

A Pilgrimage to Golgotha

June 1897 by Robert Drane FLS

Paper read to the Biological Section of the Cardiff Naturalists Society

A paper given to a society must have a title and the present one is adopted to avoid what we have found to be the detrimental effect to Natural History of giving unreserved publicity to the places where the following notes were made. "They may well call it Stony Stratford for I was much bitten by fleas there" and with something less of a non-sequiter I have called the locality of my subject 'A Pilgrimage to Golgotha' because of the great number of skulls we found there and the weird character given to its solitude by the many dry bones with which it is bestrewn, some of which are here before you now to justify my title; together with a selection of Guillemots eggs, to illustrate their remarkable divergences in size, form, color and markings. I think that to those unfamiliar with the eggs of this species their variation will appear to striking as to suggest the improbability of there belonging to one kind of bird only.

I present you here also a set of Razorbill's eggs similarly selected from an immense number of the more ordinary types. My desire concerning them is to have the two series produced by photography and color so as to place them in our Transactions as a permanent record and standard of comparison. The variation is not quite so great as in the case of the Guillemot but is still very striking.

On May 31st we found two Peregrine Falcon's eggs laid without any nest upon a ledge of the cliff overhanging the sea about a hundred feet below. The parent bird was vociferous against our intrusion, circling in the air as a safe distance. On June 5^h one of these eggs was hatched. The chick was of a uniform pale color like that of natural sheep's wool. The other egg was never hatched, for it was addled. Here is an adult Peregrine, on whose head I have placed an ancient Hawk's Hood to shew you this bird in his hawking costume, according to the fashion of James I's reign and here also is the unhatched egg. There was another nest about a mile from this, on the face of an all but inaccessible cliff. We determined to try to get to it. We knew when we were near it on the cliff top by the querulous alarm not which the parent bird uttered continually when we approached the place; so one morning all hands were piped up for the purpose, and a lad of about 14 was let down on the end of a strong rope about a hundred feet from the top of the cliff here about 200 ft high. The work was exciting from its obvious peril. "Rope dancers a score I had seen before", but to see a lad swing at the end of a string, who must die if he fell was a new thing. We spent some hours at the attempt, but it ended in failure; the only result being a number of "blackbird's" eggs. The local name here for the Razorbill is "blackbird" which has a strange sound to the ears of inland men, who at that name would think only of our familiar songster. And the partially-consumed body of a down-covered Great Black-backed or

Herring Gull in the maw and gizzard of which were the feathers of some bird supplied to it as food by its parent.

Mr Neale remarked that he had conceived a great contempt for this same Peregrine for it would risk nothing in the defence of family and home, while the harmless, helpless Plover and Oystercatcher would sometimes swoop down upon us and flout us with their wings, and always come very much nearer to us than the falcon ever did. But man is the very personification of inconsistency. Mr Neale has great admiration for the Great Black-backed Gull, which he considers "a truly noble bird". Well, now, I am going to be perverse for his sake and hit this noble bird so as to induce him to designate me "a truly noble animal". The Great Black-backed Gull is a coward, a fool, and a tyrant; tho' it is many times bigger and stronger than the Peregrine we frequently found its eggs and took its young while it stood afar off stoically looking on, without once risking anything in their defence. (Coward) As for intelligence it is far inferior to the Raven, for when this bird sees that the Gull has something to eat he will worry and excite him till he drops it, and the Raven appropriates the Gull's food most cleverly. (Fool). The GBBG likes to have a domain all to himself and selects, when possible, an isolated rock or islet from which, as far as he can, he excludes other birds by robbing or eating them. We know of one such islet which used to be the home of a large colony of common terns. When we were there, there was but one pair frequenting it for this Great Gull had taken a fancy to Naboth's vineyard and I feel convinced, from what I saw of the harassed life of this pair of terns that they had been robbed of their little estate by this Gull (Tyrant). Now Mr Neale will have to give this section a paper on the natural history of this "truly noble bird", of which he knows very much more than I do. If he doesn't, I shall call him "Peregrine" thenceforth. If he does, and consistently calls me "A truly noble animal" for hitting over a gull not a tenth of my own size or weight – not in defence of home and young, but only a whimsical opinion, I will be very amiable, I will not call him "Peregrine", and I will admit that the GBB Gull is a *truly noble bird*. But I have not done with it yet, for, added to his unmentioned shortcomings, I consider him a greedy and omnivores creature. He is a dealer in old clothes, and even eats *them*. I put the evidence before you that you may judge for yourselves. Here are a number of pellets consisting of bones, feathers, fur, etc, etc. They are the indigestible parts of his food which this bird ejects from his mouth, as owls and falcons do. These pellets are conclusive evidence of the nature quantity and quality of his food. Nothing comes amiss to him. Here I have the skin of a puffin turned inside out by a Carrion Crow who had eaten all the meat. Black Back comes along and swallows the old coat which both Puffin and Carrion Crow had finished with, and, later on, ejected it as you see it now.

