

## TEN AUDUBON LETTERS.

BY ALBERT E. LOWNES.

No excuse is needed for printing the letters of John James Audubon. He was a voluminous correspondent and he reveals himself so fully through his letters that they constitute a major source of information about his life and experiences. The ten letters that follow are all of the ornithologist's most active period,—from his first arrival in London in 1827 to his last expedition after quadrupeds in 1843. The period has been so thoroughly covered by Audubon's biographers that it seems that little more could be said, but each of these letters throws further light on the man and his methods.

The original letters are all in the writer's possession. They are reprinted literally, using Audubon's spelling and punctuation, except that superior letters are indicated by italics. Only such notes are added as serve to identify persons mentioned in the letters or conditions attending their composition.

## I.

Mr Audubon presents his Respects to Mr Phillips Esqr<sup>1</sup> and begs to know at what time it will be most agreeable to meet him—he is at 55 Great Russel Street Bloomsbery May 28<sup>th</sup> 1827—

## II.

Edinburgh Novr 29<sup>th</sup> 1830My dear Harlan<sup>2</sup>—

I have this instant finished a long letter to McMurtrie<sup>3</sup> respecting the securing of the copyright of my first volume of letter press in our United States which he will show you I dare venture to say.—Mean time I give you the following questions—

First can a copyright be secured without *publishing* the work but merely by depositing the manuscript in a Public Institution or such a library as that of Congress for instance?

2<sup>d</sup>, can an American bookseller publish from an edition of the same book published in Europe in spite of the copyright secured in America?

I am up to the eyes at writing the first volume of my Land Birds which will consist of 450 to 500 pages of print octavo size.—I am trying my best to render the work equally *highly* scientific as popular.—A good portion is now ready for the press here, and my good wife is copying the manuscript to forward to America to Mr Edd

<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Phillips, M.D., F.R.S.L. This letter was written just one week after Audubon arrived in London for the first time, fresh from his triumphs in the provinces. It did not lead to an immediate meeting, but some time later Phillips subscribed to the 'Birds' and Havell introduced him to Audubon. The two became the firmest of friends. Audubon took a house but a few doors from Phillips's on Wimpole Street and one of Victor Audubon's sons was named Benjamin Phillips Audubon.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Harlan (1796–1843) was Audubon's dearest friend in Philadelphia and a distinguished physician and naturalist.

<sup>3</sup> James McMurtrie, member of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia. Audubon had great faith in his judgment and McMurtrie had full charge of seeing the American edition of the first volume of the 'Ornithological Biography' through the press.

Everett<sup>1</sup> one full month before the book is before the European Public.—Collect all the information you can with McMurtrie on this head and let me hear from you as soon as you can.—

I have now entered into the *science* of ornithology with all my heart and I am determined to cary the knowledge I possess of our birds so far as to close in a degree the business of writing about them and of their being represented again shortly.—I have it in contemplation to publish a general Sinopsis of the whole discovered species in the highest, most minute & concise descriptive manner, especially as regards the bills, tongue, eyes, & muscles of the head, with the leg & feet—with a view to make *that work a standard* of ornithology for all students of that science *particularly* or expressly for those of the U. S.—Now I need assistance and I apply to you full of confidence.—

Have collected at my expense and for my account *the heads and legs with feet* in pairs both, meaning *males & females* of every species you can, the heads cut off with a good portion of the neck and the leggs sufficiently above the *knee joint* as to answer my purpose exactly.—Have them tied I mean the head & the leggs of each bird together and with those parts of a male bird attach the same parts of the female of the same species. Whenever you can have male & female procured at the same time, all fastened together by a good thread with a small piece of *wood* numbered by notches or *Roman Figures* to corespond with a correct list kept by yourself for the purpose, after which put each of such parcels of heads & feet into a *Barrel of Whiskey* which you will buy for me.—Put Wilson's names to your list as far as his work goes and Bonaparte's Synopsis for the rest.—The boys who go out shooting can bring you a great variety of the birds, and the market may also furnish a great variety.—Use your own discretion for the prices you may have to pay, for although I am determined not to suffer my undertaking to suffer through want of money to carry it forward, money is a *good article* in my pockets.—

Collect for me *all and everything* you can between the time you begin after this reaches you until I see you next autumn (which God willing will be the case) and I will settle with you in a *Friendly Manner*.—If you prefer cash for cash say so, and I will see that you are supplied in time either by Messrs. Walker or my Brother's wife at Louisville.—

I am writing to Wm Bakewell my Brother in Law at Louisville to make my sons collect & put up all they can of birds heads & feet in the same manner and also to Louisiana—I wish I knew to whom I might write at Boston—I would willingly give a full copy of my Work for a compleat series, thus preserved and collected for me.—I can draw the descriptions of sizes & feathering from my own drawings & names and habits(?) in my Journals—As I intend spending 18 months in our Dear Woods and go further in them than I have yet done I have some hope of securing an entire collection of the sort mentioned through my Friends & myself to bring over to Europe on my return—

My 20th number is finished & out, therefore my first volume of 100 plates is completed—The volume of letter press is in reference to that volume. There will be anecdotes, descriptions of different parts of the Country, some Incidents of my Life in the Woods & in the *World &c* and as to *scientific* portions I will not fear on that score I assure you. When *Congress* receives the 20th No you will see at your house in a few days afterward the noble *Falco Harlanii*<sup>2</sup>—

<sup>1</sup> Edward Everett (1794–1865), statesman. Almost single-handed, he persuaded Congress to subscribe for the 'Birds.'

<sup>2</sup> For an account of this bird, see Professor Herrick's 'Audubon, the Naturalist,' vol. I, page 427.

