

ON HUMPHREY'S CONCHOLOGY.

By TOM IREDALE.

Read 9th April, 1915.

IN the Portland Museum Catalogue reference is made to Humphrey's Conchology. Some little difficulty was found in its recognition, and quite a little interest was aroused as to its authorship. The following notes seem worthy of record, as I cannot see any absolute proof, and the fact that it is cited under two or more names needs emphasis.

Reference to Sherborn's Index Animalium (I have used up all the laudatory adjectives at my command in praise of this vade-mecum of the systematist) gave me in the Bibliography the following entries:—

p. xxx. "[Humphrey, G.] i-vi. Numbers of a Conchology. fo. Lond. 1770-71. 26 pp. 12 pls. [No sp.nn.; some say this was published by Da Costa.]"

p. xx. "Costa, E. M. da. Number 1 of a Conchology. fo. Lond. [1770]. [6 nos. were published, 26 pp. 12 pls. No sp.nn.; some say this was issued by Geo. Humphrey.]"

When Sherborn recorded the discovery of the long-lost "Museum Humfredianum" (Ann. Mag. Nat. Hist., ser. vii, vol. xvi, pp. 262-4, August, 1905) he observed, p. 264: "The sale occupied . . . thirty-six days . . . the last day, taking books, of which Humphrey had a poor lot, the only rarities being seven copies of his own 'Conchologie' . . . As this book is stated in the 'Mus. Humf.' itself to be 'Humphrey's Conchologie', it confirms the opinion expressed in my 'Index Animalium', 1902, p. xxx, that Humphrey, and not E. M. Da Costa, was the author of the book."

The fact that in the Portland Museum Catalogue the common reference to Humphrey's Conchology also appears, would seem positive evidence in favour of Sherborn's conclusions. Reference to the book itself, however, appears to contradict that view, so I give here the extracts I have observed in connexion with this work. In the British Museum (Natural History) is preserved a copy, and a part with three original wrappers. The lettering of the wrappers read as follows:—

"Number I | of a | Conchology, | or | Natural History of Shells: | containing | The Figures of Shells correctly and finely engraved, | and accompanied with | their Descriptions in English and French. | The whole exhibited in a Systematical Manner. | By a Collector. |

"Conditions 1. This work will be printed in Imperial Quarto and on a good Type cast by Mr. Caslon. It is designed to be published in Monthly Numbers, each Number containing Two Copper Plates, and Four Pages of Letter-Press, with their Descriptions in English and French. The Price of each Number will be Three Shillings. Some Copies will be coloured after Nature, for the Curious who desire it, at the Price of Five Shillings. |

"London: Printed for the Author, by T. Jones, in Fetter-Lane, | And Sold by Mr. B. White, Bookseller, in Fleet-street; Mr. Elmsley,

Bookseller in the Strand, | and Mr. Humphrey, Dealer in Shells, and other Natural Curiosities, in | St. Martin's-Lane, near Charing-Cross."

On the wrapper of No. I is written, "Presented by the Editors Jan. 18, 1771," and on No. III, "Presented by the Editors, June 14, 1771."

As recorded by Sherborn there are 26 pages of letterpress, accompanied by 12 plates; the letterpress only gives the descriptions of the shells on the first four plates, the first figure of the fifth, and commencing on the second figure. This is a copy with coloured figures, and I see that three draughtsmen were employed in the preparation of these dozen plates: plates i, ii, iii, iv, and vi are signed "I. Wicksteed, Junr. del."; plates v and vii are signed by "W. Humphrey"; and plates viii-xii by "P. Brown". They were all engraved on copper by P. Mazell, who seems to have stood alone in this art about this time.

Now, from the wrapper alone the "Collector" and "Mr. Humphrey, Dealer in Shells", would seem to be different entities. Confirmation is apparent from a perusal of the Preface, which reads:—

"The Editor begs Leave to acquaint the Curious, that it is impossible to fix the Extent of his work, as it will depend on the Quantity of new Species that occur: but he assures them, that he shall neither spare Expense, or be wanting in an unwearied Application to render it complete, and hopes that on the Publication of the Numbers, they will judge of its Merits, and of its being more perfect than any other book of Conchology hitherto offered to the Learned . . .

