

DIOMEDEA EXULANS, *Linn.*

Wandering Albatros.

- Diomedea exulans*, Linn. Syst. Nat., vol. i. p. 214.—Lath. Ind. Orn., vol. ii. p. 789.—Steph. Cont. of Shaw's Gen. Zool., vol. xiii. p. 259. pl. 30.—Vieill. Gal. des Ois., pl. 295.—Ib. Ency. Méth. Orn., Part III. p. 27.
Plautus albatrus, Klein, Aves, p. 148. no. 13.
Albatrus, Briss. Orn., tom. vi. p. 126.—Buff. Pl. Enl., 237.—Ib. Hist. Nat. des Ois., tom. ix. p. 339.—Cuv. Règne Anim., tom. i. p. 517.
Man-of-War Bird, Albin, vol. iii. p. 34. pl. 81. head.
Wandering Albatros, Edw. Glean., pl. 88.—Penn. Arct. Zool., vol. ii. p. 423.—Lath. Gen. Syn., vol. v. p. 304.—Ib. Gen. Hist., vol. x. p. 48.

It is a very prevalent idea that a lengthened voyage at sea must be attended with much monotony and *ennui*; such however is not the case, as from experience I can testify that the mind may be so far occupied in observing the hundreds of novelties which are constantly presenting themselves to its notice, that a voyage, however extensive, is neither tedious nor uninteresting, and I shall always look back with feelings of pleasure to that in the course of which I made the circuit of the globe. It was then that I first had an opportunity of observing in a state of nature the noble bird I am now about to attempt a slight history of. The *Diomedea exulans* is by far the largest and most powerful species of its tribe, and from its great strength and ferocious disposition, is held in terror by every other bird with which it is surrounded. It is even said that it will fearlessly attack and tear out the eyes of a drowning man, a feat, from what I have observed of it, I can readily imagine it would attempt. It is most abundant between the 30th and 60th degrees of south latitude, and appears to be equally numerous in all parts of the ocean bounded by those degrees, and I feel assured that it is confined to no one part, but is constantly engaged in making a circuit of the globe in that particular zone allotted by nature for its habitation. The open sea is in fact its natural home, and this it never leaves except for the purpose of breeding, when it usually resorts to rocky islands the most difficult of access. To mention particular times and places where I observed this bird would be superfluous, as it was almost daily seen while sailing within the prescribed latitudes; it will not, however, be out of place to mention, that I first hailed its presence during my passage to Australia on the 24th of July 1838, in lat. 30° 38' south, long. 20° 43' west, and from that day until my arrival at Van Diemen's Land it was constantly around the ship, but was more abundant off the Cape of Good Hope and the island of St. Paul's than elsewhere.

The powers of flight of the Wandering Albatros are much greater than those of any other bird that has come under my observation. Although during calm or moderate weather it sometimes rests on the surface of the water, it is almost constantly on the wing, and is equally at ease while passing over the glassy surface during the stillest calm, or sweeping with arrow-like swiftness before the most furious gale; and the way in which it just tops the raging billows and sweeps between the gulfy waves has a hundred times called forth my wonder and admiration. Although a vessel running before the wind frequently sails more than 200 miles in the twenty-four hours, and that for days together, still the Albatros has not the slightest difficulty in keeping up with the ship, but also performs circles of many miles in extent, returning again to hunt up the wake of the vessel for any substances thrown overboard.

"It is pleasing," says Mr. Bennett in his 'Wanderings,' "to observe this superb bird sailing in the air in graceful and elegant movements, seemingly excited by some invisible power, for there is scarcely any movement of the wings seen after the first and frequent impulses are given, when the creature elevates itself in the air; rising and falling as if some concealed power guided its various motions, without any muscular exertion of its own, and then descending sweeps the air close to the stern of the ship with an independence of manner as if it were 'monarch of all it survey'd.' It is from the very little muscular exertion used by these birds that they are capable of sustaining such long flights without repose. . . . When seizing an object floating on the water they gradually descend with expanded or upraised wings, or sometimes alight and float like a duck on the water, while devouring their food; then, elevating themselves, they skim the surface with expanded wings, giving frequent impulses as they run along for some distance, until they again soar in mid-air and recommence their erratic flights. It is interesting to view them during boisterous weather, flying with, and even against, the wind, seeming 'the gayest of the gay' in the midst of howling winds and foaming waves. . . . I remarked that the Albatros would lower himself even to the water's edge, and elevate himself again without any apparent impulse; nor could I observe any percussion of the wings when the flight was directed against the wind, but then, of course, its progress was tardy. Many, however, have differed with me in considering that the birds never fly 'dead against the wind,' but in that manner which sailors term 'close to the wind,' and thus make progress, aided by, when seemingly flying against, the wind. This bird is evidently aided by its long wings as well as tail in directing its flight; it is never seen to soar to any great height, and is often observed to change its course by turning the wings and body in a lateral direction, and oftentimes when raising itself to bend the last joint of the wings downwards."

Like the other species of the genus, it is nocturnal as well as diurnal, and no bird with which I am acquainted takes so little repose: it appears to be perpetually on the wing, scanning the surface of the ocean for mollusks and medusæ, and the other marine animals that constitute its food. So frequently does the boldness of this species cost it its life, that hundreds are annually killed without, however, its num-