XVIII. *Copy of Mr.* Thorpe's *Letter to Dr.* Ducarel, *concerning Cheſnut Trees.*

Dear Sir,

Read March 8, 1771. HAVING peruſed the Hon. Mr. Barrington's letter to Dr. Watſon, publiſhed in the Philoſophical Tranſactions, I find he lays down three or four general rules to determine whether a tree is indigenous or not in any country, as follows:

"I. They muſt grow in large maſſes, and cover "conſiderable tracts of ground; nor muſt ſuch woods "end abruptly by a ſudden change to other trees, "except the ſituation and ſtrata become totally "different.

"II. If the trees grow kindly in copſes, and "ſhoots from the ſtool, it muſt for ever continue in "ſuch a wood, unleſs grubbed up, nor is it then "eaſily extirpated.

"III. The ſeed muſt ripen kindly: nature never "plants but where a ſucceſſion may be eaſily con-"tinued, and in the greateſt profuſion.

"Laſtly, many places in every country muſt re-"ceive their appellation from indigenous trees, which "grow there, &c. When the inſtances of this are "ſingular,

" ſingular, it will prove directly the contrary, as he " hopes to ſhew with regard to the cheſnut, &c."

In anſwer to his objections, and agreeable to theſe his forgeoing rules; I ſhall endeavour to prove the cheſnut to be an indigenous tree, in this iſland; and 1ſt, Mr. Barrington ſays, that he examined the woods near Sittingbourn himſelf; " and on a very " minute inſpection of them, found thoſe parts which " conſiſt of cheſnuts, to be planted in beds or rows, " about five yards diſtant from each other; nor are " there any ſcattering trees to introduce them, &c."

In what wood or woods, he obſerved theſe plantations, I muſt confeſs, I am quite at a loſs to find, having never obſerved this regularity in any of the woods I have been in; and I very lately aſked a perſon who has lived many years in that neighbourhood, deals largely in timber and underwood, and is over all theſe woods every year, who told me he knew of no ſuch regular plantations in any of them; that the cheſnut grew intermixed with other trees, as in all ancient woods.

Indeed, the amazing diſtance of the plants from each other, which Mr. Barrington mentions, is ſomewhat extraordinary; as the uſual cuſtom now, in planting ſets of cheſnut or aſh, for hop poles, is about ſeven or eight feet diſtance, as has been lately done by John Cocking Sole, Eſq; in his plantation of cheſnuts, at Newington.

The woods, called the Cheſnut woods, the property of the Earl of Aylesford, which lie in the pariſhes of Newington, Borden, and Bobbing, abound with theſe trees, which grow promiſcuouſly with others, both from ſtubs and ſtools of a large ſize;

twenty acres of which are annually felled for poles, &c.

Cranbroke Wood, belonging to Mrs. Mercer, in Newington, has the cheſnut in plenty with other trees, which produce poles in abundance, from old ſtubs and ſtools.

The Squirrel Wood, the property of the Hon. Mr. Roper, in the pariſh of Stockbury; thoſe called Long Tun and Binbury, contain plenty of cheſnut, intermixed with other trees, in which are very large cheſnut pollards; to appearance ſome hundred years ſtanding; which grow on a poor ſoil, and are quite hollow ſhells, having no nouriſhment but from the rind or bark; yet throw out plenty of ſhoots from the roots.

I have a farm in the pariſh of Stockbury, called Nettleſted, forty acres of which are tithe free, which portion of tithes belonged to the great monaſtery of St. Auſtin, ſituated without the walls of Canterbury. They were given in very ancient times to the uſe of the almonary or almonry of that abbey; as far back as the time of Archbiſhop Walter, in the year 1193, how long before is uncertain, and are mentioned by William Thorn, a monk of that houſe, and publiſhed by Sir Roger Twiſden, in the Decem Scriptores; part of theſe tithes are woodland, and to this day called Almery or Ambry-Tanton. In this wood are very old ſtools of cheſnut, ſome of which are ten feet circumference, and ſtand promiſcuouſly with oak, aſh, and other trees. Theſe ſtools yet produce very good poles, which were felled once in my father's time, and have twice ſince they have been in my poſſeſſion.

