

Mr. St. John's remarks, Mr. Smither, of Churt in Surrey, informs me that "when the Peewit begins to nest, the male scratches out ten or fifteen holes in different places; the female selects one, in which, after making some slight alteration, she lays her eggs. When first laid, they are carelessly placed; but when she begins to sit, she arranges them with the small ends to the centre; you can therefore always tell whether their incubation has commenced. As the sitting continues, one or both birds frequently bring pieces of dead heather, decayed horse-grass, sedge, &c. to the nest; and by the time the birds are hatched, these materials have accumulated to a good handful; whether this is done to impart warmth, or for any other purpose is unknown to me. The eggs realizing a good price, the birds are always much watched; and our good nesters will go to a hillock or rising ground, throw up their hat or a handkerchief, and watch where the birds rise from: so experienced are they, that they can tell to a certainty by their motions whether they have nests, and, if so, whether the eggs have been sat upon or not."

The young are soon removed by their parents from the dry barren heath to the softer and oozy parts of the country, where they may more readily obtain an abundant supply of the insects and larvæ upon which they subsist.

Speaking of its peculiar flight, Mr. Selby remarks that its movements are attended by a loud hissing noise of the wings, arising from their rapid motion, aided by their peculiar form, which offers a broken resistance to the air. During these aerial exercises, which are supported for a long time without intermission, the bird utters a variety of notes, very different in tone and expression from the monotonous cry of alarm that has conferred on it the name of Peewit. In autumn and winter great masses of these birds may be seen in the air, passing from one part of their feeding-ground to the other, when their broad wings render them so conspicuously different from the Golden Plover and the other members of its family that it can never be mistaken for either of them. Its flesh, continues this gentleman, is juicy and sweet in winter, scarcely yielding in this respect to that of the Golden Plover; but it becomes in the summer season dry and unpalatable.

However extraordinary are the actions of the bird in the air, the light and graceful manner in which it trips over the ground is not less so. Its movements are, indeed, most remarkable; and the suddenness with which they are occasionally suspended can only be likened to the action of a piece of mechanism, which, having run its course, abruptly stops without a shake or a quiver: the starts and apparent listenings which succeed are highly curious, but these are more or less common to all the Plovers. The Peewit is said to give motion to the ground by running round the casts of the Earth-worm, which it seizes the moment it emerges. For an opportunity of observing all these and other interesting actions, let my readers place some tame Peewits in a walled garden, where they will not only render good service by destroying worms, slugs, insects, and their larvæ, but will solace their ears by occasionally uttering the plaintive cry which has procured them their trivial name.

The sexes offer but little difference either in size or colour; but the male is the most highly coloured of the two, and has the longest occipital plume. In summer the throat of both is jet black, while at the opposite season it is white, bounded below by a dark crescentic pectoral band.

The fully fledged young birds are very beautiful; for, independently of the iridescent hues of green and purple, marks and crescentic edgings of yellowish brown occupy many parts of the feathers.

It will be seen, on reference to the accompanying Plate (which represents an old female and her four young), that these white-collared nestlings have the same general character of marking that is found in other members of the family, particularly the Dotterels. The eggs, it is scarcely necessary to mention, are four in number, rather pointed in form, of an olive hue, blotched and marked all over with deep umber-brown; they are nearly two inches in length by one inch and four lines in breadth.

I agree with Mr. Selby in thinking that the birds mentioned by Leland, under the name of "Egrets," as having been served up at the famous feast of Archbishop Nevill to the number of a thousand, must have been Lapwings, since the beautiful White Egret (*Egretta garzetta*) was probably never more than a transient visitor to this island, and to have obtained a thousand for a breakfast in any country would have been an impossibility.