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CHAPTER ONE

The Guardian Tree

A BIOGRAPHY BEGINS long before the subject's birth and does not end with his or her death: the lifespan it charts is inextricably linked to time and natural surroundings. A human life depends on weather and wind as well as guardianship. The personal narrative is given shape by parents and by those others who remember or care enough to investigate, to follow the tracks in the grass and in the archives.

We live in the shade of trees. In ancient times, Nordic people believed that the World Tree was an ash and the protective guardian tree a linden—a *Tilia*. The biography of Linnaeus should surely begin with a linden. In the late sixteenth century, a huge, split specimen with three trunks grew in Jonsboda in the Småland parish Vittaryd. Three local families were said to stem from the tree and to have taken their names from it: the Lindelius, Linnaeus, and Tiliander families. The great linden had once been declared dead but is still alive. This is Linnaeus identifying himself: “God let him spring forth from a stubborn root, replanted him into a distant place and, praise be, allowed him to soar and grow into a worthy tree.”¹

On the 23rd day of the lovely month of May, the newborn boy, who would be called Carl, opened his eyes to see the world around him: “The most beauteous spring, when the cuccu hailed the summer between *frondescentiae* [coming into leaf] and *florescentiae* [flowering].” His place of birth was the rectory in Råshult, County Småland and near the border with County Skåne, which within living memory had belonged to Denmark. Carl was born in 1707, during the night: “Between the 12th and 13th day by the Gregorian style of reckoning, at one in the morning, in the realm of Sweden, the parish of Stenbrohult, the village of Råshult.”² As this quote shows, the “old-style” calendar was still in use. Sweden had

not yet adopted the new order, so was “behind the times” and would, from then on, try in all things to catch up with the international lead.

The year of his birth fell during the somber final stages of the Great Northern War. Just two years later, the Swedish army would lose the battle against the Russians at Poltava and, by then, the country was exhausted from never-ending warfare. In 1709 the Danish government set out to reoccupy the Swedish territory lost after the peace of Roskilde. The Danish army landed near the coastal city of Helsingborg in November that year. The governor general of Skåne, Magnus Stenbock, retreated to Växjö in central Småland but ultimately led the defensive forces to victory.

The witch-hunting hysteria, particularly feverish in the north, had reached Småland by then. A few generations earlier, Johanne Pedersdatter, a distant Norwegian relation on Linnaeus’s mother’s side, had been convicted of witchcraft and burned at the stake in Stavanger.³ Linnaeus seems never to have referred to this relative and may not have known about her. He also makes no reference to the plague that followed in the wake of the war and caused at least a hundred thousand deaths, nor to other forms of contagion made worse by poverty and starvation, nor to the King’s taste for war games. A freer, more sensible world was on its way, though. Little Carl’s arrival might have been seen to counterbalance the unrest of the time, or as heralding better days to come.

Carl was the firstborn child of his parents, Nils Linnaeus and Christina Broderonia, but several siblings were to follow. Nils was a minister in the Lutheran Church and, as the son of a clergyman, Carl was to follow in his footsteps and, ideally, succeed him. It was not to be; the baton—or, rather, the hymnbook—went to his brother Samuel.

Both Linnaeus’s early homes, first in Råshult and later in Stenbrohult, burned down, but a look-alike house and garden have been created in Råshult, lovingly cared for and popular with tourists.

In his several autobiographical works, Linnaeus writes of his parents with warm affection. His father was a farmer’s son, born Nils Ingemarsson and a man who “walked slowly throughout his world, finding his pleasure in the ordering and care of his garden with its several and sundry plants as, in such matters, he found all his peace.” A few years after Carl’s birth, Nils was promoted from curate to rector in Stenbrohult parish. He now had a home near the parish church as well as his house and grounds in Råshult. The document confirming his position as rector was properly signed by the king on 12 August 1708, though Charles XII was at the time somewhere near Mogilev in White Russia (Belarus). His wife Christina, Linnaeus’s mother, was the daughter of the former rector of Stenbrohult.

