

ARCHAEOPTERYX



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Caretaking

'Husbandlie Fare'

Some Amusement for the Island.

Some oddities to be found in the lofty realms of scholarship that might give cheer to the man in the street.

For Gloria and Joan.

"A Bird in the Hand"

The Wits Of the Caretaker.

One partaketh of the Bird, giving Thanks.

One sweareth at one's brethren likening him to the Bird - in recognition of his doltishness - disesteeming him.

Not to expose the farmer entirely to some unjust abuse at the hands of the vernacular, but at the same time not allow him to escape some culpability in transferring to my care his feathered beasts without some succinct and appropriate admonitions, I assign, none the less, some measure of blame for his only jestingly alerting me to the wiliness of these less than abiding creatures, as the following narration will attempt to elucidate.

However conscientious a caretaker, I am but a casual caretaker of animals. My casualness stems from naught but a casual knowledge of them. While 'seeing to it' these creatures meet not with some ravaging predator, I am apt, otherwise, to treat them as dumb brutes needing my tenderer ministrations, an unwarranted presumption on my part; there's little more required than herding them into their pen; must I tuck them in and recommend them to prayer? Surely, I did not stand as guardian all throughout the night.

In particular I relate of turkeys, with whose 'stupidity' I had some marginal acquaintance, having caretaken them in the previous year for the selfsame farmer, for a period of two months. In hindsight, while this husbandman of animals had more familiarity than I, with farm animals in general, my first turkey caretaking adventure coincided with the farmer's own incipency in the raising of this fowl. His very first flock consisted of a domesticated White Holland variety which came provided with (or without, as the case may be) its toes and beaks altered (somewhat lessened) in order to prevent them from clawing and mauling each other (only somewhat

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domesticated, not unlike homo sapiens). Despite her familiarity with the breed, and knowledge of its lineage, and some of its history, and the traditions surrounding these beasts, it was with trepidation that Mrs. Farmer accepted this latest experiment in her husband's husbandries. As a girl, the Mrs. remembers her parents raising these Birds, she recalling their proneness to disease, a consideration which would deter her in choosing this kind of animal, or fowl, for a casual farming practice.

It was Karl who very succinctly assessed the measure of the turkey's intelligence by stating "If you moved their feed trough two feet they would starve to death". But hearsay evidence is not best evidence. While the Bird may stand condemned for other manifestations of denseness, his demeanor with regard to food was one of insistent ravenousness, likened to those pangs familiar to us, which we labor to control as we sit in polite array about the dinner table fumbling with bibs, serviettes, utensils, carvings, passings from right to left, or left to right, in addition, asking of the Lord a blessing, which in some households may develop into a recitation of the day's events. This aforementioned pursuit of an immoderate appetite caused these domesticated creatures, of a band, small in number, but in a confined space, to forego all semblance of manners, dispensing with Grace and all other formalities, in their impatient voracity, to literally dislodge from my hands the bucket containing their food pellets. I offer this latter as best evidence to contradict Karl, who, however, is not to be swayed in his opinions; turkeys - notwithstanding - as a life, have a right to a fair assessment.

As I have revealed these Birds were a first for the farmer. He desired to raise these gross fowl as burgeoning meat-lockers, on-the-hoof (on the claw) as a variant in foodstuffs which he might himself proudly raise, partake of, and pass around or trade during the Island's year-end convivial festivities. The farmer had determined a judicious portion of the commercial 'turkey-starter' feed, basing his decision on so much cost per pound, not calculating as judiciously the Bird's need for the sustenance required to attain the prescribed growth, which may be calculable in so much per pound but may not achieve the desired result.

As mentioned, this turkey business was also a first for me, thus, any independent observation of the facts and any possible opinions or judgments adduced, were systematically precluded as part of my caretaking effort. Mine was to follow the regimen; I followed, to the letter, each motion of the farmer, that is, until the incident involving the dislodgment of the feed pail, this latter manipulation requiring some modification - if I was to preserve my equanimity as a caretaker.

Turkey and trough, during feeding, were located under cover in a small box-like space defined by a grillwork of boards, one part a gate through which the farmer, or caretaker, entered, carrying feed and water, and another part, a removable lattice for allowing the beasts access to a small fenced pasture area in the corner of the orchard.

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I had devised a masterful piece of deception that, in the end, 'bore out', somewhat, Karl's estimation of the intelligence, or lack thereof, contained within that ugly crypt carried aloft upon their rather gawky, scrawny, withered and purplish necks. This piece of daring-do on my part witnessed my arrival at the early morning feeding time, leaving the bucket outside the feeding gate, followed by the act of climbing over the fence into the pasture in order to remove the lattice, thereby admitting the Birds to their larger confinements in the pasture. I then walked to the furthest extremity of their outdoor enclosure with them in 'hot pursuit', they, all the while, pecking every available morsel of edibleness and inedibleness along the way. And while so engaged I would run full tilt towards their box-like pen disappearing within, pulling the lattice behind me, the turkeys always a fraction of time slower in their pursuit, being hobbled, in a race they never would win. This eluding allowed me to leisurely change their water and fill their trough unmolested. I would then leave through the feeding gate clambering, once again, over the fence to remove the lattice to their cage through which opening they would awkwardly locomote, as though in some automatic mode, 'forward' being the only direction to follow though one claw tangled in the other and each other's; they never seemed to lose ground in their ravenous orgasm.

Well, already I lengthen these matters pertaining to the first year's caretaking efforts, beyond what might be considered reasonable and appropriate, in preparing you for the events to which this narrative purports to lead in the subsequent.

I should add one comment, making it known herein, that one quite often unwisely foregoes his intelligence apparatus in yielding his judgment to first impressions. I had assumed after two months I now understood how to handle turkeys and outwit turkeys, as well as care for them. I will also mention that the ravenousness of these birds was greatly relieved upon the return of the farmer who sought to fatten them for their eventual slaughter. The mere addition of more rations seemed to assuage their eagerness for the pelletized matter serving as their sustenance. Ah-Hah!, hunger assails thee and satiation avails thee. That's not hearsay.

I must mention still one other small matter, only because it involved some of my expertise as a caretaker and gave rise to some thoughts pertaining to the higher animals. The weaker of these beasts was best served by the toelessness and the blunted beaks of the stronger, for in their efforts, for whatever reasons, to dominate one another (this factor is even not apparent amongst humans) the weaker were seemingly turned upon as some form of prey; there seemed to exist an insistent persuasion to 'rub out' those who were unwilling to maintain their rightful place on this earth, notwithstanding all we have heard regarding the meek inheriting that selfsame place.

Perhaps the scant rations triggered and promoted some heightened activity in the area of eliminating the competition (again one cannot learn

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much from his own species behavior since we seem to 'rub out' one another for a multitude of reasons).

It did become necessary to isolate one of those who became lame, for all the others seemed wantonly persuaded, as children sometimes do, from out some senseless meanness or malice to 'peck' upon the weakest amongst themselves, perhaps in obedience to some still more remote instinctive programming that professes to maintain a virility in the gene pool, or that observes some innate pressure to maintain a strength in all members of the group, the survival of the collective enhanced thereby. And was it not so that Che Guevara was captured in Bolivia because Che, a Doctor imbued with the Hippocratic tradition, could not abandon a *camarada* greatly incapacitated with lumbago; he was thus impeded in his own movements, was subsequently captured and executed.

