

portly growth to the dimensions of Harrowgate or Leamington. And that it is thriving may be judged from the fact, that last year it appropriated to itself a member of the fourth estate, in the shape of a weekly journal, specially to record the doings, arrivals, and departures of Bridge of Allan visitors: with, of course, a peep at the insignificant outside world to which they belong.

### LARKS AND LAYS.

It involves something like a slur upon a race of very innocent joy-inspiring birds, to apply their common name to the mischievous pranks to which youngsters are prone, with not a few of their elders, who ought to know better. How it has come to pass that they are so styled passes comprehension, unless on account of the bird being so eminently a creature of bounding habit and exuberant spirits. Thence the "skylarking" of sailors, an amusement occasionally conceded to them, that of climbing to the top of the highest yards, and sliding down the ropes. But most certain it is, that as the persons who are the victims of the pranks referred to are beguiled, so is it the fate of the warblers themselves to be by wholesale ensnared. We have no sympathy with "larking," either of the literal or the metaphorical kind, for it is with regret that we see the songster whose nature it is to soar singing towards the heavens, reduced to the condition of a prisoner with only the area of a cage a foot square to move in. Yet, perhaps the feeling is more natural than intelligent, for something may be said in favour of the capture. No right is violated by it, since dominion over the fowls of the air has been expressly assigned to the captors. The bird, too, seems to take to confinement well, judging from the song given forth right merrily from the patch of greensward in its cage. It is also generally tended with affectionate care, and is a great solace, by the liveliness of its notes, to the poor artisan in towns. So, if the captive is happy, and makes itself pleasant to others in captivity, we may be content with the arrangement, especially seeing that, however great the number of cage-birds in our houses, there is no sensible diminution of the free stock in the open country.

"Up with the lark" has become a proverbial phrase for early rising; and eminently is the bird,

"— bard of the blushing dawn;"

or, as Thomson, has it,

"— the messenger of morn,  
Ere yet the shadows fly, he mounted sings  
Amid the dawning clouds, and from their haunts  
Calls up the tuneless nations."

Milton mentions among the incidents of the day-break,

"To hear the lark begin his flight,  
And singing startle the dull night;  
From his watch-tower in the skies,  
Till the dappled morn doth rise,  
Then to come in spite of sorrow,  
And at my window bid good morrow."

But, without breach of charity it may be surmised, that not a few have noted and commended the early

habits of the bird, who have rather sympathised in practice with Hood's "Morning Meditations."

"Let \* \* \* \* \* prate, upon a morning breezy,  
How well to rise while night and larks are flying—  
For my part, getting up seems not as easy  
By half as lying.

"What if the lark does enrol in the sky,  
Soaring beyond the reach of sight to find him out—  
Wherefore am I to rise at such a fly?  
I'm not a trout!

"Talk not to me of bees and such like hums,  
The smell of sweet herbs at the morning prime—  
Only lie long enough, and bed becomes  
A bed of time.

"Why from a comfortable pillow start,  
To see faint flushes in the east awaken—  
A fig, say I, for any streaky part,  
Excepting bacon!"

This is all very well for pleasantry. But it remains a sober truth, that those who have spent the most useful and happy days, and had them in the greatest number, have generally observed the habit distinctive of most of the feathered tribe, "early to bed and early to rise."

Capital larks, it may be said with literal exactness, are the skylark and woodlark, in comparison with others of the family. The former is the most universally admired, as it is the most common of our native songsters, and has been the theme of poetry from Chaucer downwards. No creature can well be more lowly, and at the same time lofty, in its habits. Except when soaring, it is quite terrestrial, rarely alighting on a tree, hedge, low bush, or wall. It roosts and nestles on the ground, runs along the surface with great celerity, and is fond of rolling in the dust, by way of cleaning its plumage, in the same manner as the common fowl. On the other hand, its flight is indeed a lofty one, continued upwards, higher and higher, carolling all the while, till the minstrel is lost to sight, though not to hearing, in the bright blue or glorious sunbeams of the sky.

"Hark! hark! the lark at heaven's gate sings."

