

TESTIMONY OF SOME EARLY VOYAGERS ON THE GREAT AUK.

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MR. LUCAS, in his recent article on the Great Auk, asks if the "great Apponatz" of Hakluyt may not be either a misprint or a wrong translation of "*grasse Apponatz*," the fat Apponatz; and further on supposes, for the sake of a question, that the Apponatz is the Razor-bill, as if the "Apponatz" and the "great Apponatz" were two different birds. That there is no mistake involved, and that but one bird, the Great Auk, is meant, can be shown by comparing the certain statements of early travellers.

Unfortunately the notes from which I draw my material were taken for quite another purpose, and contain no extracts from Cartier, and no copy of his works is at present accessible; but as every good library should contain at least the Tross reprints of the 'Bref Recit et Succincte Narration,' the 'Discours du Voyage fait (en 1534)' and the 'Relation Originale,' his exact words can be very easily determined. A few of the very best libraries in the country may possibly contain the following as well: 'A short and || brief narration of the two || Navigations and Discoueries || to the Northwest partes called || Newe France: || First translated out of French into Italian by that famous || learned man Gio: Bapt: Ramutius, and now turned || into English by John Florio: worthy the rea || ding of all Venturers, Trauelers || and Discouuerers' || etc. This book, published in 1580, is an English translation of Cartier's work, and is in all probability the one quoted by Hakluyt.

While these four books would decide the question of *grande* and *grasse*, far more valuable as evidence is a quotation from one of them made by Marc Lescarbot in 1609. This I have not compared with Cartier, but probably, like most of the quotations of that time, it is a paraphrase rather than a verbal reproduction. Certainly it is much modernized in spelling. Yet that it is strikingly accurate anyone may see by comparing the French as here given with the English translation from Hakluyt, quoted in 'The Auk' for April, p. 129. The great value of this extract as evi-

dence, lies in the fact that Lescarbot had travelled extensively in this country, being as he said himself "temoin oculaire d'une partie des choses ici recitées"; and so able from his own experience to correct any misprint in Cartier's work; and moreover would not have hesitated to do this, as anyone who is acquainted with the calm way in which these early travellers appropriated each other's observations will admit. The extract is as follows:

"...et approchames de trois iles, desquelles y en avoit deux petites droites comme un mur, en sorte qu'il estoit impossible d'y monter dessus, et entre icelles y a un petit escueil. Ces iles estoient plus remplis d'oiseaux que ne seroit un pré d'herbes, lesquels faisoient là leur nids, et en la plus grande de ces iles y en avoit un monde de ceux que nous appellions Margaux, qui sont blancs et plus grands qu' Oysons, et estoient separez en un canton, et en l'autre part y avoit des Godets; mais sur le rivage y avoit de ces Godets et *grands Apponaths* semblables à ceux de cette ile dont nous avons fait mention [probably his Ile des Oyseaux, No. 3 of his chart; this Ile des Margaux is No. 46]. Nous descendimes au plus bas de la plus petite, et tuames plus de mille Godets et Apponaths et en mimes tant que souloumes en noz barques, et en eussions plus en moins d'une heure remplir trente semblables barques. Ces iles furent appellées du nom de Margaux." (Lescarbot, *Histoire de la Nouvelle France*, Vol. I, p. 231 et seq., ed. 1609; p. 233 et seq., Tross edition.)

It is extremely improbable that the same verbal error should find its way into the three different versions of Cartier and also into the four editions of Lescarbot published during the latter's lifetime. Hence if Hakluyt, quoting a translation, said "great Apponatz," and Lescarbot, quoting Cartier either directly or indirectly, said "grands Apponaths," the chance that Cartier ever said or meant to say "grasse" is exceedingly small. Whatever the bird was, we must admit that it impressed the French as being large; and we must remember that this is an absolute, not a relative term.

In one or two places Mr. Lucas writes "Great Apponatz," beginning the adjective with a capital, as if there might be a 'Lesser Apponatz,' in comparison with which this was large. That this could not have been the case, may be seen from the fact that Apponatz, or Apponath, was an Indian name, not yet naturalized, so that any adjective attached must have been purely descriptive, never distinctive in its use. For any other bird some-

