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character than for that God-given vision of the Divine glory, of which "he who has beheld the least fragment . . . will have a confidence and a power which nothing else can bring."¹

And, after all, such an attitude does not seem to be consistent with those wider views of Divine providence which give, perhaps, the best external evidence for the truth of the Divine word. That wonderful correspondence between the view of the Divine purpose, as given in the Scriptures, and the circumstances of the Jews up to our own day is, perhaps, the most striking thing in history, the more so that that purpose has been fulfilled not by, but in spite of, them. It was no mere enlightened conscience or spiritual insight which foresaw the blessing of all nations in Israel—brought about in a way so absolutely opposed to their own ideas and desires; while we still find them, as so graphically described in Deuteronomy, scattered "among all peoples, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth,"² and their city (as Christ foretold) in such a peculiar sense "trodden down by the Gentiles."³ It is this which gives us confidence that the holy men of old, who spoke of all these things, "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost";⁴ and while yet "the earnest expectation of the creation waits for the revealing of the sons of God,"⁵ such a view justifies us in looking still forward with assurance to those "times of restitution of all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of His holy prophets since the world began."⁶



John Mulso's Letters to Gilbert White of Selborne.

BY CANON J. VAUGHAN, M.A.

THERE was published not long ago a series of letters, extending over a period of nearly half a century, written by his "most intimate friend" John Mulso to the naturalist of Selborne. The first mention of this correspondence, which

¹ Westcott, "Christus Consummator," p. 171. ² Deut. xxviii. 64.
³ Luke xxi. 24. ⁴ 2 Pet. i. 21. ⁵ Rom. viii. 19. ⁶ Acts iii. 21.

consists of considerably over two hundred letters, seems to occur in a short biography of Gilbert White, written by Edward Jesse for Sir William Jardine's edition of the "Selborne" published in 1850. After stating that Mrs. Chapone's brother, John Mulso, was White's most intimate friend, the writer continues, "and between them a most interesting and amusing series of letters took place. These letters would have been well worth publishing, and it was intended that this should be done; but when Mr. Mulso's son was applied to for Mr. White's correspondence, the mortifying answer was returned that they had all been destroyed. Mr. Mulso's letters, we understand, are still remaining."

It is these letters, "containing almost the only contemporary estimate of Gilbert White's character and career," which are now published under the editorship of Mr. Rashleigh Holt-White, a great-grand-nephew of the naturalist. The letters are of interest, not only for the many allusions to Selborne which they contain, and for the light they throw on White's career, but also for the picture they present of the thoughts and habits of a typical eighteenth-century clergyman, fortunate in having a Bishop for an uncle. The letters, too, are full of wit and vivacity, written by a man of classical culture and of wide knowledge of the ways of the world.

John Mulso and Gilbert White dated their friendship from Oriel College, Oxford, where they were undergraduates together, and the intimacy continued without the smallest apparent cloud for fifty years. The first letter of the series was written in 1744, when White had just been elected a Fellow of Oriel, and the last in 1790, a few months before the death of Mulso in the Close at Winchester. But long and constant as was their friendship, no two men could have been more totally unlike in character and tastes. Both, it is true, were men of good birth and education, both were lovers of literature, both doubtless "entered the Church" with a view to enjoying "a reasonable competence" in life; but beyond this the likeness cannot be extended. While Gilbert White delighted to spend his life in a

retired country village, so difficult of access that he notices in his journal under March 15, 1756, the unusual occurrence, "Brought a four-wheel'd post-chaise to ye door at this early time of year," his friend, as Mr. Holt-White says, "was a typical townsman, who loves the corner of a carriage much better than the back of a horse." For the interests of country life, the succession of seasons, the birds, the wild-flowers, the crops, the garden, which engrossed the mind of the Selborne naturalist, Mulso cared nothing. The latter, moreover, was a married man, with the cares of an expensive family, and, as became the nephew of a Bishop, a dignitary of the Church and the holder of several livings; while White remained a lone bachelor, in the humble capacity of curate to one or other of the country parishes in the neighbourhood of Selborne. And while, as time went on and preferments accumulated, the Rector and Prebendary became more and more idle, the famous naturalist continued to the last the quiet round of pastoral duties, from the sentiment, as his friend records, that "a clergyman should not be idle and unemployed." Mulso's letters clearly evince a full recognition of this difference of character. "I envy you," he writes, "your bold Flights, your Eagle Ranges. . . . I am a poor sculking Quail, whose very Love-song is plaintive." In wit and vivacity, as Mr. Holt-White truly says, no doubt Mulso was the superior, though a dry vein of humour often pervades the naturalist's letters. Mulso's sister, "the admirable Mrs. Chapone," the friend of Richardson and of Dr. Johnson, and the authoress of "Letters on the Improvement of the Mind," speaks of him as "a diverting animal" and "that comical creature"; while his children, in a family memoir, make mention of their father's "genius" and of his "captivating manners." He was undoubtedly, as this series of letters abundantly reveals, a man of great amiability of character, and he proved himself a true and constant friend to the then unknown genius of Selborne.

