

PROSPECTUS.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NATURAL HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES,

IN TEN VOLS. QUARTO,

BY LOUIS AGASSIZ.

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For more than eight years, I have now been in this country, devoting my attention chiefly to the study of those classes of the Animal Kingdom which American naturalists have, thus far, not fully investigated. The amount of materials I have already brought together is so great, that the time seems to me to have come when I should proceed with the publication of the more important results of these investigations. Desirous of contributing my share to the rapid progress natural sciences are making at present in this part of the world, I wish to present my work to my fellow-laborers in this field in the form most easily accessible to them. It has therefore appeared to me desirable to bring it out in a series of independent volumes. This plan will, moreover, leave me entirely free to present my contributions to science with such minute details, and to such an extent, as I shall deem necessary to the fullest illustration of my subject.

Without entering into a detailed account of the contents of this work, it may be sufficient here to state, that it will contain the results of my embryological investigations, embracing about sixty monographs, from all the classes of animals, especially selected among those best known as characteristic of this continent; also descriptions of a great number of new genera and species, accompanied with accurate figures, and such anatomical details as may contribute to illustrate their natural affinities and their internal structure.

I shall not extend my publications to classes already illustrated by others, but limit myself to offering such additions to the Natural History of the States I have visited as may constitute real contributions to the advancement of our knowledge.

From a careful estimate of the materials I have now on hand, I am satisfied I shall be able to include the most valuable part of my investigations in ten quarto volumes; each volume containing about three hundred pages, with at least twenty plates. I therefore now open a subscription for such a work, in ten volumes, quarto, in cloth binding, at the price of twelve dollars each volume, payable on delivery. Each volume shall be complete in itself, containing one or several independent monographs; so that, if any unforeseen difficulties should interrupt the publication of the whole, the parts already published shall not remain imperfect. As far as possible, I shall always select first such of my papers as contain the largest amount of new matter, or may contribute most directly to the advancement of science. Having devoted the greatest part of my time to the investigation of the embryonic growth of our animals, I shall make a beginning with the embryology of our turtles, several of which I have traced through all their changes. I trust this monograph will afford our medical students a fair opportunity of making themselves familiar with the modern results of one branch of physiology, which has the most direct bearing upon their science, and for which the different species of the family of turtles found in every part of the United States will afford them a better opportunity even than the artificial breeding of hens' eggs. Moreover, the extent of my embryological researches, covering, as they do, all the classes of the animal kingdom, will furnish, I trust, a new foundation for a better appreciation of the true affinities, and a more natural classification, of animals. I foresee the possibility, upon this basis, of determining, with considerable precision, the relative rank of all the orders of every class of animals, and of furnishing a more reliable standard of comparison between the extinct types of past geological ages and the animals now living upon earth.