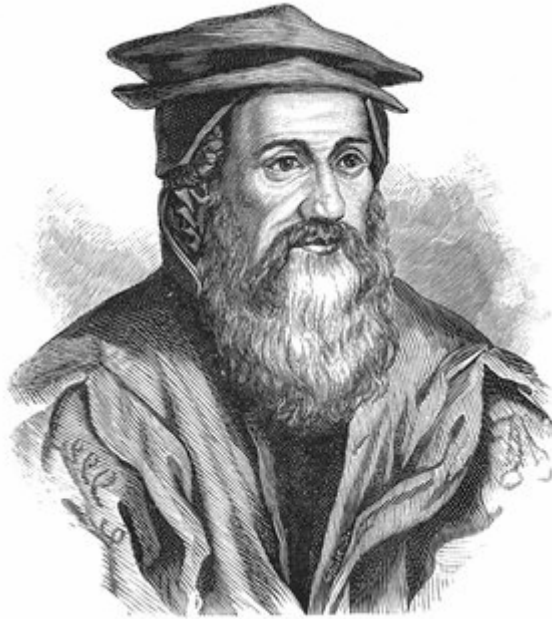


IN HONOUR OF CONRAD GESSNER



By: Elio Corti,

Italy

Why a Gessner Zentrum?

But Jesus said them: A prophet is not devoid of honor unless in his homeland and home. Matthew 13,57

The proverbs, also those inherited from Gospel, look like SMS messages so in fashion today, however they have the peculiarity of holding millennia of human knowledge. The statement of Jesus – who dying in his homeland showed the faithfulness of his aphorism – is perfectly fitting also in Gessner's case. In Zurich, native town of Conrad, there is a street entitled to one Gessner, the Gessnerallee, but after a frantic search - successfully carried out by Francesca Marchisio - we got to the end of a mystery which left us quite astounded.

The Zurich's Gessnerallee is not entitled to Conrad but to the painter Salomon Gessner. The fact is that they neither entitled a lane to Conrad - just imagine a museum! - nor pulled francs from their pocket for devoting to him I don't say a colossus, but a small bas-relief:

"Heute 29. Maj 2006 habe ich an die Zürich Polizei (0041-44-4117117) angerufen um Information über Gessnerallee zu haben; die Polizistin hat mir gesagt daß diese Straße ist an Salomon Gessner gewidmet der war ein Maler, und in aller Stadt Zürich gibt es keine Straße oder Monument oder Museum an unserer Arzt Conrad Gessner gewidmet."

Quite the reverse happened in Bologna for Ulisse Aldrovandi: even a square was named after him. In my opinion, however, also in this case the proverb is flawless if we have the courage of reading it with critical eyes. Yes, Aldrovandi got dressed as prophet, but he wasn't at all.

On the contrary in our opinion Conrad Gessner was a rather serious person from a scientific point of view. If this was not enough, in addition it is very difficult to come across errors when running through the big amount of quotations held in his naturalistic treatises.

With Aldrovandi the direct opposite is happening.

CONRADI GESNERI
 Tigurini medici & Philosophiæ professoris in Schola Tigurina, Historiæ Animalium Liber III.
 qui est de Avium

natura. *Item expurgatio germanica*

ADLECTI sunt ab initio Indices alphabetici decem super nominibus Avium in totidem linguis diversis: & ante illos Enumeratio Avium eo ordine quo in hoc Volumine continentur.



*Ex qui paco Confone
 al' L'epugatio pcc. ca
 La Inquisition d'ano
 d'io. q. por fa' l'omnia
 lo foma de minimis*



CVR Privilegijs S. Cæfareæ Maiestatis ad octennium, & Christianissimi Regis Galliarum ad decennium.

TIGVRI APVD CHRISTOPH. FROSCHOVERVM,
 ANNO M. D. LV.

*in la libreria principal' del collegio de Alcalá.
 Mo de 1705*

R-109 615

Well, being that the data handed down by Gessner are a precious source from which a modern naturalist might suddenly to be in need of drawing, we settled to found the Gessner Zentrum so that his prized data are easily accessible.

