

above the canal in St. James's Park. On April 2 (yesterday), I saw a male gadwall in the Serpentine. This, no doubt, is the same bird that frequented the Serpentine all last winter, as well as a male teal, both birds being perfectly tame. The teal I last saw on the 1st of May last. One of the keepers in Kensington Gardens tells me that wigeon, pochards, and tufted ducks breed in the shrubberies on the Serpentine. If this is the case the birds reared must be few in number, or the great majority of them must disappear as soon as they can fly; otherwise they would appear in greater numbers on the London waters. The birds I have seen always seemed to me to be adult birds, the male wigeon especially being in the plumage of the old bird. C. M. A. is mistaken in saying that the tame duck cannot fly. The ducks frequenting the Serpentine and round pond I suppose he would call tame, the birds of the wild breed being now in a decided minority; but whether white, black, parti-coloured, grey, dun, or in perfect wild plumage, they all fly equally well. Mr Waterton is quite right when he says ("Essays," First Series, p. 197), "The domesticated duck only loses its inclination for flying when it is bred and reared far from any large sheet of water; but where an extent of water is at hand, this bird will be observed to assume more brisk and active habits; it will indulge in long and lofty flights." Judging from my own repeated observations, I should say that the closed wings of the mallard, although longer than those of the tame duck, do not reach to the end of the tail by more than an inch; those of the wigeon and gadwall are longer. On the 11th of April last, I saw a little grebe (dabchick) in the middle of the round pond. I watched it for some time through a glass, and satisfied myself as to the species. Where did this little short-wing bird come from, and where did it go to, for I have never seen it since? On the 11th of February, 1863, I saw a dabchick in the upper part of the Serpentine, but it disappeared before I could get an opera-glass to bear upon it. The first hybrid wigeon (mallard and wigeon) I ever saw was in 1856 (January and February). A very handsome pair frequented the pond in the Botanic Gardens for some months until driven away by the frost and the skaters in the beginning of 1857. Since then I have often seen hybrid wigeon of both sexes, but only in the lake in the Regent's-park. Last winter a coot frequented the Serpentine, and I am told that he was seen there this winter, in January.—H. H.

SALE OF AFRICAN CURIOSITIES.—The sale of a good collection of African skulls, skins, and curiosities, the property of the celebrated Dr Baikie, will take place at Stevens's, on Thursday next. The specimens were chiefly obtained by him in his recent explorations up the Niger; they include some good elephant and rhinoceros crania, as well as many of those of smaller animals.

GARDENING.

SEA KALE.

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