

"A PRESENTATION COPY" OF AUDUBON'S "BIRDS."

"It seemed, come an arranger de deus"—Old Saw.

How little reliance can be placed upon the assurances of those operators before the fact, every one whose grinders have been submitted to their merits is competent to declare; but there are others who fall not a whit behind the tooth-drawer in mendacity, who are every day before us. Your traveller, now (and they are plenty as mushrooms in these days), will descend for hours, and detail the wonders he has witnessed by large measure, while the quantum of truth contained in his narrations is of Homoeopathic minuteness. The sportsmen, too, whether disciples of old Isaac, or legitimate descendants of Nimrod; from the hunters of bear or buffalo on the prairies, the grouse or wild turkeys of the West, down to the shooter of sand-pipers on the sea shore, never consent to diminish a pin or a feather in recounting their exploits, especially if their auditors have never mounted a shooting-jacket, or sported a double-barrel. But there is reason in all things, and some do bounce so horribly as to bring discredit upon a whole fraternity. I am a sportsman myself, and am free to admit that I always consider the odd bird a brace, and in this I have warrant from the shop-keepers, who do not scruple to sequester to their own use the half-penny of every customer in making change.

Of the amplifying order of the school, Peregrine Pinto, who kept house at the sign of "The Pear Tree," in the village of Polopodes (vulgo Pollywog), in the valley of the Chemung, held the most distinguished honors. Others might go out and return without seeing a bird, but Peregrine would beat the same ground and boast of success. To be sure, his game-bag did not vouch for the veracity of his assertion, as it was most often empty; the birds, however, had certainly been killed, but the cover was too thick, or some other cause was assigned why the dog could not find them, although he often boasted that Pinto was the best retriever in the three counties.

"The Pear Tree" was the best kept house in all Pollywog. Peregrine was a jovial fellow, fond of good eating himself, and willing to feed well his guests of every description; and no man was in danger of being poisoned either at his bar or his buttery. Consequently he had many boarders, and was occasionally visited by gentlemen of leisure, good shots, and otherwise. Among the former was Doctor Lighthouse and two counsellors at law; men who never burnt powder themselves, and who did not think much of those who did. "There is no accounting for tastes," and for the perversity of theirs I shall not endeavor to find an excuse; but, although they repudiated that kind of fun, the article in general they were great admirers of, and now practised a joke, with more adroitness, or laughed more vociferously at its success, than these repudiators of dogs and double Mantons.

Of the sporting clique who used to visit the "Pine Tree," was Charles Copely, a finished shot, a well-reared gentleman, and a most clever fellow in every walk of life. He was versed in the science of Ornithology, and pursued his amusement with a double zest, as every subject brought down by his gun enabled him to make further researches in that interesting study; and not unfrequently he would attempt to indoctrinate Peregrine in his favorite pursuit.

Peregrine was a willing scholar, but, unfortunately, in his school days, Webster's spelling books were plenty, but the "dictionary" with which our modern school is to be endowed, was yet in embryo. He would listen to the descriptions of Copely of bills tetragonal angulated, projecting mandibles, Tarsus's scutellate, naked or clothed, &c.; and, by dint of application, he acquired a bead roll of terms, of which he understood but little; but, proud of his erudition, he never failed to read a lecture to unbelievers in the joys of field sports upon every occasion.

The Doctor and the two Counsellors were those upon whom he used oftentimes to perpetrate his homilies, too frequently "flat and unprofitable," by the jumble of ideas, and the misapplication of terms. These lessons increased in length at every visit of Copely, and Peregrine used to pour forth his newly acquired ideas without "remorse of conscience." The Doctor could not "take his ease in his inn," and smokes his accustomed cigar while reading the newspaper; nor could the Counsellors con their briefs, without being bored with the old history, or with descriptions of some new subject, and they began to grow restive.

One of Copely's periodical visits was drawing to its close, and having sent his trunk to the Lakes, he determined to give the marsh another brush, and take the steamboat homeward. In this excursion he was attended by Peregrine.

