

THE PURCHASE OF A GREAT AUK FOR THE
THAYER MUSEUM AT LANCASTER, MASS.

BY JOHN E. THAYER.

(Plates XIII and XIV.)

THROUGH Mr. Rowland Ward of London I have had the good fortune to purchase a Great Auk (*Plautus impennis*) and three eggs. The following is an account of the bird and eggs.

MOUNTED BIRD.

This specimen was bought for Viscount Hill's Hawkstone collection in 1838 from Gould, the Naturalist, and was first mentioned by the late Mr. R. Champley of Scarborough in the 'Annals and Magazines of Natural History,' 1864, Vol. XIV, page 235. The Hawkstone collection was sold to Mr. Beville Stanier, who has a collection of birds of his District. A Great Auk not consistently belonging to a local collection, he decided to sell it and it was purchased through Rowland Ward of London for the Thayer Museum.

The following is taken from the Hawkstone catalogue,—“This Bird was re-set up by H. Shaw in 1867, and is supposed to be the best specimen in existence.”¹

THE THREE EGGS.

These eggs came from the collection of Mr. Robert Champley of Scarborough, England. He had nine Great Auk eggs, which were acquired by him in 1864 and a few years preceding that date.

Three of these came from the Royal College of Surgeons, London. Two of these eggs, No. 7 and 8, are the ones I bought. My other egg, Mr. Champley bought in Paris.

¹ It would be better to say “one of the best” instead of “best,” although it really is a magnificent specimen.

In Symington Grieve's book, 'The Great Auk or Garefowl. Its History, Archæology and Remains,' there appears the following: "On the 11th of July, 1865, there was sold at Steven's Sale Rooms, London, four Great Auk eggs, that were part of the splendid set of ten eggs discovered in the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons. The prices they fetched were 33£, 31£-38s, and two 29£ each." As it may be interesting for our readers to have some further information about these eggs, we may state, that in a footnote on page 483 of 'The Garefowl and its Historians' (Nat. Hist. Review, 1865), Professor A. Newton mentions that a few years prior to that time there was found in the Royal College of Surgeons, London, by the late Curator, Mr. Stewart, a box with the words, "Penguin Eggs — Dr. Dick." Of when or how they came into possession of the establishment there was no record.

The box contained ten matchless Great Auk eggs, which were recognized by Professor A. Newton, and from the name Penguin being on the box he supposed them to be of American origin.

The collection appears to have been unique and unrivalled, and to all interested in such remains invaluable for comparison. The authorities of the Royal Museum were evidently unappreciative of them, for it is stated that they disposed of some without even taking casts or photographs. From a letter which Mr. J. C. Stevens, the Auctioneer, wrote to Mr. Champley, dated 14th of July, 1865, we get the following information: Lot 140 sold for 29£, Lot 141 for 33£. Lot 142 for 31£-10s. Lot 143 for 29£.

In addition to the above four eggs of which we have given the sale prices, three others from the same collection were sold privately to Mr. Champley.

Egg No. 6 (Plate XIV, lower figure) was bought from Mr. Ward of London, who got it from Mr. Fairmaire, a dealer in Zoölogical wares in Paris. Mr. Ward sold it to Mr. Champley. Size $4\frac{7}{8}$ inches long, 3 inches broad. It has a ground color of dirty white, beautifully marked all over with black and brown spots. In Grieve's list of Great Auk's eggs this is No. 61 (see Grieve, page 33, appendix).

Egg No. 7 (not figured) was bought through the agency of Professor Flower from the Royal College of Surgeons by Mr.

Champley. Size $4\frac{3}{4}$ inches long and $3\frac{1}{4}$ broad. Dark yellow markings, all at the thick end (Grieve, No. 63, page 33, appendix).

Egg No. 8 (Plate XIV, upper figure) was bought from the same. Size $4\frac{3}{8}$ inches long and $2\frac{7}{8}$ broad. Ground color dark yellow, marked all over (Grieve, 65, page 34, appendix).

These eggs are all in good condition, but of course end blown and the holes seem large in comparison to the way eggs are blown to-day.

ORNITHOLOGY OF A CHURCHYARD.

BY B. S. BOWDISH.

EVEN under unpromising conditions, and in unexpected places, there is often something for the bird-student to investigate. This is illustrated by some surprising records from city parks, and even from the smaller green spots, oases in the great desert of brick and mortar.

As such a record I here submit for whatever it may be worth, the results of observations in Saint Paul's Churchyard, New York City, made mostly during intervals of a few moments at noon, and occasionally in the morning, and covering the migration periods of spring and fall of 1903, and spring of 1904.

Saint Paul's Church property is situated nearly midway between the East and North Rivers, fronting east on Broadway, Church Street at the rear, Vesey Street on the north side and Fulton Street on the south, and it is thus in one of the busiest and noisiest sections of the city.

At the rear of the property, along Church Street, there is the constant rumble and roar of the elevated railroad. This church property is about 332 feet long by 177 feet wide, of which area the church occupies a space about 78 by 120 feet at the Broadway end, while at the Church Street end the Church School takes off another slice about 30 feet wide. The space remaining consists of the main yard at the rear of the church, between it and the



Thayer, John Eliot. 1905. "The Purchase of a Great Auk for the Thayer Museum at Lancaster, Mass." *The Auk* 22, 300–302. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4070163>.

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