

retiring occasionally to the flats to rest and bathe, "being," adds Mr. Stevenson, "particularly fond of washing and splashing the water over their plumage with their wings."

"This is the only one of the Scolopacidæ," says Thompson, "which can be characterized in general terms as a bird of double passage, only visiting us merely on migration to and from its breeding-haunts. In the month of April or May it appears in large flocks along the line of the eastern coast, on that of Wexford, Dublin, Louth, Down, Antrim, &c. As the Whimbrel is not found to the westward within the latitude of Ireland, it is interesting to know that these migratory bodies move as regularly along the western as the eastern coast. Thus they are very common in April and May near Tralee, in Kerry, appear in large flocks about Roundstone, on the Galway coast, in May, and remain during that month where they are unknown at other times. They likewise take an inland course of flight, appearing, among other places, at the marshes below Killaloe, on the Shannon, every spring, and in the high moory ground about Lough Conn, in Mayo. Their popular name everywhere has the word *May* connected with it, as May-bird, May-fowl, &c., in consequence of their appearance in that month. On their arrival in spring they are often very tame, and may be openly approached within gun-shot; but persecution soon makes them wild. They generally remain from four to six weeks, then depart, and reappear again very soon after the breeding-season, generally about the middle of July, their numbers gradually increasing from the time they are first seen. During August they are most numerous in the Bay of Belfast, from which they are chiefly gone by the end of September. In spring, Whimbrels generally keep by themselves; but in autumn they exhibit a very sociable disposition, and are frequently to be found in company with Curlews and Godwits. They fly much about during the autumnal nights, be they dark or moonlight, but prefer the latter. They may always be distinguished by their cry. They fly from the sea inland as well as the opposite direction, and take both courses during every turn of the tide; hence we may consider them to be night-feeding birds."

"In the beginning of May," says Macgillivray, "a few individuals of this species make their appearance here and there on the sandy pastures bordering the west coast of the long range of the Outer Hebrides, from one end to the other. Their numbers daily increase, until, in about a week, they are in many places very numerous. Their food consists of *Bulimus acutus* and *Helix ericetorum*, which are very abundant there. They walk, for the most part, sedately, but sometimes with alacrity, having their neck bent forward, and their regards fixed on the ground. If alarmed, they stand, elevate their heads, emit a shrill tremulous cry, and perhaps fly off, or presently resume their search. If surprised, they are clamorous in their flight, but usually alight at no great distance. When on the wing they display the white part of the back conspicuously, and have a beautiful appearance."

"The Whimbrel," remarks Mr. Hewitson, "breeds in wild, desolate districts, far distant from human habitation, on open moors and uncultivated wastes, choosing in preference those which are wet and marshy and composed of moss and that black peaty soil which is, in such places, a substitute for coal."

"The nest is nothing more than a slight depression in the surface of the ground. We might except that the eggs, like those of all the allied species, would be four in number; but none of the nests I have myself examined contained more than three; as these were all fresh, the number was probably incomplete."

The late Mr. Wolley informed Mr. Hewitson that "in the Faroe Islands the Whimbrel is very abundant, and is always flying round just out of shot; in the north of Sweden and Finland it is to be seen in most of the open marshes, and is very noisy, especially when sitting at the top of a tree or stake (for it also frequents places where there is a good deal of wood). Yet I have never happened to be present at the finding of more than two nests; they were little more than depressions in the ground, and contained each three eggs only." From this additional information we must come to the conclusion that the Whimbrel lays only three. The eggs are pear-shaped, very like those of the Curlew, but smaller, and are of a dark olive-brown, blotched with darker brown.

I am indebted to Mr. J. Edmund Harting for a fine example of this bird, killed by him on the 11th of May 1870, in Pagham Harbour, in Sussex, to which, he states, the bird is "a regular visitant in May and August," as he believes is the case along the whole of our south coasts. "In May, only the old birds are seen; in August, both old and young make their appearance. The young admit of a nearer approach than the old ones, and are good eating."

The birds in the accompanying Plate are about the size of life.