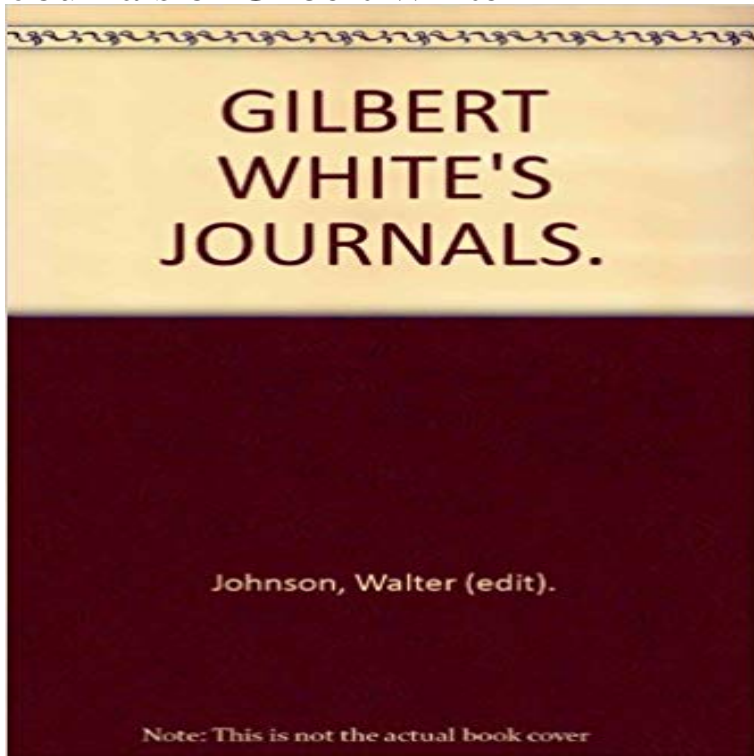


Journals of Gilbert White



The eighteenth-century English countryside is as lost to us as Eden, but it can be at least vicariously revisited in these serene pages. They reveal the naturalist Gilbert White scanning his rural world with such unflagging enthusiasm over a period of 25 years that it is almost as if he were giving names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field, and to the plants, for the very first time. His daily entries also regard the wind and weather and the geology and ecology of his world, nor does he neglect its humanity. This edition consists of excerpts from among the full 10,000 daily records found in the unpublished journals. These excerpts cover each of the years from 1768 to 1793. Gilbert White (1720-1793) studied theology at Oxford and was ordained in 1747. He devoted his life to his native parish of Selborne, in Hampshire, and to observing the natural history and antiquities of its environs. In 1789 his *Natural History of Selborne*, which may still be the most widely read of all nature books, was published. His writings altogether are enhanced by a delightful simplicity of style and by a precision of naturalistic scientific observation. White had an eye for the minute which could also embrace the full grandeur of nature in all its ripeness. He can even restore a temporary wholeness to his readers, one of whom remarked that to read him is to find ones own world mended. I think it is the way he steadies the mind. These five typical days from 1784 may afford a subliminal glimpse of his world: Apr. 15. Dog-toothed violets blow. Apr. 16. Nightingale heard in Maidendance. Ring-dove builds in my fields. Black-cap sings. Apr. 17. The buds of the vines are not swelled yet at all. In fine springs they have shot by this time two or three inches. Apr. 19. Timothy the tortoise begins to stir; he heaves-up the mould that lies over his back. Red-start is heard at the verge of the

highwood against the common.... Apr. 23.
Timothy the tortoise comes forth from his
winter-retreat.

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