ACCENTOR ALPINUS.

Alpine Accentor.

Motacilla alpina, Gmel. edit. Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 957.
Sturnus moritanus, Gmel. ibid., p. 804.
——— *collaris*, Gmel. ibid., p. 805.
Accentor alpinus, Bechst. Naturg. Deutschl., tom. iii. p. 700.

Those persons who have done me the honour to consult my work on the 'Birds of Asia' will have observed that all the species of this form contained therein are figured under the generic term *Accentor*; but I may here remark that Professor Kaup has divided the birds hitherto placed in that genus into three genera, reserving *Accentor* for the present species, with which its near allies *A. nipalensis* and *A. altaicus* must be associated, proposing the term *Tharrhaleus* for the common Hedge-Accentor of Europe, *A. modularis*, with which must be placed *A. immaculatus*, *A. rebeculoides*, *A. strophiatus*, and the Japanese *A. rubidus*,—and *Spermolegus* for the *A. atrogularis* vel *montanellus*. Now, although I have not adopted these divisions, I admit that the German *savant* has sufficient reasons for separating the Accentorine birds into two genera; but I strongly object to the generic separation of the *A. atrogularis* from *Tharrhaleus*, since, in my opinion, it is identical in form. The species, then, of Professor Kaup's restricted genus *Accentor*, of which the bird here represented is the type, are three in number, namely *A. alpinus*, *A. nipalensis*, and *A. altaicus*; all are inhabitants of mountainous districts. Compared with the members of the genus *Tharrhaleus*, of which *T. modularis* is the type, these Alpine birds have longer wings, and more robust forms, and the marking of their plumage is of a different character. They are said to be even more tame in disposition than our well-known Hedgesparrow; at least it is so reported of *A. alpinus*. The birds of this latter form also affect very different localities, rocky mountains being the situations wherein they love to dwell, rather than among the lowlands. They and the Wild Rhododendrons live together—the European species with the *Rhododendron ferrugineum*, on the Alps, while the others creep about among the plants of the same family in the Himalayas, the discovery of so many species of which has made Dr. Hooker's name so famous among botanists. The European *A. alpinus* keeps true to its locality; for it seldom leaves the Alps, and never intrudes upon the haunts of those inhabiting the great Himalayan ranges, which, in like manner, are constant to their natural abodes. The Accentors constitute a well-defined group of birds, the members of which are confined to the Old World, and, as far as we yet know, to its northern regions. What claim, it may be asked, has the *Accentor alpinus* to a place in the avifauna of Great Britain? If we look into the works of Macgillivray, Yarrell, or Thompson, we shall find it recorded that a pair were seen in the garden of King's College, Cambridge, and one being shot, on the 22nd of November 1822, it was submitted to the inspection of the ornithologists living at the time, accompanied by a scrap of information bearing out their rock-loving disposition; for it was noticed that when not on the ground they frequented the buttresses of the surrounding buildings. The second example was supposed to have fallen a victim to a cat. In Loudon's Magazine for 1832 is another record of the occurrence of this bird.

"I am indebted," says Mr. Yarrell, "to the Rev. Dr. Goodenough, the Dean of Wells, for the knowledge of the occurrence of a third example of this rare bird, which was shot in the garden of the Deanery, in Somersetshire, in 1833. . . . The same character was noticed in the specimens both at Cambridge and Wells, the birds allowing observers to approach unusually close to them, and, when at length obliged to move, making very short flights and always settling on some part of the nearest building. The resemblance of the steeple-crowned edifices of Cambridge and at the Deanery of Wells to the pointed and elevated rocks of their own peculiar haunts was supposed to have been the attraction in both the localities referred to." Still more recently Mr. Gatcombe has submitted to my inspection a very fine pair shot by himself in Devonshire, respecting which he has favoured me with the following note:—

"On the 20th of December, 1858, while walking on the coast in the neighbourhood of Plymouth, after some heavy gales from the south-west, I was much surprised and interested by seeing a pair of Alpine Accentors hopping about among the grass on the top of the cliffs. Having watched them for some time I returned home for my gun; but when I came back they had disappeared, and, although I sedulously searched the whole of the coast, I did not see them again until the 10th of the following month, January 1859, when I had the good fortune to shoot them. Their actions closely resembled those of the common Hedge-Accentor; and they were tolerably tame, but, on being alarmed, immediately flew down among the rocks, uttering a note which resembled the words *tree*, *tree*, *tree*, quickly repeated, reminding me much of the noise made by some kinds of small birds when fighting. They kept close together, and appeared when feeding to