Of course I speculate endlessly upon the behavior of turkeys and men, not shedding much light on either.

To continue, then, with this last accounting of these white birds, serving as prelude to what follows. The fenced off portion of the orchard did not exceed three feet in height on one side and four feet on the other; these creatures were easily able to fly out therefrom to far greater expanses, yet they did not do so. They would occasionally fly atop a post or board that formed part of their enclosure, easily encouraged to dismount, always in the direction of the enclosure; now there's obeisant submission or dutiful compliance, eh wot? For Karl's sake one may still wish to conjecture at length upon their lack of intelligence, in considering their eventual fate.

As hinted earlier, the farmer having only casually and jestingly alerted me to the propensities of these new birds, it was my assumption to perceive the second year's batch in no ways differently than those of the first, although they were different in appearance. While I cannot recall the exact statement made by the farmer, he did say, in essence, that on one occasion he had to chase some of the newer turkeys who had escaped, capturing them with a fishnet. No further mention or elaboration was tendered. The fishnet was left leaning, perhaps rather eloquently, against a stump near the turkey pen; however I did not feel unduly and dutifully alarmed, nor did I anticipate any particular alteration of circumstance from the *status quo ante*.

There is surely a tale to be told, although it is one which fulfills none of the criteria of an epic or the ingredients of high drama, it is more what one might characterize as a farcical circumstance in an otherwise utterly staid and mundane world. I shall thus take you by a long road which will eventually lead to game - so tag along.

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The Bird

The different appearance of these new birds was manifested in their coloration which bore some resemblance to their assumed ancestors, which, according to the literature are denoted as 'wild' turkeys, and were indigenous to that area of the globe now known as Mexico and the Southwestern United States, but, at the time of their discovery in the early fifteen hundreds, was really a nameless undelineated place, subsequently called New Spain. Therein the Spaniard is purported to have found some of them tamed, presumably by the indigenous population, one time naming the Pueblo Indians as the tamers, not as poultry, but as a source of feathers which were plucked from live birds to be used as burnt offerings in propitiating their Gods. The Spaniards were in the process of conquering whatever would yield to their will; some of the turkeys were already tamed. These tame fowl were transported o'er the high seas in 1518 to Europe, their progeny, perhaps, to eventually appear in England, as perhaps some royal gift, in 1524. And as fair turnabout were, after successive breedings and generations, brought back as live fowl to the New England coast by the Pilgrims in or on the Mayflower in 1620. These, in turn intermingled with the 'wild turkey' of what is now known as the Northeastern part of the United States, which it is assumed, said interbred creature was, once again, transported to the Old English shore. At least that's one story as perhaps told by the Spaniard.

Another, as perhaps the English would like to suggest, the Cabots brought 'wild' birds from the North American coast, where they were native, also in the early fifteen hundreds. Whichever variant of the introduction to Europe is the truer does not alter the fact of the Pilgrims being the agents of reintroducing a certain variety of turkeys to North America. The 'wild' turkey of those times has all but been decimated in their North American habitats, both in the Northeast, and in the Southwestern part of the United States and in Mexico.

Without entering into the genetics of producing varieties of these fowl since their introduction to Europe and reintroduction into North America, suffice it to say these birds (I was caretaking) possessed the same white tail feather tips of their ancestors, the balance of their coloration, in the Cock, being a distribution of white and brownishness speckled with black, and the Hen, being mostly without the white. I assume this particular 'breed' would answer the description of the nominally Naragansett variety, which I shall take the Zoological liberty to name '*meleagris gallonaragansetti*', the partial root of which will become apparent as I pursue some rough scholarship.

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'Unearthings': An Adventure into Etymology and other Speculative Origins; and judgments occasioned thereby.

In ones search for the authoritative and definitive text he soon comes to realize that much unwarranted assignation of complete knowledge has hovered about our quiet libraries which are purported to house all there is to know in their time-honored leather-bound musty and mysterious tomes.

I am the last in the line of 'scholars'; doubtlessly I shall increase the disorder in confusion-worse-confounded hoping to convey as much the mirth I extracted from my researchings as the facts themselves, the facts being somewhat embarrassed. Actually I did, only briefly, invade the overwhelming and oppressive stackings and wallings of books, letting my own meager store of mustiness serve; that store, but some distillation of the other, which doubtlessly occasioned a maddened PhD. or two.

I would not propose to be the one to unearth the exact lineage of these fowl. Still others have tried, perhaps judging the importance of such an endeavor of little consequence, thus limiting their research to the perpetuation of existing myths.

Despite these last disparaging remarks, the researcher has uncovered fossilized remains which seem to extend into antipodean times some forty to one-hundred thirty millions of *years ago*, on the planet Earth, somewhere between the earlier Tertiary into the Jurassic periods, the Cenozoic and Mesozoic *eras*, and the Eocene and Unlabelled epochs, give or take a few million years, to which we have Assigned *Archaeopteryx*. It surely creates a markedly different perspective when we consider Jesus Christ, the Exemplary, extends into a barely coherent past only 2000 years, and the serving of turkey as "*Christmas husbandlie fare...shred pies of the best...and turkey well drest*" arises sometime during the second half of the Sixteenth Century. A great gulf in cosmological time exists between fossilized remains some 40 to 130 millions years old, giving or taking millions of years, and our own present day, wherein a period of a few years, or perhaps a few thousand years, becomes a matter for scholarly debate. Our own paltry record may indeed not bear upon this tale; 'what relevance then?' you indignantly inquire. I am able to offer none except to say, a few historicals occasionally provide a more panoramic setting, a touch of romance, as it were, for otherwise drab and mundane narrations.

The myths of contemporary origin involve the presumptions of nationalities which teach us as much about bias as they do concerning fowl. Aside from the biases, which in lieu of proper information, seem to be sustained as local myths, one, in his search for truths is naturally exposed to man's haphazard ways of identifying, naming and classifying what he has observed in his environment. To some, The English scholars, 'turkey' is considered a misnomer, believing it had nothing to do with

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acquiring its name from the dominion of the Turks. Instead they opine the beast named itself; at least the creature originally obtained from the New World, in this case supposedly transported to England by the less than credible Cabots; Yes!, named itself, 'possibly because of its repeated call note, syllabled as "turk, turk, turk" '.

The Spanish, who had little to do with either evolution or geological time, but who had much to do with being Spanish and the introduction of the turkey into Europe from New Spain and who suffered defeat at the hands of the English on more than one occasion, seem to have overlooked onomatopoeic significance in their Nominalism. For indeed, in Spain, the turkey utters the resounding and immortal cry " *Pavo!*, *Pavo!*, *Pavo!* ", and in France, " *Dindon!*, *Dindon!*, *Dindon!* ", and in Italy, " *Tacchino!*, *Tacchino!*, *Tacchino!* " where it ought to be, " *Gallina!*, *Gallina!*, *Gallina!* ", and in the New World, you guessed it, " *Gobble!*, *Gobble!*, *Gobble!* " (RCWD).

