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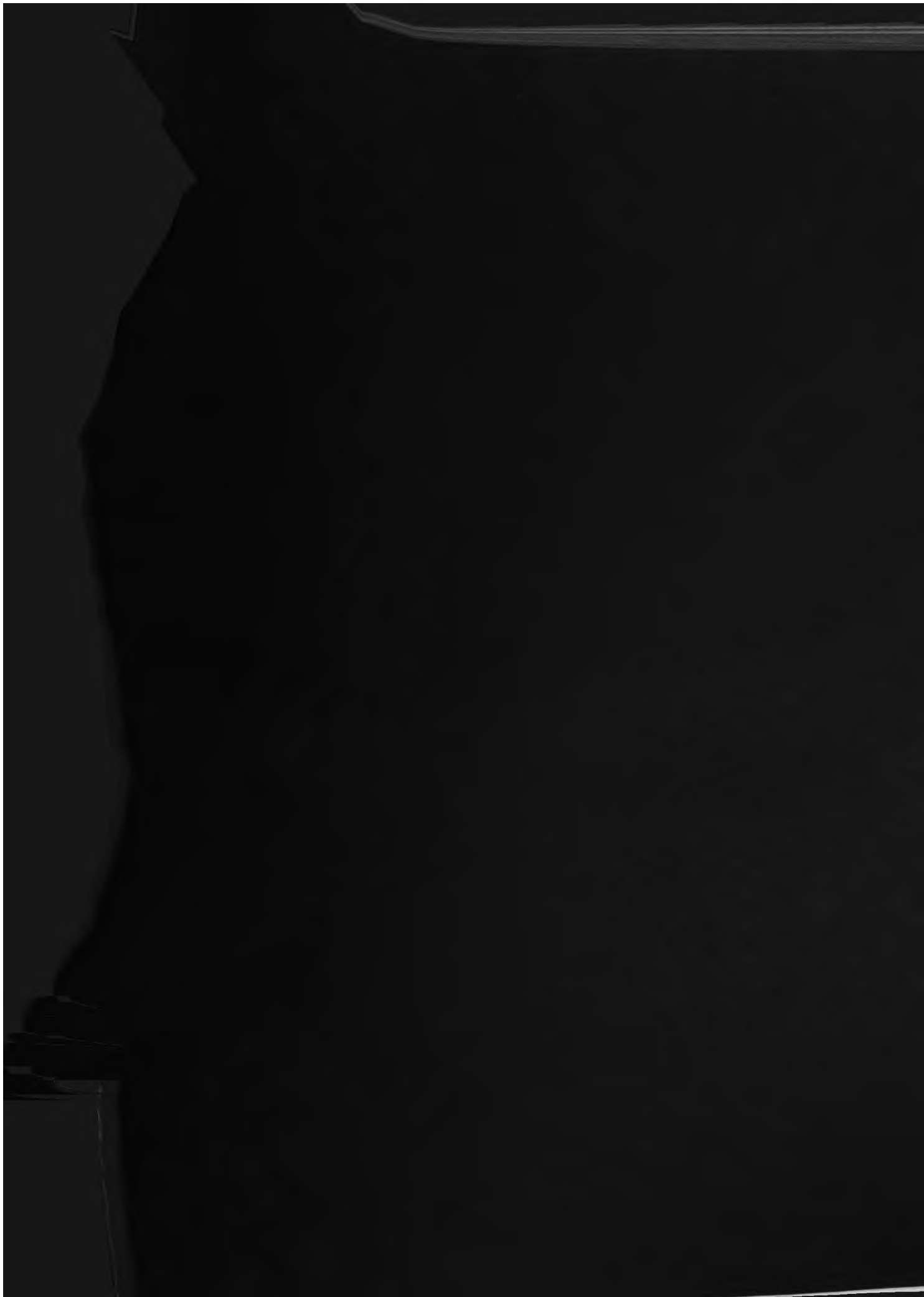
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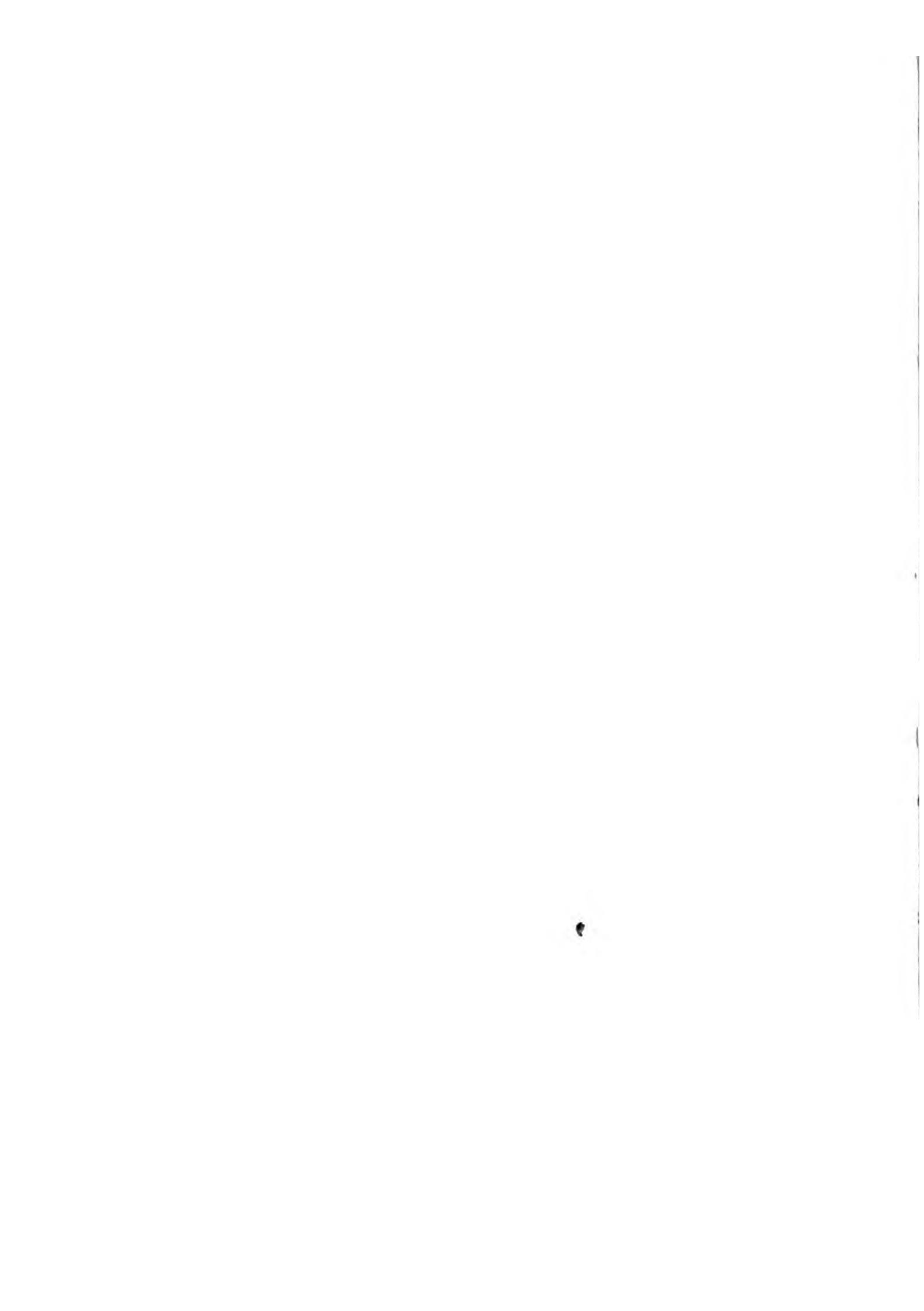




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BIRDS OF MOIDART





Group of Sea Birds

THE PRINCIPLES OF

GEOMETRY

BY
M. H. B. BLACKBURN

EDINBURGH,
DAVID DOUGLASS,
MDCCLXXV.



BIRDS FROM MOIDART AND ELSEWHERE

DRAWN
FROM NATURE
By B.

M^{RS} Hugh Blackburn.



EDINBURGH,
DAVID DOUGLAS,
MDCCCXCV.



TO HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF ARGYLL
WHOSE KNOWLEDGE OF BIRDS IS ONLY
SURPASSED BY HIS LOVE OF THEM
I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

J. B.

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BIRDS FROM NATURE.

THE pictures of birds in this book are all drawn from nature, most of them from life, and, when that was not feasible, from fresh killed specimens placed in the attitudes and with the surroundings such as I had seen when they were alive. I have always been interested in birds. The first book I ever possessed was a copy of Bewick's *British Birds*, given to me when I was four years old, and I should be very glad to think that this work of mine might give to others, even in a small degree, the pleasure that book gave me—that it might lead them to consider the fowls of the air as capable of affording delight in other ways besides filling a game bag, or adorning a hat.

I do not attempt to give a complete collection of British birds, or even of those of Moidart, still less to describe them scientifically (all which has already been admirably done by Yarrell), but only to represent such birds as I have known personally, and to add simply, and I trust truthfully, a few observations which I have had the opportunity of making on their life and habits.

I. WINTER.

THE LAPWING is not common here. The ground, being rough and rocky and bushy, is not suitable for rearing their young, except just at the head of Loch Ailort, where it is open and flat. I have seen a few pairs congregating there in spring. I have seen a few individuals on the seashore here in winter. They are numerous in some parts of the South of Scotland, in Stirlingshire particularly.

The Rook is one of their greatest enemies, watching his opportunity, when the parent is in pursuit of some other foe, to rush in and steal an egg. It is a wonder that any of the young can ever be reared amidst such a host of enemies and in such unsheltered situations. Were it not that their instinct teaches them that "union is strength," and that they all unite in defence of the breeding ground, they would probably become very scarce indeed, perhaps altogether extinct. Their French name is "Dishuit," their Scotch one "Peesweepe," from the cry they make. There are several kinds of waders here—Redshank, Greenshank, and Turnstone.

Curlews do not breed here, but are often to be seen and heard on the seashore in winter.

THE TURNSTONE (*Strepeilas interpres*) I have seen in small flocks flying about in spring close to the sea, and alighting on the many rocky islands in Loch Ailort. We got three at one shot (all males), not yet quite in their summer plumage. In winter they are dark on the upper parts and white beneath; in summer they are brightly coloured—a sort of tortoiseshell mixture of black, white, and chestnut. In summer I have seen one near

WINTER.

the top of Roshven, which seemed to have a nest somewhere, but I did not find it.

In March, when on the shores of Loch Fyne, at Inveraray, I had the opportunity of looking at many birds through a good telescope, at the residence of Sheriff Shairp. It was high tide, and a number of water-fowl had come ashore on a small grassy island just opposite the house, apparently for a siesta. Mallards, Oyster Catchers, and others that I could not quite make out, had gathered together in close amicable proximity. Wigeons were there, easily distinguished by their graceful walk, not waddling, like ordinary ducks. One of the sleepers looked, as far as I could see, like a Goosander, but I could not be sure, as its head was, as the saying is, "under its wing." (Birds do not really put their heads under their wings when they go to sleep, but lay them back over their shoulders, nestling the beak among their back feathers, which keep the breath warm, like a respirator tempering the chill night air.) I had never seen Wigeons alive before, but only in poulterers' shops. Several rare birds have appeared occasionally in the woods of Inveraray, the Great Spotted Woodpecker more than once, also the Shrike.

THE GREAT NORTHERN DIVER (*Colymbus glacialis*).—Both the Great Northern Diver and another large Diver with a white throat, but otherwise resembling it, come here to the sea in autumn and winter. They make a plaintive cry, something like the whinnying of a young foal. The Diver breeds in fresh-water lochs, among wild hills, in the North of Scotland. A

WINTER.

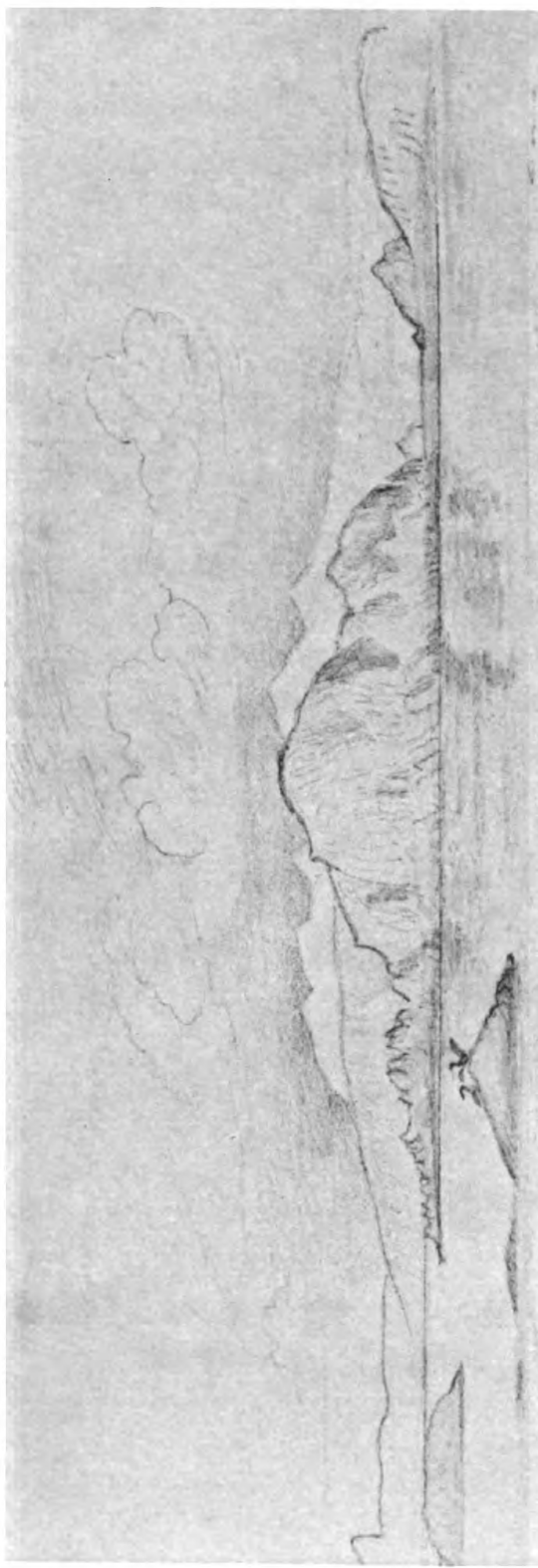
dead young one was sent to me once from Sutherlandshire. It was an ungainly little creature, covered with coarse black down.

One of the most interesting sights in the Zoo is the feeding of the diving birds, in a large glass tank, in the aquarium-house. One can see their various modes of progression under water, in pursuit of the minnows thrown to them. The Guillemot uses both wings and legs at once, flying and swimming and steering with its feet. The Penguin uses its wings only for progression under water; they are not large enough to fly in the air with. It steers with its hinder end. It shines bright with air bubbles all over its body when it first plunges under water. The Darter, a most elegant slender bird of the Cormorant species, uses its legs only in swimming under water. It moves fast and with great ease, catching fish most cleverly, reaching them with its long neck, which, however stretched out, seems always to be able to reach a little farther by relaxing a sort of kink in the middle of it. (Looking at them there is much more agreeable than having to follow a liberated Guillemot into the sea to find out if it really flies under water.) When the Darter has caught its minnow, it comes up to the surface, tosses up the fish and catches it again, so as to be able to swallow it head foremost, as the Kingfishers do; indeed, it would be difficult to swallow a fish whole in any other way.

THE LITTLE AUK (*Mergulus alle*).—Those little birds have often been found in Loch Moidart in winter, driven in by a severe storm from the north. I once owned a stuffed specimen in

WINTER.

my youth, a much valued possession, now turned to dust. It was brought from Shetland, where they breed. I believe many more than usual have been driven south this hard winter (1894-5).



II. OSPREY.

(*Pandion haliaëtus.*)

HAVING heard that there was an Osprey's nest, with young in it, at Rothiemurchus, on the ruined castle on Loch an Eilein, we took a long journey to see it. Arriving there, on the second day, we sat down by the loch side to observe the birds, and sketch them and their nest and its surroundings. The young birds were still in the nest, well grown and fledged, but with some of the down still on them. After a while the parent birds arrived, bringing fish for their young. I was very much struck with the marvellously scientific way in which they carried the fish (tolerably large ones, apparently of the salmon tribe). They held them fore and aft, with one foot before the other, in such a manner as would least impede their flight; the head of the fish foremost as they flew against the wind. I had read many descriptions of the Osprey in books of natural history, how they plunged in the water to catch their prey, and how well adapted their rough-soled feet were for holding them with the claws two on each side, but I never found any mention of this most interesting fact.

Their method of holding the fish with one foot in advance of the other, and the hind foot being placed near the tail, is effectual also in preventing the fish when alive from lashing with its tail and disturbing its equilibrium.

We spent the afternoon at the loch side, and saw the old birds bring fish several times, always holding them in the same manner, and flying up-wind to the nest. The fish seemed to be still alive, as the back fin was raised and the lateral ones extended. The birds seemed to come from a distance. I was

OSPREY.

told that the loch they fished in was six miles off. I never saw them fish in the little loch beside the nest. After several hours spent in observing them we took a walk through the woods, and admired the noble old Scotch firs. To judge by the number of rings on the stem of one tree that had been cut down and sawn across, they must have been over a hundred years old. They seemed to have grown very slowly for the first twenty years or so (an encouraging fact to those who have young plantations), then the rings became rapidly, but irregularly, thicker, showing that they must have grown much more in some years than in others.

We spent the night at the manse, where we were hospitably entertained by the Rev. Mr Macdougall, the minister of Rothiemurchus. Next morning, having some time to spare before the departure of the train, we returned to our post of observation at Loch an Eilein. In a little while we saw the two young birds take flight and forsake the nest, probably for altogether. We were very glad we had lost no time in coming to see them. Had we been a day later we should have missed seeing them at all.

The loch is a very small one, and the castle not far from the shore, so it was easy to see the nest and observe the habits of the birds. For the more minute details I had a good opera glass. I am told they have built there for many years, though driven away sometimes owing to the nest being harried, but they returned the following year; and in the case of one of them being killed, the other found a second mate. The proprietor took all the care he could to protect them from unconscientious naturalists, or avaricious egg dealers.

OSPREY.

Ospreys are very rare in Scotland now. I know of only one other place where they build, but, for the safety of the birds, I will not mention it. This rare bird must have been better known in England in Queen Elizabeth's time than it is now, as Shakespeare mentions it in the play when Coriolanus is besieging Rome. Tullus Aufidius says of him—

“I think he'll be to Rome,
As is the osprey to the fish,
Who takes it by sovereignty of nature.”

Now, it is not likely that a play-writer would seek to make his meaning clearer to his audience by using for a simile a rare bird which they had never seen or heard tell of. Shakespeare generally uses for illustration the very commonest and best known birds—most of all the Crow. The Osprey is so scarce now as to be unknown to many people.



III. GOLDEN EAGLE.

(*Aquila chrysaëtus.*)

THE illustration is from a sketch of a young full-grown bird belonging to the Duke of Argyll, which was afterwards sent to the Zoological Gardens. Its eyes were hazel, the plumage still mottled, and the tail whitish. In the adult the plumage is of a more uniform rich chocolate-brown, and the eyes are yellow. It is rarer here than the Sea Eagle, but I have seen it occasionally—once flying near the coast of Ardnamurchan, pursued by Sea Gulls; and another time, perched on a rock at Ardnish. We once found the remains of one in a steel trap lying on the sea-shore. It had probably been caught in the island of Rum, and had flown away with the trap till it fell exhausted into the sea, and was washed ashore on this coast. The Eagle flies low in pursuit of its prey, as the Goshawk does; not pouncing, like the Peregrine, but picking up its prey as it floats along. It is probably too heavy to do otherwise.

A friend of mine saw one skimming along a hillside and swooping up a lamb in its claws as it went. When we first came here there was an old deserted nest, said to be that of the Golden Eagle, on a high cleft of a bare sea-beaten rock at the point of Ardnish. It consisted of a great mass of coarse sticks and heather stalks. It has now entirely disappeared, and has never been replaced.

I sketched two young ones also at Auchendarroch. They were carried to the house with their legs carefully secured, though they were very tame, for even a friendly grip of such claws would be serious. They use their claws mostly in attacking their prey, and the beak afterwards to tear it in pieces.

GOLDEN EAGLE.

They were let loose in the servants' hall, and, rather to our terror, began flying round the room over our heads. Fortunately they did not alight on any of us. Finally, they settled down on the table, and feasted on some rabbits which had been provided for them.

It is a remarkable thing that the beaks of all birds—be they Eagles or Finches, Curlews, Avocets, Parrots, or Pelicans, or even the Spoonbills—however differently formed for feeding purposes, should all serve equally well for preening their feathers.

Eagles have been known to attack and destroy red deer. The following account has been sent me by an eye-witness, Allan M'Laren, deer-stalker to Lochiel. He writes as follows:—

“December 21, 1894.

“On one of my rounds on Ben-e-chrie, about the month of March, twelve years ago, I noticed about forty hinds coming along the face of the hill at full gallop, and, wondering what disturbed the animals, I sat down, thinking they were pursued by a dog. But on taking out my glass, I observed three Golden Eagles hunting after the deer, and having about a mile and a-half of the hill in view, I watched eagerly what was to be the result. During the last half-mile a year-old stag broke away from the herd, and one of the Eagles fixed on his back, the other two following close by. Latterly they disappeared out of my sight, about a mile away. I at once made for the spot. On arriving, I found the year-old stag killed by the Eagles, and part of him devoured opposite the heart. All three were busily engaged in the feast, having a right jolly dinner. I felt at the moment if only I had a gun—although Eagles were strictly preserved—I could not resist the temptation of having a shot.

ALLAN M'LAREN.”



B

The Golden Eagle

I V. S E A E A G L E.

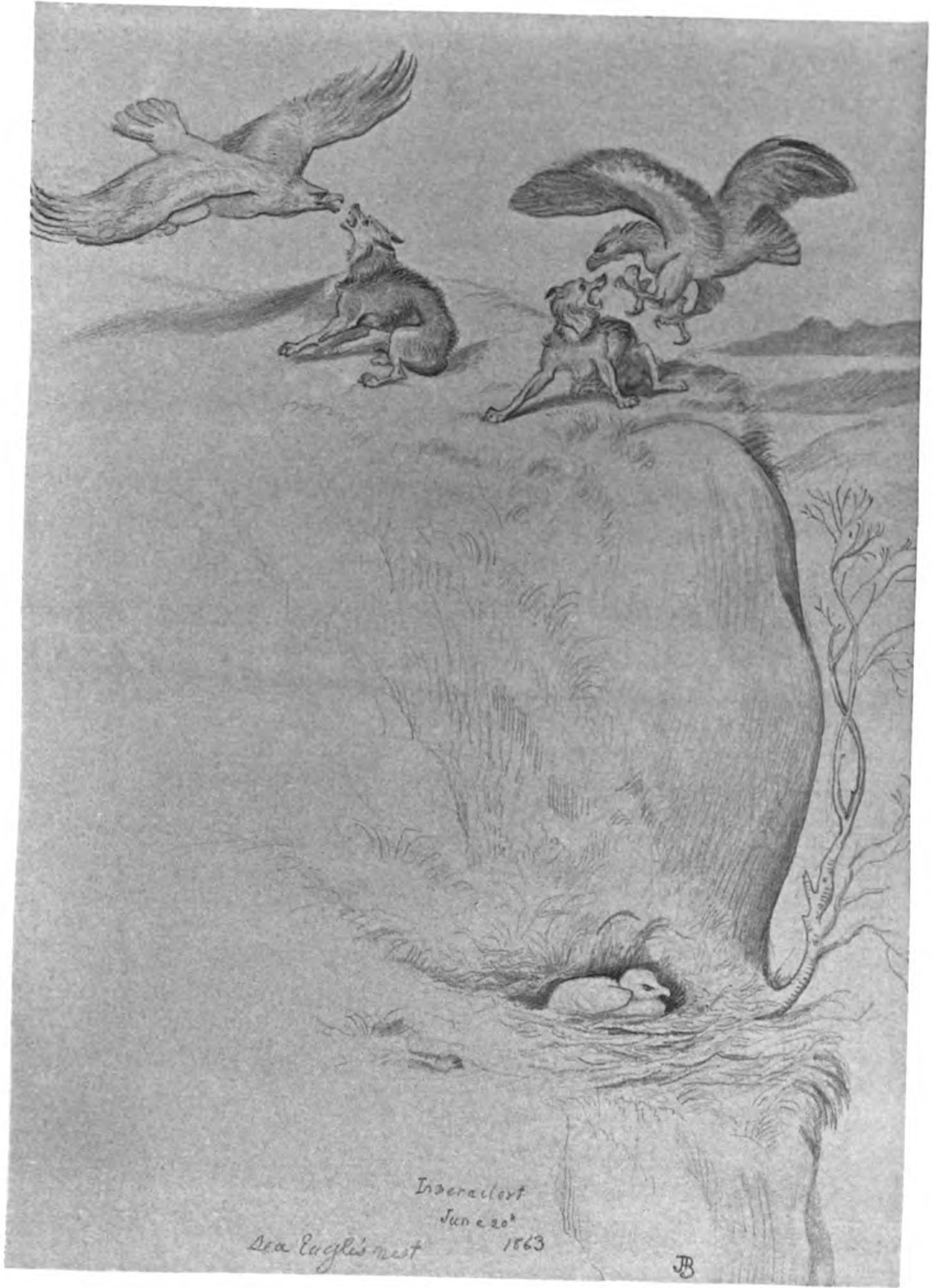
(*Haliaëtus albicilla.*)

THE Sea Eagle is not very uncommon here, and builds in the neighbouring hills. We heard of a nest some miles off, and were guided to it by a shepherd. On approaching the eyrie the Eagles came screaming around us, swooping with extended claws at the shepherd's dogs, who turned upon them in self-defence, snapping and snarling, evidently a good deal frightened. The Eagles came very near the dogs, but did not venture actually to strike them. We found the nest on a flat place near the top of a rock, which projected a little over it, so as to afford some shelter from rain. It looked quite accessible from a little distance, but when we got to the top of the rock we found a very bad step, and could not get into the nest for want of a rope, which we had not thought of bringing. By peering over the edge of the cliff we could see the white downy young one in the nest, surrounded by fragments of food, such as bits of lambs' feet or hill hares' legs, and skin and fur. The nest was built of coarse sticks, and there was plenty of room on the shelf for the parents to alight and for the young one to walk about when it was old enough to come out of the nest.

I got a good view of the nest from a rock opposite, and when the sketch was done we departed, meaning soon to return for another visit, with a rope to help us further "ben," and with the intention of carrying off the young one for a pet and model, but were prevented doing so for some weeks owing to a severe and widespread outbreak of typhoid fever. Good trained nurses not having then been developed, we had to attend on the sick ourselves as we best could. When the plague was stayed, and

SEA EAGLE.

we had leisure to revisit the nest, we found the young one fledged, but not yet able to fly. I no longer desired to have it, as its beak had been disfigured by being caught in a trap, set by the shepherds in the nest to try to catch the parents. Its countenance being marred and its fine expression gone, it would have been no better than *L'Homme qui rit* for a model to draw from.



Inverclyde
June 20th
1863
Sea Eagle's nest

JB

V. B U Z Z A R D.

(*Buteo vulgaris.*)

THIS large Hawk is not uncommon here. From its size and broad-tipped wings it might almost be mistaken for an Eagle when soaring at a distance. Those in the illustration were got from a nest near here. It was in a rocky bank, not very difficult of access, rudely constructed of sticks, and containing three young ones, and with remains of hill hares and scraps of small lambs lying about it, rather dirty, and with a powerful smell, which I had to endure while I made a drawing of the nest on the spot.

Buzzards are sometimes erroneously called "Kites." I have never seen the really fork-tailed Kite in this country, except at the Zoo. They are very numerous in Egypt, and very tame and bold. They are very fond of fish. I have seen them hovering over fishermen who were netting a small canal, and trying to snatch the fish from them. The Glead is another name for the Kite, also for the Buzzard. Shakespeare calls it the Puttock in "Henry VI.":—

" Who finds the Partridge in the Puttock's nest,
But may imagine how the bird was dead,
Although the Kite soar with unbloodied beak ?"

THE KITE.—"Yelmane (a man disguised as an Amazon) sought occasion to speak with Philoclea, Basilius with Yelmane, and Gynecia hindered them all. If Philoclea happened to sigh, and sigh she did often, as if that sigh were to be waited on, Yelmane sighed also, whereto Basilius and Gynecia soon made up four parts of sorrow. Therefore she endeavoured to beguile them with country sports, with the bow and the angle; and now she brought a seeled Dove, who, the blinder she was, the higher she

KITE.

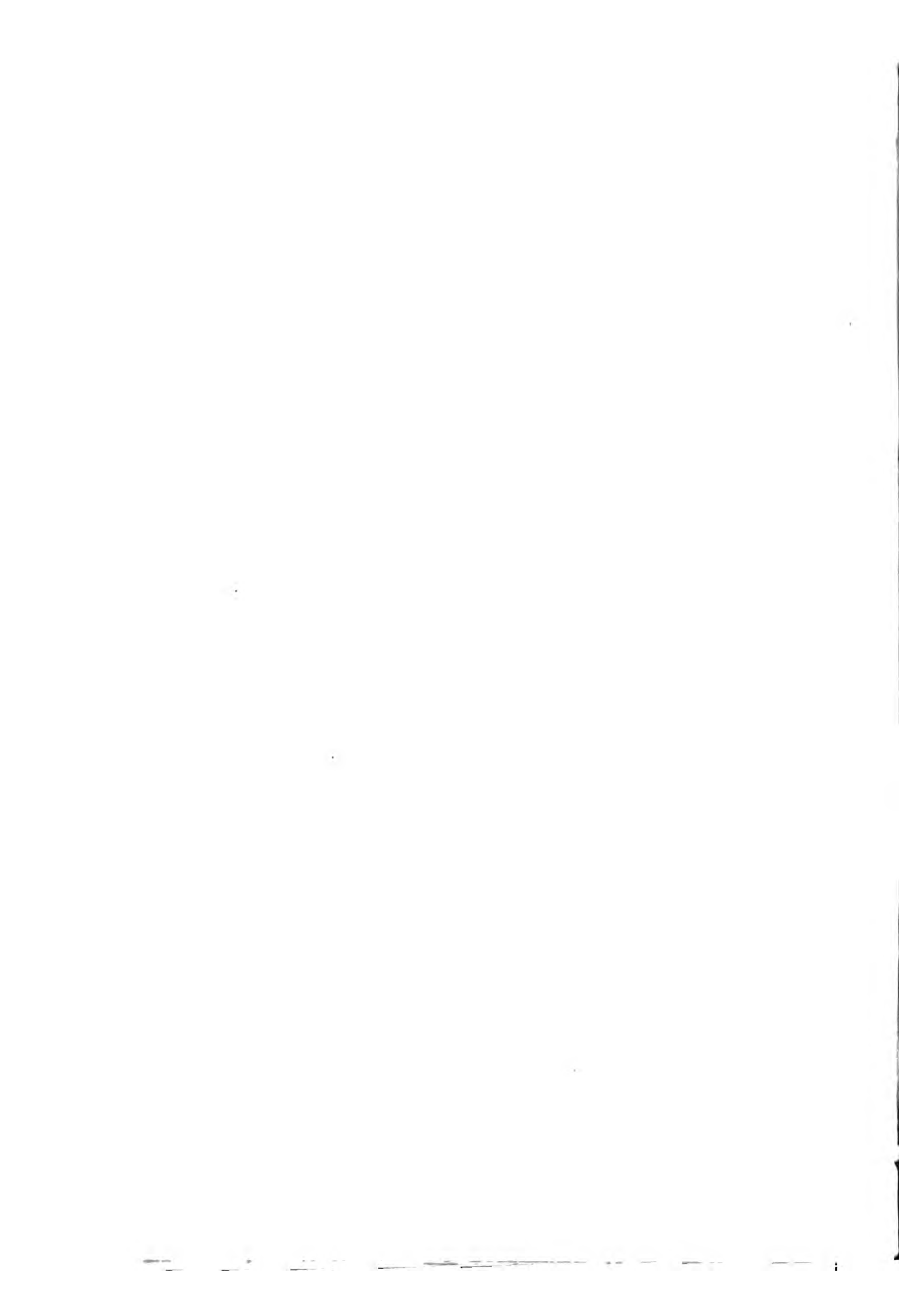
strove. Another time a Kite, which having a gut cunningly pulled out of her, and so let fly, caused all the Kites in that quarter, who, as oftentimes the world is deceived, thinking her prosperous when, indeed, she was wounded, made the poor Kite find that opinion of riches may well be dangerous."—THE COUNTESS OF PEMBROKE'S *Arcadia*, Book I., written by Sir Philip Sydney, Knight.

Although Kites are such handsome birds, and of noble flight, they did not stand high in popular esteem for moral qualities. "Kite" and "Greedy Gled" are terms of opprobrium. No one would think of using "Eagle" or "Falcon" as terms of contempt. Nor had the Kite a reputation for wisdom. Mr George Herbert's "Jacala Prudentum" says—"Twirling the eyes too much shows a Kite's brain."

It is not complimentary to be called an "Owl," although it is Minerva's bird. It conveys the idea of the wisdom being more apparent than real.

Note.—"Craigenputtock," the abode of Thomas Carlyle, was probably called so from being inhabited by Kites. In a newspaper pedigree of Mr Gladstone, it is said the name originally was "Gledstane."





V I. G O S H A W K.

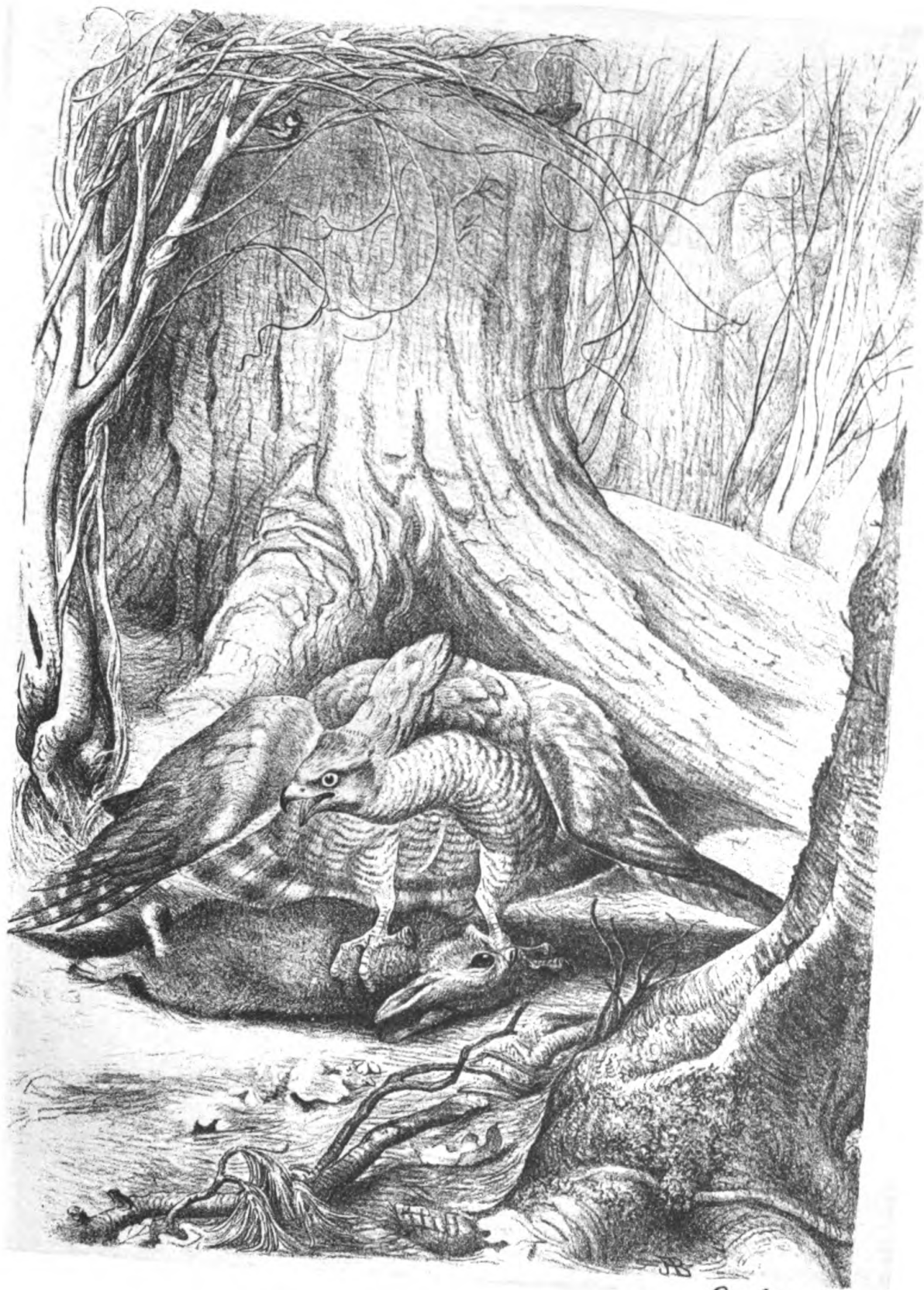
(*Astur palumbarius.*)

DRAWN from a trained female bird belonging to Captain Salvin, whose book on Hawking is well known. The attitude is a study from nature.

The Goshawk's manner of pursuing its prey is different from the Peregrine's. It does not soar and pounce, but flies along low, swooping on the victim and carrying it along in its flight as Eagles do.

We went out hawking with Captain Salvin and his Goshawk one winter's day to Garscube, near Glasgow. A hare was soon started. The bird was thrown off, and flew straight after it, but presently changed its mind and flew off to the woods. We had to go in pursuit of it, and spent all the afternoon searching for it, guided by the cries of the little birds, who were much alarmed at its appearance, and sought to drive it away with their noise. We luckily found and captured it just before dark, and drove back to Glasgow, having acquired some knowledge of the habits of birds, though not much of the sport of hawking. The failure was caused by the bird having been fed too recently, the keeper not knowing in time that it was to be flown that day.



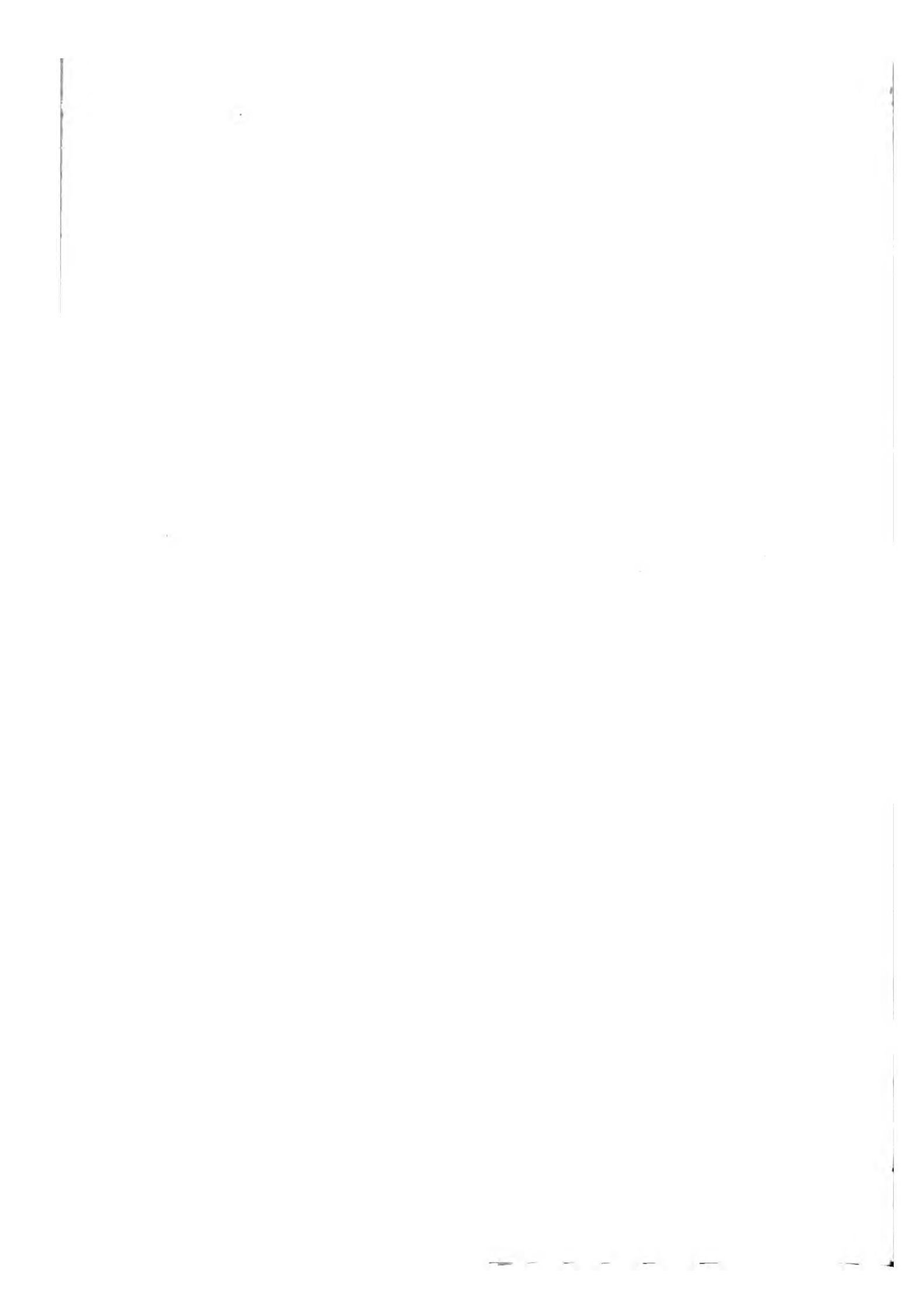


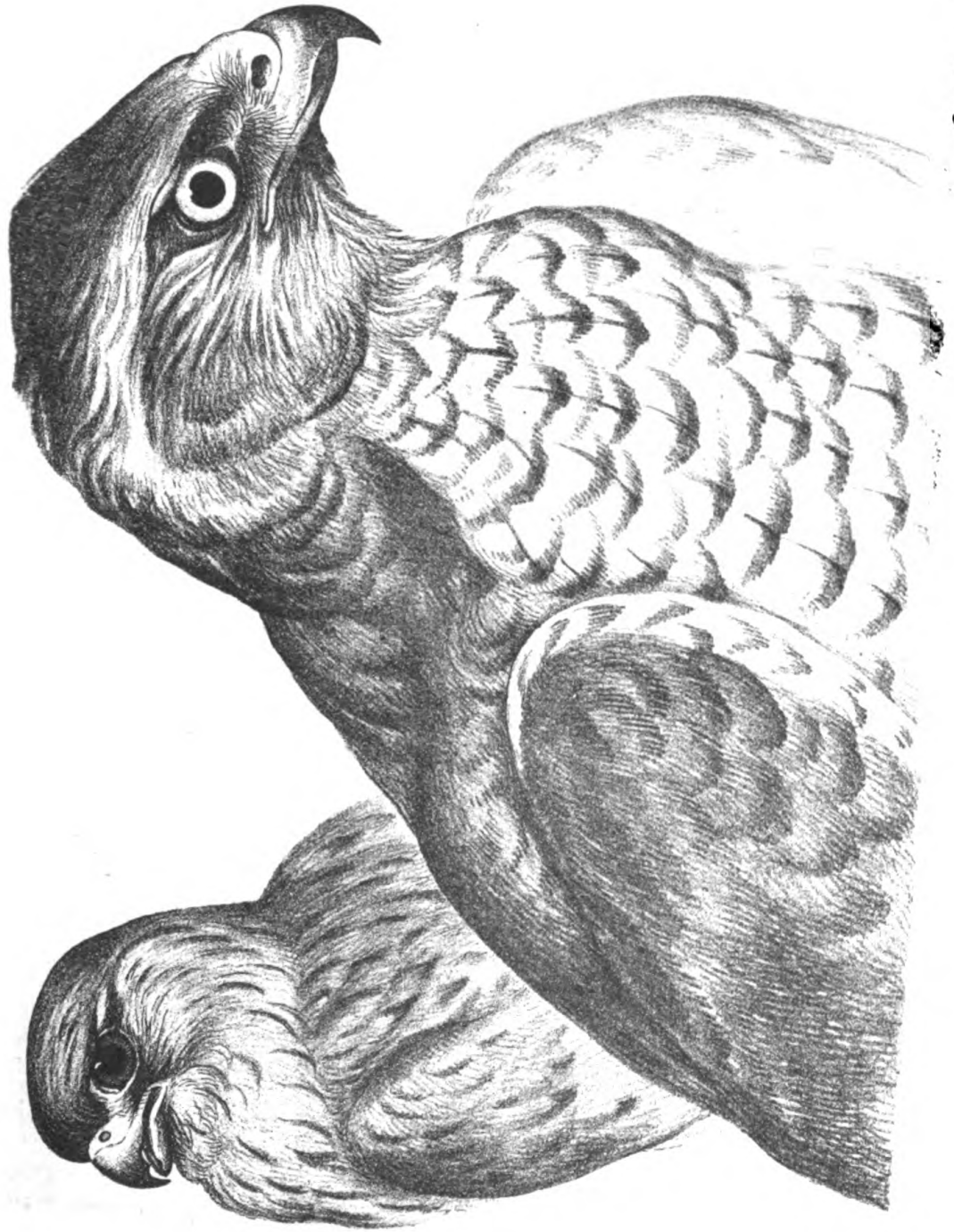
Goshawk



VII. GOSHAWK AND KESTREL.

THIS illustration is of the same Goshawk, done from life. The Kestrel (a male) is introduced for comparison. The difference in form of the beak may be noticed.