Dinner was over, and the trio of unbelievers were cozily seated about the stove when Peregrine returned, full of new matter, which he seemed eager to put forth.

"Well, Perry," said the Doctor, "what new?"

"A fine specimen, a most rare bird, we shot upon the marsh," was the reply.

"Where is it?" asked the Doctor.

"Copely took it with him, with intent to preserve it. He called it a Gallinipper, or the European Chlorosis," said Peregrine.

"Gallinule, you mean," said the Doctor.

"Well, it may be," responded Peregrine; "they are pretty much alike, but I must get dinner before I describe it to you."

While the hungry sportsman was filling his stomach, the Doctor broke forth—

"Gentlemen, our friend improves; so bright a light in the field of science must not be obscured. Pollywog must no longer hold this splendid luminary under a bushel. Our duty to ourselves and our country," he continued, with a Fourth of July flourish, "demands that our great ornithologist should be known to that greater one, whose fame is universal. Our Pinto, who, I doubt not, is legitimately descended from the Ferdinand Mendes, memorized by Congress, needs but to be known to be justly appreciated, and it is our duty to—"

Here the entrance of Pinto (who had "snatched a short repast") broke up the conclave.

Some ten days afterwards, the same party was again assembled. A horn sounded, and Peregrine, who officiated as Portmaster of Pollywog, ran to receive the mail. The office was kept within the bar, and he was busily employed with the letters; one of a singular quadrangular form, sealed with wax and impressed with a spread eagle, as if imprinted by the reverse of the Federal coin, met his eye, and which, to his great surprise, he found addressed to himself. Opening it in haste, and looking at the signature, he saw a name, which, never until then, was upon the list of his correspondents.

"Why, who's this?" he exclaimed.

"What's the matter, Perry?" said the Doctor, "you seem puzzled."

"A letter from a man I never heard of before, and I can't make out the name."

"Let me try," said the Doctor (and glancing at the letter). "Why, it's from Audubon!" he exclaimed.

"And who the devil's Audubon?" cried Pinto; "I never heard his name before."

"Never heard of Audubon?" replied the Doctor; "the greatest Ornithologist in the world! He has already published four volumes, each almost as much as a man can lift, and is now busy with the fifth; they say the price of each set will be a thousand dollars."

Pinto stared in astonishment.

"What can he want with me?" he said.

"Read the letter," said the Doctor; "it must explain itself."

The amazed Peregrine began, but, gliding so many words beyond his comprehension, he handed it over to the Doctor, who repeated audibly the following words—

Peregrine Pinto, Esq.—Dear Sir.—The nature of my communication will, I trust, prove a sufficient apology for the liberty I am taking in addressing an entire stranger. In my avocation I find it difficult to avoid asking information from any source whence I may hope to obtain it; and I trust you will the more readily pardon the liberty taken, when I say that I am referred to you by Doctor Lovejoy (with whom I have had the pleasure of becoming acquainted in New York), for some ornithological information in regard to the region about the head of Seneca Lake.

You are doubtless aware that I am engaged, since my return from the Rocky Mountains, in preparing my MSS. for publication, and as my attention has been mainly given to the discovery of new species and genera in the heretofore unexplored regions of the "Far West," I am sadly deficient in the necessary knowledge of the habits and localities of many species of birds in the Middle and Eastern States. If I am rightly informed, the natus of Seneca Lake, and the low marshy grounds about its head, abound in interesting specimens in ornithology, and I am anxious to obtain some further information concerning them. If not presuming too much, I would ask you to communicate to me any information which you may think interesting, particularly in regard to the different species of duck, teal, plover, woodcock, snipe, rail, grouse, &c., &c., whether they are gregarious or not—migratory or resident—which of them breed in your vicinity—their mode of nesting—time of migration, and general habits; likewise, at what time in the year you consider them in season—the method of hunting them, &c., &c.; and particularly as to the different varieties of the snipe family—the Vir. Aug. of Linnaeus, whether it is resident or migratory, and, if resident, its manner of nesting, number of eggs laid, &c.—Rex Piscator—Same—and, in fine, any information you may see fit to communicate on the general subject of my immediate pursuit.

