

hundred miles from the coast of Ireland, and, after flying round the vessel two or three times, settled on the rigging. I tried in vain to catch it, and it flew to sea again in half an hour, winging its way I know not whither. On this subject I find the following passage in the 'Field' of November the 10th, 1860 :— "In October 1857, I was travelling up the Mediterranean; and between Gibraltar and Malta, Land-Rails frequently came on board, flying south, particularly near the Algerian and Tunisian coasts, and I think one or two after we left Malta; so that if the Land-Rail does not migrate from England, it is not from want of the capability of doing so, and its migration in the south of Europe renders it probable that it does the same in the north. (B. L. C.)"

So many instances have been recorded of this bird assuming the semblance of death as a means of escape from impending danger, that there seems every reason to believe it really does resort to this artifice when occasion requires. My good old friend Edward Jesse, Esq., mentions, in his 'Gleanings in Natural History,' that "A gentleman had a Corn-Crake brought to him by his dog, to all appearance quite dead. As it lay on the ground, he turned it over with his foot, and felt convinced that it was dead. Standing by, however, in silence, he suddenly saw it open an eye; he then took it up, its head fell, its legs hung, and it appeared again quite dead. He then put it in his pocket, and before long felt it all alive, and struggling to escape. He then took it out; it was as lifeless as before. Having laid it again upon the ground, and retired to some distance, the bird in about five minutes warily raised its head, looked round, and decamped at full speed." A similar instance of its feigning death was communicated to the Rev. F. O. Morris, by W. R. Shepherd, Esq., of the Dana, Shrewsbury. "Whilst out with my gun at Ludlow, in going over a grass-field, my dog flushed a Corn-Crake, which flew steadily for a short distance and then dropped among the grass. Desirous of watching its movements, I hurried towards the spot where it had alighted, when I saw it stealing through the grass with the stealthiness and rapidity of a mouse, ever and anon raising its head to see the extent of the danger. Motioning the dog to stay behind, I crept cautiously to the spot; and as I drew near it, was surprised to see no attempt at escape. Having reached the place, I carefully examined the ground for some distance round, but could find nothing. I was just on the point of giving up the search, thinking that the bird had stolen off without my notice, when my attention was attracted by what appeared to me to be a clod of earth lying on the ground among the grass. On stooping down, I was surprised to find the object of my search apparently lifeless. I took it up: the head and legs dropped; to all appearance the bird was quite dead; but, being well acquainted with the habits of birds, I immediately detected the imposition; so, placing the bird upon the ground, I retired to a short distance, under cover of the trunk of a large tree. I had not remained there long, before I saw the cunning bird gently move; then, suddenly starting to its legs, it ran a short distance, took wing, and soon disappeared over an adjoining hedge. This is a striking instance of the deep cunning and sagacity which characterizes the habits of some birds." Several similar instances of these attempts at deception have appeared in the 'Zoologist,' in which it is stated that the bird, when taken in the hand, will appear perfectly dead, but if thrown into the air will fly away as well as ever.

The Land-Rail seldom employs its powers of flight, and, when it does, flies very slowly, with its legs hanging down, and speedily drops again into the first covert which seems likely to afford it shelter. Its food consists of worms, slugs, snails, various insects, some few vegetable matters, and seeds.

The nest, which is a very slight structure of dried plants, is generally placed in a hollow among corn, clover, or herbage of any kind. The eggs are of an elongated-oval form, from seven to ten in number. "They seldom vary," says Mr. Hewitson, "except in the size and frequency of the spots; some have the ground-colour of a warm red tint, with deep red brown and purple blotches, while others are white, slightly tinted with blue, and fancifully streaked and spotted all over."

The sexes, which are alike in colour, may be thus described :—

The feathers of the upper surface are light yellowish brown, with an oblong spot of brownish black in the centre; a broad band over and behind the eye; throat and breast ash-grey; face and ear-coverts yellowish brown; flanks barred with light red and buff; wings light brown; bill and legs fleshy white; irides light hazel.

The female is somewhat smaller than the male, has the grey on the sides of the head less pure, and the usual colour of the wing mixed with darker brown.

The young are at first clothed with a long hair-like black down, which soon gives place to the plumage of the adult.

The Plate represents the two sexes of the natural size, and a brood of young birds about a fortnight old and beginning to assume the plumage of the adult. The plant is the Bladder Catchfly or Campion (*Silene inflata*).