

waited for, when their whereabouts will at once be revealed. Perhaps the most curious feature connected with the history of the bird is the singularity of some of the situations selected by it for the purpose of reproduction—incubation being sometimes performed under a large stone where the bird may be easily seen, at others in holes in the rocks and in the burrows of rabbits and rats. According to the Rev. F. O. Morris they also make runs for themselves, where the soil is soft, to the distance of three or four feet: this is confirmed by J. Ambrose, who says (Nov. Scot. Inst. Nat. Sci., 1864, p. 34) it “digs breeding-holes in the ground, using its bill as a pickaxe and throwing behind it the loose earth with its feet;” and the following remarkable statement was communicated to me by Mr. C. Monfort:—“On the 28th of June, being on a small island, opposite Kirkwall, called Thieves’ Holm, which is about half a mile in circumference, and on which a few sheep are kept, I found in the turf a hole of about two inches diameter, which descended for perhaps a yard in an oblique direction, and then proceeded horizontally for three or four yards, not direct but diagonally; at the extremity, occupying about twelve or fifteen inches of its length, were placed a series of eighteen or twenty limpet-shells close to each other, and at the end the bird was sitting. Several other excavations of the same kind, with more or less shells in each, which had been formed the preceding year, but were not yet occupied, were also found; and I was told that on Yell Island numbers of the Petrels nested in the same manner.”

“In an excursion through the Shetland Islands,” says Mr. Hewitson, “in search of rarities for the ‘British Oology,’ I had the very great satisfaction of seeing and taking many of these most interesting birds alive. They breed in great numbers on many of the islands, principally on Foula, the north of Unst, and upon Papa and Oxna, two small islands in the Bay of Scalloway.” At the last of these it had not arrived on the 31st of May; and on the 16th of June, although it had revisited the breeding-places, it had not yet begun laying. On again visiting Oxna, on the 30th of June, he found they were just beginning to lay their eggs. “In Foula they breed in holes in the cliff, at a great height above the sea; but here under stones which form the beach, at the depth of three or four feet or more, according to that of the stones, going down to the earth beneath them, on which to lay their eggs. In walking over the surface I could hear them under my feet very distinctly, singing in a sort of warbling chatter, a good deal like Swallows when fluttering above our chimney-tops, but somewhat harsher; by listening attentively I was guided to their retreat, and after throwing out stones as large as I could lift, on all sides of me, seldom failed in finding two or three of them seated on their nests, either under the lowest stone, if partly raised above the surface, or between two of them. The nests, although of much the same materials as the ground on which they were placed, seemed to have been made with care; they were composed of small bits of stalks of plants and bits of hard dry earth. Like the rest of the genus, the Stormy Petrel lays invariably one egg only. During the day-time the Petrels remain within their holes; they are then seldom heard, but towards night become extremely garrulous, and when most other birds are gone to rest issue forth, spreading themselves far over the sea. The males may possibly be abroad during the day, whilst the females are sitting; but I am inclined to think they rarely come out before night, as the fishermen never see them at any other time.”

Macgillivray describes the egg as “nearly elliptical, the small end being a little narrower or less rounded than the other, with a rather thick shell, somewhat roughish, without gloss, white, with a belt of minute dark reddish dots at the large end. The average size is an inch and a twelfth and a half in length, ten twelfths in breadth. I have not seen any without some dots at the large end, although there is seldom a distinct belt there.

“From the nature of the food of this species (which is said to consist of oily and fatty substances, small crustacea and mollusca, fishes, and animal matter of any kind) it is very fat and oily, and its stomach and gullet are found to contain oily matter, which, when seized, it vomits or ejects from its nostrils like other members of the family. By the inhabitants of the Ferroe and other islands it frequents, it is sometimes converted into a lamp, by drawing a wick of cotton or some other material through its body, which continues to burn until the oil becomes exhausted.”

The young, for some considerable time after they have been hatched, are entirely clothed in a greyish-black down, through which the more perfectly formed bill protrudes as from a little round ball; and it is not until the primaries are completed, and the bird able to take wing, that it leaves its hole and proceeds to sea. In the great Albatros, the maturation of the wings is said to occupy several months; and, from their great length, I can easily imagine that such may be the case, and that some weeks must elapse before those of the Storm-Petrel are fit for use.

The sexes are alike in plumage. The Plate represents a male, a female, and a young bird of a few days old, all of the natural size.