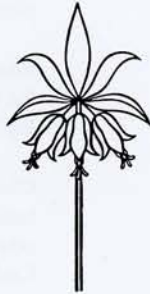


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Editor	Robert W. Kiger
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Conrad Gessner to Leonhart Fuchs, October 18, 1556

John L. Heller and Frederick G. Meyer

"I WAS VERY GLAD to learn from your letter, most learned Fuchs, that you are well and that your *Stirpium Historia* is nearly ready for publication in three volumes. Not so pleasing, however, was the thought that you are frightening me away from the same field of investigation." Thus begins a letter in good colloquial Latin, the first draft of which was brought to our attention in July of 1976 on a visit to the Bibliothek Zentrum of Zürich in search of materials bearing on the life and works of Leonhart Fuchs (1501-1566), the famed professor of medicine at Tübingen since 1535. We hope that a facsimile reprint can soon be brought out of the first edition (1542) of his great illustrated herbal *De historia stirpium Commentarii insignes*, published in folio at Basel by Michael Isengrin and dedicated to Joachim II (1505-1571), Margrave of Brandenburg and an Elector of the Empire, who had embraced protestantism in 1539.

Unfortunately we do not know exactly what the elderly and often aggressive Fuchs had requested of the much younger Gessner, then in his forty-first year and busily engaged with the fourth volume (on fish) of his encyclopaedic *Historia animalium*. It is not likely that Fuchs was urging Gessner to give up his interest in investigating plants and surrender all his materials. Probably he was only asking for a limited degree of help — if Gessner had any original observations he might be willing to contribute — and was more assertive about his own achieve-

ments to date. What we do know is that Fuchs did not succeed in his efforts to find sponsors for his new three-volume work with some 1,563 figures, the copy for which, still unpublished, has been found at Vienna in the Nationalbibliothek (see K. Ganzinger, *Sudhoffs Arch. Gesch. Med.* 43: 213-224, 1959).

Gessner's letter, rather extended and rambling in the effort not to offend Fuchs but win his good will, begins with a polite refusal of any immediate help. To some general principles (*e.g.*, that the perfect catalogue of all living plants will require accurate observations from many people in different parts of the world and will not soon be achieved) he adds the practical difficulty that his own abundant notes are not completely written out and could hardly be of use to anybody except himself. "And I have more notes in my head, perhaps, than on slips of paper. For from my youth onward botany has been my chief pleasure, which I will not lay aside except with my life. Do you, I beg, let me keep my freedom and my dearest delight."

But for the future, the always obliging Gessner offers two possible modes of collaboration. If he should see Fuchs' work before it is published, he promises to give his candid advice on any points that need emendation — and Fuchs could do the same for his work on plants, if ever it nears completion. And he comments at length on his experience with Belon and Rondelet during

the composition of his work on quadrupeds, birds and fish, and on his consequent resolve always to give credit by name wherever he had drawn information from any source, including his contemporaries — a point of scholarly conscience which in its absence in the work of Belon and others had drawn charges of plagiarism. Then in another long digression Gessner reveals his previous acceptance of a suggestion from a printer, the late Wendelin Rihel of Strasbourg, that he undertake to revise Kyber's translation of Bock's German herbal and to add something of his own about the plants of the mountainous regions of Switzerland. So far he has failed to execute either commission, but he now proposes to work on Bock's book (which he will reduce rather than enlarge) for the son, Josias Rihel. And with the help of his friends in Germany, France and Italy he has determined to go ahead with a great work on botany which would concentrate on useful information and would avoid some of the prolixity of his encyclopedia of animals.

After outlining his own program with so much enthusiasm, Gessner turns again to Fuchs and his publisher Isengrin. He will change his plans, after all, in their favor. He will wait until their three-volume work has been published and will then write brief *Paralipomena* or Supplements, simply correcting its omissions, and will give the copy to Isengrin for printing. But they should make a concession to him in turn and let him have all the pictures that will have been used in their volumes, to be placed in a single volume along with his own illustrations, all in the order and with the nomenclatural captions which will seem best to him. He will be careful, however, to indicate which plants are Fuchs' and where in his volumes their descriptions can be found,

and likewise where in the Supplement his own plants are described. "If you two incline (plural *admittitis*) toward this plan of mine, it is well; but if not, I will return to my first proposal and my freedom. Farewell."

Obviously, the letter tells us much more about Gessner's concerns and rather indefinite planning than about Fuchs, and it is not surprising that Caspar Wolf (Wulphius) saw fit to include it in his posthumous publication of Gessner's *Epistolae medicinales* (Zürich, Froschauer, 1577), where it stands (with a second letter to Fuchs, dated February 11, 1557) at the very end of the collection, leaves 137^v-139^f. (The reference was given correctly by the late Professor Hans Fischer in his scholarly biography *Conrad Gessner <26. März 1516 - 13. Dezember 1565>*, *Leben und Werk*, Zürich, Leeman, 1966, p. 98. Though Fischer's account of the correspondence is open to some question — he accepted Gessner's word that Fuchs was frightening him away from botany, and elsewhere credited Fuchs with ennoblement by Charles V — he was certainly right in characterizing Fuchs as contentious and egotistical.) Perhaps Wolf thought that knowledge of the letters to Fuchs would compensate the curious for his own failure to keep his promise (in the *Hyposchesis* published with Simmler's *Vita* in 1566) to see to it that Gessner's *magnum opus* in botany should be published forthwith. Actually the materials were in a chaotic state and after passing through various hands were published only in part at Nuremberg in 1753-1771, while the whole mass remains unpublished (like Fuchs' three volumes) — a treasure of the university library at Erlangen (see B. Milt, *Vierteljahrschrift der naturforschenden Gesellschaft in Zürich* 81: 285-291, 1936).

