Chapter 3

Kilvert the Naturalist

> To turn the imagination not inwards, but outwards; to give it a class of objects which may excite wonder, reverence, the love of novelty and of discovery . . . this is one of the great problems of education; and I believe from experience that the study of natural history supplies in great part what we want.
>
> Charles Kingsley*How to Study Natural History*, lecture delivered at Reading in 1846

> Collecting, microscopes, curiosity, wonder, and close vision – these were the hallmarks of natural history. For the Victorian naturalist, every fact, every detail inspired amazement.
>
> Lynn Merrill, The Romance of Victorian Natural History

> The passion for collecting . . . was very strong in me.
>
> Charles Darwin, *Recollections of the Development of my Mind and Character*. He was recalling himself at the age of eight.

The previous chapter suggested that it is fruitful to see Kilvert in the role of naturalist, but is it accurate to do so? Was he among those described by Barbara Gates as 'the numberless amateurs out in the field . . . avidly collecting butterflies, marine animals, ferns and rocks, and filing their discoveries away . . . in drawers and notebooks'?[1] Certainly it was clergymen who, from the eighteenth century onwards, were most to be found in their ranks because they had the time for natural history, believed it to be good for their health, and a useful means of keeping in touch with parishioners.[2] Such clergymen were 'well represented within the ranks of popularisers of science in the second half of the nineteenth century'.[3] Books written by them, or by lay people equally keen to advance natural theology, were welcomed in the Kilvert household, as will be seen.

One historian of natural history in Britain has shown that its beginnings were characteristically Evangelical, so that it was entirely to be expected that those Kilvert men who were clergymen – Kilvert's

uncle Francis, Kilvert's father, and Kilvert himself – should make it part of their spirituality. Various strands of development in natural history from the eighteenth century continued into the nineteenth and they did so, according to Allen, because they were 'founded in a certain well-defined emotional-cum-religious attitude which . . . we may define as Evangelicalism'. A key feature of Evangelicalism was that 'the moral and the useful became, increasingly, intertwined: pursuits like geology could be justified . . . as a means of revering the earthly grandeurs of Creation', in other words as an expression of natural theology. And even when pursuits lacked obvious usefulness, like mountain climbing, moral content was attributed to them in their justification. The wonders and beauties of nature came to be seen as sacraments. As the influence of Romanticism faded by the 1830s, a new view of nature took over, which was often marked by sentimentalism. A whole series of books appeared, aimed primarily at the middle class, which combined natural history with sentimental verses (e.g. Mrs Hey's *Moral of Flowers*, Miss Twamley's *The Romance of Nature*, Joseph Marrin's *Butterflying with the Poets*).[4] Fatuous as this development may appear, to it 'we owe the massive strength of Victorian natural history . . . The natural history that now emerged was in its whole essence an Evangelical creation'. Its value lay partly in the fact that it allowed for the discharge of powerful emotions that Evangelicalism regarded as taboo (a sensuous feel for beauty, a semi-pagan response to nature) which, having to achieve some release, appeared as sentimentalism.[5] O'Connor has defended works combining natural history with sentimental verses, rejecting Allen's dismissal of them as 'a debased substitute' for a real appreciation of nature. Publishing of any kind was rarely profitable in this period, O'Connor argued, and 'publishers needed to try every trick in the book to attract readers'. Furthermore, the appeal through sentimentality does not, O'Connor insisted, imply insincerity. Such works were 'multi-layered imaginative commodities . . . and they deserve sympathetic historical attention'.[6]

We are fortunate to have, in Edmund Gosse's *Father and Son* (1907), a 'case-history' documenting the impact of natural history on an Evangelical family around the time the Kilvert children were growing up. In the words of its editor, the book 'conveys a sense of the traumatic scientific and religious ferments of the mid-nineteenth century'.[7] Like the Kilverts, the Gosses were a middle-class and Evangelical family, though their Calvinism was much more extreme. 'No fiction of any kind, religious or secular, was admitted into the house', wrote Edmund.[8] The Kilvert parents were not so strict, although there is a parallel in that in both households the father's

Evangelicalism was more extreme than the son's. Edmund Gosse was born in 1849, only child of Philip Gosse, son of an engraver. Philip was keen on natural history as a boy, an interest encouraged by his aunt, who was herself a naturalist.

The books allowed to Edmund were 'a queer variety of natural history', travel books, some geography and astronomy, and 'much theology'. Significantly, he had access to Charles Knight's *The Penny Cyclopedia*, which was 'his daily, and for a long time almost [his] sole study'. Philip Gosse's *A Naturalist's Rambles on the Devonshire Coast* (1853) 'brought before the public the science of marine biology and was partly responsible for the sea-shore craze of the mid-Victorian period'.[9] The book resulted from nine months' residence on the Devon coasts in company with his wife and 'a little naturalist in petticoats' (his son Edmund), pursuing 'the study of the curious forms, and . . . curious instincts, of animated beings'. Gosse earnestly urged readers not to be found among the 'idle pleasure seekers' oblivious to the 'strange, beautiful, or wondrous objects' of the sea shore, to which his book could be a 'hand-book'.[10] In 1856, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society and 'was now the leading populariser of natural history in the country'.[11]