In one of Gilbert White's letters to Thomas Pennant, written in 1767, he says: "About ten years ago I used to

spend some weeks yearly at Sunbury, which is one of those pleasant villages lying on the Thames, near Hampton Court." This is the only allusion in the famous "History" to the naturalist's friendship with Mulso, who at that time was Vicar of Sunbury. In the correspondence now published there are nearly eighty letters written from this pleasant village on the Thames, from which we gather many details as to White's fortunes and Mulso's clerical doings. The latter, who was some years under thirty when, through the influence of his uncle, the Dean of St. Paul's, he had been appointed to Sunbury, already has his eye on further advancement. Before long the Dean "changed his Title of Doctor Thomas for that of Bishop of Peterborough," and now Mulso has hopes of a Canonry, and writes to his friend at Selborne: "I have taken Possession of no Prebend, for there are no Vacancies at Peterboro'." And, again: "I am sure that my Uncle is so much a Man of Honour that, if a Prebend was to fall, it would be mine, because he has promised it so often." But the Fates are against him. "I don't know," he writes a little later, "that any of the everlasting Prebendaries of Peterboro' are frozen this winter: I reckon they are braced up for another Twelvemonth at least." In the meanwhile he makes the best of his disappointment. His church is in such a ruinous condition that he is forced to rebuild it. He writes to White to help him to "a good Inauguration Sermon for it"; but in the end Mulso himself preaches, and is "complimented with a Request of having the discourse printed. Whether I shall or no I am in Doubt, and I refer it to the Bishop. It is put to me," he adds, "that a young Man should lose no Opportunities of making known whereabouts in ye World he is." His sermons are clearly acceptable, and make a stir in the neighbourhood. He is asked to preach at Hampton, and puts a sermon against drunkenness in his pocket, with the result that, "tho' but a Bishop's Nephew, he is burnt in effigy like a Pope." At Kew, where he preaches a charity sermon, "the collection was larger than it had ever been before." His work, too, in his own

parish cannot have been wanting in success, for we learn that "we gathered for ye Propagation of the Gospell in our small Village above eighteen Pounds, which I think very handsome." And again, after lamenting his weak health, which had caused him—he hopes dear Gil., as he calls White, will forgive a human Infirmary—to give up "ye cold Bath ever since ye first Frost," he adds that he had done all his "Duty of late—nay, and on Christmas Day I administered the Sacrament to almost fourscore People."

There are many allusions in the earlier letters to "the misery of a solitary winter," brought about to a certain extent by the difficulties of travelling. "The roads between Sunbury and Staines," we learn, "are almost impassable by a Chair, tho' I walked over there once this winter, which may properly be called a bold step." So, after "a more than ten years' siege," Mulso is married, and dispatches a letter to Selborne: "Your Friend is no more the pensive Bachelor, but a married man; and, indeed, so lately one that he will not venture upon Encomiums on the state; only this much, that Mrs. Mulso promises him, if possible, more Satisfaction as a Wife, than she gave him as a Mistress; and we were then pretty remarkable as happy People." White sends him a soup-tureen, which is duly acknowledged. "I am as well pleased as my Wife can be, and as proud of my present: the Bishop and Family had a Soupe out of it; and it is thought a great Beauty; but I am afraid it cost you a great deal of money."

It is asserted by Edward Jesse, in his edition of "Selborne," that Gilbert White in his earlier days was much attached to Miss Hester Mulso (afterwards Mrs. Chapone), and this statement has been expanded by Mr. Bell into a touching little romance, in which the naturalist figures as a blighted being who never married because of the enduring effect of his disappointment. This last development of Jesse's statement is doubtless an exaggeration; yet it must be allowed that the correspondence now published evinces in letter after letter a more than ordinary interest, on the part of Miss Mulso, in the distinguished Fellow

of Oriel. It is clear that John Mulso would have welcomed the union; and, though Mrs. Chapone was left a widow within a few months of her marriage, yet it is equally evident that Gilbert White had fully determined that "Selborne should be his only mistress."

