

**PICTURES IN PROSE OF
NATURE, WILD SPORT,
AND HUMBLE LIFE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649103652

Pictures in prose of nature, wild sport, and humble life by Aubyn Trevor-Battye

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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A Nesting Place of the Lesser Tern [*Sterna minuta*—LINN.]

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OF
NATURE, WILD SPORT, AND
HUMBLE LIFE

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LONDON
LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.
AND NEW YORK: 15 EAST 16TH STREET
1894

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81
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1894



To

MY EARLIEST TEACHER IN NATURAL HISTORY

MY MOTHER

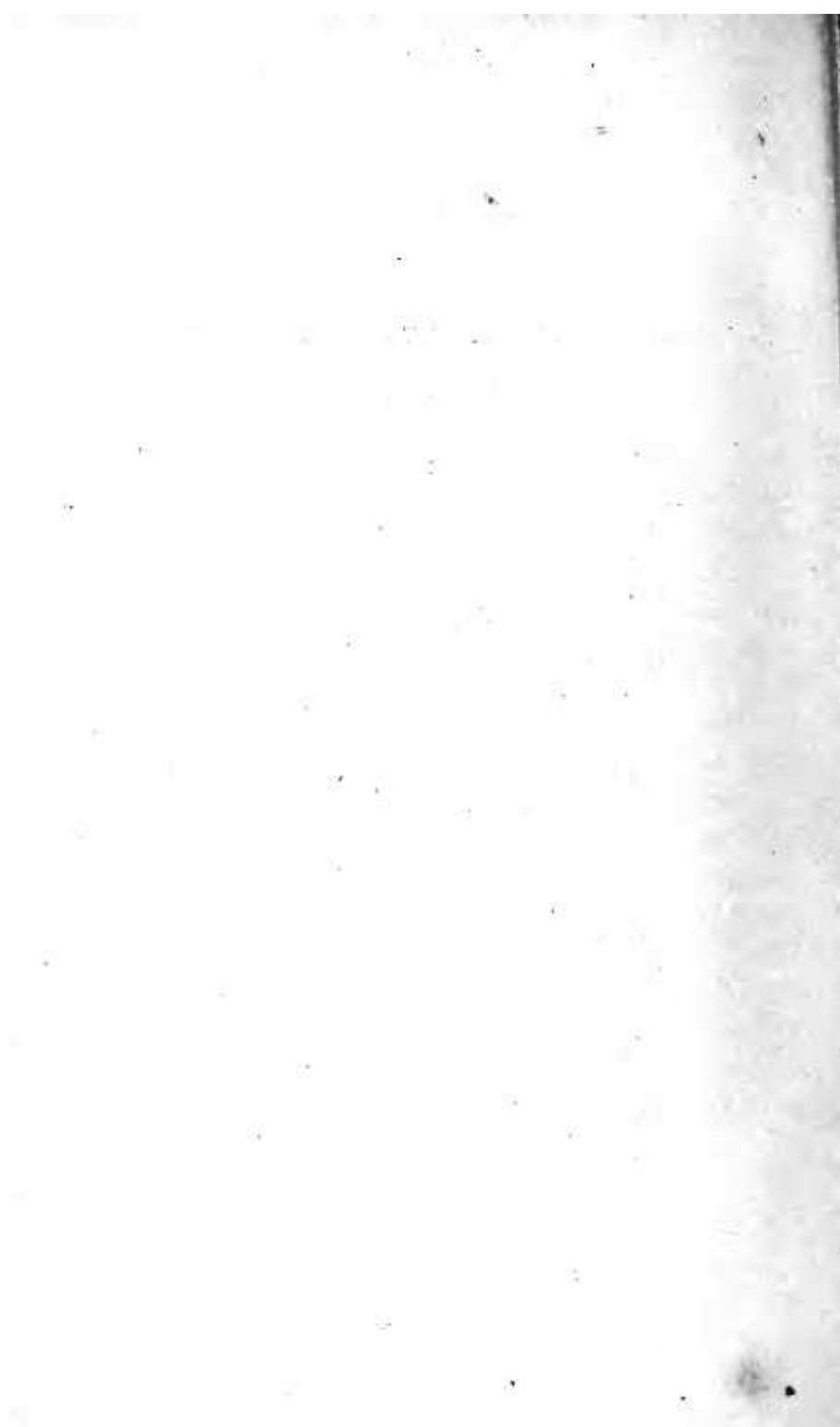
*The voice that led me at the first
To follow Nature where she moved
In lips of orchis lightly pursed,
Or ripples that the swallows loved :*

*In jewelled web, in glittered sky,
In painted poppy princely raised,
In flashings of the dragon-fly,
Rings yet its music. God be praised.*

*Then this, dear Lady (this that brings
No reasoned lore, and erudite,
Nor any deep imaginings,
But only picture-touches—light*

*As songs of summer tossed about
From forest breath to forest breath—
Of gentle peoples playing out
The fateful round of life and death)*

*This, Lady, on thy birthday take,
And love a little shall achieve
For all the gracious days that make
The radiance of a golden eve.*



PREFACE

THIS book goes out with no other pretensions beyond an aim at accuracy and truth.

The ways of some wild creatures, followed now through many years, are here dropped back into their proper places, so to say, as readably as I can contrive to do it. I have tried not barely to catalogue facts as facts, but to mirror something of the many-sided life of Nature where it beats through the seasons in this and other lands. I have tried, too, to keep touch with an influence there is out of doors, comparable with that of the beautiful in Art, but deeper-reaching, wider, finer—a star for a crimson lamp.

If in this I had perfectly succeeded, he who read would be for that time "in league with the stones of the field," the wind moving in the grasses, the sun playing on his face. And as this cannot be, I am content to hope that here may be found a

pleasant companion, to be carried perhaps in the fishing-basket or read by the winter fire.

And yet I am sure that there must be mistakes in it. Perhaps many. It is only after long and patient watching that one can at all venture to generalise from the things one sees. Often, too, the results arrived at one day seem clean contradicted the next. But this is good for every one, if only because it tends to foster that attitude by which alone is learning possible. So that no wise man will be self-satisfied the more because he seems to see anything clearly, whether a law of the universe or a secret of the humble-bee.

Quite distinct from this is the rewarding delight in learning some new truth, and such consolation for imperfect vision as may be cozened out of that old saying, "In the kingdom of the blind the one-eyed is king."