The specimen-hunting recorded by Mary Howitt in *The Children's Year* may be seen as a manifestation of this mid-century enthusiasm for natural history. The Kilvert family's summer holidays to seaside resorts in Somerset and Devon, noted in the last chapter, were coloured by Mary Howitt's descriptions of her children's experiences. Certainly Kilvert had a developed interest in marine flora and fauna, as we shall see when we examine his account of his Cornish holiday. One wonders whether the collection of pebbles picked up on Clevedon beach by the Kilvert children (mentioned by Emily Kilvert) gained in significance because William Howitt had recorded that a local schoolmistress had impressed him 'with the perception that there was wisdom in the formation of a common pebble'.[12] The pebble was often recommended in natural history books of the period as an object for the pious mind to contemplate. Charles Kingsley, who typified the clergyman-naturalist, urged that the young should be taught 'wonder in every insect, sublimity in every hedgerow, the records of past worlds in every pebble'.[13]

Kilvert's instinct for the striking and the unusual, discovered often in ordinary experience, was in essence his artistic vision, his talent as a writer, nurtured by a family ethos which, as has been shown, encouraged children to take an interest in both the natural world and the world of man-made inventions, and to find 'wonders' in them. His

great ability to convey the physicality of objects and scenes, commented on by virtually all critics, stems partly from a relish for, and a sensitivity to, the qualities that make them different or 'curious'. He enjoyed visits to his 'philosopher' friend, Richard Meredith, because he usually heard him expound upon 'antiquities and curiosities'.[14] It is highly significant that he expressed the motive behind his diary-keeping in terms that connect with a background in which showing an interest in the wonders of creation appeared as a moral duty: 'because life appears to me such a *curious* and *wonderful* thing . . . some such record as this' was called for.[15] Kilvert was a collector of 'curious' things and his *Diary* is his collection – of experiences, places, characters, landscapes, memories, and natural objects.

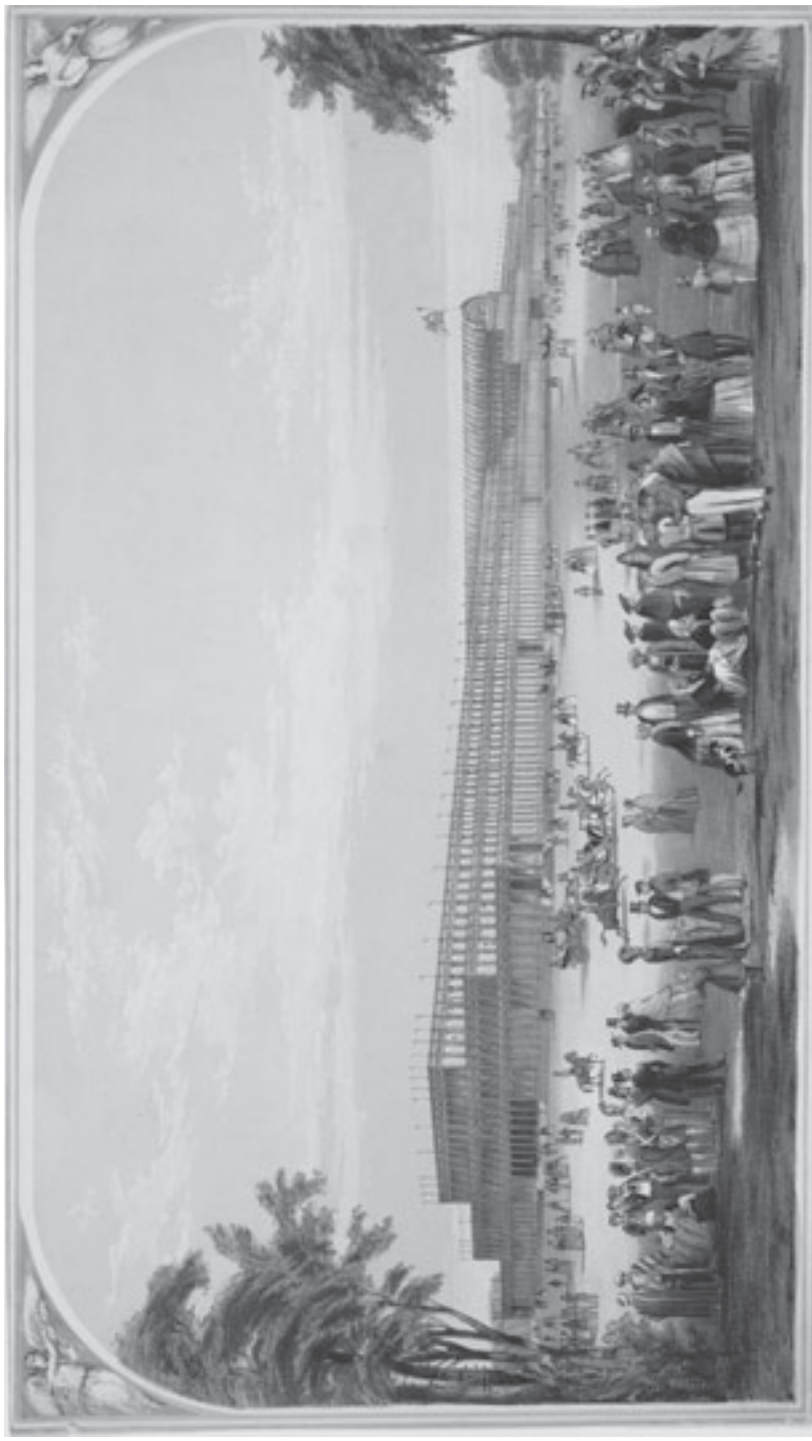
Lynn Merrill's observation that *singularity* was 'the motive engine of Victorian natural history' provides further insight into the way Kilvert wrote. '"Singular" is,' she stated, 'a particularly felicitous word for natural history, since it suits the aims of the pursuit so well'. Its key meaning for natural history is 'unique, individual, one of a kind', and 'extraordinary, unusual … rare, precious'. This quality is responsible in her view for the characteristic discourse of Victorian natural history: just as natural objects could be 'colourful, sensuous, visually complex, minutely detailed', so was the language used to describe them.[16] To the Victorian field naturalist, intent on detailed, accurate observing and recording, objects were particular, moving and exciting. The accounts given in *The Children's Year* of the adventures of the young naturalist Herbert exemplify perfectly the discourse Merrill had in mind – a blend of the factual and the imaginative.

