FRINGILLA MONTIFRINGILLA.

Bramble-Finch.

The Bramble-Finch is so widely dispersed over the northern portion of the Old World, that the extent of its range excites our wonder and astonishment. Before me at this moment are specimens obtained in England, with others from the continent of Europe, Asia Minor, Persia, China, and Japan, all of which are so precisely alike as to leave no doubt in my mind that they are all referable to one and the same species.

To the Continent, to England, and to Ireland it is a winter visitant, migrating hither from more northern climes, the countries of the pine and the fir, the regions of the birch and the willow, the uplands of Norway, Lapland, Finland, and Russia. The Chinese and Japanese examples doubtless pass the summer in Mongolia and Tartary. The fall of the year brings us the Red-wing and the Fieldfare; and as certain as they appear, so also does the Bramble-Finch, and that in still greater numbers; for it arrives in flocks of thousands, which generally keep together until the following spring, and evince a preference for forests of beech, under the branches of which trees these great flocks of Bramble-Finches search for their natural food, which is said to be the mast of these well-known trees. In severe winters, when the ground is carpeted with snow, the Bramble-Finch often resorts to the straw-yards of the farmer, where, with numerous other Finches, they subsist on the scattered grain thrown out by the thresher; as the day closes in, they retire to roost among the lower trees of the neighbouring plantations, where they are well screened from the cold blasts of the long winter nights. The great laurel-hedges of such estates as Dropmore and Cliveden are, among other places, the nightly rendez-vous of this bird during its sojourn with us. When April arrives, the Bramble-Finch is impulsively reminded of the coming season of reproduction, and a restless desire to return and perform this important duty takes possession of it. The home of the Bramblings which resort to the British Islands is Norway and Lapland. In the year 1856, I observed them breeding in various parts of the former country, but more especially in the higher or birch-region. In company with Mr. Wolf, I put my hand into many nests, some containing eggs, others callow young. We were on the Dovrefjeld at the end of June; and there, in a desolate region too high for the Chaffinch, the nests were numerous, and generally placed on the stem of a birch or at the bifurcations of the branches; carrying out the decorative propensity of the Chaffinch, the outer walls were adorned with flat pieces of lichen and other materials; several of these nests were so pretty, that I brought them to England as trophies of the bird's skill in this part of its economy; and they are now as fine as when I took them six years ago.

The Brambling, as seen in this country in its winter dress, is an attractive bird, but when in its full summer costume, as it may be seen in Norway, it is an object of very great beauty: no pencil can do it justice; and the accompanying representation gives but a faint idea of the bird in a state of nature at that season.

All the nests I observed were very beautifully made, but not so neatly as those of the Chaffinch; they were also much larger, deeper, and warmer, and made of coarser materials. The walls were composed of green mosses and fine dried benty grass interwoven with cobwebs, and externally decorated with flat pieces of white lichen and thin glaucous-coloured shreds or peelings of birch-bark, giving the whole a silvery and extremely pretty appearance; and, as they are usually placed near the bole of the white-barked birch, they are not very easily distinguished; internally they were lined with fine wool and some feathers of the White Grouse, the tips of which frequently rose above the upper edge of the nest, and curved inwards so that when the female is sitting she must be almost hidden, the head, the centre of the back, and the tail being all that could be seen. Their external diameter was about five inches and a half, and their depth three inches and a half; the diameter of the interior was about two inches and a half. The different nests of eggs varied considerably in colour,—one set being clear grey-green, irregularly and faintly blotched or freckled all over with brown; in another the ground-colour was suffused with brown, the blotches or freckles not so distinct, and small chestnut-coloured dots were also dispersed over the surface. The eggs are generally six in number.

In confirmation of what I have said respecting this bird arriving in great flocks, I may cite the following passage from Latham's 'General History of Birds,' vol. vi. p. 61:—They " are also seen at certain times in

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