

ance the name *lacunosum* seems to have originated. But characters which are not subject, so far as I know, to any observation, are afforded by the *appendices corollæ*, by their colour, by the form and length of the style, and by the surface of the seeds.

DR. GRISEBACH.

Berlin, March, 1837.

III.—*Contributions to the Natural History of Ireland*. By WILLIAM THOMPSON, Esq., Vice-President of the Belfast Natural History Society.

No. 5.—*On the Birds of the Order Insectores**.

[Continued from Magazine of Zoology and Botany, ii. p. 440.]

THE REDBREAST—*Sylvia Rubecula*, Lath.—Is very common in Ireland. Well known as are its habits, a few notes illustrative of them in the neighbourhood of Belfast may be selected: and first, with regard to its familiarity. In the very mild winter of 1831—32 a redbreast very frequently joined a friend and his lady residing in the country at breakfast, and without invitation, eat of the bread and butter on the table, and when not so employed, made itself quite at home by perching on the toasting-fork at the fire. In summer it built in one of the out-houses, and visited the kitchen daily; its song was in August, poured forth in the hall. In this house also a redbreast once built its nest in the fold of a bed-curtain in an occupied chamber: such a proximity being held undesirable, the room window was closed against the intruder, and in consequence the first egg was laid outside on the bare window-sill. This circumstance caused pity for the bird, and the egg was placed in the nest, where the usual number was duly deposited and incubated. One young bird only was produced, which was overfed to such a degree that it grew to a

* The order in which the species appear in Mr. Jenyns's 'Manual of the British Vertebrata' is followed in these papers. In the MS. of the first of the series on the *Raptores*, one, two, or three synonyms were given to each species, with the view that some one of them might be known to every reader. The editors however considered one scientific appellation sufficient in every instance; and being thus limited I adopt that used by Temminck as the most widely known, although I am partial to a much greater subdivision of genera than appears in his 'Manuel.'

most unnatural size, but did not long survive, falling a victim most probably to too good living. Butter is so great a dainty to these birds, that in a friend's house frequented during the winter by one or two of them, the servant was obliged to be very careful in keeping covered what was in her charge to save it from destruction: if unprotected it was certain to be discovered. I have notes of their visiting labourers at their breakfast hour and eating butter out of their hands, and entering a lantern to feast on the candle. But even further than this, I have seen the redbreast exhibit its partiality for scraps of fat, &c. Being present a few days ago (December 1837) when the golden eagle described at page 45 of vol. ii. of the Magazine of Zool. and Bot. was fed, to my surprise one of these birds took the eagle's place on the perch the moment he descended from it to the ground to eat the food given him, and when there it picked off some little fragments; and this done, quite unconcernedly alighted on the chain by which he was fastened. I at the same time learned that it thus regularly visited the eagle's abode at feeding-time, and as yet there has not been any severity of weather. A plant of the *Fuchsia tenella* in the "Falls" greenhouse was entirely deprived of its seed by these birds.

Except at the moulting period the song of the redbreast is heard with us throughout the year, and in the grey morning as well as the dusk of the autumnal and winter afternoon; by moonlight it was once heard by an ornithological friend at the last-named locality. I have more than once listened to the commencement of its song in the first week of June at a quarter before three o'clock. In fine autumnal mornings succeeding wet nights, the favourite time for the harmony of this and many other birds, I have seen and heard about a dozen of redbreasts singing at once, when perched at pretty regular distances, twenty-five to thirty yards apart. So many of them sending forth their notes at one time—without reference to plumage, which sufficiently marks the adult from the immature—satisfies me that the young birds of the year bear their part in the concert, and the fact of every individual in view trilling forth its notes, favours the idea that the female bird also is possessed of song.