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In ſhort, all that vaſt range of woods, called Stockbury vallies, which extend from Key-ſtreet to Binbury Pound, produce the cheſnut in common with other trees; the woods formerly belonging to the abbey of Leſnes, founded by Richard de Lucie, chancellor and chief-juſtice to Henry II. in the pariſh of Earith, ſtill called the Abbey woods, having great plenty of cheſnut, both timber and ſtub wood, and from the ſtumps and ſtools of large timber trees formerly felled, which ſtools are now quite hollow and decayed, except the outward bark or ſhell, round the crowns of which ariſe many ſtools, and are cut for poles at the proper growth.

Church wood, in the ſame pariſh, has the like; and many others in this neighbourhood.

In Wrotham pariſh above Kemſing, is a wood belonging to a farm, called Cottons, which has cheſnut intermixed with other trees.

I could enumerate many more in different parts of this county, was it neceſſary; and I make no doubt, on due inſpection, the like may be found in other counties of this kingdom: it is moſt certain, the cheſnut does not grow in every wood, but in ſuch only, where the ſoil is adapted to it. Different ſtrata will produce different trees; as for example, the great wood called Jordens, in the pariſhes of Bexley and North Cray, the woods beyond Ruxley towards Farningham, have ſome acres nothing but birch, ſome only hazel, &c. Godden-wood, in the pariſh of Seal, is intirely birch. The woods on the Cold hills, of Chelsfield and Nockholt, run moſt upon beech; and thoſe in the Weald of Kent, upon a clayey ſoil, are chiefly oak.

In anſwer to the third and laſt general rule; that the nuts of the cheſnut tree ripen kindly, and in great quantity, is manifeſt from the numbers of poor people at Earith, and the adjoining hamlet; going into the woods at the proper ſeaſon, and gathering ſome a quarter, others three ſacks each, to fat their hogs, eſpecially when pulſe and grain are dear. It is true, the nuts are not ſo large as on trees which ſtand ſingle and open to the ſun, in parks, courts, &c. Even the oak will not produce acorns in a wood, till it becomes an old tree; and then not ſo large and in ſuch plenty as on old trees and pollards which ſtand open in fields and hedge rows. But where the cheſnut, as before obſerved, ſtands ſingle and planted for ornament, as in the Wilderneſs park, the ſeat of Mr. Prat, in Seal; and in Bradbourn park, the ſeat of Sir Roger Twiſden, Bart, at Eaſt Malling, and divers other places, the nuts are large, well taſted, and in great plenty, yielding excellent food for the deer.

It is well known that trees cloſe planted in orchards will not produce fruit ſo large and fair, as in kitchen gardens, where they ſtand ſingle, are often digged about, and manured.

Mr. Barrington himſelf ſays, Dr. Watſon informed him, "that in Spain the cheſnut trees deſtined to "produce the beſt fruit, are engrafted upon the "wild cheſnut; and that the French call the com-"mon ſort Chataignier, and the improved one "Maronier." If ſo, the latter may be the ſort which are annually brought to England, and ſold at all the fruit ſhops, &c. and are called Spaniſh cheſnut. Mr. Barrington ſays, "the very name of Spaniſh, "ſeems

" ſeems moſt ſtrongly to indicate the country from " which this tree was introduced here." But why Spaniſh? I do not know that it is any where here ſo called, and none of the wood-men know it by that name. The old Botanical writers, John Bauhine, Gerhard, and Parkinſon, call it Caſtanea Vulgaris. Caſpar Bauhine, in his Pinax, Caſtanea Sylveſtris, the common or wild cheſnut tree. Ray indeed, in his Synopſis, the 3d Edit. publiſhed by Dillenius, p. 449, has the following, " in ſylvis quibuſdam prope " Sittingburn Cantii oppidum, & Woburn Bedfordiæ, " obſervavimus an ſpontaneam, an olim ibi ſatam, neſ- " cimus." It is ſomewhat ſtrange that ſo celebrated a Botaniſt ſhould treat of it in ſo ſlight a manner, and with ſeemingly ſo little attention, as to mention it only in thoſe two places.