In what follows, we present a modernized Latin text of the original letter, an English translation, and a largely bibliographical Commentary, which includes a summary (see note 22) of Gessner's second letter to Fuchs. An Epilogue rounds out the story by noting in some detail what can be learned from the extant letters of Fuchs about his completion of the new three-volume *Stirpium historia* and his failure to achieve publication.

But first, the document preserved at the Bibliothek Zentrum in Zürich (see Figure 1) deserves examination for another reason. The beautifully clear italic book hand is not that of Gessner himself but that of a professional scribe who wrote out what Gessner dictated as he sat down to compose what was likely to be a difficult letter. Then later, after Gessner had made a few changes, the secretary would have recopied the letter, the fair copy being sent off to Fuchs in Tübingen and the original draft filed away for future reference. This had been the traditional procedure at least since the time of Cicero and St. Paul, and it is indicated for this case by a note in the left margin of the second page. Opposite the point of a long vertical bracket which has been drawn from lines 6 to 26 (where the letter discusses Gessner's relations with Wendelin Rihel), there is a notation: *Vuendelino Ri- / helio quid promiseram, / et quid praestiturus / sim filio*. Wolf says nothing about these circumstances, which readers at that time would take for granted, but his edition follows the corrected draft closely, except for slight alterations of the salutation and the formula for the dating of the letter, and one substantial emendation of the text (see note 9), all of which we have accepted in our text. And we were told at Zürich that there are other letters in the collection whose handwriting

is that of a dictated first draft. For example, ms. no. C (50 a Nr. 19), which we have summarized (see note 22), is the second letter from Gessner to Fuchs in the 1577 *Epistolae medicinales*.

It is true that letters exist from Gessner to familiar friends (e.g., Joachim Camerarius the Younger) which were not dictated but written in his own hand, sometimes in haste (*subito*; see G. Rath, *Die Briefe Konrad Gessners aus der Trewischen Sammlung*, *Gesnerus* 7: 140-170, 1950; 8: 195-215, 1951). The first previously unpublished letter in Rath's selection (to Camerarius in Nuremberg, August 5, 1558) has a phrase in parenthesis which Rath dutifully notes was "von Gessner nachträglich gestrichen." But the only other corrections, usually marginal notes, are those entered by the recipients. Moreover, Gessner signed all these letters at the end (e.g. in number 1) *T[uus] ex animo Con[radus] Gesnerus*, whereas our letter has a closing *Vale*, which certainly lacks the warmth of his signature to his friends.

The text below has been modernized for the benefit of those not accustomed to the peculiarities of 16th-century printing. All abbreviations have been expanded except for the now familiar *etc.* in line 68, and this has been done tacitly except for those in the salutation, where we use square brackets. Ampersands in the printed text are replaced by *et*, as in the original draft. Ligatures for *ae* and *oe* are expanded and an occasional *ç* is expanded to *ae*. The grave accents which distinguish adverbs or particles from other grammatical forms are neglected. Punctuation follows the printed text generally, but the colon (:) has been changed to a semicolon (;) or reduced to a comma (,) or even a period (.) when it seemed advisable to shorten a sentence. Capital letters are reserved for the initials of sentences, personal

Con. Gessnerus Leonardo Fuchsio

20

S. Valere te et stirpium historiam tribus edendam Tomis maturare ex
 literis tuis, doctissime Fuchsi, cognoscere mihi pergratum fuit. Minus uero
 gratum illud quod ab eodem argumento me absterres. Atqui oportebat nos
 5 maiorem publicae q̄ private utilitatis rationem habere. Vnus uir nullus 5
 uir, si usq̄. in hoc maxime argumento, uere diu mihi uidetur. Sunt enim
 infinite plantarum species, quarum magnam partem singulos ignorare
 necesse est, propter regionum diuersitatem. Quod si suas quisq̄ obseruationes
 in commune protulerit, spes est aliquando fore ut ex omnibus opus unū
 10 absolutum ab aliquo colophonem addituro perficiatur: quod ut nostro seculo 10
 fieri optarim, ita uix sperare audeo. Veller tu, ut alij que obseruauerunt ipsi,
 ad te mitterent: atq̄ utinam id multi facerent, et magnos pulcherrimosq̄ conatq̄
 tuos iuuarent. et facerem id ego quāq̄ libentissime, si non adeo multa haberet
 15 et omnia descripta, atq̄ ita ut tibi usui essent possint. nam de eruditione tua
 15 et iudicio tanto iam tempore his in rebus exercitato nullum mihi dubium foret,
 quin recte omnibus utereris. Sed multa omnino uariaq̄ habeo, et ex innumeris
 schedis notata potius q̄ descripta, atq̄ ita ut nemini ferè quàm mihi usui esse queant.
 20 possint: neq̄ ualeat hoc mihi commodius describere. Et in capite plura forte q̄
 in schedis habeo. Ab adolescentia enim hoc studio me oblectauit, quod nisi cum
 20 uita non deponam. Tu mihi q̄to libentem meum, et meas delicias per mitte.
 Quando de ijs aliquid scribi editurus, uosuo: adeo proluxa est quam suscipi omni,
 sic inuicem ueneris historia et iis ...