When I brought to an end the translation of the Latin text on chickens of the 2nd volume of Aldrovandi's Ornithology, I decided for the translation of the equivalent text of Gessner heavily plundered by Aldrovandi (today by an euphemism we would say downloaded) and during this job I realized that several passages of Aldrovandi were finally becoming understandable and translatable.

Roberto Ricciardi undertook the task of reviewing with huge patience my Aldrovandi's translation. And I, like a good conceited person, being often true the just quoted aphorism, didn't dare to ask him to also review my Gessner's translation on chickens, being practically superfluous. In fact, after Aldrovandi has been corrected, the translation of Gessner is automatically emended.

The Latin texts on chickens of both Renaissance researchers have been transcribed by Fernando Civardi, who, having seen the preciousness of the data handed down by Gessner, decided to transcribe his whole large treatise of Ornithology that bit by bit will be published in my site www.summagallicana.it

Does the following question cropped up by chance in your mind?

"How is that Corti went to get newly involving himself in Latin and Greek, as well as in transcribing Hebrew? Perhaps he tried to get younger thanks to a plunge in the remote years of high school?" The things are not thus at all.

In order to draw up the chicken's genetics treatise I had to gather a large library. Among recommended texts someone had the idea to point out the English translation of Aldrovandi's chickens spawned in 1963 by Lind, Aldrovandi on chickens. I was just in time to get one of the last copies still on sale. The translation of Lind was checked for historical genetics research. Suddenly leapt out that either Aldrovandi was a fool - and partly he has been such - or Lind had awfully translated the paper of Ulisse.

At this point from Padua Gabriele Baldan sent me the Aldrovandi's original text dated 1600, and the comparisons began. The translation of Lind appeared as a classical extravagant feat. It was time of recovering the fate of Italy by showing that Lind, chairman of Kansas' University, through Aldrovandi denigrated the Italian culture reducing it to sheer trash.

When Chicken's Genetics was done, I resolved to translate Aldrovandi without omitting the attachment of the original text for due comparisons, a thing that Lind not even dreamed to do. It would have been enough to reduce the type to a half and his book would have contained also the original text of Ulisse. But Lind, aware of doing an extravagant feat, tried to escape comparisons and criticisms not only foreseeable, but unavoidable too.

It's just as well that Lind didn't come into the idea of translating also the equivalent text of Gessner. If this had happened, the Swiss would have appeared as weenies. After all, Gessner was divinely lucky: not only Zurich, but also the United States of America forgot him.

We warmly hope that other poultry lovers are feeling the need of pay homage to Gessner in taking on the task of transcribing other parts of his treatises, and maybe, also translating them.

Surely the science will take advantage from this.

UPDATE

An updating is needed of what has been just affirmed, that is, that Zurich forgot Gessner. To mislead us has been the Police of Zurich, to which we had to blindly



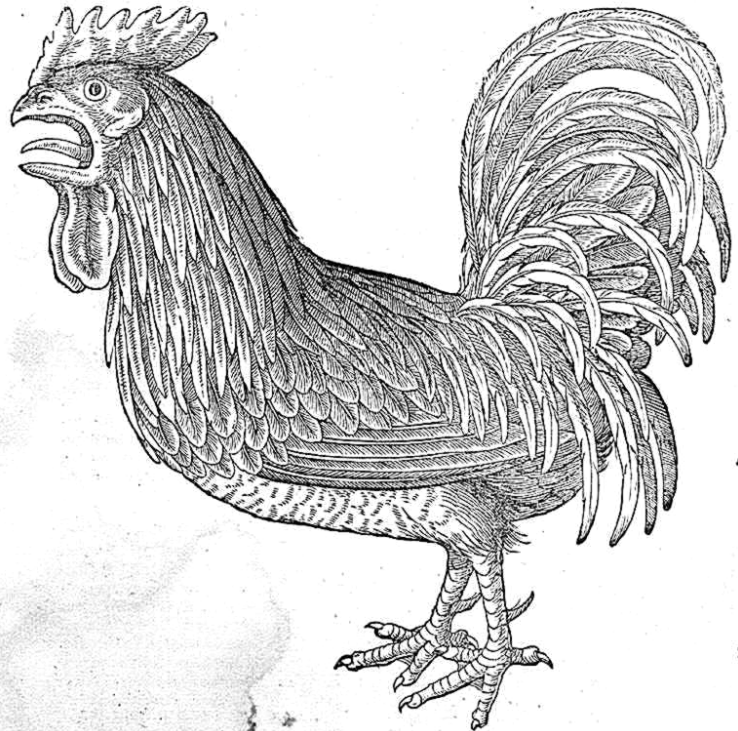
believe. This updating is dated April 22, 2009, 3 years afterwards I threw my arrows against Conrad's native town, and the merit is wholly of Elly Vogelaar: being a relentless, precise and deadly researcher, she discovered in the web some data which are putting me with my back to the wall.