She was “heedful and indeed so industrious as to never give herself time to rest. She feared God greatly and was the mother of 5 children. . . . She was a beautiful young girl. . . . The boy was nursed, suckling his own mother’s breasts.” This last remark reflects a significant element in Linnaeus’s later instructions about natural nutrition. Christina’s stepmother was a harsh, difficult woman, which might be why the younger woman accepted Nils’s proposal—“although otherwise, she had not been thus inclined.”

Carl’s parents are both described as “of middling height”—that is, “short” by present-day standards—but the differences between them are more striking. Nils was heavily built and she was slender; furthermore, “his spirit slow to anger, even-tempered, and good, hers sharp-tongued, quick, and workaday.”⁴ Linnaeus is mostly rather silent about his mother, which might suggest secret reservations.

“For her, the day of 13 May 1707 was a day of mourning, as she gave birth, with the greatest difficulty and danger to her life, to a well-formed son: this despite her wish that the child would have been of the gentler sex. . . . The man was however made happy indeed and his gladness atoned for her grief. Thus, they joyfully christened this child, their firstborn, on the 19th day of that same month.” Here, the writer is Samuel, Carl’s younger brother by eleven years; he is addressing the Småland “nation” at Uppsala University after his eminent brother’s death in the New Year 1778.⁵ How is it that Samuel knows about his mother’s regrets? Why mention it in this context? We don’t know. One explanation might be found in the “tradition of conservation”—a form of social support based on the rule that the young clergyman should marry the dead pastor’s widow and support any children. The pastor’s grown daughter would be free to marry “out.”

Linnaeus speaks of his mother only once more: “At 6 o’clock [6 June 1733] after midday, my most dear and pious mother departed, causing me in my absence an ineffable anxiety, grief, and harm.” There is nothing more. Nils wrote about his wife in her book of remembrance: “She always feared God and ordered her home well, always diligent and cautious, generous and heedful, and gifted with fine understanding.”

“A great man can come from a small house,” Linnaeus remarked, referring to himself. Physically, he was a small man, even for his time (estimated height about 153 cm), and seems fascinated by the tall and strongly built: “Those living here [in Stenbrohult], as well as in most Småland parishes, incline to be larger than elsewhere, as is true for both sexes, for the probable reason of belonging to the old tribe of Göthaland, as strangers are seldom seen here and a farmer rarely has his daughter marry anyone not born in the parish.”⁶ Linnaeus’s notes contain occasional references to

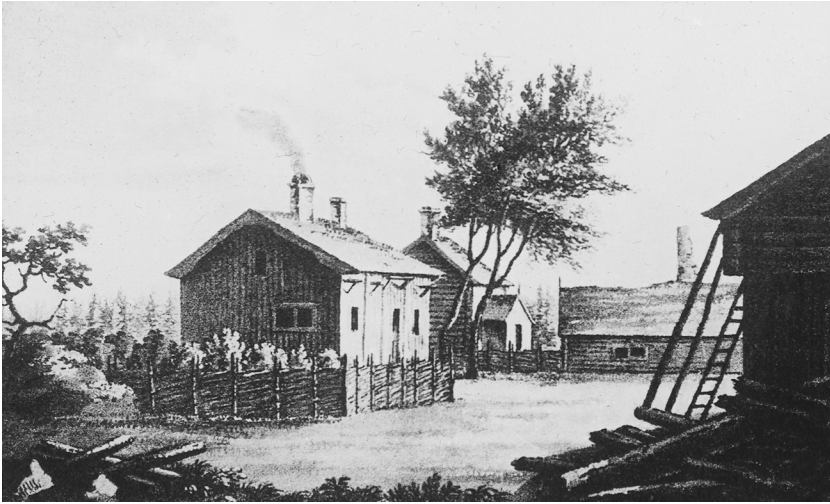


FIGURE 3. “A great man can come from a small house.” Råshult, Linnaeus’s place of birth. The original house has burned down. Uppland Museum.

a tall Finn called Daniel Cajanus, and one note mentions that the Sami are shorter than himself. Johan Lång (Tall) was a member of Linnaeus’s student “nation”—the Småland nation at Uppsala University—and his height caught the attention of its recordkeeper: “Master Tall from Tall Lycke vilage is tall—a tall man’s tall son.”

