing and impating a polish to floorcloths and linoleums there are few things better than milk. Milk will wash out ink-stains on cotton or linen goods, and will even clean paint.

The whey of sour milk is one of the best things for dabbing on the face and hands when they are red and hot from exposure to sun and wind with boating, tennis, etc. Sun freckles can be removed by making flower of sulphur into a paste with sour milk and spreading it over the face at bed-time; wash off in soft rain water the next morning, and, if persevered in, this treatment will beautify the skin as well as remove disfigurements.

A glass of new milk at bed-time, taken regularly, between the ages of twelve and fourteen, will cause a child to grow almost twice as fast as without it.