Any communication you may favor me with will be gratefully acknowledged by, sir, Your obedient servant, AUDUBON.

P.S.—Do the following birds frequent the waters of the Seneca?

Holandsch Volant—"Linnaeus."

Large White Gull (American).

Bittern, or other "rara avis"—their size, plumage, &c.

"Well," said Pinto, "what shall I do?"

"Answer it, of course," said the Doctor; "it is very easy. A letter half as long as one of your ordinary discourses would answer every purpose. Beside, it is usual with authors in such cases to present a copy of their works to their correspondents, and Audubon's 'Birds' are certainly worth having."

"I think so too," said Peregrine; "but then the letter should be well answered. The cock-shooting will soon be in season, and Copely is the man of all others to do it in style. I will wait until he comes."

All seemed to concur in this resolution, and the 6th of July was anxiously awaited by Pinto. It came at last, and Copely came with it. The conclave was in session, and he was ushered in. The letter was produced and read, and pondered well by Copely, who at first suspected a hoax; and he cast a scrutinizing glance at the Doctor, who was making some grave comments upon the epistle. Nothing was elicited to sustain his conjecture. He looked at the two counsellors with the same intent, but the stolid gravity with which they received his gaze, and the profound attention which they gave to the Doctor's descent, put him at a non-plus.

"I will not act precipitately," thought he; "the matter shall be thoroughly sifted before I mingle in it. Beside, I cannot make the preparatory researches until I reach home, and opportunities will be constantly offering to detect the humbug, if it be really such. Meanwhile, Pinto was showing the letter to every customer, and all Pollywog was agog, to get sight of the splendid books, which he so confidently expected. This enthusiasm of the citizens helped to delude Copely, and on his departure he took the letter home with him; and, although a little mystified that inquiries should be made of birds so common, he thought that the great ornithologist, perhaps, might wish to ascertain whether their habits in fresh water regions corresponded with those on the seaboard. Of the authenticity of the dispatch he now no longer doubted, and set about preparing an answer in behalf of Peregrine.

Accordingly, he traced the river banks in his vicinity, and watched the holes with which they were perforated, and the tenants by which they were occupied. At length, in a remote nook, he saw a cavity of larger dimensions, and near it, perched upon a dead tree, a pair of Kingfishers; one of which, after some delay, entered the hole, and from the length of time which the bird remained therein, he became convinced that the incubation was not perfected; and that, finding the eggs entire, he would be able to answer the enquiries of the letter much to the satisfaction of Mr. Audubon.

He hastened home, and procuring implements and assistants, with great care proceeded to clear away the earth, and possess himself of the desired nest. The process was slow, from apprehension of deranging the domicile of the Kingfishers; but finally it was laid open to view without a straw disturbed, and before it was removed our friend made the most minute scrutiny of the tenement and of the earth which surrounded it, so that the description might be true to the letter.

With regard to the gulls (I mean the flying ones,) he had not so much trouble. He had only to take a trip up the lake, where at a certain point our excellent Capt. Dakin orders the refuse of the dinner table thrown out for them, and large congregations, of various species, were sure to hover about the steamboat. He pursued the enquiry with respect to the other birds mentioned in the letter, and when all research was exhausted, he elaborated with great care an epistle which might have satisfied all ornithologists from Linnaeus to Audubon. This he forwarded to Peregrine to be signed and sent; and all Pollywog was invited by the delighted Pinto to assist in the reading of his letter to Audubon.