Charles Swain has happily treated this contrariety with an artist touch, introducing a common note of the bird.

"Wherefore is thy song so gay?  
Wherefore is thy flight so free?  
Singing—soaring—day by day;  
Thou'rt a bird of low degree!  
Tirral-la!

"Scarcely sheltered from the mould,  
We thy humble nest can see;  
Wherefore is thy song so bold?  
Little bird of low degree.  
Tirral-la! Tirral-la!

"Humbly though my dwelling lie,  
Next door neighbour to the earth;  
Rank, though lifted ne'er so high,  
Cannot soar like humble worth:  
Tirral-la!

"Shall I silently repine,  
When these birds of loftier airs  
Say no parent race of mine  
Built a nest as high as theirs?  
Tirral-la! Tirral-la!

"Give me but a summer morn,  
Sweet with dew and golden light,  
And the richest plumage born  
Well may envy me my flight!  
Tirral-la!

"Through the azure halls of day,  
Where the path of freedom lies,  
Tirral-la! is still my lay—  
Onward, upward to the skies!  
Tirral-la! Tirral-la!"

However high the skylark rises, the bird never loses sight of home, and is never a truant long, but descends rather more rapidly than it rose, singing too as if rejoicing to rejoin its mate, till, suspended for a moment over the spot which contains its treasures, the fond vocalist silently drops with unerring precision into the nest. Wordsworth has not forgotten the moral which its life teaches.

"Ethereal minstrel! pilgrim of the sky!  
Dost thou despise the earth, where cares abound?  
Or, while thy wings aspire, are heart and eye  
Both with thy nest, upon the dewy ground?  
Thy nest, which thou canst drop into at will,  
Those quivering wings composed, that music still.

"To the last point of vision, and beyond,  
Mount, daring warbler! That love-prompted strain  
(Twixt thee and thine a never-failing bond)  
Thrills not the less the bosom of the plain!  
Yet might'st thou seem, proud privilege, to sing  
All independent of the leafy spring.

"Leave to the Nightingale the shady wood—  
A privacy of glorious light is thine,  
Whence thou dost pour upon the world a flood  
Of harmony, with rapture more divine.  
Type of the wise, who soar—but never roam,  
True to the kindred points of heaven and home."

Mrs. Hemans indulges in much the same vein:—

"Oh! Skylark, for thy wing!  
Thou bird of joy and light,  
That I might soar and sing  
At heaven's empyreal height!  
With the heathery hills beneath me,  
Whence the streams in glory spring,  
And the pearly clouds to breathe me,  
O Skylark! on thy wing!

"Free, free from earth-born fear,  
I would range the blessed skies,  
Through the blue divinely clear,  
Where the low mists cannot rise!  
And a thousand joyous measures  
From my chainless heart should spring,  
Like the bright rain's vernal treasures,  
As I wander'd on thy wing.

"But oh! the silver cords  
That around the heart are spun,  
From gentle tones and words,  
And kind eyes that make our sun!  
To some low, sweet nest returning,  
How soon my love would bring  
There, *there*, the dews of morning,  
O Skylark! on thy wing!"

The nest is composed of vegetable stalks, lined with fine dry grasses, and horse-hair, which, singular enough, is generally white. It is placed amid corn or herbage, often in a little hollow of the ground, or next a stone, to screen it from cold, and always on the sunny side. Grahame's description is pretty accurate—

"The daisied lea he loves, where tufts of grass  
Luxuriant crown the ridge; there, with his mate  
He founds their lowly house, of withered leaves  
And coarsest speargrass; next, the inner work  
With finer, and still finer fibres lays,  
Rounding it curious with his speckled breast."

The bird is said to be a miner as well as a drainer, under certain circumstances, in the locality chosen for the nest. "The skylark," says the "British Naturalist," "selects her ground with care, avoiding clayey places, unless she can find two clods so

placed as that no part of a nest between them would be below the surface. In more friable soil she scrapes till she has not only formed a little cavity but loosened the bottom of it to some depth. Over this the first layers are placed very loosely, so that if any rain should get in at the top, it may sink to the bottom, and there be absorbed by the soil."

