

hatching they are perfectly filled out, the shell being tense, no doubt from the development of small quantities of gas within it.

The sand in which the eggs are hatched does not feel warm to the hand, but rather, in the daytime at least, cool, and it is always moist. I gathered several sets of eggs, placed them in large vessels full of sand, and took them on board the ship, thinking that I should easily succeed in hatching them artificially. I wished to obtain eggs in all stages of development. I found, however, that all my eggs perished within a couple of days. No doubt a certain definite amount of moisture must necessarily be maintained in the sand as well as a certain constant temperature in order to keep the eggs alive and develop them. I exposed the sand in which my eggs were to the sun in the daytime and covered it up at night.

I used to imagine, from what I had read, that Turtles' eggs were hatched by the direct daily heating by the sun of the sand in which they were buried. It appears to be the case, however, that the eggs are buried at such a depth that the sand there maintains a constant mean temperature, never hot and never cold. The eggs of a species of Mound Bird (*Megapodius*) are hatched under closely similar conditions in the Philippine Islands.\*

The young Turtles fresh from the eggs are kept as pets by the seamen at Ascension in buckets of sea-water. They eat chopped-up raw meat ravenously, using their fore-fins to assist their beak-like jaws in tearing the morsels. Turtle-meat is served out twice a week as rations to the inhabitants of Ascension, who are all naval employés. The island is commanded by a captain, and is treated by the Admiralty as a man-of-war, a sort of tender to the "Flora," the Guardship stationed at the Cape of Good Hope, to which the Ascension officers theoretically belong.

I paid a visit in the small steam-vessel which is employed in collecting Turtles from the various bays of the island to Boatswain-Bird Island, a breeding-place of various Sea Birds. As we steamed along the shore of the main island large Flying Gurnets (*Dactylopterus*) rose, scared by the vessel, and skimmed rapidly away in front of the bows. I stood in the bows with my gun and tried to shoot Flying Fish on the wing, a novel experience, but quite without success. The flight was rapid and the boat was in constant motion, pitching and rolling; no doubt in calm weather the thing might be done.

Boatswain-Bird Island is a high rock separated from the main island by a narrow channel. The sides of the rock are precipitous, but some sailor had managed to climb up and fix

\* See p. 348.