

a rope at the summit, so that it hung down the cliff. The cliff surface was covered with guano, hanging everywhere upon it in large projecting masses and stalactite-like formations. We clambered up the cliff by means of the rope, being half blinded and choked by the guano dust on the way.

In holes on the sides of the cliff, burrowed in the accumulated guano, nest two kinds of Tropic Birds (*Phaethon aethereus* and *P. flavirostris*). In bracket-like nests, as at St. Paul's Rocks, fixed against the lower parts of the cliffs, breeds a species of Noddy (*Anous*), and together with these birds, a beautiful snow-white Tern with black eyes (*Gygis candida*), called by the seamen the White Noddy, to distinguish it from the Black Noddy.

The summit of the rock is flat, and the plateau is covered with guano, in hollows on which nest the Booby (*Sula leucogaster*) and a Gannet (*S. piscatrix*), and the Frigate Bird (*Tachypetes aquila*). The throat of the Frigate Bird hangs in the form of a sort of pouch in front. This pouch is bare of feathers and coloured of a brilliant vermilion, looking as if rubbed over with some bright red powder. The bird is thus very handsome.

All the birds allowed themselves to be knocked over with sticks on their nests or when near them on our first reaching the plateau, but they soon became generally alarmed and took to flight. The Frigate Birds were on the look out whenever the Gannets were molested, and snatched the small fish which they disgorged, thus profiting by the general disaster. A single "Wideawake," the name given to the Tern (*Sterna fuliginosa*), which breeds in millions gregariously at "Wideawake fair" on the main island, was found on the plateau. The bird was nesting all alone amongst the Gannets for some reason or other.

It was striking to find breeding thus in the middle of the Atlantic, on the top of a steep volcanic rock, the same assemblage of birds which we had seen breeding together on a coral island at sea level off the north-east coast of Australia. At this latter island, namely Raine Island,* there is a third species of Gannet and no *Gygis*; but a Frigate Bird, the same Noddy, the same two Gannets, and the "Wideawake" breed there together as at Ascension, and also one of the species of "Tropic Birds" of Ascension.

After a halt at Porto Praya, and St. Vincent Cape Verde Islands, the ship was steered for England, but being long delayed by contrary winds, had to put into Vigo for more coals before it reached the Channel, and anchored at Spithead in the evening of May 24th, 1876.

* See p. 301.