Since the Mediterranean Latins had preceded all this controversy, they did not have an opportunity to apply labels to any of these 'new' birds; but those who perpetuate the tradition of applying Latin to Zoological classifications were not to be denied, and became resolved on '*meleagris gallopavo* ', which contains an etymology of its own.

The original Bird, to which the name applies, presumably known to the ancients and identified, or cited, by none other than Aristotle (that knower and *opiner* of all things) as *μελεαγρίο* *meleagris*) was seemingly an East African bird Abyssinian (Ethiopian)], later identified as *numidia ptilorhyncha* , 'guinea fowl'.

The '*meleagris*' designation is apparently a transliteration of The Greek word *μελεαγρίο* into the Latin alphabetical equivalent, as might have appeared in Pliny, supposedly denoting and identifying this fowl.

Numidia would have been added considerably later to denote, perhaps, the place of origin of a second species of guinea fowl - *numidia meleagris*, imported at a much later time from Guinea by the Portuguese. Although second in order of appearance, it was seemingly the first in terms of being identified for establishing the order *NUMIDIDAE*, Guinea Fowl. Opinion seems to vary (so what's new) with regard to the domestication of the 'numidian fowl'. Some maintain they were kept in captivity since Aristotle's time (how else would he know, since they were not native to Greece; however it is possible, since the Macedonian empire, under Alexander, had reached its fullest extent during Aristotle's time, it is possible he may have had access to these and other 'fowl'. Other equally plausible explanations can be devised regarding trade, court visitations [gifts], etc.).

The Romans made reference to a 'numidian fowl' as well as a '*meleagris*', these being maintained in captivity as a source of meat.

It is possible the Romans applied the original '*meleagris*' name to a second species and it is equally possible the one referred as 'numidian fowl', purportedly from East Africa, was the same as that observed by

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Aristotle. In some ways it appears a moot point since, with the fall of the Roman Empire, all the 'birds' seem to have 'flown the coop', until reintroduced to Europe in the Sixteenth Century. No records seem to exist to indicate the domestication of the guinea fowl occurred before the Sixteenth Century. It is not known whether the indigenous populations of Africa had domesticated any of the species of guinea fowl, as seems to have happened with the 'turkey bird' found in New Spain.

Guinea, in those times (Sixteenth Century) encompassed the west coast of Africa from approximately 13° North Latitude to 16° South Latitude, the Portuguese having held 'possessions' on the south west coast of this territory, from which it is assumed the guinea fowl, *numidia meleagris* (*galatea*) was reintroduced to Europe. It is also assumed it was this fowl which received a second name of 'turkey', becoming synonymous with it. The exact origins and associations for the naming of the guinea fowl, 'turkey' are, of course, not clear. It is further opined, certain fowl were imported to Europe through the Turkish domains which were at their most extensive in Africa during the Sixteenth Century. Which fowl? is open to question and debate.

Obviously the common name, or vernacular, was not *meleagris* as applied to the 'turkey' or the 'guinea fowl' or, Watch Out!, for the 'peacock' of India, as a possible third fowl - each, as birds, seemingly confused with one another for some period of time. During the middle to late Sixteenth Century many exotic birds found their way into Europe to enhance a variety of bird collections. Much confusion existed regarding the ordering and classifying of all these creatures until the 'ornithologists', or zooifiers, developed some system for cataloguing the differences amongst these many foreign fauna.

It is the opinion of some scholars that the more domesticated Bird in Europe was the guinea fowl, the creature of slate-colored plumage speckled with white spots. As stated earlier, this bird acquired the name of 'turkey' at some indistinct point in time. The guinea fowl is not a small bird; it is certainly larger than a robin or a crow, and even larger than most barnyard fowl. It is easy enough to imagine how a casual observer might confuse and call a bird of nearly equal size and similar appearance, though not exactly the same, and for the lack of a better appellation, by the same general name. Thus it is the theorists, who, in brandishing their pens in scholarly debate advancing the notion of "turk, turk, turk" as the origin for 'turkey', may have been hearing instead the 'stuttering and stammering' of each other engaged in 'dubious battle'.

Again, and subsequently, it was just a matter of time before 'turkey' was applied as well to the Spanish import (*[meleagris] mexicana*) from New Spain, and/or the purported English import (*americana sylvestris*) from North America's east coast. The confusion became worse confounded (if you are not totally lost by now) when the '*meleagris*' designation was applied to this, or these, North American import(s) by none other than Linnaeus

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(Carl Von Linne), who, it is opined, probably obtained the nomenclature from the prevailing myths.

Once we arrive in this middle to later Sixteenth and early Seventeenth Centuries, people are seeing 'turkeys' everywhere.

In addition to the metaphors employing the use of the 'fowl' bird as a disesteeming appraisal of one's fellow man, I'll list a few of the earlier references to the turkey, as a bona fide creature, as compiled from the O.E.D.:

- 1573 Tussar, in Husb(banding?):
Runcivall pease...more tender and greater than wex
Of peacock and turkey leave jobbing their bex.
- 1596 Shakespeare, in Henry IV:
The turkies in my Pannier are quite starved.
- 1616 Captain Smith, in Descriptions of New England:
Teale, Meaws, Guls, Turkies and Dive Doppers.
- 1634 W. Wood, in New England Prosp(ects):
The turkey is a very large bird, of blacke colour, yet
white in flesh
- 1643 Baker, in Chronicles:
About (1524) it happened that divers things were brought
to England whereupon this rhyme was made:
'Turkey, Carps, Hoppes, Picerell and Beer
Came into England all in one Year'.

Also, as one scans through the dictionaries or zoological or ornithological texts he finds, under 'turkey': *meleagris gallopavo*. While having already stated this 'branding' contains a history of its own, as a history, it gains a momentum of its own as well. Lest one foreclose this issue entirely, I have chosen to continue, only because there is more to tell.

More follows thusly. Turkey, as we know it today, *meleagris gallopavo*, comes down to us through Linnaeus, from his *Systema Naturae*, Linnaeus merely having recorded the prevailing 'myths' in existence, at the time, as I am undoubtedly doing in my historicals; only he Latinized them. These were then carried forth faithfully until our present day in all subsequent systems of zoological classifications - as regards the turkey, anyway.

In the beginning one is able to imagine, before serious taxonomic differentiation of the thousands of species of birds began, one's observations tended to note that some birds were big, some were small, some had long legs, some short, some long necks or short; some walked, flew, and swam; some flew and swam; some walked; and some swam. As time passed, observations becoming more acute and discriminating, beaks, claws, plumage, and sundry physical manifestations of difference were included, and eventually classification became a matter of innerness and behavior,

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and, as in Aristotle's case, whether they were 'bloodholding', or not. Nearly two-thousand years elapsed between Aristotle's *Historia Animalium* and Linnaeus' *Systema Naturae*, this latter appearing in the middle of the Eighteenth Century. By inference, Aristotle's first 'bloodholding' class was *Mammalia*, with that of *Aves* as second, as was also the case, more specifically, with Linnaeus. There are a few more similarities between these classifiers, but Linnaeus went on to create a complete compendium for the entire plant and animal kingdom known in his time, which formed the basis for our current system of natural classification.