The Kilvert family's penchant for curiosities and wonders is well illustrated by its visit to the Great Exhibition of 1851, which was at that time the greatest collection of them ever assembled. One clergyman stated in his sermon on the Exhibition: 'This repository of wonders may be regarded as a Beneficent Stimulus to Human Diligence and Industry'.[17] When Emily Kilvert described the family visit as 'a *wonderful* event in our childhood', there was literal force in her use of the word. She recalled that unique curiosity the Kohinoor diamond (in fact, her typically nine-year-old's memory of the 'great brass cage' that protected it).[18] Another curiosity she remembered was Queen Victoria herself, looking very cross on a gallery above. Our knowledge of the values informing the Kilvert family's outlook enables us to see why it should have made the Exhibition a prime target, just as it was for John Dillwyn and his family, who visited it in 1851 on 21 March, 6 and 23 June. It represented work, which the Kilverts respected. The Exhibition's motto, chosen by Prince Albert and redolent of natural

theology, was 'The Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof'. It was also 'an outward and visible sign of how readily capitalism could conquer the globe'. In other words, it stood for the progress proclaimed in *Old England* and, as in Knight's portrayal, it chiefly meant British progress: 'It was fundamentally designed as a demonstration of British superiority to other nations', exporting its modernity and importing all the goods and curiosities of other nations, which were displayed in the 'emblematic hothouse' in Hyde Park.[19] The Crystal Palace, a structure of glass and iron, was designed by Joseph Paxton as a larger version of the conservatory he had built for the Duke of Devonshire.[20] The motives that brought the Kilvert family to the Exhibition along with six million other visitors between 1 May and 15 October 1851 can be gathered from Greenhalgh's summary of its significance. Exhibitions of this kind 'embodied the transformation of Victorians' existence and contributed to the shaping of the Victorian consciousness'; they were 'political propaganda', 'the first events committed to mass education', 'sale-rooms' for all kinds of manufactured goods, 'they celebrated religion [and] intellectual culture', and were the beginning of the 'mass-tourist industry'.[21]

The salient feature of the Exhibition was, in Briggs's view, 'an emphasis on power', epitomised by Nasmyth's steam-hammer, which apparently 'caught the imagination of visitors more than any other object'.[22] The Victorian, Henry Mayhew, a visitor to it on 26 May 1851, also found 'the machinery . . . the grand focus of attraction', with the power-looms 'the chief centres of curiosity'. He praised working people for their behaviour, showing no sign of the disorder widely predicted: 'The fact is, the Great Exhibition is to them more of a school than a show' because the working man had little 'book-learning, but such knowledge as constitutes the education of life – viz. the understanding of human motives, and the acquisition of power over natural forces'.[23] To the Kilvert family, the Exhibition was both a school and a show. Its lessons were those taught by the trade element in its background and by the writers they valued – the Howitts, Britton, Knight, Martineau, Marryat – whose works celebrated practical education, 'the arts of living', as well as the 'wonders' of the man-made and of nature.

