

ALBINISM AMONG BIRDS.

In the issue of the SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN bearing date October 25, 1873, a correspondent has given us the particulars of the finding of a nearly perfect albino starling, or blackbird.

Although this perverse mood of nature is by no means uncommon or unnoted, it is of sufficient importance and rarity to attract the attention of the most untutored observer, whenever an example of the kind presents itself. We hear mention, by eminent ornithologists, of albinism occurring among crows, some of the sparrows, starlings, and the shore lark, but the writer does not recollect finding note of this freak among the thrushes, and therefore presents, with the accompanying engraving, a description of the singular markings of plumage as exhibited by an adult female American robin (*turdus migratorius*).

For several successive days, in the opening spring of 1870, this specimen was observed frequenting the grounds of a citizen of Auburn, N. Y., on one of the principal streets. The remarkable markings of this robin, especially as seen in its flight, evoked expressions of surprise and comment from the most casual observers. At this time the bird under notice was busily engaged with its mate, a bird of perfect plumage, in building its nest in the branches of a tall and thrifty pear tree, and assiduously fulfilling its maternal instincts. Not willing that so rare a freak in feather should pass without an examination, a favorable opportunity was seized for bagging it, with the following results:

General color above, wherever occurring (see the shaded parts in the engraving), of a dull or faded umber, much lighter than the shade found in the perfect bird; the rest of the upper plumage, from frontlet to tail, pure white; breast, white, lightly and irregularly interspersed with a faint ferruginous color; bill, yellow; primaries, pale umber, edged with white; alula and scapulars, ashy brown; third tertials, pure white, with the outer webs loose and frayed in appearance; tail, two outer coverts wholly, and the remaining feathers irregularly, tipped and marked upon their outer vanes with white; iris, of the prevailing color of the species; legs and feet, lighter than in the perfect bird; dimensions, regular; specimen active, and note set clear to the predominant scale of the robins. Specimen shot at Auburn, N. Y., April 21, 1870.

A correspondent, E. H. F., sends us the following similar instance: The white blackbird mentioned in your journal of November 25, I have seen twice myself. One of them was in Maine some years ago, and was lost by being destroyed in a burned building. The other is, or was last May, in the possession of Mr. Charles Derninger, of Sauk City, Sauk county, Wis., who is a German naturalist of no mean acquirements, but of such retiring and modest disposition as to have allowed his light to be hidden from the world at large. He had a very fine collection of mounted birds, all done by his own hands, and among them many albinos: Two white quail (*ortyx virginianus*), a white robin (*turdus migratorius*), white tree sparrow (*spizella monticola*), a white swamp or red winged blackbird (*agelaius phoeniceus*), and a white duck, which I believe to be, as near as I could judge, a canvas back. The white blackbird was a young bird of a pure white color, with the exception of some few feathers which were tipped with a dull brown or drab. The wings distinctly showed the scarlet markings of the species. Mr. Derninger stated that his was the only one he had ever seen, in a twenty-five years' experience, in a country where blackbirds are so plentiful as to be an unmitigated nuisance, at least to the farmers.

Pinoline.

When heat is applied to the retorts a light oil, crude pinoline, passes over at first, and then ceases. The receivers are changed, and the fire augmented, when the heavy oils pass over, and colophonium is left in the retorts. The heavy oils are of a deep violet color. They are boiled for a day with water, and a part of the matter which passes off with the steam is collected. The next day the water is drawn off, and the residue saponified with caustic soda of 36° B. The almost solid product is then heated anew till no more oil distills over. The oil which has been distilled (single rectified) is submitted again to the same treatment, and that which finally passes into the receiver is called double rectified. It is used for adulterating fish oils. Crude pinoline contains acetic acid, from which acetate of lime may be prepared by neutralizing the crude product of distillation with chalk, and redistilling the oily liquid.