Goshawk
+ Kestrel

B



VIII. PEREGRINE FALCON.

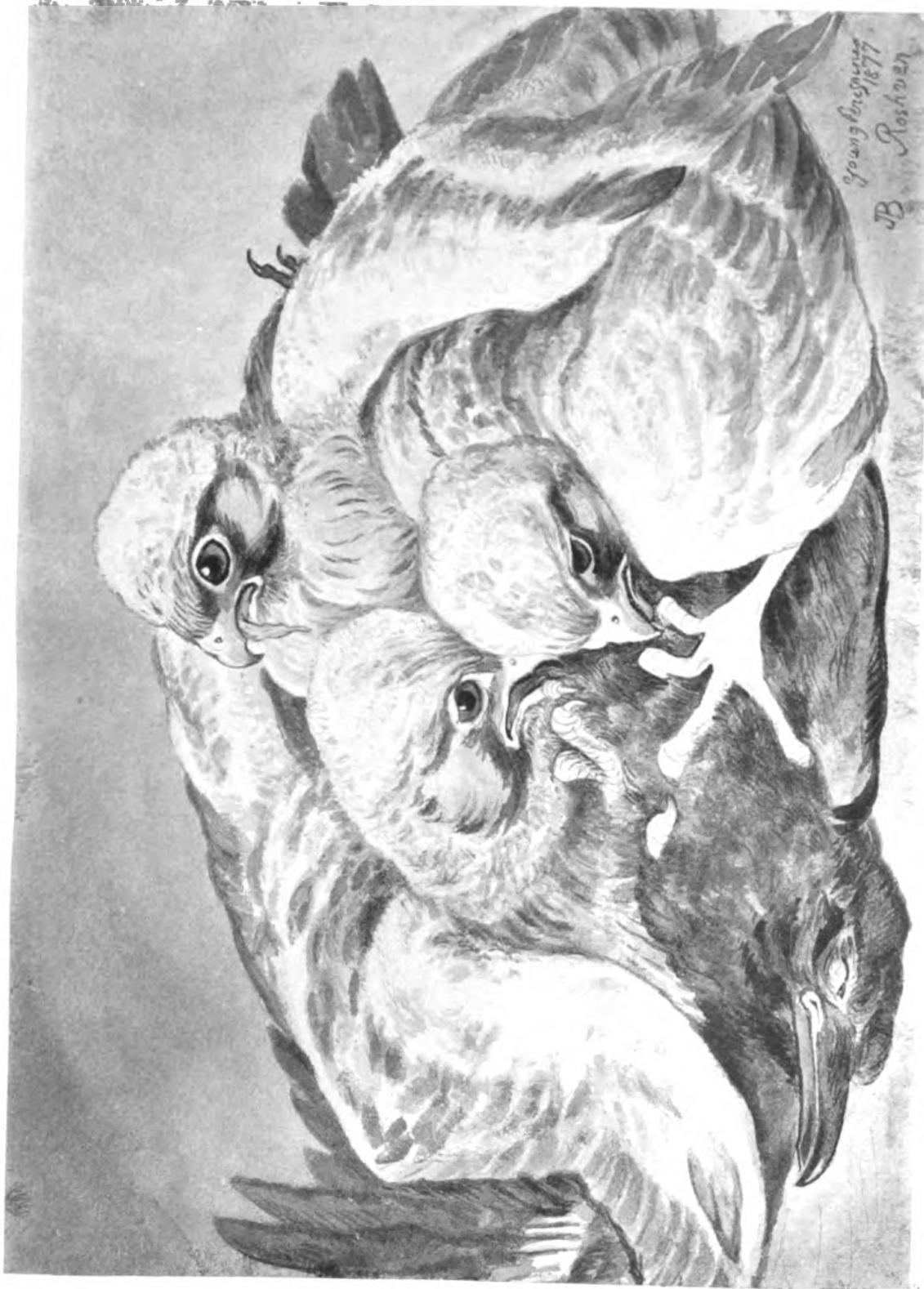
(*Falco peregrinus.*)

FALCONS are distinguished from Hawks by having a tooth-like notch in the beak, and by having more pointed wings, the second quill being the longest in the wing, not the fourth, as in Hawks. The Peregrine Falcon is not uncommon in Moidart. The young ones in the illustration were taken from a nest in a wild glen near Loch Ailt, not many miles from here, to be reared for a friend who wanted to train them for hawking. We fed them mostly on young Rooks, which were being shot at that time. They ate voraciously, and, when gorged, laid their heads down on the carcase and fell asleep.

When Captain Salvin was quartered in Ayr, many years ago, I have seen a Falcon of his flown at Rooks for want of better game. The unfortunate Rook it was pursuing always made for the shelter of a hedge or wall, where the Falcon had not room to strike, whence it had to be driven out by the cracking of long whips.

In Ireland Peregrines are frequently flown at Magpies, which afford better sport. On the open plains of India Herons are the best game, and the pastime can be enjoyed on horseback. The most interesting part of all to the uninitiated was to see the Falcon, at the falconer's call, return to the lure of its own free will, submitting to the bondage of hood and jesses, when it had the power to fly away and be at liberty.





I X. KESTREL.

(*Falco tinnunculus.*)

THE Kestrel or "Windhover," as it is sometimes called, is common here, but not in such numbers congregated together as I have seen in some parts of Europe. Many of them may be seen in Athens hovering over the Parthenon. I saw great numbers flying over the heights above Cherbourg, near the church of Notre Dame de Secours. They had evidently been feeding on Privit Hawk moths, the *débris* of whose wings was lying on the ground. There is a colony of them also in London. When we were on the top of St Paul's one summer morning waiting to see the sun rise, some Kestrels woke up and began flying about at the first light of dawn, long before either the Pigeons or Sparrows bestirred themselves.

The young Kestrels in the picture were taken alive from the nest and drawn from life. The nest, which was on the top of a rock on the island, was also drawn from nature on the spot. The young had still some down on them, though nearly fledged.

The Merlin is also to be seen here, but not so often as the Kestrel.

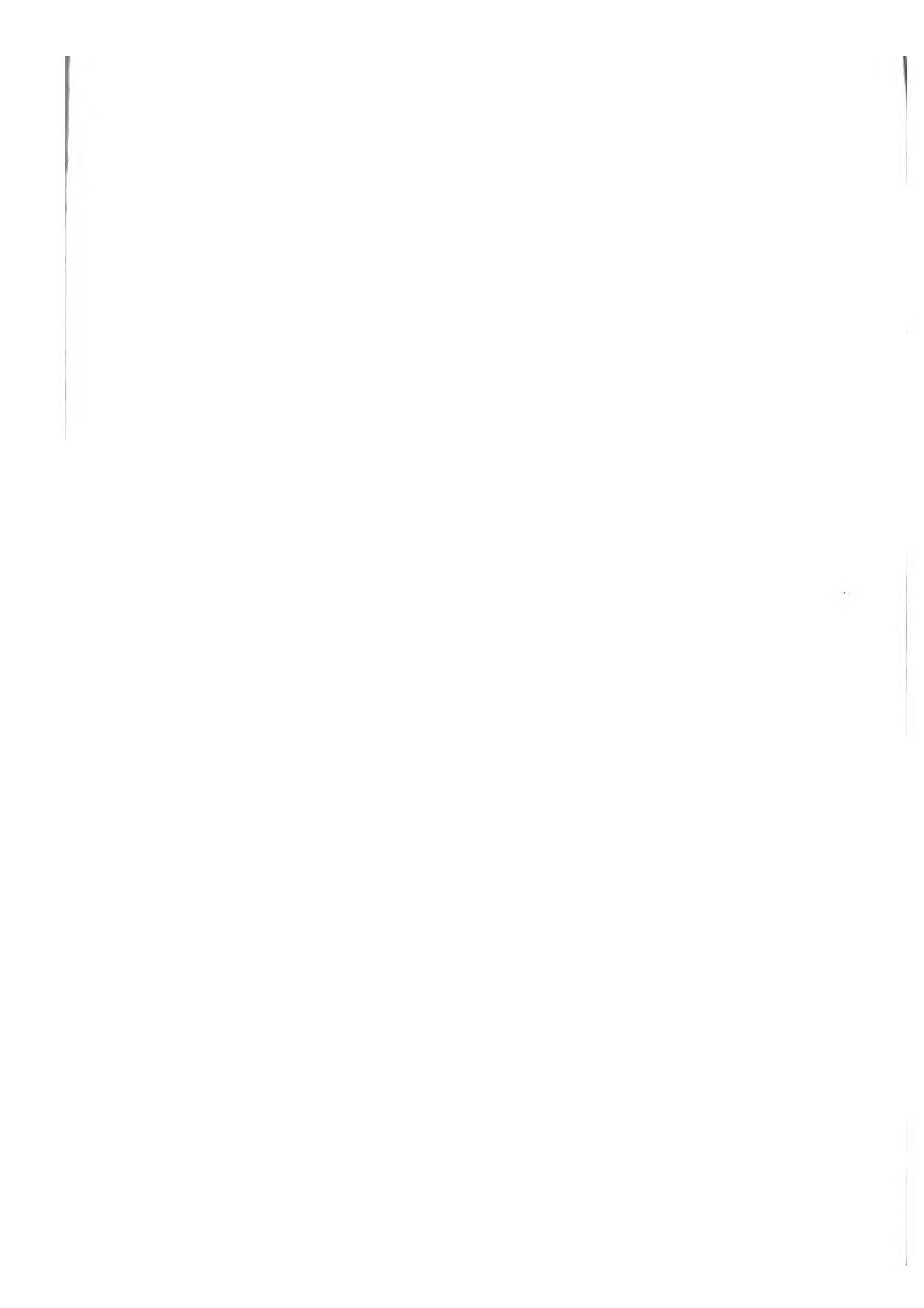


JB
Young Kestrels



JB

Young Kestrels



X. SPARROW HAWK.

(*Accipiter nisus.*)

THIS bird is the commonest of its tribe here, and its depredations among domestic fowl render it the most conspicuous. Grave cause have poultry and pigeons "to curse that hedgerow thief the Sparrow Hawk." Bold, clever, and active, it can wing its way through among the crowded branches in a fir plantation, where it is nearly impossible to get a shot at it, and when arrived at the poultry yard, it cannot be fired at without risking the lives of the chickens.

The orphans of the incubator were the first to suffer if ever they ventured beyond the sanctuary of the foster-mother, some of them disappearing daily. After an enclosure was netted safely for them, we again heard an outcry in the poultry yard, and found the Sparrow Hawk attacking a brood of chickens under the motherly guardianship of a hen, who was facing it boldly in their defence, and shrieking for help, while the chicks were lying flat on the ground shamming death, not moving a muscle till after they were lifted. At last the order had to be given that the marauder was to be shot at all hazards, which was done, costing the lives of two of the chickens, martyrs to the public safety. Their bodies were hung up over a steel trap as bait for rats or weasels. Next day the trap had disappeared, but a clanking sound was heard on the shingley shore close by, and another Sparrow Hawk was discovered caught by the leg drawing the trap after him. Another, which came into a shed after a Blackbird, was adroitly caught and slain, and a family of six were shot in a neighbouring wood, where they had had their nest among the trees.

SPARROW HAWK.

“Still we're not quit of that prolific race,
For when one falls another fills his place.”

They are very bold birds; audacious enough even to come close to a house in pursuit of their prey. I have known them pounce through a window to get at a bird in a cage.

One day when I was feeding my Pigeons a panic seized them, and they all flew off with a loud clatter. There was such a cloud of blue feathers filling the air that I could not at first see what had happened. In the course of the day the body of one of the Pigeons was found by the roadside half a mile off, which the Hawk had plucked, and was just beginning to feast on when he was disturbed.

The rest of the Pigeons fled. Some flung themselves headforemost into the dovecot; others “severed and madly swept the sky,” high up in wide circles, too much terrified to take their food that day, nor could they take their meals in peace for many days after.

I have known a Sparrow Hawk fly off with a Pea chick nearly as big as itself, but, finding it too heavy, had to drop it.



Sparrow Hawk JB

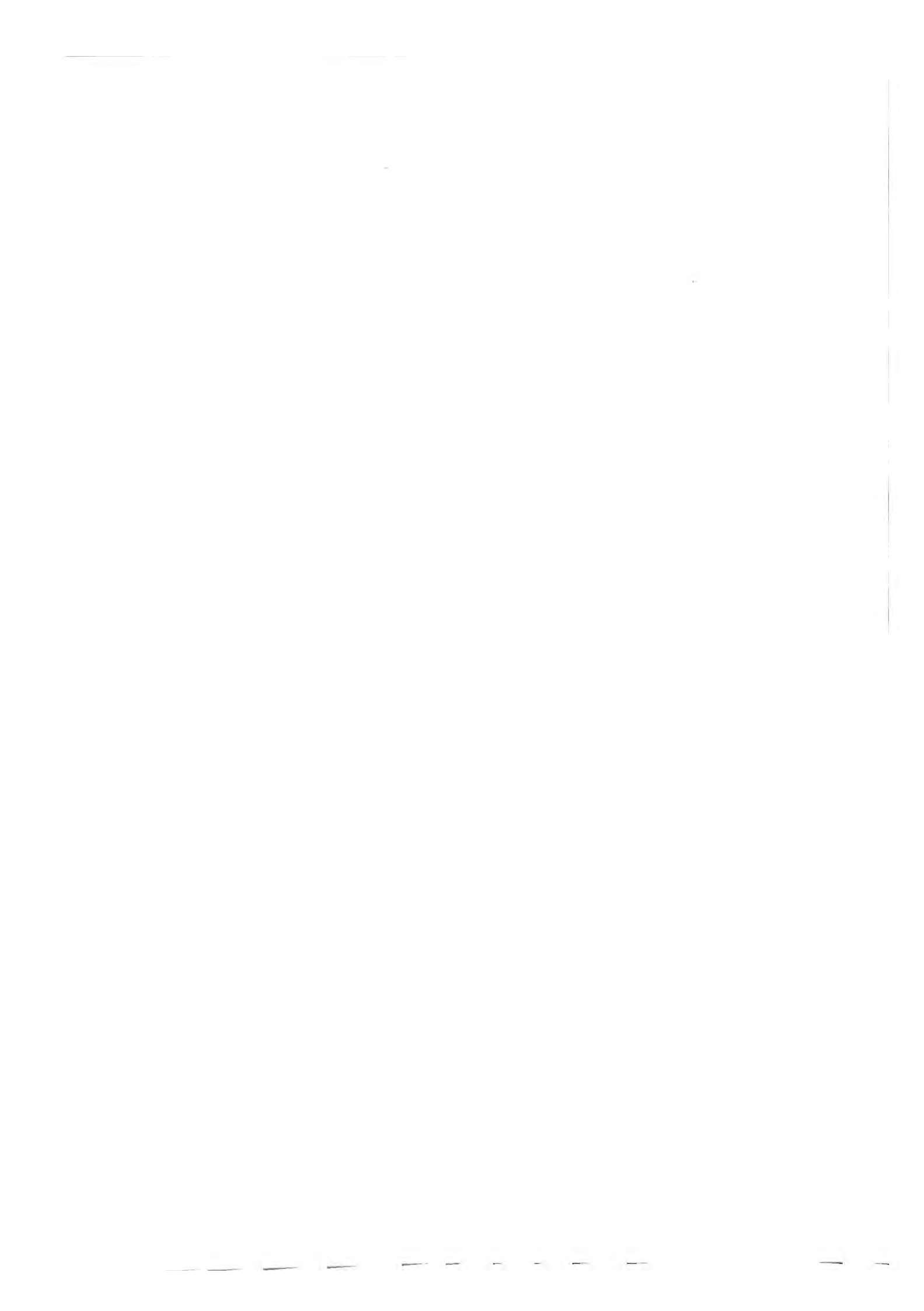
XI. OWL.

(*Syrnium aluco.*)

THE large portrait was from a tame bird. Owls have young ones of different ages, in the nest and outside of it on the branches, at the same time, still being fed by the parent birds. I brought a couple of young ones here, where we had none, though they existed a few miles off, and let them loose in the garden, where they sat on an old tree-stump in a cave by day, and were "mocked and wondered at" by the little birds when they discovered their retreat. They were not old enough to shift for themselves when I first imported them, so we put out food for them daily. They were very fond of fish, so we always put out a share of what was caught in the evening, and they always devoured it before morning. We also imported some white Screech Owls, but they have disappeared.

The brown Owls have increased, although some of them were shot by a timid neighbour, who thought their hooting foreboded evil, and who did not appreciate the cheerful sound in the fine moonlight nights.

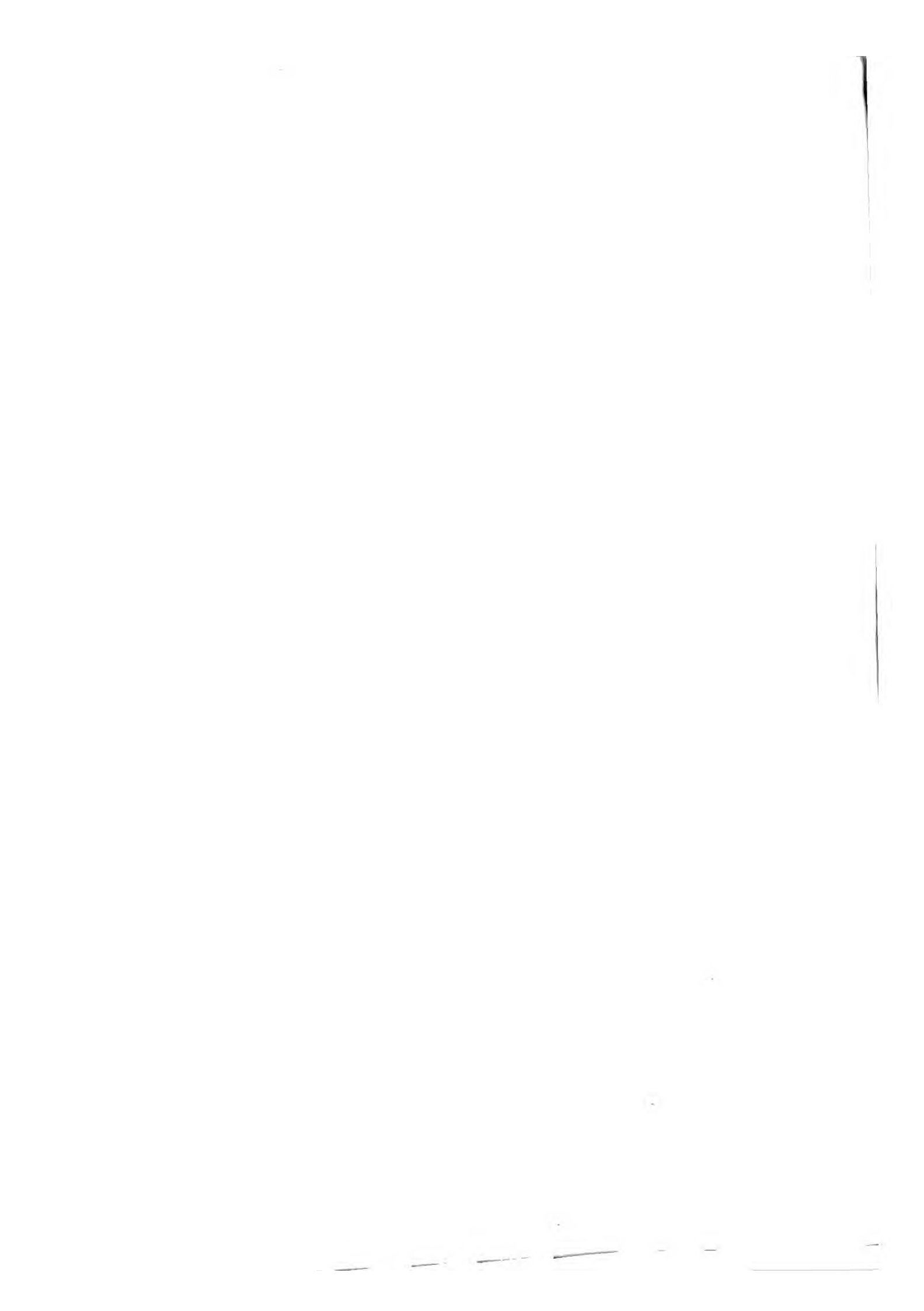
I saw a curious scene in the cave where those imported Owls spent the day. A Wren had discovered their haunt, and was strutting up and down on the stump beside one of them, with its tail so stiffly cocked up as nearly to touch its back. The infuriated little troglodite was screaming defiance in its loudest voice and hurling insults at its sleepy head. The Owl, whether from stupidity or good nature, made no attempt to retaliate.





Tawny Owl

JB



XII. LONG-EARED OWL.

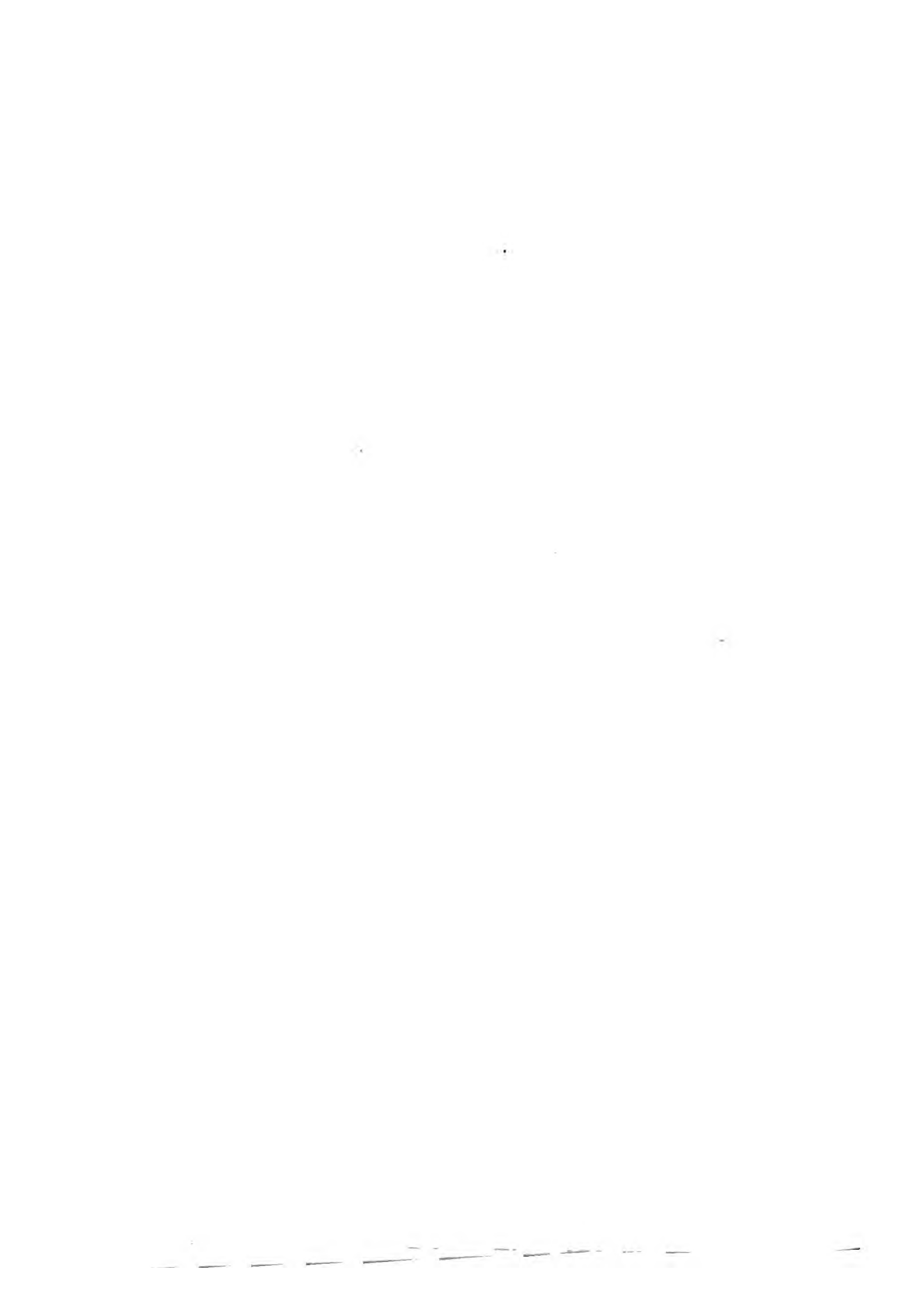
(*Asio otus.*)

So called from the long ear-like feathers that stand up on its head. Was drawn from a caged bird, a fine, lively, well-feathered specimen, with brilliant yellow eyes. I have never met with it in a wild state, nor with the Short-eared Owl.



B

The Long-eared Owl



XIII. SPOTTED FLY-CATCHER.

(Muscicapa Grisola.)

THE plumage in the young bird is much more obviously spotted than in the old. Their note resembles that of the Chats. They perch on a branch or rail, and the old bird flies up after insects, which it catches on the wing, and brings to its young.





B

Spotted Flycatcher's young
August 1861



XIV.

DIPPER.

(*Cinclus aquaticus.*)

GREY WAGTAIL.

(*Motacilla boarula.*)

PIED WAGTAIL.

(*Motacilla lugubris.*)

I HAVE put these three birds on the same page as they inhabit the same sort of locality, and may be seen together in summer on the same stream.

The Dipper is not common here (I got my specimen in Forfarshire). I do not know if the absence of minnows may have anything to do with that, or with the Kingfisher being hardly ever seen here, though both of them are common enough in other parts of Scotland.

The Pied Wagtail is more numerous here than the Grey one (which I should be more inclined to call yellow), and is a summer visitor only. The Pied one may be seen in winter also, especially in the south of Scotland, where it comes to be fed among other hunger-tamed birds at the back door.

An old housekeeper in Kirkcudbrightshire, who used to feed the little birds in winter, told me that of all the scraps she could collect for them, *haggis* was the greatest favourite with the birds, as each one could find in that excellent compound the sort of food that suited it best, whether meat or oatmeal.

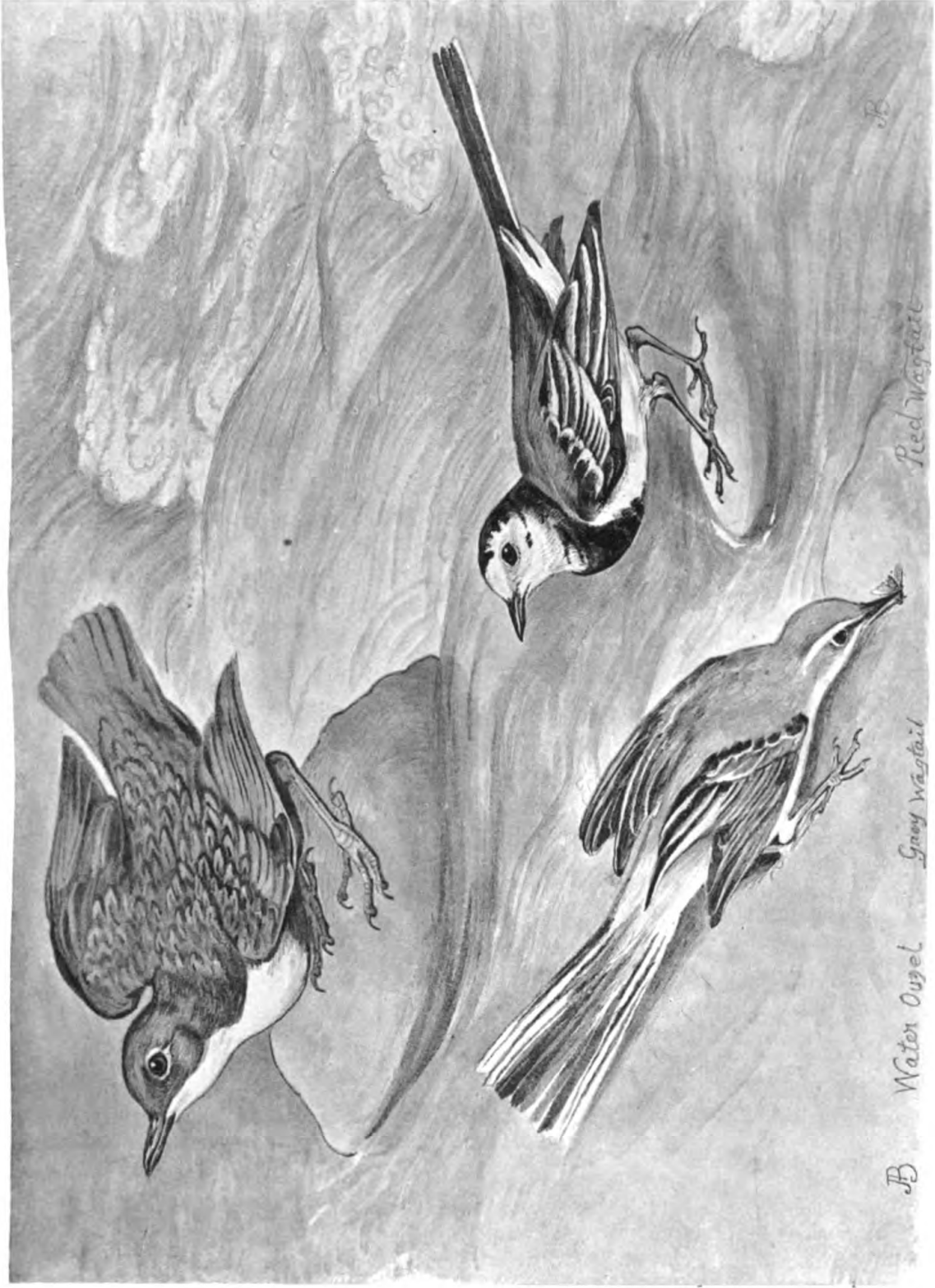
Those who practise feeding little birds in winter should get a cocoanut and saw it across, and hang it up by a string near a window. It is very pretty to see the little blue-cap Titmouse get up inside of it and enjoy the contents. (The open end should be undermost, of course.) Blackbirds and others

DIPPER—GREY WAGTAIL—PIED WAGTAIL.

are very fond of it too, so it does not generally last very long. Some people hang up a bone with a little meat on it, which pleases the Titmice very well, but is not so elegant.

Both sorts of Wagtails come much about the windows and roof of Roshven in autumn, seeking for the flies that are beginning to look out for their winter quarters. While sailing in the Mediterranean one stormy day in the month of April, a bird very like the Grey Wagtail came on board. I tried to make a drawing of it, but the steamer (a very long and narrow screw) was rolling so violently I could not make the drawing sufficiently accurate to identify it by.

The Pied Wagtail has the rather poetic name of "The Seed Lady" among the Catholic peasantry of Braemar. It is supposed to be sent by the Virgin Mary in spring to let them know the proper time to sow the seed.



B Water Ouzel Gray Wagtail

Pied Wagtail

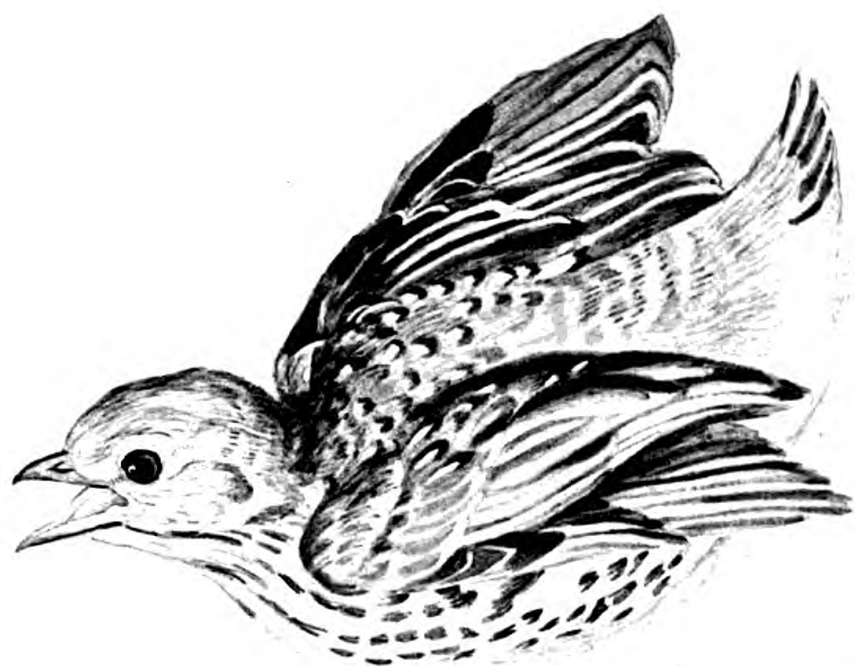


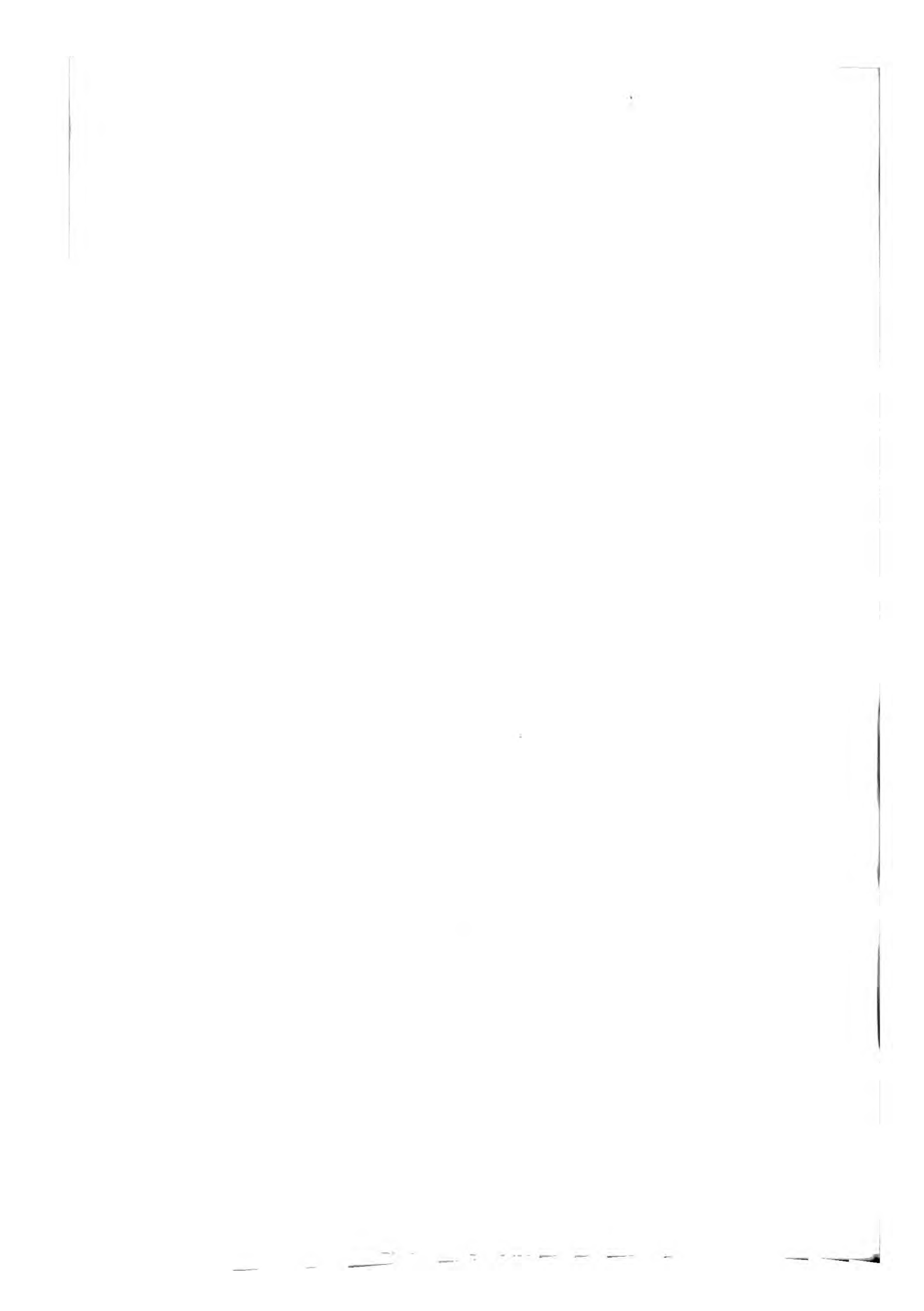
XV. MISSEL OR MISTLE THRUSH.

(*Turdus viscivorus.*)

THIS bird is common here. It is one of the largest of its tribe, being two inches longer than the Song Thrush, and of a paler colour. Not having a drawing from life of the adult, I insert a young one; also a young Ring Ouzel (*Turdus torquatus*) in its first plumage, as many people may not have had an opportunity of seeing it in that condition. Many young birds are spotted in youth which are plain-coloured when full grown. This difference occurs in beasts also. Red Deer and Roe Deer, the Wild Boar and the Black Tapir are spotted at first.



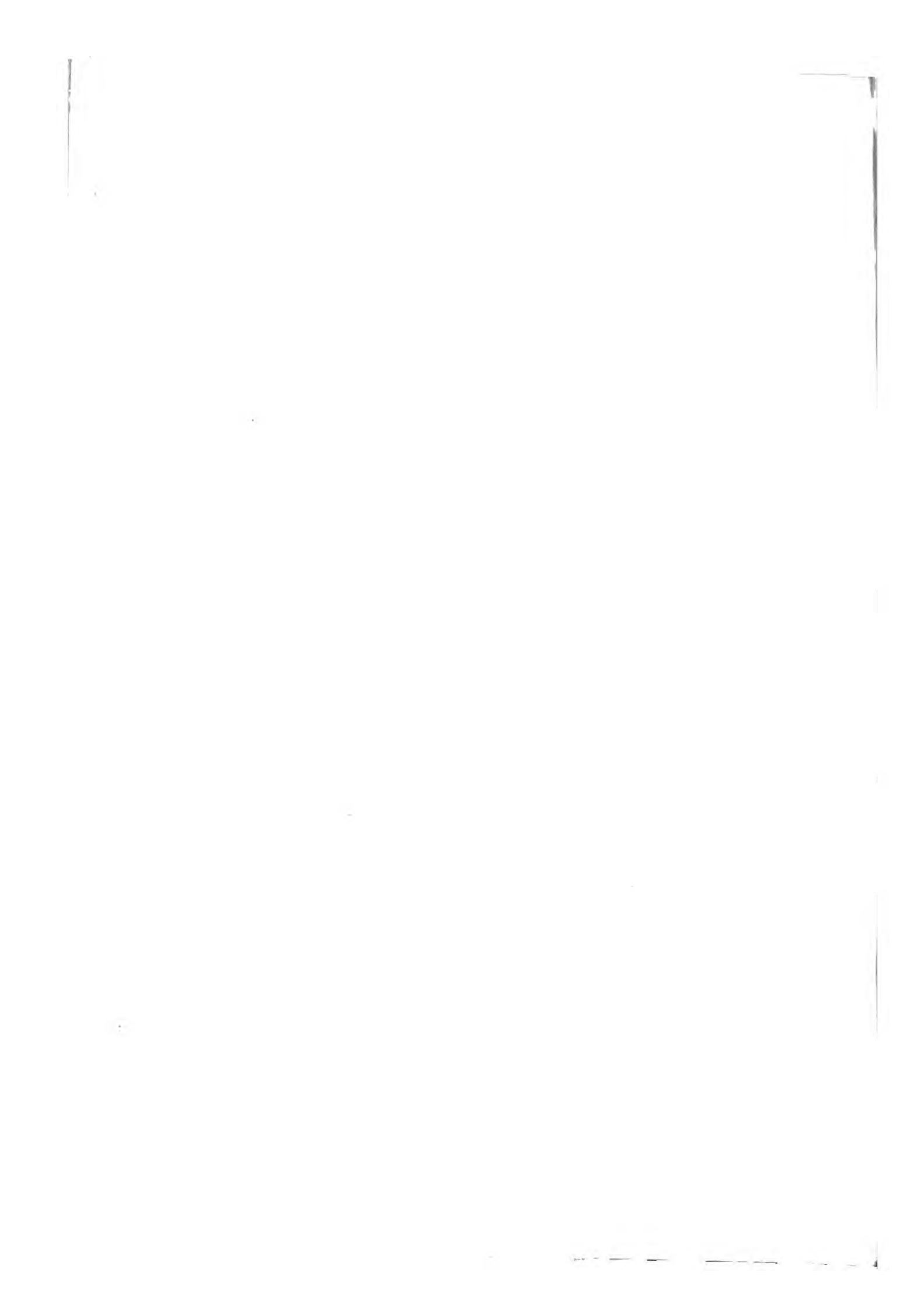




XVI. FIELDFARE.

(*Turdus pilaris.*)

THE drawing is from a fresh specimen shot in Forfarshire, December 1860. Fieldfares come in great numbers to all parts of Scotland in autumn, and are generally accompanied by flights of Redwings. They are very fond of rowan berries, and devour great quantities of them. The unusually large crop we had this year (1894) was entirely cleared off by them in a few days, and the trees left bare.





