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TWO LETTERS

TO

SIR JOHN SINCLAIR, BARONET.

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## TWO LETTERS

TO

SIR JOHN SINCLAIR, BARONET,

PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF AGRICULTURE,

ON THE SUBJECT OF

DRAINING WET AND BOGGY LANDS,

Etc.

By JAMES ANDERSON, L.L.D.

F. R. S. F. A. S. S. &amp;c. &amp;c.

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*Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour. St. Paul to the Romans, xiii. 7.*

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EDINBURGH:

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AND J. GUTHRIE, EDINBURGH,

1796.

ADVERTISEMENT.

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*THE first of these Letters appeared in the Newspapers nearly in the present form, a short time after its date; and is now reprinted for the sake of connection. The second is now published for the first time.*

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TO SIR JOHN SINCLAIR, BART.

PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF AGRICULTURE.

LETTER FIRST.

*Cotfield near Edinburgh,  
30th June 1795.*

SIR,

I USE the freedom to trouble you at present on the subject of Draining adopted by Mr ELKINGTON, not with a view to detract from the merits of that Gentleman, nor to find fault with the remuneration you have obtained for him, but merely to set you right in regard to a matter of fact concerning me, which might easily escape your notice.

I presume, Sir, you thought it evident, from the statement made by Mr Elkington, that the mode of Draining ground which has been so successfully practised of late by that Gentleman, was an invention peculiarly his own. That this is not the case, admits of evidence, which I hope you will allow to be satisfactory. It is now twenty years since I published a book, called *Essays relating to Agriculture and Rural Affairs*. If you will take the trouble of turning to the second Essay in that work, which is, *on Draining Bogs and swampy Ground*, you will there find the method of draining, by means of *tapping*, which has been adopted by Mr ELKINGTON, fully explained, and the principles upon which it may be practised clearly developed, by the aid of il-

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[ 4 ]

illustrative figures, discriminating plainly the cases in which that mode of practice would be improper.

I do not understand that Mr ELKINGTON practised this method of draining before the publication of that Work (anno 1775), neither do I mean to assert that he adopted the practice from the directions there given. I readily admit that the principle is so simple, and so obvious to every considerate mind, that it would certainly be nothing extraordinary, if he, by his own reflections alone, should have discovered it, as well as I did. There is only one particular in his mode that I myself had not practised before that Essay was published, viz. the making the Tapping by means of *a boring instrument*; but even this I have particularly described, as you will find in the following words, at page 181. (*Third Edition Vol. I.*) of the forefaid Essays. After describing the mode of Tapping I had adopted, by sinking small pits, and explaining the cases in which it may be successfully practised, it is added, "I have often imagined that the expense of digging these pits might be saved, by *boring a hole through this solid stratum of clay with a wimble (an auger) made on purpose*; but as I have never experienced this, I cannot say whether it would answer the desired end exactly."—Neither can I now say, whether Mr ELKINGTON grounded his practice on this hint or not; but I may safely say, if he did not, he might have done it: And as I could not have borrowed it from him, if there be

[ 5 ]

any merit in the *discovery*, I have assuredly a just title to claim it.

I wish not to throw out any insinuation to the prejudice of Mr ELKINGTON, who, by a proper degree of management on his part, has great merit in having turned the attention of the Nation towards a mode of draining, which, if the principles upon which it is grounded are fully understood, and properly applied, will be found to be equally cheap and efficacious; as I myself, from an experience of it for more than thirty years, can safely assert. But it is a mistake, to think it can be universally applied. There are many cases in which it can be of no use, and therefore it were vain to attempt it; as I have fully demonstrated in the Treatise referred to.

Whether Mr ELKINGTON did actually discover this mode of draining of himself, or adopted it from the very plain directions given in that Treatise, is of little consequence to the Public. In either case, he has alike the merit of having introduced it into practice in the Southern parts of this Island: for the simple fact that he has been supposed to be the first inventor of it, is the clearest proof that this part of my Treatise, by how many soever it may have been read, has been allowed to remain, in a great measure, a dead letter, even till the present hour.