Linnaeus' second Class, *AVES*, included six *Orders*, with seven distinct *Genera*; included under the *Order* (*GALLINAE*) one finds *Meleagris*. These *Orders* have been expanded, nowadays, to some twenty-seven *Orders* (plus fossil *Orders*).

In consulting the local University Science Library regarding which *Species* Linnaeus listed under which *Genera* I found him in Microprint, but when I placed him in the Microprint Reader, I found I could not focus him, only with great difficulty and fleetingly. I notified the 'librarian' of the difficulty I was experiencing in getting Linnaeus into focus, and was told there had been other complaints, but there were no funds available for repairs, and that it was a low-priority item in their budget. Well, this 'librarian' was only a student 'on work-study' 'making a buck'. Perhaps there was some hidden message in all this; in any case, I felt what I might find in Linnaeus would not add more to the general store of useful information. So I decided to ad-lib, somewhat of an ornithological tradition. The general assumption for Linnaeus' *Gallinae Order* holds for the modern day *Order GALLIFORMES*, chiefly referring to fowl, including domestic fowl. The *Gallinae Order* listed at least four *Genera* that pertain to this 'investigation' (...er... marathon narration; are you still there?), *Pavo*, *Meleagris*, *Phasianus*, and *Numidia*; these, in fact, almost dictate the *Species* one would expect to find included in this *Order*, however they might be arranged today.

For those not into ornithology, the *Order Gallinae* (Galliformes) includes what are referred to as 'gallinaceous' birds; as well as the more familiar turkey, pheasant, peacock, also included are quail, grouse, ptarmigans, partridges, and most domestic fowl, excepting ducks and geese. In passing it should be mentioned that the ornithologists are still far from agreement amongst themselves as to the exact arrangement of all the little birdies in/on the birdie tree.

'Gallinaceous' has its origins in the Latin, *Gallinaceus* (relating to poultry), derived from the root word *Gallus* (L), a cock (or dunghill cock), and including reference to, *Gallina* (L), a hen.

Perhaps now we may approach the examination of our *meleagris gallopavo* with sufficient background. '*Meleagris*' we know is transliterated Greek. *Gallo* of *Gallopavo* seems to make some reference to 'cock' (perhaps guinea cock, turkey cock, etc.), but no real reference to turkey, therefore

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seems a redundant usage, as 'meleagris' already incorporates guinea 'cock' in its usage. *Gallo* is not used to suggest gallinaceous since most of the other *Galliformes* Order, with the exception of *gallus gallus*, *jungle fowl*, native to India since 4000 B.C., do not employ 'gallo', per se, in their poultry nomenclature.

In tracing the origin of '*pavo*' we find *Pavo* (L) for peacock or peafowl. These are described as either one of two large 'pheasants', *pavo cristatus* (crested or plumed peacock) of India or Ceylon, or *pavo muticus* (uncrested or differently crested peacock) of Southeast Asia (Maylaya, Java, Borneo).

The Spanish borrowed the Latin word for peacock, *Pavo*, applying it to the fowl they brought from New Spain - thus the turkey became *Pavo*. The Spanish had perhaps already named the peacock, *Pavon*, indicating, in the former, an observation of difference from the latter; as well as a similarity. Somehow the naturalists carried all of this 'musical chairs' Latinizing to its illogical extreme.

In the end, it emerges as it should, if you can bear it: *meleagris* (guinea cock) + *gallo* (cock) + *pavo* (peacock); going off thrice cocked (RCWD).

You may frown at the excesses of these 'unearthings', being prompted to inquire, "what's in a turkey besides white meat and dark meat?". For some truly explainable reason, I availed myself of the dictionary in seeking some information regarding the turkey; I can't even remember the exact reason now, except to say that I was interested in expanding the little trove of uses and abuses which this '*husbandlie fare*' has sustained as metaphor, to wit: talk turkey, walk turkey, cold turkey, he's a turkey, poor as Job's turkey, turkey in the straw, turkey trot. Well, I wasn't satisfied with these meager gleanings, so I consulted the OED and Britannica, then Taxonomy, Zoology, Ornithology, History and Mythology (Sorry, no Musicology or Baseball). It had all begun innocently, ending with a pile of notes too good to throw away that drove me to distraction as I tried to present them in a readable vivified order, not so sucked of their juices as to leave the reader with a parched sensation, at least as parched as I was after the ordeal of organizing the PILE.

My wife and I almost did battle when I attacked her college Zoological text, which I felt sincerely, but none the less, misled me (but she forgave me, adding a few punch lines (RCWD) to demonstrate her good will and to spice up this text). I believe one should question everything (even this), even a name with a PhD after it.

Even though, from convenience, I tend to venerate these 'worthies' amongst us (perhaps because I am not one); I really should know better, having spent twenty years (forty percent of my life) working under (not quite beneath) them (Aristotle would have approved). They, amongst themselves, were not of uniform manufacture, and those whom they had

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anointed or Knighted, as it were, with that prestigious symbol, PhD, were, also, not of uniform manufacture. The implication hereto set forth suggests one ought subject these titled eminences, wherever they are found, to a closer scrutiny than one's unassuming and reverential nature would ordinarily demand or allow; especially when it pertains to matters of fact or truth - or opinion, which ever the case may be. May I be somewhat exonerated because I do not sport a title? I would encourage you to freely question and scour this epistle.

Mythological Overtones

Now, if you will bear with me, I would wish to further adjure your sensibilities, for I feel I must set the stage for yet another aspect of our mysterious behavior; and if you are patient you will realize that it all pertains.

In recalling what I have been, where I've been, what I've done, I rely on a gradually diminishing memory. The extant photographic record of my life is but a series of still lives. My mother unveils nothing of the past but a saccharine embryo, we each of us in our mother's eyes another haloed creature in the making. In some ways it all seems rather dull; my own searching self-exhumation will reveal nothing new, nothing pertinent, pertinent to the glory I seek.

I could add a touch of romance, a search for the Phoenix, the Golden Fleece or the Holy Grail, or point the way towards the Exemplary Man.

I have lived my own history more than I have recorded it. I color my past experiences with a variety of biases, as does my mother. Living through her eyes somehow does not ring true, like a Madonna scene full of nimbi, and sort of bloodless. Its as if one was gleaning American History, with a jaundiced eye, in a classroom full of patriots hearing tell of courageous men and women, Star-Spangled Banners, pledge allegiances; a scene enacted upon a stage with a painted, stilted background devoid of the multifariousness of reality and truth.