That a single bird or pair of redbreasts have generally a particular beat or range I have had abundant evidence, (vide Dovaston in *Mag. Nat. Hist.* vol. vi. p. 3,) as also that they very frequently keep within it as spring advances, instead of retiring to the thickest woods to nestle as described by many authors. Within towns they have been known to me as frequenting a certain quarter throughout the year. For two seasons this occurred in our own office-houses at Belfast, and in both two broods were reared. In one instance the nest was placed on the top of a wall supporting the roof of the gateway, and in the other on the same part of the side-wall of a three-story building, their only approach to it being through small apertures, about two inches in diameter, that were cut in trap-doors on the first and second floors to admit the rope attached to a pulley. Perched on the neighbouring buildings these birds gave forth their song, and for about the latter half of the month of October 1831, when the days were very fine and bright, one regularly frequented the stable, and sang when perched upon the stalls without being in any degree disturbed by the general business of the place going forward, even within two or three feet of his station.

A pair of redbreasts that were assiduously watched during their nidification in the conservatory attached to the town-house of an acquaintance, were one morning found in great consternation, produced, as it turned out, by the nest having been taken possession of by a bat, which they eventually compelled to change his quarters.

Four particularly noted instances of the redbreast building within doors near Belfast in the summer of 1833 here follow. In all of them (and the country house already alluded to may be added) shrubberies and plantations are quite near to the chosen sites. The two first were communicated by my relative, (noticed in one of my former papers on birds,) and occurred at Wolfhill. He observes: "The nests of a robin that I examined in the carpenter's loft are placed on the corner of the wall which supports the roof; the foundation is large wood shavings, of which the sides of the nest are likewise formed, together with moss, beech leaves, wool, tufts of cow-hair, &c., but with horse-hair only are they lined. The mass of materials in which these two nests

are made is about a foot and a half in length, eight inches in breadth, and five inches in thickness. In wet days the male bird kept much within the loft and sang there. The carpenter tells me that one only flew in with the leaves and collected the shavings; this individual he knew from its wanting the tail: it made very free with his pot of grease, and picked from it while in his hand. On another occasion the nest was built in the joist-hole of a wall, in the process of completing which it was necessary to remove it, when it was placed in an adjoining aperture of the same kind. The parent bird after looking for some time about the spot where the nest had been, rejoined her young—of which one was killed by falling out of its domicile in the course of removal—in their new situation; and here she did not remain undisturbed, as in the breaking out of a door within a foot of the nest the mortar and stones fell perilously near her, but she nevertheless deserted not her young.” At Fort William, the seat of a relative, the following occurred. In a pantry, the window of which was kept open during the day, one of these birds constructed its nest early in the summer. The place selected was the corner of a moderately high shelf among bottles, which being four-sided gave the nest the singular appearance exteriorly of a perfect square. It was made of moss, and lined with a little black hair, and on the side that was exposed to view, and that only, were dead beech leaves. When any article near the nest was sought for, the bird, instead of flying out of the window as might be expected, alighted on the floor, and there patiently waited until the cause of disturbance was over, and then immediately returned to its nest again. Here five eggs were laid, which, after being incubated for the long period of about five weeks without any success, were forsaken. The room above this pantry was occupied as a bird-stuffing apartment; and after the redbreast had deserted the lower story, a bird of this species, and doubtless the same individual, visited it daily, and was as often expelled in the fear that the specimens might in consequence be injured. Finding that expulsion was of no avail, recourse was had to a novel and rather comical expedient. My friend had a short time before received a collection of stuffed Asiatic quadrupeds, and of these he selected the most fierce-looking Car-

nivora, and placed them at the open window, which they nearly filled up, hoping that their formidable aspect might deter the bird from future ingress ; but the redbreast was not to be so frightened "from its propriety," and made its *entrée* as usual. Its perseverance was at length rewarded by a free permission to have its own way, when, as if in defiance of the *ruse* that had been attempted to be practised upon it, the chosen place for the nest was the head of a shark, (the mouth being gagged may have prevented its being selected,) which was hanging on the wall, the tail of an "alligator stuff'd" serving to screen it from observation. During the operation of forming this nest the redbreast did not in the least regard the presence of my friend, but both worked away within a few feet of each other. On the 1st of June I saw it seated on the eggs, which were five in number : they were all productive, and the whole brood in due time escaped in safety.