As my intention in publishing that Essay doubtless was to benefit the public, I owe, perhaps, thanks to Mr ELKINGTON, for having thus forwarded that design. It is not impossible that the time may not be far distant, when I shall be laid

[ 6 ]

under a similar obligation to some other person, for bringing into practice *as a new invention*, the mode of Embanking Rivers, which is described in the Effays referred to, with a similar degree of clearness; and which, when reduced into practice, will be an improvement equally cheap and efficacious with the above. An obligation of this sort was conferred upon me, some years ago, without my knowledge of it at the time, by a Mr BRODIE, I think the name is, when he brought into notice, what he called, the *Patent Bath Stove*; the principle upon which that stove is constructed, having been explained, and clearly illustrated by means of a plate in a Treatise of mine "On Smoky Chimneys," that was first published in the year 1769; but this particular was little adverted to for several years, till Mr BRODIE, by a *little proper management*, brought it into notice †. My ideas, freely communicated to the Public, have been a source of emolument or of honour to others also—my own reward has been the satisfaction of having done what I know to be right, and the *honour* of being indirectly flattered by compliments that were publicly appropriated to others.

Wishing you success in your laudable undertakings, which, if properly supported, cannot fail to be at-

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† It is generally believed that Mr Brodie has realized an hundred thousand pounds by this contrivance.

[ 7 ]

tended with effects highly beneficial to the Nation, I have the honour to be, with due respect,

Sir,

Your most humble Servant,

JAMES ANDERSON.

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LETTER SECOND.

*Cotfield, near Edinburgh,  
10th January, 1796.*

SIR,

SINCE I had the honour of addressing you in public on the subject of draining land, I have learnt that a controversy has been carried on in the Newspapers to some length, upon the same subject, by various persons. Who these persons are I know not; and with the particular object that each party has in view, I am in a great measure unacquainted. I never saw one of these publications except two, which accidentally fell into my hands in September last, when I passed through London. The present letter, therefore, must be considered as having no connection with, or reference to these publications; and if any thing shall here occur that shall tend either to corroborate or oppose any of these writings, it must be considered as merely accidental.

Since my own letter above alluded to, was written, I have seen two publications by the President of the Board of Agriculture, in which the

[ 8 ]

draining of land has been mentioned. The first is an Address to the Board of Agriculture, dated 14th July 1795, in which it is taken notice of in these words: "The Board has succeeded in its first application [i.e. to Parliament for a reward on account of *discoveries*, advantageous to Agriculture] in behalf of a very deserving individual, Mr Joseph Elkington, *who has carried the art of draining to a perfection hitherto unknown.*" The second is in an Address to the Board of Agriculture, on the cultivation and improvement of the waste lands of *Great Britain*, by the President, printed 23d Decem- 1795, in these words: "A considerable proportion of the wastes of Great Britain, consists of lands of a wet and boggy nature, which it has been yet supposed was the most difficult to improve and cultivate. Fortunately, however, *discoveries* have been made in the art of draining such bogs by Mr Joseph Elkington, a farmer of the county of Warwick, as renders the improvement of swampy land a matter of much less difficulty or expence than formerly." My friends think that in both these passages there is manifestly a *marked* determination to set aside my claim to any share in the discovery of that mode of draining, and a studied care to avoid my name in any way, lest it might imply some sort of derogation from the merit of Mr Elkington; and they farther think, that after the public claim I have already made to that discovery, it would argue little less than a consciousness of the injustice of my claim, should I suffer such a

[ 9 ]

public affront to pass unnoticed. As some of Sir *John Sinclair's* best friends, with whom I have spoken upon the subject, concur in the same opinion, I find myself called upon to urge a farther explanation on that head; which is one of the principal objects of the present address.

The question at issue may be reduced to a very narrow point, which is this. The practice of Mr Elkington is in its principle, either the same with that which was practised by me, more than thirty years ago, and the principle of it developed and clearly illustrated by figures, in *Essays* relating to Agriculture and Rural affairs, which were published in the year 1775; or it is not. If it be the same, then doubtless Mr Elkington can have no just title to be held out to public view *exclusively*, as the discoverer of this practice; for I presume, he will not alledge that at the time of the discovery, I had ever heard of him or of his practice. Indeed, I never did hear of either, till his name was first mentioned in some of the publications of the Board of Agriculture. On the contrary, as it is certain that my discovery was published more than twenty years ago, and that Mr Elkington has never till this hour published his, but has been going on from imperfect beginnings, gradually improving as he went on, it is not so clear that he may not have borrowed some hints to direct his practice, either directly from my treatise, which has been pretty generally read in Lancashire, or from the conversation of some persons who had read it. From these considerations,

