

## AUDUBON'S LABRADOR TRIP OF 1833.

BY RUTHVEN DEANE.

FOR many reasons I think that this expedition has been generally regarded as one of the most memorable of the many Audubon so successfully accomplished. Much valuable work was done, considering the many hardships endured, the long fatiguing hours necessary to complete his drawings, made under most unfavorable conditions, and the natural responsibility of the five young men who accompanied him. All these details we have read and reread for so many years in that most 'attractive episode 'Labrador',<sup>1</sup> and later 'The Labrador Journal'<sup>2</sup> which records the daily events between the departure from Eastport, Maine, on the schooner 'Ripley,' in command of Captain Emery,<sup>3</sup> on June 6, 1833, and the safe return to the same port on August 31, 1833.

Audubon's party consisted of his son John Woodhouse Audubon,<sup>4</sup> William Ingalls<sup>5</sup> and George C. Shattuck<sup>6</sup> of Boston, Thomas Lincoln<sup>7</sup> of Dennisville, Maine, and Joseph A. Coolidge<sup>8</sup> of Eastport, Maine, all young men between eighteen and twenty-one years of age. None of them had had any sea-faring experience except young Coolidge, whose father had charge of a revenue-cutter and had taken Audubon to various islands on the Maine coast in quest of birds.

In 1903, Dr. William Ingalls was the only surviving member of this party. Having incidentally learned that he was still living, not only did I have the pleasure of a delightful correspondence, but a still greater satisfaction of visiting with him at his home in Roxbury, Mass., in July, 1903, only five months previous to his death. Al-

<sup>1</sup> Orn. Biogr., Vol. III, p. 584.

<sup>2</sup> 'Audubon and his Journals,' 1897, Vol. I, p. 349.

<sup>3</sup> While I have been unable to trace anything definite regarding Capt. Emery, it has been reported that he afterwards was in command of an ocean liner and later died insane. (R. D.)

<sup>4</sup> Born, Henderson, Ky., Nov. 30, 1812; died, New York, Feb. 21, 1862.

<sup>5</sup> Born, Boston, Mass., Jan. 5, 1813; died, Roxbury, Mass., Dec. 1, 1903.

<sup>6</sup> Born, Boston, Mass., July 23, 1813; died Boston, Mass., March 22, 1893.

<sup>7</sup> Born Dennisville, Maine, March 27, 1812; died, March 27, 1883.

<sup>8</sup> Born, Maine, 1815; died, San Francisco, Cal., July 30, 1901.

though in his ninetieth year his memory was very clear as to many of the experiences of his Labrador trip of seventy years before. At my request he wrote a little account of how he happened to be selected as one of the party and of various incidents which occurred while on the trip. As no one besides Audubon has ever written of this expedition, I feel sure that the following rambling narrative, and the recollections of an eye witness, will be of much interest.

Joseph A. Coolidge remained in Eastport, Me., until 1849, when he emigrated to California, remaining there until his death July 30, 1901, having been a respected citizen of San Francisco for forty years. In a letter received from Mr. Coolidge, dated Dec. 31, 1896, he writes the following in reference to his trip to Labrador with Audubon:

“Our custom while there was to anchor our vessel in some harbor and cruise in two boats (east and west) commanded by John Woodhouse Audubon and myself. Of course there was some rivalry as to who should be the most successful, not in number of birds, but in the quality of specimens. Our orders were to kill them with as few shot as possible, so as not to disfigure them. On one occasion I returned to the vessel late at night and found those aboard in ecstasies over a very fine bird which John W. Audubon procured. I examined it and pronounced it the finest specimen of the cruise, but that I could procure a better one and would wager the wine for the company upon it. I then brought my bird and all examined it and finding no shot mark upon it said I must have found it, but I convinced them that I did shoot it by exhibiting the shot mark near the neck. I had killed it flying with only one fine shot; it dropped dead without a struggle, showing a slight stain on the feathers, which I pulled out. A copy of this specimen (I think) may be seen in the plate representing the Red-throated Diver. I do not mention this to assert my superiority as a marksman over Audubon's son, but consider it merely a chance shot.”

