

DOUBTFUL SPARROW.

Pyrgita Petronia.

Le Gros-bec soulcie.

WE have followed the example of many previous ornithologists in associating this bird with those forming the restricted genus *Pyrgita*, or true Sparrows, although we doubt the propriety of so doing, as we think that it possesses peculiar characters, which would entitle it to rank as the type of a separate genus: its strong conical bill, lengthened wing, and abbreviated tail are not in strict unison with the generic characters of *Pyrgita*; but we have refrained from separating it, being desirous of obtaining further information respecting its habits and manners, which doubtless differ in many particulars from those of the Sparrows the typical form of which is represented by the common species inhabiting England. Independently of the characters alluded to as differing from those of *Pyrgita*, we may add that in this genus the markings and colour of the plumage of the sexes are very different, while in the sexes of the present bird no outward variations are perceptible.

Dr. Shaw informs us in his General Zoology, vol. ix. part ii. p. 434, that "this species is found over the greatest part of Europe, in the southern portions of which it is migratory, but is nowhere so common as in Germany. It is not found in this country; it affects woods, and builds in the holes of trees, laying four or five eggs, and feeds on seeds and insects. These birds are very delicate, as numbers are often found dead in trees in the winter, during which time they assemble in flocks."

The top of the head is longitudinally banded with greyish white tinged with yellow, which colour pervades each of the feathers of the back and upper surface; wings brown; the secondaries and scapularies tipped with yellowish white; primaries and tail brown with the outer webs margined with yellowish white; the inner webs of all the feathers of the latter, except the two middle ones, having a large spot of white near the extremity; under surface dusky grey and white, mixed deepest on the flanks; upper mandible brown, lower one yellow at the base and brown at the tip; irides brown; feet brown.

We have figured a male of the natural size.