The nestling on the ground is by one of our living writers, Walter Thornbury, used as a lesson of safe humility.

"Three foot in the pleasant corn,  
Full three foot in the corn,  
The lark has sought his nest at night,  
To shelter in till morn.

"Yes, deep below the sun and wind,  
To where the field-mouse dwells,  
Below, where the poppy showy burns  
In waving nooks and dells.

"Down far below the sparrow-hawk,  
Safe hidden from the stoat,  
The noisy young between the stalk  
All clamour in one note.

"The eagle seeks the snow Alp top,  
Proud in his royal birth,  
But the humble lark, safe and content,  
Couches upon the earth."

Though to be had cheap, as a very common bird, yet a first-rate singer commands rather a high price in the market; and in private life large sums have been known to be rejected even by needy owners for their favourites. The late naturalist, Mr. Thompson of Belfast, mentions the case of a poor chandler in that town, who had a lark remarkable for its song. A gentleman one day entered his shop, and stated that he had come to purchase his pet. "Indeed," replied he, "I do not think you are likely to get home that bird, which delights all my neighbours as well as myself." "Well, I think I am," rejoined the other, "here are five guineas for it." The sum was instantly refused, and the offer of ten guineas shared the same fate. The owner was then told, "It is now the fair-day, and the market full of cattle; go and purchase the best cow there, and I shall pay for her." Even these terms were declined, and the chandler kept his lark.

The power of voice in the skylark is very extraordinary; for when the feathered minstrel is but a speck aloft, or lost to view in the distance, the notes reach the ear so clear and distinct, that we wonder how they can be produced by a thing so small. Shelley has celebrated the wildly varied strain in harmonious numbers:—

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

"Higher still and higher,  
From the earth thou springest,  
Like a cloud of fire,  
The blue deep thou wingest,  
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

"Sound of vernal showers  
On the twinkling grass,  
Rain-awakened flowers,  
All that ever was  
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass.

"Teach me half the gladness  
That thy brain must know,  
Such harmonious madness  
From my lips must flow,  
The world should listen then, as I am listening now."

Still, the initiated say that no bird sings with greater method; a remark which we can neither verify nor dispute, not having studied the melody while listening to it. There is, we are told, an overture performed *vivace crescendo*, while the singer ascends. Then, when at the full height, the song becomes *moderato*, and is distinctly divided into short passages, each repeated three or four times over, like a *fantasia*, in the same key and tune. So different is the style in each case, that persons can tell whether the bird is rising, is stationary in the air, or coming down, without looking at it.

Poetical larking may be found in the pages of James Montgomery, Frederick Tennyson, brother of the Laureate, the Corn Law Rhymer, and the Ettrick Shepherd. We must find room for the lay of the latter, written by a careful observer of Nature in her wilder haunts.

"Bird of the wilderness,  
Blithesome and cumberless,  
Sweet be thy matin o'er moorland and lea!  
Emblem of happiness,  
Blest is thy dwelling-place—  
Oh, to abide in the desert with thee!  
Wild is thy lay, and loud,  
Far in the downy cloud;  
Love gives it energy, love gave it birth.  
Where, on thy dewy wing,  
Where art thou journeying?  
Thy lay is in heaven, thy love is on earth.

"O'er fell and fountain sheen,  
O'er moor and mountain green,  
O'er the red streamer that heralds the day,  
Over the cloudbet dim,  
Over the rainbow's rim,  
Musical cherub, soar, singing away!  
Then, when the gloaming comes,  
Low in the heather blooms,  
Sweet will thy welcome and bed of love be!  
Emblem of happiness,  
Blest is thy dwelling-place—  
Oh, to abide in the desert with thee!"

The Shepherd was quite correct in connecting the bird with the wilderness, or the uncultivated country. Though in England fond of the wide open meadows and arable lands, yet both in Scotland and Ireland the wild mountain moorland is its favourite abode. Yet one more strain.

