

NEW LIGHT ON MARK CATESBY

BY ELSA G. ALLEN, PH. D.

Plate 23

FEW of the early naturalists have left so worthy and so substantial a contribution to science and yet such meager details of their biographies as has Mark Catesby. In fact, it has often been said that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to trace out the story of his life from the scant sources available. The progress of this study has therefore been disappointingly slow, but through the aid of the American Council of Learned Societies, the American Philosophical Society and a fellowship from Alpha Omicron Pi Society, of which I am a member, I have been able to seek out in England a few details of Catesby's life while working on the general problem of pre-Audubonian ornithology.

The published matter on this early naturalist is unfortunately limited to a few short articles, two by Dr. Witmer Stone ('Bird-Lore,' vol. 7, 1905, and 'The Auk,' October 1929) and brief accounts in the 'Dictionaries of National Biography' and 'American Biography' as well as in the older standard works of this type. In addition, there are a few scattered mentions of Catesby in the 'Virginia Magazine' and other Southern journals.

With these few basic articles to work from it has been a great help to meet a collateral descendant of Mark Catesby, Mr. T. Catesby Jones of New York, for putting me in touch with whom I am indebted to Mr. Alexander Sprunt of Charleston, South Carolina. To Mr. Jones I am indebted for information regarding the whereabouts of some of Catesby's letters and other matter. He is the donor, many will recall, of a memorial plaque to Colonel Thomas Jones and Mark Catesby in Williamsburg Chapel, Williamsburg, Virginia. However, the combined information contained in these various accounts and offered by these several leads, still leaves us in ignorance of Mark Catesby's birth and final resting-place, his parentage, his education, and most of the details of his adult life beyond the facts that he made two trips to America, one in 1712 and a later one in 1722, and was elected a member of the Royal Society of London in recognition of the publication of his two-volume work 'The Natural History of Carolina, Florida and the Bahama Islands,' which came out in separate numbers between 1731 and 1743.

FAMILY, PARENTAGE AND BIRTH

According to C. W. Bardsley's 'Dictionary of English and Welch Surnames,' the Catesby family is from the fertile inland county of Northampton, and all the Catesbys in the 'Dictionary of National Biography' may ultimately be traced to this interior section of England and probably had their name originally from the Parish of Catesby.

On his mother's side Mark Catesby was a direct descendant of Thomas Jekyll, born January 21, 1570, antiquary and historian of the Counties of Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk. There were two rather distinguished sons of this Thomas Jekyll: Thomas Jekyll, a divine, and Sir Joseph Jekyll, Master of the Rolls, knighted in 1700 and a member of the Privy Council, who left part of his private fortune to relieve the national debt. A third son of Thomas Jekyll was Nicholas Jekyll, apparently not known in public life. Nicholas Jekyll was the grandfather of Mark Catesby, and the father of Catesby's mother, Elizabeth Jekyll. On his father's side also Catesby was of the blood of lawyers; for his father, John Catesby, was a magistrate of the town of Sudbury in Suffolk and several times its mayor,—and a very spirited gentleman and politician he was. He owned considerable property in London in the neighborhood of Fleet Street, as well as several farms, dwellings and other holdings in Suffolk, some of which he left to his son Mark.

The marriage of Mark Catesby's parents took place May 16, 1670, and is recorded in Foster's 'London Marriage Licenses, 1524-1869': "John Catesby, gentleman, about 28, bachelor, and Elizabeth Jekyll of Castle Hedingham, spinster, 18, her father consents, at St. Andrews, Holborn, or Gray's Inn, or Charter House Chapel, London." There were numerous offspring of this marriage: twin sons recorded in St. Gregory's Chapel, Sudbury, 12th September, 1675; Elizabeth Catesby who, against her father's wishes, married Dr. William Cocke of Virginia; Jekyll Catesby; John Catesby; and Ann and Mark Catesby. The exact order in which these children were born I have not yet worked out, but Mark and Ann were both of the decade 1680-1690.