That the noisy operations of the ship-builder will not prevent the selection of a place in his immediate vicinity for nidification, is shown by a circumstance which came under my own observation. On May 13, 1836, I saw a redbreast's nest containing young in a hole apparently where a knot had been in one of the timbers of the "Dunlop," then under repair in the dry-dock at Belfast. It was built inside the vessel about three yards from the top of the timber, (the deck was off,) and at the time of its construction, as at present, the deafening process of driving in the *tree-nails* was carried forward, and occasionally so close to the nest.

An observant friend discovering a redbreast's nest in which the bird was seated, remarked its apparent stupidity, and having lifted it off the eggs and laid it on his open hand, it sought not, and indeed seemed to want the power, to escape. He placed it in the nest again, and returning the next day found the young brood out. The appearance of the bird on the previous day it was now presumed had been caused by its extreme intentness on the last stage of incubation.

But in such an instance as the following, any notice of the well-known pugnacity of the redbreast would be supererogatory. On one occasion I saw two of these birds fighting most wickedly in the air, and then alighting to take breath, which,

when they had a little recovered, and were again within a foot of each other ready to recommence the charge, a duck that had witnessed the combat quickly waddled up, and in the most gentle and pacific manner shoved with its bill the one to the right further in that direction, and the one to the left further so, thus evidently separating them to prevent a renewal of the conflict.

In snares set for small birds during frost, I have remarked that redbreasts were generally the first victims. Their extreme tameness before a fall of snow wherever we meet with them unerringly shows their sensibility to the coming change, and has in several instances led me to prognosticate it, and always with certainty, when no other indication was perceptible.

BLACK REDTAIL, *Sylvia Tithys*, Scop.—The redstart noticed by me in the Zoological Proceedings for 1834 (p. 30.) as the *Phœnicura ruticilla*, on the authority of Robert Ball, Esq., has since been proved by that gentleman to be the rare British species *S. Tithys*. I am likewise informed that in the autumn of 1818 or 1819 he shot five individuals of this species at Youghal, county Cork, but of which, unfortunately, all that remains is one ill-preserved specimen. A redstart was subsequently taken in a corn-store at Youghal, and in June 1837 another was seen in a garden within the town; but whether these also were the *S. Tithys* cannot now be determined.

In the counties of Dublin and Armagh I have heard of the redstart's occurrence, but have been unable to learn anything satisfactory on the subject.

It appears somewhat strange that the common species *P. ruticilla* should not be a regular summer visitant to any part of Ireland, for in no country are their localities apparently better suited to it: of these I judge from the haunts in which it has occurred to me in Westmoreland and Derbyshire, and those in which I very frequently met either with it, or some of the closely allied *Phœnicuræ* (Swainson) in Switzerland.

GRASSHOPPER WARBLER, *Sylvia Locustella*, Lath.—Montagu states that he has found this bird in Ireland (Orn. Dict.), and Templeton remarks that it is "not very uncommon
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during spring and summer," (Mag. Nat. Hist., vol. i. p. 405, New Series,) which observation I know, from having access to his MS., applies to the neighbourhood of Belfast. Here there is not an Irish-killed specimen of the bird preserved, owing perhaps as much to the gun not being used during the time of its sojourn in this country as to the difficulty of procuring individuals; nor have I anywhere had the opportunity of examining a native specimen. By several ornithological friends as well as myself, a warbler has in the north occasionally been seen, and more frequently heard, whose note agrees with the peculiar one of this species. About Killaloe, county Clare, the Rev. Thomas Knox has partially seen and has heard a bird the note and habits of which correspond with those of the grasshopper warbler, but a specimen of it has not been obtained by him.

