

TURDUS PILARIS, *Linn.*

Fieldfare.

Turdus pilaris, Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 291.

Silvia pilaris, Savi.

Merula pilaris, Selby, Ill. Brit. Orn., vol. i. p. 160.

Arceuthornis pilaris, Kaup.

THE Fieldfare and Redwing are so intimately associated, that when the mind reverts to one, the thoughts are naturally led to the other. Both are migrants, which come to this country in autumn for the purpose of spending the winter; and both simultaneously depart again in the spring, to breed and pass the summer in Norway, Lapland, and Russia. Like the Jackdaw and the Rook, they frequently unite in large flocks; but this band of brotherhood is broken up at the period of reproduction; each then goes its own way, and selects its own locality,—the larger bird or Fieldfare nesting in communities, the smaller or Redwing more solitary.

The countries bordering the Arctic Circle are more quickly influenced by the retiring of the sun than those further south, hence in the early part of autumn or the months of September and October insect-life becomes more scarce; and, as no laws or berries are produced there, the great hordes of these birds are necessitated to proceed further south, some to the British Islands, others to France and Spain, and others to southern Russia and Persia: from north to south at one season, and *vice versâ* at the opposite period, are the directions in which these birds and most migratory animals move. There are those who ease their consciences by considering the destruction of a migrant fair sport; and there are persons who will sneak beneath the hedgerows the entire day for a chance shot at a Fieldfare, but who will allow the Thrush and the Blackbird to fly off unscathed from the ditch along which they are creeping.

On their arrival in the autumn, the Fieldfares spread themselves so generally over the whole of the British Islands, that there is no part of the country in which the bird may not be found, if the weather be open. Arable lands, pastures, extensive heaths, and commons are principally resorted to: there it hops over the surface of the ground, and searches for the insects, grubs, and other larvæ which constitute its food. If frost sets in, the berry-bearing trees of the hedgerow afford it a supply; if the weather becomes still more severe, and this kind of food scant, a southerly and westerly movement takes place, and an asylum is sought in the warm and moist counties of Devonshire and Cornwall; here it remains until the weather breaks, when it again returns to its former localities. In this way the bird spends the winter and awaits the return of the sun, some remaining until the end of April, and even till the beginning of May, before they wing their way across the northern seas to their summer home. But do they all go? Does not a remnant remain behind and breed in some part of Scotland? I think sufficient evidence has been adduced by various writers that such is the case; but I must caution my readers not to mistake for it the Missel-Thrush, which of late years has become very numerous in that country. I have no intention of casting a doubt upon the truthfulness of those who have asserted that the Fieldfare breeds in the British Islands; for some of their remarks are certainly worthy of consideration, and, I think it likely, may be founded in fact, and that now and then a pair, or a few pairs, may remain and breed in some suitable locality in the Highlands. On this head the late Mr. St. John says:—"30th of April: the Fieldfares are still here, but not in numbers as they were a few days ago, when large flocks passed by, on their way to the northward. A few pairs I am told breed in the large woods near the Spey; and in 1848 I was shown a nest and eggs brought from that district by a brother of Mr. Dunbar, who described it as having been placed near the ground." In some remarks communicated to the 'Field' by Mr. Alexander Fraser, of Barncluith, Hamilton, N. B., he says:—"I observe that several of your correspondents mention as rare the seeing of the Fieldfare in Scotland as late as May. About a fortnight ago I had pointed out to me a nest supposed to be a Missel-Thrush's. The bird was evidently sitting. Two days after, the nest had been harried, and the eggs taken away; however, I have the nest itself. It answers Hewitson's description exactly. To-day I have discovered another nest of the same bird. It has at present only one egg—a Fieldfare's undoubtedly. The gamekeeper here tells me he has frequently seen nests of the same bird; I also myself think I have observed it before. I believe it is generally supposed not to breed in this country; here are at least two instances to the contrary. Both nests were built in the first cleft of young trees, about 14 feet from the ground."

Mr. Hewitson, who, with the enthusiasm of a true lover of nature, was induced to proceed on a bird-nesting expedition to the coast of Norway in the summer of 1833, accompanied by his friends John Hancock and B. Johnson, when speaking of this bird, says:—"Intending that the Fieldfare should be our *avant-courier* to its native land, it was with peculiar interest that we watched its long lingering in our own for weeks