Fieldfare



XVII. SONG THRUSH.

(*Turdus musicus.*)

I MADE this drawing from a cage-bird borrowed from a workman in the High Street of Glasgow. Thrushes are much more numerous at Roshven now than they were when we first came, probably owing to the increase of cultivation and enlargement of the garden. They stay all winter, unless the frost be unusually severe, and may be heard singing their most beautiful of all birds' songs even in a January morning if the weather be mild. They sing earlier in the morning and later in the evening than Black-birds do. Of course, these birds take their full share of the fruit, but that can be replaced by parcel post—the songs cannot. Thrushes abound in summer in the birch woods as well as in the garden here.

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Song Thrush



XVIII. RED WING.

(*Turdus iliacus.*)

THIS drawing is from a bird caught alive in a feeble and famished state on the snow near Ayr, in the severe frost at Christmas 1860. I have seen them feeding greedily on the berries of the yew tree. They do not seem to be so hardy as Blackbirds, or so able to stand privation, although they come to us from cold countries. I have met with them in Iceland, and heard their pretty thrush-like song.

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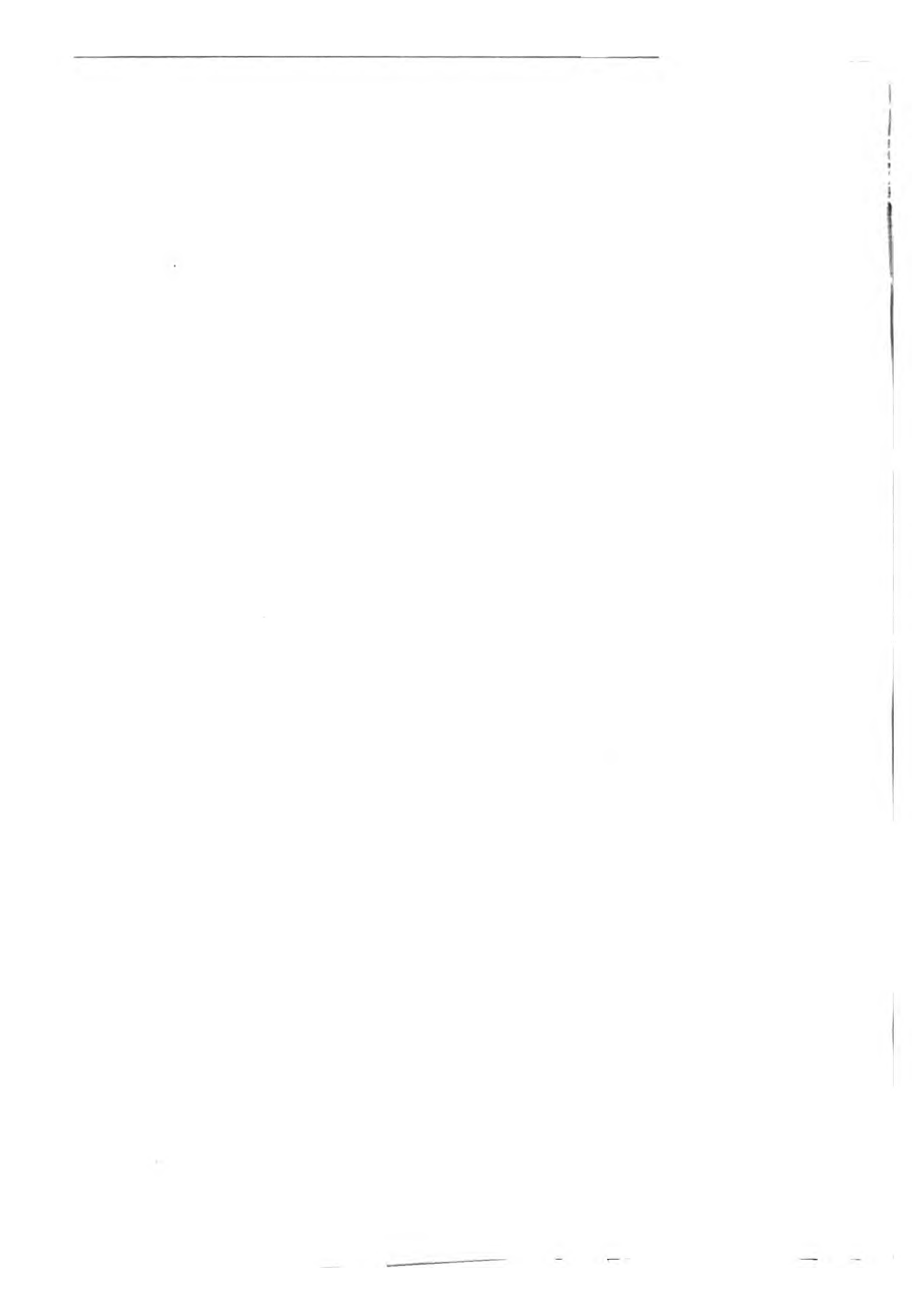
Redwing



XIX. BLACKBIRD.

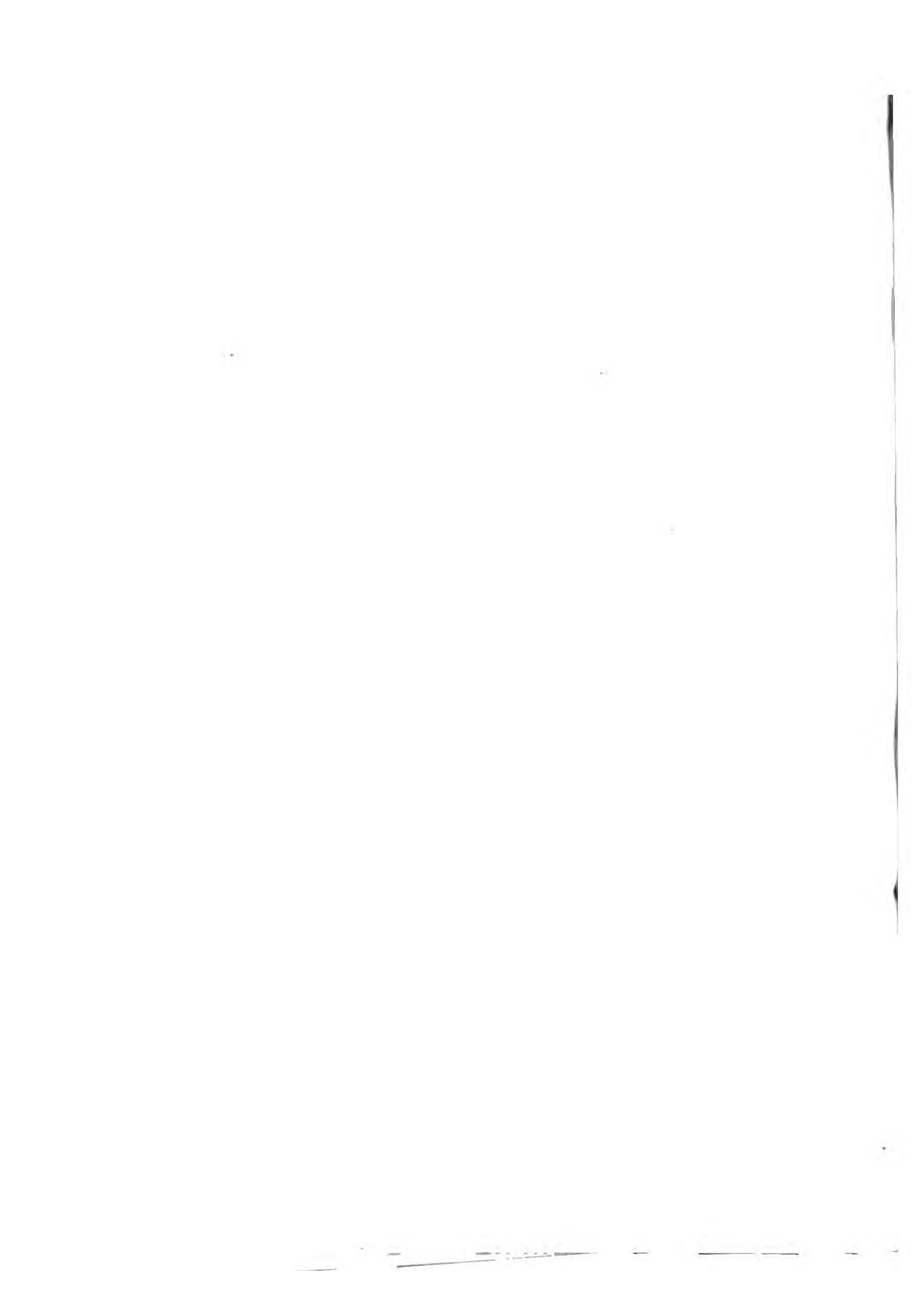
(*Turdus merula.*)

THIS drawing is from a caged bird. The Blackbird is common here, but keeps mostly to the garden. It begins to sing in March, and prefers doing so in an elevated situation—the top of a tree, or even on the roof of the house—principally in the afternoon. The female is brown and the young spotted brown; neither have the bright yellow bill of the cock. The Blackbird finds it a good plan when in search of worms to stamp on the ground, which it does energetically with both feet at a time. The worms, supposing that a mole causes the earthquake, come to the surface. I used to have a difficulty in distinguishing clearly between the song of the Blackbird and the Thrush before I lived so much among them, so I got a young Blackbird and kept it in a cage, that I might know the song better, hoping to hear it “warble its native wood-notes wild,” but was disappointed; it only made feeble attempts to whistle a tune. Both Thrushes and Blackbirds come to the windows for food in winter. The Blackbird is fierce and greedy, and drives away the smaller birds.





Blackbird



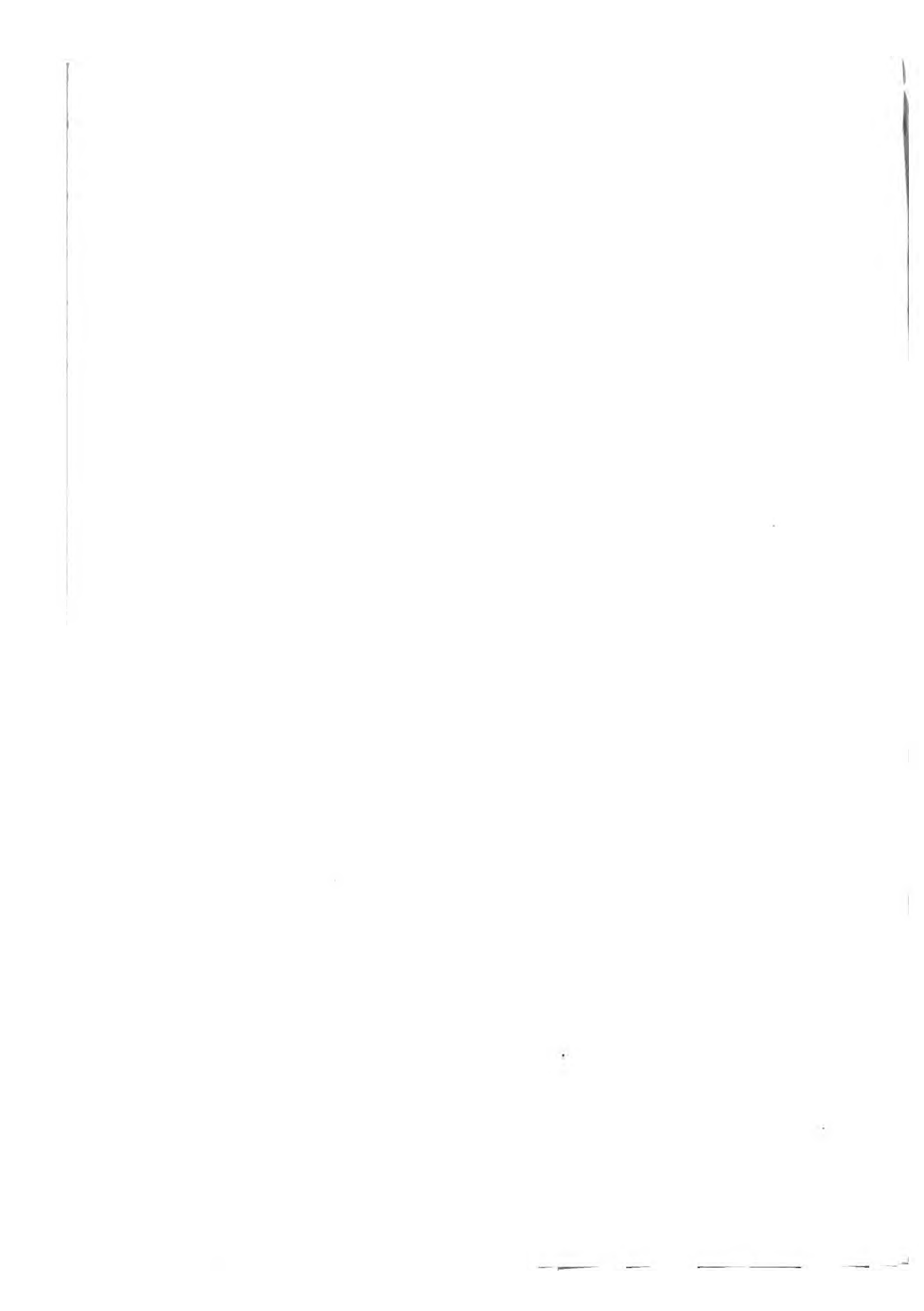
XX. PIED BLACKBIRD.

THE Pied specimen of the common Blackbird was shot at Kinloch Moidart. It is not very uncommon to see a Blackbird with one or two white feathers, but it is rare to see one so well marked as this.





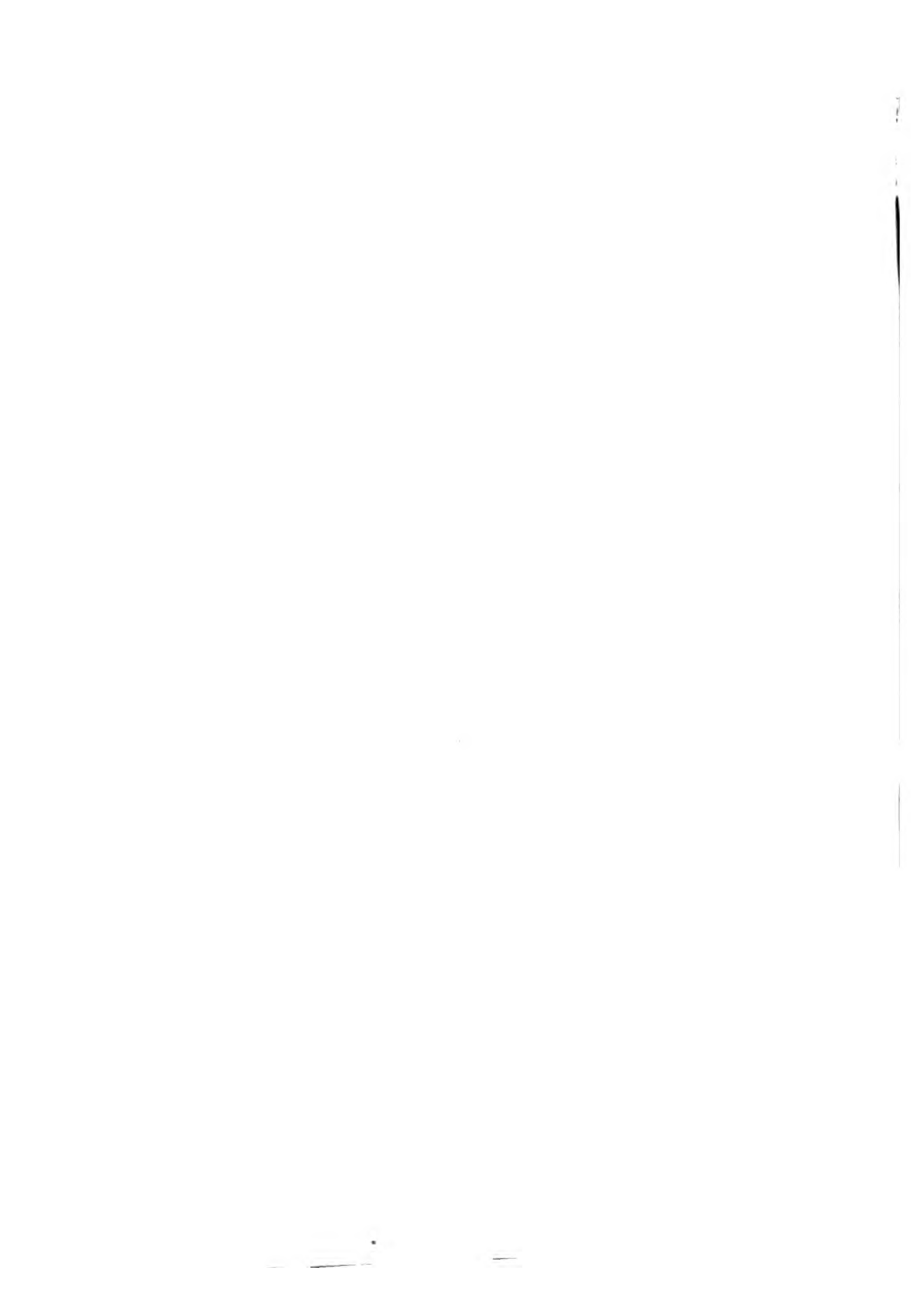
Pied Blackbird



XXI. RING OUZEL.

(*Turdus torquatus.*)

RING OUZELS breed in considerable numbers on the hills of Moidart. A number of them come at early morning usually and attack the gooseberries in our garden at Roshven. They all disappear about the end of September. The drawing is from one caught alive after it had been wounded. The mountain ash berries (or rowans), which the bird is represented eating, are a favourite food.





Ring Angel

XXII. HEDGE SPARROW.

(*Accentor modularis.*)

DRAWN from life. The Hedge Sparrow is common here. It sings sweetly, sometimes even in winter. It inhabits the garden, and comes to the window for crumbs in hard weather.

There were no Common Sparrows here when we came first, nor for many years afterwards. Since they came, the Yellow Hammer has decreased.



B

Hedge-sparrow

XXIII. ROBIN.

(*Erythaca rubecula.*)

ROBINS are very numerous here, and very tame; they frequently come into the house in winter, which necessitates saucers being set with water and crumbs all about the staircase for their convenience. One used to come in at the dining-room window daily at breakfast time and hop about the table, selecting what it liked best, principally butter, of which it was very fond, then warbling a little song of thanks. One used to come to the kitchen in winter for butter, and also in summer, carrying off some to feed its young.

“One summer (at Doonholm, in Ayrshire) a Robin built its nest in one of the drawing-room curtains, inside where it is looped up. The curtains had to be pushed back every evening to allow the shutters to be shut, but it did not mind that. It reared and took away, I think, six young ones. The next year it built its nest in the footman’s hat in the pantry, but, unfortunately, the pantry had to be painted, and the hat was hung outside the window, and it deserted. Several Robins used to live in the house in winter; they were very tame, and used to sit on the clock on the drawing-room chimneypiece and sing. One of them used always to put itself to bed on the top of the canopy of the bed in one of the spare rooms.”—J. F.

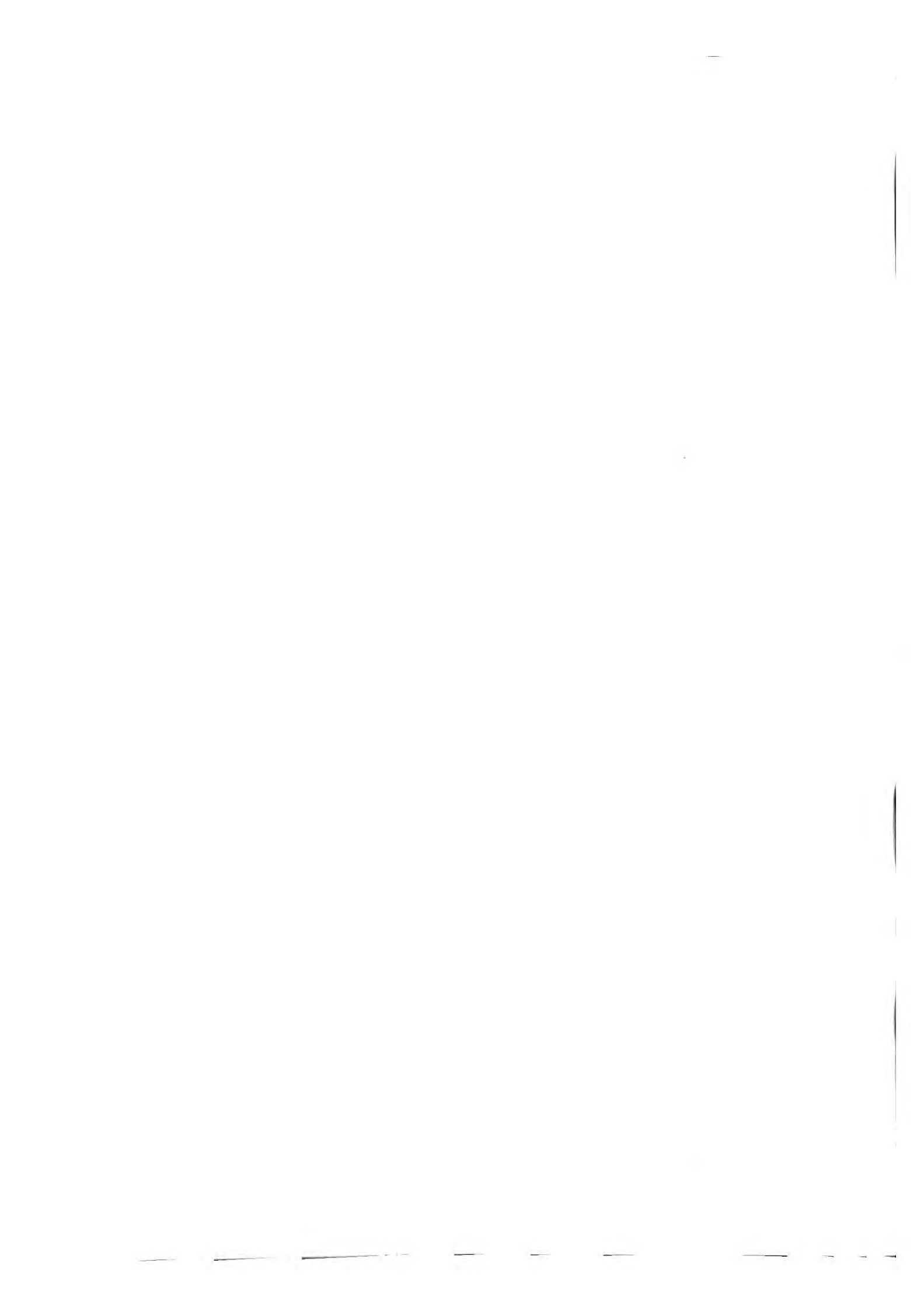
The Robins, old and young, in the picture are from life.





J.B.

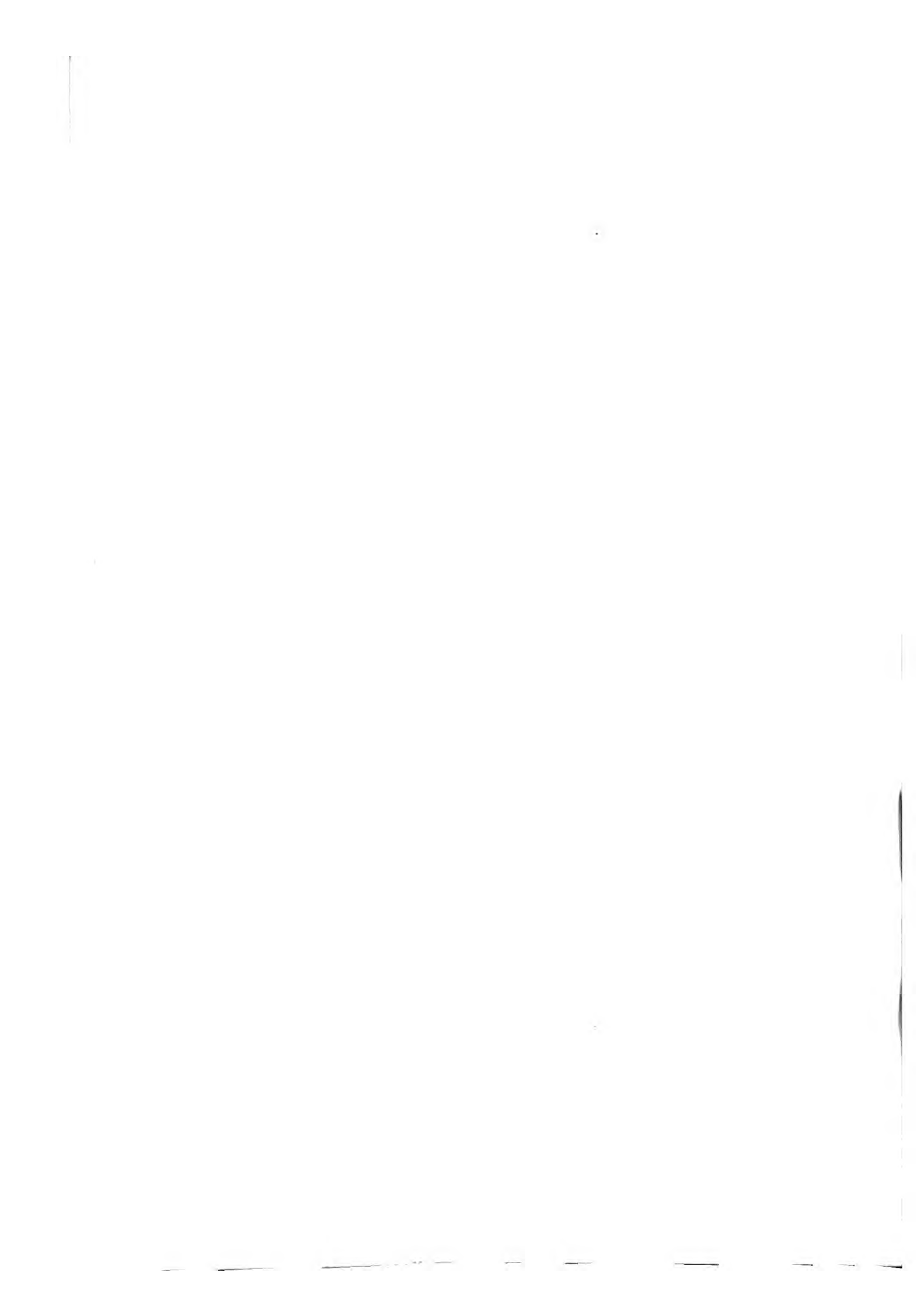
Robin



XXIV. REDSTART.

(*Ruticilla phænicurus.*)

THE Redstart is common in Moidart in summer. The picture represents the male and female that had a nest in the old garden wall. We first caught the cock alive by placing a piece of net over the hole where the nest was, and when its picture had been taken, and it had been set at liberty, the hen was caught in the same manner. There are many of them about the birch woods as well as in the garden. Firetails they are called in England, from the brilliant appearance of their tails when the birds are flying about after insects. The cock is a showy bird, with its red breast and tail and black throat, contrasting with its grey upper part and white forehead. The hen is pale-brown, nearly white on the throat and under parts, the tail red like that of the cock. I have seen some come on board ship in the Bay of Biscay in rough weather in October. Having already depicted them, I did not care to have them caught. They were in the plumage of the female. The young are spotted like young Robins.





Redstart

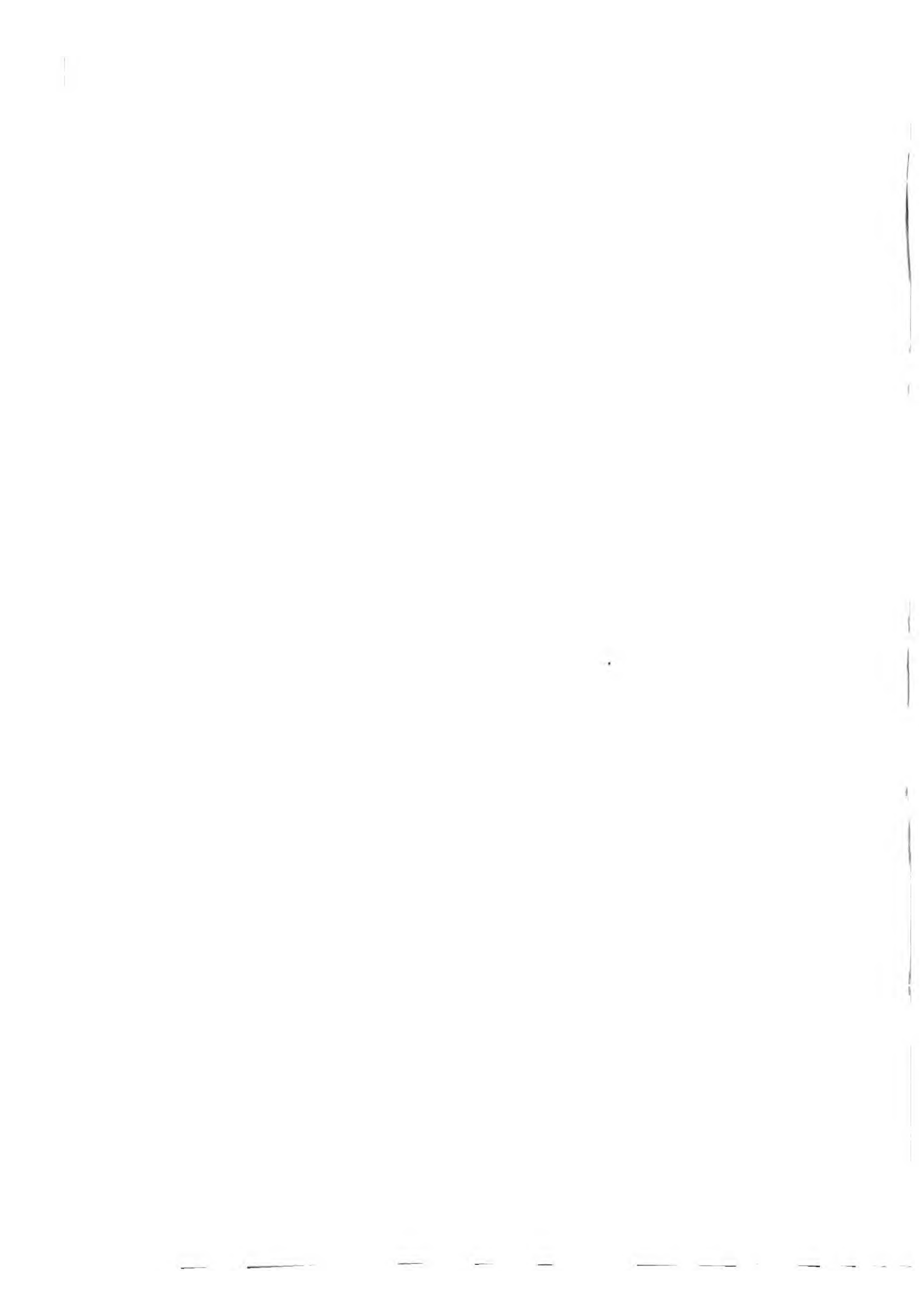


XXV. STONECHAT.

(*Pratincola rubicola.*)

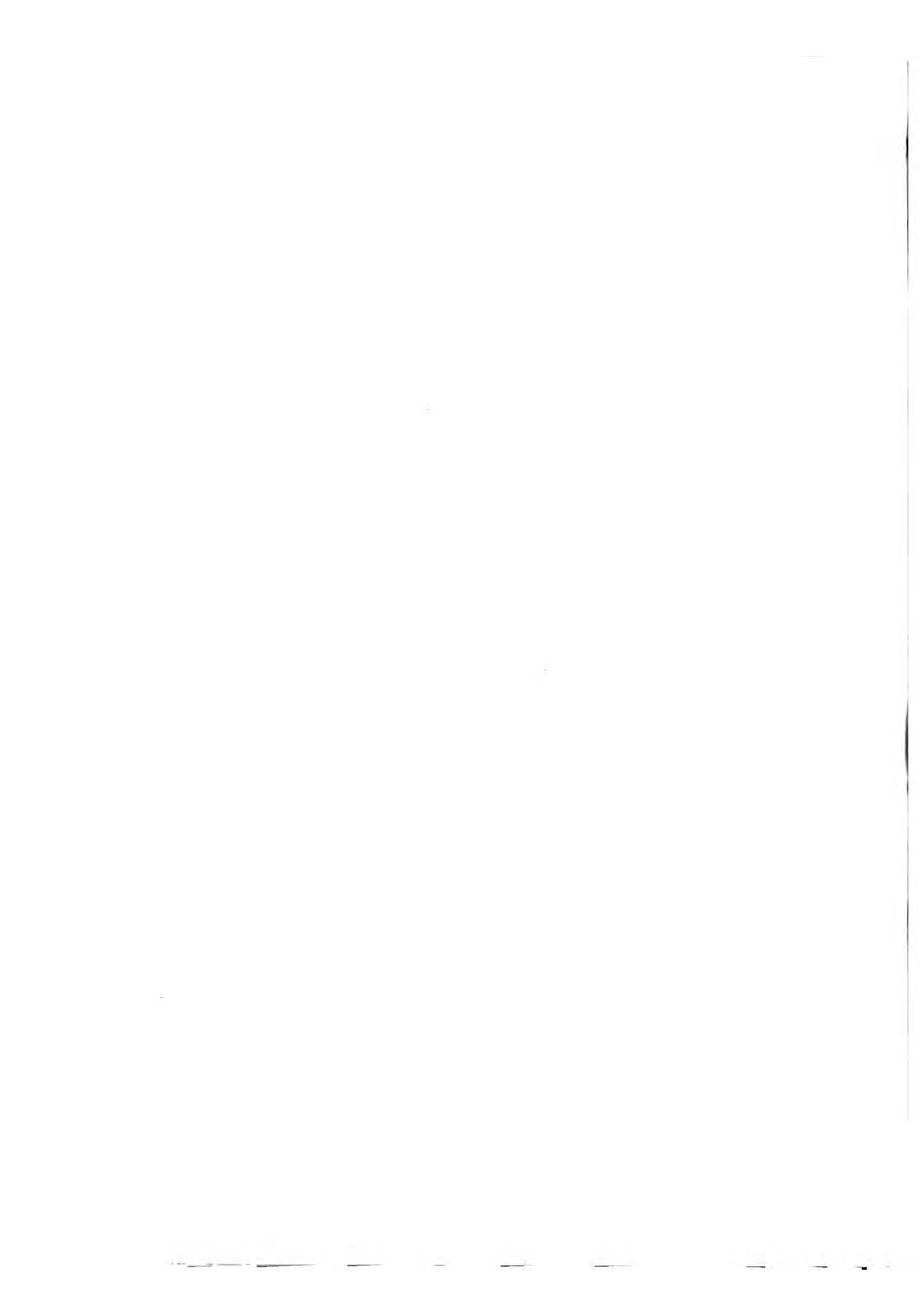
THE Stonechat is less common in Moidart in summer than either the Whinchat or the Wheatear, but seems to remain all the year—at least we have seen it late in autumn. The plate represents the male, female, and young bird.

In voice and manner this bird resembles the Whinchat. It makes its nest in low bushes, and remains during winter. The male is bright and conspicuous, and generally perches on the top of the bush.





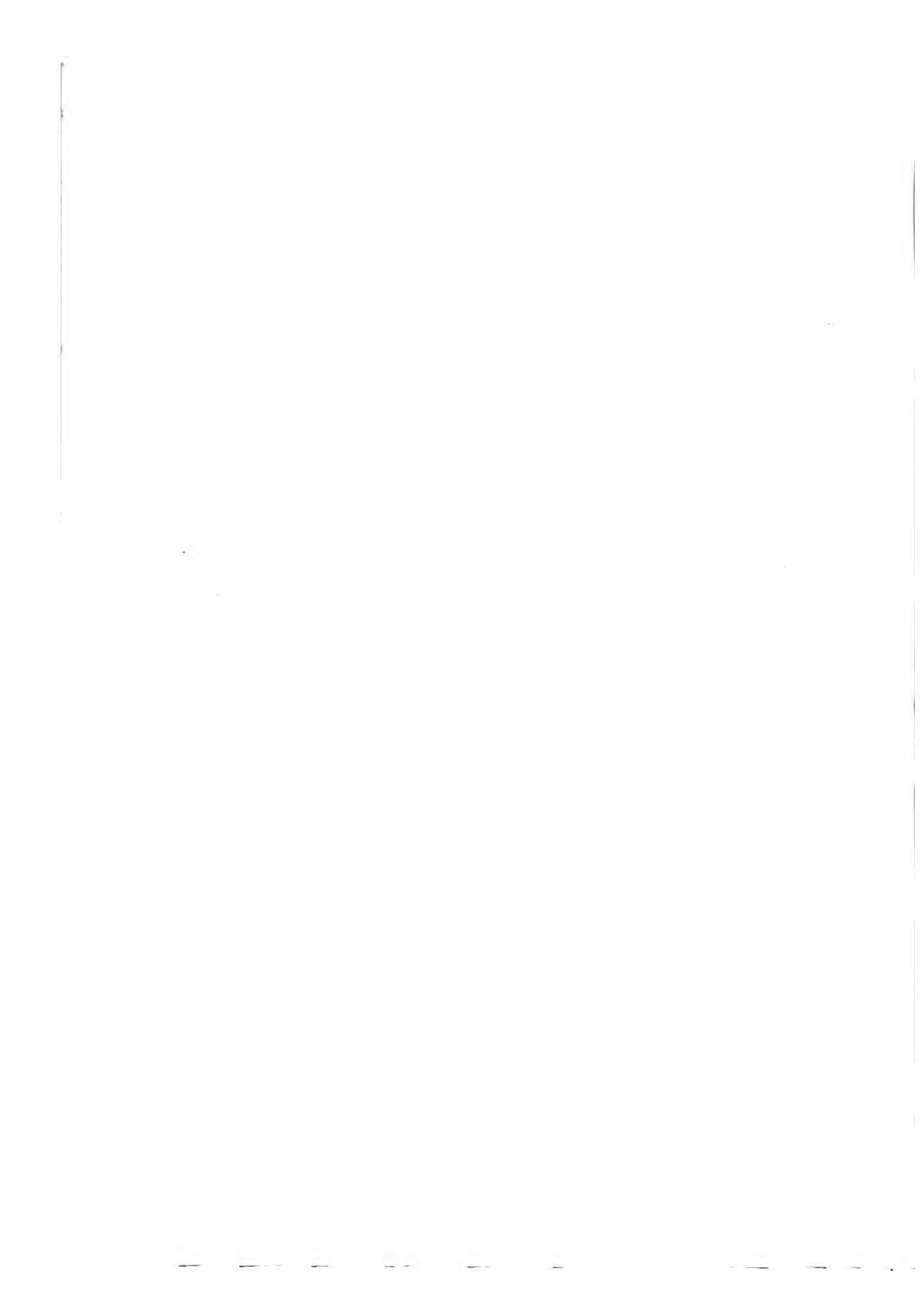
Stonechat



XXVI. WHINCHAT.

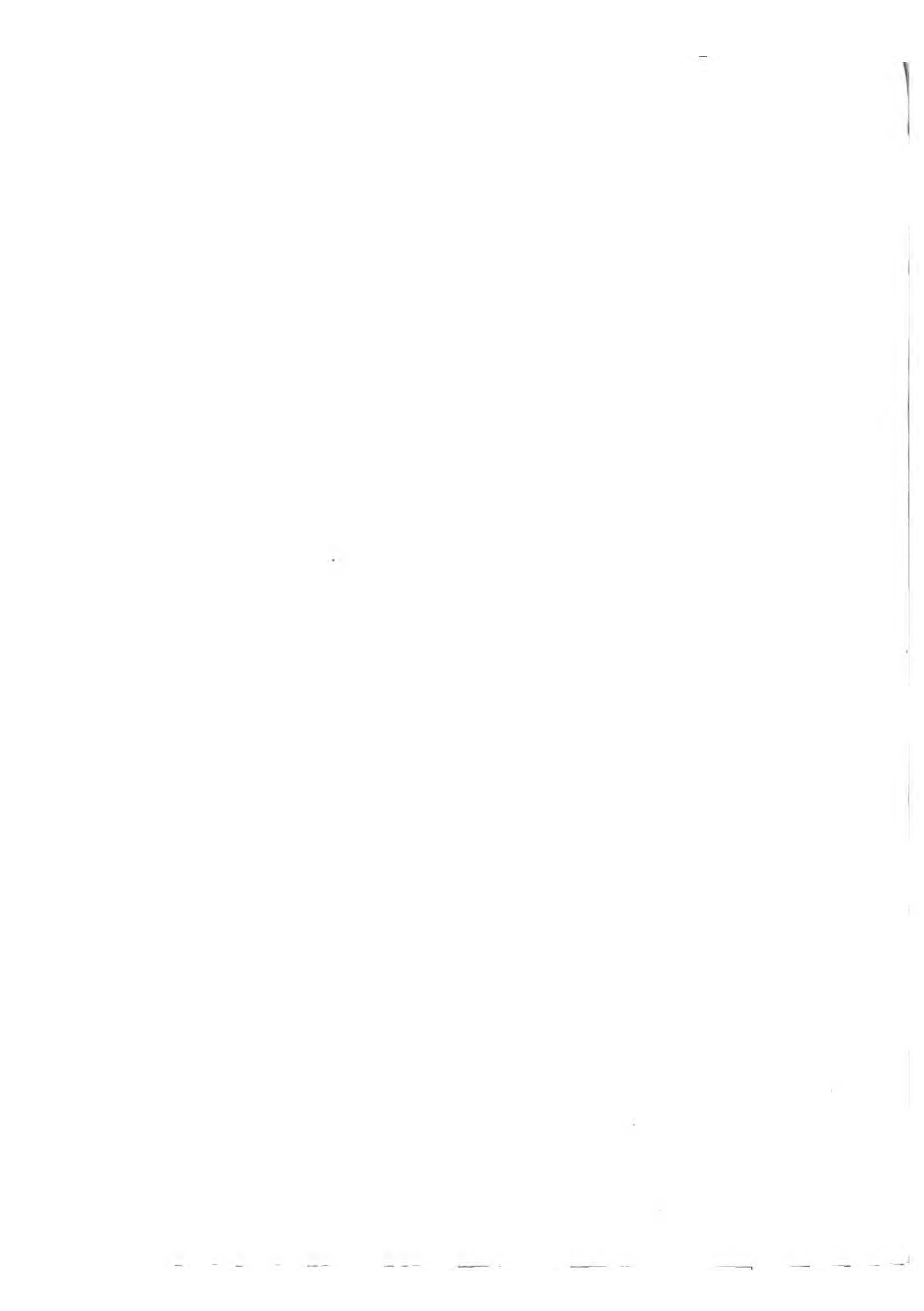
(*Pratincola rubetra.*)

THE young Whinchats in the picture are from life ; the old birds (male above, female below) are from fresh specimens. Whinchats are common at Roshven among the whin (furze), which thrives particularly well in some parts of the low ground near the sea. They are very lively, and make a clicking sound, such as is used to make a pony go on.