June 6 We found two Puffins and one Shearwater in the same hole about 4 p.m. They were discovered by the crooning noise which the Shearwater so habitually makes in its burrows. The burrow, doubtless, belonged to the Shearwater for this bird comes and takes possession of its burrow months before the Puffin arrives for the breeding season. One would assume, from the crooning, or courting, note of the bird, the Shearwater was, not only at home, but happy there; yet, when we had taken the birds out of the hole the

Shearwater and Puffin attacked each other fighting with beak and feet with the utmost fury and tenacity. This seems very strange; but in juxtaposition with this fact may be placed another on the action of another bird of a nearly allied species, for when a Stormy Petrel is detected by its crooning noise amongst the loose rocks where it is nesting it will allow itself to be taken unresistingly, and will continue to utter its love notes in the hand of its captor, as if dominated by a fatal illusion- love mania- insanity, - or as an analogous state of mind amongst religious monomaniacs of our own species as elsewhere been described- "drunk with divine love". There is, assuredly, a downward as well as an upward development for instinct is not always conducive to the preservation of the individual, or the continuity of the species. Yet there seems to be some kind of qualified amity between these two very different species, for on another occasion I heard a Shearwater crooning in a hole, I put in my arm and drew out a Puffin; I put my arm in again and found its egg form the end of the hole, yet the crooning noise was continued. I was puzzled a moment, as further examination proved that at about 15 to 18 inches from its mouth the hole bifurcated, so that the Puffins occupied one are of the Y , the Shearwaters the other, and the stem of the Y gave both a common access to their chambers.

June 6 We dug out about 30 Shearwaters. In most of the holes we found 1 Shearwater and an egg: in 2 of them we found 2 birds and no egg. On expressing surprise to the tenant of the farm, he replied "That is always so, if there are 2 birds in one hole you will not find an egg". This a subject for confirmation; but in these holes we found some eggs just laid, and others within a few hours of hatching. Then, may it be assumed that both birds do their courting in their burrow; that as soon as the egg is excluded one of them takes charge of it; that, in the case of the two birds in one hole, the time of laying the egg had not fully arrived, and so, further, that the later eggs are not laid till the earlier ones are hatched? The Puffin's eggs at this date are so much more uniformly incubated that it is difficult to obtain a fresh egg, and most of them are difficult to blow, while some are already hatched.

Next day we came upon a curious 'find', we saw a Shearwater partially buried in recently – disturbed earth, and picking it out we found another, and another, and another, till we took out thirty. What was the meaning of this? The occupants of the island consisted of our party and five resident at the farm where we were lodged,. We regretted this destruction of these interesting and beautiful birds, but availed ourselves of the chance of ascertaining what they fed on and opened four of them. In each and all we found some soft, unctuous, bright green matter only from the mouth to the stomach. Its presence from the mouth to the stomach may be due to the habit that the petrel family have of vomiting their food when captured. We collected this matter and preserved it for examination at home. It was readily diffusible in water. I asked Mr Storie to examine it for me microscopically, and he says: "I could find neither teeth, scales, nor any sign of muscular tissue. The green matter is wholly fragmentary green algae, with its stichidia and tetraspores, with a few fragments of sertularians and a little sand. The contents of the stomach seem to indicate that the bird is a vegetarian". This accorded with my own idea but all the authorities are opposed to the assumption for they all