Figure 1. Upper half of the first page of Gessner's letter to Fuchs, slightly reduced from the photocopy supplied by the Bibliothek Zentrum at Zurich of their manuscript no. C (50 a Nr. 20). A subscription at the bottom of the second page reads: *Inueniuntur haec inter Epistolas Gesneri p. 137 b*. We have added numerals for the lines. Corrections made by Gessner on reading over the dictated draft can be seen at lines 11 (*ausim* for *audeo*) and 17 (*queant* in the right-hand margin replacing *possint* at the beginning of line 18). In line 14 the original *essent* was changed to *esse possint* in the course of dictation; later, at the beginning of the line was replaced by the suprascript *si* and *possint* was corrected to *possent*.

names, geographical areas and the first words of quoted book-titles. There is little consistency of capitalization in the two versions of the text, but they do agree in presenting the entire letter in a formidably solid block. This we have broken up by introducing added space at appropriate intervals. Finally, we have normalized the spelling of certain words with repeated i-symbols (e.g., *aliis* not *alijs*) and have distinguished the semi-vowel, whether capital V or lower-case v, from the vowel sounds,

whether capital-symbol U or lower-case u, whereas examples can be seen in Figure 1 where capital V stood for either sound, likewise lower-case u. However, in line 50 we have not dared to change the graphic symbols for what in English we call "double u" and the French call "double v" from what it is in both versions: *Vuendelinus*. But we have restored the correct classical spelling of two words: *condicio* (not *-ditio*) in line 33 and *immo* (not *imo*) in line 29 and elsewhere.

Text

Con[radius] Gesnerus viro clarissimo D[octori] Leonhardo
 Fuchsio s[alutem dat]. Valere te et Stirpium Historiam tribus eden-
 dam tomis maturare ex literis tuis, doctissime Fuchsi, cognoscere
 mihi pergratum fuit. Minus vero gratum illud, quod ab eodem argu-
 5 mento me absterres. Atqui oportebat nos maiorem publicae quam pri-
 vatae utilitatis rationem habere. Unus vir, nullus vir, si usquam,
 in hoc maxime argumento, vere dici mihi videtur. Sunt enim infini-
 tae plantarum species, quarum magnam partem singulos ignorare
 necesse est, propter regionum diversitatem. Quod si suas quis-
 10 que observationes in commune protulerit, spes est aliquando fore,
 ut ex omnibus opus unum absolutum ab aliquo colophonem addituro
 perficiatur; quod ut nostro seculo fieri optarim, ita vix sperare
 ausim. Velles tu, ut alii quae observarint ipsi, ad te mitte-
 rent; atque utinam id multi facerent, et magnos pulcherrimosque
 15 conatus tuos iuvarent. Et facerem id ego quoque libentissime, si
 non adeo multa haberem, si omnia descripta, atque ita ut tibi
 usui esse possent. Nam de eruditione tua et iudicio tanto iam tem-
 pore his in rebus exercitato, nullum mihi dubium foret, quin rec-
 te omnibus uteris. Sed multa omnino variaque habeo, et ea innu-
 20 meris schedis notata potius quam descripta, atque ita ut nemini
 fere quam mihi usui esse queant. Neque vacat haec mihi commodius
 describere. Et in capite plura forte quam in schedis habeo. Ab
 adolescentia enim hoc studio me oblectavi, quod nisi cum vita non
 deponam. Tu mihi quaeso libertatem meam, et delicias meas per-
 25 mitte. Quando de iis aliquid sim editurus, nescio, adeo
 prolixa est quam suscepi omnis animantium generis historia, et vix
 ante annum aut sesqui de piscibus perscripsero. Hoc tibi polliceor,
 si unquam scripsero, honoris tui rationem me habiturum: et sicubi
 dissensensero, simplicissime modestissimeque facturum. Immo si tua

- 30 viderem antequam ederentur, de nonnullis forte in melius mutandis (praesertim quod ad nomenclaturam impositionem) candide admonerem. Quod tu quoque meis inspectis praestare posses, si velles, in multis, non dubito. Ea enim huius argumenti condicio est, ut semper multa quae addiscamus supersint. Meus quidem animus eiusmodi est,
- 35 ut in eodem, quodcumque tractandum susciperem, argumento, versari quam plurimos velim. De animalibus, avibus, piscibus, eodem tempore, quo ego, Galli etiam Bellonius et Rondeletius scripserunt; sed honorifice illi meminerunt mei in suis scriptis, et alter etiam mittendis quibusdam conatus meos promovit; adeo nulla inter
- 40 nos aemulatio est. Rondeletius tamen subinde perstringit Bellonium, et Hippolytum Romanum, (nominibus quidem semper abstinet) sed merito, quod cum ab eo plurima accepissent illi, nunquam eius ne verbo quidem uno mentionem fecerint, et ipsius inventa sibi usurparint; quod summae ingratitude, immo ingrattissimae ambitu-
- 45 onis est. Ego honorifice semper illos nominavi a quibus profeci, non semel, sed in singulis ubicunque aliquid mihi communicavit quisquam. Porro ut liquido intelligas (mi Fuchsi) summo candore me tecum agere, neque dissimulare quicquam, et cum tibi tuaeque gloriae, tum Isingrinii utilitati, viri de me bene meriti,
- 50 quam optime velle, consilia mea omnia tibi aperiam. Vuendelinus Rihelius, felicitis memoriae typographus Argentinensis, adolescenti mihi familiaris fuit, et in Graecae linguae rudimentis a me aliquando institutus est. Hic et libris a se impressis multis, et aliis quibusdam minoribus liberaliter me donavit, rogavitque, cum
- 55 rei herbariae studiosum me esse intelligeret, ut Tragi editionem Latinam emendare et annotationibus illustrare vellem. Hoc ipsum etiam Tragum, iam senem et propter adversam valetudinem lubricationibus ineptum, cupere addebat; et similiter Kyberum, iuvenem mihi artissima necessitudine coniunctum, qui Germanica Tragi
- 60 scripta Latine reddidit. Praeterea ut de Helvetiae nostrae et Alpium plantis aliquid adderem. Ego nimium facilis, promisi, nullo tamen tempore praescripto. Et hactenus quidem rem non perfeci, aliis occupationibus obrutus. Quoniam vero promisi, et pecuniam etiam aliquam a Rihelio missam ad sumptum itineris per Alpes,
- 65 et in icones pingendas expendi, aequum est omnino ut filio praestem, quod patri promiseram. Sed hoc parum erit, et nihil editioni tuae incommodaturum. Non augebo Tragum, sed minuam potius inutilem eius saepe loquacitatem, etc. errores, quibus abundat, tollam, aut notabo. Libellum de Helveticis et Alpinis plantis
- 70 perbreve addam, cum figuris paucis. Quandoquidem vero, ut dixi, observationes simul et icones de omni plantarum genere innumeras habeo, et quotidie tum ipse multa observo, tum ab amicis accipio

