

UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF WILLIAM MACGILL-
LIVRAY TO JOHN JAMES AUDUBON.

BY RUTHVEN DEANE.

THE publication of the letters of ornithologists of fame has met with much favor of late, and we cannot add to the list any of more real value and interest, than those of William MacGillivray, whose reputation as an ornithologist and a teacher of natural history, has always been valued so highly. I am under great obligations to Miss M. R. Audubon, in whose possession the original letters are, for the privilege of presenting them here.

It has been known for several years that Audubon had selected MacGillivray to assist him in the technical part of his 'Birds of America,' and these letters are therefore of peculiar interest, as they treat principally upon the progress of its publication and show the high regard in which he held his friend Audubon. It is a very fitting time to publish these letters, for only a few months ago a mural tablet to the memory of William MacGillivray was unveiled at Marischal College, Aberdeen, Scotland, where he was Professor of Natural History and Lecturer on Botany from 1841 to 1852, and where a tombstone was erected at his grave. A reference to the 'In Memoriam' published on that occasion, will be found in this number of 'The Auk.'

During the past few years I have made very careful search for a likeness of MacGillivray, but have not met with success. My correspondent, the Rev. Dr. James Farquharson, of Edinburgh, who was a student under MacGillivray, writes me that the only likeness which exists is a small water-color which he had taken of himself a short time before his death, but unfortunately this fails to convey an idea of the man, and to present it as the likeness of MacGillivray would be utterly misleading.

No. 1.

Edinburgh, 22 Warriston Crescent
7th May, 1831

Dear Sir,

I received your letter of the 30th ulto. in due time. Agreeably to your desire I called upon Mr. Neill, but did not find him, and so went to Prof. Jameson who informed me that the election of your friends had not yet taken place, but would be proposed at next meeting. I also called at Mr. Kidd's, but did not find him. With respect to the review, I can only say that if Mr. Lockhart is so doubtful as to my powers, he may doubt as long as he lists. I shall not submit any essay of mine to his judgment. If you had informed me that he or the conductor of my other review would print a notice of your works, I should have agreed to write one with pleasure, but under existing circumstances I shall not, it being repugnant to my feelings and contrary to my practice and principles to sue for favor with any man. I have already written three reviews of your books which have been printed, and when I am applied to for a fourth I shall write it too, with "an elegance of style, a power of expression, and knowledge of the subject" equal to those usually displayed by the editor of the Quarterly.

I have settled with Mr. Boyd about the volume which I am to write for him. Prof. Jamieson sent a flaming eulogy of my translation of Richard W. Blackwood, and wishes me to undertake the translation of a Latin work on Zoology, for the use of his class; nothing that has happened to me for ten years has surprised me more than his having said to you that I did not deserve to be mentioned in your book. I have been collecting birds for description, and looking over my old manuscript, and before you return I expect to have my views on the classification of objects of Natural History published, and perhaps a synopsis of British Quadrupeds and Birds. My translation of Richard has been recommended by Prof. Jameson to his pupils, adopted by Dr. Graham as his text book, and praised, as I am informed, in the newspapers. They say Wilson has said nothing of your biography in the last number of the magazine, which, however, I have not seen, and I am in-

formed his brother means to mention your works in his review only in a brief manner. You will see that Mr Cheek has given a number of extracts besides the short review. There has been a good deal of excitement here on account of the election. Mrs Mac Gillivray and the children are in good health. I am just about to commence a series of desperate jobs which will occupy me till winter. As I understood your proposals respecting the Birds of Britain to have ended in nothing, and as you do not allude to the subject, I shall suppose all our ideas to have dispersed, and shall think of the matter myself. At the same time I do not think large and expensive works commendable, as they are beyond the reach of those who are most deserving, and most likely to profit by the inspection of them — the *poor* enthusiasts. One person asked me who had written the review, and I told him I was not at liberty to say who wrote it; another told me he knew the moment he saw it who had written it, and a third said directly that I had written it. I told my brother about the Golden Eagle, but I know it will be extremely difficult for him to get one, as he resides on an island where there are few aquiline visitors.

Since writing the above, I have called again at Kidd's but did not find him. His landlady however informed me that she did not think he had any intention of going to London.

With respectful compliments to Mrs Audubon and sincere thanks for your and her kindness, and best regards from Mrs Mac Gillivray,

I remain, Dear Sir, yours truly

W. MacGillivray

No. 2.

