

A LIFE of TRAVELS

by C. S. RAFINESQUE

*being a verbatim and literatim reprint of the original and only edition
(Philadelphia, 1836)*

Foreword by

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CONSTANTINE SAMUEL RAFINESQUE died in Philadelphia September 18, 1840, in straightened circumstances, and a hundred years after his death many of the taxonomic problems that he originated in his hectic career as an author and as a publisher, still remain unsolved. Because of his unbridled tendency to propose and publish new genera and new species he had thoroughly alienated his contemporaries, and among botanists this alienation has persisted until the present time. G. BROWN GOODE'S characterization of RAFINESQUE in 1895 is very much to the point, in speaking of his brilliant intellect, eccentric character and unhappy fate; who, as an individual, at an early date developed a roving character of mind which soon became a part of his nature and led him into mental vagabondage; with a precocious mind, unguided and undisciplined, wandering at will over the entire field of books and nature; and in whom the fatal tendency to "scatter" was already apparent before he left Palermo in 1815 for the United States, thus foreshadowing all the weaknesses of his subsequent career.

The conservative taxonomist even today sees little in what RAFINESQUE published that is worthy of perpetuation, and generally speaking, if any modern taxonomist even suggests the adoption of a RAFINESQUE name on the basis of priority of publication, the usual reaction is immediately to recommend that the offending name be placed in the category of *nomina generica rejicienda* so as not to interfere with the continued use of a later but currently used name.

One of the difficulties in connection with RAFINESQUE'S work is that many of his widely scattered publications are available only in a few of our larger libraries, and that copies of them are now utterly unattainable. Moreover, no bibliographer interested in listing new technical names has ever examined all of his published works, the result being that perhaps as many as 2400 generic names and binomials still remain that are not included in our standard indices. Work on preparing a comprehensive *Index Rafinesquianus* is being prosecuted as rapidly as possible, although it is not anticipated that it will be received with much enthusiasm by the ultra-conservative botanists, once completed and published. A few of RAFINESQUE'S important works, basic to the classification of fishes and bivalves have been re-issued in facsimile form, and a few of his shorter botanical papers have likewise been reproduced, but even some of these are now difficult to secure. In 1942 and 1943 facsimile editions of two of his larger botanical volumes were issued by the modern lithoprint process, and copies of these may now be obtained from the Arnold Arboretum; these are the *Sylva Telluriana* (1838) and the *Autikon Botanikon* (1840), as they are among the rarest of RAFINESQUE'S works. His *New Flora of North America*, 4 volumes (1836-1838), and his *Flora Telluriana*, 4 volumes (1836-38), are also worthy of being reproduced, if for no other reason that botanists everywhere may have access to their contents. Of these the *Flora Telluriana*, the *Sylva Telluriana*, and the *Autikon Botanikon*, literally touch the floras of all parts of the world.

RAFINESQUE'S *Life of Travels*, which appeared in 1836, now becomes generally available through its reproduction on the following pages. This is not a literary masterpiece in the sense that portions of BARTRAM'S *Travels* are of distinct literary value, but is rather a matter of fact, unvar-

A
LIFE OF TRAVELS

AND

RESEARCHES

IN NORTH AMERICA AND SOUTH EUROPE,

OR

OUTLINES

OF

The Life, Travels and Researches

OF

C. S. RAFINESQUE, A. M. Ph. D.

Professor of historical and natural sciences, member of many learned Societies in Europe and America, author of many works, &c.

CONTAINING

His travels in NORTH AMERICA and the SOUTH of EUROPE; the Atlantic Ocean, Mediterranean, Sicily, Azores, &c. from 1802 to 1835—with sketches of his scientific and historical researches, &c.

*Un voyageur dès le berceau,
Je le serais jusqu' au tombeau*

PHILADELPHIA

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR,

BY F. TURNER, NO. 367, MARKET STREET.

1836.

PRICE SEVENTY-FIVE CENTS.

nished tale of many of the author's experiences and impressions from early youth until within five years of his death. He gives in considerable detail an account of his travels and explorations in Sicily and in various parts of the United States, his own autobiographical sketch, providing us a picture of his ambitions and of his accomplishments, at least as they appeared to him. He travelled very widely in the eastern United States, from New England to Virginia, and twice as far west as Kentucky. Incidentally he gives us some picture of life in these United States as he observed it in the regions that he visited, although such glimpses are minor and merely incidental. He did have a very wide field of acquaintances and carried on an extensive correspondence with botanists, zoologists, and other scientists in various parts of the country, as well as with those in Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, France, and Great Britain.

