

ESSAYS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

Some Birds of the Canary Islands
and South Africa



FOR THE PEOPLE
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NATURAL HISTORY

SOME BIRDS
OF THE
CANARY ISLANDS
AND
SOUTH AFRICA.



Ploughing with Camel in Fuerte-ventura

see also U 1
1857-1858

ESSAYS AND PHOTOGRAPHS.

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SOME BIRDS

59.82 (68) SA

OF THE

Canary Islands and South Africa.

BY

HENRY E. HARRIS.

92 *ILLUSTRATIONS*

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

THE photographs which are reproduced in the pages of this book were collected during some portions of a stay of six months in the Canary Islands, and during periods of a visit of about the same length of time in South Africa, and although while I was engaged in taking them I had no intention of bringing these photographs out in book form, so many people have asked me what I am going to do with them that I have decided to place them in some way before the public. Had I anticipated bringing out a book, I should have obtained many additional items of interest, and should have verified others, which have been left out because of insufficient identification. As an example of this, I may mention the botany of the various districts to which these pages relate, this branch of natural history being often so closely associated with the nesting habits of birds.

With regard to the illustrations themselves, it has been my aim to present the birds apart from their nests, this plan seeming to show their various attitudes more clearly, and I may here state that in the case of every reproduction, the object has been portrayed in a perfectly wild state, and among its natural surroundings.

Perhaps the ideal way of showing a bird, would be that in which its natural surroundings are included in

the same picture, but however successful this method may be in a drawing, it is practically impossible in a photograph, with certain rare exceptions. As some set-off against this disadvantage, it may be remarked that in photography the momentary positions assumed by a bird can be caught, as it were, and perpetuated on glass, whereas these positions would tax the powers of the best draughtsman to reproduce accurately with the pencil; in this way bird-photography may be said to be a most valuable ally to the correct setting-up of specimens for museums and other collections.

One of the chief difficulties to be contended with in this kind of photography is undoubtedly *background*, and a picture that often looks most enchanting as seen on the focussing-screen of the camera, comes out but a sorry affair in the finished print when bereft of the depth and colour which make every item stand out so clearly on the screen.

But little can be done with the birds except during the nesting season, some people preferring to stalk them, others to conceal the camera at a likely spot, having everything in readiness for the release of the shutter at the critical moment; in the former plan the operator may secure more photographs, but is entirely at the mercy of his background, while in the latter, he has the advantage of being able to arrange the picture beforehand, all that is needed being the presence of the bird itself. The dark backgrounds shown in nearly all the illustrations in this book are due to the presence of out-of-focus distance behind the birds themselves, this method seeming to bring into relief the various markings and details of feathering to better advantage

than if the birds were taken against the sky. To illustrate this in a word, the varying shades in the foliage of a tree are seen much more effectively when backed by a distant hill, than when the tree is outlined against the light. Stalking may generally be successfully employed in photographing sea-birds at their breeding stations, at which time they are more or less tame, although the wear and tear of the knees on the sharp rocks, no less than that of the temper, are things to be remembered.

I have not considered it necessary to enter into full details concerning all the birds which are shown in the illustrations, as this plan would entail much sameness of description; besides which, this book does not claim to be of a scientific nature, save to the extent that the information contained therein is authentic. To avoid confusion of identity, I have thought it better to put the Latin names below the English ones in describing the illustrations of the birds; these names have been taken, in the case of the birds of the Canary Islands, from Mr. Meade-Waldo's list which appeared in the *Ibis* for April, 1893, and in the case of the South African birds, from Mr. W. L. Sclater's list. The figures which follow the Latin names refer, approximately, to the lengths of the individual birds, in inches.

I may confess, at once, that I am no Spanish scholar, but the isolated words and few short sentences which appear in that language in the first part of my book, have become so associated in my mind with the matter to which they relate, that they would seem to me out of place if written in English.

For any shortcomings in the book, I must claim the

reader's forbearance ; I have found it no easy task, while having, as it were, to stop so frequently and refer to any particular illustration, to preserve, at the same time, the continuity of the writing. This I have endeavoured to make interesting in a general way, and not solely from a natural history standpoint.

My thanks are due to many who have kindly helped me, to my subscribers, and especially to Mr. Howard Saunders, who has been good enough to overlook my manuscript. I am also indebted to Messrs. Bale, Sons and Danielsson, for the great care which they have taken in reproducing the illustrations.

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ERRATA.

p. 29, *for* "except those which are not able" *read* "except those which are able."

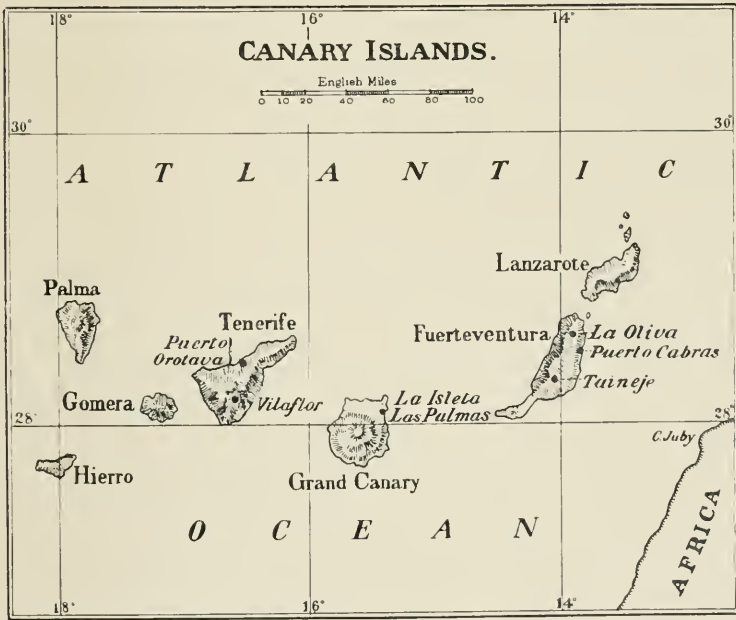
p. 57, *for* "little-wine shop" *read* "little wine-shop."

PART I.

Some Birds of the Canary Islands

CHAPTER I.

Fuerteventura.



A GLANCE at the small map which is set forth above will perhaps place before the mind more clearly than any attempted explanation, the relative positions of those islands, seven in number, which con-

stitute the group known as the Canary Islands. Five of these, Grand Canary, Tenerife, Palma, Gomera and Hierro, to name them in the order of their respective sizes, form what is usually called the western group, the eastern group being represented by Fuerteventura and Lanzarote. All these islands are of volcanic origin, those of the western group being for the most part fertile and cultivated, in strong contrast to Fuerteventura and Lanzarote, which are barren in the extreme.

My journeyings took me to three of these islands, Grand Canary, Tenerife, and Fuerteventura, and of those three I propose to deal in these pages with the two latter only. In treating of Fuerteventura first, it must not be imagined for a moment that that desert-like island can claim precedence in any way over Tenerife, indeed the contrary is the case, for the inhabitants of Tenerife regard the individual who would choose of his own free will to leave their beautiful and justly celebrated island for the barren shores of Fuerteventura, as one who must be, to put it as gently as possible, a little "touched." So far from showing this however, they evince a well-bred interest in his plans, relegating the surprise which they must feel at his actions into the dim recesses of themselves, where it keeps company with a supreme pity.

Years ago Fuerteventura was owned almost entirely by the members of one family, and a deputy Governor was chosen out of this family, whose title was *Colonel*, or Colonel, of Fuerteventura; that title has, however, long since been done away with, and the island is now governed, under the Crown of Spain, as any other of the Canary group.

One of two steamboats, working in connection with one another, visits each of the Canary Islands once a week, calling at its chief port, which in the case of Tenerife is Santa Cruz. From Orotava, on the north side of Tenerife, where I was staying, a long drive is necessary to reach Santa Cruz, whence the boat is taken by way of Las Palmas in Grand Canary, and so to Puerto Cabras, which lies on the eastern shore of Fuerteventura.

The journey now is very different to what it was some ten years ago, when the enthusiastic naturalist—for no one not interested in natural history would go to Fuerteventura—must take his chance in the rough seas which are often to be encountered between these islands, trusting himself and his belongings to some antiquated schooner which might very well take a week over the voyage.

The companion who I had hoped would have been able to accompany me was unfortunately prevented from doing so, I therefore engaged a guide from Orotava, by name Lorenzo Garcia, to act as servant.

As Lorenzo's name will be constantly appearing in these pages it is perhaps as well that I should devote a few lines to him, in order that the reader may be familiar to a certain extent with his personality before we start on our travels. He was about fifty years of age, and had been one of the chief guides for the Peak of Tenerife for a good many years. Lorenzo could speak no English, and I, unfortunately, could speak but little Spanish, so we were dependent to a great extent upon signs as a medium of communication. At this language he was an adept, and would illustrate in a

pantomimic way almost any word, converting himself for the time being into a sort of child's alphabet imbued with life; when engaged in these little performances he never liked being interrupted, and if I understood him before he had finished acting them, as was generally the case, he would still go through with them. One instance perhaps I may mention as an illustration. Before I engaged him to accompany me on the expedition in which we are at present interested, I went with a friend for a two days' excursion across the mountains in Tenerife to a little town of the name of Guimar. On our way up the mountains my friend told Lorenzo that he had been informed one of the guides had covered the distance between Orotava and Guimar in such and such a time; this Lorenzo doubted, and endeavoured to make us understand, by marking off each word on his finger in his impressive way, that the man would have had to run the whole distance if he had done the journey in the time stated. I could see he was still doubtful as to whether we understood him clearly, so, stopping us in the path and bidding us to remain where we were, he began to prepare for one of his little pantomimic shows, at the same time brushing aside, as it were, all his previous explanations. He then started off at full speed, running up the steep side of the hill as hard as he could. We saw, of course, what he meant almost before he had started, and called him back; but no, he had his dignity to preserve, and never liked to be interrupted in these little exhibitions, so he continued to run up the hill for perhaps a hundred yards, when he turned and came down at the same pace, standing before us panting, and saluting us by raising his hat ever so

little from his head. This slight raising of the hat, accompanied as it was by an almost imperceptible bow of his head as he stepped aside, was quite a feature in connection with Lorenzo's conversation, and seemed to act as a sort of polite full stop thereto ; it said, as plainly as words could say, " There, gentlemen, I have done all I can to enlighten you, we will now let the subject drop."

Many things are necessary to an even passably enjoyable sojourn in Fuerteventura, among them being a plentiful supply of food and good water, letters of introduction, and some means of understanding the inhabitants of the island. With my own personal luggage and my photographic appliances it will therefore be evident that my baggage was considerable ; but as the only method of transport in Fuerteventura is by means of camels, and these animals seem to be totally indifferent as to whether they carry one package or a dozen, there is no reason why the traveller should not take all his belongings with him.

Thus it was that four o'clock on a certain Monday morning, March 6th, 1899, found me ready to start, with my luggage packed ; while outside the hotel at Orotava, waiting in the half-light, was to be made out a carriage and pair, the figure of Lorenzo presently taking shape out of the gloom, as with a *buenos dias, Señor*, he passed me to go inside and bring out my luggage. I found it exceedingly cold, for it can be cold before sunrise even in Tenerife, and I noticed that there was a fresh covering of snow on the Peak, which rose up, white and chill, against the dim background of sky. Although I had with me an overcoat and a rug,

it was no easy matter to keep warm driving, because the carriages, in order to accommodate the quantities of luggage with which they are often burdened, had been denuded of their glass. However, I was too sleepy, being unaccustomed to rising at such an early hour, to notice this fact, but pulled up the empty window frames in turn and still wondered at the cold.

Many of the peasants rise early in Tenerife, and as we climbed the long winding hill which leads past the village of Santa Ursula, ghostly looking figures, walking barefoot and muffled up in their blankets, went silently by with hardly enough spirit to give the cheery greeting which would certainly have been forthcoming later in the day. All the poorer inhabitants of Tenerife wear these cloaks, or blankets, which are of the natural colour of the wool, and are simply fastened round the neck with a string; the peasants don these cloaks after the day's work is over, or in the early morning, when, as we have seen, the air is often chill. A cart, drawn by two oxen, would now and then lumber by, too often with the driver asleep; but the bells on the oxen always told of its approach, though we were sometimes stopped because the drowsy occupant of the cart had let his charges take up too much of the road.

The valley of Orotava and the Peak of Tenerife are soon lost to view as we at length reach the summit of this long incline, and it is noticeable that the snow on the top of the mountain is now tinted a delicate pink colour, it being the custom of the Peak thus to announce to lower altitudes, and indeed to passing vessels for many miles around, the approach of day. To us, who are perhaps twelve thousand feet lower down, the stars

are still visible, and on the sea below us lights may be seen dancing up and down, as the small fishing boats ply their trade.

We stopped for ten minutes or so at a wayside inn at Matanza, a small village and well-known place of call for carriages between Santa Cruz and Orotava. Here there was some excellent coffee to be had; the native coffee, by the way, is nearly always good in Tenerife, but is mostly consumed on the island. I had noticed on previous occasions that this inn seemed to be to a certain extent the rendezvous of sportsmen, and on the walls of the room into which I was shown were hung pictures illustrative of the chase, one, I remember quite well, representing a pheasant, a hare, and a green woodpecker tied up together, apparently not a work of art from Tenerife.

The invisible line which separates dawn from daylight generally seems to require some artificial aid to one's better perception of it, for when we resumed our journey, although we had not delayed more than about ten minutes at the *fonda*, it was already broad daylight. The various signs and sounds, too, were those of day, and the women who passed us now and again with clacking tongues were in decided contrast to the silent individuals whom we had met but an hour ago. These women carried large baskets filled with farm produce on their heads, or balanced pitchers of water with great dexterity; many of them had placed their boots on the top of these baskets, for when the authorities have taken the trouble to make such an admirable carriage road as the one which extends for a great part of the way along the northern side of Tenerife, it is not necessary to wear

one's boots out by putting them on except where custom orders it, in the approaches to the larger villages and towns.

Our way now lies along an extensive tract of high land, eucalyptus and plane trees shading the road at intervals; the latter still dangled their last year's leaves and bugles, as though in mute protest against a climate so equable as to give them no chance of a period of rest and bareness before again assuming their spring foliage. This high land is known as the Laguna Plain, and is a well cultivated district, much wheat being grown here.

The outskirts of the old city of Laguna are in time reached, and we soon find ourselves rattling through its narrow stone-paved streets, overlooked on either side by tall houses, many of them extremely picturesque and showing quaintly modelled old doorways. At Laguna, like two well-known companions of the shore, we might "talk of many things," of its Dragon Tree, of the beautiful silver lamps that hang in some of its old churches, or of the Library, with its neglected *patio*, containing orange trees now borne down with fruit, and climbing heliotrope that reaches almost to the balcony which overlooks the ground. But the outset of our journey is no time for loitering; we have a boat to catch, and though Spanish punctuality is proverbially a by word, it has occasionally a nasty way of reminding one that its existence is not altogether a myth, as I once found to my cost.

Soon after leaving Laguna the white, flat-roofed houses of Santa Cruz come into view, the town lying many hundred feet below us, with its natural harbour beyond, the whole bounded by the range of sharp,

rugged mountains, which stretches out to the extreme north-east of the island.

The steep incline down which the road winds between Laguna and Santa Cruz has, at almost all seasons of the year, a bare and burnt-up appearance, which I think gives the traveller who merely lands for a few hours from one of the ships a wrong impression of Tenerife.

The winding road takes us at length through the town of Santa Cruz to the harbour, and here we find the boat already waiting for us. There is, however, much cargo to be taken on board, and a long delay ensues before we finally make a start. Meanwhile the morning is fine, and a bright sun makes pictures of the various craft at anchor in the little bay; out-of-date old schooners, many of them painted black, with verdigris-coloured plates, sending reflections of indescribable hues into the deep-blue water beneath. In time we move off, getting a good view of the south coast of Tenerife as we clear out to sea.

I think Lorenzo was much excited at the prospect of this trip, though he was also inclined to be just a little home-sick. I am sorry to say he was a terribly bad sailor, and anathematised the sea vigorously as soon as he was out of its clutches. *Muy tempestuoso*, he would say to me after we had landed, with a graceful step backward, and with his shabby old hat, which he always took especial care to dust, raised ever so little from his head.

The captain of the boat, which was called the *Leon y Castillo*, was Spanish, as also were the sailors, the latter wearing very worn-looking blue canvas clothes

and no boots. Among the passengers was, I think, one of the stoutest little men it has ever been my lot to see. He was very short, and stood up towards the fore part of the vessel, puffing at a cigar and talking in broken English to one of the other passengers. It seemed he had been to most places, including the island of Fuerteventura, about which he was able to give me some information; he told me that I should find it very barren, and little else but a wilderness of stones.

"I vas dere," he said, "shooten, last autumn, but few people ever go dere." He knew something of the natural history of the island, and told me what birds I should find there. "*Avutarda*," he said, "Dat is your Bustard; *Tabobo*, your Hoopoe, and *Engaña*, is your Courser." I asked him the meaning of the word *Engaña*. "See 'ere," he said, taking me by the sleeve and leading me to a clear space on the boat, when he stooped down as far as his figure would permit him to, and ran a little way along the deck. "De boys run after dem, so—a little funder, so—a little funder, so—and den not catch 'em, *engaña*, he cheat, muchachos, de boys, *engaña muchachos*, he cheat de boys." "And the Bustard? *Avutarda*?" I asked him. He disclaimed all knowledge of the meaning of this word by putting his head on one side and spreading himself out in a vast shrug. "I am not a Spaniard," he said, and then resumed his place, leaning over the rail at the side of the boat. "But see," he continued, "Dere is Canaria, soon ve see de Isleta. Ah, you chust see it? Vell, across dat low bit of sand is Las Palmas, but ve go round de Isleta; anoder tree hours, it may be four hours, you never know."

Presently he continued, "Ven I travel, I put myself on to de boat as baggach ; if I a'ive, vell and goot, if not — !" Again he lost himself in a comprehensive shrug. "So far I have always a'ived, but you never know."

He presented me with an introduction to the Mayor of Puerto Cabras, with whom he had apparently stayed on his shooting expedition to Fuerteventura, producing a very large card on which was inscribed his name, and in one corner, printed in small letters, the words "Lieut. Colonel in retreat." The designation struck me at the time as a rather unfortunate one for an officer, but was probably due to the fact of his having got hold of the word "retreat" instead of "retirement." I must say he was very entertaining, and whiled away the half-dozen hours which on a small rolling boat would have seemed most tedious ; the Peak of Tenerife imperceptibly disappearing from view, while Grand Canary never seemed to be any nearer to us. Presently I saw the "Colonel in retreat" lying down on one of the deck seats, so I followed his example.

Another two hours, and we rounded the jagged rocks of La Isleta and found ourselves within easy distance of Las Palmas ; the harbour first, with its crowd of shipping, then a long stretch of sand leading up to the town itself, and last of all the cathedral, its two towers of solid masonry standing up, black and forbidding, above the crowd of white houses below. When we came into the harbour and were moored alongside the quay, the captain told us that the boat would not start for Fuerteventura until half past eight the same evening, so taking advantage of this I went up to one of the hotels to dine.

Eight o'clock found us assembled on the quay, and we certainly presented a motley crowd as we waited to be taken off to the boat, which, contrary to expectation, had moved from the side where we landed and now lay out in the harbour, one of many lights.

It was not without considerable difficulty that we had been able to discover the whereabouts of the vessel, nor was it until we had walked the whole length of the quay in the dark—a breakneck enough place at any time—that we discovered where the boat lay.

All my respectable fellow-passengers had ended their journey at Las Palmas, so that I was now left with some dozen gaunt-looking fellows clustered round the quay steps, one with a large lantern, almost the only light we had, and some with empty bird-cages. I had on my oldest clothes, but it was difficult to avoid feeling something of a “swell” in such company. My companions were wrapped up in the dirtiest of blankets, they seemed depressed, and disinclined to talk even among themselves, but moodily smoked their Spanish cigarettes. One of them at length, peering into the darkness, announced the arrival of the captain, and we were taken on board.

We sailed at about ten or eleven o'clock at night, getting into rough water as soon as we left the shelter afforded by the Isleta. The boat was due to arrive at Puerto Cabras—the chief port of Fuerteventura—at ten o'clock on the following morning, the distance being one hundred miles, or thereabouts.

I turned in as soon as we had started, and slept till six o'clock, when I found quite a transformation. The rough sea had given place to the smoothest water,

guarded as we were on the west by the island of Fuerteventura itself, and on the east by the African coast. In this desired haven the boat steals along, as boats should steal along, unaccompanied by those drawbacks that so often attend sea voyages ; this smooth steaming along, I remember, impressed me at the time, as being unlike anything I had previously experienced on the sea. My blanketed fellow-travellers were sitting in the fore part of the vessel, smoking, or eating their *gofio*, and enjoying the warmth of the sun ; the captain and the sailors seemed to be without occupation for the time being, and all appeared to be waiting for something which never came.

For hours we stole on thus, the open sea on our right, calm as a lake, the island on our left, a desert of sand-coloured ground without any sign of vegetation, leading up in the distance to mountains, which assumed a distinctly red-coloured tinge towards their summits. We saw no houses and no people. Still we crept along, the monotony of the view once broken by a school of porpoises playing on the surface of the water a little way out to sea, and raising a patch of white foam over which some gulls were hovering.

At length we drew in sight of a cluster of white houses sheltered by a bend in the coast-line, which turned out to be Puerto Cabras. Quite a small place, evidently. A nearer inspection showed us a clean-looking little port, composed of flat-roofed houses, a row of camels waiting on the beach lending a very picturesque touch to the scene.

Our steamboat anchored a little way off the quay, and we were soon disembarked, being rowed with the

baggage in a long, flat-looking boat to the landing steps, while on the shore only the tiniest ripples were doing duty for waves.

There was quite a crowd on the quay to welcome the boat, which stayed here for several hours; the advent of the captain being the signal for the preparation of a weekly dinner at the *fonda* which might be said to take the place of our "market ordinary" in an English country town.

When we got on shore, we found that the Spanish farmer to whom I had a letter of introduction had sent down two camels for us, one to carry the luggage, and one for Lorenzo and myself; this latter had a peculiar arrangement on its back with a seat at either side. The two animals were now lying down on the beach, a little way from their companions.

I left Lorenzo to look after the luggage, while I went into the *fonda* to get something to eat. We had about sixteen miles to go, La Oliva being our destination, and as the camels only travelled at the rate of about three miles an hour it would be some time before we arrived there. La Oliva is a village of some importance in the northern part of Fuerteventura.

When I returned to the quay I found that Lorenzo and the camel-driver had already begun to load up my belongings; I had six heavy packages altogether, for I had to take many things with me. The baggage-camel appeared to be lost in thought as they were loading it, gazing the while out to sea in an interested manner, and now and then turning its head to look at the men with a preoccupied air, as though they were loading some other beast and not himself. But when they

began to stow away the last piece of luggage and to tighten up the ropes his pride seemed to give way, and he began protesting in a series of bubbling grunts and complaining noises which increased in volume until he finally staggered up on to his feet, when he became quiet at once.

I sent Lorenzo to buy some provisions for himself and then we were soon ready to start. A minute or two sufficed to take us clear of the little town, and we found ourselves out on the desert, skirting the sea shore at first for a considerable time. The baggage-camel was sent on in front, picking its way along the narrow path, worn flat and smooth by many camels' feet, but being otherwise undistinguishable from the rest of the ground. The driver walked behind and urged the beasts on with many and varied cries, the one most often repeated being *arré camello, arré camel'*, with occasionally a tap from his stick, the animals responding with a shambling run for a few paces, which ill accorded with their lofty mien, and was exceedingly uncomfortable for me, inasmuch as whenever I had a reasonable expectation of being jolted forward I was joggled backward, and *vice versâ*. I had a fine view of the country round though, being perched up so high, but unfortunately there was little to be seen. The sea on our right, and a desert of stone-covered ground on our left, might truthfully be said to describe what view there was; this barren ground led up to a range of mountains some little way inland, which appears to extend all round Fuerteventura in an almost continuous chain, enclosing a long stretch of undulating country in the centre of the island. It seemed impossible that any life should be

sustained on such ground, as in the country which we passed through immediately after leaving Puerto Cabras there was no sign of vegetation of any kind to be seen.

I think the first birds that we saw, if I except a Vulture, which was circling over the distant mountains, were five or six of the Black-banded Sand-Grouse, rising in front of us with a quick, pigeon-like flight, very unlike that of any of our game birds. These birds made a very peculiar sound on rising, quite impossible to describe on paper. We met with these Sand-Grouse rather sparingly during the whole of our visit, and they did not appear to have started nesting by the end of March; the peasants call them *Gangu*, which means a piece of good luck. Now and again a Kestrel would hang over our path, floating away on the wind at our approach, and commencing afresh its search for food. These birds were not nearly so common here as they were in Tenerife, where one or more of them was generally to be seen in the air; what they could possibly have found to feed on in Fuerteventura it would be hard to say.

Lorenzo called my attention as we were gradually branching off from the coast, pointing with his stick out to sea, and there was the steamer in the distance, making her way to Lanzarote, another island which lies just to the north of Fuerteventura. Lanzarote is much more thickly populated than the island that we are in, and boasts of quite a good sized port, Arrecife by name, but it is not nearly such a clean place as Puerto Cabras, nor is the island so desirable from a natural history point of view, being more cultivated than Fuerteventura.

After leaving the neighbourhood of the sea shore

we began to ascend a low pass in the hills, in negotiating which the camels, whose anatomy is quite unadapted to climbing, seemed not at all at their ease ; the baggage-camel especially staggering up the incline, his thin legs vibrating at each step. Once over the pass, we had another long spell of flat or slightly undulating country, presently passing a small village, near to which was a pool of mud-coloured water by which the camel-driver lay down and drank greedily, afterwards inducing Lorenzo to do the same. The pool had no doubt been filled by some recent rain, so rare in this island, and only occurring about February in each year.

I found out afterwards that the water in Fuerteventura which looked the most uninviting, was generally the wholesomest, the clear springs, of which I only remember to have seen two, being almost always salt. On many of the rocks also there was a white deposit of salt.

The only birds to be seen near this village were a pair of Hoopoes ; *Tabobo* the peasants call this bird in the Canary Islands. I believe *tabobo* means "stupid," and people would say to me in Tenerife, "Of course you've got a photograph of a Hoopoe? No? Why, they're so tame, I saw one to-day on my way to church." That only goes to prove that the Hoopoe, to borrow Lorenzo's phraseology, "knows much." To my mind they are anything but stupid ; showing themselves when they choose, they take very good care not to be about when you want them, and as for their conspicuous plumage, it is only noticeable when they allow themselves to be seen. Sometimes on passing along the high road in Tenerife one of these birds may be noticed

flying up from a stone by the roadside, on which it has been lying down, its usually prominent crest laid back flat on its head, the bird itself remaining quite motionless. They are fond also of lying in this way on the rough lava rocks, and it is but rarely that one sees them until they fly up. The bird is conspicuous enough now, as he flies away and perches on the top of a wall, his crest now up, now down, or as he flutters in the air to secure a passing butterfly, and settles again with his victim held in his long, curved beak ; but that is because he chooses to let himself be seen.

I walked up the pass, and also the rest of the way into La Oliva, the path being very good and the weather delightfully cool. Our road now led along the slope of a low mountain, and looking forward into the valley we could see the first tinge of green that had met our gaze since we landed, if we except the miniature and dried up specimens of vegetation which here and there barely raised their heads above the stones with which the ground was everywhere covered. The green tinge turned out to be young wheat, which is grown over a considerable area near La Oliva, and in other parts of the island where possible. When ripe the individual stalks are gathered by hand and placed in small heaps, as a cherished article, with stones on the top. La Oliva being one of the chief wheat growing centres, we were evidently getting within measurable distance of it, but we had still some way to go, the country as we pushed on becoming gradually more cultivated.

Towards sunset we came in sight of a white church, with some houses clustered round it, which our guide told us was La Oliva. Another half-hour and the



LA OLIVA.

camels were halted before a row of flat-roofed houses, the baggage-camel being made to kneel down on the narrow stone-paved street, always an uncomfortable proceeding to the onlooker, though the chief actor in the scene immediately commenced chewing in a non-chalant and contented manner.

After knocking at the door, Lorenzo announced our arrival, and we were welcomed and shown through into a large, clean-looking room, some coloured pictures hanging on the walls and a great number of chairs ranged round the room—the chair that one sees in the cottages of Tenerife and Fuerteventura, always the same pattern, plain Chippendale, and wooden seated. These chairs are made in Tenerife, and doubtless in Grand Canary too.

My reception here was really rather amusing. The household consisted of an oldish man, between sixty and seventy, his son, perhaps forty-five, and a very old and decrepit woman servant, who never seemed satisfied unless I was eating. If she came into the room and found me not eating, she would point to her mouth and nod a great many times. I found the only way to get rid of her presence was to keep a small store of biscuits in my pocket and when she appeared to stop her mouth, as it were, by filling mine, when she would go away, muttering to herself and apparently highly pleased. The old man did not say much, but his special duty appeared to be to see that I was seated, and also that I kept my hat on in the room. The moment I stood up he would approach me, and placing his hands on my shoulders, push me gently down again, saying at the same time, "*Sientase sientase.*" I had to keep

my hat on the whole evening, while they took theirs off, and if I removed mine for a minute one of them would come up and insist on my replacing it.

The son was a man with a black beard, very like his father, and he evidently had a rooted idea which nothing could drive out of his head, that if he only shouted loud enough at me in Spanish, I must eventually understand. I have said before that I could understand Lorenzo to a certain extent, but most of the people talked so fast, and clipped the words so in their patois that I was at that time at a loss to make out their meaning.

Soon I noticed one or two strange faces at the doorway; these belonged to men who were no doubt friends of the family, and they were brought in forthwith and introduced one by one. After each introduction I heard the black-bearded son say, in a very audible and hoarse whisper, behind his hand, "*Amigo de la Marquesa.*" Now I had not the honour of knowing the Marquesa at all, but, like many other people, I am not blind to the advantages of having my name coupled with those of the aristocracy. My letters of introduction were given me by a friend of the Marquesa's, and as these good people had honoured me so far as to assume that I was an acquaintance of hers, I did not think it at all necessary to undeceive them, especially as it evidently invested me with an importance that my own personality would not have secured. I also saw that it might smooth my way during our stay in the island.

Presently one of them took up a framed photograph from a table in my room and handed it to me. I saw

at once that this was a crucial point, the more so as they were all regarding me with great expectancy. I was apparently to stand or fall in their estimation according as I recognised the likeness or not.

“*La Marquesa*,” I said.

They were delighted, and all got up and walked about the room, seemingly highly pleased with me, while every now and then I could hear above the clack of conversation, the words *Amigo de la Marquesa*. Presently the black-bearded son approached me stealthily and sat himself down about three chairs off. He then leaned towards me, put his hand slowly up to his mouth, and shouted out a sentence in a stentorian voice. I nodded, and said *Si* a great number of times, but I am afraid he was not satisfied, for he came a chair nearer and repeated his remark, finally shouting it down my ear from the chair next to me. This was disconcerting, and I wished Lorenzo had been present at the moment to be the recipient of his confidences. However, they left me in good time, with murmured blessings, and hoping that I should sleep well.

CHAPTER II.

La Oliva.

LA OLIVA probably stands at an elevation of not less than seven or eight hundred feet above the sea, and for this reason it is cooler than many other villages in Fuerteventura. We were not prepared, however, to find it really cold at breakfast time on the morning after our arrival; there was a keen wind blowing, and instead of the fierce sun that I had been led to prepare for, the day was dull and cloudy.

After breakfast I put my things together, and taking some lunch with us we started out, past the few houses which constituted the street in which our host's dwelling was situated. We took with us two Spanish boys to show us the country and assist us in looking for the nests that I was anxious to find; fortunately I knew the local names of all the birds, otherwise we should have been very much at sea.

All the towns and villages in Fuerteventura are surrounded by an open, desert-like plain, so that a very short space of time suffices to take one clear of the houses and out into the country. It was not until we were on the exposed ground that we realised the full force of the wind; we could hardly walk against it, and to make matters worse a heavy storm of rain came on before we had gone more than a mile from

the town. It was no weather for seeing birds about in, much less for photographing them, so we took refuge in one of the ravines, or *barrancos*, as they are called, which we were fortunate enough to find close at hand.

The rain continued to come down fast, being driven past us by the wind, now giving us a misty view of the mountains opposite, now obscuring them altogether. I suppose on almost any other day in the year the sun would have been pouring down with such intense heat that we should have been glad enough of the shelter of this cave as a protection against its rays; as it was, it felt decidedly cold and might well have been, save for the bare, stone-covered ground, a day in Scotland. It seemed ungrateful though, to complain, for the very rain that was keeping us idle for a few hours was the veriest godsend to the people who were entertaining us, and to the islanders generally, whose half-starved flocks had too often to be shipped in the steamboat to Grand Canary or Tenerife, to be sold for what they would fetch; sometimes in the case of goats for as little as one or two *pesetas* apiece, the *peseta* representing in our money about 7d. or 8d. Also in very dry times, when there has been no rain for more than a year, water brought over from Las Palmas sells at one *peseta* a quart, a prohibitive price, considering that most of the people are extremely poor.

While we were waiting in the cave before alluded to, I noticed our two small guides munching their *gofio* and pulling at some dried fish they had brought with them. *Gofio*, I might here explain, is the staple food of the islanders, the poorer kind is made from maize, the better kind from wheat, wheat *gofio* being rather a

luxury and eaten by the well-to-do farmers. I tasted some of this once at a farmhouse, mixed with a little sugar it is not at all bad; the people at the farm also showed me how they ground the wheat by hand, between two large mill-stones. The children in Fuerteventura have beautifully white teeth, as a result of eating *gofio*.

The weather having in some degree improved we now moved out of our shelter and walked along the side of one of the mountains, and although we made a large circuit round, I do not think we saw a bird of any description. The prospect also looked bad again, so we turned our steps towards home. In the vicinity of La Oliva I saw, perched on the top of a cactus, a Shrike, which turned out to be a specimen of the Algerian Grey Shrike, a bird which we found very common near the villages in Fuerteventura, where they were often to be seen in the small enclosures round the houses. I had not previously noticed this bird in Tenerife, as it is very locally distributed in that island. The peasants call this Shrike *Alcairon*, the meaning of which word I was not able to find out, but it is of Moorish origin.