Edinburgh, 11 Gilmore Place
16th June, 1834

Dear Sir

I received your letter yesterday and have the pleasure of answering it. If you send me twenty or twenty-five articles, I can revise them without the books to which you refer, and without your own presence, provided your descriptions be full, and

the drawings or plates sent to me. The skins and books might be consulted afterward, when we might go over the articles in company. Should you come here for the purpose, it would not, I believe, be necessary for you to stay more than three weeks or so. On the other hand I might possibly save you the trouble, by going to London, or I might go there for some weeks during the printing; but of this we can speak afterward. To be methodical I should like twenty-five birds, that is description of birds, by your first parcel; but I cannot state precisely at what time they might be revised, only I think were you to send them, you might make a trip to France and be back before I should be done. With respect to printing it seems to me very doubtful that you can get it done in London better or cheaper than here. The best way is to get estimates. If the work were post 8vo., I imagine it would sell much more extensively, but I suppose you have determined to continue it of the same size. You ask about lodgings here. Two doors from me there are good accommodations; but I am sorry, that my own nest which is in a garden, among pear-trees, is rather small. I am sorry that you have resolved to reside in London, that ugly forest of brick buildings swarming with vermin of all genera, species, and varieties, and should like much to see you, that you might condemn one half of my drawings and approve of the rest. I do not think there is anything else in your letter to be answered.

I can begin to revise immediately.

Send, if convenient, 25 articles.

Books are not necessary at present; or if any be, mention them and I can get them here.

Skins are not necessary either.

Please say when you wish the business done.

Address for security, parcels or packages to W. MacGillivray Conservator of the Museum, College of Surgeons, Nicholson Street, Edinburgh; letters, to 11 Gilmore Place, Ed.

Please offer my best regards to Mrs Audubon.

I have the honor to be, Dear Sir

Your obedient servant

W. MacGillivray

No. 3.

Edinburgh, 11 Gilmore Place
18th July, 1834.

Dear Sir

I received from Mr. Neill yours of the 9th along with a parcel of 25 descriptions of birds, and now report progress. I commenced my operations on the 1st of July, and have transcribed and corrected eighteen articles, one *for* each day, but not one *on* each, the work of Sunday being transferred to Monday. This volume will certainly be much richer and more interesting. It will also be larger. You wish to know my opinion as to the improvement of your style. It seems to me to be much the same as before, but the information which you give is more diversified & more satisfactory.

Your first volume is only beginning to be known. Chambers has reprinted many of the sketches, and Hunt has one in a late number. Had it been of the post 8vo size, in two volumes it would have gone off in style; but your imperial size and regal price do not answer for radicals, or republicans either. Could you *sacrifice* the first volume, reprint it of a small size and continue the series so to the end? In suggesting this, I firmly believe that my only object is to let the book have fair play. Lizars has sold five or six thousand copies of some of his ill-written compilations; and if you were to issue yours in a similar style—not of writing but of printing—with 20 wood cuts or engravings in each volume, I am certain it would spread over the land like a flock of migratory pigeons. Even without the embellishments it would fly, but were you to give it those additional wings, it would sweep along in beautiful curves, like the night-hawk or the purplebreasted swallow.

I have often thought that your stories would sell very well by themselves, and I am sure that with your celebrity, knowledge and enthusiasm, you have it in your power to become more *popular* than your glorious pictures can make you of themselves, they being too aristocratic and exclusive. Excuse me for putting down my thoughts just as they occur, and for wandering from my subject, which was the progress of the manuscript.

Be assured I shall get on as quickly as possible, because I am anxious to do so for your sake, and find great pleasure in reading your descriptions. At the present moment however I cannot venture to fix a period, and you have not requested me to do so.

Four months ago I heard from a naturalist for the first time that you had been attacked in a London journal, which afforded me an explanation of an expression used by you in your letter from Charleston. He promised to look out the numbers for me but I have not yet seen them. Perhaps the best place for your answer would be the preface to your second volume.

I have the honor to be, Dear Sir

Your obedient servant

W. MacGillivray

No. 4.

Edinburgh, 11 Gilmore Place

Monday, 28th July, 1834.