THE SEDGE WARBLER, *Sylvia Phragmitis*, Bechst.,—Is a regular summer visitant to Ireland. It is generally observed around Belfast within the first ten days of May, but in 1836 one was seen on the 16th of April. The 5th of September is the latest date on which I am aware of its being noticed, but further observation may possibly show that it remains until a later period, as it does in England. (Selby's Ill. Brit. Orn., vol. i. p. 202.) The migration of the sedge warbler extends to the extreme north-west of Ireland, where on July 1, 1832, I heard and saw one near Dunfanaghy; and Mr. Stewart, in his Catalogue of the Birds, &c. of Donegal, observes that it is common. Throughout the northern counties generally it has occurred to me in suitable localities; these are not confined to where "reeds and other tall aquatic plants" abound, or even grow, as is generally described, but it is found in the lower grounds about old ditches, on which the sloe or blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) and other shrubby plants afford it a safe asylum; also on the banks of mountain rivulets at as great an elevation as the spontaneous growth of the willow or any underwood forms sufficient shelter; and it likewise frequents the wooded borders of well-kept ponds, where none of the aquatic plants alluded to appear.

It is perhaps too common-place to be remarked here, that it is simply from natural inclination and not from shyness that

the sedge warbler inhabits the "tangled brake." When perched singing on a reed it has admitted my approach within about three paces without ceasing its song; and what might perhaps be termed its boldness, is evinced by any object flung into its haunt prompting it to sing, as if in defiance of the interruption, or, as a certain author would imagine, "to keep *its* courage up." The well-known and most amusing song of this species is sometimes heard from its arrival until the end of July.

A bird described to me by the Rev. T. Knox as frequenting the county of Westmeath and the vicinity of the river Shannon, is I have little doubt the sedge warbler.

BLACKCAP WARBLER, *Sylvia Atricapilla*, Lath.—Mr. Templeton remarks that the blackcap was seen at Cranmore, his residence, near Belfast, on the 17th of June 1818, and twice since that time. A male bird shot near Dublin in the first week of December 1833, was forwarded to my friend Robert Ball, Esq., before the vital heat had fled. On March 1, 1834, I saw a recent specimen of this bird, an adult male, which was brought to be set up at a bird-preserved in Belfast by the Bishop of Down, in whose garden, within a few miles of the town, it had been shot either on that or the preceding day. Mr. Robert Davis, jun., of Clonmel, county Tipperary, informs me that in his collection there is one which was killed in that neighbourhood on Dec. 27, 1834, and which was stated by the person who shot it to have been accompanied by five or six others. By Mr. W. S. Hall, bird-preserved, Dublin, a specimen was shown me which was killed at the Vale of Avoca, county Wicklow, on May 23, 1837, and a few more were seen at the same time.

The blackcap does not, so far as I can learn, appear annually in any part of Ireland. A drawing taken a few years ago from a bird so rare in one of the most southern counties as to be unknown to a scientific collector, was submitted for my opinion, and represented a female* of this species. It is sin-

* Judging from Temminck's description in the 1st part of his 'Manuel': in the 3rd part, since published, he adds, that the young males resemble the female, the red colour of the top of the head being only less decided.

gular, that of the occurrence of the blackcap on the few occasions here mentioned, it must in three instances be presumed to have wintered in Ireland, and further, that such should have been in the north, the centre (as to latitude), and the south. Being one of the latest summer birds appearing in England, it may I think be fairly concluded that the occurrence of an individual on the 1st of March is rather indicative of a winter residence than of an unprecedentedly early vernal migration.

The bird described in Rutton's Natural History of the County of Dublin, vol. i. p. 317, as the "Blackcap," is obviously not the *Sylvia atricapilla*.

GREATER PETTYCHAPS, *Sylvia hortensis*, Lath.—The following observations on this species are copied from the MS. of the late John Templeton, Esq.: "On the 21st of May 1820, I had the pleasure of seeing this bird, to whose haunt in my garden I was attracted by its pleasing melody. * * It was not very shy, coming near enough to be distinctly seen, but was extremely restless, flitting every moment from place to place, and only stationary on the branch while it gave out its song. * * The male continued to sing until the young were reared, when his song ceased for about a fortnight; then it was again renewed, as I suppose on the construction of a second nest."

