FIELDFARE.

Turdus pilaris, *Linn.*

Le Merle litorne.

The Fieldfare is only a winter visitant of the British Islands and the temperate parts of Europe, arriving in autumn and departing northwards in the spring, its native habitat being the regions adjacent to the arctic circle, such as Sweden, Lapland, the Northern parts of Russia, Norway, &c., where, according to Mr. Hewitson of Newcastle, it is very abundant. From this gentleman's interesting and very valuable work on the eggs of British Birds, we have made the following extract: "We were soon delighted by the discovery of several of their nests, and were surprised to find them, so contrary to the habits of other species of the genus with which we are acquainted, breeding in society. Their nests were at various heights from the ground, from four feet to thirty or forty feet or upwards, mixed with old nests of the preceding year. They were, for the most part, placed against the trunk of the spruce fir; some were, however, at a considerable distance from it, upon the upper surface and towards the smaller end of the thicker branches. They resemble most nearly those of the Ring Ouzel: the outside is composed of sticks, and coarse grass and weeds gathered wet, matted together with a small quantity of clay, and lined with a thick bed of fine dry grass. The eggs are five and sometimes six in number, very like those of the Blackbird and Ring Ouzel. The Fieldfare is the most abundant bird in Norway, building as above described in society, two hundred nests or more being frequently found within a very small space."

After the breeding season is past, and when the severities of winter set in over those northern regions, vast flocks congregate together and pass gradually southwards till they find a locality affording the necessary means of subsistence; hence, in our locality they spread themselves over fields and pasture lands in search of worms, grubs, and insects, retreating to thick hedges, where various berries supply them food, when the snow precludes their other means of support. Unlike the Song Thrush they are shy and wary, not allowing themselves to be approached, but taking wing and wheeling off in a body to some distant spot. This shyness of disposition, together with the harshness of their note, assimilates them strongly to the Missel Thrush, which in fact they closely resemble, except in their gregarious habits.

The sexual differences in the Fieldfare are so trifling as to be scarcely perceptible; indeed, it requires anatomical examination to ascertain the distinction.

The Fieldfare generally leaves us in March or April, and, as far as we know, there are no instances of their having bred in our island. Their powers of song are very moderate, and their common call note very like that of the Shrikes.

Their flesh is by many held in considerable esteem, and hence they are often eagerly pursued by the gunner, a circumstance which, if we mistake not, conduces much to their timid and suspicious habits.

In size, the Fieldfare is next to the Missel Thrush, but possesses a style of colouring peculiar to itself. The head, lower part of the neck and rump cinereous grey; the top of the back and wing-coverts chestnut brown; space between the beak and the eye black; a greyish white streak passes above the eyes; the throat and breast light rufous brown, with lanceolate black spots; the feathers of the flanks are blotched with black and bordered with white; the abdomen pure white; tail black, the outer feathers being inclined to grey; bill bright orange, with a black tip; tarsi black.

The Plate represents an adult bird of the natural size.