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A General View of the Writings of Linnaeus

Carl Linnaeus (1707–88), father of modern taxonomy, was one of the most important scientists of the eighteenth century. This biography was written by Richard Pulteney (1730–1801), a physician and botanist who greatly admired Linnaeus' methods and aimed to promote them in England. The first edition was published in 1781 and contains a thorough account of the major works of Linnaeus and his unpublished papers. As well as details of his academic career, the work also gives insights into Linnaeus' character and personal life. The second edition, reissued here, was edited by William George Maton (1774–1835), a physician and member of the Linnean Society, and published in 1805. It contains in addition a memoir of Pulteney and a translation of a Swedish life of Linnaeus based on his own notes. The book is a rich source of information on a central figure in the history of botany.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-03730-3 - A General View of the Writings of Linnaeus
Edited by Richard Pulteney and William George Maton
Frontmatter
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A General View of the Writings of Linnaeus

RICHARD PULTENEY
EDITED BY WILLIAM GEORGE MATON



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Pasch Pinxit. Engraved from a Picture in the Possession of The R.^t Hon.^{ble} S.^t Joseph Banks Bar.^t K.B. &c. Roberts sc.

*Carl von Linné.
Born May. 24.th 1707. Died Jan. 10.th 1778.*

Published as the Act directs by Jos.^h Mawman, March 16.th 1805.

A
GENERAL VIEW
OF THE
WRITINGS OF LINNÆUS,

BY
RICHARD PULTENEY, M.D. F.R.S.

THE SECOND EDITION;
WITH CORRECTIONS, CONSIDERABLE ADDITIONS,
AND
MEMOIRS OF THE AUTHOR,
BY
WILLIAM GEORGE MATON, M.D. F.R.S. F.S.A.
FELLOW OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS,
AND A VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE LINNEAN SOCIETY OF LONDON.

TO WHICH IS ANNEXED
THE DIARY OF LINNÆUS,
WRITTEN BY HIMSELF,
AND NOW TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH,
FROM THE SWEDISH MANUSCRIPT IN THE POSSESSION OF THE EDITOR.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR J. MAWMAN, IN THE POULTRY.
BY R. TAYLOR AND CO. 38, SHOE-LANE.

1805.

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THE
EDITOR'S PREFACE.

AS it may not be necessary to apologize for re-introducing to the notice of the public, a work which has been found so useful to the scientific student, as the late Dr. Pulteney's *General View of the Writings of Linnæus*, the editor's only intention, in this preface, is to explain by what plan he has been guided, in the compilation of the present volume.

The author not having undertaken the province of a *biographer*, it would have been improper (though no other objections had existed) to incorporate with his performance any additional particulars relative to Linnæus's private life, except such as seemed "to connect in a better manner the series and occasion of his publications; to relieve the tediousness of a bare account of books;" or to show more exactly the progress of his reputation and influence in the republic of science. Circumstances unconnected with these objects, therefore, have not been introduced into the "*General View*;" but the editor has not hesitated to intersperse others, in which he would most
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probably have been anticipated by Dr. Pulteney himself, had the latter possessed such an authentic source of information as Linnæus's own Diary. It was originally the editor's intention, to subjoin all the new matter in the form of notes; but finding, as he proceeded, that many corrections, and alterations of arrangement in the text, became necessary, he at length resolved to re-model some part of the substance of the work, in preference to perplexing the reader with a multitude of annotations. As to differences of a *verbal* nature between this edition and the first, they extend no further than it was conceived the author himself would have carried them, had he prepared the work for the public at the present period. The arrangement has been rendered strictly chronological,---an order from which the author may be seen to have deviated, in two or three instances, without apparent reason. Abstracts from the *Systema Naturæ* were given *partially* before; but, as all the grand divisions of that incomparable performance manifest alike the talents of Linnæus, the editor has ventured to present the same kind of *conspectus* of each. For the same reason, the classification of the *Materia Medica* is now exhibited, conformably with the plan before adopted in respect to the *Genera Morborum*, an epitome of which occupied