THE WHITETHROAT, *Sylvia cinerea*, Lath.,—Is a regular summer visitant throughout Ireland. Like the sedge warbler it appears about Belfast early in May, and has been reported to me by Mr. James Garrett of Cromac, near this town, as observed on the 24th of April* 1836: by the same gentleman also one was seen on the 15th of September last, the latest date on which I am aware of its having been remarked here. This bird is well known in Ireland. Mr. Stewart observes that in Donegal it is "common," a term that may be generally applied to it in the north.

In communications with which I have been favoured, it is stated by the Rev. T. Knox to have been obtained by him at

* On the 21st of this month it was once heard near Carrickfergus. M'Skimmin's Carrickfergus, p. 354, 2nd ed.

Killaloe; by Mr. Robert Davis, jun., to be not uncommon about Clonmel; and by Mr. T. F. Neligan, to be a regular summer migrant to the county of Kerry.

Its song commences on arrival, and generally ceases early in the month of July. From its habits, and the grotesquely earnest appearance that the erected feathers on the crown of its head and the distended throat impart when singing, it is one of the most interesting of our warblers. When on one of its harmonious flights, the whitethroat, though generally so, is not always constant to returning to the same place again. I have seen it rise from a low bush, and singing in its upward and irregular flight, alight on a leafless tree at some little distance, and there continue to pour forth its notes without intermission, or as if it had been perched in one place all the time. Under the date of June 4, 1833, a note appears in my journal that two accurately judging friends had several times of late heard the whitethroat imitate the songs of other birds much after the manner of the sedge warbler.

Early in July, 1837, a nest was discovered at the "Falls," within about ten paces of a public highway, and double this distance from an occupied dwelling-house. It was elevated about a foot above the ground, in a sloe-bush, and concealed by the growing grass of a late meadow: at this late period it contained eggs. Again, on July 11, 1833, when walking at the side of the river Bann, near Coleraine, a whitethroat, perched upon a hedge, and with a caterpillar in its bill, denoting the vicinity of its nestlings, permitted my approach within about two paces, all the time keeping a great uproar, which was a mere repetition of the word *churr*. This species seems partial to placing its nest in thorny plants; thus in the latter instance it was at the base of a whitethorn hedge, in the former in a sloe. In brambles it most commonly occurs here, and occasionally in the wild rose: grasses generally serve to screen it from observation*.

* *Sylvia Curruca*, Lath. In a note added by the late Mr. Templeton to a copy of Dr. Patrick Brown's "Catalogue of the Birds of Ireland," published in Exshaw's Magazine for 1772, I find,—"*Motacilla Curruca*, White-bellied Nightingale, seen about Ballydangan in May 1773, Brown." In the Catalogue the *Mot. Sylvia*, or *Syl. cinerea*, appears. Several of my

WOOD WREN? *Sylvia sibilatrix*? Bechst.—Relying on the accuracy of a relative, who has bestowed much attention on birds and their nests, I should be disposed to give this species a place here with confidence but for one character, hereafter to be mentioned. On June 19, 1832, it is remarked of a nest he detected on the ground in a small meadow surrounded by a wooded glen, near Belfast, that it belonged to a bird most nearly approaching the willow wren, *S. Trochilus*, but larger, and with a whiter breast; and that the eggs, instead of being marked with numerous very minute, and a few large specks of a dark pink colour, like those of the *S. Trochilus*, were dotted all over, so much so as to give the egg, at a cursory view, a light brown appearance. Sketches of these eggs and of those of the willow wren, made at the time, are now before me, and present the difference here pointed out. He observes that it was a very pretty nest, formed of moss, and lined with feathers*. On the morning of the 19th of June it contained one egg, on the 21st three, and on the 24th five eggs; on July 7th the young were hatched, and on the 19th had left the nest: thus in six days the complement of eggs was laid, in thirteen they were incubated, and in eleven or twelve days the young were fledged. There was a second nest at the same place (Wolfhill) this season, containing similar eggs.

