

fruit, in due season, are added. As regards reproduction, the Robin may be said to have accomplished this duty once before the ordinary spring birds have arrived, and a second brood will be ready to compete with the young of the migrants by the time insect life has become most abundant. The situations chosen for the nest are very varied:—in the garden the ivied wall, the bank-side, an inverted flower-pot, any hole or corner in the greenhouse; in the wood the stub of a tree, or on the ground, the side of a ditch. No place appears to be too quiet or too turbulent and noisy. Dr. Percy informs me that a Robin has been known to fly through the flywheel of a copper-rolling mill, with six arms and going at the rate of 120 revolutions a minute; and Thompson mentions “that the noisy operations of the shipbuilder will not prevent the selection of a place for nidification in his immediate vicinity;” for he saw a nest built inside a vessel under repair in the dry dock at Belfast, which was placed in a small round hole of one of the timbers, and during its construction the deafening process of driving in the trenails was carried forward occasionally close to it. To reproduce here the hundreds of anecdotes which have been recorded respecting the tameness and pugnacity of the Robin would be useless, but I may be excused for transcribing the following curious instances of the latter propensity from Thompson’s ‘Natural History of Ireland:’—

“Robins being so wholly absorbed during combat as to be regardless of all else was ludicrously evinced at Springvale by a pair fighting from the air downwards to the earth, until they disappeared in a man’s hat that happened to be lying on the ground, and in which they were both captured. Two caught fighting in a yard at Belfast were kept all night in separate cages. Early in the morning one was set at liberty, the other, being tamer, kept with the intention of being permanently retained. So unhappy, however, did the prisoner appear, that it was set at liberty in the yard, which was believed to be its chosen domicile. The other came a second time and attacked it, when my informant, who was present, hastened to the rescue, and the wilder bird flew away. The tamer one was again caught and brought into the house for safety. The intruder was now driven off the premises; and in the evening, when it was supposed that he was in a different locality, the other bird was turned out; its wicked and pertinacious antagonist, however, still lay in wait, a third time attacked, and killed it: the tamer bird, though the inferior of the other in strength, always ‘joined issue,’ and fought to the best of its poor ability. Some years ago, at Merville (co. Antrim), a Robin kept possession of the greenhouse, and killed every intruder of its own species (amounting to about two dozen) that entered it. This had been so frequently done, that an examination of two or three of the victims was made, to ascertain the cause of death; and a deep wound was found in the neck of each, evidently made by the bill of the slayer. The lady of the house hearing of the bird’s cruelty, had the sharp point of its beak cut off; and no more of its brethren were slaughtered; but it did not long survive this slight mutilation.”

As an evidence that the Robin can appreciate kindness and evince gratitude, I may cite the following anecdote communicated to me by Mrs. William Fowler, of Whittington Hall:—“In the winter of 1862 a Robin was brought to me with a broken pinion; I bathed the injured limb with warm water for several days, and in about a month it was so far recovered as to be able to fly about the room. During this time it would hop about, and eat from my hand, jump from the table to my lap, or, if on the ground, settle on the skirt of my dress and sing. It commenced singing on the third day, apparently in joy and gratitude for the attention it received, and ultimately became completely domesticated.”

Besides being very generally dispersed over the British Islands to the outer Hebrides, Orkney, and Shetland, the Robin is abundant in all parts of Europe, from Sweden and Norway to the shores of the Mediterranean; it is also found in all the islands of that sea, the whole of North Africa, as far east as Smyrna and Erzroom, Madeira, the Azores, and Teneriffe—in which island I killed it in 1838, and the specimen I then obtained still graces my collection. In many parts of the continent it is a migrant, and, contrary to what obtains with us, is there treated as a vagrant; for there is scarcely a country across the water in which it is not shot down and eaten.

The materials of which the nest is composed vary according to the situation in which it is placed; but moss and hair always form a part. The eggs, which are four or five in number, are dull pinky white, blotched with pale reddish brown; they are about nine lines and a half long and seven and a half broad.

Some persons are of opinion that there is a great difference in the colouring of the male and female; such, however, is not the case. The young, at their first moult, which takes place about a month after they are able to fly, throw off the speckled plumage of immaturity, and assume the colouring common to both sexes.

A minute description of the Robin is quite unnecessary, since a glance at the accompanying Plate will surely be sufficient for the recognition of the male, the female, and the young, which are there represented of the natural size. The principal plant is the common Ivy, *Hedera Helix*, Linn.