The date and place of Mark Catesby's birth have never been definitely known but are entered variously and with question-marks, as probably Sudbury or London in 1679 or 1680. A search of the parish registers of Sudbury failed to reveal Mark's birth but yielded that of his sister Ann, in 1688. However, knowing that his mother was from the village of Castle Hedingham, about eight miles from Sudbury in Essex, just over the little bordering river Stour, I took occasion to examine the registers of the old Norman church of Saint Nicholas and was glad to find Mark Catesby's birth and baptism there entered in fairly legible form, as follows: "Mark Catesby, son of John Catesby, gent, and Elizabeth, his wife. Baptize—March 30, Nates March 24th, 1682." In all probability Mark was born in the village of Castle Hedingham in the house which, it is likely, was built as well as occupied by his grandfather, Nicholas Jekyll. This house is still standing,—a picturesque 17th century type,—at the south end of the village. It has been said and published¹ that the Jekyll family owned and

¹ See Lewis H. Jones's 'Captain Roger Jones of London and Virginia,' Albany, 1891.

operated the old castle now in ruins which stands on a hill overlooking this village and known as Hedingham Castle. But this erroneous statement has doubtless grown out of the confusion existing in the use of the names Castle Hedingham and Hedingham Castle indiscriminately for both the castle and the village. I am indebted to my friend, Mr. C. F. D. Sperling of Sudbury, for an explanation of this matter. He has pointed out to me also the epitaph which formerly stood over the grave of Mark Catesby's maternal grandparents in the churchyard of Castle Hedingham, and also the old Jekyll home known as 'Shapcote,' in the village.

We know from the entry in the Parish Register of Saint Nicholas that Catesby was three years younger than his reported age at death, the date of which has been published as December 23, 1749. In Lewis H. Jones's 'Captain Roger Jones of London and Virginia,' Albany, 1891, there is a notice purporting to be an excerpt from a London newspaper, as follows: "On Saturday, December 23, 1749, died at his home behind St. Luke's church in Old Street, the truly honest and ingenious and modest Mr. Mark Catesby. . . . He lived to age of 70 [his proved date of birth makes him only 67 at death], well known to and esteemed by the curious of this and other nations, and died much lamented by his Friends, leaving behind him two children and a widow who has a few copies of his noble work undisposed of." Also, in the 'Gentleman's Magazine' (vol. 19, p. 573), there is a list of deaths for the year 1749, and we read: "Mr. Mark Catesby, F. R. S., aged 70, author of the Natural History of Carolina, a large and curious work which is the chief support of his widow and two children."

Regarding Catesby's education it is difficult to learn anything but it is probable that he attended the old Grammar School of Sudbury founded in 1491 by William Wood. However, upon going there to consult the files, I was informed that all the records previous to 1837 had been burned.

Catesby is said to have gone early in life to London, because of his interest in natural history, and in the preface to his 'Natural History' he regretfully refers to his distant residence from London, the natural Mecca of the learned.

MARK CATESBY'S PLACES OF RESIDENCE IN LONDON

Catesby is said to have lived in three different parts of London proper: Fulham, Hoxton, and Old Street, which is in St. Luke's Parish in Middlesex. No letters that have yet come to light were written in Fulham, but in 'Britton & Boulger, British and Irish Botanists,' he is said to be "of Hoxton and Fulham." We know from a letter of Mark Catesby to his niece, Mrs. Jones, that in 1730 he was living in Hoxton, a part of London where several botanists and nurserymen resided, notably Thomas Fairchild, the author of

'The City Gardener,' 1722, and an experimenter in the hybridization of plants. Catesby's latter years, at least, were spent in the Parish of St. Luke, —Old Street,—a poor section of London at that time and also today, although the buildings of the mid-eighteenth century have been largely replaced.

It is probable that he was buried in the old churchyard of St. Luke's, but the only entry in the church register possibly referring to him is in the name of Sketesby, being death entry No. 26 for that month, and with the cause of death given as "age." Errors in names such as this were very common in those times for they were often set down by uneducated assistants of the undertaker, and unless deaths occurred from a few definite diseases they were said to be due to "age." It is evident, however, that Catesby was suffering from a dropsical condition shortly before his death, as we may gather from a letter¹ of Mr. Knowlton to Mr. Richard Richardson, dated July 18, 1749. Speaking of a trip to London he says: "I saw likewise Messrs. Catesby and Edwards who has materials for a third volume of Birds, Flies and Animals, etc., but poor Mr. Catesby's legs swell and he looks badly. Drs. Mead and Stack said there was little hopes of him long this side of the grave."

In talking with the present vicar of this church, I learned that although many tombstones still remain, the graves have in most cases been used and reused, and most of the tombstones, except the large sarcophagi, have been arranged around the periphery of the churchyard as a sort of wall. The name Catesby is not to be found among them and it is probable that Catesby's widow was too poor to afford any memorial.