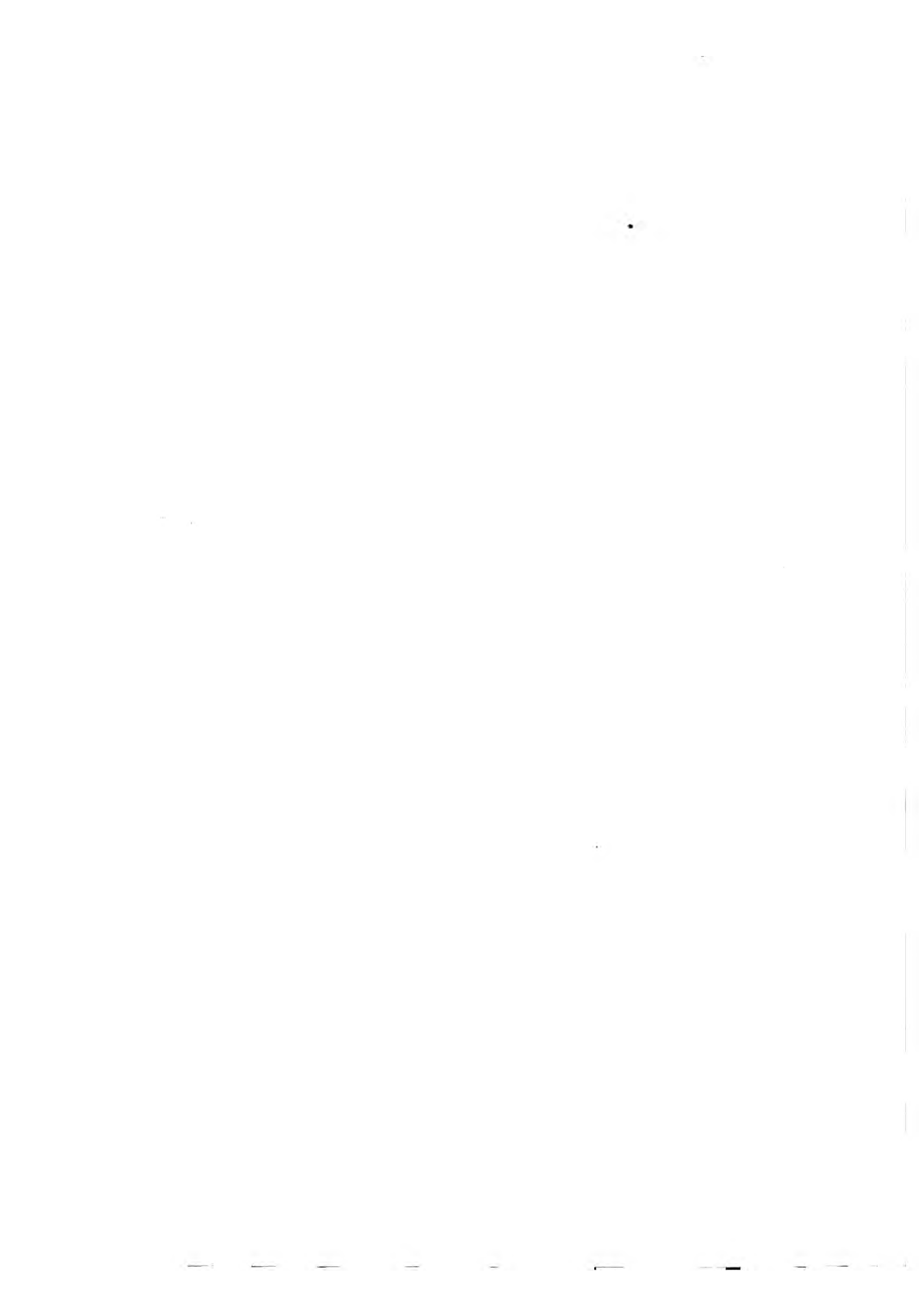
Whinchat

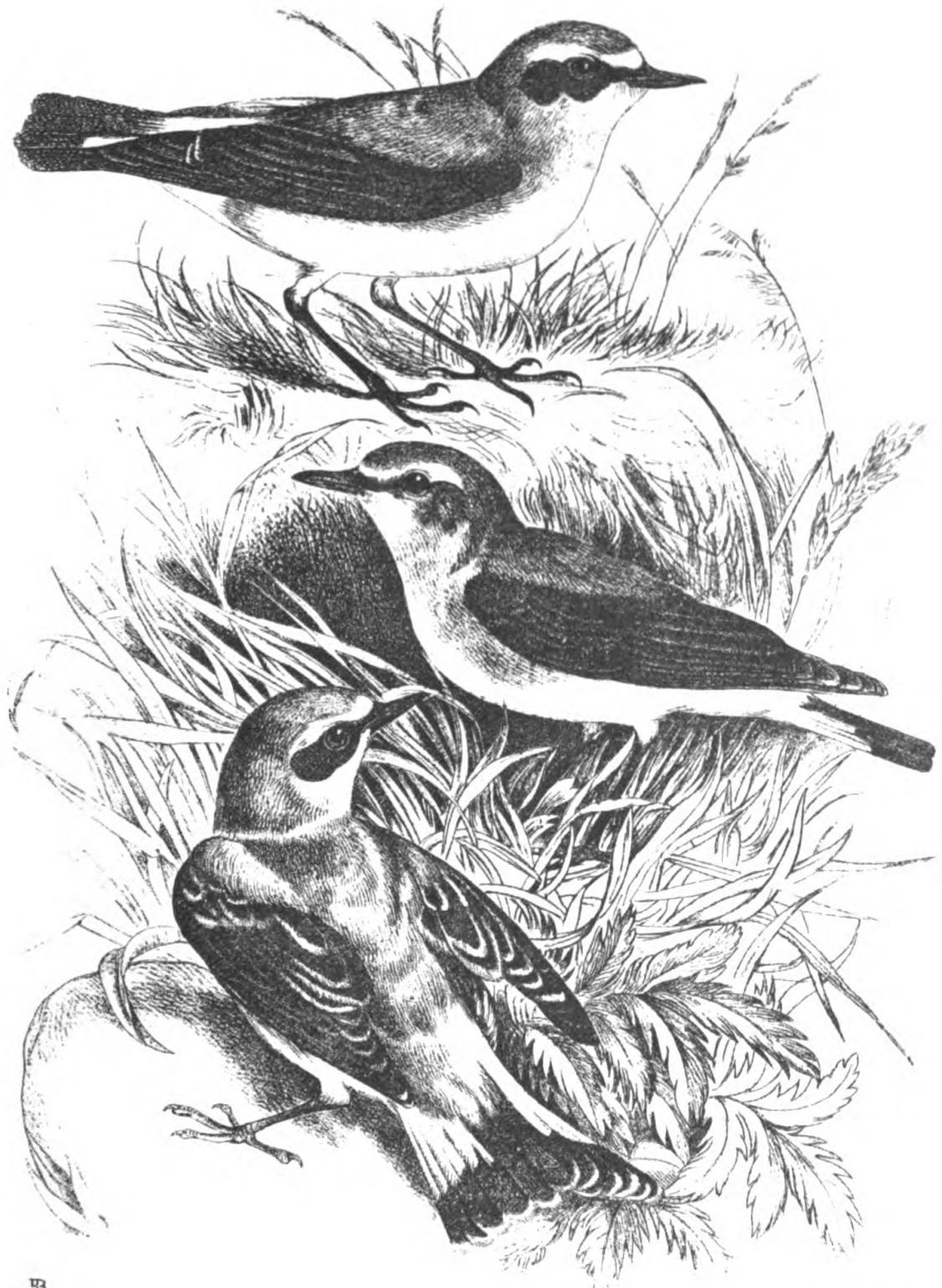


XXVII. WHEATEAR.

(*Saxicola ananthe.*)

THE Wheatear is common here as a summer visitant, inhabiting the open ground, and making its nest on the ground or in turf banks. Male and female are represented. The female is duller in colour than the male, and without so dark a mark at the eye.





Ⓕ

Wheatear



XXVIII. WILLOW WARBLER.

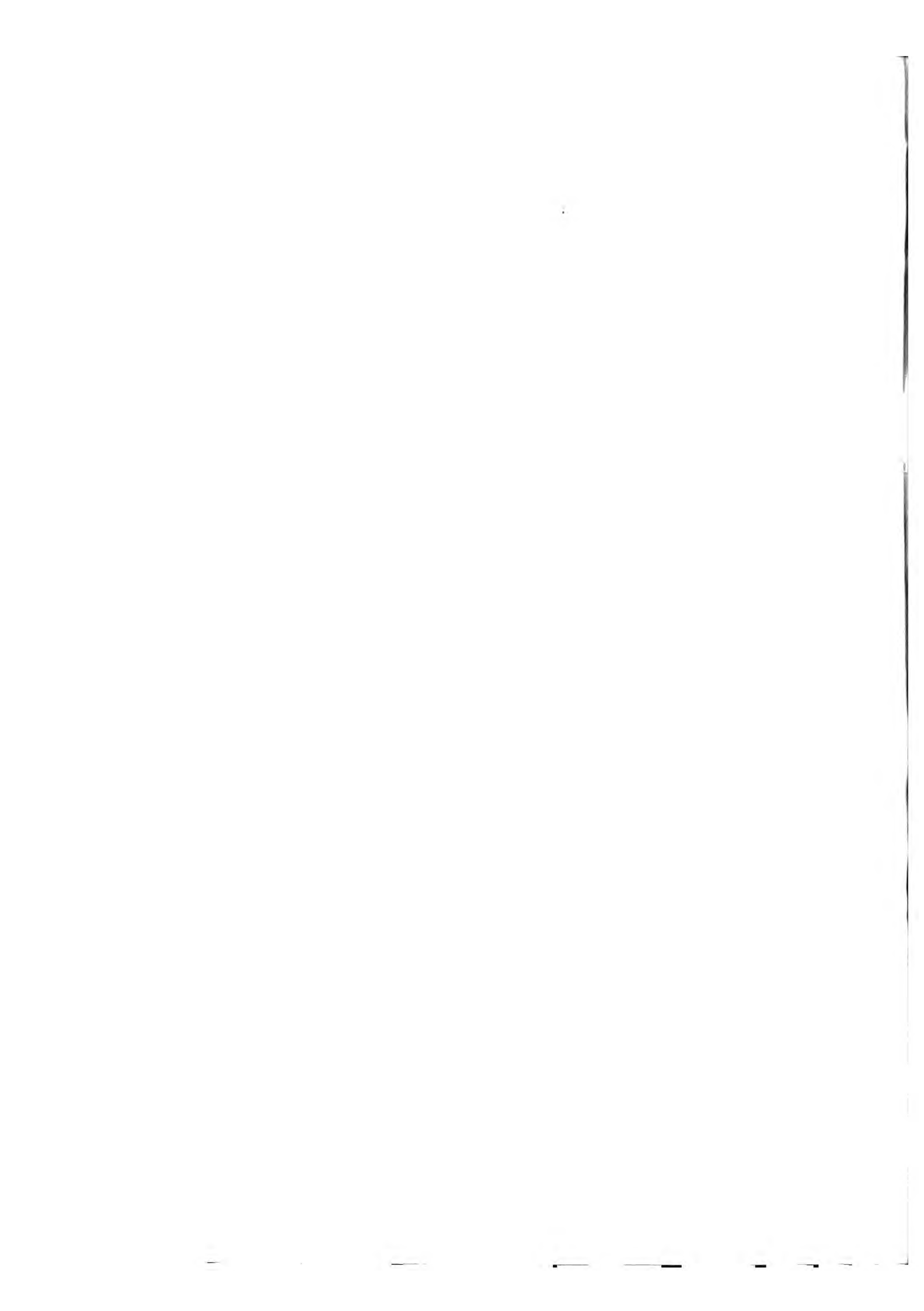
(Phylloscopus trochilus.)

THE nest of the Willow Warbler is from nature, and the birds, young and old, from life. The old bird was caught by putting the young ones in a cage. The whole were replaced when the drawing had been made; after which the young were reared by their parents as if nothing had happened. The bird is common in Moidart. Its note is sweet and soft.





Willow Warbler



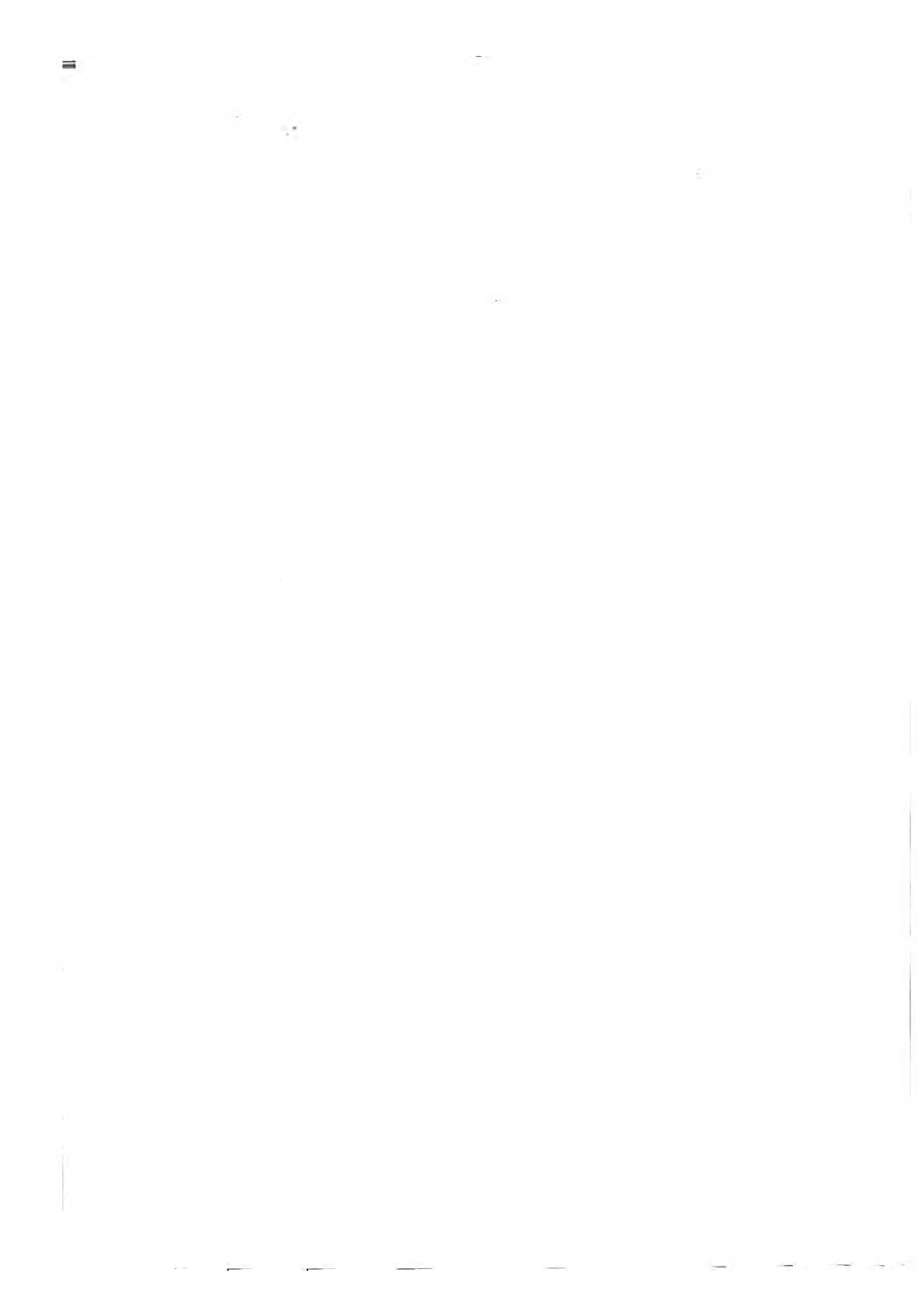
XXIX. WOOD WARBLER.

(*Phylloscopus sibilatrix.*)

FROM a fresh specimen shot at Roshven, where it seems to be a regular summer visitor, though Yarrell says he is not aware of any record of its appearance in Scotland.

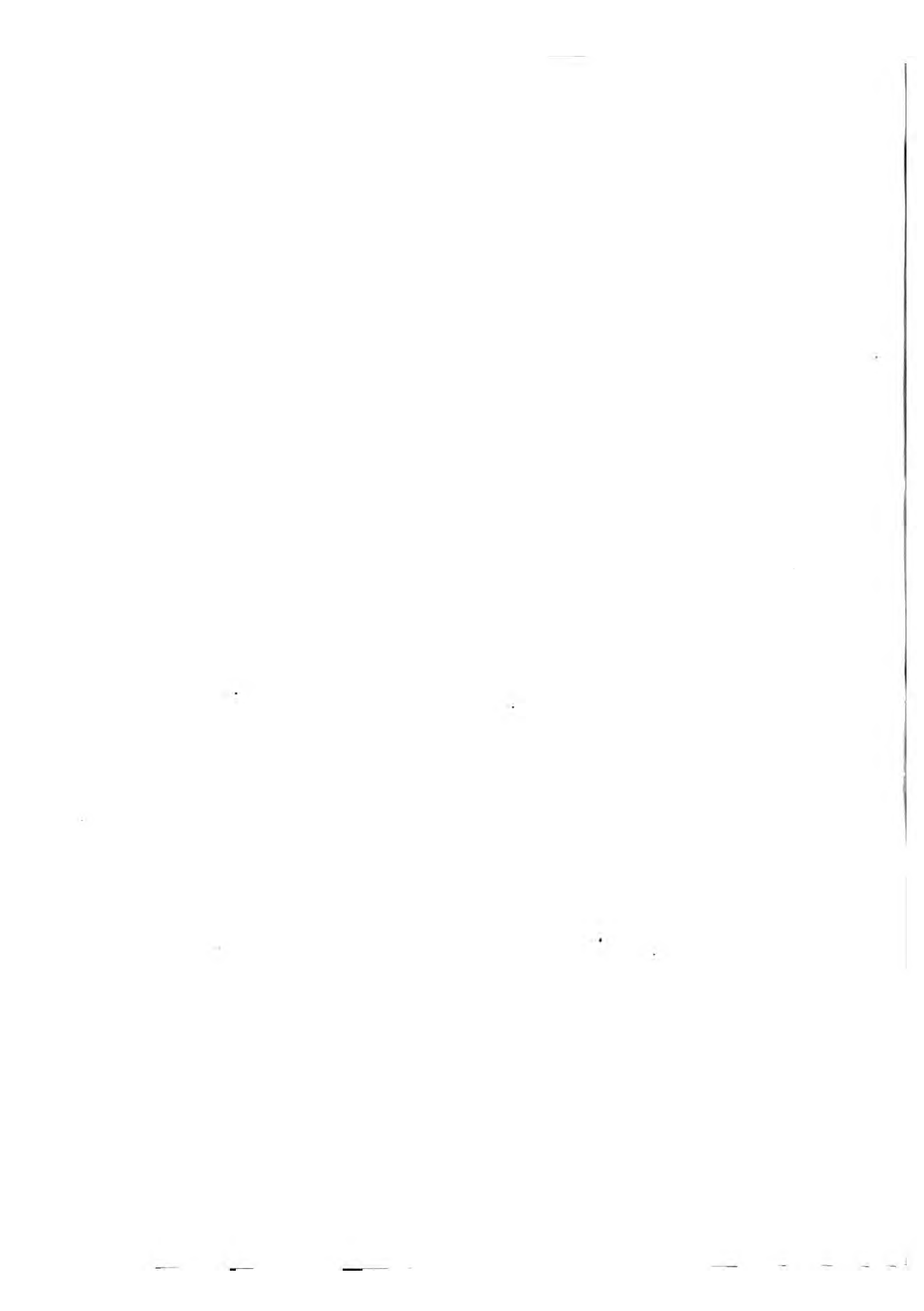
It inhabits an old fir wood. It is less common with us than either the Willow Warbler or the White-throat.

The White-throat is common here in summer, but not very numerous. It keeps very much out of sight, in "leafy labyrinths," hunting for insects among the bushes and under the leaves. Unlike many of the soft-billed, insect-eating summer visitors, its notes are rather harsh.





Wood-warbler



XXX. NIGHTINGALE.

(*Daulias luscinia.*)

THE illustration is a sketch from life done in the Zoological Gardens, London, some years ago. It was easier to get near it there than when flying about the hedges in England, although I have been close enough to one near Canterbury to observe how it swelled out its throat when singing. I have seen and heard many a one since then. At a villa near Florence, where I was staying, one came to a bush near my window and sang every fine night in May. At Giandola, a small town on the way from the Riviera to Turin, they positively swarmed, and never ceased their songs day or night. In the midst of their music I chanced to hear a Blackbird singing, and did not feel inclined to make an invidious comparison.

I have perched the Nightingale on an olive, as it was the commonest tree there. It was about the last week in May, and the natives were busy gathering the ripe black fruit, whipping down the berries with long sticks from the branches which they could not reach by climbing. Sheets were spread under the trees to receive them, and the women collected them in baskets. They were afterwards crushed by a millstone to extract the oil.

Lady Margaret Cameron of Locheil has kindly sent me the following:—

“Memorandum made in 1889.

“ACHNACARY.

“A Nightingale was heard for three weeks, and also seen, during the month of June 1889. Thermometer 90 in the shade in May. Very hot all May, June, and July, but cold and wet in the south and east of England.”

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The Nightingale.

J.B.

XXXI. BLUE TIT.

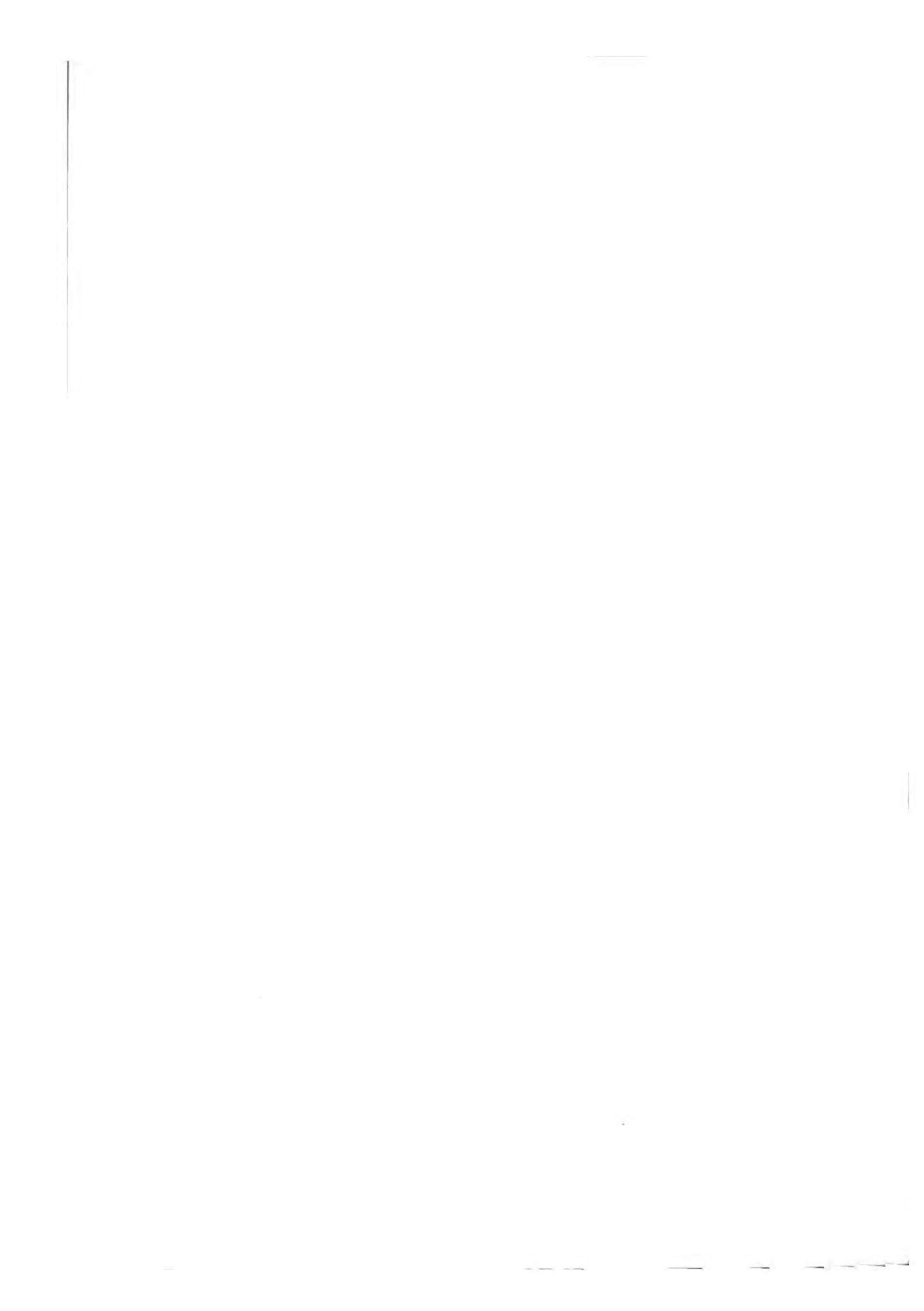
(*Parus cœruleus.*)

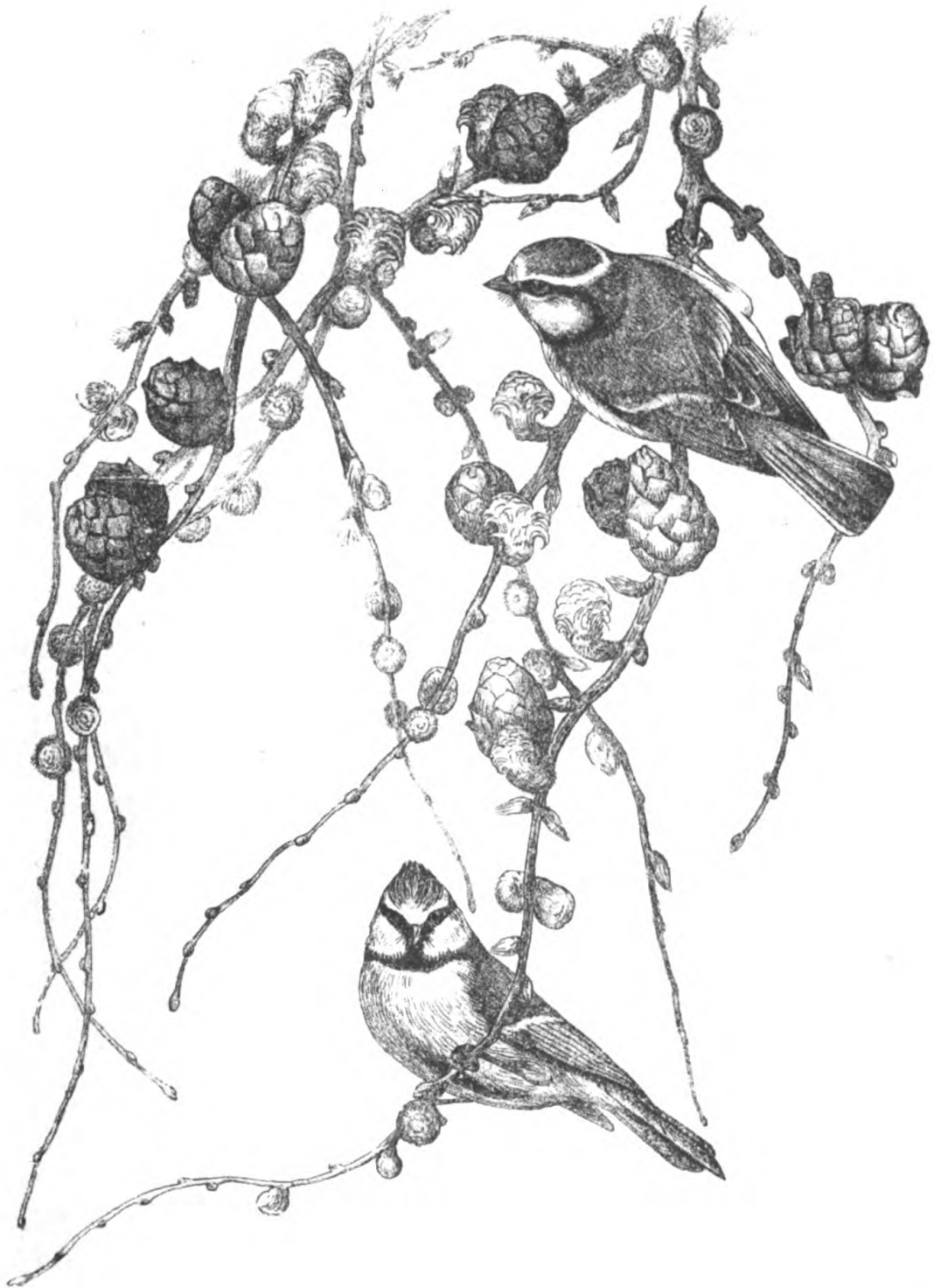
THE Blue Tit is common here. It is active and various in its attitudes; has a pale yellow breast and blue bonnet, and is altogether a very attractive little bird. It is quite worth while to hang out a half cocoanut at the window for them to pick at. They also will eat meat or pick a bone, holding it with their claws as the other Tits do.

They were done from live birds, caught in winter, and kept in a cage for a few days to have their attitudes studied and their portraits taken, when they were let go again.

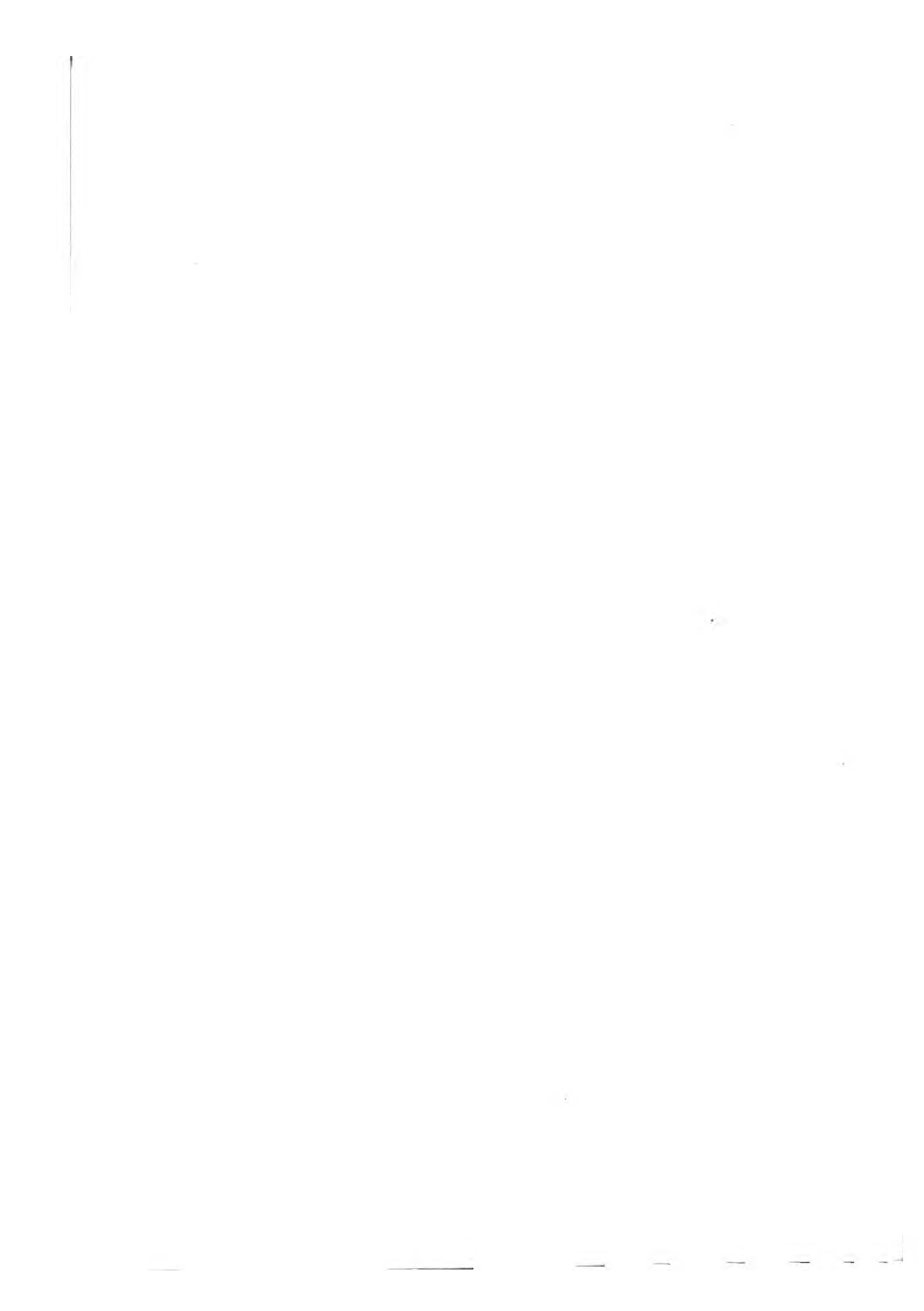
Besides the Blue Tit, we have observed the Great Tit or Ox-eye, the Cole Tit, and the Long-tailed Tit in Moidart, but no other *paridæ*.

I have placed them on boughs of larch in flower, when the leaf-buds are just bursting, and while the last year's cones are still adhering.





^B
Blue Tit



XXXII. LONG-TAILED TIT.

(*Acredula caudata.*)

THE Long-tailed Tit is very common here, and may be seen in large family parties in summer, among the twigs of the birches. In winter likewise, in even larger parties. They are cheerful, loquacious little birds. I have not seen them in the garden here, nor at the window. They are easily seen and recognised by their long tapered tails. The plumage is black and white, with a tinge of dull pink on the sides, and the eyelids are red. The male and female are much alike.

The Long-tailed Tits were obtained in Kinloch Moidart, where they had bred. They had pink eyelids, a point which Yarrell does not mention, but in other respects agreed with his description.



HR

Longtailed Tit

XXXIII. SKYLARK.

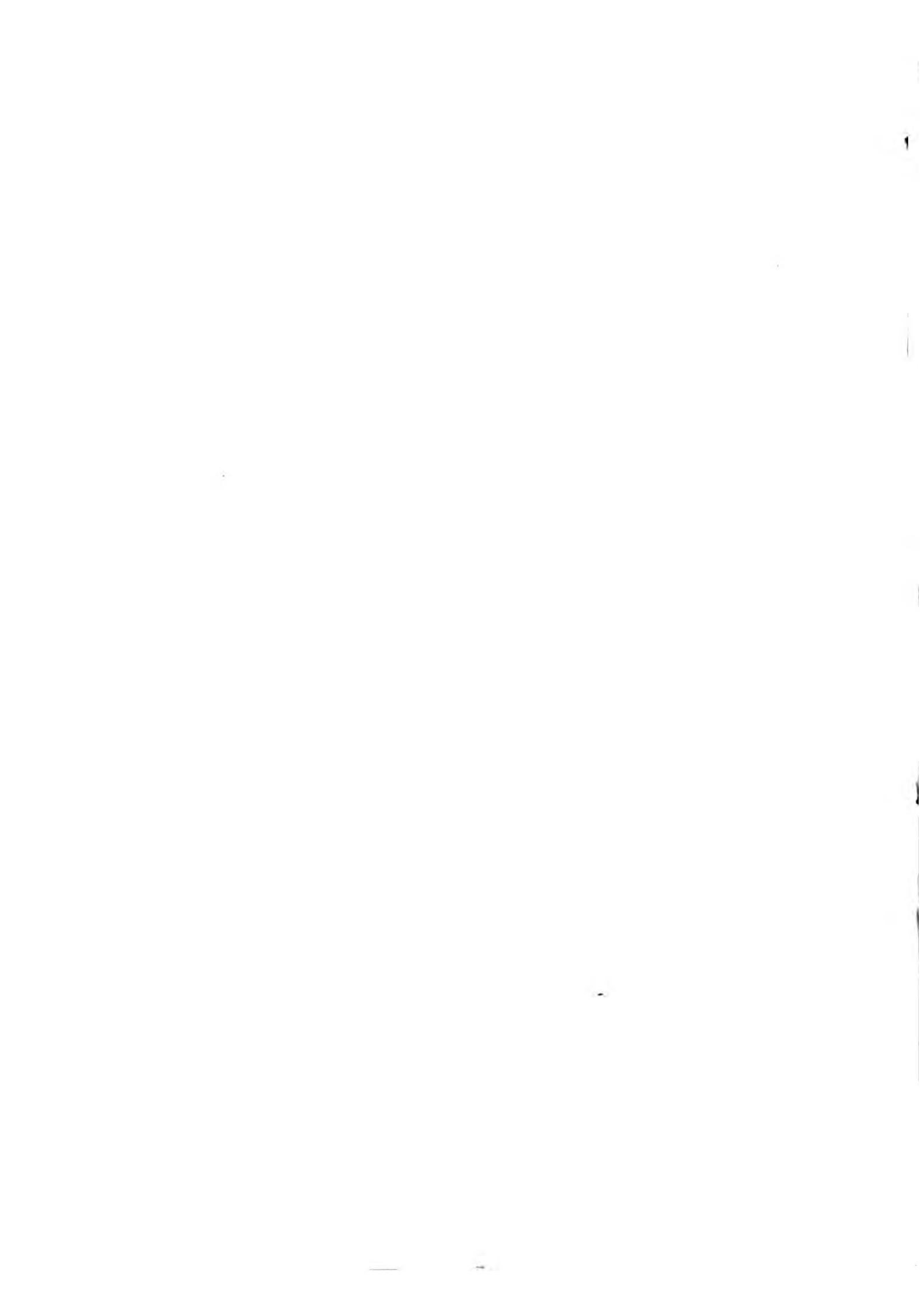
(*Alauda arvensis.*)

THE illustration was done from a caged bird lent me by a workman, who had a variety of birds in his room, in the High Street, opposite Old Glasgow College. There were many Skylarks kept in the slums of Glasgow. I used often to hear them singing at the windows of houses in the Vennel while I walked in the College Green. It was rather touching to see them in that smoky place flapping their wings and singing their *gloria in excelsis*, with their feet on a withered turf, and with a board or canvas over their low, dark cages to prevent them trying to fly upwards to the light.

It is pleasanter to see a Canary in such circumstances. "Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage" to it; it is "home, sweet home." It has never known another, nor a better.

We have no Skylarks in this place; the ground does not suit them. They inhabit the open ground near Loch Sheil all the year round, and begin to sing in February.





XXXIV. SNOW BUNTING.

(*Plectrophanes nivalis.*)

I HAVE only seen Snow Buntings once at Roshven. I saw them frequently in Iceland, and have heard that they are not very uncommon in the North of Scotland. Those in the picture were shot in autumn picking about for seeds by the roadside.





Rosheen. October. JB

XXXV. BLACK-HEADED BUNTING.

(*Emberiza ridibundus.*)

A FEW pairs of this pretty little bird are to be found in Moidart,

“By the rushy fringed bank,
Where grow the willow and the osier dank.”

The female differs from the male in having the head brown instead of black. I have seen the male flying about among the saugh bushes with a caterpillar in its beak, evidently going to feed its young, but I did not find the nest. I have never seen it in winter, nor near a house. It is sometimes called the Reed Bunting, from its habit of frequenting marshy places.





