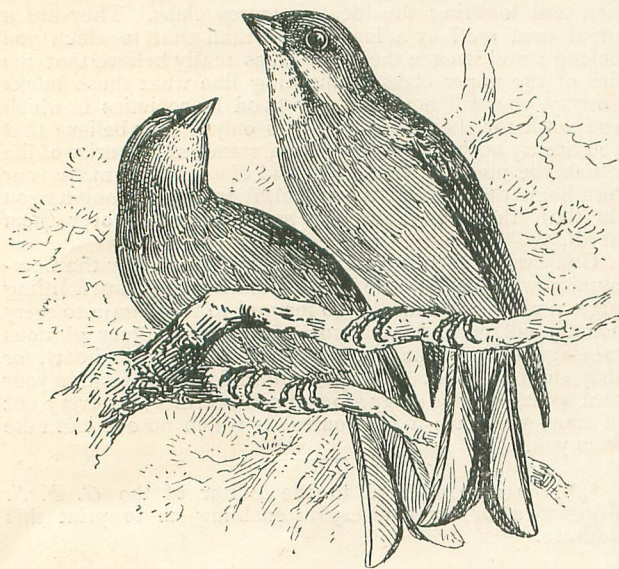


ORTOLANS.

(*Emberiza Hortulana*.)



ORTOLANS.

YES, I must confess the ortolans were a great failure!

I saw the name in a list of living birds for sale, and immediately my thoughts went back to old Roman times, when no banquet was deemed complete without its dainty dishes of ortolans served in a hundred ways known to the famous chefs of antiquity.

Not having ever seen the bird, I did not know whether it was large or small, beautiful or commonplace. It was to me only a romantic name, but somehow I could not resist taking advantage of this opportunity of becoming the

possessor of a pair of birds of such historical interest. Great, therefore, was my disappointment when I opened the basket in which they had travelled from London, to find two dingy birds, very like sparrows in size and colouring, wild little creatures fluttering about in their cage, looking very miserable and unpromising as pets.

As they evidently required more space, I let them loose in an outdoor aviary with a grassy floor and plenty of room to fly about.

So pleased were they with this change that one little captive presently lifted up his voice and sang a sweet little warbling song. This was the first and only time that I ever heard either of them attempt to sing.

For several months I tried my best to make the ortolans happy and to induce them to form a nest in a secluded corner of the aviary where building materials were supplied, but they were entirely unresponsive. They chirped, they basked in the sun, they became in good condition, with sleek plumage, and they developed excellent appetites, but as a little girl once remarked, "they wouldn't have any habits." So on a bright summer's day I opened the aviary door and let the captives go where they pleased.

They remained near the house for a few days, and then I saw them no more.

North Africa is believed to be the winter resort of this bird, so it may be that my released captives enjoyed a few months' residence in our woods and fields, where they would find insects and grain of various kinds, and that then instinct taught them to migrate to their own country.

There are establishments in the South of Europe where these birds are caught on their way south in large numbers; they are then fed upon millet seed until they are plump and fat enough for the fate which awaits them.

I had the curiosity to look in a modern cookery book and found more than a dozen recipes for serving these poor little victims of gastronomic luxury.

ELIZA BRIGHTWEN.



A GIRL-PAINTER AND HER PAINTINGS.

I THINK, as far as anyone can attain his ideal, Miss Fortescue Brickdale must have done so, in her forty exquisite water-colours lately exhibited in London. We see the gorgeous colouring of a Byam Shaw, like his, never inartistically brilliant; the mediævalism of a Burne-Jones; the tenderness and quaintness of a Rosetti; the pre-Raphaelism of a Millais, fused together by the unique style of—a Brickdale.

And the best of it is this. Each painting is a pictured thought. Like those of Mr. Watts, which many of you know in the Tate Gallery, these pictures have a message in each for those who look with the eyes of the mind as well as of the body. But these are the work of a woman well under thirty. Some are full of life, of youth, of activity, others tell of thoughts that lie too deep for tears, some speak of wealth, some of poverty; joy, grief, birth, death, sin, innocence crowd upon us as we gaze. Tread softly, for these pictures show the holy of holies—the inner chamber of the mind of a girl, full of her great ambitions, her lofty thoughts, her sparkling fun, her tears, her prayers—all that is best and cleverest and holiest in her.

I often think when we talk, as most of us amateurs do, of pictures, just taking them as a matter of course, how unutterably stupid the artist who hears must consider us!

And now, girls, I will tell you something. I was asked

to give a short account of Miss Brickdale's life. I got to know her and went to tea. When, on my speaking to her about this, she suggested telling me something of herself, I—ran away! Yes—from the subject. I felt I could not let that woman uncover, for me to give to the world, what the poorest and even the worst of us women who are not famous may keep for ourselves—the history of her life. Some may like to give it—yes—not this woman, I could see that. And I said I would just tell the Editor that I couldn't! Not the way to make a successful interviewer, is it? But then I don't mean to be one—of people.

This is an interview all the same. Of whom? you ask. Why, of a picture! Let us look at it, see what it has to tell us, and listen to the voice that each one of us has in her, to speak to herself of the things that are lovely, that are of good report. Hush!

TO-DAY FOR ME. (*A Picture.*)

A lady sitting in a meadow, and, kneeling at her feet, a little child. The latter is the easier to describe. Just a simple wee bundle in a white frock, with a plump, happy, baby face, a blue ribbon binding her hair. The little one has her hands clasped on the lady's knees, and is looking up as she repeats her assertion. "To-day for me!"

Yes, baby, to-day—all is to-day around you. The