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A drawing of *Podiceps cristatus* once in the possession of Rembertus Dodonaeus

(with plate 1)

BY

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Through the kindness of Prof. Dr I. Q. van Regteren Altena I could study a collection of drawings, probably once in the possession of Plantijn. It contains first of all some pen-pictures in sepia, which are clearly the originals of some of the wood-blocks first used for some new figures in the edition of 1608 of the: „Herbarius oft Cruydt-boeck” of Rembertus Dodonaeus, printed in the „Plantijnsche Druckerij van François van Ravellingen tot Leyden”. Comparing the drawings with the figures in the book, it is at once clear, that the first are the originals. The last are less natural, comprimated to fit in the smaller size of the block and yet, though of course giving a reflected image of the drawing, they show all the details of the last.

Besides the drawings of plants, the collection contained some pictures of animals. As far as could be eruated these were never printed. Important in this connection however, is the following quotation from: Max Rooses, Christophe Plantin, imprimeur anversoï, 2me édition, Anvers 1896, p. 325: „Plantin qui avait retrouvé Dodoens en Hollande y renoua avec lui les liens d’une ancienne amitié. Au moment du décès du savant botaniste, l’imprimeur rappelle, dans une de ses lettres, l’affection qui les unissait et dit que Dodoens à la fin de sa vie avait commencé une description des poissons et des oiseaux”. The same book p. 345—354 gives more details of Plantyn’s life in Leyden, where he lived from 1583 to 1585.

From the biography of Dodonaeus (P. J. van Meerbeeck, Recherches historiques et critiques sur la vie et les ouvrages de Rembert Dodoens. Mâlines, 1841, p. 59) we learn that Dodoens was appointed professor of medicine in Leyden in 1582, where he died the 10th of March 1585. In 1584 Plantijn edited a reprint of Dodoens’ astronomical work: De Sphaera, sive de astronomiae et geographiae prin-

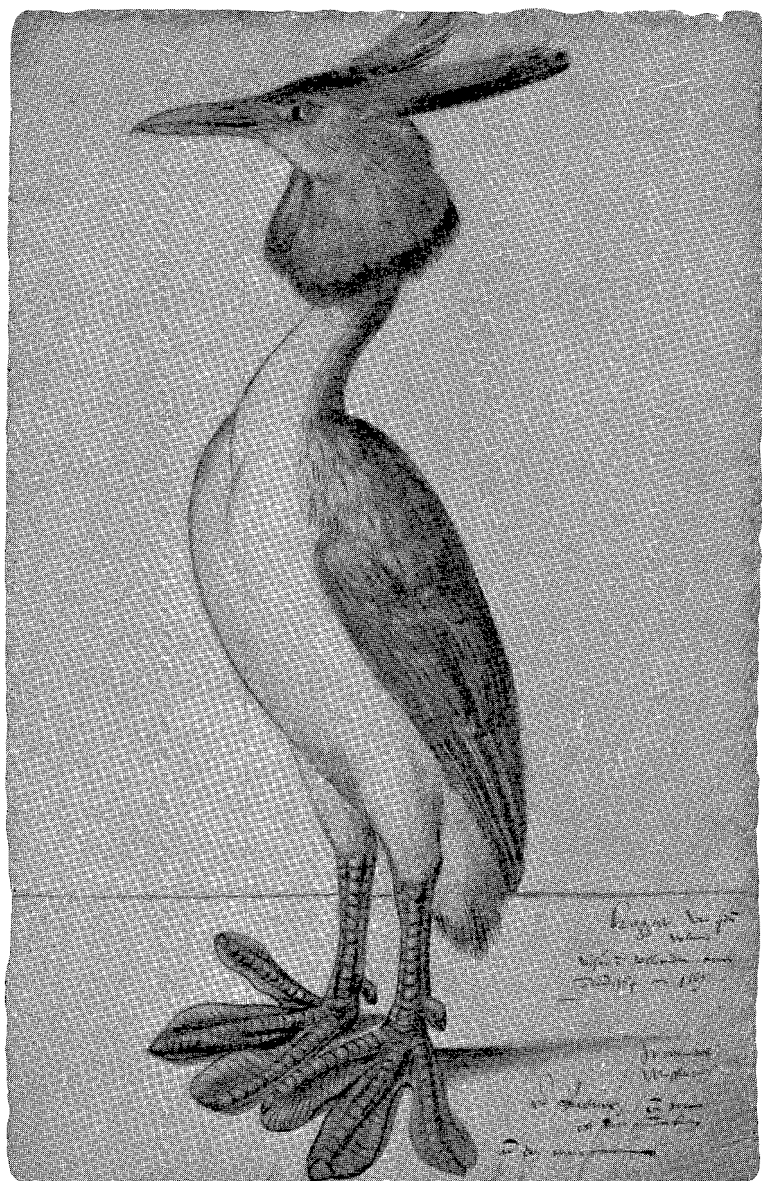
cipis cosmographica Isagoge. In the same year the second edition of his: *Medicinalium Observationum exempla rara*, appeared at Plantyn's office. According to van Meerbeeck he was preparing the second edition of his „Histoire des plantes” (sic) when he died.