While his personal interests were remarkably wide, covering most fields of descriptive biology, he delved into many other subjects, some as far afield from his biological interests as history, archeology, comparative philology, and finance. His conclusions in various fields were not always sound, and about every disparaging adjective in the English language has been applied to him by this or that author. And yet, ASA GRAY, one of his severest critics, in reviewing his botanical work in 1841, the year after RAFINESQUE's death, states: "It is indeed a subject of regret, that the courtesy that prevails among botanists of the present day (who are careful to adopt the names proposed by those who even suggest a new genus) was not more usual with us some twenty years ago. Many of RAFINESQUE's names should have been adopted; some as a matter of courtesy, and others in accordance with strict rules."

One botanist, writing in 1907 regarding RAFINESQUE's ideas of species states that: "In his crazy notions regarding the multiplicity of species, RAFINESQUE has no equals, a few weakling imitators, and only one real successor," inferring, I suppose, that RAFINESQUE was insane. I have seen no indication of what one might interpret as indicating insanity in any of RAFINESQUE's published writings; I have seen plenty of evidence that his judgment was not always good—but this latter statement could equally well be levelled at literally hundreds of botanists. In spite of RAFINESQUE's idiosyncracies, in spite of his distinctly erratic work, and in spite of the numerous errors that he made, which, I am sure, can largely be charged to lack of good judgement, or to too rapid work, we should not forget that as early as 1832 he forecast the general principles of organic evolution in his published statement: "The truth is that Species and perhaps Genera also, are forming in organized beings by gradual deviations of shapes, forms and organs, taking place in the lapse of time. There is a tendency to deviations and mutations through plants and animals by gradual steps at remote irregular periods. This is a part of the great universal law of PERPETUAL MUTABILITY in every thing." This, in 1832, was, of course, rank heresy, and anybody who published such a statement might readily be adjudged at least mildly insane. I quote from JOHN KIERAN's "One Small Voice" who recently had occasion to discuss briefly the strange career of RAFINESQUE: "How close did he come to absolute genius? How far was



There exist two or three (probably more) portraits of RAFINESQUE. The one of 1810, published as a frontispiece to RAFINESQUE's *Analyse de la Nature* (1815) is best known. We reproduce it on plate 5. It has often been reproduced (*e.g.* in R. E. CALL's 1899 reprint ed. of the *Ichthyologia ohioensis*, in FITZPATRICK's RAFINESQUE, etc.) and has also been copied for other portraits, *e.g.* for the engraving reproduced above, with kind permission of the owner, Mrs. ROY ARTHUR HUNT of Pittsburgh, Pa. This is a rare print, according to Dr. FITZPATRICK (*in litt.*) the same (without the pedestal, autograph signature and engraver's initials) as the wood cut illustration in T. L. CHASE's article on RAFINESQUE in *Potter's American Monthly* 6:97 (1876). For additional information on portraits of RAFINESQUE see FITZPATRICK 1911: RAFINESQUE, A Sketch of his Life with Bibliography, p. 240/41. A doubtful painting by JOUETT has been reproduced in CALL's 'Life. . .'. — On plate we now reproduce a miniature of RAFINESQUE which has not been published before in a biological-historical publication.

The *Twentieth Century Biographical Dictionary of Notable Americans*, edited by ROSSITER JOHNSON and JOHN HOWARD BROWN, vol. 9, published in Boston 1904, pages unnumbered but material alphabetical, under RAFINESQUE, says among other things the following: "He was awarded a gold medal by the French Geological Society, on which was imprinted his only known portrait." This is of course not correct. Moreover the medal referred to shows Pallas Athene (and not RAFINESQUE), for centuries a symbol of wisdom and the emblem of many scientific societies.

