

fishy taste, and is far from being palatable. The other aquatic birds are mostly sea-gulls, gannets, boobies and albatrosses, which congregate here in large numbers to breed.

The coast of Africa about five miles off looks barren in the extreme. Nothing but hills and ridges of grey sand are to be seen, with here and there black and very bleak looking rocks. The whole coast for hundreds of miles is completely iron bound, with a heavy surf constantly breaking on its whole extent, so that any unfortunate ship stranded or getting on shore by accident is soon broken up, and the crew can only escape with extreme difficulty. It is, therefore, a most dangerous coast for a ship to be lost on, no water being obtainable on its sandy deserts, even if the crew should reach the shore. Our boats are now got ready for loading the guano, as we discharge the stone ballast we have taken in for the outward voyage; stages are rigged from the island well out, clear of the surf which is constantly breaking on the rocks. These stages are well secured and guyed from the top of the spars with chains, anchors and stout ropes, while planking is laid along for the passage of the crews with their bags of guano to the boats; meanwhile the long-boat or pinnace is slacked into the stage,