STURNUS UNICOLOR, De la Marmora.

Sardinian Starling.

Sturnus unicolor, De la Marmora, Temm. Man. d'Orn. ed. 2, p. 133 (1820).—Dresser, Birds of Europe, 1874, pl. xxvi.

I quite agree with Mr. Dresser when he says, in his valuable work on the birds of Europe, that the true Sturnus unicolor has been erroneously recorded from Scinde, the Punjab, and Cashmere; further than this, I may say that several of our best orthithologists have assigned it a place among the birds of India, where, however, it certainly does not occur. In size all the Starlings are pretty much the same; and a similar law also prevails among them as regards the spotted character of the plumage from youth to maturity; there are, however, infallible characters by which the present bird may be distinguished from the rest—among others, the feathers of the throat being soft and silky, and the under portion of the wing being black. The native country of the S. unicolor is Southern Europe, North Africa, and Asia Minor; and Canon Tristram records it from Palestine.

In Italy it is common. Salvadori (J. f. O. 1865, p. 276) writes that:—"he never met with it in the more elevated portions of the country, but always in the plains, where they search for insects with the Crows in damp places. At the close of day they leave the fields and pass the night on roofs of houses. He observed them in the pigeon-caves at Cape St. Elias, near Cagliari, in company with *Columba livia* and *Cotyle rupestris*."

Malherbe (Mém. Ac. Roy. Metz, 1843, p. 133) states that "it inhabits the mountainous districts in the interior of Sicily, and is common at Lentini, Caltagirone, Troina, &c., where it is sedentary; and Lord Lilford found it common and resident in the Island of Sardinia. It has occurred in Malta, as Mr. C. A. Wright writes (Ibis, 1864, p. 56) that "Schembri includes this species, from two specimens shot out of a flock of five or six many years ago." Neither Von der Mühle nor Lindermayer ever observed it in Greece; but Lord Lilford (Ibis, 1860, p. 137) met with it at Corfu.

The figures in the accompanying Plate are of the natural size, and represent a male in summer plumage. The black-billed bird is in the winter dress; or it may be the young in its second dress or immediately after its brown state.

My principal reason for figuring this bird in the 'Birds of Asia' is, to show Indian naturalists what the true S. unicolor is really like, so as to avoid in future the chance of its being considered an Indian bird. The figure is of the size of life.

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