

EARLY SWARM OF BEES—RIGHT OF FOLLOWING THEM.

DURING the latter part of last week my bees began to destroy drones, and on Thursday last, the 16th inst., sent out a very strong swarm, which pitched on a currant bush about 50 feet from the hive. This was at 10 A.M., and about one hour after they were safely lodged in a new hive, and well shaded from the sun, but at 1 P.M. they started off, and after some searching I found they had pitched on a wall at the top of a house where inlets had been made for air between the bricks, and where from inquiry I learn that bees have been for twelve years at least. The owner objects to have his premises disturbed, and I am very desirous of knowing if I have any right to claim the swarm, which at this early period of the season and the late destructive winter has made of additional value.—OBITER DICTUM, *Bridport*.

[Blackstone, in his "Commentaries," says, "A swarm which fly from and out of my hive are mine so long as I can keep them in sight, and have power to pursue them; and in these circumstances no one else is entitled to take them." Indeed, if the rightful owner quickly pursues the swarm, and keeps them in sight, and any one else should hive and keep them, it would be a larceny. We believe that if the bees have been quickly followed from the hive whence they swarmed, and have never been lost sight of, their owner is entitled to follow them on to another man's land and hive them. If the man on to whose land the bees strayed took possession of the swarm, or prevented the owner from doing so, we think the owner would have a legal remedy against that man. Of this we are quite sure—no one who is honest will prevent the owner of a strayed swarm following and recovering it.]

THE DOTTRELL.

I SEE by your paper of 14th inst., that you request any information respecting the Dottrell. I know but little of them in a wild state; but a remarkable circumstance occurred within a few miles of Birmingham, that, as relating to this truly singular and beautiful bird, will no doubt afford some considerable interest to a portion of your subscribers. It appears some parties were out at night "drawing for Skylarks," and unexpectedly secured a Dottrell. On being handled, it repeatedly uttered a loud wailing cry, that was immediately responded to by another bird of the same description some twenty yards in advance of the persons netting. Running on rapidly with the net, they secured this likewise, and they proved to be male and female, neither of them being injured at all by the capture. The next morning they were purchased by a general dealer in live birds, named Bates, in the Birmingham Market Hall, who called upon me to know "what they were." He also wished to know "whether I thought it possible to keep them alive and in health." I confess I then had my doubts on the subject. The plan he adopted was, at the onset to feed them entirely on earth-worms, and after some three or four days this diet was exchanged for shreds of raw beef, from which again he gradually "meated them off" on boiled egg, bruised hempseed, and bread, the same as the ordinary cage-food of Nightingales. They prospered well, became even improved in condition, and perfectly tamed, all in the short space of seven or eight weeks. The plumage of no wild bird could be better, being glossy and as close-lying as possible. The appearance of the eye was peculiarly mild and intelligent, and they quartered their cage with that methodical and graceful step so characteristic in all the family of waders. When they saw food preparing they came close to the cage side, and indulged in a low plaintive whistle. They would eat freely from the hand; even from the first they never attempted to fly against the wires or escape observation, but were very observant of all that passed, and occupied much time in preening their feathers. After being kept so long in this very confined space, they were, about two weeks since, sold to a party in London. Their remarkable familiarity, taking so freely to food so unnatural, together with their being captured so early in the season as the first week in March, has caused me to jot down these few particulars, as fancying some other individual might enjoy keeping so unusual a pair of pets, if chance threw them in his way.—EDWARD HEWITT, *Sparkbrook, near Birmingham*.

those birds. I have noticed this year—Swallow, April 5th; Chiff Chaff, April 17th; Cuckoo and White Throat, April 22nd; Nightingale, April 23rd; Swift, May 13th; Turtle Dove, May 14th.—B. P. BRENT, *Dallington, Sussex*.

DO CROSS-BRED RABBITS TEND TO A GREY COLOUR?