The letter given below from John James Audubon to his wife is of particular interest in this connection, as it was written on board the ‘Ripley’ during the Labrador trip, and is here published for the first time. My thanks are especially due to Miss M. R. Audubon for the gift of this valuable document.

DR. WILLIAM INGALLS'S RECOLLECTIONS OF THE LABRADOR  
TRIP.

Roxbury, Mass., October 30, 1902.

My dear Sir:—

Your letter of the 23rd gave me much pleasure and I will "commence at the commencement" if you please. Under some trifling ailment my father<sup>1</sup> bid me to bed and the next forenoon he and Dr. George C. Shattuck<sup>2</sup> came to my bedside. Dr. Shattuck looked at me a moment and both men turned away to the window; presently Dr. Shattuck said to me, "William, my son George is going to Labrador with Mr. Audubon, would you like to go with him?" I did not spring out of bed but I grasped his hand with both of mine. How George and I got to Eastport I have not the faintest idea, but I presume we took a run on the Mall and then leaped from Boston to Eastport and if you do not believe this you have no imagination. We waited two or three days for some last things to be done and for Mr. Audubon. We five boys and Mr. Audubon found in the after cabin of the schooner good and comfortable bunks. Captain Emery took care of himself. Our dining room was midship and this was used when we had birds to skin of an evening after a hunt, which we preserved with arsenic. I suppose we were careful for no poisoning occurred. Now, on the 6th of June, 1833, we left the wharf at Eastport, passed Lubec and were fairly launched for our trip in the fine, but not very large schooner 'Ripley.' Our first stopping place was the entrance to the Gut of Canso, having passed Seal and Mud Islands. In our row boat we went near the fine, beautiful clear rocks of the shore; the water so clear we could see lobsters on the bottom, so we tickled their backs with oars which they grasped with their great mandibles and held on till they were let into the boat.

Having passed through the gut entering St. Lawrence Bay, we came near the Gannett Rocks, four, rising with high perpendicular sides. Many hundred Gannetts were upon the rocks and thousands

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. William Ingalls, Sr. A celebrated physician in and about Boston, Mass., died in 1851.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. George Cheyne Shattuck, born Templeton, Mass., July 17, 1783; died Boston, Mass., March 18, 1854. At one time President Massachusetts Medical Society.

flying above and around uttering peculiar noises, snapping their long, sharp and hard bills. It was wonderful. I cannot give you the events of our voyage in true catenation, except my desultory presentation. We soon came to Wapitagun Harbor which has a tortuous and narrow entrance but when inside one is struck with wonder at being surrounded by high ledges of beautiful, clear gray granite forming sides like a basin, of course irregular, large enough to accommodate a fleet. Sailors call it 'Wappitygun,' meaning a whopping great gun — there being on the top of a high sharp pinnacle a large stone which at a distance, with moderate fancy, resembles in form a large cannon. How could we be there, we boys, and not climb up for a nearer inspection? In another place, or harbor, there was a similar peak upon which there is an immense boulder said to be movable, rockable; we proved the fact but could not start it down hill, although we tried. This is a good place for me to tell of the sagacity of our Captain upon getting into the harbor, his manner of doing it and the feeling of responsibility he manifested. The boat launched and manned, Captain with lead-line in hand, and *eating* tobacco, standing aft, eyes everywhere, excited yet weary, slow, easy, pull hearty, accomplished. He was very alert, always willing and ready. Mr. Audubon being almost all the time aboard at work did not have so good a knowledge of the *moss* of which he speaks, as we boys did, for we were sent out to different distances from the ship to explore, to gather information, to hunt and to bring ourselves and *new species of birds*, home at night.