Dear Sir

Yours of the 24th, I received on the evening of the 26th. That evening I called on Mr. Kidd, & did not find him at home. Today however, I succeeded, but he informed me that he could not deliver the drawings as they were yet unfinished. The paper on the Goshawk, which you say you wrote for Sir Wm. Jardine, I never heard of before, and if it be the one to which you refer in your last letter, as in a box or a sealed parcel, I have it not. You left nothing of any kind with me excepting the skins of 2 birds, and a stuffed Gannet. You ask when the printing may commence, but the question cannot be answered by me. If you had sent the articles in order from 1 to 50, with the corresponding number of tales and descriptions of scenery, the printing might have been commenced tomorrow, and gone on straight to the end without any impediment. I have finished looking over 25 of your articles, and tonight commence the next parcel, which will, I expect, be done on the 20th. of August; in the next parcel I wish you would send those of the first 50 that have not yet come, along with as many more as will make up the 25. If you think of publishing in small size, and reprinting the first volume of the same, the second

volume might still come out first, or both might come out together, in which case the first might be improved and perhaps enlarged. Can you inform me where Mr. Gould has described a Wagtail formerly confounded with the Yellow Wagtail, and which I am informed he has named *moracilla neglecta*? I have found the bird here in abundance in some meadows near the town, and thought at first that I had discovered a new species. It is, like the Grey Wagtail, a most elegant bird, but it has a conical elongated bill, and a long slightly arched hind claw. Now that your American birds are completed I suppose you will have at the European or the British. In the latter case what will become of mine? However, I have resolved, God willing, to go through with my task. I have at least 20 drawings superior to anything in the way ever seen by me, excepting always "The Birds of America," and so good that one might look at them without disgust even after seeing yours. With best respects to Mrs. Audubon,

I have the honor to be, dear Sir,

Your obedient servant

W. MacGillivray.

No. 5.

Edinburgh. 11 Gilmore Place
19th August 1834

Dear Sir

I regret that I have caused you so much uneasiness. Your letter of the 5th August, accompanied by a parcel of descriptions of birds came duly to hand, as did your subsequent letter, but I have been out of town on urgent business and only returned late last night. I have seen Mr. Kidd twice today, and informed him of your wishes.

The College of Surgeons are so urgent with me to have the Catalogue of their Museum printed by the 1st of November that it will be quite impossible for me to go to London before December, because after the catalogue is done, the registration of students which occupies three weeks commences. If it be really necessary that we should meet, I apprehend under these circumstances that you will be obliged to come north, which perhaps

will not be extremely inconvenient, as you say you must be in Manchester. I really wish that I could go to London, and so save you the trouble of coming down, and give myself the pleasure of a little relaxation from my labors; but I have no prospect of being able to do so as I have said, till December. On the other hand it would be expedient that you should determine as to the mode of printing, because I think the technical description of the birds might be rendered more readable were you to reprint the first volume — that is less *formal*, and as to the Biography — I mean your own — if you honor me with the revisal of it, it would be well that we should converse on the subject. I will endeavor to see Mr. Kidd in a day or two.

I have the honor to be, dear Sir,

Your obedient servant

Wm. MacGillivray

No. 6.

Edinburgh 11 Gilmore Place

Tuesday, July 1836

My dear Friend

Your letter, which I received on Saturday evening, afforded me very great pleasure. I have been thinking of you ever since, but have scarcely had time to write until this moment, when I have just arrived from Leith, where I have been delivering a Botanical lecture. I have two lectures there weekly, one at the Young Ladies' Institution, and an excursion on Saturday from twelve till eight. The composition of these lectures, and the drawings necessary for illustrating them, occupy nearly the whole of my time at present, but they will all be over before the end of the month. I have done very little otherwise since I saw you, although I have been generally, in very good health. Craigie's death had a strong effect upon me, and I believe my views of life and its occupations have been a good deal changed by it. It was upon him especially that I had set my hopes. However I am reconciled to my condition. The girls have ever since been particularly anxious to do what they could to assist or please me. My drawings of birds have been stationary for some

time past. I have no one now that you are away, to show them to, or to stimulate me to go on with them. I shall long for your return, but the thought that you will be here several years will, I am assured, keep up my spirits. It gives me the greatest pleasure to be informed by you that I shall hear occasionally from you when on your perambulations, and I hope I shall have resolution and gratitude enough to enable me to write regularly in return. I have not yet been able to see the Wilsons, John and Jemmy, but I will endeavor to do so soon. The memorandums which you desire with reference to collections to be made, I cannot send now, but when I write in a few days, I shall say something on the subject, although I am not aware that I have anything to communicate respecting which you are ignorant. The great object is to have specimens of all the birds in spirits, as well as skins. You desire to know how I am "going on with the world." The world and I are not exactly as good friends as you and I, and I am not particularly desirous of being on familiar terms with it. I have got rather into difficulties this year, but I do not exactly know the state of my affairs, and must take a few days among the hills by myself before I can understand how I am situated. I cannot write more at present. Present my best regards to Mrs. Audubon and the young gentlemen and accept for yourself and them the best wishes of Mrs. MacGillivray.

