

## HOME TALENT ABROAD.

### SOME AMERICAN SONG BIRDS IN EUROPE.

Many of Our Finest Native Songsters, as Well as Sundry of Our Birds of Showy Plumage, Are Now Domesticated Across the Atlantic Ocean.

**Acclimatization of Birds.**  
The fact that the common, meek, pugnacious and thievish sparrow, an immigrant from Europe, has for a few years made itself so obnoxious as to occasion class legislation and a war of extermination, makes the question of bird importation and exportation, and especially that of domestication, timely and interesting. Right here let it be stated that, with the single exception of the so-called English sparrow, no European bird has found a second home in this country, and that of others the hospitality shown it, and quite a number of transatlantic songsters and warblers have been imported during a decade or two. The great lovers and knowers of birds, the Germans, have especially distinguished themselves in systematic efforts at importing and then propagating a number of the most charming little song birds that render the forests and glades, the hedges and bushes of the fatherland so tuneful. Among these may be mentioned more particularly the nightingale and redbreast, the linnet and thrush, the finch and the lark and the robin. Specimens of these may now be met with in the parks and gardens, or, as in the case of the lark, on the boundless prairies. While thousands of these have perished in the dangerous process of acclimatization or as the prey of winged slayers, thousands of others have survived, have become used to the great climatic differences between their old home of more equable temperature and their new, bracing, trying atmosphere.

It is true—though known to but comparatively few Americans—that a much greater number of American birds have been exported of recent years to Europe. And it was likewise again the country where birds are cherished and petted, and loved and praised the most in prose and song, in Germany, where these little American strangers were received most kindly and domesticated most quickly. There are, it is true, a few varieties of American birds, among them our national favorite, the mockingbird, that have become pets in thousands of European homes, in England and France as well as in Germany and in the Scandinavian north. But these, as well as that magnificent little fellow, the cardinal grosbeak, popularly known across the water as the Virginia nightingale, are kept in cages, and hence never acquire citizens' rights. There are other pretty American birds kept in captivity over there as well, such as the catbird, the Carolina parrot, the red-winged blackbird, the yellow-hammer and the bobolink, the meadow-lark and the blue jay and indigo finch. These are all valued more or less highly in Germany especially, either because of their melodious song, or because of their brilliant plumage, or their docility and cleverness at executing tricks. The most expensive of these caged American pets, the mockingbird, is, however, at the same time one of the hardiest of them, because very quickly ac-

climated and learns to mate and to rear young ones on foreign soil. Hence, too, the mockingbird is such a general favorite with dealers and lovers of birds in the old country. With that this bird is capable of learning new tunes all the time, and it therefore richly repays the patience and attention required to teach it and to develop it into a first-class songster. The case is similar with that other European favorite, the cardinal grosbeak. They are in song from March to September, beginning at the first appearance of dawn and repeating a favorite stanza or musical passage twenty or thirty times successively. While their song, therefore, must be termed a little monotonous, these exceedingly handsome birds, more than atone for this one little deficiency by their sprightly figure and gaudy plumage, as well as by the bell-like clearness of their voice and the inexpressiveness of their board and lodging.

But these American varieties, as well as some of the others mentioned, while affording pleasure to their keepers and owners, cannot be said to have acquired European citizenship. It is quite likely that if they were given a chance to return to their old haunts in this country they would gladly forswear all allegiance to Emperor Wilhelm or Queen Victoria. It is different with some other American birds. The one man who has especially exerted himself in acclimatizing American

birds of different species in Europe is Dr. Carl Russ of Germany, the greatest living ornithologist. And he pays the highest compliments to a large number of our birds, claiming that they are easy to acclimatize over there, and that because of several sterling qualities possessed by all of them they would make very valuable acquisitions to the list of European birds. As qualities of this kind he names the beauty of their plumage, their docility, intelligence, amiable disposition, their song, and—most important of all—their expertness in destroying noxious insects, especially caterpillars and larvae. Dr. Russ mentions the fact that the exportation of American birds has of late diminished in number, due to laws prohibiting this which have gone into effect in a number of our States, and he expresses the fear that within a short time the importation of American birds into Germany and other European countries may, on this account, cease altogether. All the more does he rejoice that several thousands of the most valuable American birds have been brought into Germany last year by the large firm of C. Reiche, in Alfeld, near Hanover, and that specimens of them—notably of the brilliant-tinted cardinal grosbeak and rose-breasted grosbeak, of the resplendent nonparill and of the purple finch—can now be bought of all the bird dealers throughout Germany and Austria.

