

# HUNTIA

A YEARBOOK OF BOTANICAL AND HORTICULTURAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

VOLUME 1

15 APRIL 1964

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HUNTIA

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Subscription price: \$7.50 (US) a volume.

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## Thomas Pennant's copy of Kalm's «Travels» (1770-71)

THE CHAPIN LIBRARY at Williams College owns a set of Pehr Kalm's *Travels into North America* (1770-1771), in three volumes, translated from Swedish into English by John Reinhold Forster, which has an interesting provenance as well as an informative letter from the translator to Thomas Pennant, distinguished eighteenth century British traveller, antiquarian, and naturalist.<sup>1</sup>

The detailed notes and critical information given in the Hunt Botanical Catalogue (no. 616) provide references and essential information about John Reinhold Forster (1729-1798), cited sometimes as Johann Reinhold, or Reinhold, as in the *Dictionary of National Biography* in the entry under his son's name, Johann Georg Adam Forster (1754-1794), who in turn is more commonly cited as George, and was also a naturalist, student, and sometime travelling companion of his father.

In transcribing the four-page letter of Reinhold Forster, tipped into Volume I of the Chapin copy of Kalm, I have followed the original manuscript (with misspellings indicated) and have given some brief annotations that seem useful in helping historians and naturalists who may be unfamiliar with certain names and events in the period, 1765-1780.

It is obvious that Thomas Pennant and the elder Forster were communicating regularly by 1771. This copy of Kalm's *Travels*, which contains the Pennant *ex libris* in Volume I, an important twenty-line note in Pennant's handwriting (in ink), as well as another leaf listing twenty-eight names of animals with page references to Vol. I (in the same hand), may provide botanists and other scholars interested in natural history with some brief and enlightening information about the two men. The letter (of which p. 1 is reproduced here as Fig. 26) reads as follows:

<sup>1</sup> This is the same item as described in the *Catalogue of botanical books in the collection of Rachel McMasters Miller Hunt*, vol. 2, no. 616. The Chapin copy was acquired from Lathrop C. Harper prior to 1936. The makeup of the Hunt copy varies from the Chapin copy in that the "List of Subscribers" which is stuck into sheet "A" of Vol. II (Hunt copy) is bound in Vol. III of the Chapin copy, and four leaves signed "A" following the Preface, precede the text, which begins with the normal signature "A." There are three plates of birds in Volume II of the Chapin copy, rather than two as reported for the Hunt copy; plus a plate of "Cohoes Fall, on the River Mohawk." All plates are hand colored in the Chapin copy.

Dear Sir

London May the 20<sup>th</sup> 1771.

I was with pleasure that I heard, You were arriv'd safe at Oxford, & hope to hear the same agreeable news of Y<sup>r</sup> arrival at Chester.

I have gone in Y<sup>r</sup> absence through a great deal of difficulties, & I am not yet quite free, however there is now a fair prospect of getting soon the better of all. I offer'd my books as a pledge for about 60 £ I wanted to buy furniture with but I was every where refus'd, tho' I could plainly shew at a very moderate valuation, that my books were worth more than 170 £. Accidentally I met with Th. Davies & offer'd him my translation of Boson's travels into Louisiana which he immediately took at the rate of 25 £, but he wish'd still more, to enter into an Agreement with me about the Russian travels, & after some talk we agreed

Fig. 26. First page, letter by Thomas Pennant to J. R. Forster.

London, May the 20th 1771.

Dear Sir

It is with pleasure that I heard, You were arrived safe at Oxford, & hope to hear the same agreeable [*sic*] news of Y<sup>r</sup> arrival at Chester.

I have gone in Y<sup>r</sup> absence through a great deal of difficulties, & I am not yet quite free, however there is now a fair prospect of getting soon the better of all. I offered [*sic*] my books as a pledge for about 60 £ I wanted to buy furniture with but I was every where refused, tho' I could plainly shew [*sic*] at a very moderate valuation, that my books were worth more than 170 £. Accidentally I met with Th. Davies<sup>2</sup> & offered [*sic*] him my translation of *Bossu's Travels into Louisiana*<sup>3</sup> which he immediately took at the rate of 25 £, but he wished still more, to enter into an Agreement with me about the Russian travels, & after some talk we agreed [end of page 1] at last: he gives me for the copy 250 £, 12 copies, & 50 Guineas if he prints a new edition. I am to deliver the first Volume in November to draw the Maps & drawings, to have 60 £ in a few weeks advanced, & the rest of the 125 £ due for the first Volume on its delivery, & the other 125 £ for the 2<sup>d</sup> Volume on the delivery of it. M<sup>r</sup> Barrington<sup>4</sup> was so good as to mention him, that he could trust me, & so he made no further scruples: & as soon as I can remove to my new house in Sommerset-house [*sic*] Stable-Yard N<sup>o</sup> 2.; which I hope will be before the Expiration of this Week, I'll set out upon the work, with great Spirit. I offered [*sic*] it first to White,<sup>5</sup> that he might not find fault with me, for neglecting him. All is settled, but however if You would mention a word to M<sup>r</sup> Th. Davies in Russel [*sic*] Street about me, it would encourage him still more, & give me some additional merit. M<sup>r</sup> Davies [end of page 2] wants to make me acquainted with D<sup>r</sup> Sam Johnson the Lexicographer, & wishes I might supply him with Natural History terms, for a new Edition of his Dictionary.<sup>6</sup>