- ex Germania, Gallia, Italia, statueram omnium qui de plantis
utiliter scripserunt, veterum praesertim, et ex recentioribus
75 praecipuorum, scripta uno volumine colligere, brevius arguti-
usque quam in Animalium Historia feci, et absque philologia fere;
et iam aliquot folia conscripseram. Hoc si tibi et Isin-
grinio displiceat, in vestram gratiam mutabo consilium. Expec-
80 tabo donec tomi tui omnes prodierint; tum, si vixero, iis in-
spectis, scribam Paralipomena, et ea Isingrinio cudenda dabo,
ita ut nihil repetatur eorum, quae in tuis scripta fuerint.
Sed ut hoc faciam, et primum consilium meum relinquam propter
vos, vicissim peto, ut a vobis quoque aliquid mihi concedatur,
quod et Isingrinio utile, et studiosis gratum erit. Nemp̄e ut
85 icones omnes, quas in libris tuis habueris, mihi permittat, quo
voluerim ordine, nomenclaturis, quae mihi videbuntur, additis,
una cum nostris iconibus praeterea addendis (quas tu non habu-
eris) in unum volumen coniungere, sicut in quadrupedum et avium
figuris feci, et faciam quoque in piscibus. Simul autem cum
90 nomenclaturis notabo quas plantas ex tuo opere sint, et quo in
loco a lectore requirenda singularum descriptio: item qua nostrae
sint, et ubi in Paralipomenis descriptae. Hoc meum consilium
si admittitis, bene est: sin minus, ad primum meum institutum
meamque libertatem redibo. Vale. Tiguri, 1556. Octobris die 18.

Translation

Conrad Gessner to the most distinguished Doctor Leonhart Fuchs [gives] greeting. I was very glad to learn from your letter, most learned Fuchs, that you are well and that your *Stirpium Historia* is nearly ready for publication in three volumes. Less pleasing, however, [was] the thought that you are frightening me away from the same field of investigation.¹ And yet it was fitting that we should have more regard for the public's advantage than for our own. "One man, no man," this saying seems to me to be true, if anywhere, especially of this field of investigation. For there are infinite kinds of plants, a great part of which must be unknown to any one person on account of the differences between regions. But if every person offers his observations

in the public good, there is hope that at some time it will come about that from them all a single perfectly complete work will be produced by someone who will add the final touch.² Though I might wish for this to happen in our age, still I would hardly dare to hope for it.

[13-] Your desire would be that others should send their own observations to you, and I could wish that many would do so and would be helpful to your great and beautiful beginnings.³ And I too would be very glad to do this, if I did not have so very many things to say, if they were all written out and in such condition that they could be of use to you. For because of your learning and good judgment, tested in these matters over so long a period, there would be no doubt in my mind, but that you would use

them all properly. But I have a great many and a great variety of observations, and they [are] in such a state that they can be useful to hardly anybody except myself. And I have no time to write them out in better style.⁴ And I have more notes in my head, perhaps, than on slips of paper. For from my youth on I have taken my pleasure in this study, which I will not lay aside except with my life. Do you, I beg, let me keep my freedom and my dearest delight.⁵

[25-] As to when I shall publish anything from my store, I have no idea. The work which I have undertaken, the natural history of every kind of animal, is so very extensive, and scarcely within a year or a year and a half⁶ will I have finished writing about the fishes.⁷ This I promise you, that if ever I do write out [my thoughts], I will take full account of your merits, and if I disagree at any point, I will do so frankly and in moderate terms. Indeed if I should see your work before it is published, I would give you my candid advice on any points that perhaps needed emendation (especially on the imposition of names⁸) — a thing which you too, after seeing my work, could do for me, if you would, in many respects, I do not doubt. For in this field of investigation it is the rule that there are many things left over for us to learn.

[34-] Indeed my own disposition is such that, in whatever field I have undertaken to investigate,⁹ I would like as many people as possible to be involved. On animals, birds, [and] fish the Frenchmen Belon¹⁰ and Rondelet¹¹ also wrote at the same time as I, but they mentioned me in their writings with respect, and the latter even advanced my efforts by sending me certain materials; to that extent there is no rivalry between us. Nevertheless Rondelet often criticized Belon and the Roman Ippolito,¹² (always indeed refraining from naming them) but

deservedly so, because, though they had borrowed a great many details from him, they never mentioned him by so much as a word, and they claimed his discoveries as their own — which is the height of ingratitude or rather of ungracious self-seeking. I have always named respectfully those from whom I have profited, not once but on each occasion, whenever somebody gave me any information.