The Kilvert tourists up in the capital from Wiltshire were intent on seeing other aspects of its intellectual culture. They went to the Zoological Gardens where the 'hippo was a recent acquisition having been brought over to England in 1850'.[24] Established by the founder of Singapore, Sir Stamford Raffles, the Gardens were based in Regent's Park and, like Kew Gardens, combined scientific work with popular entertainment. 'From its beginnings it had functioned explicitly both



View of the Crystal Palace, Hyde Park

as a symbol and an agent of national power'.[25] The hippo the Kilvert children saw was called Obaysch and was such a curiosity to the public that annual attendance rose from 168,895 to 360,402. Emily's memory of the creature was always coloured by her brother's response to it: 'When [the hippo] came dripping out of his tank, Frank (i.e. Kilvert) naively enquired where his bath towel was, at which the people standing nearby tittered a good deal'.[26] The Kilvert children were being entertained by Obaysch but their background ensured that they were also learning. Lightman explained the context in which visits to the Zoological Gardens and other London locations took place:

> The Victorians were fascinated by the strange new worlds that science opened to them. Exotic flora and fauna from across the empire poured into London daily, many later to be displayed in the British Museum (Natural History) or Kew Gardens to a public hungry for science. Visitors of every rank, at many sites, in many ways, defined knowledge, ordered nature, practised science.[27]

Emily Kilvert couldn't remember whether they were taken to the British Museum,[28] but she did remember going to the Hans Sloane Museum and 'having various curiosities pointed out'. She had many reasons, as had her family, for regarding Sloane (1660-1753) as a hero. He came from a relatively humble background that encouraged useful work.[29] Emily Kilvert and her siblings would have seen a vast range of objects at his Museum including plants and seeds, shells, parts of animals, fossils, insects, minerals, classical and oriental antiquities, paintings and drawings, coins, and machines. 'Sloane's Museum acquired the reputation of being the most desirable repository for . . . objects of scientific importance'.[30] After his death, his collection was bought by the government and became the British Museum.

Something of the serious purpose behind the Kilvert family's trip to London may be gleaned from the fact that its pattern of visits to the Exhibition, Zoological Gardens, and the Polytechnic Institution was mirrored by Charles Darwin's family in July 1851. Darwin 'took an intense interest in the exhibits at the Crystal Palace', though his children became bored. The next day they too went to see Obaysch and after that to the Polytechnic Institution in Regent Street.[31] This was 'an exhibition hall for popular science with working models, lectures, and a "gas microscope" projecting images of minute objects on to a large screen'. On its roof was the first studio where daguerreotype portraits were made. Maria Edgeworth had hers done there and wrote about the experience enthusiastically to a friend: 'It is a wonderful, mysterious operation'.[32] Emily Kilvert remembered the Polytechnic as 'one of the

most delightful places . . . which was the wonder of all of us children'. Looking back sixty years later, she was still excited: 'Here we saw the great Electric Eel in its tank, the diving bell. . . . The great wheel spinning glass, of which the man at work gave us specimens to our great joy, and all the other marvels of the place'.[33] When looking forward to her visit, Emily would have remembered the *Children's Year* passage which told how the Institution was one of Alfred's 'favourite places' because of 'all the *wonders* of the place'. Alfred had sampled the 'diving-bell . . . the electrical machine . . . the magnified figures and the dissolving views'. He had also seen 'the glass-blower at work, and brought away spun glass'.[34] Emily was, it seems, thrilled to be experiencing exactly what Alfred experienced.

The glass 'specimens' were not the only things Emily collected on that exciting day: for the child brought up on *The Children's Year*, the 'collecting' of the London experiences would have been a special form of the natural history collecting encouraged by that book and by her background, in which 'religious and scientific knowing were neither separate nor separable categories'.[35] Collecting specimens expressed both kinds of knowing. The Victorian and Evangelical work ethic 'introduced a new note of fervour' into collecting specimens. A good collection was a sign of devotion, effort, reverence, achieved 'while gazing all the time "through Nature up to Nature's God". Collecting, in short, received religious sanction'.[36] Mary Howitt's account of her children's early education instilled both this mentality and the habit of collecting, particularly in relation to their experience of the seaside at Hastings, where their rented house was situated. Herbert was intent on finding 'treasure and wonders', and when the tide was out 'they found treasures at every step: there were shells, and sea-weed, and star-fish'. And such collecting had an inevitable outcome: having, like proper naturalists, arranged their 'treasures' on shelves in a cupboard, 'It was to them like a little marine museum'.[37] Producing and ordering a collection were significant activities of the period, as Endersby explained: 'The mid-Victorian natural history sciences were pre-eminently concerned with collecting and classifying, activities that some practitioners of the physical sciences regarded with disdain. As a result natural history tended to be held in low esteem',[38] and this was particularly the case with botany.

Mrs Emma Hockin, Kilvert's hostess during his Cornish holiday, exemplifies a number of themes relevant to this chapter, the most obvious of which is that she was in the tradition of Victorian women with a strong interest in botany. Kilvert's stay with her and her husband William at their home of Tullimaar from 19 July to 6 August 1870 could almost be described as a naturalists' field-trip, so full was it of

excursions in which the collecting of specimens was a primary activity. Towns and historic buildings were sometimes the target of excursions, but no matter whether the objects targeted were man-made or natural, Kilvert's approach to them was that of the avid collector. Some places visited were on a list he had prepared beforehand, some were chosen by his hosts, who shared his 'collecting' mentality. On 1 January 1867, Emma married William Hockin, son of the rector of St Stithians, Cornwall. His maternal uncle, Benjamin Sampson, was an industrialist, supplying gunpowder for blasting to Cornish mines. It was he who built Tullimaar in 1830, as the Prologue noted.