"Sentinel of the dawning light,  
Reveller of the spring!  
How sweetly, nobly, wild thy flight—  
Thy boundless journeying.  
Far from thy brethren of the woods, alone,  
A hermit chorister before God's throne!  
O wilt thou climb yon heavens for me,  
Yon starry turret's height,  
Thou interlude of melody,  
'Twixt darkness and the light!  
And find—Heaven's blessing on thy pinions rest—  
My lady love—the moonlight of the West,  
No woodland caroller art thou,  
Far from the archer's eye;  
Thy course is o'er the mountain's brow,  
Thy music in the sky!  
Then fearless be thy flight, and strong,  
Thou earthly denizen of angel song."

These beautiful lines are by Davyth ap Gwilym, the bard of summer, quoted in a previous number.

The woodlark is smaller than the skylark, and by no means so common, even where it is pretty

generally distributed, as over the midland and southern counties of England. It is also far less social in its habits; for while skylarks congregate in flocks of many thousands, it is rare to see any number of woodlarks together. In winter, during hard weather, some six or seven may be found associating, members of the original family, near the localities in which they were bred. The bird prefers the cultivated districts which are bordered by copses and woods, or where tall hedgerows abound—the great ornament of the English landscape. It perches on the trees, but breeds on the ground, building its nest under some low bush or tuft of grass, or at the foot of growing timber. A nest has been known on the trunk of a fallen oak, upon the topmost bough of which, perhaps, in previous years, when it stood in all its pride, the lark had warbled, and, when levelled to the earth, could not bid the spot adieu, but tarried to sing a daily requiem over the prostrate remains. Old authors refer to it as the woodwele, as in the ballad—

"The Woodwele sung, and would not cease,  
Sitting upon the spray,  
So loud he waken'd Robin Hood,  
In the greenwood where he lay."

The bird rises from the tops of the trees high in the air, and there remaining stationary, the wings and tail expanded, it sings uninterruptedly for hours together, and pours forth melody also when perched. It sings far into the night, invading those hours which are generally considered sacred to the nightingale, the queen of feathered vocalists.

"What time the timorous hare trips forth to feed,  
When the scared owl skims round the grassy mead;  
Then high in air, and poised upon his wings,  
Unseen the soft enamour'd Woodlark sings."

The song is exquisitely beautiful, though somewhat sad and plaintive. The notes are not so varied as those of the skylark, but they are more melodious and flute-like. In the house, the bird sings from a retired corner, tranquil and motionless; but some have been known never to utter a note in the presence of an auditor, or unless the cage was placed outside the window. Bechstein remarks upon these obstinate birds being the best singers. The female, as is the case with the other larks, is musical; but her strains are shorter, and less sustained.

Some people are so fond of larks as to eat them. Though the transition is abrupt from song to gastronomy, yet we make it, as really pertinent to the subject in hand. Around Dunstable the birds are caught in great numbers, for the hideous purpose of mastication, and sent to the metropolitan market, where they sell at from three to four shillings the dozen. There is certainly no accounting for taste. But it may reasonably be surmised that all taste must have vanished, except for the pleasures of the table, in the case of those who can relish feeding on the songsters of the skies and woods, notwithstanding the assertion of the French gourmand, that with "thrush-sauce a man would eat his own father." After all, in catering for the appetite, the moderns are not quite so bad as some of the ancients. Around Rome and in the Sabine country, providers for the stomach established voleries—a kind of vaulted courts—in each of which hundreds of black-

birds, thrushes, and larks, were incarcerated, for the purpose of being fattened and eaten. They were well supplied with roasts, and had the choicest food. The windows were few in number, and so placed as to prevent the prisoners from seeing the fields, the woods, and the songsters flying at liberty. This was with the view of excluding the sight of objects which might awaken the susceptibilities of the inmates, and thus disturb the calm so essential to corpulence. Twenty days before killing, the intended victims were separated from the rest; their allowance of food was increased, and, with exquisite refinement, boughs and verdure were introduced, in imitation of natural scenery, to render the birds more placid. On occasion of a festival or a triumph, thousands were served up at the feasts.