You must fancy the surface over which we toiled, a rich, thick, beautiful, spongy moss, in lumps as though baskets with rounding bottoms the size of a peck, up to two bushels, turned bottom upwards and laid together, joined, the rounding elevation being five to ten inches. Do you get it from my clumsy description? Now, walk. No, proceed for a mile over this carpet and you will experience the fatigue of a walk from Cambridge to Boston and return. It was different from walking through snow six to ten inches deep; 'twas lovely moss to look upon. In some places we found straw-colored berries the size of cherries, the flavor pretty good. The name we gave them I forget.

Having described imperfectly the moss I am induced to try a

*one day*, if you are not tired of reading all this. I, however, am delighted with the task I have set myself in writing this.

Earlier than usual we set off for a long row to mainland. We hauled the boat up high and men and boys scattered, but not so very far apart as to be out of reach in an emergency. A pretty extensive plain we had to cross to arrive at the foot of rather abrupt ledges in which a little way in, there were trees of a stunted growth. As to game, I think all our bags were empty as we found on assembling at the hour agreed upon at the foot of the hill. To cross the plain from where the most of us were there was one pretty large, damp looking area, with sparse grass and other growth upon it. This spot was not especially avoided by us, some were one side and some another. I happened to be the one who while going directly across found myself over my ankles; suddenly a step or two more and my knees were wet, in about two more I was down to my waist. Now, I said to George Shattuck, "This seems to be serious, the flat of my gun laid down does not help me and I am getting deeper." By this time Shattuck, Lincoln, Coolidge and John Woodhouse Audubon were looking around for something to afford me a purchase. Fortunately, Tom found a bit of wood, some part of a ship, and by this I was helped out of the quag-mire, a sort of boggy mud sticking all over me and I was cold, but thankful. The jolly tars launched the boat and as there was a breeze, set the sail. In ten minutes the breeze became a wind, in ten minutes more the wind became a tempest; William Ingalls shivering and wet. Down came the sail, out the oars, I rowed but it did not warm me and I returned to aft part of the boat. It blew harder and the waves were higher; again it blew great guns and the waves were higher yet. It seemed to me that more than a third of the keel was out of water at every recovery from a plunge. Stout four rowers; we came abreast of a little island and near enough, so that some one suggested camping there for the night. I noticed we did not gain a foot for as much as twenty minutes while trying to get by the island. At last we did move and got under the lee of some high land and then went ahead until we gained the ship. I think every one of us who were in the boat were conscious of being in great peril; there was a subdued expression prevailing, if I may say so, and when we struck the lee there were long drawn sighs; no word was spoken

unconsciously. I verily believe there was a spirit of thanksgiving even by the roughest, careless sailor boy,—and why not? One day Mr. Audubon and all of us went upon a not very large island well covered with nests of Guillemots and other seabirds, there was much shooting. Eggers go upon these rocks and smash every egg they can find. Next day they find plenty of fresh laid eggs. Now, I was standing watching the actions of the birds, Mr. Audubon being a little ways from me; presently a Tern, *Sterna arctica*,<sup>1</sup> flew towards me swiftly, falling very near my feet seeming to be in consternation or fright; with flashing swiftness another Tern descended and in his dart came within a very few inches of the terror stricken bird. The next day on our return towards night from our excursion, I darkened a little the table at which Mr. Audubon sat. He looked up and saluted me with "Hollo, Sangrido" (he gave me this name the first day), "he is here, he is scared, afrighted, he is looking up at you, you cannot help him." Now, the dear man had his chalks upon the table and upright in front of him was a pine board upon which was secured in position by means of long thin pins, the bird whose likeness he was transferring to the cardboard before him. When you look at this picture you will see with wonder *expression*, even after reading this lame description. Have you his large book, 'Birds of America'?

We brought at various times plenty of sea birds aboard and we made enjoyment out of assembling in the midships cabin of an evening to skin and dress them, but of *new* species, none. I think this is a good place for me to begin an outline of my remembrance of the individuals of the party.

Mr. Audubon was known by many and I think there is no exception to the fact that those who have spoken of him have testified to his great amiability and manliness, his humanity and it has always seemed to me he was one of those men who on meeting, one would at once say, "Bless you, dear man."