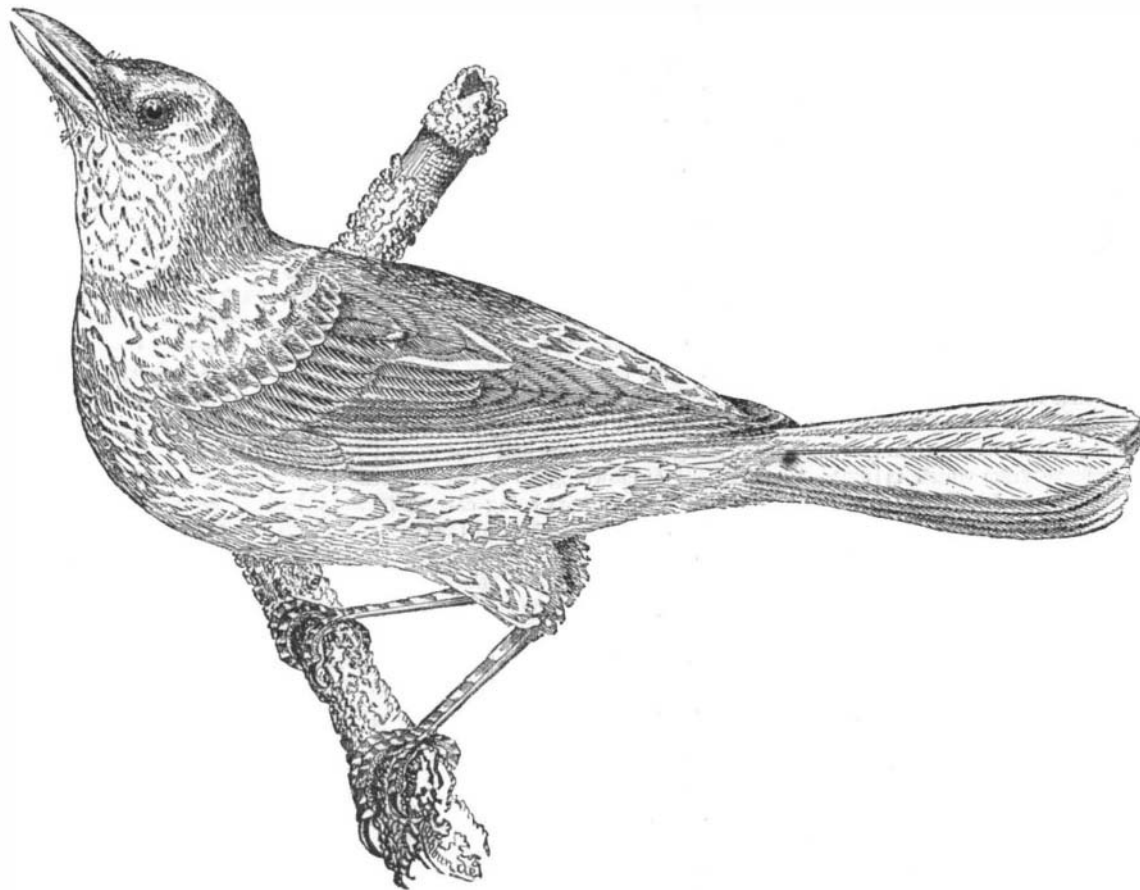
New Method for Chromic Acid.

The following method is based upon the decomposition of barium chromate by nitric acid, with the separation of the barium nitrate thus formed, by means of sulphuric acid.

Precipitated barium chromate is added to boiling nitric acid (diluted with an equal bulk of water) till completely saturated; the whole is then allowed to cool, when the greater quantity of the barium nitrate crystallizes out. To the mother liquor a sufficiency of sulphuric acid is added, to precipitate the remainder of the barium; the barium sulphate settles readily to the bottom of the vessel. The supernatant liquor, containing chromic and nitric acids, is drawn off and evaporated to dryness on a water bath, when all the nitric acid is expelled, leaving a residue of nearly pure chromic acid, which may be purified by crystallization. By this method, nearly

bottom, A. The pot is then placed on the fire, when the steam generated in A forces a continual flow of water up through pipes, B, into drum, C, thence through the perforations in the bottom of the latter to the coffee, which has previously been ground and placed in the muslin bag, D. This circulation is allowed to continue until the strength of the coffee is extracted, when the drum and bag are removed and the pot filled with hot water. No boiling over can take place, and the infusion is made very quickly, thus preventing the escape of the aroma and flavor of the coffee.

