

OUR PETS.

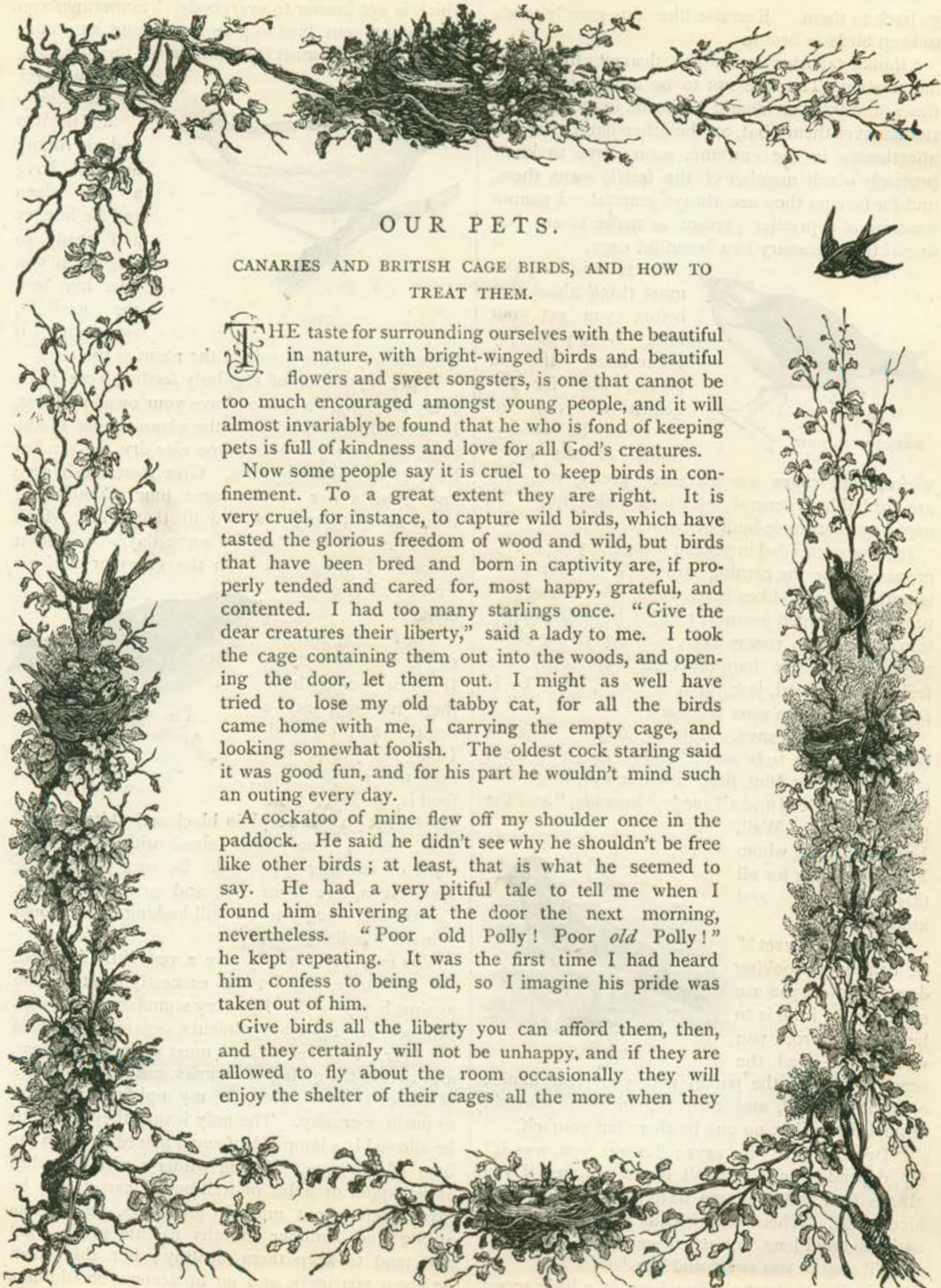
CANARIES AND BRITISH CAGE BIRDS, AND HOW TO TREAT THEM.

