

this and avoid the pitfalls of malobservation on the one hand and those of poetic distortion on the other. Among the few may be mentioned Maurice Maeterlinck in his 'Life of the Bee' and Jules Fabre in the eight incomparable volumes of his 'Souvenirs Entomologiques.' Unfortunately only a single volume of the latter's work has been translated into English, and even the original is far too little known and appreciated. Those who are feeding the American public with false animal psychology done up in tinselled English interspersed with seductive half-tones, would do well to study the methods whereby the young Belgian mystic and the aged French observer contrive to satisfy the reader's æsthetic sense without departing from the truths of rigid observation and experiment. While it is not given to all to succeed like these, it is certainly possible for any one to repress a striving for æsthetic effect at the expense of truth.

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## UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF JOHN JAMES AUDUBON AND SPENCER F. BAIRD.

BY RUTHVEN DEANE.

THE following correspondence between John James Audubon, at the age of sixty-two years, and Spencer F. Baird, a young man of nineteen years, cannot fail to be of interest to the readers of 'The Auk.' The letters are of peculiar interest, as they touch upon Audubon's proposed trip to the Missouri River and of Baird's great desire to accompany him, and show the deep interest and affection each held for the other, though there was a difference of forty-three years in their ages.

The original letter from Baird has come into my possession through the generosity of Miss M. R. Audubon, and I am under great obligation to Miss Lucy H. Baird for a copy of the original Audubon letter and recommendation, which she found among her father's correspondence.

## BAIRD TO AUDUBON.

Washington, July 27, 1842.

My Dear Mr. Audubon.

After making several unsuccessful efforts to get a second sight of you day before yesterday, I was obliged to give up the attempt in despair. I went to the Capitol at half past twelve and wandered over the whole building, Library, Senate Chamber and House, without being able to see or hear anything of your excellency. In the evening as in the morning I was again at Fuller's<sup>1</sup> without avail, went up the street, listened a while to the Circus music, came back, you were in bed.

One thing I wanted to ask you about, was respecting your proposed trip next spring. In the first place the expense. The Pennsylvanians have been all so much affected by the derangements in the Currency of our state, stocks, banks, etc., that when in former years dollars were thrown away, cents are now carefully looked to. Nothing would delight me more than to go, if I can afford it. Next what preparation would I have to make to fit myself to accompany you. The journey ought to be a sort of "Humboldt & Bonpland" one, for the purpose of increasing the general sum of knowledge in every department of science, physical as well as natural. Will you please write and tell me all about the matter, route &c. If there is anything I can do for you here, do not hesitate to command me. It would require a good many drafts on me to wipe off the heavy load of obligation I am under to you for your kindness to me in New York, by sympathy and assistance in more ways than one. I have influential friends and relations here who, if occasion demands, may forward some of your views. By the by, a gentleman asked me yesterday several particulars about your proposed work, as to time of commencement, finishing and probable cost, intimating at the same time an intention of becoming a subscriber. Will you enable me to give him some information on the subject.

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<sup>1</sup> The old City Hotel kept by A. Fuller and known as "Fuller's," situated at the northwest corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and Fourteenth St., where the Willard Hotel now stands.

I have spent my time since I have been here principally between the Treasury Building and the Patent Office. I have a strong desire to spend a few months among the collections of the Exploring Expedition,<sup>1</sup> with the privilege of overhauling the articles. This my uncle Mr. Penrose,<sup>2</sup> solicitor of the Treasury, says I will be enabled to do by being connected in some way with the corps to be employed under act of Congress the ensuing winter. He says that if I could get a note from *Mr. Audubon* intimating in general terms, that from his knowledge of my qualifications, I would make a competent assistant to those gentlemen already engaged, that there would not be much trouble about the matter. Will you do me the favor to write something or other to this effect which he may use for this purpose. A few lines from you will be of more avail with the Secretary of Navy, or State, than a whole folio would be from anybody else. Will you ask Major Le Conte to send me a few of those very fine steel pins, tightly packed up, directed to me in an enclosure to Chas. B. Penrose, Solicitor of the Treasury, Washington, D. C. With my best respects to Mrs. Audubon and all your family, I remain,

Yours sincerely,

Spencer F. Baird.

