

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen
Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup
Mommsen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff
Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt
Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
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Chamberlain Langbein Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates
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Marx Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz Ringelntz
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The Natural History of Selborne

Gilbert White

Imprint

This book is part of the TREDITION CLASSICS series.

Author: Gilbert White

Cover design: toepferschumann, Berlin (Germany)

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg (Germany)

ISBN: 978-3-8495-2229-2

www.tredition.com

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INVITATION TO SELBORNE.

See, Selborne spreads her boldest beauties round
The varied valley, and the mountain ground,
Wildly majestic ! What is all the pride,
Of flats, with loads of ornaments supplied ?—
Unpleasing, tasteless, impotent expense,
Compared with Nature's rude magnificence.

Arise, my stranger, to these wild scenes haste;
The unfinished farm awaits your forming taste:
Plan the pavilion, airy, light, and true;
Through the high arch call in the length'ning view;
Expand the forest sloping up the hill;
Swell to a lake the scant, penurious rill;
Extend the vista; raise the castle mound
In antique taste, with turrets ivy-crown'd:
O'er the gay lawn the flow'ry shrub dispread,
Or with the blending garden mix the mead;
Bid China's pale, fantastic fence delight;
Or with the mimic statue trap the sight.

Oft on some evening, sunny, soft, and still,
The Muse shall lead thee to the beech-grown hill,
To spend in tea the cool, refreshing hour,
Where nods in air the pensile, nest-like bower;
Or where the hermit hangs the straw-clad cell,
Emerging gently from the leafy dell,
By fancy plann'd; as once th' inventive maid
Met the hoar sage amid the secret shade:
Romantic spot ! from whence in prospect lies
Whate'er of landscape charms our feasting eyes'—
The pointed spire, the hall, the pasture plain,
The russet fallow, or the golden grain,

The breezy lake that sheds a gleaming light,
Till all the fading picture fail the sight.

Each to his task; all different ways retire:
Cull the dry stick; call forth the seeds of fire;
Deep fix the kettle's props, a forky row,
Or give with fanning hat the breeze to blow.

Whence is this taste, the furnish'd hall forgot,
To feast in gardens, or th' unhandy grot ?
Or novelty with some new charms surprises,
Or from our very shifts some joy arises.
Hark, while below the village bells ring round,
Echo, sweet nymph, returns the soften'd sound;
But if gusts rise, the rushing forests roar,
Like the tide tumbling on the pebbly shore.

Adown the vale, in lone, sequester'd nook,
Where skirting woods imbrown the dimpling brook,
The ruin'd convent lies: here wont to dwell
The lazy canon midst his cloister'd cell,
While Papal darkness brooded o'er the land,
Ere Reformation made her glorious stand:
Still oft at eve belated shepherd swains
See the cowl'd spectre skim the folded plains.

To the high Temple would my stranger go,
The mountain-brow commands the woods below:
In Jewry first this order found a name,
When madding Croisades set the world in flame;
When western climes, urged on by pope and priest
Pour'd forth their minions o'er the deluged East:
Luxurious knights, ill suited to defy
To mortal fight Turcestan chivalry.

Nor be the parsonage by the Muse forgot —
The partial bard admires his native spot;
Smit with its beauties, loved, as yet a child,
Unconscious why, its capes, grotesque and wild.

High on a mound th' exalted gardens stand,
Beneath, deep valleys, scoop'd by Nature's hand.
A Cobham here, exulting in his art,
Might blend the general's with the gardener's part;
Might fortify with all the martial trade
Of rampart, bastion, fosse, and palisade;
Might plant the mortar with wide threat'ning bore,
Or bid the mimic cannon seem to roar:

Now climb the steep, drop now your eye belong
Where round the blooming village orchards grow;
There, like a picture, lies my lowly seat,
A rural, shelter'd, unobserved retreat.

