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[Phillips]


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A
DESCRIPTIVE CATALOGUE
OF
Quadrupeds and Birds,

COLLECTED AND PRESERVED

IN THE
BRITISH AMERICAN COLONIES.

——
BY
THE REV. R. FERRYMAN.

——
Quid hic? Intueri Naturum. Linn.

What call'st thou solitude? Is not the earth
With various living creatures, and the air
Replenish'd, and all these at thy command
To come and play before thee? Know'st thou not
Their language, and their ways! They also know
And reason not contemptibly; with these
Find pastime, and bear rule; thy realm is large.
So spake the Universal Lord.

Milton's P. L. Book 8th.

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1817.

DESCRIPTIVE CATALOGUE

BRITISH AMERICAN COLONIES

OF THE

1817

BRITISH AMERICAN COLONIES

To look through the world is what we have
examined the new world in all its
magnitude and with the eye of the
from the first steps of the
to the present day, we have seen
the progress of the colonies
and the growth of their
power and influence
in the world
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P R E F A C E.

TO look round this world in which we live; to examine the uses and the habits of all which it contains, and, step by step, to trace the affinities, from the first simple elements, from air to water, to earth, to plants, to animals up to man, and to angels, and to the Maker of them all; to know, as far as weak man can know, all that has been made; and to know the great Power that made them all: is not only the most pleasurable, but it is the most interesting—the most important—it is the highest and the noblest subject that can possibly engage the thoughts of man: it is a subject that, in all ages and in all countries, hath always occupied a large portion of the time of the greatest and the best of men. In ages long since past, in the earlier stages of humanity, we have good and great reasons for presuming that it was more studied, and better understood, than in these later days. Of those early times we have, indeed,

but little more than some faint, interrupted vestiges, some scattered fragments, to guide us; but they are enough to guide us safely to a just conclusion, and to satisfy the most sceptical how great the whole body of knowledge must once have been.

Who can read the 39th chapter of Job; the 8th chapter and 7th verse of Jeremiah; the 10th chapter and 3d, 4th, and 5th verses of St. John; the 3d chapter and 3d verse of the Epistle of St. James; with other like passages in almost every page of the Sacred Book, and for one moment entertain a doubt of the early inhabitants of the East having had a full and correct knowledge of the works of nature? They had, in truth, many advantages which we have not. They lived nearer to the origin: they lived in that country which was first inhabited, and where all the great works of nature were most visibly achieved: they, doubtless, were in possession of knowledge, which, in a great measure, is lost to us. We know not what was lost, when confusion and disorder was in the city of Babylon, and the great work, the building the Temple of Belus, was stayed, and the most ingenious and most learned men were driven out and dispersed: when the Israelites, time after time, were led captive: and when the great library of Alexandria was destroyed by fire. The loss, doubtless, must have been great and irreparable;

and after the total destruction of the great repositories of ancient knowledge, all succeeding enquirers had to begin almost *de novo*: they were left alone to their own observations, to their own reasonings and their practice. Surely then, in common fairness, it must be admitted that they have made great progress in every branch of science, but in none more, perhaps, than in the natural history of the things belonging to this earth.

The immortal Swede has given us a long and well-arranged list of Nature's great system, from the clod to man. Gesner, and Willoughby, and Ray, and Edwards, and Catesby, and Buffon, and Wilson, and many others of credit, have given us more full and detailed accounts of the produce of this and other countries; yet, though they have done much, the subject is far from being exhausted: very much more remains to be done.

A short time before I sailed from this country, for the English colonies of North America, in the year 1815, I was told by the first character, the best informed, and greatest friend to science in this or any other country, that there was nothing for me to do in America; that it had already been carefully explored; and that every thing it produced was perfectly known.

Very soon after my arrival, on going into the woods, and enquiring of those I thought best able to inform me, I was much surprised to find how very little was really and rightly known. Almost every thing I saw, in some respects, was new: if it was known and described at all, it was incorrectly so. Much confusion and error may have arisen from a want of a minute attention to every separate species. Some of the Trans-atlantic birds are very similar to the birds of Europe; but in no one instance are they precisely the same: the resemblance in some is so close, that it requires an intimate acquaintance with the birds of both countries to detect the difference.