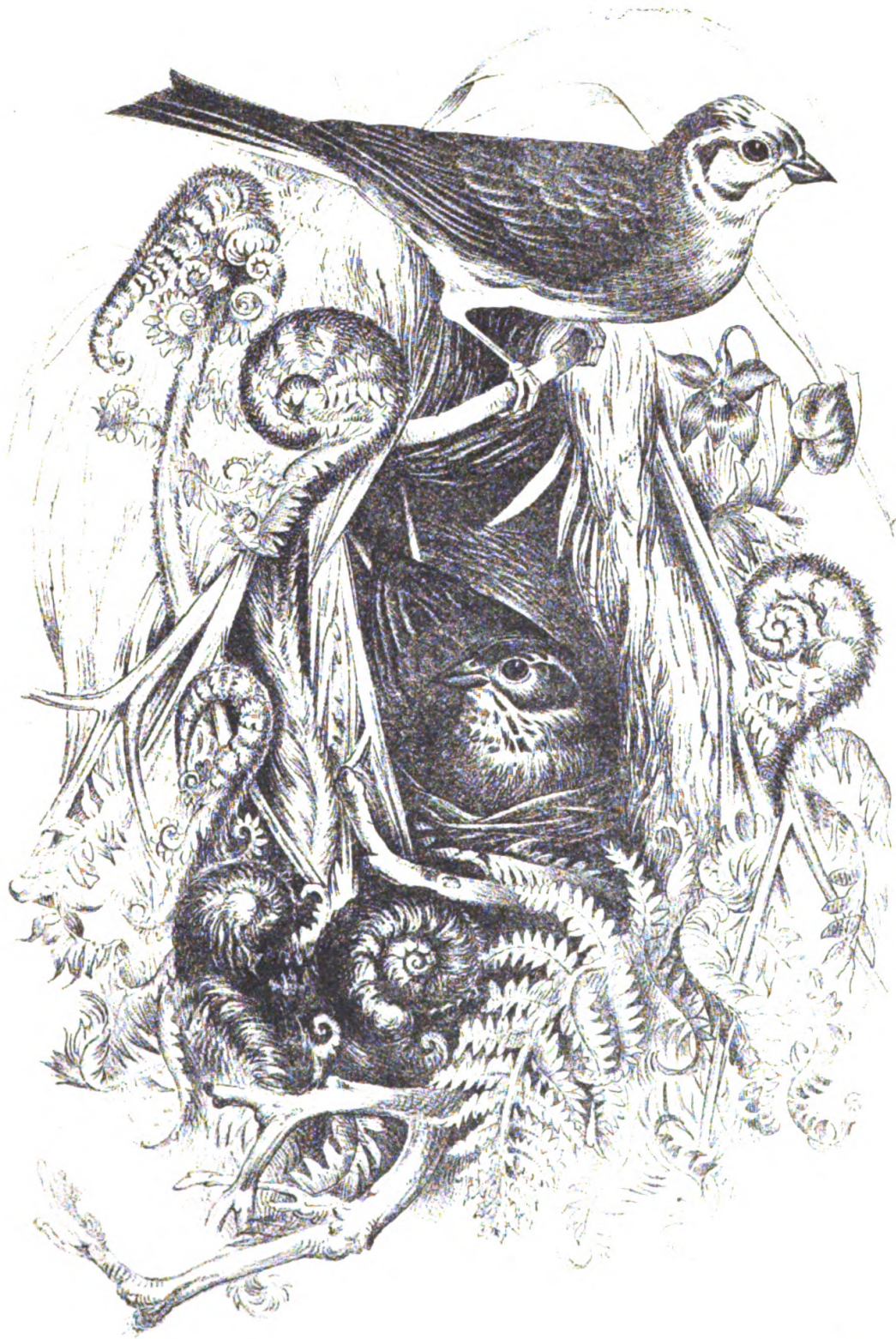
Turdus



XXXVI. YELLOW HAMMER.

(*Emberiza citrinella.*)

THE Yellow Hammer's nest among the uncurling ferns and the dog violets is from nature at Roshven. The bird remained on its eggs while the drawing was being done. Yellow Hammers used to be very common here before the Sparrow invaded us.



Yellow Hammer



XXXVII. MOUNTAIN FINCH OR BRAMBLING.

(*Fringilla montifringilla.*)

THIS plate was drawn from a caged bird. We have not seen the Brambling in Moidart.



JB

Mountain Finch

XXXVIII. GOLDEN-CRESTED WREN.

(*Regulus cristatus.*)

THE Golden-crested Wren (so-called) breeds in Moidart. We have had a beautiful nest suspended by four equi-distant pendulous twigs of an old yew tree. The twigs in this picture were drawn from spruce.

We have caught the bird alive here, in the house, in autumn. The crest of the female is yellow, and not nearly so bright as the golden and orange-coloured crown of the male. It has a very sweet little song, which I have heard it give utterance to even in the dead of winter.

They are very combative, and sometimes so deeply engaged in a fight as not to perceive the approach of man.



JB

Golden Crested Wren

XXXIX.

GOLDFINCH.

(*Carduelis elegans.*)

CHAFFINCH.

(*Fringilla cælebs.*)

LINNET.

(*Linota cannabina.*)

LESSER REDPOLL.

(*Linota rufescens.*)

TWITE, OR MOUNTAIN LINNET.

(*Linota flavirostris.*)

I HAVE put the Goldfinch, Chaffinch, Linnets, and Redpoll in the same picture, as they all frequent open ground and feed in grassy, weedy cornfields. I have only seen a Goldfinch once here. They used to be common in the wild parts of Kirkcudbrightshire when there was less cultivation and fewer plantations. They are common in France, where I have seen flocks of them in cornfields, among scarlet wild poppies and "bluets," clinging to the cornstalks and picking the seeds. They enjoy ripe thistle seeds when they come across them. The finest I ever saw were at Constantinople. One of the crew of the steamer I was in had bought them and showed them to me as "beautiful larks." The common Linnet is to be seen here, the Twite still oftener, and the Redpoll most of all. It builds on the apple-trees in the garden a neat little nest, but not quite equal to that of the Chaffinch, who also builds in the apple-trees at the time the tree is in blossom, its grey lichen-covered nest contrasting beautifully with the pink flowers.

The Chaffinch is very numerous here, most obviously so in the winter time, when great flocks of them frequent the bare fields, picking up what seeds they can find (of weeds, probably, as it is long after the corn has been carried). To judge by the plumage they were hen birds, but some of them may have been young males, who do not acquire their bright feathers till spring.

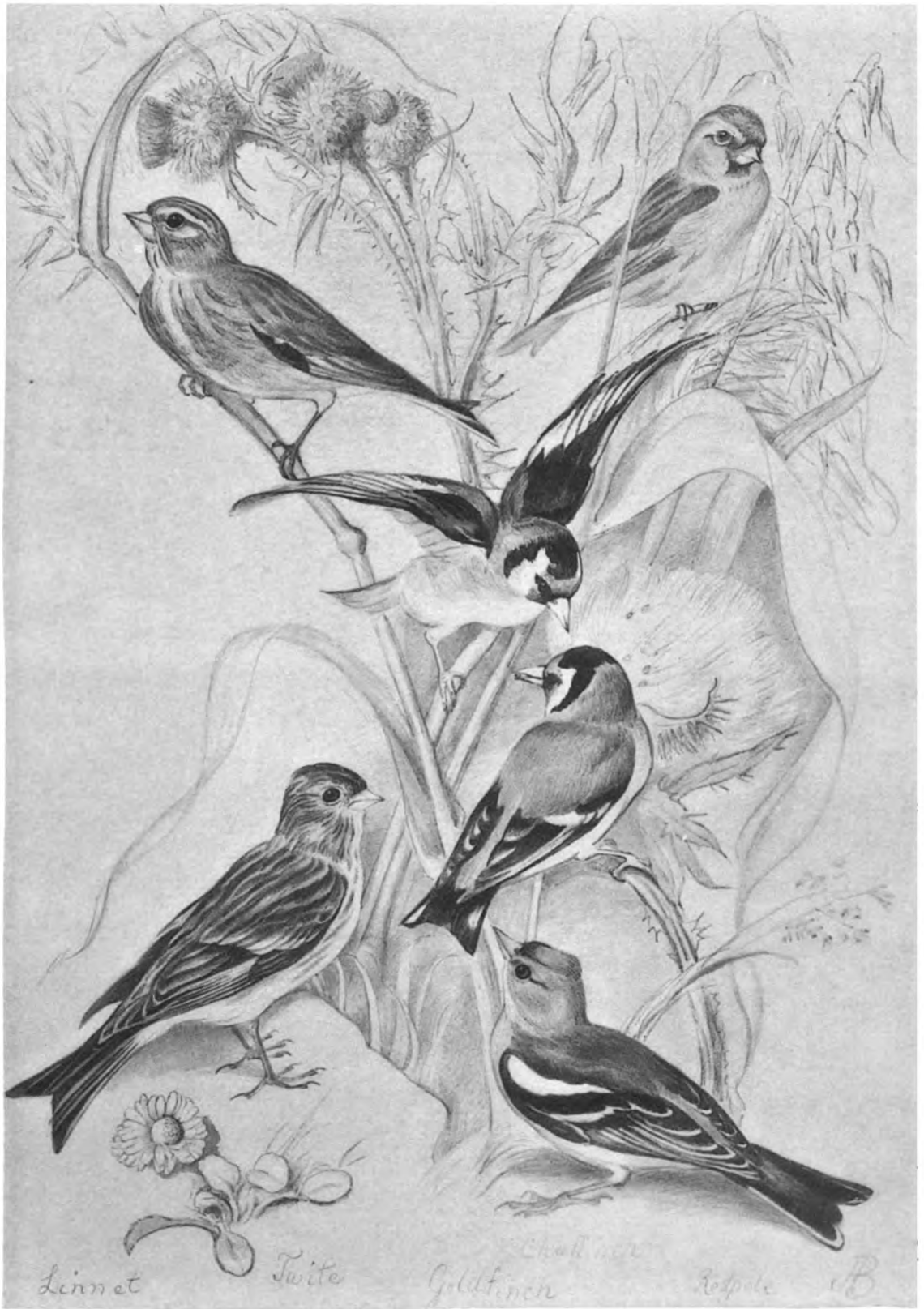
GOLDFINCH—CHAFFINCH—LINNET.

The cocks do not associate with them in winter, though they remain here and come a good deal about the house to be fed, and fight with each other and the Robins for crumbs.

One dark stormy night, in late autumn, I heard a fluttering and tapping at my bedroom window, and, on opening it, a young Chaffinch flew into the room, and after circling about for some time, it finally settled for the night on the bed-rail. In the early dawn it flew out, and, like Bede's sparrow, was no more seen.

Linnets (of sorts) are more or less tinted with rose colour. The common Linnet has it on the breast, the Twite on the rump, the Redpoll on the breast, and also a brighter crimson on the forehead. Linnets fly about in companies, chirping as they fly, and making a noise something like the sound of distant stringed instruments.

The Chaffinch is not so musical. He seems in his song to proclaim himself "a little, wee, wee drunken sowie."



Linnet

Twite

Goldfinch

Chaffin

Redpoll

B

X L. BULLFINCH.

(*Pyrrhula europæa.*)

BULLFINCHES are very common here, and do a good deal of damage in the garden, coming in flocks and eating the buds off the fruit-trees and gooseberry bushes. They look very pretty when picking among the apple-blossom. In general they inhabit the birch-woods summer and winter, and their soft voices may be heard at all seasons, "sole or responsive each to other's note." They have rather a poor song of their own, but can be taught to whistle tunes very sweetly in confinement. They are very nice cage-birds, easily tamed, even when caught old; very affectionate to those they love, and sometimes showing a marked dislike to strangers. They are not generally long-lived in captivity, being very apt to die of apoplexy. They ought not to get much hempseed. I have seen them eat common primroses, and also seed on weeds, as groundsel, plantain, &c. Some cage-birds are very fond of mignonette. We discovered it accidentally to be a good bird food when some canaries escaped from their cage and lived in the garden for some days before they could be caught again, although the weather was very bad. They lived mostly on mignonette.

I have known a nest of Bullfinches to be taken when the young were fledged, but not able to fly, and put in a cage hung as near as possible to where the nest was built, and the parent birds came and fed them through the bars of the cage. The cage should have the top and sides of wood to protect the young birds from the weather. This arrangement facilitates the rearing if it is properly carried out, but care must be taken that the old birds are not frightened away, lest the young get starved.

I have never seen Bullfinches come to the window to be fed here; I do not know if they do so elsewhere.

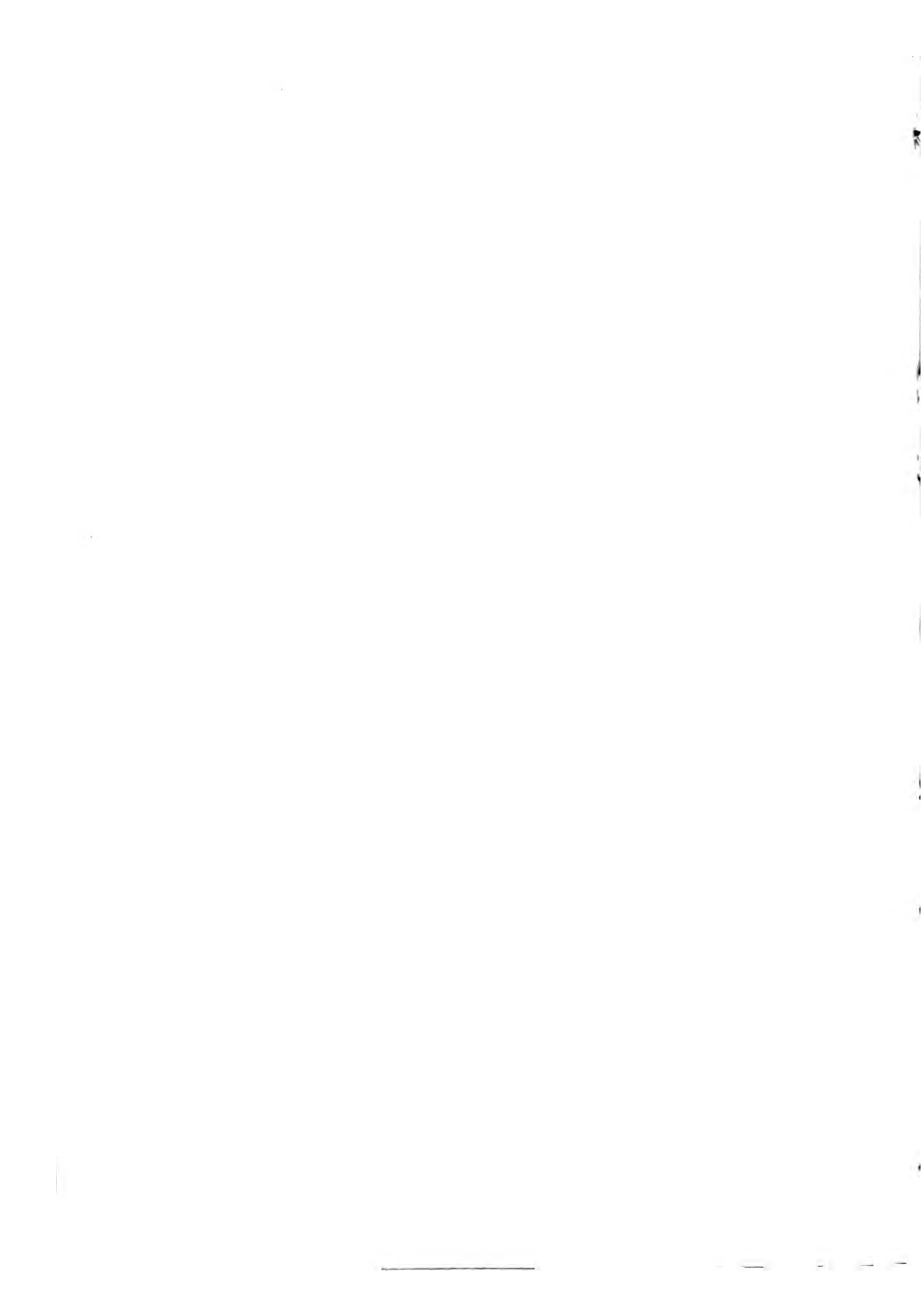




XLI. CROSSBILL.

(*Loxia curvirostra.*)

THE Crossbill is to be found in the North of Scotland. These birds were obtained in winter at Ruthven, in Forfarshire. The three birds were killed at one shot while climbing about in various attitudes in a larch tree. They varied considerably in colour, some being much tinged with red, some with green. The beaks are very peculiar, and seem to answer their purpose admirably in enabling the bird to extract the seeds from fir cones.





Crossbill

X L I I. S T A R L I N G.

(*Sturnus vulgaris.*)

THE illustration was done from a tame Starling I had, which, when let out of its cage to run about on the gravel, would put its beak under the larger stones, and, by opening it wide, raise them and look if there were any worms or insects beneath. It came on board the steamer *Palestine*, in a storm, in the Bay of Biscay, when I was on my way to Egypt, and was caught and given to me by one of the sailors. It soon became quite tame, and would eat out of my hand, and much enjoyed being washed and gently dried with a pocket-handkerchief. I took it with me to Egypt, and home again to Scotland. During our stay in Malta it enjoyed picking weevils out of old navy-biscuit. It got cockroaches sometimes in our small dahabieh above the cataract; they were not to be had in the larger one we had from Alexandria. Nothing came amiss to it in the eating line. It sang a good deal very sweetly, but always ended in a loud harsh chirp or long contemptuous whistle, just as the wild ones do. I never heard it imitate sounds or human speech as I have known a Jay do.

To my great grief it died within the year of atrophy during its moult. Its health had, I think, been injured by the over-fatigue of a long railway journey through France and England. Railway travelling does not seem to suit birds. The continuous clinging to the perch night and day so as not to be shaken off it fatigues them greatly. They can stand the swinging about in a sea voyage much better, even if it is rough.

There were no Starlings here when we first came in 1856. Many rested on the islands when migrating, as many of them do.

STARLING.

In Canna I have seen a little tree quite covered with them. They began to come here a few years ago, and a good many stay all the year round, and live in the dovecot among the pigeons. Some try to build in the chimneys of the house (if the rooms are empty and fireless), filling them up yards deep with sticks, which are very difficult to get out, even with the help of a long wire with a hooked end. One has to light an occasional fire to drive them away with the smoke, and prevent their repeating the offence, which they are only too ready to do.

Starlings seem to me to be much more numerous in Scotland than I remember them long ago, both in town and country. There are many in the old parts of Glasgow, and as soon as the New University Buildings were finished they began to inhabit them. I have seen them in the greatest numbers at Canterbury, where they swarm, along with the Jackdaws, in the Cathedral and Deanery.

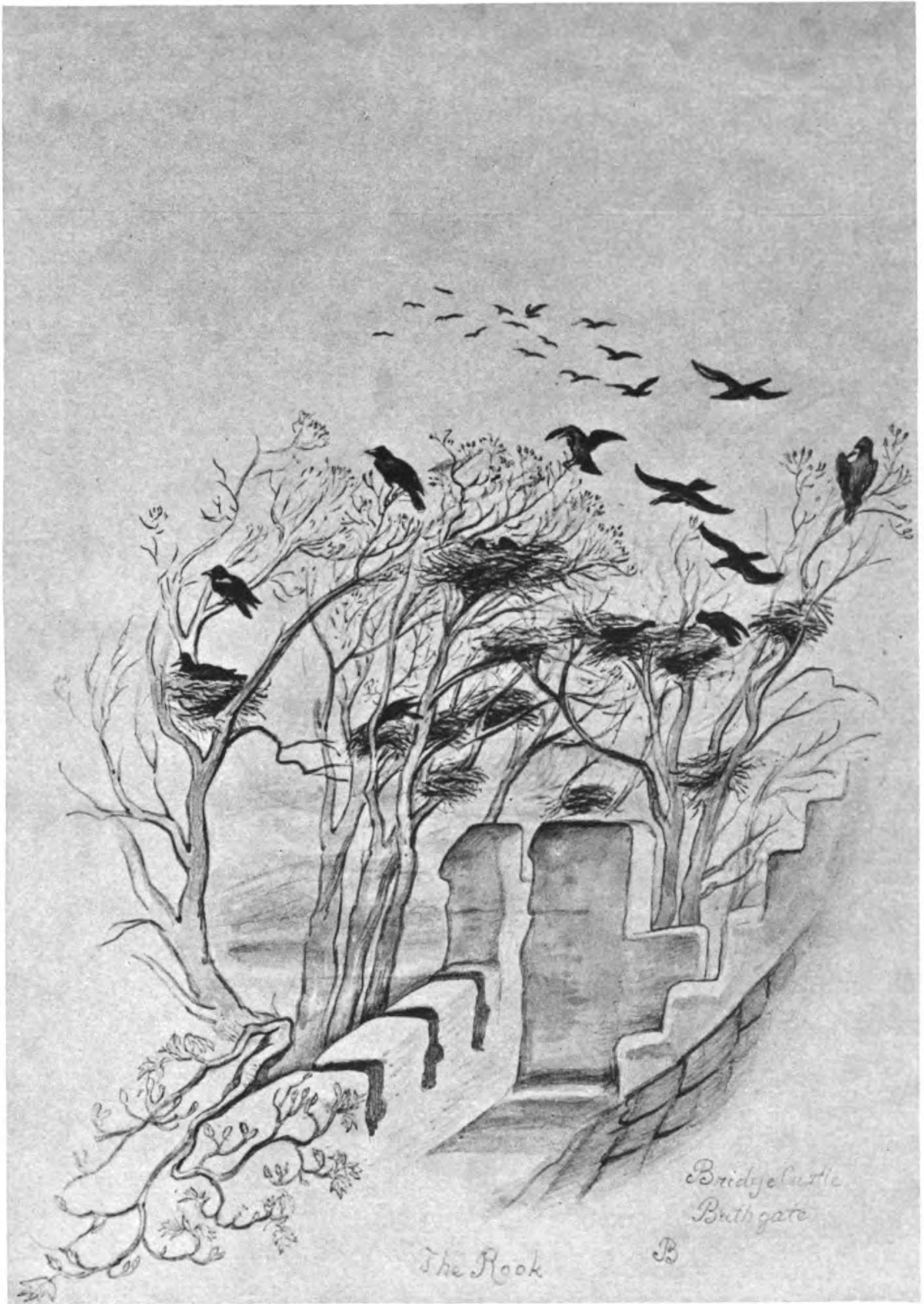


XLIII. ROOK.

(*Corvus frugilegus.*)

THE Rooks did not build here when we first came, but only flew across the sea from Armadale on predatory excursions. At harvest time they would carry off potatoes and hide them, sometimes forgetting where they were buried, and leaving them to come up in unexpected places the following spring. They also transplanted acorns we had sown, sometimes replacing them in a more favourable spot. After we had been here for some years, they began to build in the trees behind the house, and increased in numbers to an extent that the corn supply could not afford, and so were shot down in spring, and ceased to build here.

They had a habit, before going to roost, of assembling themselves together in the evening on a rocky islet near the shore in great numbers, and holding a parliament. Then they took a few precautionary flights round about to see that all was safe before retiring for the night. The Rooks here are not very fine birds, nor have they so bare a place at the base of the beak as those that inhabit a rich agricultural country. Perhaps they have not depth enough of soil here to dig in so as to rub off the feathers.



The Rook

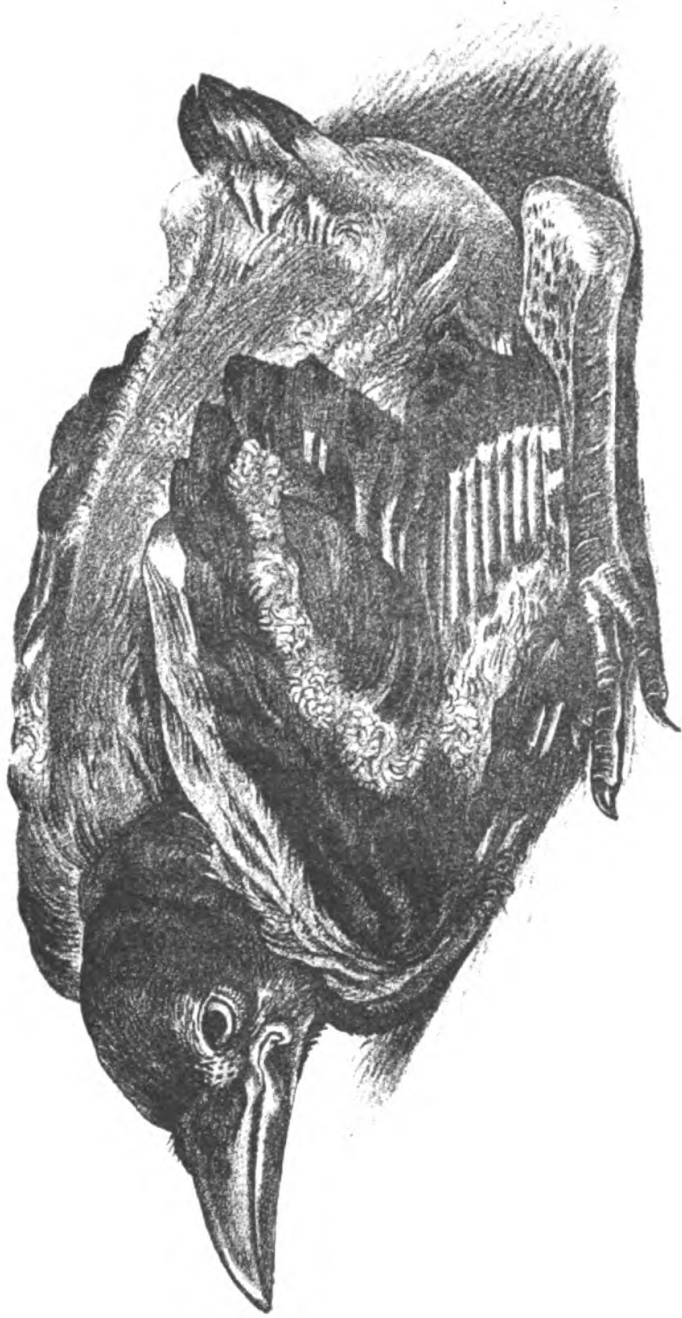
Bridge Castle
Bath gate

B

XLIV. CARRION CROW.

(*Corvus corone.*)

THE young Hoodie or Royston Crow here drawn was so good as to fall uninjured out of its nest on an old aspen tree growing out of a rock on the island at the mouth of Loch Ailort, the day we went to try to get at it.



JB

Young Hoodie Crow

XLV. GREYBACKED CROW.

(*Corvus cornix.*)

THIS bird, sometimes called the Greybacked Crow, visits the eastern counties of England annually in autumn and winter. It is called there the "Royston Crow," and in Scotland the "Hoodie." It remains here at all seasons. Like the Vulture, it has a keen scent* for carrion, or rather an eye for a sick-fallen beast; and though none may be in sight when a sheep falls or dies on the hill, they will soon assemble around the carcase and begin their feast, even sometimes before the poor animal has breathed its last. They are the plague of shepherds and game-keepers, being very destructive of game and eggs, as well as of young and feeble lambs in the springtime.

We do what we can here to destroy the young in the nests,

* It is more probably by sight than scent that the Carrion Crow or Raven finds the carcase. Our neighbour, Dr Macvicar, had a tame Hoodie, and tried the experiment of hiding a bit of carrion. It did not find it. High-flying birds like the Raven or Vulture must have a great advantage in seeing things so far below them, as no obstacle can be interposed. They also can see one another from a great distance when perched on some high place on the lookout, and will soon perceive if any of the fraternity have discovered a treasure, and be ready to share it. In "Hiawatha" there is a fine description of vultures watching each other's movements with this intent.

Never stoops the soaring vulture
On his quarry in the desert,
On the sick or wounded bison ;
But another vulture, watching
From his high aerial look-out,
Sees the downward plunge, and follows ;
And a third pursues the second,
Coming from the invisible ether,
First a speck and then a vulture,
Till the air is dark with pinions.

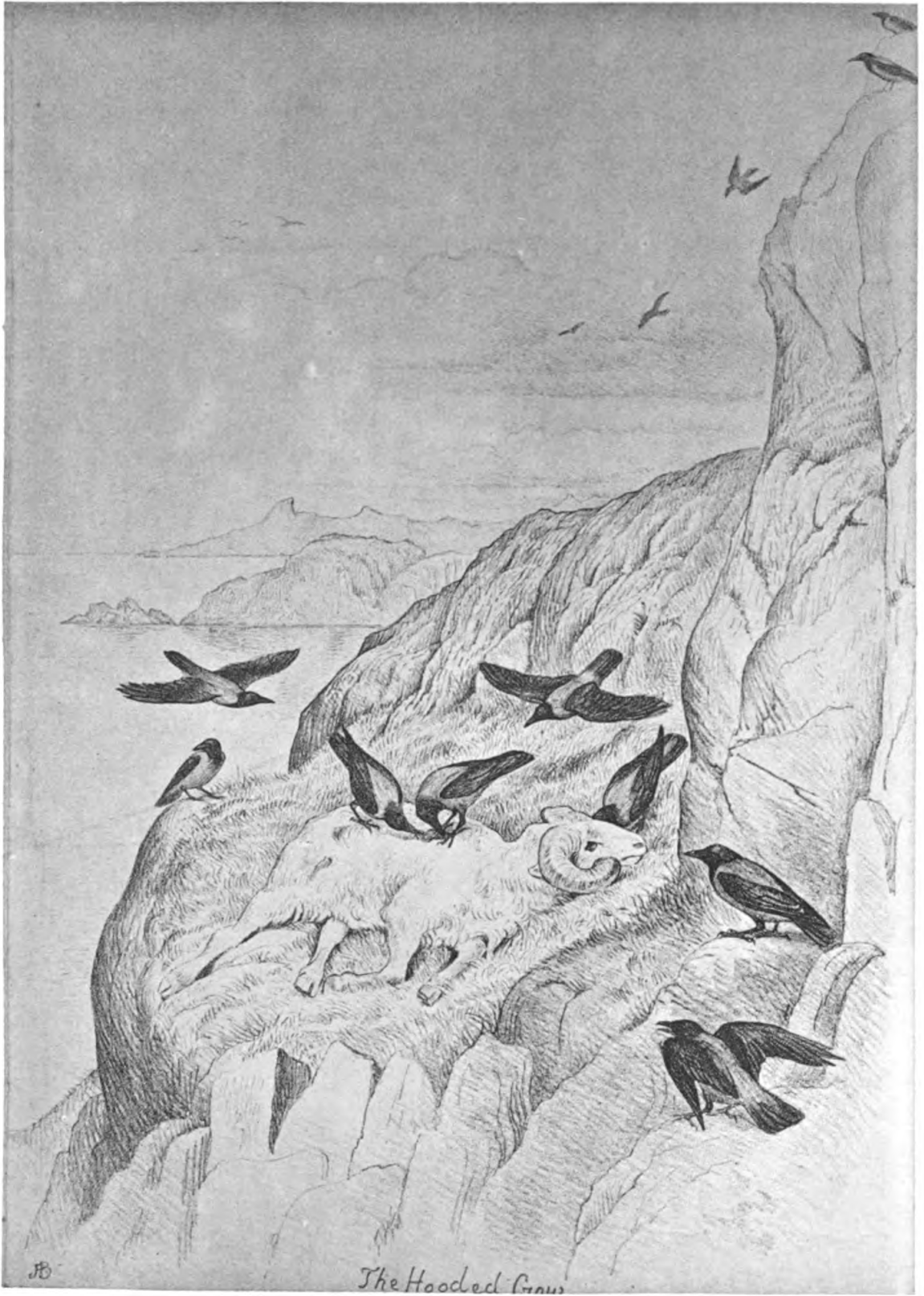
Hiawatha.

GREYBACKED CROW.

for when once they can fly they are very difficult to get near with a gun. The Black Carrion Crow is very much the same as the Hoodie, except in colour. In Forfarshire I have heard of them pairing, and of young ones being both black and grey-backed in the same nest; but I have not known it happen here, although I believe there are a few of the entirely black sort here also. It is very difficult to distinguish them from Rooks of the first year, that still have the beak feathered, except by their cry. They generally caw only three times, and perhaps more frequently rise silently and sneak away if disturbed; whereas the noisy Rooks, who generally congregate in greater numbers than the Carrions do, are in the habit of "rising and cawing at the gun's report, sever themselves, and wildly sweep the sky."

The Greybacked Crow frequents the seashore, especially after a storm, looking out for what jetsam the waves may cast up, or, if there is no better food to be had, feeding on shell-fish. I have more than once observed them eating the berries of the mountain ash off the trees growing near the seashore, where there was abundance of apparently more congenial food. Their taste for these berries does not seem to be generally known.

In the young Greybacked Crow the eyes are blue. I do not know if it is so in the Black Carrion Crow.



JB

The Hooded Crow

XLVI. RAVEN.

(*Corvus corax.*)

THE Raven is not an every-day sight here, but seldom any very long time passes without one's seeing and hearing two or three of them flying high overhead and uttering their well-known croak. They are very wary and unapproachable, more so than even the Carrion Crows. Unlike them, it does not frequent the seashore in search of food. I have several times kept tame Ravens, which make most amusing, but rather inconvenient, pets—very affectionate to their owners, but mischievous in the extreme, and malevolent towards strangers. My first, a very fine large bird, had the name of "Beelzebub," which many of my friends thought it deserved. The nest from which it was taken was near Loch Ard, on a high rock, called by a poet in that neighbourhood, "the Craig of Grahame's destiny." It was very wild at first, but by keeping it beside me it soon got quite tame, and would sit on my shoulder without ever offering to bite. When a visitor called, it always made a point of ascertaining whether he wore boots or shoes, and applied its beak accordingly, and was especially severe on thinly-shod ladies. When I had him in my room one day to draw his portrait, he collected my slippers and put them in a basin of water which I had set for him to drink or wash in. When corrected for his misdoings, he would lie down and croak penitentially, and as soon as forgiven would repeat the offence.

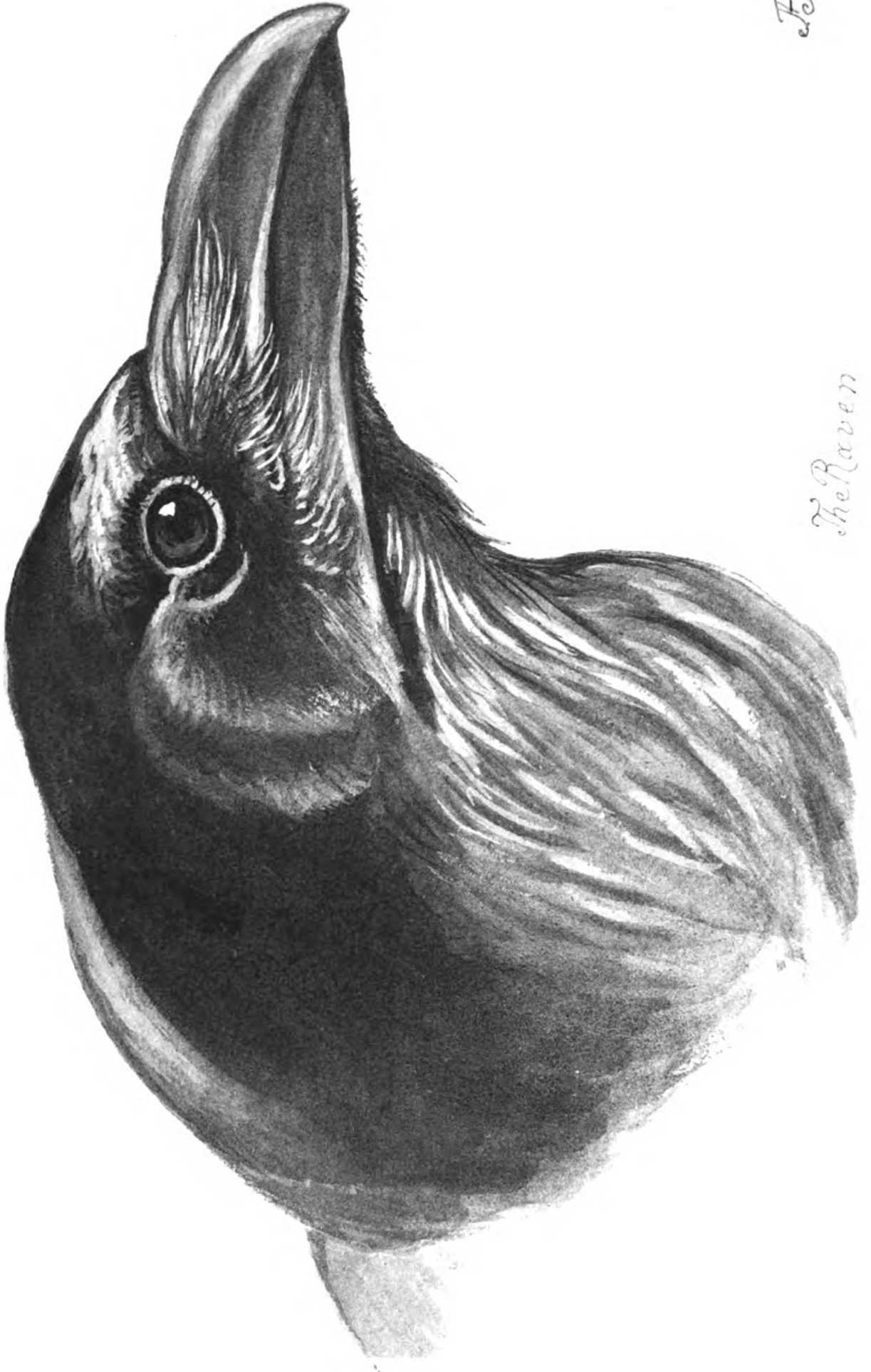
Woe to any hedgehog, toad, or other small animal he might meet when out walking with me in the country. He would proceed to bore holes in them if they were not rescued at once. Even the flowers did not escape his destructive beak. One day

RAVEN.

when we shut him in the garden, not wishing him to follow us, we found on our return all the gay tulips that had that morning adorned the borders gathered and laid out in rows on the walk. When in town he could not do so much harm, but danced about in the back green, cursing and swearing like an angry Frenchman, and pinching the tails of the dogs and cats who were rash enough to go within his reach. He cared most for a large bulldog with a very short tail, and nose to match, not so easily laid hold of as the better developed extremities of the lesser ones, and of whom he stood in some degree of awe; but even he was made sometimes to feel the power of "Beelzy's" beak. Though its gibberish sounded like human language (not of the best), I never heard it say any words that could be recognised. There was no attempt made to teach it to speak. It existed before the time of *Barnaby Rudge*.

My second pet Raven I got from a nest in this neighbourhood. It was not so fine a bird as "Beelzy," but had the same love of mischief and sense of humour. During our absence one winter, a friend, fond of animals of all sorts, offered to take care of "Asmodeus" for us, for which good nature her chickens suffered. He was allowed the use of his wings. One day he stole the priest's prayer-book, and flew off with it to the top of the house, where the impious bird, with sacrilegious beak, tore it leaf from leaf, scattering the sacred pages to the winds, while Father D—— stood below in helpless despair; but all the time, with true Catholic charity, excusing it on the plea of "invincible ignorance." "Poor thing, it does not know what a sin it is committing."

B



The Raven

XLVII. JACKDAW.

(*Corvus monedula.*)

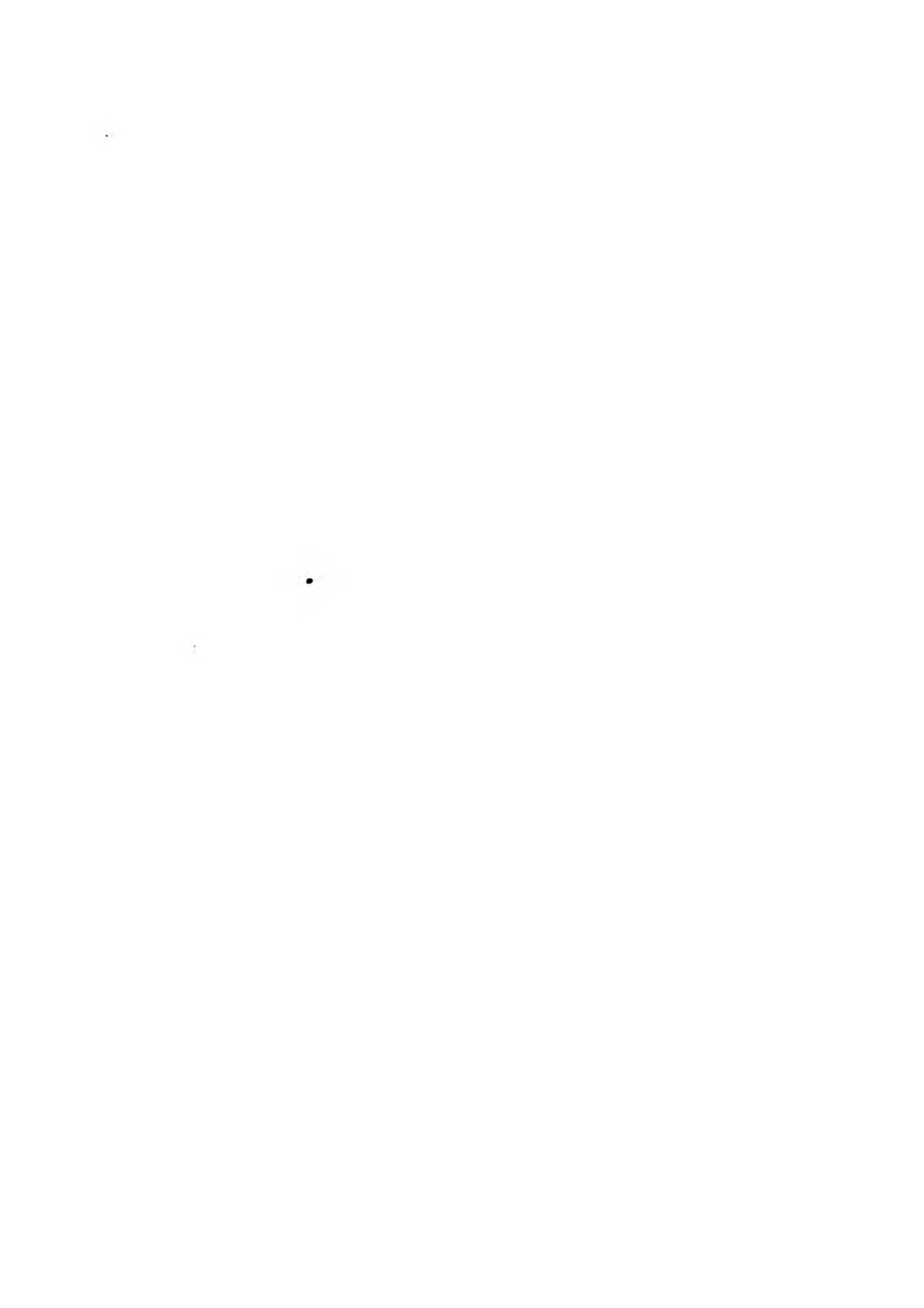
JACKDAWS are very numerous here. They associate with the Rooks, and used to build beside them among the trees; but when the Rooks were driven away the Jackdaws also went, and established themselves in the island opposite, building their nests high up in the rocks. Both Rooks and Jackdaws are very fond of eggs. The Jackdaws will sit watching a duck's nest till the mother goes off and then steal an egg. I have seen their nests in the island of Inch Murrin in Loch Lomond among the roots of old oak trees, some of them quite low down in the ground, others above, with great quantities of sticks both above and below. They build in fireless chimneys too, and I have seen them inhabiting a niche, and perching in a most disrespectful manner on the shoulder or nose of a stone saint outside the cathedral at Chartres. Their eggs are very good to eat, better even than plovers'.



The Jackdaw

B





X L V I I I. W R E N.

(*Troglodytes parvulus.*)

THE Wren is very common here—more so, perhaps, among the rocks and heather than even about the garden. Its song may be heard in winter as well as in summer; it is more loud than melodious, somewhat like that of a second-rate Canary. I have observed, when I have had occasion to sit up all night in cases of illness, that its song was the first to be heard at very early dawn on the summer mornings. I heard a Wren singing on the 3rd of January 1895, in the garden of a cottage where I had been visiting. It was late in the afternoon—"the sun was set, but yet it was not night." There was a beautiful afterglow lighting up the snowy landscape and tingeing the hills with orange. No wonder it was moved to chant a benedicite.

THE TREE CREEPER (*Certhia familiaris*) is also to be seen here among old moss-grown trees, running up and down the stems searching for insects in the crannies of the bark. In creeping up the trees, it keeps its stiffly-feathered tail pressed close to the trunk to prevent its slipping downwards.