CATESBY'S MARRIAGE

Catesby's wife was named Elizabeth, but I have not been able as yet to learn where the marriage is recorded. However, the widow's will presents a few facts of interest to us, especially that she left two children, Mark Catesby and Ann Catesby. A daughter, Elizabeth Rowland, is likewise mentioned in her will and it appears that this person must have been her daughter by a former marriage and therefore a step-daughter to Mark. This gathers new interest for us and might cause confusion in biographical research, in the light of a recorded marriage of Mark Catesby to Mrs. Elizabeth Rowland, both of the Parish of St. Luke's, Middlesex, on October 8, 1747, in St. George's Chapel in Mayfair. This was one of the famous churches where marriages were performed without license or publication of banns, and although they were considered clandestine, were nevertheless valid and binding. Be this as it may, the will of Mark Catesby's wife, Elizabeth, presumably his first, who was buried in London, February 18, 1753, estab-

¹ Richard Richardson, 'Extracts from the Literary and Scientific Correspondence of the Eighteenth Century, Letter CLVIII,' p. 400.

lishes the fact that she and Mark Catesby were the parents of two children, Mark and Ann, of whom the mother's will speaks as follows:

I, Elizabeth Catesby of the Parish of St. Lukes, Old Street, widow, being weak in body but of sound mind and memory, do make this my last will and testament in manner and form following, that is to say, imprimis, I will that all my debts and funeral charges be paid. Next, I give to my loving daughter, Elizabeth Rowland, ten pounds. I give to my loving cousin, Jekyll Catesby,¹ a second volume of Mr. Catesby's Natural History, to make his set complete.

I give to Martha Arther a guinea as a token of my love—all rest, residue and remainder of my estate, whatever money, goods, plates, and all that I may be possessed of or entitled unto, I give and desire to my two loving children, Mark Catesby and Ann Catesby, to be equally divided between them, share and share alike, and I appoint my loving cousin, Jekyll Catesby, my sole executor to this my last will and testament.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF I have hereunto set my hand this 4th day of January 1753.

Elizabeth Catesby¹

Witness: Peter Collinson
Mary Arther

This will was proved at London on the 29th day of August, 1753, after Mrs. Catesby had died of consumption in February, 1753. Her burial took place February 18, as entered in St. Luke's register.

MARK CATESBY'S FIRST TRIP TO AMERICA

The earliest period of Mark Catesby's life to which there is any published reference, concerns his first trip to America in 1712, probably prompted by the fact that his sister Elizabeth having married Dr. William Cocke, the Secretary of State under the famous governor, Alexander Spotwood, was living in Virginia. On this first expedition he was neither painter nor collector, although he did a little desultory painting and collecting, especially of plants, and is said to have sent some tubs of growing American plants to the Chelsea Gardens, the oldest botanic garden in England, founded in 1673 by the Apothecaries' Society. In 1715 he made a trip to Jamaica, but there are apparently no zoological or botanical results of it.

Catesby was evidently well connected in America through his association with the Governor of Virginia and his aforementioned brother-in-law, Dr. William Cocke, the Secretary of State. He spent some time also at Windsor, the seat of Major Woodford, who had married Catesby's niece, Ann Cocke.

In 1719 he returned to England but apparently regretted that he had not devoted more time to natural history for as soon as he was home he at once

¹ It is necessary to state that the term 'in-law' was not in use in England at this time but the term 'cousin' was used a great deal for lateral and marriage relations, and unquestionably Jekyll Catesby was Mark Catesby's brother, i. e., Mrs. Catesby's brother-in-law.

began to plan for a return to the colonies. He soon became acquainted with Sir Hans Sloane, a learned physician, President of the College of Physicians, and himself also a traveller to Jamaica in 1707, where he went as physician to the Duke and Duchess of Albemarle. The Duke, however, died there the first year, and the Duchess's wish to return home obliged Sir Hans to return to England with her long before he had planned to do so. We may imagine, therefore, that Catesby's trip to Jamaica, the scene of Sloane's unfinished work, made a bond of interest between them.