There is a Goat-sucker in America, but it is not the same as the Goat-sucker of England. There are the same number of species of Swallows: they are very similar, but not the same as the English Swallows. There is a Brown Wren, a Willow Wren, and very many others that approximate to the birds of this country; but they all are different. To show the differences, appeared to me of some importance. I therefore resolved upon making a collection, and of placing the birds of both countries in a comparative point of view.

What I have already done, and have now to offer to the attention of the public, is but small: it is but little more than a sample of a great design

long since formed. If this sample, small as it is, meets with encouragement; and if a good and gracious Providence should be pleased to spare me a few years longer, and to continue my health and my strength; I hope, year after year, to add something new; and ere many years do pass, to make it well worthy the notice of the curious, and the man of science, in this most enlightened country: the country which I must still love above all other countries: it is the country which gave me birth.

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A Descriptive Catalogue, &c.

No. 1.—BEAR.

BEARS are not numerous in Nova Scotia, nor yet greatly mischievous, unless first attacked; but then they are, sometimes, most ferocious and desperate. In the spring, those which live near to the sea-coast feed much upon fish, particularly upon the Gasperoes, which, at that season, come in immense shoals, to spawn in the shallows and narrow places, where the fresh-water lakes discharge themselves into the ocean. These fish are in some parts so numerous, and so close-wedged together, that the Bears need no peculiar cunning or adroitness in taking them; they leisurely put their paws into the water, and claw out sometimes perhaps a dozen or more at a time. The flesh at this season is rank, and unpleasant to eat. In the autumn they feed chiefly upon berries, and become extremely fat; and then the flesh is esteemed good. They will sometimes indeed seize a sheep or a pig, but it is not common; it is to be con-

sidered as a departure from their regular habits, and as a vice in their natures. They sleep through the severer months of winter, and when they awake in the spring are always lean. The shape of the head, and the colour of the body, is somewhat different to, and they do not grow to quite so large a size as the Brown Bear of Norway.

They are generally taken in dead-falls, a kind of trap made of two large logs, well loaded, which is shown more at large in the case of the Martin.

No. 2. LOUP CERVIER and HARE.—Why it is called Loup Cervier, or (in English) the Wolf Stag, I never could well understand: it has nothing of the wolf or of the stag in its make or in its habits. We know, right well, that the first French settlers in Nova Scotia, the Acadians, called it *loucifil*, probably from *loup*, the French word for wolf; and from *felis*, the generical name for all of the cat kind. It doubtless is as ferocious as the wolf, and not less powerful; and it certainly has all the distinguishing characters of the cat. It has the velvet foot and long retractile claws: it is vigilant: it lies in wait secretly: it springs suddenly upon its prey, and seizes it with its claws. It has, by some, been called the American Lynx; and it probably is the same as the Lynx of Linnæus, who, in speaking of its habits, says, *venator cervos*; but for what reasons, and on what authority, I do not know. It makes

great havock, at times, in the sheep-folds; but it feeds generally upon hares.

HARE.—The Hares of America are much smaller than the Hares of England. In the summer they are uniformly brown; but in the winter they change, not to a pure white, but to a dull grey, as the one in the case of the wild cat.

No. 3. WILD CAT and HARE.—This Cat is frequently confounded with the *loup cervier*. Its legs are shorter: its paws much smaller: its colour darker; and the end of the tail is tipped with white. It evidently is a distinct species. Its habits are nearly the same; and, like the *loup cervier*, it feeds most upon hares.

It may not, perhaps, be thought unworthy of remark, that this specimen was shot, in 1816, on board the *Centurion*, the hospital-ship then lying at anchor in Halifax harbour, at least a mile distant from the nearest land. It probably was lured by the strong scent of some rancid train-oil, with which they had, a short time before, payed the sides of the ship.

No. 4. FOX and PORCUPINE.—The Fox of America differs somewhat from the Fox of England. It is proportionably thicker and shorter; its brush is much larger; and the black and white lines down the fore part of the hind legs

are very distinguishing marks. It feeds chiefly on mice, but sometimes ventures to attack the porcupine.