Last Friday M<sup>r</sup> James West Pres<sup>t</sup> of the Royal Society<sup>7</sup> got a letter from the Gentlemen on board the Endeavour Sloop, mentioning that all were safe & well & only one Engraver a sickly man is dead,<sup>8</sup> & they are now expected in a few days or weeks, as they were in 8<sup>br</sup> [October, 1770] last at Batavia. Will You come up to see M<sup>r</sup> Banks<sup>9</sup> when he arrives; or will You let me have a letter for M<sup>r</sup> Banks, to deliver it to him, as soon as he arrives: In case You intend not to come, I would regard it as a favour to be the bearer of such a letter wherein You'll mention me as Y<sup>r</sup> friend & client.

I have at last settled the affair with Heydinger<sup>10</sup> he wishes to see a Specimen of one

<sup>2</sup> Bookseller, (1712?-1785) See *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 5, pp. 608-609.

<sup>3</sup> Published London, 1771, 2 volumes, full title given in note to item 619, Hunt Botanical Catalogue (vol. 2, p. 345).

<sup>4</sup> Dedicattee: (Daines Barrington, (1727-1800). See *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 4, pp. 1206-1208.

<sup>5</sup> Benjamin White, brother of Gilbert White (1725-1794), successful publisher in Fleet Street, London. See *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 21, p. 37.

<sup>6</sup> Johnson's *Dictionary* first appeared in 1755 in 2 volumes. The third edition, also of 2 volumes, appeared in 1773, and was the last edition revised by Dr. Johnson.

<sup>7</sup> (1704-1772), President of the Royal Society from 1768-1772.

<sup>8</sup> Mr. Buchan, a landscape artist, who died on the voyage, April 17, 1769, at Port Royal Bay. See *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 4, p. 992, under Cook.

<sup>9</sup> Sir Joseph Banks, accompanied Cook on voyage of the *Endeavour* (1768-1771), arrived in England June 12, 1771 in the Downs. *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 4, pp. 992-993.

<sup>10</sup> C. Heydinger, translator of Le Roy's *A Narrative . . .* London, 1774. See Cox, E. G., *A reference guide to the literature of travel*, vol. 2, p. 18 (1938).

plate for [end of page 3] our Latin Synopsis<sup>11</sup> before he concludes with Murray.<sup>12</sup> I have taken the whole in Consideration & in order to give a representative of almost [*sic*] every Genus I have given a new bill of fare, which I join here<sup>13</sup> & wish to hear Y<sup>r</sup> opinion about it; at least be so kind not to mention any thing to Heydinger, till You let me know first Y<sup>r</sup> opinion: and after we have settled all about this, You'll be so kind to let Heydinger know in a letter that this Catalogue of plates is approved by You; not being too expensive, nor too stinted giving a representative almost of every Genus, & many new drawings & curious non descript Animals represented.

I have not yet done Y<sup>r</sup> copy of Kalm, as George<sup>14</sup> had no time to colour the plates for You, but in a few days it will go, with the copies of Kalm for the Subscribers in Y<sup>r</sup> neighbourhood to M<sup>r</sup> Lawton<sup>15</sup> to Chester, & I'll send you advice of its going, so that if You want any thing else, not to [*sic*] bulky, to be put in the parcel, it might go along with it. As I have disposed of my Russian Travels.<sup>16</sup> [End of letter.]

On the front flyleaf of Vol. I of the Chapin copy, and perhaps in Pennant's hand, is written:

Gift of the Translator 1771.

Below (see Fig. 27), is written in a different pen and ink:

I was very desirous to see a translation of the Travels of the pupils of Linnaeus, as my desire and by the encouragement received from me & [crossed out] my friend [crossed out] Doctor Forster undertook the work. The voyage of Kalm was the first. It succeeded so well that he afterwards translated those of Osbeck<sup>17</sup> & Toreen<sup>18</sup> to the East Indies & China. Then the life of Loeffling<sup>19</sup> another of Linnaeus's disciples who went to Spanish America where he died in Andulusia [*sic*] or Gumana,<sup>20</sup> his catalogues of the plants he observed in Spain & in S.[outh] America form the second volume of the Doctors Translation of Bossu's travels into Louisiana.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Is this *Flora Americae Septentrionalis* (1771), or *Catalogue of the animals of North America*?