The despatch was sent by mail duly franked, and Pollywog was on tenter hooks for the arrival of an answer; but about that time there were great complaints against Cave Johnson's management of the Post Offices, and the curiosity of the people was held in suspense. Meanwhile the elated Peregrine, who confidently expected a presentation copy of Audubon, watched every arrival by the canal, enquiring for the package, and to the beatmen at the Collector's office, as they were clearing for a downward passage, he gave strict charge to "keep dry" anything which might be shipped to him, as he expected valuable books from Audubon.

Things were in this state for a month or more, without any abatement of Peregrine's enquiries, or diminution of his anxiety, until the triumviri who had concocted the hoax, and who had enjoyed the laugh inwardly, were resolved upon a roar universal. The Doctor congregated all the best lungs of the village in the bar-room of Pinto, and told the story. And such a shout! (equalled alone by that described by Milton.) The echo's of Pollywog never before reverberated.

When the news of this explosion came to the ears of Copely, he laughed loudest of any. Admitting that he was most excellently well sold, he enjoys the joke to this day. But Peregrine was prodigiously chafed, and has not yet recovered his disappointment at not receiving that presentation copy from Audubon.

THEATRICALS IN NASHVILLE, TENN.

The theatre is generally well attended—Miss Julia Dean and Miss Logan have each of them played various engagements, with the most marked success. In fact, stars are well supported, both by the actors and the public. Mr. J. B. Roberts is here at present, an actor who has not yet filled the sounding trump of fame, but one who will, if I do not greatly err, step forward to a proud eminence, and that without delay. Mr. Roberts has been for twelve years a hard student—seven years ago he

was here as a stock actor; he has now returned to show us what his more mature efforts are capable of, and what improvement study has made in him. He commenced to very indifferent houses, but to use the language of one of our editors, "he now draws crowded and fashionable houses at the Adelphi nightly, and is winning golden opinions from all sorts of people." This is as it should be. There has been no actor in our city since the olden times who could walk the stage and "speak the speech" with Mr. R., and we question if there are many in any other city in this country who can surpass, or even equal him. He possesses a rare combination of talents which peculiarly fit him for his profession, which have been improved by years of unremitting and judicious study. Though his gesticulations and attitudes are always apt and in good taste, they are naturally so, and not the result of a set rule of action. But his chief point is his adaptability, if we might use the word. When you have seen him in one character, you have only seen him in a tithe of his attractiveness. His versatility is really astonishing, and the ease and perfection with which he adapts himself to the different characters which he personates, without borrowing from one for the other, is the secret of his great success." In the stock company are John Greene and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Crisp, Mr. and Mrs. Herbert, Bernard, Fuller, Johnson, &c., &c.

I have already written more than I intended, but if you and your readers feel any interest in the doings at Nashville, you shall hear again from

NASHVILLE, TENN., Nov. 4, 1851.

MISS JULIA BENNETT IN CHICAGO.

CHICAGO, Ill., Oct. 31, 1851.

Dear "Spirit."—We have had a number of stars this season—among them I may mention Miss Cushman, Mr. Murdoch, Pitt, the humorous Silbee, and lastly, the charming Miss Julia Bennett, who has been drawing a crowded house each night of her appearance. This same Miss Bennett I saw some four years ago at the Haymarket Theatre, in London; having been born in London, and a patron of the Haymarket, you must guess my surprise at finding my old favorite on the Chicago boards. She is indeed a lovely woman, frank, unaffected, with a merry beat to her heart and step, a face full of light, and a voice full of soul—she has a grace that, as poets are, she was born to, not the result of cultivation, evident in every character she assumes. Gliding like a bird in sunshine, from phrase to phrase in the role she delineates, joyous in all, a sunshine ever in her sadness, she renders herself a favorite, and one likes her "whether he will or no," and is, indeed, a true specimen of an English woman. Last evening she took a benefit, and personated two characters, that of Letitia Hardy, in "The Belle's Stratagem," and Kate O'Brian, in "Perfection"—the house was crowded. Mr. Rice, I see by the bills, has re-engaged her for six nights more, and then she will leave for the East. There is no doubt but that her farewell benefit will be the greatest jam ever inside of this theatre, for she is creating a great sensation.

