CINCLUS MELANOGASTER, Temm.

Black-bellied Water-Ouzel.

Cinclus melanogaster, Temm. Man. d'Orn., tom. iii. p. 106, tom. iv. p. 609.

Naturalists have always been and doubtless ever will be divided in opinion as to the definition of a species: for instance, some incline to the belief that the Magpies of Europe, Asia, and America, to which the generic term of *Pica* is now restricted, have a common origin, but that circumstances unknown to us have caused differences in their size and colour which, having become permanent, are by others regarded as specific distinctions. As mentioned in one or other of my previous writings, I believe it will be desirable not to speculate upon how such differences have arisen, but to treat of them as they are found to exist. Now the case of the Water-Ouzels is precisely similar to that of the Magpies, the true Jays, and many other groups; that is to say, there are several species of each which are very similar in their markings, but which the scientific ornithologist has no difficulty in distinguishing, or in separating into species or races, whichever they may be considered: for my own part, I should prefer to retain each under a distinct specific appellation.

The Water-Ouzel, to which the term *melanogaster* has been assigned, is a native of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and other parts of Scandinavia, and, so far as I have myself seen, has always a black belly and a large extent of white on the breast; while the bird of the same form frequenting the mountain-streams of Switzerland, and probably those of the whole of the Alps and Apennines, has a light grey back, a less amount of white on the breast, and a chestnut-red belly, being in fact very like the species so generally dispersed over the mountainous districts of the British Islands; consequently in Southern Europe and in Britain we find one, if not two, Water-Ouzels differing from that inhabiting Scandinavia, the difference principally consisting in the colouring of the belly.

When we consider the mountainous character of the countries to which all the species of the genus resort both in the Old and in the New World, we cannot but be amazed at now and then meeting with solitary Dippers among the waters of the flat, fenny, and marshy county of Norfolk, a locality which must be ill adapted to the habits and economy of a bird of this peculiar form. How is it that they are found there? It is evident that they are not individuals which have strayed across the country from Cumberland, Wales, or Derbyshire; for they are all differently coloured from the birds there found: the chances are that they are wanderers from Scandinavia—restless, erratic individuals, whose instincts have deserted them, and, like many other European birds, they have wandered seawards, and ultimately landed on the coast of Norfolk, the most prominent, and consequently nearest point of the British Islands. Mr. Stevenson's notes on the Norfolk-killed birds will, I think, bear out this supposition; and I have little doubt that, the attention of collectors having been directed to the subject, some interesting information respecting these wanderers will be the result.

Some recent writers have advanced the opinion that this is the true Sturnus cinclus of Linnæus; and I should have supposed that this view was correct, since it is the species with which he must have been surrounded; but upon turning to the 'Fauna Suecica' (Retzius's edition) I find it stated "Abdomen in adulta ave ferrugineum," which is characteristic of our British bird. Could Linnæus have taken his description from an English example?

Mr. Stevenson says:—"Whether or not the Black-breasted Water-Ouzel (Cinclus melanogaster) be specifically distinct from the ordinary British form with a chestnut band across the abdomen, or merely a climatal variety, undoubtedly our Norfolk specimens belong to the former type. I have at different times examined six or seven examples, all killed in this county, which, with one exception to be hereafter mentioned, exhibited no trace of chestnut on the under parts, but were identical with a Lapland specimen in the Norwich Museum, collected in that country by the late Mr. Wolley. We may naturally infer, therefore, from this circumstance and the season at which our few Norfolk specimens invariably appear (between the months of November and February), that they are chance stragglers from the Scandinavian peninsula; and this opinion is also entertained by Mr. Gould. The Messrs. Paget refer to one example of this bird, in the collection of Mr. Youell, of Yarmouth, as having been killed at Burgh in November 1816; and Mr. Hunt in his 'List' mentions Costessy and Taverham as places where the Dipper had occurred to his knowledge. Mr. Stephen Miller and the Rev. Mr. Penrice, of Plumstead, had also each a specimen in their collections, both of which I have no doubt were obtained in this county. The specimen in the Norwich