[ 10 ]

if the principle be the same, it will be difficult for the President of the Board of Agriculture, to clear himself from the imputation of a marked partiality in the passages above quoted; especially after my having pointed out to him in my former letter the passages in my Essays that directed the same method of practice so long ago as has been already specified. If, on the other hand, the practice followed by Mr Elkington differs in principle from that which I had so long ago explained; in that case, the President of the Board of Agriculture may be with reason accused of injustice to the public, by having delayed so long to explain the principle of that useful discovery; for, as the public have already paid for the discovery \*, they have a right to demand that it should be made more generally known for the benefit of the whole community, in the same manner as Mr Forsyth's receipt for recovering decayed trees was published, on receiving his premium. I therefore, in the name of the public, demand of you, Sir, who have taken the lead in this transaction, to publish this secret, that all the world may be enabled to know it, and to avail themselves of it if they incline, without being obliged to have recourse to Mr Elkington himself, who in this instance, like the venders of quack medicines, carefully conceals his secret, that he may be enabled to profit by the credulity of the public;

\* It has been publicly asserted by the Board of Agriculture, that Mr Elkington refused to discover his method till he obtained for the secret one thousand pounds, which were granted to him for that purpose, by Parliament, last year.

( 11 )

And shall the President of the Board of Agriculture demean himself so far, as to give countenance to such transactions !!!—I will not suppose, that such can be the case. Yet appearances are against you.—Inadvertence may have led you to adopt a language that is fairly susceptible of that interpretation; and you cannot take too early an opportunity of doing it away\*.

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\* The President of the Board of Agriculture may, perhaps, have been induced to adopt the mode of conduct that has given occasion to these animadversions, from considerations of the most patriotic kind, which need only to be explained in order to command the most universal applause. He may have deliberately resolved, like Fabius Maximus of old, to subject himself to a little temporary obloquy, in order that he might thus have it in his power to benefit his country to a greater extent than he otherwise could have done. He may have remarked, what is an undeniable truth, that mankind in general, pay little attention to what they acquire at a small expence, and with little trouble to themselves; but what costs them much money, and is sold to them as a secret, is very much valued;—is talked of in polite circles,—attracts the notice of ministers and nobles; or, as Dr Johnson might have said, “of many men, many women, many children.” He knew of what vast importance the proper draining of land might be to this country, if the attention of the persons above described could be directed strongly to that point. He had seen how vain it was to think of producing that effect, by publishing plain and undisguised directions for performing these operations, where all appearance of mystery was laid aside. He had observed, no doubt, that most men who read such performances, might be said, like the heathen deities of old, “to have eyes, but they see not, and ears,



( 12 )

It will be the easiest thing imaginable for Sir John Sinclair to clear himself from this charge, and settle the matter,—simply by publishing the principles on which Mr Elkington's method of draining are founded. This can be attended with little trouble:—For as Sir John must fully understand the principle himself, (otherwise it would be an insult to suppose he could

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but they hear not." They read, and perhaps applaud; but so little attention do they bestow upon what they do read, that when the same thing is introduced by another mode to public notice, they do not even recognise that ever they have seen it before. He knew, perhaps, it would be an ungracious task, to attempt to rouse these dreamers, by the rude stroke of a flapper, like that which Dean Swift has conferred on the inhabitants of Laputa; but that it would be much better gently to tickle them, until they, by this pleasing sensation, shall be induced to open their eyes to admire those objects that are purposely placed before them, with a view to catch their attention at the propitious moment. If they can be thus beguiled into a casual attention to things that tend at the same time to promote their own interest and the welfare of the public, which, without these arts, they never could have done; who can blame the man who thus beguiles them in order to benefit them by it? Doubtless, he deserves applause: and the applause in this case ought to be the greater, because, in order fully to effect this beneficent purpose, it may, perhaps, be necessary apparently to rank himself, for a time, among a class of men who do not meet with the utmost respect from the public; and which few men would voluntarily submit to do. Had Sir John Sinclair given me the smallest hint of any thing of this sort, it must have commanded my warmest applause:—But as he never did so, I am not at liberty to put that construction on his conduct:—So that if I do him injustice in this respect, the blame cannot fairly be attributed to me.

( 13 )

have adopted a language so strong and decisive as he has done)—he can find little difficulty in explaining it, as a supplement to one of those publications that are every day issuing from the press, at the expence of the Board of Agriculture.

