

CORRESPONDENCE.

Habits of the Goony, and Notes on Variability of Birds' Songs.

EDITORS OF 'THE AUK':—

Dear Sirs:—In his interesting paper on the 'Occurrence of American Birds in Hawaii, in the July Auk (Vol. XVII, pp. 201-206) Mr. Henshaw, writing of the Brown Gooney (Gony ?), *Diomedea chinensis*, records "the added fact that the Goonies also roost upon the vessel's yards at night." Is this a fact? My observations tend to a different conclusion. In several voyages on the Pacific I have noticed that these Albatrosses, early in the morning, invariably came from far astern of the ship, indicating that they had been resting on the water during the night. Although a cold-sea bird, they not infrequently follow a vessel many miles into the tropics.

May I advert to another item, on page 305? In the notice of 'Oberholser on Birds from Santa Barbara Islands, California,' a quotation is given praising the striking vocal performances of the Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella magna neglecta*). An editorial comment expressing non-agreement with Mr. Oberholser's conclusion is added. Mr. Oberholser is not alone in his admiration for the song of this species — or subspecies. Mr. Ernest Seton-Thompson, in one of his charming descriptions, is enthusiastic over the rapturous music this bird pours forth. In the many years I have known it, I never heard any note finer than the somewhat husky whistle, that was not to be compared, so I thought, with the clear flute-like carol of the Eastern Meadowlark. The question arises — may there not be individuals of surpassing vocal powers?

While in Nova Scotia the past summer I saw and heard a Robin singing in a strain unlike anything I had ever listened to from a Robin before. There was, it is true, the unmistakable Robin song, but it was strangely wild and glorified. There, too, was the bird, only of darker head and ruddier breast it seemed, as befitted this exceptional singer. Some writer — perhaps Mr. Torrey — has told us of local differences in voice in the case of the familiar *Merula migratoria*. May there not be still greater differences among individuals of certain forms? Baltimore Orioles may be cited as an instance in favor of this view.

G. S. MEAD.

San Francisco, Cal.,
August 18, 1900.