

which you are detained, and the necessary fees; for I choose previously to make inquiries respecting these floating bills of yours. Good night."

The salutation was not returned by Horace. Fastening the door as well as he could—for the lock was of course broken—another storm of impotent wrath and misery swept over his spirit, ending in the utter wretchedness of weeping.

A BIRD SHOW.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "CURIOSITIES OF NATURAL HISTORY."

FROM time immemorial, man has delighted to capture and keep in cages various kinds of birds. The old lady keeps her pretty Polly, the young lady her canary, the gamekeeper chains up an eagle by his house, and the savage of Africa makes a rude cage wherein he confines birds either for profit or amusement. Of late years the art of keeping pet birds has become a real science. Books can be bought on "Diseases of Parrots," and the maladies of pigeons and canaries, in which appropriate treatment and medicines are prescribed; and now we have bird shows both at the Crystal Palace and elsewhere. Occupation is one of the principal sources of happiness, and these bird shows do good, inasmuch as they foster a spirit of emulation and competition in a study which might fairly come under the notice of the "Social Science" committee. Many a canary that would otherwise have sung his daily matins to his mistress and the cat in the parlour, and would have had no longer journey than from his perch to the bottom of the cage, and back again from the bottom of the cage to the perch, now takes a long railway journey, and sings his song to thousands of bird-lovers and bird-fanciers; his notes are listened to attentively by judges who understand bird music; his colour, form, and condition are criticized, and the bird which otherwise would have died in the same parlour where he was hatched, and who would have had no history or record written of his life, now returns from the show honoured with a prize, and when he is ultimately stuffed and put in a glass case, becomes an historical archive in the family to which he belonged when in life.

Bird shows seem to be patronised by persons of all ages. Gentlemen exhibit, and ladies exhibit; the names of not a few misses and masters are recorded among the list of contributors; and, lastly, we find a Life Guardsman sending no less than nine pet birds to the show.

A person who is not well up in canaries will be surprised to know how many different kinds of these birds are "cultivated." "As yellow as a canary" is almost a proverb; but at the show we learned that *all* canaries are not yellow. In the catalogue we find birds described as "variegated buff," "variegated yellow," "marked buff," "clear mealy crested," "silver spangled," "golden spangled," "mealy London fancy," "jongue London fancy," and so on. There are no less than fourteen kinds of canaries shown; and eight different kinds of mule birds, such as the "mealy goldfinch mule," the "mealy linnet mule," the "cinnamon or dove canaries," and so on. To give a description of

these birds in print would be impossible; it would be like the long Latin descriptions of birds we find in scientific books, which take one an hour to construe, contain words expressive of colours not to be found in any Latin dictionary, and, when deciphered, give no idea of the bird, whether a duck or fly-catcher; nevertheless, these Latin descriptions are invaluable to those who make use of them, and cannot be dispensed with. Our idea, after leaving the canary part of the show, was that some birds were valuable on account of their excessive ugliness, others on account of their beautiful proportions; that some fetched long prices because they were quite straight, others because their backs were humped like a workhouse cripple. Some commanded attention because they were as yellow as a bilious Indian, and others because they were as pale as if dusted with wheat flour; some because they had a bunch of feathers on their heads, others because the feathers were all flattened down on their heads, and they showed a "pole," as we see on the top of a baby's head. We were enabled to gain some idea of their actual value because the price is affixed to every bird, and hence we learn that some canaries can be bought for twelve and sixpence, others at prices varying from one pound to five guineas. The subject of cages seems to be disputed ground among bird-fanciers, for at the bottom of every page is a notice that "the cage is in every case included in the price named."

The art of talking just now seems to have become fashionable among the brute creation. Ever since that marvellous humbug, the talking fish, (a poor harmless seal,) began to *talk*, other creatures have found the use of their tongues; and in the Crystal Palace show for 1858, a talking canary bird was exhibited. Its speech, too, was printed, and we read that it repeated words like a parrot. We were not fortunate enough to hear this performance.

The canary is a foreigner, and although his race has been highly cultivated and improved in this country, yet the bird-lovers have wisely not forgotten British birds, birds of passage, and migratory birds. Among the former we find the bullfinch, both yellow and black; the chaffinch, worth 10s. each; the goldfinch, (one specimen, nine years old, worth £2 10s.); the lawfinch, the cross-bill, the linnet, (one specimen, belonging to the Hon. A. Willoughby, pipes the "Huntsman's Chorus," and is worth considerably more than his weight in gold, as £50 is marked opposite his number); the sky and the wood-lark, the robin (the robins that fly about in the Crystal Palace at liberty, came and tried to fight and peck their poor captive brethren in cages); the blackbird, the songthrush, the starling (one beautiful and knowing-looking bird hatched in June, 1858, talks famously, asks people to kiss him, whistles a tune, calls the cat, etc., and is worth £3 3s.); the jay, the magpie, and so forth. Lastly, we have a grand competition for the "best group of British birds in one cage or aviary." Opposite one of these is marked "Price £50." No one who has examined this collection of British birds can say that we have no pretty birds in this country. What a dandy is the goldfinch! how proud is the

thrush, as he rumples up his feathers, and how sleek and knowing does the blackbird appear in his glossy coat and bright yellow bill.