Such a publication is likewise necessary on Mr Elkington's account, if he means to free himself from the imputation of quackery; which idea, the manner in which he has been introduced to public notice by the Board of Agriculture, has a strong tendency to countenance. This ought to be done away, if he wishes to gain that respectability of character to which superior talents should naturally entitle him. With such men, *candour* is ever a leading characteristic feature; for, however far concealment and deception may lead to emolument in certain cases, it never can be accounted honourable. Now, if Mr Elkington is sensible that he understands the principles upon which his practice is grounded, so completely as to be able to explain it in such a satisfactory manner, as to set at defiance the critiques of philosophical investigators, he can have no objections to publish it. He has received a price for it; and not only honour calls for it, but *justice* requires it at his hand. If neither the President, nor any other member of the Board of Agriculture, nor Mr Elkington himself, shall, after being thus called upon, publish the secret that he has sold, the public will be disposed to believe that Mr Elkington cannot do it, and that he has availed himself of the influence of some great man, to impose upon the President and the Board of



( 14 )

Agriculture, who have thus, in their turn, been induced to lend their aid to enable him to dispose of his nostrum to the best advantage. From these considerations, it alike behoves the President, the Board of Agriculture, and Mr Elkington himself, to lose no time in publishing his secret. Among other good effects that will result from this measure, it will totally preclude all farther altercation respecting the merit of this discovery between him and myself, or others.

Till such publication appears, it may not be improper in me to observe, that another body of men, who have had good opportunities of information, have thought proper to adopt a conduct respecting this particular, very different from that of the President of the Board of Agriculture. The gentlemen who compose the Society of Agriculture at Altringham, near Manchester, in the county of Lancaſter, having determined to encourage the draining of land by means of tapping, judged that a respect for their character required them, in this case, to act with the strictest impartiality: And thinking it would be of use to those who were to attempt it to know the principle on which success depended, as well as the mechanical practice of the art, the Society offered a premium to those who drained the greatest quantity of land, according to the practice followed by Mr Elkington, on the principles explained by Dr Anderson, in a book called *Essays relating to Agriculture and Rural Affairs.*

( 15 )

The following is Mr Elkington's own account of the way in which he was first led into the train of discovering his mode of draining by means of tapping, as it was told to me by a gentleman of great veracity, who had it from Mr Elkington himself; and it appears to be so natural, as fully convinces me that it is strictly the truth. Mr Elkington's father having died about the year 1763, left him in possession of a small farm of wet four land. He found that no good could be made of it without previous daining. He accordingly set to work to drain it in the usual way; but after having laid out as much money as his narrow funds could afford, he had the mortification to find that no benefit had resulted from his labour; which tended very much to discourage him. While he was in a state of despondency on this account, he, by accident, dug a little deeper than usual in one of his drains, and found, to his great surprise, that a copious spring of water burst forth from the hole, which continued to flow with a plentiful stream for a very long period of time. He dug deeper in several other places with the same effect, though the streams were less copious than the first. In consequence of these openings, he had the satisfaction to perceive, that his fields gradually became drier and drier, till they at last were perfectly freed by it from all the superfluous moisture. And not only were his own fields thus drained, but the contiguous land, for a considerable distance all round, was made drier also by the operation. This circumstance led him to suspect, that in other cases, where the surface

( 16 )

appearance of wet land was somewhat similar to his own, they might be drained by making openings resembling to those above named. Success attended his operations in many cases; and he gradually went on in his practice, correcting his first errors by experience, and improving upon it till the present time.

From this account, it would seem that the discovery was, as to him, merely accidental; nor does it appear, from the above, that he had any clear idea of the manner in which the draining is thus effected, or the principles on which it depends, so as to be able to distinguish *a priori*, those cases in which that mode of draining could be of no use, from those where it must of necessity prove efficacious.

