

## CORRESPONDENCE.

## Early Editions of Wilson's Ornithology.

EDITORS OF 'THE AUK.'

*Dear Sirs:*—The following notes concerning the early editions of Wilson's 'American Ornithology' may interest some of the readers of your journal. The original edition, as is well known, was published in nine folio volumes at Philadelphia, during the years 1808 to 1814. Wilson died on the 23d of August, 1813, while the eighth volume was in the press. The eighth and ninth volumes were published in 1814, under the superintendence of George Ord, who furnished the text that accompanies the few plates Wilson had drawn for the ninth volume.

Two hundred copies of Vol. I were published in September, 1808. On the 21st of that month Wilson started on a tour through the New England States to exhibit his book and solicit subscribers, and soon afterward he travelled south on the same mission as far as Savannah, Ga. On his return to Philadelphia, in 1809, the subscription list was large enough to warrant the publication of three hundred additional copies of the first volume.

The second edition of Vol. I bears the original date 1808, although it was not published till 1809, and there is nothing on its face to distinguish it from the original issue, until the two are collated. It then appears that the second issue is truly a new edition; that the text was all reset, and that the author seized the opportunity thus offered to make certain additions to the text and to correct some errors and carelessly written passages. As an example: an alteration of the text that occurs on page 33, in the biography of the Wood Thrush, is the result of knowledge acquired by Wilson during his trip to South Carolina and Georgia in the winter of 1808-09, after the first edition had been published. In the first edition the passage in question reads thus: "Tho' it is believed that some of our birds of passage, and among them the present species, winter in the Carolinas, yet they rarely breed there; and when they do, they are certainly vocal." In the second edition this is replaced by the following: "I have myself searched the woods of Carolina and Georgia, in winter, for this bird, in vain, nor do I believe that it ever winters in these states." Again, on page 34, referring to the Hermit Thrush, Wilson adds to the text in the second edition the statement that he has found this bird numerous in the myrtle swamps of Carolina in the depth of winter.

With regard to the text of subsequent editions of Wilson: Ord's "re-print" of 1824 (bearing date of 1808) of course follows the amended text of Wilson's second issue of the first volume, so do Harrison Hall's edition

(1828), Jardine's (1832), and the various reprints of Jardine, such as Brewer's (1840), and those published by Chatto & Windus (1876), etc. The editions published by Porter & Coates (Phila., 1871, 1878), are printed from Hall's edition of 1828-29. Jameson's edition (1831) alone, so far as I have observed, reproduces the text of the first edition of Vol. I.

The last three volumes of Wilson's work were not so carefully elaborated as the earlier volumes. Ord therefore subjected these volumes to a careful revision and published them in a second edition,—Vols. VII, VIII, in 1824, Vol. IX in 1825. In the second edition of these volumes Ord introduced extensive additions to the text of Wilson and important changes in the nomenclature, while the sketch of the author's life, prefixed to the ninth volume, was enlarged from 36 pages to 198 pages. The changes in the nomenclature are tabulated in the editor's prefaces to the second edition; but the alterations and additions to the text are often indistinguishable without a collation of the two editions.

While issuing the second edition of Vols. VII-IX, Ord reprinted the rest of the volumes, I-VI, in 1824, retaining on their title-pages the dates of the original edition of these volumes, viz. 1808-12. Comparison of the "reprints" with original copies of Vols. I-VI reveals the fact that the re-issue is far from being a mere reprint of the first edition. In the edition princeps Wilson made certain emendations of the nomenclature, etc., at the eleventh hour, in the indexes to the several volumes, and more particularly in the 'List of the Land Birds of the United States,' which appeared in the sixth volume, in 1812. In the reprint of 1824 Ord incorporated most of these emendations in their proper places in the text, and in a few instances introduced changes of his own. These reprints, then, taken together with the 1824-25 edition of Vols. VII-IX, strictly speaking, constitute the second or Ord edition of the 'American Ornithology,' the true date of which is 1824-25.

Two of Ord's amendments in these so-called reprinted volumes affect the nomenclature. Twice had Wilson applied the same name to two different birds. In Vol. VII the Sora Rail is called *Rallus virginianus*: in Vol. VI the same name is given to the Virginia Rail. The Slate-colored [Sharp-shinned] Hawk is described under the name *Falco pennsylvanicus* on p. 13 of Vol. VI, while on p. 92 of the same volume the Broad-winged Hawk figures by the same name. In the reprint of 1824, the Sora Rail appears as *Rallus carolinus*, the name of the Broad-winged Hawk is changed to *Falco latissimus*. The latter specific name is the one sanctioned by the A. O. U. Check-List, in which it is credited to Wilson, 1812, instead of Ord, 1824. During the same year, 1824, Bonaparte (Journ. Acad. Nat. Sci. Phila., III, 348) drew attention to Wilson's double use of the name *pennsylvanicus* in the genus *Falco*, and proposed the name *wilsoni* for the Broad-winged Hawk; but in a footnote he courteously withdrew this name in favor of *latissimus* on being told by Ord that he had chosen this name in his forthcoming reprint of Wilson. Both of these names, however, are anticipated by *Sparvius platypterus*, a name

assigned to the "Broad-winged Hawk" of Wilson by Vieillot in 1823 (Encycl. Méthod., Ornithol., III, 1273). The correct name of this bird, therefore, is *Buteo platypterus* (Vieill.).

The history of the Ord reprints was well understood by contemporary writers, but as time went on confusion arose from the false dates on their titles. So early as 1853, Cassin, in his 'Illustrations of the Birds of California, Texas, etc.,' p. 101, declared that only the last three volumes of Wilson were republished, and that the names *pennsylvanicus* and *latissimus* as applied to the Broad-winged Hawk occurred in different copies of the original edition. He therefore inferred that the latter name was substituted by Wilson himself, while the sheets were going through the press. Cassin further affirmed that Mr. Ord told him that he had nothing to do with either of the names in question,—a lapse of memory not remarkable in a man who at the time Cassin wrote had numbered more than three score and ten years. As a matter of fact, a *Falco latissimus* copy of Vol. VI bears within itself indisputable proof that it could not have been printed in 1812. It was in the sixth volume that Wilson inserted his 'General Index of the Land Birds,' which included some species to be treated of in later volumes of the work. The places for the volume and page references in such cases were necessarily left blank, with notice to the reader that the blanks might be filled up in MS. after the publication of the later volumes. Now in those copies in which the name *Falco latissimus* appears, these blank spaces are occupied by printed references to the pagination of subsequent volumes, including the ninth, which was not only printed, but written (by Ord himself) after Wilson was in his grave.

Sets purporting to be the original edition are sometimes made up by combining volumes belonging to the first and second editions. When this mixture involves the first six volumes, which bear the same ostensible dates in both editions, a convenient ear-mark for detecting the Ord reprints will be found in the printers' signatures. The signature of the sheet following Z is a double A. In the original edition the double letter is a small capital and lower case (Aa),—in the 1824 reprints it is capital and small capital (AA).

WALTER FAXON.

Cambridge, Mass.