ALAUDA ARVENSIS, *Linn.*

Sky-Lark.

Alauda arvensis, Linn. Faun. Suec., p. 76.
——— *italica*, Gmel. edit. Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 793.
——— *vulgaris*, Leach, Syst. Cat. of Indig. Mamm. and Birds in Coll. Brit. Mus., p. 21.
——— *cœlipeta*, Pall. Zoog. Rosso-Asiat., tom. i. p. 524.
——— *segetum*, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., p. 318.
——— *montana*, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., p. 319, tab. 20. fig. 1.
——— *agrestis*, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., p. 320.

It cannot be expected that anything I may attempt to say respecting the history of a bird so well known as the Sky-Lark will be imbued with novelty. From the days of Chaucer and Spenser nearly every poet of eminence has alluded to its charming song, and every writer, although unimbued with poetic feeling, has very correctly described its habits, disposition, and economy. Some authors have dwelt upon its value as a bird for the cage and the aviary, and its consequent importance as an article of commerce; while others have dilated upon its qualities as a viand for the table, and displayed their talents in detailing how a dozen larks may be made into one of the most *recherché* of dishes. For me to rhapsodize on the aërial song and other pleasing traits of the Sky-Lark would be absurd, since poems and verses on this head are almost innumerable, many of them written with much feeling, and exquisite beauty of expression.

> "The busy larke, messenger of daye,
> Saluteth, in her song, the mornine gay;
> And fyry Phœbus ryseth up so bright,
> That all the orient laugheth of the light."—Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*.

> "Wake now, my love, awake! for it is time!
> * * * * * *
> The merry larke her matins sings aloft,
> The thrush replyes, the mavis descant playes."—Spencer's *Epithalamion*.

> "Lo! here the gentle lark, weary of rest,
> From his moist cabinet mounts up on high,
> And watches the morning, from whose silver breast
> The sun ariseth in his majesty."—Shakespeare.

> "Now laverocks wake the merry morn,
> Aloft on dewy wing."—Burns.

The Sky-Lark is universally dispersed over the British Islands, but is less numerous in the Western Isles, the Orcades, and the extreme north of Scotland, than elsewhere, especially during the months of winter. In autumn our climate, generally more humid and milder than that of the continent, attracts great numbers of Larks to our shores; and hence enormous flocks may, at this period, be seen congregated together in many parts of the country, but more especially in the central districts. Winter being over, these foreign Larks again cross the channel, and return to the summer home where they were bred and reared; while our stay-at-home birds take up their quarters in arable lands, wild heaths, and moorlands; and, before the regular migrants have arrived, they have paired, and the exuberant song of the male is attuned in joyous strains, which daily increase in volubility until the female has commenced the task of incubation; and then it is that the male, daily mounting higher and higher in the air, becomes lost in ecstasy, and during his ascents pours forth his song to the delight of his mate as well as of the lover of nature. After the female has performed her natural duty, no such solace is requisite; for both parents are now happy in assiduously attending their young until they are able to live by themselves. If summer be not in its wane, a second nesting takes place, and a similar result follows. The male forsakes the ground, ascends again in the air, and cheers the female during her second brooding.

"When the weather is fine," says the Rev. C. A. Johns, "its song may be heard throughout the breadth of the land. Rising, as it were, by a sudden impulse from its nest or lowly retreat, the bird bursts forth, while yet but a few feet from the ground, into exuberant song, and with its head turned towards the breeze; now ascending perpendicularly, and now veering to the right or left, but not describing circles, it pours forth an unbroken strain of melody until it has reached an elevation computed to be, at the most, about a thousand feet. To an observer on earth it has dwindled to the size of a mere speck, but, as far as my experience goes, it never rises so high as to defy the search of a keen eye. Having reached its highest elevation, its