

and as many feet in breadth, one may often see fifty or sixty crowded into a solid mass, and each sitting on its own egg. Such masses are of frequent occurrence, the shelves being larger or smaller; but in general two or three, or four are seen together; and sometimes an individual is seen sitting solitarily, if one may say so when it is surrounded by others at no greater distance than three or four feet at furthest. When a shot was fired, most of the birds in the neighbourhood left their nests and flew about, while some, in their hurry, fell into the sea, and, on emerging, raised with their wings an uninterrupted splashing of the water some hundred yards from the base of the rocks. After a succession of shots almost the whole body seemed to be on the wing, presenting the appearance of a kind of cloud, which occupied a quarter of a mile square, and through which one could scarcely distinguish the blue sky from the flakes of white vapour. In their flight the birds did not cross much, but generally moved in the same direction, wheeling in a circle. This disposition probably arose from their number being so great that they could not conveniently fly at random. Their mingling screams produce a general mass of harsh sound, in which the cries of individuals cannot be distinguished.

"The noise and bustle of these winged inhabitants of the rocky isle reminded me of the stir of some great city, and their prodigious numbers I could compare to nothing but the shoals of some species of fish. Many were fishing on the smooth sea around the island, many flying from the rocks, many returning to their eggs, many resting on shelves and crags along the edge of the water; but by far the greater number were seated on their eggs. Such was the appearance of the place when the birds were not disturbed: and they were not very excitable; for, unless after a shot, none stirred on our account, however close the boat came. It was not uncommon to see them arranged in a line extending several yards along a fissure; and this formed a very pretty sight, especially when their white breasts appeared; for they stand nearly erect.

"It is pleasant, at a distance from their breeding-places, to see these birds flying over the sea in small troops, generally in single file, with a direct and rapid flight, beating their short wings without intermission, but frequently turning a little to either side, so as at one time to present the breast, at another the back, to the spectator. In flying, the head, body, and tail are direct, the wings extended, and never brought close to the sides, but acting in alternate movements in a nearly vertical direction. In alighting, they settle abruptly; but as they never alight from above, they sustain no injury from the slight shock. On the rocks they have an awkward and hobbling motion, and can scarcely be said to be capable of walking. I have never seen them alight on a sandy beach or on pasture-grounds.

"It is usually on the open sea, around their breeding-places, but often at the distance of many miles from them, that they search for their food, which consists chiefly of small fishes—young herrings for example—and crustacea, which they procure by diving. In swimming, they keep the body nearly horizontal, the neck retracted, and, as they proceed, frequently immerse their head, as if exploring the deep. In diving, they suddenly elevate the hind part of the body, spread out their wings a little, plunge with great force, and thus fly off, using their wings under water much in the same manner as when flying in the air. They can remain a considerable time under, and are often seen to rise at a great distance. In general it is not difficult to approach them on the water, as they allow a boat to come within shooting-distance; but, as they dive very suddenly, it is not always easy to shoot them. I have never heard them emit any other cry than a low croaking sound. If a wounded bird be seized, it bites severely, and is with difficulty disengaged.

"The egg, which is laid in the beginning of May, is excessively large, of an oblong shape, somewhat pyriform, but more rounded at the small end than that of the Guillemot, its average length 3 inches, or rather less, its greatest breadth 2 inches. The ground-colour is white, greyish white, or brownish white, largely blotched or clouded, and spotted and sprinkled, with deep brown or black, with spots of paler brown and light purplish blue interspersed."

The chick is covered with down, which is white on the head and neck, and of a dark brown on the upper surface, and has the bill slaty black, with a small knob of white near the tip.

The sexes are alike in plumage when adult, and in summer have a narrow line from the bill to the eye, the under surface, and the tips of the greater wing-coverts white, the chin and the remainder of the plumage being black, bill black, crossed about the middle by a nearly vertical narrow band of white; legs and feet dark leaden grey, becoming lighter on the toes; and the nails black.

The throat, which is black in summer, becomes pure white in winter, and the white hair-like line between the bill and the eye less distinct, if not altogether absent. Dr. Saxby states, in his 'Ornithological Notes from Shetland,' that he shot a female at Balta Sound on the 17th of December, the entire plumage of which was precisely similar to that described as "peculiar to this species in winter, with the single exception of there being no white line between the base of the bill and the eye," and remarks, "I am unable to account for its absence; for, so far as I am able to ascertain, such a mark becomes apparent even in young birds soon after they leave the rocks, and is distinct during the first winter." ('Zoologist,' 1865, p. 9520.)

The Plate represents an adult of the size of life, and a young bird about two days old.