

MOUNTAIN OR BRAMBLE FINCH.

Fringilla montifringilla, Linn.

Le Gros-bec d'Ardennes.

THIS species of Finch is dispersed in considerable abundance throughout every country in Europe, and, as its specific name implies, prefers high and mountainous districts. In many parts of the Continent it is stationary, while in others it is strictly migratory. In the British Islands the winter season alone is the period of its visits, where it makes its appearance at the end of the autumn, and retires again on the approach of spring. During summer it dwells and incubates in those extensive forests of fir and pine which abound in all high northern latitudes. Although few seasons pass without the presence of this elegant bird in the central portions of our island, nevertheless it must have been remarked that at certain periods it makes its appearance in some of our woods and stubble-lands in flocks, often associating with Chaffinches and other granivorous birds in innumerable quantities. As to situation, they appear to evince a decided preference to woods of beech, on the mast of which they for a time subsist, feeding also on various seeds and the shoots of tender vegetables, resembling in this and many other respects the Chaffinch (*Fringilla cœlebs*, Linn.), and like the latter is equally typical in form; and for beauty and elegance it is not surpassed by any other of its genus. Although it is very probable that a limited number of this species remain to breed in the northern parts of Scotland, yet we have never been able to verify the fact. It is said to incubate in forests of lofty pine and spruce, the nest being composed of moss and wool, lined with feathers and hair. The eggs are white, spotted with yellowish brown, four or five in number.

In the general style of colouring the two sexes are similar; the male, however, far surpasses his mate in the richness and contrast of his plumage. In summer the male is adorned with a different dress from that of winter, that portion of the plumage which is then brown being exchanged for black during the spring and breeding-season. The male bird in the accompanying Plate exhibits a state of plumage intermediate between these two seasons, both sexes having been taken immediately before their departure.

The male has the head, ear-coverts, nape, and upper part of the back black, each feather being edged and tipped with yellowish brown; scapularies barred across the centre of the wing with white; edges of the secondaries, throat, and chest bright ferruginous brown; rump and vent white; primaries black edged with yellowish red; bill black at the tip, yellow at the base; legs brown; irides hazel.

The female has the general markings and colours of the male, but in every respect much more obscure and dull.

The Plate represents an adult male and female of the natural size.