One of Kilvert's excursions during his Cornish holiday was to Kynance Cove and his account of it includes the following passage: 'We gathered some seaweed off the rocks to take home for a weather gage [*sic*], and H knocked off the cliff a piece of serpentine rock for me to bring away as a remembrance of the place and a specimen of the rocks. He described it as having been "struck off by the hoof of the learned Erasmus"'.[39] This last reference perplexed the *Cornish Diary*'s editors, who set it aside as 'a baffling joke'. They had failed to find a link to the 'sixteenth-century humanist scholar', Erasmus. They were focusing on the wrong scholar – and here we came across again the 'iceberg' nature of *Kilvert's Diary*, one of those brief glimpses into the diarist's knowledge and experience, indicating larger elements below the surface. 'H' (Kilvert always designated Hockin thus) had meant *Erasmus Darwin* (1731-1802), grandfather of the author of *The Origin of Species*, and Kilvert had understood Hockin's allusion,[40] which means he knew something of this 'Erasmus'. Hockin's knowledge perhaps came from his maternal uncle's involvement with the Cornish mining industry; Hockin could have known that Erasmus Darwin had accompanied the entrepreneur Matthew Boulton (1728-1809) during his two months' stay in Cornwall on a geological expedition in 1780.[41] Hockin certainly knew that Erasmus Darwin was in the habit of chipping off any fragments of stone, or quartz, or spar he found interesting.[42] Kilvert recognised that Hockin had a knowledge of geology, one which matched his own.

Kilvert's enthusiasm for the serpentine rock at Kynance Cove may have been fired in part by Hockin's own. Kilvert wrote: 'I never saw anything like the wonderful colour of the serpentine rocks, rich, deep, warm, variegated, . . . veined with red, green and white, huge blocks of precious stone, marble on every side, an enchanted cave, the palace of the Nereids'.[43] The passage's combination of detailed, precise observation with a flight of fancy (it was another moment of enchantment) is frequently found in Mary Howitt's *The Children's Year*, and echoes the following passage from it that describes rocks at East Cliff near Eastbourne:

> The angles of many of the blocks of stone are worn off . . . and this roundness [and the green sea-moss] give to them the fanciful appearance of huge heads covered with green wigs. Herbert and Meggy . . . recalled all the stories that they had ever heard of mermen and mermaids, sitting on rocks in the sea, combing their long green hair. Surely this must be a great company of sea gods and goddesses.[44]

The co-existence of detached scientific viewpoint with imagination was a marked character trait of Dr Erasmus Darwin. Educated at St John's College, Cambridge, he trained as a doctor but was interested in everything. He loved electrical experiments as a boy, and was one of the founder members of the Lunar Society[45] of Birmingham, leading figures of which were the entrepreneur Matthew Boulton, the engineer James Watt, the pottery king Josiah Wedgwood, the chemists James Kerr and Joseph Priestley, the geologist Whitehurst, and the inventor/educationist R.L. Edgeworth.[46] Most were Nonconformists. When Erasmus Darwin noticed fossilised shells in the walls of caves in Derbyshire, he became very excited at the idea that all species had developed from one original microscopic ancestor and on this idea he based his theory of evolution.

Erasmus Darwin's range of enquiry, imagination, and enthusiasm for knowledge were qualities shared by Kilvert, not in the same degree but basically of the same kind. It was these qualities that made him a writer, and the instrument that channelled and focused him was his pocket-book, which he always had with him. His stance towards experience, towards the 'collecting' of experience, is typified by the 3 May 1870 *Diary* entry: 'I stood by the window making notes of things in general in my pocket-book'. From the stockpile of 'things in general' there emerged the particular, finished elements that make up the *Diary*. The raw material, the 'specimens' that were initial impressions of things, people, places, experiences, were later sifted, classified, their essential features isolated and intensified through reflection and imagination.

It is *Kilvert's Cornish Diary* that provides the clearest evidence of Kilvert the naturalist, the collector, and this is so for a number of reasons. His holiday in Cornwall partook of the nature of a 'field-trip' because it was a unique area and one unknown to him. One of his first impressions of it was its industry: 'the most striking feature being the innumerable mine works of lead, tin, copper crowning the hills with their tall chimneys' and he noted ships in the river near Truro waiting for cargoes of tin and copper. From the home of his hosts, he could glimpse the Perran Foundry belonging to the Fox family. His preoccupation with Cornwall's mining industry appears

in the numerous references to it. 'The red flames burst and roared from the tops of the tall mine chimneys' is one entry that shows that his imagination was aroused by the sights and sounds of industry. Another is this: 'We came to a mine called St Ives Consoles, and the works, rattling, clanking, clumping, at "stamping" and "streaming" tin'. And noticeably, even when visiting Tintagel, the centre of Cornwall's tradition of King Arthur legends and described very romantically by Kilvert, he felt moved to note: 'they have just begun mining for iron in this cliff'.[47] This is not a man who could find beauty, interest, things worth writing about only in the conventionally pretty and picturesque, but one whose imagination, like that of Erasmus Darwin, was fired by anything and everything.