There can be no possible objection to operate with knife and fork upon grouse, pheasants, partridges, ducks, geese, pigeons, or turkies, for it is hard to say what else they are fit for, besides being acceptable to the palate. The Marshal de Mouchy used to maintain that pigeons had a consoling power. Hence, when he lost a friend or relation, he would say to the cook, "Have roast pigeons to-day for dinner; I always find that when I have eaten a couple of pigeons, my grief is considerably assuaged." By the way, in some parts of France the turkey, a relished refection, has the name of Jesuit, owing to its first introduction being attributed to that order. This renders some invitations to a repast, and table-talk, to us very amusing:—"Come and dine with me to-day; you shall have a fat crammed *Jesuit*." "I'll trouble you, sir, for a little of that *Jesuit*." "Pray, sir, do you find that *Jesuit* tough or tender?" Not the slightest repugnance have we to a Jesuit for dinner, in this sense of the word. But to feed upon a blackbird, thrush, or lark!—as soon think of eating Jenny Lind.

#### THE ORPHEONISTES.

Soon after the peace of 1815, and the restoration of the Bourbons to the throne of France, the friends of religion and order in that country, impressed by the demoralization everywhere prevailing among the working and humbler classes, and which was the effect in good part of the revolution and the revolutionary wars, began to bestir themselves with the view of guiding the industrial masses once more into the path of rectitude and subordination. The religious sentiment, which, under the Directory, had been ridiculed and disowned, had revived but in name, under the favouring edicts of Napoleon; and with regard to the immense majority of the working men of Paris and the larger departmental cities, the best that could be said of them in this respect was, that they were totally indifferent to religious matters. The task of bringing them back to a right feeling was no easy one, and may well have discouraged the most hopeful by the difficulties it presented. Foremost among those who devoted themselves to this important mission appear to have been the religious order of Christian Brethren, by whose personal efforts the first attempts were made. They visited the workers in

their humble residences, and brought home to them that religious and moral teaching which they could not be induced to go in search of. They introduced themselves into the workshops and manufactories, and, with the encouragement of the authorities and the concurrence of employers, addressed the artisans on moral and religious subjects (as they themselves understood them)—always taking advantage of the temporary cessation of labour occurring on the fortnightly pay-days for the delivery of a short and appropriate lecture. By these, and such like means, some progress, though it was not much, was effected, and at length they were in a condition to attempt greater things.

As French workmen have much leisure at command, particularly in the evening, the Christian Brethren established for their use gratuitous evening classes, or courses, for the teaching of drawing and design, coupled with instruction in singing. These classes were intended to serve a double purpose—to raise the practical efficiency of the worker, and to imbue him with sentiments of loyalty, of morality, and of religion: the instruction in design was to educate his intelligence, while, by means of the singing, it was sought to awaken his better nature, and to influence his mind and heart. To this end, the subjects of all the songs, chants, and choruses in which they were exercised were either loyal and patriotic, or moral and religious. These classes were enthusiastically attended by the people, who soon made astonishing progress in the performance of musical pieces—so much so that, ere long, their services were eagerly sought after on all occasions of great religious festivals, and were always as willingly accorded. No women or girls were admitted to these classes, or took part in the performances. The reason for this prohibition—and it is well founded—is, that to women of the humbler classes such instruction would prove rather a snare than a benefit; would subject them to temptation and to the hazards of indiscriminate association with the men; and might, further, unfit them for their home and domestic duties.

It is to M. Wilhan that the French are indebted for the amazing spread and popularity of those numerous and patriotic strains and sacred chants and choruses which are now known and practised throughout the whole extent of the empire. He introduced a new system of musical teaching, so simple and easy as to come within the capacity of mere children; and he was thus enabled, by means of deputies acting under his instruction, to organize classes in all the cities and towns of the departments, and thus to educate, as it were, the whole vocal power of the kingdom with *the same discipline* in the execution of the same music, while imbuing them with the same sentiments of loyalty and sound morality. To insure their co-operative efficiency, he established monthly meetings between the members of adjacent districts, when all the classes of those districts were united and sung together; and it was found, so efficient was the simple system, that generally all were in perfect accord, even at their first reunions. At Paris these assemblies of the several classes took place at the Orpheon, where their performances were of