"There now only remains to solicit of the Collectors an Access to their Cabinets, to acquire the proper Opportunities of perfecting his intended Plan; and should any Ladies or Gentlemen possess any non-descript Shells in their Collections, and chuse to have them engraved and described, if they will honour the Editor to send them either to the Booksellers Messrs. *White* and *Elmsley*, or to Mr. *Humphrey*, to be conveyed to him, he will return them safe, and gratefully acknowledge the Favour, by adding to the Description the Collector's Name (if permitted) to whom he is obliged."

From this extract the conclusion would be that "the Editor" and "Mr. Humphrey" were different personages. Judging the work alone, from a knowledge of Da Costa's known work and from Humphrey's own plea of ignorance, I should unhesitatingly ascribe it to the former, and not to the latter.

I would simply record the following facts: Chemnitz, in the *Neues Syst. Conch. Cab.*, vol. xi, published in 1795, quotes the book as (p. 181) "Da Costa, Conchology or Natural History of Shells"; (p. 184) "Da Costa Conchol"; (p. 185) "Da Costa Conchology"; and on pp. 186-8. I would note that recently, since Chemnitz's work, as above, has been rejected as non-binominal, the names from this eleventh volume have been accepted; but this volume is certainly as polynominal in its nomenclature as the others, the apparent regularity of binominals being superficial: thus, of twenty-three species of *Murex* listed, eleven only consist of two words; of nine species of *Mytilus* four are binominals, five are not. If *Tellina* or *Venus* were

simply looked at, a different conclusion might be gained, as here all the species happen to range themselves under a binominal system. If any student will carefully consider all the names in the volume no other course save that of rejection can be urged.

Bolten, in the Mus. Bolten, 1798, apparently ignorant of Chemnitz's quotations, as that volume of Chemnitz, viz. xi, is never quoted in Bolten's work, only knew Da Costa as the author of the work, as references to that name appear on pp. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, where Latin names are given to the species figured in the "Conchology". Maton & Rackett, in their Historical Account of Testaceological Writers (Trans. Linn. Soc., vol. vii, 1804), wrote under the name Da Costa—"Still more acceptable to the public were two other works of this author; one of which, however, was on too extensive a scale to admit of being completed; we mean the '*Conchology* or *Natural History of Shells*', which was published, anonymously, in folio numbers, but never proceeded beyond twenty-six pages of letter-press and twelve plates."

Doubt as to the authorship of the work appears to have arisen later, as Dillwyn in his Descr. Cat. Recent Shells, vol. i, p. ix, 1817, gave a "Catalogue of the Books consulted", and on p. ix wrote: "*Humphrey's Conch.* Conchology, or Natural History of Shells. (Supposed to be the joint work of E. M. Da Costa and George Humphreys)." In the Index Hist. Conch., Lister published in 1823, Dillwyn simply wrote: "Humphreys and Da Costa. Conchology, or Natural History of Shells."

It may be of interest to note Da Costa's own account. In the Elements of Conchology, 1776, p. 51, he wrote: "A new anonymous Conchology began to be published in this Metropolis in 1770, in folio, illustrated with copper plates. It was to be published in monthly numbers, and each number to contain two plates of Shells, with their descriptions in English and French. It was also intended to be a General Natural History of Shells, and to include the figures of all the known species, common as well as rare, beautiful, or otherwise; and some copies were designed to be accurately coloured for the use of the curious. Six numbers of it were published, comprehending the families of the Limpets, Sea-Ears, and Worms; but not meeting with suitable encouragement, the authors have laid it aside, at least for the present." Later, when reproducing figures, Da Costa wrote, "taken from the anonymous new Conchology."

While strongly of the opinion that Da Costa was the author of the work, this note has been written for the purpose of emphasizing the fact that quotations to "Da Costa", "Da Costa Conch.", or "Humph. Conch." all refer to the same work. This work was published anonymously, the author being given as "A Collector", and under this heading the book may be met with in some library catalogues.



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