say the bird feeds on fish. Sometime after our return, Mr Cording the bird preserver, sent me a Shearwater, the contents of whose stomach I submitted to Mr Storie, who says they consisted of a structureless green fat, with some minute marine univalves, such as might easily be introduced into the stomach with the algae, on which the bird was assumed to feed. This rather staggered me. I had assumed that the green was chlorophyll, which was confirmed by Mr Storie's first report, but now he says, in this last instance, it is a structureless green fat, soluble in alcohol and, as I know, soluble in chloroform. And here it is. So with Dr Arnold's most kind assistance it was submitted to the spectroscope and the spectroscope said in the most decided manner that the green was not chlorophyll. Then the green was not vegetable green, and the microscope declared that the food was not fish food. Then what on earth, or in the sea, can this strange food of petrels be? Gentlemen, art is long and time is fleeting. We must wait. I am fairly puzzled. I must go again, observe and think; but anyway, I have by no means done with this mysterious bird. Done! and had better had said, scarce yet begun. I first thought, because taught they lived on fish. Then thought, surprised at naught, that they were vegetable feeders. (They are fish feeders, not vegetarians, and the green colour is due to chemical changes. – RD, July 1898).

But what of those 30 Shearwaters we found?– Why this, as subsequently we found. Some fishermen had asked one of the farm boys to get them Shearwaters for bait. The boy got 30 and buried them, waiting for the fishermen, and pay; but they came not. Meantime, the Carrion Crow did. He discovered the buried birds, pulled out some; we came next, and then unearthed the whole. That boy swore he would serve fishermen no more, and that upon a Sunday! The Shearwater (one native told me that the English name was 'Watershears') usually lay their eggs in burrows made by rabbits or Puffins. I found that both birds sometimes lay their eggs in unusual places, thus- a Shearwater's egg laid on the projecting ledge of rock which was covered only by an overgrowth of heather, and a puffins in a fissure of rock closed by a fragment of stone, much further inland than the majority breed, and where, from common observation, one would not have expected to find its egg. The essential conditions seeming to be darkness in relative proximity to the sea. The Puffin has the power of so sinking itself in the water that only the head and neck are above the surface; when it is so sunk it uses its wings for propulsion as if flying in the air. I saw the Cormorant do the same thing. I found its egg so much and so distinctly spotted as to resemble a gulls. To my very great regret I broke it in my pocket while climbing the cliffs. There is something very unconventional about this clumsy bird. It is so naturally and delightfully stupid that it reminds one of those persons who occasionally find themselves in unaccustomed surroundings, thus- they descend from the clifftops to the water in concave lines; and one day, while sitting watching below the level of the cliff top, one of them struck me in its flight, and was, it seemed to me, surprised that there were other beings in the world than Puffins on the wing, and we are all Puffins in a way, and dumbly, stupidly perceive that we belong to something other, higher than ourselves, that lifts us from life's petty rivalries and lets us stand where troubles ineffectual waves still have a peaceful land.

June 13th Found a little Lapwing (Plover) not more than one or two days hold. Found a Shearwater's egg chipped and about to be hatched. We brought home to the farm four live Puffins which we had taken from their holes on purpose. Two of these were let go on the flat surface of a grass field, they fled away from us along the surface of the ground in their usual hurried headover-heels manner, and did not attempt to take wing when pursued and were retaken several times over. The other two we put on the floor of the granary which had open windows about two foot or two foot six inches from the ground level, through which they might easily escape, and left them undisturbed all night. Next morning they were both found trying to conceal themselves in the darkest corner they could find. These two things were done because the natives say that these birds cannot take wing from a flat surface, and here they failed to do so either under the excitement of fear, or when left for 14 hours undisturbed and without food. I had frequently noticed that both old and young Puffins had their crops quite full in the evening. I killed one Puffin chick and found 41 tiny fish about one and a half inches long in its maw. Here is one of them as a sample. This was about seven in the evening. I did not find all young birds had full crops between this hour and 11 p.m., though the old birds were often to be seen coming home in the evening with their bills full of this fish. Next morning I found several young Puffins with distended crops at 10.30, while at 12.30 I found parent and chicks in their burrow both with entirely empty crops. I cut off the parent birds head and noticed its feet were moved in their defensive action fully 2 minutes, and that the heart pulsated very nearly 6 minutes after decapitation. These investigations were too unpleasant to be followed, though the bird is not one to excite great sympathy either by its person, disposition, or habits. It will quarrel and fight with its fellows with the greatest passion and persistence. We noticed many of these contests in the water, in which both birds were frequently submerged for a minute or two, but neither would release the other, and I suppose that many of the dead Puffins we saw were the vanquished parties to these duels, which certainly last for half an hour, and are determined only by the utter exhaustion of one or both. They use both bills and feet in fighting. The beautiful and dove-like Kittiwake is also a persistent fighter, continuing the contest long enough to tire the observer, but they fight like gentlemen, with rapiers, and not like blackguards as the Puffins do.