We get from the correspondence a few glimpses of White at Oxford, from which it appears that for some years after his election to a Fellowship at Oriel he was accustomed occasionally to reside for a few weeks at a time in college. In 1752 he was appointed Junior Proctor of the University, and Mulso considers he has "paid the University a great Compliment in accepting of the Sleeves." At the same time he served the office of Dean of Oriel; and a few years later, when the Provostship fell vacant, we find Gilbert White a candidate for the post. In this, however, he was unsuccessful, and Mulso writes to him: "With regard to the Affair at Oriel, I heartily wish that you had put yourself up from the Beginning, if anything we could have done would have given you success." From that date White became an entirely non-resident Fellow, while at the same time he held the small college living of Moreton Pinkney, in Northamptonshire, which, however, he was allowed to serve by deputy.

In the course of time Mulso's uncle, the Bishop of Peterborough, became Bishop of Winchester, and before long further preferment falls to the expectant nephew. In 1770 he writes from Witney, to which living he had already been appointed by the Bishop, to his friend in Hampshire: "If you can let me know that a Vacancy is likely to happen in ye Stalls of Winton, it would be good news, for my Uncle having lately provided for Mr. Rennett, I have hope of being next in succession." His expectations were shortly realized, and we learn that "Mrs. Mulso depends upon your promise of taking an exact survey of her new house in Dome Alley, Winton." To the Canonry was added a few months later the Rectory of Meonstoke with Soberton, one of the richest pieces of preferment in the diocese of Winchester, situated some fourteen miles from the cathedral

city, and about sixteen from his friend's home at Selborne. The village is prettily situated on the left bank of the River Meon, with Beacon Hill and Old Winchester Hill rising hard by. But the place doubtless seemed dull enough to the town-loving dignitary. He writes to Gilbert White that the parsonage-house has been miserably neglected by the last incumbent, and that the fore-parlour looks against a dull hill. As for the garden, it displeases him much. "It has not one barrow of gravell in it, so that I shall be at a Loss how to stir out mornings and evenings, and after showers; and the country is a clay and very greasy." The living, too, has "the hatefull Circumstance of a *cum Capellâ de Soberton*"; but he hears that the neighbouring parish of West Meon, in the gift of his episcopal uncle, is vacant, and, though "he does not *ask*, yet he might be *prevailed* on to take it." In this pious frame of mind the weeks pass on, and he hears "Nothing of West Meon." At length he writes to "Dear Gil.," to whom he quite freely opens his mind: "I could have liked to have joined the Income of West Meon to that of Meonstoke, but I hear that a Mr. Prior read in there last Sunday." For the last twenty years of his life Mulso divided his time between Meonstoke and Winchester, spending the summer months on the banks of the Meon and going into winter quarters in the cathedral city. That this period of residence was most agreeable to the family is clear from the following sentence: "My daughters," he writes to White, "are well and much yours. Hester is quite sobered down by *Old Hang* (as she calls Meonstoke) and longs for the Theatre and Riots of Winchester."

At Meonstoke Rectory Gilbert White often visited his friend, staying for a few days at a time. He would leave Selborne early in the morning, so as to arrive in time for dinner at three o'clock. Mulso, who seems to have looked forward with much eagerness to these visits, would send minute instructions for his convenience and comfort: "We will have the Dinner ready for you at three o'clock on Monday, so see that you set out in good time, that your *Totum Nil* be not spoiled.

If you come through the village, the gates of my meadow shall be opened for you ; and the gates of my field if you come round by Brockbridge ; *put care* that your Driver shuts them after him." Sometimes, but not often, for the Canon and his wife were "an inactive couple," the Mulso chaise with its coach-horses would venture as far as Selborne ; but one condition was always insisted on—namely, that the chaise "be met by a guide at any place where we can make a stop, for you are more difficult to find than ye Bower of Woodstock." Sometimes we find the following postscript : "I bring no Gown or sermon" ; but "While I am with you, my Saddle-Horse will go to grass, if you please ; but my coach-horses will not. Lay me in therefore a quarter of Oats, and I will be responsible for it. As to yr hay—the Lord have mercy on you !"