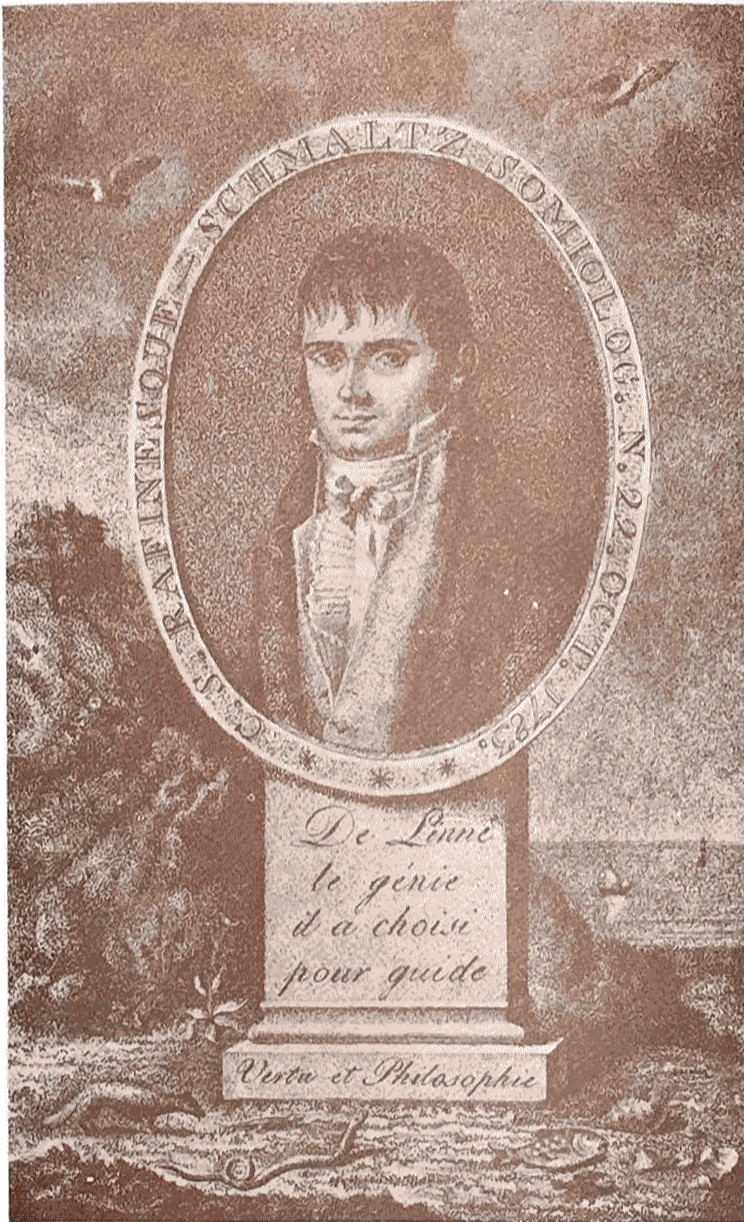
he from partial insanity? His eccentricities fell in with JOHN DRYDEN's lines:

'Great wits are sure to madness near allied
And thin partitions do their bounds divide.'

In spite of RAFINESQUE's widely diverse interests (for he published voluminously, his bibliography now containing over 900 titles literally "on most subjects under the sun"), he was first and foremost a botanist, and it is in this field that he published most, and perhaps also in this field that he raised by far the most numerous problems for his successors to solve as best they may. As one reads his *Life of Travels*, one will note that over and over again the use of such phrases as these: "I collected many rare and new plants at the falls of the Potomak"; on his return to Sicily, on landing in Italy, south of Leghorn, where "I collected many fine plants, even new ones"; in Sicily the mountains "afforded me a rich harvest of rare plants"; on a trip to the Catskill Mountains he brought back "a large collection of new and rare plants"; and the barrens of Kentucky which were "full of rare and new plants"; and he constantly speaks of his numerous correspondents who "sent him many rare plants."

His income after his return to the United States in 1815, never very large, was freely utilized to cover the cost of his long journeys of exploration and to cover the cost of publishing his numerous works, particularly in the decade between 1830 and 1840. From his own statements he had amassed an herbarium in excess of 40,000 specimens after 1815, for all of his natural history collections, library, drawings, and manuscripts assembled up to that date, were lost in his disastrous shipwreck on Race Rocks, off Fisher's Island, near New London, Connecticut, November 2, 1815. I suspect that at the time of RAFINESQUE's death in 1840 his herbarium was not only the largest private one in the United States, but it may have been even larger than any of the then existing institutional herbaria, which were very few, perhaps even confined to a single one in Philadelphia.