As Mr Neale's boys had now nearly a dozen young gulls, a part of the days business was to provide food for them, this largely consisted of the eggs blown for preservation and kitchen scraps. One day we caught some eels and frogs for them. When a half-grown frog was put to the young gulls, it cried out in its instinctive alarm as I have heard rats do in the presence of a ferret which was not pursuing them. One of the nestling gulls seized the frog and swallowed it; but it came up again, and cried much louder than before, as if in extremist fear, when it was seized by another of the gulls, and was swallowed for a second time. The frog's shriek, for it was a shriek, was quite different from its ordinary voice, and was one of those sounds which one instinctively recognises as the expression of extreme terror so that it was positively pathetic and painful to hear.

On June 7 we saw a good rainbow at 7.30 p.m., and as we wanted a fine day on the eighth we quoted the old saw with approving satisfaction and faith—"A

rainbow in the morning is a shepherds warning; a rainbow at night is a shepherds delight". The 8th was unsettled, gloomy, with frequent showers-not a fine day. This incident brings us to the domain of mythology, the land of soft half light, inhabited by bats that flutter from shadow to shadow, and even as they go, become transformed- where that ignorant, common creature, Custom, the daughter of Afreetes, brings up her foster babes on lies, by sucking bottles of delusion. A sheep had died, and there it lay swollen almost to bursting point, with longitudinal knife cuts upon its underside, inflicted, before death, by the farmer. The sheep had been bitten by a 'Cuddyaver' or 'Cuttyaver' a venomous little beast inhabiting these isles, which, out of sheer malignity, thus kills the sheep. Its bite is fatal. And why those long incisions?- 'To let the poison out' Could you show us one of these venomous things?- 'Yes, perhaps so'. If you can find one can you bring it to us? - 'No! I will show it to you, but I would not touch one for a five pound note'. A day or two later a 'cuddyaver' was found. We went to see and saw a pretty, a harmless little lizard, two or three inches long. This was the Afritte which loomed large and hideous, or sunk to almost nothingness at will, as these creatures are well known to do. Of what disease the sheep had died none knew, but such deaths are ordinary occurrences in summer. There are no 'cuddyavers' in winter and no sheep die, therefore it is the 'cuddyavers' which bit and kill the sheep. Now, what does all this mean?- Adder is the name of the only poisonous British snake; the word is a mutation of Edder, a Norse word for 'poison'. It is found in Eddercop = Poison spider, and the Welsh have 'Coppyn' for spider. Edder becomes Adder- Adder passes into Avver- to which the prefix Cutty, heard as Cuddy, is attached. We have Cuttypipe for a short pipe, Cutty-wren for smallest of birds, and Cutty-sark for a short or small skirt, so now we know that this 'Cuddyavver' is simply 'a small poison'. I have here a sheep's cranium whose former owner died of 'Cuddyaver' in 1894. It will also serve to impress upon the eye the extreme smallness of the creature's brain, and so explain the hideous expression of its idiot eye.