As to myself, the discovery of that mode of draining was made in the following manner: I had a field of wet land that lay very flat, but so surrounded by ditches, that no surface water could come to it from higher ground any where, and possessing at the same time such a level as to prevent any water from necessarily stagnating upon it. The field was so wet, that in many places it was a meer hobbling bog, over which a man could scarcely pass during the driest weather in summer. This was a very unprofitable as well as disgusting object; and, in the beginning of the year 1764, I set about seriously to have it drained. On considering the circumstances of the case with attention, I soon perceived that as no *surface* water could come upon it from the higher ground; and as the rain that fell upon the field itself was suffered freely to run off, the water

( 17 )

that drowned it must rise up from *below*. But as the weight of the atmosphere acted on this field as well as on those around, the water could not be made to ascend, as in a pump, by means of suction: it must, then, be forced to take that direction in consequence of some powerful pressure from below ground, acting so strongly as to overcome its natural gravity. This pressure, it was evident, could only be in consequence of the water flowing from higher ground, *under the surface*, through a stratum of pervious matter, being pent in near the bottom, by a stratum of clay placed above it, and thus forced to rise to a higher level, than the low ground, in this kind of subterraneous canal, so as, by the natural power of gravity, to be squeezed forcibly through small fissures in the superior stratum of clay. If so, it would necessarily follow, that should a hole be dug through the superincumbent stratum of clay, so as to reach the bed of the reservoir, the water would be allowed to issue freely through that opening, and to run off the ground by its natural level; and thus would the accumulated water, which occasioned the pressure, be gradually discharged, after which it could no longer be forced up through the small fissures in the clay; and, of course, the wetness, that had arisen solely from that cause, must be gradually removed. On this reasoning, which seemed perfectly conclusive, and which was confirmed by observing that the subsoil of that field was every where a very stiff clay, mixed with small stones, the dry weather was no sooner set in, than I put a man to dig a pit as near to the edge of

( 18 )

the swaggle as he could approach, ordering him to penetrate directly downwards, making the pit no larger than was sufficient to allow him to work, and to proceed without interruption, until he should perceive that, on making his strokes, it should sound as if it were somewhat hollow below. On observing this, he was desired immediately to desist, until he called me and received farther orders. The labourer accordingly fell to work; but he found the ground so hard, that, in the course of two days, he had only penetrated to the depth of about five feet. During that time I frequently visited the work, to examine appearances. Nothing remarkable occurred, save that little peering springs often were discovered, through which the water issued; but the quantity of water that came from them was not such as to interrupt the work. On the morning of the third day, about breakfast time, the labourer called on me, and said, that as his stroke gave a *douf sound*, (that was his phrase,) he had called me according to my desire. I went immediately with him to the place, and having made him go down into the pit, I desired him to show me in what manner he could come out of it. He then pointed out to me a kind of steps he had made into the clay on one side; and having lent him my hand to assist him, I found he could get out very quickly. I then ordered him to take a kind of sharp pointed iron crow, with a cross handle and foot to it, which he had found a very useful tool in loosening the clay, and give a stroke of that with all his force upon the bottom, which he did.—On this, to his

( 19 )

great surprize, the tool penetrated a thin crust, and then fell down, from one to two feet, as in a vacuity. Through the opening thus made, a strong jet of water rushed instantly with great impetuosity; but I, being aware of it, and at hand to assist the man in mounting, he got very quickly to the surface, and out of all danger, though not a little terrified at what had happened. The stream was at first so large, as might, I suppose, have filled a pipe of from 6 to 12 inches diameter; and rose, as a *jet d'eau*, to the height of six feet at least, above the surface of the ground. The labourer, who had no idea of such a phenomenon, looked upon it with an overpowering astonishment, which would have furnished a fine subject for the painter. The stream continued to flow, and to rise above the surface of the ground for about a week; but gradually abated in height, till it arose not above the surface of the ground, and continued still to flow; but the quantity of water gradually diminished, till it at last settled into a perennial spring, which continues to run till the present day.

The consequence of this operation was, that during the course of the ensuing summer, the water gradually drained off from the boggy ground; the swaggle slowly acquired a firm surface, so as to admit of being plowed at any season; and about twenty acres of ground were thereby drained, which, before that time, had been in a great measure useless for every agricultural purpose.

Ten years afterwards, being about to publish an Essay, containing directions for draining all the dif-

ferent kinds of wet grounds that occasionally prove detrimental to the farmer, I naturally specified this variety of wet ground among the others, and gave a plate explanatory of the cause of that phenomenon, as I had done of the others, in order that every person who chose it, might be enabled to distinguish the case, and apply the remedy himself, if he so inclined. The Essay has been now in the hands of the public above twenty years, and will speak for itself; so that more need not be said here on that head, further than that all these facts could be *proved*, were it thought necessary to do so.