In spite of RAFINESQUE's idiosyncracies, in spite of his careless work, in spite of his constant and often caustic criticism of his associates, much that he accomplished was distinctly worth while. With little personal knowledge of systematic zoology, I judge that his work on the classification of our fresh water fishes and bivalves is basic to the ichthyology and conchology of eastern North America; certainly a very much higher percentage of his conclusions in botany manifestly should have been accepted than has been the case. His was the opportunity to become one of the outstanding North American botanists of his time in association with MICHAUX, PURSH, ELLIOTT, NUTTALL, TORREY, and even the then young ASA GRAY, but he tried to do too much, to cover too much ground, and in the end, in spite of his claims that the future would render unto him his just desserts, posterity has been as unappreciative of the general nature of his taxonomic work in botany as were his contemporaries. And yet, in reference to RAFINESQUE, I not only endorse ASA GRAY's statement of 1841, quoted above, but could only wish that the average botanist would admit that some of the work that RAFINESQUE did was of distinctly high order, accept the good, reject the bad, and not arbitrarily reject about everything that



RAFINESQUE, act. 27, frontispiece from "Analyse de la Nature". — "The picture is a very interesting one in that it so well shows some of the peculiar features thus early developing in the mental life of the naturalist. The wide range which his studies and his activities already had assumed is indicated by the ornamentation of the plate. Modelling his work after Linnæus he sought to establish it on probity and philosophy. They constitute the foundation stones of the character which he hoped to build. The birds of the air, the animals and plants of the fields, the fishes and mollusks of the waters, are all included in the illustration as reminders of the diverse directions in which his energies had been expended. He was a merchant, and the son of a merchant; he had been a traveller; and so, in the offing, there appears a ship under full sail. A happy conceit this, if we only pardon the bit of personal vanity which it implies." (CALL 1895, Life and Writings of RAFINESQUE, p. 68).



Enamel miniature of RAFINESQUE (diameter $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches) by William Birch (American, 1755-1834), in a blue coat and white stock. This belonged successively to Jacob Schieffelin, Effingham Schieffelin, Hiram Burlingham and Erskine Hewitt (†1938). It was sold in 1938 (cf. Parke-Burnet Galleries Cat., Oct. 18/22, 1938) to Transylvania College. We are under obligation to Mr. Judd for kindly drawing our attention to this portrait, which has not been reproduced before in a biological-historical publication, and to Mrs. Charles F. Norton, Librarian Emeritus of Transylvania College, for the above information about it.

RAFINESQUE published as utterly hopeless. And with this expression of personal opinion I repeat the quotation from OVID with which I closed one of my published papers on RAFINESQUE (1): "Pascitur in vivis labor. Post fata quiescit, cum suus ex merito quemque tuetur honos."

Within the past two or three decades there has been a distinct recrudescence of interest in RAFINESQUE and in his accomplishments. With this development, and with the re-publication of selected RAFINESQUE works, of which this reproduction of his *Life of Travels* is an example, once his works do become available to a wider circle of working biologists, perhaps we may approach a truer evaluation of what he actually accomplished. Unless the investigator has the opportunity of actually examining RAFINESQUE's publications he is scarcely in a position to pass judgment on what he proposed, and outside of a very few of our older institutions most of RAFINESQUE's widely scattered technical papers and independently published volumes are not available, and they are even more rare in European than in American libraries.

For more detailed information regarding the career of RAFINESQUE and his accomplishments the reader should consult CALL, R. E., *The Life and Writings of RAFINESQUE* i-xii, 1-227, illus., 1895, and FITZPATRICK, T. J., *RAFINESQUE, A Sketch of his Life with Bibliography* 1-238, illus., 1914. The very detailed bibliography in the latter work lists 941 items covering rather thoroughly the published books and papers of RAFINESQUE with data regarding his unpublished manuscripts, while the supplementary *Bibliotheca Rafinesquiana* lists 134 titles containing data regarding RAFINESQUE published by others.

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(1). MERRILL, E. D., *RAFINESQUE's Publications from the Standpoint of World Botany* (Proc. Am. Philos. Soc. 87: 110-119, 1943); *see also* MERRILL, E. D., *A Generally Overlooked RAFINESQUE Paper* (op. cit. 86: 72-90, 1942); *An Index to RAFINESQUE's Published Technical Names for the Cellular Cryptogams* (Farlowia 1: 245-26, 1943); *New Names for Ferns and Fern Allies Proposed by C. S. RAFINESQUE, 1806-1938* (Am. Fern Jour. 33: 41-65; 97-105, 1943).