I remain, Dear Sir, your sincere friend and obedient servant
Wm. MacGillivray

No. 7.

Edinburgh, 16 Minto Street,

Newington

4th November 1836

Dear Madam.

At the same moment that Mrs. MacGillivray received your very welcome letter of the 27th ulto. I received one not less welcome from Mr. Audubon, dated New York Oct. 8th. Although you are of course aware of his plans, and it is therefore unnecessary for me to transcribe his letter, I may yet present an epitome of its contents, in case there may be something new to you. He mentions

having got twelve subscribers, two at Salem, four at Boston, and six at New York. At the Ac. of Nat. Sciences at Philadelphia he saw the collections of Messrs. Nuttall and Townsend, and ascertained that they had procured forty new species of birds. Mr. Nuttall afterward presented him with six other species. The birds in spirits for the new édition are upwards of 200, besides 20 large jars, which Mr. Bachman has filled. They intended to remain at Phila. and at Great Egg Harbor some days, and then proceed to Charleston, whence, accompanied by Mr. Harris, they were to search the shores of the gulf of Mexico as far as Sabine River.

We have removed from Gilmore Place to Newington, which is a much more pleasant situation in every respect. My young baby, who has received the name of Audubon, is thriving and the other children are in good health, as is Mrs. MacGillivray. Dr. Aitkin is very well, preparing for his winter classes which begin five days hence. We had a very unexpected fall of snow last week, which however remained only three days. Provisions are expected to be dear this winter, on account of the badness of the summer and autumn, although in the lower districts I believe, the crops were all got in safely.

I have in hand just now a work on British Birds on a larger scale than that on the Rapacious species, and was anxious for the specimens of the wild Turtle Dove and the Black Dove, which Mr Audubon could not procure in London. I have desired my bookseller, Mr. Scott of Scott, Webster & Geary, Charterhouse Square, to procure for me among the dealers all my desiderata, there will be several plates representing the digestive organs, and a few skeletons with a multitude of wood-cuts, and I expect the first volume to be out by the middle of March at the latest. I have scarcely done anything in the way of money making since you left this, but must brush up, otherwise I shall be gazetted as an insolent book-maker. In the meantime I have plenty of offers, indeed if I had three heads and six hands, I have work enough for all.

I must endeavor to get through as much as possible before Mr Audubon comes back, which I hope will be about this time next year, when we shall have plenty of pickles. By the bye, it will certainly be necessary for him to take a small house for the

express purpose of dissecting, otherwise the odour of the rum will bring the excisemen upon us.

Please present my best regards to Mr. Victor, and be assured that, negligent as I am as to writing, I ever cherish a lively remembrance of you all, being perfectly assured that with him after whom my dearest William Craigie was named, you are my best friends. Pray God to keep you all and send us a happy meeting first in Edinburgh and finally in Heaven.

I have the honor to be, dear Madam

Your most obedient servant

W. MacGillivray.

THE RESIDENT LAND BIRDS OF BERMUDA.

BY OUTRAM BANGS AND THOMAS S. BRADLEE.

APART from a few sea birds that breed in Bermuda, there are but some ten species of birds¹ that are resident in the islands. Three of these — the House Sparrow, the European Goldfinch, and the Bob-white — have been introduced by man. Thus the indigenous ornithology of Bermuda includes but seven species of Land Birds — the Ground Dove, the Florida Gallinule, the Crow, the White-eyed Vireo, the Bluebird, the Catbird, and the Cardinal.

Many species of North American birds visit Bermuda, more or less regularly, on migration, and a few unexpected stragglers, such as the Corn Crake, the English Snipe, the Sky Lark, and the Wheatear have been taken there, but except in the cases of a few species, Bermuda does not lie in the regular line of migration and the coming and going of North American migrants are matters of much uncertainty.

In the various lists of the birds of Bermuda that have been pub-

¹The Great Blue Heron and the Red-tailed Hawk are said to each have bred once in Bermuda. See Capt. Savile G. Reid's 'List of the Birds of Bermuda,' Bull. U. S. Nat. Mus., No. 25, 1884, pp. 220-221 and p. 242.