

interest to many people besides ornithologists. After a keen competition it was purchased by Sir Vauncey Crewe, of Calke Abbey, Derbyshire, for 300 guineas.

"The collecting of birds' eggs is a pastime which has obtained for some centuries. John Evelyn mentions in his diary for 1681 that when at Norwich he saw the collection of eggs formed by Sir Thomas Browne, but we must come to the end of the eighteenth century before we can trace any collector in possession of an egg of the Great Auk. Early in the present century references to collections containing specimens of this egg become more frequent. There are 68 recorded eggs of the Great Auk, but this number includes several fragmentary remains that can only by courtesy be called eggs. They may fairly be divided into four groups. Ten specimens, from their perfect condition, color, and style of marking, may be put into a class by themselves. Then we have 34 good specimens; 12 are slightly cracked, badly blown, or varnished eggs, while the remaining 14 are imperfect, varying from the eggs that had one end knocked off (probably for the purpose of sucking), like that in the Angers Museum, to the two fragments of the Natural History Museum at South Kensington. Great Britain possesses the larger number of the specimens, for, of the 68, England has 45 and Scotland 3. France comes next with 10 eggs, followed by Germany with 3. Two are in Holland, while Denmark, Portugal, and Switzerland each possess one; there are two in the United States. Again, of the 68 eggs, 29 are in 19 museums, while 21 private owners possess 39 eggs among them.

"The fact of the Great Auk having formerly inhabited the British Isles has been one great cause for the steady advance in value of its eggs. The earliest record we have of a sale by auction is in 1853, when two fetched respectively £29 and £30, which remained about their value until 1860, when one sold for £60. In 1880 the price had risen to £100, followed in 1887 by £168 and in 1888 by £225.

"The egg which was sold yesterday, though not nearly such a good specimen as that sold in 1888, has an interest to all British ornithologists from having belonged to Yarrell, who purchased it in Boulogne of a fisherman who had been in a whaling ship. He had two or three swan's eggs and this egg on a string. Yarrell asked if they were for sale, and was told that the white eggs were one franc each and the spotted one two francs. Unfortunately we do not know the date of this transaction, but it was anterior to 1838, for in that year the egg was figured in Hewitson's 'British Oology.' After Yarrell's death it was sold at Stevens's auction-rooms for £21 (December, 1856), and purchased for the late Mr. Frederick Bond, an old friend of Yarrell's. It remained in this gentleman's possession until 1875, when it was sold with his unrivalled collection of British eggs to Baron Louis d'Hamonville of Château de Mononville, who sent it to Mr. Stevens."

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ERRATUM.—At bottom of Plate IV, second line, for "preessing" read "preening."