The photographs reproduced I obtained a few days after our arrival, the nests being generally placed in almond trees, which grow sparingly about the houses in most of the villages in Fuerteventura, constituting a thick isolated bush, and during the time that I was in the island, generally speaking, you had only to find your almond tree to find your Shrike's nest.

The nests were in all cases made of thorny twigs forming a good sized structure, with the cavity very deep, open at the top and lined thickly with wool and



ALGERIAN GREY SHRIKE ON NEST.

(*Lanius algeriensis*.)

8" 2"

goats' hair and some pieces of woollen stuff matching the eggs in colour. Where the birds had not been able to suit themselves with such accessories to the lining there was always coloured hair or wool to match the eggs.

I remember reading an article in "Nature" some years ago on the subject of the same peculiarity of colour-matching in the nests and eggs of the Red-backed Shrike in England. Certainly in the case of the Algerian Grey Shrike the markings of salmon-clay colour on the eggs were reproduced in every shade in the lining of the nest. Four eggs seemed to be the usual number.

The birds were very tame at the nest, and would fly away a little distance and then appear at the top of a slender tree, which bent down with their weight as they balanced themselves; they never left off that sideways swirl of the tail peculiar to all the Shrikes, as they swung to and fro on the tree, and would put their heads on one side and watch my preparations with the camera.

The *Alcairon* has a curious way of appearing and re-appearing on the top of some conspicuous plant or low tree, and you may not be aware of its presence at all until you hear a loud *chack* and look up to find the bird regarding you critically; then it generally takes flight to a short distance to work its way unperceived to some other "look-out station," in order that another surprise may be prepared for you.

The following day was equally windy though less wet, so we went out again taking a different direction to that in which we had gone before. We soon saw a Courser running among the stones away from the path which we were following, after which it took wing for

a short distance, the nearly black colour of the primary feathers showing very distinctly as it was in the air. In flight it much resembled our Peewit, and after it had alighted on the ground it ran along with its wings half spread out. Although I saw many Coursers later on, I think this was the only bird that I noticed on the wing; during the nesting season, at any rate, they seemed to prefer to keep to the ground, where they were very inconspicuous. During our wanderings that day we met a small boy whom we questioned with a view of finding out whether he could show us nests of either these birds or the Houbara Bustard, which is also to be frequently met with in Fuerteventura; he told us, through the medium of Lorenzo, who generally constituted himself spokesman, that only a few days previously he had seen two *Engaña's* eggs, but that he had put his foot on them and broken them. Lorenzo was very much enraged at this and took the unfortunate boy by the shoulders, shaking him and calling him *Malo muchacho*, interspersed with sundry mutterings which were unintelligible to me. The breaking of every egg they find is a habit of the boys both in Tenerife and Fuerteventura; they couldn't tell you why, but they always do it. You may offer them a reward consequent on the eggs being intact on the following day, but it is rarely you find them so.

About the middle of the day one of the boys shouted to us, telling us that he had found a Houbara Bustard's nest on the summit of a low hill. There was only one egg, which was of an olive-green colour, marked with rather faint blotches of greenish-brown; this had been laid on the bare ground, the earth having been hollowed



NEST OF HOUBARA BUSTARD.
(*Otis unicolor*.)

out very slightly to receive it. The accompanying photograph gives a good idea of the situation in which the egg was placed. Round about were a good many white stones, and growing among these stones was a plant which we found rather common near here, though we never saw it elsewhere in Fuerteventura. Lorenzo pronounced this plant to be *tacaronteia*, and as no one was in a position to be able to contradict him, I think he felt that for the time being he had distinguished himself. This plant grows also in Tenerife, and has a large bulb with leaves something like those of the lily-of-the-valley sprouting out from it.

We saw something of the birds belonging to this nest, as they flew round while I was photographing the egg, and settled some distance away; they have a powerful, rather heavy-looking flight, and keep the neck stretched straight out when on the wing. Their local name, *Avutarda*, means a heavy, slow sort of bird.

It was evident that the Houbaras and the Coursers, the two kinds of bird that I was most anxious to meet with, were only just commencing to nest, which was rather unfortunate, as it is difficult to do anything photographically with the birds themselves unless they are sitting. The only bird we found in that condition was at the end of our visit, not far from Tuineje, a village situated towards the south of the island. Unfortunately, when I went with my camera to try and obtain photographs of the *Houbara*, we found that some ravens had been before us, and broken holes into the sides of the eggs. Lorenzo couldn't take the ravens by the scruff of the neck and shake them as he treated the boys in Tenerife, but he growled at the invisible

Cuervo and scanned the horizon with his hand, shading his eyes, in a threatening and somewhat theatrical attitude.

Lorenzo's method of looking for nests was peculiar ; he could not be made to understand that any bird would be so foolish as to lay its eggs on the bare ground, unprotected in any way by grass or shrub, consequently his time was taken up in peering into the small bushes, six inches or so in height, which were sprinkled here and there over the desert. Later on, when we found some Courser's eggs, it was with great difficulty that he could be induced to see them as they lay on the ground, although he was standing over them, and when at length he succeeded in making them out, his surprise and admiration were so great that he had to be led away to a safe distance in order that he should not inadvertently trample upon them. He was extremely useful in every other way, and had a happy knack of making us feel at home wherever we went in the island.

We found no more Houbara's eggs and no Courser's eggs at all in the neighbourhood of La Oliva, although we made long excursions each day we were there, going on one occasion almost as far as the sea shore ; the weather gradually improved, but it still kept fresh and very windy. The only other nests which we did find were those of the Stone-Curlew. This bird, so frequently met with in Fuerteventura, is interesting as being a regular summer visitor to England, and is one of those birds which still breed with us sparingly in two or three of our counties. These birds were, like the Coursers and Houbaras, only just beginning to nest

when we were in Fuerteventura, and as they were so common here I did not trouble about them, thinking I should find them on my return to Tenerife, where, unfortunately, I got but little chance at them. The Stone-Curlews are adepts at concealing themselves, and will often start up into view on the rough ground a few yards ahead, run for a short distance in a very leisurely way, and then stand still, or fly away. The peasants in Fuerteventura call this bird *Alcaravan*, but in Tenerife it also goes by the name of *Pedro Luis*, both names being given to it by reason of its peculiar cry. This cry is heard almost exclusively at night time, more especially on moonlight nights, and the wild notes of the *Alcaravan* might often be heard around the villages in Fuerteventura when all else was silent.

The island contains few birds except those which are not able to avail themselves of its sand-coloured ground as a means of escaping detection ; there are no trees, speaking generally, if we except the palms which in some of the villages surround the water tanks, so that birds which are not of a protective colour are driven to make their homes in the vicinity of the villages, where they find the only available cover in the scattered almond trees, or among the cactus plants. Even the Hoopoes, conspicuous enough at times, as we have shown, combine in the varied colouring of their plumage many of the tints of the desert rocks, tinged as some of these rocks are with orange or red-coloured lichen.

One little bird that could certainly claim protection from the open desert was the Trumpeter Bullfinch, of

which we saw a certain number during our stay in the island. I think they were more numerous in the neighbourhood of the sea shore than they were inland, consequently we did not meet with them very frequently. I saw these birds also on a sandy piece of ground near the Golf links above Las Palmas in Grand Canary; there was a small flock of them feeding, and I might very likely have passed them over had not their peculiar cry attracted my attention. This cry has a far-away sound, and on first hearing it I took it to be the bark of a dog only just audible in the distance. After this had been repeated I then found that it came from the ground only a few yards in front of me, and on looking down I saw six or seven of these small birds. They were exactly the colour of the sandy ground on which they were feeding, and now and then one of them would hop up on to a stone; as I approached them they flew away to a short distance. Unlike most birds of protective colouration, the Trumpeter Bullfinches do not avail themselves of their similarity to their surroundings in choosing a nesting-site, for the only nest of this species that I found was placed in the roof of a tumble-down shed, and was well concealed. The eggs, four in number, were very similar to those of our Bullfinch in England, but were rather smaller.

Before I came to Fuerteventura I was regaled with stories of missionaries and others who had barely escaped with their lives, on account of being attacked by the wild camels which lived on the island, one lady assuring me that a missionary whom she knew had been chased "nearly the whole length of the island," a distance, by

the way, of some sixty miles, more or less. The fact is that the camels are turned out on the hill sides to feed when they are not required for work, and a familiar scene in Fuerteventura is one in which these animals are dotted here and there on the barren slopes, feeding on what isolated specimens of vegetation they can find. There is no fear of their over-eating themselves.

Camels and donkeys are the only beasts of burden in Fuerteventura ; the former carry cargo almost exclusively, while the latter are ridden by the inhabitants when they find it necessary to ride, as for instance in making a journey to some distant part of the island. The camels are also used for the purpose of ploughing, wherever it is possible to till the ground at all, the plough used being a very simple affair, and made of wood. The day before we left La Oliva, as we were returning home from a long excursion, we came upon some of the peasants engaged in ploughing, and had some conversation with them, or rather Lorenzo had, but they did not know of anything that would be likely to interest us. I took some photographs of them, one of which is reproduced here, and another forms the frontispiece to this book. They were much interested in the camera, and I should think it probable that very few of them had ever seen such a thing before.

The country where these peasants were ploughing was on the slope of a broad shallow valley, its sides gradually sweeping up to the bare mountains on either hand, and on these slopes it seemed most curious to see camels leisurely feeding their way, and cropping at the almost microscopic vegetation that grew here and there among the stones. As we walked up the centre of the

valley these camels would raise their heads and stand looking at us, not resuming their grazing until we had left them some distance behind. On our way back to La Oliva in the evening we passed at intervals a flock of goats and one or two camels being driven desultorily home by some small boy ; the camels seemed obedient enough and were quite at large, though had they taken it into their heads to rebel against their diminutive guide I am afraid there would not have been much of him left to tell the tale. I think nothing lowers one's self-esteem more than being met by a camel ; it is not merely the fact of being cut, though that is bad enough, but somehow they give you the idea that you are not there at all, gazing the while at the distant mountain tops, as they swing quietly along, with an intensely interested and preoccupied air. One feels as though one had been passed through, not merely passed by.

On nearing La Oliva for the last time we stopped to rest and have a smoke by the way, and talk over our chances of success in the southern part of the island, until we were reminded that the day was drawing to a close by our friends of the wayside now passing us, the camels stalking along with an expression of smug complacency, while the goats, with frequent bleats and tinklings of many bells, scrambled hither and thither on either side of the path, nibbling at what scant herbage they could find.



A MID-DAY REST.

CHAPTER III.

New Quarters.

THE four days which we had spent at La Oliva were certainly not productive of much, looked at from an ornithological standpoint ; the birds in the neighbourhood were few, and those that we did come across were evidently only commencing to nest. In all probability the weather, and more especially the food supply, had much to do with this.

I had a further introduction, to a farmer who lived at Tuineje, a village situated some little way south of the centre of the island ; this village is marked on the small map contained in the initial chapter. We were told that it would take us a long day's journey to reach Tuineje before nightfall, if indeed we were able to do so by then, accordingly an early start was arranged for.

Hospitable and kind though the people were at La Oliva, I should have fared badly without the provisions which I had brought with me from Tenerife, especially as the old woman to whom I have before referred was stationed over me while I ate my meals, various delicacies being pointed out by her in the homely dish which might with advantage be consumed in the next mouthful. Tea was apparently an unknown luxury in the island, but a very dilapidated and rusty old teapot was after some difficulty borrowed in the

village, and in this she was able to brew a concoction of some sort from the supply of tea I had brought with me. I think she considered this to be of untold value, she poured it out so carefully, and was much distressed if even a drop were spilt.

The same man who had piloted us from Puerto Cabras to La Oliva made his appearance in good time with the camel, which animal we found kneeling down ready to be loaded in front of the door of my room. After getting my belongings stowed away on to a kind of wooden saddle with projecting pieces at either side, the man made the camel stand up, and treated it much as though he were measuring it for a suit of clothes, giving a hitch here and a twist of the rope there, and being very careful to make an exact balance of the luggage ; when at length he had adjusted this to his satisfaction he climbed up the animal's tail, so that he might make a last tightening of the ropes. Lorenzo was immensely pleased at this procedure, to which he drew my special attention.

We were sorry to leave the people who had entertained us so kindly during our short stay ; they made Lorenzo a present of a stout wooden stick, which contained a whistle in the handle, with which he was much pleased, christening it by blowing several shrill notes on it, and saying in an explanatory way to me, *Para el Pico, Señor* ; he then whistled again and put his hand to his ear as though listening, meaning that it would no doubt come in useful to him in his excursions up the Peak of Tenerife. Following this little performance, as usual, came the customary raising of his old hat, ever so slightly, with a step backward, *Si, Señor*. The only

time I ever saw him use this whistle was in Las Palmas, when we were driving from the harbour to the town, and he certainly made good use of it then, blowing a shrill blast at every vehicle that we passed, until he made us the laughing-stock of the road for the time being.

Our farewells over we made a start, the black-bearded son accompanying us for a short distance on our way. He still shouted in my ear as he had done on the first night of our arrival, but the process was more bearable out of doors. We dropped him at the first village we came to, some four or five miles from La Oliva, and then pursued our journey with only the camel driver for our guide.

The country to the south of La Oliva was bare in the extreme, more so I think than any that we had passed through; we saw a few Coursers, which would now and again run from our path, though they were not always easy to discern; one or two flocks of Sand Grouse, too, we also saw. I think the ground was too bare for the Houbaras, as no verdure was visible to relieve the arid prospect, not even the *ajulaga* shrub, which may generally be found growing where there is any vegetation at all, and with its feathery grey-green foliage forms a rather pleasing contrast in colour to the surrounding desert. On many of the stones which covered the ground there was a deposit of red lichen, this colour being especially noticeable towards the tops of the mountains as seen from a distance.

Six or seven hours travelling brought us to La Antigua, which is perhaps the largest village in Fuerteventura, and is more up-to-date than many, inasmuch

as it possesses a mill to pump up water, the only one we had seen in the island so far. Some of the inhabitants were engaged in carrying water from the small reservoir, the contents of which had a much more refreshing look than that of most tanks in Fuerteventura, where it appears green and uninviting in the extreme. This reservoir was surrounded by tall palm trees. The pumping in many of the smaller villages is done by camels, which are blindfolded, and walk round and round on a small parapet raised about six feet from the level of the ground.

We had now completed about half our journey, and it was necessary to give the camel a rest, for which purpose it was unloaded, and allowed to kneel down on the narrow street. We, too, required some refreshment, though it was difficult to know what to get ; wine there is none to be had, if I except a thin, white, and exceedingly vinegary fluid that even Lorenzo's paved palate rejected as soon as touched. *Malo vino*, he would say, making a wry face and shaking his head.

One noticeable fact, or rather omission, in connection with these villages, is the scarcity of shops of any kind. In England we are so accustomed to have goods brought to notice as it were under our very eyes, that a shop-keeper who apparently takes a vast amount of trouble and pains to hide his wares in the remote recesses of his shop, and then to shut the door and wooden windows of that shop, would seem, to our enlightened minds, to court failure of trade. On the other hand, perhaps, in villages of this kind where few strangers ever come, the shops are so well known that it is unnecessary for the *tenderos*, as the shop-keepers are called, to advertise the



REPLENISHING THE WATER-TANK.

whereabouts of their goods by any outward show. Certain it is that in a good-sized village, as La Antigua evidently was, we had the greatest difficulty in finding even a provision shop; then, after opening the door and stepping in from the bright sunlight outside, a temporary darkness obscured such eatables as were ranged on shelves behind the counter.

We purchased some bread—fortunately I had other provisions with me—and then enquired if they could make us some coffee. No, they could not, but there was a house, so and so, in which we might be able to obtain some. We had still more difficulty in finding this place, and as nearly every house in Fuerteventura keeps its own special breed of mongrel dog, warranted to attack anybody whom it has not seen before, and a good many people whom it has, there was a certain excitement in approaching the doors of the various houses at which we tried. I began to think that I didn't care for coffee, and that life would be more pleasant without it, for at every house that I ventured near, Lorenzo shouted out, *Cuidado, Señor, el perro*, rolling the two *r*'s in a most vigorous way, till I began to question my right to monopolise all this pleasure, and accordingly Lorenzo took up the quest, armed afresh at each dwelling with a large stone.

We found the house after much searching, and when we had been kept waiting for some little time they served us with coffee, which was quite drinkable, though not so good as is generally to be obtained in Tenerife. The people would not accept any payment for the coffee, so, leaving nothing but our grateful thanks behind, we prepared to continue our journey

On we went at the same level pace, the country becoming somewhat less arid and a tinge of wild vegetation appearing now and again in the landscape. Once we passed a house which was painted a brilliant blue colour; it was pointed out to me as quite the most beautiful object in Fuerteventura. I cannot say that I admired it, though the colour of most of the houses in the villages so far had certainly been monotonous, all of them being built of clay-coloured stone, more like boxes than houses, having exceedingly thick walls, unplastered outside. The immense thickness of the walls of the houses showed how well the Fuerteventuran Spaniards understood their own climate, for however hot the sun might be outside, their rooms were invariably beautifully cool. None of the houses, with very few exceptions, consisted of more than the ground floor.

Some way further on Lorenzo, after a conversation with the camel driver, pointed out to me a house standing by itself a little distance away from the road, and called out in his cheery voice, *Casa del medico, Señor, mucho dinero in banco, muy rico*. I asked them if he was the only doctor in the island, and they said they thought he was, though I should think there must be one in Puerto Cabras. The man certainly deserved to be rich if he had to doctor the whole of the populace. Towards evening we approach a range of mountains, and are told that our destination lies some little way beyond them, but the path makes a bend to the left hand so as to avoid the long climb up for the camels.

Another two hours' travelling and we round these mountains, and then see in front of us two good-sized

villages, the further of which, we are informed, is Tuineje. Soon we pass through the village, accompanied by barking dogs and wondering children, and then halt before a long, low house of the usual type, which is the residence of the farmer to whom I have a letter of introduction.

I sent Lorenzo down the path leading to the front of the house, soon hearing, as I had anticipated, a sharp encounter with the watch-dog. That animal being quieted by its owners, a pleasant-featured old lady came out and bade me welcome, saying that her husband, whom we will call Don Ramon, would not be at home until late that night, having gone on a journey to a distant village, but that their best room was at my service for as long as I would be their guest.

I do not know whether they had been previously advised of my visit, but whether they had or had not, nothing could have exceeded the quiet welcome of this farmer's wife. My luggage was unloaded, and for the second time on this island I felt that I had fallen among friends.

Don Ramon, an old man of about seventy, but very spare and active, came home later and joined his welcome to that of his wife; and I may here say that a kinder pair than these two old people, from start to finish of my visit, I have yet to meet. No trouble was too much for them to take, Don Ramon, while joining in our ornithological expeditions, or his wife when welcoming me home in the hot afternoon, with a quiet shake of the head and a smile, as she opened the door of the cool room and remarked on the heat outside. They had several children, but most of them were

married and settled in homes of their own. There was a brother of Don Ramon's, who often came in, though he did not live with them. He was a white-bearded old fellow, and used to be very amusing; he would have it that I understood what they said when they were talking among themselves, and would laugh and say, *Entiende, entiende*, notwithstanding my protests to the contrary.

I must now pass on to our doings after our arrival at Tuineje. The country around was much the same as we had previously seen, except that here we met with but little wheat in comparison with what there was at La Oliva; nor did they appear to have had the rains of the preceding few days. The only verdure to be seen as a rule was the *ajulaga* shrub, which was sprinkled here and there in districts, but never seemed to grow to more than about a foot in height; there were many small snails on it, on which the Houbaras are said to feed.

For three days we hunted without success, save finding a Stone-Curlew's nest, a photograph of which I reproduce here, so that on the third day, that being the day before the weekly boat left for Grand Canary, I had decided to go back to Tenerife. The peasants said that the birds were not breeding this year, as it had been too dry, or that they were not here, and so on, and it really looked as though there were some truth in their remarks, as we had seen few Coursers, and only one or two Houbaras. So, as the boat left Puerto Cabras at eight o'clock in the evening, and Don Ramon had sent out a large number of people to search for nests on the previous day without success, eight o'clock in the



NEST OF STONE-CURLEW.
(*Diadenus crepitans*.)

morning found us ready to start home, with everything packed.

Just as we were going to load up a boy came to say that he could show us an *Engaña's* nest, about three miles distant ; this was very annoying, as I had quite made up my mind to leave, disgusted as I was with our bad luck, but Don Ramon and his wife did all they could to persuade me to stay, while at last old Lorenzo, thoroughly homesick and tired of the place as he must have been, struck a tragic attitude and said "*Que lastima, Señor*" (what a misfortune), to go back having found nothing. Thus he turned the scale, so we set to and unpacked, turning out the remnants of provisions, some of which I had dispensed with a too lavish hand the day before.

An hour and a half's journey brought us to the place where the nest was situated ; our youthful guide, dressed as were all the peasant boys, in white, trotting along in front of us to show the way. He pulled up near the centre of a flat piece of ground which skirted one of the stony ravines, looked about for a few minutes and then pointed to his feet, where we saw, matching in colour and size the surrounding stones, a Courser's egg. There was not the slightest attempt at any hollowing of the ground, only a small bare space, quite flat, and about six inches in diameter, cleared from among the adjacent stones. Evidently the birds had only just begun to nest now, and there would no doubt be another egg laid to-morrow or the next day, so after photographing the egg *in situ* and rewarding our guide, we marked the spot and went off in another direction.

It seemed we were to have some luck at last, for while we were searching along the ground in line, I was fortunate enough to find two Courser's eggs on the shoulder of a low hill, placed similarly in all other respects to the previous egg, except that the surrounding stones were slightly larger. Remaining where I was I called to the others, who came up and were much pleased at my discovery.

This nest I took photographs of, and then sent my companions some distance away, where they waited within hearing while I lay down under cover of a tumble-down cairn of stones that stood on a slight elevation about two hundred yards distant from the eggs. I had not seen the bird so far, and wanted to make sure that the eggs were being sat on.

I had to wait quite half an hour before I saw the Courser appear over the crest of the hill. She came very slowly and cautiously, going in and out among the stones, frequently stopping and standing still, then she stood where I judged the eggs to be and sat down on them, becoming, so far as the eye could tell, one among a wilderness of stones. I waited a few minutes, then whistled to Lorenzo and made him walk towards the bird, I keeping my glasses on her all the time, as I did not want her to see me rise from my hiding place. I was also anxious to see how soon she would get up from the eggs, to aid me in searching for other nests. I was surprised to find that she did not rise till he was within about seventy yards, although she could see him coming all the while; then she got up and began walking away, zigzagging about among the stones and stopping every few yards to look round, finally disappearing behind the brow of the hill.



CREAM-COLOURED COURSER, AND NEST.

(*Cursorius gallicus*.)

g' g''

Although it was rather late in the day for such work, I decided to try and take advantage of what seemed to be a good chance of photographing the bird sitting, and it was as well I did so, for it was the only opportunity I had. Arranging the camera to photograph a bird is always a long and tedious business, the least thing left undone and one's chance is spoilt. In photographing where there is cover it is generally not so difficult, the camera may then be placed on its stand and the whole concealed with branches ; on the open ground, however, where there is absolutely no cover, the case is different. Here the camera must be placed on the ground, or in some instances almost below the ground, and after focussing very carefully the exact spot to which the bird is expected to come, the lens must be "stopped down," to use a photographer's term, so as to make sure that the whole of the bird is in focus, for it may sit broadside to the camera, or it may choose to sit facing it. The direction of the wind, however, will often be a guide in this respect, as a bird generally sits facing the wind. After focussing, the shutter has to be pulled down and the dark-slide inserted, great care being taken not to shift the camera at all, which would throw the object out of focus. The camera should then be covered over with a piece of cloth of some kind matching the ground in colour, and stones, sand, or earth placed upon this, so as to present an even appearance with the surroundings. The shutter, always the most difficult part to disguise successfully, should then be chalked over so as to match the surrounding ground in colour, and a short piece of cotton attached to the spring which works the release of the shutter. Five or six skewers may then be stuck

into the ground, leading in the direction of the place where the would-be photographer intends to conceal himself. The next duty is to walk to this place of concealment with a fishing reel containing anything up to two hundred yards of line, leave the reel at this spot, undo the check, and the line will run out easily without entangling. This line must be passed through the five or six skewers, one of which should be close up to the camera, and then attached to the piece of cotton already mentioned ; the object of the cotton being to avoid any jar or movement of the camera when the line is pulled. This piece of cotton is an important feature in taking photographs of this kind, because it enables the operator to pull as hard as he likes at the exact moment he wishes to take the photograph ; the cotton being sufficiently strong to release the spring of the shutter then breaks off, thus avoiding any jar to the camera.

While I was photographing the eggs as they lay on the ground, Don Ramon's brother, who sometimes accompanied us on our expeditions, touched me on the arm and pointed out the summit of a neighbouring hill some half-mile away as a likely spot on which to place the camera with a view of taking the bird, assuring me that I should never be able to photograph it at a less distance. He altered his opinion somewhat on seeing the camera disguised on the ground, but still, as he retired with his companions to their own hiding place a little distance away, I could see him shaking his head and looking very wise, evidently feeling that I was putting a slight on the intelligence of the *Engaña*.

I think the bird came rather more quickly this time, pursuing the same tactics, and standing about, as before.

I was glad to see that she took no notice whatever of the camera, but worked her way up to the eggs and then sat down. It is always well to leave a bird alone for some little time and not to take the photograph at once, because it will almost invariably shift its position once or twice before settling down.

I was just tightening up the string preparatory to giving the final pull and securing perhaps one of the most interesting of ornithological representations, when three ravens, flying very low, came right over the bird, one of them making a feint at the camera, its sharp eyes evidently detecting something that the Courser had failed to notice. This had the effect of making my bird leave the eggs and stand still a few yards from them, while the ravens continued their flight. They seemingly did not notice the Courser's eggs, though they must have seen that she was sitting. She soon resumed her place, and then, seeing by the aid of my glasses that she had apparently settled down and was in a favourable position for being taken, I pulled the string.

The bird sprang into the air with a loud *squawk*, very different from the low note that it occasionally utters when flying, then settled a few feet away and began, metaphorically speaking, to "rub its eyes" and wonder if it had been dreaming. Apparently it thought it had, for, running a few steps it again went on to the eggs. I had to disturb the bird in order to change the dark slide, as I wished to take another photograph of it, and the afternoon was beginning to close in, so I went up to the camera and made the necessary alteration.

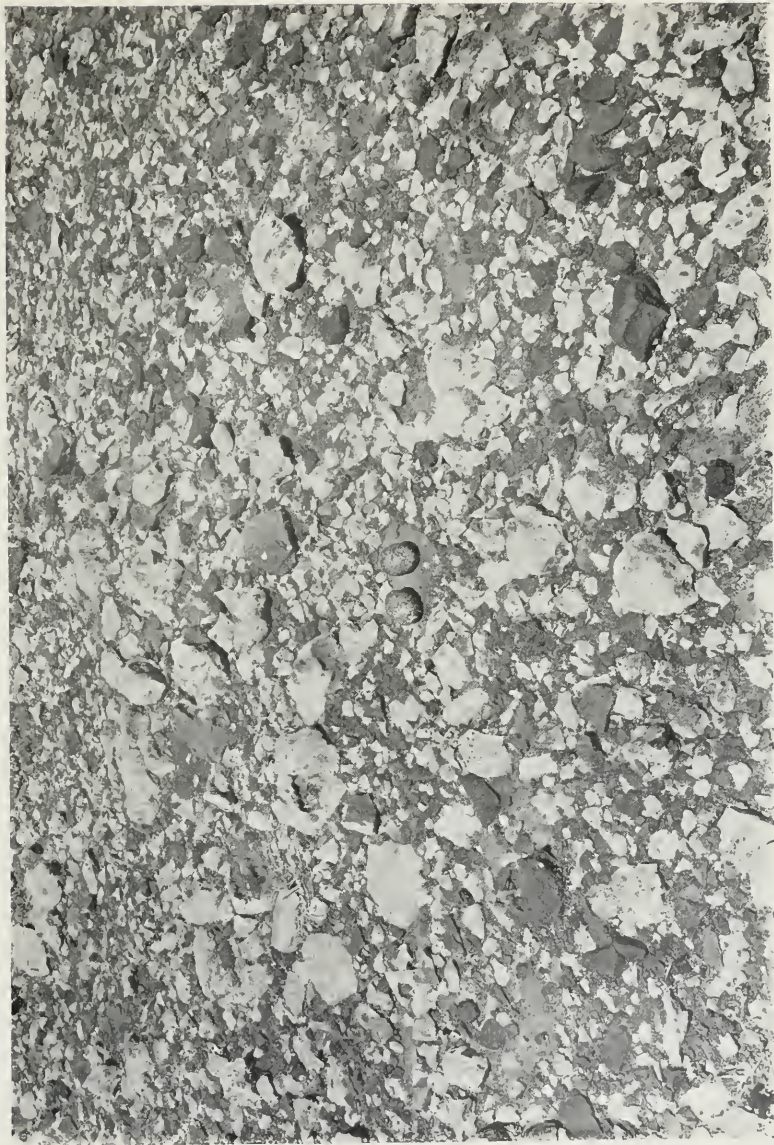
I obtained one more photograph, but this time the

bird did not move at the sound of the shutter, I think the wind prevented her hearing the click. In this instance she ran up to the camera and looked it over before settling down on the eggs.

I trust I have not wearied the reader in the above description with too many technical details ; I had not intended to mention them at all, simply letting the illustrations present themselves naturally, as in the course of a ramble through the country ; but so many people have an idea that these photographs are merely "snapshots," and that one can go out at any moment and "take" a bird, that it may surprise them to know how much time and trouble is really necessary to obtain good results.

While I was waiting to take the photograph described in the foregoing, the sun came out with quite desert-like force at times ; generally speaking though, we found a nice breeze on any elevated ground, it was on reaching the village that we learnt what the sun really could be in Fuerteventura. The nights, however, were nearly always cool, and the air was beautifully dry.

Lorenzo always took great care of my cameras, but as we were going home on the evening of the day on which I had photographed the Courser, he quite exceeded himself in this respect, wrapping up my long-focus camera in his blanket as though it contained the bird itself. He always insisted on carrying his blanket, even on the hottest day ; none of the peasants in Fuerteventura carried theirs, but then Fuerteventura was very much behind the times, and I am afraid Lorenzo had not much opinion of the place, in which he was right from his own point of view. I asked him once



NEST OF CREAM-COLOURED COURSER.
(*Cursorius gallicus*.)

how he liked the island, to which he replied, "*Buena gente, Señor, buena gente, pero le país——*" and he shrugged his shoulders and spat on the ground.

Don Ramon and Lorenzo would often take a stroll round the village of an evening, and sometimes I went with them, during which times I think I learned more Spanish than in any other way. While on these walks Lorenzo would pat the children on the head in a fatherly way, using some term of endearment to them, such as *chiquillo*; the termination *illo* is often tacked on to the end of a child's name, and implies smallness, as *Antonillo*, the little Antonio. It seems to render the name of a small child less ponderous; many of the commoner names are exceedingly pretty, such as *Celestina*, *Cipriano*. We found the children in Fuerteventura always courteous and well-behaved, in striking contrast to those about the larger towns in Grand Canary and Tenerife, where, unfortunately, they have learned the commercial value of being impertinent.

Strolling along on one of these evenings past a row of houses, I heard Lorenzo give a low growl, somewhat similar to that given by a large dog when it passes any one to whom it owes a grudge; I asked him what was the matter, when it transpired that he had taken a pair of shoes which I had given him a few days previously to a shoemaker to be re-soled. This man had reduced them so much in size by the process that it was an impossibility for Lorenzo to wear them without extreme pain. Accordingly he shook his fist at the dwelling of the shoemaker, telling me that he was a bad man. When we returned to Orotava he took the shoes to his own shoemaker to be re-topped, but he still referred to them as *zapatos del Caballero*.

One evening we spent at the priest's house, which was quite an imposing building for Fuerteventura, and possessed a *patio*. Lorenzo enjoyed himself vastly that same evening, and I think monopolised a large share of the conversation. I heard him speaking of the life in great cities, though he had never been outside the Canary Islands. Then he could speak a little English it seemed, and the Englishman before he went to bed always said "Gool nai," and again, if he were to find himself in London, he would be able to speak English quite well in three weeks. I think the glass of beer which the priest produced for our delectation picked him up a little, for he had had some long days carrying the cameras about, and I noticed, as we found ourselves at home again, that he patted the brindled watch-dog, a thing I had never seen him do before.

CHAPTER IV.

Our Last Week in Fuerteventura.

WITH the assistance of some of the peasants we were now beginning to find more nests, or perhaps it was that the birds had only just commenced to lay. One morning a man came into the village from a distance, and said that he could take us to the nest of a *Guirre*, this being the local name for the Egyptian Vulture. We were told that the nest was placed in a position in which it might be possible to photograph it, and as this bird usually selects the most inaccessible situation for its eyrie, it seemed worth while visiting the place.

We started off in a southerly direction, and had covered a considerable distance before we passed a lonely *finca* or farmhouse, possessing, as must do every house that stands by itself in Fuerteventura, a water tank. At this house we stopped to ask if one Zachariah was about on the premises, but we were told that he was in the ravine which skirted the farm with his goats, accordingly we went in search of him.

Our guide now shouted out "Zachariah," "Zachariah," to which Lorenzo and Don Ramon joined their voices, until the mountain-side which bordered the ravine threw back a continuous echo, "-reeyah, Zachareeyah," but no Zachariah appeared; so we sat down

and waited. "Could nothing be done without Zachariah?" I asked Lorenzo, who was rolling a cigarette and preparing to enjoy himself in the hot sun. He made no reply, but hunched himself up and shot out his under lip, which after all expressed more than he could have put into a few words.

