

or blackish spots; the young run off as soon as they break the shell, are then quite black, and run about among the grass like mice. The old ones he has very rarely observed at that time, but the young often. Almost every old settler along these meadows, with whom I have conversed, has occasionally seen young Rail in mowing time; and all agree in describing them as covered with blackish down. There can, therefore, be no reasonable doubt as to the residence of many of these birds both here and to the northward during the summer. That there can be as little doubt relative to their winter retreat, will appear more particularly towards the sequel of the present account. During their residence here, in summer, their manners exactly correspond with those of the Water Crake of Britain already quoted; so that, though actually a different species, their particular habits, common places of resort, and eagerness for concealment, are as nearly the same as the nature of the climates will admit.

Early in August, when the reeds along the shores of the Delaware have attained their full growth, the Rail resort to them in great numbers, to feed on the seeds of this plant, of which they, as well as the Rice-birds, and several others, are immoderately fond. These reeds, which appear to be the *Zizania panicula effusa* of Linnæus, and the *Zizania clavulosa* of Willdenow, grow up from the soft muddy shores of the tide water, which are alternately dry, and covered with four or five feet of water. They rise with an erect, tapering stem to the height of eight or ten feet, being nearly as thick below as a man's wrist, and cover tracts along the river, of many acres. The cattle feed on their long green leaves with avidity, and wade in after them, as far as they dare safely venture. They grow up so close together that, except at or near high water, a boat can with difficulty make its way through among them. The seeds are produced at the top of the plant, the blossoms or male parts occupying the lower branches of the pannicle, and the seeds the higher. These seeds are nearly as long as a common-sized pin, somewhat more slender, white, sweet to the taste, and very nutritive, as appears by their effects on the various birds that, at this season, feed on them.

When the reeds are in this state, and even while in blossom, the Rail are found to have taken possession of them in great numbers. These are generally numerous in proportion to the full and promising crop of the former. As you walk along the embankment of the river, at this season, you hear them squeaking in every direction, like young puppies; if a stone be thrown among the reeds, there is a general outcry, and a reiterated *kuk kuk kuk*, something like that of a Guinea-fowl. Any sudden noise, or the discharge of a gun, produces the same effect. In the meantime, none are to be seen, unless it be at or near high-water; for when the tide is low, they universally secrete themselves among the