

1881

A Circular to Sea Captains and Other Seafaring Men

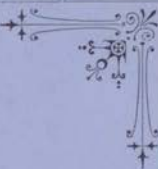
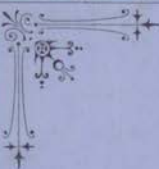
Portland Society of Natural History

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Recommended Citation

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A CIRCULAR

—TO—

SEA CAPTAINS

—AND OTHER—

SEAFARING MEN.



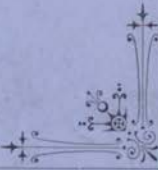

PRESENTED TO

—BY THE—

Portland Society of Natural History,

PORTLAND, MAINE, U. S. A.

APRIL, 1881.



PRESS OF HENRY F. PERRY & CO.

A CIRCULAR

—TO—

SEA CAPTAINS

—AND OTHER—

SEAFARING MEN.



PORTLAND, MAINE, U. S. A.
PORTLAND SOCIETY OF NATURAL HISTORY.
APRIL, 1881.

OFFICERS—1881.

WILLIAM WOOD, - - - - PRESIDENT.
JOSEPH P. THOMPSON, - - - VICE-PRESIDENT.
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THOMAS H. HILL,
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ALEXANDER W. LONGFELLOW.

ACTING MEMBERS to be residents of Portland, pay an admission fee of five dollars and an annual assessment of two dollars.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS to be non-residents of Portland, and to pay an admission fee of five dollars.

CORRESPONDING AND HONORARY MEMBERS to pay no fees.

Any person who shall contribute, at one time, to the funds of the Society, a sum not less than one hundred dollars, shall be denominated a Patron.

Any member who shall pay into the treasury, at one time, the sum of fifty dollars, shall be exempt from the annual assessments.

Members of all classes are entitled to admission to the Hall of the Society at all times, to attend all meetings and lectures of the Society, and take part in its Scientific Discussions. Acting members and Patrons only, are entitled to vote, to hold office, or to transact business.

CIRCULAR TO
SEA CAPTAINS AND OTHER SEAFARING MEN.

The Portland Society of Natural History has twice lost by fire (from causes wholly external to itself) all its collections, and in the last great conflagration of 1866, its beautiful and convenient hall, which, at an expense of nearly \$20,000, had been completed but a short time. The whole of its losses reckoned only pecuniarily would easily amount to the sum of \$100,000 ; but reckoned by their scientific value, they cannot readily be estimated and some of them are irreparable.

The society has now for the third time gathered together a very good and quite large cabinet of objects, in which the various departments of natural history are more or less fully represented ; a library, which

though small is quite valuable ; and it has now taken possession of the new and commodious hall on Elm street, the erection of which was completed last year, the 36th since its organization. We do not doubt that all of our citizens feel some interest and even take some pride in furthering its objects, which are all designed to promote, in the best way, the cause of education, and will gladly aid in building up an institution that shall be both an agreeable place of resort for themselves and their families and a very attractive one to every intelligent stranger who visits our city.

Whilst our main object is to develop, illustrate and study the natural history of our own State, we are aware that specimens from other parts of this Union, and especially from foreign countries and the more remote parts of the world, aid materially in promoting this very object. They enable us to take a more comprehensive view of nature's plan and to understand better the relations and affinities that lie hidden under the ever varying forms which they present to the eye. Besides, they are often very attractive objects of interest, or can be made so, to all visitors, and will furnish perhaps the only opportunity, that many of them may have, of beholding a few of the wonder-

ful works of creation, that are found scattered broadcast over the whole world.

Knowing what facilities you, who go down to the sea in ships, enjoy for obtaining such objects at little more expense than the trouble of gathering them, we are desirous of making an appeal to you for such aid as you can render us, when enjoying in foreign lands, as a brief relaxation from the arduous labors incident to your vocation, a ramble along the shore or a trip to the interior. By collecting a few specimens of rock broken from the first ledge that you meet, by making sections of moderate dimensions of the branches of a tree or shrub, and gathering a few of the pods or other seed vessels these produce, a new zest would be added to the pleasure derived from such excursions, by knowing that such things, duly marked as to their common names, when known, and locality whence derived, are veritable objects of study and scientific interest and will aid materially in enriching the cabinets of this society in the far off city of your home.