In the possessor of such a name I naturally expected to see some hoary patriarch of the desert, weighed down by years, and still more so by a lifelong sojourn under a name so ponderous; judge of my surprise, therefore, when the mellow tinkle of a bell caused us to look round, and there we saw a small boy, clad in white, make his appearance leisurely over the side of the stony *barranco*, followed by his flock of goats. This was Zachariah, and as he greeted us our guide spoke to him and took his place, while Zachariah expressed himself ready to show us the nest of the *Guirre*. We had still some distance to go when we came in sight of a steep volcanic mountain standing out by itself, a sight common enough in these islands. As we drew near to this mountain we saw one of the birds whose nest we had come to seek sailing majestically round and round in widening circles; doubtless he had come out to reconnoitre, his keen eyes having sighted us from afar. This bird presents a very different appearance in the air to what it does at close quarters, when it looks a ragged and ugly creature. In the distance, as it gradually rose higher and higher, its black and white plumage showed in relief against the background of blue sky.

We had to go round to the far side of the mountain in order to make the ascent, as it was impossible to



NEST OF EGYPTIAN VULTURE.

(Nest excavated at Abydos.)

climb up the loose cinders except by a winding foot-path, which led us, after about half-an-hour's walking, to the summit of one side of the crater; this seemed to dip down almost as deep as the base of the mountain, the mountain itself being really nothing but the sides of a gigantic cone. Our small guide, Zachariah, now pointed out a large face of rock, standing out a little way below the summit of the crater; in this rock was a good-sized cave, within which we could just make out one of the Vultures sitting. She remained till we had walked half-way round towards the cave, and then flew off and settled a little way above the nest.

On reaching the rock we found that the cave was easily accessible from below, and with a little care it would be quite possible to photograph the nest, though there was very little light inside. I first went along to the cave, in which I found two eggs; they turned out to be quite fresh, and were of a dirty white colour, marked very sparingly and indistinctly with dark reddish brown. There was a sort of nest made of a little wool; the cave also contained one or two bleached bones. I asked Lorenzo to hand me my camera, which he was hugging in a very determined manner on the narrow path which overlooked this rock, but to my surprise, for the first time since we had been out together, he definitely asserted his authority, saying repeatedly, *No quiero, Señor, no quiero*, and at the same time waving his forefinger backwards and forwards in front of his face, a habit many of the Spaniards have when they wish to imply a very determined negative. I think he considered himself responsi-

ble for my safe return to Tenerife, and although there was no possible danger, he was no doubt so well acquainted with these peculiar formations that he knew, had I slipped, I should not have stopped until I had reached the bottom of the deep cone-shaped hollow, to climb up the shelving sides of which would have been well-nigh impossible.

The photographs were not a great success, as I had to place the camera almost within the cave itself in order to obtain them. I took the eggs, as I thought it was the only Vulture's nest I was ever likely to get up to, and then we descended and had some lunch at the foot of the mountain, both birds wheeling high in the air and watching us off the premises before returning to the nesting site.

On our way home we were shown a Houbara's nest, the eggs, two in number, being of the same olive-green colour as before; one of them was of a very narrow, oblong shape, and scarcely marked at all. There was no nest, properly speaking, the eggs lying in a very slight hollow, a small bush a foot or so in height growing close to them and acting somewhat as a foil to the eye, inasmuch as it was of about the same colour as the eggs. There was also a sprinkling of vegetation round about. I never saw the bird at all, though I waited for some time; but another day, while I was watching some Coursers, a Houbara ran by me within about thirty yards; it moved very quickly, keeping its long neck perpendicular.

We found two more Coursers' nests during our stay on the island, one pair of eggs having distinct zones round the smaller ends, while in all the other eggs that we saw the markings were evenly distributed.

In no case was there any hollowing out of the ground to receive the eggs, merely a small space cleared of the surrounding stones and flattened down so as to be quite level. There were a certain number of places slightly hollowed out, which the peasants told us were made ready for eggs, but I do not think this was really the case.

One of the difficulties I had to contend with, as mentioned in a previous chapter, was that the boys, although invariably polite, would insist on breaking every egg they came across.

I am inclined to think I should have had more success if I had been allowed to look for nests in my own way. We had too many people out with us as a rule, but as some of them insisted on accompanying us out of politeness it was difficult to explain this to them. I think the reason why the Coursers' eggs are so exceedingly difficult to find is that the ground on which the birds nest is open and comparatively flat. The eggs of Ringed Plover, Lesser Terns, and others are often hard to discover, but then there is generally some limit to the ground to be searched over—a strip of beach, with perhaps some rising shore from which you can watch the birds. Here there may be one Courser's nest in half a square mile of country, and if you see the bird in front of you it is impossible to tell whether it has run twenty yards or two hundred, or whether it is simply standing by the eggs. The Houbara's eggs are very much easier to find; probably the ravens, of which there are a fair number, take toll of them, but I should doubt if these birds find many of the Coursers' eggs.

We found a nest of the Morocco Raven one day, containing six eggs, and placed on a ledge of rock in an absurdly accessible situation ; I give a reproduction here which presents a good idea of the materials of which the nest was composed. The day was intensely hot, and after I had finished photographing I took up two of the eggs ; they were so heated that I could scarcely bear them in my hand. I had not a suitable camera with me that day for trying to photograph the bird on the nest, so while I was thinking how best to set about it, Lorenzo entertained me with the remark, whispered into my ear, *El cuervo sabe mucho, Señor*. He seemed to stand in great awe of the Raven, and I think gave it credit for the possession of a large amount of sagacity, in which surmise he was probably correct.

Although my fortnight in Fuerteventura could not be called exactly successful from the point of view that I had anticipated, yet I certainly did manage to obtain photographs of nests, at any rate, of some of the most interesting birds. Had we arrived in the island a month later in the season I should have had more to show, the Sand-Grouse for instance, or *Ganga* as the peasants call them, were still going about in small coveys, and had evidently not started nesting at the time I write of, about the middle of March. I must however add that I did not visit the southernmost extremity of the island, which is, I believe, the most interesting, and is certainly the most wild ; but I had no introductions to any one in those parts, and though I had a tent with me I never used it, owing to the difficulty of obtaining water.

Food also was another stumbling block, and I was



NEST OF MOROCCO RAVEN.

(*Corvus tingitanus.*)

very glad that we had taken a fair stock of provisions, as meat, excepting now and then a small chicken, bread, vegetables, in fact all the commonplace articles of consumption, were rarely seen wherever we went. *Gofio*, dried fish, and very indifferent water seemed to be the diet of nearly all the islanders. Lorenzo came to the door of my room one evening looking very mysterious, and poked his head inside, being evidently the possessor of some secret intelligence not lightly to be parted with. Pointing over his shoulder to the shed where the cooking was done he nodded his head several times, to an accompaniment of sniffs. *Carne de carnero, Señor*, he said. I understood him quite well, but this was not enough. Dropping on all fours he gave a loud *baa*, at which I could not help being amused. This pleased him, for he thought the sweets of anticipation were aroused in my breast as they were in his, so with his well-known salute he left me. A special effort had seemingly been made to give me a treat, and if the brindled watch-dog evinced that evening a somewhat suspicious desire for my company that he had not shown before, who was to know that he, and not I, was the consumer of that mutton? In a word, the brindled watch-dog helped me over a difficulty, and although it was not exactly an animal one would care to be under an obligation to, the arrangement happened in this case to suit both parties.

The people were greatly interested in my cameras, which I think they regarded with some amount of superstition, even Lorenzo appearing relieved when the shutter had gone down and the photograph was taken. Sometimes four or five of them would stand

round while Lorenzo was handing me the things I required; he was very useful in that way and would steal up to me silently with a dark slide concealed about his person, as though the sun could hear as well as see. After the silence that always accompanied the taking of the photograph their tongues would be loosed, and Lorenzo would give them a sort of extempore lecture on photography. This of course was while I was photographing a nest.

A day or so before we left I offered to take photographs of Don Ramon and his family, and a little while before the time appointed a secret expedition was made into my room, which contained a large wardrobe, to extract therefrom Don Ramon's best Sunday suit, while Lorenzo was preparing, in the next room, to attack him with scissors and razor. This was not what I wanted, as I was desirous of photographing him as he looked in his everyday clothes, and as he used to accompany us on our expeditions, so I intimated as much, and finally induced him to come out and be taken.

The event must have been noised abroad, for no sooner had I photographed Don Ramon and his family than their places were taken by other families, who had walked quietly in, all decked in their very best, while a thin stream of people could be seen threading their way from the village.

On the evening of the day previous to our departure we find ourselves returning home across the bare undulating ground for the last time, meeting now and then on our way peasants, who give us a *buenas tardes, Señores*, as they pass. Occasionally a string of camels would go by, laden with cargo from Puerto Cabras, where the

boat touches on a Tuesday morning on its way to Lanzarote, calling at Puerto Cabras again on the following day on its return voyage.

Fuerteventura had but little that it could export beyond its own inhabitants, these migrating, after an unusually lengthened period of drought, to Cuba or the Peninsula, by which name they always referred to Spain; chiefly to Cuba though, where nearly all of them seemed to have relations of one sort or another.

When the last string of camels has resolved' itself into a mere dot upon the horizon, and the sun is tinting the mountain-tops an even deeper red than usual, we find ourselves outside the little-wine shop close to Tuineje, while the cheery brother insists on making every one feel very uncomfortable by taking a small glass of the thin vinegary wine of the country.

The Spaniards in Fuerteventura are great cigarette smokers, but the older men will as frequently smoke pipes. The flint and steel too are in general use among many of the inhabitants in outlying villages, in which matches are rarely seen. Certainly no more satisfactory method of lighting a pipe in a strong wind is to be found than by the use of the flint and steel. The native match, as made in the island, is a homely affair, consisting simply of a broad strip of touch-paper cut into notches on one side, so that pieces may be torn off as required, the ends of the pieces so notched being dipped in phosphorus. The cigarettes, which may be bought at twenty for a penny, are composed of dry, chopped up tobacco, enclosed in a roll of paper, which is closed up at both ends.

The poorest class of Spaniards here, as in Tenerife,

have an odd name for penny and halfpenny. If you go into a shop that is kept by one of these people, they will tell you that the price of such and such an article is *perro grande* or *perro pequeño*, which means that it costs a "big dog" or a "little dog," the former being the word in general use amongst them for a penny, and the latter for a halfpenny. I think smoking is almost the only luxury indulged in in Fuerteventura, and poor though the inhabitants are, it says much for their native courtesy that they should seldom be without the means of offering the traveller some civility, even though that civility be represented only by a cigarette costing the twentieth part of a penny.

For the second time all is packed and ready for the journey to Puerto Cabras, a journey we are told that will occupy the best part of twelve hours; the boat is to leave at eight o'clock in the evening, so we make a start in good time in the morning. Don Ramon is to see us, as is the custom of the island, some little distance on our way.

With many good-byes and good wishes we take leave of them, the last words being an invitation from the cheery brother for me to stay at his house next year; there is an almond tree in his garden, he says, in which the *Alcairon* nests every year; the nest shall not be touched until I come. Even the brindled dog grudgingly puts in an appearance, and lies in the hot sunshine with its nose on its two paws, looking up at the proceedings with bloodshot eyes.

Soon clear of habitations, we strike out into a new direction, to complete the triangle of which our former journeys have been two sides. We drop the pilot, our



NEST OF THE ALCAIRON.
(*Ianius algeriensis*.)

old friend and companion Don Ramon, after about an hour's travelling, and then we are left to ourselves with no sound but the soft tread of the camel and now and again the strange cries of its driver.

The question of leave-taking reminds me of that of remuneration for board and lodgings. Among people of such good manners one's natural impulse would be to scout any idea of payment, but the inhabitants in the out-of-the-way places in these islands are poor, and sentiment must not override common sense. Any allusion to the matter, however delicately put, is generally met with a positive refusal to take anything, and yet they expect something. I usually found that the most satisfactory way was to leave what I intended to give them in an envelope, so that in opening this after my departure they might avoid the embarrassment of being "insulted"—to use a Gilbertian phrase—in my presence.

One man with whom I stayed for a short time provided me with a donkey to ride, much against my own wish ; I was on good enough terms with the animal until it took to falling down, which it would do without the slightest warning. After it had repeated these performances two or three times I said I thought I would walk ; this evidently seemed to be the donkey's wish too, but they would not hear of it. "*Montese, Señor,*" they said, "*montese, montese,*" and so I was forced to get up again. Its next obeisance was made on the edge of a steep ravine, down which I narrowly escaped rolling ; this strengthened me in my resolve to walk, and I ultimately had my own way. I think the donkey, being Spanish, was too polite to *kick* me off,

so it adopted this subterfuge to try and get rid of me, which after all amounted to much the same thing. This leads me round again to the leave-taking question, for the owner of this donkey, having accompanied me as usual for a short distance on my way, and being about to say good-bye, I asked him if I might be allowed to make some small return for his kindness. We were sitting down, smoking, at the time, and he waved the suggestion aside vehemently, "*No, Señor, nada,*" he said most emphatically, moving his hand quickly to and fro in front of his face. Here was evidently a deadlock; I did not know what to say next, but after we had been sitting for some little time without speaking, he said in a very low voice, apparently addressing himself, *Para el burro?* then shrugged his shoulders and put his head on one side as though to see how the suggestion looked, now he had got it out. I did not catch his meaning at once, and it was not until he had repeated the words, this time a little louder, and again surveyed them, as it were, after they were spoken, that I saw what he was driving at. It appeared that the donkey was to be the scapegoat, so I asked him if he would accept something for the use of the donkey. He was still very diffident, and had evidently not accustomed himself to the idea yet, so he gave a deprecatory shrug, as much as to say if I would insist on it, that was the only way he could see out of it. I must confess, after my experiences of the said donkey, I would rather have had some other object made the medium of payment, but that was evidently the only solution of the question.

We saw but few birds on this our last journey in

Fuerteventura, although the country gradually became less arid, with here and there an attempt at cultivation. They are a dull lot, the birds of Fuerteventura, and it says little for their musical capabilities that the Hoopoe's note is the most often heard of any during the daytime; the monotonous "Oo, oo, oo, oo, — Oo, oo, oo, oo," heard in the early mornings, being a sound that associates itself in my mind with the yellow stone walls and blue-green cactus plants round about the village of Tuineje. The cry may be exactly imitated by three or four whistles on a very low note repeated again and again. It has a strangely *wooden* sound.

Lorenzo returned from a foraging expedition in one of the villages that we passed through and showed me an orange, quite a rarity in this island, and the first that we had seen; I admired it, but he still held it out impatiently to me, evidently meaning it as a gift. Villages were more numerous along this route than we had found them on any of our previous journeys. Once we passed a spring of clear water, which looked very inviting, but was, so they informed me, salt. During one of our expeditions a few days back, while we were walking up the bed of a dry *barranco*, Don Ramon stooped down at a certain point and dug away some sand with his hands to a depth of about a foot. After waiting for a few minutes this hollow began slowly to fill with dirty-looking water, which he said was good to drink. There were some camels and goats standing near the place, so I think they must have been aware of the fact of water being about, though they could have made but little use of it themselves. In this *barranco*, in which a few tamarisk bushes were growing, I saw

a specimen of Mr. Meade-Waldo's Chat (*Pratincola dacotia*), the only one that I came across in the island. This bird is, I believe, peculiar to Fuerteventura.

When we are within five or six miles of Puerto Cabras we strike into a carriage road, much to our surprise; it seems it is newly constructed, and appears to be feeling its way out into the desert in a very tentative manner. It certainly does not get much encouragement, for so far as I know there was nothing on wheels in the island at the time we were there. The camels evidently mistrust this road, as they have worn a narrow track on one side of it, and avoid walking in the middle. It was decorated on both sides with rather small stones placed at intervals of about twenty yards, apparently as ornaments, for they were not of much use, being merely placed on the ground where they could be kicked aside. This road necessitates bridges and all sorts of extravagances, and our camel, after studiously ignoring the existence of the road for some miles, starts off down the steep side of a *barranco* instead of going over a bridge, so that it has to be ignominiously driven back by the man.

A long incline breasted, and we look down on Puerto Cabras—the Port of Goats,—still an hour's journey away, although it appears to be so close. The sea, as yet, is untenanted, and there is no sign of the *Leon y Castillo*, which should soon be putting in an appearance on her return from Lanzarote; we are early yet though, and take our time over this, the last stage of our journey.

We pass the little white-walled cemetery which overlooks the town, and then find ourselves in the

narrow street ; a geranium growing in front of one of the houses being the only flower we have seen during our stay on the island. There are no flower gardens in Fuerteventura, water is too scarce a commodity for gardening. Our luggage is left down by the quay, now laden with stores waiting for the boat ; a row of camels may be seen reclining on the shore, the same abstracted gaze far out to sea, the same nonchalant chewing. Before we reach the *fonda* the boat slips quietly in unnoticed, and takes her accustomed place.

There was a crowded table at the *fonda* that night, and many quaint and curious dishes, to which justice was certainly done by the majority of the guests. Among these I noticed a highly-coloured old gentleman from Lanzarote, with a napkin tucked round his collar, his grey moustache doing a vast amount of work over the various courses. He was rude enough to say to his neighbour, in whom I recognised a face from La Oliva, "The gentleman seems very fond of the bottle.' This was in allusion to my nose, which had borne the brunt of the sun for a fortnight. There was a slight hush, then in an undertone, *Amigo de la Marquesa*.

By nine o'clock we were on board, Lorenzo appearing very jovial, either on account of the prospect of returning home to his wife and family, or else because he had found some wine more to his taste than that which he had been able to get in the villages.

My closing recollection of Fuerteventura was certainly a weird one. The sea was calm, and after most of the cargo had been taken on board I saw two long boats being rowed laboriously towards the steamer, the

moonlight shining on the ruffled water at every stroke of the oars ; these boats were each laden with forty lambs, two camels, and four oxen ! The lambs were disposed of in the spaces not taken up by the camels and the men who were rowing, the four oxen floating in the water, two at each side of the boat, to which they were attached by a kind of wooden yoke fastened to their shoulders. The lambs were unloaded first, bleating helplessly, and were passed from hand to hand into the hold of the vessel. Next came the oxen, lifted and swung round into position by a crane ; and lastly the camels, bound as it were hand and foot, with their long necks stretched out horizontally, uttering the while a gurgling sound, as they were finally deposited with a soft bump in the hold. I think there must be some charity in me, because although these camels had passed me again and again with the most contemptuous demeanour and insolent drooping of the eyelid, yet now, when they were helpless and bound, with the prospect of a sea journey before them, I felt sorry for them and pitied them.



CYPRESS TREES AT VILAFLOU.

CHAPTER V.

Vilafior.

FOUR thousand feet or more above the sea, on the south side of Tenerife, is situated the small town of Vilafior. The mountain slopes on which it is built are for the most part composed of rocky ground, from which springs, here and there, one of the giant pine trees so often to be met with in the higher districts of Tenerife; these trees unite in places to form isolated woods, remnants of the forest which at one time clothed these mountain sides.

It is a quaint village, built round a large square, the church standing at the top, the *fonda* on the left-hand side, while leading out of the two bottom corners of this square are two narrow streets. To the right of the church are three magnificent cypress trees, the row of steps included in the accompanying illustration of these trees leading up to the church itself.

Like some old families, this village is touchy about the spelling of its name, and one must be careful not to confound the *Vila* with the Spanish word for town, which is *villa*. Orotava people have a great love for Vilafior, and in that I think they show good taste. Sometimes enveloped in cloud for days together, its full attractions are not realised until the sun draws from its woods the warm scent of the pines, which here

attain an almost fabulous size. The healthiness of the surroundings of this, the highest situated village in Tenerife, or the example of great age set by its pines, is not without its effect upon some of the inhabitants of the district, and it was a touching incident that the old priest who had ministered to the people of Vilaflor for so long should have been taken from them only a few months ago, when he lacked but three years of the hundred.

A long journey is necessary in order to reach Vilaflor from Orotava, and the traveller must follow the stony path that leads past the few straggling villages on the lower slopes of the mountains, passing through a thousand feet of drenching cloud, where everything is green, and the peasants live for some portion of the year in a genuine Scotch mist; then out of the mist into the bright sunshine, the yellow bloom of the *genesta* marking one altitude; the white flowered *retama* another. When the *retama* zone is reached, the Cañadas are not far distant.

Above the cloud-belt which so often surrounds the Peak of Tenerife, shutting out all view of the mountain from the coast, lies an extensive level plain, composed entirely of small pieces of pumice stone; this plain extends for many miles, at an altitude of some seven thousand feet above the sea, constituting what is generally known as the Cañadas, and rising out of these same Cañadas in every conceivable shape, are jagged pieces of black lava. Then again, with almost startling distinctness as viewed through the dry, clear atmosphere, towers the Peak of Tenerife. It is May, and the only signs of winter snow are the pencil streaks

of white that mark the courses of its crevices and gulleys. The air is fragrant with the scent of the flower of the *retama*, a kind of broom that flourishes here where little else grows; single bushes of it are dotted here and there for miles around, some exceptionally large ones growing to a height of three or four feet.

Keeping well to the left of the Peak, the path leads on for many miles, skirting now and again walls of black lava that rise to a height of fifty feet out of the plain, the light pumice stone yielding a sound as of half-frozen snow under the foot. Now the far side of the Cañadas is reached, and the traveller looks down, not over the blue sea on the south side of Tenerife, but on to a billowy plain of white cloud, stretching out into space, while near at hand, like rocks out of the sea, jagged points of black show themselves.

After descending perhaps a thousand feet, the path skirts a bold sweep of black cindery ground, from which it is separated by a narrow gorge; the colour-effect of the *retama*, growing in isolated bushes, on this dark background must surely be unique in nature; the black cinders, the sage-green stems, and lastly the white flowers, merging in perspective into a delicate mist of white. The cloud-belt soon obscures the view save to a short distance, where occasionally a rugged pine tree takes indistinct form, with its stem bare of branches except near the top. These trees now become more frequent and more distinct, until in time the lower limit of the clouds is reached, and sunlight begins to dispel the mist. Bird life begins to show itself, and the *Caminero* may be seen along the path, now settling on a stone,

now flying on for a few yards and then alighting again. This bird, Berthelot's Pipit, is quite one of the most distinctive birds of Tenerife, and indeed of all the islands, and what the Blackcap and the Canary are to the more wooded parts, the *Caminero* is to the rough, open ground. It is met with more frequently, I think, than any other bird in Tenerife, and will fly along in front of the traveller, settling on a stone or a wall by the wayside, and remaining just long enough for him to note the dull-brown of the upper parts of its plumage, its striped breast, and its delicate flesh-coloured legs. The bird is interesting as being found only in the Canarian Archipelago; even in Fuerteventura it was to be observed on ground which was not absolutely barren of all vegetation.

After descending one side of a deep wooded ravine the path leads uphill, past orchards of pear trees in full blossom, and so to the outskirts of Vilaflor.

The weather was very hot during the first few days we were at Vilaflor, afterwards it became cooler, with occasional immersions in cloud. No fear of bad water here; one has only to go about a hundred yards above the village to find the clear stream racing down in a hollow wooden aqueduct, and there one is "top man," always an enviable position in these islands, where the chances of fever lurk below the villages. Above us are no habitations, nothing but the rocks and pine trees. Following up the path a little way above the village we come to the great pine tree of Vilaflor, attaining I am afraid to say what altitude, but it was certainly seven feet in diameter, measured at the height of an average man from the ground. Nearly all the trees are of



BERTHELOT'S PIPIT AND NEST.

(*Anthus bertheloti*.)

5" 7"

enormous size, but none of them I believe is as large as this one. The peasants, though wood is everywhere abundant, have cut a large wedge-shaped block out of this tree at its base, but this has been somewhat atoned for now by a wall of stone having been built to guard the tree.

As we follow the path through the forest, various sounds show that our movements are noticed by the lawful residents of the woods. A raven "waits on" us from a great height up, and so plainly does he see us and know all about our movements, that he is in no hurry to give his hoarse croak, a sound that travels down very audibly to our ears through the clear air. After all it was not exactly a warning, it was merely a sort of clearing of the throat, as though he would say, "Ahem! I know you're there, you know." But his nest was safe enough, and we were not on the path that led to it, so he soon leaves us alone. "Not even dangerous," he seems to say as he sails off, giving another croak.

A very paradise this for the *Frailasco*, the Tenerife Blue Tit, as it flits here and there, now dumping down on to a twig, ducking first to one side and then to the other, with a chattering twitter, then off as soon as settled to its home a hundred feet up among the tangled *débris* near the tops of the giant pines.

The "little friar" is an engaging bird, and one of the few inhabitants of the forest that seems to give you any sort of welcome. He evidently thinks you ought not to be there, but being there he is content to scold you and then bustle up under cover of some undergrowth to examine you more closely. He has few companions of

his own lively disposition in the sombre woods besides his own kith and kin, unless it be the Tenerife Robin, who is nearly always hunting for food among the pine needles on the ground, and when he has finished he just flies up to some little loop of a branch, where he sharpens his beak and waits till he is hungry again. Not much of a companion this, after all, for the lively *Frailesco*, who is always on the alert, never still for a moment, and seems perpetually to be trying to have his head and his tail in the same place at the same time. He spares time occasionally from his bustling life to come out into a patch of sunshine which carpets the ground here and there amid the gloom, and search a flower for insect food, hanging head downwards from a dependent twig; sometimes, in his impetuous way, he shifts his position on to the flower itself, which of course breaks down with his weight, so he scurries off again into the woods. There are hundreds of these little birds far up in the tall trees, and their incessant chattering may continually be heard.

Another resident in the forest is the Kite, *Villano*, which may often be seen in the air as he glides over the tall tree-tops, steering himself with his forked tail, and giving now and then his peculiar mewing whistle. He settles for the most part on an old lightning-struck tree close to his nest, which is built near the top of one of the tallest pines, a tree some six feet across at the base. On the withered branch of this tree he waits for us, and when at length we have scrambled up over the slippery bed of pine needles, not without many back-slidings, his attitude seems to say, "Well?"

He is quite right, for it is an impossible tree to climb,



TENERIFE BLUE TIT.

(*Parus tenerife.*)

4' 8"

so there he remains, with his grey head slightly on one side, and doesn't seem at all perturbed. Nevertheless, he watches us through the forest, gliding above us with outspread wings, and then floats down to the valley below.

We retrace our steps, passing the water-course above the village, where the Grey Wagtail catches flies in the air, or sits balancing his long tail. He is always there, except when the washerwomen have taken possession of the place, when he balances his tail from a distance and wonders when they will cease their everlasting "clack, clack," with its accompaniment of wet linen dabbled down on stones, and their cackling laughter.

The pace at which some of these women talk is almost incredible. There are no pauses, and each syllable is dropped out with very nearly the rapidity of the punctuations of a sewing machine; and when it is explained that the poorer class of Spaniards in these islands frequently clip both the beginning and end of some words, often substitute an *l* for an *r*, and hardly ever pronounce the *s* at all, the difficulty of making out what they say will be to some extent understood.

My friend Mr. W., who accompanied me on this expedition, left Vilaflor for Orotava after a stay of a few days, I remaining a little while longer. Imagine my state of feelings then, shortly after his departure, when our landlady, by name Livoria Cano, came in at breakfast time and clacked off an interminable flow of words at me, none of which I in the least understood. If she had brought in the coffee-mill and ground it at me I should have been quite as much enlightened.

She left the room, still talking, and returned almost immediately with a bunch of knives and forks in each hand, with which she was gesticulating freely.

I began to understand now, my friend had gone away and taken some of her cutlery, instead of that which we had brought from the hotel with us. There was evidently nothing to be done till she "ran down," so I waited patiently, the more so as directly I tried to get in an explanatory word the pitch of her voice was raised considerably, she could hardly increase the speed.

All things come to an end in time, and when she had no breath left to talk with she began to cry. A word now and then, followed by a sob—and in the lull of the storm I could catch such expressions as "*Muy pobre . . . pero no sé, Señor . . . Muy pobre.*"

Now was my chance, as she gradually relaxed her hold on the knives and forks and placed them on the table. I was very sorry, I said, but Mr. W. was not a thief; I would send a letter that day to him at Orotava, and the *Arriero* should bring her things up next time he came. As to being very poor, and not knowing anything, I assured her that her cooking was most admirable, as indeed it was. The sun now shone through her tears, she collected her weapons, and left the room.

We got on very well after that, and she flattered me by saying she could understand me quite well; I wished I could have paid her the same compliment; however, she subsequently modified to some extent the speed of her talking. This good woman certainly cooked plain dishes very well, and in the English way,

which latter circumstance was accounted for by the fact that she had been for some time housekeeper to an English lady who lived for many years at Vilaflor, and died there. On one occasion a live partridge was brought into my room, with a string attached to its legs, and my landlady wished to know if I would like it for dinner that evening. I asked her how it was caught; she seemed surprised at the question, and explained, in a sentence lasting over several minutes, that it had been caught on the nest. I tried to make her understand that in England it was not the custom to eat partridges during the nesting season, at which she began to cry. I had several more partridges after that one, and they were certainly very good, and only cost fourpence apiece.

One day I asked her what time it was; the day was misty, and as she pointed up towards the sky she shook her head and gesticulated. "*No hay sol, Señor, no sé que hora es,*" she said.

This was quite true. They had no church clock in the village, but when the sundial which stood against the church indicated mid-day, the bell in the tower was rung twelve times.

There is no carriage road within many miles of Vilaflor; stores and merchandise have therefore to be brought by way of the steep paths which lead up from the villages along the south coast of Tenerife, or from Santa Cruz, which is a very much longer journey. Mules are the chief beasts of burden in Tenerife, although there are a few camels in the island. I remember one evening hearing a bell ring outside my room at Vilaflor, and on looking out I saw a camel

kneeling down in front of a small shop which faced the house where I was staying ; the number of boxes and packages that were being unloaded from the poor beast might well have filled a cart, and I could not help wondering at what stage the proverbial "last straw" would have had its effect. The whole business was done so silently, the men being bare-footed as well as the camel, that I should have known nothing of the proceedings had it not been for the ringing of a small bell which was suspended from the head-gear of the animal.

In the more open country about Vilaflor there were many small birds to be seen, commonest among these being perhaps the *Triguero*, or Wheat-bird, in which may be recognised a familiar English species, the Corn Bunting. These birds were very numerous in almost every part of Tenerife, nesting in the more cultivated portions of the island, where their mechanical note was uttered monotonously again and again. The Spectacled Warbler, too, which is abundant near the coast, finds its way up as high as Vilaflor, though I did not actually see the bird there, but only found its nest, placed in a cistus bush. This looked very pretty amid the white flowers, the eggs much resembling those of our Whitethroat.

Chiffchaffs were very numerous in Tenerife, and their notes might generally be heard wherever there was a sprinkling of wood. At Vilaflor these birds were nesting in May, the nests being hardly ever placed at a less height than three feet from the ground, and sometimes as high up as ten or twelve feet. Possibly they build them thus in order to keep the eggs more



CHIFFCHAFF AND NEST.

(*Phylloscopus rufus.*)

out of the way of the lizards, which are very numerous in Tenerife. The peasants call this bird *Hornero*, meaning Oven-bird, on account of the shape of the nest, which is domed, as in England, with an entrance at the side.

Another bird that found its way up to Vilaflor was the Hoopoe, though there were but few of them at this altitude. In Tenerife, as in Fuerteventura, these birds often nest in the crevices of the rough stone walls, but they are shy of disclosing the whereabouts of their nesting-site, and if they think they are observed, will show at times a remarkable amount of patience. Settling on the bough of a fig tree, the bird looks very much on the alert, erecting its crest, and being evidently suspicious of danger; then, having satisfied itself that there is cause for alarm, it settles down, either along or across the bough, flattens down its crest, and waits. After a while it flies off to another tree, and then both birds may be seen showing off to each other, with their crests up, or one of them may chase a butterfly, hovering for a moment in the air before finally catching it.

One day during our stay at Vilaflor we found ourselves in the vicinity of the Raven's nest, at least there was a rather dilapidated nest placed in a cleft of rock at a height of fifty feet or so from the ground, and quite inaccessible except by means of a rope. On the other side of a gorge, though, which ran beneath this crag stood a rock, from which we could see across almost to the level of the nest. One *Cuervo* sat on a tree some distance away, the other on a big pine which overhung the nest. This bird did not appear

to mind our presence at all. "That?" he seemed to say, screwing his head on one side and looking down into the nest, "Oh! that's an old nest, been there as long as I can remember, that's nothing to do with us," and he lolloped a little further along the branch and hitched up one foot, as though to dismiss all possibility of argument, finally drawing in his head and giving one or two little flicks with the tips of his wings, so as to ensure for himself the acme of comfort.

I hate doubting anyone's word, and unless the Raven were a consummate actor, it seemed useless to pursue investigations further; but with the business-like training which had for so many years been instilled into my mind, I felt it my duty not to leave the spot until I had found out for myself whether the nest were untenanted or the reverse. Accordingly I threw a stone up at the nest, with the result that four or five gaping beaks at once showed themselves, making a horribly immature croaking noise; they then dropped down, one by one, into the nest and were silent. *El Cuervo* was in a great rage; to think that, after all his training, his family should have been caught by a trick like that; and in his anger he ruffled up his feathers, and dug his strong beak many times into the pine branch, splintering bits of bark off at each dig, while the gorge resounded with the hollow sounds.

I took several photographs from the rock opposite the nest in this way, though they were not very successful ones, and each time the young birds showed themselves the Raven went through this extraordinary performance, until at last, as though he could contain him-

self no longer, he flew to the tree where his mate was, and dug with his beak at the branch close to where she was sitting. "Why don't you do something?" he seemed to say. "Sitting there!" "I suppose you know what's going on?"

While I was photographing these young Ravens a *Carpintero* flew out into the sunshine and settled on the trunk of a large pine tree close at hand, commencing at once a diligent search for insects in the deep crevices of the bark, his red nape and mottled back showing very conspicuously in the bright sunlight. He was not allowed to stay there long though, for almost as soon as he had alighted, half a dozen "little friars" came down from the top of the tree and surrounded him from all sides, chattering and pecking at him, while many others were on their way to join in the fun; so he flew quickly and silently back into the woods. This bird, the Great Spotted Woodpecker, is not uncommon in the pine woods round about Vilaflor, although it is chiefly by means of its ringing cry, and an occasional rounded hole in one of the older forest trees, that its presence is to be detected. No bird takes better care of himself than the *Carpintero*, as the peasants call him, and if you are on one side of a tree he is almost sure to be on the other; thus the observer may become the observed, and he will probably find out more about your habits than you do about his.