Tom Lincoln, quiet, reserved, sensible, practical and reliable. George C. Shattuck, a quiet man, but if you had thought him a goose you would soon have discovered your mistake. Joe Coolidge, unselfish, with a lot of sea and other practical knowledge and a right

<sup>1</sup> In the 'Labrador Journal,' June 25, 1833, Audubon writes: "Made a drawing of the Arctic Tern of which a great number breed here."

good fellow. John W. Audubon, always good natured, he and his papa the best of (boyish) friends, cheering us sometimes with his violin. I have spoken of the Captain whom we all honored for his skill and his evident desire to help the expedition. And now let me repeat a truth which was uttered by Mr. Audubon. "Brought together, strangers, three months in a small ship, we can say there was not a word or spirit of an unpleasant nature in all that time," and permit me to say that cornmeal bread made by a good cook with sea birds eggs is fit for ——— ——— Yum-Yum!! Excuse me, I am nothing but a boy.

Were you ever anywhere in company with black flies? Well, don't seek them, unless you wish to get a large number of them to put in a bottle of alcohol. George Shattuck came on board one afternoon, face and neck a mass of bites. The black flies are beastly and can easily draw one on to suicide.

If I have added anything about our trip to Labrador to that which you have read or can read, I shall be much pleased. Having left Labrador we crossed over to St. George's Bay, Newfoundland, and we saw some fine Newfoundland dogs, one of which was very large, tawney and so fierce that they kept him chained. We were honored by an invitation to a ball,<sup>1</sup> to which we went. To say we had a good jolly time, dancing reels and country dances,—*no minuet*; we danced. There were girls at the ball, some of them were pretty and all were jolly and good. We started for the ship at a proper hour in a fog, towards morning, but we found the ship 'all's well.' The home-coming is well described by Mr. Audubon. Of course each one of us used his own eyes and other senses. I think I had better stop here, lest I prove myself a bore. I cannot realize that seventy years have passed since we were together on that truly-wonderful shore.

Accept my best wishes,

William Ingalls,<sup>2</sup> M. D.

<sup>1</sup> "A Ball in Newfoundland" (episode), *Orn. Biogr.*, Vol. 11, p. 211.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. William Ingalls was born Jan. 5, 1813, at No. 4 School St., Boston, Mass. He attended the old Latin School, which stood on School street, on a portion of the site occupied by the Parker House. He was graduated at the Harvard Medical School in 1836 and began the practice of medicine in this city, but after two years removed to Louisiana, and remained there eight years. Returning to Massachusetts he settled in Winchester. In 1862 he entered the Army as a surgeon, and served with

## AUDUBON TO HIS WIFE.

Great Macatina Harbour, coast of Labrador. Latitude 50°, 43', Longitude 59°, 15' Greenwich, called on the charts, Bay de Portage, July, 23d, Monday afternoon, 1833. Thermometer, 58°.

My Dearest Friends,

The schooner 'Angelica' which sails tomorrow from this place for Quebec will take this letter there and I hope most sincerely that in less than three weeks it will have reached thee, found thee well and happy and the whole of those who feel any interest in us. Our voyage from Eastport was as prosperous a one as we could possibly have wished for, in eleven days we landed on this coast and visited the island of Magdelaine and others in the Gulf of St. Lawrence previously. We first landed on this coast at a place called on the charts, Mount Joly or American Harbour, where we found seven American Cod fishermen's vessels and 2 from Nova Scotia, a few days afterwards H. M. Schooner "Gulnare"<sup>1</sup> came in and anchored near us. This vessel being now employed in the coast survey of this coast is commanded by men of science, and

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the Fifth Massachusetts Regiment nine months and then in the Fifty-Ninth Massachusetts until 1865. For more than twenty-five years he had his office at 556 Tremont Street, and from 1870 until 1885 was surgeon in the City Hospital. Dr. Ingalls was a Mason and Odd Fellow. He was a member of the Massachusetts Medical Society, the Obstetrical Society and other organizations of physicians and surgeons. He died in Roxbury, Mass., Dec. 1, 1903.