P. S. Please address anything to me under cover to Chas. B. Penrose.

AUDUBON TO BAIRD.

New York, July 30, 1842.

My Dear Young Friend, —

Your letter of the 27th Inst. reached me yesterday. I am truly vexed that I should have missed you at the Library or the Congress Chambers, where I went (perhaps too late) between 3

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<sup>1</sup>United States Exploring Expedition, during the years 1838-42. Under command of Charles Wilkes, U. S. N.

<sup>2</sup>Charles B. Penrose of Pennsylvania, Solicitor of the Treasury from 1841 to 1845, appointed to office by President William H. Harrison.

and 4 o'clock of the afternoon, having been detained at the different Departments of State where it was my duty to call, preparatory to next coming Great Western Journey.

Now it proves by your letter that you feel favorably disposed to accompany me on this long-thought-of and contemplated Tour, and wish me to give you some idea of the expenses, attached to such an undertaking; but to this question I am quite unable to reply at present, although I may do so in a few weeks, and which I shall do, provided you write to me again on the subject.

I have no very particular desire to embark as deep in the Cause of Science as the great Humboldt has done, and that, simply because I am too poor in pecuniary means and too incompetent; but I wish nevertheless *to attempt* to open the Eyes of naturalists to *Riches untold*, and facts hitherto untold. The portions of the country through which it is my intention to pass, never having been trodden by white Man previously.

I have some very strong doubts whether the results of the Antarctic Expedition will be published for some time yet; for, alas, our Government has not the means, at present, of paying some *half a Million of Dollars* to produce publications such as they should publish, and connected with the vast stores of Information, collected by so many Scientific Men in no less than Four Years of Constant Toil and privation, and which ought to come to the World of Science at least as brightly as the brightest rays of the Orb of Day during the Midsummer Solstice. O, my dear young friend, that I did possess the wealth of the Emperor of Russia, or of the King of the French; then, indeed, I would address the Congress of our Country, ask of them to throw open these stores of Natural Curiosities, and to *Give away* Copies of the invaluable Works thus produced to every Scientific Institution throughout our Country and throughout the World.

As you however appear desirous to present my thoughts of your capabilities as one of the assistants in that Stupendous undertaking, I send you enclosed what I hope most sincerely may prove beneficial for such purposes.

Now as you have been kind enough to offer me your services at Washington, I ask you to call upon Mr. Cushing, M. P., of Massachusetts, and to ask him to have the goodness to forward

me the Letter promised me by the president of the U. S., for, as I have not yet had it, I somewhat fear that it has been missent.

Write to me at once, and believe me,

Your friend, John J. Audubon.

#### AUDUBON'S RECOMMENDATION OF BAIRD.

New York, July 30, 1842.

Knowing, as I do, Spencer F. Baird, Esq., as a Young Gentleman well qualified to assist in the arrangement, description, etc. of the specimens of Natural History brought home by the Exploring Expedition, and deposited in the National Institute at Washington City for the purpose of being published and thereby rendered useful to the world of Science; I take great pleasure in recommending him as a most worthy, intelligent, and industrious student of Nature, both in the field and in the museum, and I would feel great satisfaction in hearing that our Government had employed him in this national and important undertaking.

John J. Audubon.

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### NESTING HABITS OF THE HERODIONES IN FLORIDA.

BY A. C. BENT.

*Plates XIX-XXI.*

(*Concluded from p. 29.*)

#### **Botaurus lentiginosus.** AMERICAN BITTERN.

This species seems to be sparingly but generally distributed throughout the fresh water marshes of Florida, where it undoubtedly breeds. We did not find any of its nests but, as we spent very little time in suitable localities, this is not strange. We flushed a few American Bitterns from the saw-grass marshes on