The favourite food of the Porcupine is the young shoots and thin rind of the hemlock spruce. The flesh is much esteemed by the Indians. I have eat of it with the Indians, in their wigwams; but I did not think it very good. The Porcupine is an inoffensive animal, and seeks security by slowly climbing the highest trees. If caught in an open place, on the ground, it makes but a poor defence. If a dog or a fox can get before it, it is easily thrown on its back, and soon killed; but if it can protect its head under a large stone, or the stump of a tree, it uses its large muscular tail so dexterously, and drives in the quills, with which each side of the tail is armed, so forcibly and so deep; and the quills, being barbed, stick so fast and give such acute pain, that not only the fox, but the stoutest dogs I have ever seen, are always obliged soon to give over the combat.

No. 5. MARTIN.—The general characters of the Martins of America differ but little from the characters of the Martins of England, but their furs are richer. In proportion as our researches are pushed more to the northward, the skins are found to be more and more valuable. The furs of the Martins of Nova Scotia are superior to the furs of the Martins of England: the furs of Upper

Canada are superior to the furs of Nova Scotia: and those near the Arctic Circle are much finer still, in length, in fulness, in softness, and in colour; so much so, that if the gradations could not be regularly traced, we should almost be tempted to fancy that they were the furs of another distinct species of animals. I have taken measures, and opened a correspondence with hunters beyond Montreal; and, if my life be spared so long, I doubt not, that, in the course of one or two years more, I shall be able to place, side by side, specimens of the different Martins, from Nova Scotia to the highest latitudes where hunters have ever yet been, and clearly to show the effect of climate upon the skin.

No. 6. MINK.—The make and general habits of the Mink are not much different to the polecat of England. Like the polecat, it is a destructive enemy to rats and mice; but the Mink is fond of, and powerful in the water, which the polecat is not. It swims and dives with great swiftness, and in shallow places pursues, and infallibly takes, the smaller fish at the bottom. In the summer, fish are its most common food. The fur is fine, but not long: it is valuable, and generally sold as sable.

No. 7. STOAT or ERMINE.—In America it is known by the name of the weasel; but it is evidently similar to the Stoat of England, though

much smaller. In the summer it is always brown; but changes slowly, as the cold weather approaches, till it becomes all over of a pure white, excepting the black brush at the end of the tail. It is, no doubt, the true Ermine. This specimen was killed late in November, when the change had advanced.

No. 8. **ERMINE**.—This was killed soon after Christmas, when the change was complete. They feed on mice, squirrels, and hares.

No. 9. **TREE SQUIRREL**.—The habits of the Tree Squirrel differ but little from the habits of the English Squirrel; but it is much smaller. The flesh is sweet and wholesome: I have frequently eat it; and the ermine knows its goodness, and never loses an opportunity of feasting upon it.

No. 10. **GROUND SQUIRREL**.—This is the smallest species of Squirrel that I am acquainted with. It will climb the trees with much facility; but it more frequently seeks protection in a hollow tree, or a hole in the ground, from which it has the name of the Ground Squirrel.

No. 11. **FLYING SQUIRREL**.—The Flying Squirrel is not rare in Nova Scotia, though it is rarely seen, as it seldom quits its hiding-place, in some hollow tree, till late in the evening. It

does not fly, as its name seems to imply, but it mounts up to the utmost point of some high or long projecting branch, and then takes one bold spring, and at the same time spreads the thin membrane which extends from the fore to the hind foot, which, like a parachute, enables it, while descending, to float on the air for a considerable distance, more or less, in proportion to the height of the branch from which it took its spring.

No. 12. MUSK RAT.—This Rat, in its characters and habits, nearly resembles the beaver. Like the beaver, it has a flat muscular tail, without hair: it has webbed feet: it inhabits the fresh-water lakes: it makes a house similar to the beaver's house; and, if disturbed, seeks refuge in the deep waters. Its most favourite food is the root of the sweet water-lily. The fur is used by furriers, but it is not much valued. It has a musky smell; and, on that account, the animal has obtained the name of the Musk Rat.

No. 13. BIRCH PARTRIDGE.—I do not venture decidedly to say that this is the Drumming Pheasant of the southern states of America; but, in the spring, the male, probably as a lure to the female, raised on some large dead log, makes a drumming noise, something like the sound of distant thunder; and so loud, that, in a still day, it may be heard at four or five hundred yards dis-

tance. It inhabits the thickest woods. It feeds, in the spring, on the tender shoots of various plants; in the autumn, on the delicious fruit of the maiden-hair; and, in the winter, on the buds of the birch, for which it has the name of the Birch Partridge.