At this time, 1719, an expedition to Africa was being discussed amongst the savants of London, and both Catesby and a man named Eleazar Albin, author of a book on insects, and later of a three-volume work on birds, as well as one on spiders, were discussed as possible candidates for the task of collecting in this distant land. It seems that upon Albin's declining the offer, negotiations were opened with Catesby to go. From Dr. Richard Richardson's 'Scientific Correspondence of the Eighteenth Century' it is possible to glean that Catesby, although his first wish was to go to Carolina, changed his plan when opportunity offered, and was seriously contemplating the trip to Africa. In a letter from Dr. William Sherard, one of his patrons, to Dr. Richardson, dated March 28, 1721, we read: "Mr. Catesby is not yet fixet with the African Company, but will be I believe this week. What he sends from thence you may depend to receive a share of. 'Tis a sickly place; and I could wish he had held his resolution of going to Carolina; but he's now so far engaged with the Duke of Chandos to think of that." Be that as it may, this plan, though all but settled, was abandoned by Catesby and furthermore the Duke of Chandos, who at first wished to sponsor the African trip, finally stood at the head of the list of patrons for the trip to America. William Sherard, Sir Hans Sloane, and a Mr. Dubois were other supporters of this plan, and Sherard in a letter to Richardson dated December 7, 1721, wrote: "I believe Mr. Catesby will be going to Carolina in a month. I have procured him subscriptions for near the sum he proposed." As a matter of fact, however, it was April 1722, before Catesby got off on his second trip to America.

CATESBY'S PATRONS

It is well known that in the early days of the study of natural science, collectors who went to foreign lands were almost always wholly dependent upon the personal patronage of wealthy noblemen. It was no reflection upon their ability that they had to seek such assistance and to foster and cultivate the interest of their benefactors. Catesby was no exception and although it appears that he was at one time the owner of considerable property, he was at the time of his second trip to America no longer a man of means. Sherard, in recommending him for his post, refers to him as a gentleman of

“small fortune” and may have had in mind the various properties left him by his father in the Parish of St. Brides, London, and his extensive holdings in Sudbury. What became of these parcels of land I have not yet had time to work out, but it is easy to conjecture that much of his inheritance was used in his young manhood, for his father died in 1705 when Mark was only twenty-three years of age. It is interesting therefore to see the list of distinguished men who were willing to subscribe to Catesby’s enterprise of collecting in America. At the head of the list stands the august personage, his Grace, the Duke of Chandos, owner of palatial homes in Edgeware and Cavendish Square, member of the Privy Council, friend of the composer Handel, who lived with him for two years and composed his oratorios in his drawing-room. Next, the Right Honourable Thomas Earl of Oxford; the Right Honourable Thomas Earl of Macclesfield; the Right Honourable John Lord Percival, member of the Irish peerage and one who aided in the colonization of Georgia; Sir George Markham, Bart., F. R. S.; Sir Hans Sloane, Bart., President of the Royal Society and of the College of Physicians; the Honourable Colonel Francis Nicholson, F. R. S., Governor of South Carolina; Richard Mead, M. D., F. R. S., a famous physician; Charles Dubois, Esq., a botanist; William Sherard, LL. D. and F. R. S., founder of the Chair of Botany at Oxford. Sir Hans Sloane, Colonel Francis Nicholson, Dr. Richard Mead, William Sherard and George Markham were all members of the Royal Society. Charles Dubois was the only one apparently who had not achieved notable distinction and even he was an authority on some branches of botany, particularly mosses. Catesby was further aided by a pension to which reference is made in the ‘Council Minutes’ of the Royal Society of London (vol. 2, pp. 324–643, 1632–1727).

At a meeting of the Council held October 20, 1720, we read, “Colonel Francis Nicholson (F. R. S. 1706), going Governor to South Carolina, was pleased to declare that he would allow Mr. Catesby, recommended to him as a very proper person to observe the rarities of that country for the uses and purposes of the society, the pension of twenty pounds per annum during his government there, and at the same time to give ten pounds by way of advance for the first half year’s payment and so for the future half a year’s pay beforehand.”

THE MEN FOR WHOM CATESBY COLLECTED

These persons also are interesting in that they serve to clarify the nature of Catesby’s mission to America and to give some understanding of Catesby’s connections in London. Chief among them were William Sherard and Sir Hans Sloane. Sherard was primarily a botanist. He had studied at Paris and Leyden and had made trips to Geneva, Rome, Naples and Asia Minor in the interest of botany and archaeological antiquities. Most of

Catesby's letters that have been preserved are to Sherard but there are a few to Sir Hans Sloane in the Manuscripts Department of the British Museum and a very significant one to Dr. Dillenius at Oxford. Sherard's entire collection of plants, many of them collected by Catesby, were a nucleus of the Oxford Herbarium.

