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and when they breed, to make themselves acquainted with the colour and markings of their eggs, the downy state of their young, and the changes of plumage they undergo until they attain that of the adult. Still it is to be regretted that their existence is not further prolonged.

Each season of the year possesses its peculiar attractions; but spring has especial claims upon our notice. The sun, awakened from its wintry lethargy, ushers in this delightful season with its genial warmth; and all nature greets with joy the presage of coming summer, and its many pleasing and interesting associations. The smaller birds are now prompted to exercise their vocal powers, filling the woods and hedge-rows with their joyous harmony; and preparations for pairing forecast the breeding-season. The Grouse tribe resort to their "lek-ställes"\*, the Ruffs to their hillocks; the Rooks return to their ancestral elms, and the Daws to the nooks and crannies of the castellated tower.

It is at this particular season that birds assume their gayest colours, and oftentimes appear in accessory plumes. The Peacock now spreads his magnificent train to the greatest advantage; the Ruffs display their curious neck-plumes, the Grebes their tippets, and the Egret its flowing back-feathers. In short, every species is now arrayed in its newest and most showy dress. Pairing having been accomplished, each species sets about the serious responsibilities implied in the propagation of its kind. Some, during this season, delight to nest in company, as seen in our own familiar Rook, which will occupy in immense numbers the lofty trees of many a noble avenue, returning, year after year, for centuries, to the same spot. Such places, again, as Ailsa Craig, Handa, and Flamborough Head attract myriads of cliff-haunting species, which evince a similar tendency to reproduce in colonies. Few more wonderful sights can be seen during the month of June than the precipitous face of one of these places, say Handa. Viewed from the sea, there may be descried tier upon tier of Guillemots and Razorbills, &c., almost jostling one another, from the manner in which they are closely packed. Each species constitutes a separate community, and strictly confines itself to its own ledges. The Cormorants and Gulls have also their selected situations. Far above all, in their curious rabbit-like burrows, in the sandy earth constituting the summit, congregate those oddest of all birds, the Puffins. The din and noise of such an assemblage is indescribable, and, when a gun is fired, almost unendurable; while the circling, swooping flight of the countless myriads thus disturbed communicates the sensation of complete bewilderment. Usually among these great gatherings will breed a pair of some raptorial bird, such as the Peregrine, or more rarely the White-tailed Eagle, while in some of the more southern cliffs the Chough nestles, and adds its cackling cry to the universal hubbub. The Common Heron, again, is a bird nesting in communities, choosing, as a rule, large pine-woods,—notable examples being the

<sup>\*</sup> Lek and lek-ställe are Norwegian terms, applied to localities "where affairs matrimonial are carried on." We find them frequently used by Mr. Lloyd in his 'Game-birds and Wild Fowl of Sweden and Norway,' when alluding to the courting assemblies of the Capercaillie, Blackcock, Snipe, &c.