No. 14. **SPRUCE PARTRIDGE.**—These are either very bold or very stupid birds. The whole brood, to the number of a dozen, or more, are not unfrequently found perching in the same tree near to each other. If their attention be engaged by some gentle noise, such as a low continued whistle, a noose of twine, or of fine wire, fastened to the end of a thin pole, may be raised quietly and put over the head of the lowest bird, without disturbing the one nearest or above him; and thus, one by one, they may all be taken. They feed, principally, on the black spruce; and, on this account, have the name of the Spruce Partridge. The male is darker in colour than the female.

No. 15. **BLUE JAYS.**—These birds differ from the European Jays in but little more than colour.

No. 16. **WOOD OWL and JAY.**—Like the English Jays, they insult the Owl whenever they chance to see him.

No. 17. LEAST WOOD-PECKERS.—I shot the male while sitting at the entrance to his nest. Not being quite dead, he hung for some minutes by his claws; during which time the female came and expressed such marks of surprise at the situation of her mate, as I never beheld in a bird before.

No. 18. White-Backed WOOD-PECKER.

No. 19. Three-Toed WOOD-PECKER.—All other Wood-Peckers have two toes before and two behind: this alone has two toes before and only one behind.

No. 20. GOAT-SUCKERS.—They are smaller and darker in colour than the Goat-suckers of England. The male Goat-sucker of England has a white spot on each wing, without any white on the tail. The male Goat-sucker of America has a white bar across each wing, and a white line across the tail. Goat-suckers are the largest of the swallow genus.

No. 21. MARTIN.—It differs in colour from the Martin of England. Like the English Martin, it makes an ingenious nest, of clay, under the eaves of a house, or some sheltered place; but the Martin of England leaves a semicircular hole, close under the eave, for an entrance: the American

Martin finishes her nest with a neck drooping downward.

No. 22. CHIMNEY SWALLOW.—This bird generally builds its nest in a chimney.

No. 23.—This was caught on a rope of the ship I was in, on my last passage from America, at least three hundred miles from the nearest land. It must be recollected, that there are not any species of flies far out at sea; of course, this bird must have been not only weary with long flying, but faint for lack of food.

No. 24. Rose-breasted BULL-FINCH.—The song is similar to the English Bull-finch. It sometimes sings while flying: its descending notes are very sweet.

No. 25.—This is generally believed to be the female to the Rose-breasted Bull-Finch. It is very true, all that I have killed of this plumage have been females; yet I am much disposed to consider it as a distinct species.

No. 26. Large Red BULL-FINCH.—They inhabit the thickest woods; they brave the rigours of the severest winters; and, in the frozen season, feed on the buds of trees.

No. 27.—Female of the Red BULL-FINCH.

No. 28. CHATTERER.—They sometimes appear in large flights, in Nova Scotia, in the summer, and feed chiefly on cherries, in that season; from which they are sometimes called Cherry-Birds.

No. 29. NUN.—These birds are common about Panama and the isthmus of Darien; and are sometimes, but rarely, seen in the swamps and low lands of Nova Scotia.

No. 30. BLUE-BIRDS.—They are most abundant in Bermuda, from which they are best known by the name of the Blue-birds of Bermuda; though they are not rare in many parts of America.

No. 31. BLACK-BIRD.—It differs from the Black-bird of England, in shape; it is longer and thinner: it has a black bill, and a yellow iris. The English Black-bird has just the reverse. It has no song; and, in fact, is more of a pie, than of a turdus, or thrush.

No. 32. GREEN FLY-CATCHER.—The bill is peculiarly broad and flat, and the vibrisæ are singularly large. The dull green of the plumage so nearly resembles the colour of the trees in which

it is generally found, that it is with difficulty and minute attention it can ever be seen.

No. 33.—This was caught, while dying, in a fold of a sail, more than two hundred miles at sea.

No. 34. BROWN WREN.—It differs somewhat in colour from the English Wren; and it is smaller. Its song is weaker, and the strains shorter, yet very sweet and pleasing.

