

upon ancient china at Leagram Hall, Lancashire. It can easily be understood that James I., who was so passionately fond of sport, would not be long in taking up Cormorant-fishing; and hence we find many interesting documents confirming this in the Record Office. From these papers it appears that he built an extensive establishment for his Cormorants about the spot where the new Houses of Parliament have been erected; and here he had ponds made and stored with suitable fish, and filled with water from the Thames by means of sluices. John Wood seems to have been the first Master of the Royal Cormorants, which, like the Master of the Horse, and the Master of the Royal Buckhounds, was an office of importance. Luke, Robert, and Richard Wood, George Hutchinson, and John Harris, gentlemen, are mentioned; but they appear to have been only Cormorant-keepers."

"Cormorants, when at their breeding-stations," remarks Yarrell, "seem to prefer the higher parts of the rocks or cliffs; and many birds congregate harmoniously together. They make a large nest, composed of sticks, with a mass of seaweed and long coarse grass; they lay four, five, and sometimes six eggs, which are small compared with the size of the bird. The eggs are oblong, similar in shape at both ends, rough in texture externally, of a chalky white colour, varied with pale blue, the length two inches nine lines, by one inch and seven lines in breadth. Mr. Selby says, 'The young, when first excluded, are blind, and covered with a bluish-black skin; in the course of a few days they acquire a thick covering of black down, and are sufficiently fledged to take to the water, though still unable to fly, in the space of three weeks or a month.' The old birds fly well, generally low over the surface of the water; they swim rapidly, and dive in perfection; their food is fish, which they appear to catch with great ease and hold with certainty by the sharp, hooked, horny point of the upper mandible, their dilatable throat enabling them to swallow a large prey. When fishing, they are frequently observed to carry their heads under water, perhaps that vision may not be interfered with by the ripple on the surface. They are frequently seen sitting on posts, rails, or leafless trees by the water-side, when, if a fish should move on the surface within their sight, it is pounced upon and caught to a certainty. An eel is a favourite morsel with him; and a Cormorant has been seen to pick up an eel from the mud, return to the rail he was previously sitting upon, strike the eel three or four hard blows against the rail, toss it up in the air, and, catching it by the head in its fall, swallow it in an instant."

Perhaps the most interesting feature connected with the various members of this somewhat large family of water-birds is the degree of ornamentation by which they are characterized during the periods of spring and summer, in which respect no two species are precisely alike. Several of the foreign kinds are more highly decorated than our own, some having double crests, others the cheek-feathers greatly developed; and others, again, are distinguished by peculiar marks on the thighs. That these extraordinary appendages are perfectly useless as regards the economy of the birds is certain; and they cannot be regarded as sexual distinctions, both sexes being clothed alike, and the female being in some instances more beautifully marked than the male; neither can it be for the purpose of attracting the fishes or the lower animals upon which the bird feeds, inasmuch as they are only carried at one season and not at others, and are not assumed under any circumstances until the birds are fully adult, say at least two years old; it therefore appears to me that they are for ornamentation only. A similar nuptial dress is to be found among other groups of water-birds, particularly the Grebes, the Auks, and the Penguins.

The principal figure in the accompanying Plate is about two thirds of the natural size, in the plumage of spring.