And Man has lived his history more than he has recorded it. In the ancient times, it was barely recorded, lacking the modern-day benefits of parchment, printing presses, the Media, computers with endless memory banks and fast data-retrieval; and excessive selfconsciousness. And that history was no less rife with bias than ours, and was surely cast in its own prevailing mythology concerning *its* own beginnings and its own record. Can you imagine a historian, in ancient times, without a library, without references, attempting to create a history of his past. A few very solitary figures survive the onrushing juggernaut of time. We enter a world shrouded in mystery, in myths, in incredible tales interspersed with an observed reality - the actual nowness of their existence, their mere remote palpitation, the scant three dimensionality of their world.

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Those who have followed, even like myself, who attempt to piece together some shreds of truth, find that, when one separates fact from myth, he has remaining a leaky sieve through which most of the story slips, or seeps away.

What of these myths we concoct and perpetuate in our very own day, wherein we extol our virtues, wherein we pursue the good, the true, and the beautiful. I'll leave for you to fill in the blank spaces.

Throughout all of this accounting, time is inadvertently telescoped. Myths of ancient times are superimposed upon modern taxonomy, and more modern times and nomenclatures are projected upon an ancient mythological setting. Its as though we looked through both ends of a telescope simultaneously. A chronological order may have been desirable in this turkey history, but I feel I am not the one to so provide. I think if any real order had been simple to arrange and if that had been deemed the purpose of our lives, the record would have been provided long ago. It would have created a tidy picture to have begun this taxonomic tale at a specific time. Surely reaching back forty millions of years is beyond the scope of any inquiry. Nowadays we cannot wait to bury yesterday.

Yet we do go back in time to the Myth of Meleager, from whose name it is proposed the *guinea fowl* obtained the name '*meleagris*' as cited in Aristotle. Meleager was a legendary Greek hero of sorts. As decreed by the Fates his life would be as long as a burning brand upon the hearth. Upon hearing this oracular pronouncement his mother retrieved the brand quenching its fire, secreting it in some safe place known only to herself. In his heroic deeds Meleager ran afoul of his uncles, killing them, to the great displeasure of his mother, who avenged their death by, once again, retrieving the fatal brand from its hiding place, this time casting it into the fire, whereupon Meleager purportedly soon perished. In order to better bear suffering the loss of their beloved brother, his sisters were turned into *guinea fowl* by Atremis during part of the first year of their mourning.

Hah!, how assay these historicalers, mythologicalers, ornithologicalers and taxonomicalers. What say this connection between Aristotle's word-name and a real bird that purportedly received its name from a legendary figure; would these tellers of tales and classifiers have us freely associate and infer therefrom that live creatures inhabit myths, that reality and myth live side by side? Why do we not see more mention and recording of the pheasant, *Phasianus Colchis*, that was native to the very place in which Meleager conducted his exploits, and was included in one of the variants of the story of the Golden Fleece, as the actual embodiment of the Golden Fleece, the search for which was conducted near the very river bed, Phasias, from which the pheasant received its name? And was Meleager not one of those Heroes who shipped aboard the Argo with Jason in pursuit thereof? One might wonder to no purpose.

It is possible the bird to which Aristotle refers as '*meleagris*' is the 'guinea fowl', but somehow the guinea fowl seems superimposed upon a

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myth. It is as if to say the fowl coexisted alongside the myth - and within it, but would have remained unnamed as a fowl until the legend of Meleager had become a matter of mythological history (or record). Perhaps somewhere in the lexicons of mythology one will find an invention to satisfy the needs of this particular story, and therein will learn which came first, the 'chicken or the egg', alias 'Meleager or the *guinea fowl*', or Alas!, the *pheasant*.

Yes!, in our search for the Meleager bird we telescope myth upon modern taxonomy. We impose error upon myth and truth alike, making little distinction between them. It is the story that matters, the quest and not the finality of fact, as was perhaps symbolized in the search for the Golden Fleece (or Sandia man, for that matter).. The fact is dry, perhaps as dry as the facts of our very own lives. Yet I resist these embellished tales as I do those of my haloed innocence, as divulged by mother in her fictions; perhaps because mother sees not the epic in me. I'm convinced there is more epic to her. Yes!, we all pale before the truth as perhaps does the turkey in the presence of the guinea fowl.

If one day you should stumble upon a secret place, and therein discover a private bird of no previously known description or connection, unanswerable, as it were, to some tabular prison (as have been occasionally discovered in Africa or New Guinea), there exists a whole lexicon of Greek and Latin morphemes, runes, pothooks and hangers upon which to suspend and baste this new discovery, all white, argus plumed, with golden crest, of such nonchalant bearing as to suggest HIS very essence as HE strolls about in Paradise. We, of course deem such a happenstance unlikely anymore - how dull. Perhaps it is best to have it all over and done. Nowadays, in our imaginary rush into a nebulously replete and fulfilled future, we decimate species, daily, by the hundreds, without a bat of the eye.

When we set off the bombs, should any portion thereof survive, perhaps this radiance given off by *homo sapiens* will have induced a whole new genesis. And in the ensuing instant fix and cremation, our own brand of fossilized record will be labelled B.B., before the Bomb, the Plasteredsce of the Quintessenary Period of Jerkological time.

Aye, what are we able to glean from all this searching and judging? Hardly a romance. Perhaps a few facts or some humility in the face of our haphazardness, our stumbling about in the dark. Yet, perchance, given this stumbling, we may find some opportunity to marvel at those sentinels of ancient times, whose dedication in their lonely outposts began the process which may yet lead us from out the darkness. We have eaten of the tree, we presume upon nature.

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A Brief Recapitulation of the Cockiform

Dare I recapitulate within an etymological succinctness?

Turkey: *meleagris gallopavo* ; and I too sport a name that bears no resemblance to Adam - so what's in a name?

(*meleagris* [μελεαγρις]): from Meleager; his sisters transformed into guinea fowl, the designation twice misapplied; first: to the guinea fowl of the southwest coast of Africa (*numidia meleagris*), the original μελεαγρις purporting to be an East African guinea fowl *numidia ptilorhyncha* secondly: to the turkey (*meleagris gallopavo*) which it resembled, in Europe, being perpetuated in the record by none other than Linnaeus.

gallo (*gallus* [L]): meaning cock; a sort of redundancy, to wit, its application to the jungle fowl (*Gallus gallus* ...er...twice cocked).

pavo (*pavo* [L]): is the Latin-Spanish-Latin reaffirmation of the turkey as being a peacock. Thus we are rooted in this convention of creating conventions as to dare not contravene them for fear of creating confusion worse confounded. We have affirmed there is no rhyme nor reason to convention or confusion.

The North American turkey became the guinea fowl of Abyssinia, usurped by the guinea fowl of Guinea, married to the peacock of India, with perhaps the cockiform of all these gallinaceous birds added in, regardless of their place and time of appearance - and - the fowl from America was given a round trip to Europe and back, the Noble savage reintroduced as a cultured bird acquainted with our Western Holidays.

After all is said and done 'a turkey by any other name would taste as sweet'.

I have labored so in these histories and taken you down a long tedious path, and now, must take leave of you to flush the bird.

A Return to the Bird.