Left:
Alter Botanischer Garten in Zurich. Photo Wikipedia.

in colico affectu post multa remedia frustra tentata, liberatus est tandem epoto cyatho (ditatum autrium unciarum) pinguedinis capi pinguis decocti in aqua (ut fieri solet ad cibum) abiq; sale. operer autem pinguedinem iuri innatantem se paratam bibere quam calidissimam. Ex libro manuscrip. pro. Ei qui patitur urices, seui hircini felibram, & adipis de capone libram simul permisce, & in limteo die louis ceroti more adpone. potenter subuenies, Marcellus. Ad fistulam cum emortua est, (hoc est, ut mihi uideretur, cum nullus in ea doloris sensus superest,) pellicula interiorum de uentriculo capi quae abijci solet, in Sole arefactam tere & insperge, Obscurus. ¶ Sunt qui ossa crurum capi compositis ad alba mulierum profluvia medicamentis admisceant.

DE GALLINA, ITEM DE OVISTVM
gallinacis, tum in genere in C. E. F. G. & H. c. &c.

Errone factum est per festinationem, ut superius gallinacis iconis l'ico gallinae icon posita sit: cuius occasione hic contra gallinacum pro gallinae ponimus.



GALLINAE proprie dicuntur foeminae in gallinaceo genere uillatico, sed interdum pro genere toto nominantur, ut *apud* etiam uel *apud*, id est aues, apud Graecos. Vide in Gallinaceo A. Domestica uel uernacula gallinae sunt, quas Varro uillaticas nuncupat, Gyl. Longolius, Plinius uillares. Cohortalis est auis quae uulgo per omnes serae uillas conspicitur, Columella. ¶ Hebraica nomina גוריון, tarnegolet, & כרייא, fakua, pro gallina, ponuntur a Munstero in Dictionario trilingui. Vide supra in Gallinaceo. Gigeo, gallina uel gallus, Sylluaticus. Alibi apud eundem legitur digegi, ut apud Serapionis interpretem digedi, Tefele, galina

But only partly, since surely the Swiss people didn't let themselves go to the excesses of Bolognese people towards their very beloved Aldrovandi.

This is how Switzerland is saving itself: in 1978 gave birth to a banknote of 50 francs with the portrait of Gessner, and in 1997 the hilltop, on which the Zurich's Alter Botanischer Garten stands, has been devoted to Gessner with the name of Gessner-Garten.

Thanks to Elly justice is done, even though by moderate cost.



Note by the editor:

You can find the Gessner Zentrum at the website www.summagallicana.it where you among other things can read a biography of Gessner and the complete text of the treatise on chickens from the book of Gessner (in English and in Latin).

However, much more can be read here; the most impressive being the 'Summa Gallicana', a Chicken Genetics treatise in 3 volumes, in which you will also find what you are not looking for! The website is in Italian, but larger parts are also available in English.

Another thing that can be read here is a biography of Aldrovandi, plus the complete text in both Latin and English, of Volume 2 (poultry) from the book 'Ornithologiae tomus alter' by Aldrovandi.

A unique English translation of this book, completed with original illustrations, is granted by Elio Corti to Aviculture Europe and can be downloaded at our website www.aviculture-europe.nl (Homepage, Button: books)