Patented through the Scientific American Patent Agency, September 23, 1873, by Margaret J. Stubbings, Lock Box 41, Youngstown, Mahoning county, Ohio, to whom letters for further information may be addressed.

**ALBINO ROBIN.**

the theoretical quantity can be obtained from potassium chromate.—*J. McLellan, in Chemical News.*

IMPROVED COFFEE POT.

Very few persons know how to make good coffee. In the majority of cases, and especially in hotels and restaurants, the beverage is served in a reasonable state of clearness, but has an astringent and bitter flavor, while, if it be allowed to stand in the cup until cold, globules of oil may be noticed upon the surface. Coffee thus prepared has lost its caffeine, which is the nutritive and valuable principle of the bean, and the infusion swallowed is merely a decoction of indigestible tannin. Good coffee, in small quantity, is deleterious to but very few organizations, and is healthy to most persons except those of extremely nervous temperament; but when badly cooked, it is productive of headache, nausea, and other disagreeable ailments.



In order to aid those who have not learned the art of making clear and aromatic coffee, we illustrate herewith a newly invented apparatus which, according to the inventress, will produce an excellent beverage. The outer part of the pot is of the usual form, and is provided with a tightly fitting lid. A is a cylindrical cover which rests upon the bottom, and has notches, as shown, at the lower open circumference. Two or more vertical pipes, B, of slightly conical shape, connect with the top of the steam cover, and carry, by means of elbows which fit closely over their upper ends, the cylindrical drum, C. The bottom of the latter is perforated, and below it is suspended a muslin bag, D, which is held by a ring that fits between the elbows and rests on suitable lugs. Boiling water is first put in until it covers the steam

planter will find considerable profit above the cost of production, and we are in much doubt if any other crop he can produce will net him as good return. But it is desirable to make home as attractive as possible everywhere. We agree with the writer in this advice.—EDS.

Mennonites of Southern Russia.

The Secretary of the Interior, in his recent annual report says:

"I desire to invite the attention of Congress to a request from a colony of Mennonites, now and for several generations residing in Southern Russia, near the shores of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, for a modification of the existing land laws in certain particulars, to enable them to settle upon our public domain in a compact colony.

By a decree of the Russian government, this people, numbering between forty thousand and fifty thousand persons, have been deprived of certain immunities which they have enjoyed ever since their first settlement in Russia, and the granting of which had originally induced them to leave their former homes in Prussia and settle in their present place of abode.

It is their desire to come to the United States and to occupy a portion of our public lands in a compact body, with no strangers to their religious faith within the exterior bounds of their possessions. Such exclusive occupancy they deem essential to enable them to carry out their peculiar system of farming, which to some extent involves a community of interest in and occupancy of the lands; and they also wish to avoid, as far as possible, the presence of any disturbing elements in their immediate neighborhood.

The deprivation of the immunities heretofore enjoyed by them does not take effect until the expiration of ten years from June, 1871, the date of the imperial decree. Within that it is their desire to dispose of their property in Russia, and remove to a country where they may enjoy civil and religious liberty; and they have selected the United States as a place where they can most fully realize such freedom.

In order, however, to enable them to obtain possession of lands in a compact body, some concessions must necessarily be made from the present requirements of the land laws. I would respectfully suggest that the Secretary of the Interior be authorized to withdraw from sale or entry such lands as they may desire to occupy, for a term of years long enough to enable them to emigrate to this country and settle thereon, and to dispose of such lands to those persons among the emigrants who shall make the proper entry or purchase thereof in accordance with existing laws. Should they desire to settle within railroad limits, the authority should enable the withdrawal, in like manner, of the alternate sections belonging to the Government. It is possible that the entire body of the emigrants may not desire to locate in one colony but would prefer the selection of two or more colonies or locations. It would be well, therefore, to confer such discretion on the Secretary of the Interior as would enable him to meet their views in that regard. The entire area they will probably require will be about 500,000 acres."