

## BIRD NESTING IN LABRADOR.

The Canadian coast and islands which margin the south-eastern portion of the Peninsula of Labrador, embracing the north shore of the Lower St. Lawrence, from Seven Islands to Blanc Sablon, near the North-West River, are interesting localities for the naturalist to visit. The aborigines, and their modes of life; the magnificent lakes and picturesque rivers; the fisheries of the white man, and the singular methods by which he obtains a subsistence on the rock-bound coast, are subjects claiming our attention at this age of human knowledge. Labrador was visited by Audubon before he issued his beautiful work on the Birds of America. He was aware that without a thorough ornithological knowledge of these northern bird breeding-grounds, his book would contain but few facts in addition to those given by Wilson and prior writers on our birds and quadrupeds. The naturalist who now retraces Audubon's footsteps along the Labradorian coast may fully realize the accuracy and truthfulness of this clever writer. In 1867, such was the object of the Editor of this journal, who went there to collect a series of bird eggs, and determine the species breeding on the coast. On the rocks surrounding the beautiful Bay of Seven Islands, the nests of several marine birds may be found. The greater portion being the Herring Gull, (*Larus argentatus*) and the White-winged Guillemot (*Uria grylle*). Proceeding towards Mingan, Leach's Petrel, (*Thalassidroma Leachii*) may be seen skimming over the stormy sea, but where the birds nest is only conjecture. There is a sand cliff between the Shel-drake River and the latter place, which may be occupied by these birds. The nesting habits of the Petrels being similar to the Sand Martin. Approaching the St. John River, a rock stands some distance seaward; it is called Isle Parroquette; it is covered with earth and turf to allow numbers of the Arctic Puffin (*Mormon gracialis*) to burrow and form their nests. This rock is an extensive Puffin breeding-

ground. The Mingan group of Islands in the vicinity are heavily wooded, and nests of the common Eider Duck (*Somateria mollissima*), may be found occasionally. The nests of this species have been so frequently robbed by the people from the coast, that these islands are not now selected by the Eider Ducks for purposes of nidification. It is only on the islands below Point Esquimaux, which are not so easily accessible to man that the nests of these birds are found. The oölogist who can visit the group of islands between the latter place and Watsheesho, about the middle of May, will find plenty of material, but few species. There are abundance of Eider Duck's nests. Indeed, one small island visited by us, was almost covered with the nests of this species, and here we first found the nests of its congener the King Eider, (*S. spectabilis*.) It is in this region that one can realize the wildness of northern scenery. The diversity of the innumerable rocky islands which are surrounded by the sea; some bare and weather-beaten; others with trees of stunted growth, while a few tower to a great height, and are densely covered with wood. Such are the island homes of the sea birds. On one of these rocks called Table Rock, representing a platform about two acres in extent, we found the nest of the Black-backed Gull, (*Larus marinus*), and the Herring Gull (*L. argentatus*). It is a curious fact, that each of the rocky islands have been for centuries, the nesting-ground of marine birds, each species selecting and holding to this day its favorite island, where they produce a progeny forming a community of thousands each succeeding season. For instance, an island on which the Arctic Tern (*Sterna macroura*) breeds, cannot be invaded by any other species; the little creatures will fight even the larger gulls, and hold the locality to themselves. This is not the case with the Great Black-backed Gull, and the Herring Gull, the nests of which are frequently found on the same island, almost within three feet of each other. This is partially accounted for, and further to show the instinctive nature