

{Endpaper}

Walden April 17 1846

Even nations are ennobled by affording protection to the weaker races of animals. When I read of some custom by which an ancient people recognized the migrations of birds and beasts, or any necessity of theirs, they seem not more savage but more god like— The Greeks were not above this humane intercourse with nature. They were as happy as children on the arrival of the swallow in the spring—and the passage of cranes from the sources of the Nile. They took note of and delight in such trifling events like Indians. Anacreon sings

Behold how the crane travels  
Behold how the duck dives.

The partridge & the quail the swan and the stork were also mentioned by the poets with distinction.

According to Hare “The children in Rhodes greeted the latter (i.e. the swallow) as herald of the spring in a little song. Troops of them, carrying about a swallow (*χελιδονίζοντες*), sang this from door to door, and collected provisions in return.” I give my own translation as most literal

The swallow has come,  
The swallow has come,  
Bringing beautiful hours,  
Beautiful seasons,  
White on the belly,  
Black on the back.  
—Wilt thou bring forth figs  
From thy fat house,  
And a cup of wine,  
And a canister of cheese,  
And wheaten bread? The swallow

The existing annotation reads

233.4-7 When . . . like--: The book T was reading has not been identified; it may be the source of material from 233.7 to 234.14 and from 234.38 to 235.13.

T was reading Heinrich Hase, *The Public and Private Life of the Ancient Greeks*, (London: John Murray, 1836), pp. 23-26, which was available to him in the Harvard College library. He quotes passages about the swallow at 233.17-234.14 and the ox at 234.38-235.13 from Hase.

THE  
PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LIFE  
OF  
THE ANCIENT GREEKS.

BY

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Translated from the German.

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LONDON:  
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.  
MDCCCXXXVI.

AH4818.36

~~10223/15~~

LONDON:  
PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS,  
Stamford Street.

AH 4818:36

*Antiqu. Vc*



*Bought with the  
Library Fund  
subscribed in 1842*

*Recd Sept. 5,  
1843*

*1845*

realms of ether, was attached to the prophet-god, Apollo. The white migratory pigeon of Syria was sacred to Venus, because it is frequently found on Paphos and Eryx, where the worship of Aphrodite, as a goddess of outward nature, first arose. The Dodonean doves, according to Herodotus, were dark coloured. The first white ones that were seen in Greece, appeared when the Persian fleet, under Mardonius, was wrecked at the foot of Athos.

The peacock belonged to the temple of Here, at Samos. From that spot they spread over Greece, but were always rare. In the time of Socrates, and even of Philip of Macedon, they were admired as curiosities, and in earlier times, a thousand drachmæ was the price of a single peahen. An edict of the Emperor Diocletian (A.D. 303), for the city of Stratonice, fixes the price of a fatted peacock, in dear times, at two hundred and fifty (bad) denarii; for Roman gluttony, from the time of Hortensius, had reckoned peafowl among its dainties. Pheasants are spoken of as a festal dish by Philoxenus of Cythera, in his poem of the Banquet (*δειπνον*). A hybrid race was produced by a cross with the common fowl. Fighting-cocks, in whose battles the ancients so greatly delighted, were reared more particularly in Bœotia, Rhodes, and Chalcis.

Nor was the melodious song of the nightingale wanting in the groves and thickets of Greece, though she was but a foreigner and a visiter, and her voice was heard but for a short time. Attic vanity connected the sweet songstress of spring with Attic history by a mythic tale: the household swallow was, in like manner, interwoven with the legendary history of Athens by the tragic poets of the Attic stage. The nightingale and the swallow were both of them

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birds of passage. The children in Rhodes greeted the latter as herald of the spring in a little song. Troops of them, carrying about a swallow (*χελιδονίζοντες*), sang this from door to door, and collected provisions in return. It is so descriptive, and affords so many interesting comparisons, that we may allow it a place here.

ἮΝΘ', ἦνθε χελιδὸν  
καλὰς ὄρας ἄγοισα,  
καλὰς ἱμαυτὰς,  
ἐπὶ γαστέρα λιυὰ,  
ἐπὶ νῶτα μίλαινα.