I am it appears a member of the Society of Arts & Sciences of Boston Oh Philadelphia, Philadelphia, is it true that I am not worthy of being one of thy Academicians?<sup>1</sup>

Now my dear Friend I must once more bid you Adieu, remember me to Sully<sup>2</sup> & other of our Friends & believe me ever Yours most

Sincerely

JOHN J. AUDUBON

I have taken leave to mention your name, McMurtrie's, Sully, Le Sueur,<sup>3</sup> & Wetheril<sup>4</sup> in my Introduction—

I quote no authors and only such synonyms as are absoly necessary—

I have written for the press (in my book) a description of the Pine Swamp<sup>5</sup> that will please good Jediah Irish and will bring a stare to the Eyes of the *Youngsters* of your fair City—Try to see Lehman<sup>6</sup> and ask him to write to me and keep to yourself, *Murtrie & Lehman* my return next autumn to America—

Richd Harlan, Esqr M.D. &c &c &c

Philadelphia U. S. of America

### III.

Charleston S. C. February 12th 1837

My dear Mr Havell.<sup>7</sup>—

We are now on the eve of taking our departure from this place, with the view to proceed on what I look as my last Ornithological Tour.—May have been Joined by our friend Edd Harris,<sup>8</sup> and having no Revenue Cutter in this port at present, we will *Three of us*, proceed by Land to Pensacola, Mobile, &c in Two or Three days, and hope to meet with one of the Cutters very soon.—

I was very glad indeed to hear through my Son Victor, that you have at last secured yourself respecting Old Phillip's<sup>9</sup> debt to you; and now hope that you may not ever meet with such another *adventure!*

Since here I have drawn 76 birds, a Hare, and a Toad—I shipped 9 Drawings on the 17th of Decr to the care of the Rathbones<sup>10</sup> of Liverpool by the American Ship The Mohawk, Capn Stephens, and these Drawings I sincerely hope have reached London ere this day in good order.—On the 6th Instant Nine others, consigned to the Same House at Liverpool, went off in the American Ship The *Superb Capn*

<sup>1</sup> At this time, Audubon was not a member of the Philadelphia Academy. He had been introduced there by Bonaparte and had the backing of many influential members, but the opposition of a few persons (some of whom were financially interested in Wilson's *Ornithology*) was strong enough to keep him out for many years. This irritated Audubon greatly. My copy of Vol. v, part i, of the 'Journal' of the Academy bears Audubon's signature on the title-page. Below his name he has added a heavily underscored *F. R. S.*

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Sully (1783–1872), celebrated painter in Philadelphia. He gave Audubon instruction in the use of oil colors.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Le Sueur (1780–1846), naturalist and artist. Friend of Audubon in Philadelphia.

<sup>4</sup> John P. Wetherill (died 1853). Active member of the Philadelphia Academy and friend of Audubon.

<sup>5</sup> See 'Ornithological Biography,' vol. i, page 52.

<sup>6</sup> George Lehman, Swiss landscape painter. Assistant to Audubon on the expedition to Florida, 1831.

<sup>7</sup> Engraver of the plates of the 'Birds.' After 1839 he lived in the United States. (See the letter of May 11, 1839.)

<sup>8</sup> Edward Harris (1799–1863), of Moorestown, N. J. Audubon's first patron and lifelong friend. He accompanied Audubon to Florida (1831) and up the Missouri River (1843).

<sup>9</sup> Not identified. Not Benjamin Phillips, see note 1.

<sup>10</sup> Audubon's friends and patrons. Mrs. William Rathbone was the first subscriber to the 'Birds.'

Irish, and I trust that these also will reach in goodly times, so as not to interrupt or stop the progress of our Publication.—

You will observe that in consequence of Many New Birds coming unexpectedly to hand, I am obliged to have some plates more crowded than was the general case before, which is unavoidable in consequence of my determination to finish the Work with no more than Four Hundred Plates, eggs included!—I need not say to you after our many years of acquaintance and good understanding that I hope you will exert yourself, and make those about you exert themselves also to proceed on and to finish this great undertaking to the best of your capabilities.—NO, I take it for granted that you will do so, and leave the Subject for the present.

I should have liked very much indeed to have received one Sett of the Numbers you have finished since my departure from London, and wish that you would, when this reaches you forward such a set to New York, where I could see them as soon as I return from my forthcoming expedition. I always feel great delight whilst viewing the progress of the Work, but I believe now, more than ever, as it draws towards its completion!—I received a few days ago one of the setts of 3 volumes out of the 5 sent to New York and like it well.—When (as I expect it will be the case) we have 50 Compleat Copies to print, colour and have bound It will appear as a Frolic after all our Labours, and I intend taking with me a famous list of Subscribers, with whose money we will keep the Machine in good condition.

Mr Harris came here on the 6th Instant, and on the 8th we went Deer-Hunting and killed (among the party of 5) Five Deers! I wish I could have handed you the whole carcass of the Largest, and disposed of the rest among our Friends and family in London.—

We are in perfect health, will keep together all the time of our absence, and I hope will return to England about August next.—

I have four beautiful Flying Squirrels for you, provided they live until our arrival at London.—Indeed, I intend carrying a rare mess of all sorts of Curiosities, to prove that, at least, We think of our absent Friends.—Show this to my Dear Wife & Son.<sup>1</sup>—Present my best regards & good wishes to your own Dear Wife and child, to Dolphus,<sup>2</sup> Mr Blake<sup>3</sup> and Brother Henry<sup>4</sup> and believe me as ever

Your sincere friend,

JOHN J. AUDUBON

To Robert Havell Esqr  
London

#### IV.

Sir—

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 3d Instant, conveying to me the information that the Ornithological Society of London has elected me a Foreign Member.

