

CANARIES: THEIR REARING AND MANAGEMENT.

By AN AMATEUR.

PART II.

I now come to the question of rearing birds, and this requires some judgment. It is not always the handsomest birds that are the best for the purpose. The best plan is to place the female in a cage alone, and then to put perhaps two male birds in separate cages near at hand. It is better that the female should be rather older than the males; but neither should be less than a year old; they should be between two and five years of age.

You will soon see whose attentions the female bird prefers, and after about a week let the favoured one become her mate and admit him to her cage. It is absolutely necessary that the birds should take a fancy to one another. The *mariage de convenance* does not obtain with canaries, and however handsome or highly-bred either may be, all is of no use unless nature gives them an attraction for each other.

Canaries must not be paired before the middle of April or after the middle of August.

I have always found open wire cages by far the best. They should be placed in a light situation and not covered over except of a night.

The old-fashioned breeding cages are, I



THE WILD PLANTAIN.

believe, a mistake, as canaries always build in the lightest places, and avoid making their nests in anything like a night-box, however elaborately constructed.

The hens usually lay from three to six eggs before they begin to sit. They should not be left solitary. Talk to them gently; hang their cage in a cheerful position, so that they can look out of window, as they are a little inquisitive and like to know what is going on in the world around them. To put them in a dark room or in a heavy lugubrious

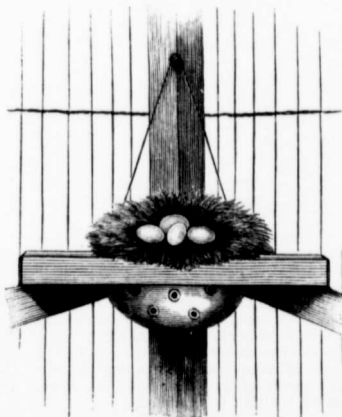
cage makes them melancholy and dispirited. But it is better not to allow strangers or noisy persons—schoolboys for instance—to go too near the hen when sitting. Of course the birds are caged and cannot get out to collect materials with which to build a nest; these must be provided for them, therefore, and arrangements made to attach the nest to the cage and support it. A spur should be constructed in one corner of the cage, if the latter is square, or a small frame if the cage is round. Upon the supports thus provided insert one of the porcelain nest-basins (which may be bought for 4d.) with a movable lining of thin white felt (I bought mine at the Crystal Palace). When placed in position it will be like sketch.

Nesting materials can be bought anywhere, but it is advisable to add a little feather-grass and some clean small feathers if you have any at hand. You will probably find a little squabbling going on between the male and female birds over the building of the nest, as they often take different views of the matter; but if you leave them alone after pulling it to pieces three or four times, the female, who is really the "master builder," will get her own way. I remember on one occasion the male bird was determined to insert one large feather in the nest, and the female was equally determined not to have it there, and the controversy over that feather lasted about three days. Whenever the hen bird went down to find some fresh building materials, the male hopped into the nest and placed this feather where he thought it looked well, but directly the lady architect returned it was ignominiously thrown out. Finally it was rejected.

Some birds are lazy over their building and others are so fastidious that the first egg

is laid before the nest is completed. Some young birds will lay the first egg on the floor of the cage without building a nest. In this case the egg should be taken away as it will simply get trodden to pieces and cannot possibly be hatched.

Our girls must not be frightened if domestic differences take place between the birds, who are often very quarrelsome and even pugnacious. I was once afraid that I should have to separate one couple, but a working man who was in the house at the time said to me, "Take my advice, ma'am, and don't separate them birds. They are just like human beings, and if they 'as their differences, they'll soon



NEST BASIN