In 1703 Stenbrohult parish had 206 inhabitants but, by 1729, the local population had increased to 578. Local authority was embodied in the rector, who kept the parish records of births and deaths, went to people’s homes to make sure that they knew their catechism, and would advise in day-to-day matters. People understood their country in the terms of the Protestant exposition of the relationship between the state, the working people, and the church; this text was printed and distributed with hymnbooks and catechisms. Its fundamental thesis was Luther’s teaching about the three hierarchies or estates: church, political establishment, and household. These three entities were also defined respectively as the learned, exploitative, and nourishing estates, and their roles illustrated by a dozen short passages from the Bible.

Nils was a practical man, well able to restore the decaying parish church and keep the rectory in good repair. He was a man of learning but also a farmer who knew how to speak to other farmers. The parish supported their rector generously and helped him to construct a morgue and an ossuary near the church, and also to restore the rectory after a fire.

The rector paid for guest rooms, farm laborers' quarters, and a bathhouse. Everyone was forthright and trusting, the old soldiers as well as other villagers. What was said of the farmer Åke Kvick in Råshult was more or less generally true: "Well versed in the Bible, a patient man who never let the world weigh on his spirit."

Linnaeus writes in *Spolia Botanica*: "Stenbrohult is a parish found some 30 miles from Wexiö, toward the border with Skåne in the municipality of Allbo, and which, compared with all other places, in appearance is like a queen among sisters; preferred to others even in the location of rare and wondrous herbs not often to be seen elsewhere in the country. Indeed, the very rectory here is as if adorned by Flora herself; I would doubt if any space in the whole world could present itself more pleasantly. Surely it is not strange that I have reason to lament along with the poet: 'Nescio qua natale solum dulcedine cunctos / ducit et immemores non sinit esse sui'" (Our native land charms us with inexpressible sweetness and never allows us to forget that we belong to it).⁷

Much later, when Linnaeus reluctantly agrees to describe landscapes, he declares that he is like a lynx abroad but a mole at home, and knows more about "what is produced by Virginia in America, Cap de Bonne Sperence in Africa, and Zeylon in the East Indies, than in my own native land which I left before I had properly woken and rubbed the sleep from my eyes."

He had hardly seen more than Stenbrohult, the village where he was born, and Växjö, the city where he went to school. He had left these places before reaching adulthood and had, ever since, hardly seen more of any one place than a wandering goose in its flight—a migratory bird. "What I saw in my youth, or through the eyes of old Cubae or of Arvid Månsson Rydaholm, I still recall as if it were a dream and, now, it is all I can speak about."⁸ He goes on, however, to describe uplands and high hills, forests, meadows, fields, marshes, and lakeshores before getting around to the plants, the animals, and the minerals—in fact, he turns out to be a man with an excellent memory. Far from being a blind mole, he was a lynx also in the forests of his childhood.

Göran Wahlenberg, a colleague of a later generation, provides an explanation of Linnaeus's scientific approach in the 1822 issue of the yearbook *Svea*, based on what he believes was a natural kind of cultural simplicity. "A beautiful and solitary situation, in a setting of low hills pierced by many streams and cloaked in vigorous birch woods. The scarcity that affected Linné in his first youth here appears in its way to have made him stay close to his natural surroundings, indeed to unite his lively spirit with them and thus develop in him that natural sensibility, which to

such a great extent nourishes the imagination and so becomes a source of the finest qualities.”