THE taste for surrounding ourselves with the beautiful in nature, with bright-winged birds and beautiful flowers and sweet songsters, is one that cannot be too much encouraged amongst young people, and it will almost invariably be found that he who is fond of keeping pets is full of kindness and love for all God's creatures.

Now some people say it is cruel to keep birds in confinement. To a great extent they are right. It is very cruel, for instance, to capture wild birds, which have tasted the glorious freedom of wood and wild, but birds that have been bred and born in captivity are, if properly tended and cared for, most happy, grateful, and contented. I had too many starlings once. "Give the dear creatures their liberty," said a lady to me. I took the cage containing them out into the woods, and opening the door, let them out. I might as well have tried to lose my old tabby cat, for all the birds came home with me, I carrying the empty cage, and looking somewhat foolish. The oldest cock starling said it was good fun, and for his part he wouldn't mind such an outing every day.

A cockatoo of mine flew off my shoulder once in the paddock. He said he didn't see why he shouldn't be free like other birds; at least, that is what he seemed to say. He had a very pitiful tale to tell me when I found him shivering at the door the next morning, nevertheless. "Poor old Polly! Poor old Polly!" he kept repeating. It was the first time I had heard him confess to being old, so I imagine his pride was taken out of him.

Give birds all the liberty you can afford them, then, and they certainly will not be unhappy, and if they are allowed to fly about the room occasionally they will enjoy the shelter of their cages all the more when they



go back to them. Exercise like this greatly tends to keep birds in health.

I think canaries make the dearest little pets imaginable. They are apt to be a little jealous at times, and this fact should be borne in mind in our treatment of them; but, on the other hand, they are affectionate in the extreme, soon come to know precisely which member of the family owns them, and for favours they are always grateful. I cannot conceive of a prettier present to make to any boy or girl than a canary in a beautiful cage.



FIRE-CRESTED WREN.

As to this last, you must think about that before you get your bird. It may be very ornamental if you please, but for the health of your bird it must be roomy. Some of the fancy

wicker-work cages are extremely pretty, and they are not liable to several objections which might be urged against those built of painted wire.

Having succeeded in getting a cage to your liking, prepare it for the coming stranger's use, for there is nothing a bird likes better than, after a long and probably cramped journey, to find himself popped into a nice, clean, roomy cage, with everything about necessary for his happiness and comfort. He feels a little dazed, just for a moment, when he is first put in, but he soon recovers.

"Hullo!" he says, "this *is* jolly! What a beauty of a cage to be sure!" and he cocks his head and looks about him, first with one eye, then with the other. "Seed and all ready," he adds, "and the purest of water. Well, I wonder, now, whom I have to thank for all this attention and kindness?"

"Tweet! tweet!" he continues, looking down to where you are standing, for if he is to be your bird, you would have had the

sense to receive the parcel with your own hands, open it yourself, and turn the bird in yourself, letting, if possible, no one be there but yourself.

"Tweet, tweet!" he says; "it was you, was it? Oh, depend upon it I shan't forget you, and if you always feed and tend me well I'll sing you such nice songs. When your friends are here I'll trill both loud and long, but when you are all by yourself I'll sing to you sweet and low."

And talking about singing, here is a little secret

which is not known to everybody. Sometimes you may want your bird to give an evening entertainment; if so, you must feed him well in the forenoon,



CANARY.

then cover the cage up and put it in a dark room; he will have a nice sleep and be hungry and ready to sing when you take him into the gaslight, especially if

there be any other music in the room at the time.

Make a practice of regularly feeding your birds every morning, before you have your own breakfast. Be exceedingly careful in the cleaning out of the cage, and supply it with some nice dry sea-sand at least every third morning. Give them fresh seed and clean water at the same time. Nothing is more likely to make a bird ill than water which has been left standing for some days, because it becomes impregnated with the gases or foul air with which it comes in contact.

