

is not only fish, frogs, and insects that the Heron takes ; for a water-rat or the chick of a Moorhen or Rail will not come across him twice. Mr. Henry Shaw, of Shrewsbury, tells me that he once took a fully fledged Moorhen from the gullet of a Heron ; and, from the enormous dilatability of that part of the bird's structure, I can well believe it.

As spring advances, the beautiful occipital plumes common to both sexes, but finest in the male, are assumed ; and the entire plumage becomes finer than in winter. The young of the first autumn differ greatly from the adults, being clothed in a dingy grey dress, without any lengthened feathers on the breast or occipital plumes. It is at this age that it is best for the table : for a history of the bird would be incomplete without an allusion to its being an "*oiseau de luxe*" of our continental neighbours ; and to the excellence of its flesh, when the bird is young and in good condition, I can myself bear testimony.

Macgillivray has given so graphic a description of the places of resort and the habits of the Heron, as seen in the North, that I must be excused for reproducing it here.

"The cold blasts of the north sweep along the ruffled surface of the lake, over whose deep waters frown the rugged crags of rusty gneiss, having their crevices sprinkled with tufts of withered herbage, and their summits crowned with stunted birches and alders. The desolate hills around are partially covered with snow ; the pastures are drenched with the rains ; the brown torrents seam the heathy slopes ; and the little birds have long ceased to enliven those deserted thickets with their gentle songs. Margining the waters extends a long muddy beach, over which are scattered blocks of stone, partially clothed with dusky and olivaceous weeds. Here and there a Gull floats buoyantly in the shallows ; some Oyster-catchers repose on a gravel-bank, their bills buried among their plumage ; and there, on that low shelf, is perched a solitary Heron, like a monument of listless indolence—a bird petrified in its slumber. At another time, when the tide has retired, you may find it wandering with slow and careful tread among the little pools and by the sides of the rocks in search of fishes and crabs ; but, unless you are bent on watching it, you will find more amusement in observing the lively Tringas and Turnstones, ever in rapid motion ; for the Heron is, or seems to be, a dull and lazy bird ; and even if you draw near, he rises in so listless a manner that you think it must be a hard task for him to unfold his large wings and heavily beat the air until he has fairly raised himself ; but now he floats away lightly, though with slow flappings, screams his harsh cry, and flies to some distant place, where he may remain unmolested.

"About the middle of March numerous individuals assemble in certain places, and soon after resort to their breeding-stations, which are not in the rushy marshes or on unfrequented islands, but on tall trees, sometimes in large woods, but more frequently in places near some old family mansion. The nests, which are very large, nearly flat, and constructed of sticks, with a lining of grass, wool, and similar materials, are sometimes crowded together in great numbers, generally on the highest trees, but occasionally on those which would seem not well selected for security, or even on an isolated tree of no great height. The eggs are light bluish green, broadly elliptical, or having both ends nearly equally rounded, $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches in length, by $1\frac{9}{12}$ inch in breadth. Incubation continues about twenty days ; and the young, at first sparsely covered with tufts of down, remain about six weeks in the nest. Mr. Yarrell states that sometimes Herons build on precipitous rocks near the coast, as at South Stack Lighthouse, near Holyhead, and at Great Orme's Head ; they are said also to build occasionally on the ground, among reeds and rushes."

Mr. Yarrell has given a lengthened list of the heronries still existing in England, but has omitted to mention that belonging to Sir George Musgrave, Bart., at Eden Hall, in Cumberland, which his son, R. C. Musgrave, Esq., informs me is one of the largest, as it comprises nearly two hundred Herons.

The front bird in the accompanying Plate is about half the size of life ; the young are represented in the state in which they appear when two or three days old, and are figured from examples kindly sent to me by Mr. W. A. Tyssen Amhurst, of Didlington Park, Norfolk.