

The Rockwood Review.

where he had found sanctuary, asking repeatedly after his health in persuasive tones. I gave up the cage after that and established him on a smart stand in the dining-room window; for I found that the birds in the conservatory could not bear the sight of him. A light chain securely fastened on his leg promised safety, but he contrived to get within reach of my new curtains and rapidly devoured some half-yard or so of a hand-painted border which was the pride of my heart. Then came an interval of calm and exemplary behavior which lulled me into a false security. Cockie seemed to have but one object in life, which was to pull out all his own feathers, and by evening the dining-room often looked as though a white fowl had been plucked in it. I consulted a bird doctor, but as Cockie's health was perfectly good and his diet all that could be recommended, it was supposed he only plucked himself for want of occupation, and firewood was recommended as a substitute. This answered very well, and he spent his leisure in gnawing sticks of deal—only when no one chanced to be in the room he used to unfasten the swivel of his chain, leave it dangling on the stand, and descend in search of his playthings. When the fire had not been lighted I often found half the coals pulled out of the grate, and the firewood in splinters. At last, with warmer weather, both coals and wood were removed, so the next time Master Cockie found himself short of a job he set to work on the dining-room chairs, first pulled out all their bright nails, and next tore holes in the leather.

—A little girl, whose father was the village postmaster, and had heard him speak of "dead letters," picked up a mourning envelope and exclaimed, "Papa, this is a dead letter, isn't it?"

RUFFS AND REEVES.

The changes of birds during the breeding season are in different parts of the world very wonderful. No transformation is, however, more remarkable than that of the ruff as the time for courting draws near. His face is then covered with singular fleshy tubercles, yellowish or pinkish color. Curious tufts of stiff plumage protrude themselves near either ear, and a large ruff of elongated feathers stands out over the neck. This ruff, from which the birds receives its name, is distensible at pleasure. The bill, legs and feet are then yellow or orange color. The color of the plumage and especially of the ear tufts and ruff vary greatly, so that two birds are seldom found alike; the ruff is usually barred black, but in some individuals it is marked with white, brown or gray. Metallic hues are often noticeable. Purplish black is more usually the color of the ear tufts while the general color of the neck ruff is chestnut. Young birds of the year do not display the ruff and other sexual changes of plumage and appearance. The assumption of this strange and beautiful breeding plumage is completed in May and begins to vanish again toward the end of June. The deeper colors, such as purple and chestnut, disappear together, and by September the change is complete and the ordinary plumage usually regained. The female makes no pretence to anything in the shape of the ruff or ear tufts. During the courting season, the ruffs, resplendent in their gay plumage, meet together on pieces of rising ground, among the fens and marshes, and there battle together fiercely for the possession of the reeves. This practice was termed by the fenmen "hilling" and the turf and herbage were usually to be found beaten down by the movements of the birds during these contests. Besides these battles the royal ruffs are in the habit of displaying their plumage, dis-