I beg you to assure the President & Council of the Society of the gratification with

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Audubon and Victor remained in London to supervise the production of the 'Birds' while Audubon was in America searching for new species.

<sup>2</sup> One of Havell's assistants.

<sup>3</sup> Engraver, employed by Havell. He was so proficient that Audubon looked on him as Havell's successor in case anything should cause Havell to give up the work before it was completed.

<sup>4</sup> Henry Augustus Havell (1803-1840), artist. In 1829 he opened a print shop in New York, which failed. He returned in 1839 and was again unsuccessful. Audubon gave him financial assistance and offered him work on the 8vo 'Birds,' Havell refused to work with Bowen, the lithographer, and laid plans, which were never consummated, for a pirated edition.

which I accept the honour and of my due appreciation of this mark of their consideration.

I am Sir with great regards

Your most obt Servant

JOHN J. AUDUBON

To  
Wm Holl Esqr  
&c &c &c  
Secretary of the Ornithological  
Society of London

4 Wimpole Street  
16th Novr 1837

V.

Edinburgh May 11th 1839.—

My dear Mr Havell.—

I am quite surprised at my not receiving an answer to my last to you, sent on the 4th Instant.<sup>1</sup> Surely my letters to London cannot have so sadly been miscarried?

In my last I asked of you to call on Mr Hayward<sup>2</sup> (to whom I had written 10 days before, but who did not receive my letter) and to tell him to engross the Insurance for the Samson from £3,000 to £5,000 as soon as possible. I also asked of you to take on board the *Westminster* (the Packet by which you will [leave] England on the 7th of next month) all such Books, Drawings or other effects that may be deposited under the care of our good friend Benj. Phillips, including my Original Drawings which must be packed and Tined securely. To have all these regularly shipped with Bill of Lading &c and addressed to my Son Victor G. Audubon, care of N. Berthoud,<sup>3</sup> New York. Mr Hayward may do all this, and save you the time and trouble connected with such matters.—I besides the above asked you to tell Mr Hayward that I wished him to forward his a/c to me, that I might sent him a check for what I owe him.—And again I asked you whether or not, it would suit you equally well to be paid in America for the Extra setts of the Birds of America; as to pay you in America would be much more desirable to us, as when I leave this country I am not anxious to return to it again, or to be troubled with London Bankers any more.—

We received a letter from Victor last evening, in which he mentions having written to you and to Mr Phillips by the same Packet (the Virginian). He was then at Charleston at Doctr Bachman<sup>4</sup> who the day previous had killed 4 Deer 1 Wild Turkey and 1 Fox! No such shooting in the Regents Park me thinks!

My Son John, his Wife, Babe<sup>5</sup> & Nurse will be in London on Saturday or Tuesday next when they will see you. They are going to Paris and shortly to America, perhaps indeed by the *Westminster*, in which case you can have some talk among old and well known Friends!

<sup>1</sup> The letter of May 4, referred to, is printed in the 'Letters of John James Audubon.' Boston, 1930.

<sup>2</sup> Custom-house broker of London.

<sup>3</sup> Nicholas Berthoud (married Eliza Bakewell), Audubon's brother-in-law.

<sup>4</sup> John Bachman (1790–1874), Lutheran clergyman and amateur naturalist. Audubon's two sons married his two oldest daughters and he wrote most of the text for the 'Quadrupeds.'

<sup>5</sup> Lucy Audubon (1838–1909), daughter of John Woodhouse Audubon and J. J. Audubon's oldest grandchild.

I pray you to answer this by return mail and with best wishes from all to all, believe me always

Your friend  
JOHN J. AUDUBON  
6. Alva Street

To  
Robert Havell Esqr  
10 York Buildings  
New Road  
London

VI.

86 White Street New York  
June 30<sup>th</sup> 1840

Dear Sir

Your favour of yesterday, was delivered here a few hours ago; and I answer to its contents at once.—

I have according with your request delivered Two Copies of the Birds of America each from No 1/12 (No 12 having been issued since you were here) and one No 12 to make the Sett you took compleat. We will continue to deliver the Nos as they come out to D. Appleton & Co—

I wish you had forwarded us *the names* of the subscribers you have now, that we might have them entered on our printed List, and recommend you to do so for the future.

Although it is my intention to visit Albany soon after the celebration of our Independence, it would be well for *you* to exert *yourself* and procure as many names as may be in your power to do, and, to assist you in this particular, I send you a few printed Prospectuses which you can place or hang in your Shop, and upon which those Persons willing to subscribe, can put their names and address.—

I remain Dear Sir

Very Respect'ly  
Your obt Servt  
JOHN J. AUDUBON

W. C. Little<sup>1</sup> Esqr  
Albany N. Y.

VII.

Providence, R. I. Sunday Augt 9<sup>th</sup> 1840.

My dearest Friends—

I wrote to you this day 2 weeks from Nantucket, and gave you a partial a/c of that curious island, where after all, I procure 18 new Subscribers.—I hope my letter did reach you, as I thought it would engage a few moments of Dearest Maria's<sup>2</sup> attention, and perhaps please her.—Now to please you both and all the Dear Friends beneath whose roof you stil are, I will give you some account of what I have done since then.

I was very sick on my passage back to New Bedford, but the kind looks of my numerous Friends there, a good Dinner, and a good night's Sleep restored me quite and enabled me at once to resume my labours. The next morning I received 13 pictures from New York, all copies from my original Drawings, and in two days I

<sup>1</sup> Audubon's agent in Albany and a subscriber to the 8vo 'Birds.'