In other words, Råshult and Stenbrohult were the right places to foster qualities such as characterized Linnaeus the man. Wahlenberg develops his theme and argues that the long, low ridge that runs through Uppsala has helped to change the university town into a source of creativity—of the “imaginative power” so cherished by the Romantics. Linnaeus would later admit that his home “appeared as if adorned by Flora herself. Here I have with my mother’s milk been infused by the shapes of a multitude of plants.”⁹ When he grew up, the enclosures were still in the future, and the village was surrounded by woodland meadows, a form of cultivation typical of southern Sweden. Species diversity is an outstanding characteristic of these hay meadows, and in Stenbrohult they were “richer in tree canopies and fuller of flowers than in any other province. . . . When you sit there in summertime, hearing the song of the cuccu and also songs of many other birds as well as the piping and humming of insects, and you see the bright and splendidly colored flowers, you cannot but be astounded at so excellent a creation.”¹⁰ Where the Taxås ridge enters Lake Möckeln, the views from the top of the steep rock face leave you with a sense of a great and spacious world.

Impressions of the landscape’s striking natural beauty were instilled in Linnaeus from childhood. He had learned to recognize all the flowering plants around Stenbrohult: viper’s grass, common milkwort, quaking grass, yellow rattle, heath spotted orchid, wolf’s bane—the poetry of the names alone was wonderful. The church and the rectory stood in the middle of the village. The rectory had a garden and an avenue ending at a circular drive in front of the main house. The guardian tree grew next to the house, and behind it stretched a kitchen garden and a somewhat wild “pleasure park.” These were quite large cultivated areas looked after by hired workers rather than the pastor himself. The practices and layout followed ancient patterns, perhaps going back to monastery gardens. Most of the inspection records reflect such traditions, including cabbage patches, hops cages, and ponds stocked with Crucian carp. At Råshult, they had an unusually well laid-out cabbage plot as well as an herb garden and several hop cages—hops for brewing the dark local beer. In his *Travels on Öland*, Linnaeus describes the garden of his childhood home: “It had many more species of plants than any other garden in Småland had and did with my mother’s milk inflame my spirit with an unquenchable love of plants.”

The rectories around the lake formed part of a distinctive culture. The inhabitants were related, and shared interests and tasks. The care taken

of gardens and plants is documented; one of the clerics actually owned *De plantis* (1583) by Andrea Cesalpino, the great Italian botanist.¹¹ Families, neighbors, and at least some members of the local gentry bonded with each other by being godparents when children were christened—as was carefully noted down.

Rectory kitchen gardens were “sermons made real.” Clergy who traveled abroad brought back ideas and plants—lilacs, for example, and herb gardens and arbors. We know about the gardens at Råshult from Samuel’s letters and later from Linnaeus’s *Adonis stenbrohultensis* (1732), in which the plants were already ordered by their sex.

His father, Nils, was impressively knowledgeable about plants. Carl was barely four years old when, one afternoon when house guests were resting on the grass, Nils held forth about Latin plant names: “The little one found listening to this a heart’s delight. Ever since, the lad would give the Father no peace.” Once, he had forgotten a name and was scolded by his father, but “since that moment, the boy’s entire will and thought was to remember the names and never cause his father displeasure.”¹²

Nils had an interest in botany that went well beyond even what might be expected. Linnaeus writes: “How come the boy fell in love with Flora I do not know. What I do know is that his Father had always loved the company of plants.” As a student in Lund, Nils had learned the Latin nomenclature of plants, and collected and pressed some fifty specimens. Linnaeus continues: “It was known that when the boy was troubled and could be soothed in no other way, he would soon fall quiet the moment he was given a flower to hold. This, what I believe to be his innate delight, was heightened when the boy listened to his Father speaking of some characteristic of a plant that seemed noteworthy.” Young Carl was given “a garden *en migneateur*, where in a small space he grew samples of all that was found in the garden.”¹³