A number of experiments have been made, in Germany as well as England, having in view the acclimatization and propagation in the open of some of the prettiest American birds. Baron von Cramm, a wealthy nobleman with a hobby for birds, thus succeeded in making several pairs of our American cardinal grosbeaks pass unharmed through the severe winter of 1890-91 on his estate near Brunswick. In the vicinity of Stettin, a city even more northerly than Brunswick, a pair of the same birds escaped from their cage and managed to maintain themselves all through the same hard winter. Last spring they nested in a clump of tall pine trees and raised a healthy and independent brood of young Americans right there by the shores of the Baltic. Reports from several other parts of Germany are to the same effect—everywhere this hardy American traveler, nicknamed the American nightingale, managed to make himself at home and to perpetuate his species without any sort of artificial shelter. Similarly the mockingbird, its cousin, the catbird, the rose-breasted grosbeak and the blue jay and purple finch, even the summer redbird—although in the case of the latter a much more southern clime has been habitually its winter quarters—have been doing nicely in the open in different parts of Germany.

Dr. Russ several years ago, during a popular lecture, advised the farmers of Germany to people their poplar trees with parrots. At the time he was ridiculed by everybody, but recent events have shown that his advice was not ill-considered. For where the thing has been tried adequately since it has been found that parrots are the most valuable assistants of the farmer in exterminating noxious insects, provided they were supplied with good quarters. Lord Buxton, for instance, has bred on his estate in England a number of parrots, of all sorts and varieties, including Australian and Carolina ones, with the best possible results. They all did remarkably well and raised families, excepting the North American ones—the so-called parakeets—although to all outward appearances the latter had been the

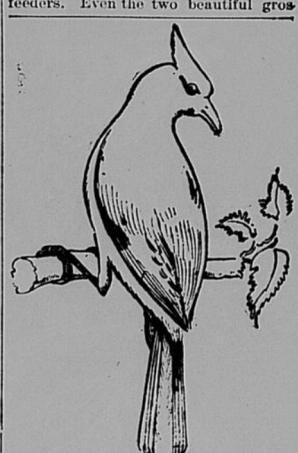
pigeons in the same cote and making their regular daily excursions on the wing right along, even on days when snow was lying deeply. As the one American bird of all other



CAROLINA PARROT.

which Dr. Russ recommends for acclimatization in Germany, England and other parts of Europe where the winters are not too severe, he mentions the

mockingbird. "Not only is this one of the most highly prized singers," he says "but this bird is also one of the most efficient, because one of the largest and most voracious destroyers of insects hence of great benefit to the agriculturist. This is also true of their nearest relatives, especially the catbird, and of the blue jay, oriole and other insect feeders. Even the two beautiful gros-



STELLER'S JAY.

beaks, the rose-breasted and the cardinal one, would be of vastly more benefit than injury to the farmer. They feed their young almost exclusively on insects, especially caterpillars and larvae. Their prime value, of course, would consist in their being birds of decorative plumage as well as songsters. The same might be said of the American thrushes, finches, etc. Both the American indigo and purple finch would be of use to farmers around orchards. Their accession to the ranks of our native birds, therefore, would mean a distinct advantage.

A wealthy merchant of Hamburg, Melkers by name, has begun, since spring of last year, a series of acclimatizing experiments on a large scale, using mostly American birds for the purpose.

#### Hold Hard to Life.

A woman who died in the almshouse at Bliddeford, Me., recently, aged nearly 100 years, had passed through some queer experiences. She came to this country in 1846, and for thirty years she was an inmate of the almshouse. In that time she had been laid out as dead three times, but on each occasion she came to life in time to put a stop to the funeral arrangements. Only a few days before her death an undertaker was called to prepare her remains for burial, but when he arrived she was sitting up in bed.

## HOW UNCLE SAM IS ROBBED.

The Interesting Game of Inspectors Against Postal Thieves.

