Genus TURDUS. *Auct.*

Gen. Char. *Beak* moderate, emarginated, compressed and arched at its point. *Upper mandible* slightly notched. *Gape* furnished with a few bristles. *Nostrils* basal, lateral, oval, partly closed by a naked membrane. *External toe* joined at its base to the middle one, which is shorter than the tarsus. First *quill-feather* very short; third or fourth the longest.

MISSEL THRUSH.

Turdus viscivorus, *Linn.*

La Draine.

This bird has derived its appellation from the alleged circumstance of its feeding upon the berries of the Misseltoe; and we place it at the head of the genus as being the largest, and exhibiting the generic characters in the greatest perfection. Of all the Thrushes, the present species is the most extensively spread over the older continent, being not only found in Europe, but also in that altitude of the Himalaya Mountains and the high lands of Asia which afford a temperature similar to our own. Thinly dispersed over the British Isles, the Missel Thrush is a solitary and unsocial bird, differing considerably in its habits from the common favourite, which delights to dwell within the cultivated precincts of our shrubberies and gardens. Affecting remote situations, it retires from the haunts of human society to pasture lands, wide commons or meadows skirted by orchards or groves, feeding, like its generic companions, on snails, worms and the larvæ of insects, during the months of spring and summer, but resorts to berries, especially those of the mountain ash, the haw, and, according to authors, the misseltoe, when autumn and winter deprive it of more esteemed fare. It is one of our earliest breeders, the commencement of March being the season of incubation; the place of nidification being sometimes orchard trees, at others those of more lofty growth, such as the elm or oak; and the nest, with a view to its concealment, is artfully placed either close against the stem or in a fork of one of the larger branches, being composed on the outside of coarse lichen, gray moss, or such dried vegetables as are found on the spot and accord with the colour of the tree: the materials are carelessly interwoven. Within this outside covering is a layer of mud neatly lined with fine grasses; the female laying five eggs of a pale blueish white spotted with dull red.

As this bird is one of our earliest breeders, so also may the note of the male be heard the earliest in the spring, while, perched at the top of some tall tree, he serenades his mate with loud discordant sounds, which consist of monotonous unpleasant notes, repeated by the hour together. The Missel Thrush is very pugnacious during the breeding season, attacking all birds indiscriminately should they intrude within a certain distance of his nest. After this period we have seen the Missel Thrush collected in small companies, but never in such congregated numbers as the migratory species of the genus.

The male and female differ from each other so little in size and colour, that one description will serve for both: the young, however, have their feathers edged with a darker colour, which soon disappears, when the plumage assumes the adult colouring.

The weight of the Missel Thrush is near five ounces; its total length eleven inches.

The whole of the upper surface is of an ashy brown; between the beak and eye the feathers are grayish white. The under-surface is white, more or less tinged with yellowish red varied with barb-shaped brown spots, which become more oval on the lower parts; wing-coverts edged and tipped with white; the three outer tail-feathers ending in a lighter colour; beak and legs yellowish white, the former the darkest.

The annexed Plate represents an adult male in its spring plumage.