Our Coloured Illustrations.

BAFFLED KITTENS: DEFENSIVE WARFARE.

Three brisk little kittens,
Whose prim little paws,
With soft velvet mittens,
Bear sharp little claws—
Their pretty teeth gleaming
As if they could bite,
Their eyes greenly beaming
Or winking at light,
Their ears, ever twitching
At hearing of sound,
Their tails, often switching
Or waving around—
These playmates of Baby
Wear ribbons of silk,
And cost, for each. may be,
A penn'orth of milk.
But when careless Nancy,
Who sews, drops her reel,
That's a toy to their fancy;
The joy that they feel,
At its rolling and running,
As they pounce upon it,
Is almost as "stunning"
As Nancy's new bonnet.
An epithet, truly,
That savours of slang:
Correct then, most duly,
My "tongue with a tang."

But lo! what a wonder!
And oh! what a fright!
Worlds upper or under
Ne'er showed such a sight.
Caprices of Nature
Could never let be
Such a horrible creature
As that which they see.
Not at all like the cattle
They meet in the house,
Their foes in life's battle,
The rat and the mouse;
Or the nag, at his manger,
Or dog, in the yard,
Or cow, a stray ranger
When gates are unbarred.
Such beasts often meeting,
A cat may survive;
But here's a Thing, eating
Or drinking, alive,
A Monster, to kittens,
Though not very big—
A mere bundle of prickles
With snout like a pig.
No shape in its body,
No show of its limbs—
An artist, if odd, he,
In one of his whims,
With pencil or pigment,
At easel or desk,
Might sketch such a figment,
And call it "grotesque!"
But 'tis not a vision,
This figure uncouth;
Its living condition
Is seen for a truth;
A beast that is greedy,
A gluttonous thief,
Or applicant needy
For indoor relief;
He's upset their platter—
He's supping their food—
Till, roused by this clatter,
The whole kitten brood,
Come down on the rascal
Who's robbing the house,
To take him to task, all
As he were a mouse.

In temper befitting,
Up backs and out claws,
All snarling and spitting,
And swearing their cause,
All tossing and prancing,
To form their attack,
Little Cats are advancing
To leap on his back!
But the first that is striking
Shall first be to feel,
Not at all to her liking,
Some points of his steel!
As, yelling in anguish,
Puss cuddles her paw,
The hearts of all languish,
Their forces withdraw!
While, bolder and ruder
His reck'ning to bilk,
The sturdy intruder
Still gobbles their milk!

MORAL.

His warfare is passive;
His fighting, defence.
Its skill, not aggressive,
May teach us good sense.
Keep our land and sea forces,
But *don't seek* the foe.
The statesman's wise course is
To war *not to go!*

MORNING AND EVENING: BIRD LIFE.

The feathered race of animals which freely inhabit the air and waters and the trees or bushes of this our hospitable earth have their customary ways and manners. These are observed at the opening and closing hours of a seasonable day in summer. The life of birds is a joyous life. Their perpetual activity and levity of movement, which is performed with such ease and freedom by the majority of species, must have an exhilarating effect. They breathe most abundantly of the freshest air, they bask in the sun's light, they see much of the world in their flitting, roving, desultory trips about the neighbourhood. They visit a good deal, have numerous and various acquaintance, plenty of conversation, small talk as well as music, and no end of flirting. How different is all this from being an oyster! "A lark and oyster pudding" is a favourite dish for pampered gourmands at the feasts of the London City Companies. Now the juxtaposition of such names, those of creatures so extremely dissimilar in their character and condition of life, is grimly grotesque to the imagination of a humourist, but shocking to the lover of truth and nature. Let the epicure's gullet, if he will, absorb the luscious bivalve. We prefer listening to that soaring songster of gladsome spring, whom the poet, envying his exalted tones of harmonious rapture, has boldly addressed, with his

> Hail to thee, blithe spirit!
> Bird thou never wert,
> That from heaven, or near it,
> Pourest thy glad heart,
> In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

