WILSON'S PETREL.—MOTHER CAREY'S CHICKEN.

†*THALASSIDROMA WILSONII*, Bonap.

PLATE CCCCLX.—MALE AND FEMALE.

A long voyage would always be to me a continued source of suffering, were I restrained from gazing on the vast expanse of the waters, and on the ever-pleasing inhabitants of the air that now and then appear in the ship's wake. The slightest motion of the vessel effectually prevents me from enjoying the mirth of my fellow passengers, or sympathizing with them in their sickness. When the first glimpse of day appears, I make my way on deck, where I stand not unlike a newly hatched bird, tottering on feeble legs. Let the wind blow high or not, I care little which, provided it waft me toward the shores of America. If the sky be clear, the first sight of the sun excites emotions of gratitude towards the Being by whose power it was formed, and sent forth to shed its benign influence on surrounding worlds. Silent adoration occupies my soul, and I conclude with ardent wishes for the happiness of friends left far behind, and those toward whom I am proceeding. But now, ever flapping its winglets, I have marked the little bird, dusky all over save a single spot, the whiteness of which contrasts with the dark hue of the waters and the deep tone of the clear sky. Full of life and joy it moves to and fro, advances toward the ship, then shoots far away, gambols over the swelling waves, dives into their hollows, and twitters with delight as it perceives an object that will alleviate its hunger. Never fatigued, the tiny Petrels seldom alight, although at times their frail legs and feet seem to touch the crest of the foaming wave. I love to give every creature all the pleasure I can confer upon it, and towards the little things I cast over the stern such objects as I know they will most prize. Social creatures! would that all were as innocent as you! There are no bickerings, no jealousies among you; the first that comes is first served; it is all the result of chance; and thus you pass your lives. But the clouds gather, the gale approaches, and our gallant bark is trimmed. Darkness spreads over the heavens, and the deep waters send back a blacker gloom, broken at intervals by the glimmer of the spray. You meet the blast, and your little wings bear you up against it for awhile; but you cannot encounter the full force of the tempest; and now you have all come close beneath me, where

you glide over the curling eddies caused by the motion of the rudder. You shall have all possible attention paid you, and I will crawl to the camboose, in search of food to support your tiny frames in this hour of need. But at length, night closes around, and I bid you farewell.

The gale is over; the clear blue of the sky looks clearer than ever, the sun's rays are brighter, on the quiet waters the ship seems to settle in repose, and her wings, though widely spread, no longer swell with the breeze. At a distance around us the dusky wanderers are enjoying the bright morning; the rudder-fish, yesterday so lively, has ended its career, so violently was it beaten by the waves against the vessel; and now the Petrels gather around it, as it floats on the surface. Various other matters they find; here a small crab, there the fragments of a sea-plant. Low over the deep they range, and now with little steps run on the waters. Few are their notes, but great their pleasure, at this moment. It is needless for me to feed them now, and therefore I will return to my task.

It would be extremely difficult for any individual to determine the extent of the movements of the three species of Petrel seen on the waters of the Atlantic. My opinion is that until their breeding places are repeatedly visited by naturalists, little can be known respecting the range of their flight. I have crossed the ocean many times, and have always paid more or less attention to these birds; yet I am as ignorant of their migrations as my predecessors. I have rarely seen Wilson's Petrel farther to the eastward than the Azores, and beyond these islands it generally abandoned the vessel. Along the American coast, I have not met with it to the northward beyond the 51st degree of latitude; while to the southward I have rarely observed many on the Gulf of Mexico; nor do I believe that any breed on the shores of the Floridas, or on the Bahama Islands, as alleged by WILSON, who, it would appear, stated so from report. Petrels are rarely destroyed by men, quadrupeds, or rapacious birds, when breeding; to the former they are of no value as an article of food, and by the latter they are seldom sought after; consequently they are more likely to return to their breeding places than most other birds, many of which are frequently induced to abandon them on account of the persecutions to which they are subjected. I have found the Forked-tailed Petrel breeding on our coast, in the fissures of rocks above the reach of the spray, and Wilson's digging for itself burrows in the sand or loose earth, on low islands. The *Thalassidroma pelagica* I have never found breeding on any part of our coast; but it is well known that it resorts to holes on certain of the Shetland Islands, among the blocks and stones of which the beaches are formed; though it appears that in some spots, where the fishermen are in the habit of destroying them, many resort to the elevated fissures of the rocks, where also a few of the Forked-tailed species

