

be in like manner, and so on. Page after page has been written respecting the Ruff; all, however, conveys but a feeble idea of the interest which attaches to this singular bird.

"In its polygamous nature," says Mr. Selby, "this species differs from the rest of its congeners, such peculiarities producing the difference of habits that so remarkably distinguish it during the season of reproduction. Shortly after the arrival of the males in this country, which takes place during the month of April, and as soon as the feathers of the throat and the auricular tufts become almost fully developed, they begin to *hill*, as it is termed,—that is, to assemble in companies on some dry hillock or rising spot of ground amidst the marshes, each individual selecting a particular stand or *walk* at a small distance from his neighbour, any attempt to encroach upon which is instantly resented, and the possession of it most obstinately defended. Here each bird keeps moving in his respective circle, awaiting the approach of any one of the other sex, whose appearance immediately throws the whole assemblage into excitement, and acts as a signal for a general fight, her favours being the prize of victory. Each morning soon after daybreak, when the males return to their hill from the surrounding marshes, over which they disperse and feed during the night, the same kind of warfare takes place; and the theatre of these battles and amours soon becomes bare of grass, from the constant traversing of the combatants. This scene continues during the month of May and great part of June, until their mutual fervour begins to abate, indicated in the male bird by the shedding of the ruff and auricular plumes and the commencement of a general moult. The papillæ or fleshy tubercles that cover the face and the region of the eyes during the height of the season disappear; and in a short time they become clothed in a plumage so unlike that of the early summer as to be with difficulty recognized. With this difference of plumage a change is also wrought in their disposition; for they no longer exhibit the extreme pugnacity that distinguished them during the time of *hilling*. In fighting, the actions of the Ruff are not unlike those of the Common Cock: the head is lowered and held in a horizontal direction; and the feathers of the neck which form the shield are distended outwards, so as to cover and protect the tender parts of the body; the auricular feathers are erected, and the tail partly expanded. In this attitude the combatants stand opposed to each other, attempting to lay hold with their bills; and if this is effected, by a leap the wings are then brought into offensive action. As might be expected from the nature of their weapons, their contests are not often attended with fatal consequences. The females, generally called Reeves, possess no elongated feathers; and their plumage of summer varies but little from that of autumn and winter. They live in the marshes, and resort to the hills of the males at stated periods. The place selected for nidification is commonly of the most swampy nature, abounding in tufts of tall grass and other marsh-plants, and upon these the nest is formed, being only a slight depression lined with coarse grass and herbage. The eggs, four in number, are in colour and markings very like those of the Common Snipe, but rather larger. In the wild state, the food of the Ruff consists of worms, aquatic insects, and their larvæ; but in confinement they soon eat bread and milk, boiled wheat, and other farinaceous diet with avidity, upon which they soon become very fat."

Macgillivray states that on the east coast of Scotland Ruffs usually appear about the middle of September, and depart in about a fortnight. The bird is not known to breed in any part of Scotland or its islands; and it is therefore more than probable that the small flocks which are not unfrequently met with on the shores of the Frith of Forth, the east coast of Aberdeenshire, &c. have winged their way from Scandinavia, on some parts of which the bird is more common during the summer. According to Thompson, the Ruff "visits Ireland on its autumnal migration southward not unfrequently, but very rarely appears on its vernal movement northward."

In Iceland it is so rare that only a single instance has been recorded of its occurrence there; and that was as far back as 1820.

Loche states that it visits Algeria during its migrations; and we may infer that it spreads itself in all suitable situations in Africa.

Dr. Jerdon says that "the Ruff and Reeve are found in large numbers in India during the cold season, sometimes assembling in vast flocks. They are frequently found in grass-land and damp meadows at some distance from water, at other times on the edges of tanks. They feed greedily on rice, and are most excellent eating."

Mr. Swinhoe states that it visits the interior of China in winter, from Kamtschatka and Siberia, where it is common.

Like Mr. Selby, I must refer my readers, for a full and interesting account of the Ruff, the modes of taking them, &c., to the Supplement to Montagu's 'Ornithological Dictionary,' art. "Ruff," and also to the Rev. Richard Lubbock's 'Observations on the Fauna of Norfolk.'

The front figures represent a Ruff and a Reeve, of the natural size.