



The Barbatula du Chaillu.

AMID the gigantic forests of Africa, when villages on plantations are made, the natives cut the trees from a height of ten or fifteen feet. When these cut trees become dry and dead, the wood softens, and this bird, discovered and named by the celebrated traveller, Paul du Chaillu, attacks the trees, boring holes for nests. The throat and breast of this bird are a glossy blue-black. The back is black and covered with spots of canary yellow. The head is scarlet. There is a line of yellow from above the eyes extending around the neck. Right above the bill it has two protuberances which Du Chaillu called brushes. They have thicker and stronger bills than the woodpecker, though they seem to be allied to that species. Sometimes they work with heads upward and sometimes downward. To make a nest in these trees requires many days of patient and difficult toil.

These birds are very little larger than sparrows, yet they dig or peck out a hole two inches deep with a circular opening of two inches in diameter. This complete, they dig perpendicularly for four inches. This cavity completes the nest.

Eighteen to twenty-one days these skilful carpenters labor without ceasing. Then the female lays her eggs and safely hatches them. No snake or monkey can reach her artfully-designed abode. During the season of rain and storm the Barbatula du Chaillu seeks the cosy shelter of her well-prepared home. The rain cannot reach her, and near by are her bird neighbors, perhaps a dozen in the same tree. A regular bird encampment, all shy, but very affectionate and helpful to each other! The gray Barbatula, another species, go in regular colonies, as many as forty nests to a tree.

Another very curious bird found in almost all the regions of Equatorial Africa, is the *Sycobius nigerrimus*. These birds are fond of society. Right in the middle of a village or town, or on the trees right back of the huts, not far from the palm or plantain trees, they abound. If the tree is large, there will be hundreds of nests on it. They are skilful and intelligent nest builders and food gatherers. In the villages of the interior, the natives plant trees for these interesting birds.

There are two species of the *Sycobii* which are a little larger than sparrows and both live in the same trees. The male of one is black and the female a dark gray. The eggs of this species are bluish with black spots. In the other species the male is yellow with a black and yellow throat. The eggs of this species are light pink with dark spots. Day after day these industrious birds work from morn till night, never seeming weary or discouraged.

The nest is pendent and nearly round; on one side is a narrow passage for going out and coming in, this passage having its opening beneath. In one tree the traveler counted over two thousand nests. Each nest had its family of father and mother and little birds. Both the male and the female work at the nest building, stripping the leaves from the palm and plantain or banana tree. Their material is neatly split into very narrow strips, and they look as if they were carrying ribbons as they fly from a palm or banana tree. They choose a pendent twig on which to hang the nest and then go to work. Over this twig they turn their leaf strips, interlacing them in such a way that no rain or dampness can reach the interior of their cosy home. The bill, the feet and the body are all used in making the nest. They are very adroit and industrious, and also particular as to the exact shape and finish of their nests.

They make the entrance last. They use leaves for an inside lining. Each pair has young several times a year. So nest building is continually going on. Two are raised in a brood. Just before the rainy season sets in, they are very busy in building new nests and repairing old ones.

These bird colonies are somewhat hard on trees, the growth of the branches and the general condition of the tree being impaired by the weight of the nests. As a rule the birds in these colonies live very amicably, but once in a while the strong attacks the weak, when quite a battle ensues.—E. S. L. Thompson.

An Indian's Retort.

BISHOP WHIPPLE, of Minnesota, says that the Dakota Indians once held a war-dance near a mission house. He went to Wabasha, the chief, and said: "Wabasha, you ask me for a missionary and a teacher. I gave them to you. I visit you, and the first sight is this brutal scalp-dance. I knew the Chippeway whom your young men have murdered. His wife is crying for her husband; his children are asking for their father. Wabasha, the Great Spirit hears his children cry. He is angry. Some day he will ask Wabasha, Where is your red brother?" The old chief smiled, drew his pipe from his mouth, and said: "White man go to war with his own brother in the same country; kill more men than Wabasha can count in all his life. Great Spirit smiles; says 'Good white men! He has my book. I love him very much. I have a good place for him by and by.' The Indian is a wild man. He has no Great Spirit book. He kills one man, has a scalp-dance. Great Spirit is mad, and says, 'Bad Indian! I put him in a bad place by and by.' Wabasha don't believe it!"

ONE may well believe, as a Winnipeg man told a reporter of the *New York Sun*, that it is no joke to be caught in a blizzard on the prairies of Manitoba. It is fortunate for the man if he escapes with his life. "This is what happened to me once a little north of Medicine Hat," said the man. "It was in January, and the thermometer was about five degrees below zero, but the wind blew at the rate of thirty miles an hour. I was travelling with a half-breed guide and a dog sleigh. We upset the sleigh, got the dogs and ourselves under it as well as we could, wrapped the furs around us, and let it blow. The snow soon piled over us, until we had an irregular wall a quarter of a mile long and ten feet high on each side of us next morning, when the blizzard abated. This may surprise you, but a mound six inches high is enough to enable the snow to lodge and pile up until it forms a blockade miles long on the prairies."

THERE is an old legend, says the *San Francisco Chronicle*, of the time when Mr. Bidwell was candidate for Governor. He had a servant at the door who demanded cards from his visitors before they could be admitted. Cards are not plenty in the rural districts. But the story has nothing to do with cards. One day, an old farmer and his family called. The servant answered the call. "Is the Governor's folks at home?" demanded the old farmer. "Are, papa, are; not is," said the Mills Seminary daughter. "Are the Governor in?" said the old man; and the young lady fainted.

CEDAR, oak, yellow pine and chestnut are the most durable woods in dry places.

