fruit-trees. Its call-note and song have generally met with little admiration from the historians of the species; but, being sweetly plaintive, they are to me extremely pleasing."

As a caged pet few birds are more highly valued, both on account of the readiness with which he becomes friendly and familiar, and of his capability for learning to repeat easy tunes. Such pipers may be found in many of our bird-shops, and "Charley over the water" and "Rule Britannia" may there be heard issuing from their throats with the greatest accuracy.

Speaking of the teaching of the Bullfinch, Bechstein says, "Different degrees of capacity are shown here as well as in other animals. One young Bullfinch learns with ease and quickness, another with difficulty and slowly; the former will repeat, without hesitation, several parts of a song; the latter will hardly be able to whistle one part after nine months' uninterrupted teaching: but it has been remarked that those birds which learn with most difficulty remember the songs which they have once well learned better and longer, and rarely forget them even when moulting. Many birds when young will learn some strains of airs whistled or played to them every day; but it is only those whose memory is capable of retaining them that will abandon their natural song, and adopt fluently and repeat without hesitation the air that has been taught them. Numbers of these instructed Bullfinches are brought from Germany to London every spring, and are frequently advertized in the newspapers; their price, which is sometimes considerable, depends on the powers and proficiency of the performer."

At all other seasons, then, but that of summer (when it is breeding), the Bullfinch may be observed in little troops of four or five in number, probably the brood of the preceding year, accompanying their parents, until the return of spring prompts them to separate. These little troops can seldom be approached without causing alarm; for it is the nature of the Bullfinch to be shy and retiring; and, unlike the Robin, it seldom shows its bright-red breast more than for a moment or two as it darts across the glade and over the hedgerow and vanishes from sight. Its white rump, however, is always very conspicuous during these short flights; its presence, therefore, is seldom long hidden; and were it not visible, it would soon be detected in the covert by the faint inward plaintive call-note it is constantly uttering.

April and May are the breeding-months, the nest being generally placed in a shrub or some low tree. The beautifully constructed one figured on the accompanying Plate was taken on the 25th of April, 1859, from the horizontal branch of a box-tree in the woods of Taplow Court. It will be seen that the platform is made of the dead flower-stalks of the Traveller's Joy (Clematis vitalba), and that the centre is composed of very fine roots and tendrils and a few hairs. In it were six pale-greenish stone-coloured eggs, some of which were blotched at the larger end with brown, and here and there had a streak of black. The pair of birds to which this nest belonged immediately commenced the construction of another, but this time selected for the platform old flower-heads of the alder; and these were so beautifully disposed as to lead to the belief that the bird had a taste for ornamentation. In both instances the heads of the plants employed were regularly arranged in a circle; and the interior lining of both was composed of the same materials.

So much difference occurs in the colouring of the sexes that it will not be out of place, even with so common a bird, to allude to the fact, and also to mention that the young when they leave the nest differ greatly in colour from the adults. A few words, however, will be sufficient to point out these differences. The adult male is at once distinguishable by the fine red colouring of his breast, which part in the female is rich vinous brown, a colour which also occupies the centre of the back in place of delicate grey in the male. The young, for a short while after leaving the nest, have the upper and under surface rusty brown, which is also the tint of the tips of the greater and lesser wing-coverts, forming conspicuous bands across the steel-blue primaries and secondaries. The bill at this age is pale olive or pea-green, inclining to yellow, and the legs are purplish white.

In a note to me from Dr. Carte, of Dublin, that gentleman says "the Bullfinch of the Crimea is a larger and more brightly coloured bird than that of the British Islands." I suspect that the Crimean bird is identical with the *Pyrrhula coccinea* found in other parts of the European continent, which I know is also visited by our species, as I have French specimens before me which are identically the same. Mr. H. Osborne, of Wick, has also favoured me with a line, in which he states that the Bullfinch is rare in Caithness, but is plentiful in Ross-shire, and may be seen all along the roads on the east coast wherever it is thickly wooded.

The Plate represents the two sexes, with a nest and eggs, all of the natural size, on a branch of the Larch.