occasionally breed. The latter then, though more abundant in America, belongs to Europe also. WILSON was not aware that the species now named after him was any thing else than "the Stormy Petrel, *Procellaria pelagica* of LINNÆUS;" and he remarks that it "is found over the whole Atlantic ocean, from Europe to North America, at all distances from land, and in all weathers."

Wilson's Petrel breeds on some small islands situated off the southern extremity of Nova Scotia, and called "Mud Islands," but which are formed of sand and light earth, scantily covered with grass. Thither the birds resort in great numbers, about the beginning of June, and form burrows of the depth of two or two and a half feet, in the bottom of which is laid a single white egg, a few bits of dry grass, scarcely deserving the name of a nest, having been placed for its reception. The egg measures an inch and a half in length, by seven-eighths of an inch in breadth, is almost equally rounded at both ends, and has a pure white colour. These Petrels copulate on the water, in the same manner as the Hyperborean Phalarope. By the beginning of August the young follow their parents to sea, and are then scarcely distinguishable from them. During incubation, they remain in the burrows, or at their entrance, rarely going to seek for food before the dusk.

On wing this species is more lively than the Forked-tailed, but less so than the Common Stormy Petrel. It keeps its wings nearly at right angles with its body, and makes considerable use of its feet, particularly during calm weather, when it at times hops or leaps for several feet, or pats the water, whilst its wings are extended upwards with a fluttering motion, and it inclines its head downwards to pick up its food from the water, and I have observed it immerse the whole head beneath the surface, to seize on small fishes, in which it generally succeeded. It can walk pretty well on the deck of a vessel, or any other flat surface, and rise from it without much difficulty. Its notes are different from those of the Forked-tailed Petrel, and resemble the syllables *kee-re-kee kee*. They are more frequently emitted at night than by day. I never could ascertain whether or not these birds alight on the rigging at night, but my opinion is that they do not, for the sailors, to whom I had offered premiums for catching some of them, told me that although they flew about them while aloft, they could not see one standing anywhere.

During my several visits to the coasts of the Floridas, I saw scarcely any of these birds in the course of several months spent there, but I found them pretty abundant on returning towards Charleston. This species, like the others, feeds on mollusca, small fishes, crustacea, marine plants, excrements of cetaceous animals, and the greasy substances thrown from vessels. When

caught, they squirt an oily substance through the nostrils, and often disgorge the same. The sexes are similar in their external appearance.

STORMY PETREL, *Procellaria pelagica*, Wils. Amer. Orn., vol. vii. p. 90.

THALASSIDROMA WILSONII, Bonap. Syn., p. 367.

WILSON'S STORMY PETREL, Nutt. Man., vol. ii. p. 322.

WILSON'S PETREL, *Thalassidroma Wilsonii*, Aud. Orn. Biog., vol. iii. p. 486; vol. v. p. 645.

Male, $7\frac{1}{4}$, $15\frac{3}{4}$.

Wanders from the Gulf of Mexico, off the whole Atlantic coast to Baffin's Bay, and often almost across the ocean towards Europe. Breeds in vast numbers from Maine to Baffin's Bay.

Adult Male.

Bill shorter than the head, slender, straight, with the tips curved, as broad as high at the base, compressed towards the end. Upper mandible with the nostrils forming a tube at the base, beyond which, for a short space, the dorsal line is straight, then decurved, the ridge narrow and separated from the sides by a narrow groove, the edges sharp, inflected, the tip compressed, obliquely deflected. Lower mandible with the angle rather long, narrow and pointed, the dorsal line beyond it very slightly concave and decurved, the sides erect, the edges sharp, the dip slightly decurved.