Laſtly, Mr. Barrington ſays, " that many places, " in every country, muſt receive their appellation from " indigenous trees which grow there, &c."

There are many trees which give few, if any, appellation to places. It does not therefore follow that they are not indigenous. In ancient time, England abounded more in woods and foreſts than at preſent; and the oak and aſh being then two of the moſt common trees, occaſioned the names of the contiguous places and pariſhes to receive their derivation.

Notwithſtanding his trial of the ſpecimens of oak and cheſnut, I am well aſſured many old buildings were, and are, of the latter; eſpecially in places where theſe trees flouriſhed. When I repaired the old houſe at Nettleſted, in Stockbury, in ſawing off the end of the main girder, it was decayed at heart; and

and pronounced by the ſurveyor and carpenter then preſent to be cheſnut, as are the other timbers.

Cowſted, a very ancient ſeat in the ſame pariſh, is intirely of that wood; and Dr. Stukely, in his letter to the late Lord Hardwick, read at the Society of Antiquaries, and ſince publiſhed in the Archæologia, p. 44. ſays, "the curious roof of the large hall "of the manſion houſe at Leſnes is of cheſnut, which "no doubt was felled in the abbey woods there."

In latter times, the ſeat called Mount Maſcal, in the pariſh of North Cray, rebuilt by Sir Comport Fitch, Bart. about fourſcore years ſince, the girders and large timber of which are, as I am well informed, of cheſnut felled in the woods adjoining.

And why ſhould it not have been uſed in buildings, ſeeing it is very durable, and grows to a great ſize? witneſs the fine trees felled laſt ſummer, together with ſome oak and beech, in the park of Penſhurſt in this county; poſſibly in length of time, the characteriſtick of the cheſnut trees decaying inwardly, might be the reaſon of the oaks being moſtly uſed, as the more durable timber; and the former found to turn to better account for underwood and poles; eſpecially when hops came into uſe in Henry the Eighth's time, and are the beſt for that purpoſe. Even oak, by reaſon of its ſcarcity and dearneſs, is now little uſed in publick buildings; firtimber altogether ſupplying its place.

The cheſnut tree yet alive in the court at Tortworth, in Glouceſterſhire, ſuppoſed by Evelyn and Bradley to have been planted in the time of King John, may poſſibly be the oldeſt tree of the kind extant in this kingdom; but is no proof of there not

not being cheſnut trees before that time: Any more than the famous tree called Bears oak, in the park at Penſhurſt abovementioned; or the well-known tree called Fiſher's oak, in the pariſh of Farnborough, in this county; or that in Welbeck park, the ſeat of the Duke of Portland, were ſome of the firſt trees of that kind here planted; the ſituation and ornament of theſe trees protected them from the axe.

The common elm, Evelyn thinks not to be an indigenous tree, and it may not as it is ſeldom, if ever, found growing in woods; but in road ways, hedge rows, &c.; and not in the North of England, though, as Mr. Ray obſerves, ſome trees are only found in the North, ſome in the South, and others in the Weſt; neither does the elm, when an old tree, ſhoot kindly from the ſtool.

I agree with Mr. Barrington, that the box tree is an exotick; but the yew is certainly indigenous, as I think may be eaſily proved, and which he aſſents to, but doubts whether the euonymus or ſpindle tree, and liguſtrum or privet, are ſo; moſt certainly they are, as no ſhrubs are more common on dry banks, and in hedges, &c.: but, as he aſſigns no reaſon for their not being indigenous, I ſhall dwell no longer on that ſubject, and conclude,

Dear Sir,

Your moſt humble ſervant,

Bexley,
Nov. 26. 1770.

J. Thorpe.

XIX. *Extract*