

**SELF-SELECTED
ESSAYS: A
SECOND SERIES**

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Self-selected essays: a second series by Augustine Birrell

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AUGUSTINE BIRRELL

**SELF-SELECTED
ESSAYS: A
SECOND SERIES**

UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME.

IN PREPARATION.

FROM FIJI TO THE CANNIBAL ISLANDS.	<i>Beatrice Grimshaw.</i>
FROM A COLLEGE WINDOW.	<i>A. C. Benson.</i>
A LODGE IN THE WILDERNESS.	<i>John Buchan.</i>
WILD ANIMALS I HAVE KNOWN.	<i>Thompson Seton.</i>
THE LAND OF FOOTPRINTS.	<i>Stewart E. White.</i>
THE PATH TO ROME.	<i>Hilaire Belloc.</i>
THE GREAT BEER WAR.	<i>A. Conan Doyle.</i>
A MODERN UTOPIA.	<i>H. G. Wells.</i>
WILD LIFE IN A SOUTHERN COUNTY.	<i>Richard Jefferies.</i>

SELF-SELECTED ESSAYS

A SECOND SERIES

BY

AUGUSTINE BIRRELL

LOCKE—

"I am not to answer for Malebranche, but for myself. I make use of Authors only as they come into my subject, but I never go out of my way to bring them in."

MONTAIGNE—

"I won't dispute that; but in my opinion you write best when you steal most."

Dialogue between Locke and Montaigne,
by Matthew Prior.

THOMAS NELSON AND SONS, LTD.
LONDON AND EDINBURGH

P R E F A C E.

A FEW years ago my friend Mr. John Buchan was at the pains to make a selection from my Essays for the Nelson Series. I am sure he made as good a job of it as possible. At all events no complaints have reached my ears, though to be sure, in such a matter as a selection, the world is very easily content. Not so the author who has been thus treated. He, when he turns the pages of the truncated thing, though fully alive to the fact (else were he a fool, an unbearable hypothesis) that selection involves omission, and that consequently omissions there *must* be, is yet uneasy as he reads. Everywhere discrimination is discerned, as against himself; discrimination with its consequent rejection; nor can he take pleasure in the thought of his trifles "light as air" being weighed in the critical scales, one against another.

I once lived in close friendship with a poet, long since lost "in death's dateless night"; elegant, refined, ironical, who though his poetical output, all told, was of the tiniest dimensions, yet took it into

his head one day that he would like to see it cut down by just one-half—for no more than this, so he thought, would the world, ever impatient (as was he) of bulk, willingly let live. In pursuance of this design he entrusted the task of selection to a friend, also a poet, and of a kindred though more productive genius than his own, who at once, and for love's sake, undertook the Lilliputian task, and was able, in an amazingly short time, to produce the minutest of volumes. The poets exchanged thanks and compliments, and one of them supposed the incident was over. Barely a fortnight, however, had elapsed when there coyly appeared in the shops, by the side of the new-comer, a twin volume containing *all* the poems the friendly critic had omitted.

This second and self-selected selection contains nothing that is not at least ten years old; and half the "pieces" were not before Mr. Buchan when he made his choice.

A. B.

SHERINGHAM, *September 1916.*

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