is ever plentiful in the north of Europe, and that it breeds over the greater part of Norway and Sweden. In the former country I observed it breeding on the Dovrefjeld, while in Lapland the late Mr. Wolley obtained numerous richly coloured specimens, nests, and eggs, and, in some notes communicated to Mr. Hewitson, says, "The Mealy Redpole is seen in most seasons throughout the winter in Lapland, though the greater number go southwards. Even in the breeding-time it seems to be a gregarious bird; for a considerable number of nests are to be found in a small space of the birch-forest; and the region of birch trees seems to be its proper habitat. In 1854, I principally met with it in a small district, at a great elevation, towards the Norwegian frontier. In 1855, when all soft-billed birds were so scarce after the preceding severe winter in the south, the Mealy Redpoles were abundant everywhere, from the very strands of the Arctic Ocean, over the mountains, where the nests were often close to the ground, as indeed they sometimes are in other situations, to the extensive forests of Munioniska."

"The nest of the Mealy Redpole," says Mr. Wheelwright in his 'Spring and Summer in Lapland,' "is one of the most beautiful I ever saw—perfectly cup-shaped, built of fine sticks, then a layer of fine grass, and next an interior lining of the white down of the willow and white feathers of the Willow-Grouse."

The eggs are said to be five or six in number, and, as figured by Mr. Hewitson, are of a very pale blue or bluish white, in some cases sparingly, and in others more profusely, speckled with pale rufous round the thicker end.

Every observer of nature must have noticed that a red colouring largely pervades the nuptial and summer dress of the *Loxiidæ*. These bright colourings offer a striking contrast to the green foliage of the trees among which they respectively breed, give light as it were to the sprays of the pine, and life to the snow-covered branches of the spruce, their rosy breasts showing like living flowers among the birches and stunted willows during the inclement season of early spring.

Mr. Newton informs me that he considers only three species of this form to have been clearly defined. In this case the present bird must be subject to a greater variation in the size and form of its bill than any other small bird that has come under my notice. In some specimens the bill is as large, long, and pointed as that of a Goldfinch; in others it is short and triangular (the normal form of the genus); while I possess two examples, killed by myself on the Dovrefjeld, in which the bills differ from both slightly in form and altogether in colour, being nearly black. Mr. Stevenson and many other observers have noticed these differences; but no one, I believe, except Brehm, has been bold enough to characterize them as distinct species. They are indeed sadly puzzling to the ornithologist; but it is possible, if not probale, that they are dependent mainly on season. In the Brambling and Chaffinch the bill entirely changes its colour with the time of year; and it may well be, though from a different cause, that the same is the case with its form. Excluding from consideration birds that have been kept in cages, it will be found on examination that Redpoles having the longest bills are those which have been obtained towards the end of summer. This fact leads one to suspect that the peculiarity may be owing to the birds' having at that season lived almost exclusively on soft food (insects, buds, and the like), which would occasion no wearing away of the mandibles as is the case at other times of the year, when hard seeds form their principal if not their only diet. Again, in specimens obtained in winter, especially in high northern latitudes, the bill is so thickly clothed with feathers at its base that its apparent length is very greatly diminished, though if these be taken into account it will be found not so very much differing, either in size or shape, from what it is easily seen to be in summer. Future observations, no doubt, will set this point at rest.

The Mealy Redpole is subject to precisely the same changes of plumage as the Lesser Redpole: in the summer the rosy tints of its breast are most beautiful, and the further you proceed north the finer and brighter do they appear to be. In winter the male has the lores and throat brownish black; feathers of the head dusky, with a patch of deep red on the crown; back of the neck and upper part of the back pale yellowish brown, lower part of the back and rump greyish white; wings and tail dark brown, margined with brownish white; wing-coverts the same, the whitish tips forming two bands across the wing when closed; breast and fore part of the flanks suffused with rose-red; all the feathers of the upper surface and flanks with a small streak of brown down the centre; abdomen white; bill dull yellowish; irides, legs, and feet brown.

The female at this season is very like the male, but is paler in her general hue, and has no trace of the rose-red on the breast and flanks.

In summer the upper surface of the males becomes of a more uniform and darker brown, from the absence of much of the yellow bordering of the feathers; the head becomes of a deep blood-red; the breast, throat, and upper part of the flanks of a very rich rose-red, a trace of which colour appears on the rump and upper tail-coverts; and the flanks are conspicuously striated with blackish brown.

Specimens from North America agree exactly with our bird; but in that country there is certainly another species also, the true *Ægiothus canescens*, a much larger species.

The Plate represents two adult males and a female, life-size, and a branch of the alder (*Alnus glutinosa*).