# HARLEQUIN DUCK.

Anas histrionica, *Linn.*

Clangula histrionica, *Leach.*

Nature, ever boundless in her resources and ever varying in her details, appears not unfrequently to delight in producing the most striking and singular contrast of colours, with which to adorn the plumage of the feathered race: and yet, strong and decided as the contrast may be, the whole effect is harmonious and delightful. It is so in the splendid bird before us, which gains its name from the multiplicity of its markings, —markings which, unlike those produced as it were by accident, and observed only upon varieties, without permanency and without method, are here the characters of a species, and are continued feather for feather through successive generations.

The general contour of its body together with the fanciful markings of its plumage would seem to ally it to the Mergansers; but on comparing the skeletons it was found by Mr. Yarrell and ourselves not to approach so nearly to that tribe of birds as did the skeleton of the Long-tailed Duck, *Harelda glacialis*, Leach. This circumstance, together with its general similarity in bone to the skeleton of the Golden Eye, has induced us to arrange the Harlequin Duck under the same genus with it.

Although higher latitudes than the British Islands constitute the true habitat of the Harlequin Duck, it has nevertheless been frequently captured here, and both sexes enrich several of our collections of native birds. Its presence, however, is attended with great uncertainty both in this country and in all the temperate portions of Europe. It is consequently prized by ornithological collectors as one of their greatest rarities. The Arctic regions, which are enriched with so many aquatic birds, afford this beautiful species a residence especially adapted to its solitary mode of life, as well as supplying it with every necessary conducive to its existence. It is said to be peculiarly local in its places of resort, preferring inland streams in the neighbourhood of waterfalls and cataracts. It is abundant in Norway, Russia, and Siberia; and was also observed by Dr. Richardson while pursuing his course from Hudson's Bay to the shores of the polar seas, sometimes in pairs, but not unfrequently in small flocks of eight or ten. It breeds near the water's edge, generally laying from six to twelve eggs, of a pure white. Its powers of diving are said to be great; hence it seeks its food, which consists of shell-fish and mollusca, at the bottoms of rivers and inlets of the sea. It flies with great rapidity, and is capable of performing extensive migrations in a very short time.

The disparity in size between the sexes is strikingly apparent, the female being full a third smaller than the male, and remarkably plain in her colouring. We have to thank the Rev. Dr. Thackeray, Provost of King's College Cambridge, for the loan of the female from which our figure was taken. That gentleman has also most liberally offered us any other species in his valuable collection for the same purpose.

The young male of the year very much resembles the adult female in colour; its superior size however, and enlarged windpipe, at once point out its sexual difference. They are at least four years attaining the fine state of plumage which characterizes the male in our Plate.

The cheeks and neck are black, with dark violet reflections; a triangular space between the beak and the eye, a spot behind the eye, a longitudinal band on the sides of the neck, two crescent-shaped collars on the breast, with parts of the scapulars, are all of a pure white; over each eye is situated a rufous band which terminates at the occiput; breast and belly blueish ash; flanks reddish chestnut; the whole of the upper surface deep blackish brown.

In the female, the upper surface is of a dark brown, with the exception of a white spot behind the eye, and a space of dull white which covers the face; the head lighter brown clouded with transverse markings of a darker colour.

We have figured an adult male and a female, about two thirds of their natural size.