Samuel Linnaeus comments in his letters on his father’s keenness for gardening and how it captivated his older brother. He also describes how Nils went about planting: “In this garden, my dear departed father had with his own hands created a round, elevated area like a *table* around which plots with herbs and shrubs represented the guests, and groups of flowers, the dishes served on the table. Our mother often went to see it: this was at the time when my brother was conceived.” The layout was recreated in 1982, the round table “set” with wild thyme, sweet William, lavender, feverfew, and musk mallow

Samuel tells another story about Carl at play with his siblings during school holidays: “At the slightest suggestion of someone’s ailment he would



FIGURE 4. The young Linnaeus? Unknown artist, oil painting in the art collection of the Småland Museum, Växjö.

palpate the sufferer's pulse, make as if to use a thumb lancet of wood (for bloodletting), and search for herbs with which to cure his sisters."¹⁴ As a boy, Linnaeus played at medicine and, by his own system, he was then at the third age of life "when, by running hither and thither in constant pre-occupation, the child practices his body incessantly, day after day"—as he would later describe it.¹⁵

How does an interest start? How does it become an obsession? Linnaeus speaks of a vision: “I was ill in 1718 from winter until Whitsun, then came out into the greenery which appeared to be not of this world but of Paradise.”¹⁶ Then:

I believe there are persons who, when stepping outside, see the ground in front of them as green with some other colors, the cloud he sees like shadows and the sun like a bright disc, so enthralled is he by economic, political, fanatical, arrogant, lustful, mercenary, vengeful, etc. concerns and impulses that he cannot see further into what comforts our Creator has provided and placed us in the midst of. . . I admit in my own case, one summer in my youth when ill with a strong fever, I did not look at nature from *medium Martii* until *Juli* and then, when I was allowed outside, I saw the world in a very much changed manner, different from before and all spread out in front of me, being so high, so beautiful. . . Then consider Adam and Eve: perfectly made, in their finest, most healthful flourishing, free of prejudices, and so shown hills and green valleys with rivers running wherever the most temperate weather might be (in *Mesopotamiae terras* or *alibi*), everywhere clad in grass, plants, trees, all green and also with every kind of flower of great loveliness, divers form and *colour*, animals who run about, birds on the wing flit through the air, singing and calling, fishes silently wander in the pellucid river gently flowing forth, insects seated on flowers and trees like small jewels, wings shimmering like a *pocader*, everything together in *migniatyr*, then would it not be the proper moment to admire the Creator as if only then had they been given eyes to see with and in their joy could not decide where to turn to see more, to observe sun and moon, stars, sky, and wander in the night. As their ears hear the murmuring of the weather, the sounds of animals and songs of the birds, would they not easily mingle with many.¹⁷

The Fall from Grace awaits . . .

Linnaeus came home to Stenbrohult to visit in the summer of 1728 and at Christmas in 1731 and 1732. In spring 1735, he stops by on his way to Holland and stays from 19 March to 15 April. All his siblings are there, and his old father: “Mother missing as she had died since one was last at home. House in confusion.”¹⁸ On 15 April: “Finally, after a month of staying at home, one must *valedict* one’s sweet *natale* Stenbrohult with one’s *Patre* in his sixties and 4 siblings. . . My elderly father commended his *Biblioteque* and also my youngest sister to my protection should a fatality

come to afflict him.”¹⁹ Linnaeus returned for a few weeks in the summer of 1738, again in 1741 on his journey to Öland, and in May 1749 on his way to Skåne. It adds up to about eight visits, surely evidence of what he calls his *nostalgia*.

When he visited in 1749, his father had died and the rectory had burned down. He wrote: “Here, I found the birds dead, the nest burned, and the young ones dispersed. I could hardly recognize the room where I had myself been hatched and felt as if present at *campum, ubi olim Troja* [the field where once stood Troy], the place where my dear departed father the rector Nils Linnaeus planted his garden that formerly glowed with the finest plants in Sweden but was utterly destroyed by fast flames before time took him away on 12 May of the past year. The pleasures of my youth, the rarest plants once growing wild in this location had not yet emerged. I, who 20 years ago knew every person in the parish, could hardly find 20 of them now; those who were stout lads in my youth had gray hair and white beards, their lives were done and a new world had taken the place of the old.”

