

TOUPET TIT.

Parus bicolor, *Linn.*

La Mésange bicolore.

THERE can be no doubt that the northern regions of America form the true habitat of this species ; we have, however, seen specimens which were undoubtedly killed in Russia, and therefore no longer hesitate in classing it among the occasional visitants of the European continent ; nevertheless it is there extremely rare and is confined to the regions adjacent to the arctic circle. In the works of Wilson and Audubon its manners are described as resembling those of the other members of the genus. “ It moves along the branches,” says the latter gentleman, “ searches in the chinks, flies to the ends of twigs, and hangs to them by its feet, whilst the bill is engaged in detaching a beech- or hazel-nut, an acorn, or a chinquapin, upon all of which it feeds, removing them to a large branch, where, having secured them in a crevice, it holds them with both feet, and breaks the shell by repeated blows of its bill. . . . It resorts to the margins of brooks to drink, and when unable to do so, obtains water by stooping from the extremity of a twig overhanging the stream ; it appears to prefer this latter method, and is also fond of drinking the drops of rain or dew as they hang at the extremity of the branches.” The same author also informs us that its notes, which are usually loud and mellow, are rather musical than otherwise ; that it is somewhat vicious in its disposition, and occasionally attacks and destroys smaller birds by repeated blows on the head until it breaks the skull.

The nest is constructed of all kinds of warm materials, and is generally placed in the holes formed by the Downy and other species of Woodpecker, but is occasionally placed in a hole dug by the bird itself for that purpose. The eggs, which are from six to eight in number, are of a pure white, with a few red spots at the larger end.

The sexes are so much alike as to be scarcely distinguishable.

Forehead black ; sides of the head brownish black ; all the upper surface uniform grey ; under surface greyish white, tinged with yellowish brown on the flanks ; bill black ; irides dark brown ; feet lead colour.

We have figured an adult of the natural size.