No. 35. BOBALINCORNE.—This has, by some, been considered as the best song-bird in America. It is, perhaps, the loudest, for its size, but by no means the sweetest. It sings, sometimes, while on the wing, like the sky-lark of England; but it falls far short of the English sky-lark's melody. The female is brown, very shy, conceals herself in the grass, and is rarely seen. These are the Rice-birds of the southern states.

No. 36. ROSE LINNET.—Similar to, but larger and redder, than the Red-linnet of England.

No. 37. Black-Billed SNOW-BIRD.

No. 38. Yellow-Billed SNOW-BIRD.—These two have hitherto been confounded. They appear in large flocks, in the winter.

No. 39. Great NIGHTINGALE, or GOD'S BIRD.—It hath often been remarked, that the Trans-atlantic birds are richer in plumage, and less interesting in their songs, than the birds of Europe. However correct this may be with respect to the southern states, it is not so in the British American colonies. Wherever I have been, I have seen and heard a greater variety of singing birds, than I have ever heard in England; and their songs, perhaps not so loud, but as varied and as melodious.

This bird has all the general characters of the English Nightingale. It delights most in thick shades, and sings more by night than by day. It is known to the Indians by a name, which, in their language, signifies God's Bird, on account of the superior sweetness, and fancied divinity, of its song.

No. 40. The Lesser American NIGHTINGALE.—This bird has been confounded with the Greater Nightingale. Its song is equally sweet, but not so loud.

No. 41. CAT-BIRD, or GREY NIGHTINGALE.—The song of this bird is loud, but not so soft and pleasing as either of the two former Nightingales. There is a character which belongs equally to every species of the Nightingales. If at any time disturbed, or interrupted in their

song, they have a kind of alarm-note, something like *chur, chur*. In this bird it faintly resembles the mewing of a young cat; therefore it has obtained the name of the Cat-Bird.

No. 42. Grey MOTACILLA.—All this genus are soft-billed, and pleasing warblers.

No. 43. Yellow-crested MOTACILLA.

No. 44. Chesnut-sided MOTACILLA.

No. 44. Yellow & Black Spotted MOTACILLA.

No. 46. Black-throated MOTACILLA.

No. 47. Yellow-throated MOTACILLA.

No. 48. Orange-throated MOTACILLA.

No. 49. Flame-sided MOTACILLA.

No. 50. Yellow MOTACILLA, or WILLOW WREN.—Somewhat larger, and more spotted on the breast, than the large Willow Wren of England. All the Motacillas go southward, as the cold weather approaches. They all feed on insect-food; and they are all most pleasing songsters.

No. 51. HUMMING BIRDS.—They are said

to feed on the nectareous sweets of flowers. The fact is not so. While hovering on the wing, they insert their missile tongues into the cups of various flowers, and from thence draw out the minutest microscopic insects, the remains of which I have always found in the stomachs of all those I have ever dissected. The motion of their wings is so rapid, as to appear not to move; and they produce a considerable humming sound, from which the birds have their name.

No. 52. GREAT SPRING BIRD.

No. 53. LESSER SPRING BIRD.

No. 54. SPRING BIRD.

No. 55. SPRING BIRD.

No. 56. SPRING BIRD.—These birds first hail the approach of spring, and dissipate the gloom of a long winter by their cheering songs.

No. 57. KING BIRD.—The male is much attached to the female, and so bold in her defence, as to attack the stoutest bird of prey, even the eagle; and, by mounting above him, and insulting and buffeting him, always succeeds in driving him away: for which he is called the King-bird; king of the place where he chooses to inhabit.

No. 58. GOOSANDER.

No. 59. SEA LOONE.

No. 60. BITTERN.—Smaller, and different in colour to the large English Bittern.

No. 61. DIPPER.

No. 62.—ICE-BIRD.

No. 63. MARSH RAIL.

No. 64.—ORTOLAN, or WINTER LARK. They assemble in large flocks, in the winter, and are easily taken in horse-hair springes..

No. 65. Brimstone-sided MOTACILLA.

No. 66. AMERICAN ROBIN.—It resembles the Robin of England in nothing more than in having a red breast. It is a turdus, or Thrush; and it has the song of the Thrush, though neither loud, nor varied, nor sweet.

No. 67. GREY BIRD.

THE END.

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