Many birds which ought, according to their nature, at this time of the year to be in South Africa, found themselves, in November, 1859, in an artificial tropical climate in the Crystal Palace. Thus, we inspected specimens of the blackcap, the ringdove, the redpole, the brambling, the "wry-neck cuckoo's mate, or snakebird," (that curious little fellow with a coat like the bark of a tree, and who perpetually hammered with his bill at the bars of the cage, as his habit is to tap for insects on the bark of forest trees); the ringdove; and last, but not least, one cage containing "six nightingales, aged seven months," the price of which was marked as £12, and not too much either, considering the excessive difficulty of rearing them in captivity. We have heard of a gentleman who once bought a nest of young nightingales: they were watched, tended, and fed with the greatest care, opening their mouths with unwonted avidity: the brood got on capitally, and the owner was delighted to think that he was going to rear a whole brood of nightingales. As time advanced, feathers began to sprout on the naked hungry little creatures, and as the feathers grew, doubts arose in the mind of the owner; at last there could no longer be any doubt: they were not nightingales at all, but a lot of common larks, palmed off as nightingales in their innocent infancy. Note, if you buy young nightingales, do not make your purchase before the feathers have sprouted.

A large collection of parrots headed the list of "Foreign Birds" at the show. Ten grey parrots led the van. For the first on the list £100 was asked, and £50 for another. There were also nine green parrots exhibited; most of these were talkers, whistlers, or singers, and their performances were printed in full. One bird could say enough to fill six lines of print—"imitates thrushes and blackbirds, performs nursing the baby, drawing a cork, etc." A full report of their speeches was placed on their cages, written on cardboard; but before the show was over, the birds had eaten up these reports, or pulled them to pieces with their bills. It is an extraordinary fact, we observed in these speeches, that their leading features decidedly relate to domestic and affectionate habits. Thus we find "Pretty Polly," "Such a duck," "Pretty fly," "Pretty creature," and the spectator is nearly always invited to nurse the baby, or kiss the performer; in fact, kissing seems the principal theme of these bird discourses. I wonder who taught the parrots to speak.

After the parrots came the paroquets, the cockatoos, and macaws, in great variety alike of form, colour, and acquirements; some screamed as if the house was on fire, or held their heads down in silence to be scratched, as if humbly begging one's pardon; others looked sedate and judge-like, others stupidity itself—pretty, but dumb, like the wax figures of the beautiful ladies at Madame Tussaud's. Then we saw cages full of little foreign birds, the constant inhabitants of aviaries, such as the Java sparrows, the indigo blue birds,

the zebra wax birds, the cardinals, the quaker birds or silver beaks, the weaver birds, Californian quails, capuchin manikins, etc., the prettiest of the lot, to our taste, being the grand "Whidah birds," which looked as if they had been cut out with a pair of scissors, of the best black silk velvet. Then we had two piping crows of Australia (price £4 4s.), those magpie-looking birds that pipe and laugh with such musical voices; also a couple of common English herons in a large white wicker cage. These birds did not seem to enter into the joke of the exhibition at all, and stood looking horribly sulky, and ruffled up their feathers at all visitors. A couple of herrings were placed in water for their dinners, but they seemed to have lost their appetites.

Every now and then, as we were examining the birds, loud shouts of unearthly laughter rang through the building; then it ceased, and a sort of wild hysterical shout succeeded. "Some curious bird," thought we, and sought him out directly. We soon found our hilarious friend in a blackbird's cage, and at once recognised the great brown king-fisher, or laughing jackass, from Australia. We laughed at his long beak, open mouth, and absurd voice; he instantly took up the note, and began laughing heartily at us in return. Perhaps, kind reader, you too will follow suit, and laugh also.

A DAY, AT BEN DHRYPPING.

A LETTER FROM A HYDROPATHIC CONTRIBUTOR.

It was with no little satisfaction that I spied your welcome handwriting amongst the huge pile of letters on the tray this morning. The arrival of the post is one of the most exciting and stirring



events here. Thanks for your home news contained in your valued epistle, as well as for the intelligence *ex officio*.

I am amused with your minute inquiries as to