We found on one of our islands three varieties of owls- The White or Barn Owl, the Brown or Wood Owl, and the Short-eared Owl. We took a half-grown Short-eared Owl, sitting on the ground and brought it home, where, alas, it met a tragic death at Mr Neale's, where his raven's pulled it into little bits. We saw the Brown Owl repeatedly hawking for field mice (voles) or young rabbits in the daytime while the sun was shining, a habit which, relying on authorities, we should have thought inconsistent with its natural history; still there is the fact, we saw it repeatedly, it was easily distinguished from the White Owl by its colour and from the Short-eared by its form and large round head. Of the latest authorities Saunders (1989) says, p. 288; ' During the day this bird remains concealed and dislikes sunlight more than any other British member of the family' and Bowdler Sharpe (1896, Vol. 2, 101, says: ' It is nocturnal in its habits and seldom flies by daylight'. Yet this is the species which we saw repeatedly on the wing while the sun was shining. We did not find the 'nest' or egg, of either of these owls. But on a very small detached islet we found the White or Barn Owl breeding in a little cave in the rocks overlooking the sea, where only one house was within one mile of it; yet this owl is of all others the one most frequently found associated with man, as its common name implies. Here we found it about a mile from the nearest house, with well-grown young

and fresh eggs in the same nest. I have heard the evidence of its habits, - pellets and animal remains taken from its little cavern. The pellets consist of fur and feathers. The fur is that of the wood mouse and the bank vole (*Microtus glareolus*). There are five crania four of which are of this vole and one that of the woodmouse, and other nine those of the rock pipit only. Very near this owl's house was a considerable colony of the Common Cormorant, in which we found many nests, some containing almost fresh eggs and others half-grown young, ugly creatures covered with sooty black down perhaps a month old. They are said to lay sometimes as many as six eggs, but we saw no nest with more than three eggs or young. As to the economy of these birds, Saunders says, 'They use their wings under water for propulsion as in air for flight'. Bowdler Sharpe, 'That it uses its tail as a rudder underwater, but does not make use of its wings'. I would say to all observers, take nothing for granted, but see before you believe and verify before you record. Follow on authority and you feel safe, consult a second and you will doubt you will doubt both. Personally, in this case, I am with Saunders, and think the Cormorant uses its wings underwater for propulsion.

The cormorant does not feed its young in the usual way. It opens its mouth and the young bird thrusts its head down its parent's throat and takes the contents of its parent's crop. No description can convey an adequate idea of this act, it is most singular, but is easily observed, for in the breeding season these birds are by no means shy, and I conceived therefrom an alternative conception of the expression 'The bowels of compassion'.

We saw the Shag, or Green Cormorant breeding here, - not in colonies like the Common Cormorant, but solitarily, here and there one pair, and few in all, on ledges of rock, amongst Guillemots and Razorbills; but all those we saw were in completely inaccessible places. I have since observed that this is only locally so.

I may just record the fact that, botanically, these islands are not interesting, as the following list of the more notable plants will indicate;- *Rubia peregrina*, *Sedum telephium* (abundant), *Scutellaria galericulata*, *Hydrocotyl vulgaris*, *Senescio sylvaticus* (Abundant and large), *Cotytedon umbelicus* (Eighteen inches high), and *Rosa spinosissima* (Sparingly), *Erythrea polchelia* (White variety). There is not a tree on any of these islands.

Of Insects we noted- Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell, Pearl Bordered, and High Brown Fritillary (Rather early June 12th), *Sycaena Argiolus* (Azure Blue), Small Heath, Wood-brown and Meadow-brown Butterflies; and amongst moths, the Humming Bird Hawk Moth, Oak Egger and Five Spot Burnet. This list will serve to show how very casual the observation was, as nothing but the most obvious and commonplace is noted; but it surprised me to find so many species even as these on these treeless, wind-worn islands.

Of birds Stonechat (common), Wheatear (very common), Rock Pipit (abundant). Green Plover (and young ones, two or three days old June 13th), Pheasant (and found its nest among bracken), Common Blackbird, Nilghtjar, Kestrel, Peregrine Falcon, Barn Owl, Brown Owl, Short-eared Owl, Swallow,

Sparrow, Corn Bunting, Water Hen (and nest). Common Tern- Puffin, Razorbills, Guillemots, and Manx Shearwaters (all in thousands), Storm Petrels (numerous), Oystercatcher (very common), Cormorant, Shag, Great Black-backed, Lesser Black-backed, Herring, Kittiwake, and an undetermined gull.

Of mammals- Homo (several varieties), Seal, Shrew (*Sorex minutus*), Woodmouse, Rabbit, a very large variety of the Bank Vole, no rats on any of

the islands; also Frogs, Eels, and the little lizard, which they here call 'Cuttyaver' and regard as poisonous

This is, assuredly an incomplete list, but it shews how rich for a naturalist these small islands are, with the adventitious advantage of so circumscribed a field that observation is easy.