—παλάθειν σὺ προκύβλι  
ἐκ πίονος οἴκου  
οἶνω τι δίκαστρον,  
τύρω τι κάνιστρον  
καὶ πύργα; χελιδὸν  
καὶ τὸν λικιθίταν

ἐκ ἀπωθεῖται. πότιρ' ἀπίωμις, ἢ λαβώμεθα;  
αἱ μὲν τι δώσεις—αἱ δὲ μὴ, οὐκ ἰάσομις  
ἢ τὰν θύραν φέρωμις, ἢ θύπτεθυρον,—

—ἢ τὰν γυναῖκα τὰν ἴσω καθημίαν.  
μικρὰ μὲν ἴντι, ῥαδίως μιν οἴσομις.  
ἰὰν φέρης δέ τι, μίγα δὴ τι καὶ φέροις.  
ἄνοιγ', ἄνοιγε τὰν θύραν χελιδόνι!  
οὐ γὰρ γέροντίς εἰμις, ἀλλὰ παιδία.\*

The Swallow is come!  
The Swallow is come!  
O fair are the seasons, and light  
Are the days, that she brings  
With her dusky wings,  
And her bosom snowy white.

\* Athenæus, viii. c. 60. The first eleven verses are monometer hypercatalectic anapæstics. In v. 10, the best MS. has *καὶ πυρῶνα*: Hermann de Metris, II., 37, § 16, reads *καὶ πυρῶνα*, thinking that *πυρῶς* might occasionally have had a neuter plural. The true reading, however, is evidently *πύργα*, from *πύργου*, which is both a correct form, and nearer to the manuscript.—*Transl.*

- And wilt thou not dole  
 From the wealth, that is thine,  
 The fig and the bowl  
 Of rosy wine,  
 And the wheaten meal, and the basket of cheese,  
 And the omelet cake, which is known to please  
 The Swallow, that comes to the Rhodian land?  
 Say, must we be gone with an empty hand,  
 Or shall we receive  
 The gift that we crave?  
 If thou give, it is well;  
 But beware, if thou fail,  
 Nor hope, that we'll leave thee,  
 Of all we'll bereave thee.  
 We'll bear off the door,  
 Or its posts from the floor,
- Or we'll seize thy young wife who is sitting within,  
 Whose form is so airy, so light, and so thin,  
 And as lightly, be sure, will we bear her away.  
 Then look that thy gift be ample to-day,  
 And open the door, open the door,  
 To the Swallow open the door!  
 No greybeards are we  
 To be foil'd in our glee,  
 But boys, who will have our will  
 This day,  
 But boys, who will have our will.

The chief food of the swallow consisted of those chirping crickets (the *ἄκριδες*, as well as the *τέττιγες*) which were kept in houses like singing birds, and more especially in the apartments of the women, By a quick tremulous motion of the wings against the sides these little creatures produced a sort of song which, according to the notion of the Greeks, formed a part of the full charm of summer. The fashion of wearing a golden cricket in the hair was one of great



antiquity in Athens. Many fanciful interpretations have been given to this custom; by some it was said to denote not only the love of music but the privileges of autochthony, of which this insect was the sacred symbol.

Autumn was the season of that annual emigration of the cranes to the sources of the Nile, which suggested those inimitable lines in which Homer describes the noisy troops.\* Storks, quails (the type of every thing common-place), and geese, were among the migratory birds. The swan, which the lyric poets, from Hesiod's time, made the attendant on Apollo,—bringing with her from far Ligya that dying song which was afterwards derided as a fable to the well known seats of the god,—bred in the marshy shores of the Eurotas, in Tempe and at Delphi. But the ear of the Greeks heard, even in the call with which the tame partridge enticed its wild companions, a clear song, agreeable from the invitation it conveyed. And thus the first voice of the cuckoo rejoices the ear of man in every clime and country of the wide earth.

The sea, in its bays and harbours, affords treasures which are but little known or explored.

Fishes.

Modern travellers affirm that the Greeks are now very inexpert fishermen, and it appears that their ancestors had but little skill in fishery. The most important production of the sea was the thunny, (*Θύννις*, *πήλαμος*, *κορδύλη*, *Θύννος ὄρκυνος*, named according to the difference of size and age), which yearly passed in shoals through the Gaditanian strait into the inner sea. The whole body resorted to the

\* Hom. Il. iii. v. 2.