Towards evening we retrace our steps in the direction of the village, and as we find ourselves clear of the forest, the mewling whistle of the Kite, as he goes back to his favourite tree, tells us that he has watched the last travellers out of the woods.

CHAPTER VI.

The North Coast of Tenerife.

IT says much for Tenerife, that without the aid of those two accessories, rivers and lakes, which are so closely associated with much that is beautiful in scenery, the island should yet be able to hold its place as one of the beauty spots of nature. The north shore of Tenerife has a charm peculiarly its own, and at no spot on the island is a more pleasing wealth of colour drawn together than at the Port of Orotava. Here the sea is almost always rough, and it is but seldom that the deep blue of its water is not separated from the shore by a line of white surf. All along this coast the colour-changes are rung on black, white, and blue; the unusually deep blue of the sea, the snowy whiteness of the foam, and the black sand of the shore. There is always change in this prospect, for the waves of the Atlantic as they roll in, time after time, are of such a size that they thunder on to the rocks, transforming the black shore for the time being into a carpet of white foam.

But if change of colour were needed, it is supplied in the vegetation which grows in places almost down to the margin of the shore itself, or in the villages and small ports which alternate with deep ravines along this coast. Chief among these is the Port of

Orotava, the red-brown roofs of its houses forming a pleasing contrast in the foreground to the sea beyond.

But little trade is done by boat along this side of the island, the people preferring to trust their goods and their lives to the excellent carriage road which runs from Santa Cruz, the chief port of Tenerife, for a considerable way round the coast.

The sea on these shores is jealous of any improvements, and even the short breakwater that has been constructed at Port Orotava with a view of affording a kind of shelter for the small fishing boats as they are pulled up on the beach, has been treated as a mere plaything by the waves. Whole blocks of masonry have been dislodged at the end of this breakwater, and it is only a question of years how soon the sea will have completed its work. On a rough day, when the waves run unusually high, this little breakwater is in a constant state of appearing and disappearing; its decks, so to speak, being only cleared just in time to make room for the next onslaught of water, with its accompanying shower of spray. Here there is no harbour, and the two or three fishing schooners which often lie at anchor some little way out to sea, swing monotonously from side to side as the big rollers pass beneath them.

To the west of Orotava are situated the small towns of Icod and Garachico; to the east lie the cliffs of Santa Ursula, these latter frequently steeped in a blue haze so characteristic of views in Tenerife. Above these cliffs a pair of Vultures may often be seen, circling in the air, or following up the course of some ravine in their search for food. These ravines, of which there are many, find their way down to the shore, passing

beneath bridges, over which the carriage road runs. These are well built and of immense strength, being doubtless made so in order to withstand the sudden floods of water that occasionally, in the winter time, rush down the deep *barrancos*. The rocky beds of these *barrancos* are for the most part dry, although along their banks many different kinds of plants may be found growing. The bramble here is common, and the *Zarzalero*, or Blackberry-bird, may often be seen, its plumage of black and white, chestnut and grey, rendering it a conspicuous and handsome object. This little bird, the Spectacled Warbler, generally builds its nest in blackberry thickets, to which fastnesses it can retire on the approach of danger; it is also fond of churring at any intruder with a harsh, scolding note, from some exposed position, such as the one figured in the accompanying illustration, where the bird is perched upon a broken cane. These canes attain a considerable height in Tenerife, and when fully grown are utilised by the fishermen as rods.

Other inhabitants dwell in these ravines besides the *Zarzalero*, and here may be found a peculiar insect, having some resemblance to a locust, which goes by the name of the Praying Mantis. This insect, the whereabouts of which it is not always easy to discover, earns his reputation for piety from the peculiar way in which he holds his two front legs, these assuming the position of hands when clasped in the act of prayer. He will thus sit motionless on the foliage of some tree or plant, and as the small creatures on which he feeds perceive him they are struck with the reverence of his devotional attitude. "How good he is," they seem to



SPECTACLED WARBLER.

(*Sylvia conspicillata*.)

4" 8"



NEST OF SPECTACLED WARBLER.

say as they cluster round, "and what an example to all of us," and it is not until the prayerful one, rising from these exercises with a wearied and somewhat abstracted gaze, has disposed of three or four of the congregation, that they begin to realise that if he prays at least he does not fast. In this strain, at any rate, runs the legend.

To the west of Orotava the road continues along the coast, passing through some of the most beautiful scenery in the island. In this district there is no lack of water, and the springs which come racing down from the heights above are pulled aside as it were in their impetuous rush, and conducted by wooden watercourses to feed, here one village on the mountain slopes, and there another.

Icod is one of the more important towns in Tenerife, and, like the Villa of Orotava, it prefers to stand a thousand feet above the sea, being represented on the shore by its small harbour, from which a steep and villanous path leads up to the town itself. This little harbour, so far as I know, is the only one that can lay claim to such a title along the whole of the northern coast of Tenerife; when I was there a schooner arrived, laden with stone from one of the eastern islands, a commodity which the inhabitants could no doubt well dispense with.

The view of the Peak from Icod differs entirely from that obtained at Orotava, for while from the latter place the foreground is spread out around the wide valley of Orotava, gradually leading up to the steep mountain range above which the Peak shows itself, at

Icod there is but little foreground, and the mountain rises up eleven thousand feet above the town itself.

More bananas are probably cultivated in the neighbourhood of Icod than in any other district in the island, and as one stands in the large square that overlooks the sea, the intervening ground is mostly taken up with banana groves. These groves are a favourite resort of the Tenerife Robins, which seemed to be rather locally distributed over the island. The three nests of this species which I found were each of them built in the space afforded by the breaking off of one banana from a bunch, in which situation the birds constructed an untidy-looking nest, as shown in the illustration here reproduced. There is scarcely any difference, to a casual observer, between these Robins and those with which we are familiar in England; the peasants call them *Pajaro de San Antonio*—Bird of Saint Anthony.

One of the birds peculiar to the island of Tenerife is the Teydean Chaffinch. This species, which is also known as the Blue Chaffinch, inhabits the pine forests on the higher slopes of the mountains; it breeds very late in the season, and as I left Tenerife in June, I was unable to obtain photographs either of the bird itself or of its nest. We expected to meet with it at Vilaflor, but saw nothing of it there, although we were shown a spring where these birds were said to come and drink, and where the peasants used to snare them.

Many of the birds of Tenerife have a hard struggle to rear their young, not that they are harassed by many natural enemies, but the land is worked in such small holdings, and men and boys are so constantly



NEST OF TENERIFE ROBIN.

(*Eriihacus superbus.*)

passing over almost every yard of the ground, that the nests are naturally discovered, and when discovered, destroyed. Their natural enemies are few, save in the wooded districts on the mountains, where there are many Sparrow Hawks. As a rule the birds of prey are more of scavengers than hunters, and the Peregrine Falcon, a bird whose requirements would seem to be met in every way in this island, appeared to be conspicuous by its absence. A friend of mine, who lived at Las Palmas, in Grand Canary, told me that a few years ago he saw a pair of these birds near the town ; one of them stooped at, and killed, a pigeon out of a flock of those birds, which fell to the ground, but was immediately seized upon by some Vultures, so the Falcons had to kill again for themselves.

Kestrels are very common in Tenerife, and it is rarely that one or more of these birds is not in the air, hovering over the dry rocky ground in search of lizards, or above the water tanks, in the neighbourhood of which they sometimes pounce on one of the green frogs which are so numerous there. These frogs may often be seen during the daytime among the foliage of the rose trees, the leaves of which they simulate in colour ; they make a dismal and incessant croaking after sundown.

Tenerife can boast of possessing several of our most attractive song-birds, conspicuous among which are the Blackcap, or *Capiroto*, as the islanders call it, and the Chiffchaff. To these must be added the Canaries, which sing constantly in the orchards and in the trees along the roadside ; while in the wooded and more secluded *barrancos* the intermittent notes of the Blackbird, deep and mournful, are often the only sounds to be heard.

In Tenerife the eye is catered for and not the ear, and the song of birds represents much of the music in the island, even the church bells, from which might be expected some sweetness, emitting but a discordant clanging. Some few of the peasants play the guitar, and there is a little band at Port Orotava, composed of a violin and three or four guitars, which discourses excellent music; the various members of this band are persons who are engaged in trade in the Port, and each is a thorough musician. This reminds me that when we were staying up at Vilaflor we were much entertained one night by hearing a man's voice, evidently in the throes of a love-song, accompanied by a guitar. The singer possessed a very deep bass voice, which he confined within a compass of three or four notes, in a minor key, for the best part of an hour. We thought that he must be proposing, in song, to his *inamorata*, but were told on the following morning that he had been refused by a young lady in the village about a month previously, since which time he always, at midnight, serenaded her dwelling; it was certainly a far more effective and sensible way of taking his revenge than some methods adopted by other love-sick swains. The brass band, which is located at Santa Cruz, is let out on the occasion of any *fiesta* of unusual importance in one of the smaller towns, on which it descends rampant, and eager for the fray.

Saints days are almost as plentiful as blackberries in Tenerife, and none are allowed to pass without some token of remembrance, whether it be the humble bonfire that flickers after sunset from the dwelling of some peasant on the mountain slopes, or the really splendid

pageantry of the Flower Carpet, held annually in June at the Villa of Orotava.

To attempt to depict in a few lines that which should take a whole book to describe is to do such a subject injustice, and apart from this, I hesitate to allude to it except in the most cursory way, having been only a superficial observer of the ceremony, and being quite uninitiated in the why and the wherefore which go to build up much of the interest attaching to such a scene. From early morning, on the day of the Flower Carpet, crowds of peasants flock up the steep incline that leads to the Villa, the men dressed for the most part in black, the women and children in the brightest of coloured shawls and headgear; and the picturesque old town never shows to better advantage than when viewed thus from below, its church spires and many-storied houses, relieved by the fresh green of the surrounding trees, standing out in varied colouring against the distant background of mountain, or grey cloud. Every one, from far and near, who is able to go, turns out to see the Flower Carpet. For days beforehand mules, laden with heath and broom, have come down from the mountains in order to supply materials for the background of this effective "carpet." The petals of the flowers only are used, and a separate design is worked out in each principal thoroughfare, the patterns being laid into a setting of dark green; as soon as the patterns are formed, water is sprinkled over the "carpet," in order to keep the petals from blowing away. The whole is a mosaic, executed in flower petals of almost every conceivable shade. Nearly every species of flower and shrub in the island is brought

into requisition, the gradations in colour being quite remarkable when it is considered that the designs are all laid in the natural colour of the flowers, except where black is required, when it is obtained by filling in pieces of the broom which have been previously burnt for the purpose. In the large squares of the town pictures are worked out, introducing various figures, and in one of these pictures a very effective texture was obtained by utilising the long fibres which hang from the Indian corn when ripe, as a representation of an old man's beard.

All traffic is suspended in the town on this day, and when the brilliant procession, headed by the ecclesiastics, emerges from the church, it passes along the chief streets in turn, reducing what was, but half-an-hour since, a blaze of colour, to a dingy mass of nothingness. Some of the special pictures into which figures are introduced are executed by members of the old Spanish families who have been represented in the Villa of Orotava for many generations.

Some of the old gardens in the Villa are very charming, as are those also down at the Port, notably the Hotel garden, which has been transformed from a rugged crust of lava into a garden of flowers. The soil, buried for centuries beneath this crust of lava, is most prolific, roses and innumerable other flowers blooming with a total disregard of time or season.

There are few seasonal sounds in Tenerife, and the passage of time is not marked, as in England, by the whirr of the machine or the sharpening of the scythe. One of the few sounds of nature's almanack during the spring in the Hotel gardens at Orotava is the musical



FLOWER CARPET AT OROTAVA.

tinkle of the cone-shaped covering which encloses the petals of the *eucalyptus marginata*, as it falls to the ground, knocked off by the Blackcap or the Chiffchaff in its search among the petals thus liberated for insect food. Another sound that is always there is the rustle of the dried leaves as the lizard scuttles away to its hole beneath the lava rocks.

Passing over Icod, of which some mention has been made, the carriage road leads as far as Garachico, one of the most picturesque little ports in Tenerife, and noted for being the victim of the last eruption of the Peak, in 1706. Here the presence of a high projecting cliff of rock which runs a little way out to sea has been taken advantage of to form, in connexion with a short breakwater, a miniature harbour, its shore broadly margined with black sand. A harbour is of little use, though, unless its presence be recognised in some way by incoming boats, and the small fruit steamer from Santa Cruz, which creeps slowly round the coast, anchors disdainfully outside Garachico and waits for its cargo of bananas to be rowed out in small boats. The slight offered to their harbour passes unnoticed by the inhabitants of Garachico, who must sell their bananas if they are to make any sort of a living.

The carriage road ends its duties at Garachico, and will doubtless pause there for some time, as it has done at so many other towns in Tenerife, before going a stage further. The road from Icod to Garachico was only just completed when we were at the latter place, at which time a quarrel between the engineer who had planned the road and the authorities of the district

resulted in the engineer closing the road for the time being. The inhabitants, who had taken no part in it, were thus made the scapegoat of this quarrel, and had perforce to take the old road which passed by the sea on their journeyings between the two places. I do not know how the quarrel ended, but when we returned the road was open again.

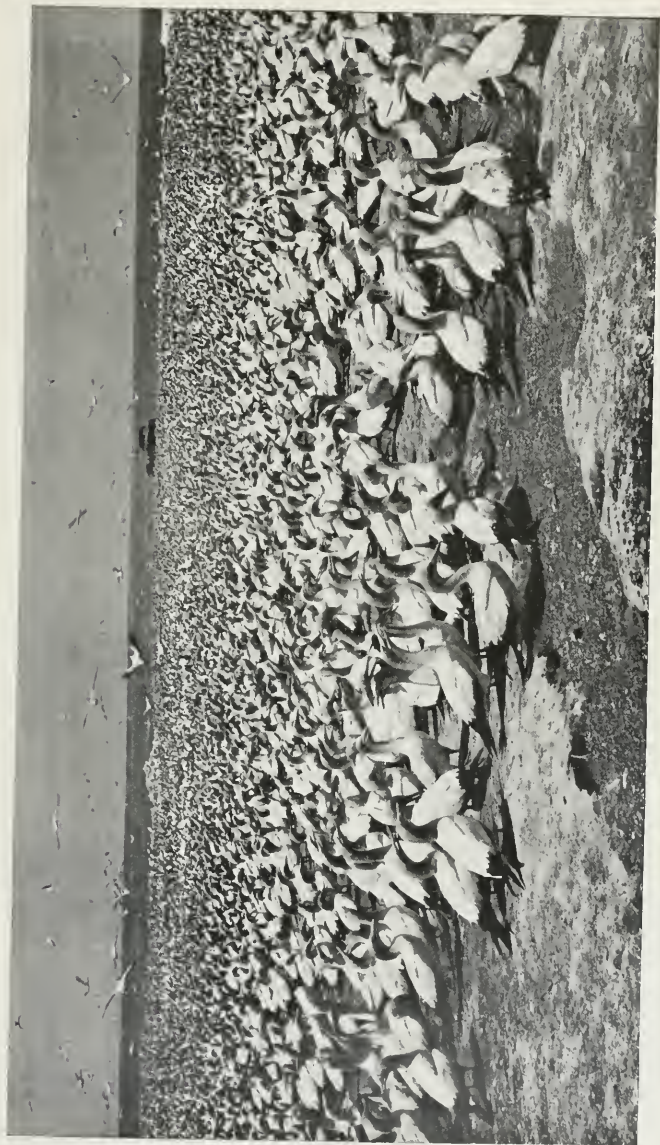
There are two or three villages beyond Garachico, but the country soon becomes very bare, several large "cinder heaps," or small isolated volcanos, standing out from the level ground near the coast; further on the mountains gradually recede from the shore, leaving an almost uncultivated plain between them and the sea. There were few birds to be noticed here, the only ones that showed themselves being the *Camíneros*, as they flew a little way along the path and then alighted.

There is little of interest along this plain unless it be the ice-plant, its separate bead-like partitions glittering in the sunshine, and the attention is gradually centred on the blue sea, on which, now and again, the presence of a sunken rock is indicated by a cool-looking patch of white surf, until, long after the last village is reached, a headland of rock runs out to sea which seems to bar further progress. This promontory goes by the name of El Fraile, by reason of the presence of a natural column of black rock which stands outlined against the sky on its topmost edge, and looked at from a distance there is a marked resemblance in this column to the figure of a cowed friar descending the ridge. This black headland serves to further emphasise the play of colour so characteristic



THE PROCESSION EMERGING FROM THE CHURCH.

of the northern shore of this island, and we might perhaps find a less fitting spot in which to bid good-bye to Tenerife than the lonely rock which *el fraile* has been so many centuries in descending.



CAPE GANNETS.

PART II.

Some Birds of South Africa

CHAPTER I.

Houw Hoek and Stanford.

“THERE'S a power av vartue in keepin' things sep'rate,” was the remark of Long Jack, in Mr. Kipling's *Captains Courageous*, and it must be admitted that under a somewhat rough exterior that mariner carried a divining mind.

Few countries which are in many ways similar as to climatic conditions, present greater contrast with regard to their people than the Canary Islands and Cape Colony, and we do well to throw off as it were from our minds the cloak of romance which envelopes the former before entering on the latter country. Nothing perhaps accomplishes this better than a fortnight's sea voyage, but we cannot afford either the time or the money to take a fortnight's sea voyage in the middle of every book that we read, hence the advisability of “keepin' things sep'rate.”

The South African winter of 1899 had been an unusually wet one, as many as twenty-nine inches of rain having been registered in one of the suburbs of Cape Town for the month of August alone, while on one occasion during that month the water was pouring down Adderley Street, doing a vast amount of damage

to property. Small wonder then, after all this rain, that passengers from the incoming steamers should be loud in their praise of the town as it appeared from the sea, in its setting of varied green. Nor were the atmospheric conditions alone disturbed, for as every one knows, the uncertainty with regard to war at that time hung over the Colony like a dark cloud. In time the weather cleared, the rains seeming to have exhausted themselves early in September, and from the town and harbour was visible once more the clear-cut face of Table Mountain. Perhaps in no country are rains more partial in apportioning themselves than in Cape Colony, some districts receiving a continuous down-pour, while others within a distance of fifty miles or so are parched for want of water.

Much has been written about South Africa within the last few months, and I will therefore confine my remarks to the immediate districts which bear on the subject in hand.

Along the north shore of False Bay, keeping the extensive tract of ground known as the Cape Flats on the left hand side, runs a short line of railway from Cape Town to Sir Lowry's Pass station. Here the line ends, for the range of mountains called the Hottentot's Holland's Mountains forms a natural barrier that is only to be overcome by latter-day engineering. These mountains, one of the limitations of the old Dutch settlement in the early days of the Colony, run out to sea in a line parallel to the range forming the Cape Peninsula, and constitute one of the boundaries of False Bay.

Post carts take up the duty of the railway at Sir

Lowry's Pass station, and after climbing the steep mountain road pursue their way over open and more or less elevated ground. The destination of most of these carts is Caledon, a small town of importance, distant about forty miles from Sir Lowry's Pass, and seventy miles from Cape Town. A half-way house between Sir Lowry's Pass and Caledon stands at a hamlet which goes by the name of Houw Hoek. This village, situated on a pass in the Houw Hoek Mountains, stands eight or ten hundred feet above the sea, and consists merely of a church, a small hotel, and a few white cottages, huddled together, as though for protection, beneath the shelter of two or three tall eucalyptus trees, or blue gums, as they are called in the Colony. Houw Hoek had bided its time for many years under the shade of these tall trees, and would soon reap its reward; the railway was going to pass its way, sections of which were begun here and there, along the most difficult parts of the route. The principal seat of the work when we were there was near Houw Hoek, where extempore houses, constructed of the ubiquitous galvanised iron, had been put up to accommodate the engineers. The workmen were almost entirely Kaffirs, and their lodging was easily arranged for, being simply a sheet of galvanised iron resting at a slant against a heap of brushwood. Rain or shine, this seemed to be all they required, indeed the less they wore the happier they appeared to be, and although they were obliged to put on ordinary clothes during working days, they would revert on Saturdays and Sundays to a state which reminded them as nearly as might be of that of their fathers. Many of them were

exceedingly tall, being considerably over six feet in height.

My friend Mr. H. and I put up at Houw Hoek for ten days or so, and the landlord, whom I will call Mr. W., made us very comfortable. He was a hale, gruff-voiced, cheery old man, who had come out from England some twenty or thirty years ago; and if he was rather too fond of looking upon his family as children, he at least equalised the matter by considering himself to be ten or fifteen years younger than he really was.

Living in a district which, although very thinly inhabited, was strongly dominated over by votaries of the Bond party, Mr. W. was exceedingly progressive himself, spelt either with a big or a little *p*, and the Cape Dutch farmers, as they drove by his lands, would wonder in their dour, silent way, at all his improvements. He was on good enough terms with them, he knew how to treat them, and when you may be five or ten miles from your nearest neighbour there is no occasion for quarrelling. These men were overbearing at first, but he had lived down all that.

The nights up at Houw Hoek in September are cold, a fire being often welcome in the evenings, and as Mr. W. stoops down to put on another log he remarks that when we get to fifty-five—here he looks at us hard, and pauses—we shall be glad of a bit of fire. He had quite a small library of books in his comfortable kitchen, and some old Chippendale chairs, these latter being articles of furniture rarely seen in this land, where everything is new. He was always ready with some awe-inspiring tale of the “tiger,” as the colonists call the leopard, and how it had come sometimes and



MALACHITE SUN-BIRD AND NEST.
(*Nectarinia famosa.*)
9"

killed as many as twenty or thirty sheep, carrying away but one into the bush. There were few leopards about Houw Hoek now, and it was almost useless to organise a raid against them, for they would take refuge in some steep mountain cleft, whence it was impossible to dislodge them. Should one appear nowadays and be specially destructive, Bond and Progressive would for the time being sink their differences, as do so many of us, in the soothing by-play of harassing a common enemy.

Mr. W. had many irons in the fire, one of his industries being the exportation to England of "everlasting" flowers, which grew in profusion on the veldt round about his farm. These flowers, of which the white only are exported, are used in many ways; among others for making mourning wreaths. The coloured ones are also picked to a limited extent, but kept in the district for stuffing mattresses with, making a very comfortable and beautifully dry bedding. In September the veldt between Houw Hoek and Caledon is ablaze with colour, and besides the "everlasting" flowers, heaths of varying shades are to be found growing, from white to very dark purple. The *protea*, or sugar bush, is also in bloom, and on the nectar contained in these flowers the different kinds of Sugar-birds feed. These birds, of which there are many different kinds, are largely represented in Cape Colony, different species frequenting the various districts. Two of these were abundant at Houw Hoek, the one most frequently met with perhaps being the Malachite Sugar-bird or Sun-bird. The colour of the plumage of the male of this species is almost entirely a dark metallic green, much the same colour as

one sometimes sees in the wings of beetles. The bird presents a brilliant appearance as he darts across the veldt with the sun shining on his glossy feathers. The female is coloured a uniform brown, and is without the two long centre feathers that protrude from the tail of the male bird. The long curved beak shown in the illustration will give some idea of how these birds obtain their food, for although insects form a considerable portion of their diet, they are equally fond of obtaining the nectar from flowers, and will sit on the edges of the *protea* flower and dip their long beaks down to the roots of the petals; I have also noticed them cling upside down to the stem of a kind of heath, and extract the juice from the bell-like flowers, one by one.

The Malachite Sun-birds appear to feed their young largely on insects, as the bird figured in the illustration was just going to the nest at the time the photograph was taken. Their eggs, two in number, are large in proportion to the birds themselves, and are very like those of the English House Sparrow; somehow, these seemed too commonplace for the birds, from whose appearance one would have expected a more delicately coloured egg. We generally found the nest placed in a bush, and in one instance in a tree, at an elevation of fifteen or twenty feet from the ground, the nests being domed, made of rough grass outside, and lined thickly with feathers.

The Cape Long-tailed Sun-birds also were to be seen in the vicinity of Houw Hoek, but they were not nesting at the time we were there. These birds are without the tropical plumage that distinguishes many of the Sun-birds, and are coloured a lightish brown, but

what they lack in brilliancy of plumage is to some extent made up to them by the possession of very long tails, some of the feathers of which, in the case of the male birds, measure as much as fourteen inches in length. This tail, in the case of so small a bird, is naturally most unwieldy, and when the bird is engaged in catching insects in the air it presents a very ludicrous appearance. It is somewhat shy, and when driven from one particular spot will fly away to a considerable distance, as though it knew the attention which its long tail must attract; when on the wing this tail floats out behind, following the undulations of the bird's flight.

Our chief reason for going to Houw Hoek was that we might visit the *vley* at the mouth of the Bot River, which we were told was the breeding place of many different kinds of water birds. Accordingly, one day Mr. W. drove us down there in his Cape cart, a distance of some fifteen or sixteen miles. We took our cameras with us, thinking that we might find something of interest to photograph. The road over the Houw Hoek Pass was good, but after leaving this behind we turned off across the veldt, and here there might as well have been no road at all: however, a Cape cart is in nowise dependent upon a road, so we bumped along, mile after mile, over the sandy soil. The veldt, usually described as so arid and uninteresting, was at this period of the year—September—one mass of bright-coloured flowers, among which the various delicately-coloured heaths were perhaps the most beautiful. Doubtless in a few weeks the ground would assume its normal bare condition, and remain in that state until the following flower season. As we drove along, the Houw Hoek Mountains lay to

our right, and on our left the Bot River, as it gradually increased in width, wound along in the valley beneath. We could see, in front of us, an extensive reed-edged lake, which narrowed, and then widened out in the distance into a clear sheet of water; the absence of reeds in this clear lake being accounted for by the fact that the water is partially salt. Just visible in the far distance was a bar of white sand, beyond which the sea was breaking.

The previous winter having been such an unusually wet one, the *vley* at the mouth of the Bot River was almost full, and perhaps another rainy season would cause it to burst its bar of sand which the waves had thrown up on the sea shore, and partially empty itself for the time being; then again, the sea would gradually throw up another bar of sand, and so on. Most South African rivers behave in this way; during the long period of drought which they go through, the channel which enables them to flow into the sea is forgotten, and filled up with sand, and as this sand is gradually piled up higher and higher by the waves, it forms a barrier that can only be broken down by strong pressure from within. This accounts for the *vleys*, or lakes, which are to be found at the mouths of so many of the rivers on the south coast, lending to these rivers an importance as they near the sea which their narrow course some few miles inland hardly warrants.

We outspanned at a small farmhouse which overlooked the river, an unkempt-looking Dutchman coming out and giving us, or rather giving Mr. W., directions as to how we could best approach the water. Unfortunately the boat was at a farm some three or four miles farther down the river, so that we had to do without it

on this occasion. This Dutch farmer told us that the birds were probably only just beginning to build, owing to the late season. With the river too deep for wading, and without the convenience of a boat, we were naturally placed at a disadvantage with regard to finding nests of water fowl, but still, as many of the reeds were not at all thickly placed together, we ought certainly to have been able to see from the shore any nests that there might be. We put up a fair number of the common Wild Duck of the Colony, *Geelbeck*, as they are called, which would scuttle out of the water, making a great noise, and then fly round in a circle and settle perhaps half a mile away. Colonies of Weaver-birds were very clamorous as we pushed our way through the thick sedge that fringed the river, and we saw for the first time one or two Red Bishop-birds.

The day was warm, and the buzzing of the mosquitoes over the water seemed to give an appearance of summer heat for the first time since we had been in the Colony. A bird that was extremely common was the Purple Heron, looking on the wing rather smaller than our Heron, specimens of which were also here. We saw no Purple Gallinules, although they were known to breed on this river, but a few of the South African Coots were to be made out some distance away in the middle of the lake. A bird that breeds here is the Reed Duyker; there are many kinds of *Duyker*, or Cormorant, in South Africa, but this is the only one of the species that breeds in fresh water, the others nesting on the various islands round the coast. One of these birds that we saw was flying with a reed in its beak, so they were evidently commencing to build.

Perhaps the most interesting bird we saw that day was either the Great White Egret, or some species closely related to it; there were about half a dozen of these birds feeding in the shallow water that formed the edge of the reed-grown *vley*, but they would not permit of a near approach. They looked fully as large, if not larger than the common Heron, and had yellow beaks, which at once precluded the possibility of their being Little Egrets, of which we saw many later on. We were able to compare the size of these large birds with that of the common Herons, as both were feeding together at the same time, and we noticed that the white birds appeared to be the larger of the two.

We went through the day without finding any nests, rather in accordance with our anticipations. On our way up to the farm-house we saw a pair of Cape Grass-Warblers, which birds we often met with throughout our stay in Cape Colony. On a near approach they would fly up into the air in rather a dancing manner, uttering at the same time a sharp, insistent note. They generally managed to conceal their nests very effectually, and would bend the sprays of a rhenoster, or other small bush, so as to conform them to the needful shape, afterwards fastening these sprays down with threads of grass. Nests of these birds were domed, but the entrance was always higher up than the centre of the nest, and there was a little portico above this entrance. No doubt the weaving-in of the foliage of plants and shrubs adopted by some of these small birds in South Africa, is done with a view of concealing their nests from their natural enemies, which must be numerous; and a nest thus woven in has the advantage over one *placed* in a



CAPE GRASS-WARBLER AND NEST.

(*Prinia maculosa*.)

bush, inasmuch as it only changes colour with the bush itself, and does not fade or die away into a colour foreign to its surroundings.

We made a further excursion to the Bot River Vley a few days later, going this time as far as the large open sheet of water that lay near the coast, but although we obtained the use of a rather dilapidated old boat, we failed to discover any nests.

The Dutchman at the farm where we put up made himself pleasant enough, but he either could not, or would not, speak to us in English. The conversation therefore had to be carried on through the medium of Mr. W. Mr. W.'s Dutch was always an entertainment to us, though I am not hinting for a moment that he was not a perfect master of the language, but it was rather a curious fact that, whereas we were unable to understand what the Dutchmen said, we could always make out in some measure the drift of Mr. W.'s conversation. I think his Dutch relied to some extent on a crack of the whip and a gruff voice, and I know that I often detected in his conversation an English word, decked "fore and aft" with a Dutch prefix and affix; some word having for its root a round old English oath, too, would now and then crop up, garnished in the same way. Perhaps he clung to these latter as he did to his Chippendale chairs and his books, regarding them as relics of the old country not lightly to be parted with. As he drove us home over the pass he pointed out a deep kloof, in the rocky face of which one of the hunted "tigers" had taken refuge from its pursuers, successfully in this instance, as the retreat was almost unapproachable, and at any rate the object of the hunt

would be in such a strong position as to defy its enemies.

I omitted to mention that on our previous visit to the Bot River we saw some Great Crested Grebes, and also a species of Reed-Warbler; the latter was larger than our Reed-Warbler in England, but had a somewhat similar song, though louder and deeper.

A bird that I was disappointed in seeing nothing of was the Bittern, not that it would be likely to come out and show itself, but I thought we might possibly have put one up in pushing about in the boat among the reeds. I have never seen this bird in a wild state, but accounts of it which I have read have always interested me. Some of the tangled masses of dead reeds in parts of this *vley* would seem to be specially suited to its requirements, and here it might make its nest in the almost impenetrable sedge, and simulate by its motionless attitude the dead vegetation which formed so much of the surroundings.

A small reptile with the habits of a lizard, while possessing some of the peculiarities of a chameleon, was frequently to be seen in the neighbourhood of Houw Hoek, where it was far commoner than in any other district that we visited. It had a brilliantly blue head, and a white stripe down the middle of its back, and these distinctive marks appeared to be always present, but the most wonderful thing about it was its power of mimicry in colour. If it were on an anthill its body would assume a kind of clay-colour, while if it were on rock which was marked with yellowish marks it would appear with similar markings on it, and in one instance, in which we found two or three of these small reptiles



SPECIES OF AGAMA.



YELLOW BISHOP BIRD AND NEST.

(*Pyromelana capensis.*)

5" 9"

on a rock which was marked in a very distinctive way with a sort of red moss, or lichen, these creatures produced a precisely similar pattern on their bodies. They had a habit of raising and depressing the head and shoulders by means of their front legs, and would sometimes do this several times, looking round at the intruder the while, and if alarmed scuttling into a crevice in the rocks. My friend obtained a much better photograph of it than I did, in which the peculiar pattern before alluded to is plainly visible. The Kaffirs call these lizard-like reptiles by the name of *Klipsemanner*. They are really a species of the genus *Agama*, of which there are several different kinds in Africa.

I mentioned our having seen the Red Bishop-bird when we were down at the Bot River Vley; there is also the Yellow Bishop-bird, or to use the name by which it generally goes in these parts, the Kaffir Fink. This bird was a very familiar object in nearly every part of the Colony that we passed through, the male bird as it scurried past in a straight line of flight, showing to advantage the intense black and brilliant yellow of its plumage. The females of both the Red and Yellow Bishop-birds are of a brown colour striped with darker markings, and not at all like the males; the bird shown in the illustration is a female of the latter species. These birds would sometimes weave their nests into the foliage of a shrub, and at others place them there; when woven into the shrubs they were generally of a substantial nature with a rather large aperture at one side. We noticed that they continued adding to their nests even after the young were hatched. With birds so much akin to each other as these two kinds of Bishop-

birds, one would naturally expect to find the eggs somewhat similar ; oddly enough, however, few eggs present greater contrasts, those of the Red Bishop-bird being of a light blue colour all over, while the eggs of the Yellow Bishop-bird are thickly covered with brownish-green markings.

A peculiar bird that was rather common about Houw Hoek was the Ground-Woodpecker. One naturally associates a Woodpecker with trees, but there are several anomalies of this kind in South Africa, two others being a Kingfisher that does not prey on fish, and a Cuckoo that builds its own nest. The Ground-Woodpecker bores holes to a considerable length in banks of earth, and lays its eggs in these holes. It is larger than our Green Woodpecker and has the general colour brown, washed in parts with crimson ; the bird has a loud startling cry which reminded me to some extent of that of the Stone-Curlew, which note it will often utter when perched upon a mound or stone.