So much for poetry *versus* pudding, and now for the morning and evening of a happy day with the birds. They are all early risers. The cuckoo's call is first heard, an hour or two after what we suppose to be midnight, in May or June. The nightingale, which has scarcely been to sleep at all, repeats, for her orisons, the same melodious plaint that she uttered in a final serenade. The lark ascends, as Milton says of the divine poet, to "the still atmosphere of delightful truth, with his invisible singing-robes about him." The jolly blackbird and the cheery thrush, from every copse and hedge across the fields, sound their tuneful whistles at the approach of dawn. Robins and redstarts commence the soft warbling chorus of nearer music, joined by all the finches, among which is heard the familiar linnet's note, from her nest in the humble furze-bush. There is a grave cawing of rooks and crows flying wide and far above the grassy meadows and the green expanse of growing corn. The jay and the woodpecker, with more startling sounds in the leafy covert of the grove, respond to the summons when they are reached by the new daylight in their sheltered home. They all begin the day with devout minstrelsy, or rather with psalmody, and chant their matin hymn before they think of breakfast. This goes on till the sun has risen well above the horizon. Then it is time for them to pick up a morsel of food, a few seeds or insects, a grain of barley, with or without the farmer's leave, for such birds as like that sort of thing; but for some others, who are kindly welcome, a grub, a caterpillar, a fly or beetle, a thing far more destructive than any granivorous bird. Yet there are birds which in the orchards and fruit gardens will perpetrate a large amount of larceny and wasteful depredation; but let not the innocent and beneficent species be condemned for such misdeeds.

> You call them thieves and pillagers; but know
> They are the winged wardens of your farms,
> Who from the corn-fields drive the insidious foe,
> And from your harvests keep a hundred harms;
> Even the blackest of them all, the crow,
> Renders good service as your man-at-arms,
> Crushing the beetle in his coat of mail,
> And crying vengeance on the slug and snail.

Having well eaten—and much good may it do them—all our feathered friends, as a general rule, next betake themselves to drinking at the nearest pool or stream; after which they retire, as the forenoon advances, to a prolonged siesta, for the purpose of digestion rather than slumber, which is continued till the decline of the sun in the afternoon. They then bestir themselves for another salutary operation—that of washing or otherwise cleaning and tidying their precious little persons. Some of them go to the water, splash their wings in it, and then, by fluttering and casting the spray over them, or beating their body with their wet wings, contrive to get a perfect ablution, as in a shower-bath or sponging-bath. There are many, however, which keep themselves equally clean by a dry-rubbing process in the sand or dust of the ground, as Mohammedans are commanded by their religion to do, instead of washing, if they are travelling in the waterless desert of Arabia or Egypt. This method is said to be the most efficacious for removing vermin that infest the bird's feathers; and it may be observed that a bird will take great pains to fill all its feathers with the dust, and thoroughly to scour them out. When thus entirely cleansed to the very skin, the task of combing and trimming is next to be accomplished. The dust is shaken out, or the moisture is wiped and wrung out of the feathers separately by squeezing each in the bill; and then, with much care and exact precision, they are "preened" or smoothly ranged, by a sort of brushing action, in their proper order, not only for the wings but the whole body. Now the little creature is dressed, as well as refreshed by food and rest, it wants to fly about and visit its neighbours. At this hour, late in the afternoon, birds have their leisure for the enjoyment of society and for the intellectual gratification, as we may almost consider it, of that eager curiosity, that desire of novelties and fresh experiences, with which they seem to be endowed. Many human travellers and saunterers about the world have less active exercise of their powers of observation.

As for conversation, without affirming that they can do more than express mutual emotions, and not distinct ideas, in communicating with one another, we may be sure that they find in this a genuine social pleasure. It is certainly quite independent of the feelings of sexual attachment and parentage which are such potent affections in the life of birds; nor is it confined to the exhibition of rivalry between the males in singing and showing off their prowess or their handsome attire or their strutting and dancing paces. For birds of several different species will often be noticed assembling together, apparently amusing themselves with each other's company, or they will seek the presence of beasts, and sometimes draw near even to man, as if solitude were irksome to them. Exceptions are notoriously found in the fish-catching and other birds of prey, whose business would be disturbed by the intrusion of companions, but whose disposition at other times is not unsociable; just as it is with diligent business men, who are glad to see their friends in hours of leisure.

But as talking is provocative of fresh appetite, and the approach of evening now brings on the swarms of insects, both in fields and woods and on the surface of lake or river, the birds' second feeding-time occurs about sunset, and this is the lively spectacle we behold in our rural walks. It is then we commonly see them most freely, and displaying the greatest activity, especially in the pursuit of flies; the nimble flight of the swallow or the swift, the one darting