The *S. sibilatrix* is not recorded as Irish.

THE WILLOW WREN, *Sylvia Trochilus*, Lath.,—Is a regular summer visitant to Ireland, and is commonly dispersed in suitable localities throughout the country. The remark has been made by Montagu, that “it is frequently found with the wood wren, but does not extend so far to the west in England, as it is rarely met with in Cornwall.” But if there be thus a diminution of numbers to the west in England, the circumstance must, I presume, arise from some other cause than geographical position. In Ireland the wil-

correspondents residing in the more southern portion of the country are disposed to consider the *S. Curruca* one of the regular summer birds of passage.

* This is the only character against its being that of the *S. sibilatrix*, whose nest is stated by authors to differ from that of the *S. Trochilus* in not being lined with feathers.

low wren ranges equally to the counties jutting out to the extreme south-west and north-west of the island, being common both to Kerry and to Donegal*.

In the neighbourhood of Belfast this species generally appears about the middle of April, when its presence is at once proclaimed by its song. In the years 1833 and 1834 it arrived within the first week of this month, but in the backward spring of 1837 was later than ordinary. It is commonly seen until the middle of September. On the 24th of this month, and on the 10th of October 1832, I heard it sing; on the former occasion incessantly for about half an hour, or so long as I gave attention. From the period of its arrival until the moult commences, the song of the willow wren is constantly heard; and as soon as the moulting is over, is recommenced, often in a weaker tone, and continued during fine weather until the very time of its departure.

My friend at Cromac, who has had many nests of the willow wren, describes them all to have been composed of fine hay,—hence the name of “hay-bird” in some parts of England,—and lined with feathers. They were situated on the ground at the foot of trees, except in one instance, when the nest was placed in the open meadow, several yards distant from the hedge; there was usually a long approach to them through the brake. Towards the end of August I was once amused on perceiving several willow wrens rising into the air from some pea-rods in a garden, after the manner of the spotted flycatcher when on its aerial captures, and thus two of them were occasionally occupied at the same time. A few flycatchers (*Muscicapa grisola*) were also on the pea-rods, from which they now and then sallied after their winged prey, having thus apparently prompted the *S. Trochilus* to these flights.

In the north of Ireland this species frequents plantations, from those of the town-square to the most elevated on the mountains. Although from the circumstance of its general

* In Mr. Stewart's Catalogue it is set down as “common” in Donegal, and so have I met with it there. By Mr. T. F. Neligan, of Tralee, it is stated to be very common in Kerry.

occurrence in pleasure-grounds and gardens (these it frequents in the town of Belfast) the name of "willow wren" may be thought "unmeaning," (vide note to White's Selborne, p. 84, ed. 1837,) I cannot so consider it. This name was doubtless bestowed upon the bird originally on account of its partiality to willows. This I have particularly remarked, on which occasions the twigs and branches of the common osier, *Salix viminalis*, abounding with aphides, were its chief favourite. Never have I seen these birds so numerous anywhere,—and I include several continental countries, in addition to the British Islands,—as they were annually in a certain hedge row of these trees in the neighbourhood of Belfast. On some scattered trees of the *Salix Smithiana*, in the same locality they were for a similar reason almost equally plentiful.

A young willow wren that was caught at the "Falls" last summer soon after it had left the nest, became at once, from its familiarity, very attractive. When at liberty in a room, and called by the name of "*Sylvia*," it immediately flew to and alighted on a finger held out for the purpose. So partial was it to this unnatural perch, that, like a hooded hawk upon the "fist," it there remained stationary when carried out of doors to feed upon the aphides infesting some monthly roses near the house, and when so engaged it flew not to the plant, but rested by choice upon the finger. To the exceeding grief of its owners it soon died, in consequence of too frequent washing.

In my possession is a specimen of the *S. Trochilus*, which flew on board a ship in 1834, to the north-west of the Azores, in latitude 44° N. and longitude 34° W.; the date, unfortunately, was not communicated.