The feeding of canaries is very important. If you would have them live long, and be healthy and cheerful, I may tell you at once that the simpler the food is, the better; the

staple diet should be plain black and white canary-seed, that is canary-seed mixed with about one-third of summer rape-seed. Be sure you get the seed clean, free from dust and grit and mildew. Canary-seed ought to be full-looking, and should shine like polished oak.

You may occasionally give a very little lint-seed, for a change, but let me earnestly caution you against hemp-seed. It is very stimulating, and may produce, among other ailments, organic disease of the liver. Another thing I must warn you against, and that is the giving of luxuries, cake and all sorts of sweet things. This, in my opinion, amounts to positive cruelty. The only luxury they ought to be allowed is a lump of loaf-sugar placed between the bars of the cage. During winter a nice morsel of sweet apple or a bit of well-boiled carrot may be given them about once in four days, and in the spring and summer months a little green food will tend to keep them healthy; but this must be given sparingly, and on no account should bits



SISKIN.



SKYLARK.

of it be left lying about the cage to undergo a process of decay. The best green food is groundsel, watercress, lettuce-leaf, and chickweed, and now and then a tender, well-washed leaf of dandelion.

Canaries ought to have plenty of fresh air, and the cage should be sometimes hung in the sun if not too hot; care being taken that the sunshine does not stream too directly on their heads, or fits of apoplexy may be the result. A bath is a great luxury, and it should be given once every day in fine weather.

Any shallow vessel, such as a saucer, does very well for this purpose. Be always careful not to hang the cage in a draughty place, else dangerous colds may be caught. If your bird has a cold, put about half a tea-spoonful of glycerine, a bit of gum arabic the size of a pea, and twenty drops of paregoric into its water, changing it daily. Castor-oil is a capital medicine for canaries; the dose is three drops, dropped from a warm knitting wire.

Canaries moult every year in autumn, and during this critical period of their little lives they need greater care, more warmth, less light, and a more liberal diet. Give no green food at this time, only a bit of nice sweetapple or a bit of well-boiled carrot; and in addition to the ordinary seed, give a little well-grated, hard-boiled egg and bread-crumbs. The bird gets listless, and nervous, and dull just before it begins to moult, and then begins to lose its feathers, on seeing which, you ought to put as much carbonate of magnesia as will lie on a fourpenny-piece in its drinking water. The bath should be given daily as usual, but beware of draughts.

Attention to these simple rules can hardly fail in keeping your bird wholesome and happy.

*Linnet*s make nice little pets, and sing very sweetly. They will eat the usual bird-seed with green food, and a little flax-seed or well-bruised hemp-seed. By placing the linnet's cage within hearing of the wood-lark's, they will learn his song, and are then very valuable.

The *siskin*, or *aberdevine*, better known in the north, is a pretty, lively little fellow, and is often kept the same as the canary, which in colour it somewhat resembles. The *robin* is a special pet of

mine. I know they are often made cage birds of, but as they discourse sweet music to us all the year round, and come into our houses and sing to us in the winter, we ought, I think, to be content to leave them where they are.

Bullfinches are taken from the parents' nest before they are fledged. They should be kept till fledged in a covered basket, and fed every hour on a paste made of hard-boiled egg, a bit of bun, and a drop of water. Feed them with

a wooden skewer. Paste of any kind given to birds should be fresh every day, especially bread and milk. When full grown, they will eat seeds. So will the *chaffinch* and the *yellow hammer*.

Larks, on the other hand, are soft-billed birds and require different treatment. The skylark is a charming bird, a most beautiful singer, and so hardy that if kept in a proper cage during the fine weather it will do best out-of-doors. The young ones, however, require some care and attention in the rearing. They are fed, until they can feed themselves, on a paste composed of stale white bread and bruised rape-seed. This is first steeped in cold water for some hours; it is then put, pudding-fashion, into a clean cloth and boiled gently for half-an-hour, after which it is reduced



AN ENEMY IN THE DISTANCE.

to a pulp, and mixed with a little hard-boiled egg grated. This food is afterwards changed to German paste, which is continued, with an occasional bit of raw meat, until they have finished moulting. The ordinary food is German paste, grits, bruised hemp and poppy-seed, with occasionally a few meal-worms and insects. They ought to have a clean turf in the cage every second or third day, and plenty of nice clean gravel. Wood-larks and tit-larks are fed in a similar way.