Sir Hans Sloane was considerably more of a zoologist than Sherard and Catesby's letters to him contain more or less ornithological observation. Sloane was likewise a very distinguished and beloved man in London, a President of the Royal Society, also of the College of Physicians, a founder of the British Museum, where were to be housed his vast collections including some of the plants and, for a time at least, many birds, shells, snakes and other specimens collected and preserved by Catesby. The birds and other zoological specimens have long since perished but there are two large portfolios of plants which are very interesting to go over for many of the sheets have long legends on them in Catesby's own handwriting; some have sketches of fruits and seeds. It is said that Catesby introduced the catalpa into England in 1728, but at this time we know by a letter of his kinsman, George Rutherford, that Catesby was living in London. Undoubtedly, however, he did bring or send it over as well as the Acacia Horse Chestnut and other species. There are in volume 212 of the Sloane Herbarium ninety-five sheets of mounted plants collected by him but the great bulk of his specimens are at Oxford.

Charles Dubois, another one for whom Catesby collected, was the Treasurer of the East India Company, and was much interested in the collection and propagation of exotic plants for his garden in Mitcham, Surrey. He contributed to the third edition of John Ray's 'Synopsis of Plants' published in 1724. There are but few references to this gentleman in Catesby's letters but he was evidently a close associate of Sir Hans Sloane and of Sherard as Catesby sent specimens to them jointly. There were times, however, when Catesby was hard pressed to keep all his friends satisfied, as may be seen by this excerpt from a letter to William Sherard dated Dec. 9, 1722: "I hope it is not expected that what I send should be to everyone separately but in the manner I have now sent, for indeed it is almost impracticable without half my time lost besides the difficulty of having them put in a dry place, for it's no small favour from a master (i. e., of a ship) to secure [the safety of] a single box or parcel, and much more, many distinct parcels and boxes."

John James Dillenius was another to whom Catesby sent specimens. He was a Dutch botanist, highly regarded by Linnaeus, whom William Sherard brought to England to become the first Professor of Botany at Oxford.

Isaac Rand (died 1743 and the son of James Rand) who with thirteen other apothecaries decided to build a wall around the Chelsea Botanical

Gardens, was another of Catesby's botanist friends. He was located in the section known as the Haymarket, adjacent to Piccadilly, and was interested in inconspicuous plants, especially in and near London. He was appointed Praefectus Horti of the Chelsea Gardens in 1724 and gave bi-weekly demonstrations there for the public.

Catesby likewise sent plants and specimens to William Sherard's older brother James, also a Fellow of the Royal Society, and to Samuel Dale of Braintree, Essex. The latter seems to have been a personal friend of his, for Catesby was often at Dale's home and carried letters and specimens from Dale to Sherard in London, and there are many references to Dale's admiration for Catesby in the Dale letters to Sherard which are among the manuscripts of the Royal Society.

Still another associate of Catesby's, especially during his residence in Hoxton, after his second trip to America, was John Cowell, a gardener of that section (then called Hogsden), and author of a book, 'The Curious and Profitable Gardener.'

Thus it is seen that all the men for whom Catesby collected, except perhaps Sir Hans Sloane, were primarily botanists, and Catesby's main task in America was the collecting of botanical specimens. Botany was the great science of the day and zoology in all its branches had to take second place. But the fact remains that Catesby somehow managed to do a great work on birds, covering about one hundred species, first depicted in the field with each one's particular plant or tree associate, and later etched or colored by himself or under his direction in England. In fact, his letters left me amazed at his capacity for work and his devotion to his task in the face of all odds.

A few excerpts from these letters may serve to throw some light on the man's character and will show some of the difficulties under which he worked for he was often short of materials and frequently distressed by the lack of letters from home to tell him the fate of what he had previously sent with the utmost care.

"Charles Town, April 6, 1724

"Honrd Sir:

"I was sensably troubled with your last Lr. of complaints. It was without any date. My uneasiness is somewhat mitigated when I reflect that by this time and by what I shall now say, if I may be credited, your resentment is abated. I shall not vindicate my remissness in writing or anything else I am knowingly tardy of. But I profess before God I never *can* be more industrious in collecting whatever I could possibly meet with, either those few days I was at Savanna Garrison or since. . . .

"It may seem as an excuse to say that the floods or late frosts have impeded it [i. e., his collecting] but the falsity of such a pretense would be very foolish when you may so easily be informed, particularly by Con. H. Johnson who assisted me in getting many and particularly endeavored to get the cones of pines and acorns. . . .