We found upon the shore some ribs and vertebrae and I was asked what they were. Supposing them to represent some unfortunate animal that had fallen over the cliff, I suggested that they were those of a cow; the farmer's boy laughed and said "No-ar they baint, twor a seal what was washed up the winter before last". And the President of the Cardiff Naturalists Society covered his mouth in an attitude of humiliation.

One of Mr Neale's sharp-eyed boys caught a little shrew after sunset. It was the *Sorex minutus*, the smallest British mammal. We brought it home alive, with some pieces of dried turf in which to conceal itself, and put it into a large jar for the night. In the early morning it was dead. The shrews are remarkable and remarkably disagreeable beasts, and are made to typify the disagreeable women of this world,- they are very thin, with long sharp noses and extremely small eyes- like old maids who subsist on tea, scandal and vinegar, which do not conduce to beauty of person, disposition of character. They cannot agree amongst themselves, and if two are caged together one of them soon kills the other and dies itself- of chagrin? Cats, who ought to like them, detest them who will always kill but never eat them. They are rarely seen alive; but in districts in which they abound, are very frequently found dead without assignable cause. They are the very Ishmaels of the animal world. This poor little thing worried itself to death by its ceaseless and frantic efforts to escape from the jar where it had food to eat and dry turf to hide in. A vole, or a mole, a mouse, a bat, or owl would have been almost happy. This peevish little thing killed itself with spleen. You will not understand this as being seriously scientific, but still tis true that (he or she) there is- The Shrew, a very nasty creature.

We caught many voles which so far as I understand, do not agree with either of the two, possible ones found in this country. Of these two, it cannot be the Common Field Vole with which everybody is familiar, and from it differs widely in appearance, colour and size. It is very like the remaining one, The Bank Vole (*Microtus glareolus*) but it is much larger, and I cannot make its teeth agree with Lydekker page 213 (1895) who gives the length of this species

head and body 4 inches, tail one and one third inch equals five and one third inches. These voles measured respectively six inches, six and a half inches, and seven inches, the tail being two inches to two and a quarter inches, so that the smallest is larger than Lydekker's largest.

Now we come to the genus Homo, an individual of this family. One of Mr Neale's sons, in his eager pursuit of science and bird's eggs climbing along the ledges of rock, dislodged a loose mass of some hundredweights, and with it was suddenly precipitated into the deep sea some twenty to thirty feet below. If you could now see whence he fell you would wonder how he escaped a sudden death, and which he did escape only by the accident of a boat and a cool-headed boy, his brother, being sufficiently near to reach him before he sank, although a good swimmer, he was disabled by a blow received in his fall. How he was got into the boat neither he nor his brother knew, but assistance obtained, we sent home for a cart it was now nearly dark, got him in the cart on a bed of bracken and took him home, well nigh unconscious all the while. Fortunately no serious injury had been sustained. And in a few days he was at his old game again, although a decidedly more cautious fellow.

We found three others of this genus- farm labourers- sleeping in a loft in bedsteads, on which was first placed some straw, then a bed of oatflights, with dark-brown blankets and pillows, all terribly filthy. There was no other furniture but a form- no drawers, closet of toilet-ware, no soap, water, brushes, or other accessories of any kind. From this standpoint their lives seemed suspended, like Mohamet's coffin, between the cave man and a rude civilisation, about equivalent to that of the villain of feudal times, and yet these human beings were not by any means unworthy relatives. It is quite easy to talk of such people with contempt and to feel it too, but they by no means lacked that touch of nature that makes us all akin. Nothing could be kinder than their attitude towards us. Personally I have never been treated with more instinctive consideration than I received from these ignorant and humble people who have never enjoyed any of the advantages of education civilisation, or culture. I am a Conservative- Tory, if you prefer that word; but these men are my relatives, and of my family, I am not ashamed. Let us now turn our attention to a different section of this same genus Homo- Sportsmen, Peer and 'English Gentleman'.

