

SOME BRITISH BIRDS.

BY H. KENDRICK, JUNR.



KINGFISHER.

THERE are people who assert that the proper study of mankind is "man," but I say that the proper study for mankind or boykind is "Nature." Taken in its every phase and aspect, there is nothing more entrancing and attractive; and in all Nature, there is no subject more enticing than the bird. In whatever garb he is dressed, be he plain sparrow or glorious kingfisher, wary hawk or nervous wood pigeon, there is always the same interest, the same enthusiasm. Let me here say, at once, that there is only one way in which to study birds, and that is in the open, by personal observation. You may read books all day long, and they will all help you to distinguish and love the different species, but you will not be a true nature student. Go out to the hedgerows and meadows on all occasions possible and find bird life in its most beautiful form. Peep into the nest, and watch all the proceedings; keep a death-like stillness and unravel the mysteries with your own eyes. This is the method, the only method, and it will bring you the truest delight.

But I have not been allowed the privilege of writing this article in order to raise

your enthusiasm. I have to describe in it the haunts and habits and the personal appearance of some of our British birds, and I can do no better than begin with the Kingfisher.

In your wanderings you may find this bird, though unfortunately it is becoming rare. The reason for this is that they so frequently fall victims to the gun of the so-called "sport." However, if you are walking along the bank of a river, you may suddenly see a bird shooting past you, either up or down the stream, and so slightly above the water that you can look down on its back. Its flight is rapid and the colours of its plumage gorgeous, so that you cannot fail to recognise the Kingfisher. If you are quick enough to follow the course of the bird, you will see it perched motionless on the lower branches of a tree, overhanging a shallow pool which contains fish. With beak pointed down, and ever on the alert, it is watching until a victim comes within fair aim; then with a twinkle of the wing, it dashes head foremost into the stream, disappears but for a moment, and emerges with its struggling booty. A few pinches with the beak deprives the prey of life, and the