"You say Sr. several of my subscribers complain, which surprises me. I could not learn by enquiry and asking those I saw that collections would be acceptable to any but Sir Hans, yourself and Mr. Dubois. I wish I could know what was required and by whom. I hope it can't be expected I should send collections to every of my subscribers which is impracticable for me to doe. However I'll doe to ye best of my abilities nor can I say or doe more. I should have thought abundance of my time lost if at my return to England I could have shown no more than the collections I send. Not that anything obstructed my collecting plants and seeds which all gives place to when opportunity offers."

CATESBY'S PLAN TO GO TO MEXICO

From his letters we gather also that Catesby planned to make a trip to Mexico with a friend, a Dr. Couper, who was considered a learned and very successful physician in the colonies. He wrote to Sir Hans Sloane asking his advice on the matter and expressing his determination to go whether his subscriptions continued or not, and spoke of securing a letter of passport or protection from the Spanish government to protect him from "so treacherous and jealous a people as the Spaniards." He expressed satisfaction that the Indian tribes through whose country he would pass were at war and therefore so occupied that they would probably not molest him. This trip probably never materialized for in his last letters he was still waiting to hear from Sherard and Sloane regarding it.

He did go, however, to several of the Bahama Islands. The first three years of his second period in America he spent in Carolina, Georgia and Florida. He then visited Providence Island to which he was invited by the Governor of the Island, Charles Plinny, who showed him much kindness and hospitality. After this he went to Ilatera, Andros and Albacco where he studied marine forms mostly. His collections from here he gave to Sir Hans Sloane to whom he felt under most obligation.

UNPUBLISHED DRAWINGS BY CATESBY IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM

I should like at this point to describe the miscellaneous unpublished drawings by Catesby in the British Museum. Suffice it to say that these are to be found in the 'Index to Additions to the Department of Manuscripts of the British Museum, 1783-1835.' Under Mark Catesby there are the following entries:

Drawings of insects, chiefly from Surinam and Guinea bearing number 5271

Drawings of fish bearing number 5269

Drawings of plants and trees bearing number 5283; in the description of this manuscript Catesby is referred to as "Doctor."

Number 5269 is a volume of water colors titled 'Bibliotheca Sloaniana' and I merely list the various drawings by Catesby found therein:—

The Green Woodpecker	Redpoll
Blue-winged Teal	Cock Sparrow
Small Water Rail	Swallow
Yellow-hammer	Marsh Titmouse
Siskin	The Greater Sparrow
Lapwing	Green Plover

Following these are the eel, crayfish, ray, seahorse and crab, a pencil sketch of a frog, fifteen different species of fish, and three plates of shells.

CATESBY'S PUBLICATIONS

These are few in number, being only three in addition to his sumptuous two-volume work, 'The Natural History of Carolina, Florida and the Bahama Islands,' published in 1731. This early treatise on our natural history is too well known to need description here, but it should be remembered that two later editions came out, one edited by Catesby's contemporary, George Edwards, and published in 1748, and a German edition published in Nüremberg in 1771.

A work that is seldom mentioned, however, is the 'Hortus Brittannus-Americanus, or a *Curious Collection of Trees and Shrubs, The Produce of the British Colonies in North America; Adapted to the Soil and Climate of England with Observations on their Constitution, Growth and Culture, and Directions how they are to be Collected, Packed up and Secured during their Passage. Embellished with Copper Plates neatly engraved by Mark Catesby, F. R. S.*' This was published posthumously in London in 1763, and was the result of his botanical studies in America and his efforts to naturalize American species in England.

In addition to these, Catesby has two other ornithological papers to his credit, a lecture on 'Birds of Passage' delivered before the Royal Society, March 5, 1746, which was published in the 'Philosophical Transactions,' and one on the same subject in the 'Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle,' volume 18, 1748. These are of particular interest to us for they offer Catesby's theories of the causes and method of migration. He believed that the main cause inducing birds to migrate was the search for food. His explanation of the method as set forth in the 'Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle,' is more fantastic, as follows: he believed that when the birds are fully fed and vigorous they undertake their most difficult flight, which is perpendicular, until they reach such a high altitude that they can see the view of the land to which they are going and descend thereto on an inclined plane. Says Catesby in this article: "The conjecture which I offer seems to me more probable and to be attended with less difficulty which is that when these three sorts of birds of passage are strong and vigorous and full-fed, their first attempt is to perform the hardest part of their

journey and what requires most pains. Thus they gain such an assent as gives them a distant prospect of those countries which are to be their next abode, to which they direct their course on a declining plane. This is performed with more ease and despatch than any other direction." This view, while perhaps less naïve than the one which asserts that swallows dash themselves into the mud and lie torpid for the winter, is nevertheless far from offering a scientific explanation. His ideas on migration as expressed in his lecture before the Royal Society and which can be read in the 'Philosophical Transactions,' show far greater scientific insight into the subject although they appeared a year earlier.