Me far above the rest Selbornian scenes,
The pendent forests, and the mountain greens,
Strike with delight; there spreads the distant view,
That gradual fades till sunk in misty blue:
Here Nature hangs her slopy woods to sight,
Rills purl between and dart a quivering light.

SELBORNE HANGER.

A WINTER PIECE, TO THE MISS B*****S

The bard, who sang so late in blithest strain
Selbornian prospects, and the rural reign,
Now suits his plaintive pipe to sadden'd tone,
While the blank swains the changeful year bemoan.

How fallen the glories of these fading scenes !
The dusky beech resigns his vernal greens;
The yellow maple mourns in sickly hue,
And russet woodlands crowd the dark'ning view.

Dim, clust'ring fogs involve the country round,
The valley and the blended mountain ground
Sink in confusion; but with tempest-wing
Should Boreas from his northern barrier spring,
The rushing woods with deaf'ning clamour roar,
Like the sea tumbling on the pebbly shore.
When spouting rains descend in torrent tides,
See the torn zigzag weep its channel'd sides:
Winter exerts its rage; heavy and slow,
From the keen east rolls on the treasured snow;
Sunk with its weight the bending boughs are seen,
And one bright deluge whelms the works of men.
Amidst this savage landscape, bleak and bare,
Hangs the chill hermitage in middle air;
Its haunts forsaken, and its feasts forgot,
A leaf-strown, lonely, desolated cot !
Is this the scene that late with rapture rang,
Where Delphy danced, and gentle Anna sang ?
With fairy step where Harriet tripp'd so late,
And, on her stump reclined, the musing Kitty sate ?

Return, dear nymphs; prevent the purple spring,
Ere the soft nightingale essays to sing;

Ere the first swallow sweeps the fresh'ning plain,
Ere love-sick turtles breathe their amorous pain;
Let festive glee th' enliven'd village raise,
Pan's blameless reign, and patriarchal days;
With pastoral dance the smitten swain surprise,
And bring all Arcady before our eyes.

Return, blithe maidens; with you bring along
Free, native humour; all the charms of song;
The feeling heart, and unaffected ease;
Each nameless grace, and ev'ry power to please.

Nov. 1, 1763.

ON THE RAINBOW.

" Look upon the Rainbow, and praise him that made it: very beautiful is it in the brightness thereof." – Eccles., xliiii. 11.

On morning or on evening cloud impress'd,
Bent in vast curve, the watery meteor shines
Delightfully, to th' levell'd sun opposed:
Lovely refraction ! while the vivid brede
In listed colours glows, th' unconscious swain,
With vacant eye, gazes on the divine
Phenomenon, gleaming o'er the illumined fields,
Or runs to catch the treasures which it sheds.

Not so the sage: inspired with pious awe,
He hails the federal arch ; and looking up,
Adores that God, whose fingers form'd this bow
Magnificent, compassing heaven about
With a resplendent verge, " Thou mad'st the cloud,
" Maker omnipotent, and thou the bow;
" And by that covenant graciously hast sworn
" Never to drown the world again: henceforth,
" Till time shall be no more, in ceaseless round,
" Season shall follow season: day to night,
" Summer to winter, harvest to seed time,
" Heat shall to cold in regular array
" Succeed. " – Heav'n taught, so sang the Hebrew bard.

A HARVEST SCENE.

Waked by the gentle gleamings of the morn,
Soon clad, the reaper, provident of want,
Hies cheerful-hearted to the ripen'd field:
Nor hastes alone: attendant by his side
His faithful wife, sole partner of his cares,
Bears on her breast the sleeping babe; behind,
With steps unequal, trips her infant train;
Thrice happy pair, in love and labour join'd !

All day they ply their task; with mutual chat,
Beguiling each the sultry, tedious hours.
Around them falls in rows the sever'd corn,
Or the shocks rise in regular array.