I may add, however, at present, when I find that a disposition is manifested, on some occasions, to withhold honour from those to whom honour is due, that though I did not think it proper, in a work that professedly treated of agricultural concerns only, to specify all the useful corollaries that might be drawn from the physical appearance above explained, I may now, without any impropriety, barely mention, that from the application of this principle, many phenomena may be explained in a very satisfactory manner, which have been hitherto reckoned cases of great difficulty. Some of these, (particularly the case of a well that was sunk at Tilbury Fort, on the Thames, as narrated in the Phil. Tran. Vol. . . . in which an abundant spring of *fresh* water was found, at a great depth below the surface of the sea, after two springs of *salt* water had been passed through above it,) I pointed out in a letter I did myself the honour to write, several months ago, to Leigh Philips, Esq. of Manches-

ter, who had been kind enough to say, that the Essay referred to was what he conceived to be a *complete system of draining*. This expression induced me to show him it could not be deemed *complete*; as several cases were omitted, which I then specified to him: among others, it was made evident that deep lakes, surrounded by mountains of great height on all sides, may, on some occasions, be entirely drained, by *bor-ing*, or sinking shafts downwards, sometimes to a moderate depth: That also wet-land may, on some occasions, be more easily drained, by opening an outlet for the water *beneath* the reservoir which occasions the wet, than by bringing it up to the surface. And that, among mountains, it may frequently be much cheaper to carry off superfluous water from mines, by penetrating downwards, than by driving a horizontal level to the surface of the ground, which is in many cases attended with a ruinous expence. These corollaries are indeed so obvious, when the principle is once explained, that it must appear astonishing to any considerate mind they have not been made, and very generally applied in practical cases, long before the present period; and I here specify them, merely to direct the attention of men to an object from which much practical good may be derived, in a variety of cases, which it would be tiresome in me here to enumerate.

I have farther to add, on this head, that there is one variety of wet ground which had totally escaped my notice in that Essay, and which has not, that

( 22 )

I know of, been treated by any writer on agriculture; though it is perhaps more universally hurtful to the farmer, than any other kind of wet land whatever. This I shall have occasion particularly to explain, in a treatise now in the press, on the improvement of waste lands.

From the facts that were stated to the committee of the Board of Agriculture, in favour of Mr Elkington's mode of draining, as published in their *report*, dated June 5th 1795, there seems to be reason to suspect, that Mr Elkington himself, even at that period, was not fully aware of all the circumstances that were essential to the practice of draining ground, in the most economical manner, by means of tapping;—as the labour and expences incurred in many of the cases there specified, seem to be much greater than that mode of draining, judiciously applied, could possibly have required. But as these cases are stated by gentlemen who did not themselves fully understand his method, they may possibly have been done with some degree of inaccuracy. When Mr Elkington himself shall publish his own method, that doubt will be removed; and every individual will then be able to judge for himself as to this particular. If his practice be as good as it is said to be, it cannot be too soon or too generally made known. If it shall be defective in any respect, these defects cannot be too soon pointed out and rectified; which would probably not be long delayed after the publication required.

I shall be sorry, if, in consequence of the precipitate conduct of Mr Elkington's friends, I have been

( 23 )

obliged, for the purpose of obtaining impartial justice, to say any thing here that may tend to prove in the smallest degree detrimental to that gentleman. I look upon him as a very worthy member of society; and I believe him to be an honest man. I have not a doubt but his practice has already been of much national utility, and will be of still more, the wider it is diffused; even although it should not be carried on in the most perfect manner of which it will be found to be ultimately susceptible; and I can assure that gentleman, with much sincerity, that there is not a man in the land, not the President of the Board of Agriculture himself, nor his still more powerful patron, who will rejoice more in his prosperity than myself, or who would more gladly lend his aid to the extending his practice as wide, and the rendering it as perfect, as possible. It is perhaps unfortunate, when a plain man finds himself forced to come forward in the genteel circle,—especially where such person may, by the ill judging partiality of ignorant friends, be induced, from the hope of benefiting his family, to acquiesce in statements that he himself would never perhaps have made,—even though he be backed by those who have the most powerful influence. For it is not in this nation, that influence can altogether suppress the voice of reason, or ward off entirely the severity of reprimand, when the insolence of supposed power provokes a scrutinizing enquiry.

I have now, Sir, done with the business of Mr Elkington, but am sorry that in justice to myself, I am not yet at liberty to put an end to this, I fear, ungracious epistle.