It should be mentioned that Catesby, according to Allibones's 'Dictionary of Biography,' is credited, according to Richard Weston, with the authorship of a book called 'The Practical Farmer.' Upon referring to Weston's book, 'Tracts on Practical Agriculture and Gardening,' to which is added a complete chronological catalogue by English authors on agriculture, gardening, etc., there is no mention of Catesby as the author of 'The Practical Farmer,' but his 'Eighty-five Curious American Plants adapted for Britain and Europe' is listed at £2/2/-.

CATESBY'S AFFILIATIONS IN LONDON

It remains to discuss, in so far as information can be found, Catesby as a man of achievement, for which he was invited to become a member of two very distinguished organizations: The Royal Society of London, and The Gentleman's Society at Spalding.

Catesby as a member of the Royal Society. The Royal Society was organized for the advancement of learning in the late seventeenth century, and the Charter of Incorporation was granted by Charles II. It was a distinct honor to be elected, as it still is, and the aspirants had to indicate their own desire to be members and then to await invitations to attend the meetings for the purpose of being appraised, so to speak, at the desire of persons already within the fold. Before the organization of the British Museum in 1758, the Royal Society was the obvious repository of all natural rarities. It follows, then, that much of Catesby's material probably went to the Royal Society of London.

The Society met weekly and from volume 15 of the 'Journal Book' we learn that at the meeting held November 23, 1732, "Mr. Catesby presented to the society the fifth part of his Natural History of Carolina which was referred to Dr. Mortimer for an account of it." He was not yet a member at this time but in the minutes for December 21, 1732, it is stated that Mr. Catesby was present at the desire of Dr. Amman;¹ also at the meeting of February 1, 1732, Mr. Catesby was present at the request of Mr. Collinson,

¹ Dr. John Amman.

At this meeting it is entered in the minutes that Mr. Catesby was put up as a candidate for election in pursuance of the following certificate:

“Mark Catesby, a gentleman well skilled
 “In Botany and Natural History, who
 “travelled for several years in various parts
 “of America, where he collected the materials
 “for a Natural History of Carolina
 “and the Bahama Islands; which curious
 “and magnificent work he has presented
 “to the Royal Society; is desirous of being
 “a member thereof, and is proposed by us
 Hans Sloane
 Roger Gale
 Robert Paul
 John Martyn
 Peter Collinson”

Feb. 1: 1732/3

Catesby again had leave to be present on March 8, 1732, at the desire of Dr. Amman, and at the meeting of April 26, 1733, there is an entry as follows (p. 263): “Mr. Mark Catesby was put to the ballot and elected Fellow.” At the meeting held May 3, 1733, there is an entry: “Mr. Catesby signed his obligations and was admitted a Fellow.” It was a rule of the Society that every name had to be read ten times prior to balloting and the dates of such readings appear at the left of the certificates. Catesby’s certificate somehow bears an error for at the bottom he is said to have been elected February 26, 1733, but in fact it was not until April 26.

Catesby’s sponsors. Some of the members had as many as ten sponsors but in Catesby’s case there were only five, headed by his long-time friend and benefactor, Sir Hans Sloane. Another name familiar to students of early American science was Peter Collinson, friend of the Bartrams and, we learn also, of Catesby, the publication of whose book he helped to finance.

