

We acknowledged the kindness by a remark on bold bright birds of passage that find the seasons obedient to their will, and wing their way through worlds still rejoicing in the perfect year. But too true friends were we not to be sincere in all we seriously said; and while Audubon confessed that he saw rather more plainly than when we parted the crowfeet in the corners of our eyes, we did not deny that we saw in him an image of the Falco Leucocephalus, for that, looking on his "caum caput," it answered his own description of that handsome and powerful bird, viz. "the general color of the plumage above is dull hair-brown, the lower parts being deeply brown, broadly margined with grayish white." But here he corrected us; for "surely, my dear friend," quoth he, "you must admit I am a living specimen of the Adult Bird, and you remember my description of him in my First Volume." And thus blending our gravities and our gayeties, we sat facing one another, each with his last oyster on the prong of his trident, which disappeared, like all mortal joys, between a smile and a sigh.

"How similar—in much—our dispositions—yet in almost all how dissimilar our lives! Since last we parted, "we scarcely heard of half a mile from home"—he, tanned by the suns and beaten by the storms of many latitudes—we like a ship laid up in ordinary, or anchored close in shore within the same sheltering bay—our sails unfurled and flags flying but for sake of show on some holiday—he like a ship that every morning has been dashing through a new world of waves—often close-reefed or under bare poles—but oftener affronting the heavens with a whiter and swifter cloud than any hoisted by the combined fleets in the sky.—And now, with canvas unrent, and masts unsprung, returned to the very buoy she left. Somewhat faded, indeed, in her apparelling—but her hull sound as ever—not a speck of dry rot in her timbers—her keel unscathed by rock—her cut-water yet sharp as new-whetted scythe ere the mower renews his toil—her figure-head, that had so often looked out for squalls, now "patient as the brooding dove"—and her bowsprit—but let us man the main-brace; nor is there purer spirit—my trusty frere—in the Old World or the New.

"It was quite a Noctes. Audubon told us—by snatches—all his travels, history, with many an anecdote interspersed of the dwellers among the woods—bird, beast, and man.

"All this and more he told us, with a cheerful voice and animated eyes, while the dusky hours were noiselessly wheeling the chariot of Night along the star-losing sky; and we too had something to tell him of our own home-loving obscurity, not ungladdened by studies sweet in the Forest—till Dawn yoked her dappled coursers for one single slow stage—and then jocund Morn leaping up on the box, took the ribbons in her rosy fingers, and, after a drame of dew, blew her bugle, and drove like blazes right on towards the gates of Day."

"His great work," says Wilson, elsewhere, "was indeed a perilous undertaking for a stranger in Britain, without the patronage of powerful friends, and with no very great means of his own—all of which he embarked in the enterprise dearest to his heart. Had it failed, Audubon would have been a ruined man—and that fear must have sometimes dismally disturbed him, for he is not alone in life, and is a man of strong family affections. But happily those nearest his breast are as enthusiastic in the love of natural science as himself, and were all willing to sink or swim with the beloved husband and venerated father. America may well be proud of him—and he gratefully records the kindness he has experienced from so many of her most distinguished sons. In his own fame he is just and generous to all who excel in the same studies; not a particle of jealousy is in his composition; a sin, that, alas! seems too easily to beset too many of the most gifted spirits in literature and in science; nor is the happiest genius—imaginative or intellectual—such is the frailty of poor human nature at the best—safe from the access of that dishonoring passion."

The second volume of *The Birds of America* was finished in 1834, and in December of that year he published in Edinburgh the second volume of the *Ornithological Biography*. Soon after, while he was in London, a nobleman called upon him, with his family, and on examining some of his original drawings, and being told that it would still require eight years to complete the work, subscribed for it, saying, "I may not see it finished, but my children will." The words made a

deep impression on Audubon. "The solemnity of his manner I could not forget for several days," he writes in the introduction to his third volume; "I often thought that neither might I see the work completed, but at length exclaimed, 'My sons may;' and now that another volume, both of my illustrations and of my biographies, is finished, my trust in Providence is augmented, and I cannot but hope that myself and my family together may be permitted to see the completion of my labors." When this was written, ten years had elapsed since the publication of his first piece. In the next three years, among other excursions he made one to the western coast of the Floridas and to Texas, in a vessel placed at his disposal by our government; and at the end of this time appeared the fourth and concluding volume of his engravings, and the fifth of his descriptions. The whole comprised four hundred and thirty-five plates, containing one thousand and sixty-five figures, from the Bird of Washington to the Herring Bird, of the size of life, and a great variety of land and marine views, and coral and other productions of different climates and seasons, all carefully drawn and colored after nature. Well might the great naturalist felicitate himself upon the completion of his gigantic task. He had spent nearly half a century "and the tall grass of the far-extended prairies of the west, in the solemn forests of the North, on the midland mountains, by the shores of the boundless ocean, and on the bosom of our vast bays, lakes and rivers, searching for things hidden since the creation of this wondrous world from all but the Indian who has roamed in the gorgeous but melancholy wilderness." And speaking from the depth of his heart he says, "Once more surrounded by all the members of my dear family, enjoying the countenance of numerous friends who have never deserted me, and possessing a competent share of all that can render life agreeable, I look with gratitude to the Supreme Being, and feel that I am happy."

