

banks on the Antrim side of Belfast Bay, rising high into the air, and passing through evolutions similar to those of the Dunlin. The first time they swept past, though at some distance, they actually startled me by their silvery flash. It was within two hours of high water; and the atmosphere was in a most singular state. There was frost, and had been for a few days previously; the sea-banks over which the tide flows, and which have usually a cold, wet, muddy aspect, now appeared dry, as if baked, and of a rich brown and dark green colour. When the large body of Knots alighted a great number of Dunlins took their stand at one extremity of the flock. They were nearly half a mile from the road on which I was; and as every individual of the many hundreds was distinctly seen, of a silvery whiteness, running about feeding on what appeared a rich green carpet of *Zostera marina*, the singularity of the scene may readily be imagined. The Gulls, too, were conspicuous for two miles, though appearing gradually smaller as they dotted the more distant beach. The light was of such a nature that, while each Knot and Dunlin looked silvery white, every Gull appeared of the purest snowy hue." While this page was going through the press, Mr. Harting kindly favoured me with the following notes:—"The Knot is found throughout Europe as a migratory species in spring and autumn; but a good many remain to winter on the southern coast. It passes down the west coast of Africa through Damaraland (where the late Mr. Andersson obtained specimens) to the Cape; it is not found in Egypt; nor on the east coast of Africa. It visits the Atlantic shores of America; but in Asia it is rare. Two specimens only are known to have been procured in India—one in winter plumage, obtained in the Calcutta bazaar, and one assuming the summer plumage, killed in southern India; the latter is now in the Calcutta Museum. It has occurred accidentally in Australia, specimens having been obtained by Strange in Moreton Bay; it also visits New Zealand.

"It is remarkable that the colour of the bill, legs, and feet in this species varies according to season; in summer they are nearly black, the soles of the feet greenish clay-colour. In winter the bill and tarsi are greenish grey, and the soles of the feet yellowish clay-colour.

"I think the Knot is one of the tamest of our shore-birds, and will allow a very near approach before taking wing, especially in autumn, when the flocks are composed for the most part of young birds. It is very easily decoyed, too, by an imitation of its note, even when the gunner is not concealed. When out in Pagham Harbour after Grey Plovers and Curlews, I have frequently called Knots right over the punt; and lying down in the punt in a deep gully waiting for the tide, I have called a single Knot over the mud from a considerable distance. It ran the whole way, calling at intervals in reply to me, and at length came so close that I might have knocked it down with an oar. I did, indeed, try to touch it with the muzzle of my gun, when it rose and flew away, the man who was with me in the punt exclaiming, 'If you'd only kept on calling, Sir, I really believe he'd have walked into the boat.' I mention this to show how tame and confiding this bird is."

There is scarcely any one of the Sandpipers that has more pleasing associations connected with it than the Knot. The seasonal changes it assumes are both curious and interesting. Its winter garb is totally different from its rich summer dress, while the young, during the first autumn, have all the light-grey feathers of the back crescented with white or greyish white. As a bird for the table, although not equal to the Snipe, it is by no means despicable; and many thousands are annually sent to our markets for consumption as food. The extreme tameness of its disposition deprives any true sportsman of the desire to destroy it; and it is principally those who live by their gun, the men who traverse the broads in their flat-bottomed boats, and whose nasal organs are accustomed to the odour of the mud they almost breathe, that supply our markets by the tithe they take of the birds during their flight. "The first flights," says Mr. Stevenson, "are described by Mr. Dowell as by no means difficult of approach; 'but as the season advances and more arrive, they assemble in larger flocks, and are then more wary, and, except in dirty weather, are not to be approached by the aid of a gunning-punt. Those which arrive in August and September usually leave again in October. Overton, the Blakeney gunner, once shot two hundred and thirty Knots, twenty-five Grey Plovers, and eighteen Redshanks. Now, as the weight of the Knot is from four and a half to six ounces, and that of the Plovers and Redshanks even more, in a utilitarian point of view this shot was an important one.

The Plate represents the bird in summer and autumn plumage, and the young of the year, all of the natural size.