

CORRESPONDENCE.

A Letter of J. P. Giraud, Jr.

EDITOR OF 'THE AUK':

I am sending you a copy of a letter which I know you will find of much interest. In 1867, Mr. J. P. Giraud, Jr., presented his collection of North American birds to Vassar College, Poughkeepsie. The letter is written to my father-in-law, a Trustee of the College at that time. I include also a copy of a letter from Mathew Vassar, founder of the college, to Mr. Lossing in which Mr. Vassar recounts his first meeting with Giraud. This letter was not dated. The bracketed words did not appear in the original but seem necessary for proper construction.

Yours very sincerely,

FRANK EDGAR JOHNSON.

16 Amackassin Terrace, Yonkers, N. Y.

Poughkeepsie, April 22, 1867

Benson J. Lossing, Esqr.

DEAR SIR:

Your pleasant note of yesterday came to hand late in the afternoon.

Local associations with collection are chiefly named in the "Birds of Long Island" printed if rightly remembering 1834 [1844] a copy of which will go with the Birds, if to be obtained. There doubtless [I] have spoken of my then fondness for gunning, especially Bay shooting. Yet fond as [I] then was of that amusement still [I] desired to know something more than merely name of that shot.

Hence [I] commenced forming [a] cabinet beginning with the Large Yellow Shank Snipe, Great Bittern and Herring Gull, and of the pleasant hours of my life none have passed more pleasantly than when collecting and studying those collected, and none have been more instructive.

None but those who have thoroughly studied Natural History are aware of its far-reaching embrace, learning, as it were, by absorption in directions of which the student is not directly in pursuit.

Students of Natural History must necessarily be close observers, which may be serviceable when apart from [the] cabinet. It is very generally regarded—so believing—that by naturalists, at least, acquaintance with any branch of Natural Science is an intellectual accomplishment, quite equal to music, drawing and other accomplishments [which] much pains are taken to acquire.

Naturalists by some are apt to be regarded sceptical on the subject of revealed religion, and [I] am happy to say that none such has ever been known personally to myself, and when enthusiasts would reach beyond

the province of Natural History they are frowned upon by the true adherents of Natural Science.

The collection by friends as well as by self is regarded valuable for containing a number of rare species from which Mr. Audubon made drawings for his large copper-plate edition "Birds of America" published as you are aware some years ago in London. Among the number of rare birds from Mr. Audubon is embraced the Great Auk, which is regarded by high authority, extinct. It also contains,—which may be interesting to some,—the first European Green-winged Teal and the first European Widgeon to which attention was called as having been shot in North America.

It further embraces also the original specimens of species new to Fauna of North America, which were described and figured in [a] folio, copy of which is to accompany the birds—only fifty copies of which were printed and distributed among the prominent Institutions in the United States and Europe devoted to Natural History, and a few leading Ornithologists.

Fifteen to twenty years ago it was—so believing—the most complete collection of North American birds extant since which period intercourse with the western side of the continent has been by collectors so frequent that many new species have been discovered scarcely sustaining Mr. Audubon* in his view with expression when completing Library edition of "The Birds of North America," which expression was, "I will give one hundred dollars for each and every new bird to be found in North America—it may have been United States—during my life."

Many of those since procured we have and are now in course of being mounted by Mr. J. G. Bell, the far-famed Taxidermist who mounted all in Vassar College Cabinet of North American birds.

With species now having and for species wanting—which Mr. Bell must have many through whom (I) hope that by Christmas next "Vassar College Cabinet of North American Birds" will be equal to any collection of North American birds in the world.

Yours Very Respectfully,

J. P. GIRAUD, JR.

* Prince delineator of Natural History.

Wednesday Morning

MY DEAR MR. LOSSING:

Yesterday for the first time in my life I had the pleasure of being made acquainted with our Fellow Citizen, J. P. Giraud, Jr., the ornithologist and generous donor of a valuable collection of Birds to "Vassar College," and I must say I was highly gratified with my friend, he was sociable, intelligent, and communicative

Yours truly,

M. VASSAR