

procuring a male bird suggested itself to me. I thought that I might possibly succeed in rearing a small family of canaries, so I consulted three friends who I knew kept birds. One of them told me that she had taken the greatest pains, had read all sorts of books upon the subject, consulted bird-fanciers and been most careful about feeding, supplying nesting materials and the latest and most approved kind of cage, in spite of which she had failed to rear even a single bird. Another friend told me that it was quite possible to rear canaries, but that she found it required so much attention and such constant care that she had given up the attempt. A third told me that she had reared a few but that it was no pleasure, because the birds could not bear being looked at, and had to be kept perfectly quiet in a breeding-cage placed in a nearly dark room, and never in any way be disturbed! If spoken to the hen would leave her nest and probably destroy it, my friend added. Now these experiences were far from encouraging, because I did not then perceive the reasons of my friend's failure.

Whether I myself should be considered successful by regular bird fanciers and rearers I do not know, but I have far exceeded my own modest expectations. Within the last three years I have reared over sixty birds from the two pairs with which I started, and all of them are flourishing and healthy. Of course I have sustained some losses; two of the original birds died after the first brood; the female of one pair and the male of the other. I think these misfortunes came about through my want of knowledge how to feed the birds at the critical breeding season, for critical it is, not only for the young birds but also for the parents. The latter must be provided with special food prepared with great care at such times, or they are apt to become exhausted and run down, as the saying is, after their rearing work is over. I have also lost about ten young birds from other causes. Sometimes the young birds are born weak, or the mother nests them clumsily; sometimes the father bird feeds them injudiciously, and their dispositions suffer. It requires so very little to kill a bird a few days old.

I took up bird-rearing simply as an amusement, and I can give no information about the rarer kinds of canaries. Girls who want to become learned upon the "points" of high class specimens, pedigree birds, etc., must consult one of the works written upon this subject. It is one which I confess has little interest for me; in fact I rather dislike prize birds. So long as my pets please me, are cheerful, healthy and know me when I talk to them, take their seed from my hand or mouth, get the most enjoyment out of their own little lives, my trouble and the very small expense to which they have put me are amply repaid.

I love to see my little favourites fly about the room provided they do so gently; but never allow them out of the cage if they are at all wild, as a wild canary will almost kill itself by flying against a window-pane or a looking-glass, or hurt itself by struggling against the hand that is raised to put it safely back into the cage. It is a cruelty to let such birds out, especially if other birds are present in the room, as even the tamest of them are liable to take a "scare."

A short time back one of my younger birds got his nails entangled in the wires of the cage and fluttered about for some time before he could be released. This caused a regular panic, not only amongst the birds in his own cage, but also amongst the birds in five other large cages that were in the neighbourhood. It may be useful to state what I have found the best thing to do when a panic of this kind occurs during the night. I uncover the cages and turn up the gas so as to give as much light as possible (of course, if there is no gas, candles might be lit), then I talk gently to the birds. When they are still and settled I lower the gas and as quietly as possible cover over the cages. These panics amongst canaries are very common if many birds are kept, and often it is impossible to discover the cause of them. I am much inclined to think that these little creatures suffer from nightmare. So serious are these night panics that I have known birds who have been seized by them to break their wings and even to kill themselves. During these panics strangers should never be called into the room, for their presence would render the birds still more excited and frightened.

I have said that on one occasion a panic was caused by a bird getting his nails entangled with the wires, and this leads me to another point. Now however objectionable it may be for a human being to bite his or her nails, it is quite right that canaries should do so. Indeed, if they do not, their nails must be cut for them. When this is necessary, take hold of the bird and hold him in your hands, then get your sister or some other girl whom it knows to cut the nails with a sharp pair of scissors—but never below the "quick." Be careful to hold down the wings of the bird, so that he cannot flutter, but do not squeeze him, for canaries are such tender little mites. Sometimes, also, they get cotton or nest materials tangled round their feet. Remove these in the same manner.

Occasionally, when you look at the cages in the morning, you will find a poor little bird dead at the bottom of the cage. His death has been due either to one of these night panics, to apoplexy, consumption or poison. Remove at once the dead bird and all the food in the cage. Canaries are poisoned by some impurity in their food, mildew, etc., so you should carefully examine the food before giving it to them.

Now as to the food itself, I have found that canary seed, rape, millet and hemp agree with them best. The canary seed and rape may be mixed together in equal quantities and a small portion of millet added to them; but the hemp must be placed in a separate vessel, or the birds will throw out all the other seed to get at it. Hemp should only be given in very small quantities. The seed pods of the wild plantain (*Plantago major*) should be given. This you can pick up on the banks of canals and small streams and sometimes by the roadside in September. Pick large quantities of it and store some for the winter. Don't shake the seed out, but give it to the birds in long tails, as they like to pick it out for themselves. Don't give it green, but keep it until it has turned brown. It will keep through the winter; but be sure to put it in a dry place. Lettuces well-washed, groundsel and watercress may be given fresh and green, and in the winter apple occasionally, also cuttle-fish, lump sugar, and very plain sweet biscuit, but no luxuries. Pray do not give chocolate "goodies," nuts, luscious fruits nor preserves, as all these things cause digestive troubles and shorten the lives of these little creatures. Proudly the poor are more successful in rearing birds than the rich, because they keep them to a simpler and plainer diet.

Of the diet of breeding-birds I shall have to speak later on. Be very careful about the water, both for drinking and for bath. Whenever you let the birds out of the cage provide them with a bath full of water and place it in full sunlight if possible. All birds love water and love of all things the sun, so never hang your cages in a dark place. If, however, the light is very fierce place a handkerchief over the top of the cage.

Caged birds are very sociable and like company. Their cages should be placed in some window looking into a street or cheerful garden. But they must be covered over after dark, as the birds will then sleep better and be preserved from draughts. They should always be kept reasonably warm. Talk to the birds, and if you can give them names and call them by their names. This is sometimes difficult when you have sixty or seventy birds pretty much alike. Still, you will find some of them will possess distinctive marks or peculiarities by which you may know them, or they may be named after their parents. Thus I have a hen whom I named "Aunt Anne" after a relation of mine, and her brood were named Antonia, Antoinette, Antonina, Andrew and Anna Maria. All these playful little jokes increase the sympathies between you and your little pets and help to tame them. Remember that birds like cheerful people and appreciate attention, so however sad your heart may be, try to smile when you address your little favourites.

(To be concluded.)

"IF LOVING HEARTS WERE NEVER LONELY—";

OR,

MADGE HARCOURT'S DESOLATION.

By GERTRUDE PAGE.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN WHICH IMPULSE SWAYS.

WHEN Guy came in to dinner that evening, he was most curious to know how the visit had gone off. He was a little anxious, too, for he had not yet experienced how Madge took details of this kind. The drawing-room was

empty, and he was just going in search of her, when she appeared, clad all in white. He looked at her eagerly and said, "Well, how did you get on?"

She did not answer for a moment, but stooped over a flower-vase and rearranged the flowers.

Then she said slowly, "I don't think

Miss Ermytrude Redfern will call again."

Guy laughed, for her voice had a touch of humour in it which was a great relief to him, and he took a stride which brought him to her side.

Resting his arm lightly across her bent shoulders, he continued in a bantering tone, "Oh, and so you don't