About thirty miles south of Caledon, and not very far from the promontory known as Danger Point, is the village of Stanford. This village, like Caledon and Houw Hoek, has its trade in "everlasting" flowers, rows of which may be seen drying in wooden sheds as one passes along its chief street. Stanford is situated on the Klein River, and is distant some ten miles from the sea, towards which the river wends its way, margined broadly here and there with tall reeds. A few rowing-boats and small sailing-boats are to be seen on this river, which is of quite respectable dimensions. Among these reeds were many colonies of Weaver-

birds and Red Bishop-birds, the black and red plumage of the latter forming a brilliant picture in the sunlight against the background of faded reeds of the previous year and the sparkling water. These two birds often shared the same clump of reeds for their nesting sites, the Bishop-birds fastening their domed nests to three or four reeds, which acted as supports, while the Weaver-birds generally suspended their curiously-shaped nests from two reeds, the slightest wind making both reeds and nest oscillate freely. There is generally quite enough noise among a small colony of Weaver-birds, but when it comes to a large colony, augmented by that of Red Bishop-birds, the chattering and quarrelling that take place are almost beyond description.

Weaver-birds were so very common in South Africa, and made such a distracting noise whenever they were approached, that I am afraid I did not avail myself of all my opportunities of photographing them and their nests; the latter, however, were exceedingly difficult to take, owing to the fact that they were almost perpetually swinging to and fro, suspended as they were from the reeds, or some slender twig of a branch.

I once watched these birds building their nests, which they often begin in June or July. A commencement is made by the birds twisting long strands of grass round the end of some pendent twig, and making a loop of this grass, about six inches in diameter, fastened again to the same twig; this is the foundation of the nest. The bird stands in this ring every time he returns to the nest with fresh material, and works from this position, pushing one end of a strand of grass through the ring, and then putting himself into all sorts

of attitudes to enable him to catch hold of it from the other side, when he pulls it through, after the manner of sewing with a needle and cotton.

The foundations for both portions of the nest are done in much the same way, several long ends of grass being left out at each side of the ring and then fastened into the ring again, thus making loops which act as supports for the bulb at either side of the nest; other strands are then woven on to this framework. The bird seemed to bring a nest into a fair semblance of itself in about a couple of days, but after that it worked at it for a long time, patching it up and strengthening it. The male birds constructed the whole of the nests during the time that I watched them, and made a great fuss over the operation, bestowing praise loudly and unceasingly upon themselves as they hurried to and from the nests, of which there would often be ten or twenty in the same tree. These, when first woven, are green, but this colour soon changes after they have been hanging for a few days. When the nests are beginning to assume finished proportions the birds go inside and do some work from the interior, or hang in a horizontal position from the opening of the nests and critically examine their work, holding their heads back the while, in much the same way as an artist would retire from a picture he was painting, to enable him to view it to better purpose. The female birds were placed in rather an awkward position, they were evidently anxious to assist, but were on no conditions allowed to; they had to strike a mean; if they attempted to help they were immediately driven away, with two or three sharp tweaks on the head, to drive



CAPE WEAVER BIRDS.

(*Sitagra capensis.*)

the lesson home, whereas if they sulked and went too far away they were brought back in order that they might watch their industrious husbands.

At sunset, when one would think there should be peace and harmony, there was more noise than ever. At this time the hen birds are allowed to go into the nests, but their husbands have no intention of leaving them alone. They fly up, clinging on to the circular opening that forms the entrance to the nest, making at the same time a continuous noise something between a chatter and a squeak, and when by these alarming sounds they have succeeded in ousting their wives from the nests, they chase them from branch to branch until they go back again. One bird that I saw was quite an actor; not satisfied with tormenting his wife in the legitimate way, he adopted a very ingenious method. After hanging on to the nest and making the most horrible noises, he pretended to be caught by one foot, and twisted slowly round and round, uttering at the same time a series of piercing screams, which gradually diminished as the poor thing was supposed to be at its last gasp; this brought the wife out in a great state, thinking that the end had come. No such thing, however, for no sooner was she out of the nest than the husband chased her back exultingly. Where the nests were placed in reeds, the birds could not act quite in the same manner, as it was more difficult for them to cling on underneath.

Not far from Stanford there was a Secretary-Bird's nest; this was placed in a thick, bushy tree, but contained no eggs at the time we saw it. These birds build immense nests, often four or five feet in diameter,

and two feet thick. The nest shown in the illustration was so substantial that I was able to place my camera upon it and also to bear most of my weight on it at the same time. This nest was situated on the Cape Flats, and was placed on the very top of a low Scotch fir tree about twenty feet in height. The two eggs were of a dingy white, with only the faintest markings of deep red; they must have been nearly hatched at the beginning of October, as the young birds left the nest early in February. One would naturally think such large nests as these would be very conspicuous from a distance, but in the case of each nest that we found, it was impossible to detect it unless one were standing beneath the tree at the time. The bird that had eggs showed a considerable amount of cunning, for it remained on the nest until we were underneath the tree, when it flew off, showing an enormous expanse of wing, sailing at first, then flapping, then sailing, as it gradually disappeared from view. While we were photographing the nest one of the birds showed itself in the air, soaring at a great altitude. These are, perhaps, among the most extraordinary birds to be found in South Africa, having the habits, and some of the appearance, of a Crane, with many of the distinguishing features of a bird of prey. Their reputation for killing snakes has secured for them Government protection, and a fine of five pounds is imposed upon any one convicted of killing them, though I imagine that for the most part they prey on frogs and such like reptiles. It is said in the Colony that only one pair of birds will inhabit a tract of country within a radius of ten miles or so from the nest and that they drive any



NEST OF SECRETARY BIRD.

(*Serpentarius secretarius*.)

intruders of their own species away, should they make their appearance in the neighbourhood.

We saw one example of the Snake-Bird on the Klein River; this bird feeds on fish and dives freely; I have never seen it in the water, but it is said to swim very low, showing nothing but its head and neck, and might consequently be easily mistaken for a snake. The bird that we saw was standing on a rail which projected over the river, apparently watching for fish.

Our stay in this neighbourhood was not productive of many photographs; we still failed to discover the breeding places of various birds that we were anxious to meet with, indeed hardly anyone in the Colony seemed to know much about, or take any interest in the birds, while those who could give us reliable information might certainly be counted on the fingers of two hands.

The only information we could count on was that some particular bird we happened to be enquiring about never nested in the neighbourhood of the place where we were at the time, but as soon as we arrived at the spot where it was supposed to nest we found that it was just a little further on, or perhaps in the very place we had previously been to. The poor birds were thus driven mercilessly about from river to river and from *vley* to *vley*, until they were banished, by a man who was largely interested in the posting business, to a lake called Brandvley, some two days' journey by cart, where the water attains a temperature of a hundred and forty-five degrees!

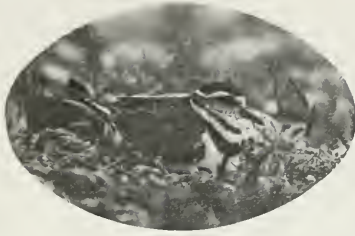
The fact is that very many of these water birds breed in large colonies on some of the more important

rivers farther north, one well-known breeding station being the Berg River, which runs into the sea about seventy or eighty miles north of Cape Town.

We were divided in our minds whether to go to this place, or to the neighbourhood of the Knysna Forest, which lies almost at the extreme south of the Colony, between Mossel Bay and Port Elizabeth. It would be impossible for us to visit both places in the same breeding season, as travelling in South Africa is not so easily accomplished as it is at home; finally, we decided on Knysna. This meant returning to Cape Town by way of Caledon, and along the route we had previously traversed. Between Caledon and Stanford is some rather wild country, and here, on our outward journey we saw a number of baboons which were feeding in a wheatfield; they were separated from us by a river, and as we approached them they leisurely made their way out of the field, and began climbing a low mountain; they looked something like very large dogs, and as they climbed the hillside they often stopped to look round at us.

Caledon is a very much larger place than Stanford, and possesses a Dutch and English church, besides two or three hotels. The town relies to some extent for its prosperity upon its hot-water springs, and here one may have unlimited hot baths free of charge.

I obtained one or two photographs at Caledon, notably those of the Three-collared Sand-plover and its nest. In returning home one evening, my friend put up a bird which we took to be some kind of Sandpiper, and as we were walking over the same piece of ground on the following day, the bird rose from the centre of a



THREE-COLLARED SAND-PLOVER AND NEST.

(*Egialitis tricollaris*.)

6' 3"

patch of dark-coloured stones. I marked the spot, and walked up to this place, and after searching for a minute or two we found two eggs of the usual pyriform shape, being marked so thickly as to be almost black; they looked as though they had been scored all over with charcoal, the larger ends of the eggs having distinct zones round them. The ground underneath these eggs was paved with very minute flat black stones. This bird, according to Seebohm's work on the distribution of the *Charadriidae*, is one of three species of Three-collared Plovers, the other two kinds inhabiting Madagascar and West Africa respectively, but the bird in question may be distinguished from either of these by the white patch on its forehead. We saw little of these birds afterwards, though they are stated to be common throughout the Colony, but I fancy they are more of an inland species, and do not much frequent the sea shore. They appeared to have more of the nervous vibration of a Sandpiper than some of the South African Plovers that we came across.

Near to the place where we found the Three-collared Sand-plover's nest was a small lake, in which were an immense number of frogs. Over this lake we one day saw a bird that puzzled us for the time being. This was the Great African Kingfisher, which was hovering above the water with its body in an almost vertical position, its long beak pointing downwards; when it dived it immersed itself momentarily in the water, and then flew to a tree which, with several others, bordered one end of the lake. There were two birds in these trees, which flew away at our approach, exhibiting a very powerful and sustained flight, not unlike that of a

Snipe; they gained a great altitude as they rose, and were soon out of sight. This is the largest of the South African Kingfishers, of which there are many different kinds, and measures fifteen or sixteen inches in length, its nearest ally being the African Pied Kingfisher, of which more in another chapter.

A bird that we frequently met with during our travels was the Fiscal Shrike. This Shrike has a bad reputation in the Colony, and takes its name from that of the old Dutch magistrates, whose behaviour it emulates, inasmuch as it disposes of its victims without the preliminary of a trial. It is much like all other Shrikes in its behaviour, looking very wicked at all times, and is as common in Government Avenue at Cape Town as it is along the railway, where it generally takes up its station on one of the telegraph wires, dropping down now and then into the grass beneath. The nests were very untidy-looking structures, made of almost anything outside, and lined with feathers and generally some bits of white rag. The eggs were in appearance very similar to those of our Red-backed Shrike. This was the only Shrike that we came across in the Colony that appeared to have the true attributes of the Shrike family; the Bush-shrikes, of which there were many, having quite different habits. The Fiscal Shrikes are very solicitous for the safety of their young, and will dash past close to one's face, making an angry chatter.

One of the Bush-shrikes that is to be met with almost all over the Colony is the Bakbakiri Bush-shrike. These birds frequent more or less open ground which is here and there grown with bushes, and are certainly one of the commonest birds in South Africa, often



FISKAL SHRIKE AND YOUNG.

(*Lanius collaris*.)

8" 6"

appearing in the gardens in Cape Town. They are handsome birds, with their plumage of black, yellow, and olive-green, and their loud cry is sure to attract the attention of the passer-by. This is uttered in the form of a duet, the male bird giving the two syllables *bak-bak*, when the female follows suit, with the cry *kiri*. This duet is uttered very loudly and energetically, and often continues for as long as four or five minutes at a stretch, if both birds keep good time; sometimes however, the female bird is not ready to join in with her part of the performance, and comes in late, or tries to make up for lost time by crying *kiri* several times in quick succession; this generally ends in disaster, and the male bird sulks, or hops down from his perching-place and commences feeding on the ground.

We did not find these birds in the woods, or on the open veldt, but always on ground where there was a sprinkling of cover sufficient for them to nest in; they frequented much the same country as the Fiscal Shrikes, but whereas the locality of the latter birds was to be found by the eye, that of the Bakbakiri Bush-shrikes was more often to be found by the ear, during the breeding season, at any rate.

CHAPTER II.

Knysna.

ABOUT midway between Cape Agulhas and Port Elizabeth is a narrow gateway in the cliffs that form the coast in these parts, known as the Knysna Heads. The big liners pass it unnoticed, keeping well out to sea; years ago a small *Castle* line boat would put in here now and again, but owing to modern requirements and the ever-increasing demand for large vessels, Knysna has long ceased to become a regular port of call.

Even the two small cargo boats which ply between Cape Town and Knysna, going occasionally as far as Port Elizabeth, have sometimes to steam about for hours in the open sea, waiting for a suitable opportunity to cross the bar. Mistakes do not occur twice to the same boat on such a dangerous piece of coast as this is, and the pilot who lives at the Heads, and puts up his signals to the approaching vessel outside, is certainly one of the most responsible, if not one of the most important men in the neighbourhood. Sailing vessels never seem to pass through this gateway, and no one who was unacquainted with the coast would care to bring his ship into the natural harbour which lies within. The slightest error or miscalculation on the part of the skipper, and the unfortunate vessel would

be hurled on to the rocks and quickly despatched. Once safely through the troubled waters of the Heads, a broad tidal estuary lies in front, covering many miles of ground, and dotted here and there with islands, while in the distance, as one looks across the water, a chain of low hills may be seen, clothed in places with dense woods; these woods are the outskirts of the great Knysna Forest.

The town of Knysna lies at the foot of these hills, and is situated but little above the level of the estuary, which separates it from the Heads by two miles or so of tidal water. Knysna is not a large town, perhaps a thousand people being gathered beneath the corrugated iron roofs of its houses. For many years it has done a steady trade in timber, but when gold was found in the forest at a little place called Millwood, it began to look around and increase its accommodation, for if the mines at Millwood were a success Knysna would rapidly develop, and could perhaps afford to make its splendid natural harbour into one of the best in South Africa.

The mines at Millwood unfortunately did no more than keep themselves going, so Knysna waited, at first with anticipation, then with impatience, and lastly with apathy. It was a case of settling down to its old timber trade again, but with an additional mouth to feed in the shape of a new hotel which had been built in expectation of better times.

I do not think that Knysna has much to thank Millwood for nowadays, though to be sure at intervals mysterious-looking persons carrying handbags will even now occasionally pass through Knysna, hire a Cape cart and drive up to Millwood. They view the mines, and

then return to Knysna and dine, passing the evening in suppressed conversation. Next morning they are gone.

There are other ways of getting to Knysna than by the two small cargo boats before mentioned, for while it is always charming to read and to write of the rough sea and the rock-bound coast, the sea which washes the south coast of Africa is not a sea, to my mind, to be entertained with any amount of complacency save from the deck of one of the larger vessels, however well-disposed one may feel towards the smaller boats, which, to their credit be it said, fight bravely during their voyages round these rough shores.

About once a week one of the "intermediate" boats from Cape Town calls at Mossel Bay, distant some ninety miles from Knysna, and from here the traveller may hire a Cape cart and make a two or three days' journey of it, stopping one night at George, a rather important centre, and another at Woodville, a little wayside inn, which with a few other buildings seems to constitute the hamlet of that name. The road is good, and the journey for the most part is continued along a plateau situated well above the sea. In the neighbourhood of George the outskirts of the Knysna Forest are reached, the road passing through some of the most beautiful scenery in Cape Colony. On nearing Knysna, steep hills and wooded valleys follow one another in seemingly endless succession, and deep gorges that a modern bridge might span, have to be laboriously traversed by the winding road. The forest here has a curious appearance, many of the trees having at one time or another been stripped of their bark and foliage

by bush fires, so common during the summer months in these districts, so that only the bare trunks and whitened branches are left standing. Those trees which have been destroyed for many years are, however, clothed in a fashion peculiarly their own, owing to the growth of long strands of a kind of moss, known as "old man's beard," which, starting from the crevices in the topmost branches of the trees, hang down, in many cases, as far as the ground. Thus these old trees with their appendages of grey moss relieve the sombre foliage of the forest evergreens, and in places, themselves supply the prevailing tone of the forest, imparting to it an aged and somewhat venerable appearance.

Climbing for the last time up the steep ascent of one of these deep gorges, the traveller looks down upon the Knysna River as it winds along many hundred feet below, soon to broaden out into the wide estuary before mentioned. A long, low wooden bridge spans the river where its tidal waters begin, and then a road skirts the shore for several miles, leading to the town of Knysna itself.

More birds are certainly to be seen in the neighbourhood of Knysna than in most places situated within Cape Colony; indeed, so far we might have considered ourselves better informed as to where not to go, from an ornithological point of view, than the reverse. The birds round about Knysna may roughly be separated, for purposes of these chapters, into three divisions: those that frequent the estuary; those that frequent the outlying portions of the forest; and those that frequent the open veldt outside the forest. Each of these groups of birds, though naturally comprising many and varied

species among themselves, keeps to its own special domain. We went but little into the main forest, as the birds there were not well adapted to our pursuit, and the gloom which prevailed rendered it almost impossible for us to do anything photographically.

The hills which rise at the back of the town in the immediate neighbourhood of Knysna, consist for the most part of rough open ground, intersected here and there by valleys that mark the course of some small stream which finds its way down into the estuary. These valleys draw straggling offshoots from the main forest, and in these offshoots are to be found many birds which, though seldom appearing outside their wooded retreat, nevertheless prefer to dwell in a somewhat less gloomy place than the forest itself. Nests in these wooded valleys require a considerable amount of finding, there are such numberless objects to distract the eye. Several different species of Flycatchers frequent these portions of the forest, and one may not be aware of their presence until their notes, in many instances rather harsh and chattering, attract the attention. As these notes, faint at first but gradually coming nearer and nearer, are heard, one may begin to look about for the birds themselves. Thus, a little greyish-coloured bird may come into view, continuously uttering a kind of complaining chirping note, and hopping from branch to branch and from twig to twig, seldom flying more than a few yards at a time. This little bird is closely followed by another, of very similar plumage, which appears to be driving it along, gradually forcing it to lower its position from among the higher branches of the trees, and bringing it close up to where one may be standing. On a nearer



CAPE FLYCATCHER.

(*Pachyprora capensis.*)

3" 11"

inspection it is noticeable that the bird which is being driven is the more brightly coloured of the two, a broad band which goes across the breast of the bird which is chasing being black, while in the bird which is being chased there is no band, but in place of this a marking of deep orange colour on the throat. Still being driven from branch to branch, and continuing to utter the same complaining notes, this bird is driven past you, until it stands for an instant upon a knot in a branch of a tree, and then disappears into this knot, with the exception of its head and tail, which may still be seen. The chasing bird, satisfied with its work, now betakes itself off, disappearing from view among the taller trees, after a few short flights.

These birds are a pair of the Cape Flycatchers, of which there are many in these woods, this species being the commonest of the various kinds of Flycatcher to be found here. One feature in connection with these birds worth mentioning is that the female bird is the more brightly coloured of the two, it being she that has the patch of colour on the throat. The knot in the branch of the tree, on which the female settled, turns out to be its nest, and the bird will allow of a very near approach. This fact makes the nest harder to find than it would otherwise have been, for the bird does not betray the whereabouts of its home by flying away until absolutely necessary. The nest itself is a beautiful structure, the framework consisting of dried grass and little strips of bark, covered externally with lichens and a small quantity of moss, the materials being felted together with cobweb. The lining, as in the case of all the Flycatchers that we met with, consisted of a very fine hair-

like portion of some plant, of a red-brown colour. I never saw the male bird of the Cape Flycatcher on the nest, but he would come and feed the female at intervals while she was sitting. She did not remain on the nest at these times, but would hop up from branch to branch and take such food as he had brought her before he had time to reach the nest; on such occasions she would stay away from the nest for as long as ten minutes at a time, nor would she return until driven back by the male bird, when she finally settled down upon the nest, and the male bird would go away.

Another Flycatcher that may be met with in these woods is the Grey-mantled Flycatcher; we saw, however, but little of this bird, and only found its nest once. This was similar to the nest of the species dealt with above, with the exception of the outside, which was in this instance covered with small pieces of touchwood; perhaps this covering was more in accord with the surroundings of the nest than if it had been composed of lichens. This nest, an illustration of which is shown on plate 30, was placed in a young shoot of an oak tree. The male and female of this species appeared to share the duties at the nest about equally, and were constantly taking each other's place; they were very restless birds, and were often to be seen flitting about among the bushes and trees, at the same time spreading out their tails, which were broad and somewhat arched. Their note was a harsh twittering noise, which was uttered by both the birds, and was considerably louder than that of the Cape Flycatcher.

The South African Paradise Flycatcher is another bird that attracts attention in these woods. This also



GREY-MANTLED FLYCATCHER ON NEST.

(*Trochocercus cyanomelas.*)

5' 2"



NEST OF CAPE FLYCATCHER.

is a restless bird, keeping for the most part well out of sight, and as it flies across one's path in the forest, its plumage lit up here and there by a gleam of sunshine, it presents a brilliantly red appearance, the two long feathers in its tail streaming behind as it flies. Nests of this species were very similar to those of the Cape Flycatcher, but were as a rule deeper. These birds always seemed to place their nests over water, either in the form of some small stream which intersected one of these wooded valleys, or else above a pool of stagnant water in the forest. In the case of the nests of each of the other two species of Flycatcher mentioned above, the nests were always placed in the vicinity of water, but not necessarily actually above it. The eggs of all these birds were much alike, being of a pale cream colour speckled with reddish-brown; the markings would differ slightly in the case of each bird.

These nests were not really so difficult to find, but they harmonised so well both in colour and in shape with the innumerable other objects in the forest which caught the eye, that they seemed to fit in as a face does into a picture puzzle, appearing very simple when regarded as nests, but when taking their place in the picture, not so apparent. On one of the many creepers which hung about the trees in the woods I noticed a kind of excrescence that would often make its appearance; this was about the size of half an orange, and was coloured grey outside, while the top of it was of a red-brown colour. It seems quite possible that these Flycatchers in making their nests, imitate to a certain extent these peculiar growths with a view of gaining

protection, as the lining of the nests and the tops of these excrescences were almost identical in colour.

A nest that required a considerable amount of finding was that of the Cape White-eye, a small bird closely resembling in its habits some of our Tits. This bird constructed its nest of a delicate green moss that grew on the trunks of some of the trees, fastening it in one instance to two slender branches that overlapped each other, after the manner of a hammock. From below, this nest had exactly the appearance of two leaves crossing each other, and the moss, being of a dry nature, would probably retain its colour as long as the nest was in use. The same lining was employed here as in the case of the Flycatchers, the three or four blue eggs looking very conspicuous against the red-brown colour of the inside of the nest ; the eggs, however, were protected from view from above by the overhanging leaves of the tree. These dull-green coloured little birds were very fond of searching the branches of the trees for insects, hanging on to the leaves in all sorts of curious positions.

Among the most interesting of the forest birds, owing to their unique habit of leading the natives to the nests of bees, are the various kinds of Honey-guide. Of these birds I cannot say much from my own experience, but as they are inhabitants of the district with which we are dealing, perhaps I may be allowed to quote from writers who have studied their habits. They are small birds and are soberly coloured, and their object in guiding human beings to bees' nests appears to be, not that they may obtain the honey contained therein, but so that they may feed on the grubs or young bees which are to be found in the honey-comb.

Of the Little Honey-guide (*Indicator minor*) the late Mr. E. L. Layard writes, his authority being Dr. Kirk :—

“The Honey-guide is found in forests, and often far from water even during the dry season. On observing a man it comes fluttering from branch to branch in the neighbouring trees, calling attention. If this be responded to, as the natives do by whistling and starting to their feet, the bird will go in a certain direction and remain at a little distance, hopping from one tree to another. On being followed it goes further; and so it will guide the way to a nest of bees. When this is reached it flies about but no longer guides; and then some knowledge is needed to discover the nest even when pointed out to within a few trees. I have known this bird, if the man after taking up the direction for a little then turns away, come back and offer to point out another nest in a different part. But if it does not know of two nests it will remain behind. The difficulty is, that it will point to tame bees in a bark hive as readily as to those in the forest. This is natural, as the bee is the same; the bark hive, “Musinga,” as it is named, being simply fastened up in a tree and left for the bees to come to. The object this bird has in view is clearly the young bees. It will guide to nests having no honey, and seems equally delighted if the comb containing the grubs be torn out, when it is seen pecking at it.”

Respecting the White-backed Honey-guide (*Indicator major*), quoting Mrs. Barber as his authority, the same writer says, with regard to the alleged habit of the bird leading to a snake or a leopard :—

“What I wrote to you in a former letter is the

opinion of many old bee-hunters in this part of the country, who have no faith in the popular belief that leading to the leopard is done on purpose. My nine brothers, who were all brought up in this country, were all of them great hunters as well as sportsmen; and during all the years of their experience while they were living at Tharfield, where bees' nests were exceedingly plentiful, and where they were constantly in the habit of following these birds, never once did the Honey-guide ever lead them *purposely* to any noxious animal. Many times in following the bird through dense woods have they started various kinds of creatures; but if they did not neglect the bird for the purpose of hunting she would continue her flight towards the bees' nest, regardless of the startled animals. One of my brothers once, while following a Honey-guide through a dense forest near the Kowie, passed directly through a drove of wild pigs. They were of course more frightened than he was, and rushed about in every direction; but my brother, knowing the popular belief, and wishing to test it, took not the slightest notice of the wild pigs, but passed on, keeping his eye on the bird, who went steadily on her way, until she arrived at the nest she intended to show, regardless of the pigs. And, again, when the bird has arrived at the nest she intends to show, there is an alteration in the notes of her voice. An old bee-hunter knows this in an instant, and knows when he ought to commence searching for the nest. Now this alteration never takes place when animals of various kinds are startled in passing through the forest while following the bird. Hence I conclude that she does not intend to show where these

creatures are, or the alteration in her voice would take place."

The *Ibis* for October, 1900, publishes the following letter on the subject from Mr. W. T. Barneby:—

"Sirs,—As I understand that some doubts are still expressed as to the truth of the extraordinary instinct attributed to the Honey-guide of attracting natives and travellers to bees' nests, I beg leave to offer you the following account of my own experience in this matter:—

"In October and November, 1898, I was on a hunting expedition, in the province of Mozambique in Portuguese East Africa. Starting from a station on the Beira railway, I explored the country to the North of the Pungwee River for about sixty miles, accompanied by some twenty native carriers.

"One day my boys brought me some honey to eat, and when I asked them how they had obtained it, they replied that the Honey-bird had guided them to the nest. Having heard the story of the Honey-guide before I was much interested, and desired the boys, when they found the Honey-bird calling to them again, to be sure and let me know, as I wished to see the bird and its method of attracting attention. A few days later, on returning to camp, I found some of my boys absent, and was told they were engaged in taking a bees' nest. On proceeding to the spot, which was not far distant, I found the boys engaged in chopping out a bees' nest, to which they told me the Honey-bird had led them. I observed them leave a small portion of the comb on a branch near the nest, for the use, as they said, of the Honey-bird, but I did not on this occasion actually see the bird myself.

“ On another occasion, just after I had shot a hyæna, and while we were engaged in skinning it, my boys told me they could hear the Honey-bird calling to them. I went with them into the bush, and saw a little brown bird flying from tree to tree, and heard it uttering a kind of twittering note. After following the bird a distance of some three or four hundred yards through the bush my boys discovered the bees' nest in the trunk of a tree, not far from the ground, and immediately proceeded to cut out the honey.

“ The belief in this curious instinct of the Honey-bird is so universally prevalent among the natives of Eastern Africa, and instances of success in obtaining honey in this way have been given by so many travellers, that I cannot believe there is room for any doubt on the subject. I may remind you that, among other well-known travellers, Mr. John G. Millais (“ Breath from the Veldt,” pp. 185-187) has recorded his personal experience of it, and has given a sketch of the bird guiding its human allies in search of the honey.”

Forest birds that went about in parties of ten or a dozen individuals, and were very noisy and quarrelsome, were the Colies, or Mousebirds. They are brown birds, having rather long tails, and are, I believe, polygamous. These birds are certainly not calculated to induce the spread of that particular state of being, for they appeared to spend the whole day in chasing one another from bush to bush, with loud chattering cries, and there fighting amongst themselves. Whether the wives were merely quarrelling with each other, or whether they had lately unearthed some specially convincing piece of scandal in connection with the



1



2

1. BAR-THROATED WARBLER.

(*Apalis thoracica.*)

5" 3"

2. SOMBRE BULBUL.

(*Andropadus importunus.*)

7" 9"

unfortunate husband, and were taxing him with it, I am unable to say.

A little bird that we found plentiful in the bush around Knysna was the Bar-throated Warbler, an illustration of which is shown here, with its nest in the background. The natives call this bird *Bosch Kelke*, which I believe means "Bush Wineglass," the name no doubt originating by reason of the peculiar notes uttered by these birds in conjunction with each other. These sounds, like so many notes of birds, are not at all easily described on paper. The male bird would utter a sort of *tac tac*, and then the female would reply with perhaps a dozen notes somewhat similar in sound to those of the male bird, but increasing regularly in speed as she uttered them. The sounds made by the female bird correspond very nearly to those produced by balancing a pencil between the first and second finger and then letting it "run down" of its own accord on the edge of a desk, or table. These notes were uttered very low, and unless one were within a short distance of the birds themselves, were inaudible.

Although one misses the continuous strains of music that would be heard in woods at home in the springtime, yet the various sounds which attract the ear in the bush around Knysna during the breeding season—October to December—are not without a charm of their own.

Springtime in England would be thought dull if we depended on the Cuckoo's note for music, and yet of all birds in these forests, the cries of the various kinds of Cuckoo are the most often heard. Many of these birds are most brilliantly coloured, rivalling some of the tropical species in their plumage. Two of the com-

moner and most beautiful of them are the Emerald Cuckoo and the Golden Cuckoo, both of which are largely sought after for their skins; fortunately, however, they are now to a certain extent protected. The emerald-green back and bright yellow underparts of the Emerald Cuckoo render it a most beautiful object. These birds, as though aware of their attractive plumage, keep for the most part in seclusion, and conceal themselves among the dense foliage near the tops of the tall trees, occasionally showing themselves to call. None of the Cuckoos around Knysna, so far as I am aware, possess the note with which we are so familiar in England, perhaps the nearest approach to it being that uttered by the bird which goes by the name of the *Piet Mijn Vrouw*, the distinctive notes of which bird are to be heard almost any time of the day during the South African spring. These notes have an almost exact resemblance to the three Dutch words quoted above.

It seems odd to hear of a Cuckoo that makes its own nest, and although the Cuckoos mentioned above are, like the species with which we are familiar, parasitic, yet there is at least one kind of Cuckoo which inhabits the Knysna forest that builds for itself. This is the Lark-heeled Cuckoo, which belongs to the family of Bush-Cuckoos, the accompanying illustration showing the nest and two young ones of this bird. The nest in question, which was made entirely of straw, was placed almost at the top of a high mimosa bush which formed part of a tall hedge, and was constructed in a somewhat slovenly way, as though the bird had considered it rather out of its province to make a nest at all. There was a large opening at one side, perhaps nine inches in



NEST AND YOUNG OF LARK-HEELED CUCKOO.

(*Centropus senegalensis.*)

diameter, and the nest would measure about two feet vertically by one foot six inches horizontally. This nest contained two young birds, lately hatched, which had a rather uncanny appearance. This singular appearance, I have since learned, is on account of the extreme prolongation of the sheaths which envelop the embryo feathers on the very young of this class of Cuckoo, and when these young birds erect their feathers in the manner shown in the illustration, this extraordinary growth has the appearance of long hairs brushed straight up.

We found this nest very difficult of approach, it being placed about ten feet from the ground, and surrounded by the long needle-like thorns of the mimosa, some of which attain a length of five or six inches. Another thorn, which grows in the shape of a fish-hook, but without the barb, is the "wait-a-bit" thorn; it is small, and only asks that its presence may be recognised, and that it may be released from your clothing. I never saw the *Vley Lourie*, as this Cuckoo is called, but once, when it was on the nest, where it sat with its long bulky tail showing outside the entrance; on our approach the bird slipped quietly out, dropping with great dexterity through the maze of dangerous-looking thorns that surrounded the nest. These birds were very shy, and rarely showed themselves, but their cry was often to be heard, and was one of the most distinctive sounds on the outskirts of the forest. The note was very deep, and was a kind of mixture between a prolonged shudder and a coo; the sound had a most odd effect. The *Vley Lourie* is considerably larger than most of the Cuckoos around Knysna, and is more soberly clad, the general

colour being a coppery-brown, with many of the feathers narrowly streaked with white.

Another note in the forest that would frequently startle one, by reason of its loudness and shrillness, was that of the Sombre Bulbul, which, as its name implies, is a bird of inconspicuous plumage. It has a habit of concealing itself in a bush or tree that you may happen to be passing, and suddenly uttering its single note *Piet*, from which it takes its local name; this note when uttered close by, has an almost ear-splitting intensity.

Sometimes in the forest we would come across some slender shoot of a tree that had been carefully twined round one of the many creepers which were so common; this was done in order that the young shoots might grow up into thick twisted sticks, in the selling of which, as walking sticks, there is a small trade done at Knysna. The woodmen who train these sticks must have many years to wait before they reap their harvest.

Oddly enough, though snakes are plentiful all over the Colony, and especially in the neighbourhood of Knysna, I never saw one during the whole of our stay. *Boomslangs*, or Tree Snakes, are very common in the Knysna forest, they feed on small birds, and one can often tell of their whereabouts by the chattering of the *Bosch Kelkes* and other birds. More snakes are seen in the Colony along the high roads, where they lie in the dust, than in the woods, for in the latter places they naturally hear of the approach of anyone, and make off. Cases of snake-bite are comparatively few in South Africa, those who are bitten being most often attacked at harvest time, when the bundles of corn are being gathered up, under which the snakes are fond of hiding themselves.

CHAPTER III.

The Estuary.

“Among the solitary birds which frequent the estuaries of rivers, the Hern and the Cormorant are of too much consequence to be overlooked.”—GILPIN.