( 24 )

It appears to me very strange, that I should have occasion, at one time, to complain of having been ill used in *two* respects, by Sir John Sinclair, as I am not conscious of ever having merited any thing of that sort at his hand, *but much the reverse*. It unluckily happens to be so however at present. The trespass, too, is of such a kind as to require that notice should be taken of it in the public manner I now do, in order that I may remove, in part at least, the injury that, by his improper conduct, must have been done to my character. I shall briefly state the facts, for the justness of which statement I appeal to yourself.

Immediately on receiving a letter from the President of the Board of Agriculture, in February last, requesting that I would favour the Board with any information I could give respecting the culture and uses of Potatoes; I sat down, and in great haste put upon paper such observations as occurred to me at the moment. These observations, without revival or corrections, were instantly forwarded to the Board, under cover, addressed to the President, and were accompanied by a letter, stating that I had lost no time in complying with the wishes of the Board respecting the subject of Potatoes, and that the papers which accompanied that letter, contained what appeared necessary for me to say on that head. But I added, that these remarks were intended solely for the use of the Members of the Board itself, and "were not intended to be *published*." This I forbade in the most positive manner; and even requested that the Board

( 25 )

would be so kind as not to mention my name in any publication they might think proper to make on that subject; desiring that the papers might be returned to me, after the Members of the Board had satisfied themselves with regard to them. So anxious was I that this requisition should not be forgotten, that I mentioned it no less than three times, in as many different letters I had afterwards occasion to write to Sir John Sinclair; and as the franks had been reduced in weight before the last letter was written, I desired him, with a view to avoid the trouble of addressing so many covers as it would then require, to send the M. S. to my son in London, who would take care to get it forwarded to me. After all this, the reader will judge of my surprise, when I read these words in a letter from Sir John: "The Board has at length finished its publication on the subject of Potatoes; and as you have been a contributor to it, you are entitled to a copy of it." In what manner I had become a contributor to that work, I could not well conceive; for I did not then imagine that ever he could think of publishing what I had so positively forbidden: but as some observations of mine on Potatoes, had been printed in other publications, I thought something might have been extracted from these works, to which this passage might allude. I took the earliest opportunity that offered, to consult that work for my own satisfaction. My astonishment at seeing the observations printed entire, with all their faults and others

( 26 )

superadded, and thus forced upon the public notice, "unanointed, unanelled;" and the indignation I felt at this unexpected insult, may be easier conceived than expressed. I call it an insult, because I conceive that no one acting in the character of a gentleman, can have a right to publish the writings of another, even without his consent, far less, if contrary to his express injunctions, clearly announced, and repeatedly enforced. You, Sir John, have it in your power, by publishing my letter, to correct me if I misrepresent the fact. If I have stated it justly, it is incumbent upon you, to make such an apology as one gentleman ought to give, and another to receive.

What adds *injury* to the *insult*, on the present occasion, is, that from the whole tenor of the writing, it was obviously intended for private information only, and not at all for the public use; and if you had taken the trouble to read, with an ordinary degree of attention, the first sentence only, you could not have failed to perceive it. You need scarcely be told it may be extremely proper to express in a particular way, what was obviously calculated for the private perusal of a few gentlemen only, who were about to judge of matters that were not within the sphere of their observation, though it would be exceedingly preposterous to make use of the same expressions, when intended to be laid before the best informed professional men in the kingdom. The observations which, in the one case, would only be calculated to induce that cautious

( 27 )

circumspection which men of professional knowledge, in any line, are in some measure required to use, when called upon to assist those of less experience, whose situation in life incidentally may bring them to decide in matters respecting that profession; but, in the other case, as being addressed to professional men, many of whom may be supposed to be equally well informed as the writer himself, could be considered as little better than an insult, and would indicate an overweening presumption in the writer, that could only excite disgust and contempt. Such, in fact, is precisely the case in the present instance; and the words of the introductory paragraph to that Essay, if they were supposed to be intended for publication, can only be calculated to make an impression on the mind of every reader that is very little in favour of the writer; and what I conceive to be extremely different from what my own character, if not obscured under such a humiliating disguise, ought naturally to produce. I feel, at least, that if any other person had written such a paragraph, intending it to be published, as this has been, I should have despised him as an impudent coxcomb, whom it would be a merit to humble. Sir John Sinclair is as capable as any man of judging of the irresistible effects of such impressions on the public mind: nor would there have been any thing extraordinary in it, if he had, on receiving such a paragraph for publication, from a man with whom he was in habits of intimacy, requested him to reconsider it, to see how far he



