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JAMES PETIVER'S GAZOPHYLACII

BY HARRY B. WEISS

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During the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century, the apothecaries sold "good cordials," "powders of Kent, Zell, and Contrajerva," "human skull and harts-horn," "essence of ambergris," "essence of viper," "commendeur balsam for apoplexy," "spirit of white cochlearia," "honey water," "orange flower water," and "arquebusade." They also prescribed for minor ills and some charged outrageous prices for their pills. It was during these good times, when the apothecaries were highly thought of for having stuck to their mortars and sold remedies during the Great Plague of London in 1665 when most of the doctors had fled, that James Petiver flourished—as an apothecary, as a botanist and as an entomologist. Although there is nothing to indicate that he charged a dollar for a pearl julep or thirty dollars for a pill "and the same for an apozeme" as did some of his colleagues, it is recorded that he had a good practice and advertised quack remedies. However, he was not alone in this, as all sorts of nostrums were sold then as now, and Charles II, in an effort to relieve suffering humanity, purchased from Doctor Goddard the formula of a catholicon, the chief ingredient of which was dried human bones.

According to the "Dictionary of National Biography," Petiver was born between 1660 and 1670 at Hillmorton, near Rugby, and received his early education at the Rugby free school. About 1683 he was apprenticed to an apothecary to St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London, and by 1692 he had his own business at White Cross, near Long Lane, in Aldersgate Street, where he lived the rest of his life. He was interested in both insects and plants, and his collection of the latter had by 1697 reached a total of between 5,000 and 6,000. He corresponded with John Ray, botanized with Samuel Doody and Adam Buddle around Hampstead, accompanied James Sherard to Cambridge in 1715, went to Ley-

den in 1711 to buy Doctor Hermann's museum for Sloane, and made many other trips. In 1695 he was elected fellow of the Royal Society, and from 1709 he was demonstrator of plants to the Society of Apothecaries.

He published some twenty-three items and contributed twenty-one papers to the Philosophical Transactions. His first publication was "*Museum Petiverianum*" (1695-1703) in "ten centuries," each of which dealt with the descriptions of one hundred plants, animals, and fossils. This was followed by five folio decads of ten plates each (1702-1706) under the title of "*Gazophylacium*," the first volume being accompanied by a small 8 vo Catalogue. In 1711 the second volume containing five additional decads and a Catalogue of four folio pages appeared.

All of Petiver's papers except those which appeared in the "*Philosophical Transactions*" were republished in 1764 (2 vols. fol. and 1 vol. 8 vo.) under the title, "*Jacob Petiveri opera historiam naturalem spectantia; or Gazophylaceum containing several 1000 Figures of Birds, Beasts, Reptiles, Insects, Fish, Beetles, Moths, Flies, Shells, Corals, Fossils, etc., from all Nations on 156 Copperplates, with Latin and English Names*" (London). In 1767 another edition appeared with "above three hundred Copper-Plates, with English and Latin Names. The additions corrected by James Empson."

The single folio volume of Petiver's works in the library of the American Museum of Natural History contains the following nine items. His "*Pterigraphia Americana Icones*" consists of a list of some four hundred names of ferns, lichens, fungi, shells, sponges, coral, etc., and a few insects, from Antego, Barbados, St. Christopher, Nevis, Jamaica, etc., illustrated by twenty plates. His insects include ichneumon flies, horse flies, bee flies, stone flies and wasps. Then follows a "*Catalogue of Mr. Ray's English Herbal*" with fifty plates figuring the flower, seed capsule, leaves and roots of some six hundred species, together with brief notes concerning their colors, time of blooming, habitats, etc. Another is entitled "*Gazophylacii Naturae & Artis*." This is made up of five parts with fifty plates and is a descriptive catalogue of the animals, fossils, birds, shells, plants, etc., found in England, Spain, India, Persia and Brazil. A few illustrations

of insects such as wasps, butterflies, beetles, walking sticks, etc., are scattered over the plates without any particular arrangement. The text is very brief and appears, at this time, quite unsatisfactory. Under "Brazil Insects" (Tab. LX) number 3 is described as "A stinking sort of Bug with a yellow Head and green Sheath-wings streak'd underneath with black," and number 5 as a "Steel wasp. Paipai guacu Brasil. A sort of Wasp or Hornet shining like polisht Steel." His other descriptions of animals, plants, etc., are just as brief, and supposedly the illustrations were to be used in identifying the species. Another short paper is "Plantarum Ægyptiacarum rariorum Icones," with two plates, a catalogue of rare Egyptian plants. His "Aquatilium Animalium Amboinae Icones & Nomina," with twenty plates, contains "near 400 Figures, engraven on Copper Plates of Aquatick Crustaceous and Testaceous Animals: as Lobsters, Crawfish, Prawns, Shrimps, Sea-Urchins, Eggs, Buttons, Stars, Couries, Concks, Perywinkles, Whelks, Oysters," etc., "all found about Amboina, and the Neighbouring Indian Shores, with their Latin, English, Dutch, and Native Names." The plates are dedicated to the various persons who supplied him with specimens and notes. Petiver's "Papilionum Britanniae Icones Nomina, &c.," illustrates over eighty English butterflies on six plates, although three of these are missing from the American Museum's copy. As usual the accompanying descriptive text is brief. Attention is called to characteristic markings, color, etc. and sometimes habits and host plants are mentioned. As a rule two or three lines of text are all that accompany each species. For example, Fig. 13, Tab. VI, is characterized as "Papilio minor supernè fuscus, infernè viridis. Holly Butterfly. Because I first observed it on that tree," and Fig. 2, Tab. V, as "Papilio Oculatus Hampstediensis, ex aureo fuscus. Albin's Hampstead Eye. Where it was caught by this Curious Person, and is the only one I have yet seen." The balance of the Museum's copy is made up of fifty plates (on some of which insects are illustrated) without explanatory text and Petiver's "Plantarum Italiæ, Marinarum & Graminum, Icones, Nomina, &c." with five plates. Petiver's papers which appeared in the "Philosophical Transactions" between 1697 and 1717 deal mainly with exotic plants, animals,

minerals, fossils and drugs which he exhibited, and which he received from his friends in foreign countries. To mention only the insects, from Maryland he received click beetles, "cantharis" and several species of "Scarabeus," sent by the Rev. Mr. Hugh Jones, from East India, beetles, crickets, butterflies sent by Mr. Edward Bulkley, Surgeon, and from the Philippine Islands, butterflies, sent by the Reverend Father George Joseph Camel. He also published in the Transactions (No. 331, 1711) part of a letter he had received from van Leeuwenhoek on the "Animalcula Semine of Young Rams."

Petiver died about April 2, 1718, and his collection and books which were purchased by Sloane are now in the British Museum. It is stated that although he was a good observer his botanical statements are frequently inaccurate. Altogether it does not appear that anything in Petiver's old folios is worth reprinting in new quartos, and his works are now as lifeless as most scientific writings eventually become.