Examination of his three-week stay with the Hockins confirms this impression. He had prepared for it by purchasing Bottrell's book on Cornwall,[48] which stimulated his interest in what he experienced. It was of course Cornwall's coast that was the centre of his attention. He rejoiced in the beauty of Mullion Cove: 'the deep blue sea rippling into the deep small cave shut in by the great dark cliffs, the fringe of white foam along the rocks . . . the streaks and patches of deep brilliant intense emerald green "playing" into blue'. He and his hosts were particularly drawn to rock pools: 'After luncheon we went down on the beach to look for sea-anemones among the rocks and pools at low water for Mrs H. We found a few red specimens and she found a green one'. Allen credited Philip Gosse with drawing the Victorian public's attention to sea-anemones, describing him as 'the loving painter and describer of sea-anemones and starfish'.[49] Barber wrote of sea-anemones: 'By 1858 [they] had become universal pets' and quoted the comment by G.H. Lewes (from his *Sea-side Studies*): 'the lovely Sea-Anemone, now the ornament of countless drawing-rooms'.[50] Evidently, Kilvert knew the different kinds of weed of the sea-shore, noting at one place 'forests of seaweed and ore weed'.[51] Shells were one target of his collecting: 'We picked up a number of pretty shells on the beach, and I meant to have taken them home. . . . '[52]

The editors of the *Cornish Diary* commented: 'This notebook is full of allusions to the Victorian mania for collecting ferns, which prompted a whole collection of fern books. Emma Hockin was clearly a passionate collector'. 'In the decade from 1845 to 1855 [the public's tastes] moved successively from seaweeds to ferns to sea-anemones', Lynn Barber noted.[53] Kilvert too was both very passionate and very knowledgeable about ferns. When he was a teenager, in the mid-1850s, the fern craze was at its height. It exemplified 'a society in the grip of a powerful emotion, a "collective projection", rooted in some deeply buried psychological layer'.[54] Boyd wrote of it: 'Members of the

cult were men and women for whom ferns were more than a fad or fashion'.[55] Ferns aroused little interest before 1830 and the first book on them appeared in 1837.[56] Allen linked the craze to Evangelicalism: 'there was something about ferns uncannily in tune with the spirit of the age. They matched the new mood of sombreness: the Fern Craze opened as men's clothes, quite suddenly, turned black', some of its moral fervour deriving also from Romanticism and medievalism.[57] Women were encouraged to be collectors and experts. Kingsley was writing in 1855: 'Your daughters, perhaps, have been seized with the prevailing "Pteridomania", and are collecting and buying ferns, with Ward's cases wherein to keep them'.[58] (Nathaniel Bagshawe Ward had invented a glass case for nurturing and displaying ferns; it was on show at the Great Exhibition.) The fern became a dominant motif in Victorian decoration on wallpaper, china, glass, tiles, and fabrics. The Victorian botanist Thomas Moore (1821-1887) said that ferns' attractiveness did not lie in their colour, 'sober green', but rather in their 'elegant forms and graceful habits'.[59]

When Kilvert was holidaying in Cornwall, the craze was subsiding (by the end of the 1870s ferns were unfashionable), but he was in the very best region for specimens. Nona Bellairs's book, *Hardy Ferns: how I collected and cultivated them* (1865) asserted that the South-West was the best area for them, 'especially the dear Cornish land . . . [which] is a land of ferns'.[60] It seems that Kilvert knew her book. Her attitude to ferns rested on pious foundations, as his did. 'The Book of Nature is the Book of God', she declared, and study of ferns would help to 'turn the child's heart to the love of the pure and beautiful instead of the vile and debasing'.[61] Nona Bellairs (1824-1897) was the daughter of the Rev. Henry Bellairs (1790-1872), who became a legend for good works in his parish of Bedworth (Warwicks.) The targets of Mrs Hockin's fern hunting in Cornwall may have been suggested by Kilvert, guided by Bellairs. The latter recommended the rocks of St Michael's Mount for specimens of Asplenium Marinum and Asplenium Lanceolatum and that was where the former searched.[62] (Kilvert observed, just as Bellairs did, that he should like to see 'a great storm from St Michael's Mount'.) Naturally he was carried along in the wake of his hosts' enthusiasm for fern-collecting during his stay at Tullimaar, but he had his own interest independent of theirs. On 17 March 1870, before his Cornish holiday, he recorded: 'English maiden-hair fern was growing plentifully about the rocks and I brought away a plant'. In another entry (3 June 1876) he noted: 'Seeing some pretty ferns growing on the bank of a hedge . . . I gathered them for Dora'. Dora, his youngest sister, born 1848, often shared natural history experiences with him.