But when high noon invites to short repast,
Beneath the shade of sheltering thorn they sit,
Divide the simple meal, and drain the cask:
The swinging cradle lulls the whimpering babe
Meantime; while growling round, if at the tread
Of hasty passenger alarm'd, as of their store
Protective, stalks the cur with bristling back,
To guard the scanty scrip and russet frock.

ON THE DARK, STILL, DRY, WARM WEATHER.

OCCASIONALLY HAPPENING IN THE WINTER MONTHS.

Th' imprison'd winds slumber within their caves,
Fast bound: the fickle vane, emblem of change,
Wavers no more, long settling to a point.

All Nature nodding seems composed: thick steams,
From land, from flood up-drawn, dimming the day,
" Like a dark ceiling stand: " slow through the air
Gossamer floats, or, stretch'd from blade to blade,
The wavy net-work whitens all the field.

Push'd by the weightier atmosphere, up springs
The ponderous mercury, from scale to scale
Mounting, amidst the Torricellian tube.

While high in air, and poised upon his wings,
Unseen, the soft, enamour'd woodlark runs
Through all his maze of melody; the brake,
Loud with the blackbird's bolder note, resounds.

Sooth'd by the genial warmth, the cawing rook
Anticipates the spring, selects her mate,
Haunts her tall nest-trees, and with sedulous care
Repairs her wicker eyrie, tempest-torn.

The ploughman inly smiles to see upturn
His mellow globe, best pledge of future crop:
With glee the gardener eyes his smoking beds;
E'en pining sickness feels a short relief

The happy schoolboy brings transported forth
His long-forgotten scourge, and giddy gig:
O'er the white paths he whirls the rolling hoop,

Or triumphs in the dusty fields of taw.

Not so the museful sage: — abroad he walks
Contemplative, if haply he may find
What cause controls the tempest's rage, or whence,
Amidst the savage season, Winter smiles.

For days, for weeks, prevails the placid calm.
At length some drops prelude a change: the sun
With ray refracted, bursts the parting gloom,
When all the chequer'd sky is one bright glare.

Mutters the wind at eve; th' horizon round
With angry aspect scowls: down rush the showers,
And float the deluged paths, and miry fields.

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF SELBORNE

In a series of letters addressed to THOMAS PENNANT, ESQ. and
The Hon. DAINES BARRINGTON

Advertisement

The Author of the following Letters takes the liberty, with all proper deference, of laying before the public his idea of parochial history, which, he thinks, ought to consist of natural productions and occurrences as well as antiquities. He is also of opinion that if stationary men would pay some attention to the districts on which they reside, and would publish their thoughts respecting the objects that surround them, from such materials might be drawn the most complete county-histories, which are still wanting in several parts of this kingdom, and in particular in the county of Southampton.

And here he seizes the first opportunity, though a late one, of returning his most grateful acknowledgments to the reverend the President and the reverend and worthy the Fellows of Magdalen College in the University of Oxford, for their liberal behaviour in permitting their archives to be searched by a member of their own society, so far as the evidences therein contained might respect the parish and priory of Selborne. To that gentleman also, and his assistant, whose labours and attention could only be equalled by the very kind manner in which they were bestowed, many and great obligations are also due.

Of the authenticity of the documents above-mentioned there can be no doubt, since they consist of the identical deeds and records that were removed to the College from the Priory at the time of its dissolution; and, being carefully copied on the spot, may be de-

pended on as genuine; and, never having been made public before, may gratify the curiosity of the antiquary, as well as establish the credit of the history.

If the writer should at all appear to have induced any of his leaders to pay a more ready attention to the wonders of the Creation, too frequently overlooked as common occurrences; or if he should by any means, through his researches, have lent an helping hand towards the enlargement of the boundaries of historical and topographical knowledge; or if he should have thrown some small light upon ancient customs and manners, and especially on those that were monastic, his purpose will be fully answered. But if he should not have been successful in any of these his intentions, yet there remains this consolation behind—that these his pursuits, by keeping the body and mind employed, have, under Providence, contributed to much health and cheerfulness of spirits, even to old age:—and, what still adds to his happiness, have led him to the knowledge of a circle of gentlemen whose intelligent communications, as they have afforded him much pleasing information, so, could he flatter himself with a continuation of them, would they ever be deemed a matter of singular satisfaction and improvement.