Its colouring is so like the bark of the tree that it is rather difficult to see, except while in motion.



The Wren

XLIX. CUCKOO.

(*Cuculus canorus.*)

THE next plate is drawn from a bird which was caught alive and kept for a few days. There are usually a good many Cuckoos in our neighbourhood, and they are to be seen constantly during the season on the open ground, as well as among the trees and brushwood. The attitude represented is not uncommon when the bird settles on the ground in search of insects.

The adult Cuckoo is slate grey above, the breast white, barred with black, eyes pale. In its first plumage the young Cuckoo is red-brown, with dark bars on the upper parts, and white barred with black beneath, and eyes dark hazel. It greatly resembles a Kestrel Hawk; it is called the Red Cuckoo, and has probably been at some time mistaken for a different species, as young Sea Gulls have been, in consequence of the great difference of plumage between young and old.





Cuckoo



L. THE CUCKOO IN THE PIPIT'S NEST.

THE nest in which we found the Cuckoo's egg was limited in size, from being built in a bank which shut it in on three sides. It was too small for a Cuckoo to sit in so as to lay her egg as birds usually do; so I am inclined to agree with those who believe that she lays it on the ground first, then carries it in her beak to the destined nest. I have heard of a Cuckoo having been shot with an egg in its mouth, which has probably given rise to the belief prevalent in the South of Scotland that Cuckoos eat other birds' eggs. There is an old nursery rhyme to that effect :—

“The Cuckoo is a bonny bird, she sings as she flies ;
She brings us good tidings, and tells us no lies ;
She sucks little birds' eggs to make her voice clear,
And always sings ‘Cuckoo’ when spring-time is near.”

The old English rhyme makes the Cuckoo masculine, and is less imaginative and more in accordance with known facts :—

“In April, come he will ;
In May, he sings all day ;
In June, he alters his tune ;
In July, he prepares to fly ;
Come August, go he must.”

It seems Cuckoos' eggs vary very much in colour, maybe in order to match those they are to be placed among, so that the foster-mother bird may be less likely to detect the fraud. I have seen a collection of Cuckoos' eggs in the Natural History Museum in London—some green, or blue, some plain white, as well as speckled-brown, like the Pipit's in whose nest Miss Blackburn found one.

Concerning this collection Sir William Flower writes me :—

THE CUCKOO IN THE PIPIT'S NEST.

“ We have now a fine series of Cuckoos' eggs, with those of the bird in whose nest they were laid, showing in many cases a great resemblance in colour, in others none at all. In some Hedge Sparrows' nests the Cuckoos' eggs are as blue as the others; but in some they are of the more usual speckled-brown. It has been doubted whether the blue eggs were really those of the Cuckoo, but Mr Seebohm set the question at rest by taking an undoubted young Cuckoo (with its very different feet from the Sparrow's) from one of them. The Cuckoos' eggs vary much in colour, and, generally speaking (though with many exceptions), show some conformity to the eggs of the bird in whose nest they are laid.

“ The rationale of this is not understood. It is exceedingly difficult to make close observations of their habits in a state of nature. Many people say the Cuckoo lays its egg on the ground, and carries it about in its bill until it finds a suitable nest to put it in.”

I have told this curious fact to various of my friends. They all exclaimed, “ How does she do it? Is the egg laid first, and then a suitable nest sought for? Or is the nest found first, then an egg laid to order?” I incline to the former view as the more feasible; also, that it is in favour of the opinion that the egg is laid on the ground first. If it were laid in the nest without previous inspection, she might perchance be surprised into laying a green egg among speckled ones.

The circumstances under which the accompanying sketch of the young Cuckoo in the Pipit's nest was made are detailed in the two following letters, which appeared in *Nature*, 14th March 1872, and in the *Lancet*, 2nd July 1892.

THE CUCKOO IN THE PIPIT'S NEST.

“Several well-known naturalists who have seen my sketch from life of the young Cuckoo ejecting the young Pipit (opposite page 22 of the little versified tale of which I send a copy)* have expressed a wish that the details of my observations of the scene should be published. I therefore send you the facts, though the sketch itself seems to me to be the only important addition I have made to the admirably accurate description given by Dr Jenner in his letter to John Hunter, which is printed in the *Philosophical Transactions* for 1788 (vol. lxxviii., pp. 225, 226), and which I have read with pleasure since putting down my own notes.

“The nest which we watched last June, after finding the Cuckoo's egg in it, was that of the Common Meadow Pipit (Titlark, Mosscheeper), and had two Pipit's eggs besides that of the Cuckoo. It was below a heather bush, on the declivity of a low abrupt bank on a Highland hillside in Moidart.

“At one visit the Pipits were found to be hatched, but not the Cuckoo. At the next visit, which was after an interval of forty-eight hours, we found the young Cuckoo alone in the nest, and both the young Pipits lying down the bank, about ten inches from the margin of the nest, but quite lively after being warmed in the hand. They were replaced in the nest beside the Cuckoo, which struggled about till it got its back under one of them, when it climbed backwards directly up the open side of the nest, and hitched the Pipit from its back on to the edge. It then stood quite upright on its legs, which were straddled wide apart, with the claws firmly fixed half-way down the inside of the nest among the interlacing fibres of which the nest was woven, and, stretching its wings apart and backwards, it elbowed the Pipit fairly over the margin so far that its struggles took it down the bank instead of back into the nest.

“After this the Cuckoo stood a minute or two, feeling back with its wings, as if to make sure that the Pipit was fairly overboard, and then subsided into the bottom of the nest.

“As it was getting late, and the Cuckoo did not immediately set to work on the other nestling, I replaced the ejected one and went home. On returning next day, both nestlings were found, dead and cold, out of the nest. I replaced one of them, but the Cuckoo made no effort to get under and eject it, but settled itself contentedly on the top of it. All this, I find, accords accurately with Jenner's description of what he saw. But what

* *The Pipits*, illustrated by Mrs Hugh Blackburn (Glasgow : Maclehose, 1872).

THE CUCKOO IN THE PIPIT'S NEST.

struck me most was this: the Cuckoo was perfectly naked, without a vestige of a feather or even a hint of future feathers; its eyes were not yet opened, and its neck seemed too weak to support the weight of its head. The Pipits had well-developed quills on the wings and back, and had bright eyes, partially open; yet they seemed quite helpless under the manipulations of the Cuckoo, which looked a much less developed creature. The Cuckoo's legs, however, seemed very muscular, and it appeared to feel about with its wings, which were absolutely featherless, as with hands, the 'spurious wing' (unusually large in proportion) looking like a spread-out thumb. The most singular thing of all was the direct purpose with which the blind little monster made for the open side of the nest, the only part where it could throw its burthen down the bank. I think all the spectators felt the sort of horror and awe at the apparent inadequacy of the creature's intelligence to its acts that one might have felt at seeing a toothless hag raise a ghost by an incantation. It was horribly 'uncanny' and 'gruesome.'

"THE UNIVERSITY, GLASGOW.

J. B."

"SIRS,—The confirmation of Jenner's observations as a naturalist, which formed the subject of your leading article last week, is the latest, but it is not the one that is best known. Another confirmation made in 1871 was published in *Nature* (vol. v., p. 382), which is even more interesting as bearing out Jenner's original account in its most distinctive and most minute points, and as having served to convince Darwin, who introduced a paragraph into his latest revision of the 'Origin of Species,' calling it 'a trustworthy account of a young Cuckoo, which was actually seen, whilst still blind and not able even to hold up its own head, in the act of ejecting its foster-brothers.' To show how closely Mrs Blackburn's account agrees with that of Jenner, I have written a few sentences from each in parallel columns. The original observations were made near Berkeley on June 18th, 1787; the confirming observations in Inverness-shire in June 1871. In the former case a Hedge Sparrow's nest contained when first seen two of the bird's own eggs with one Cuckoo's egg, and next day the newly hatched Cuckoo and one newly hatched Hedge Sparrow; in the latter case a Meadow Pipit's nest when first seen had two partly fledged Pipits with one Cuckoo's egg, and next day the newly hatched Cuckoo only, the two young Pipits, which were several days old and open-eyed, having been found lying on the bank at a distance of ten

THE CUCKOO IN THE PIPIT'S NEST.

inches from the nest. They were put back, being still alive, and then ensued the events which are related in the right-hand column :—

Jenner's account, 'Phil. Trans.,' 1788,
p. 225.

“The mode of accomplishing this was curious: the little animal, with the assistance of its rump and wings, contrived to get the bird upon its back, and making a lodgment for the burden by elevating its elbows, clambered backward with it up the side of the nest till it reached the top, where, resting for a moment, it threw off its load with a jerk, and quite disengaged it from the nest.

“It remained in this situation a short time, feeling about with the extremities of its wing, as if to be convinced whether the business were properly executed, and then dropped into the nest again.’

“Dr Norman Moore, in his *Life of Jenner* in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, has called attention to the fact that the well-known naturalist Waterton, the author of *Wanderings in South America* and *Essays on Natural History* (both edited by Dr Moore, with an excellent biography of the author), had rejected Jenner's narrative as incredible. ‘The young Cuckoo,’ wrote Waterton, ‘cannot by any means support its own weight during the first day of its existence. Of course, then, it is utterly incapable of clambering rump foremost up the steep side of a Hedge Sparrow's nest, with the additional weight of a young Hedge Sparrow on its back. The account carries its own condemnation, no matter by whom related or by

Mrs Blackburn's account, 'Nature,'
vol. v., p. 382.

“The newly hatched Cuckoo struggled about till it got its back under one of them, when it climbed backwards directly up the open side of the nest, and pitched the Pipit from its back on to the edge. It then stood quite upright on its legs, which were straddled wide apart, with the claws firmly fixed half-way down the inside of the nest, among the interlacing fibres of which the nest was woven, and, stretching its wings apart and backwards, it elbowed the Pipit fairly over the margin.

“After this the Cuckoo stood a minute or two, feeling back with its wings as if to make sure that the Pipit was fairly overboard, and then subsided into the bottom of the nest.

“All this, I find, accords accurately with Jenner's description.’

THE CUCKOO IN THE PIPIT'S NEST.

whom received.' It is singular that Waterton, who was well known to be a strict Roman Catholic, should have actually used Hume's famous argument on miracles in order to discredit a fact in natural history which was generally accepted by naturalists at the time of his writing (1836). It is more probable, he implies, that the witnesses should have been deceived than that the events should actually have taken place. But he would not have argued so concerning the events which Hume thought incredible, nor even concerning ecclesiastical miracles of much more recent date. Dr Norman Moore, as in private duty bound, backs up Waterton and calls Jenner's narrative of the young Cuckoo an absurdity. He has also found a passage in Baron's *Life of Jenner* which leads him to think that the merit (or demerit) of the observations really belongs to Henry Jenner, then a lad, who was set to watch the Cuckoo's nest and to report to his uncle. Baron's statement (vol. i., pp. 85, 86) is no doubt to that effect; but why should we assume, with Dr Norman Moore, that Henry Jenner 'gave an imaginary account?' Why should not a lad be a competent witness? Darwin was at length satisfied with the testimony of a lady, a talented artist. The testimony of the gentleman at Oatlands in 1886 was, in your opinion, strengthened by that of his sister and of another lady. Nor is it certain that Jenner was dependent to the extent that Baron implies on the reports brought to him by his nephew. For in relating the successive steps of the ejection in his letter to the Royal Society he uses four times the expression 'I saw,' or its equivalent.—I enclose my card, and I am, Sirs, your obedient servant, M. N. O.

"June 27th, 1892."



B 1871

Handwritten text, possibly a signature or date, located to the right of the illustration.

LI. YOUNG CUCKOO AND MEADOW PIPIT.

THIS plate is from an actual example of a Meadow Pipit's nest on the ground, among heather and ferns, which was occupied by a young Cuckoo. The deluded little bird was also observed taking food to her precious foster-child, as represented.

When I met Mr Harting of the Linnean Society in London this spring (1895), he told me he had just had sent for his inspection, on its way to the bird-stuffer's, a young Cuckoo in its first plumage, recently shot by a gamekeeper, who had mistaken it for a female Kestrel. In a paper he has since written in the *Zoologist*, July 1895, Mr Harting says:—"On dissection this bird proved to be a female, but with no marked development of the ovaries. This peculiar phase of plumage in the Cuckoo has been long known and described by several Continental writers, but is of such infrequent occurrence in England as to deserve some notice when met with."

THE MEADOW PIPIT (*Anthus pratensis*) is very common here. It frequents heathery ground, and is called in Scotland the "Moss Cheeper." Gamekeepers find it troublesome in attracting the attention of young dogs, who sometimes stop and point it instead of following after grouse. It is a dull-coloured little bird, with a feeble song which it makes the most of by fluttering up on high like the Skylark; and when it has chirped its little hallelujah, it slowly descends on outstretched wings to its nest again. It is most interesting when looked upon as "baby-farmer" to the Cuckoo, in which compulsory vocation it displays an unwearied and disinterested tenderness, worthy of imitation by the feather-

YOUNG CUCKOO AND MEADOW PIPIT.

less bipeds who, for the mammon of unrighteousness, voluntarily undertake a like office.

Pipits generally lay four speckled brown and white eggs; if there is a fifth, it is suspected by the natives here to be that of a Cuckoo—which suspicion I have not found verified.

Though not so very numerous as the Meadow Pipit, the Rock Pipit (*Anthus obscurus*) is common here. I once found a nest among some low rocks on our island, near the shore. It contained some fledged young ones not yet able to fly. They seemed in great terror, as a huge black slug had invaded the nest; with what intent I know not, but probably for no good, for it is carnivorous, as well as a devourer of carrion. I made a sketch of the scene on the spot; having done that, and having no time to wait, I cast out the intruder, to the great relief of the nestlings, but with my curiosity unsatisfied.

I have only once seen a Tree Pipit here. It was brought in by the house cat. It was of a dull dark brown, darker in colour and clumsier in shape than the Meadow Pipit.



Young Cuckoo + Meadow Pipit

FR

LII.

SWIFT.

CHIMNEY SWALLOW.

MARTIN.

(*Cypselus apus.*)

(*Hirundo rustica.*)

(*Chelidon urbica.*)

THERE are not many of the Swallow tribe here. It may be because there are not so many house-flies and bluebottles as elsewhere, nor mud for them to build their nests of. There is little traffic to make mud, few inhabitants to fill dust-bins with superfluous food gone to waste, or butchers' shops for the production and maintenance of flies.

Early in summer I have seen a Swift fly about here for a few hours and go away again, and once some Martins came when the new house was built, fluttered about the windows, and, not finding it to their liking, departed, much to my disappointment. When we lived for some years at Ardmillan, in Ayrshire, almost every window in the house had Martins' nests at the lintels and every coigne of vantage. It was there that the nest in the illustration was done.

Three or four pair of Chimney Swallows come here annually and build in the cart-shed, boat-house, or such like places. As a substitute for mud they have been seen to use cow-dung. Some workmen said they saw Swallows come when the cows had been let out, and bring straws, which they dragged through the freshly-dropped dung several times, then carry them to the nest they were building in a neighbouring shed.

Two years ago a pair of Swallows appeared with breasts of a more distinct buff-tint than usual, and built a nest in the coal-house and laid two eggs, then got disturbed and deserted. They have not returned.

CHIMNEY SWALLOW.

When I went to Egypt I expected to have seen our common Swallows wintering there, but I only saw the Oriental sort, with chestnut-coloured breasts. There were also Martins, much the same as those that come here. I have seen in a French bird book (the name of whose author I forget) that our Chimney Swallow goes south of the equator in winter.

The Chimney Swallow is common in Algeria, and comes there in spring somewhat earlier than it does to England. It is very tame. I have seen a pair in a peasant's house building their nest. The people told us the same pair had returned to the same place several times. One of them had a pale chestnut breast, which they recognised it by. It looked as if it were half an Oriental. Sometimes when we were travelling in out-of-the-way places during a tour in Algeria, Swallows would fly about in our bedroom, and one roosted on a white pith helmet hanging on the wall. It looked like an emblem of summer.



Swift Swallow Martin

JB

LIII. NIGHTJAR.

(*Caprimulgus europæus.*)

THE Nightjar is a usual summer visitor here. I have seen them often in the gloaming running about on their short legs on the gravel near the house, catching white ghost-moths near the grass. The noise they make is peculiar, something like the purring of a spinning-wheel. One cannot tell exactly where it comes from; it seems to pervade space "above, about, or underneath." In a modern popular novel they are described as making a clapping sound by striking their wings together. I should think it was more likely they made that sound with their beaks, as their wing-feathers are soft and their flight is noiseless, like that of the Owl. Pigeons can make a loud clapping by striking the backs of their wings together, but their feathers are harder and their flight audible. A friend, who has had ample opportunity of observing them, tells me he has heard them make a loud snapping noise with their beaks when they happened to miss catching a moth they were in pursuit of. Their mode of perching is peculiar, sitting on a branch *lengthways*, not across it, as other birds do. So long as they do not move, they are very invisible even in good daylight, their mottled plumage is so much the same colour as the bark of the branch they sit on.

The illustration was done from a freshly-killed specimen shot in this neighbourhood.

The Nightjar is looked upon as a bird of evil omen in this country-side. During the visitation of typhoid fever here, if one were seen flitting to and fro near the window of a sick-chamber, it was supposed to foretell the approaching death of the inmate.

NIGHTJAR.

Can it be this bird that Shakespeare calls the "night crow" in the description of the birth of Richard III. ?

"The night crow cried aboding luckless time."—

Henry VI., Part III., Act 5, Scene 2.



JB

The Nighthawk



L I V. C U S H A T.

(*Columba palumbus.*)

THE illustration was done from recollection of a scene we saw in the Duke of Argyll's garden, at Argyll Lodge, Kensington. The Cushat lit on a large horse-chestnut tree, and ate the flowers. None of us had ever seen it do so before.

Cushats are very numerous in London, and seem to be rather on the increase. They are to be seen and heard in Hyde Park, Cadogan Place, Montagu Square, and elsewhere. I saw the first pair that came to Whitehall Gardens, nesting in one of the tall elms, some years ago. There are many more there now. It is not likely that such a shy bird should have come into London from the country, but more probable that London has extended and enclosed them in their old haunts, and that they have spread from one garden to another. It is very pleasant to hear them cooing among the trees in town on an early summer Sunday morning when all is still, and one is not disturbed there by the thought that they are picking the hearts out of the young cabbage plants in one's garden, or spoiling the turnips in the field. I have never seen them in Edinburgh or Glasgow, but there used to be many in the Tuilleries Gardens in Paris before the siege. I have seen them coming for crumbs when the children were feeding sparrows there. I believe there are none now. In the South of Scotland they are very numerous. I have heard a tradition there that they used in old times to build their nests on the ground; but, their young having been so often destroyed by passing cattle, they took to nesting on trees. From that safe altitude they now shout to their former enemies in

ROCK DOVE.

triumphant defiance, "Coo, coo, coo! Come noo, come noo!" There are not very many of them in Moidart.

Although they are very strong, hardy birds in general, I have known them to be destroyed by a disease that prevailed among them a good many years ago in Kirkcudbrightshire, where I have found many of them lying dead in the woods, with swelled throats, and quantities of matter oozing out of their mouths and eyes.

The ROCK DOVE (*Colomba livia*) can be found in Moidart. I have seen a nest in the ruins of Castle Tirrim, the former abode of Clanranald, the Chief of the Macdonalds. They are very numerous in the caves in the West Highland rocky coast, especially in the "Cathedral Cave" in the island of Eigg (so called because the Catholic natives used to meet there for mass when their religion was proscribed elsewhere. They now have a chapel and a resident priest on the other side of the island, and the "Cathedral" is occupied by Rock Pigeons, who build their nests on the high shelves of rock inside it, flying out with a noisy clatter when alarmed by visitors). The Rock greatly resembles its descendants of the Dovecot, with characteristic black stripes on its wings, which are said to recur when fancy breeds get mixed. They never perch on trees. I have never known the Dovecot Pigeon build on trees, though I have daily seen them perch there while waiting to be fed. The pale blue ones look lovely on an old apple tree among the pink blossoms. I never knew them roost for the night on a tree.

The Domestic Pigeon is a very hardy bird, minding neither

ROCK DOVE.

cold nor heat, and positively enjoying rain. I have seen them lying on their sides on the wet grass, holding up a wing the better to let the rain get in among their feathers, and sometimes getting so thoroughly soaked by this natural shower-bath as to be hardly able to fly after it. All they care for is a shelter from the wind. This so-called "Bird of Venus" is proverbial for its amorous disposition; so much so, that I have known one set his affections on an old croquet ball for want of a more worthy object, and follow it about, strutting round it with spread tail and proud gesticulations, and cooing soft endearments to the insensate block. I have never cared to keep fancy pigeons. They do not seem to me to be any improvement on Nature, except, perhaps, in the case of the Carrier; but the beak in highly-bred specimens is a monstrosity. It is fortunate for the Pouter that the large windbag under his chin prevents him seeing his own feet, with the long ill-placed feathers projecting, ready to trip him up as he walks. The Fantail is a feeble creature, liable to be blown aside by every blast. I have seen a Tumbler so highly bred and true to its name, that every time it tried to fly it fell on its back. The natives here have a sentimental dislike to killing or eating pigeons. That feeling is said by Yarrell to prevail in Russia. In Egypt they are a favourite article of food, provided they are killed by bleeding, accompanied by prayers in the orthodox Mohammedan fashion. We were invited to dinner at the house of the captain of our dahabieh, where the banquet consisted chiefly of roast pigeons, served on a tray on the ground, and we sat down round it as we best could. Though, as a rule, strict vegetarians, I have seen a tame pigeon light on the kitchen

ROCK DOVE.

table, and pick at a cold roast of beef, eating some of the fat. Their usual food is grain or pulse, swallowed whole, which, being unfit to administer to their young in a crude state, they first digest in their own crops, and then with great exertion pump into the crops of the young. The "sucking dove" puts its bill into the parent's throat, and imbibes the soft warm pabulum. Both parents assist in feeding the young, as well as in incubating the eggs—the cock sitting on them from nine till three in the day, the hen during the night. They are nearly always constant to the same mate during life, but I have known a domestic tragedy occur in the dovecot. On one occasion a young hen deserted her elderly husband, and eloped with a younger mate; retribution swiftly followed, and the unfaithful spouse died in laying her first egg. Gentle birds as they are, "Doves will peck in safeguard of their brood," and the cocks often fight fiercely, striking hard blows with their wings, as well as pecking and tugging with their beaks. They are long-lived birds, and go on breeding for many years; but it is not advisable, if kept for profit, to have them more than three years old, as the old cocks drive away the others from the nests. Neither is it good to have more hens than cocks in the flock, as the hens cannot alone incubate the eggs. They breed both in summer and winter, laying two eggs, which are said to contain male and female young. Each pair should be provided with two nests, and they will lay a second pair of eggs as soon as the first pair of young can dispense with being sat upon.

Common pigeons do not seem to deteriorate by in-breeding. I have had the same strain for over forty years. When an old

ROCK DOVE.

cock pigeon gets to be superannuated and feeble, I have known the others set on him, and try to peck him to death.

Pigeons do not drink, like other birds, by sipping the water, and raising their heads to swallow it; they plunge their beaks well down into the water, and imbibe it in great gulps like a thirsty horse. At the village of Girgeh, on the Nile, they have an exceptional way of drinking. They fly to the middle of the river, and flutter over the water, dipping their beaks in it as if they were sea birds. I do not know of their doing so anywhere else. I once saw some pigeons in Munich, near the Post Office, sip water from a small spout, instead of drinking from the tank. Pigeons are abundant drinkers, as well as voracious eaters.



June 1895

Argyll Lodge
Cape Cod, Mass.

LV. RED GROUSE.

(*Lagopus scoticus.*)

I HAVE only given a representation of young Grouse, not having a drawing of the adult bird from life. They were caught squatting among the heather. At an early age they greatly resemble young black game, except that the toes are feathered all the way down to the claws, and the hind claw is much shorter, as they are not perching birds. I never saw one perch on a tree. They feed almost entirely on heather, but will eat oats when they can find a field of them near the moor. They are not so numerous here as on the inland moors, although the ground is suitable, nor are they of so rich a colour as those of the Perthshire moors.

The cock Grouse takes great care of the brood, and assists the hen to defend them. In late autumn, when the coveys unite and fly about together in a flock and get very wild, instead of being put up by keen-scented dogs, they are then driven by beaters to the shelters where the sportsmen are concealed to get a shot at them as they pass. Many such hiding places may be seen on the well-stocked Aberdeenshire moors.

THE BLACK GROUSE (*Tetrao tetrix*).—The Blackcock is less scarce here than the Grouse, or, at least, is more in evidence. Perching as he does on the leafless birch trees in winter, and inhabiting lower and more frequented ground near the coast, which is indented with bays and creeks, he can fly across when pursued, and so elude the sportsman. He is not so cautious in avoiding the wire fences, which often prove fatal when he flies against them. In springtime we have often found them dead from that cause. They feed very largely on the buds

PTARMIGAN.

of the bog-myrtle. I have found their crops quite full of it, emitting a strong aromatic scent when opened. In winter I have found them full of alder catkins. They come into the fields in autumn and eat the oats, affording a good chance for the sportsman's rifle while they are seated on a stook busily picking the grain.

I captured some young ones once which were hiding in the heather, and kept them in a cage for a few days, feasted them on green pease, and let them go again. They are much like young grouse at an early age, but the feet are not feathered down to the end of toes, as those of grouse and ptarmigan are.

The plumage of the hen differs entirely from that of the cock, being a sober mixture of brown and grey-mottled feathers. She takes all the charge of the young, while he struts about among the other members of his harem; for, like the Peacock and Pheasant, the "bird of the jet-black plume and glossy feather" is polygamous, as are also those gorgeously-attired Eastern potentates.

THE PTARMIGAN (*Lagopus mutus*) are very numerous on the high mountains, abiding at a height of two thousand feet or more above the level of the sea.

When pursued, they run rather than fly, only taking short flights round the hill-top, and alighting out of sight. I have seen a brood in summer near the top of Ben Lomond being carefully tended by both parents, who were much disturbed at the sight of us. I was sorry I had not materials to make a drawing of them. There are some on the top of Roshven. I remember seeing,

PARTRIDGE.

many years ago, a beautiful oil painting, by J. Wolff (that best of bird painters), of a group of Ptarmigan, with their appropriate background. They are very pretty birds. In summer the plumage is grey on the upper part and white on the lower, the feet well feathered down to the toes, a bright scarlet wattle over the eyes, and black lines down the middle of their white quill feathers. In winter they become nearly all pure white ; of this colour they are mostly to be seen in the poulterers' shops.

THE PARTRIDGE (*Perdrix cinerea*) is not a native here. There was a pair in the place when we first came here, which had an occasional brood, but they died out some years ago. We hatched some Partridge eggs in the incubator, and tried to rear them in the foster-mother, like chickens, but without success. They seemed to thrive at first, and took their food well, but dropped off daily, and were all dead in a fortnight from no apparent cause. They were quite well one day, and dead the next. We then got four pairs of full-grown birds. They arrived during frost in winter, so we had to keep them enclosed for a time till thaw came, and fed them on fresh cabbage and grain. We let them out two at a time, to let them get accustomed to the place, for fear they should fly away together if they were all set at liberty at once. They remained near for some time, coming back for the food laid out for them, and sometimes feeding with the chickens, or joining the Pheasants.

They very soon took to feeding on the seashore, among the cast-up seaweed, and finding "hoppers" and other marine delicacies, showing rather a remarkable taste for inland bred birds

PARTRIDGE.

imported to London from Hungary. In due time they nested, and hatched small broods, but they all disappeared in the course of the year, probably having become the prey of Sparrow Hawks or escaped cottage cats, of which there are more than enough here. Perhaps the worst game destroyer of all is the collie dog, when not under restraint. It does its hunting far from its own home, going off during the night, and returning in time for its duties in the morning, quite unsuspected by its owner, who knows it never kills the chickens at its own door, and who will not believe that it has done so elsewhere, and is not easily persuaded to keep his dogs in couples when not at work. I have had as many as eighteen hens killed and buried in one night by a shepherd's dog, which returned some days after to dig them up. Being an excellent animal in other respects, she was pardoned.



16 July
B
Young Grouse

LVI. RINGED PLOVER.

(*Ægialitis piaticula.*)

THIS bird is very common here and always to be seen near the shore. It makes no nest, but lays its four eggs in a slight depression of the ground, with the four small ends together, as is the custom of Plovers. They are so very like the colour of the gravelly shore on which they are laid, not far above high water-mark, that they are very difficult to find, so it is as well to take their bearings carefully, or to put some mark whereby you may find them again.

We visited them daily till the first egg was hatched, so as to get both eggs and young in the picture. They go off into the wide world as soon as they are out of the shell, the eggs all hatching within about four and twenty hours of each other, having nothing in the way of a nest to return to. Their habits, in other respects, are very like those of the Sandpiper, keeping the same stillness in the time of danger when warned to do so by the cries of the parents, who both guard the young and expose themselves to danger by their stratagem to draw off the enemy.

THE OYSTER CATCHER (*Hæmatopus ostralegus*) is very conspicuous here, with its Magpie plumage, scarlet beak and legs. It frequents the shore in great numbers, seldom silent, and making a shrill outcry on the approach of danger, thereby giving warning to the other shore birds. It builds its nest on the little rocky islands near the sea, and lays four greenish-brown spotted eggs, placed with the small ends together like those of the Ringed Plover. The newly-hatched young are very invisible in their

OYSTER CATCHER.

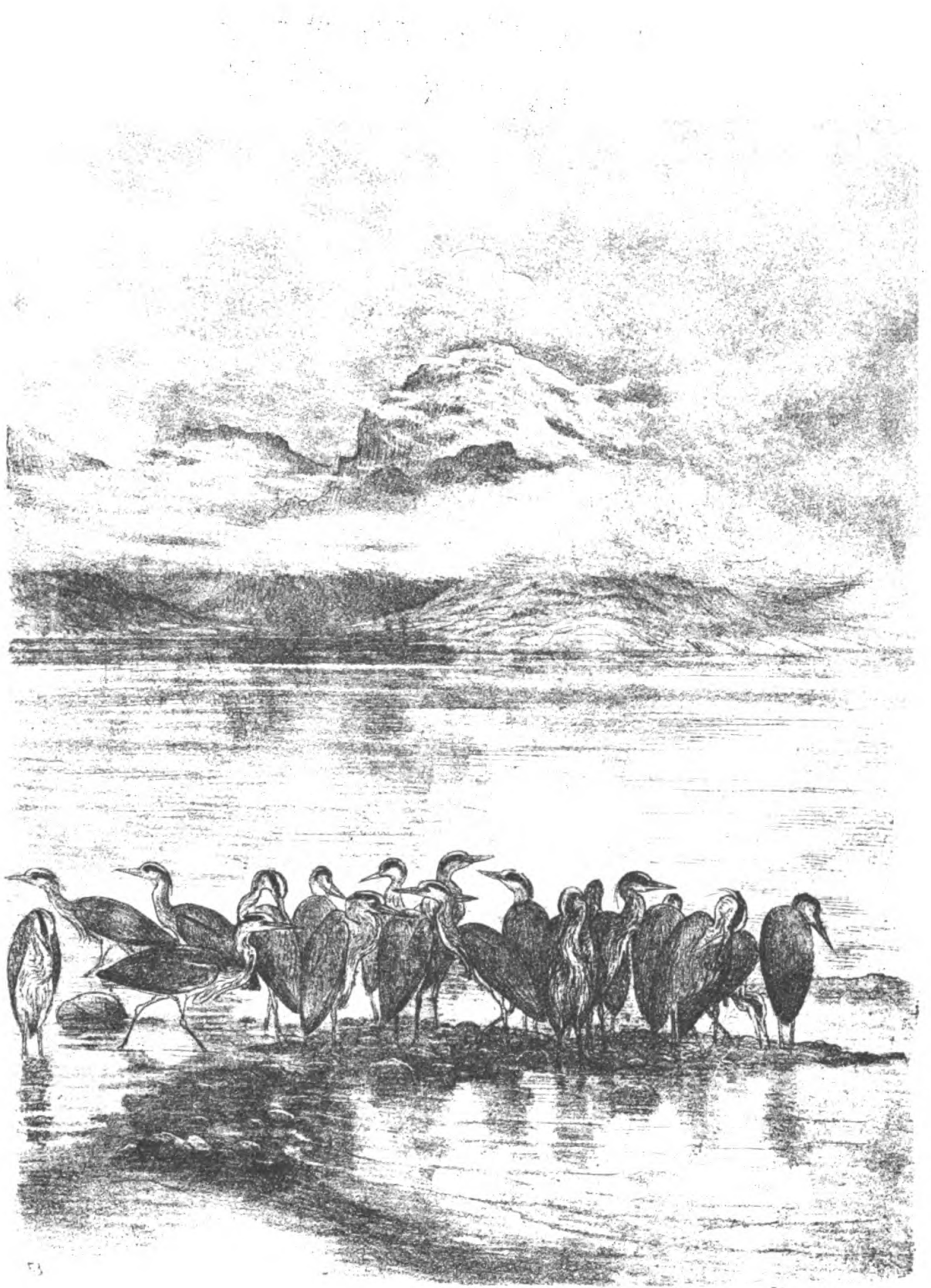
downy state when they lie still in the clefts of the grey lichen-covered rocks, which they greatly resemble in colour. We once caught some young ones fledged and nearly full grown, and kept them in captivity for a while, feeding them on limpets, which they cut out of their shells with their scissor-like bills. Oyster Catchers wade habitually, but when wounded and hard pressed they will take to the water and try to escape by swimming.



Ringed Plover

LVII. GROUP OF HERONS.

PLATE LVII. represents a group of at least eighteen Herons seen on Locheil, not far from Fassifern, one fine summer morning. The distant mountain is Ben Nevis.

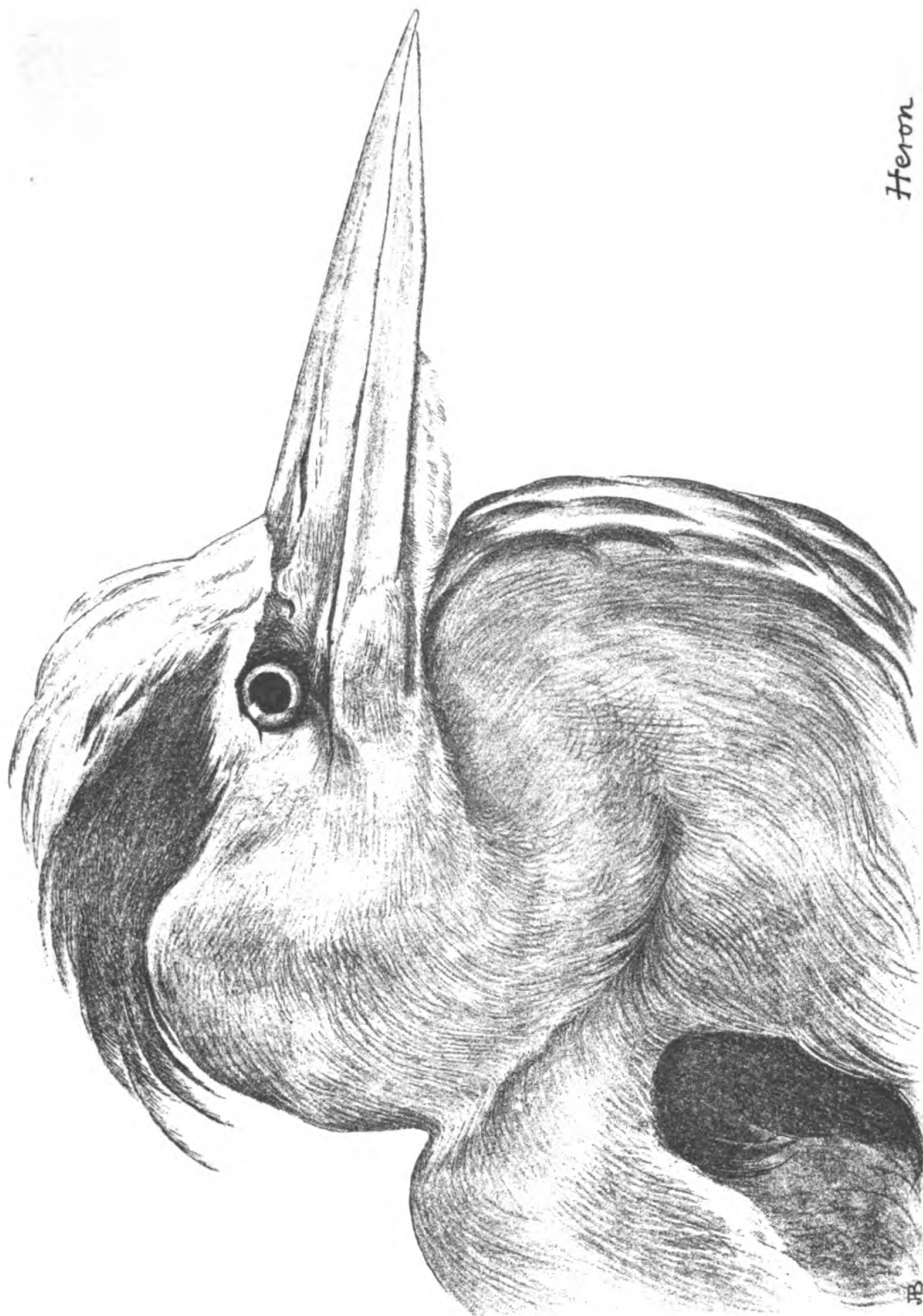


Herons

LVIII. HERON.

(*Ardea cineria.*)

THE Heron's head was done from a live bird caught at Killearn in a hard frost. It was weak from starvation. We brought it home and fed it on raw meat, and afterwards took it to Glasgow and kept it in a garret for ten days. It ate herrings out of a bath, and then stood on one leg on a chair for an hour or more, quite still, in a favourable position for being drawn. When the thaw came it was sent back by rail to Killearn, and let go where it was found.



Heron

JB

LIX. HERON'S NEST AND YOUNG.

THIS Heron's nest and young were drawn from one which had fallen from a high tree at Killearn.



Heron's nest & Young

LX. CAPTURE OF YOUNG HERONS.

HERONS build on a little rocky island in a fresh water hill loch about four miles from here, on little stunted birch trees, not far out of reach. A boy fetched down two of them for me; they were fledged, but not yet able to fly. They didn't attempt to peck at him, but made great resistance to leaving their birth-place, holding on to the branches with beak and claws as if they had been parrots. We took them home, but did not clip their wings or confine them in any way; only deposited them on the branch of a laburnum tree, where they looked remarkably well among the yellow blossoms. They soon got very tame. We fed them on fish when we had it, and at other times on raw meat. They would eat bread or porridge, or almost anything, often picking up bits of boiled potatoes with the hens or ducks. They sat for many hours quietly about the back door during the day, or flew down to the seashore for a while; and in the evening, when the days shortened, they would stalk into the kitchen to look at the bright fire and see the lamp lit. They always spent the night out of doors, only taking the sheltered side of an out-house in a stormy winter night. The next spring they began to carry sticks about among the rocks and heather as if they thought of building a nest, but nothing came of it.

In the course of time one of them died. There was no *post-mortem*, but it was reported to be very fat. The following spring the remaining one disappeared for some months. It probably went to the island it came from, and may have hatched a brood for aught we know. It returned late in summer, and was found, as usual, as still as a stuffed bird, at the back door, near the larder, waiting for its dole and as tame as ever. The

CAPTURE OF YOUNG HERONS.

spring after, unfortunately, it did not go away off the place, but was accused of waylaying and devouring young ducks about the cottages, and one day came home with a broken leg. Probably a stone had been thrown at it to stop its depredations. So there was no alternative but chloroform. I was sorry to part with it. It was both interesting and ornamental.



Capture of Young Herons. Moïdart.

JB



LXI. WOODCOCK.

(*Scolopax rusticula.*)

THE Woodcock breeds in Moidart, as well as in many other parts of the North of Scotland; but, besides the native, there are many immigrants in winter, especially during frost, when they come to the milder climate of the western sea coast. The nest in the illustration was at the foot of a small rock amongst withered oak leaves which covered the mossy ground, and of which the nest was artlessly constructed, but artfully concealed, as nest, eggs, bird, and ground were all of the same colour, so that one might have passed it without notice. The eggs, four in number, were placed plover-fashion with the small ends together. Their great idea of safety is to be as invisible as possible, by remaining perfectly still in hopes of escaping the observation of the enemy. Young Snipes and Sandpipers do so when warned by the outcries of their parents. It is a most convenient habit when one wishes to draw them.

A Woodcock was given me once which was caught unhurt by one of the beaters in a shooting party in Forfarshire. It was hiding itself under a bush. I kept it in a cage for some days, in order to make a drawing of it, and to watch its habits. I put some earthworms in a tumbler with wet mud, and it groped for them with its long sensitive bill, stamping meanwhile with its feet on the floor of the cage, as Blackbirds do when they want the worms to come up out of the earth, but with one foot at a time, not with both.

When the drawing was done, I took the bird out and let it go, rather to the disgust of the housekeeper, who had counted on it for a roast. It went off stealthily into the wood, and I saw no more of it. I have seen a Woodcock "within a mile o' Edinboro' toon" flying about in the gloaming of a winter afternoon.





LXII. COMMON SNIPE.

(*Gallinago caelestis.*)

THIS bird is not very numerous here. The Snipe is from a sketch from life, as also were the young; and the ground was from nature, in the place the young ones were found. When out with a shooter one day in August many years ago, I took him to where I had often seen Snipe, little thinking there would be downy young ones so late in the year. The old birds rose, but fortunately were missed, and the dogs were eagerly smelling about after what we discovered to be two very young Snipe, so I carried one home as quickly as I could, with perfect indifference to wet feet and draggled petticoats, and got it drawn while the daylight lasted. The gillie took it back to the place where it was caught, and found its disconsolate parents still looking for it. It also had the instinct to be still in times of danger. I never had a better sitter; it was as still as if it had been stuffed and put in the Kensington Museum.



13

Snipe

LXIII. COMMON SANDPIPER.

(*Totanus hypoleucus.*)

WE have found Sandpipers' nests in various positions—on the ground, in the side of a bank, or at the foot of a tree, and once only in a low bush, but always near the shore. The young birds are able to leave the nest as soon as hatched, but remain near it for a few days, probably returning to it at night.

The nest sketched was in a bank, and the whole family were drawn from life. The old bird was caught by placing the young ones in an open cage, and shutting the door by means of a string as soon as she went in, which she did immediately on our retiring a dozen yards. There is no perceptible difference of plumage between the male and female, but we presumed this to be the female. They were all restored to their home uninjured.