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occupied a conspicuous portion of Dr. Pulteney's own volume. Of the *Amœnitates Academicæ*, only seven volumes had been published, when this "*General View*" was first committed to the press; the analysis of the dissertations bearing that title, therefore, is here considerably extended. Besides these more obvious additions, notices and observations are interspersed in various parts of the work, tending either to supply what the editor deemed improper to be omitted, or to perfect more nearly the author's original plan. Since Dr. Pulteney wrote, there have been new editions of several of the works which he mentions; and improvements in various parts of them have been so generally adopted by the Linnean school, as to require being distinctly noticed in a performance like the present. Hence, in *this* respect also, much additional matter has been introduced, serving to render the volume as complete a view of the existing state of Linnean literature, as the editor's opportunities of information would permit. These opportunities have been greater, perhaps, than could be enjoyed elsewhere in the world; and if (as will too probably be the case) he should not be found to have employed them in a manner adequate to the expectations of the public, his claims to indulgence can be grounded
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only on the various avocations and duties necessarily attendant on an active profession. SIR JOSEPH BANKS's kind permission to make use of his invaluable library; the accurate information and friendly assistance of MR. DRYANDER,---one of the few surviving pupils of Linnæus; the communications with which he has been favoured by DR. JAMES EDWARD SMITH,---possessor of the Linnean MSS., library, and museum; and various other advantages, the editor cannot acknowledge without peculiar satisfaction and thankfulness. He has not had recourse to publications on the subject of Linnæus, without great circumspection, being unwilling to admit any intelligence that was at all of a dubious nature, and conceiving that the reader would prefer being imperfectly informed to being absolutely misled. The "*Life of Linnæus*" published by Dr. Stoeber, of Altona, which has been translated from the original German into our own language*, contains many interesting particulars; but it is not without a considerable number of errors, and is therefore very sparingly quoted. In fact, *private* memoirs form the principal part of that compilation, and the substance of the *literary* notices had appeared before in this *General View*.

* By Joseph Trapp, M.A. (London 1794. 4to.)

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To the first edition was subjoined a translation of Linnæus's *Pan Suecus*, with additional observations, and some improvements in the general order of the tables. The substance of those observations is given also in the present volume, under the proper head; but the tables, and notes annexed to them, are omitted, as they would have required more numerous additions and corrections, to render them suited to the existing state of agriculture and rural œconomy, than the editor's knowledge of those branches qualified him to undertake.

In conformity to the plan of the author, criticisms on the Linnean system are given very sparingly. "No system yet invented" (as is judiciously remarked in the author's original advertisement) "can stand a rigorous examination through all its parts, and Linnæus was, perhaps, better acquainted than any other man with the defects of his own." The method of that illustrious naturalist still retains the advantage of a general superiority over every other; and it is therefore a more agreeable employment to endeavour to strengthen its basis, supply its deficiencies, and candidly correct its errors, than to object to those anomalies and imperfections, which will most probably ever be inseparable

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rable from *artificial* arrangements, and indeed from every other human performance.

Having said thus much relative to this new edition of the *General View of the Writings of Linnæus*, the editor will naturally be expected to give some account of the very interesting and curious document subjoined to it, namely Linnæus's *Diary*.

At the latter end of the year of 1799, M. Fredenheim, son of Dr. Mennander, Archbishop of Upsala, conveyed (on certain conditions) to Robert Gordon, Esq. merchant at Cadiz, a variety of manuscripts to be printed in England. In consequence of the death of Mr. Gordon, however, the publication did not take place in the manner intended; and the manuscripts, devolving to that gentleman's executors, were disposed of by them to the publisher of this volume, but not without the heirs of M. Fredenheim having been duly acquainted with all the circumstances of the transaction. Besides a considerable number of letters, written with Linnæus's own hand, to Dr. Mennander, and some other papers, there is a folio manuscript book, containing about 80 pages, in the Swedish language, and entitled "*Vita Caroli Linnæi*," &c. M. Fredenheim's coat of arms is affixed to the inside of the cover; and on the page opposite to the
first

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first part of the Diary is a note, of which the following is a translation, *viz.*

“ Right Reverend Bishop,

“ The messenger will not wait until I have time to write. Be so good as to erase, alter, and add, *pro tua sapientia.*”

This note is explained by the following memorandum, found among the papers just alluded to :

“ On the 22nd of January, 1770, the Archiater von Linné sent from Upsala his *Curriculum Vitæ* (in a very circumstantial form, and continued by him up to that time) to Bishop Mennander, who was then at the Diet, at Stockholm; with the following short *vehiculum*, written on the very document [*see above*]. This Life, which is further mentioned in the letters of the 29th of January, 1762, 30th of October, and 19th of November, 1769, and 24th of January, 1770, therein copied, and also separately preserved, together with a Latin translation (not completed) by my late father, and the genealogy of the family of Linné, made by the Governor of the Province, Baron Tilas, was dictated with all the ingenuous simplicity of Linné, and in some places interlined and corrected by himself. It is certainly the only Life of him wholly composed by himself, and of course the most interesting and worthy to be published of all the other papers, among which are 55 letters to his most intimate friend from youth, who was fortunate enough to have chiefly contributed, if not towards rewarding this great man, at least towards encouraging him.”