THE CHIFF-CHAFF, *Sylvia Hippolais*, Lath.,—Is a regular visitant to certain localities in the north of Ireland, and also, as I am informed by Robert Ball, Esq., to the vicinity of Dublin. In the first week of April its notes are generally heard about Belfast; but in the spring of 1837 they did not attract attention until some time after this period. In the middle of May I have been for the greater part of a day in Colin Glen, the great resort of the species in this neighbourhood, without

once hearing its notes, though during a similar time, a month before, they were almost constantly uttered, and when the days alluded to were equally fine. A certain progress of their broods may have caused this silence. The chief haunts of the chiff-chaff in the counties of Down and Antrim are wooded glens and extensive plantations, especially where there is cover from underwood, though it generally frequents the higher trees: hedge-rows too are occasionally visited.

As a difference of opinion exists about this bird, (vide note to White's Selborne, pp. 80 *et seq.*, ed. 1837) I had intended entering pretty fully into the subject; but turning to the description of the species in the 'Manual of the British Vertebrata,' p. 112, I find it to accord so well with my specimens,—which, from being shot in the month of April, when uttering their notes, may be considered adults,—as to render further observation unnecessary.

The terms *Syl. Hippolais*, Lath., and chiff-chaff have been correctly used as synonymous in the best British works. The original description in the 'Index Ornithologicus' (vol. ii. p. 507.) in a few words marks the species; Temminck however, in his valuable 'Manuel' of the Birds of Europe, (part i. p. 222.) has adopted Latham's name for a continental *Sylvia* very different from the one to which it was applied by this author.

GOLD-CRESTED REGULUS, *Sylvia Regulus*, Lath.—This small and beautiful bird is common, and resident in plantations throughout Ireland. In the north its song is occasionally commenced in the month of February, and has been heard at the end of September. In the nuptial season the male erects his crest so as to make his whole head appear a blaze. My friend at Cromac on one occasion, when attending to the process of nidification adopted by a chaffinch that built within view of his window, discovered that he was not the only spectator, a regulus at some little distance (and, as it afterwards proved, with sinister intent,) being recognised as a looker-on. When the chaffinch took flight from the nest, this bird, in the most cunning manner, stole round to it in an opposite direction and carried off part of the materials. This

was its constant practice, as, in at least a dozen instances it was so observed; but the chaffinch eventually discovering the regulus in the act, gave it a severe chase through the plantation, and its mal-practices were never afterwards known to be repeated. Of two nests of which I have notes, neither was domed; one was neatly fixed to the branch of a silver fir, whose foliage shaded its little opening of one inch diameter; and the other was placed in a laurustinus, the larger leaves of which afforded more efficient protection.

Soon after the young can provide for themselves, they and their parents flit about in company, and ring their little changes throughout every plantation. In the first autumns that they thus came under my observation, I, from hearing them simultaneously everywhere around Belfast, was rather disposed to believe in a migration from the north, (vide Selby's Ill. Brit. Orn., vol. i. p. 230, 2nd ed.,) but having subsequently heard them in different years so early as the month of August, I now consider that it is our indigenous birds alone that by constantly uttering their little cries thus attract attention.

The gold-crested regulus seems not to me the hardy bird that authors generally imagine. In the north of Ireland it has been frequently found dead in severe weather, and even after slight frosts*. Early in the winter of 1835 a friend brought me three of these birds, that had been captured by a cat in a small garden, in a very populous part of Belfast, and on the preceding day four or five had in the same place shared a similar fate.

Of three stomachs of the regulus which have come under my inspection in the months of December and January, two were entirely filled with insects, among which some Coleoptera were apparent; and the third contained, in addition to fragments of stone, only seeds, of which there were two or three kinds.

[To be continued.]

* In a note to White's Selborne (p. 180, ed. 1837), Mr. Herbert gives instances of the fatal effect of cold on caged individuals.



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