Other of Kilvert's friends knew of his enthusiasm for plants (and for Wordsworth): '[Jane Dew] and Emily have just returned from the Lakes and have come back full of Wordsworth, Rydal and Grasmere and with a store of photographs, ferns and other plants connected with the poet'. The girls (daughters of Henry Dew, rector of Whitney-on-Wye) also knew that Kilvert was, as they were, among the army of *collectors*: 'They very generously gave me six photographs and Jane gave me some ferns she gathered at Dungeon Ghyll and a piece of Portugal laurel she picked up in Wordsworth's garden at Rydal Mount'.[63] A facet of Kilvert's collecting habit known to the Dew girls was his keeping of a scrap book. Alice was one of the youngest Dew sisters (born 1860) and she was pleased on 25 July 1871 to help to keep his scrap book up-to-date: 'Alice has been pasting my photograph scraps into my scrap book and illuminating their titles under them'.[64] Further illustrative of the linked cults of remembrance and collecting is the *Diary* entry for 4 May 1872, again involving the Dew girls: 'Jenny Dew has sent me two manuscript albums with a request that I will write in it "the lines you said to me under the trees" – (Newman's I think, signed J.H.N.) and "something of your own"'.[65] The emphases here indicate the role the cults had in stimulating and reflecting *sympathy* as a crucial element in Victorian personal relations.

Kilvert's naturalist self appears frequently in the *Diary* in entries which repeatedly exemplify curiosity and knowledge, knowledge and curiosity. He made explicit in the *Diary* entry for 27 May 1871 the way in which those twin elements complemented each other in his approach to wild flowers. He had met the Morrell children with their governess, Miss Sandell, one of those ladies who knew botany. Kilvert was impressed by the collection of wild flowers that the Morrell children had made, under her guidance:

> They had found the bog bean, the butterwort, milk-wort in four varieties, butterfly orchis, mouse ear, marsh valentine, marsh buttercup, hawkweed fumitory, yellow pimpernel, yellow potentilla. The children showed me what I never found out for myself or knew before, that the bog bean grows in the wern below Great Gwernfydden. And I have walked 14 miles for that flower, when it grew close by. Miss Sandell taught me more about these flowers in ten minutes than I have learnt from books in all my life.

Kilvert's tribute to Miss Sandell is significant in a number of ways. Firstly, he was acknowledging what a good teacher she was, partly because of her comprehensive knowledge, and partly because she had fired the children's enthusiasm. Secondly, he was revealing his own

enthusiasm as a naturalist in his comment about the bog bean. Thirdly, he was revealing that some of his own knowledge came from years of reading botanical handbooks. Fourthly, he was acknowledging the limitations of botanical books – discovering and experiencing flowers for oneself was superior to theoretical knowledge.

We can identify a botanical handbook that figured in the Kilvert family library from which some of the diarist's knowledge must have come: Maund's *The Botanic Garden*, held in the collection of Kilvert memorabilia in the National Library of Wales. The book is volume one, published in 1825, of what was a thirteen-volume work and was left by Kilvert's mother to her daughter Emily.[66] The undated inscription in it reads: 'Thermuthis Kilvert, Langley Burrell Rectory'. Emily had inscribed her own name below with the date September 1889. It bears the name of a Chippenham bookseller so it might have been bought by Mrs Kilvert's parents who lived nearby (perhaps as a present for her).[67] It is not hard to see why the book found favour with the Kilverts when one knows what kind of a man Benjamin Maund (1790-1864) was. He was born at Tenbury, Worcestershire, the son of a farmer, and had some formal education, 'because of the knowledge of the Classics, as well as comprehensive reading and sound knowledge of literature' evident in his writings.[68] Maund was apprenticed to a printer in Ludlow from the age of sixteen and when he was twenty-three he bought a printer's business in Bromsgrove. He combined printing with the roles of stationer, bookseller, publisher, and chemist. A model and progressive citizen, he was a churchwarden, member of several parish committees, and 'prime mover in the building of a new town hall and cattle market'.[69] Another source noted that 'he did much to raise the town's intellectual tone'.[70]

Humphreys stated that 'Maund must have been a striking personality, with an intense love of nature, and a deeply religious character'.[71] Emphases in *The Botanic Garden*[72] show his natural theology. The preface to volume one (Mrs Kilvert's volume) stated that 'Man, by nature, inherits the love of flowers', though this 'divine excitement' was often suppressed by 'the busy scenes of life'.[73] The fullest statement of Maund's natural theology appears in the preface of another ambitious work of his: *The Botanist* (five volumes, 1836-1842):[74]

> To a mind impressed with the belief in the infinite wisdom and goodness of the Creator, Botany affords a perpetual course of the very highest description, of mental gratification, in the never-ending proofs it entails of an all-pervading intelligence.

The first volume of *The Botanist* appeared in 1836 and it is clear from Maund's wording in the above passage that he was intending to make a connection between his work and the recently launched *Bridgewater Treatises* 'on the Power, Wisdom and Goodness of God, as manifested in the Creation'. The 8th Earl Bridgewater commissioned a series of works, by the leading scientists of the day in the period 1830-1836, designed to show that science and religion complemented each other.

