PHEASANTS AND PHEASANTRIES

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Pheasants and pheasantries by John Baily

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JOHN BAILY

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BY

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HENNINGHAM AND HOLLIS,
5 MOUNT STREET, GROSVENOR SQUARE.

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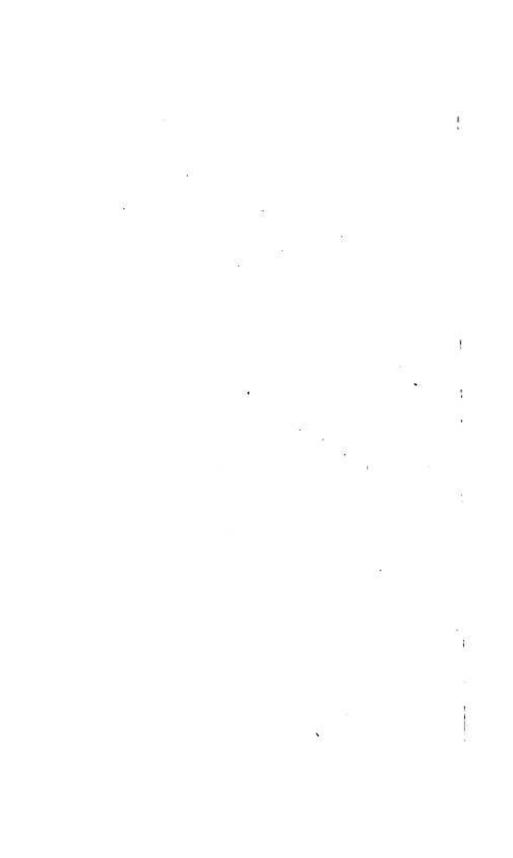


LONDON :

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PHEASANTS AND PHEASANTRIES.

CHAPTER I.

THE history of Pheasants and their requirements demands very different notice and treatment from that which was sufficient years ago. Fifteen years since I published a small book on the subject; which had a large sale; successive editions have appeared, and the fact they are now sold out has induced me to write one more.

There are two ways of getting up a head of Pheasants: either by stocking woods with wild birds, or by raising them under domestic hens. We will treat of the latter method first.

The Pheasantry should be ready, and should wait for the birds. This is very essential, because although the Pheasants are tame-bred and hand-reared, yet in common with all that have their origin in a wild stock, they are always more or less frightened when they are put in a fresh place. They are unaccustomed to it, and it is strange to them. An anecdote will perhaps illustrate. I was asked to visit a very large breeding establishment.

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I was met by the owner in his cart, and rode to the spot with him. We started at once to see the birds. I remained outside while the owner went in, with the intention of going through all the pens. Every bird began to attempt to fly and to dash about in all directions. Believing it was my presence as a stranger, I began to withdraw, when the owner called to me not to go, as he knew the cause. When he came out I asked if the birds had been frightened that day. "No," he said, "but I forgot to put on my smock-frock. I always wear one when with the birds." He returned clad as usual, and they suffered him to walk everywhere without taking the slightest notice.

It is still more desirable the birds should be handled as little as possible; nothing frightens them so much, nothing makes them so restless. Of this more afterwards.

A Pheasantry should be inexpensive, and should be easily moved. It will then be at once seen it should have nothing of a permanent character. For rearing Pheasants advantage must be taken of every circumstance favourable to the object, and nothing helps more than fresh ground. If the same is used every year it will become tainted; very partial success, if not failure, will be the result. Pheasants lay only during their season, and when that season is past it is necessary to wait for the next year. This is a truth that should always be borne in mind by those who have charge of them.

Pheasants are among the hardiest of hardy birds. They require no shelter at any time. In hard weather I have seen Pheasants still at roost at day-break with the white frost on their backs, and I have known them in the most inclement weather when driven under cover at dusk always leave the shelter and come out to roost. The motive for treating of these things thus early in the treatise is that it at once helps to simplify the construction of a Pheasantry, and renders it inexpensive.

No roof is necessary. The birds must be kept with one wing cut. It keeps them tame, and protects them from much injury. Being unable to fly, they cannot raise themselves from the ground, and thereby avoid many injurious falls. Aware that some keep their birds full-winged in pens that are covered over the top with wire netting, I will briefly state the objections I have found to it, merely premising that this, in common with everything of which this treats, is eminently practical. Spite of every precaution, Pheasants will sometimes be frightened. With them, as with other birds, the