In 1839, having returned for the last time to his native country and established himself with his family near the city of New York, Audubon commenced the publication of *The Birds of America* in imperial octavo volumes, of which the seventh and last was issued in the summer of 1844. The plates in this edition, reduced from his large illustrations, were engraved and colored in the most admirable manner by Mr. Bowen of Philadelphia, under the direction of the author, and excepting *The Birds of America* in folio, there has never been published so magnificent a work on ornithology.

Audubon was too sincere a worshiper of nature to be content with inglorious repose, even after having accomplished in action more than was ever dreamed of by any other naturalist; and while the "edition for the people" of his *Birds of America* was in course of publication, he was busy amid the forests and prairies, the reedy swamps of our southern shores, the cliffs that protect our eastern coasts, by the currents of the Mexican gulf and the tide streams of the Bay of Fundy, with his sons, Victor Gifford and John Woodhouse, making the drawings and writing the biographies of the *Quadrupeds of America*, a work in no respect inferior to that on our birds, which he began to publish about five years ago. The plates, on double imperial folio paper, engraved and colored by Mr. Bowen after the original drawings made from nature by Audubon and his sons, are even more magnificent than those of the *Birds of America*, which twenty years ago delighted and astonished the naturalists of Europe.

The *Biography of American Quadrupeds*, accompanying these plates, and of which the first volume appeared in New York in 1846, was written principally by the Rev. John Bachman, D. D., of Charleston, a long-tryed and enthusiastic friend, of whose introduction to him Audubon thus speaks in the preface of the second volume of his *Ornithological Biography*:

"It was late in the afternoon when we took our lodgings in Charleston. Being fatigued, and having written the substance of my journey to my family, and delivered a letter to the Rev. Mr. Gilman, I retired to rest. At the first glimpse of day the following morning, my assistants and myself were already several miles from the city, commencing our search in the fields and woods, and having procured abundance of subjects both for the pencil and the scalpel, we returned home, covered with mud, and so accounted as to draw towards us the attention of every person in the streets. As we approached the boarding-house, I observed a gentleman on horseback close to our door. He looked at me, came up, inquired if my name was Audubon,

and on being answered in the affirmative, instantly leaped from his saddle, shook me most cordially by the hand—there is much to be expressed and understood by a shake of the hand—and questioned me in so kind a manner, that I for a while felt doubtful how to reply. At his urgent desire, I removed to his house, as did my assistants. Suitable apartments were assigned to us; and once introduced to the lovely and interesting group that composed his family, I seldom passed a day without enjoying their society. Servants, carriages, horses, and dogs were all at our command, and friends accompanied us to the woods and plantations, and formed parties for water excursions. Before I left Charleston, I was truly sensible of the noble and generous spirit of the hospitable Carolinians."

Audubon and Bachman (the same Bachman who recently refuted the heresies of Agassiz respecting the unity of the human race) were from this time devoted friends and co-workers. For several years the health of the hero naturalist had declined, and he was rarely if ever seen beyond the limits of his beautiful estate on the banks of the Hudson, near this city, were, on the 27th of January, 1851, he died, full of years, and illustrious with the most desirable glory.

Audubon's highest claim to admiration is founded upon his drawings in natural history, in which he has exhibited a perfection never before attempted. In all our climates—in the clear atmosphere, by the dashing waters, amid the grand old forests with their peculiar and many-tinted foliage, by him first made known to art—he has represented our feathered tribes, building their nests and fostering their young, poised on the tip of the spray and hovering over the sedge margin of the lake, flying in the clouds in quest of prey or from pursuit, in love, enraged, indeed in all the varieties of their motion and repose and modes of life, so perfectly that all other works of the kind are to his stuffed skins to the living birds.

But he also has indisputable claims to a high rank as a man of letters. Some of his written pictures of birds, so graceful, clearly defined, and brilliantly colored, are scarcely inferior to the productions of his pencil.—His powers of general description are not less remarkable. The waters seem to dance to his words as to music, and the lights and shades of his land-scapes show the practised hand of a master. The evanescent shades of manners, also, upon the extreme frontiers, where the footprints of civilization have hardly crushed the green leaves, have been sketched with graphic fidelity in his journals.

No author has more individuality. The enthusiastic, trustful and loving spirit which breathes through his works distinguished the man. From the beginning he surrendered himself entirely to his favorite pursuit, and was intent to learn everything from the prime teacher, Nature. His style as well as his knowledge was a fruit of his experiences. He had never written for the press until after the age at which most authors have established their reputation; and when he did write, his page glowed like the rich wild landscape in the spring, when Nature, then most beautiful, "bathes herself in her own dewy waters." We seem to hear his expressions of wondering admiration, as unknown mountains, valleys and lakes burst upon his view, as the deer at his approach leaped from his ambush into the deeper solitudes, as the startled bird with rushing wings darted from his feet into the sky; or his pious thanksgiving, as at the end of a weary day the song of the sparrow or the robin relieved his mind from the heavy melancholy that bore it down.

When the celebrated Buffon had completed the ornithological portion of his great work on natural history, he announced with unhesitating assurance that he had "finished the history of the birds of the world."—Twenty centuries had served for the discovery of only eight hundred species, but this number seemed immense, and the short-sighted naturalist declared that the list would admit of "no material augmentation" which embraced hardly a sixteenth of those now known to exist. To this astonishing advance of the science of ornithology, no one has contributed more than Audubon, by his magnificent painting and fascinating history.

Mr. Audubon left unpublished a voluminous autobiography, which we hope will be published with as little delay as possible.