This passage bears witness to his sense of alienation. Linnaeus had been born in an impoverished country where little was thrown away. Hordes of starving, homeless people drifted along the roads in the years when the harvest failed. Nowadays, visualizing such scenes makes us uneasy; they are very different from the glamour we believe characterized the last half of the eighteenth century.

Linnaeus tells us of his own poverty: “He could lie awake all night as he lacked the money for evening meals when he was a student.” He had to “incur debt to afford food, had no coins to have mended the soles on his shoes but must walk with his bare foot on some paper that he put inside the shoe.”²⁰ Later, he would try the natural foods eaten by the Sami as well as share sumptuous meals in the homes of the wealthy but still find his years of hardship difficult to forget. In *Nemesis divina*, his book of exemplars, Linnaeus shows compassion for the poor, as in this example: “The poor farmer labors all year, has barely the straw to rest on, and is paid but little; *sic vos, non vobis* [thus you work but not for yourselves]. Consider the poor slave, at work while you sleep. You would say of him, he ploughs my field, it is my farm and I decide. I tell you: nothing is yours. God has lent you all.”

In such times, a healthy child might well be the best insurance and old age pension. The injunction to “be fruitful and multiply” was taken seriously not least by the reverend clergy. It went without saying that Linnaeus had siblings. In 1730 his eldest sister, Anna Maria, married *magister* Gabriel Höök, appointed rector in Virestad in 1742. Her son Sven Niklas

painted a group portrait of Linnaeus's only son Carl and his sisters. In 1749 the next eldest sister, Sophia Juliana, married *magister* Johannes Collin, pastor in Ryssby. Both women gave birth to a dozen children. Once widowed, Sophia was destined to live in poverty, and Linnaeus pleaded with the diocese on her behalf. Her daughter Anna Sophia married *magister* David Widegren, also rector in Ryssby. Carl's younger brother Samuel (born 1718) studied in Lund, where his doctoral thesis was supervised by Sven Lagerbring, professor of history. He fathered twelve children, of whom only three reached adulthood: two daughters who married into the clergy and a son, Carl Samuel, born 1778. The boy had made Stenbrohult the subject of his doctoral thesis in Lund but died at the age of twenty-two. Carl's youngest sister, Emerentia (born 1723), married in 1749 to the clerk to the local authority, a Mr. Branting from Virestad. This overview indicates the social circles of country clergy.

In deepest Småland, spirits roam and can be glimpsed in the moonlight: "In Stenbrohult, when the moon shone at night, everyone could see three dancing white-clad ghosts, around three musket shots away. I denied their existence and laughed at those who believed therein but they promised to show me. One evening, when Dr. Rothman, the local judge, was present, a farmhand came with the message: 'Now they are dancing.' We went outside and saw them with our very own eyes. Then Rothman took me and my father to the place where a boulder striped with white moss seemed to shift in the moonlight." Later, he wrote self-confidently that "Spectra are seen in Smoland every night. . . . I believe there are as many in the world as there are in just Smoland." Rothman and Nils and Carl Linnaeus undeniably come across as a trio of enlightened men in a dark place.²¹ Even so, Linnaeus was always uncertain about the validity of many popular beliefs.

Linnaeus insists on the importance of birthplace. Rather than an astrologist, he is a "topologist." He would instruct his students under the subject line *Solum natale* that your health is always at its best in the place of your birth and where you were brought up because you are used to the air. Migratory birds, returning in spring to their native homes, are examples of this principle. "In this context, an illness called *nostalgia* [homesickness] is found, which principally causes the sufferer to be weak, anxious, *cacheticus* [cachexia, a wasting syndrome] and look as though having contracted pneumonia." Swedes have found that traveling to Holland can bring on this condition: "The symptoms afflicted also *regius medicus* [royal physician] Linnaeus when he was in Holland and contracted the ague before he left the place where he stayed and arrived at