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The passages in the letters, referred to in this memorandum, are copied in the same hand-writing (*viz.* that of M. Fredenheim) at the head of the Diary, and are to the following purport :

“ I have here drawn up my own panegyric, and found that *propria laus sordet*. I should never have shown it to any body in the world, if not to the only one of all my friends, who has been unalterably such, from times when I was in less advantageous circumstances. If you should be pleased to extract any thing from it, my dear friend, it would attract notice, when coming from such a pen as yours. I am quite ashamed to lay it before you, and should never have done so, had I not been convinced of your friendship and uniform sincerity.

Upsala,
 Jan. 29, 1762.”

(It would appear from this extract, that Linnæus had sent his memoirs to the Archbishop in the year 1762 ; but, if we may judge from a passage in another letter, quoted below, the Archbishop did not actually receive them until the 22nd of January, 1770.)

“ My principal object, in wishing to see you at Stockholm, my dear friend, was to beg of you, who have shown the most sincere and constant friendship for me, to take the trouble (when you are at leisure) of writing, in Latin, my insignificant memoirs which ought to be delivered to the French Academy,

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Academy, as I am *Ordinarius Extraneus Professor*; and, since age and attendant circumstances admonish me *colligere sarcinas*, the sooner this is done the better.

Upsala,
 Oct. 30, 1769."

"I cannot mention my personal merits without some preface; for *propria laus sordet*, and self-love will here and there show itself.

Upsala,
 Nov. 19, 1769."

"The day before yesterday I sent, by a peasant, my *Curriculum Vitæ*, under cover to Archater Bäck. If he should not have already transmitted it to you, you will recollect that Archiater Bäck lives opposite the cannon-foundery yard, or the gate of it.

"If, when you return home, you should have time, be so good as to think of me. It was written at various intervals, and of course with various degrees of attention. Pray alter the shape of it in any way you please, as it is intended only to state facts. This will be the last service that can be rendered to me, who now see people of my time of life dropping on all sides. *Ego infelix socius resto*.

Jan. 24, 1770."

These passages explain all the circumstances connected with Linnæus's Diary, and cannot require any comment.

The Archbishop's Latin translation extends no further

ther than the year 1730, a period having been put to his undertaking by death. The English translation published at the end of this volume was made by Mr. Troilius, a Swedish gentleman (now residing in London) of the same family with the late Archbishop von Troil, the well-known author of the *Letters on Iceland*. Both the style and the arrangement of the original are adhered to as closely as possible, and the Latin passages are given *verbatim*, in order that there might be no further deviation from Linnæus's own expressions than was absolutely requisite.

Through the greater part of the Swedish MS. the hand-writing is Dr. Lindwall's, who was a pupil of Linnæus; but different hands are discoverable, and the materials appear to have been put together with very different degrees of attention. The writing is in some places difficult to be decyphered; in others the sense is obscure; and there is often (as the reader will observe) an abrupt transition, in the construction, from the third person to the first.

The earliest letter in the collection is dated "*Upsala, 1734,*" and bears the following superscription, *viz. A Monsieur M. Charles Friedric Menander, Etudiant en Philosophie et Histoire Naturelle a Stockholm.*"