<sup>1</sup> Capt. Henry Wolsey Bayfield, R. N., born Jan. 21, 1795; died with the rank of Admiral, Feb. 10, 1885. He was employed under the British Admiralty from 1815 to 1856. As a mark of approval he was appointed in 1827 by the Lord High Admiral, the Duke of Clarence, to survey the St. Lawrence River and continued until Oct. 21, 1856, when he attained the rank of Rear-Admiral. He was a resident of Quebec from 1827 to 1841, and was an original member of the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, and corresponding member of the Natural History Society of Montreal. During a recent visit in Quebec, I had the pleasure of an interview with Capt. J. G. Boulton, R. N., who has had in his possession the original journals of the late Admiral Bayfield, and I am under many obligations for the following account of Bayfield's meeting with Audubon when on the 'Ripley' off the Labrador coast.

"Little Natashquan Harbor, June 24, 1833. Mr. Audubon, the naturalist, we found here on the American schooner 'Ripley' with several young men, two of them medical students. Mr. Audubon has come principally to study the habits of the water fowl, with which the coast of Labrador abounds, and to make drawings of them for his splendid work on the birds of America. We found him a very superior



we found Captain Bayfield, R. N., Doctor Wm. Kelly<sup>1</sup> and others, not only polite but truly kind to us.

I will not now attempt to say a word about the country we are in, it is so unlike anything that I have ever seen before and so far beyond my means to describe, that to let it alone may (for the present at least) prove the most prudent. We are, thanks to God, all well! and have all been so since we left the United States. Our vessel proves a fine sailor and a staunch one. Our Captain a first rate man, active, industrious and pleasing in his manners. Our young gentlemen agree delightfully together and thus far I am pleased with the charge I have of them.

The *information* which I have received connected with the publication of my work will prove, I believe, unprecedented and although I have procured only 2 new species, one a *Fringilla*<sup>2</sup> and the other a *Parus*,<sup>3</sup> and made but 17 drawings, I feel well satisfied. We have however been deceived as to the quantity of birds represented to be found with here. Birds are rarer than even on the

person indeed. On returning Mr. Audubon's visit, was delighted with his drawings, the birds being represented of life size and most beautifully painted."

Under the same date the Bayfield journals give the following account of the "Eggers" on the coast of the Canadian Labrador. In his 'Ornithological Biography' (Vol. III, p. 82) Audubon gives a most graphic account of the traffic in the eggs of Labrador sea-birds, but Bayfield has added some facts of interest.

"June 24, 1833.—Mr. Audubon dined on board the 'Gulnare'.... We heard from the Americans [he alludes to the American fishermen] about the 'Eggers,' a sort of people, we, today, first heard spoken of as a body. We had, previously, no idea of the extent of the 'egging business,' as our informant termed it. It appears that in some seasons twenty small schooners, or shallops, of 20 to 30 tons, load with eggs from this coast (the locality was principally the Meccatina Islands). Halifax is the principle market for them, where they, at times, fetch a much higher price than hens eggs.

"They are stowed in the hold in bulk, and kept for several weeks without any preparation. These men, the 'Eggers,' combine together, and form a strong company. They suffer no one to interfere with their business driving away the fishermen, or any one else who attempts to collect eggs, near where they happen to be. 'Might makes right,' with them, it is clear; they have arms, and are said by the fishermen not to be very scrupulous about using them.

"As soon as one vessel is loaded, they send her to market, others follow in succession, so that the market is always supplied, but never glutted. One vessel of 25 tons is said to have cleared 200£ by this egging business, in a favorable season."

Bayfield's vessel, the 'Gulnare,' was a two-masted schooner, square rigged on the fore-mast, with no steam power.

<sup>1</sup> "A man of talents, a student of botany and conchology." (The Journals.)

<sup>2</sup> *Melospiza lincolni*. Orn. Biogr., Vol. II, 1834.