I must now conclude, dear "Spirit," this letter, and if you think it worthy of putting in print for the benefit of your readers, you are at liberty to do so. So I remain yours, in haste, till next time,

LONDON.

NONSENSIANA.

Renovated, translated, originated, and perpetrated, for the especial benefit of the "Spirit" and its readers, by "Beb."

A young friend of ours, on whom neither Venus, nor Minerva, had lavished their gifts in any excessive degree, had been for some time paying his addresses to one of our most fascinating and courted belles. As he met with no encouragement whatever, in spite of all the advantages with which he had not been endowed at his birth, he asked a friend the best mode of punishing her severity.

"Are you anxious to do something particularly unpleasant to her?" asked the friend.

"Yes, I would repay her with usury for all that she has made me suffer!"

"Well, then, my dear friend, all you have to do is to go and pay her a visit!"

The following "raal 'un," which was related to us by an old lady, was "some" on our vest buttons. We personally pledge ourselves that it is true as gospel.

Madame Z. (who related us the story herself) is entrusted with the raising of a number of youngsters of the other sex; and an excellent one, by the way, she is, at teaching the youngest kind of idea how to shoot, and produce any quantity of the rarest kind of fruit.

Among other exotics of which she is the intellectual gardener, is one bright-eyed little daughter of Eve, who came to her some time since to be instructed in the art of warbling sweet poetic prose in English; for with this very melodious and mellifluous idiom Miss Pepita was utterly and wholly unacquainted.

Madame Z., moreover, is the fortunate possessor of an antiquated female specimen of the canine race. We lay peculiar stress on the word antiquated, as we truly believe this to be the sole quality of the quadruped in question, unless her being a female should happen to enhance her natural (dis)advantages. This interesting miss rejoices in the appellation of Emily. (Shocking, isn't it, but true, 'pon my word—know the lady myself; Emily, I mean.)

Well, whether it be that Mrs. Z. has taken compassion on Emily (proh pudor), on account of her ugliness (which is "some"), or of her sex, or of her age (19 next Spring), or her melodious snarl, which has got to be chronic, I am not prepared to say; but I know that she loves, adores, cherishes, and doats upon Emily (nomen horribile dictu). She (the biped lady) is in the habit of having her (the quadruped ditto) come every morning into her room, before she rises, and while the latter affectionately licks the hands of the former, the former gently pats the latter on the head, with such exclamations of love as, "You dear, good old brute, you!"

Now, this is certainly a very natural exclamation, and most undoubtedly a most innocent one; but alas! innocence is not always a safeguard against accident and misfortune.

One evening, then, Madame Z. determined to give a "reg'lar blow out" All her plants and flowers were duly arranged and properly laid out in the vast parlors, ready and eager for the fray. Anxious fathers and tender mothers gradually poured in, one after another, with their friends and relatives, till finally quite a large concourse was assembled. Madame Z. gradually became very enthusiastic about her pupils (the plants and flowers above-mentioned), till, finally, in order to show how they profited under her judicious care, she called one up (it happened to be our heroine, Pepita), and commenced questioning her in English. The droll replies and pretty foreign accent of the child met with much success. The good lady was very much gratified, and, to reward her, presented her with a cake, which she took from a waiter which was going around.

"Now, Pepita, what do you say?"

Thereupon Pepita, determined to show that she deserved this kindness, took her most winning smile, and, approaching her, patted her on the shoulder (she couldn't reach her head), and said, in the most affectionate tone—

"Thank you, you dear, good, old brute, you!"

Can you imagine the good lady's face? Hamlet, looking at his father's ghost, must have presented the most cool and undisturbed countenance in the world, compared to hers.

"What do you say?" at length gasped out the horror-stricken mistress, while the audience were swelling to Daniel Lambert proportions with restrained laughter.