<sup>12</sup> Not identified; would be a printer or publisher.

<sup>13</sup> Not with letter or in book at the Chapin Library, may have been on separate sheet[s].

<sup>14</sup> His son, who is credited with doing the coloring of the plates. All plates are colored in the Chapin copy.

<sup>15</sup> Mr. Lawton, of Chester, not identified.

<sup>16</sup> Reinhold was in Russia in 1765. His son, George, attended school in St. Petersburg. They went to London at the end of 1766, and to the Academy at Warrington in 1768, where the elder taught. See *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 7, p. 455.

<sup>17</sup> Petrus Osbeck. See Cox, *op. cit.* vol. 1, pp. 298, 342 (1935).

<sup>18</sup> Olof Toreen. See Cox, *op. cit.* vol. 1, p. 298 [Torén].

<sup>19</sup> Peter Loeffling. See Cox, *op. cit.* vol. 2, p. 142, 283 (1938). His *Iter hispanicum* Stockholm, 1758. Original edition in Swedish. Peter [or Peder] Loeffling, a Swedish botanist, and pupil and friend of Linnaeus, died of fever in Venezuela, February 22, 1756.

<sup>20</sup> Cumaná, or Camaná. Nueva Andalucía; NW in South America.

<sup>21</sup> Nicholas Bossu's *Travels* . . . (1768), mentioned in Forster's letter, see footnote 3.

Gift of the Translator 1771.

I was very desirous to see a translation of the Travels of the pupils of Linnæus. as my desire & by the encouragement received from me ~~to~~ my friend Doctor Foster undertook the work. The voyage of Kalm was the first. It succeeded so well that he afterwards translated those of Osbeck & Forssk to the East Indies & China. Then the life of Loefling another of Linnæus's disciples who went to Spanish America where he died in New Andalusia or Camaguey. his catalogue of the plants he observed in Spain & in S. America form the second volume of the Doctors Translation of Bophs Travels into Louisiana.

Mr Kalm

Fig. 27. Commentary on Kalm's Travels in unknown hand.



Inside the back cover of Volume III are brief notes and references to pages, seemingly in Pennant's hand, as well as a clipping from an unidentified late eighteenth century newspaper, bearing the heading:

"A Correspondent, who has been many Years in Canada, has favoured us with the following Account of the Country, Lakes, &c. from Quebec to Lake George in America."

A word about some of the names in the long "List of Subscribers" may be of interest. Among the more than two hundred names there are many that are familiar, and the following are indicative of the kinds of persons listed: Thomas Pennant, Joseph Priestly, Benj. Stillingfleet (2 copies), Thos. Tyrrwhitt, Andrew Napier, Mr. Middleton of the Temple, Duke of Marlborough, Thos. Falconer (2 copies), Wm. Eden, Sir John Eden, Rev. Walter Borlase, Rev. George Borlase, Rev. Wm. Borlase (3 copies), Hon. Daines Barrington [Dedicatee of Vol. 1], and Edw. Archer, M.D. of Gray's Inn.

While investigating Pennant's handwriting, prior to final preparation of these notes, some interesting and relevant material in Harvard's Houghton Library were located. Among them is a short holograph letter from Thomas Pennant (1726-1798) addressed to Thomas Martyn (1735-1825), Professor of Botany, Cambridge University, and a subscriber to the *Travels*, dated from Downing, June 9, 1775, and consisting of twelve lines written as a covering note for a parcel which was being sent to Mr. White with a "description of the several vultures."

Also owned by the Houghton Library is a very interesting and valuable "Scrapbook" received from the estate of Samuel Henshaw and containing Thomas Pennant's *ex libris*,<sup>22</sup> a number of engravings, drawings, colored and plain, and three letters from Johann Reinhold Forster to Thomas Pennant. All of the letters are in Forster's holograph, and are dated 10 November, 2 December, and 13 December, 1771. Two bear the address, "No. 2 Sommerset Stable Yard", to one was added the word "Strand." The first letter is the longest and contains 8 pages of abstracts translated from "Amboinar" [?] as well as an account of "The Phoenix" by Forster. The other two are on a single sheet, folded, making four pages of writing, very similar to the format of the letter in the Chapin's copy of Kalm's *Travels*. Both of the later letters contain information on events, birds, plates, etc., the kind of communication that was usual between scientists.

H. Richard Archer  
Chapin Library  
Williams College

<sup>22</sup> The motto on Pennant's *ex libris*, is in Welsh, and may be freely transcribed HEB DUW HEB DIM, A DUW A DIGG ON, and translated, "Without God, without anything; with God, enough!"