

XVII. *Notice of an Original Painting, including a Figure of the Dodo, in the Collection of His Grace the Duke of Northumberland, at Sion House. By W. J. BRODERIP, Esq., F.R.S., V.P.Z.S., &c.*

Read April 12, 1853.

PROFESSOR OWEN, at whose disposal the Duke of Northumberland placed the following additional pictorial evidence of the existence of the Dodo in the seventeenth century, has requested me to draw the attention of this Society to the highly interesting picture which the Duke has been so good as to send for the inspection of the Fellows. The size of the picture, which is in the finest preservation, is thirty-two inches by nineteen. It is executed in oil, and bears the following monogram and date.

Mr. William Russell, with his usual discernment, detected in this monogram the signatures of Jean Goeimare and Jean David de Heem, and proved the correctness of his judgment by a reference to Brulliot<sup>1</sup>. Jean Goeimare, who is not noticed by Descamps, Bryan, Sandrart, or Houbraken, is described by Brulliot as a Flemish artist who flourished

J. D. H. A.  
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<sup>1</sup> Dict. des Monogrammes, 1 partie, pp. 201, 274.

at the commencement of the seventeenth century, and painted landscapes with many animals, executed with great care, but in rather a dry manner<sup>1</sup>. Of De Heem, the celebrated painter of still life, it would be superfluous to say anything. We may conclude, then, that in this joint production the landscape and animals were painted by Goeimare, and the shells by De Heem.

In this picture, which seems to have been intended as a record of rarities, the foreground represents a sea-shore from which the tide has retired, leaving empty shells of the following genera:—*Nautilus*, *Pteroceras*, *Strombus*, *Triton*, *Pyrula*, *Cassis*, *Cypræa*, *Conus*, *Mitra*, *Turbo*, *Nerita*, *Mytilus*, *Ostrea*, &c. Behind, on elevated ground, are two Ostriches; and below, to the right of the spectator, the Dodo is represented as in the act of picking up something from the strand. The head and body of the bird, covering an area as large as the palm of a man's hand, are seen; but the legs are hidden. The painter of the Dodo, in *my* picture, has given the only complete-foreshortened back view of the bird known to me. In the Duke's picture the head and body are presented to the spectator on a larger scale; and I have nowhere seen the hood or ridge at the base of the bill, from which the bird obtained the name of *Cygnus cucullatus*, so clearly represented. Near the Dodo are a Smew and other aquatic birds, and further off Hoopoes and Terns. In the distance is the ocean, with a sea-monster awaiting the attack of Perseus, who descends on a winged steed to the rescue of Andromeda chained to a rock. Those who have had occasion to describe and figure new species of Testacea, know how difficult it is to find a draughtsman who can give a correct design of the shell to be represented. Unless the artist, like Mr. G. B. Sowerby, jun., is aware of the internal structure of the shell, and acquainted with its organization, a lamentable failure is generally the result. In the picture before us, with one exception—and even in that the specimen may have been distorted—so accurate was the eye of the painter, that if he had been aware of the organization of each shell—knowledge which he probably had not—he could not have represented the objects more correctly. The *Nautili*<sup>2</sup>, *Strombus gigas*, *Triton*, and *Pyrula* are painted with great breadth and power, and all are drawn and coloured with wonderful truth; indeed a conchologist may name every species. One of the *Nautili* is partially uncoated, to show the nacre, and the other dissected, to display the concamerations. None of the shells have the epidermis, and all are of the natural size. The artificial condition of these subjects, and especially of the *Nautili*, is, it must be allowed, rather out of place in an assemblage of testaceans left on the sands by the retired tide, unless we are to suppose that the sea-nymphs had been amusing themselves by polishing the specimens and displaying the internal structure of one of them; but this very treatment shows that the designs were accurately made from real objects then considered as rarities. With the exception of the Dodo, none of the natural objects represented are now rare. The shells, especially those whose *habitats*

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Mr. Russell for this information.

<sup>2</sup> *Nautilus pompilius*.

are the seas of the Antilles, are at present very common ; but at the date of the picture—the second year of the reign of our first Charles—the natural productions of the West Indies were not well known, and were, comparatively, very scarce. With the shells on the shore is the cranium of a carnivorous quadruped, apparently of the family *Canidæ*. The monster-cetacean in the distance has evidently no chance with the avenger who is coming down upon him mounted on a winged steed. But Pegasus, who, with other prodigies, sprang from the blood that dropped from Medusa's head, as the conqueror who had cut it off with his harpe traversed the air with his gory trophy, immediately winged its flight to Helicon, there to become the pet of the Muses. The best version of this mythological story relates, that when Perseus afterwards killed the sea-monster and delivered Andromeda on the coast of Ethiopia, he effected his purpose by raising himself in the air through the aid of the wings and talaria given to him by Mercury, and not with the help of the winged horse on which most of the painters mount him.

Professor Owen informs me that Roland Savery's picture containing the Dodo, in the Berlin collection, bears the date of 1626 ; and that the colour of the Dodo in the Duke of Northumberland's picture resembles that of the portrait of the bird, of life size, by the same painter, now at Oxford. L'Estrange describes the hue of the back of the living Dodo which he saw exhibited in London "about 1638," as of "dunn or deare colour."