When the Sandpiper is on eggs, if disturbed she flies away quietly and silently; but if the young are hatched, she flaps about, making a great outcry to warn the little ones to sit perfectly still, so as to attract no attention, while she feigns lameness and impotency to lead away the enemy from the neighbourhood. The young can run very quickly almost as soon as they are out of the egg. They are very small, and so like the colour of the shore, or the banks of the streams they frequent, that it is extremely difficult to see them when they do not move.



Sandpiper

LXIV. RED-NECKED PHALAROPE.

. (*Phalaropus hyperboreas.*)

I HAVE met with this amiable little bird in Iceland. It is naturally very tame and confiding, and swam about so near me that I was able to do a picture of it while I was sketching beside the lake at Thingvalla. Redshanks and many other birds were about, but none came so near me. At Thingvalla we were expected to sleep, or at least to take shelter, in the church for the night; but being neither tired nor sleepy, I went out with a wakeful companion and sketched, while he went off to bathe. Afterwards we had a row on the loch, till the far off, longed for hour of breakfast should come. Our attention was attracted to a long-tailed Duck flying near us, fluttering and tumbling about as if badly hurt. We supposed it must have been wounded by one of the shooting party the day before, and my companion was just taking aim to put an end to its apparent misery, when we discovered a brood of downy young ones in the water close by, and found it was performing these manœuvres to lead us away from them. When we turned away in another direction, the distracted mother went quietly to her brood.

The Phalarope both wades and swims well. It has half-webbed feet, lobated like that of the Coot.

There are many and various birds in Iceland. Long-tailed Ducks are plentiful. Wild Swans often flew whooping overhead, and Whimbrels were constantly circling over us, continually uttering their plaintive and monotonous cry. They are like Curlews, but a good deal smaller. Of singing birds, we saw and heard the Thrush-like Redwing. The Snow Bunting was numerous.



The Phalarope

LXV. CORNCRAKE, OR LANDRAIL.

(*Crex pratensis.*)

THE nest of the Landrail is from nature, at Roshven. The nest among long grass, was visited daily, till one egg was hatching. I carried it home, and made a drawing of the little, black, downy young one. When it was half-way out of the shell it ate flies out of my hand, picking them up as cleverly as if it were an experienced fly-catcher. It seemed to have the power of measuring distance, and taking a good aim, as soon as ever its head got out of the shell. Very few other creatures are so precocious. Chickens are able to pick up food pretty neatly, but they do not begin to eat for the first twenty-four hours of their life. It takes a baby a long time before it can judge distance—even to stretch out its hand and clutch anything—and then it makes a good many bad shots before it puts the thing into its mouth.

After being drawn, the young bird, minus the shell, was returned to the nest. More of them were beginning to hatch, and next day all had left the nest. The attitude of the old bird was taken from a live one I had in the house for a time, and then let go. It went away in a stooping position, threading its way stealthily through the grass, and very soon disappeared. While in the house it poked about into all corners of the room trying to hide itself.



♂ Corncrake



L X V I. W A T E R R A I L.

(*Rallus aquaticus.*)

THIS illustration is from a freshly killed specimen obtained in the neighbourhood of Glasgow in 1861. In comparing it with Yarrell's description it was found to differ in the following particulars :—

The beak, instead of being all red, had the top of the upper mandible nearly black, the rest red, and the irides were vermilion, instead of hazel. There was a light mark on the under eyelid, and some of the wing coverts (the spurious wing) were slate-grey, barred with white, like the flanks. In all these points the bird agreed with Pennant's description and plate.

A Waterrail was caught in the garden here this winter, during the long and severe frost, nearly starved. We fed it with oatcake, and it was able to fly away when let go again.

The Waterhen and the Waterrail have very long toes, well adapted for supporting them on the soft ground in the muddy, wet places they frequent.

THE MOOR HEN, or WATER HEN (*Gallinula chloropus.*)—
These birds are to be found here and in most other places. I hoped to have made a drawing of a nest in a horse pond at the foot of a tree beside an old stump, and made a voyage to it in a washing tub for want of other means; but it was deserted. I have seen a nest in a stream on the extremity of a willow branch that stretched out into the water. In spite of all their precautions, Waterhens' eggs are stolen by rats. One has been seen taking them out of the nest and handing them on to its companions to help to get them ashore. Rats are very clever at

COOT.

carrying away eggs out of hen houses without breaking them. A weasel or stoat will break and suck the stolen egg on the spot.

THE COOT (*Fulica atra*) is also found in Moidart, but I have not had an opportunity of drawing it from life, or studying its habits further than that in swimming it carries the stern high. The feet of this bird are rather peculiar—half-webbed and lobated like the Dabchick's and Phalarope's—adapted both for swimming and wading, or walking in soft, wet places.

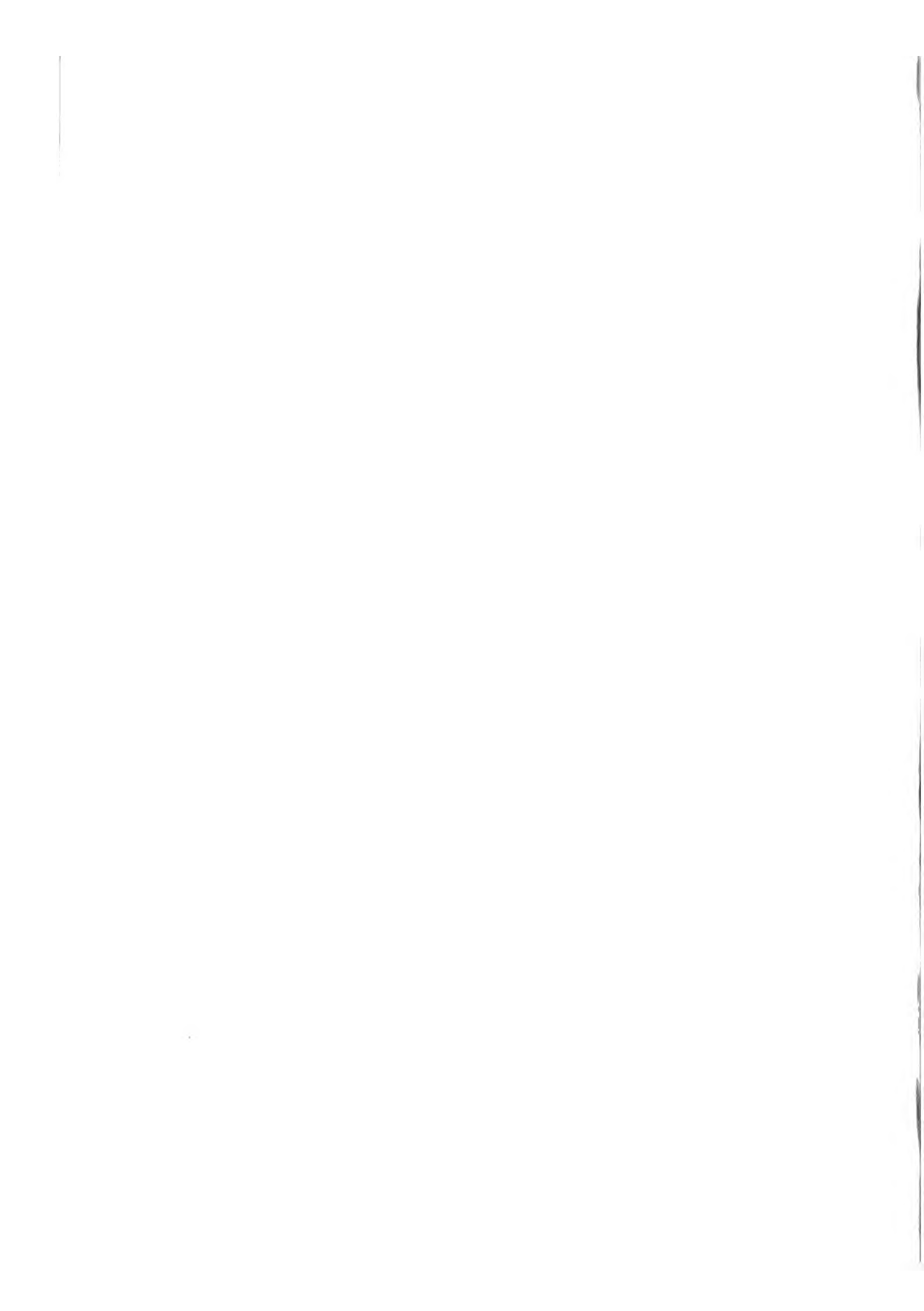


Water-rail

LXVII. HOOPER, OR WILD SWAN.

(*Cygnus musicus.*)

THE head of the Wild Swan was done from one which was taken alive one very hard winter in a pond at Culzean Castle, in Ayrshire. I had the opportunity of drawing it. It was put in a shed, and was not very wild or much agitated. It lived for seven years afterwards on a small lake where the late Marquis of Ailsa used to keep a variety of tame water-fowl. I have heard of what I supposed must be Wild Swans being seen one winter in Loch Ailort during severe weather. They were described to me as "large white birds that made a whooping noise as they flew." I was not there myself at the time, and never saw them except in captivity in this country. I have heard of their being seen in Loch Moidart, as well as Wild Geese. They are very commonly to be seen in Iceland in summer. They have not the graceful beauty of the tame Swan, who, "with arched neck between her white wings mantling proudly rows her state with oary feet." It is more like an attenuated goose, especially when walking about on land. It is smaller than the tame Swan, and has not the black knob on the base of the bill, nor does it raise its wing feathers while swimming.

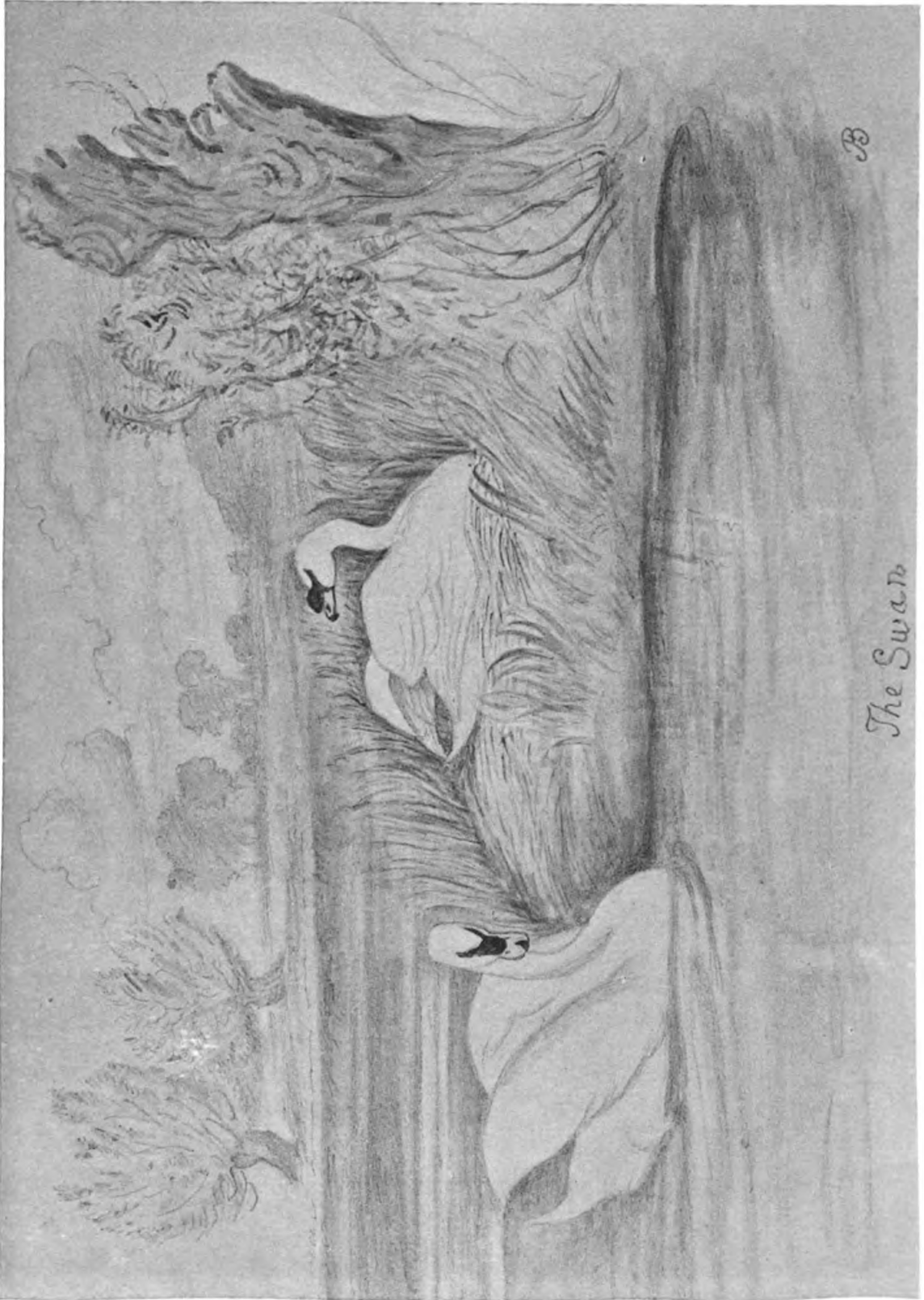




LXVIII. MUTE SWAN.

(Cygnus olor.)

THE illustration of the Swan's nest was done from nature on the banks of the Thames, near Eton. The Swans did not mind me sitting near enough to draw them.



The Swans

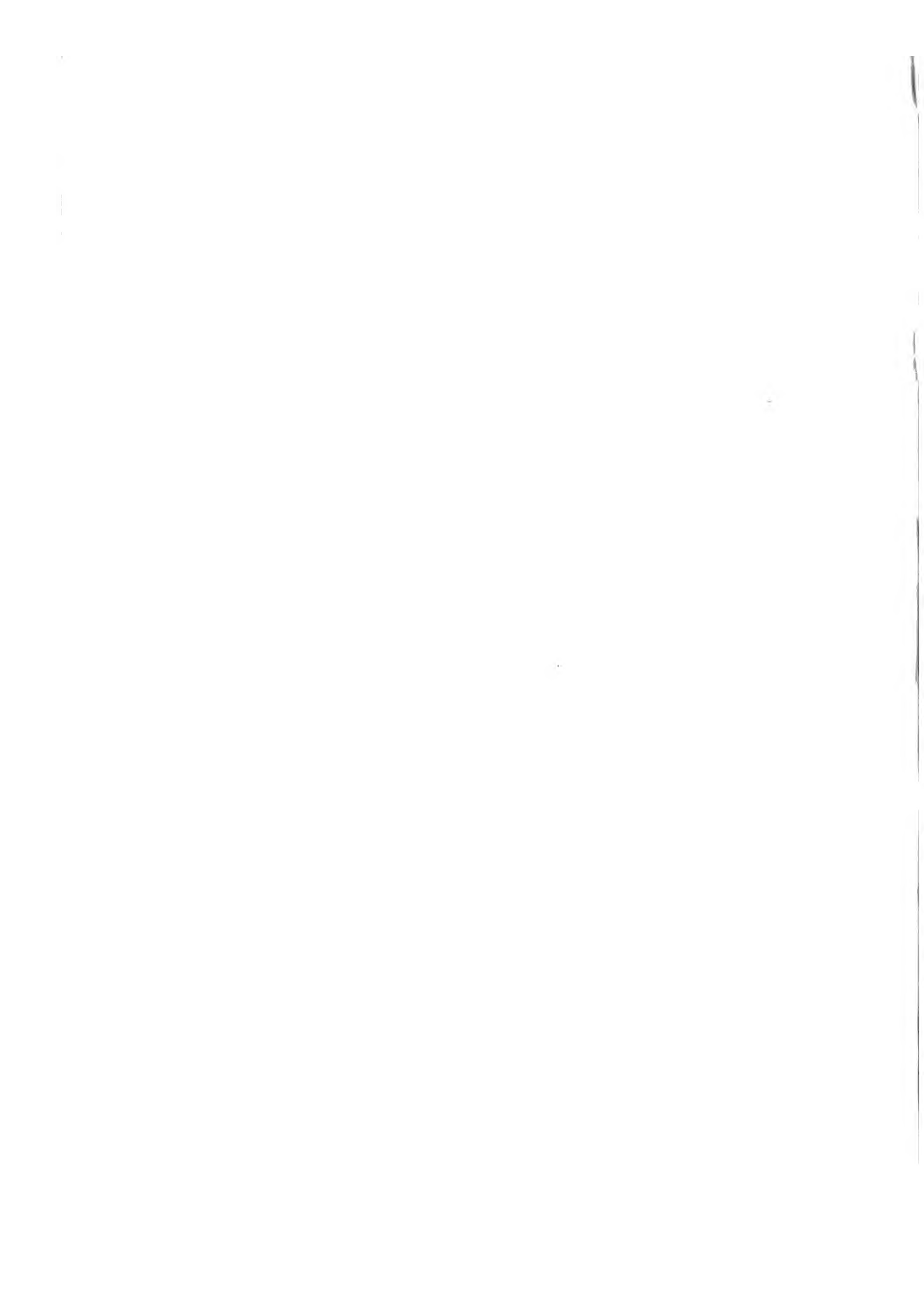
LXIX. EIDER DUCK, OR ST CUTHBERT'S DUCK.

A FEW are to be seen swimming about in Loch Moidart, Loch-na-Nuah, Loch Ailort, and about Arisaig Point. They breed on the coast here, and on the rocky islands at the mouths of the different sea lochs—on much the same sort of places as the Sheldrake or the Merganser. The eggs are surrounded with down, whiter and of a finer quality than that of the Merganser or Sheldrake. They are very numerous in Iceland, where they are strictly protected, the down being an article of commerce, worth twelve shillings per lb. They build about the houses near the sea, sometimes on the turf with which the roofs are covered, and sometimes on the ground. They are very tame. One that we came across sat quite quiet and unconcerned in her nest while I sketched her. The down may be taken from the nests once or twice, but if they are robbed a third time the birds are unable to renew it, and desert their nests. The male and female differ very much in plumage, the male being nearly all white, with a dark breast, a black spot on the crown of the head, and a green patch on the cheek. The female is brown—the colour of the female of the Black Grouse—which it also somewhat resembles in flight.



B

1874 + DUCK



LXX. SHELDRAKE.

THIS beautiful bird is common here in summer. I have seen a score of them together flying about over Loch Moidart in the springtime. They frequent the shore here, and build in the rocky islands in the open sea at the mouth of Loch Ailort. The nest in the illustration was done on Eilan Treen. It was in the hollow of a turf bank, well concealed, as it is the custom of bright-coloured birds to put their nests out of sight. There was a circle of grey down round the eggs. We got on that island a young one, from which the picture is taken, and which we attempted in vain to rear. The Countess of Selkirk had a little flock of Sheldrakes in a pond at Balmae, in Kirkcudbrightshire. They were reared under hens and were quite tame, and used to come at call to be fed. However, they did not remain there long; but when full-grown, all of them that were not pinioned flew away back to their native ocean, which was not far off.

The Sheldrake differs from other ducks in that the plumage is alike in both sexes, and does not appear to change according to the time of year; also, that the male assists in hatching and rearing the young, a work that other drakes leave entirely to the female, going off to a distance to moult while the duck is in her nest.

The male Swan is also exceptional among the anatidæ in this respect, helping to rear and to defend his offspring. I have seen one pursue a boat, with great fury, that came nearer than it approved of to its incubating mate. This philo-progenitive instinct seems to go along with the similarity of plumage in the sexes. It is strong in the domestic Gander; and among the gallinaceous birds is the same, or nearly so. The Grouse,

SHELDRAKE.

Ptarmigan, and Partridge are exemplary in their performance of the domestic duties of husband and father, while the Black-cock, Pheasant, and Peacock are notably the reverse.

Some authorities excuse them for this desertion on the plea that their more conspicuous plumage might betray the nest to their enemies, but I cannot think that that is the cause, for, directly after the breeding season, the drake lays aside his nuptial finery and becomes as dingy as the duck. I can find no answer to the difficult question except the old-fashioned one I used to get in my youth, "It is their nature so to do."

Unlike the Drake (Sheldrake excepted) the Gander in the domestic state takes care of his young. Even when he has two wives, and both have families, he adopts them all, and will, if allowed, take a turn at sitting on the eggs of both his geese. At Killlearn it happened that a hen had hatched some goslings, and the Gander killed her because she would not let him have them. When the Goose is sitting on eggs, the Gander appears to know on what day they ought to hatch; and, if shut out of the goose-house, he will watch at the door for her to come out with her brood. A Turkey Cock there also took great care of the young Turkeys. He was a great defence for them against Crows and Jackdaws. This was supposed to be an unusual case. With the Gander it is always so. There was an old pet white Leghorn Cock at Arisaig Inn that devoted his latter days to the charge of young chickens, when he was much confined to the house from old age and infirmity. The instinct for nursing seems to occur sometimes in most unexpected quarters. I knew a cat, many years ago, that had a fancy for adopting a young chicken, and

SHELDRAKE.

sitting in charge of it near the kitchen fire. The first time she did it she had lost her kittens, and may have done so in hopes that the chicken might help to relieve her of her superfluity of milk ; but, as she did the same thing another time, she must have been actuated besides by the pure love of nursing. Greater wonders than this have been narrated in old times. In Shakespeare we read :

“ Some say that Ravens foster forlorn children.”

Titus Andronicus, Act ii., Scene 3.

But no such instance has come under my own observation.



B

Sheldrake
Nestling young

LXXI. M E R G A N S E R.

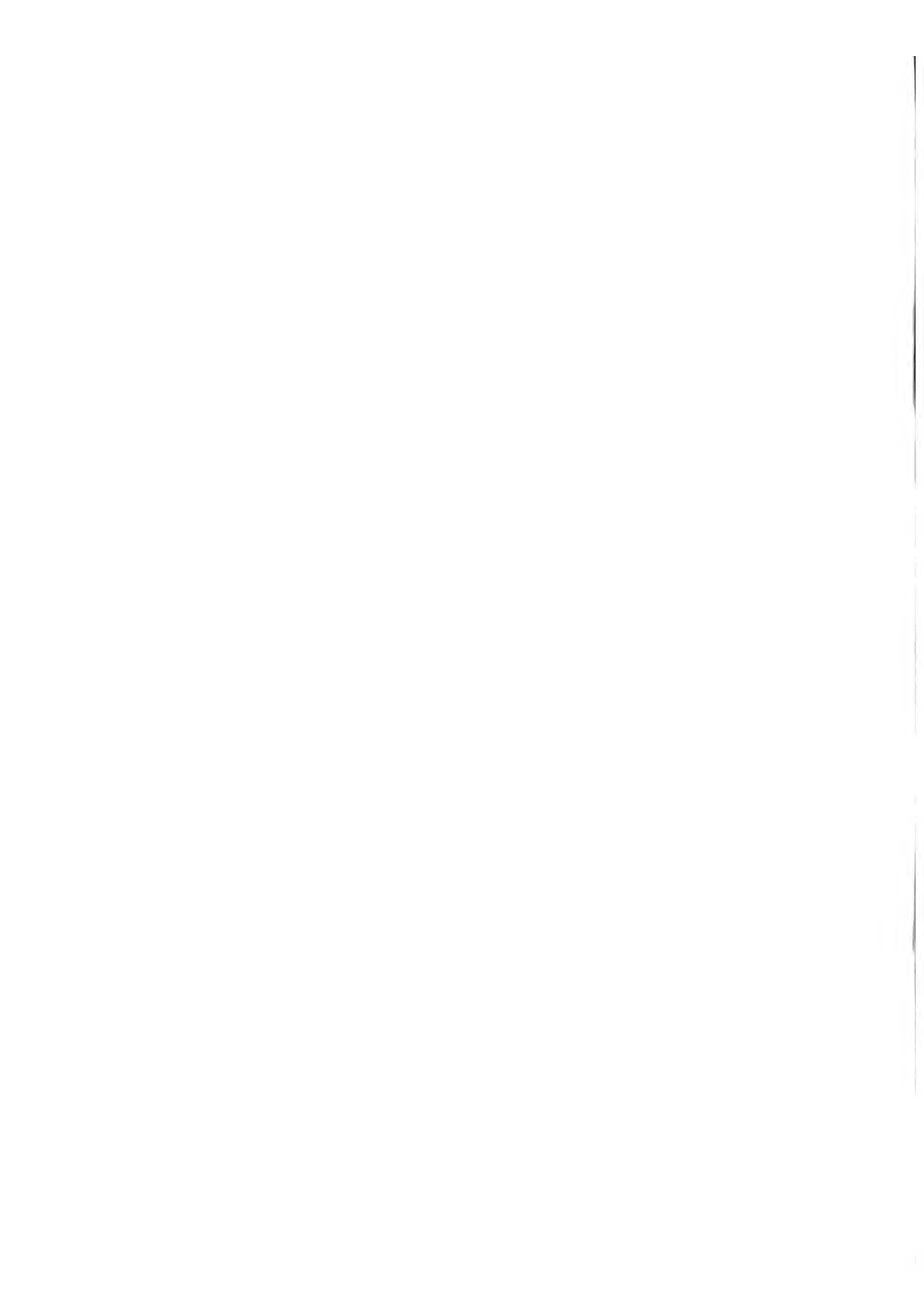
(*Mergus serrator.*)

THE mother bird in this illustration was from a live one caught unhurt in its nest by a little dog. After being taken home and pourtrayed, it was let out of the window. The eggs of sea birds do not require to be so constantly sat upon as those of land birds. On a fine day the gulls are more often to be seen standing beside the nest than sitting on the eggs. In bad weather and at night they sit close, so I trust neither mother nor eggs were any the worse for her short sojourn in the studio.

The nest was like that in the picture, and had a fishy fume perceptible at some distance. It contained eight or nine buff-coloured eggs, surrounded by a roll of rather dirty grey down. The nests are often placed on the top of a steep rock in a heathery place, whence the young must be helped down to the sea by their mothers, as they could not come down of themselves at so early an age. They follow her in the sea, swimming and diving with great activity almost as soon as hatched, sometimes running with great speed on the top of the water with their disproportionately large webbed feet acting as a support like snow shoes, and leaving a white streak of spray behind them.

The adult has the eyes bright red; in the young they are blue. Young creatures, both bird and beast, have often blue eyes in their infancy, which turn to yellow-red, or hazel afterwards; some hazel, which turn yellow. I do not know if eyes which are blue in the adult ever begin with a different colour. I have seen in old people with hazel eyes a blue or grey tint beginning round the outside edge of the dark brown iris, as if the colour were fading or turning grey like the hair. The young hoodie crows that I have seen had blue eyes; the old ones have very dark hazel.

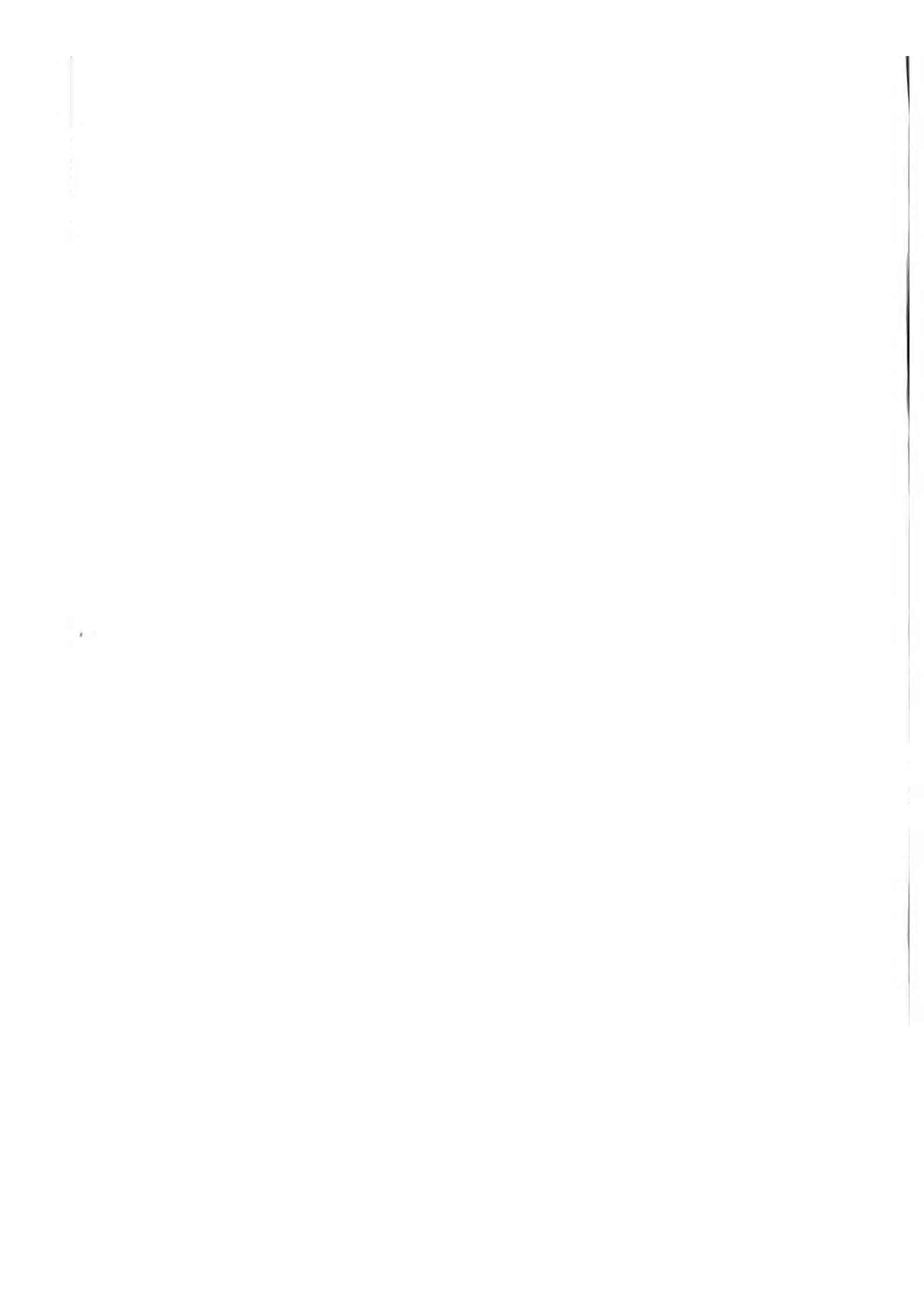


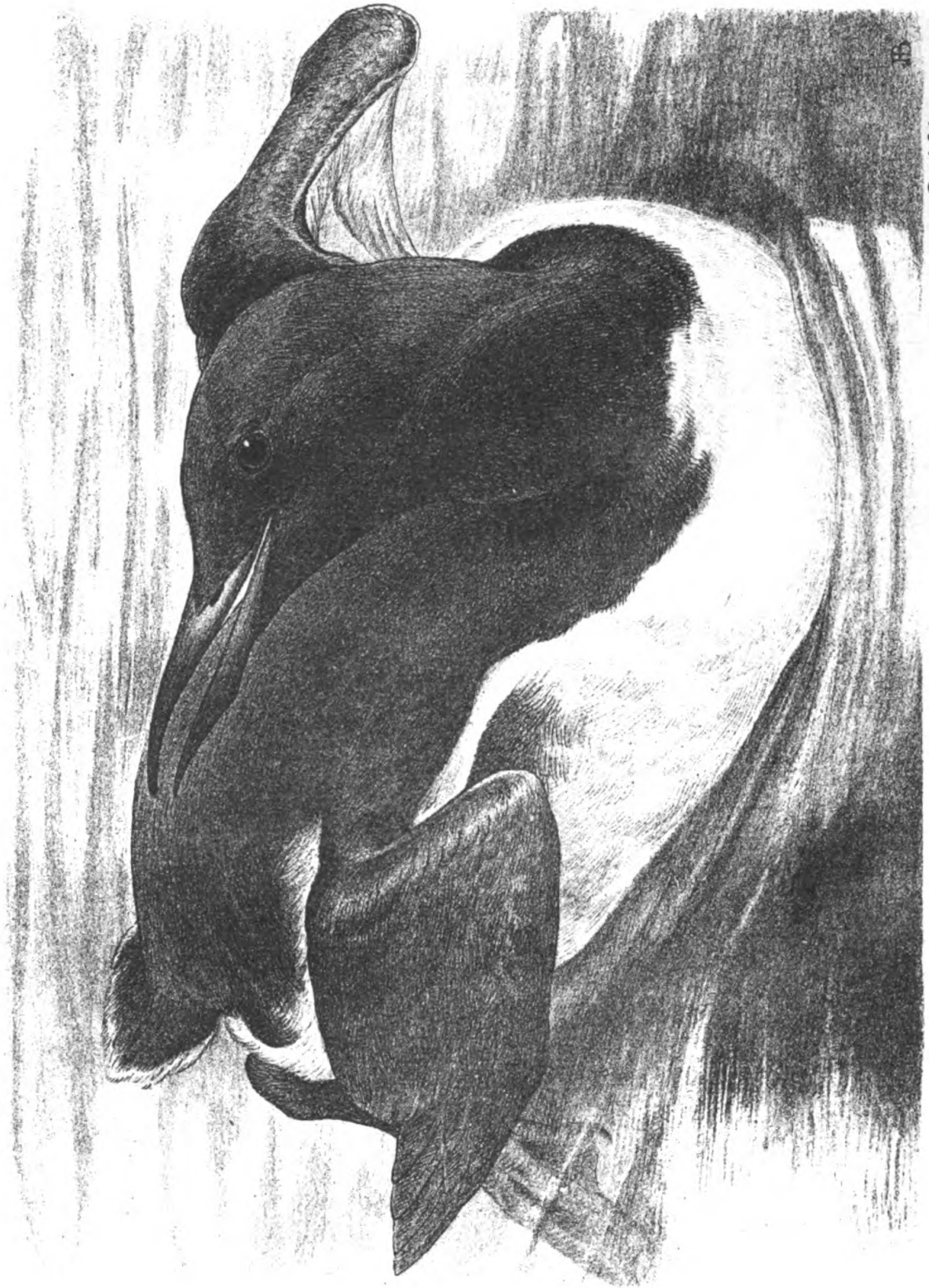


LXXII. COMMON GUILLEMOT.

(*Uria troile.*)

THE Guillemot, though it frequents Loch Ailort in search of fish, especially herring fry, does not breed here. It prefers more precipitous rocks than are to be found here, such as the Bass or Barra Head, where the nearly perpendicular precipices are from 400 to 600 feet high, and where many kinds of sea-birds rear their young on the narrow ledges of rock at a considerable height above the sea, choosing the elevation according to their several tastes—oddly enough, the small winged Guillemot choosing the highest ledge, where, exposed to the Atlantic storms, it lays its one or at most two eggs, which are of a large size in proportion to the bird. The Guillemot swallows the fish it catches, and when they are half digested, disgorges them for the young to feed on. The Guillemot I drew in summer plumage had the feet and legs black. Some we saw in January, in Glasgow Market, had the legs and toes orange-yellow, membranes olive, claws yellow.





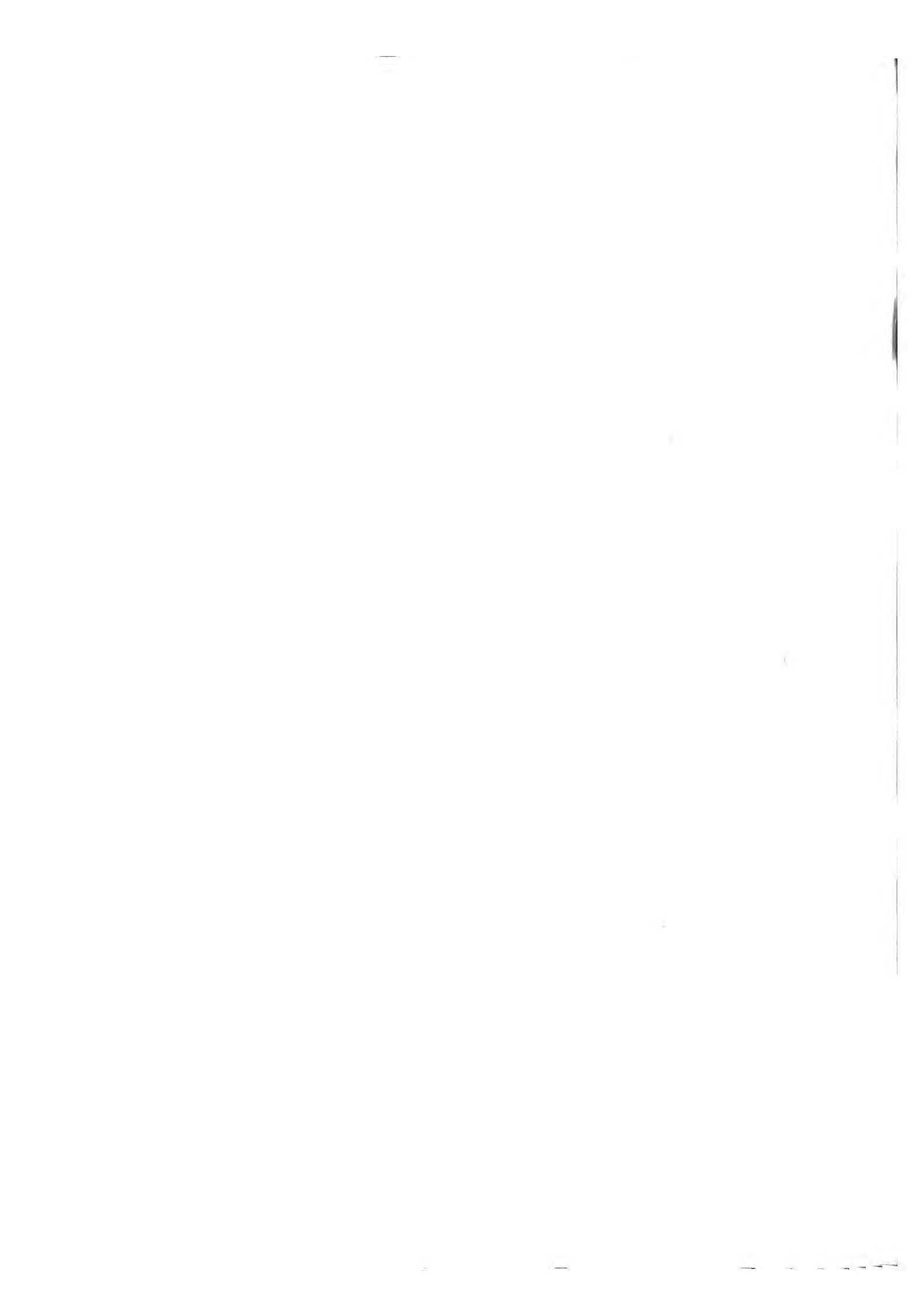
45

Guillemot

LXXIII. BLACK GUILLEMOT.

(Uria grylle.)

THIS bird was caught alive on her eggs on a little rocky island at the mouth of Loch Ailort, where a few pairs breed annually. She returned to her eggs—we cannot call it her nest—on being let out at the window after her picture had been taken. Unlike the Common Guillemot, the black one, when alarmed, readily flies up off the water instead of diving. The flight has a resemblance to that of the Grouse.





[♂]
Black Guillemot

LXXIV. BLACK GUILLEMOT IN
WINTER PLUMAGE.

THIS plate represents the winter plumage of the Black Guillemot. The specimen figured was shot, in October, in Loch-na-Nuagh. It is called the "Dovekie" by Arctic voyagers, who find it a plentiful article of food. It is only in winter plumage that it has a remote resemblance to a Dove.



BB

Black Guillemot in Winter Plumage

LXXV. BLACK GUILLEMOT—YOUNG AND EGG.

THIS plate is a delineation of the Black Guillemot's nest, or rather of the place her eggs were laid, on the black damp earth in the cleft of a rock, on a small island in Loch Ailort. The young ones were drawn from life, and were not injured by the operation, being afterwards restored in safety to their nursery. So far as we have observed, it only lays one or two eggs and no more; but sometimes the birds lay near the same place and get mixed. The Black Guillemot lays its eggs in a concealed and sheltered place among the rocks at no great height above the sea. The Common Guillemot and Razorbill lay theirs on an exposed shelf of rock near the top of a precipice.



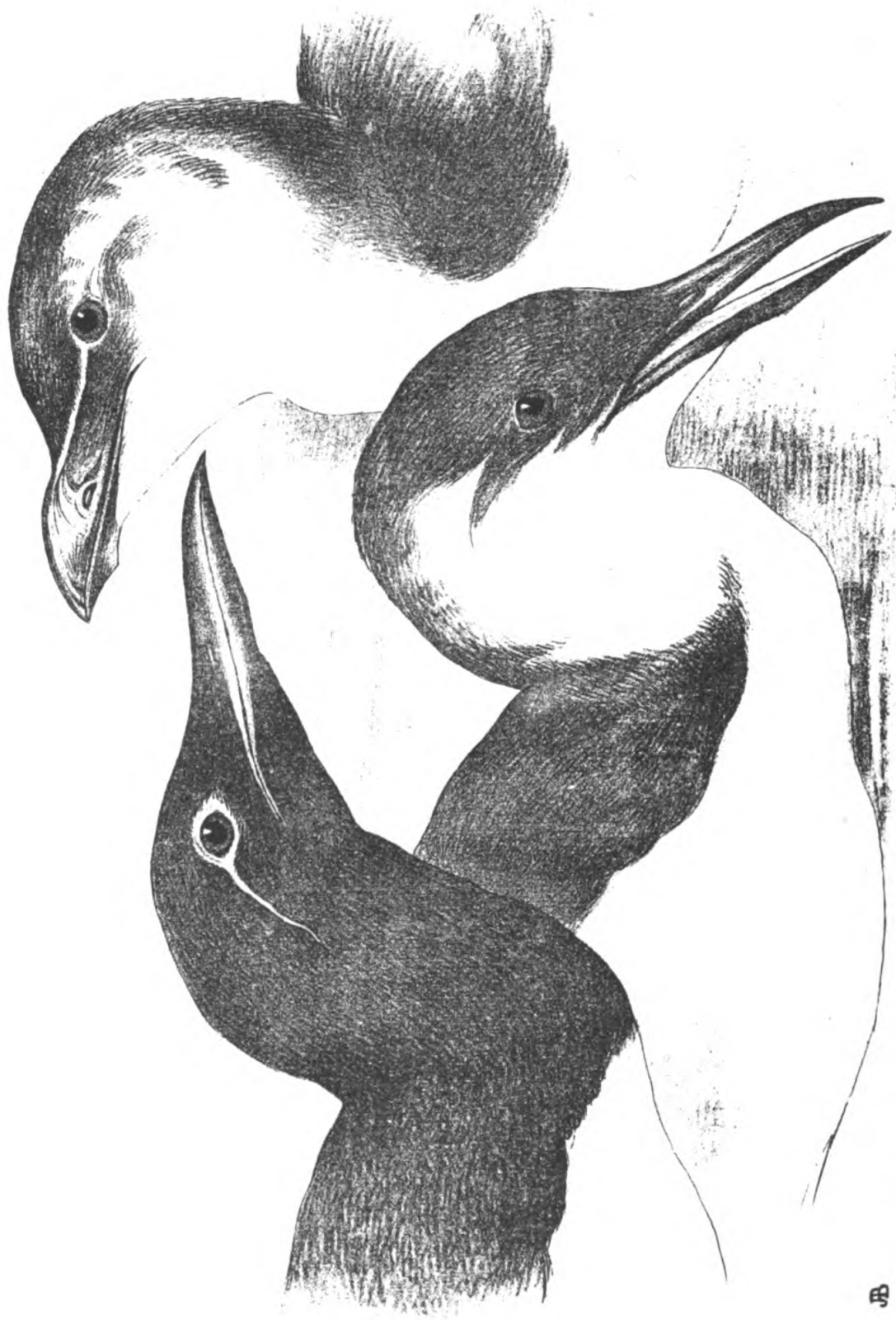
Black Guillemot's Nest

LXXVI. HEADS OF RINGED GUILLEMOT, COMMON
GUILLEMOT, AND YOUNG RAZORBILL.

RAZORBILLS and Guillemots are common here, and Puffins are to be seen sometimes in autumn. None of them breed in this immediate neighbourhood. They are difficult to shoot, as they dive at the first flash of a gun. The ringed or bridled Guillemot whose head is on the left in the drawing was shot on the Clyde, near Greenock. We have also seen one here. The Guillemot flies in the air much better than one would suppose possible with such small wings. We had an excellent opportunity of observing the way in which it uses them under water, by letting away in clear, but not deep, water one which had been caught uninjured.