<sup>3</sup> *Parus hudsonicus*. This was not a new species. Audubon found a nest and four young, able to fly, July 18, 1833.

St. Johns River of the Floridas at the exception of those of a few species of which thousands may be seen on the outer sea islands. Scarcely a day that have we been without a constant fire. We see snow in all our walks. Mosquitoes and Caraboo flies in thousands at every step. A growth of vegetation that would astound any European garden and yet not a *cubic foot of soil!* Granit, Granit, Granit, Moss, Moss, Moss and nothing but Granit Rock and Moss of thousands of species.

I have a drawing of a pair of Willow Grouse with a covey of young which will perhaps give you a faint idea of the exterior or superficial aspect of the country, but as I have said before, the country cannot be described at present. John's violin and a flute prove very agreeable *attachés* to our expedition; nothing indeed is to me more pleasing of a rainy, foggy cold day than the sounds of chords every one of which lead me to thy side and blessed company *when with thee*. Write to my worthy friend John Bachman, that I shall take to *him a cargo of yarns*, to friend Berthoud<sup>1</sup> say a cargo of *egg shells*, but to dear Eliza, alas I fear *no furs*, 10 guineas is what we are asked for a Silver gray Fox, 6 to 7 pounds for a black one and as to Sables or other very fine skins, scarcely one is now to be met with for purchase. God willing we will be on our passage homeward on the 1st to the 10th of Sept., *we are told* that field ice is abundant at the lower end of the Belle Isle Straights, and we are also told that snows begin to fall about the middle of Sept.

For episodes I will have "A Labrador Squatter,"<sup>2</sup> "The Cod Fisherman,"<sup>3</sup> "The Eggers,"<sup>4</sup> "The Sealers"<sup>5</sup> &c., &c. Had it proved convenient for our good and valued friend Harris<sup>6</sup> to have come with us, I think he would have liked it much (particularly tell him as the country bids defiance and description) and I am sure it would have found *a few means* of obtaining *abundance* of [torn].

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholas Augustus Berthoud, brother-in-law of Audubon.

<sup>2</sup> 'The Squatters of Labrador,' Orn. Biogr., Vol. II, p. 154.

<sup>3</sup> 'Cod-Fishing,' Orn. Biogr., Vol. II, p. 522.

<sup>4</sup> 'The Eggers of Labrador,' Orn. Biogr., Vol. III, p. 82.

<sup>5</sup> The episode of 'The Sealers' did not appear in the Orn. Biogr., nor have I ever seen it in any of Audubon's writings. (R. D.)

<sup>6</sup> Edward Harris, Morristown, N. J. In 'The Journals' we see that he met Audubon at St. John, N. B., on his return from Labrador, and handed him the first home letters he had received in two months.

We will proceed to *Bras d'Or*, about one hundred miles east and north of this as soon as the wind will admit. That place is the general rendezvous of all the fishermen, then perhaps (and I hope it will prove so) I may find a letter of thine. To tell thee how I long to see thee again would be superfluous. Copy this for Bachman, show it to Harris and Nicholas,<sup>1</sup> of course, and copy it for good Dr. Parker,<sup>2</sup> the same for Victor.<sup>3</sup>

Now my dearest friend, God bless thee and may I find thee well and happy and all going on well. John joins me in every thing, he is now out scrambling on the mountains with the rest of the young men. Our collection of plants, I hope will prove agreeable to thee and others, *beds of Mosses* if not of roses and abundant I assure thee. Think of Mosses in which at every step you take you sink in up to your knees, soft as velvet, and as rich in color. Once more God bless thee.

Thine friend and husband forever,

John J. Audubon.

[Superscribed]

Mrs. Audubon.

Care of N. Berthoud Esq.

Merchant.

New York.

Via. Quebec.

Recd. Montreal, Aug. 25, 1833. and forwarded by H. Gates.

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholas Augustus Berthoud, New York.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. George Parkman, Boston, Mass.

<sup>3</sup> Victor Gifford Audubon, who was then in London supervising the publication of the 'Birds of America.'