Genus SULA.

Gen. Char. *Bill* longer than the head, thick, strong, straight, acuminate, compressed towards the point, with the dertrum slightly convex; mandibles equal; the upper one laterally sulcated from the base to the tip, and with a hinge near the posterior part, making it appear as if composed of five separate pieces; culmen rounded; lower mandible having the angle rather prominent, gently ascending to the tip; chin-angle narrow and long, filled with a naked dilatable skin; face naked; tomia intracted, obliquely and unequally serrated. *Nostrils* basal, concealed from view. *Wings* long and acuminate. *Tail* graduated. *Legs* abdominal. *Tarsi* short. *Feet* of four toes, all connected by a membrane; the middle and outer toes of nearly equal length; middle claw having its inner edge dilated and toothed.

SOLAN GANNET.

Sula Bassana, *Briss.*

La Fou blanc ou de Bassan.

The seas bordering the European shores are the natural habitat of the Solan Gannet, and nowhere is it more common during summer than on the rugged and precipitous coasts of Scotland, especially the Bass Rock, the isles of Ailsa, St. Kilda, &c., where they breed in vast multitudes: these situations, in fact, appear to be the principal nursery for this race. On the approach of autumn they leave their rocky breeding-places, and go further out to sea, the greater number passing considerably to the south, feeding on herrings, pilchards, and other fishes. Being destitute of the power of diving, they seize their prey by a vertical plunge when within a certain distance, and so forcible is their descent, that we are informed of instances in which they have killed themselves, by darting at fish attached to a board, connected by a rope fifty or sixty yards in length to a vessel at anchor, the neck being either dislocated or the bill driven firmly into the wood. The flight of the Gannet is extremely rapid, vigorous, and capable of being long sustained; hence it traverses the wide surface of the ocean with comparative ease. Although in the breeding-season the Gannets congregate in such countless multitudes, it seldom happens that they are found in flocks out at sea, but mostly alone, dispersed apparently in search of food. On the approach of spring they return to their accustomed rendezvous, which is generally preserved from molestation and farmed by persons who make a profit of the feathers and the young birds, their flesh being considered by some a delicacy, though to most persons its oily and fishy flavour renders it extremely disagreeable. While sitting on their nest, which is composed of sea-weed and other similar materials, they are so absorbed in the task of incubation, that they will sometimes permit themselves to be approached, and even handled, without quitting it: they lay but a single white egg, which in size is between those of a Cormorant and a Common Goose. From the time it is hatched till it arrives at maturity, no bird undergoes a more marked change in the colouring of its plumage. Mr. Selby was informed by two persons who rent the Bass Rock that the Gannet is four years in attaining a permanent state of plumage, and until this period has elapsed it is not known to breed.

The first year's plumage is characterized by the head, neck, and all the upper surface being blackish grey, inclining to brown, each feather tipped with a triangular spot of white; the breast and under surface white, each feather being edged with greyish black; the quills and tail greyish black, the shafts of the latter being white; the bill blackish grey tinged with brown; the irides pale brown; the legs and feet deep grey.

The second year's, by the head and greater part of the neck being white, more or less spotted with blackish grey; the upper surface of a nearly uniform brown, the white spots on the tips of the feathers becoming less distinct or entirely disappearing; and by the under surface becoming whiter.

The third year's, by the white increasing all over the body; the scapulars and tertials remaining black or spotted with blackish grey.

The fourth year's, or fully adult plumage, is characterized by the crown of the head, occiput, and upper part of the neck being pale yellow; all the remaining plumage pure white, with the exception of the quills and bastard wing, which are black; bill bluish grey, fading into white at the tip; naked skin round the eyes greyish blue; membrane at the gape and beneath the throat black; irides pale yellow; streak down the front of the tarsi and toes bluish green; webs blackish grey; claws greyish white.

The Plate represents a fully adult bird, and a young one of the first year, about three fourths of the natural size.