

of four or five hundred feet to view the most thickly populated breeding-places ; and having hurled down a few stones to frighten the birds, they all took wing, leaving a most extraordinary collection behind them. The Guillemot's egg, which is large and of a handsome shape, is very variable in colour, and of all shades from pure white to a deep green, many being spotted with fantastic characters and intricate lines, which baffle description or portraiture. The sight of so many, therefore, lying exposed on the bare rock is one of no common interest. On such occasions many hundreds may be seen uncovered, all nearly touching one another ; and when the birds come pouring in towards the ledges, after having been disturbed, each flying directly to its own egg, the infinite variety of colouring, or *private marks*, so to speak, may be looked upon as an all-wise arrangement for keeping up the harmony of the settlement.

"Descending the grassy slopes on one occasion when all the birds were hatching, I approached the perpendicular walls of rock facing the south, on which Guillemots, Razorbills, Solan Geese, and Kittiwakes were sitting in congregations outnumbering all calculation, crept cautiously to the verge of the precipice, thrust my chin over the sharp edge of a pillar, my heels being held by a companion behind, and had a satisfactory view. Looking down four hundred and fifty feet, I observed that the Gulls and other birds floating on wing had no particular form, on account of the distance ; but there could be no doubt as to the identity of the black imps just under my nose. These were young Guillemots and Razorbills, the old birds being beside them, anxiously poking out their necks, and looking upwards with an eye of fear that fairly put me out of countenance. Under the perch of these odoriferous 'children of the mist' other families came into view, lower and still lower, their behaviour and unclean peculiarities being modified by distance till the eye lost sight of the species, and sea-fowl in general became responsible for the smell and uproar. The fearful discord which prevails on these ledges when the young are hatched is not easily described. The Guillemots and Razorbills unite in one deafening roar of a peculiar tone ; and when that loud groan is past, the harsh cries of the Solan Geese, bad enough of their kind, are heard as a faint echo. But the noise is only exerted when danger is at hand ; for on ordinary occasions the cry of the gentle Kittiwake is oftenest heard, especially at twilight before all becomes hushed."

With regard to the mode in which the young Guillemots reach the water, the evidence differs considerably. Mr. Gray, in the paper above alluded to, says, "When the young of the Guillemots are half fledged, the parent birds are seen daily, by the keeper, taking them down on their backs to the sea, and unceremoniously pitching them off within a few feet of the water. They have also been observed to seize them by the hind neck, as a cat does its kittens, and, after a moment's hesitation, launch from their high perches and descend with an unsteady flutter till they could drop the young ones with safety ;" while Mr. Gurney, jun., in some notes he has kindly communicated to me, says, "on visiting in June, 1871, a spot about five miles north of the Flamborough lighthouse, where the limestone cliffs of that part of Yorkshire rise to the height of 400 feet, and where the Guillemots, or 'scants,' as they are there called, are as numerous as bees, I made particular inquiries as to how the old bird conveys her young to the water. Mr. T. Machin, the first witness, stated that he had been on the rocks and had actually shot parent Guillemots with their nestlings in their beaks as they came down from above ; on the other hand, a climber of thirty years' experience assured me that they had also witnessed the old ones bear their young down on their back, and in no other way."

It will be observed that my figures represent the two birds known by the names of the Common and the Bridled or Ringed Guillemot ; this I have done in deference to the opinion which now prevails among ornithologists, and with which I coincide, that the latter is merely a variety of the former, as they are generally found breeding in company, not only on the same ledge of rock, but frequently paired with each other. Some, whose attention has been called to the subject, state that the relative numbers of the birds with the white ring are about one to five ; others, as about one in ten. On this head Mr. Gatcombe writes to me :—"The mackerel-boats bring into Plymouth hundreds of the Common Guillemot, in many instances alive ; but among the large numbers I examined, the bridled species or variety rarely occurs." Mr. Gray, when speaking of Ailsa Craig, says he never had any difficulty in obtaining ringed birds from the keeper, who goes in search of them when wanted, cleverly snaring them with a hair noose on the end of a pole.

In summer and winter the Guillemot is differently clothed : in winter the neck and throat are white and the feathers are loose and shaggy ; in the early spring a change of plumage takes place, and the neck is covered with short, adpressed, velvety-brown feathers.

As above stated, the Plate represents the Common and the Ringed Guillemot, both figures and the egg being of the natural size.