The letters are full of these little details of daily life, which show how close was the intimacy between the two men ; indeed, as Mulso says, "I am used to take up my pen to an old friend, and generally trouble him with any circumstance that seems material to myself." Thus we hear that "the change of weather will put an end to ye beauties of my Rose Bushes, which were luxuriant and delightful" ; or, "I am going to see after Neighbour Cutler, of Droxford, who is expected home to-day, after being long delayed by sickness in his Journey. 'Tis a feeble man, but highly agreeable." Not long afterwards Neighbour Cutler dies, and is buried in the chancel of Droxford Church ; and we read : "We miss poor Cutler much. I have visited his successor, and I feel a Partiality for him, for he has in his ways a Resemblance to you and your family. I need not say he is a very ingenious man." Dr. Chelsum, however, is constantly away from home : "the man is like a Needle in a Bottle of Hay." It is interesting, again, to notice that influenza played pretty much the same tricks in the eighteenth century that it plays to-day, for we read : "I and all my family have been ill with what is called *Influenza*. This distemper ought to show the same symptoms, and keep to them in everybody ; but I think it is not so : it seizes the weak part of everybody,

and therefore varies with the constitution." Details of ill-health constantly recur. Now poor Mulso has to "encounter all the artillery of Mr. Rogers, ye apothecary of Droxford"; and now, in spite of "hot stoops of Camomile and Laudanum," he "trembles at the thought of strict Residence at Winchester." He is pleased, however, with the office of Vice-Dean, and parts with it with "one Regrett—the comfortableness of ye Stall in Church, which is *warmer* than my own, and makes me wish for that seat."

It was not till December, 1788, when Gilbert White and his friend were both nearing the age of threescore years and ten, that the famous "Natural History of Selborne" appeared. More than once Mulso had prophesied that White would "immortalize Selborne," and eagerly he awaited the publication of the volume. He wrote to Gilbert White to "desire yr Brother Benjamin to secure me one of the first Impressions of your Book"; and later he acknowledges the courtesy of "yr Brother for sending me yr Selborne so early, before it made its appearance in ye world." His estimate of the book, in view of its after success, is now of singular interest to all naturalists. Mulso at once recognized that "your work will immortalize your Place of Abode, as well as Yourself." From time to time he sends his friend word as to its reception in the world of Winchester. "Your Book was mentioned with Respect by our Chapter (a full one), and the volume ordered to be bought for the Library." Again: "Mr. Lowth and Dr. Sturges (both able men) admire your Book, particularly the Natural History, which not only seems well founded, but has an Originality in the Management of it that is very pleasing." And yet again: "Your Book is everywhere spoken of with the highest Praises. Among others, Dr. Warton is excessively pleased with it."

In this same letter, which closes the correspondence of fifty years, Mulso announces his wife's death: "You knew her, my good Friend; and you valued her, as she did you." And he thus makes reference to his own infirmities: "As to my Health during this year 1790, I have never once been in a condition to

attend at church either in the Cathedrall or in my parishes. It has been a year of perpetual pains from Bile, from Gravel, from Ulcers. . . . I hear that, bating your deafness, you are in great soundness of body and mind. Alass, my good Friend, how should we now do to converse if we met? For you cannot hear, and I cannot now speak out." A few months later John Mulso passed away in his prebendal house in the Close at Winchester. His death must have deeply affected the Selborne naturalist; but the only reference now to be found among White's papers is contained in a letter to his niece, written some four or five months later, in which he says: "The death of my good friend Mr. Mulso is a sad loss to his children. Where his daughters are to live we have not heard."

So closes a lifelong friendship. Mulso, it is clear, with all his clerical shortcomings, was a true and attached friend to Gilbert White; and the correspondence from which we have quoted has added materially to our knowledge of the great naturalist's career. The letters bear eloquent witness to the amiable qualities of the man whom their author so much admired; and not unfittingly, as has been happily suggested, may the verses addressed by Charles Cotton to Izaak Walton, the prince of biographers, be applied to the humbler correspondent of Gilbert White of Selborne:

"But yours is friendship of so pure a kind,
For all mean ends and interest so refined,
It ought to be a pattern to mankind.
"For whereas most men's friendships here beneath
Do perish with their friend's expiring breath,
Yours proves a friendship living after death."



Literary Notes.

THE "Life of John S. Rowntree" is a book which should be read by many people. In it may be found a number of interesting sidelights on the Society of Friends. There are those who know that a "Friend" is indeed a man of strong convictions, who feels it his duty to say or do a certain thing, and who generally carries it out unmoved by the greatest of obstacles. One might be astonished at the number of great names on the membership of the