<sup>2</sup> Maria Bachman Audubon (1817-1840), eldest daughter of John Bachman. She married John Woodhouse Audubon in 1837. She was ailing at the time this letter was written and died very soon afterward.

sold the following ones at the prices annexed, to wit.—Bird of Washington \$100. Turtle doves 75\$. Red-shouldered hawk 50\$,—these to Mr Howland,<sup>1</sup> a wealthy Quaker. White-headed Eagle \$100. Tetra umbellus \$75. These 2 last bought by a Mr Morgan.<sup>2</sup>—Peregrine Falcons \$75.—Purple Grakles \$40, to Mr Saml Morgan.<sup>3</sup>—All these were paid cash down, and I have yet 6 others there for sale. Besides this I had the fortune to sell 2 copies of the large Work in sheets to a Mr Seabury,<sup>4</sup> each copy for 875\$ and 22 portraits for as many Dollrs He paid me all except a balance of 397\$ which I will receive next week. He purchased these copies for the purpose of selling the plates singly on spec and I hope he will do well with them, and as all my subscribers at Nantucket paid me and several of them for the 1st year, I was enabled to send Doer Parkman<sup>5</sup> \$1099.70/100—and Victor \$1005!—This has enabled Victor to pay Havell \$1000.—and to keep the pot boiling!—Considering the tough times, and I like this better than the “Hard Times” or the word “Crisis,” has been doing pretty well for an old man like me.

Here I am arrived to try my luck tomorrow, and as I was born under a fortunate star I expect to do something worthy the time spent.

I called several times on young Lee<sup>6</sup> at New Bedford and gave his Young Wife a Lesson in oil painting! She is the smallest woman I ever have seen married. Her waist is about the size of a quart bottle; but she is very clever and amiable and lively. She sang for me far sweeter than a Nightingale.—I have received 2 Gull's Eggs from friend Doer Wilson<sup>7</sup> and had these been laid on a sand beach, the bird in a wild state; I would have pronounced these gulls new to me, but little dependence can be placed in eggs thus produced. My best regards to him. Where is his son now that you have a new Collector of the Customs??—

My poor head so very frequently travels so much faster than my body or my fingers and pen that I was about forgetting to say to you that I went from New Bedford home and returned again in less than 48 hours and spent several of these at home where I had the pleasure of finding all pretty well save our beloved Eliza<sup>8</sup> who complained somewhat of her cough. Little Harriet<sup>9</sup> who almost walks by herself remembered me at once & I was delighted to kiss her and dearest old Mother.—The little angel has 4 pegs; just the number I have! Hers are new and as sharp as the edge of a new razor; mine are blunted and worn out by age, fatigue, and almost constant anxiety. How dearly I should have liked to have spent *this Sunday* with you all. How oft I would have kissed my little Lulu<sup>10</sup> and perhaps pleased our beloved Maria; and talked and talked with the rest of the family, old Mrs. Davis,<sup>11</sup> &c &c

<sup>1</sup> George Howland, Jr.

<sup>2</sup> Charles W. Morgan, an important merchant and ship-owner of New Bedford.

<sup>3</sup> Should be Samuel Rodman, who also subscribed to the 8vo 'Birds.'

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Seabury. It is interesting to learn that Audubon had no compunction about breaking up sets to sell the individual prints.

<sup>5</sup> George Parkman, professor in Harvard Medical School, and Audubon's friend and agent in Boston.

<sup>6</sup> Probably Stephen S. Lee, who was a subscriber to the 8vo 'Birds,' but possibly Hepburn Lee.

<sup>7</sup> Samuel Wilson, M.D., of Charlestown, S. C. He was a subscriber to the 8vo 'Birds' and assisted Audubon by collecting birds and eggs in his region.

<sup>8</sup> Eliza Bachman Audubon, second daughter of John Bachman and wife of Victor Gifford Audubon. She died in 1841.

<sup>9</sup> Harriet Bachman Audubon (1839– ), daughter of J. W. Audubon.

<sup>10</sup> Lucy Audubon. See note 24.

<sup>11</sup> Mrs. Davis. An old friend of Audubon's in Charleston. More often he refers to her as “Grandma Davis.”

When I leave this I will return to New Bedford for one day, proceed to Plymouth, Boston, &c as far east as Portsmouth, New Hampshire, as at the latter place I have some hopes of selling a copy of the large Work.—Afterwards I will wend my way back towards home once more, rest a few days and retake the field of action until the 25th day of Decr after which I will give up hunting subscribers and seek Rats and other animals of the sort. By the way, my collection is coming on apace and I have several friends at work for me in different parts of the Country.—

When this reaches you, you will have had the 14th No which finishes the 1st Vol. of the little Edition. I am anxious to see how it looks bound.

As there is no post this holy day I will not close this until tomorrow when perhaps I may have something more to say. Meantime God bless you all & may you, my beloved children, soon be enabled to return to us along with some of the members of the family.

Monday. 10th My Dear Son. I have procured only one subscriber this morning and now must close my letter with nothing more worth while. God bless you.