[47-] And now, in order that you (my dear Fuchs) may understand clearly that I am completely frank in my dealing with you and am not concealing anything, and that I have every good wish not only for you and your good name but also for the advantage of Isengrin,¹³ a man who has deserved well of me, I will reveal all my plans to you. The late Wendelin Rihel,¹⁴ the printer of Strasbourg, was a close friend in my youth and received instruction from me, now and then, in the elements of the Greek language. He treated me generously, both with copies of many books which he had printed and with certain smaller gifts, and, since he knew that I was a keen student of botany,¹⁵ he asked me if I would emend the Latin edition of Tragus¹⁶ and illustrate it with annotations. He kept adding that Tragus himself also desired this, since he was now an old man and by reason of ill health was unfit for scholarly effort; and likewise that Kyber [desired this], a young man bound to me by close ties of scholarly activity, who translated into Latin the German writings of Tragus.¹⁷ Besides this [he begged me] to add something about the plants of my Switzerland and the Alps. Obliging to excess, I gave him my promise but without setting any date. And indeed as yet I have not completed anything, being overwhelmed by other obligations. But since I have given my word and have even spent some funds which Rihel had let me have

towards the expense of a journey through the Alps and for the preparation of pictures, it is altogether right for me to provide the son with what I had promised the father.¹⁸ But this will be a small task and will cause your publication no inconvenience. I will not enlarge Tragus but will rather diminish his often useless verbosity, etc. [and] I will remove his errors, which abound, or explain them. I will add a very short treatise on Swiss and Alpine plants, with a few figures. But since, as I have said, I have a great many observations together with pictures of every kind of plant, and every day not only do I myself make many observations but also receive [them] from my friends in Germany, France, [and] Italy, [therefore] I had determined to gather together in one volume the writings of all those who have written usefully about plants, especially the ancients and the best of the moderns, [expressing it] more briefly and more forcefully than I have done in my history of animals, and practically without philological notes, and already I have written out a few leaves.¹⁹

[77-] If this is displeasing to you and Isengrin, I will change my plan in your favor. I will wait until all your volumes have appeared. Then, if I am still living [and] have looked them over, I will write a Supplement²⁰ and give it to Isengrin for printing, in such a way that nothing which has appeared in your book is repeated. But if I do this and set aside my first plan for your sakes, I beg in turn that by you also a concession be made to me, which will be both advantageous for Isengrin and pleasing to students. What I suggest is that he let me have all the pictures which you will have placed in your books, to be brought together in a single volume,²¹ in the order which I will have decided, with the addition of names which will seem best to me,

along with my own pictures to be added furthermore (which you will not have had), just as I have done with the figures of quadrupeds and as I will also do in the fishes.²² But at the same time along with the names I will note which of the plants are from your work and in what place the description of each is to be sought by the reader; likewise which plants are mine and where [they are] described in the Supplement.

[92-] If you two incline towards this plan of mine, it is well; but if not, I will return to my first proposal and my freedom. Farewell. [Dated] at Zurich, 1556, on the 18th day of October.

Commentary

¹The Latin word *argumentum* (here and in lines 7, 33 and 35) hints at the literal meaning of Greek ἱστορία (an inquiry) as in the title of the great work of Theophrastus, Περὶ φυτῶν ἱστορία, always translated *Historia plantarum*.

²*Colophonem addere* (line 11, to add a final touch, literally a summit) again reflects an originally Greek expression, κολοφωνα ἐπιτιθεναί, often used by Plato, also by Aelian (*De animalium historia*, xiii 12). In this same year (1556) Gessner published the first critical edition of Aelian's complete works in Greek; see H. Wellisch, Conrad Gessner; a bio-bibliography, *J. Soc. Bibliogr. Nat. Hist.* 7(2): 151-247, no. 42.1, 1975. But already in renaissance Latin the word colophon was also applied to a printer's device or imprint placed with a date on the last page of a book.

³He refers to the great herbal of 1542. Compare the comment made more than ten years earlier in the *Bibliotheca universalis*, 1545 (Wellisch 16.1.A), leaf 460^v: "I hear that a second volume also is being prepared, which we await with great eagerness. For

although I disagree with it in some respects, pertaining to the imposition of plant-names drawn from the ancients, nevertheless I do not doubt but that the author, when advised by me and others who have seen more regions abroad that are fertile in plants, will make certain changes for the better [*quaedam emendaturus sit*]; and I praise vigorously the diligence of the man, his method of instruction, and finally the elegance and perfection of his figures, which even by themselves, if nothing else were added, would be of no small value [*non parvo redimerentur*]." And he went on (481^v) to quote ten lines or so from the dedicatory preface which indicate the scope of the *Commentarii* and the illustrations.

⁴Gessner's syntax is perfectly classical (see 21), though somewhat colloquial and elliptical; compare the omission of the copulative verb in lines 4 and 16 and the substitution of *queant* for *possint*. Since the copyist used distinctive round brackets to enclose parentheses (e.g., at line 31), we must use square brackets to mark our supplements. They are especially frequent after line 34.

⁵The plural *deliciae* often has erotic overtones, as in Roman comedy.

⁶Another colloquialism, using the very rare separate word *sesqui* where we should expect a compound *sesquiannum*.

⁷The first three volumes, covering quadrupeds and birds, of Gessner's great *Historia animalium* were issued at Zürich by Froschauer in 1551, 1554 and 1555 (Wellisch 23.1, 24.1 and 25.1). The fourth volume (on fish, Wellisch 26.1) is dated 1558. Gessner's estimate of 18 months from October 1556 was not far off the mark. But in these same two years Gessner was also publishing three little works — *Sanitatis tuendae praecepta* (Wellisch 41), 1556; *De piscibus et aquatilibus omnibus Libelli III* (Wellisch 43), 1556?; *Athenagorae ... Apologia pro Christianis*

... (Wellisch 44.1), 1557 — a letter to Mattioli in *De stirpium aliquot nominibus* (Wellisch 45.1) and the major folio edition of Aelian (see 2; Wellisch 42.1). Indeed he had little leisure to work on botany.

⁸Gessner's first efforts in botany, published in the years 1541 and 1542 (Wellisch 3.1 and 8.1), when he was just 25 years old, were alphabetical lists of plant names and their medicinal properties, drawn from the same ancient sources used by Fuchs, and a second catalogue of names in Latin, Greek, German and French. And of course there was bound to be disagreement on the application of an ancient name to a plant known in the field by contemporary investigators (see 3).

