

blotched with brown of two tints, the paler having the appearance of being beneath the surface of the shell. The same gentleman has likewise communicated to me the following note:—"Since I was in Lapland in 1855, I have three or four times renewed my acquaintance with the Pomatorhine Skua. In Iceland, although it has been observed by several travellers, I believe it is not common, and I only saw the species once. In October 1862, while lying weather-bound in Torbay, a party of about thirty of these birds were for two days in close attendance on our ship, and about as many more round each of two other vessels anchored near us. They were very tame, coming close alongside the quarter-deck in quest of food; and dire was the strife and loud the contention as one lucky bird after another seized on some choice morsel and conveyed it far astern to devour it at leisure. Scarcely any two of these birds were alike in plumage. There was every gradation, from the sombre whole-coloured suit of sooty-brown to the varied dress with an under surface of pure white, adults in the extreme of each habit appearing, as their long disk-bearing tails testified. On my return from Spitzbergen in August 1864, about midway between Bear Island and the coast of Norway, we saw many of these birds, generally in waiting on the flocks of Kittiwakes which we encountered. In Spitzbergen itself, only one was recognized by our party."

The Pastor Sommerfeldt, in his account of the birds of East Finmark, mentions its yearly occurrence, in spring and autumn, in the Varanger Fjord, and states that he has obtained its eggs from Gamvik, where it has been observed all through the summer. From this and the information given by Mr. Newton, I should conclude that it breeds on the high fells east of the North Cape, which look forth towards the Arctic Ocean.

In the British Islands it only occurs as a straggler, but in that character it is certainly not rare. It sometimes is met with in large bands, and occasionally wanders far from the sea into the inland counties. The first record of its occurrence as a British bird is, I believe, to be found in the sale Catalogue of Bullock's celebrated Museum, in 1819. Two specimens are therein mentioned, one of which is stated to have been killed at Brighton. This was secured by Dr. Leach for the National Collection, where it may now be seen; but Mr. G. R. Gray, in his 'Catalogue of Birds in the British Museum,' attaches to it the locality "North Britan," which is probably an error.

In proof that it is frequently met with on our coasts, I may mention that on the 19th of October, 1857, I saw in Leadenhall Market five Great Skuas, seven Pomatorhine Skuas (one adult and six young of the year), and one young Arctic Skua, all of which were from Yarmouth, and, it was believed, had been killed near the Light-ship after a gale.

The weight of the old Pomatorhine Skua was 1 lb. 6 oz., that of the young 1 lb. 8 oz. The colouring of the legs of the latter was very beautiful,—the thighs, knees, and half an inch of the tarsus beneath, and the joint immediately above the interdigital membranes, being beautiful cobalt-blue; the front of the middle part of the tarsi pale greenish blue; the interdigital membranes dark chocolate-black, resembling india-rubber in appearance; under surface of the foot reddish flesh-colour; irides brownish black; bill brownish slate-colour, tips black. The feet and tarsi of the old bird were uniform dark chocolate-brown; under mandible fleshy, becoming black at the tip; basal portion of the upper mandible sickly yellow, the tip black; irides very dark.

The changes of plumage to which this species is subject are most perplexing, and I feel assured that much yet remains to be learnt respecting them. See what I have said on this subject in my account of *Stercorarius longicaudus*.

A most perfect and singularly coloured British-killed specimen is contained in the collection of our native birds belonging to Viscount Hill, at Hawkstone. This individual is remarkable for its large size, for the length of its middle tail-feathers, and for the uniformity in the colouring of its entire plumage, which may be characterized as of the deepest chocolate, inclining to black; the tarsi appear to have been black, and the beak also, with the exception of the culmen, which is olive. This specimen has no appearance of immaturity; the two middle tail-feathers are of uniform breadth from the base to the tip, and are much longer than usual. Total length 22 inches; bill 2; wing $13\frac{3}{4}$; tarsi $2\frac{1}{4}$; middle toe and nail 2.

The Plate represents an adult and young bird, rather less than the natural size.