William J. Clark, who is Superintendent of the Thomson-Houston Electric Company in New York, was for four years a postoffice inspector, and recently, while in Cincinnati, he told a Times-Star reporter some of his experiences in the mail service.

"I was reading the other night," said Mr. Clark, "of some of the skillful means adopted by the postal thieves to rob the mails of Uncle Sam, and I realized that some of the most novel stories of thieving had been omitted by the inspector who gave the stories.

"Now, just imagine, if you can, how money may be extracted from a letter without opening the envelope. Remember, the envelope is sealed. It is almost impossible to imagine how such a thing can be done, and yet it has been done several times, and once very successfully by a clerk in a New Jersey postoffice. For many months reports were received by the department of large amounts of money being extracted from letters which close examination showed never to have been opened. As may be easily imagined, the inspectors who were set to work on the case were dumbfounded, and knew not where to start in to ferret out the thief.

"It is a well-known fact that when once a man starts in to rob the mails he generally keeps on with his thieving until he is caught. So it was with the thief in this instance; his persistence brought about his capture. It would not interest you much to know how he was captured, but how he extracted the money is the pointer. You know that nearly every envelope is left at both ends without any mullage with which to seal the flap. Our man would feel a letter, and, if he thought it contained money, would press the top and bottom together so that he could just get a glimpse of the interior of the envelope. Then, taking two needles fastened together at the ends which he held in his hand, he would insert the other ends, and, nipping the bill as though with a pair of pinchers, he would deftly roll the piece of currency about the needles and then take out his money. It was estimated that he had secured nearly \$1,000 in this manner.

"Several of the inspectors had a funny experience in the New York Postoffice a few years ago. Letters had been disappearing rapidly for a few weeks, and no clue could be found to the thief. By hard work, however, the boys managed to trace the stealing down to one of three clerks who worked in a corner in which they were screened from observation. After considerable thought on the subject one of the boys rigged up a scheme which he was certain would succeed. A big box of stamped envelopes was secured, and half of the envelopes removed. Then a trusty boy, who was employed in the office, was put in the bottom of the box and covered over with the remaining half of the envelopes.

"Several holes were bored in each side of the box, so that the boy could see all that transpired. Then the end of a spool of thread was given him, and by unraveling the remainder of the spool, communication was established between the boy and the three inspectors, who awaited a signal in their room, just off a balcony about twelve feet above the main floor. The time hung heavily on the inspectors' hands, and they decided to play a game of poker. The game grew interesting. There was a jackpot on the board, and the hands to open it had been dealt.

"'I'll open it for \$1,' said one. 'I'll cost you \$2 to draw cards,' said another.

"'I'll just make that \$3,' remarked the thief.

"Well, sir, the two began betting heavily, and in the middle of their excitement the thread, which was tied to the finger of one of the players, was jerked. Here was a how-d'ye-do. Over \$10 on the table, and they had to attend to business. But they knew their business, and left the game, rushed down-stairs, and to the envelope box.

"Which one was it, Jimmy?" one of the inspectors asked of the boy in the box.

"The Swede in the corner," answered Jimmy in reply.

"The fellow to whom Jimmy had referred was placed under arrest, and taken to the room in which the Postoffice inspectors conduct their searches of persons suspected of having stolen mail secreted about their persons. The fellow was searched from head to foot, but not a trace of the stolen letter could be found upon him. Mystified beyond measure, the inspectors released Jimmy from his hiding place and told him that he must be mistaken.

"Did you look in his shoe?" asked Jimmy.

"Here was a point that had been overlooked, and the inspectors returned to their search. In the shoe of the fellow were found three letters. He had a habit of scratching his heel, and when no one appeared to be watching him he would slip a letter into his sleeve and later transfer it to the sole of his low-quarter shoe. He was a dandy from Copenhagen.

"But that brings me down to a peculiar fact. Do you know that sending paper money through the mails unregistered is a very foolish thing? Why, of course it is, as I can prove to you in an instant. Here's this \$5 bill. I'll put it in an envelope. Now smell it. There you have it. There is nothing on earth that smells like paper money, and an expert thief with good olfactory nerves can detect the presence of money in an envelope at any stage of the game. There is one

thing that the people should remember, and that is that 'for ways that are dark and tricks that are vain' the average mail thief beats the 'heathen Chinese.'—Cincinnati Times-Star.

