ated ; the extreme ſegment large and triangular : the

flowers are blue, and grow on hairy viſcid pedicles, in long ſpikes : the calyx is brown. This species is found in Northumberland.

SONG, in poetry, a little composition, consiſting oſ easy and natural verſes, ſet to a tune in order to be ſung. See Poetry, n⁰ 120.

Song, in music, is applied in general to a single piece of mufic, whether contrived for the voice or an inſtrument. See Air.

*Song of Birds,* is defined by the honourable Daines Barrington to be a ſucceſſion of three or more different notes, which are continued without interruption, during the ſame interval, with a musical bar of four crotchets in an adagio movement, or whilſt a pendulum ſwings four ſeconds.

It is affirmed, that the notes of birds are no more in­nate than language in man, and that they depend upon imitation, as far as their organs will enable them to imi­tate the founds which they have frequent opportunities of hearing : and their adhering ſo ſteadily, even in a wild ſtate, to the ſame ſong, is owing to the neſtlings attending only to the inſtruction of the parent bird, whilſt they diſregard the notes of all others that may perhaps be ſinging round them.

Birds in a wild ſtate do not commonly sing above 10 weeks in the year, whereas birds that have plenty of food in a cage sing the greateſt part of the year : and we may add, that the female of no species of birds ever ſings. This is a wiſe provision of nature, becauſe her ſong would diſcover her neſt. In the ſame manner, we may rationally account for her inferiority in plumage. The faculty of singing is confined to the cock birds ; and accordingly Mr Hunter, in dissecting birds of ſe­veral species, found the muſcles of the larynx to be stronger in the nightingale than in any other bird of the ſame ſize ; and in all thoſe inſtances, where he diſſected both cock and hen, the ſame muſcles were ſtronger in the cock. To the ſame purpoſe, it is an obſervation as ancient as the time of Pliny, that a capon does not crow.

Some have aſcribed the singing of the cock-bird in the ſpring ſolely to the motive of pleaſing his mate during incubation ; others, who allow that it is partly for this end, believe it is partly owing also to another cauſe, viz. the great abundance of plants and infects in the ſpring, which, as well as ſeeds, are the proper food of singing birds at that time of the year.

Mr Barrington remarks, that there is no inſtance of any ſinging bird which exceeds our blackbird in size; and this, he ſuppoſes, may ariſe from the difficulty of its concealing itſelf, if it called the attention of its ene­mies, not only by its bulk, but by the proportionable loudneſs of its notes. This writer farther obſerves, that ſome passages of the ſong in a few kinds of birds correſpond with the intervals of our musical ſcale, of which the cuckoo is a striking and known inſtance; but the greater part of their ſong cannot be reduced to a musical ſcale ; partly, becauſe the rapidity is often ſo

great, and it is alſo ſo uncertain when they may flop, that we cannot reduce the paſtages to form a musical bar in any time whatſoever ; partly alſo, becauſe the pitch of moſt birds is considerably higher than the moſt ſhrill notes of thoſe inſtruments which have the greateſt compaſs ; and principally, becauſe the inter­vals uſed by birds are commonly ſo minute, that we cannnot judge of them from the more groſs inter­vals into which we divide our musical octave. This writer apprehends, that all birds sing in the ſame key ; and in order to diſcover this key, he informs us, that the following notes have been obſerved in different birds, A, B flat, C, D, F, and G ; and therefore E only is wanting to complete the ſcale : now theſe intervals, he ſays, can only be found in the key oſ F with a ſharp third, or that of G with a flat third ; and he ſuppoſes it to be the latter, becauſe admitting that the firſt mu­fical notes were learned from birds, thoſe of the cuckoo, which have been moſt attended to, form a flat third, and moſt of our compositions are in a flat third, where music is simple, and conſiſts merely of melody. As a farther evidence that birds sing always in the same key, it has been found by attending to a nightingale, as well as a robin which was educated under him, that the notes reducible to our intervals of the octave were always preciſely the ſame.

Moſt people, who have not attended to the notes of birds, ſuppoſe, that every species sing exactly the ſame notes and paſtages: but this is by no means true; though it is admitted that there is a general reſemblance· Thus the London bird-catchers prefer the ſong of the Kentiſh gold­finches, and Essex chaffinches ; and ſome of the nightingale-ſanciers prefer a Surry bird to thoſe of Middleſex.

Of all ſinging birds, the ſong of the nightingale has been moſt univerſally admired : and its ſuperiority (de­duced from a caged bird) consists in the following particulars ; its tone is much more mellow than that of any other bird, though at the ſame time, by a proper exertion of its musical powers, it can be very brilliant. Another point of ſuperiority is its continuance of ſong without a pauſe, which is ſometimes no less than 20 ſe­conds; and when reſpiration becomes neceſſary, it takes it with as much judgment as an opera-singer. The ſky- lark in this particular, as well as in compass and variety, is only ſecond to the nightingale. The nightingale alſo ſings (if the expreſſion may be allowed) with ſuperior judgment and taſte. Mr Barrington has obſerved, that his nightingale, which was a very capital bird, began ſoftly like the ancient orators ; reſerving its breath to swell certain notes, which by theſe means had a moſt aſtoniſhing effect. This writer adds, that the notes of birds, which are annually imported from Alia, Africa, and America, both singly and in concert, are not to be compared to thoſe of European birds.

The following table, formed by Mr Barrington, agreeably to the idea of M. de Piles in eſtimating the merits of painters, is designed to exhibit the compara­tive merit of the Britiſh singing birds ; in which 20 is ſuppoſed to be the point of abſolute perfection.