

as they are apt to pick up notes entirely foreign to the airs they have learned and inject them into the midst of the song in a very unharmonious and laughable way. This bird is a great favorite with fanciers. The male is a little over six inches in length. Its bill is a deep, shining black, the top of the head, the chin, wings and tail are black, with white tips on the wings; the back and base of the neck are slate gray, often having a roseate hue, and the sides of the head, throat, breast and abdomen are a light red with a slight chestnut tinge.

Not the least musical of these newcomers is the skylark (*alanda arvensis*, L.), a field bird which will probably be the least familiar to the denizens of the city of them all. On the contrary, so rapidly does the lark multiply, it will be as familiar a sight in the country as the present field or meadow lark, to which it is closely allied. In fact, the Germans so call it, their name for the bird being *feldlerche*. From early in the spring until late in the fall the sweet song of the lark is heard, as the bird darts skyward or flutters high up in the air. Its notes are strong and full and can be distinctly heard when the singer has become a mere speck in the sky. It seldom sings except when in flight. Larks are a good table bird, and thousands of them are sent to market, but they multiply so rapidly that their numbers remain undiminished even in such a thickly-settled country as England. In color the skylark is of varying shades of brown, mingled with white and an occasional tinge of yellow. The abdomen is a yellowish white. The starling (*sturnus vulgaris*, L.) or *star*, is a handsome bird with dark mottled feathers and a long, bright yellow beak. They assemble in great flocks in low, marshy districts, and seem to be regularly organized under the command of one of their number, whose voice they obey with a promptness and concert of action that is marvelous. A vast cloud of these birds passing overhead and darkening the sky, will suddenly become almost invisible by the instantaneous turning of each bird on his side, thus presenting to the eye only the edge of the wings. Flocks will separate into divisions, will wheel with the greatest accuracy, will unite again, and execute other maneuvers with military precision. Starlings are easily tamed and become amusing pets, being admirable talkers and often learning to speak words nearly as well as a parrot.

The singing quail (*coturnix communis*, Bonnat) or *wachtelfamilie*, is closely allied to the Virginia variety (*ortyx virginiana*), better known as "bob white." It is a great game bird in Europe, and is shot, snared and netted by the thousands during the periodical migrations. Quails fly at night, and generally, the males precede the females by several days, conse-

quently falling a prey to the sportsman in greater numbers than the gentler sex. They are polygamous in their domestic life, and the males fight fierce battles for the possession of their harems. In this respect they resemble the barn yard fowl, and are very pugnacious and courageous. In some countries they are trained for fighting the same as game fowls. It closely resembles the Virginia quail in form and color, the chief difference being light streaks of white on the neck and back and a browner tint on the abdomen and breast. In size it is somewhat smaller than the "bob white," but the probabilities are that people generally would fail to notice the difference between these American and German cousins.

Of the birds contributed by the Alpine club, the most important, and one that will, no doubt, become the best known, is the celebrated mocking bird of the south. It is universally acknowledged as one of the most wonderful of feathered songsters, and it not only possesses a remarkable voice and song of its own, but is endowed with powers of imitation of the songs of other birds that none of its rivals can equal. Nor is this a matter of education, for it can instantly repeat the notes of a strange bird with astonishing exactness of tone. This bird (*mimus polyglottus*) seems to consider Mason & Dixon's line the boundary of his dominions, seldom being seen north of Kentucky, Missouri and Kansas. Not only will it imitate the notes of other birds, but the voices of animals and men as well, and even mimics the sound of machinery and any other curious noise it may hear. In its imitations it not only deceives the sportsman but other birds as well, wooing some of them by piping the love notes of their mates, or frightening others by uttering the shrill cries of birds of prey. It fiercely fights for the defence of its young, and many a black snake, its worst enemy, while endeavoring to feast upon its eggs, has been savagely attacked and killed by the dauntless bird. Rearing mocking birds is a difficult task, and an adult male bird, well domesticated, is valued highly. In color it is a dull brown, the whole under part of the body being paler and inclining to gray, and the wings and tail mixed white and dark brown.

One of the prettiest of all is the bob-o-link, or bob-linkum (*dolichonyx aryzivorus*), known also as the rice troopial, rice bird, rice bunting and reed bird. It ranges all the Atlantic states, spending its winters in the West Indies and tropical portions of the mainland. Its song is very peculiar and varies greatly in character. Its ordinary cry is simple and unharmonious, but its love song, with which it woos its mate, is one of the sweetest and most wonderful uttered by a feathered throat, its rapidly-uttered notes harmonizing like the united voices of several