Your Friend & Father,

JOHN J. AUDUBON

To John Woodhouse Audubon, Esqr  
Care of Revd John Bachman, D.D.  
Charleston, South Carolina

#### VIII.

New York Jany. 25th (Sunday) 1841.—

My dear Children and Friend.—

Your precious letter of the 3d Inst. we received a few days ago, and were indeed right glad to see that our beloved Eliza's hand writ was affixed with a few lines, showing as we all hope her better state of health, as these very few lines have been the only ones received from her since your arrival at the Havanna.<sup>1</sup>—

It is quite clear that up to that date you had not received a fine letter of my own, although as well as John Bachman says we have written enough to give you full employment in the reading line.—I am sorry, very sorry indeed for all this, because in my earliest letters I asked you to write to us by every oppy. to any part of the States, and had you done so we must have had many more letters from you than we can receive by a different course.—Now we have only the oppies. arising from vessels directly bound from this to the Havanna, and these I am sorry to say are few and far between.—I must here tell Victor that it will not do for him to put off writing his letters to us until the vessel by which he writes is *underway!*—We all exceedingly regret that you should have remained in the *Infernal City* so long instead of putting at once for the Interior of an Island so far famed for all that is most congenial to ardent spirits.—You say however that you are going in a few days to some place about 17 miles from Matanzas. Why not have gone to the very interior of the island in one of the most elevated and by the promise of a dry atmosphere still better suited to the state of health of our Eliza?—I would have done so at once for I feel assured that the beauties of nature in these high altitudes would have been preferable to all you in every point of view.—

Here we all go on much as usual. Johnny has 4 full length (small) pictures to paint and has one of them partially finished which I think is highly creditable to him. The

<sup>1</sup> Victor and his wife, Eliza, were in Cuba in the hope of bettering Mrs. Audubon's health. She died, however, in April, soon after returning to New York. See note 8, p. 160.



names of the parties are the family of Mr Trudeau<sup>1</sup> and he will get \$400 for them. He has begun a picture of his "old dad" that promises wonders and if well finished will be lithographed forthwith. I am sorry that you have not met with ready sales for the pictures but heartily glad that you have no subscribers to the little work and wish you to avoid everything of the sort *in the Island of Cuba!*

About a week ago Mr Bowen<sup>2</sup> got on his high horse and went so far as to write to me that he would give up the work! Telling us big stories about his losses &c &c and complained bitterly that every number of Johny's drawings contained more work than the last. Chevalier<sup>3</sup> I do believe felt me easy on the subject. I never did and in consequence of all this I wrote a letter to Bowen with the will and wishes of Mamma and Johny in which I told him that we were ready to accept his resignation and asking him to appoint a day for settlement and *actual* payment of the balance! Bowen was at breakfast with us the very next morning but one. We received him *as usual* extremely kindly; he showed us the coloured proofs he had brought along and I refused them at once, determined as I was that we were to have our own way over him for once and for ever. He stared not a little, but on his hearing me tell him that in case of should give up his engagement, that I would send Johny to England that very day for the purpose of bringing over 50 workmen as good as himself, he mellowed down as an apple does in an oven, and ere he left us the same day did promise us never to complain again and ask as a particular favour that I would burn his letter, which however I told him I would retain for the "Sake of Old Lang Syne," and I hope we will have no further trouble with him for a *good while*. The fact was simply this, that he had taken upon himself to *cut up our little drawings at such a rate*, that I was determined to check him, and I have done effectively. Chevalier is properly delighted and so are we all.—He has furnished Chevalier with back Nos up to 9 inclusive but it will be something like 2 months before he comes up to No 24. But we must be patient.—

We have made pretty fair collections with the *Members of Congress* and you will not be surprised when I tell you that since my return from Boston, I have actually written and sent off upward of one hundred letters! We are still without an agent at Charleston and God knows when we will have one. Not a word from Mr Grimshaw<sup>4</sup> or Mr Gordon<sup>4</sup> has been received, and therefore no money. We will have to pay about 150\$ in cash for the binding of the volumes for New Orleans, and may have to wait 6 months for a return. Do not, I pray you, accept any more such subscriptions. We can have plenty of subscribers near and around us who will receive the work in Nos as published to be delivered and paid for.—We delivered yesterday the last set on hand up to 24 to Capn Britton,<sup>5</sup> who paid me 24\$.—I have forwarded all the numbers wanted for every part except at Charleston where we scarcely know what subscribers we have, although John Bachman is trying his utmost to bring matters round in that city.—You, my dear Victor, would feel perfectly amazed, were you here, to see the *numerous errors in your entries on our books*. All of which Johny and I have corrected and settled.—This I can easily

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps Dr. James Trudeau, an accompanied ornithologist of New York and a friend of Audubon.

<sup>2</sup> John T. Bowen, of Philadelphia, lithographer of the 8vo 'Birds,' the 'Quadrupeds,' etc.

<sup>3</sup> J. B. Chevalier, a Philadelphia lithographer, and co-publisher with Audubon of the first five volumes of the 8vo 'Birds.'

<sup>4</sup> James Grimshaw and Alexander Gordon, Audubon's agents in New Orleans. Gordon married Ann Bakewell, Mrs. Audubon's youngest sister.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Britton, commanded the *Cladiator* on which Audubon crossed to New York in 1836. He subscribed to the 8vo 'Birds' and was a friend of Audubon's family.

account for by the anxiety you felt for Eliza, but I assure you that it perplexed us not a little.

We have forwarded all *Nos* to England and written to everybody there. No news from Phillips of late. Not a word from Russia,<sup>1</sup> and I will write to Mr Poinsett<sup>2</sup> on the subject as I have no faith in the consul here, who has never called upon us. By the way, Mr Poinsett wrote to me to ask me to deliver lectures on ornithology before the "National Institution" in that city, which I very politely declined! Our toll of subscribers exceeds 1100 and we can have as many more as we can wish, *provided* we can supply the demand, and there is the rub! No 25 will be out in 10 days and No 26 not until the first of Feby. on a/c of the labour in finishing the back *Nos* up to 24, but we will make it all up in the long days of summer.

