

## Science Notes.

## INSTINCT IN YOUNG BIRDS.

EVERYONE who has watched the behaviour of young chicks or ducklings must have been struck with their self-sufficiency and independence compared with the human infant. When the little birds are protected by the hen, it is difficult to determine how far their actions are due to instinct, and how far to instruction. Indeed, it is difficult to determine in any case, for instinct has been defined as "untaught ability," and hence an action requiring a high degree of co-ordination and very early learnt must be favoured in its development by instinct or inherited tendency.

Some time ago Professor Lloyd Morgan watched some chicks in an incubator, and kept them under observation for a time in order to study their behaviour. More recently he has watched some pheasants, and recorded their progress in the same manner. They attempted to pick up, or peck at, crumbs or boiled rice after an interval varying with different individuals from less than twelve up to twenty-four hours. At first the pecking was uncertain in its aim, but it improved very rapidly.

The young birds at first took no notice whatever of a vessel of water placed before them, and at length learnt to drink by picking up particles of food under water. The emotion of fear (which Prof. Drummond and others have stated to be the first emotion manifested by a young animal) appeared in the young pheasants to be conspicuous by its absence. They showed no fear of the professor or of his dog, though when the latter was permitted to smell them (under strict orders not to touch) he was trembling in every limb with excitement.

When the pheasants were a week old, the Professor procured a blind worm and placed it in front of the drawer of the incubator, which he then opened. They showed no fear of this creature, but when its forked tongue played in and out of its mouth, after the manner of a snake's, they pecked at it vigorously, apparently mistaking it for a worm. This appeared to the Professor to account for the constant play of the snake's tongue, and, perhaps, also the hitherto inexplicable "fascination" exercised by the snake over birds.

It is curious to note also a possible explanation of another phenomenon connected with animal life, and, probably, familiar to all readers. That is, the habit which the wood-louse has of rolling its many jointed body in a ball, and completely hiding its legs. The pheasants frequently caught and swallowed wood-lice when the latter were moving along, but if one happened to roll itself up, the bird could not hold the slippery morsel—it was shot out of the beak as soon as seized.

When a bird seized a worm he made a short run with it, as a rule, whether his possession of it was disputed or not.

To refer once more to the fearlessness of the young birds, it is worthy of note that Hudson, the "Naturalist in La Plata," believed that young birds did not usually show instinctive fear of strange animals, but had their fear instilled into them by the warning cry of the parent bird. This warning cry or danger signal they did appear to understand instinctively, and thus they gradually learnt to fear their enemies by the association of their appearance with the sound of the warning note.

## A Book of the Week.

## "A GREEN CARNATION."\*

"The Green Carnation" is an audaciously pert book; it is wonderful that any publisher should have consented to print such flippant and rude remarks upon the celebrated writers and talkers of the day; but this, the fourth of the Pioneer Series of up-to-date novels, is something more than merely pert; it is witty, and there is a laugh on almost every page. The conversations are undeniably brilliant, and the sarcasm that lies beneath the intellectual fireworks is scathing and yet humorous—a rare combination. The chief characters in the book, Mr. Esmé Amaranth and Lord Reggie, wear green carnations, and talk paradoxically and aphoristically all day long at breakfast, dinner, supper, in the drawing room, smoking room, and garden. They are never dull, and their little pistol-shots of wit seldom miss fire. Mrs. Windsor and Madame Valtesi, who appreciate their *décadent* and pessimistic views about the world, the flesh, and the devil, are strongly marked personalities, and Lady Locke, the colonial simple-minded widow and mother, is equally well described. There is but little story in the book—it is all talk; but then it is such amusing talk. I should like to quote several of Esmé Amaranth's utterances, but among so many, selection is difficult, and my space, alas! is so limited. Esmé says that his

"wife spent the first year of her married life in trying to influence him, and all the rest of it in trying not to be influenced by him. . . ." "Our artists, as they call themselves, say that all their failures are 'pot-boilers.' They love that word. It covers so many sins of commission."

"People say we are so wicked—I wish one could feel wicked; but it is only good people who can manage to do that. It is the one prerogative of virtue that I really envy."

But Goethe has said this last aphorism much better!

When the author conveys his characters down to a village in Surrey, they astonish the good and worthy clergyman not a little, and during one or two chapters of genuine comedy it appears as if the Green Carnations were to return triumphant from their pilgrimage; but without spoiling the reader's enjoyment of revealing the ending of the book, I will say that it is wholesome, and, on the whole, natural. . . . Lady Lockes' natural piety, and her love for her boy Tommy are well described; and there is a strong scene when the widow of the loyal and honest-hearted soldier overhears Lord Reggie promising her boy the gift of a green carnation, the emblem of *décadence* and pessimism. The funniest thing in the book is the description of how this London-pated party spent Sunday afternoon in the country; this chapter is a finely ironical *tour de force* that deserves careful reading. Esmé's lecture to the village people on the beautiful Art of Folly, which has been so much commended in the reviews, is, to my thinking, too full of effort to be successful, and the constant reiteration of the jokes about the choir boys and their little nightgowns is wearisome.

In *Punch* of October 17th, there appeared a clever parody of this novel under the title of "The Blue

\* "The Green Carnation." The Pioneer Series. 2/6 net. (Heine-ann.)

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