Some of our drawings are dated, e.g.: Schouwen, 1½ mile from Zierikzee, Aug. 18th 1584; Holland 1564 or 1565; July 25th 1584; caught behind England Oct. 13th 1583, the same species seen in Leyden Dec. 19th 1584; Katwijk Sept. 6th 1581, Scheveningen Nov. 16th 1566. It is obvious from these dates that D o d o n a e u s bought the pictures (in 1581 and 1566 he was not in Holland) at least partly from others, some others are related to the botanical drawings and were perhaps made under his supervision. Three drawings were executed in sepia and in madder-red. One, already described by Dr A. B. van De inse in: *Archief van het Zeeuwsch Genootschap* 1940 p. 1—8, represents a bottle-nosed whale: *Hyperoodon rostratus*, it is dated Schouwen 1584 Aug. 18th. The second pictures a moonfish, *Mola mola*, caught behind England and brought to Zierikzee, Oct. XIVth 1583. The third picture of the lesser grey Mullet, *Mugil chelo* of *M. ramada* is not dated. On the moonfish picture D o d o n a e u s has added: „Anno 1584 Decembris 19 visus Leydae. Piscis planus, Rondelet f. 425. Longus fuit Leydae visus 3½ fere et latus....? duos, crassus fere unum”. These measures do not conform to those given in a cartouche by the painter, so in Leiden D o d o n a e u s saw another specimen. We may imagine that the animal was shown for money in different towns, the owner illustrating his show with some pictures, that D o d o n a e u s saw it in Leyden and bought the three said drawings from the owner, who had acquired them in Zeeland.

The handwriting of D o d o n a e u s was easily identified through the kind help of Dr H u n g e r, who compared it with me with some of his letters. It is very characteristic and left no doubt that the annotations made on several of the drawings were made by D o d o n a e u s himself.

The water-marks and the fact that the irregularities of the cutted sides exactly fit into each other, make it possible to conclude that some of the papers originally formed one large sized sheet. As some of these represent the plants, it may be induced that these drawings were specially made for D o d o n a e u s. The water-marks point to the same dates as written on the drawings (cf. M. B r i q u e t, *Les filigraines*. Paris 1907).

Three drawings are beautifully executed aquarels, while the rest are merely pen-drawings in sepia. Curiously these three are made on paper with nearly the same watermark: a crowned eagle holding a scutcheon with three oblique bars and signed with the letters WR. One of these drawings represents the greater Weever (*Trachinus draco*), another the Gwyniad (*Coregonus oxyrhynchus*), while the third is the picture of a bird: the great crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*). The last is here reproduced as a curious specimen of old Dutch ornithology. The drawing has been beautifully executed, the mistakes are mostly due to the stuffed bird, that has served as the model. The animal is, quite unnaturally, standing high on the feet, which are unproportionally large. The collar is reddish, the crest



Coloured drawing of *Podiceps cristatus* in the possession of Prof. I. Q. van Regteren Altena, with notes in the handwriting of Dodonaëus, about 1565.

black, other colours used are: grey, white, brownish yellow and light red. The paper-sheet, here entirely reproduced, is 322 mm long and 209 mm broad.

In the handwriting of *Dodonaeus* the following notes have been added: „Hagger ut qdū (quidam)/ volunt/ visus ī (in) Hollandia circum/ annum 1564 aut 1565/ Heremides/ Mosserus (or Mosservies)/ vide (?) Riever (Kiever,?)/; ende dit/ es dat manneken/ van den Meercaut”.

It has not been possible, though many people were so kind to help me, to decipher it to the last word, the words Riever, Heremides and Mosserus could not be interpreted in a satisfactory way. Prof. Swaen informed me that Hagger was the name used for a falcon caught after having moulted in the wild state. So the „quidam” from whom *Dodonaeus* had his information were quite wrong and *Dodonaeus* was right in saying with some doubt: „ut quidam volunt”, „as some people will have it”. It seems curious, that the animal was not more commonly known in Holland, since it is rather common nowadays. Perhaps *Dodonaeus* only later on met with people who knew the animal better and told him that it was „dat manneken van den meercaut”, i.e. „and this is the male of the coot”, though of course this is also wrong. Whether „Riever” in this last case was his informant is not clear, I have sought in vain for an author of this name or one that looks like it. Neither was it possible to find the two other words, possibly reading Heremides and Mosserus. (Van Maerlant in „Der Naturen Bloeme” book III, line 2583, speaks of the Cormorant as Morper, while Albertus Magnus in „De Animalibus” calls this bird Morfer. There could be some relationship with Mosserus, for *Dodonaeus* clearly did not know the Grebe and easily might confound it with the Cormorant). Prof. Stresemann advised me to look in: H. Suolahti, Die deutschen Vogelnamen, in: Turner, De Avibus (1544, reprint 1823) and in Belon, L'histoire de la Nature des Oiseaux, Paris 1555. But none of these yielded any information. The grebes figured by Adriaan Collaert, who lived about 1520 to 1567, in his: Avium vivae et artificiosissime icones, make us think of our animal, but the difference is too great to suppose any relationship.

I have to thank Mr Oldewelt, Dr van Hoboken and Miss van Eeghen of the Amsterdam Archives, Dr Hulshoff, Dr Breuning and Dr Redeke of the University Library in Utrecht for their kind help in deciphering the notes of *Dodonaeus*.