hither and thither, with momentary sudden turns, like those of a greyhound, this way or that, to snap its tiny prey; the other, a winged shot, as an arrow from the archer's hand, too rapid for the eye to follow; besides their less powerful cousin, the modest marten, whether its nest of clay be stuck against a house-wall, or it belong to the sand-marten species, burrowing its deep chamber in a rustic bank of earth. The motions of this tribe are a most interesting study for the naturalist; and that delightful writer, the Rev. Gilbert White, of Selborne, has filled several of his most agreeable pages with the charming topic. He was, to be sure, as many writers upon other themes were a hundred years ago, totally mistaken in some of his opinions; but we like him none the worse for that, as it gratifies the self-complacency of the modern age, when "schoolboys laugh at the jargon which deceived Bacon." The fancied hybernation of swallows is an exploded delusion. Their rule of annual migration from the north coast of Africa, usually arriving here about the middle of April, was perfectly recognised by Gilbert White, whose brother, residing in Spain, furnished some useful notices of their passage in spring-time. He had also paid much attention to the dates and the manner of their autumnal departure for a southern clime. But he was misled by a few ill-authenticated stories of birds found here in a state of torpidity during our English winter, and being revived by warmth, as is probably the case with certain insects and reptiles.

Our British birds, whose daily course of life has been slightly reviewed, are the best vocalists to be heard in any region of the earth; of course, including the nightingale, which is a bird of passage, coming to us yearly from Greece, Syria, Persia, and India, whither she returns for the winter season. But we cannot boast an equal superiority in the merit of beautiful plumage for the birds of this country. It is to the tropical forest regions of the Malay Islands or South America that we must look for those magnificent creatures of the parrot tribe, the macaw, the lory, and the parrakeet, and the exquisitely pretty finches, that claim so much admiration at our Zoological Society's Gardens. The most richly coloured of our native birds is the rather handsome kingfisher, who cuts a dash with his shining green and blue livery, as we have often seen him, driving post-haste along the course of a pleasant stream well known to us in Devonshire, upon some errand he would not stop to explain. He is, like some other gay personages, an elegant figure to look at when he goes abroad, but a nasty, sordid, shabby fellow at home. If ever you peeped into a kingfisher's private abode, which is merely some old hole in the river bank, deserted by the water rat, and serving instead of a nest, you must have sickened at the filthy heap of fish-bones and garbage, vomited by its foul tenant for the procreant cradle of the kingfisher's young. The "halcyon," forsooth! a graceful, classical name for this unworthy creature—was anciently believed such a favourite of the gods as to ensure fair weather at sea while this bird's eggs were hatched in some far inland recess. And it was a superstition of the Middle Ages that its body hung up in your kitchen or parlour would serve to indicate the changes of the wind, as Shakspeare in "King Leah" speaks of flattering courtiers—

> Who turn their halcyon beaks
> With every gale and vary of their masters.

But we have no scruple in declaring that the kingfisher is a snob, for all his brilliant outside. There is a large Indian bird, one of the same tribe as the stork and heron, which is not particularly nice in its habits, but is really useful to the troops in our military cantonments. It has been promoted, as it were, to a brevet rank, and bears the title of adjutant, for its punctual appearance on parade. The services it actually performs are less dignified, being those of a scavenger in the removal of butcher's offal. With its bald head and bare neck, having a raw fleshy appearance, its presence is scarcely ornamental to the barrack-yard. Its native name is the Argala, and its natural way of living, as an aquatic bird of prey, feeding on water-snakes, frogs, and other small reptiles, is shown in our "Morning" Illustration. The beautiful Mandarin Duck of China, which has been recently introduced to the ponds of English pleasure-grounds, is represented in the same coloured picture. Its green and purple crest, wing-fans erect above the back, and bosom of a rich chestnut hue, relieved with bands or stripes and deep-green borders, surpass all other ducks. This is "a duck of a duck," as a lady would say, and we can say no more.

ENGLISH SPORT AND FRENCH SPORT: HUNTING.

The national pastime of riding to a pack of fox-hounds is not yet out of fashion with those classes whose rural residence and practice of horsemanship, or their command of money as well as leisure, allows them to indulge this taste. There are, we believe, about one hundred and forty recognised packs in England, not reckoning those of Wales, Scotland, and Ireland: and the cost of maintaining a good pack is estimated at £2000 a year, but may here and there exceed that sum. This would be found, however, to bear a very small proportion to the probable aggregate expenses of the individual foxhunters, each keeping several horses for the purpose, besides special grooms, with much travelling, staying at hotels, or renting of furnished houses, during the season. It cannot be doubted that foxhunting in England represents a yearly expenditure of more than one million sterling, which is the estimate adopted by the author of "Covert-side Sketches," a recently published volume containing much information upon this subject.

