Genus ERYTHACA, *Swains.*

Gen. Char. *Bill* broad, rather depressed at the base, gently narrowing towards the tip, where it is slightly compressed; of mean strength, with the upper mandible deflected at the tip, and emarginated. *Nostrils* basal, lateral, oval, pierced in a large membrane, and nearly concealed by the projecting feathers of the antiæ; gape beset with thick bristly hairs. *Wings* having the first quill very short, the second double the length of the first, the third shorter than the fourth and fifth, which are nearly equal, and the longest in the wing. *Legs* with the tarsi longer than the middle toe; the outer toe joined at its base to the middle one; the outer and inner toes short, nearly equal in length, and each only reaching to the second joint of the middle one. *Claws* not much hooked; that of the hind toe the longest. Form short and compact.

ROBIN.

Erythaca rubecula, *Swains.*

Le Bec-fin rouge-gorge.

We may consider this lively and familiar bird as strictly indigenous to Europe, since among the numerous and extensive collections received from Northern Africa, India, and China we have never observed a single example, neither is it mentioned (as far as we are aware,) by any writer as an inhabitant of those countries; it appears, however, to extend eastward as far as the border line of Asia Minor, one example, and one alone, having been received in a collection from the shores of the Black Sea. In Europe the middle and northern regions are those in which it appears to be most abundant and over which it is universally spread; there are none, indeed, who are not well acquainted with its habits and manners, and with whom it is not a favourite. One of those species whose fearless confidence in man lead it to frequent his gardens and the precincts of his house, its sprightly manners and its animated song, which is poured forth morning and evening even throughout the autumn and colder part of the year when other songsters are silent, render it a most welcome visitor to his habitation. Attractive as the Robin is in all its habits and manners, still it is of a quarrelsome and pugnacious disposition: two males seldom agree to live within the range of the same garden or within a given distance, the stronger always driving away its weaker antagonist; in this respect the Robin differs from many other birds that flock together in winter, and even from its nearly allied species, such as Redstarts and Wheatears, which migrate at the close of summer to a warmer climate, whilst it braves our coldest winters with the utmost impunity. During the greater part of the year its food consists of worms, grubs, the softer caterpillars, and other small insects, together with berries and fruits when in season; but in the depth of winter, when its natural food cannot be procured, it subsists upon crumbs and other refuse.

The sexes, which are alike in plumage, appear to continue mated throughout the whole of the year, and commence the task of incubation at an early period before many of our summer visitors have even arrived, in consequence of which they have generally two broods in the course of the year. The places chosen for the site of the nest is entirely according to circumstances, being sometimes a bank at the root of a tree, at others in the side of a house, in a hole in a wall, in the tool-house of the gardener, &c. The nest is constructed of moss, leaves, grass, the stalks of plants, or any material near at hand, generally lined with hair; the eggs are five or six in number, of a whitish grey with reddish spots. The young during the first three months of their existence would hardly be recognised as the progeny of the Robin, so much do they differ from the adult birds in the colouring of their plumage; a change of feather takes place in the winter, when their new dress resembles that of the adults and being then fully competent to shift for themselves, they are driven by their parents to a distance and compelled to locate elsewhere.

The top of the head and the whole of the upper surface is of a soft olive brown, the wings and tail being darkest; face, throat, and breast fine ferruginous red; the rest of the under surface dull white; bill, irides, and tarsi blackish brown.

The young when fully fledged have the upper surface of a deep brown, thickly speckled with dots of yellow; the chest is slightly tinged with ferruginous, each feather having a dark brown margin; under surface greyish white.

The Plate represents an adult male and female, and a fully fledged young bird, of the natural size.