music performed at the Prussian court and compose two new grand operas, or three smaller ones, every three years. But he began by at once embroiling himself with the in­tendant, Count Brühl. Spontini’s life at Berlin may be best described as a ceaseless struggle for precedence, under circumstances which rendered its attainment impossible in the sense in which he desired it. Yet he did good work, and did it well. *Die Vestalin, Ferdinand Cortez,* and *Olympia—*the last two entirely remodelled—were produced with great success in 1821. A new opera, *Nourmahal,* founded on Moore’s *Lalla Rookh,* was performed in 1822, and another, entitled *Alcidor,* in 1825 ; and in 1826 Spontini began the composition of *Agnes von Hohenstaufen,* a work planned on a grander scale than any of his former efforts. The first act was performed in 1827, and the complete work in three acts graced the marriage of Prince William in 1829. Though the German critics abused it bitterly, *Agnes van Hohenstaufen* is undoubtedly Spontini’s greatest work. In breadth of conception and grandeur of style it exceeds both *Die Vestalin* and *Ferdinand Cortez,* and its details are worked out with untiring conscientious­ness ; yet Spontini was utterly dissatisfied with it, and at once set to work upon an entire revision, which on its repre­sentation in 1837 was in many parts scarcely recognizable

by those who had heard the opera in its original form.

This was his last great work. He several times began

to rewrite his early opera, *Milton,* and contemplated the treatment of many new subjects, such as *Sappho, La Colère d'Achille,* and other classical myths, but with no definite result. He had never been popular in Berlin ; and he has been accused of endeavouring to prevent the performance of *Euryanthe, Oberon, Die Hochzeit des Camacho, Jessonda, Robert the Devil,* and other works of genius, through sheer envy of the laurels won by their composers. But the critics and reviewers of the period were so closely leagued together against him that it is difficult to know what to believe. After the death of Frederick William III. in 1840, Spontini’s conduct became so violent and imperious that in 1842 Frederick William IV. dismissed him, with power to retain his titles and live wherever he pleased in the enjoyment of his full salary. He elected to settle once more in Paris, after a short visit to Italy ; but beyond conducting occasional per­formances of some of his own works he made but few attempts to keep his name before the public. In 1847 he revisited Berlin and was invited by the king to conduct some performances during the winter. In 1848 he became deaf. In 1850 he retired to his birthplace, Majolati, and died there on 14th January 1851, bequeathing all he pos­sessed to the poor of his native town.

SPOONBILL. The bird now so called was formerly known in England as the Shovelard or Shovelar, while that which used to bear the name of Spoonbill, often amplified into Spoon-billed Duck, is the Shoveler (see vol. xxi. p. 842) of modern days—the exchange of names having been effected, as already stated *(loc. cit.)* about 200 years ago, when the subject of the present notice—the *Platalea leucorodia* of Linnæus as well as of recent writers—was doubtless far better known than now, since it evidently was, from ancient documents, the constant concomitant of Herons, and with them the law attempted to protect it.@@1 Mr Harting (*Zoologist,* 1886, pp. 81 *et seqj)* has cited a case from the “Year-Book” of 14 Hen. VIII. (1523),

wherein the then bishop of London (Cuthbert Tunstall) maintained an action of trespass against the tenant of a close at Fulham for taking Herons and “Shovelars” that made their nests on the trees therein growing, and has also printed *{Zoologist,* 1877, pp. 425 *et seq.)* an old document showing that “ Shovelars ” bred in certain woods in west Sussex in 1570. Nearly one hundred years later (*circa* 1662) Sir Thomas Browne, in his *Account of Birds found in Norfolk (Works,* ed. Wilkin, iv. pp. 315, 316), stated of the *“ Platea* or *Shouelard* ” that it formerly “built in the Hernerie at Claxton and Reedham, now at Trimley in Suffolk.” This last is the latest known proof of the breeding of the species in England ; but more recent evidence to that effect may be hoped for from other sources. That the Spoonbill was in the fullest sense of the word a “native” of England is thus incontestably shown ; but for many years past it has only been a more or less regular visitant, though not seldom in con­siderable numbers, which would doubtless, if allowed, once more make their home there ; but its conspicuous appear­ance renders it an easy mark for the greedy gunner and the contemptible collector. What may have been the case formerly is not known, except that, according to Belon, it nested in his time (1555) in the borders of Britanny and Poitou ; but as regards north-western Europe it seems of late years to have bred only in Holland, and there it has been deprived by drainage of its favourite resorts, one after the other, so that it must shortly become merely a stranger, except in Spain or the basin of the Danube and other parts of south-eastern Europe.

The Spoonbill ranges over the greater part of middle and southern Asia,@@2 and breeds abundantly in India, as well as on some of the islands in the Red Sea, and seems to be resident throughout Northern Africa. In Southern Africa its place is taken by an allied species with red legs, *Ρ. cristata* or *tenuiroslris,* which also goes to Madagascar. Australia has two other species, *P. regio,* or *melanorhynchus,* with black bill and feet, and *P. flaνipes,* in which those parts are yellow. The very beautiful and wholly different *P. ajaja* is the Roseate Spoonbill of America, and is the only one found on that continent, the tropical or juxta-tropical parts of which it inhabits. The rich pink, deepening in some parts into crimson, of nearly all its plumage, together with the yellowish green of its bare head and its lake-coloured legs, sufficiently marks this bird ; but all the other species are almost wholly clothed in pure white, though the English has, when adult, a fine buff pectoral band, and the spoon-shaped expanse of its bill is yellow, contrast­ing with the black of the compressed and basal portion. Its legs are also black. In the breeding season, a pendent tuft of white plumes further ornaments the head of both sexes, but is longest in the male. The young of the year have the primary quills dark- coloured.

The Spoonbills form a natural group, *Plataleidse,* allied, as before stated (Ibis, vol. xii. p. 606), to the *Ibididæ,* and somewhat more distantly to the Storks (see Stork), —all belonging to the *Pelargomorphse* of Prof. Huxley. They breed in societies, not only of their own kind, but in company with Herons, either on trees or in reed-beds, making large nests in which are commonly laid four eggs, —white, speckled, streaked, or blotched, but never very closely, with light red. Such breeding-stations have been several times described, and among the more recent accounts of one of them are those of Messrs Sclater and W. A. Forbes (*Ibis,* 1877, p. 412), and Mr Seebohm *{Zoologist,* 1880, p. 457), while a view of another has been attempted by Schlegel *{Vog. Nederland,* taf. xvii.). The latest systematic revision of the group is by Dr Reichenow (*Journ, fur Ornithologie,* 1877, pp. 156-159), but his views have not been wholly accepted in the present article. (a. n.)

@@@1 Nothing shows better the futility of the old statutes for the protection of birds than the fact that in 1534 the taking of the eggs of Herons, Spoonbills (Shovelars), Cranes, Bitterns, and Bustards was visited by a heavy penalty, while there was none for destroying the parent birds in the breeding-season. All of the species just named, except the Heron, have passed away, while there is strong reason to think that some at least might have survived had the principle of the Levitical law (Deut. xxii. 6) been followed.

@@@2 Ornithologists have been in doubt as to the recognition of two species from Japan described by Temminck and Schlegel under the names of P. major and P. minor. Lately it has been suggested that the former is only the young of P. leucorodia, and the latter the young of the Australian P. regia.