Head of moderate size, roundish, anteriorly narrowed. Neck short. Body rather slender. Feet long, very slender; tibia bare at its lower part; tarsus very slender, reticulate, anteriorly with a long plate which is very slightly marked. Hind toe conical, so minute as scarcely to be perceptible; anterior toes rather long and extremely slender, obscurely scutellate above, connected by striated webs with concave margins; the third and fourth toes longest, and about equal. Claws slender, arched, depressed, acute.

Plumage very soft, blended, the feathers distinct only on the wings, which are very long; primary quills tapering, but rounded, the third longest, the second slightly longer than the fourth, the first much shorter and a little longer than the sixth; secondaries short, the outer incurved, obliquely rounded. Tail rather long, even, of twelve broad rounded feathers.

Bill and feet black, but the webs yellow excepting at the margin. Iris dark brown. The general colour of the plumage is dark greyish-brown, the quills and tail brownish-black, the outer secondary wing-coverts and some of the secondary quills light greyish-brown, and tipped with whitish. The rump, sides of the abdomen, and exterior lower tail-coverts, white.

Length to end of tail $7\frac{1}{4}$ inches, to end of wings 8, to end of claws 8; extent of wings $15\frac{3}{4}$; wing from flexure 6; tail $3\frac{3}{4}$; bill along the back $\frac{7}{12}$,

along the edge of lower mandible $\frac{8}{12}$; tarsus $1\frac{5}{8}$; middle toe 1, its claw $\frac{3}{12}$. Weight $1\frac{1}{8}$ oz.

Adult Female.

The female resembles the male.

The palate is marked behind with four longitudinal ridges, which are papillate, and before with three ridges; the mouth $4\frac{1}{2}$ twelfths in width, but capable of being dilated to 9 twelfths; the tongue $\frac{1}{2}$ inch long, triangular and acuminate, at the base concave and emarginate, flat above, with a slight median groove. The lobes of the liver are equal, their length $7\frac{1}{2}$ twelfths. The œsophagus, *a b*, has a uniform width of 3 twelfths until it enters the thorax, when it at once expands into an immense ovate sac, *b c d e*, 1 inch 11 twelfths long, viewed anteriorly 1 inch 1 twelfth in breadth, laterally 1 inch 2 twelfths. This sac is formed, properly speaking, of the proventriculus; its walls are extremely thin and transparent, and it is studded all over with roundish glandules placed at a considerable distance from each other. It curves upwards in front, and becomes narrowed to 2 twelfths, ending in the stomach, which is an extremely diminutive gizzard, of an oval form, only $3\frac{1}{2}$ twelfths long, and 3 twelfths in breadth. The stomach is thus reversed in position, its fundus being anterior; and accordingly the intestine, *f g h i*, comes off from its left instead of its right side, forms a semicircular sweep round the fundus, then passes backward for 1 inch, to *f*, bends forward to the liver, at *g*, and forms a number of loops, *g h i*, making in all 9 turns. The duodenum is 1 inch $\frac{3}{4}$ twelfth wide, and the intestine continues so for half its length, when it gradually contracts to $\frac{3}{4}$ twelfth, and is rather less in the rectum, which is terminated by a very small globular cloaca, *j*, $3\frac{1}{2}$ twelfths in diameter. There are no cœca. The intestine measures 14 inches. The stomach properly so called is lined by a rugous epithelium, and is in fact a true gizzard. It contains a quantity of shell-sand. The inner surface of the proventriculus is soft and smooth; that of the œsophagus longitudinally plicate. The trachea is $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches long, from $1\frac{1}{2}$ twelfths to 1 twelfth in breadth, flattened, with rings 84 in number, slender, and unossified. Bronchi wide, of 25 half rings.

WEH

Wilson's Petrel. Mother Carey's chicken.

1 Male 2 Female

Drawn From Nature by J. J. Audubon F.R.S. F.L.S.

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