

A VISIT TO
Hellbrunn
AT THE TIME OF COLLOREDO

HESTHER LYNCH PIOZZI, CIRCA 1785

A fever prevented us seeing the salt mine from which the city had received its name, but the water conduits at Hellbrunn entertained us for a while; I never saw such happy beavers as those of the Archbishop of Salzburg, who allowed – even encouraged – them to build and take pleasure however they wished: he also had fish that ate from his hand, they are not carp, but I don't know exactly what they are either. My lack of the language is a hindrance. The German streams appear especially clear and as far as I am led to believe never freeze. The taste in gardens seems to be of the old style here and one is amused by little dolls that are made mobile by hidden machines. The royal archbishop's income amounts to three to four-hundred-thousand pounds sterling and he uses it among his servants, who are half in worship of him. His great passion is animals, especially horses, of which he had as many as one-hundred and seventeen for his personal use, all for various needs, beauties and breeds. He is also a special fan of beautiful, silken-haired yellow and white and very long-legged English setters.

Hesther Lynch Piozzi, Notes to the Journey Through France, Italy and Germany. In English with an introduction and remarks by Georg Forster. Vol. 2, Frankfurt–Mainz, 1790.

The author was born in January 1740 or 1741 (the exact date is unknown) in Bodvel (Carnarvonshire) and through her mother received a thorough upbringing and education. Together with her mother tongue of English, she also learned the Greek, Latin and Hebrew languages. She lived in London from 1750. In 1763 she married a certain Mr Thrale, who later became parliamentary member for Southwark, but she soon entered into a relationship with the man of letters, Samuel Johnson. Following the death of her husband, in 1781, the writer moved with her four daughters to Bath and in 1784 married the Florentine painter Gabriele Piozzi from Quinzano in the province of Brescia, who had previously been the family's music teacher. She shortly after accompanied her husband to Florence. She died on 2 May 1821 in Clifton.

Hester Lynch Piozzi travelled through France and Germany to Italy to make the acquaintance of her second husband's family and to avoid the social scandal of her marriage to the Italian music teacher. Her extremely personal travel reports are written in diary form, but were later revised. The German translation, which appeared only one year after the original English edition, was made by the famous world traveller and naturalist Georg Forster (1754–1794). She not only dedicated her work to women of her ilk, the scholarly author provided a self-assured foreword, but the publisher of the German edition placed an introduction on the same page, which put the woman in her place according to German creed.

During her stay at the summer palace and garden at Hellbrunn (constructed 1613–1615) the traveller noted above all the animals kept there and the mechanically driven "dolls", no mention was made of the palace building and the trick fountains that were then famous.

The person of the last-ruling sovereign, Hieronymus Count Colloredo (1772–1803/12), is reduced to his annual income and love for specific animals. If the royal archbishop is given as a fan of horses, a special leaning for dogs is otherwise without mention. (Perhaps the author meant Colloredo's predecessor, Sigmund Count Schrattenbach?)

Due to a lack of knowledge of the language, Piozzi's details of her visit to Salzburg remain imprecise – the people of Salzburg in no way worshipped the sovereign – and cursory.