Mr Neale had arranged with the tenant that while we were there to study the birds the islands should not be invaded by strangers and leave to land upon it withheld. One day I was on the cliffs watching, when I repeatedly heard shots which I did not understand. Presently, a boat rounded an angle with three men in it; one of these was shooting at Puffins, Gulls and Guillemots (for sport). I saw the birds drop into the water, but no attempts were made to recover them. 'It was for sport' in the height of the breeding season and many of these victims of sport had young ones which would have to starve. I shouted a remonstrance when I took in the facts; received an execration in extremely choice language; the sporting continued, and a new protest was useless. I saw our own boatman later on and asked who those fellows were who were shooting the birds and he told me. But surely a gentleman would

not use such language as he did? "Why not? He never hears anything else from his father, who never speaks without a curse. Next day we were bathing at the foot of cliffs a hundred and fifty feet high, when stones came over repeatedly and fell unpleasantly near us. Presently we saw three heads appear against the skyline; the stones still falling. We had no idea who they were who threw these, but we could see they were aimed at the Puffins sitting along the verge, and shouted, "Stop that! You fellows up there, or you will hit us". The only reply was, "You go to hell!" I saw these three men afterwards and asked the young farmer who they were. He said they were Lord- his son, and Captain- their friend. We said we thought he would have kept the island free of intrusion while we were there. He said he told them they ought to have asked leave to come, and the reply given him was, "If I had to ask leave everytime, I should have nothing else to do, perhaps I shall buy the island some day"* This gentleman has since purchased the island. The day after this, at our bathing place, I found hiding under a mass of rock a Puffin, with its wing injured and an eye knocked out, in the interest of English sport; in the interest of mercy, I killed it.

Let India perish- trade and commerce die,
But spare- Oh, spare us, God!- our aristocracy.

I have spoken of the Storm Petrel as abundant, but I had been on the island a week before I had heard or seen one; they seem so completely nocturnal. On June 7 I picked up a pair of black wings attached by their bones and tendons so fresh as to show that the bird had been killed and eaten during the preceding night. It could not escape the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor the destruction that wasteth and noonday. Oh, the eating of that accursed apple- the pity on't, the pity on't. These wings were the wings of the Storm Petrel and its enemy was an owl, for not other bird of prey is about when the petrels are on the wing. Consulting the natives we were told that if we wanted petrels we must go out after dark along the dry stone walls or among the heaps of broken rocks and we should hear them. As for the speaker, he could find in the daytime, by using his nose to detect their haunts as a dog would do. This might have been a figure of speech. We could not smell them anywhere, anyhow, but he seemed quite serious, went and found one. At 10 p.m. Mr Neale and I went out to look for petrels. We soon heard a strange voice issuing from a congeries lapidum. Then, within a yard of so of it, another, more strange, more weird, and more varied. The first was 'Churr-Chat, Churr-Churr-Chet'. The other I cannot pretend to illiterate. Having found our first petrels we spread a mackintosh on the ground, lay down upon that covered ourselves with rugs, and watched and listened for upwards of an hour within two or three feet of the birds. With but little intermission they continued their conversation or courting, for courting it was. I smoked and we both talked, so that the birds must have been aware of our presence but that did not disturb them in the least. Ultimately the crooning ceased; then one of the petrels silently emerged, and took wing like a swallow. Five minutes later the other followed. It was now the darkest part of a summer night. We marked the place where they came out for investigation by daylight. We soon found another petrel, not two this time. As we knew what happened in the last instance, we set to work at once removing the stones, directed all the while by

the continual Churr Churr Chet. When we were very near the bird we light a candle and proceeded more cautiously, till presently on lifting out a stone there sat the little petrel quite unconcerned; and then, a little way off, we found its egg, - our first, at midnight, under some hundredweight of stones. While looking at the egg by candlelight, another petrel emerged from its hiding place into the cavity we had made, and there it sat as quiet and unconcerned as its mate had done until it appeared we had no suspicion that there were two. We put the two birds in our pockets and went home with the egg, as proud as peacocks with a plurality of tails. Before going to bed I released the petrels in my bedroom, they flew round and about for a few turns, and then settled for the night. Their fragility and innocence were striking, they allowed themselves to be taken in the hand quite unresistingly, and would nestle in its warmth; still they were not wholly destitute of fear, for when first taken they vomited a little green oily fluid which was without offensive odour. Next morning we took our petrels to a pond and put them into the water, for you know I have suggested that petrels are not truly aquatic birds at all, and here was a rare chance of testing my theory. They used their webbed feet as if unpractised in the art of swimming; their plumage became soaked they escaped to the side and tried to climb out of the water. Being replaced they both took wing from the water as easily as a puffin would have done. Such are the facts, and my witnesses are here. We tried the same experiment with shearwaters in the sea. They did not seem to dislike the water as much as the petrels did, for they swam away a considerable distance before they took wing.

