EMBERIZA CITRINELLA, *Linn.*

Yellowhammer or Yellow Bunting.

Emberiza citrinella, Linn. Faun. Suec., p. 84.
——— *sylvestris*, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., p. 294.
——— *septentrionalis*, Brehm, ib., p. 294.
Citrinella septentrionalis, Kaup, Natürl. Syst., p. 142.

The present beautiful bird is known throughout the greater portion of the British Islands by the name of Yellowhammer, a term which Yarrell considered to be a corruption of Yellow Ammer, the word "ammer" being a common and well-known German name for many of the Buntings; he has therefore called this species the Yellow Bunting or Yellow Ammer. The Scotch biographer of our native birds, Macgillivray, also described it as the Yellow Bunting, and adds the following list of provincial names as applied to it:—Yellowhammer, Yellow Yeldring or Yoldring, Yellow Yowley, Yellow Yite, Yoldring, or Yeldrock, Skite, Devil's bird, Buidhein, Buidheag Bhuachair; while Thompson, of Ireland, mentions only the following:—Yellow Bunting, Yellow Ammer, and Yellow Yorlin. Of all these terms that of Yellow Bunting is undoubtedly the most correct; but Yellowhammer is the one by which it is generally known to the school-, the herd-, and the plough-boy. Like those sturdy sons of the soil, it is strictly a native of, and a permanent resident in, this country (for it never leaves us either in summer or winter), and is alike common in every district, from north to south and from east to west, from the low fluviatile county of Lincolnshire to the high peaks of Derbyshire, from the Lothians to the hills of Rosshire.

In the early mornings the Yellowhammer may be seen on the dew-bespangled sprays of the field-side, and there, while perched on some prominent twig, emits his singular ditty long before the vernal migrants have arrived. As summer advances, no bird is more showy, nor is there one whose appearance is more striking among the hedges which skirt the green lanes; the dense coppice and the thick wood he shuns; it is among the wide shaws in low valleys, and the bushes which grow on commons and wastes, that the Yellowhammer finds a home congenial to his tastes. It has now paired, and the couples only wait for the thorn-bush to be covered with leaves, and the ditch-side overgrown with grasses and herbage, before they commence their nests.

"Just by the wooden bridge a bird flew up
Seen by the cow-boy as he scrambled down
To reach the misty dewberry. Let us stoop
And seek its nest. The brook we need not dread,
'Tis scarcely deep enough a bee to drown,
As it sings harmless o'er its pebbly bed——
Aye, here it is! Stuck close beside the bank,
Beneath the bunch of grass that spindles rank
Its husk-seeds tall and high: 'tis rudely planned
Of bleachèd stubbles and the withered fare
That last year's harvest left upon the land,
Lined thinly with the horse's sable hair.
Five eggs, pen-scribbled o'er with ink their shells,
Resembling writing scrawls, which Fancy reads
As Nature's poesy and pastoral spells:
They are the Yellowhammer's; and she dwells
Most poet-like 'mid brooks and flowery weeds."

During spring and summer the Yellowhammer is associated with the *Rubus fruticosus* from the period of its flowering to that of its fully ripened fruit, the well-known Blackberry; but when the spring is past and "summer is over and gone," it betakes itself to the open fields and seeks its food on the ground, where it finds a plentiful supply of seeds, small-shelled mollusks, &c. As winter approaches, it assembles in flocks, and mingles with Finches and Sparrows around the outstanding ricks, and even ventures within the precincts of the farmyard in quest of grain or other kinds of food which such places afford. Soon, however, spring again appears, and with it comes a change of diet; for insects and their larvæ are then eagerly devoured—a kind of food with which the Buntings also feed their offspring.

No one of our native birds varies so much in colouring as the Yellowhammer; the differences in this respect are, however, too trivial to be regarded as specific, the variation being confined to the intensity or richness of its hues, and to the presence or absence of markings on the head. Some males have this part of a beautiful clear yellow, while others have a well-defined light-chestnut moustache bounding the lower part of the face; others, again, have the head and cheeks suffused with dark brown, without a trace of the