## A QUESTIONABLE PRACTICE.

Putting Boys in Terror of Their Lives to Make Them Good.

"Captain," began a manly looking boy, leading by the hand a soiled, tear-stained, but still defiant-looking youngster, apparently about ten years of age, to Captain Hemenway, of Boston Police Division No. 2, this morning early. "Captain, here is a boy who won't obey his mother; what can you do with him?"

"What?" thundered the Captain, "won't obey his mother? Come here, sir," at which command the kid approached, giving vent to what seemed premonitory symptoms of a howl.

"Where do you live?" "Spring street, sir," blubbered the boy.

"Do you know what we do with boys who won't obey their mothers?" "No, ssir."

"Well, I'll show you. Here, officer, take this boy into the cellar and show him what he is coming to. Don't lock him up yet, but let him see," and, escorted by the burly officer, the precocious youth was led away.

A few minutes later he was escorted back with the same solemnity, and, with a face very pale and a little dirtier, was brought again before the stern-looking Captain, and tearfully promised to act in future as cherubs are supposed to do.

After he had gone Captain Hemenway said to a Herald reporter: "This is a common occurrence here, and it usually has a much better effect on a boy than either punishing him corporally or sending him to a reformatory institution, where associations will ruin what still remains in him uncorrupted. Some time ago two boys, really bad, were sent here by their parents prior to having them placed in some institution, and after thoroughly scaring them by picturing to them an imaginary fate, had them put in the guard-room with the doors ajar, and left them to themselves after telling them that hope of escape was useless, for the police would finally run them down and recapture them.

"As I expected, love of liberty proved too strong a temptation, and they slipped out, supposing they were unnoticed. Now, that was several months ago, and led on by their parents, who were posted, they believe that they are fugitives from the law, and in every bluecoat they see a pursuer. There are, as a result, no two better-behaved lads in Boston. Such results could not have been obtained in the best-managed reformatory in the country."

## Human Relics of Pompeii.

In the museum at Pompeii are preserved the most horrid and pathetic relics of the last days of the ill-fated city. Early in 1863 the workmen who were helping to unearth an immense palace struck into a cavity in the lava, the nature of which, of course, was a mystery. Without breaking further into it, they poured plaster of paris down the crevices that were already opened, and as soon as the plaster had hardened the crust of lava was carefully removed, and lo! the form of a human being in his last struggles was revealed. The outlines and form of the person were perfectly preserved, showing plainly that he had been buried in boiling lava, which had hardened about him. The intervening 1,800 years, and the heat of the lava besides, had reduced the body to a handful of dust, but the lava had left a cast natural as life.

Since that time several bodies have been reproduced—one of them with the features so perfectly preserved as to show the expression of the face. In some of the plaster casts parts of the skeletons are imbedded. Two female casts which are clasped in each other's arms, have been called "The Mother and Daughter." Persons who have seen this group say that there is nothing in all Pompeii more touching than the utter despair depicted upon the face of the "mother."

## Pledging His Father's Name.

The Egyptians had a very remarkable ordinance to prevent persons from borrowing imprudently. An Egyptian was not permitted to borrow without giving to his creditors in pledge the body of his father. It was deemed both an impiety and an infamy not to redeem so sacred a pledge. A person who died without discharging that duty was deprived of the customary honors paid to the dead.

## Spain's Population.

The recent census of Spain gives its population as 17,565,632. This is a gain in a century of over 7,000,000. In the last decade the increase was more than 1,000,000. Madrid, its greatest city, is among the rapidly growing cities of Europe. A century ago it contained 156,672 inhabitants. Now it has 682,644, an increase of over half a million.

## Doesn't Want Company.

A man in Lincoln County, Maine, who dislikes too much company, has removed the elevated walk by which his front door was reached, and goes in by means of a ladder at the back, drawing the ladder in after him. He has also posted this sign: "No caller wanted on the Sabbath. It is the Lord's day—a day of rest."

## American Blue Jackets.

There is a general impression that our naval service is full of foreigners, but the facts are that about one-half the men in the naval service of the United States are native-born Americans. Nearly all the sailors are naturalized Americans, whether born in France, Germany or Great Britain.