The head in the centre is that of a Common Guillemot in winter plumage, from a fresh specimen in Glasgow market in January.

The head on the right is that of a Razorbill bought in Glasgow market in January. It is a bird of the year, and therefore the beak is not fully developed, but the plumage resembles the winter plumage of the adult bird.



Heads of Ringed Guillemot, Common Guillemot, & Young Razorbill.

L X X V I I. H E I S K A R.

THE GOLDEN PLOVER (*Charadrius pluvialis*).—We met with the Golden Plover on the Island of Heiskar, in the open sea some miles beyond Canna. We went there after seals, as it is a favourite resort for them. We found them more interesting than the Plovers, which may be seen on any Scotch moor, and abound in poulterers' shops. We had a splendid summer day, with just wind enough to take us there, and not enough to make landing difficult. It was agreed that no one was to fire for half an hour, so that I might have time to observe the seals and make a sketch of them. We crept quietly up to the top of the island, where we could look down on a small lagoon in the basaltic rocks. The tide was out, and there were many seals playing about and barking, and there were many more swimming in the sea beyond. One we thought was dead was lying in the foreground, but it was only sound asleep, and at the first gun report it waddled off to the nearest water, bobbing along on its stomach. It was the only one we secured.

According to Sir Walter Scott, the seal loves music in common with other animals :

“ Earth, ocean, air have nought so shy
But owns the power of minstrelsy.
Rude Heiskar's seal, through surges dark,
Will long pursue the minstrel's bark.”

When whistled to in Loch Ailort, or when a flute was played, I have seen them raise themselves breast high in the water. Whether they admired or only wondered at the gentle sounds I do not know ; but they had a very different effect on them

HEISKAR.

from the gun's report. We saw a beautiful large butterfly on Heiskar—*Parnassius apollo*—yellowish white, with red and black spots on it. It is not a British species, but has been found on the island of Lewis, in the Outer Hebrides. It inhabits the Alps and Norway and Sweden.



22-2-5
22-2-5

B.

Heiskay Golden Plovers

Cormorants

LXXVIII. CORMORANT.

(*Phalacrocorax carbo.*)

DRAWN from life in the Zoological Gardens. A gentleman was trying at the time to photograph them, but they fidgeted too much. It was before the kodak had come into use. So my drawing was made use of at a meeting of the Zoological Society.

“June 6, 1882.—Professor Flower, LL.D., F.R.S., President, in the chair.—The Secretary called attention to the curious way in which the young Cormorants, lately hatched in the Gardens, were fed by the parent bird, and exhibited a drawing by Mrs Hugh Blackburn, taken on the 9th ult., illustrating this subject. The Cormorants deposited by Captain Salvin in the autumn of 1881 had paired in March last, and built a nest of sticks on a stump in the enclosure called the ‘Gull Pond.’ Two young ones were hatched on the 22nd April last, after four weeks’ incubation, both parents taking turns in the nest. The young birds were at first naked, but soon became covered with black down-plumage, whence they were now beginning to moult into their adult dress. As would be seen by the illustration, the parents fed the young ones by allowing them to poke their heads far down into the parents’ throats and to extract the semi-digested fish from the stomach.”

Captain Salvin used to keep Cormorants trained for fishing. Unluckily they died before I had an opportunity of seeing them at work. They are now beautifully stuffed, and set up in the Hancock Museum at Newcastle, with the little leather collars round their necks to prevent them swallowing the fish they caught.

There are many Cormorants here in autumn. They abound in the island of Heiskar, where there must be a great supply of fish to support both them and the numerous seals that frequent it. Cormorants build on the ledges of high rocks at the Land’s End in Cornwall and on the cliffs in Barra.



J.B.

17 May
1882

Cormorants & young

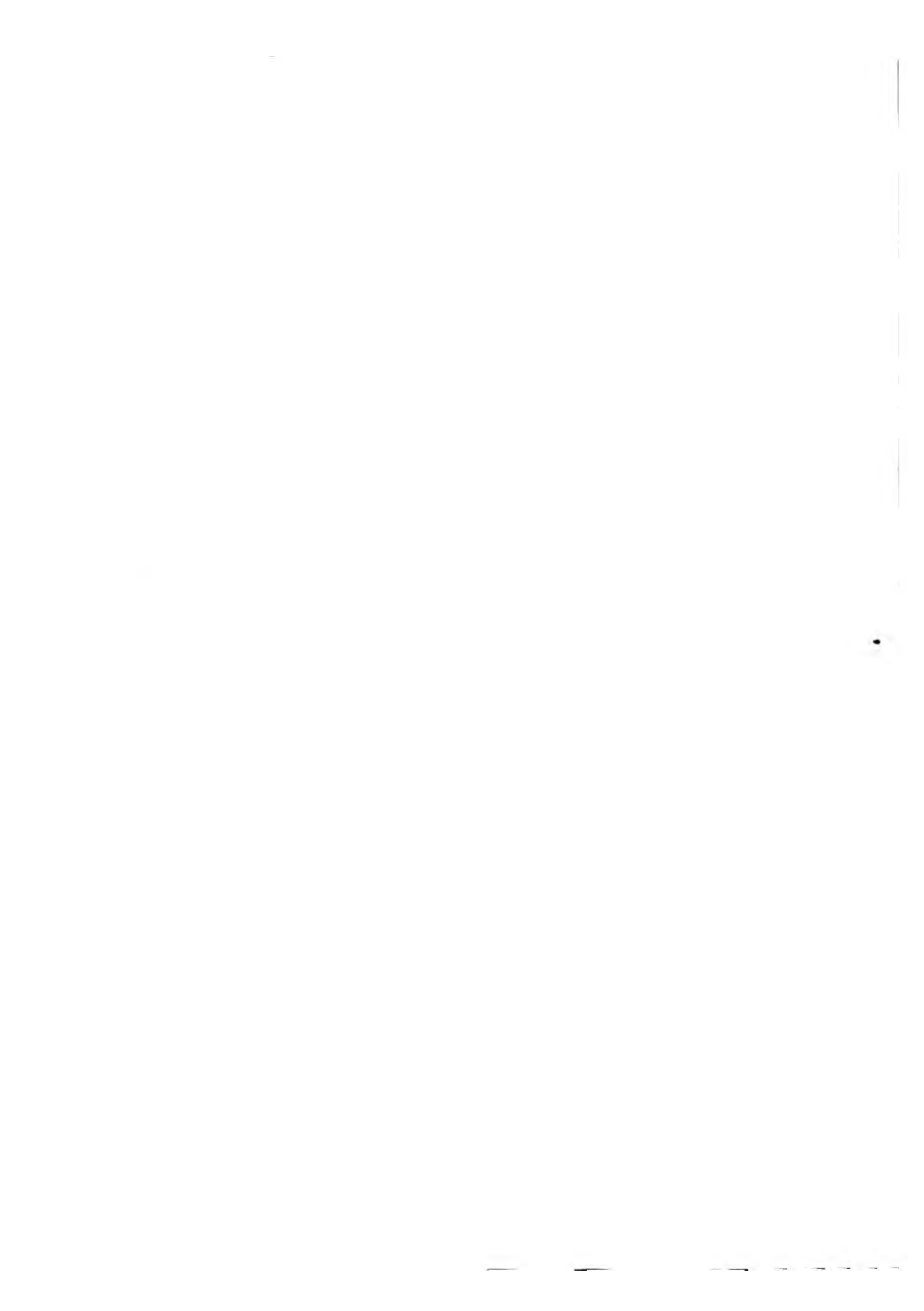
LXXIX. SOLAN GOOSE, OR GANNET.

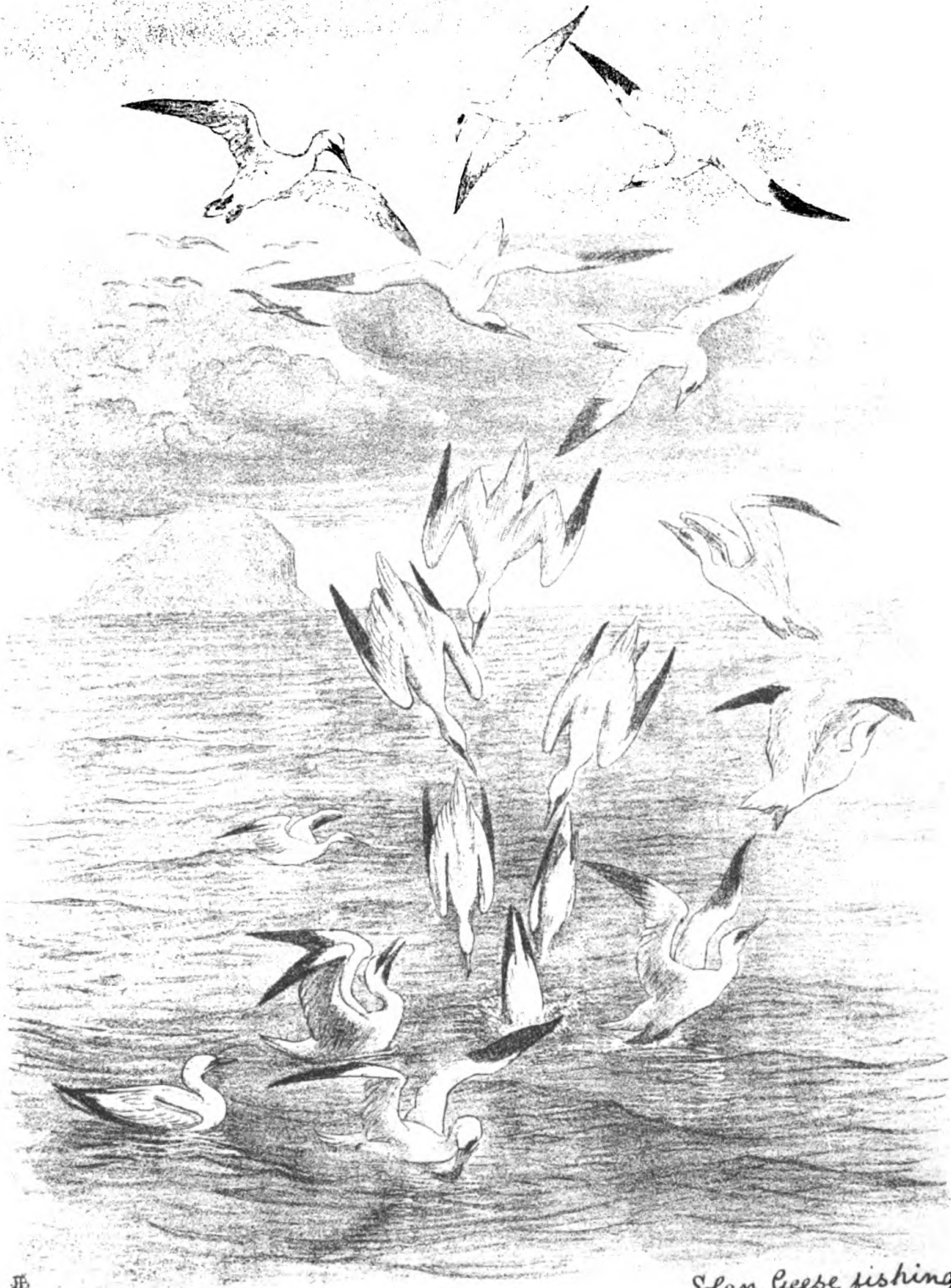
(*Sula bassana.*)

THIS plate is from memoranda of what I have often seen on the Ayrshire coast, nearly opposite Ailsa Craig, which is introduced in the distance. On that coast a number of Solan Geese may be seen pouring into a small spot of the sea, and then rising heavily from the water and wheeling round till they attain a sufficient height to see the fish below, when they close their wings, and dart headlong down again to seize their prey.

We see them frequently in the Bay at Roshven, mostly in autumn or in stormy weather. They probably come from Ailsa Craig, as there is no place nearer here where they congregate or breed. There is a colony of them on the Bass Rock, which is the best place of all for seeing them in their nests. Such persons as cannot get there may see the scene admirably represented in a group in the Natural History Museum in Cromwell Road.

The first plumage of the Solan Goose (which it retains for, I believe, two years) is dark brown, spotted with white. It is a mystery to me where they spend their adolescence, one so seldom sees them anywhere, not even near the Bass Rock nor Ailsa Craig. All I have seen there have been white. The only one I ever saw in full brown plumage was in the Bay of Biscay, on a very stormy day in October. I have occasionally seen one not yet quite white, but with some patches of brown still remaining.



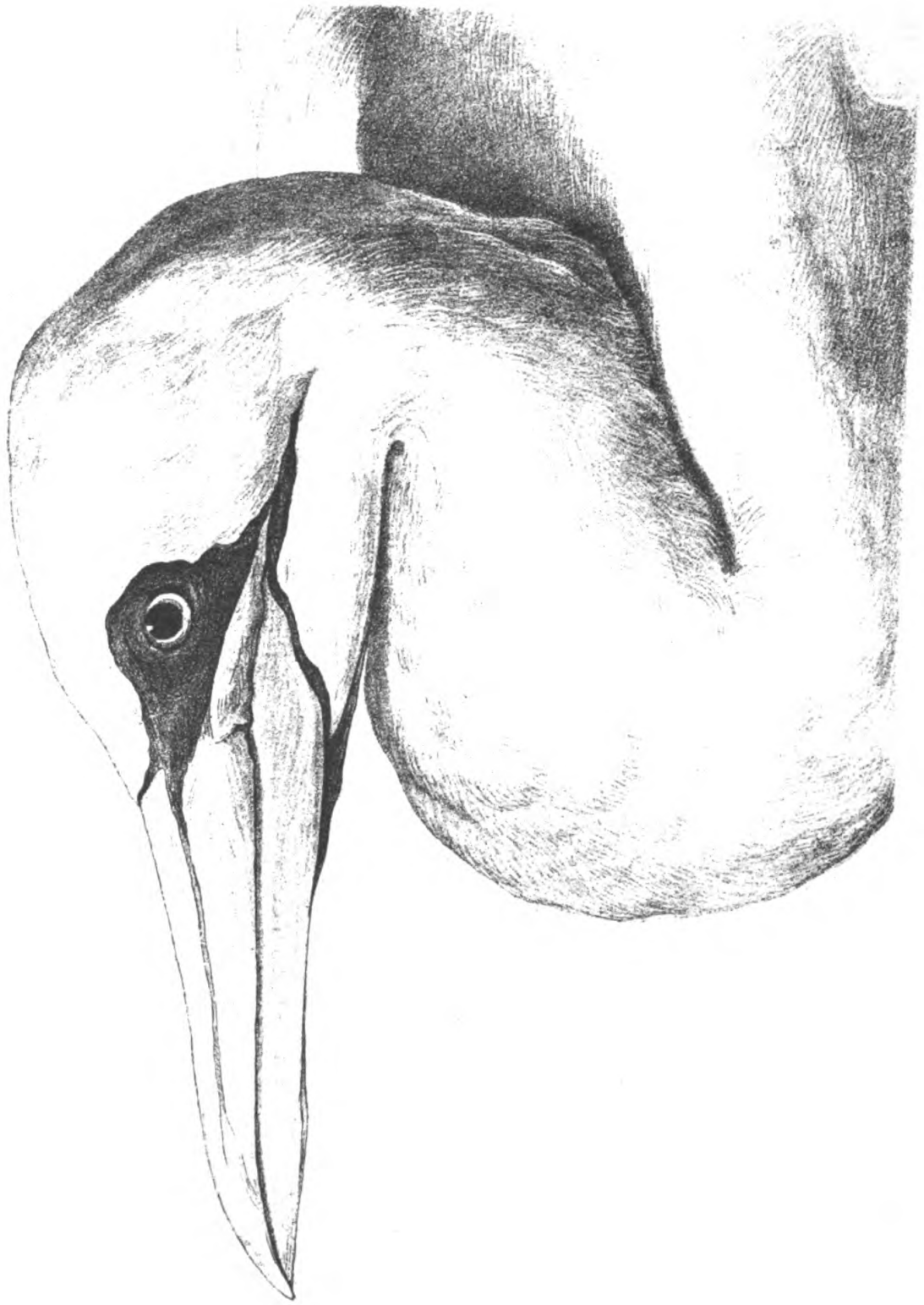


JB

Solan Geese fishing

LXXX. SOLAN GOOSE.

THE bird from which this was drawn was found dead on the shore near the mouth of Loch Ailort. It had probably struck itself on a stone when plunging from a height after fish.

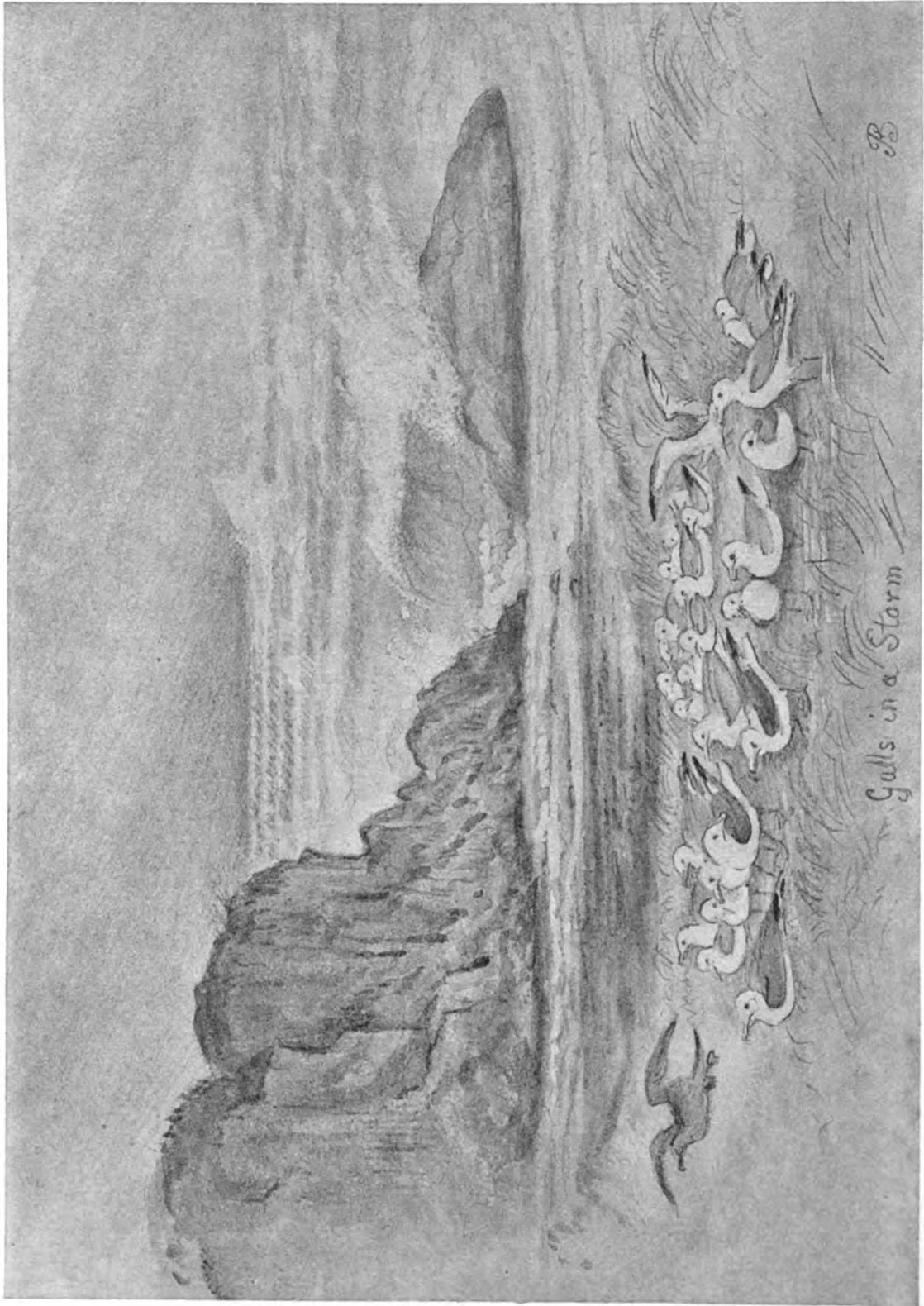


Solan Goose



LXXXI. GULLS IN A STORM.

GULLS have not the powerful flight of the Gannet to enable them to battle with the fury of the winter blasts. On the approach of a storm they often fly inland for many miles and feed on the insects and worms they find in the ploughed fields. I have seen them here taking refuge from a winter gale, all huddled together in a sheltered corner of a partly submerged field near the sea, quite unable to fly. Among them were some Skuas in a helpless condition, one of which we managed to catch. On comparing it with Yarrell's description we believed it to be Richardson's Skua. It was speckled brown of a lighter colour than the Common Skua, which I had seen before in the bay pursuing the Sea Gulls, and robbing them of their fish. Its eyes and beak were dark, and its legs pale coloured, with dark toes and webs.



Gulls in a Storm

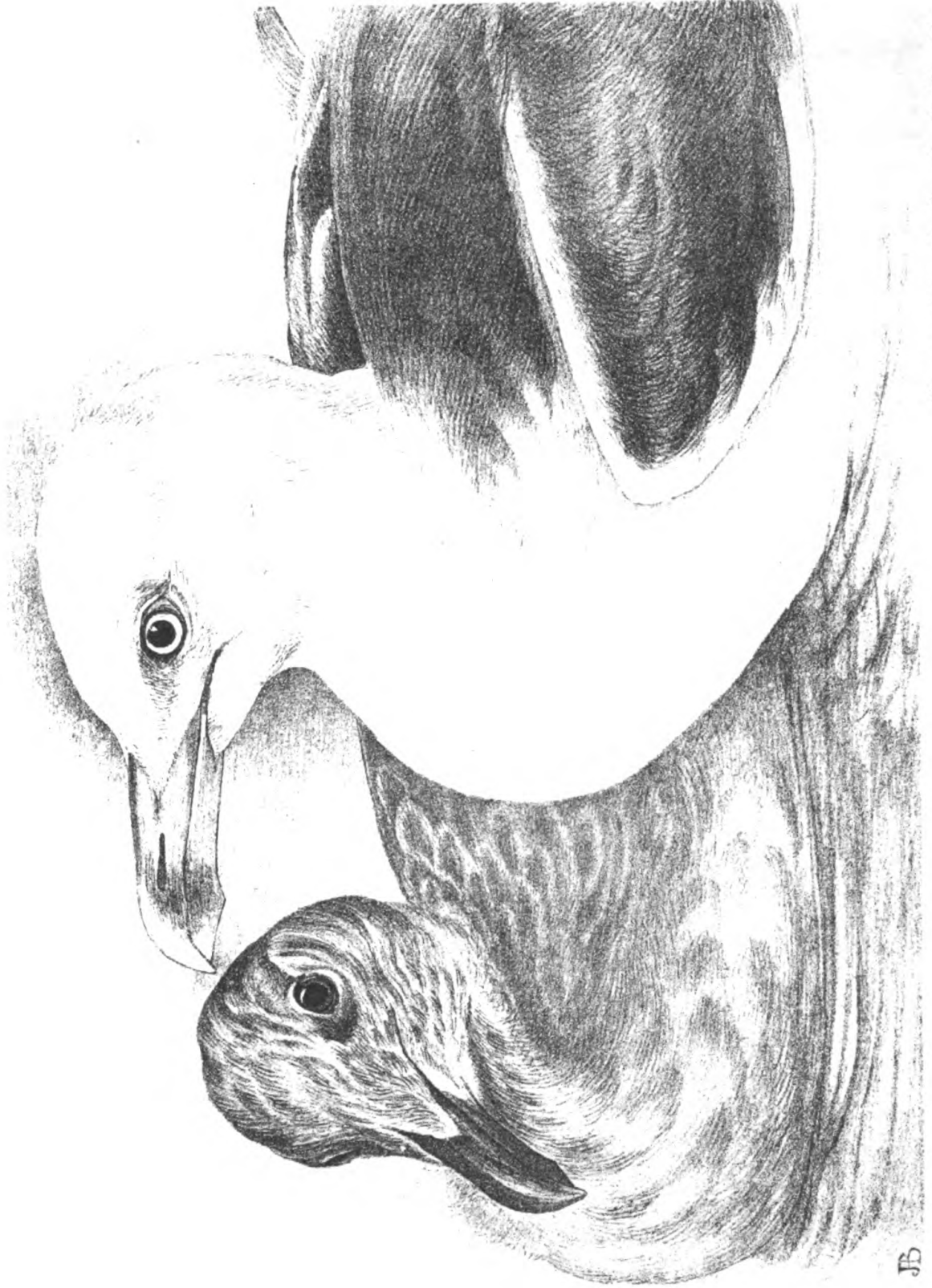
J.B.

LXXXII. LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL.

(*Larus fuscus*.)

THE figure to the right in the next plate is from an adult Lesser Black-backed Gull. The young Gull, whether Herring or Black-backed, in the course of a few weeks changes his downy coat for the mottled-brown plumage represented to the left of this plate. This plumage is retained for at least one year, and the young birds of the two species, as well as of the Great Black-backed Gull, the plumage of which passes through corresponding changes, are often mistaken for distinct species from their parents.

THE BROWN-HEADED GULL (*Larus ridibundus*).—Dr Macvicar writes me:—"The Brown-headed Gull is only occasionally seen in Loch Moidart in summer. It is common in winter, and comes in numbers near the house to be fed during hard weather, being less shy than the Common Gull." The COMMON GULL (*Larus canus*) is by no means shy this hard winter (1894-5). I never saw it come before about the houses in the way it has done lately, both at cottage and castle eating up the food laid out for poultry, pigeons, pheasants, or finches; alighting on window sills, and crowding in the carved balustrades at Inveraray Castle. I suppose their great hunger may be accounted for by the long frost preventing the plough from working, which otherwise at this time of year might be turning up worms in plenty. All the little birds that come to the house have required extra feeding this winter (1894-1895). Many of our numerous Thrushes have disappeared. The Blackbirds are more hardy. Many other birds, not so well situated, have suffered from want, especially Woodcocks, whom it is impossible to help.



Lesser Black-backed Gull

B

LXXXIII. GULL'S NEST.

THE drawing was made from an actual specimen, *in situ*, and whilst it was in progress, the young bird in the egg (which, it will be seen, is chipped) fairly extricated himself from the shell.

The fact of the young offspring being differently coloured from their parents occurs among beasts as well as birds. Young wild boars are striped, while the old ones are plain brown. A young tapir I saw in the Zoo, which had been born there, was striped very like them, while its mother was plain grey. The young of the red deer and the roe are both spotted with white, like the fallow deer. Foxes are born black; so are tigers. Lions have a few stripes and spots when very young.



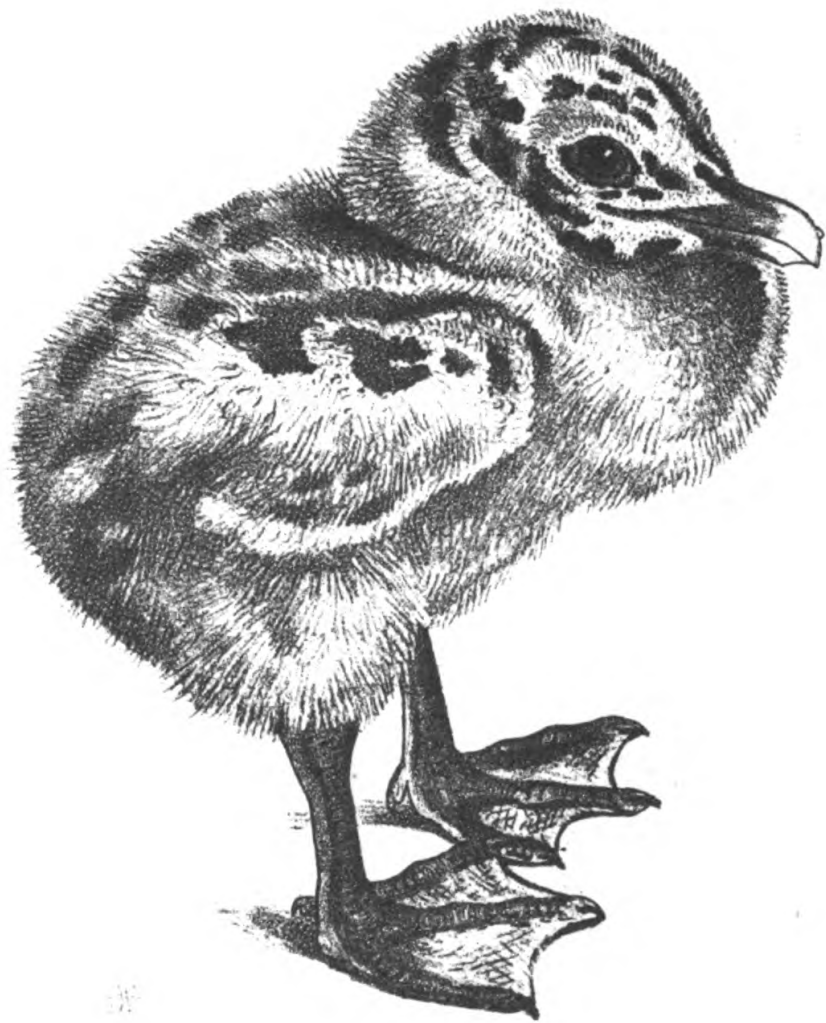
Gull's nest

LXXXIV. YOUNG GULLS.

HERRING GULLS and other *laridæ* do not assume the adult plumage of white and grey for a year at least—the Solan Goose is even longer. In former times, when natural history was not so much studied as it is now, the young Herring Gull was supposed, from the dissimilarity of its plumage, to be of a different species, and was called the “Wagel” or “Burgomaster.”

The young Kittiwake, in the first year, has part of the wings and back dark, and a dark ring round the back of the neck. It used to be called the “Tarrock,” and was supposed also to be of a different species. It is like the Common Seamew, but has no hind toe—only a small excrescence; also, instead of the Seamew’s inarticulate scream, its cry is distinctly “Kittiwake” (hence the name). There is another distinguishing mark which has not been noticed in any description—a red patch at the edges of the gape and at the base of the lower mandible.

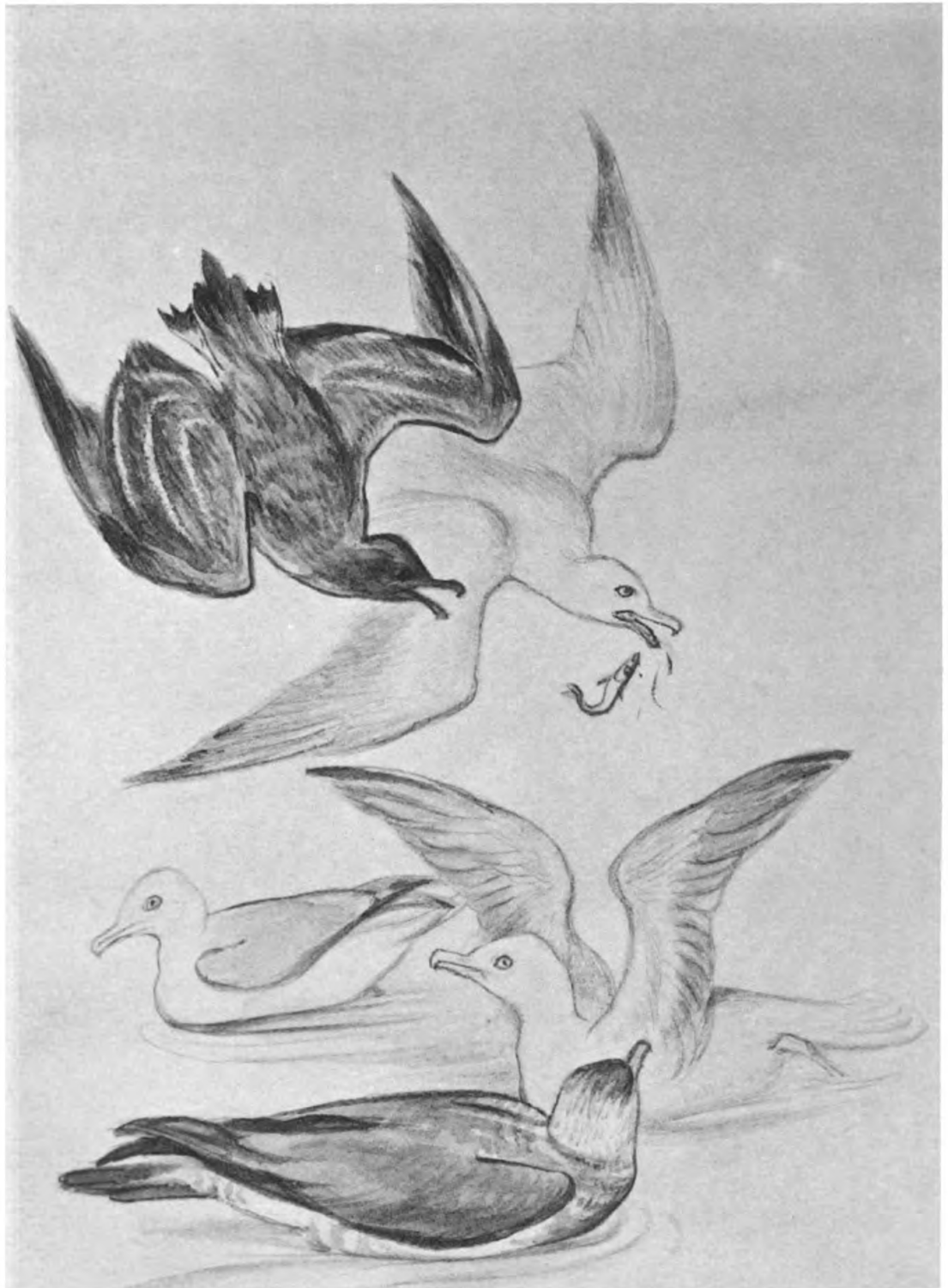
The Kittiwake builds on the highest ledge of the high cliffs at Barrahead, and in the westmost islands; the Seamew on quite low rocky islands in the upper part of Loch Ailort. Most young Gulls are brownish and speckled at first—a less conspicuous colour than the white and light grey of their maturer years, and more suitable in the helpless stage of youth, when concealment is their only safety. The young Tern has its first feathers edged with drab colour, and its beak and feet pale orange; not the brilliant scarlet they afterwards become.



Young Gull

L X X X V. S K U A.

ONE day when I was out fishing I saw what looked like a Hawk in pursuit of a Sea Gull, which was evidently in a great fright. To my surprise the dark coloured hawk-like bird soon after alighted on the sea, and swam about among the other Gulls. An old fisherman who was out with me told me in such English as he could command that it was a sort of Gull that chased the others and stole their fish, so I conjectured that the bird I saw must be the Skua, which I had read of, but had never seen. It dashed at the Gull, which opened its beak to scream, dropping the fish, which the Skua caught in mid-air, and carried off.



LXXXVI. FULMAR.

(*Fulmaris glacialis.*)

THE drawing of the Fulmar is from a live one brought from St Kilda by a yachting friend. It was done life-size, but I have only reproduced the head in order to show the very peculiar beak, with the nostrils in a tube. In other respects it is much like a Herring Gull—the same in colour, but not quite of so handsome a shape.

We saw numbers of them flying about near St Kilda, where they inhabit the high cliffs, and serve, when smoked and dried, as winter food for the natives, as well as for furnishing oil for their lamps. There were many near some similar islands on the coast of Iceland, and near the Faroe Islands, where there were also crowds of Guillemots and other sea-birds. It was very foggy on the day we approached those islands, but one could guess where the land lay by seeing the birds fly in that direction with fish in their bills.

The illustration of the STORM PETREL (*Procellaria pelagica*) was done from a dead one. The first time I ever saw the Storm Petrel was in a great gale, on the 3rd October 1860, when some of them were blown inland over the top of the house. We mistook them at first for Swallows, and wondered at their being here so late. I have seen specimens in the island of St Kilda captured by the natives, and offered to us for sale. I have no doubt they breed there, but we had no time to go in search of them, being on our way to Iceland. We feared that if the wind rose we might be storm-stayed there, for when the sea is rough, neither landing nor embarkation is possible, as there is such a swell on the rocks of that unsheltered shore.

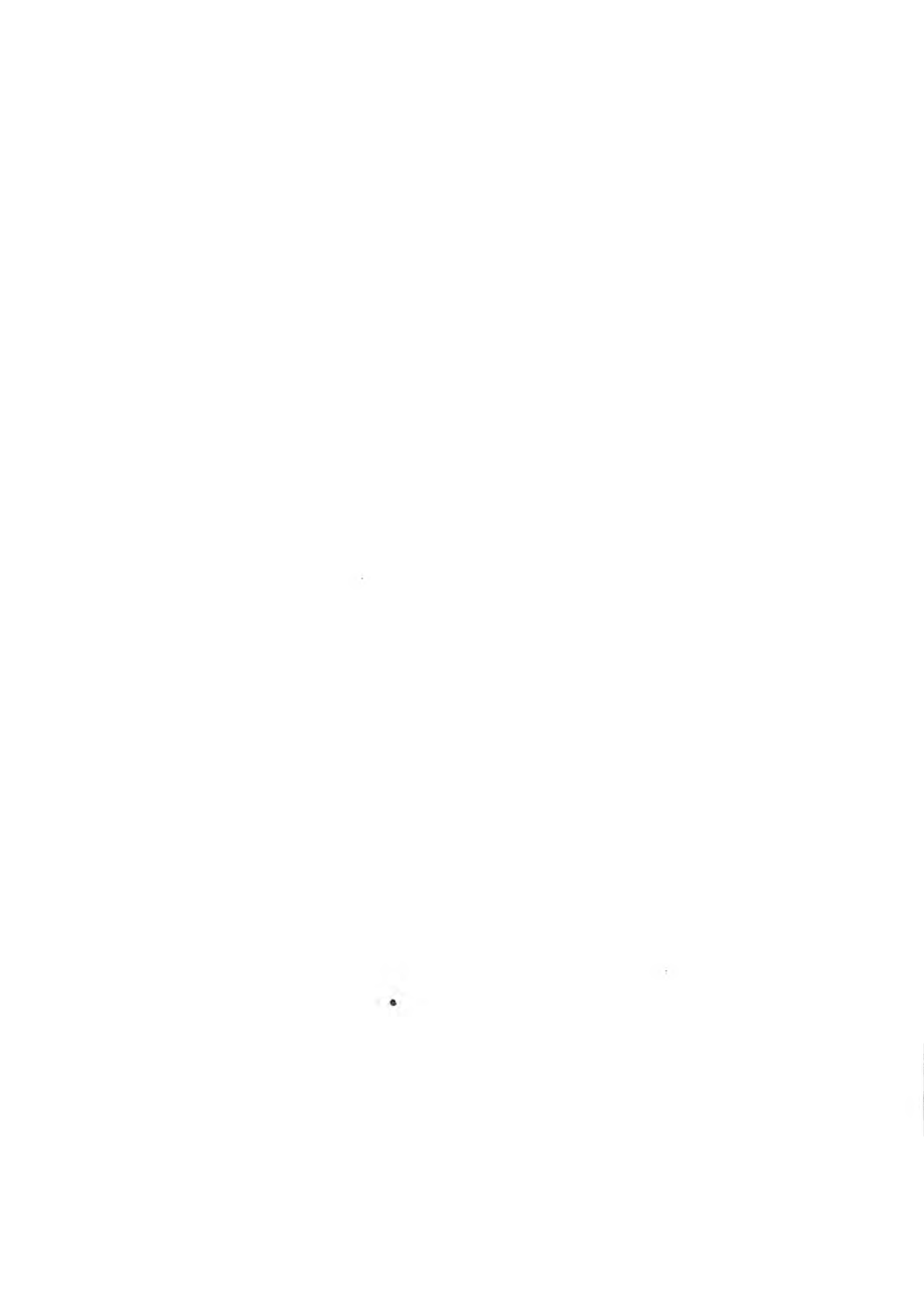
STORM PETREL.

The Petrel, Fulmar, and others of that kind are well supplied with oil, which they squirt out of their peculiarly formed beaks, as a defence against their enemies. Is it possible that they may use it to calm the stormy waves, as ships do ?



Fulmar

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LXXXVII. SHEARWATER.

(*Puffinus anglorum.*)

THE Shearwater is to be met with here on the open sea, between the coast of Moidart and the island of Eigg, where it is said to breed; as also in the Isle of Man, whence its name, "The Manx Shearwater." The illustration is done from a disabled specimen we picked up when yachting, which, after being sketched, was let go. I have seen many such birds in the Mediterranean flying low, just over the tops of the waves. Among the French sailors they go by the name of "Ames Damnées;" wherefore, I do not know; perhaps a survival of the doctrine of transmigration of souls.

Major-General Richardson tells me that long ago, when he was shooting on the Pontana marshes in Sicily, there used to be a lot of Terns, which fluttered about, and that Mario, his factotum, a superstitious Sicilian, said they were "the souls of the dead," and did not want him to shoot any of them.

A Sicilian friend also writes me that a Tern, which he calls *Sterna fluvialis*, is to be found on these marshes, and is called *Ame de Sbirro*.



The Shearwater B

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