Who knows what traits of their ancestors were harbored in the genes of these domesticated creatures. To reiterate briefly: without entering into the genetics of producing varieties of this fowl, suffice it to say these 'new' birds possessed the same white tail feather tips of their ancestors, the balance of its coloration, in the cock, being a distribution of white through a predominant brownishness speckled with black; the hen lacking most of the white. There was no noticeable sheen to their feathers. In taking liberties with identification without really knowing, I would say these were of the Narragansett variety which I will ad-lib to be *meleagris gallo-narragansetti* (meaningless gobbledegookeldegobble).

Besides not being white, this second crop differed from the first in not having their toes and beaks remodeled. One could observe a general

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alertness and quickness, and what I would characterize as a wiliness; whether or not their quickness was related to being in possession of all their toes, I know not.

Despite these differences, in my relative innocence I was 'taken in' by their seeming complaisance as I entered their quarters, this year comprised of a small building equipped with a roost (so they didn't have to sleep in it), the same feeding trough, and decapitated plastic jugs nailed to the wall studs serving as water containers. The Birds appeared inured to the intrusion of one carrying buckets, to the pouring of water from the one and feed from the other. After a few days it was easily determined their feeding rate was less than those of the previous year; the same amount of 'turkey starter' sufficient for this larger group (eight birds as compared to five of the previous lot) had been insufficient for the smaller group. The buckets I carried into their quarters thus remained unmolested through any ravening spasms - all very obliging and encouraging.

One further comment upon the differences between these two batches of birds could be made concerning their size, this latter being noticeably smaller; it was the farmer's opinion, upon his return, these would indeed 'weigh out' less on the claw than their predecessors.

A Tale: "A Bird in the Hand "

Perhaps one ought not volunteer his services when they are not specified, as requirement, especially as a consideration in the caretaking of turkeys; and one ought pay strict attention to, even casual remarks, voice inflections and other innuendos uttered by farmers in a hurry to leave town (for vacationing), their attention diverted thereby.

My troubles began when I elected to exceed the requirements of my profession as caretaker. In exercising my office as dutiful caretaker, in good weather, and in observance of some anthropomorphic generalities, it occurred to me a good cleaning of the turkey's quarters was in order; in addition I remonstrated with myself that 'an ounce of prevention was worth.... some proverbial end', this latter assumption pertaining to cleanliness (without becoming proverbial), perhaps assuring for a more disease-free turkey coop, and, turkey bird, as well.

In preparation for the event it would be necessary to remove the turkeys from their house, for while they might not object to buckets engaged in familiar patterns of movement, a shovel served as a frightening provocation that quite alarmed these *non compos mentis* beasts, into a flapping nightmare, threatening to break the glass windows forming part of their accommodations. Such provision was already accounted for in part, the farmer having constructed an outdoor enclosure attached to the building, however, much smaller than the previous year's, approximately equivalent to the floor space of the building itself. A small trap door, only a

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foot square, located approximately two feet above the ground, at floor level in the coop, opened from the coop into the enclosure. The building itself measured approximately eight feet by ten feet on the floor by eight feet in height; the outdoor enclosure perhaps measuring eight feet by twelve feet.

Not dismissing entirely the farmer's casual remark regarding the chasing of a bird with a fishnet in hand, I decided to cover this outdoor enclosure, which stood at three feet in height. The enclosure was constructed of some cattle fencing with large openings, these openings being mostly covered by a fish netting draped to the ground cursorily tied with twine to the fence's top wire. The trap door, when opened, swung up against the top of the now-covered enclosure; a steep narrow ramp, constructed of a board with wood strips nailed as treads, was leaned against the building from the ground, beneath the trap door.

All in readiness it was time to exercise "Be kind to dumb animals". These creatures being not too keen on changes in their routine, as perhaps intimidated by Karl, and, as we may observe in all orthodoxies, were reluctant to go outside; but with gentle coaxing and mutual persuasion, they made their exit to the great out-of-trap-doors, seemingly content in the bright morning sun. Thus was I easily able to accomplish the task of cleaning their quarters. It being a nice day, I abandoned the birds to their leisure in the enclosure, periodically checking their disposition, finding them preening and otherwise behaving nonchalantly. Very pastoral, No?

They remained for the better part of the daylight hours. When the time arrived for them to be returned to their condominium, they seemed not too inclined to climb the treaded board and to enter through the smallish opening. After some coaxing using a stick as prod and myself as a mobile demoniacal threat outside the fence, they eventually flapped, beat and clawed their way in for the night. Hah!, something accomplished; a little self-congratulation was in order; a good deed done, and such a healthful experience for these, so destined for the Christmas platter. A-men.

With such a success behind me, I thought nothing of turning these beasts loose again upon the next bright sunny day; without as much as coaxing them, they found their way to the out-of-doors to take an airing in the sunshine where they remained - Alas! - until dusk.

Having dallied in my conversation down the road, imbibing both wine and conviviality, darkness approaching rapidly, twilight already upon the world, a sense of duty calling more and more loudly and urgently within, I departed for the quarter-mile walk to the farm. It was time to check the disposition and security of all the feathered beasts, hoping to find them snugly ensconced upon their respective roosts. To my amazement and ensuing frustration I found little compliance with previous behavior; some suspicious from of anarchy, ... a la Animal Farm? The ducks and geese had voluntarily entered their house contrary to previous behavior which

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required their being herded into their nighttime barrack, the old wash-house. Very nice! Very cooperative!!, Hmmnn!?

Having entered the farmhouse on my way to attend these feathered ones, I had picked up and carried a flashlight in order to perform the usual chicken count ensconced upon their roost. Upon entering their quarters, it was immediately apparent they were not all present and accounted for; Never!! before had they not all stood evening muster perched upon their prescribed nighttime accommodations. One half of them had decided to roost in the covered lean-to outside the barn which served as a sheep-pen. Thus with the flashlight turned on, resting atop a post nearby, I was obliged to carry each damned bird (they have a high resistance to being herded) one by one, to their protected perch, all the while the Gods of darkness were swallowing whole, thus engulfing, the luminescent earth.

The concern herein manifested for these fowl involved their protection from the whims of predatory creatures, namely raccoons, whose presence was repeatedly noted during this particular fall, they having absconded with some three-hundred pounds of the farmer's plums despite vigils with shotgun at the ready (a man's gotta sleep some time). Now with the fruit season passed it was suspected this resourceful omnivore might decide to include fowl in its diet.

With the chickens safely tucked away, I proceeded to the turkey's quarters - and predictably, they simply had not flapped, beat and clawed their way into their coop. Instead they had taken to huddling together in a corner of their outdoor enclosure, resting upon the ground.

With flashlight in one hand, illuminating the hatchway to their quarters, and using the handle of the fishnet as a prod in the other, I attempted to persuade these *meleagris gallonarragansetti* to 'take a walk', 'up the plank', as it were. It became apparent they did not get the idea, or found the idea repugnant, or were too indisposed by fright brought on by a glowing Cyclopean eye which caused more alarm than the illumination (lighting of the way) the torchbearer had imagined. Some of this conjecture is necessarily borrowed from hind-sight. If I had it to do all over again.....