We have another insight into Kilvert as teacher and naturalist when we recall that one of the books he sent on 23 March 1872 as a present to Hugh Thomas, son of his Mitcham friend, was R.M. Ballantyne's *The Gorilla Hunters*. The book has two heroes: Ralph Rover,[75] a naturalist, and Peterkin Gay, a hunter, whose mission to West Africa epitomises Victorian attitudes to the natural world and to Empire. They have interdependent roles: Ralph wants to collect specimens, some of which Peterkin will shoot. The former states that he intends to take home specimens in the interests of science.[76] This is one of the ways in which the book justifies colonialism; trade and Christianity are the other justifications. The thousands of specimens of exotic flora and fauna flooding into Britain from all over the Empire signified an attempt to control nature.[77] The BAAS took the lead in the classification of specimens and was well known to the public, although it 'existed primarily to serve the interests of élite naturalists',[78] with many clergymen playing a key role in its founding. There were also county natural history societies, known as 'field clubs', that encouraged a social cross-section of local people to make trips into the countryside to collect specimens.

Kilvert's essentially ambivalent attitude to field clubs is seen in his shunning of his local club – the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club of Herefordshire. One *Diary* entry records its imminent arrival in Hay-on-Wye in May 1871 to open up an ancient barrow. Kilvert wrote: 'I had intended to be present, but I did not go as I hate going about in herds and hated the idea of seeing the mountain desecrated by this particular herd'. Three days later, he went close to the barrow: 'Imagine my delight to find the place perfectly silent and solitary except for the sheep'.[79] This is Kilvert the solitary, spiritual man for whom nature was a thing of beauty and quietness, a vehicle for meditation, and the source of private memories and dreams. The formal collaborative, recording/classifying aspect of the naturalist's work did not appeal to him. Rational scientific enquiry seemed at odds with the spiritual dimension, the *mystery*, of nature. Nevertheless, such enquiry, conducted by others, excited him (this ambivalence is explored later vis à vis his admiration for the scientific work of John Tyndall).

Kilvert's younger brother Edward, nicknamed 'Perch', was a naturalist of the recording, classifying kind, as was evident when he came to stay in Clyro in June 1870 and the brothers embarked together on several outings which had the character of field trips. On 11 June we find Edward identifying some beetles, while Kilvert stood back and admired his knowledge: 'These beetles seemed to be old acquaintances of Perch who recognised them immediately as the wailing beetle or Necropherus sepultor'. (Kilvert himself never used Latin names for fauna and flora.) It was Edward too who 'found the curious circular nest of the ground bee' two days later. He was regularly to be found 'groping' in streams in the hunt for creatures, as on 17 June when he found a crayfish, 'which crawled about the table . . . like a fresh water clean brown lobster'. Kilvert had learned something from his brother: 'I did not know there were any crayfish in the brook'.[80]

Kilvert was brought up, as this chapter and the previous one have shown, to be a collector. The seminal volumes of his early reading – *The Boy's Country Book*, *The Children's Year*, *Old England*, *The Beauties of England and Wales*, *The Leisure Hour* and (Maund's) *The Botanic Garden* – all had a collecting ethos. The idea of 'collections', often actual museums, figured strongly in his background. *Old England* is characterised as a 'Pictorial Museum'. He must have had something like a museum at home or in his lodgings to house the shell, plant, and mineral specimens he collected.[81] The 'memorials' (locks of hair, bookmarks etc.) of child lovers in his desk's secret drawer were a kind of museum. The Great Exhibition, to which he was taken as a child, was an inspiring museum of Empire: a coming together of exotic wonders and wonders of everyday usefulness. His endless parochial journeying ('villaging' he called it) combined the naturalist's hunt for specimens of various kinds with a concern for parishioners' needs. His naturalist self was supported by his sisters Emily and Dora and by his brother Edward. In the environs of Clyro it was supported by the Dew sisters, Richard Meredith, and Thomas Webb (of whom more will be said later). And he always had his close friends, the Hockins.

The historian Lynn Merrill's analysis of the characteristic discourse of Victorian natural history contains various insights relevant to Kilvert's mode of writing. She showed that agricultural, historical, and topographical information was typically blended with folklore and anecdote – a marked feature of *Kilvert's Diary*. In addition, natural history writing of the period was 'intimately entwined' with travel writing; Kilvert's work shows this too. Merrill regarded

the tone of G.H. Lewes's books – 'emotional, awed, subjective' – as typical of the genre. This subjective quality is important. Unlike scientists who sought to understand natural objects, naturalists were content to look at them simply for their beauty and complexity. Thus, 'the natural history that captivated . . . so many Victorians was a personal, evocative, aesthetic science'. All of this explains why the natural history parts of *Kilvert's Diary* read the way they do; its author was recording science of a kind but it was 'a science endowed with literary qualities'.[82] It also had the spiritual dimension that this chapter has traced, represented often by clergymen/naturalists such as Gilbert White, Kingsley, Philip Henslow (1796-1861), Buckland, and, notably, Kilvert's close friend, Thomas Webb, as well as by lay figures such as Maund. The involved nature of Kilvert's approach to natural history illustrates what this chapter has set out to show, that 'Natural History was part of a complex social practice; it was not a single set of ideas'.[83] According to Merrill, two motifs dominated Victorian natural history: the cabinet and the microscope. The former became 'one's own personal museum' and arranging its contents was 'a creative act'. It stood as 'a metaphor for personal consciousness of nature – consciousness of remembrance'.[84] Kilvert's pocket book had the same role in this process: it recorded memories because the best, most significant ones, became part of his own identity.