

## WINTER BIRDS OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND.

(Francis Bain, in the Auk, July 1885.)

PRINCE Edward Island, situated in the southern basin of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, possesses in some respects a climate peculiarly its own. Sheltered from the chilling breath of the Labrador Current by the primary ridges of Nova Scotia and Cape Breton, it enjoys a summer season with a more elevated temperature, a purer atmosphere, a clearer sky, and more abounding sunshine on its rich, verdure-clad swells, than are to be found on the immediate Atlantic seaboard.

In winter, on the contrary, the shallow waters of the Gulf are soon covered with ice, sometimes extending unbroken as far as the Magdalens, and the temperature of the season is uniformly severe. Snow lies deep on the ground, and the rivers and bays for four months are firmly locked in ice. The atmosphere, however, is pure and bracing, and free from the damp chilling mists of the ocean seaboard.

These conditions have an influence on our winter avifauna. Water birds, which frequent bays and mouths of rivers are completely driven away. Only a few deep-sea fowl stay to glean a hardy living where the blue waves break among the parting flocs. The depth of snow is unfavorable to members of the Finch tribe which, like the Tree Sparrow, seek their living from seeds on the ground. But the splendid deciduous forests which flourish on the fertile New Red Sandstone soil, afford food to some of the tribe during the inclement season, which are not known to winter in the neighboring Provinces.

The Purple Finch frequently winters here. He does not frequent the abodes of men, but the lonely forest, where the doomed summits of the great yellow birches, *Betula excelsa*, are thick-laden with strobiles, is his home. The stay-at homes never see him. But on a keen, bright morning, when the gilded twigs are surging aloft in the frigid blue, from their loftiest tops rings out the glad, sweet carol to startle and charm the adventurous woodman.

Strange that the occurrence of a roving song bird in a district should be connected with the distribution of the ancient geological formations. But it is so. The soils of the New Red Sandstone formation sustain a class of