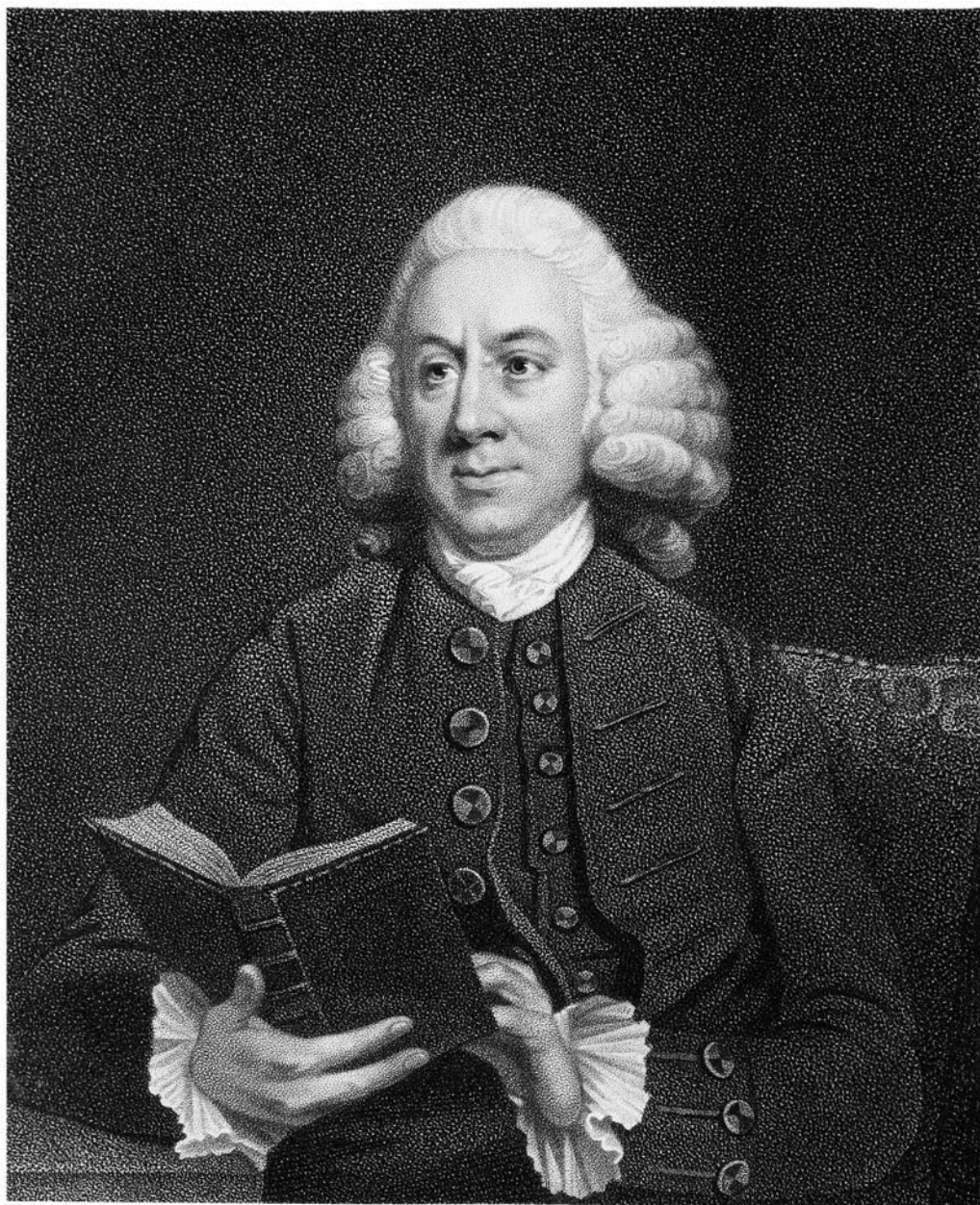
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The last letter is dated “*Upsala, Nov. 8, 1775.*” In this interval, Linnæus’s correspondent became Professor of Philosophy at Åbo, afterwards Bishop of that city, and lastly Archbishop, and Pro-Chancellor of the University, of Upsala. He appears to have been a very warm and affectionate friend, and to have assisted Linnæus on various occasions essentially affecting his interests. As the letters almost wholly relate to private occurrences, it was not thought necessary to publish them entire; but the few passages which either elucidate Linnæus’s literary history, or involve matters of importance not mentioned in the Diary, are made use of in the body of this work.

To the *General View of the Writings of Linnæus* are prefixed some memoirs of Dr. Pulteney himself, whose well merited eminence, both as an author and as a physician, seemed likely to render them not unacceptable to the public. The editor felt an additional motive to pay this tribute to his memory, in the grateful remembrance of a friendship, which influenced his pursuits at a very youthful period, and to which he owes many of the most instructive and agreeable hours of his life.



Painted by T. Beach

Engraved by P. Roberts.

Richard Pulteney
M.D. F.R.S. Lond. & Edinb. & F.L.S.

Published as the Act directs, by Jos^h. Mawman, March, 16th. 1805.