One quickly becomes familiarized to the common objects by which he finds himself surrounded, the first sight of which aroused his interest and attention, such as the grandeur of some precipitous cliff or craggy shore, the various forms of animal and vege-

table life found clinging to their bases above or beneath the surface of the water, or the beauty of islands clothed with all the luxuriance of tropical verdure.

The first things that arrest the attention in such places are the desirable things, but too often, after becoming familiar with them, their very profuseness produces a feeling akin to that of satiety or indifference to them. The idea that they can possibly be of value and worth the trouble of gathering becomes lost in a vain attempt to find something of greater interest and "worth bringing home," the result most generally being that nothing is obtained.

The star fishes, crabs, shrimps and other forms of animal life can be easily packed in salt. The seaweeds gathered from the rocks, or that are tossed upon the shore after a storm, may be dried in an airy and *shady* place, and then be loosely and roughly tied up in coarse paper. These and a hundred kindred things are all objects of great interest and can again be restored almost to their former beauty and perfection. At all events they are sure to be objects of great scientific interest and more heartily welcomed to our collections than many other curiosities that are bought with gold and silver.

The idea of this circular is to impress upon all who

have the opportunity of visiting foreign lands, that the *most common things* of those regions, and which are to be had without money or price, except the trouble of collecting and preserving them, are the *desirable things*, which under the hands of our curators are made to become the attractive objects of interest in our cabinets and, when properly arranged, to throw light and greater interest upon the animate or inanimate objects that we gather from every part of our State.

It has not been thought desirable to attempt to enumerate all the objects that may be regarded as desirable. It is only important to understand that one can scarcely go amiss if he ever bears in mind the idea, that will admit of being reiterated, that the *most common things* are the really desirable ones. Even the specimens of mud brought up by the anchor, saved in some tin can or box and marked with the name of the locality from which obtained, are almost sure to contain some minute forms of life of great interest and rarity. Delicate corals may require packing in seaweed or sand, and smaller objects may be dropped into strong brine or alcohol if regarded of sufficient value. Living shells or those containing the animal, if of small size, can be treated in the same way, or the animal can be extracted from those of larger size,

after decaying a little, when they need no further attention than washing and packing away so as to secure their delicate edges or tops from injury. Fruits and seed vessels of all kinds, large and small, are very desirable. The fresh fruit can be wrapped in pieces of cotton cloth and dropped into a pickle jar, filled with strong brine or some alcoholic preparation, whilst the dry pods and other forms of seed vessels only require the protection of a box. Some may be desirous of preserving some of the twigs or plants bearing flowers. These spread out in a sheet of newspaper and placed between the leaves of an old log book, may be well preserved by removing them in their newspaper covers daily for a few days, and exposing the book for a short time to the air, and then replacing the covers with the contained plants and placing the whole again under a moderate pressure.

By alluding in this manner to the numerous objects of interest within your easy reach, we do not expect nor desire to make the collection burdensome for you, or that you will attempt to do more than what may be very easy and convenient for you at any time. One may find recreation without much trouble in collecting one or more objects at one time, and other objects at another time. But the efforts of quite a num-

ber in different parts of the world, even if thus limited, will result in adding largely to our collections, and rendering us very thankful and grateful for favors which we can hardly ever expect to obtain in any other way.

For everything brought to the society, acknowledgments will be made in all labels on such specimens, as well as in the printed list of donations to the cabinet. Mr. C. B. Fuller, cabinet keeper of the society, will furnish all additional explanations. It is hoped that every one into whose hands this circular may fall, will endeavor to do something for the society whose objects are so excellent, and to which, at little or no expense and with little trouble, he can render an essential service.

WILLIAM WOOD,

CHARLES B. FULLER,

Committee on Circular.

PORTLAND, MAINE, U. S. A., April, 1881.