I finished yesterday morning a *good* drawing of 2 beavers the size of Life, and I am going to paint a picture of them for Bowen to lithograph as one of the series of 6 which he has begun with the Pheasants. The latter is about  $\frac{2}{3}$  done and looks finely on the stone. We paid him last week about 1200\$ for work done of the back *Nos* to No 9.—I greatly regret that you should send W. C. D. Cuthbertson<sup>3</sup> *cigars at our own expenses*. He is fast assuming the pompous with us all. (This is *entre nous*, of course.) We paid Havell 500\$ about 10 days ago and will not settle until you return to us although his balance agrees very nearly with ours. *In his a/c you had forgotten* in some of your entries to carry out 275 sterling for which you had his own receipt. This of course is an *item!* He is now in New Jersey, perhaps with Edd Harris, about to purchase a farm for his only son. Bowen told us that Havell had the best and easiest of times while he was doing our work in London. So much for the humbug of this world!—Of late the editor of the *New World* has published about 25,000 copies of the wood cut (copper) of the Wild Turkey and a portion of the history of that Bird, and again he has (*gratis*) published our prospectus daily, in the *Evening Signal*. There is a *running rumour* in town that the Mercantile Library will at last buy a copy of the large Work. *Nous verrons?* Doer Bartlett<sup>4</sup> has been very ill for nearly 2 months, and says that he regrets his not having gone with you. Of course since, the "*Albion*" has not been quite so good as formerly. I saw him several times within 10 days and I think he will recover, although he has been indeed very low. All well at N. Berthoud's, at the Hall's,<sup>5</sup> and at everybody that we know, which indeed is precious little in this city. Will it do you good to know that Ward,<sup>6</sup> the bird stuffer and thief, died at the almshouse at Boston of actual drunkenness?—

About 10 days ago, I forwarded our *a/c* against Beile<sup>7</sup> of Charleston, sworn to, and duly so, before the Judge of the Circuit Court of this city, and put it under

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<sup>1</sup> Probably refers to Baron Krudener, Russian Minister to the United States (1827-38) and a subscriber to the folio 'Birds,' but who failed to pay for the work.

<sup>2</sup> Joel R. Poinsett (1779-1851), of Charleston, S. C., Secretary of War and patron of the sciences. He was the first president of the National Institution of Washington.

<sup>3</sup> Probably William Cuthbertson, "originally of London, but now a citizen of New York," 'Ornithological Biography,' vol. v, page xxiv. In London, he and Audubon were close friends.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. John Sherman Bartlett (1790-1863). In New York he [published 'The Albion,' devoted to improving the relationships between Great Britain and the United States. He was an Englishman by birth.

<sup>5</sup> Probably the family of Caroline Hall, who married John Woodhouse Audubon, 1841.

<sup>6</sup> Frederick Ward, English taxidermist, brother of Henry Ward, who accompanied Audubon to Florida in 1831. Henry afterward returned to England and both brothers and their mother subsequently troubled Audubon greatly with claims and demands for money.

<sup>7</sup> J. P. Beile, Audubon's first agent in Charleston.

cover to Mr Poinsett to be forwarded by him to John Bachman, who wrote to us that *Mr Patrick* would settle it at once. Thomas Butler King<sup>1</sup> of Georgia to whom I have written several times never has answered to me. We have had what is called "an open winter" here. Rains in torrents, short lapses of sharp cold, some sun, and again rain. It is now quite mild and raining freely.—I always guessed that your expenses in Cuba would prove very great, and you must try to reduce them by bringing back a great number of good sketches that you can turn to account on your return to us.—We do not know yet if we will remain at 86 White Street this year, but we will know, and we will inform you, as soon as our next quarter is paid, which will be on the 1st day of February, of course.—

Rents are actually "*looking up*" but all the *papers* are up against it. An immense quantity of houses, lots, &c has been sold of late at auction, and yet there is an appearance of better times, which I hope will *reach us, wherever we may be!* Along with this we send you (in a parcel directed to the same care) Nos 20 to 24 inclusive, for you to look at, and for you to bring back to us. I hope that these will reach you wherever you may be when this reaches you.—Along in the same parcel I send you all the papers of the day so you may have some greater insight of what is going on in this part of the broad World.—

I scarcely know anything more for me to say, but as the thoughts may occur, I will leave this to the last moment.—And now a new thought has occurred to me!

It is this. As it may be that you have not received any one of *our* letters to you, I think it proper to give you an idea again of what I did during my journey to Boston and Yankees, by which you will see that I was both fortunate and well-treated. The amount of money which I sent home was something like 1800\$ and I received at Boston alone 105 additional subscribers,—4 at Lowell,—19 at Worcester, 5 at Springfield, and about 12 at Hartford.—I was away precisely one month to a day and I did call that a very fair "turn out!" The "Yankees" as our eastern people are called, are in my opinion as good a set of folks as any in the World, and I love them the more, the more I see of them. My pen which ought to be a "*steel*" one, is, I fear, only "cast iron," and I doubt somewhat if you will be able to make out even the run of my ideas? However as we ourselves do receive letters past belief in the hand write of the writers, I hope for the best, and trust to your keen young eyes for the result.—The Hall family are all going to England in April next. We have seen a good deal of them of late, and Johny and I were there 2 evenings ago.—By the way of news let me tell you that old Robert Balham<sup>2</sup> of Hampstead, England, wrote to me to deliver letters in America! And besides sent a fine young Gent of the name of Burgess with *letters patent* by way of introduction. We like him very much. He is a gentleman throughout, but with all as innocent as Mother Eve was before she plucked the cursed apple from the cursed apple tree! He wishes to become a spinner of *thread* in America, and perhaps he would succeed if he were provided with double leaves, the precious pieces around you, and of which I wish and hope you may send us a barrel full by way of variety, but alas, his double sovereigns, are I am sorry, hardly as valuable as five penny pieces, and yet how many men of the like nature have made their way clean in our country?—Why thousands and more!—

I think that now my thread is pretty nearly at an end, and I hope that dearest Mamma and Johny may have some thoughts that have not occurred to me. I will now close with my blessing, and merely ask by way of a conundrum whether my

<sup>1</sup> Of St. Simon's Island, Georgia. He entertained Audubon at his estate in 1831 and subscribed for the folio 'Birds,' at that time but he did not pay his account until 1842.

