

remember with what intense admiration I was filled in gazing upon the nest and lovely blue eggs of the common Hedge-Sparrow, and the pride I had in consigning them, when blown and thus bereft of half their beauty, to that string which was to hold so many of my subsequent findings. Coequally with the spread of natural history generally, has advanced the interest felt in the collecting of eggs—so much so that even amongst school-boys they now find their way into carefully appointed cabinets, in place of being used only as the plaything of an hour. The study of Oology at the present day may fairly claim an important place amongst the sciences; and, to speak more specially on the subject, I could name several men, whose studies have taken this direction, who follow their taste with such ardour that neither distance nor expense suffice to deter them. One of the most enthusiastic of these was the late Mr. John Wolley, who immured himself in the heart of Lapland for two or three winters for the sole purpose of being sufficiently early on the breeding-grounds to procure such rare eggs as those of the Gyrfalcon, Pine-Grosbeak, Waxen Chatterer, and Smew. To enhance still further the interest attaching to the study of oology, I have only to refer to the beautiful form, colour, and markings of most eggs, and to the difference in the number that are laid by various species. The Common Guillemot and the Razorbill lay but one, and that very large in comparison with the bird; on the other hand the Grouse will lay nearly a dozen; the Swift lays invariably two, and the Swallow four, while some of our Tits deposit from twelve to fourteen. Those eggs which are white are frequently placed in dark situations; but this is by no means a constant rule, since in the case of the Wood-Pigeon and Turtle Dove the eggs are not only fully exposed to light, but, owing to the slight structure of the nest, may be frequently desecrated through it. Their allies the Stock-Dove and Rock-Pigeon, however, lay theirs in the dark, as does also the Wryneck, all three having white eggs. On the other hand the Nuthatch, Creeper, and many of the Tits, producing speckled eggs, deposit them in holes of trees and other places inaccessible to the light of day.

From the egg to the chick is a natural sequence; and here commences a stage in the life of birds which has been regarded by myself with more than ordinary interest. If any one feature in my illustrations to the 'Birds of Great Britain' has special claims to originality, it is the representation of the young or infantine state of many of the species; and this, I trust, will be duly appreciated by those who possess the work. In the imagination of most people young birds are blind, callow, helpless creatures, depending in every way on the fostering care of their parents, and instinctively opening their gaping bills to receive the food assiduously brought to them. Such a helpless condition as this undoubtedly prevails amongst the young of nearly all, if not all, the *Insessorial* birds; but compare these with those of other forms, and what vast differences are seen! The tiny offspring of the Grebe, emerging from its bursting shell in all the vigour and activity of a fully organized being, is immediately capable of clambering, should danger approach, upon its mother's back, or of seeking security and concealment by diving under a floating leaf. Who is not familiar with the Duckling, which, from birth, equals, if it does not surpass, its parents in the quickness of its movements, and in the skill with which it darts over the surface of the water in pursuit of flies or other insects? As a