⁹Gessner's first draft reads *quodcumque me hortante* (on my own initiative). This was corrected by Wolf to *quodcumque tractandum* (for investigation). *Me hortante* probably refers to the quartos and folios like the *Catalogus plantarum* of 1542 (Wellisch 8.1), the *Bibliotheca universalis* of 1545 (Wellisch 16.1.A) and especially the *Historia animalium* of 1551 and later (see 7). Many of the other works were undertaken to please a publisher, doubtless for an honorarium. See Wellisch under his no. 1 and his footnote 13 on p. 157, and for Gessner's autobiographical letter to Bullinger, translated on pp. 163-164. But Wellisch's wonder (p. 158) at the labor required to write down the monumental *Bibliotheca universalis* in longhand should perhaps be revised in the light of Gessner's use of dictation to a scribe.

¹⁰Pierre Belon (1517-1564) published on fish and birds: *L'histoire naturelle des estranges poissons*, Paris, 1551 (Latin translation, Paris, 1553) and *L'histoire de la nature des oyseaux*, Paris, 1555.

¹¹Guillaume Rondelet (1507-1566), who had been one of Gessner's instructors in medicine at Montpellier in 1540, published

his two books on fish in Latin (Lugduni, 1554 and 1555), later in French (Lion, 1558).

¹²Ippolito Salviani (1514-1572), professor of medicine at Rome, began publishing his *Aquatilium animalium historiae liber primus* at Rome in 1554 (colophon: 1558). According to Artedi (*Ichthyologia*, 1738, Bibliotheca, p. 29), it was the most reliable of the three contemporary single works on fish and did not deserve Rondelet's calumnies. Gessner is biased here by his evident friendship for the older man.

¹³Michael Isengrin (1500-1557) was the publisher at Basel of Fuchs' great 1542 herbal, under an imperial privilege which gave him control, for a limited period, of the rights to reprint and sell it. He had also published (Basileae, 1550) a two-volume folio edition of the complete works of Aristotle. "This was Erasmus' edition in Greek which is based on Gessner's personal copy of an earlier edition, and contains his notes and corrections as well as those of other humanists" (see Wellisch under his no. 21). (For the dates and vernacular names of printers here and below, see J. Benzing, *Die Buchdrucker des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts im deutschen Sprachgebiet*, Wiesbaden, 1963.)

¹⁴Wendelin Rihel (Richel, Reihel, Riel; ca. 1500-1555) published books at Strasbourg between 1535 and his death (see below on Tragus and Kyber). Gessner had spent the year 1532 in Strasbourg as a student of Hebrew and unofficial tutor in Greek (Wellisch, p. 155), when he was just turning 16.

¹⁵*Rei herbariae studiosus*: though Isidore of Seville (560-626) had used the word *botanicum* (from Greek βοτάνη, pasture-land or fodder) in a technical sense, the generic term for the science remained *res herbaria* until well into the 18th century (see Stearn, *Botanical Latin*, New York 1966, p. 23).

¹⁶Hieronymus Tragus (Bock; 1498-1554) had compiled an earlier herbal in German, *New Kreütter Büch*, published by Rihel in 1539 without illustrations and favorably noticed by Fuchs in his dedicatory preface (1542). Other editions with woodcut illustrations followed and in 1552 Rihel brought out a Latin translation by David Kyber (Wellisch 33), to which Gessner contributed a preface containing a brief bibliography of botanical writers culled from his *Bibliotheca universalis*.

¹⁷David Kyber (1525-1553) also composed a *Lexicon rei herbariae trilingue*, published by Rihel in 1553, with a contribution from Gessner in the form of a list of plants tabulated over the months according to their times of flowering (Wellisch 35). It is a little strange that Gessner, who speaks of the death (in 1555) of Rihel, *felicis memoriae*, does not mention the deaths of Kyber from the plague in 1553 or of the aging Tragus in 1554.

¹⁸The son was Josias Rihel (1525-1597). He succeeded his father in the business at Strasbourg, with his brother until 1557, later, and very successfully, by himself. Gessner never quite fulfilled his promise here, but when the friends and students of Valerius Cordus, a young German naturalist who had died in 1544 on a botanical expedition in Italy, kept urging Gessner to edit and publish the manuscripts for a commentary on Dioscorides and a *Stirpium historia* based on his own observations, Gessner at length agreed and entrusted the printing to Josias Rihel, who brought out a fine folio of 302 leaves, illustrated, in 1561 (Wellisch 51.1). Besides editing the work of Cordus, Gessner had added a treatise on the flowers of the mountains near Berne by a professor of Hebrew and Greek (again from first-hand observations), a few articles of

his own on various plants (including the recently introduced *Tulipa turcorum*) and an essay on gardening and private botanical gardens in central Europe. This would have satisfied the request of the senior Rihel, at least in part. Gessner did not do anything further with Tragus' work, but Cordus' was certainly more important.

¹⁹But though Gessner continued to labor during the last ten years of his life on this so optimistically projected work, he was also kept busy with other projects — some of them perhaps, like his (the first printed) edition of the Greek text of the Meditations of Marcus Aurelius in 1559 (Wellisch 46), on his own initiative, others to please various friends and publishers — and his literary executor, Caspar Wolf (in his *Hyposchesis* published with Simmler's *Vita* in 1566, Wellisch C 2) found that his long-awaited History of plants was in a chaotic state. And, though he tried to set in order the mass of manuscripts and illustrations, he finally gave up on his public promise to publish them. They were sold (with the consent of the heirs) to the physician Joachim Camerarius the Younger of Nuremberg, who used some of the illustrations (without acknowledgment) but made no move towards publication. After passing through other hands in the next 150 years, about a third of the materials was published at Nuremberg in 1753-1771 in two "handsomely printed large folio volumes with hand-colored illustrations of plants" (Wellisch, p. 171 and B 11, where the title mentions more than 400 figures — far fewer than Fuchs ultimately possessed). We note here that Wellisch has missed the recent publication (1971-1979) of most of Gessner's drawings in eight elegant volumes by the URS Graf/Verlag at Dietikon/Zürich.