thought it proper for the public eye, on the supposition that it had escaped his notice through inadvertency. But to publish it in that imperfect state, though contrary to the express orders of the writer, repeatedly enforced, without giving him even a hint of such an intention, was using a freedom which no man, whatever his situation in life may be, has a right to take with another. The law has provided a punishment for him who injures his neighbour's good name. The injury may be as great when it is done in this way as any other, though it has, perhaps, hitherto escaped the notice of legislators. With those who shall read this letter perhaps, *a part* of the injury, may be done away; but Sir John ought to consider that thousands may have seen the publication alluded to, who may never have an opportunity of reading this, and that the writer must continue to be despised by them till the end of time.

Besides the circumstance above alluded to, there are other blameable particulars originating from the publication of that performance by the Board of Agriculture, that must affect the character of the writer; for so little attention has been paid to the printing, that, from the incorrectness of the press, he must, in some cases, appear to write in a manner altogether unintelligibly, and, in others, he is made to speak perfect nonsense ||. I will not say that these things

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|| EXAMPLES. I had said, 'But now that *fresh* kinds are obtained from *seeds*,' which is printed, 'But now *the* fresh kinds

were intended: But is it fit that one person should suffer a material injury, through the carelessness of another; especially when that is produced, not in the ordinary course of business, but is occasioned entirely by the culpable forwardness of that person?

I am happy at being now come nearly to the close of a letter, the writing of which has been to me a very unpleasing task; for I mean not to bring forward any other complaints against you, at this time; and hope I never shall be forced to do so, at any future period. I do not take pleasure in finding fault; and in few cases could it prove more irksome to me than the present. Anxious as I have been, through the whole course of my life, to see the prosperity of this country augmented, by promoting the peaceful exertions of rural industry, and thus preserving the morals of the people untainted, the only sure basis of national welfare, I cannot but feel a sensible regret at any degradation of the character of the man who has taken the lead, for the present, in that laudable undertaking. Undoubtedly nothing tends so much to exalt a man's character, and to give him superior weight on all occasions among his equals, as

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'are obtained from *reds*.' I had said, 'Nor are those kinds that send their bulbs deep in the ground, so *desirable* as those that rise upwards,' which is printed, 'So *durable* as those that rise upwards.' I had said, that in a rich mellow soil 'the roots would be able to strike with ease, and *find* abundant nourishment;' it is printed, 'And *send* abundant nourishment.'

( 30 )

that unbiaſſed integrity, which, riſing above thoſe partialities and prejudices that are inſeparable from little minds, preſſes ſteadily forward in its courſe, without wavering, however aſſailed by the tempting lures that may be held out to it, on either hand, by the artful and deſigning. It was this that raiſed Ariſtides, the Athenian, to that exalted pre-eminence that ſuppreſſed even competition itſelf, and gave him ſingly the power of adjusting the claims of rival States. Such a character commands reſpect, everywhere talents are rather defective ; and will make errors themſelves be overlooked by moſt men : but where this divine attribute is wanting, the moſt brilliant talents diſplay their luſtre in vain ; and even the moſt uſeful purſuits, by ſuch men, are frustrated. I have been hurt, Sir John, at the obvious partiality of your conduct towards myſelf, and the apparent deſign, unfairly, to leſſen my character with the public. Should a ſimilar weakneſs, to uſe the mildeſt expreſſion, be perceived in regard to other the influence of the Board of Agriculture muſt ſoon be loſt with the public. It will only be then viewed as one of thoſe tiny inſtitutions that are calculated to ſooth the vanity, or to augment the political influence of certain individuals for the time. I moſt anxiously wiſh that this may never be the caſe ; and ſhall only add, that if any thing I have here ſaid ſhall, by inducing a little more circumſpection, where the reputation or the intereſt of others may be affected

( 31 )

ted by any caſual inattention on his part, tend to render the character of Sir John Sinclair ſtill more reſpectable than it has hitherto been, it will add to the pleaſure and happineſs of

SIR,

Your very ſincere well-wiſher,

JAMES ANDERS

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N. B. The first four Essays above mentioned, were written at the request of Sir John Sinclair, and intended for the Board of Agriculture:—But, for reasons that will be explained in the Preface, and that have no connection with the subject of the present letter, the Author declined that mode of publication, and adopted the present.

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