As a manly, healthy, and tolerably harmless recreation, which serves to keep up a good breed of horses, and to encourage the accomplishment of bold and skilful riding, there is much to be said on behalf of this characteristic English sport. It may, indeed, be commended in preference to wholesale shooting massacres of feathered or four-footed game, in artificial preserves, where the *battue* has superseded the exercise of sportsmanlike ingenuity, and the use of dogs, with their admirable instinct of search and faculty of scent. The foxhunter does little or no real mischief to the agriculturist, either in the early days of his amusement, when he is after the cubs for an odd day or two, before the woods have lost their summer verdure, or in the regular season from November to the spring-time, when three or four days a week of good runs across country may be enjoyed in favourable weather. There are, it is well known, extensive districts in the midland, northern, and western shires, where landlords and farmers have long agreed to give ample facilities, in their method of fencing and other details of land management, for this popular kind of diversion. A strict economist might take objection to any such interference with the ideal of profitable cultivation; but, looking at the question of profit all round, and reckoning the large sums of money spent, as aforesaid, partly within the district, for the support of hunting, we are not prepared to say that there is any direct loss to the agricultural class. They are seldom heard to complain of foxes as they do of hares and rabbits. Leaving this point, however, to the Commission of Inquiry which is to find out the truth concerning all rustic business interests, let us briefly notice, as a conspicuous feature of English social history, two or three celebrated local establishments of foxhunting whose glories have not yet passed away.

The "Quorn" and the "Pytchley" are twin names of foremost renown in this illustrious department, but little more than names to a great many quiet middle-class people, who have never cared to learn what and where they are. Quorndon Hall, near Charnwood Forest, towards the border of Leicestershire and Derbyshire, was the seat of the late Mr. Hugo Meynell, who hunted enthusiastically during the second half of the last century. He, in 1800, gave up the hounds to Lord Sefton, afterwards succeeded by Mr. Thomas Assheton Smith, a famous sporting hero of the age, Mr. Osbaldeston, and others of more recent memory, holding the office of Master for a society of gentlemen subscribers. The Pytchley Hunt is so called from a little village in the heart of Northamptonshire, where it was established by Earl Spencer in 1750, almost contemporaneously with the Quorn. This pack has likewise been administered by successive Masters of high reputation, amongst whom were another famous Mr. Thomas Smith, the late Mr. George Payne, Mr. Anstruther Thomson, and the present Earl Spencer. The tracts of grass country, with suitable woodland coverts, and with fences and brooks of convenient height and width for leaping, which belong to the Quorn and the Pytchley, are all that is to be desired. A short distance northwards lies the Belvoir Castle domain, on the confines of Lincolnshire, and not far east of Nottingham. The land is a deep and stiff clay, which severely tries the horses' strength in crossing ploughed fields. But the Duke of Rutland's hounds are greatly admired; their breed, with a rich mixture of colouring, black, white, and tan, and with perfection of form, is preserved in the utmost purity. The Cottesmore, of which hunt Lord Carington is now Master, commands a fine open country in the neighbourhood of Stamford. These are the principal associations for hunting purposes in that famous region of the East Midlands which is fondly called "the Shires" by sporting men. It lies within a hundred miles of London, between the Great Northern and the London and North-Western Railway lines, while the Midland Railway passes very near to the Quorn Kennels. Melton Mowbray and Market Harborough are notable places of sojourn for hunting gentlemen who patronise one or another of these packs. Still farther on, in the wealden parts of Lincolnshire and the East Riding of Yorkshire, good packs of dogs as well as good horses will be seen afield in pursuit of that useful animal, the fox, without whom the horses and dogs would have no *raison d'être*. In the West of England, though many second-rate packs are kept on foot, the only celebrated or fashionable one is the Badminton, which has passed from the Duke of Beaufort's management to that of the Marquis of Worcester. Londoners may perhaps be aware that foxhunting, such as it is, does take place almost within the metropolitan postal district, just beyond Harrow, in the one direction, and Croydon in the other. On the Brighton Downs, also, there is a tolerable style of preparation and performance suitable to the middle class of amateurs. *Non cuivis homini contingit adire* the "Shiree."

French huntsmen, as shown in one of our coloured pictures, enjoy their triumph in the killing of the wolf, by the aid of powerful hounds, which run down the savage beast at sight after being led to his lair by tracking his footsteps in the snow. The wolf is often sometimes dispatched with a rifle shot, and he deserves no more respectful consideration. This ferocious animal has been known, even in recent times, to appear in the streets of a village or country town.