²⁰*Paralipomena*, literally things omitted, but in English we would use the singular

Supplement. Probably it was not vanity which led Gessner to think that Isenegrin might be glad to publish such a work. Once Gessner's reputation as a scholar had been established, the generosity of Rihel and of Froschauer, who took him to the book fair at Leipzig in 1543 (Wellisch, p. 159), and the readiness of printer-publishers at Basel, Lyons and elsewhere to reprint his work would have convinced him of his value to them.

²¹Gessner closes his sentence here (line 88) with an infinitive (*coniungere*) of purpose (Allen and Greenough, *New Latin grammar*, 1903, § 460) where a gerundive would have been normal and in fact preceded it.

²²The illustrations in the several volumes of the *Historia animalium* (see 7) were arranged alphabetically, following the order of the chapters. In 1553 Froschauer brought out a separate folio, *Icones animalium quadrupedum viviparorum et oviparorum* (Wellisch 24.1), arranged systematically (*per certos ordines digestae*), each figure with its names in Latin, Italian, French and German. A separate volume, *Icones avium* (Wellisch 30.1), followed in 1555. The separate volume on fish has a different title, *Nomenclator aquatilium animantium, Icones ...* (Wellisch 31.1), and appeared in 1560 with a claim to have added many things not contained in *magno nostro de aquatilibus volumine*. In the same year Froschauer had brought out second editions of the two prior volumes (all of them published in folio), the one on quadrupeds (Wellisch 29.2) doubled in size, the other (Wellisch 30.2) slightly enlarged. Thus emphasis was shifting from encyclopaedic description to systematic illustration.

But it was the similar separate handling of Fuchs' figures that caused trouble. Gessner's second letter to Fuchs is dated February 11, 1557. It opens with the statement that Fuchs' letter, dated December 13, had

reached him on February 10. Gessner seems to have replied in extraordinary haste, but a two-month interval for travel in midwinter between the two cities would indicate that Fuchs had not been slow to answer Gessner's letter of October 18. Probably he began by denying any intention to infringe upon Gessner's liberty, and he seems to have accepted the idea of Gessner's proposed *Paralipomena*, for Gessner now promises to write this Supplement, which will contain only those figures "which will not be found in your publication, as you urge and as I was already planning to do." But evidently Fuchs had queried the surrender by Isengrin of all the pictures from the new edition, for Gessner continues, "I see that you did not understand my proposal about the illustrations of your edition. What I desired was not only to write the Supplement but in addition to have from Isengrin all the figures without any text [*historia*] or description, to be printed separately [*i.e.*, one or two to a page], as he did previously in the first edition and as I published the figures of quadrupeds and birds separately, with only their names. I desire such a volume of pictures to be entrusted to me, so that I can arrange your and my figures in the order I desire and with names assigned [to the plants] according to my judgment. But we will discuss this point at another time, if I survive." But here the cautious Gessner adds that he will not bind himself in any verbal contract (*fides*), for circumstances could change and he might not write (the *Paralipomena*?) at all or might form a new plan for disposing of his botanical materials. "But whatever happens," he assures Fuchs, "I will always keep in mind both the advantage of your printer (a man who deserves well of me) and of your good name [*honor*], which your learning deserves." Then he

adds 20 lines (fully a third of the letter) concerning a new plant, a kind of *Allium* or *Oreoscorodon* with remarkable curative powers, which grew in the mountainous regions near Lucerne. Fuchs is welcome to use this information, though Gessner had intended it for the *libellus* which he would some day (*olim*) write about a few plants of Switzerland.

Here the younger scholar was attempting communication and even possible collaboration. But Fuchs was not impressed by Gessner's offer, and the two went their separate ways, ending with their deaths ten years later. See the Epilogue for Fuchs' side of the story; and while Gessner eventually acquired an *herbarium pictum* of more than 1,500 plants (fully a third of which were drawn by his own hand, according to Wellich, p. 166), neither his nor Fuchs' collection has yet been published.

Epilogue

Several letters from Fuchs also found their way into Trew's tremendous collection; compare Rath's article on Gessner (cited above, p. 63). Notable among them are a score or more to Joachim Camerarius the Elder (1500-1574), who after his move from Tübingen to Leipzig in 1541 continued to be Fuchs' intimate friend and confidant — practically his only one. The documents have been summarized, with selections from the original Latin in the footnotes, by G. Fichtner in an important article in *Gesnerus* 25: 65-82, 1968.

From these letters we can learn details of the negotiations for publication of the new edition of the *Commentarii*, "*opus omnium laboriosissimum ac sumptuosissimum ... in tres maximae molis tomos digestum*" (Fichtner, footnote 80, from the letter of April 18, 1564

to Camerarius the Younger). The completed copy had been submitted two years before to the widow of Michael Isengrin, and Fuchs says that she had bound herself and her son by a contract (*syngrapha*, compare *chirographium*) in a letter (Fichtner, footnote 79) of April 3, 1563 to the elder Camerarius) to publish the massive work with its more than 1,500 woodcut illustrations. But she was now withdrawing from the contract: "*ita nusquam, mi Ioachime, tuta fides est,*" Fuchs protests. She estimated that the work would cost 3,000 florins to produce, and was hoping to find another printer-publisher who could risk that much capital on the venture. See the letter of August 10, 1565 (Fichtner, footnote 81), in which Fuchs pleads that he could not himself supply so large a sum without severe damage to his children's inheritance, and says that so far no other printer had shown any interest. Fuchs had therefore resolved to seek subsidies by writing to the leading princes and imperial cities of the area in the hope "that by their munificence to me or rather to the students of medicine and botany, I may secure a sufficient sum of money so that I can come to the aid of the printer at least in some part." But less than a year later, on May 10, 1566, death overtook the already weakened Fuchs, and the completed manuscript was still in his study; see Hizler's *Vita* as cited by Stübler, *Münchener Beiträge* ..., 1928, p. 176. Hizler was sure that all the books, especially the long-awaited new *Commentarii*, would be published by the heirs; but this did not happen.

