

*Some Observations made in Scotland by that Ingenious Knight  
Sir George Makenzie, sent in a Letter to Mr. James Gregory,  
and by him communicated to the Publisher.*

S I R,

**I**T were as needless as fruitless to write a History of our Land as to its ordinary qualities, productions, situations, and the like; or of the ordinary methods of manuring it for Corns and Fruits; since I know little practiced here, but what is so over all the Nation. I shall in a short time give you some account of some *Marcasites* and *Minerals*, that are found here, after I have given a little time to examine some Informations.

Of *Earths* I have little to say; only one of our most ordinary Soyls for Barley-land, is an Earth digged and mixed with Beasts-dung: In a place near my dwelling there is a plot of ground, less than one Acre, out of which for these many years past Earth hath been digged for the said use; and in two years time it will grow up again, and fill the excavated place, so that it continually furnishes Soyl for the adjacent Lands. An other like this I have in a Farm belonging to my self, twenty miles distant from this, of the same nature and quality. Both are a stiff Clayish Earth, of a dark colour and moist. Both these places I have viewed these several years, and have discerned this truth: It will grow a foot high in two years. Nothing makes our Land give greater increase of Barley than Sea-wrack (*Alga marina*;) but Lands often used to this manure yield but bad Oats, and small quantity, and the husks both of the Barley and Oats that grow on such Lands are thicker than those that grow on other Lands, and these grains have also greater mixture of darnel.

The Increase that some places in our Isles do yield is almost incredible, considering the Climate and Soyl. For some will ordinarily yield sixteen or eighteen fold, as very honest and credible Farmers have often informed me from their continual Experience: And most of those Lands, that yield so well, are  
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of a very sandy Soyl, and only manured with Sea-wrack. I have a piece of Land in *Lothbroom-Parish*, that yields continually every year plentiful crops of Barley, without ever having so much as one load of Manure, or any kind of addition laid on it: And this it hath done past memory. I have seen the Corn of it several years; nor doth the Ground grow less, nor is it exhausted by yielding such plenty of Corn and Straw, though it receives no addition. Whether it be, that Rains wash down matter equivalent to manure from the adjacent Hills (which yet cannot be discerned, though looked after;) or whether its fertility proceeds from prolifick exhalations from a subterraneous cause, I will not determine.

There are also some Fields, that appear to be nothing else but a gathering of small Pebbles, insomuch that Earth cannot be well discerned amongst them; yet do they yield abundance of good Corn, especially of Barley; and more than contiguous Lands that are not stony. Whether this be from accidental Heat contracted by the pressure of those Stones; or from sulphureous Salin emanations from them (which yet I could never force out of them;) or whether it be from the repercussion of the fermenting exhalations that ascend, which they force into the portion of Mould that is mixt with them; I leave to the Judicious to consider.

As for our *Herbs*, I have nothing extraordinary. All I find here, are in History, excepting one, which grows on Stony-shoars; but because 'tis not by me, I will not venture to give you its description now, lest it should be too imperfect. One particular I took notice of, which perhaps is no novelty to you, as it is none to our Highlanders; But since it is to me, I shall relate it. When they want Ink, they take the Root of the *Iris palustris lutea* (*yellow Water Flower-de-luce*) and infuse it twenty four hours in clear Fountain-water; others boil it a little: The water will not be tinged to any height. Then they take a rough white Pebble, and rub it continually in the water on a knife or any piece of clean Steel; and in less than an hours time the water will become very black, and tolerable good Ink: This I oft practised.

Our Forresters ailedge, that when Deer are wounded, they lie on a certain Herb, which grows plentifully in our Forrests,  
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and that by its vertue the bleeding is stanch'd, and the wound healed. I did take a quantity of it, and reduced it to a salve, with Wax and Butter. Its effect was that it healed too suddenly, so that I durst not adventure to use it in any deep wound: But for superficial scars it hath a very sudden operation. At that time I did not know this Herb by any name; but now I find it to be *Asphodelus Lancastriae* verus of *Johnston*, or the *Lancashire Asphodil*.

I cannot omit to add here, that 'tis very ordinary to find *Molucco Beans* on the shoar of the *Lewes* or other our Western Isles. They are found fast to the stalks, which the Common-People supposed to be Sea-tangles, and laughed at me, when I said they were Land-beans: Which made me to write to the Earl of *Seafort*, whilst he lived in the *Lewes*, that I supposed, these apparent tangles were the ham of the Beans, which by long lying in the Sea might acquire that likeness. His Lordship examined the matter, and found it so. And he likewise sent to me a piece of a *Cabbage-tree*, that was found on that shoar. It is observable, that the kernel of these Nuts will be fresh and sound, and the people make boxes for Snuff of the Bean-husk. Now, considering the scituation of those Isles with respect to any place where *Molucco-beans* grow, let the Observers of Tydes consider, what reciprocations must be imagined to adjust the Eastern and Western constant Currents of the Main with the waisting of these Beans on places that lie so far out of the road of any of the direct Tydes: And if they grow only about the *Molucco-Isles*, or in no place on this side the *Equator*, it would seem more probable, that they came by the Northern passage, than any other way. And their freshness in the Kernel seems rather to have been kept in the Cold conservatory, than in the Warm Baths of the other progress.

*Tarbutt*, July 9. 1675.