WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE.

Anser albifrons, *Linn.*

L'Oie rieuse, ou à front blanc.

We have not been able to ascertain with any degree of certainty whether the jet black markings which ornament the breast of this species are only assumed during summer, or whether they are confined to certain examples. While describing this bird in his "Manuel d'Ornithologie," we find M. Temminck equally at a loss with ourselves, for in a note appended to his description he states, that "after inspecting the plumage of this Goose, I suspect that the species moult twice in the year, and that in summer the belly and chest are of a deep black, while these parts in winter are pure white. I say only that case appears to me such, for it is by the naturalists in the North alone, who are able to observe this bird during the period of incubation, that this circumstance can be decided." The great numbers of this species brought to the London market during the first fortnight of January 1835, afforded us ample opportunities of examining a great variety of specimens; which examinations have led us to doubt if the irregular markings on the breast are ever assumed by many of these birds until they have attained a considerable age, there having been numerous mature individuals among those examined which had not the slightest trace of this peculiar feature, while in others it was slightly apparent; yet the majority of both sexes possessed the character in question, displayed in the most conspicuous manner. Some few birds of the year were observed, many of which had already the black feathers appearing in a slight degree; from which circumstance it is clear that a still further knowledge of the habits, changes, and economy of this fine Goose is required to render its history complete; and it is to be regretted that our island does not afford a retreat for so valuable a bird, in which it might breed and rear its young. It is just possible that the individuals examined by us at that early period of the year might not have commenced their spring moult; and if so, it is singular that others should have acquired so much of the black, which, according to M. Temminck's theory, is characteristic of the plumage of summer.

The summer residence of the White-fronted Goose is the high northern latitudes of both worlds: in these countries it finds a place of security wherein to incubate. It commences its migrations southwards early in the autumn, at which period great numbers pass into Holland, Germany, and France. In the British Islands it is tolerably abundant, particularly in the midland and southern counties, giving a decided preference to low marshes and fenny districts. Its food consists of aquatic vegetables of various kinds, small snails, &c. Its weight generally varies from five to seven pounds, and as an article for the table it is not surpassed by any of its tribe, its flesh being finely flavoured and tender.

Bill pale flesh-colour, nail pure white; forehead white; head, neck, and upper part of the chest greyish brown; breast, belly, and abdomen black marked with irregular bars and blotches of white; back brown, each feather being margined with greyish white; wing-coverts grey edged with white; quills dark greyish black; vent and upper tail-coverts white; middle tail-feathers grey, with white tips, the remainder becoming gradually lighter, to the outer ones, which are wholly white; legs and toes orange; claws whitish.

The Plate represents an adult and a young bird of the year about three fourths of the natural size.