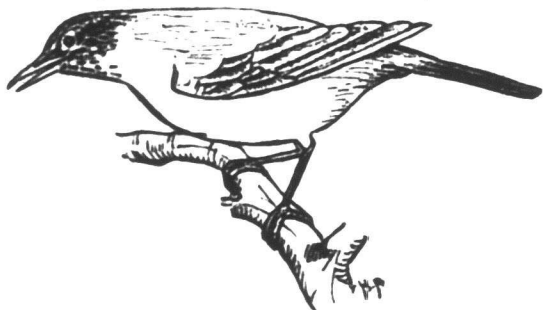


## FERNDALE SCHOOL.

NO. XXI. THE AMERICAN ROBIN.

*Merula Migratoria*, Linn. (761 A. O. U.)—Natural length, about ten in.

The Robin, the forerunner of the Spring.

LONGFELLOW. — *Lady Wentworth*, line 113.

T. Here we have a mounted specimen of our Canadian robin. They had nearly all gone south to spend their winter, and in this month of April we shall see them returning. Look carefully at its bill, its feet, its wing feathers, and its color.

Next let us hear what Tennyson says of the robin, and tell me what you think of it:

In the Spring a fuller crimson comes upon the robin's breast.  
CHORUS OF S. Our robin has no crimson on its breast.

T. Here is a verse from Wordsworth:  
"Art thou the bird whom man loves best,  
The pious bird with the scarlet breast—  
Our little English robin;  
The bird that comes about our doors  
When Autumn winds are sobbing."

CHORUS. Our robin's breast is not scarlet.

S. Why does Wordsworth call the English robin "the pious bird"?

T. Delie W. Norton, in a poem to the Robin Red-breast, says:

"On fair Britannia's isle, bright bird,  
A legend strange is told of thee——"

S. What is the legend?

T. Hoskyns-Abrahall, in "English Lyrics," gives it briefly, thus:

"Bearing His cross, while Christ passed forth, forlorn,  
His God-like forehead by the mock crown torn,  
A little bird took from that crown one thorn.  
To soothe the dear Redeemer's throbbing head  
That bird did what she could; His blood, 'tis said,  
Down dropping, dyed her tender bosom red.  
Since then no wanton boy disturbs her nest;  
Weasel nor wild-cat will her young molest;  
All sacred deem the bird of ruddy breast."

S. Is the story true?

T. Oh, you should know that much. It is a pretty, poetic picture, suggested by the blood-red breast of the little bird.

S. But our robin's breast is not blood-red.

ANOTHER S. Nor is it a very little bird. Ten inches long is a pretty fair size for a bird.

T. You are right. Our robin is altogether different from the robin of the songs and stories of England. The color of the breast of our robin is——

S. Chestnut, or reddish orange.

T. Correct. And it was called the robin by the first settlers, because it had a reddish breast and frequents the neighborhood of man, and migrates to the south in winter, returning in spring, something like the robin in their home country. It belongs to the thrush family of the song perchers, however, and its scientific name means "the migratory thrush."

S. But it is different from the English robin?

T. Very. The English robin belongs to the warbler family of the song perchers, and is something of the size and shape of our warblers, which are so abundant in May. Its breast is of a much brighter and purer red than that of our robin, also.

S. Are there many different kinds of birds of the thrush family in the province?

T. Five or six, perhaps. Wilson's thrush, Olive-backed thrush, and the bluebird, belong to the family.

S. How can we know a thrush from other birds?

T. Count the number of quill feathers on the last great joint of the wing—the primaries, as they are called.

S. There are ten; but the first is very short.

T. Correct. Examine the tarsus—the bare part of the leg.

S. It is covered with one continuous plate, like a boot, instead of several small plates or scales.

T. Yes. That is what is called a "booted tarsus." Which is longer, the tarsus or middle toe?

S. They are very nearly the same in length; at least, the tarsus is not much longer.

T. How is the bill?

S. Not stout like the Grosbeak's; rather slender, with the slightest curve, and a small notch near the tip of the upper.

T. Very good. Have you ever noticed what they feed upon?

S. Berries, worms, caterpillars and other insects.

T. They are useful, therefore, you see, and we should encourage their multiplication.

S. When feeding, or hopping on the ground, it repeats quite friskily, *pwee-sht, pwee-sht, pemp-pemp*.

T. What is its nest made of?

S. Of fine twigs, covered inside with mud, then lined with very fine grass fibres. They are often saddled on the branches of trees.

T. And you have seen their eggs?

S. Yes. Generally about five, of a beautiful sea-green, a little longer than an inch the longest way.