A much earlier letter to the elder Camerarius (November 23, 1542, cited by Fichtner, footnotes 71 and 72) throws a curious light on the relations between author and dedicatee in the case of the first edition of the herbal. The letter was being carried to

Camerarius by a courier (*per hunc adolescentem*) along with a specially bound copy of the newly printed *De historia stirpium Commentarii insignes* destined for the Margrave (and Elector) of Brandenburg, who had recently returned home, now that the Turkish war had been concluded happily. The copy was valued, Fuchs says, at no less than 15 florins, apart from the binding — a very high price. The courier was instructed to unwrap the book and turn its pages for Camerarius to inspect. Fuchs was then begging Camerarius to write first to "our friend Philip" (*i.e.*, Melanchthon, 1497-1560, the Lutheran theologian whose enthusiasm for Greek and humanistic education had been instrumental in the call of Fuchs and Camerarius to Tübingen in 1535 and then of Camerarius to Leipzig) and persuade him to commend "my trifles" (*nugae*, compare Catullus, 1.3) to the Elector, and also to write to Melanchthon's son-in-law, the humanist Georg Sabinus, or someone else at court, so that the courier might be welcomed and have easy access *ad principem cum codice*. When such wires were to be pulled at the presentation of a copy to the dedicatee, it is not likely that arrangements had been made in advance — as was the custom later — to secure a subsidy in exchange for the dedication. And we do not know if there was any gesture of reward after the presentation.

It is in the latest of the letters to Camerarius (November 24, 1565, Fichtner, footnote 78) that Fuchs expresses his final opinion of his younger rival:

Quod Gesneri opus ingens in singulari apud quosdam sit expectatione, valde miror, quandoquidem ille ante annum fere ad me scripserit se nedum sylvam eius operis sibi adhuc parasse. Fac vero ante meum prodeat, non laboro, ut qui Gesneri, optimi sane amici, et crebro ad me scribentis, animum perspectum habeam, per

omne fere genus autorum circumvolantis, et ex retextis aliorum sertis, novas subinde corollas concinnare gaudentis. Ita nuper universum Rondeletii librum in suos de piscibus commentarios retulit. Pari ratione a me petiit, si ei permittam, ut pro arbitrio singula disponat, se post editos meos commentarios Paralipomena scripturum. Disponat ipse sua ut libet, ipse non patiar, ut mea secus ac ipse feci, disponat. Iam cupit a me de omnibus meis ut illum certum faciam petere. Sed sentio quid moliatur, ideo et deinceps nihil mearum stirpium mittam.

We attempt a translation of this very colloquial and elliptical Latin:

I am amazed that some people are looking forward eagerly to the vast [botanical] work of Gessner, since he wrote to me about a year ago that he had not yet finished preparing the "forest" [? Gessner's word, compare Cicero, *De oratore*, iii 103, etc.] of his work. But suppose it does appear before mine; I'm not worried, since I am well acquainted with Gessner's character. To be sure, he is a good friend and often writes to me. [But] he flits about [like a bee, compare Horace, *Epist.*, i 3.21] over practically the whole field of authors, and likes to take apart other people's garlands and weave thereafter new chaplets. As recently he took a whole book of Rondelet's and put it into his own commentary on the fishes. With the like intention, he has begged it of me, if I would allow him a free hand in arranging the items, [promising] that he would compose a critical Supplement after the appearance of my Commentary. Let him arrange his own items as he will. I will not permit him to arrange mine otherwise than I have done myself. Now he desires to beg it of me that I inform him about all my materials. But I see what he is trying to do, therefore and hereafter I will not send him anything of my plants.

Gessner had many admirers in various places, but one German among the *quidam* of the first sentence above was probably the younger Joachim Camerarius (1534-1598); see note 19. Fuchs' protest, then, was directed to the father of one of the persons he had in mind. Note also that the specific charge of plagiarism concerned the fourth volume of Gessner's *Historia animalium*,

published in 1558; see note 6. But the cleverly worded and malicious comments about Gessner's character which precede the charge, and the references in the rest of the letter to Gessner's promise of a future volume of *Paralipomena* in return for the use of Fuchs' illustrations, to be placed "in the order which I will have decided, with the addition of names which will seem best to me" — all these points could have come merely from Gessner's formal letters of 1556 and 1557. The most recent letter was probably a friendly inquiry about the prospects for the publication of the three-volume edition, together with a rueful admission of the size of his own undertaking and the remoteness of its completion. Possibly it and preceding letters renewed a request for the use of Fuchs' illustrations. But Fuchs defiantly refuses to relinquish control over the ordering, naming and illustration of his plants, just as Gessner, nearly ten years before, had desired to keep his "freedom." And Fuchs was not worried about the delay in the publication of his new edition.

Fuchs died unexpectedly in May of the next year, 1566; Gessner had succumbed to the plague in December 1565. Neither man saw the publication of his greatest work in botany. (Neither have we, 400 years later, seen all of it.) What better ordering of his materials Gessner might have achieved if his life had not been cut short, is matter for speculation. But Fuchs had done his part, and the failure to achieve publication must be charged to his heirs.

702 W. Indiana Avenue
Urbana, IL 61801

and

U.S. National Arboretum
24th & R Streets, N.E.
Washington, DC 20002