THE above quotation seems to apply very happily to the estuary of the Knysna River, where not only are the “Hern and the Cormorant” frequently to be seen, but also many other birds which affect similar districts, notably the Curlew and the Little Egret, to say nothing of the Greenshank, and innumerable small waders. All these birds, and many others too, congregate in the neighbourhood of Knysna during the three closing months of the year, and in December, when the “season” is in full swing, the Storks, as visitors of some importance, arrive upon the scene.

From the large island which is connected with the mainland by a low breakwater and on which the jetty is built, one may look across a broad expanse of mud, and narrow channels of water, to Steinbok Island, on which a few low bushes and stunted trees stand out in relief from the surrounding flats, while in the distance, just visible through the shimmering air, rise the two natural gates of rock which form the Knysna Heads. At low tide the birds are busy feeding indiscriminately, an Egret or two dotted among the Curlews, and a

Greenshank zigzagging about here and there amongst them, feeding in his hap-hazard way. Another Egret joins them, moving over the water with a soft, owl-like flight, and when he has settled he keeps his long neck stretched out in a somewhat ungainly attitude, not at all resembling the graceful pose in which he is often depicted. Something startles the Greenshank, always the wariest of birds, and he flies up with four or five shrill screaming whistles, winging his way with erratic flight some distance off. The Egret looks at the Curlew, which has not moved, but stands stock-still, though he has left off feeding; if the Curlew does not go, the Egret is quite satisfied to remain where he is, for the Greenshank has cried "wolf" too often, and there is no merit in detecting danger when five-sixths of your warnings are false alarms. The Curlew, of course, is not infallible, but then who is?—and life on the estuary would be unbearable were all the birds to live in the constant state of unreasonable excitement and alarm that characterises the Greenshank's existence.

Another Curlew alights, and stands immovable; he remains so for at least five minutes, apparently absorbed in thought, in reality taking in the slightest movement within the limit of his keen sight, then, as though in apology for having been so long in commencing to feed, he seems to recollect himself, and puts his long curved bill down a little way towards the shallow water in which he is standing, then draws it up again. He is in no hurry, he can easily wait another two or three minutes. So a little while later he slowly puts it down again, this time so as to almost touch the water, and then—commences to feed?—Oh no, he only wanted to find out

if there was anybody about ; because it would have been a good chance for anyone who might happen to be watching him to have shifted his position, ever so slightly, when the Curlew was supposed to be feeding, and no one knew that fact better than the Curlew himself. Presently a Heron joins them, alighting like a fallen feather, and walks a little way out into the stream, placing first one foot, and then the other, very gently and tentatively in the water, as though he too were thinking out some abstruse question. The Heron looks about him many times before he begins to feed, and keeps his long neck stretched out at an angle like that of the Egret, though he is slower than that bird in his movements.

The Greenshanks are very fond of chasing one another when they are feeding in the shallow water, through which they move about with great agility. One day while I was out on the estuary, several Greenshanks rose simultaneously, loudly uttering their alarm cries, when the reason became at once apparent, for a little Falcon shot down among them, just missed one of the Greenshanks, and soon disappeared out of sight. I do not think the Greenshanks recovered this, which was a real danger, for some time, as they kept on the wing till their shrill cries were lost in the distance.

The tide has now sunk so low that there is only a broad river, not more than one-third of its width at high tide, between Steinbok Island and the island that we are on. On either side this channel is margined broadly with a carpet of smooth green sea-grass, which shows up to advantage the white plumage of the Egrets, standing here and there at intervals ; nearest the shore of

each island is a still broader expanse of mud. Out in the middle of the channel, and far from any possibility of danger, the Storks are feeding, five or six of them, moving slowly down the stream. They feed in line, ten or twenty yards apart, in a dignified manner and without hurry of any sort; it seems to be recognised by the other birds that they are old-established patrons of the estuary, and that their feeding grounds must not be encroached upon. They are wary though, and never allow themselves to be surprised, but if they think danger is likely to threaten them they slowly rise and fly off in line to a more secluded part. But few of these wading birds breed in the neighbourhood of Knysna, the majority of them being only visitors during the "off season."

A small bird that may often be seen as it searches the flotsam and dead sea-grass on the shores of these islands, is the *Quick Stertje*; literally, quick-tail. These birds, the Cape Wagtails, we found common wherever we went; they were very difficult birds to photograph, as are all of this species, on account of their habit of incessantly moving their tails. They nest in all sorts of odd places, and in positions very similar to those chosen by most Wagtails. The nest shown in the illustration is not very easily seen, but it is situated under the piece of overhanging rock just below the centre of the picture.

Life on the estuary presents a different appearance when the tide is up; the birds are not then feeding, and crowds of Curlew will assemble on one of the smaller islands in the distance, making a great noise among themselves, which is borne across by the breeze; not



CAPE WAGTAIL AND NEST

(Muscicapa capensis)



CAPE WAGTAIL AND NEST.

(*Motacilla capensis*.)

7" 2"

their well-known cry, but a sort of clamorous and continued noise, something after this manner :—" Eedle eedle eedle eedle eedle—eedledoo eedledoo—eedle eedle eedle." The sound travels very distinctly over the water, though the birds may be a mile or more away. The Curlews were evidently moulting when we were at Knysna, as numbers of their feathers were to be found on the shores of the larger islands.

The spring tides run very high at Knysna, and the rough grass near the water's edge was often flooded for a distance of fifty or a hundred yards from the shore, leaving little pools and excrescences of ground that formed hiding places for the smaller Plovers and Sandpipers which frequented the estuary in even greater numbers than the larger wading birds. These small waders would start up, apparently from nowhere, the Plovers flying only a short distance and then settling, the other little wading birds forming themselves into a flock, and flying over the water in ordered flight, now lost to view against the screen of distant hills, now flashing their white underparts as they wheel round and settle, with almost soldierly precision, no great distance off. The tide is still rising, and as the narrow ridge of grass that represents all that is visible of the small island on which they have settled is gradually submerged, these small waders themselves present the appearance of an island supported by innumerable stilt-like legs.

There is a rock which stands a little way out to sea from the Knysna Heads, on which the Egrets were supposed to breed ; I do not know that anyone had ever landed on this rock, but it was argued that because

these birds were not found nesting anywhere else in the neighbourhood of Knysna, they must of necessity breed here. There were but a few days in the year when a boat could approach this rock, but the pilot, who should know the vagaries of this coast if anyone did told us that he thought, under certain favourable conditions, he could land us there. He said he would send us word if a suitable day arrived, but though we were at Knysna for a considerable time, we did not manage to get to this rock. I believe there was one day on which we could have gone, but the pilot did not send up to tell us, as there was a thick mist on the water at the time. The Egrets were observed, by fishermen who lived near the Heads, to fly out to this rock of an evening, and from this circumstance it was assumed that they nested there. In all probability they only flew out to roost, and bred in large colonies, in company with other species of Heron, near the mouth of the Berg River, which, as has been previously mentioned, is situated some little distance north of Cape Town.

With but little doing on the estuary at high tide, we may turn our attention to birds on the island itself. Among these the mewling cry of the Cape Long-claw, or "Cut-throat Lark" is sure to attract notice. This Pipit, which is not really of so bloodthirsty a nature as its name would imply, we found plentifully on rough ground wherever we went; it is a striking-looking bird, being considerably larger than our Sky-lark at home, and having a very distinct orange-red patch on the throat, narrowly edged with black. This bird is often a familiar figure by the roadside as one drives over the veldt, looking very conspicuous as it takes its stand on



CAPE LONG-CLAW AND NEST.

(*Macronyx capensis*.)

7" 3"



CINNAMON-BACKED PIPIT AND NEST.

(*Anthus pyrrhonotus.*)

6" 5"

an anthill or some other eminence, in an upstanding position.

Larks and Pipits are among the most difficult birds to photograph ; one never knows where to expect them, and with the camera placed almost on the ground, as it must be, the grasses and such-like vegetation which intervene between the bird and the lens make the task no easy one. It took me a long time to obtain the photograph which is here reproduced of this bird, and it was only after a great amount of trouble that I was able to secure it. We spent I should think quite two hours on our knees driving the bird very gently towards an anthill, the top of which I had focussed with my camera ; there were many other anthills round about, and the bird naturally chose these in preference to the one on which it was desired he should take his stand. Again and again he made as though he would run on to the mound, but always thought better of it, and ran past it on to another, while the slightest hurry or quick movement on our part and he flew away. At length, by driving him from two different positions and letting him take his own time, he placed himself in position, with the result shown. Very occasionally these birds will perch on a low bush, but they are thorough ground birds.

There were many species of Larks to be found on the dryer parts of the large island, amongst which the Rufus-capped Lark was very plentiful, while a Pipit that we found breeding was the Cinnamon-backed Pipit. This bird is, I believe, well distributed over the Colony, but we did not see much of it ; perhaps, being of an unattractive plumage, and resembling more or less many of the Larks, we may not have noticed it.

Birds that may occasionally be seen on the estuary are the Stanley Cranes. They appear to be more of a land-feeding bird than a wader, as whenever we saw them they were either on the rough ground in the centre of one of the islands, or else feeding among some rushes which margined one corner of the largest island. They are fine-looking birds, standing considerably higher than the common Heron, and have almost the entire plumage slate-grey, with the exception of the top of the head, which is white, and the long black plumes that hang down over the back. The young birds, when they are two or three weeks old, are a rather lighter uniform grey, without the black plumes, the top of the head being of a light chestnut colour. Mr. B.'s children, at the Grand Hotel at Port Elizabeth, had three young Stanley Cranes, which were brought from the mouth of the Sunday River by a Kaffir woman; they fed them on pieces of melon, on which diet the birds seemed to thrive well enough, and would follow the children about all over the garden like dogs. These young birds make a low guttural noise, a faint reproduction of the rattling croak that the old birds utter. One day, I remember, I was photographing on one of the islands, when I was startled by hearing three or four of these deep rattling croaks; I looked up, and there were five of these birds, sailing at an immense altitude, with just the least flapping of their outspread wings. They seemed nonplussed for the moment, for they had evidently come in their dignified manner by appointment, and I felt that I had usurped a place which they had doubtless looked upon from time immemorial as a sort of board room. I think they were

offended, because they broke up the regular order of flight in which they had arrived, and sailed round and round for a short time, making remarks about me of an uncomplimentary nature in their deep voices; afterwards they moved off in different directions, evidently disgusted.

They are strange birds, and although so dignified when in the air, they will sometimes cut the most ridiculous figure on the ground. I saw two of them feeding once on this same island, and tried to see how near they would allow me to approach; I got to within about fifty yards of them when they commenced to run, spreading their wings out at the same time, and the faster I ran the faster they ran. The bird on the far side of me executed an extraordinary kind of dance at the same time that it was running, taking two or three quick steps and then a jump, as it looked at me over the other bird's back; seeing that I was gaining on them slightly, they then floated off into the air and sailed away.

There were one or two of these birds in St. George's Park at Port Elizabeth, and also some Kaffir Cranes, and I once saw one of the Stanley Cranes, without the slightest warning or apparent reason, suddenly execute a kind of waltz round the Kaffir Crane, who seemingly did not approve of dancing, as he eyed the proceedings with a stony stare and then resumed feeding. This is a well-known habit of the Stanley, or Blue Cranes, as they are also called.

Sometimes one of the large eagles, of which there are many different kinds in the neighbourhood of Knysna, would sail over the estuary, wheeling round

and round at a great height in the air. Mr. M., in his collection of skins, which is I should think the best collection of Knysna birds to be found anywhere, has some very fine specimens of these eagles.

There are one or two small streams, which, starting in the seclusion of the forest, find their way down through wooded valleys into the main river near Knysna. The largest of these little tributaries goes by the name of the Salt River, though to be sure it is but a small river and hardly worthy of the name. This stream in its lower reaches is almost entirely dependent for its supply of water on the main river, as the main river itself is dependent on the tide, and at its mouth the Salt River is a miniature of the estuary, mimicking at low tide the various islands of the latter by small mud banks and sand banks, left high and dry, the former over-grown here and there with rushes. The same birds, moreover, that frequent the main river are to be seen here. Single birds mostly, and those of a kind constantly on the lookout for danger, are the frequenters of this particular spot, and near the stone bridge which spans the stream where it joins the estuary a Curlew or a Heron may often be seen, standing knee deep in the water and feeding in a slow and cautious way.

Higher up, where the tide has drained the water away, stands a Little Egret, his white plumage showing conspicuously among the rushes that grow on the mud bank by which he is feeding and listening, for he seems to do most of the latter. He takes but little notice of the pistol-like crack of the whip as the heavy waggon, drawn by its team of oxen, lumbers over the bridge, and no notice whatever of the *pit* of the Kingfisher

as he hovers over the narrow channel of water that now does duty for the stream ; but still he listens more than he feeds, and then flies up as though startled, the reason soon being apparent, as a coloured boy threads his way noiselessly along the narrow path through the bush. A rough road follows the curve of the stream along its left bank, thick woods growing down to the water's edge on the right.

There were other birds besides the waders that frequented this stream, for after all the Curlews and Egrets were merely hap-hazard visitors, and were liable to be frightened away by any suspicious or unusual sound. The birds which made this stream their home were the Pied Kingfishers, of which there were perhaps a dozen or more. There are a great many different kinds of Kingfisher in South Africa, the smaller kinds almost invariably conforming to our notions of what that bird should be, and having the usual brilliant plumage. The two larger species, however, depart from this rule, and are more soberly clad, the Great African Kingfisher, mentioned in a previous chapter, having the upper parts a dull slate-colour spotted with white, the under parts generally being of a dark chestnut colour.

The Pied Kingfisher, although a striking-looking bird, has no colour but black and white, and is roughly about twice the size of our Kingfisher (*Alcedo ispida*), and rather more than half that of the Great African Kingfisher. These Pied Kingfishers seemed specially desirable from a photographic point of view, so many birds of brilliant plumage being quite untranslateable in a satisfactory way by the camera, but like many

desirable things, their photographs were exceedingly difficult to procure. We found that they had nested in a bank some half-mile up the stream, but that the young birds had already flown. These Kingfishers seemed to fish at most hours of the day, and would vary their station according as it was high, or low tide. At low tide, when the water was mostly out of the Salt River, they would betake themselves to some rocks that jutted out into the main river, and from these rocks they made excursions into the air, gradually attaining their "pitch," and then hovering for a minute or two at a time. On sighting their prey, they would dive down into the water from a height of twenty or thirty feet, often unsuccessfully, in which case they would fly rapidly off and again hover a little distance away. When hovering, the body is held almost vertically, the long beak pointing downwards and the wings moving rapidly. They seemed to prefer to fish in water of about two feet or so in depth; perhaps they could the more easily see their prey in shallower water. When they dived they would hit the water with a smack, being momentarily immersed, and would then fly with the fish held crosswise in the beak to the nearest convenient perching place, keeping close to the water as they flew. I noticed that they always gave their victims one sharp tap on the rock or stump to which they happened to fly, in order to despatch it. The plumage of the bird, as it appeared after coming out of the water, glittered in the sun almost as brightly as the silvery scales of the fish itself.

Sometimes when one of these birds was hovering in the air it would dart down towards the water, then



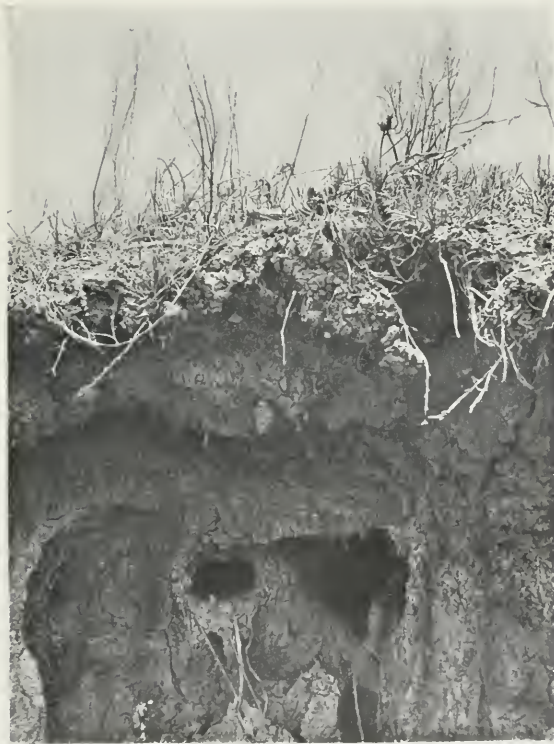
PIED KINGFISHER.

(*Ceryle rudis.*)

arrest its progress, hover again, then drop again, like a spider descending from a beam, finally darting into the water from a height of only about a couple of yards, when it would frequently come up with a fish. No doubt this manœuvre meant that the prey was shifting its position in the water and the bird wanted to make suré of its aim. There seemed to be something wrong about the fishery rights of these Kingfishers, because if one of their number succeeded in catching a fish when the others were within sight, they would often give chase to the successful bird with loud cries of *pitwee, pitwee*, until one of them caught him and took the fish from him, when he in his turn would be chased and made to yield up his ill-gotten spoils. They would waste a lot of time in this way, when each bird might have been fishing on his own account to much better advantage. When they were tired of this proceeding they used to sit in a row along the shore of the estuary in attitudes very unkingfisher-like. I think they were the most difficult birds that I ever had to deal with photographically; they appeared to be able to see through any ordinary bush; perhaps their powers of vision had been increased by constantly looking for fish beneath the surface of the water.

After a little while it became easy to tell what these Kingfishers were doing, without the aid of the eye; a sharp *pit, pit* in the distance, as they followed the curve of the river, a pause, as they failed to put in an appearance and were hovering over the stream, then the echoing smack as the bird hit the water, followed very quickly by a hollow knock as the unfortunate victim was despatched upon a rock or stump.

They had their favourite "killing blocks," one of which was a solid stump with a sharp edge at its projecting end, concealed beneath the shade of the thick bush which fringed the stream on one bank, the end of this stump being more or less covered with fish-scales, and here was sometimes to be found a small network of fish-bones which had been thrown up by one of the birds. The holes in which these Kingfishers nested went into the bank of the stream for a distance of two or three yards, and the eggs were said to be laid on a nest of sea-grass, but as our informant on this subject was a boy whom we very soon found to be utterly untrustworthy in his statements, I refrain from attaching any credence to this piece of information. Indeed, we soon dispensed with the services of this youth, who rejoiced in the pastoral name of David, though had we been collecting information in a Pickwickian style, note book after note book might well have been filled with the most startling ornithological disclosures. At first we thought his rudeness was some guarantee for his honesty, for he was exceedingly brusque, and when we offered him some of our lunch, as we often did, he merely took it in his hand and walked away. We asked him one day if he had no Dutch word for "thank you." "What say"? he would reply. "What say"? was his favourite expression, and became after a time rather monotonous. One day he told us he knew of a Secretary-Bird's nest. How far off was it? we asked him. "Not so far," he replied. This again was always a standing answer of his, no matter if the distance were ten miles or only a hundred yards. He gave such a graphic description of his visit to this same nest a



PIED KINGFISHER AND NESTING-SITE.

year or two ago, when the birds, according to his own account, stood on the edge of the nest in a kind of boxing attitude and drove him wounded from the field, that we thought we should like to verify this statement for ourselves; so we sent him out to report upon the place, for these birds return to the same nest year after year.

When he arrived, thirsty and footsore from this expedition, and told us that the tree had since been cut down, I should have felt sorry for him had I not known that he had indeed been "not so far," but had been lying down on the hills at the back of the town during the whole day. Before finally dismissing him, which we did not wish to do at all unfairly, we agreed to pay him by results; this sounded very thorough and business-like, and seemed to depress his spirits somewhat. However, he soon regained his customary sulky stolidity, and informed us one day that he had succeeded in finding several nests. Where were they? we asked him. "Oh, not so far," he said. Accordingly, after walking a little way into the bush, he put down our belongings and pointed to a tree which he approached stealthily. This tree was decorated in a rather too lavish manner with nests, while on the ground another nest had been thoughtfully placed by our promising guide. The affair was perhaps a trifle overdone, but having started off on this voyage of fabrication he was not going to be pulled up short for want of a little dilating on the subject in question. "Dis bird," he explained, in allusion to the owner of one of the nests, "'ad a blue 'ead and a red back." "Dis nest 'ad kickens in it yesterday," and so on, showing at the same time

a well-acted surprise that the eggs and young ones had since been removed. I think this exhibition of his perfidy made us decide to dispense with his services altogether ; he had evidently, to save himself trouble, collected all the old nests that he could find and placed them near the same spot ; they were not even fastened to the branches of the tree in any way. After all, I think we found more nests by ourselves than with his help, carefully though most of them were concealed.

A bird that one is sure to come across sooner or later in the Colony, is the Hammerkop. This bird seems to stand in a class almost by itself, and is in reality a species of Stork, but is of a dull-brown colour. The nest of the Hammerkop is a curious structure, and is placed sometimes in a tree and sometimes upon a rock. The nest shown in the illustration (just beneath the point where the branch cuts the top of the picture) I found on one of the banks of a river that runs into the largest of the Knysna Lakes. In shape this nest was something like an enormous wren's nest, but was built of sticks, intermingled with a great lot of rubbish. They seem to build equally often in trees. I think these birds display a considerable amount of cunning in placing their nests, because although these are so large as to be plainly visible, yet when it comes to inspecting them, I found that their size, and the position of the entrance, prevented my discovering what was inside ; doubtless I could have done so in time, but I was almost sure that the two which I found were untenanted. The Hammerkop seems to be altogether a shady kind of character, and unlike other birds ; sometimes of an evening we have come upon him standing meditating



NESTING-SITE OF HAMMERKOP.

(*Scopus umbretta.*)

by some lonely pool, when he would seem to collect himself and fly away. Whether his designs were to obtain food, or whether he was tired of life, and was meditating an excursion into the unknown, who shall say? Occasionally we saw him in the daytime, but most often in this lonely way at sunset.

In this same river near the Knysna Lakes, which was some twenty or thirty miles from the town of Knysna itself, I saw a party of Night Herons; they flew with a slow, laboured flight out of a thick bush which overhung the river, and then settled again on a tree a little way further up. They looked ungainly creatures, and out of place, perched upon the branches of a tree, but they seemed to be able to retain their footing at a considerable angle; after a while they gradually dispersed themselves to more convenient perching-places in the deeper recesses of the wood; they evidently disliked coming out into the bright sunshine. There were three or four old birds and perhaps as many young ones, the latter being coloured a greyish-brown, while the dark green plumage on the head and backs of the old birds was plainly visible as they flew. The gentleman with whom I was staying at the time told me that they always rested during the daytime in the thick bush from which we put them up, but that at dusk they would fly down to the lake to feed. It was refreshing to get some information that I could rely on after our experiences of the last few weeks. The Knysna and George Lakes form an almost continuous chain of water for many miles between those two places, separating the cliffs which constitute the sea coast on the one hand, from the high land where the forest begins, on the other.

CHAPTER IV.

The Outskirts of the Forest.

FROM nowhere is a better view of the estuary to be obtained than from the hills which rise up at the back of Knysna, the broad river spreading itself out below, its various islands showing here and there as in a map. These hills are covered for the most part with rough grass, varied occasionally with rhenoster bushes or other small shrubs. From here also one might look down on the straggling bits of forest which divided these low hills, and it was seldom that the cry of one of the forest birds was not in the air, the note most often to be heard being the shrill whistle of the *Piet*, or the weird melancholy "shudder" of the *Vley Lourie*. These open hills had their sounds of bird life as well as the forest, and these sounds, like those of the woods, were made up more of the various isolated notes of the small birds that frequented this rough scrub than of any sustained melody of song.

There was the short jerky note of the Cape Grass-Warbler, as the bird flew up into the air for a second or two, and then took refuge in the thick cover which the ground afforded, or the sniffling chirrup of the South African Stone-chat, as it settled on the topmost spray of some low bush, and jerked its tail in a rather galvanic manner for several minutes after alighting.



SMALL GREY-BACKED FANTAIL AND NEST.

(*Cisticola subruficapilla*.)



POINTED-TAILED GRASS-WARBLER AND NEST.

(*Sphenæacus africanus.*)

8" 9"

The bird whose notes were certainly the most musical of any on these hills was the Pointed-tailed Grass-Warbler, a peculiar bird, considerably larger than any of the other Grass-Warblers that we met with in the Colony. It rarely showed itself except when singing, at which times it would perch in a rather conspicuous place, and repeat the same strain again and again; when not engaged in singing it would conceal itself in the thick grass and cover, keeping well out of sight. The short wings and long pointed tail of this bird gave it somewhat the appearance of a miniature pheasant.

The Kaffir Fink, too, was here a common bird, and he would hurry past in his business-like way, settle on the top of some tall plant, and from this position utter his curious low notes, unlike those of any other bird, and resembling the jingling of tiny shells. This bird seemed to have rather an easy time of it, for we never saw him assisting in any way at the nesting operations, either by helping to build the nest or to feed the young ones.

There were several different kinds of Grass-Warblers on these hills, which latter appeared to be specially suited to their requirements. All of these birds, with the exception of the Pointed-tailed Grass-Warbler, constructed their nests, which were domed, at the foot of a small bush or shrub, weaving the foliage round so as to form the outside of the nest, and lining the same with the white down of some flower. These nests were exceedingly difficult to find, and were nearly always placed close to the ground.

The veldt on the confines of the forest was naturally

a favourite resort of the various species of Sun-birds, which would come out of the woods and feed on many of the flowers. The Malachite Sun-birds seemed to be present in every part of the Colony that we visited, but here the place of the Long-tailed Sun-bird was taken by the Scarlet-chested Sun-bird and the Black Sun-bird. Both of these were very handsome little birds, and next to the flower of the *protea*, they seemed to prefer feeding on the nectar obtained from the bloom of one of the *mesembryantheums*. This was a plant with fleshy triangular leaves, spreading itself along the ground, and in places covering a considerable area. The flowers of this plant were sometimes of a light pink, and at others of a pale yellow colour, and these Sun-birds might often be seen standing on them and dipping their long beaks down amongst the petals. Later in the season these flowers produced a small fruit, which goes by the name of the Hottentot fig, this is picked in considerable quantities by the natives and sold to the colonists for the purpose of making jam; the raw fruit is not very palatable. The reproduction on plate 33, showing the nest of the Cape Wagtail, illustrates a portion of this plant, but in this instance it is trailing down the side of a rock, instead of in its usual position, along the ground.

Butterflies also were equally fond of settling on these flowers, though they sometimes had to wait their turn until the Sun-birds had finished feeding. We did not find butterflies very plentiful in the Colony; like the birds, they were few and far between, and a large extent of ground had to be covered if one wished to meet with many different kinds. One species to be

found about Knysna which attracted attention was one of the beautiful Leaf Butterflies. On the wing these butterflies showed a considerable amount of purple as they flew past, though as a rule they kept well out of reach, and seldom came very near the ground. These Leaf Butterflies took very good care where they settled, and I never saw them choose any resting-place except a tree which was, I think, one of the white pear trees, and had leaves of autumn tints ; here these butterflies would alight, melting at once into the foliage of the tree, and there defying detection. A shake of the branch would cause the apparent phenomenon of some of the leaves of the tree falling to the ground, while others fluttered upwards, to settle again on the higher branches of the tree.

The subject of protective colouring, perhaps one of the most fascinating studies of natural history, reminds me of the Nightjar. The edge of the forest around Knysna seemed to be well suited to the habits of these birds, and yet I do not think we saw one during our stay. Had there been many about we must certainly have heard them in the evenings ; possibly their breeding time may be very late in the season, as it is with us at home, and they might not have arrived at Knysna before we left. The commonest Nightjar in the Colony appears to be the South African Nightjar, a bird similar in many respects to the European Nightjar, with which we are familiar at home, but rather smaller. The latter bird is also a visitant to South Africa, and has been procured, I believe, at Knysna.

The well-known note of the Nightjar is familiar in June to many people in England who live in those

districts which are grown with pine and heather, or with oak and bracken; the continuous churr, unexpectedly brought to a stop as the bird shifts its position, to be resumed again as it re-alights. After a minute, perhaps, the note will sound doubly loud as another bird joins in, then one of them leaves off, and the single churring note continues, to stop suddenly, when all is silent. Nor is it from their notes alone that Nightjars are interesting birds, their extremely protective colouring, and the rigid stillness with which they mimic their inanimate surroundings, being perhaps even more deserving of attention.

The accompanying illustration of a Nightjar on its eggs I obtained in Norfolk, and although with this exception I have not introduced into my book any photographs that were not taken either in the Canary Islands or South Africa, yet the ground about the edge of the forest at Knysna appeared to be so specially adapted to the presence of these birds that the photograph seems to fall naturally into place here. My brother-in-law, who showed me the nest, and I, were able to watch this bird at very close quarters; she sat quite still, and kept her eyes almost closed, just peeping out of the two narrow chinks between her eyelids; this was done no doubt in order that the light, shining on the glassy surface of her eyes, might not betray her presence.

There is one ruse adopted by this bird which seems worth mentioning. After I had taken the photograph of the Nightjar shown in the picture here reproduced, I moved slightly nearer to the bird; she made no sign or movement, but was, I think, in doubt as to whether



EUROPEAN NIGHTJAR ON NEST.

(*Caprimulgus europaeus*.)

10" 6"

or no she should fly away and disclose the presence of her two eggs. Was there any other deception by which she could mimic still further her surroundings? Apparently there was one, to be used only as a last resource. She kept perfectly still, her body not even swaying as she breathed, and then suddenly vibrated her throat very quickly and silently for perhaps a minute, after which she left off as unexpectedly as she had begun, and sat still as a statue again. A glance at the illustration of this bird will show on its throat two markings, not very distinct, but plainly visible on the bird itself, which resembled in colour and in form two little bits of dried bracken. I think the bird vibrated the portion of her throat on which these specially-marked feathers grew, so that they might resemble the tips of the dried fronds which are sometimes to be seen hanging from the main stem of a fern by a thread of wool or hair, and are in these cases vibrated by any light breath of wind. When we sent the bird off her eggs, she flew into a wood which was near at hand and settled on one of the boughs of a tree, not following the line of the bough, and not across it, but in a position between the two: On returning to the eggs, the bird alighted on the ground a foot or so off, and remained where she was for about a couple of minutes, keeping her eyes wide open all the time, she then waddled on to the eggs and immediately closed her eyes to the same extent as before, when she resumed her usual pose of absolute stillness. From this it seems evident that these birds do not close the eyes only on the approach of danger, but as a general habit, for if the bird in question had suspected danger she would not have returned to the nest.

In the case of another Nightjar's nest that I came across, the eggs were almost hatching, and the bird sat so closely, adopting the same tactics as in the foregoing description, that she would allow me to move her to and fro by means of a bit of dead stick across which she was sitting; the bird kept perfectly rigid all the time, never showing her eyes save through the narrow chinks behind which she was watching, and might well have been the rotten branch of wood that she imitated to such perfection. The surroundings of this bird were of a more protective nature than those of the Nightjar which is shown in the illustration, inasmuch as when I was trying to find her I looked more than once at what I took to be a dead bit of a branch lying on the ground, and it was not until I caught the reflection of the light in her half-closed eye that the bird itself began to take shape. Strewn on the ground were leaves of the Spanish chestnut and the oak, and on some of the feathers of the bird's wing were markings representing the dead leaves of these two trees, both in shape and in colour.

Among the forest birds which occasionally showed themselves on the hills around Knysna, were the Hornbills. A party of these odd-looking birds would sometimes come and take up their positions, one by one, on some posts that formed part of a fence running down one of the hillsides. I noticed that they were feeding on some large caterpillars that frequented many of the shrubs growing on these hills. These birds, which were of a kind known as the Crowned Hornbill, and are ungainly birds with large red beaks, would fly down from these posts and endeavour to cling on to the

slender stems of the bushes while they procured their food, flapping about in a clumsy way, and seeming much too heavy to gain any prolonged foothold. They would then fly back to their several posts before making further excursions. They made a sharp metallic clicking noise occasionally, consisting of one note only, and when they had done feeding they flew off, one by one, as they had arrived, to a thick bush which became almost black as the whole flock gradually assembled themselves upon it. I do not think these birds were breeding at the time we were at Knysna, but there is a peculiarity in connection with their nesting habits which may be interesting. These Hornbills nest in holes in trees in the forest, and when the female bird commences to sit, the male bird plasters up the aperture leading into the nest, leaving only a small space, through which the female can be fed. She is thus entirely dependent on him for food, and not only so, but should "anything happen" to the male bird, to use a familiar phrase, the female would be unable, so it is asserted, to set herself free from the inside. When the young birds are ready to fly she is liberated, with them, by the male bird.

The Eagle-Owls in South Africa are represented by two or three different species, of which the Cape Eagle-Owl is the largest. We did not come across this bird, but on one or two occasions we met with the Spotted Eagle-Owl. The first time we saw this bird was near Caledon, where we flushed it twice from some rocks in the vicinity of a small stream; in neither case did we see the bird until it rose, the markings of its feathers no doubt rendering it inconspicuous among the rocks and rough ground which formed its surroundings. We

looked carefully for any sign of a nest, but could find none ; possibly, the month being September, we were too early. At Knysna, on a narrow shelf of rock in the face of a disused stone quarry we were one day shown two young birds of this species ; they were almost ready to fly, and it was surprising that they had not been taken out of the nest, as some men were boring for water at the foot of the quarry. We saw nothing of the old birds in this instance, but they were probably concealed in the rough scrub which surrounded the quarry. The remains of small crabs and the skin of a snake were lying on the ground beneath the nest, showing what kind of food these birds had conveyed to their young ones.

I have reproduced several photographs of these two young Eagle-Owls, not so much from a natural history point of view, as because of the really ludicrous expressions that are to be seen on their faces. I may say that it was not until I had developed the negatives that the intense humour apparent in the photographs of these young owls occurred to me.

So far from looking young, however, they might be a hundred years of age, judging from their expressions. If they had been acting a play, in which one of them took the part of husband and the other that of wife, they could hardly have produced more absurd results.