Gil. White.

Selborne, January 1st, 1788.

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF SELBORNE

LETTERS to THOMAS PENNANT, ESQ.

Letter I

To Thomas Pennant, Esquire

The parish of Selborne lies in the extreme eastern corner of the county of Hampshire, bordering on the county of Sussex, and not far from the county of Surrey; is about fifty miles south-west of London, in latitude 51, and near midway between the towns of Alton and Peters field. Being very large and extensive, it abuts on twelve parishes, two of which are in Sussex, viz., Trotton and Rogate. If you begin from the south and proceed westward, the adjacent parishes are Emshot, Newton Valence, Faringdon, Harteley Mauduit, Great Ward le ham, Kingsley, Hedleigh, Bramshot, Trotton, Rogate, Lysse, and Greatham. The soils of this district are almost as various and diversified as the views and aspects. The high part to the south-west consists of a vast hill of chalk, rising three hundred feet above the village; and is divided into a sheep down, the high wood, and a long hanging wood called the Hanger. The covert of this eminence is altogether beech, the most lovely of all forest trees, whether we consider its smooth rind or bark, its glossy foliage, or graceful pendulous boughs. The down, or sheep-walk, is a pleasing park-like spot, of about one mile by half that space, jutting out on the verge of the hill-country, where it begins to break down into the plains, and commanding a very engaging view, being an assemblage of hill, dale, wood-lands, heath, and water. The prospect is bounded to the south-east and east by the vast range of mountains called the Susses-downs, by Guild-down near Guildford, and by the Downs round Dorking, and Ryegate in Surrey, to the

north-east, which altogether, with the country beyond Alton and Farnham, form a noble and extensive outline.

At the foot of this hill, one stage or step from the uplands, lies the village, which consists of one single straggling street, three-quarters of a mile in length, in a sheltered vale, and running parallel with the Hanger. The houses are divided from the hill by a vein of stiff clay (good wheat-land), yet stand on a rock of white stone, little in appearance removed from chalk; but seems so far from being calcareous, that it endures extreme heat. Yet that the freestone still preserves somewhat that is analogous to chalk, is plain from the beeches which descend as low as those rocks extend, and no farther, and thrive as well on them, where the ground is steep, as on the chalks.

The cart-way of the village divides, in a remarkable manner, two very incongruous soils. To the south-west is a rank-clay, that requires the labour of years to render it mellow; while the gardens to the north-east, and small enclosures behind, consist of a warm, forward, crumbling mould, called black malm, which seems highly saturated with vegetable and animal manure; and these may perhaps have been the original site of the town; while the wood and coverts might extend down to the opposite bank.

At each end of the village, which runs from south-east to north-west, arises a small rivulet: that at the north-west end frequently fails; but the other is a fine perennial spring, little influenced by drought or wet seasons, called Well-head.* This breaks out of some high grounds joining to Core Hill, a noble chalk promontory, remarkable for sending forth two streams into two different seas. The one to the south becomes a branch of the Arun, running to Arundel, and so falling into the British Channel: the other to the north. The Selborne stream makes one branch of the Wey; and meeting the Black-down stream at Hedleigh, and the Alton and Farnham stream at Tilford-bridge, swells into a considerable river, navigable at Godalming; from whence it passes to Guildford, and so into the Thames at Weybridge; and thus at the Nore into the German Ocean. (* This spring produced, September 14, 1781, after a severe hot summer, and a preceding dry spring and winter, nine gallons of water in a minute, which is five hundred and forty in an hour, and twelve thousand nine hundred and sixty, or two hundred and six-