<sup>2</sup> Neither Balham nor Burgess can be identified.

"orange stick" is still growing or not? Why does not my sweetheart write a very long letter to us? It seems as if you were all on the run to the very moment of departure of a vessel from the Havannah to the United States.

God bless you all.—

Your Friend and Father,

JOHN J. AUDUBON

(*In Mrs. Audubon's handwriting.*)

My beloved children. Your father has written all that can be said I believe almost; but he has forgotten to urge the painting of the pictures you have orders for and which I trust you will not neglect or forget; and the time will soon come for you to leave Havannah and return *home to us*, a period I am always looking forward to. My sister and the young ones were here today. Last night *Master Gordon*<sup>1</sup> had a party of 12. My own dear little ones grow so fast and I am kept altering their clothes constantly. The little queen,<sup>2</sup> as I call her, gained 2 pounds last month, and their height is in proportion; and I hear that there are two frocks coming from Charleston which will not surprise me if they just fit Harriet. Mrs Hall sent us a nice pork pie and the news of a *daughter born* yesterday, all as well as can be expected.—Madam Trudeau comes every day with her daughter, Mrs. Gaylusac, to sit for her picture which I think will be first rate, and sister today mentioned someone who wanted two. I am very sorry that you are at such a non-come-at-able place. I have wished to send you many things, but the agents say it is almost impossible. Do let me know if so or not. And now, farewell, dear friends, and come home soon.

Believe me your affectionate mother,

L. A.

I cannot close now I think of it without saying that Mr. D. W. C. is the very last man to whom I would give anything. For all our kindness we get nothing but *wine* at the highest price, not fit to drink, and of which we are ashamed!

(*In John Woodhouse Audubon's Hand.*)

For the Trio, as papa says, I write, but after all that Papa has said, I feel that I am ashore before I can make the first tack to windward for an offing. The sails fill, but no steerage way is to be had and I make leeway back to where I started from. I had a letter from Charleston about 4 days since. All well and in good spirits except Mr B. who was labouring under one of his fits of *indigestion*.—I have my hands *too* full now, but I fear it will be a short run, and then a long spell of nothing to paint. But I intend to *shine* at the April exhibition or "go down."—I wish we could have gone to the country and been free from the care, excitement and sorrow of this bustling world,—where we could have learned to say "happy the man whose only care a few paternal acres" etc. but our family is born to separations, and our affectionate dispositions are almost as much sorrow as pleasure to us. Our friends are north and south, east and west, and the new ones we make leave us,—or we them. Not a day but an inquiry for someone, "he's gone out of town, sir, and won't be back." It is the answer I have to make to those who ask for you all.—And when *you* come back, *papa* will be gone to Boston or Albany or Richmond,—an eternal separation of some of us.—But I turn from so dismal a subject and hope for better luck.—Don't send, *unless you promised!!* cigars to W. D. C. He's a "cow doctor"

<sup>1</sup> Son of Mrs. Alexander Gordon. See note 4, p. 162.

<sup>2</sup> Lucy Audubon. See note 5, p. 158.

and *rides a horse at least 40 hands high*, and the horse grows taller every day.—And poor Mrs. C. lives at Staten Island and *has a whole cow* bought for her at one time, so as to have 750 lbs. of roast, and baked, and salted, and cow heel, morning, noon, and night. How clearly my sweet Maria saw through that man,—and said, “he would have killed me long ago.” I do not often indulge in gossip, but a man who lays himself so open is fair game.—We have to pay Bowen about \$1500 in a week or two, and I fear we shall be pretty nearly “high & dry” if we cannot make close collections throughout.—The southern agents are dreadfully “long-winded” at Washington, Richmond, etc.—What sort of arrangement did you make about the journal we have in the evening?—It is good for nothing and we want to stop it.—The De Rhams<sup>1</sup> and Moore’s<sup>2</sup> do not see anything of us scarcely.—

## IX.

New York March 8<sup>th</sup> 1843

My dear Friend.—

I was this day honoured with your note of the 6<sup>th</sup> Inst. and although I much regret your non-convenience to forward me any money at the present time, I cannot but express my sincere thanks for your allowing me to draw upon you at Ninety Days after date for the sum of Two hundred Dollars, which I have done this day, and which you will greatly oblige me by paying when at maturity.

As one of the good Friends, whom in you I have in this poor World, you must allow me to say that I trust, and that with great sincerity, that you will never dispose of the “Birds of America” until indeed you are reduced to the direst necessity, which of course can never be the case with one who possesses such a *head* as is now so powerfully poised on your good shoulders.

Health and prosperity attend you, my good Friend, and ever believe me *yours*,

JOHN J. AUDUBON

The Honourable  
Daniel Webster<sup>3</sup>  
Washington City  
D. C.

## X.

Fort Union, Upper Missouri. June 17<sup>th</sup> 1843.—  
Thermometer. 60. 85. 70.

My Dearest Friends.—

As usual I find myself confined to a very short time, to let you know that we are all well. Three Mackinaw Boats leave this tomorrow morning at 7. and Mr Murray,<sup>4</sup> a Scotch Gentleman who has the command will give this to the Messrs Chouteau<sup>5</sup> & Co at St Louis who will forward it by Mail; and I hope that you may receive it sometime or other, when I feel it will be welcome to you all.—We are now pretty

<sup>1</sup> H. C. DeRham, Jr., subscriber to the folio ‘Birds.’

