"The nest of the Twite is placed amid the tops of the tallest heaths, and is composed of dry grasses and heather, and lined with wool, the fibres of roots, and the finer parts of heath; and the four or five eggs it contains are of a pale bluish green, spotted with pale orange-brown. The bird itself leaves the mountains in autumn, and assembles in flocks, which associate and travel with the Common Linnet, and are taken in their company by the London bird-catchers, who can always tell when there are any Twites in the flock by their peculiar note, expressive of that word." These are the words of Mr. Selby, one of our best observers, with respect to this interesting little bird, which is very generally dispersed over the lowlands of the British Islands in winter and the mountain-tops in summer; there, amidst the pure air and flowering ling, it pours forth its mirthful little song, and brings forth its young. In the Peak district of Derbyshire, in the Cheviots of Northumberland, in the Grampians of Scotland the Twite may always be found; and northward of these localities, even to the Orkneys and the Outer Hebrides, it is the most abundant of the summer visitors, and may be seen breeding at the proper season. In the northern parts of Europe, from Scandinavia to Prussia, it is as plentiful as with us; but it becomes sensibly more scarce as we proceed southwards.

The Twite has but few fine colours to recommend it to our notice: unlike the Linnet and its allies, in which red is the prevailing tint, a little deep blood- or purplish red on the rump of the male, and the male only, is the only variation from the uniformity of its brown colouring; I must mention, however, that in the breeding-season the bill, which is usually of a mealy white, becomes of a wax-yellow. As a bird for the cage, it is less in request than the Linnet.

Macgillivray states that "it is plentiful in the Hebrides, and in winter frequents the corn-yards in large flocks, clinging to the stacks of oats and picking out the seeds. Its flight is rapid and undulating, and it wheels over the fields previous to alighting, uttering a soft twitter at intervals. When disturbed, it betakes itself to tall trees or to a distant field; but is not shy, and may be easily approached when feeding. In spring, it forsakes its winter haunts, and disperses over the hilly tracts, where it forms its nest on the ground, among short heath or on the grassy slopes of craggy spots. The nest is a nest structure of fine dry grasses, fragments of heath, and a little moss, lined with roots, wool, and hair. In habits it almost precisely resembles the Common Linnet, with which in winter it sometimes associates. Towards the commencement of that season, the individuals unite into flocks, sometimes of vast extent, and search for food chiefly in the stubble-fields, where, besides the seeds of chickweed, field-mustard, polygons, and other plants, they pick up those of the cultivated grasses. Although both this and the Common Linnet might seem too small to feed upon these latter seeds, yet in winter I have generally found the greater part of the contents of their stomach to consist of them."

Sir William Jardine informed Mr. Yarrell that the Twite is abundant in the North Highlands, where it takes the place, in summer, of the Common Linnet in the Lowlands. A pair shot within a few hundred yards of Jardine Hall in Dumfriesshire, whether they had been driven by a winter storm, were feeding on the heads of the black knapweed (Centaurea nigra).

The presence of the Twite in the Orkneys has been noticed by the Rev. Mr. Low, by Mr. J. D. Salmon, and by the late Mr. Dunn. Mr. Low states that it remains there all the year, building in the heath, but seldom or never in bushes; Mr. Salmon, that the Mountain was the only species of Linnet seen by his party; two nests came under their observation; one was placed upon the ground, among the young corn, the other amid some whins (Ulex): they were both alike, their outside composed of small roots and dried grass, and their insides lined with a small quantity of hair and a few feathers; and each contained six eggs, similar
in appearance, but smaller than those of the Common Linnet; and Mr. Dunn, that the "Heather-Lintee," as
it is there called, is, so far as he was aware, the only Linnet that breeds there. He adds that it is very
generally dispersed, and that he had repeatedly taken its nest from shaded situations among long heath. In
winter it appears in large flocks, frequently in company with Sparrows and Snow-Buntings, and then infests
the corn-yards.

Mr. Thompson informs us that in the heath-clad mountains of the more northern parts of Ireland the
Twite breeds annually. "In the north of Ireland it is distinguished from the other Linnets by the name of
'Heather-grey." These birds may be seen every winter in large flocks about Clough, in the county of
Antrim, where they chiefly frequent the stubble-fields in the neighbourhood of the mountains. They are
said to be common about Armagh in winter. I have had specimens from the county of Fermanagh; they
have been obtained in Kerry, and have been shot in the middle of February, in company with the Grey
Linnet, on an island in Wexford harbour, where they seemed partial to the vicinity of high-water mark, and
had taken up their quarters among the grassy banks. In the north they frequently resort to the sea-side in
winter, and associate with the Grey Linnet. The nests, which have been frequently found on the top of the
Knockagh Mountain, near Carrickfergus, were generally placed in the heath, but in some instances were
built near to the ground, in dwarfed whins growing among the heath." Mr. Thompson mentions several
other localities, and adds that "it is common and breeds in the counties of Cork and Tipperary."

In autumn and spring vast flocks often frequent the fields of cole-seed in the fens of Cambridgeshire and
the Isle of Ely.

In winter especially the Twite closely resembles the Common Linnet in plumage, but may be readily
distinguished by its yellowish-red throat, devoid of dark streaks, and by the yellow colouring of the bill.

The Plate represents the two sexes, of the natural size, on the flowering ling (Calluna vulgaris, Salisb.).

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