On another occasion when we found a petrel and its egg by moving laboriously huge pieces of loose rock requiring the help of three persons, but ever directed by the birds 'Churr-Chett', the captured bird continued its Churr-Chetting in Mr Neale's hand, such was its infatuated submission to the law of its nature. We released the bird and blew the egg. It was quite fresh. This was on June 12th. In an egg taken 5 days earlier the chick's body was formed so that it was not easily blown.

Now what have we learned of the petrel? We were told by the natives that where we found two Shearwaters in one hole we should not find an egg, and we found it was so. This bird is very nearly allied to our petrel, and so we may expect some analogies with habit etc. When we found our first petrels we had two birds crooning together; the voice of the one being easily rendered by the words 'Churr-Chett', the voice of the other so different as not to lend itself to transliteration and here we found no egg. (courting continued, result in future). In the case of the next two, we heard one bird only, and it said 'Churr-Chett'. The other bird uttered no sound; it was there but silent. (the egg was laid).. In a third case we found one bird only with one egg. It cried 'Churr-Chett' in Mr Neale's hand. (incubation commenced). Now therefore, I am disposed to assume that the voice which we first heard, and which I cannot reproduce was that of the male courting before the egg is laid, and that the 'Churr-Chett' distinguishes the female.

One night we went out at 10.30 to observe Shearwaters, or 'Cukles' as they are here called. They did not begin to come out till nearly eleven; then the

night is at its darkest, and everything except these birds is as silent as the grave, - "Tis then that churchyards yawn and graves give up their dead", and till then I never realised so well what Shakespeare said. The ground now becomes alive with them and the air is thick with their wings. The scene was strange and exciting in the highest degree. The fun became faster and more furious by the minute. We wrapped ourselves in rugs and sat side by side upon a mass of rock. I remembered that on the Bosphorus, where these queer birds have a ghostly habit of flying up and down – up and down, - they are called "Ames Damnees"- lost souls, - and the appropriateness of the epithet as I now understood it made my tingle all over. As a youth I was much moved by the presentation of the Witches Frolic in *McBeth*, and I saw it often repeated in my dreams with an excitement gentle only because of a sense of security from their spells, - it was a show, a tale, and unreality; - but here were real lost souls flying in all manner of directions with the irresponsibility and confusion of unrestrained insanity, - they touched us in their flight, - they flee between our heads as we sat shoulder to shoulder. There were thousands upon thousands of them crying in every key of melancholy sound- "Cuckolds-In-A-Row, Cuckles-Ah-A-Roe, Cuckles-Ah-Char, Cuckles-Ah-Oh, Cuckolds-In-O, Cuckolds-In-A-Row-Co, and one of the startling things was to hear one of these voices rapidly approaching you, stop most abruptly in mid-utterance, and you felt that silence herself had put her hand upon the mouth of one whose eyes just saw a stranger present in this infernal world. You feel this state of things cannot possibly last long, it does not; at 12.30 it is at its height, by 2 am it has very sensibly decreased, at 2.15 it is almost over, and at half-past completely so. Not a bird is left upon the wing; not one is visible. The silence seems ominous! The sky lightens to the north; the day break is at hand; you feel a slight movement of cool wind; you cannot help but sigh. Then comes a shrill cry, the spell is quite broken, and you are back into the world. Whose that call? - It was the Oystercatcher the warder of the east, who cries, "the dawn! the dawn!". The next to wake are the gulls, the puffins next, and we go home about 3.15, knee deep in bracken drenched in dew. We than had some whiskey and water. I drank the whiskey and Mr Neale had his dew. I went to bed feeling I had seen the world of shades, and when I come to stand by the dark river's side I shall feel that I have been somewhere thereabouts before.