

PIED FLYCATCHER.

Muscicapa luctuosa, Temm.

Le Gobe-mouche becfigue.

IN the British Isles this interesting little bird is exceedingly local in the districts it chooses for its periodical visits. Arriving, on the return of spring, from the more congenial and warmer portions of the Old Continent, it takes up its abode, not, as might be expected, in the southern parts of our island, but in the northern and midland counties, especially Lancashire, Yorkshire and Derbyshire, finding probably either food or some other inducement, of which we have no knowledge, that is suited to its wants. In France and Germany it is far from being scarce; but its most favourite tract is along the European shores of the Mediterranean, and over the whole of Italy. In Holland, and, we believe, in Denmark, Sweden and Russia, it is never seen.

The Pied Flycatcher is a most active and unwearied pursuer of the insect tribes, being continually in motion, darting at them as they pass, or searching after them among leaves and flowers. Whether it be for the sake of the fruit itself, or for the insects which abound near the figs, certain it is, that from the circumstance of the bird being constantly found in the neighbourhood of fig trees, it has obtained the name of *Beccafico*. It constructs a nest in the holes of trees, and lays from four to six eggs, of a uniform pale blue colour.

WHITE-COLLARED FLYCATCHER.

Muscicapa albicollis, Temm.

Le Gobe-mouche à collier.

ALTHOUGH we have seen this species in a collection of British birds, and were informed that it was supposed to have been killed in England, still we have every reason to believe that it seldom advances so far north as England, or even the adjacent provinces of France or Germany; it is in fact more strictly confined to the central portion and Asiatic confines of Europe.

As regards the distinguishing characteristics of these two closely allied species, we may observe, that the adults in the plumage of summer may be easily distinguished from each other by the absence in the former of the entire collar round the neck; but to render the description of both these species more complete, we beg leave to translate the following passage from the valuable *Manuel d'Ornithologie* of M. Temminck: "The female of the two species, the males in their winter clothing, and the young, all resemble each other so closely as frequently to deceive. They may be easily distinguished, except in the first species, by the little white speculum which occupies the centre of the wing in *M. albicollis*, whilst the wing is of one colour in *M. luctuosa*; secondly, by the lateral feathers of the tail, of which the two external have the edge whitish, more or less spread, according to age, in *M. albicollis*, whilst in the *M. luctuosa* the three lateral tail-feathers are slightly bordered with white edges. The manner of living, the note or call, and the song of the male offer very marked differences: the eggs also differ in colour. It is to M. Lotinguer that we are indebted for the knowledge of the double moult which annually takes place in these birds."

In winter, according to the above-quoted author, both these species lose the black plumage of summer, and assume a uniform brown livery over all the upper parts, at which season the young, female and males, resemble each other: on the return of spring they moult again, the males assuming their black livery.

In the month of October, and during the greater part of the winter, both these species collect in countless flocks in Italy, where they are known by the common term of *Beccafici*, and at which time they are taken in immense numbers for the table, being considered an especial luxury.

The eggs of *M. albicollis* are greenish blue spotted with brown.

The Plate represents a male and female of *M. luctuosa*, and a male of *M. albicollis*, of the natural size, in the plumage of summer.