While these fowl appeared agitated indeed, it was not unexpected they would be so, but relying on a persistent prodding, accomplished with the fishnet handle poking through the holes in the enclosure, I had expected to succeed finally in persuading them to comply with my wishes - and, indeed, one did respond to the urgency, however, not without the characteristic fluttering and darting about; as a matter of fact, all were darting and flapping in a state of agitation - Whoops! - somehow one escapes the enclosure; one of the smallish birds - a hen. Tally Ho!; with flashlight and fishnet in hand (one in each), I rushed to capture this licketty-splitting two-legger. Wise in the ways of catching turkeys, since I had listened well to the farmer (and queried him at length on the procedure, No?). The beast galloped towards the fence at the edge of the

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forest - Ah- Hah! - surely she'll be captured in a trice. Now, 'tis against the fence made of vertical cedar slats (about three inches wide, rough-split, shake thickness, obtained from beach logs); Again - Hah! - it shoves its head and neck between a slat and a tree (acting as a post) - I'll simply grab it - My God! (*My What?*) - in a mad thrust, bending the limber slat, the damned bird escapes therethrough. HOI!, now I must negotiate the fence, all the while keeping the flashlight upon the bird hot-footing it to freedom; all somehow accomplished, but barely - with a wild pursuit to follow - such wild pursuit!.

For a few minutes the chase scene is all straightforward, rather a clambering scene, through the woods, over logs, through brambles, down rocky slopes, plunging into this declivity and that, not stopping to ascertain the proper footing, probably looking like a bronco rider with all the sudden graceless jolts experienced on the uneven terrain. Suddenly! I lose sight and sound of the wily creature, itself the color of the forest floor. I listened intently, breathing hard; I searched with the light; it must be near - There!, There 'tis! - the chase is renewed. I gain, finally driving the creature between a rock and log; I raise the net in one hand, bringing it down upon the beast; it struggles and struggles, finally beating and flapping its way free as I'm holding the net with only one hand supplying insufficient leverage, the flashlight in the other - away it goes over the log - disappearing again. By this time I'm some distance from the fence, in the, now, dark wood, with only the flashlight for illumination. Again I listen and search; again believing the bird to be near - this time - nothing. Alas!, one less turkey repast in the making. Exeunt. I stumbled my way back to the fence; then to the remaining turkeys.

And, Lo!, there's another bird outside the enclosure lying alongside the fence, in the company of the others still outside the hutch (but inside their fence). When the creature perceives the light, it begins to run hither and thither towards the fence on the other side of the pasture, with the caretaker in hot pursuit, once again driving the bird against the fence, lunging for the beast, a large cock; it eludes capture, running in another direction, away from the fence towards the barn in the middle of the pasture. By this time darkness has virtually devoured the light. The pursuit suddenly ends, as the turkey disappears behind a vehicle situated beneath a lean-to adjoining the barn. Approaching the hidden side of the vehicle, I altered my pace to a slow stealth, light and with net in hand. Ha! There 'Tis!, lying still, crouched upon the ground, feigning hiddenness; simultaneously, without hesitation, I dropped on all fours, letting fall the flashlight, grasping the net with both hands, snaring the fowl beast with the net, as it begins struggling and flapping wildly - but I lay upon the whole wriggling mass, grasping the bird with both hands through the net and entwined therein - HE WILL NOT BE FREE!!! I then transported the bundle of bird, net and feathers, holding the whole in a 'death-grip', to the

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hutch, discharging said bird therein through the outside doorway. Tally = two inside the coop, five outside, in the enclosure, and one off stage.

Return to battle. This time I crawled inside the enclosure, getting about in a squatting position. Once again, with prod and flashlight I began to persuade the birds up the narrow sloping ramp, through the small opening. Amidst much commotion of fluttering and grabbing hands-full of feathers I managed to persuade, first one, then in the crouching, stooping position, waddling about like a duck under the three-foot headroom, as another is crawling, slipping, clawing, flapping its way inside, two others go 'bananas', and one disappears behind me; and still more hands-full of feathers as I force another banana up the ramp inside, and still another. This is really not a lesson in mathematics, but there are now six of eight inside the coop at this point in the narrative. I turned around to seek out the one who disappeared behind me - Nowhere to be seen!. No doubt it had flapped, clambered and clawed its way out; the netting had been pulled down exposing large openings in the cattle fence through which the alarmed beast, the largest hen, easily could have escaped.

The darkness now has fully engorged the light. I scanned everywhere with the flashlight - not a sign - not a sound. I criss-crossed the bog, the swamp, and the pasture, slowly covering all the ground in the vicinity of the enclosure, fanning out from there. I had imagined the bird squatting somewhere in the tall grass, playing hide and seek. Many times I traversed the pasture without flushing the beast.

Enough!!!. Six down - two to go - full of self-recrimination for having dallied down the road, partaking of homemade wine and Island conviviality. Still there was hope on the morrow, in the daylight, that is, if the raccoons did not succeed in discovering them first.

AYE!!, Dumb animals!! ?? Kindness ?? !!

I eagerly awaited the next morning in order to continue my pursuit and capture of the wily beast I believed to be somewhere in the pasture, one success having given me some encouragement. And sure enough, there 'twas, outside the turkey house gobbling away. Heh!, she's a wily one; upon catching sight of me she takes flight, running towards the woods as fast as her legs would propel her, in the same manner as the first one. I could not head her off to keep her in the pasture; as a consequence, she is driven against the vertically picketed cedar fence; with fishnet in both hands I swing the netting to surround the beast - SHIT!! (*Blistering Blue Barnacles!!*) - the netting becomes enmeshed in some loose barbed wire remaining from an old fence, becoming completely tangled. Unable to free the net, the bird still attempting to get through an opening in the slats, its head and neck between a pair, its legs digging in for all they are worth, attempted to propel the too-large body through the too-small opening. I grasped for the body of the bird - obtaining a hold -

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Suddenly!, in its plunging and digging, as though it was a football player in 'red-dog' mode, - CRACK! - a slat snaps - and I'm left with a handful of feathers as the beast gains its freedom through the fence - once again (*B. B. Barnacles*). I lose the bird, the net is tangled; something isn't proceeding according to the script.

I ambled off to the 'can' to meditate (a two-holer situated on the edge of the pasture with its doorway facing towards the forest). Then I try again, climbing the knoll in the woods behind the pasture fence. I hear the hen clucking away (it doesn't sound much like 'turk!, turk!, turk!', although it sounds more like 'turk!' than 'gobble!'). I see her, engaging her in pursuit, attempting to steer her towards the pasture. Being cagey, she looks for an opportunity to get around me, but eventually I succeed in driving her between the knoll and the fence. I lose track of her in the bramble and jumble of limbs of recently fallen (felled by man) coniferous trees. Once again, a bird seems to play dead - not a sound. I gave up again, going off to imbibe some coffee and tend my other chores.

