

**EMINENT  
NATURALISTS**

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Eminent naturalists by Thomas Greenwood

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**THOMAS GREENWOOD**

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# EMINENT NATURALISTS.

BY

THOMAS GREENWOOD, F.R.G.S.

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*"A Tour in the States and Canada," "Free Public Libraries,"*  
*"Half Hour Papers," etc.*

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1886.

## P R E F A C E.

THE age in which we live necessitates brevity, and average readers have not time for the perusal of voluminous biographies. It appeared to the author that there was a need of short yet comprehensive sketches of some leading naturalists, and he has attempted to supply that want. His desire has been throughout to stimulate a desire, particularly in the minds of the young, for Natural Science. Elementary lessons in Botany, Geology, and other subjects of a similar nature are now given in many Board and voluntary schools, and the author will be glad if this little book reaches the hands of some of these young students. He has endeavoured to interest the reader in the lives of a few of the men of light and leading in the study of nature.

LONDON, *January*, 1886.

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## SIR CHARLES LINNÆUS.



THE subject of this sketch was born on May 3rd, 1707. His father was pastor of the little village of Rashult, in the province of Smaland, Sweden. The family surname is supposed to have originated from a lofty linden-tree which stood in the native place of their ancestors.

Charles was the first-born of the family, and, like many other men who have made the world famous, it was intended that he should follow the same calling as his father, and though the pulpit of that day may have lost an earnest and zealous teacher, botanical science has been the gainer, and in many ways it may be said that he has exerted a wider and more beneficial influence by the calling which he eventually followed than he could possibly have done as a village pastor.

His father, Nicholas Linnæus, was passionately fond of gardening, and living as he did in the heart of a beautiful country, in a house surrounded by ample grounds, he was enabled to gratify this hobby to his heart's content, and young Charles appears to have been born with this intense love for the same pursuit, and thus his parents themselves laid the foundation of what was afterwards to defeat their most cherished wishes, that he should enter the ministry. As a babe cooing in his wooden cot he was often carried into the open air amid the trees and flowers, and the lullabies of his mother were supplemented by the lullabies of the birds and the rustling leaves. His earliest attempts to walk were among the flower-beds, and his fingers daily revealed the handfuls of soil which he had been displacing. Even his very toys were flowers, and thus in the midst of such surroundings there could be no wonder that he should grow up a veritable child of nature.

A change of pastorate in 1708 took the family to another living, and here the father selected a house with a very large garden, which he soon cultivated to such an extent as to make it the finest and most variegated in the entire district. He had at one time in it upwards of four hundred species of flowers, many of them of foreign growth. Young Charles very soon made himself familiar with the names of the plants and flowers growing around their home, and almost as soon as he had found the use of his little legs he went out on private expeditions and brought home roots of weeds and wild herbs among

other things, and these he himself planted in the garden, giving his father great trouble to get rid of them afterwards. The boy, however, soon began to distinguish what he could bring home and plant with safety, and what he could not.

The time soon came when Charles was to attend his first school, and to Wexico, a neighbouring town, he was sent in 1717. His father had given him a good elementary education, and of Latin the boy's head had just about as much as he could well carry at that time; but, chief of all, his love for his favourite pursuit went with him, and it was fortunate that the rector of the school was also fond of botany, and soon took an additional interest in Charles when he discovered that he possessed extraordinary talents in quoting the names and peculiarities of plants and flowers which grew about the school. The majority of the school-companions of Linnæus were far ahead of him in the ordinary studies which they passed through, and looked upon Charles in the light of a truant in his self-imposed excursions after plants at the expense of Hebrew and the other subjects of the school course. So negligent did the boy become of these subjects, that the tutors, after many admonitions, considered it necessary to complain to his father, and this so disturbed the senior in his mind that Charles was severely reprimanded. He promised to pay all the attention which he could to divinity, but had to confess to his father that he possessed no inclination whatever for the sacred pursuit which he so eagerly desired him to