Roger Gale was best known as an antiquary; he was a vice-president of the Society of Antiquaries, and for some time treasurer of the Royal Society. Robert Paul was a writer on miscellaneous subjects and John Martyn was a botanist of the first rank, holder of the chair of Botany at Cambridge, 1732–1768, and the author of many botanical works and translations. It is obvious that Catesby was held in high esteem by the membership of the Royal Society but it does not seem that he was a very outstanding or active member of the group. Being by this time a man of very modest means and apparently retiring by nature, he was not apt to put himself in the foreground of the Royal Society’s activities. He was, however, a regular attendant at the meetings and took some part at least in their discussions as

well as in the Society's acquisition of new members. He appears to have had a broad appreciation of ability in others for he sponsored several members from widely varying walks of life. Among these may be mentioned Dr. Thomas Stack, physician, well known for skill in chemistry, anatomy and natural history, elected in 1737; Mr. John Maud, chemist, and a gentleman well versed in several parts of polite literature, elected 1737; John Mitchell, long resident of Virginia and, like Catesby, describer of many American plants, elected 1748. Lastly, Catesby sponsored General James Oglethorpe, famous and progressive colonist of Georgia, skilled in natural history, mathematics, and all branches of polite literature, elected 1749.

Thus we see that Catesby took a real share in the work of the Royal Society and by the fact that he recommended General Oglethorpe whom no doubt he knew while he was living and working in Georgia, and who was not elected until November 9, 1749, we see that nearly up to the time of his reported death he was a faithful and interested attendant at the meetings.

It should be mentioned, however, that one person whom he recommended, Iodo Mendez Laquet, apparently an army physician of Portugal, failed to achieve election, although he was balloted upon February 5, 1746/7. It is likewise of interest to know that George Edwards, at the time of his first candidacy for membership in the Royal Society in 1744, was sponsored by Mark Catesby, his contemporary and peer in ornithological study. Edwards withdrew his name for election at this time but was finally admitted in 1756, some years after Catesby's death.

The Gentleman's Society at Spalding. This organization was founded by the distinguished antiquary and barrister, Maurice Johnson, a grim and learned gentleman who banned within the Society all discussion of politics "in which," as he said, "every man thinks himself wise"; he likewise frowned upon any sort of gaming "which most young men esteem as their beloved evening's recreation." To keep the ideals of the Society thus pure and intellectual, the good man was forced to depend chiefly on the strength of his own children (of whom he had twenty-six, sixteen of whom sat down at his table), and his near relations whom, as he said, "he took care to train up to a liking of it from their infancy" and who, he trusted, would keep it up when he should leave them.¹

Despite these austere regulations, the Gentleman's Society was an aggregation of the leading literary and scientific men of the day, some of the most striking of whom were Sir Isaac Newton, Sir Hans Sloane, Sir John Evelyn, several bishops, John Ray, George Edwards, Pope, Addison, Steele, John Gay, and many others. Into this august assemblage was inducted with due ceremony the modest naturalist, Mark Catesby, and al-

¹ From a letter of Mr. Johnson to Mr. Gale, 1743, in the 'Reliquiae Gallaenae,' p. 390.

though I have searched the minutes of the Society for some contribution made by him to the entertainments thereof, I can learn only that he was a member. The subjects usually discussed were antiquities, but there were also lively scientific discussions, for instance, on bird migration, and we may reasonably imagine that Catesby contributed to these.

MARK CATESBY'S DEATH

There remains one other point which I hesitate to bring up since I cannot yet offer conclusive evidence, but for the sake of clarifying this investigation and removing a possible pitfall in future biographical research it seems wise to record the fact that there is a will in the Principal Probate Registry, London, by a Mark Catesby, which gives much evidence of being by the Mark Catesby of this study. The signature appears to be identical with the signature of Mark Catesby's letters, and the sole executor of the will is the brother of its author, Jekyll Catesby, often referred to in Catesby's letters and whom, we recall, Catesby's wife had as the sole executor of her will. From this newly discovered document (formerly it was thought Catesby left no will) which I found on my recent trip to England, I learned that Mark Catesby was "going to the Seas" in the ship 'Portfield' of the East India Company and made his will the 30th day of October, 1749, just before going on his intended voyage. Upon looking up the log of the ship I found it duly recorded, that Mark Catesby departed this life at 3 a. m., April 20, 1750, having died of a fever, and at 8 a. m., "amid faint airs and a calm sea, his body was committed to the deep." Not ready to discredit his reported death on December 23, 1749, and knowing that Mark Catesby, the naturalist, had a son Mark, I thought that this man was his son. This, however, is not possible since three years later, in 1753, Catesby's wife refers to her son Mark then still alive. In view of this and other baffling findings in the life of Mark Catesby, it will be necessary to delve further into the history of his career both here and in England before we can fully reconstruct the life of this little-known naturalist.

*Laboratory of Ornithology,
Cornell University, Ithaca, New York*