AMPELIS GARRULUS.

Waxen Chatterer.

Ampelis garrulus, Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 297.
Bombycilla Bohemica, Briss. Orn., tom. v. p. 333.
Garrulus Bohemicus, Ray, Syn., p. 85, A.
Bombyciphora poliocœlia, Meyer, Vög. Liev. und Esthl., p. 104.
Bombycivora garrula, Temm. Man. d'Orn., 2nd edit. p. 124.
Bombycilla garrula, Bonap. Am. Orn., vol. iii. pl. 16. fig. 2.
Parus bombycilla, Pall. Zoogr., tom. i. p. 548.

How lavishly has Nature bestowed beauty and ornament on the various forms which people the world, without restricting it to any particular class of animal life! for whether we look to the mane of the Lion, the spotting of the Leopard, the gay colours of the fishes of the tropical seas, the brilliant hues of the generally despised reptiles, or the showy markings of the swallow-tailed Butterfly, we find it is everywhere displayed. Such ornaments and beauty may possibly be given to please the opposite sex, for in most instances it is bestowed upon the male alone. That the lengthened plumes and the fine colours so often occurring among birds can have no influence on their well-being is evident, since in some instances these conspicuous features are merely seasonal, while in others they are borne throughout life. In their extreme youthful state, too, many birds are clothed in a dress of great beauty for the short period of three or four days only; and even the eggs of many species are ornamented in an extraordinary degree. How charming are all these beauties! How interesting are these variations! How constant are they in every species! so constant, indeed, that the Kestrel which flies over the pyramids at the present moment exhibits all the spots and markings of the Kestrel embalmed three thousand years ago. The subject of the present memoir—the Waxen Chatterer—one of the most singular and chastely plumaged birds of the British Islands, affords an illustration of the foregoing remarks. Behold its elegant crest, its silken plumage, the ornamentation of its wings; the primaries fringed with yellow, and the secondaries tipped with wax-like appendages of the brightest scarlet. Few, I think, will assert that these are given for any specific purpose in the bird's economy. In the *Ampelis garrulus*, these particular features are given to both sexes; but in the allied species they are bestowed upon the male alone. The form is strictly a northern one; and the number of species is limited to three, of which one is peculiar to America, another to Japan, while the *A. garrulus* appears to range over all the countries between the 40th and 70th degrees of latitude; for it is known to inhabit Norway, Sweden, Germany, Bohemia, Russia, the Steppes of Siberia, the Amoor, China, Japan, America, from the Rocky Mountains to Canada, and, lastly, England, Scotland, and Ireland. Truly welcome is it when it comes to our island, where its reception, I regret to say, is generally the reverse of friendly; for as certain as a small flock appears, they are hunted down and shot to a bird. The very sight of a Wax-wing drives the collector mad: he follows it from tree to tree, from hedgerow to hedgerow, from field to lawn, from the lawn to the garden, stumbling over everything in his path, until he has obtained the object of his pursuit.

As I have before stated, the presence of the Wax-wing in the British Islands is uncertain; and its coming entirely depends on the nature of the season in the countries further north, where it doubtless remains as long as a supply of its natural food is procurable and the degree of cold is not excessive; for on the approach of rigorous weather it flies before the cold blast, and seeks shelter and food in this and other countries lying in similar latitudes. Notices out of number of its occurrence in our islands have from time to time appeared in the various zoological and other periodicals, local lists, &c. In the works of Selby and Yarrell we find it stated that it has been seen in various places, from the Orkney and Shetland Islands to Sussex and Cornwall. I believe, however, that it is more frequently met with in the midland counties than at either of those extremes. In Ireland it occurs in about the same numbers as in England. If unmolested, it would doubtless remain with us until the following spring, when it would be instinctively prompted to return to its northern home. Until the year 1856, its breeding-place was unknown, its mode of nidification merely guessed at, and its eggs desiderata in every European cabinet. Thanks, however, to the Lapland researches of the late Mr. John Wolley, we are now in possession of full particulars respecting these points in the bird's history. Its breeding-ground having been made known, others followed in Mr. Wolley's footsteps, and even fresh nesting-places have since been discovered. Mr. H. E. Dresser, to whom I am indebted for the loan of the nest and young birds figured on the opposite Plate, also found it breeding on a small island near Uleäborg, in the Gulf of Bothnia. With the descriptions furnished by those gentlemen I shall close this portion of the history of this interesting bird.