<sup>2</sup> Probably Benjamin Moore, subscriber to the 8vo ‘Birds.’

<sup>3</sup> Webster was an enthusiastic sportsman and duck-hunter. He promised to get specimens of the Labrador Duck (even then rare) for Audubon, but he was unable to fulfil his promise. He subscribed for both the folio and the 8vo ‘Birds,’ but, to quote a phrase from another letter, he was “poor pay.”

<sup>4</sup> James Murray. Audubon had visited his father’s farm on the Tweed on his return from a trip to the highlands of Scotland.

<sup>5</sup> Traders of St. Louis. The city grew out of the post founded by August and Pierre Chouteau in 1764, and Pierre (1749–1849) gave Audubon a great deal of aid in planning his expedition up the Missouri River.

busy drawing Quadrupeds, and all possible attentions and accommodations are granted to us, and yet we are far away from home and its delightful comforts.—

I did intend to have sent you a very long letter, but my apology is above, and you must be contented to hear, that we are all positively quite well and in good spirits.—Many strange tales I could put on paper at this time, and many of them might quite astonish you, but all these I must keep embosomed with me until we meet. I can assure you however that there are no twelve pounders of brass at this Fort, and that Mr Cattlin<sup>1</sup> is no less than a Deceiver.—Fort Mortimer who acts in opposition to this<sup>2</sup> is only 3 miles off below.—I wrote to you by the Omega on her return to St Louis only 4 days ago and as the River has been rising ever since I hope that she will have a short and prosperous passage and that you will receive my letter by her long ere you have this one.—In about 20 days Mr Culbertson,<sup>3</sup> who has the command and management of this Fort, will go down to St Louis, and I will have a very long letter prepared in advance, that I hope may be of interest to you all.—We have seen a Wolf caught and brought to the Camp or Fort on horseback, in less than 20 minutes. It was a beautiful sight, that would have pleased you all; and Johny especially.—I have received several handsome presents from Messrs Culbertson, Kipp and Chardon,<sup>4</sup> all of whom exert themselves in our favour, and of whom I will give you curious and singular accounts.—They are first rate Men, and perfectly up to the trade they all follow.—In a few days Mr Kipp goes up the Yellow Stone amongst the Crows, and Mr Chardon to the Blackfeet; the most rascally set of Indians in North America! Hunters are going out for us tomorrow morning to procure Antelopes, Mountain Rams, &c and our Patroon Provost<sup>5</sup> is going to a Lake to trap Beavers and Otters for us.—We procured this morning several Lazuli Finches, and red shafted Woodpeckers.—Birds are very abundant but shy, though very rarely if ever shot at.—We hear hundreds of anecdotes daily about Bears, and all other species of animals.—I am well pleased with Sprague,<sup>6</sup> who is an industrious Young Man, &c &c.—Friend Harris is still a Doctor, and has many patients on hand, consumed with defects too bad for me to name, for the Country itself is the finest I was ever in for purity of Atmosphere and healthiness.—We have bread only twice a day, morning and evening, but we have very excellent Milk, and Butter, and probably the best Catfish, found in the World.—In my next I will give you a good account of the Fort, and the surrounding country, which is so level that from one of the Bastions this afternoon I could see an area of something like 20 miles.—The country abounds in small Wild Fruits, such as Currants, Gooseberries, now pretty large, and many others.—Wolves may be shot from the Fort almost every night or day.—I have a fine young Badger alive, which I hope to take home.—Sprague and I have been busy drawing all day, and Bell<sup>7</sup> shooting and skinning pretty much as long as we. I hope that you are all well and Happy, and

<sup>1</sup> George Catlin (1796–1872). His 'Manners and Customs of the North American Indians' was published in 1841. It is only fair to state that in the interval between Catlin's travels and Audubon's, the Indians had suffered seriously from disease, but Catlin was inclined to paint too happy a picture.

<sup>2</sup> i. e., belong to the "opposition company." These forts were not military establishments, but trading posts of the fur companies.

<sup>3</sup> Alexander Culbertson, an Englishman and a celebrated rider and shot.

<sup>4</sup> Kipp and Chardon were fur traders and Kipp, at least, was a partner in the American Fur Company.

<sup>5</sup> Provost accompanied Audubon's expedition as a guide and hunter.

<sup>6</sup> Isaac Sprague, artist of Boston. He was particularly noted as an illustrator of scientific books and as a landscape painter.

<sup>7</sup> John G. Bell (1812–1889), celebrated New York taxidermist.

all with you goes comfortably.—Take care of yourselves until we meet again.—Remember me kindly to Friends Hall and Augrave<sup>1</sup> the Doctor and everybody, not forgetting Henry Mallory<sup>2</sup> and the Mother and Young Daughter &c &c &c Take great care of Dearest Mother and the Darlings, for all of whom, and in fact You All I am having some Moccasins made.—God bless You All, and now again and again believe me forever, Your Affectionate Husband, Father and Friend

JOHN J. AUDUBON

Do not forget to write to St Louis once a month at least, and kindest regards to all the Chouteau<sup>3</sup> family at N. Y.

V. G. Audubon Esqr

77. William Street

New York

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<sup>1</sup> Clifton Augrave of New York. Subscribed to the 'Quadrupeds.'

<sup>2</sup> Brother of Georgiana Richards Mallory. She was the second wife of V. G. Audubon.

<sup>3</sup> Charles P. Chouteau lived in New York at this period. He was a subscriber to the 8vo 'Birds' and the 'Quadrupeds.'