

THE CANARY BIRD.

As this bird has been recently domesticated, namely, within the last 350 years, its variability deserves notice. It has been crossed with nine or ten other species of Fringillidæ, and some of the hybrids are almost completely fertile; but we have no evidence that any distinct breed has originated from such crosses. Notwithstanding the modern domestication of the canary, many varieties have been produced; even before the year 1718 a list of twenty-seven varieties was published in France,⁴⁶ and in 1779 a long schedule of the desired qualities was printed by the London Canary Society, so that methodical selection has been practised during a considerable period. The greater number of the varieties differ only in colour and in the markings of their plumage. Some breeds however, differ in shape, such as the hooped or bowed canaries, and the Belgian canaries with their much elongated bodies. Mr. Brent⁴⁷ measured one of the latter and found it eight inches in length, whilst the wild canary is only five and a quarter inches long. There are top-knotted canaries, and it is a singular fact that, if two top-knotted birds are matched, the young, instead of having very fine top-knots, are generally bald, or even have a wound on their heads.⁴⁸ It would appear as if the top-knot were due to some morbid condition, which is increased to an injurious degree when two birds in this state are paired. There is a feather-footed breed, and another with a kind of frill running down the breast. One other character deserves notice from being confined to one period of life, and from being strictly inherited at the same period; namely, the wing and tail feathers in prize canaries being black, "but this colour is retained only until the first moult; once moulted, the peculiarity ceases."⁴⁹ Canaries

⁴⁶ Mr. B. P. Brent, 'The Canary, British Finches,' &c., pp. 21, 30.

⁴⁷ 'Cottage Gardener,' Dec. 11th, 1855, p. 184: an account is here given of all the varieties. For many measurements of the wild birds, see Mr. E. Vernon Harcourt, *ibid.*, Dec. 25th, 1855, p. 223.

⁴⁸ Bechstein, 'Naturgesch. der Stubenvögel,' 1840, s. 243; see s. 252, on the inherited song of Canary-birds. With respect to their baldness, see also W. Kidd's 'Treatise on Song-Birds.'

⁴⁹ W. Kidd's 'Treatise on Song-Birds,' p. 18