In illustration number one, for instance, the husband is seeing that all is secure for the night, while in number two they evidently suspect the presence of burglars. Illustration number three rather gives one the idea that the wife, being something of a pessimist, has been expressing doubts as to their ability to last through the



3



4



1



2

SPOTTED EAGLE-OWLS.
IMMATURE.
(*Bubo maculosus.*)
19''

winter, coals and provisions being at their present high prices ; this remark is met by her husband, who is apparently of a more hopeful turn of mind, assuring her that Providence will look after them. In illustration number four the wife has seemingly brightened up a little, and has ventured, in a very mild way, to make a joke ; she looks timidly at her husband to see how it has "taken," and almost wishes she could recall it. How well we recognise the husband's demeanour from our knowledge of human nature ; the much-sat-upon wife, it may be, taking advantage of an unusual period of good-humoured self-complacency in her spouse, ventures her annual joke ; too often, alas, this is met by the husband with a rather forced and tolerant smile, and some such reply as, "Really, my dear, if you can't think of anything better to say than that !"

After all, they were only acting, as we see from the illustration in the centre of the plate, which says as plainly as can be, that they are not such fools as they look.

CHAPTER V.

Two Kinds of Plover.

ON those portions of the coast of South Africa where the sea does not beat directly upon the cliffs, there is generally a more or less sheltered bay, the shore of which is composed of very light-coloured sand, almost amounting to white. This light sand occurs in False Bay, Mossel Bay, the neighbourhood of Port Elizabeth, and doubtless in many other bays around the coast. In False Bay especially, when the sea happens to be in a good humour and the waves are mere ripples, the water assumes a delicate transparent green tint, owing probably to the fact that the colour received from the blue sky is influenced by that thrown up from the light sand beneath, the two hues blending their tones in the water. Perhaps no wider contrast could be found in the way of shore than that between the coast of Tenerife and of South Africa, the former with its almost unnatural combination of deep blue water and black sand, the latter with its white sand and the faint contrast of transparent green water. It stands to reason, then, that any birds which make their home on this white shore must themselves be of a very light colour; the only ones, so far as I know, that can claim protection from such a shore, being the White Sand-Plovers, which, seen in certain lights are but little darker than the sand itself.

Shore Plovers of their various kinds have always seemed to me among the most interesting of birds; their methods of escaping observation, and the unprotected way in which they place their eggs, appearing to present to the naturalist a direct challenge to find these if he can. The birds are open enough about their nests, and they do not deny for a moment that they have got eggs, all they ask of you is that you will be quick over your search, so that they may return to them. They are in no hurry though, standing perhaps forty or fifty yards from you, and gazing seawards in a rather preoccupied manner, occasionally giving their characteristic little bow or duck, which all the shore Plovers seem to share in common with each other. You do not find their eggs, they did not expect that you would, so after you are gone, and not until after you are gone, the bird returns to the nest, first tucking the eggs underneath her, then screwing herself round once or twice, and shifting her position every few minutes so as to face the wind, after which she half closes her eyes, but not her ears, and dozes. Such are the habits of most shore Plovers, whether it be the Ringed Plover on the English coast, or the White Sand-Plover of South Africa, six thousand miles away. Nevertheless, in one rather important point they differ, for whereas the Ringed Plover if undisturbed will nearly always lay four eggs, the White Sand-Plover, so far as my experience goes, never lays more than two. The eggs also of the latter species are less pyriform, and lack to a certain degree the characteristic plover-like shape of those of the Ringed Plover.

Although none of these birds make any nest, pro-

perly speaking, yet most of them, after scooping a slight hollow in the sand or shingle on which they deposit their eggs, line this hollow with small flat stones or little bits of shell, matching the eggs to some extent in colour. It would be hard to say what is their reason for doing this, but certainly if these little stones or bits of shell be removed, the birds will replace them with others.

I remember watching some Ringed Plovers on a bed of shingle not long ago in Norfolk, and I could see, with the aid of a pair of glasses, one of these birds sitting on her eggs; the white circle round the neck, from which the birds take their name and which is so conspicuous when they are standing, was now closed up to a narrow ring as the bird sat on the beach, and might have been a thin white stone, sticking up edgewise; it also served the purpose of dividing the bird, as it were, into two pieces, which looked like two brown stones. Another instance of the same kind was in connexion with the Kentish Plover, a rather rare bird in England. I was trying to make out the identity of a small wading bird near Las Palmas in Grand Canary, which I think was a Turnstone, as it was feeding in a shallow pool. The bird was working its way round what I took to be two stones lying in the water, and on my approach it flew away, when to my surprise the two stones also ran along a little distance in the pool; I looked through my glasses and then found that what I had taken to be two stones was really a Kentish Plover. In the position in which the bird was standing, the white collar which extends round the back of the neck had exactly the appearance of a ripple



WHITE-FRONTED SAND-PLOVER AND NEST.

(*Egialitis marginata.*)

of water catching the light as it was blown against a stone. In this case the stone was the bird's head, while its body was to all intents and purposes another stone of larger size. As long as the bird kept still I should not have found out the deception, but directly it moved I wondered how I could have been mistaken.

On the shore of Mossel Bay, which is nearly a hundred miles from Knysna, there is no beach, but taking the place of beach are great quantities of finely broken shells, giving the shore a pearly appearance. The White Sand-Plovers frequent this bit of coast, as they do every suitable stretch of coast around South Africa, and they make their nests here, placing them a little way up the sand banks and lining them with small pieces of broken shells. Thus they rather draw attention to the nests than otherwise, for they are easily discovered when placed in this way on the white sand, where there are but few other objects to distract the eye.

Where the shore is suited to their requirements these birds are very numerous, but at Knysna there was little of such ground. On the island called Steinbok Island, near the mouth of the river, we found these Plovers, and also on one or two strips of white sand that there happened to be on the shore of the estuary. This ground, however, had great advantages from the point of view of the birds themselves, inasmuch as it was thickly dotted over with stones, and for this reason the eggs were very difficult to find. Again and again I marked one of these birds on a strip of shore at Knysna, but was unable to discover any eggs, until at last I went down on my knees at the exact

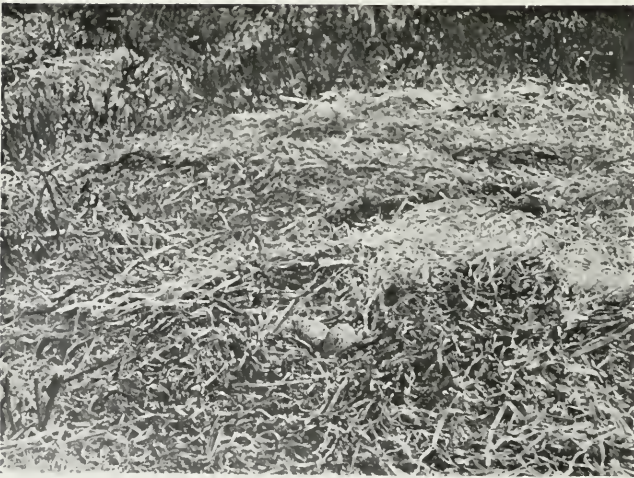
spot where I had seen the bird run from, and then I saw, partly hidden by the sand, two light-coloured eggs. The tides vary much in the Knysna estuary, and I could see that at one time the river had been up as far as the nest, round which the bird had made a little trench, apparently with the object of diverting the water.

With regard to the birds themselves perhaps I may be allowed to remark at some length. The first circumstance that would attract the attention of the passer-by would probably be a low note, *pir-rit*, uttered very softly; this may be repeated, and on looking to see whence the sound proceeds you may distinguish the bird running swiftly in front of you, then stopping suddenly, standing quite still, and looking at you. The note is repeated, and you are aware that two birds are standing close together, watching you; one of them will perhaps give a quick, stiff little bow, and then stand still again. If you move towards them they will wait until you are within a short distance, and then both of them will commence running as hard as they can, with legs slightly bent, and bodies rather hunched up. They run so evenly and smoothly, and their legs move so quickly, that they appear to be sliding along invisible wires. Again they come to a stand, utter their low call *pir-rit*, and seem to wonder what you want with them. If you press them too far, so that they are driven off the strip of white sand on to the green grass, their instinct seems to tell them that here they are conspicuous, and they will not run on this grass but will take wing over the water, returning to the extremity of the white sand along which you have already passed. You can do no more with them in this way, but if

you lie down somewhere near their nest, partly concealed by one of the ridges of sea-grass, you will, before very long, see a white head bob down behind another ridge of sea-grass on the far side of the nest; the bird will have been watching you for some little time, and at the slight movement you make in discovering it, will crouch down and run along under shelter of this ridge, keeping close to the ground. After a while you may see it looking at you again in the same cautious way; perhaps you stand up to see what it will do to conceal itself, when it runs from the shelter afforded by the sea-grass in a crouching position, and takes advantage of the first depression in the sand, however slight, to lie down and flatten itself out. You approach it again, when it pursues the same tactics as before, running a few yards and then hiding in some footprint or other inequality in the sand. If you follow it thus to the margin of the shore, it flies for a few yards as though each beat of the wing would be its last, and then, seemingly tired of this fooling, it takes wing with quick and buoyant flight over the water, describing a half circle, and then alights again on the shore some two or three hundred yards from you. You may depend upon it that if you expect these little Plovers to show you their nest they will not do so. You may lie down and wait, but they will do the same, that is to say they will stand patiently waiting some little distance off, perhaps stretching a wing and gaping, or hitching up one leg in rather a bored way, and looking round at you as much as to say "I wish you'd go"; but as you do not go, they still remain in the same place a little while longer, and then run leisurely off to

feed down by the water's edge. They feed in a very quiet manner, turning over the *débris* and dead sea-grass that the tide has left, looking the while for any small insects that there may be. They seem to feed differently to our Ringed Plovers at home, and to take life altogether in a more sober way. If they find themselves too far separated, one of them—presumably the male bird—gives his low cry *pir-rit*, which is answered by the female, when they know that they are within call of each other, and continue their feeding.

Photographs of these Sand-Plovers were not so difficult to obtain on the nest, although even that took considerable time and labour, but I was rather anxious to get illustrations of the bird standing, and this was a different matter. It is impossible to obtain a satisfactory photograph of any of these kinds of birds by stalking them, you must know exactly where they are coming to, and as a difference of three inches from the place where you are expecting to photograph them would throw the picture entirely out of focus, the difficulties to be contended with may be imagined. The illustration of the bird in the act of rising from the eggs is interesting, as showing the exact position assumed by these birds which nest on the ground when covering their eggs. It was almost miraculous how, time after time, the eggs escaped being broken. Not unfrequently a team of oxen would be outspanned near the shore of the estuary, and these oxen would generally find their way to this particular stretch of sand, which would afterwards be trodden all over with hoof-marks, except perhaps just where the eggs were laid. On one occasion I saw the oxen lying down all round the sitting



WHITE-FRONTED SAND-PLOVER, AND NEST IN SEA-GRASS.

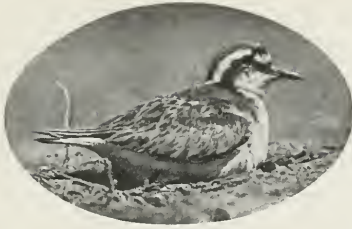
bird, which did not seem perturbed, but sat quietly enough, as though she was holding a kind of reception.

On the large island, which I have mentioned before, on which the jetty is built, there are masses of sea-grass which have been bleached by the sun, and here some of these White Sand-Plovers showed a striking example of adaptability to circumstances by nesting on this dead grass. We found in all three separate nests thus placed, and in each case the eggs were laid on the summit of a mass of grass at an elevation of about a foot from the ground, so as to be out of reach of the water at high tide, which at that time often partially flooded the island. The nests were merely depressions in the dead grass, lined with little bits of the same material chopped up very finely; this must have been done by the birds themselves. The eggs laid in these nests were always of a darker shade than those laid on the white sand, and were a kind of nankin colour, matching the darker portions of the sea-grass. Those laid on the sand were almost white, but all were marked with black specks and dashes. The birds appeared to run with equal facility on the uneven surface of the sea-grass as on the smooth sand, but they too knew the protective value of its colour, and would never run on the green grass.

These little Plovers naturally kept aloof from the flocks of small waders which frequented the shores of this island, for the ground that effectually concealed the latter, would only serve to show up the whereabouts of the former birds. A great proportion of the wading birds to be found on the estuary were only there as visitors; one exception to this rule being the Kittlitz's

Sand-Plovers, which I think out-numbered any of the others. These birds would start up from the half-flooded ground, having concealed themselves from view by the margins of the small pools and in the slight unevenness afforded by the ground. Kittlitz's Plovers bred in great numbers about Knysna, always in the neighbourhood of water, but they were more of an inland breeding species than the White Sand-Plovers, and were not generally seen on the sea-shore. These Plovers, when put up from their feeding grounds, utter a low note resembling the syllables *to-whit* as they fly off, to settle again shortly.

The nesting habit of these birds is perhaps their most remarkable feature, and without being acquainted with this peculiarity one might search in vain for their nests. The ground on which they lay their eggs is sometimes covered with short grass, but more often waste pieces of land are chosen, on which grows such scant vegetation as may be found on ground which is occasionally flooded with brackish water. The only way to find the eggs of these Plovers is to watch the birds themselves very carefully. Suppose a bird to be marked down to its nest, and to remain in such a position that you are quite sure it is sitting, you get up and go to the spot, keeping your eyes carefully on the place all the time; when you arrive there, no trace of any nest is to be found, although you know the exact spot from which the bird rose. I am afraid you will not derive much assistance from the bird itself, for it will probably be standing a few yards away from you, giving now and then a stiff little bow similar to the one given by the White Sand-Plover; if you turn your



KITTLITZ'S SAND-PLOVER AND YOUNG.

(*Aegialitis pecuaria.*)

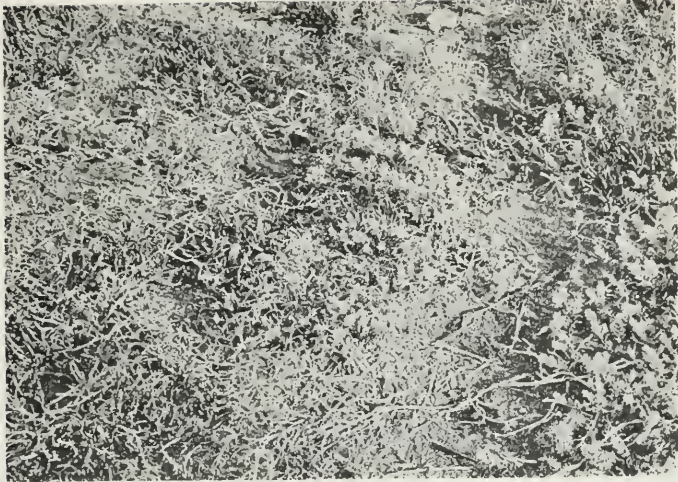
6" 6"

attention to the bird it will run leisurely a few yards further on and then give another little bow, or duck of the head. This may be all very well, but it does not help you to find the eggs, so, after making quite sure that there is no semblance of a nest you again retire a little distance to enable you to solve the mystery. The bird soon returns to the same spot, shuffles for a second or two very quickly with its feet, and then sits down. This time you make no mistake about the exact place, and you locate the position of the bird with the aid of two little bits of herbage growing near; again you approach, the bird rises as before, and repeats the same performance, standing a little way off, and looking as though it would help you if it could, and if you would only tell it what you were looking for. The ground is quite undisturbed, and there is no sign of a nest or eggs; the little bits of drift-wood and bark, though, which lie between your feet are loose, and the earth underneath them is loose also, and then you feel beneath the loose earth and there are two eggs! The bird need not have taken so much trouble to hide them, for they are just the colour of the earth itself, being about the size and shape of a Snipe's egg. The bird does not seem to mind your having found the eggs, she stands a few yards away, looking towards the river and bowing every now and then in a rather absent manner. If you had time to wait, you would see that at her leisure she collected such little odds and ends as she thought would be useful to her in concealing her eggs, so that on the approach of any one she might not be hurried when covering them up. After these little pieces of bark and suchlike materials are placed over

the eggs the bird further conceals them by scraping very quickly with one foot on each side of the nest, thus covering the whole with dust, and presenting an even texture with the surrounding ground. Two or three of these kicks were quite enough, if she were hurried, to conceal the eggs, which were already placed in a hollow in the earth. The illustration at the foot of plate 45 I have inserted with a view of showing exactly how these birds uncover their eggs; the bird's right foot had just swept some of the covering from above the eggs when the photograph was taken. I have often known to a yard where the eggs were, and yet been unable to find them, so skilfully were they concealed.

Other ground that was a favourite nesting place of these birds was that on which patches of dead weed had been left, here and there, by some exceptionally high tide and then bleached by the sun; small pieces of this weed were then utilised by the birds, forming an effective covering for their eggs. They were very fond also of ground on which rubbish had been thrown, and would display a remarkable amount of sagacity in selecting materials as covering for their eggs which were in harmony with the surroundings; in one instance, I remember, the nest was placed on a perfectly bare piece of ground which was strewn with old kettles, scraps of iron, and bits of crockery, portions of which were collected together and utilised to conceal the eggs.

Kitlitz's Plover never appears to lay more than two eggs, nor did any of the Plovers whose nests we found. The South African birds as a rule lay a less number of eggs than the English birds do, and we noticed that



NEST OF KITTLITZ'S SAND-PLOVER COVERED UP.



NEST OF KITTLITZ'S SAND-PLOVER SHEWING EGGS.

the shells were very brittle, the smaller eggs frequently breaking in one's hand without sufficient reason.

The eggs of Kittlitz's Plovers seem to escape being broken in a marvellous way, especially when one considers that the ground selected for a nesting site is often some piece of waste land, well traversed by both man and beast. One day I walked up to a nest that I knew of, and found an ox lying down on the nest itself, while the Plover was running round the animal in a rather ludicrous manner, frequently stopping and bowing; the ox took no notice whatever of these little acts of politeness, but calmly continued chewing the cud. When I drove it off the nest I found that one of the eggs was completely broken, but that the other one was quite intact.

The young of these birds are very difficult to find, as they hide themselves in any bit of cover that may be at hand, and do not move unless called up by the parent birds. They run with great speed, faster indeed than the old birds do, their legs looking very long and stilt-like. I found it impossible to photograph them except in a crouching position, for, once on their legs they would never stand, but would run as hard as they could. The old birds will feign lameness when they have young, but I never saw them do so when they had eggs; perhaps they consider the latter sufficiently concealed without any further devices. When feigning disablement they fly for a few yards in a very limp sort of way, and then come to the ground, spreading out one wing as though to show how helpless they are, and when they are approached they go through the same performance again, beating the apparently useless wing

upon the ground, in this way luring you from their young ones.

The town of Knysna itself stands nearly opposite the Heads, but there is a broad expanse of water, at least two miles in width, separating the two places. On either side of the Heads is a low ridge of hills, which, sloping down on the landward side, ends abruptly as it faces the sea, and forms the cliffs which guard the coast. To reach the Heads from Knysna in any way other than by water, it is necessary to follow the road which skirts the estuary on its left bank, thus making a considerable *détour*. While driving along this road, one or two farms are passed through in which Ostriches are bred; these birds will sometimes stray on to the road and run along in front of the cart for some little distance, their heavy bodies seeming too weighty for their comparatively slender legs. They have an odd way of turning their small heads from side to side as they run, looking back at the cart which follows them. The male Ostriches are occasionally very savage in the breeding season, a kick from one of these birds, which is delivered in front, and not behind, being sometimes fatal. When I was staying with Mr. R., in the neighbourhood of the Knysna Lakes, he told me that his nurse was out one day with one of his young children on the farm, when an Ostrich attacked her; fortunately she was used to their ways, and threw the child into a thick bush while she herself called out for help and took refuge in a similar situation. Out in the open, it would have been a serious matter for both her and the child, the only thing to do in such a case, being to lie down flat on the ground, when the Ostrich will trample on

you, but cannot get at you so as to kick, that being its most dangerous form of attack. One often hears of the "digestion of an Ostrich," as a matter of fact they are, I believe, very delicate birds, requiring constant care and attention. A prolonged drought, which in any way affects their supply of food, causes them to fall out of condition in a very short time. The Ostrich industry still seems to pay, and is largely cultivated in many districts in the Colony.

After these farms are passed through, the road leading to the Knysna Heads continues along a flat tract of land scarcely raised above the level of the estuary itself, the latter being on the right hand side of the road, and an extensive piece of low-lying ground, known as Horn's Marshes on the left. These marshes are almost impenetrable towards the centre, being composed of thick rushes and aquatic vegetation, beneath which lie three or four feet of water and soft mud, and here on a November morning during the breeding season the metallic bleat of the Snipe may often be heard as the bird descends towards the marshy ground from a great height in the air, rising after each descent, to fall again. The late Mr. L. C. Layard in his comprehensive work on South African birds, says that in the far interior the noise made by these birds, well known in England by the name of "drumming," has earned for them the title of *Spook Vogel*, or Ghost-bird, by the Boers. This would seem to be originated by the bird occasionally drumming on moonlight nights, sometimes as late as midnight. We saw a few Harriers sailing over this marsh, just clearing the tops of the reeds, into which they would now and then drop down; doubtless some

of them were nesting in the thicker and more secluded parts.

The bushes which margined the edges of this swamp were rather favourite nesting places for the Malachite Sun-birds, which would occasionally take long flights over the reeds in search of insects with which to feed their young ones. The plumage of the male bird glittered very conspicuously in the bright sunlight, and he seemed to do most of the foraging, being no sooner back from one expedition than he started off on another. This marsh was the outcome of a small tidal backwater which flowed out of the main estuary, the backwater itself consisting of a clear stream with grass banks on either side; between this stream and the estuary was some dry waste land on which many of the Kittlitz's Plovers used to nest.

The Greenshanks also were very fond of frequenting this stream, as well as flocks of Wood Sandpipers, both of which species showed up pleasingly towards evening, when the sun was low, and their partially white plumage was emphasised and reflected in the clear water beneath them. I tried, two or three times, to obtain a photograph of these birds as thus described, but to do so was almost impossible; quite apart from the fact of their being so very wary, it would have been necessary to take them with a short-focus lens in order to ensure the birds being all in focus, and this would have meant that the camera would have to be within about a yard of the birds themselves, if they were to be represented in anything but microscopic form. I succeeded in photographing a single Greenshank with its reflexion in the water, but even that was hardly large

enough to be worth reproducing. The Greenshanks are very restless feeders, running about in the water, here, there, and everywhere. While I was waiting to take the photograph of the Greenshank alluded to above, I saw a Snipe come leisurely out of the rushes on the opposite side of the stream, and walk in a clumsy way to the water's edge. The bird looked very lethargic in its movements when compared with the agility of the Greenshanks, and seemed to carry its long bill as though it were too heavy for its head; after prodding about on the bank of the stream for a minute or so it betook itself back to the seclusion of the rushes. It seemed difficult to believe that this was the same bird we had seen but a day or two before showing off its powerful flight above the marsh. Occasionally the sharp *pit* of the Pied Kingfisher would attract our attention as he hovered over the stream, although this was rather out of his usual beat, and he would have to return a long way over the estuary to reach his home on the Salt River.

As in many parts of England, no bird showed itself more frequently on rough uncultivated ground than the Stone-chat. The South African Stone-chat is very similar in plumage, as in its nesting habits, to the bird with which we are familiar at home, and where there are a pair of these birds about, very little searching is required to find them. *Bontroche*, the Dutch Colonists call this bird, which means parti-coloured, the name applying evidently to the male bird alone, for the female, like that of the bird with which we are familiar in England, is soberly coloured. The male bird, figured in the illustration on plate 47, had a caterpillar in its

beak at the time the photograph was taken. Like all Stone-chats, these birds are fond of perching on the topmost spray of some low bush, or plant, whence their familiar note may often be heard ; they were generally to be met with on the open hills, but a few of them might be found on any sufficiently dry ground near the estuary.

In one of the big trees which grew here and there on the banks of this stream, there had been a Hammerkop's nest, but someone had pulled it down recently, the ground at the foot of the tree being littered with sticks, of which the nest had been constructed ; these sticks would certainly have filled a small hand-cart. As we drove home in the evening we passed one of these birds, feeding in his solitary way.

We spent Christmas at Knysna, doing our best to keep up the traditions of the old country, and were even able to dispense a little ill-deserved charity in the shape of a Christmas-box to our sometime guide David, which this youth demanded with great assurance ; previously to this we had seen nothing of him for some weeks. New Year's Day is always a great day at Knysna, everybody taking a holiday ; the black people especially seem to give themselves up to enjoyment, the boys playing cricket, the girls playing concertinas, and the old people watching them and gossiping, as they sit about on the ground. To wind up with, at night there is a grand coloured ball, to which they all appear to go. Shortly before seven o'clock on this same New Year's Day, David slowly sauntered up to the door of our hotel and said that he wished to speak to one of us. Knowing that we were shortly to leave



1.



2.



3.

SOUTH AFRICAN STONE-CHAT.

(*Pratincola torquata*.)

5' 6"

Fig. 1.—MALE.

Fig. 2.—FEMALE.

Fig. 3.—YOUNG.



SOUTH AFRICAN STONE-CHAT ON NEST.

(FEMALE.)

Knysna, and apparently regretting his previous behaviour, it appeared that he had been doing a little nest-hunting on his own account and had succeeded in finding the nest of a rather rare Woodpecker, which he told us had laid two black eggs in a hole in a tree ; the bird itself, from his representation, was a most brilliant creation, possessing apparently all the colours of the rainbow. His description of this bird aroused our interest, and we made an appointment with him, so that he should call for us at such and such a time on the following morning. "How far was it"? we asked him. "Oh, not so far," he replied in his characteristic manner. I could not quite make him out, he seemed better pleased with himself than usual, and was quite smartened up. He had not left us more than two or three minutes when he returned to the door and said he wanted to speak to us again. It seemed this time he had come to tell us that the coloured ball was to be held that night, and he was very anxious to attend it, but the fact was he happened to have no money in his pocket, and as he could not go to the ball without money he wanted to know if we would advance him the shilling or two that he would have earned by showing us this nest, to enable him to go. With our previous experience of him we ought perhaps not to have yielded to his persuasions, but we decided to risk being imposed upon rather than deprive him of the evening's enjoyment, so with assurances that he would come at the appointed hour, he departed. Ten o'clock on the following morning arrived, but no David ; however, it was early yet ; but when eleven o'clock came and still there was no sign of him we began to wonder. Possibly he

was taking an extra hour or so in bed after the exertions of the ball, so we would give him a little longer. Still he failed to put in an appearance, and the affair now began to appear in its true light. We had evidently been "done," and no one likes to be "done." A great indignation began to make itself felt within us at his perfidy, so putting aside our ordinary occupations for the day, we gave ourselves up to revenge. We composed, with many flourishes and legal terms, a lengthy document, which, when finished and sealed with the lid of a tobacco tin, had a distinctly legal smack; this became the more apparent as we found on going through it that we were at a loss to understand it when completed. This form we left at the hotel, and then sallied forth, filled with revengeful thoughts.

There were but few people about, owing probably to the dissipations of the previous night, but near the shore of the river we came across a small urchin whom we addressed with the object of finding out the residence of the untruthful one. The small urchin at first seemed doubtful as to whether he should divulge the secret, but with the promise of a *tickey*—the Colonial word for threepence—he agreed to take us to the place. We had a little way to go, up a hill and through a path in the woods, but in due time we were shown a reed-built hut, situated in a small clearing in the bush, which we were told was the residence of Mr. David "Woodman." Here our small black guide left us, evidently unwilling to be detected in the character of a spy, so we approached the dwelling alone. A curl of blue smoke was ascending from the hut, and altogether the sylvan surroundings of the place seemed ill in keeping

with one possessed of so much guile. The only "note" wanting to complete this peaceful scene was the presence of his mother, whom we found engaged in some light occupation outside the door of the hut. We asked her if Mr. David "Woodman" was at home, but were informed that he was away in the town. So we intimated to her that unless her son returned the two shillings which he had obtained from us on false pretences by seven o'clock that night, we should have him locked up. "I have a warrant for his arrest at home," I added, in a slightly deeper voice. The woman seemed to brighten up considerably at this last piece of news, and it really looked as though she would be glad to have him put aside for a time, but as that was her affair and not ours, we left her. Loss of dignity is always one of the most trying of the lighter misfortunes to bear, and our friends, to whom we showed the document before referred to, were rude enough to point out that the warrants for arrest were always printed on blue paper, while ours was on white, consequently the boy, whom we proposed threatening with the document, would see at a glance that this was not official. Seven o'clock arrived, and as we were sitting down to dinner, a small brown hand was inserted into the room through the open window, and a two-shilling-piece was placed on the window-sill; the small brown hand was then withdrawn, and the emissary of the guileful one ran down the road at top speed. This boy must not be taken by any means as a specimen of Cape boys, he was a specially bad lot, and it was unfortunate that we should have happened on him; I do not suppose anything but the threat of imprison-

ment would have persuaded him to yield up his ill-gotten gains, but the natives have a wholesome horror of the jail, or *tronk*, as they call it.

If there are many difficulties in the way of reaching Kynsna, the facilities for leaving the neighbourhood are indeed few, and the visitor to these districts must make up his mind beforehand to the probability of delay in getting away. We had decided to go on to Port Elizabeth, but as the only two boats which call at that port are cargo boats carrying wood from the forest, and study but little the convenience of passengers, it will be seen that these latter are dependent for transport on the uncertain demand of the timber trade. We could of course have hired a Cape cart and driven to Port Elizabeth, a distance of about two hundred miles, but even this arrangement would not have sufficed to convey our luggage, which was necessarily of considerable bulk. We had therefore nothing to do but wait until one of the boats before mentioned was going eastward, which we found would be early in January.

We had heard many and varied accounts of the boat that was to take us, and had seen her often as she lay alongside the small jetty near the town, where, as viewed over the low-lying ground and mud-banks of the estuary, she looked a veritable leviathan. True, she had the berth all to herself, and was not placed at an undue disadvantage by comparison with other vessels of perhaps five or ten times her tonnage. That she was a good sea boat, however, everyone admitted. We were to sail in the afternoon, and as the departure of one of the boats is always an event that collects a

crowd at Knysna, we found a goodly number of people assembled when we reached the vessel. The pilot came on board in due time, when it might reasonably have been expected that we should make a start, but it appeared from signals which were put up at the Heads, that the bar was not in a condition for us to pass. This entailed a delay of nearly two hours, during which we had time to observe the culinary arts as practised by a Chinaman who went by the name of "Ah Sin," and who was an important personage on board, to wit, the cook. "Ah Sin" prepared the dinner in a small kitchen on deck, going about his business in a very workman-like manner, and being in nowise disconcerted or flurried by the inquisitiveness of either the passengers or their friends who had come to see them off. When we went down to dinner we were rather surprised to see him standing at the head of the small table in the saloon, dispensing curry to the assembled guests, his pigtail being neatly curled round the top of his head. He seemed very much at his ease.

After a long delay, flags were at length put up at the Heads signalling that we might now start. Although the estuary is of such width, varying from one to two miles in places, yet there is only a narrow channel along which a vessel of any size may go, but the pilot's duty being to know this channel, we naturally steamed along without mishap of any sort; first across the open water of the estuary, and then following the deep channel which winds along beneath a high bank overgrown with bush and scrub. This bank leads us up to the narrow gateway of the Heads, and here, just before the vessel begins to plunge and duck pre-

paratory to crossing the bar, the pilot quietly slips overboard and drops into his small boat. In less time than it takes to tell these few words he is fifty yards astern, thus taking part in as pretty a closing scene as one could wish for.



PENGUINS.

(ST. CROIX ISLAND, ALGOA BAY.)

CHAPTER VI.

Bird Island and Saint Croix.

AS seen from the deck of the incoming steamer, Port Elizabeth cannot be said to present a very prepossessing appearance. Somehow one misses those odds and ends of buildings and low sheds that have become so associated in the mind with the idea of a port, or harbour, and however undesirable this collection of nondescript architecture may be at close quarters, it cannot be denied that the traveller expects, and has a right to expect, something less solid and respectable-looking than the massive stone buildings which here almost overhang the sea itself. There are no old houses in Port Elizabeth to form a link with the past, and as though to dispel at once any idea of the picturesque, the electric cars which climb the steep ascent of one of its principal thoroughfares are plainly visible from the ship which lies at anchor, perhaps a mile or a mile and a half out to sea.

If I were asked what my impression of Port Elizabeth was, I think I should describe the town as one representing solid commercial prosperity. Its public buildings, its warehouses, its shops, and even its private residences all told the same tale. "We were built," they seemed to say, "by plain, hard-working men, men who had made their own living, and who had left the old country

in early life with but little in their pockets ; can you blame them, then, if they have fashioned us to represent what they lacked most at home, and came all these miles to seek " ? These men left the old country, too, at a time when people were not expected to live up to their wealth as they are now, and when a plain man and a plain house were often backed up by a long purse. And so these merchants when they retire, or perhaps I should say when they slacken their hold on business through advancing age, do so in a solid, substantial way, building large stone houses, more or less a replica of their place of business, in the suburbs of Port Elizabeth. They grumble of course at the times, as every healthy merchant should, but there is a suspicious twinkle in the eye as they go on their way that sets one thinking. Few of them retire in the way that we understand the word at home, for what occupations would they have if they did so ? South Africa does not seem to be in harmony with retired men, its chief sports and pastimes are for the young, and it may be that the " bit of shooting " which often solaces the later years of the retired business man in the old country, has come with too grim an earnestness at the other end of life to some of the South African business men of long standing in the Colony. No, the only pastime for them would be to go down to the warehouse or office, and watch others do what they themselves had done for so many years before, but then the spice would be out of it, and we all know what the spice is.