what resembling this, the French would have adopted the Indian name already applied to it, instead of transferring this. But there are other reasons why Apponath can refer to the Great Auk only. Later, we find that the bird had French names given it, and Apponath was retained only as a synonym. Frère Gabriel Sagard Theodat, in his 'Grand Voyage du Pays des Hurons' (Paris, 1632), speaks of the bird as Guillaume, Tangeux, or Apponath, stating that the latter is the Indian name for it. He describes this bird as being "large as a goose," "black and white," "with a short tail and little wings." Unquestionably, this is the Great Auk, and his use of the word Apponath is such that it must have been applied to this bird only. Aside from this, there is another reason, partly negative, but having great weight with those best acquainted with the zoölogical observations of this age, why the term Apponath could not have included the Razor-bills. There is no evidence, I think, that the French voyagers ever noticed the difference between the Razor-bills and the Murres; I am not aware that any of the early English observers made the distinction. The points most important in scientific classification were passed by unnoticed, differences of size, color and habit forming the basis of their distinctions. To them, birds as near alike in size, figure, habits and general coloration, as the Murres and Razor-bills, would be regarded as one and the same. It is almost a certainty that the Godels (the Godetz of Cartier, Godets and Godes of Lescarbot) which Sagard describes as similar to the Apponath but smaller, include both the Murres and Razor-bills. Another reason for the term Apponath not referring to the Razor-bill is that it is everywhere spoken of as being fat, "excessivement gras." Murres and Razor-bills, so far as my personal experience goes with specimens killed in winter, are, contrariwise, excessively lean, being shaped somewhat like a toy Noah's Ark. But the Apponath, on the other hand, is invariably described as fat and oily; and the term Tangeux which Sagard says was the sailor's name for the Guillaume or Apponath, although not in any dictionary which I have consulted, seems to be equivalent to "lumpers," and to imply that the birds were short and fat. What Guillaume signifies, not even Trevoux hints at. John Josselyn in his 'New England's Rarities Discovered,' etc. (London, 1672), describing the Wobble, which is undoubtedly the

Great Auk, calls it "an ill shaped Fowl, having no long feathers in their Pinions, which is the reason they cannot fly, not much unlike a Penguin; *they are in Spring very fat*, or rather oily, but pull'd and garbidg'd, and laid to the fire to roast, they yield not one drop."

More evidence might easily be collected from the narrations of these early travellers, but in dealing with them care has to be exercised to see that they are not quoting some earlier traveller without giving him the credit due him.

As to the Great Auk breeding on the New England coast, the statement of Josselyn already quoted, that they were taken at Black Point (which was near Portland, Maine) *in the spring*, is an indirect testimony, the stronger for being undesigned. Again in Archer's 'Account of Gosnold's Voyage to Cape Cod' made in the spring and summer of 1602, he mentions "seeing petrels, coots, hagbuts, *penguins*, mews, gannets, cormorants, gulls," etc. These birds were seen in the months of May and June in the region of Cape Cod; hence it is reasonable to suppose that the Penguin, or Great Auk, was breeding there at that time. Again, Brereton in his 'Account of the Voyage of Gosnold to Virginia' speaks of the birds of the country, among which he mentions "eagles; hernshaws; cranes; bitterns; mallards; teals; geese; *penguins*; osprays and hawks; crows; ravens; mews; doves; sea-pies," etc. Gosnold arrived in Virginia, April 26, 1607, and Brereton's account was published the following year, so that these "penguins" may have been seen during the winter, though it is fully as probable that the list was made soon after their arrival in the country. Throwing this out as doubtful, at least two good references have been given to show that the Great Auk was present on our coasts during the summer. If they were there at that time, what could they have been there for unless to breed?

In his article in 'The Auk,' Mr. Lucas says: "As for the bones found in shell-heaps, they are probably those of birds taken during their migrations southward, for the Great Auk was doubtless formerly as common on the New England coast during the autumn and winter months as the Razor-bill is now." This certainly is a fair conjecture, and may be the correct one yet; considering the references already given which show that the Great Auk was, for a period of seventy years at least, a summer resi-

dent, and also taking the formation of the shell-heaps into account, it is quite as probable that these were summer specimens. For, the popular opinion to the contrary, I can show the best of reasons for believing that nineteen-twentieths of all the clams and oysters represented by our shell-heaps were taken and shelled during the summer months; that the Indians, instead of living on the spot the year round, came down the rivers in the summer in large numbers and made a business of gathering clams and oysters; and that, instead of eating these on the spot, they dried them in large quantities and carried them back up river and into the country for winter food. If this be the correct solution of the formation of the shell-heaps, these heaps must have accumulated rapidly during the summer, and slowly (for undoubtedly some Indians remained there the year through) during the rest of the year. Hence, most of the bones found in the heaps are the kitchen refuse of those engaged in shelling clams for winter use; hence, also, if the bones of the Great Auk are found in numbers proportionate to the bones of other kinds of animals, they are, presumably, the remains of birds taken by summer occupants of the kitchen middings and were not fall and winter specimens. That this is not mere theorizing the statements of Archer and Josselyn show: for if the birds were on the coast in summer at a date when the shell-heaps were approaching their completion, it is not illogical to suppose that they were at least equally abundant at the same season while the shell-heaps were growing most rapidly; and if the shell-heaps received nearly all their additions during the summer months, as can be shown to be true of the Maine heaps, the majority of the Great Auk bones found in them may be confidently set down as the remains of birds who had bred or were breeding on the coast. It will yet be conclusively proved that the Great Auk was resident the year round on the coasts of New England.