the sandy heathlands of Brabant where the air was clean and, on that day, he was well again.” Linnaeus has another example at hand: an Inuit girl from Greenland who lived briefly with the late queen of Sweden [Ulrika Eleonora the Younger]. He observes that no *Lapp* living high on a hill is a *melancholicus*, but the opposite is the case with those who live in forests. The place where you live and the air you breathe are critically important, and it follows that homesickness is very strongly felt by people born at high altitudes who have ended up living in lowland areas, for instance Swiss people in Holland.

Linnaeus also stressed that inheritance matters, for instance to be conceived by healthy parents, and points to himself as living evidence. True, his temperament at least was very different from that of his placid father, who was content to live quietly in his own small world. Linnaeus was perhaps more like his mother, with her “quick” mind.

When he died at the age of seventy-four, Nils Linnaeus was celebrated in learned journals for his beautiful garden but above all for instilling a ceaselessly active mind in his eldest son. Fredrik Hasselquist, a naturalist who had traveled widely, writes in praise of the son as much as of the father: “His son sprung from his root / and brought his country honor; as Nature’s spokesman he stood out / peerless in the Nordic lands.”²²

What were Linnaeus’s thoughts about childhood, his own and more generally? He insisted that babies should continue to suckle mother’s milk for a few years because he saw it as important on moral and practical as well as medical grounds. Worm infestations can follow drinking cow’s milk but not mother’s milk. The baby consumes milk at will, without forcing, and the mother need not chew the food for her little one. A child must never be deprived of rest and sufficient sleep; for boys, he recommended sleeping twelve hours out of every twenty-four. Parents often urge their children on: “[They] think it will give their children quicker minds, but instead of catching fish they get frogs. . . . Is it not so that every day you can observe the children of the wealthy families who, from the age of 4 years until they are 24, have been made to study and tutored daily whereas the poor farmer’s son who begins with books 10 years later, has come much further in his studies and also in his *ingenio* although having taken the same length of time while the other’s youth had passed in silence.”²³ The physical effects are dire, too: “To force the children to sit all day over the books in *scholis* distresses them and makes them smaller and thinner.”²⁴

He summarizes: “All that is done to bring up a child is directed toward this: to teach them good habits.” On the other hand: “Habits are of the Devil. God help whoever has been given a bad habit. . . . As when children

are told to fear the villain who lurks in the darkness beyond the window-pane so that they must not step outside at night and must be quiet. . . . As for me, I did not dare go outside alone until my twentieth year and, in some places, I shudder even though I know better. . . . *Caveat hinc* [beware here]: If you instill a belief in a child, it will stay in his mind for far too long a time.”²⁵

What were the factors that contributed to shaping the young Linnaeus? He grew up in a rural-agrarian Sweden, in a Lutheran pastor’s home, and experienced its natural surroundings, but also in wartime, with all its consequences of poverty, pestilence, and a high mortality rate. Oscar Levertin, who has written a classical account of Linnaeus’s childhood, ends with the following passage: “On one of the innumerable pieces of paper on which, in his high old age, he noted down his solitary thoughts, is written in the shaking, perhaps stroke-troubled hand of an old man, a single word under the heading *Nostalgia: Stenbrohult*.”²⁶ True, Linnaeus discussed *nostalgia* in his large manuscript on dietetics and also in his taxonomy of illnesses. We know that, for him, childhood is bathed in a blessed light. As for that “piece of paper,” no one except Levertin has ever seen it.

The image of Linnaeus as a child is an integral part of the cult of the man. As the “child of nature,” he gained by instruction in natural learning of a kind approved by Rousseau. He was, by definition, a child of nature, and his authenticity implies that he shared ancient wisdom and natural religiosity. Even as an adult, he was thought naïve, innocent, and, hence, charming. There are risks, though, when you gild a childhood like his—especially as he himself was lending a helping hand.

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