Port Elizabeth has no harbour, unless the broad expanse of Algoa Bay can be called such, but if the town as viewed from the sea looks plain and uninterest-

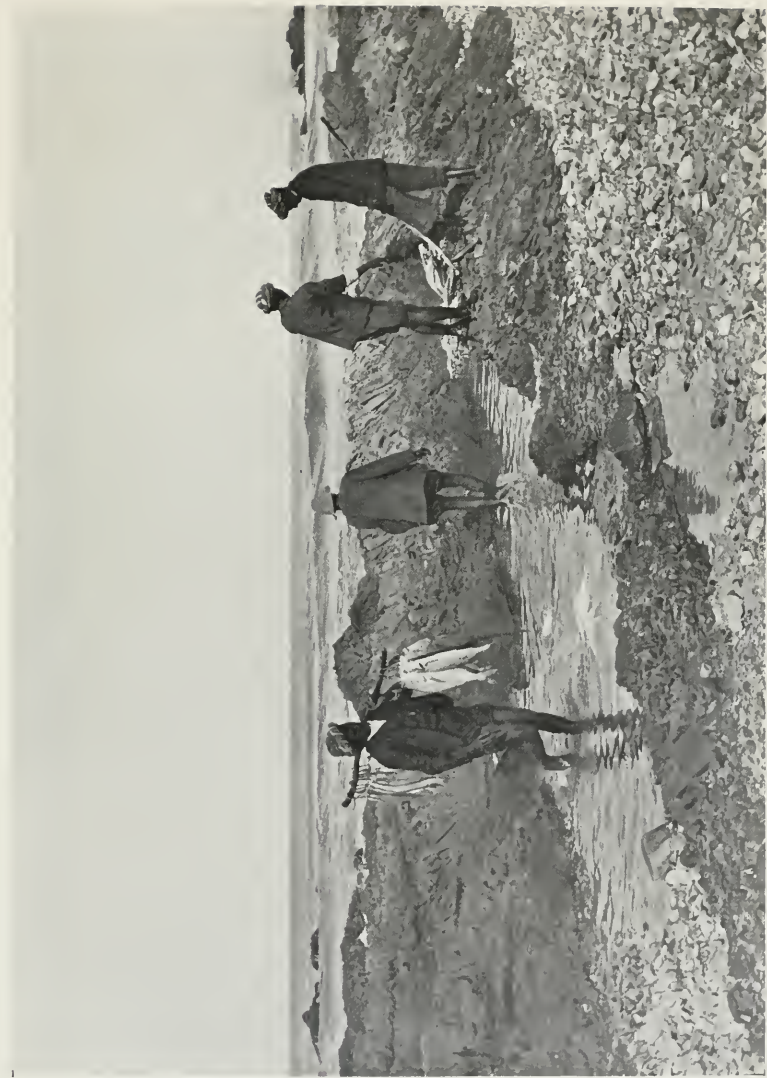
ing, the same cannot be said of the sea as viewed from the town. Here is the real life of the place. The crowded jetties, with their trains passing up and down carrying merchandise, the clumsy-looking lighters bringing cargo from the ships, and being loaded and unloaded by means of large cranes that stand along either side of the jetties, together with the Malays wearing their brightly-coloured turbans, all go to make up a brilliant picture of commercial life. Then there is the sea through which all this turmoil and busy life has to be carried on. The south-east wind is the prevailing wind at Port Elizabeth, and you may see it pull the water up in a surprisingly short space of time, making things uncomfortable for the various ships lying at anchor.

Here there is no crowd of shipping, there is plenty of room for all, and each vessel gives its neighbour a wide berth. The big liners get the swell first, a mile or so out, standing steady as a rock; then the smaller steamboats, "tramps," and one or two quaint-looking sailing ships; these soon grow uneasy under the rising swell and rock from side to side to an alarming degree, while nearest the shore, on a line with the end of the jetties, are moored rows of empty lighters, which heave clumsily over the rollers, punching each other in the ribs if perchance they should be fastened too closely together. But the connecting life of the whole picture is the admirable service of tugs, without which little work could be carried on. It would be hard to find better tugs anywhere, or better men at the helm. Thoroughly up to date and serviceable, they yet looked extremely picturesque as they scurried along in almost any sort of weather, dragging behind them

empty lighters and taking back full ones, or *vice versa*. There was no time lost with them, returned from one ship, they would hitch on to the empty lighters which were heaving with the swell alongside the jetty and nosing against its pillars like lazy fish, and before these old hulks fairly knew what was happening they would be jerked forward by the busy tug, in a most summary and undignified manner. When they had been towed perhaps a hundred yards or so out to sea, and realised fully the indignity put upon them, they would take advantage of a temporary standstill in the tug's progress while it steamed bravely over the crest of a wave, to make an ill-natured dig at its stern, which the tug always managed skilfully to evade; tug and lighter were soon intermittently lost to view amid the large dull-green rollers.

I was rather amused one evening about sunset, when the sea happened to be calm, to see these same lighters, apparently so helpless during the daytime, don brown-coloured sails and do a little cruising on their own account. The smart-looking tugs had been anchored for the night, and there were some half-dozen of these clumsy boats spreading their wings like moths at twilight, and seemingly continuing the day's work in a mild and leisurely way. The sea though, as I have said, was reasonably calm, or doubtless the lighters would not have been allowed out by themselves.

Sometimes a gunboat would come into the Bay, taking her place among the large liners which formed the outer row of vessels, and at night she would practise with her searchlight, turning it first on to one ship and then on to another, afterwards flashing it up to one of



COLOURED BOYS WASHING FISH IN ALGOA BAY.

the houses in the town. I remember seeing it turned on to one of the old-fashioned white sailing ships that lay at anchor in the Bay; this ship seemed to resent the liberty, and shifted uneasily from side to side under the brilliant light; perhaps a hundred years ago she might have carried cargo that would not have borne such scrutiny, who knows? At any rate she rolled heavily on the swell as the light still played on her, and when it shifted rapidly, to centre itself on some other object, the white vessel sank into oblivion.

Somehow the sea at Port Elizabeth always gave one the idea of an immense amount of latent power. It was not always rough, but even on comparatively calm days, at high tide the water would come swinging past the end of the jetty in rather a choppy way, and when it reached the solid wall of masonry that guarded the railway station on the one side of the jetty and the large block of public buildings on the other, it would lurch in a very casual manner against this wall, sending a shower of spray over some empty trucks which were standing on the line. This was only done in a lazy way, and was a very poor example of what the sea could do when driven before the south-east wind.

The largest tug at Port Elizabeth was named the *Sir Frederic*. They were all good sea boats, but I suppose the *Sir Frederic* could be trusted out in almost any weather. This boat it was that carried oil and stores to the lighthouse at Bird Island every month, a distance of some thirty-five miles, more or less. Bird Island is the largest of a group of small islands which lie at the mouth of Algoa Bay, practically in the

open sea, and a good lighthouse is here a necessity, where the waves dash against the rocks with a continuous roar.

I was rather anxious to go to Bird Island ; not that I anticipated much pleasure from the voyage itself, but because I knew that if I were lucky enough to happen on a day when it was at all calm, I could get some good photographs of the Gannets, which resort to this island every year in countless thousands to breed. Consequently I set about making enquiries.

Major Blank, I was told, was the only man who could give me leave to go there, accordingly I tried to find Major Blank. There are some men who are easily accessible, while others seem to do all they can to put stumbling blocks in one's way and to surround their whereabouts with profound mystery ; of the latter class of men was Major Blank. I think I need hardly enter into a description of my search after the Major, who concealed himself in a very small room in the centre of an immense block of buildings, which seemed to contain endless staircases and endless small doors, over which were written almost every name one could think of except "Blank." It will be enough to say that after roaming about for half an hour in these buildings, I had not only failed to discover the whereabouts of Major Blank, but had also succeeded in losing myself. I began to class him as a sort of human Hammerkop, for like that mysterious bird, his home, though very much in evidence, was exceedingly difficult to get into. At length I met someone who offered to put me on the right track, and I forthwith found myself in the desired room. The Major was writing with a scratchy quill

pen at his desk, nor did he discontinue this operation until some considerable awe of the presence that I had ventured into was instilled into my mind. I told him what I had come for, and when he had hummed and hawed for some minutes he asked me to call again on Tuesday morning. Tuesday morning arrived, and I called again, and asked him if he would give me a pass to go to Bird Island on the following day in the tug. He replied in a cheerful voice, that I was too late.

“Too late”? I said. “I thought you told me to call on Tuesday morning”?

“At nine o’clock,” said the Major in an impressive voice.

Now I knew that he had not mentioned any time, and was just going to tell him so when I thought better of it and agreed with him, deprecating my own stupidity. I think this rather took the wind out of his sails, for he evidently expected me to argue the case with him, and was preparing to enjoy himself and my discomfiture at the same time.

“I never allow more than five persons to go,” he said, “and five have already applied,” pointing to a little heap of half-sovereigns that lay on his desk in front of him.

“Then I shall not be able to go?” I said.

The Major pushed away his inkstand and the little pile of half-sovereigns, then laid down his pen and leaned back in his chair, as though to give himself plenty of space in which to alter his decision without loss of dignity. After a pause he said, “You will have to pay ten shillings to the Sailors’ Widows and Orphans Fund.”

I expressed my willingness to do so.

Then he continued, "What anyone wants to go to these islands for, I don't know! They're ill all the way there and all the way back, and sometimes they can't land at all. However, some people never seem to know when they're well off." He went on in this strain some little while longer before he signed and handed me an order without which the lighthouse keeper would not allow me to land. Afterwards he became quite friendly, showing me the different islands on a chart and telling me their names, until he suddenly pulled himself up and dismissed me, as though he felt that such an unapproachable representative of the Harbour Buildings as he was, had no right to be conversing on familiar terms with a mere person.

"Could I land on Seal Island?" I asked him, as I left.

"I've never landed on Seal Island," he replied in an austere and rather hurt voice.

That settled the matter.

The evening was not a promising one, from a weather point of view, but the sea gets up and goes down at Port Elizabeth in such a short time that even the most weatherwise of the old hands on the jetty, and there are many such, were sometimes at fault. I managed to get an early breakfast, and was down at the appointed, and unusual hour for me, six o'clock. The wind had shifted in the night, from south-east to north-west, and it was blowing fairly hard from the latter quarter, but as this meant a wind from the land, it seemed to be the opinion of those best able to judge that we should have a quiet sea. The large rollers,

so accustomed in their impetuous way to dash themselves against the solid wall that guards the town, were stopped by the opposing wind and flattened out, as it were, before they could expend themselves.

We started after a delay of about half an hour, steaming our way past the lighters and various ships lying at anchor until we were hailed, after going perhaps a mile, by a large vessel, the captain of which required us to give his boat a shift round so as to alter her position slightly.

Now that we were out of reach of the shelter afforded by the low hills along the face of which Port Elizabeth is built, we began to realise that the wind, although coming from the land, was rapidly increasing in force, and while the captain of the *Sir Frederic* was making fast the cable which the big vessel had thrown out, it was all he could do to understand the shouted instructions of the captain of the latter. More than he could do in fact, for after steaming at the end of the cable for at least half an hour, during which time both captains were rapidly losing their tempers, the thick rope parted, and we found ourselves free.

Meanwhile, we who were not engaged in losing our tempers had leisure to observe the weather. The wind had increased, and was increasing every minute, until it now whistled past us, dashing salt spray into our faces with a cold slap, and the sea, which was to have been so calm, was being rapidly beaten up with the north-westerly gale. The wind seemed literally to tear the water off the choppy waves and hurl it at us, and then race past laden with white scuds.

Our captain now began to observe the weather too.

“That’s a lucky delay for us,” he said. “Once started, and nothing on earth would have turned me back, but blank me if I like the look of the weather.” I said I thought the north-west wind beat the sea down. He laughed, and replied, “So it does, if there’s a south-east wind blowing at the same time, but eight or ten miles out there’ll be quite as much hullabaloo on as with a south-easter. No, I’ll go to back to the jetty, and if they say ‘go’ I’ll go, if we have to hang about the island a week before we can land. It aint often I turn back neither.” The upshot of it was that we were to start at seven o’clock on the following morning, weather permitting.

The gale continued all day, but next morning when we met on the jetty we found that the wind had gone down, and with it the sea. There was now only a big glassy swell, with the wind still in the same quarter. This looked more promising, and we made a start without delay. Port Elizabeth and the shipping were soon lost sight of, and we then had a long steam with only the distant coast comprised of low sand-hills in sight, which forms the north-eastern boundary of Algoa Bay.

There were not many birds to be seen during the voyage, although as we got further out Gannets might be observed sailing over the sea, sometimes single birds, sometimes in flocks, one of them every now and then dropping like a stone into the water beneath. I remember watching a Gannet keeping level with us for miles and miles when going round the coast in the *Carisbrook Castle* — one of the best mail boats and doing exceptionally fast time — the Gannet just flew

along at its every-day pace, easily keeping abreast of us. I do not think there is any breeding station of the *Malagash*, as these birds are called, round the south coast of Africa with the exception of Bird Island. These Gannets must demand a heavy toll from the fishermen, for they are to be met with all along the coast, certainly as far as Cape Town, where they are to be seen often about the harbour.

We had a very uneventful voyage to Bird Island ; the captain and mate having little to do as regards navigation, sat idly side by side behind the wheel. I think they found time hang heavily on their hands, until they came to a difference of opinion with regard to another tug that was steaming along some four or five miles distant from us, but rather hugging the shore. They disagreed as to whether this boat was going faster than we were or slower, and the question was warmly discussed between them for two hours, with occasional short intervals. Probably the mate was right, because the captain rather lost his temper in a friendly way, and ended the discussion by giving the mate an unnecessarily vigorous slap on the shoulder to send home some final argument before he went down below ; the mate naturally was unable to reply, verbally or otherwise, being tied to his post at the wheel.

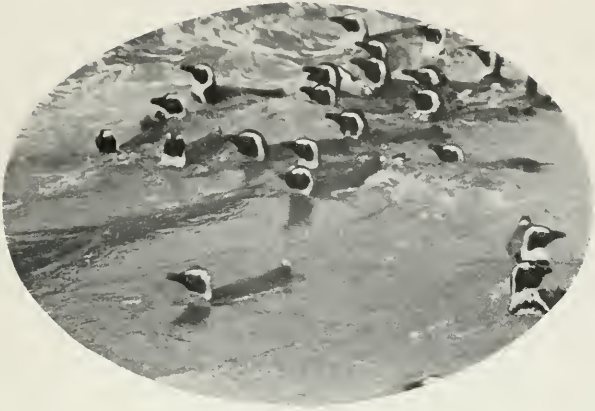
In due time we sighted the Bird Island Lighthouse, standing up out of the sea and looking in the distance no thicker than a needle. We were certainly fortunate as regards the weather, for the sea had now settled down to a smooth undulating swell, across which our boat travelled steadily enough. Traces of the storm of the previous day were, however, to be noticed in the

large rings of dirty-white foam that we passed now and again. As we neared the islands Gannets became more numerous, while occasionally a buoyant Penguin, turning its striped head from side to side, dived at our approach.

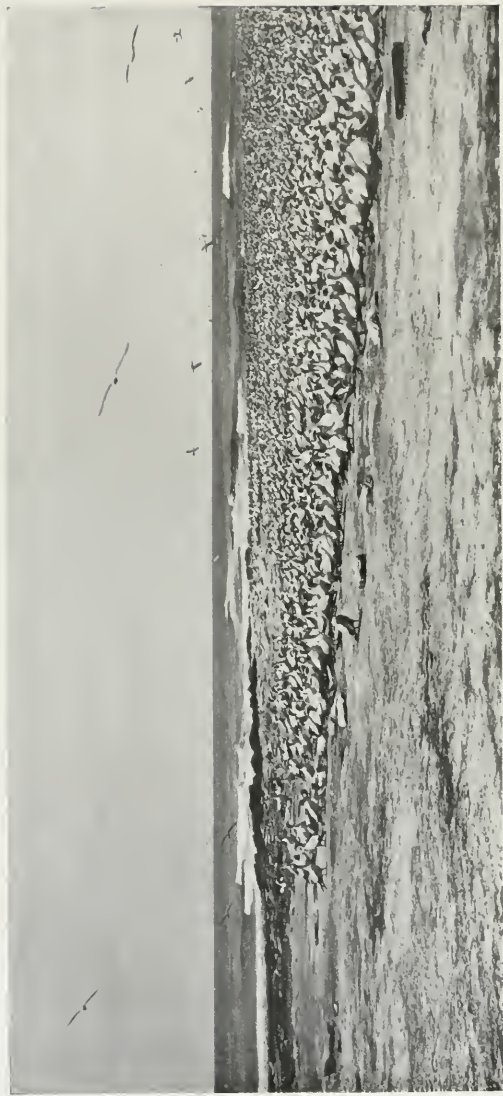
The first island that we passed was Seal Island, and though we were not within half a mile of it, we could hear, above the roar of the surf, the bellowing of the sea-lions, at which noise the captain became greatly excited. "See that old feller on top of the rock there, with the yellow mane?" he said. "That's 'Ginger.' We always call him 'Ginger' because of the colour of his mane. He's been there as long as I can remember. Yah! you old brute you," and he shook his fist at him.

On the next island there were a few *Duykers* (Cormorants) of different kinds, and it was here that the sea-lions used to live, but owing to sailors occasionally landing, they removed to the more isolated rocks. Gannets were sailing round the far side of the largest island, on which stands the lighthouse, but we had not yet come within sight of perhaps one of the most extraordinary crowds of bird life that is to be met with.

We rounded the north end of Bird Island first, and then, close to the lighthouse, and covering quite an acre and a half of ground, were to be seen thousands of Cape Gannets. The ground was white with the birds themselves, while above them in the air, a kind of kaleidoscopic effect was produced by the ever-moving wings. Among a crowd of birds so thickly packed together as these Gannets were, one naturally wonders if it is possible for them to keep to their own eggs; perhaps each bird recognises its own special place from the position of



PENGUINS.



CAPE GANNETS.

(BIRD ISLAND, ALGOA BAY.)

its neighbour, otherwise it would appear impossible for each to return to its separate place among such thousands of birds. After all, I daresay they wonder how we, who are all so much alike to them, are able to distinguish one another in a crowd, and how we are able to find our own homes. The men at the lighthouse say that these birds arrive in a mass at this, their breeding station, and that when the season is finished the island is untenanted as to bird life until the following year.

The spectacle was not so imposing as that presented by the Gannets on the Bass Rock in Scotland, where the birds, as seen from a distance, have the appearance of bees swarming round a hive. Here the birds were shown horizontally instead of vertically ; still, it was an imposing sight, and in the distance had the effect of a large extent of ground covered with white flies.

The weather had improved steadily during the day, and although clouds of white spray could be seen on the sides of the island which faced the open sea, we were told that this was the calmest effect that could be produced here. Our tug was anchored some quarter of a mile off Bird Island, about half of our small number of passengers going ashore, while the others preferred to remain on the tug to try their luck at fishing. Landing was effected without much difficulty, but the seaweed which covered the rocks made the first few steps very difficult, laden as I was with two large cameras and about twenty dark-slides. Before setting to work, I thought it would be well to ask our skipper how long he could give me ; he told me that he would wait for three hours, so I anticipated having plenty of time, although the more one takes of this kind of

photograph, the more one finds that each one requires carefully considering before being taken ; there are so many things that fight against success.

The day was perfect, with very little wind and a brilliant sun, so I started to try and do the best I could on the most important subject, the large crowd of Gannets before alluded to. They were tame enough, but it was difficult to choose a time when the birds nearest to me were not taking wing, and at the same time when the flying birds were not sailing by at too close a distance, which would have resulted in a blurred image, and spoilt the group. I noticed that the birds which flew up from the ground had some difficulty in rising, and used their feet for a short time, kicking off against the ground to enable them to rise the more easily. The air resounded with their harsh cry, *Carra-Carra*. It was quite impossible to include more than about a third of the whole group of birds in one plate, unless I had shown them very much smaller than they are reproduced on plate 21.

To expose eight half plates on this subject occupied a considerable time, and I then began taking some odd groups of birds, both Gannets and Penguins. I had not been long engaged thus when the captain of the tug came to look for me, and said we must be going ; this was quite an hour before the time limit he had given me, and I told him so, but he was inexorable, and I had no alternative but to commence packing up my things.

One other photograph I must not forget, and that is the picture of the old gun. This gun, after being wrecked a hundred years ago or more, in one of the



A BIRD ISLAND SCENE.



OLD GUN ON BIRD ISLAND.

old East Indiamen, was lately raised up from the sea and placed in the position shown in the illustration, where it stands near the lighthouse, like an aged pensioner, proud of the charge entrusted to it in its last years.

There were a few Penguins on the island and a few Gulls ; otherwise it was inhabited as to bird life by the Gannets only.

The captain now said he would row us between two other islands, and so to Seal Island, in order that we might obtain a closer view of the sea-lions, which are here called seals ; the tug meanwhile would come round and pick us up. We took our places in the boat, exchanging for one of the lighthouse men a young son of the captain's ; the boy seemed to be accustomed to spending occasional months on Bird Island, and I asked his father whether he would not be lonely there. He laughed, saying that he had got the birds to look at, and a bundle of "comics," and the time would soon go till he came to fetch him. The captain steered us very cleverly through a narrow strait between the two islands, through which the sea was breaking with considerable force, biding his time, and giving a sudden order to the men to pull just after one long wave had swept broadside across the narrow passage. We found ourselves clear, and in the open water again only just in time, followed by another long breaking wave ; the skipper knew what he was about, but it looked rather a bold stroke, with the rocks on either side of us.

About twenty minutes further rowing brought us alongside of Seal Island, and a wild sight it certainly was. As far as I remember, the island was composed of two

large black rocks connected by a low ridge, while over this ridge the sea was breaking and boiling in masses of white surf. The rocks were thickly tenanted by the sea-lions, the biggest of which certainly must have been as large as the body of a medium-sized mule. We hung off within about thirty yards of the rocks, and the creatures that were lying nearest the water flopped about in a most ungainly way until they slid into the sea, often to reappear, head and shoulders, in the midst of the white surf; those on the top of the rock raised themselves up and looked about them. Perhaps the most strange effect of any was the continuous roar that they kept up all the time; the sound reminded me of a drove of cattle. I asked the skipper whether it would be possible to land, but he said that the boat would be stove in against the rocks, and as it was the men had hard work to keep her anything like stationary. He wanted me to take some photographs from the boat, and if I had had a hand-camera with me I could have obtained some good ones; those that I took were useless, as I knew would be the case, being taken with a twenty-inch-focus lens from an unsteady boat. When specimens of these sea-lions are required for any museum, the creatures are generally clubbed on the head by one of the sailors; if shot, they will nearly always succeed in escaping into the water.

The tug, which had been longer than we expected in putting in an appearance, now came into view, so rowing out to meet it, we were soon on our way home.

The group of islands treated of in the foregoing pages is not the only one in Algoa Bay, for, starting from Port Elizabeth in a north-easterly direction, and

thereby cutting off the most sheltered corner of the Bay, are two small islands ; the larger one is called St. Croix, and the smaller, Jarheel.

These islands lie not very far from each other, and at a distance of about ten miles from Port Elizabeth. No boats visit them regularly, for they do not possess a lighthouse, and are quite out of the way of any regular traffic by sea, so that one must either charter a tug for the day or be content to leave them alone. As my friend Mr. H. was leaving for England shortly, we decided to try our luck on St. Croix by chartering one of these tugs, and trusting to chance in being able to hit off a day on which it was calm enough for us to land. Although so much less exposed than Bird Island, St. Croix has the reputation of being very bad landing ; I believe there is only one little creek where boats can approach the shore, possibly two, but I am not quite certain.

St. Croix is not one of the guano islands, consequently it does not come under the strict supervision of the Cape Government, as do the Bird Islands, Dyer's Island, off the extreme south coast, Dassen Island, a little way north of Cape Town—this latter the scene of many wrecks—and several others. The Cape Government obtains a not inconsiderable revenue from the sale of guano from these various islands, and also to a much smaller extent from that of the Penguins' eggs, which latter find a ready sale among the poorer classes in Cape Town. The officials are therefore exceedingly chary of giving permission to visit any of these islands which are under their control, lest the birds be driven away from their breeding stations.

St. Croix, then, as I have said, not being under the observation of these officials, we set about making enquiries with a view to hiring one of the small tugs for the day, the price of which would be so and so; the amount seemed rather heavy, but represented, I believe, only the bare expenses of working the boat. The warehouses at that time were so full of war provisions that no coal could be stored, which fact caused an unusually high price to be asked for that article of fuel.

Going down to the jetty on the day before our proposed trip we met Captain L., who laughed and shrugged his shoulders when he saw us. "You might land," he said, "in a whale boat, but it's very doubtful. There'll be wind to-morrow if it doesn't rain to-night, but if it does rain you'll be all right, the sea will go down." With this somewhat ambiguous reply we were fain to be content. Then Mr. N. came along and unlocked the door of his office, he laughed too, but waited till he had looked at his weather-glass to shrug his shoulders and shake his head. "I'll let you know in the morning," he said, "if you can go, but I should think it's doubtful."

That same night there was a heavy thunderstorm, lasting for several hours, accompanied by high wind and rain; this was the first storm of the kind that I had seen in the Colony, for they are not so common in the southern parts as they are farther north, on the Karroo and in the Transvaal. This storm certainly was not lacking in brilliancy, for the lightning shot down, flash succeeding flash in such quick succession that the town seemed for the time being to be illuminated, and the thunder, which is usually accorded a

decent interval in which to make itself heard, had perforce to keep up an almost continuous roar. We were agreeably surprised therefore, after such a stormy night, to receive a call from Mr. N. the next morning, who came to inform us that he thought we should be able to land on St. Croix Island; at any rate he considered that the chances of doing so were in our favour. When we came down to the jetty we found that it was as Captain L. had predicted, the rain had beaten down the sea, and there was now only a smooth rolling swell. We found all in readiness, and within five minutes of reaching the tug, had shipped our various paraphernalia on board and had got under way.

After leaving the jetty we picked up and took in tow a small boat, for the purpose of landing on St. Croix Island. Soon getting clear of the large steamers which stood furthest out to sea we found ourselves among some porpoises, one of which would roll up occasionally in a lazy way, close to the boat, then blow, and disappear under water again. A few Cape Hens glided in front of the tug and followed the course of the waves, but there were not many other birds to be seen. The scarcity of sea birds was very noticeable round the jetty at Port Elizabeth, perhaps on account of the absence of any harbour there is but little food for them to pick up; this is in striking contrast to the harbour at Cape Town, where at most seasons of the year Gannets, *Duykers*, and Gulls are to be seen by hundreds, Penguins even making their way to the entrance of the harbour.

A few stragglers from the great colony of Gannets on Bird Island were to be seen now and then as we

steamed along on our way to St. Croix, the birds looking a pure chalky white against the blue sky, as they sailed with outspread wings over the water, even the cloud of spray that replaced them as they dived scarcely rivalling their plumage in purity of white. Gannets will keep under water for a considerable time, and just as one begins to surmise when any particular bird is going to come up again, it will suddenly appear, floating lightly upon the water, turn its head quickly from side to side and then take wing, leaving foot-marks upon the sea as it gradually rises.

When we had gone a distance of about six miles or so we altered our course slightly, in the direction of a vessel that lay at anchor by itself, which we were told was a dynamite ship, and as such had been banished to this lonely anchorage. It was a large vessel, and as we drew up underneath it, our skipper fastened one or two parcels and a bundle of newspapers to a line that the occupants of the ship let down for the purpose. They asked us the news, and inquired of us where we were going to, so after satisfying their curiosity we bade them goodbye and continued on our way.

St. Croix was now visible, outlined against the distant line of sand-hills which forms the northern boundary of Algoa Bay, but as the island is only perhaps fifty or a hundred feet in height it was not until we were within reasonable distance of it that we could distinguish it from the coast line. We could see with the aid of our glasses that Gulls, both old and young, were circling over the island; these would probably be the African representative of our Great Black-backed Gull.

The island of St. Croix, although so bare and desolate looking, is not without some historical interest, inasmuch as it was here that one of the stone crosses erected by the Portuguese exploring expedition, under the leadership of one Bartholomew Diaz, was placed, more than three centuries ago. Portions of this cross are now in the Museum at Cape Town.

A nearer approach to the island enabled us to see rows of Penguins sitting at various altitudes on the shelves of rock which in places overlooked the water. We anchored about a hundred yards from the north end of the island, and then prepared to go ashore in the little boat. As we were rowed past the rocks we could see several groups of Penguins standing in their quaint attitudes close to the shore, many of them in very bad plumage, this being apparently the moulting season—the middle of January. We landed in a little creek, somewhat sheltered from the swell, and taking our cameras up to a dilapidated old shed which stood near at hand, we began to get ready to commence operations. This shed had been erected as a shelter for sailors who might find themselves wrecked upon the island, in the event of their vessels being blown landwards by the frequent south-easterly gales.

The attitudes of the Penguins were very comical; one bird, we had noticed when we were landing, going through the most extraordinary performance by itself, standing bolt upright and turning its head stiffly from side to side, its two flippers sticking out from its body. The bird presented much the appearance of an old and rheumatic man trying on a tight-fitting coat in front of a looking-glass, and endeavouring to see for himself

how it fitted at the back. I was just going to photograph this bird, which was standing on a piece of shelving rock near the margin of the shore, when a big wave licked it up most unceremoniously, rolling the bird over and over down the sloping rock and into the sea. Whether these contortions were put on by this bird because of the unusual presence of visitors to the island, or whether they were of everyday occurrence I do not know, probably the latter, as I remember noticing at the time several other Penguins, themselves concealed in a small cave, who were apparently enjoying the spectacle, until all were rudely swept up by the wave. My friend stayed about here to photograph some groups of Penguins, while I walked part of the way round the island to see what I could find of interest. I soon came to a small inlet between the rocks, up which the waves were breaking with considerable force, while on either side of these rocks were standing groups of Penguins. I found that if I approached them too quickly they took to the water at once, one bird usually leading the way, and the rest following, at first slowly, and then helter-skelter, many of them rolling down the rock in their eagerness to reach the sea. These birds, commonly called the "Jackass" Penguin, from the peculiar braying noise that they make, are totally unable to fly, and walk with extreme ungainliness. I found that the most successful way to obtain photographs of them was to drive them into the sea and then wait quietly with the camera, when after a little while they would gradually take to the rocks again.

It was amusing to watch them doing this, and I



BLACK-FOOTED PENGUIN.

(*Spheniscus demersus*.)

26"

noticed that they generally waited for a higher wave than usual, taking advantage of the help thus afforded to start them on their way. It often took them five or six attempts before they could obtain a foothold up the steep rocks, and when at last they succeeded in getting their balance they would toddle up with bent back, aided by their outstretched flippers, and rejoin their companions who were waiting for them at the summit. I think the small barnacles which in many places covered the rocks down by the sea, were a great assistance to them in gaining a foothold. Perhaps the most successful photograph that I obtained of them is the one shown on plate 49, which presents the birds in three different attitudes, some swimming in the water, others laboriously climbing up the steep face of the rock, and others again standing at the top. Once in the water, however rough it might be, they seemed to be thoroughly at home, swimming easily, and when the waves became too rough for them they took refuge in diving, at which they were adepts; here they looked anything but foolish. One bird which was standing on a piece of rock, separated from another piece of rock by a fissure of about a foot in width, apparently wished to change its position; this it could only do by jumping, so, after contemplating the situation for a little while, it shuffled with its feet and then jumped across the gap, only just managing to regain its foothold on the other side.

The great breeding stations of these Penguins are for the most part on islands where they can deposit their eggs in burrows and holes in the ground, but on St. Croix and one or two other rocky islands they

have to suit themselves to their surroundings, nesting in the crevices, of which there are many, between the rocks. It was curious to see parties of them hurrying into the sea as we approached them; they did not seem to mind rolling about, and if they were too far from the water to reach it in what they considered to be a dignified manner, they would tumble down and roll over and over until they reached their favourite element. It is said that Penguins breed all the year round on the islands off the coast of South Africa, and that the breeding places are never entirely untenanted by these birds. There were very few of them breeding on St. Croix at the time we were there, and I should not have obtained the photograph of the Penguin on its nest, had it not been that the bird drew my attention to itself by giving me a smart peck on the ankle as I was walking down the rocks to look at some nests, which, I was told, belonged to a species of Crane. I therefore stopped, and returned good for evil by taking the Penguin's photograph. It assumed the most ridiculous positions while I was doing this, lying on its stomach and screwing its head round, first to one side and then to the other, never keeping still for a moment. I can only describe its movements as "languishing"; nor was this the only bird that languished, for some that were evidently moulting, and had retired to crevices underneath the large rocks, did the same thing. I have no doubt that the nest here reproduced, which was made of sticks, was in reality an old nest of a *Duyker*, and that the Penguin had adapted it to its own use.

We had not been favoured with a good light for



PENGUIN ON NEST.

photographing during the early portion of the day, and at about three o'clock it began to darken very rapidly, when it soon became apparent that we were to have a second edition of the storm of the previous night. This was disappointing, neither of us having taken as many photographs as we wished to, nor had we used up more than about half of our plates. There was evidently nothing to be done but run with all speed to the shed which afforded the only shelter there was on the island, and before we had arrived there the rain had begun in real earnest, accompanied by thunder and lightning. Here we found two of the men from the tug, who had come to take us off, one of whom was nursing a large Penguin, which he said would make him a capital supper! They told us to get ready as quickly as we could, as there was going to be a storm, and the sea would rise in a very short time. After taking particular care to bring our mackintoshes with us, it was only natural that they should be in the tug while we were in the boat, consequently we were exposed to the full force of the rain, which came down in no half-hearted manner during our short passage from the island to the tug.

The only birds we saw on St. Croix besides Gulls and Penguins were a pair of Black Oyster Catchers, which were standing about on the rocks near the shore. We had met with these birds before, at Mossel Bay, where the white sand served to show up their sooty-black plumage and long red beaks very strikingly. They would not permit of a near approach at Mossel Bay, perhaps knowing how conspicuous they must look, but flew off, uttering their loud whistling cry, *K-lee*

K-lee K-lee. They were tamer on St. Croix, where the surroundings were more in keeping with their plumage.

The steam back to Port Elizabeth could not be called, by any stretch of imagination, enjoyable, nor was the fact of being cooped up in a very small cabin calculated to improve the position, decked out as I was in a coat that did not belong to me and smelt strongly of fish. In due time the rain ceased, and when we were able to quit our shelter, I was relieved to find that the masts of the shipping outside Port Elizabeth were just visible, lit up by a pale streak of sunlight in the midst of the stormy surroundings.

THE END.

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