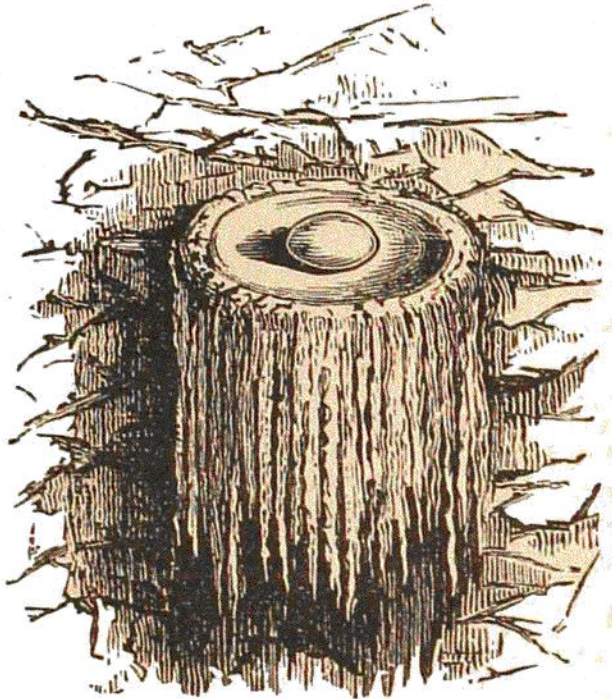


cemented together by the birds' dung, and the nests having been used for ages, are now solid masses, with a circular platform at the summit, beneath which hang down a number



NEST OF NODDY AT ST. PAUL'S ROCKS.

of tails of dried seaweed. The older nests project from the cliffs on the sheltered sides of the rocks, like brackets, having been originally commenced, as may be seen by the complete graduations existing, by a pair of birds laying an egg on a small projecting ledge of rock and adding a few stalks of weed.

It is only the stronger and more vigorous noddies that are able to occupy and hold possession of a nest of this description. There are only a limited number of

such on the island, there not being cliffs enough to accommodate more.* The island being somewhat over-populated, a great many noddies have to put up with the bare flat rocks as breeding-places, and there they lay their eggs in any slight hollow or chink. They are plucky birds, and the old ones sometimes make dashes at the head of an intruder who goes too near their nest. They had so little fear of man, from want of experience of his cruelty, that we could have caught any number of them with our hands.

In vast abundance, all over the rocks, crawls about a crab (*Grapsus strigosus*), the same as that already noticed at the Cape Verde Islands. This crab has been referred to by nearly all visitors to the rocks. It is far more wide-awake than the birds, and keeps well out of reach, being thus of some difficulty to catch. The crabs are all over the rocks, every crevice has several in it.

You are fishing, and you have put down at your feet a nice

* The two species of noddy occurring at the rocks are so nearly alike, that I did not notice at the time that there was more than one species present; a fact which I have since learnt from Mr. Howard Sanders' paper—"On the Laridæ of the Expedition," Proc. Zool. Soc., 1877, pp. 797, 798. Possibly the birds, which make bracket-like nests, are of one species only, and those which build on the ground, of the other.