## TWO GYMNASTS.

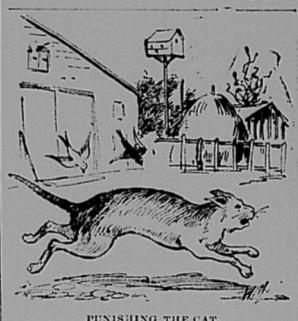
And How the Delinquent Cat Was Effectually Punished by Them.

Big newspaper space is daily taken up with accurate throwing, and catching, and hitting of balls, the aim of the human eye, the speed of the human foot, the accuracy and dexterity of the human hand, and the young people who play base-ball and tennis enjoy this reading matter.

But a short time ago I saw two creatures only a year old outdo in aim and accuracy any human being I ever knew, says a writer in the St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

"They were a pair of barn-swallows. A very gentle little house-cat was in the habit of taking her daily nap in the hay-loft, directly under the nest among the rafters. All went well until the mother bird began to sit on her eggs. Then, presumably, the cat lifted her eyes to contemplate the pretty sight, for about 4 o'clock of the first day the bird staid upon the nest the cat came rushing out of the barn, the two swallows after her. Giving her in turn a vicious peck, they rose in air, swooped down and pecked her squarely on the back, one after the other, though she was running in all directions.

Twenty-three times I watched them rise in air so high as to be out of sight, then come sailing down, one behind the other, and each time giving the poor cat a peck apiece on the back, although she was speeding hither and thither, bewildered, seeking to hide under carts, under trees, here and there; they never missed her once, though they never slowed their swift flight to do it, never paused for the peck, but swiftly gave



PUNISHING THE CAT.

It as they skimmed down over her, rising on the same point of curve, to descend again presently.

For about two weeks they were sent to fly out and repeat this punishment whenever the cat appeared on the green near the barn.

## MAHOGANY.

How the Beautiful Wood Was Discovered and Brought Into Use.

The discovery of the beautiful and costly timber known as mahogany was purely accidental. The first mention made of it was by Sir Walter Raleigh, who used it in 1597 at Trinidad for repairing his ships. About the beginning of the eighteenth century a small quantity of it was taken to England by a West India captain named Gibbons, who sent a few planks to his brother, a physician residing in London. This gentleman, at the time of the receipt of the wood, was having a house built, and placed the planks in the hands of the carpenters. They attempted to cut it, but because of its hardness very quickly threw it aside. The doctor expostulated, but the workmen remained fixed in their determination to have nothing to do with a lumber which so successfully resisted their attempts to saw it. The planks were then taken to a cabinet-maker named Wollaston, who was directed to make a candle-box with a portion of the wood. The same objection was advanced by this workman, but, being a persevering individual, he persisted and finally made the box. When polished it so outshone anything previously made that it very quickly became an object of curiosity, and the people flocked to see it.

As a consequence the wood became quite popular, especially after a portion of the physician's treasure was employed in the construction of two bureaus, one for himself and the other for the Duchess of Buckingham. These specimens of cabinet work caused the rejected wood to become a prominent factor in the construction of luxurious pieces of furniture. Thus Wollaston was amply rewarded for his perseverance in fashioning it into the candle-box, and his name, together with that of the physician and his nautical brother, became inseparably connected with the history of the introduction of this wood into civilized lands.—Free Press.

## Cooking Potatoes.

A book is soon to be published which will contain 365 different recipes for cooking the Irish potato.

A CURIOUS observation made by Dr. Tere, an Austrian physician, formed the subject of a paper read some time ago at a meeting of the French Entomological Society. He asserts that a person stung by bees is for a time exempt from the effects of further stinging, and is protected in the same sense that vaccination gives immunity with regard to smallpox. This protection lasts for six months or less, according to the number of stings received.

OPTICIANS and oculists say that belfry and steeple clocks are absolutely useless to at least a third of those for whose benefit they are set up. In many instances such defect of the eyes is unsuspected in children, and probably hundreds of children learn at school a reputation for stupidity when not intellect but the eye is at fault.



CARDINAL GROSBEEK.

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MOCKINGBIRD.

strongest and had certainly been used to more rigorous weather in their old home in the Carolinas than the Brazilian and East Indian parrots had been. On the other hand Baron H. von Berlepsch has kept for years a whole bevy of Carolina parrots on his estate of Seebach, near Hanover, the birds roosting with the