

THE SKINS AND EGGS OF THE GREAT AUK.

BY

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NEWTON (*Ibis*, 1870, p. 259) estimated the number of existing skins at 71 (or 72?). Symington Grieve, in his monograph *The Great Auk, or Garefowl*, recorded 77 specimens of the Great Auk (*Alca impennis*) as existing in 1885 in the Appendix, pp. 4-24. (This is a translation of Prof. W. Blasius' list and is convenient for reference, as numbers are given to each specimen.) In Grieve's "Recent Information" he gives the number of skins as 78 or 79 (p. 25, 1888).

T. Parkin, in his pamphlet on *The Great Auk* (1911), gave the number of skins (on E. Bidwell's authority) as 80.

At the recent sale of the collections of the late Mr. George Dawson Rowley, who died in 1878, two skins came into the market and were sold at Stevens' on November 14th, 1934.

Both were purchased by Captain Vivian Hewitt of Rhyl, N. Wales; the first (lot 158), described as a female in summer plumage, for 480 guineas, and the second (lot 159), described as a male in summer plumage, for 500 guineas.

Mr. G. D. Rowley bought the first bird in 1869 from G. A. Frank of Amsterdam, who had acquired it from the collection of Graf von Westerholt-Glikenberg of Westerholt, near Münster, Westfalen. It is No. 13 in Grieve's list, and Dr. B. Altum mentions it in a footnote as still existing in this collection in the *Journal f. Ornithol.*, 1863, p. 115.

The second bird (No. 14 in Grieve's list) was bought by Rowley in 1868 from Gardner of London, who got it in 1848 from Lefèvre of Paris.

At the same sale no fewer than six eggs of the Great Auk were offered for sale, the largest number ever sold on a single occasion, although four eggs were sold at Stevens' on July 11th, 1865, and the collection of Mr. R. Champley of Scarborough contained nine specimens, which were, however, disposed of privately.

Of these six eggs, lot 152 (No. 9 in Grieve's list) was neatly blown with the usual two holes and characteristically marked. It was one of the ten eggs discovered in a box at the Royal College of Surgeons and identified by Newton. It was bought by G. D. Rowley for £33 on July 11th, 1865, and was sold on this occasion for 300 guineas to Captain Hewitt. It is Egg V. of Parkin's pamphlet.

Lot 153 (No. 12 in Grieve's list) is the egg bought in Paris by Yarrell, for Lady Cust, for 5 francs. It is neatly blown with

two holes and is almost white, having one or two blackish streaks only at the larger end. This was bought by myself for 210 guineas.

Lot 154 (No. 11 in Grieve's list) was bought by G. D. Rowley from B. Bourman Labrey of Manchester. It had formerly been in the possession of Mr. Wilmot. This egg had been broken and put together by Yarrell. It retains its markings, but the repairing has been done in somewhat crude fashion. This was also purchased by myself for 140 guineas.

Lot 155 (No. 10 in Grieve's list) was a remarkable egg. The markings were very fresh and consisted of interlacing lines on a white ground. It is believed to have belonged to Captain Cook prior to 1779, and was bought by G. D. Rowley on March 16th, 1863, from John Gould, who thought it was probably of British origin. Unfortunately, it was blown by the removal of the small end, leaving a large jagged hole. This egg was bought by Sir Bernard Eckstein, Bart., of Uckfield, Sussex, for 260 guineas.

Lot 156 was No. 1 of the three eggs which formerly belonged to Lord Garvagh, who obtained it from the sale of T. H. Potts' collection. It was formerly in the collection of the Vicomte de Barde, and subsequently in the Musée de Boulogne, and then passed through Gardner to T. H. Potts. It is No. 13 in Grieve's list and is fairly well blown and typically marked. This was knocked down to Captain V. Hewitt for 300 guineas.

Lot 157 (No. 14 in Grieve's list) had been broken and roughly repaired, but was a well-marked specimen. It was also in Lord Garvagh's possession (No. 2) and is apparently the egg bought at T. H. Potts' sale on April 7th, 1854, for £20 (Egg II. in Parkin's pamphlet). This was bought by Mr. G. N. Carter of Withington, Manchester, for 100 guineas.

The number of eggs in existence is probably 75, but one or two have been lost sight of and it is desirable that a fresh census should be made.

In 1870 Newton estimated the number as 65 (*Ibis*, 1870, p. 261), Grieve in 1885 at 68, and in 1888 at "67 or 69".

Parkin in 1911 gave the number as 73, and since that date two more have been recorded, so that apparently the number at present known is 75.

A number of bones of the Great Auk from Funk Island were also included in the sale, and were bought by the Marquess Hachisuka for £3 5s. (lot 246).