As time passes I hear her again, in the bush. I went to investigate with weapon in hand. My back is 'killing me', so I sit on a stump in the woods waiting for some sight or sound. Ah! - did I see a movement in the bramble along the fence? I wait, intently staring towards that furtive place - sure enough!, there 'tis again. I deliberated for a bit; there's no coaxing it in the dense brush; finally issuing myself an ultimatum 'nothing ventured, nothing proverbial'. Away we go - my objective to drive her against the fence, hoping she would escape through it, in the other direction this time, into the pasture where I could have a less encumbered run at her. It seemed this would be the case as she put her head between several pairs of slats, only, as luck would have it, there was not one single hole in the fence; a standoff!. If I moved in too close she would get around me; being in the bush I was very restricted in my movements; the terrain was definitely in her favor.

The challenge to my venturesomeness still remained; my back was tired; a standoff was only a sure route to frustration, so I chanced it, chasing the beast along the fence still hoping for a hole; finally, as expected, she darted away from the fence into the dense brush, only to play dead again. I couldn't flush her out with poking, and probing into the bramble and bush. It was raining; I yielded the field of battle to the unvanquished nothing gained'.

It was now midday; it had been raining heavily for two hours; the bird ought be soaked to its pinfeathers, wishing it was back in jail, eating turkey starter, enjoying the conviviality of her friends in their clean, dry quarters. What price Freedom!?

I thought I would try again, but was found counseling myself "I've made a sterling effort". I began a new approach: in the 'recognition scene' I said unto myself, "I owe thee farmer, for two of thy birds, 'tis a plain and simple truth; I tarried long, when homeward should have I wended.

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Aye!, and unto thy beasts I ought not have tendered kindly ministrations". And still more unto myself to soliloquize, "I could try once again to espy the beast, carrying a shotgun, shoot the damned thing, stash it in a freezer, at least salvaging something".

No doubt the birds (in case you had forgotten there are two birds on the loose) will die of starvation or pneumonia if the coons, dogs or humans don't get them first - and if they survive - Imagine!, range-fed turkeys!. I had thought of sponsoring the first Island 'Real' Turkey Shoot (every year the Island holds an imaginary Turkey Shoot, at least that's what they call it, conducted in the school-yard, using Bull's Eyes...targets...). At least the farmer might appreciate the humor of a real turkey shoot.

Alas! my back had taken a 'turn for the worse' through this turkey-chasing - NEVER AGAIN - I'll shoot 'em!!!.

"Turkey or not to turkey....."

I had begun to inform the other islanders of my turkey fortunes, mostly to humor myself and to seek some form of comforting gestures or expiation of my deeds. Some offered to help corral and capture the beast, the next time it appeared (I had given up on the first bird, having neither heard nor seen it since the night of its departure). Even this didn't help, for upon the first occasion that I availed myself of this assistance, the wily hen flew-up thirty feet into the trees, threatening to fly even deeper into the woods. A shooting seemed the simplest way to recover some of the apparent loss. So Karl said he would come by one day to shoot the bird, which I had managed to keep nearby, on the wooded side of the fence, enticing it with scatterings of turkey feed, cast thereabouts, which the ravens also found to their liking. However, when the bird caught sight of me, it would immediately 'skeeedaddle' into the forest. I did not pursue this cagey beast any longer.

It had rained heavily, turning the whole pasture into a bog. Karl never did come by. A couple of times the bird flew into the pasture to be near its companions, taking flight as soon as I appeared. One day it even ventured as far as the barn to be under the cover of the sheep's lean-to where the other barnyard fowl congregated during the inclement weather - again lickety-splitting at the sight of me.

As pertains to the earlier allusion, I had given up on the first escapee, never seeing feather nor hide of her. Finally, one day, two weeks after the episodic or epic jailbreak, the second escapee once again seemed challenge for my determination, despite my earlier resolve of NEVER AGAIN. The condition of my back, which now seemed reasonably 'stable' made it possible to decide, especially since the bird boldly, affrontingly, haunted the very step to her own house communicating with her brethren, in broad daylight, perhaps preaching insurrection. It was raining ducks, geese, chickens, cats, dogs, the whole cast of Noah's characters, a swelter of deluge; a most disheartening day for man and beast; a cold miserably boggywet, wherein not a creature alive could do but suffer. It was upon

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this very occasion, this very day, in late afternoon, that I staged my latest assault.

Coolly and collectedly, I donned my yellows, pulling on a pair of the farmer's gumboots, covering my head with the sou'wester, prepared for the rain-infested siege, and the immortal murk, if there was any existent. Thus armed, with fishnet and all kinds of determination I set out to accomplish my task. Once again, almost immediately, the turkey took flight - on the wing - to the tree tops. Undeterred, or unruffled, as one might say, I cast stones at her, causing her much discomfort, uncertainty and loss of balance; she could do naught else but leave her perch - and 'twas so, she took flight in the direction of the open pasture, my intended strategy, now paying dividends. A 'merry chase ensued' (over hill and dale)...er... over stream and bog. My only hope of capturing her resided in her not taking to wing; and indeed the creature hot-footed herself towards the pasture fence, which, with, but a few flaps of her wings, she could have unceremoniously cleared to unknown freedoms; instead she sought an opening through some horizontal rails (instead of the predominantly vertical slats she had broken before in her previous thrusts towards freedom), making a poor choice in her initial selection of spaces, allowing me sufficient time to cast my net, landing upon the beast with net and all fours in a slurry of yellows, grass, leaves, feathers and mud!

ELATED WAS I!!!

Victory!!

A Final Tally and Clarification.

And surely the bird must have been relieved to quit the wintry weather and to be somewhat cheered in rejoining its brethren. It was necessary to catch this bird in order to redeem myself in the eyes of the Islanders who viewed me as one who was outsmarted by a 'turkey', of whose intelligence they held a very low opinion.

If you have been unable to follow the actual count of the number of birds, this narration not intended as a math exercise, herewith I attempt a recapitulation; the turkey scene began with eight birds, four larger, of an older batch, and four smaller, of a later batch.

Three birds had escaped, one hen, perhaps the smallest, from the younger batch, lost to her freedom in paradise, hardships unknown.

The second to escape was a large cock from the older batch, it being captured soon after its escape. The third was the largest hen, also from the older batch. Her freedom lasted two weeks. She was returned to the hutch to preach insurrection or the pros and cons of freedom; however I was unable to detect any plots to overthrow the regime.

The fishnet suffered its demise in the last capture having broken off at the base of the handle where it begins to form the loop upon which is strung the netting; in landing upon all fours, it was my intent to subdue the bird - without finesse.

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I delivered to the farmer seven birds which most likely were sufficient to supply *husbandlie fare* for his neighbors and himself during the forthcoming yuletide celebrations...as a matter of fact, one potential customer requested two birds, a number the farmer felt he could supply.

In the end, the farmer did confess or reveal a more involved chasing of turkeys which required both he and his Mrs. in securing their capture. His earlier casual statements to me did not do justice to the final revelation. In some small part I felt only slightly deceived by the farmer, thereby shedding some minute portion of my guilt - as adequate recompense for so small a deception.

It is possible there could be a sequel to this epic; a third experience might reveal more fully what I had learned from the first two; I may also become embroiled in a defense of my ornithologicals, zoologicals, historicals and mythologicals.

Ex eunt.