

PERCHING BIRDS

Order PASSERIFORMES

THE absence of rivers, lakes and marshes from the mountainous districts of the Malay Peninsula naturally excludes very many families of birds from consideration in this volume. The lack of ducks, herons, waders and such-like birds is, however, more than compensated for by the great variety and abundance of Picarian birds, as shown in the families already dealt with, but more especially by the predominance of the above group, amongst which are included very many of the species peculiar to the Malay Peninsula.

The two families most largely represented are the flycatchers and the babblers, and both include species which never descend to the lower levels, and are in some cases little known, and of very considerable rarity, regarded from the point of view of mere museum specimens, though many are extremely abundant in their own special habitat.

It will be noted that for details of nesting habits I have been compelled, in the majority of cases, to draw on our knowledge of allied, but not strictly identical, forms from India and Burma. The higher hills of the Peninsula are not an inhabited area, and little continuous observation has, until recently, been possible. Now that hill stations on a fairly considerable scale are about to become an accomplished fact, I again appeal to local ornithologists to study the life habits of all our resident species. If actual collecting is done, it may be suggested that young and fledgeling birds and spirit specimens will prove more useful for scientific purposes than the ordinary series of skins.

PITTAS OR GROUND THRUSHES

Family PITTIDÆ

Vol. I., p. 167.

SOME brief mention must be made of this characteristic family, lest it be assumed that the omission is accidental, but the heading is like that of the natural history book dealing with snakes in Ireland—there are no pittas in the mountains of the Malay Peninsula.

The Malayan list comprises seven species, of which two partially migratory species have already been described. The remaining five inhabit deep jungle, one being almost confined to the vicinity of mangrove forest, another preferring fresh-water swamp, while the remainder live in drier jungle, often in the vicinity of low limestone hills. All the species are ground-loving birds, though, when forced to, they can fly quite well. They are known to Malays as *burong pachat* or *burong kubor*, or *burong kubor mas*, though why they should be called "cemetery birds" I do not know.