## MERULA TORQUATA.

Ring-Ousel.

Turdus torquatus, Linn. Faun. Suec., p. 80.

Merula torquata, Boie, Isis, 1822, p. 552.

Sylvia torquata, Savi, Orn. Tosc., tom. i. p. 206.

Copsichus torquatus, Kaup, Natürl. Syst., p. 157.

Merula montana, collaris et alpestris, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., pp. 375, 376, 377, tab. 21. fig. 6.

In the British Islands the Ring-Ousel must be regarded as a migratory bird; for it comes and goes as regularly as the Fieldfare and the Redwing,—but, unlike those birds, is a summer and not a winter sojourner, its arrival taking place in April, and its departure in the month of September. Its spring migration is very different from its autumnal movement; for it arrives singly or in small parties, and generally goes direct to its breeding-grounds on the hills; while in autumn it is spread over the country, and we find both old and young in the lowlands, and sometimes in the gardens. They then gradually move southward, and before the cold weather sets in will all have departed to the western part of France, Portugal, and Spain, whence they again push onwards to the shores of the Mediterranean, and across that sea to their winter quarters in Morocco and other parts of North Africa.

Unlike the Blackbird, which locates itself in lowland woods, shrubberies, and gardens, the Ring-Ousel resorts to the wildest tracts of our mountains, and there, far from the haunts of man, it breeds, generally constructing its nest among the rocks of the wildest glens and the most rugged watercourses, but occasionally in juniper bushes or patches of furze on the mountain-side, high up on wild moors, tors, and peaks, where the drumming of the snipe is heard, the raven utters its sonorous croak, the Titlark and Wheatear are its companions, and the dashing Merlin its enemy. Generally speaking, wherever there are rocky mountains of above a thousand feet elevation, in any part of Britain, this spirited bird is to be found; so that the rugged parts of old Cornwall, the Dart- and Ex-moors of Devon, the greater part of Wales, Derbyshire, Cumberland, the Pentlands, the Grampians, and the bleak hills of Sutherland- and Ross-shires are among the places on the mainland frequented by it; while the islands to the north and westward—the Orkneys, Shetland, and the Hebrides—and all suitable situations in Ireland, are not less resorted to.

Mr. Stevenson, speaking of the Ring-Ousel as seen in Norfolk, remarks that it is a regular migrant, but has been known occasionally to nest in that country; "and although probably overlooked from its general resemblance to the common Blackbird, and the similarity in the eggs of the two species, it is not improbable that a few pairs may breed nearly every year in favourable districts; and I have reason to believe that such is the case at Holkham."

Mr. Ryland, of Horsey, informed Mr. Stevenson that he generally saw several every year in the early spring, and in May 1857 watched four, morning after morning, on the grass in front of his window; and as constantly did an old Missel-Thrush descend from an oak hard by, where she had a nest, and attack first one and then another, until she drove them away, showing that she would not permit of intruders, as these birds really were.

In disposition the Ring-Ousel is bold and spirited, perches with upright breast on the very summit of the rock, and springs from stone to stone with the greatest agility. At times, however, it is shy and recluse, but, when driven from the bush in which it has secreted itself, flies with surprising rapidity, uttering as it goes a loud defiant whistle, or, on again alighting on a stone or crag, its peculiar chattering notes, reminding us of the *Petrocossyphi* or Rock-Thrushes, to which, in my opinion, it is nearly allied.

It has always been an object with me while writing the present work to render as much general information as may be in my power respecting the range of the species over countries beyond our own. This in fact is essential; for every one, I should suppose, would like to know whither this bird, for example, goes when it leaves us, and whence it has come when it returns. The Ring-Ousel is by no means a cosmopolite; for it is not found in India, nor in Africa south of the equator, neither is it an inhabitant of America. In Europe, on the other hand, it is so generally dispersed that it may be said to frequent every country suited to its habits and economy. In the Alps and the Apennines, as a matter of course, it is plentiful, as it is in the Tyrol in the east, and the highlands of Norway and Finland in the north, while in the low country of Holland it is a scarce bird. Southward of the Mediterranean, we learn from Loche that it winters in the provinces of Algeria and Constantine. On the continent of Europe, as with us, it is a migrant—not that every one leaves a country or a district. To most rules there is an exception; and a Swallow or a Black-cap remaining with us does not constitute those birds permanent residents any the more. I have remarked that a considerable