Blackbirds are very nice pets, and may be taught to whistle several tunes. They are not very particular as to what they eat, and are usually fed on German paste and meal-worms. The same may be said about the feeding of the *mavis*, or thrush. Both these birds, like the starling, are



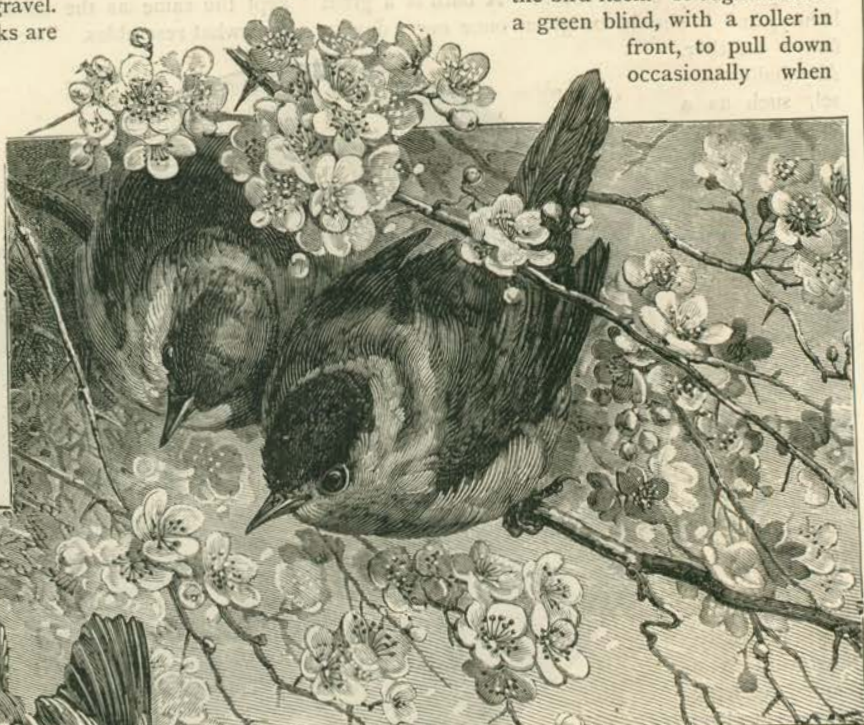
THE FIRST FLIGHT.

fond of soft hay in the bottom of their cages. The starling is even less particular about his food than the blackbird, and will eat almost anything. Paste is the usual diet, but he should have a little raw meat now and then, slugs, snails, worms, and insects.

This paper would indeed be incomplete if I said not a word about the *nightingale*, the sweetest of all our feathered songsters. Many people do not know that these delightful birds can be tamed, and

that they are happy in confinement, living for years, and singing as melodiously as they do in their native woods or copses.

The nightingale arrives in this country in April, and it is then they should be taken, and not afterwards. There is a peculiar kind of cage called the nightingale's cage, which is to be had at bird-shops, and this you ought to obtain before you get the bird itself. It ought to have a green blind, with a roller in front, to pull down occasionally when



interruption is feared, as at first they are exceedingly timid. For some time after being caught the nightingale ought to be fed on tiny bits of raw meat minced, and forced down the throat; also make a paste of raw meat and hard-boiled egg, and put into the dish with some insects, such as ants, meal-worms, and gentles. This will by-and-by tempt them to eat; but they must be forcibly fed till they do. It is not necessary to continue the feeding on live food; a paste of meat and eggs does very well, giving them also fresh ants' eggs in summer, and dried in winter, and mealworms. In autumn ripe elderberries should be allowed them. They are sometimes very ill at moulting-time, and then require generous diet and warmth.

My concluding advice is this: whatever bird you keep, *love* it, and you will then know what its little wants are as surely as though it had told you in words.

ARION.