WILL "R. S. S.," who has had such great experience with Rabbits, or any other person, have the kindness to state whether, when Rabbits of any kind, which generally breed true to colour, are crossed with some other coloured kind, the offspring show any tendency to revert to the grey colour of the common English Rabbit? There seems to me sufficient evidence that when two differently-coloured and true breeds are crossed that there is often a tendency to revert to the colour of the wild aboriginal parent. I have seen striking instances of the rule with crossed Pigeons and poultry.—CHARLES DARWIN, *Down, Bromley, Kent*.

[We shall be obliged by replies to this query from any one experienced in Rabbit-breeding.—EDS.]

VARIETIES.

CREASOTE, or KREASOTE, is an artificial organic substance, generally obtained from the products of the destructive distillation of wood. It is procured incidentally as one of the constituents of wood-tar, from which it is separated by a tedious process. The principal supplies are obtained from Stockholm, Archangel, and America. In the pure condition, creasote is a colourless oily liquid, with high refractive powers; but the commercial specimens are generally coloured yellow or light brown. It boils at 398° Fahr.; does not really inflame; but when set fire to, burns with a smoky flame. It has a hot burning taste, and is very poisonous to plants and animals. It has a great power of coagulating albumen, and hence may be employed with advantage in toothache; a drop placed on the exposed nerve coagulates the albuminous tissue, and destroys its vitality and sense of pain. The most important property possessed by creasote, however, is its antiseptic or preserving power over vegetable and animal organs and structures. Thus, ordinary meat treated with only one-hundredth of its weight of creasote, and exposed to the air, does not putrify, but becomes hard and dry, and assumes the taste and odour of smoked meat. Again, timber treated with creasote does not suffer from dry rot or other disease; and thus creasote, in a crude form, is employed in the preservation of wood. The crude pyroligneous acid of commerce, which is often employed in the curing of hams, &c., owes part, at least, of its preserving powers to the presence of a trace of creasote, which leaves its characteristic odour so well known as obtained from the burning of wood for the smoking of hams, &c. When used medicinally, creasote acts externally by destroying the cuticle; internally, in small doses of a drop or two, it is serviceable in arresting obstinate vomiting; whilst in large doses it produces nausea and severe vomiting, and, in many cases, fatal results.—(*Chambers' Encyclopædia*.)

OUR LETTER BOX.

WORK ON PIGEONS (*J. Wilmott*).—"The Pigeon Book," by Mr. Brent. You may have it free by post from our office if you enclose twenty penny postage stamps with your direction.

TURKEY DYING RAPIDLY (*G. Ray*).—"The skin which encircles the heart being coated with a white substance like chalk," tells the cause of death. That encircling skin is called the pericardium, and the bird died of inflammation of that skin. Nothing would have saved the bird. Such disease is often occasioned by exposure to damp and cold. Nothing is more likely to produce it in Turkeys than their roosting at night in a cold, damp house.

CANARY CONTINUALLY MOULTING.—A Subscriber and Constant Reader asks why a yellow cock Canary is always moulting. Such a proceeding I regard as an effort of nature to get rid of an over-abundance of nutriment from the bird being too well fed. Discontinue the saffron, linsed, and eggs, as well as rape or hempseed and all such stimulating food. Feed on good canary seed and plenty of chickweed and groundsel, with an occasional small piece of bread, apple, boiled carrot, broccoli, or potato, and allow the bird frequent use of the bath. Sometimes hanging in a room where gas is burnt will cause the birds to be continually dropping their feathers. Avoid draughts and excessive heat or cold, but the air cannot be too fresh.—B. P. B.

INCUBATION OF CANARY (*The Public's Man*).—The period of incubation in Canaries is thirteen days, and I am not aware of any instance of deviation. The eggs that have been sat on for eighteen days must be bad, either from the defective incubation of the hen or from want of vigour in the cock. When the eggs have been sat on for a few days, it may readily be seen if they are good by holding them in the sun's rays, when they appear thick. If they look clear they are bad.—B. P. B.

ARRIVAL OF MIGRATORY BIRDS.—In reply to "H. R.'s" inquiry, I send you an account of the time I first saw or heard