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XVII. *A Letter from Dr. Ducarel, F. R. S. and F. S. A. to Dr. William Watfon, M. D. and F. R. S. concerning Chesnut Trees; with two other Letters to Dr. Ducarel, on the same Subject.*

S I R,

Read Mar. 8, ^{1771.} **I**N a letter addressed to you, on the trees which are supposed to be indigenous in Great Britain, published in the *Philosophical Transactions* *, the Hon. Mr. Daines Barrington has attacked a prevailing notion among the learned; that chesnut trees are the native production of this kingdom. Mr. Barrington argues that they are not; and his reasonings on this, are now to be considered.

In my *Anglo-Norman Antiquities*, p. 96. I had observed that “ many of the old houses (in Normandy) when pulled down, are found to have a great deal of chesnut timber about them; as there are not any forests of chesnut trees in Normandy, the inhabitants have a tradition, that this timber was brought from England: and there are some circumstances, which, when rightly considered, will

* Vol. LIX. p. 23.

“ add strength to this tradition ; for many of the old
 “ houses in England are found to contain a great
 “ deal of this kind of timber : several of the houses
 “ in Old Palace Yard, Westminster, and in that neigh-
 “ bourhood, which were taken down in order to
 “ build Parliament and Bridge-streets, appeared to
 “ have been built with chesnut ; and the same was
 “ observed with regard to the Black Swan Inn, in
 “ Holborn, and many other old buildings lately
 “ pulled down in different parts of England.” And
 to this I had subjoined the following account in a
 note. “ Chesnut timber being at present rarely to be
 “ found growing in the woods and forests of Eng-
 “ land, many persons are induced to think that the
 “ sweet chesnut was never an indigenous tree of this
 “ island : but a little consideration will plainly evince,
 “ that it always was, and is to this day, a native of
 “ England. It is generally allowed, that all the
 “ ancient houses in the city of London were built of
 “ this timber. Certainly it did not grow far off ;
 “ and most probably it came from some forests near
 “ the town ; for Fitz Stephens, in his description of
 “ London, written in the reign of king Henry the
 “ Second, speaks of a large and very noble forest,
 “ which grew on the North side of it. Rudhall,
 “ near Ross, in Herefordshire, an ancient seat of the
 “ family of Rudhall, is built with chesnut, which
 “ probably grew on that estate ; for although no tree
 “ of the kind is now to be found growing wild in
 “ that part of the country, yet there can be no
 “ doubt, but that formerly chesnute trees were the
 “ natural growth of the neighbouring wood lands,
 “ since we find that Roger earl of Hereford, founder
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“ of the abbey of Flaxley, in Gloucestershire,
 “ by his charter, printed in Dugdale’s monasticon,
 “ tom. i. p. 884. gave the monks there, the tythe
 “ of the chesnuts in the forest of Deane, which is
 “ not above seven or eight miles from Rudhall.
 “ The words, are *Singulis annis totam decimam casta-*
 “ *nearum de Dena.* In the court before the house
 “ at Hagley Hall, in Worcestershire, the seat of
 “ Lord Lyttelton, are two vast sweet chesnut trees,
 “ which seem to be at least two, if not three hun-
 “ dred years old; and Mr. Evelyn, in his Sylva, p.
 “ 232. mentions one, of an enormous size, at Tortf-
 “ worth, in Gloucestershire, which hath continued
 “ a signal boundary to that manor, from King Ste-
 “ phen’s time, as it stands upon record; and which
 “ tree is still living, and surrounded by many young
 “ ones, that have come up from the nuts dropped
 “ by the parent tree. Mr. Evelyn also assures us,
 “ that he had a barn framed intirely of chesnut tim-
 “ ber, which had been cut down in its neighbour-
 “ hood. In the forest of Kent, adjoining to Suffex,
 “ there still remains several large old chesnut stubbs,
 “ which were left by the woodmen as termini, or
 “ boundaries, either of parishes, or private property.
 “ Besides this, there are to this day, in the North
 “ East part of Kent, several large woods, consisting
 “ principally of chesnut trees and stubs. In the
 “ parish of Milton, near Sittingborne, is a manor
 “ called Norwood Casteney, otherwise Chesteney,
 “ from its situation among chesnut woods, which
 “ reach to the highway from London to Dover, and
 “ give name to a hill between Newington and Sit-
 “ tingborne, it being called Chesnut Hill, the ches-
 “ nut

“ nut trees growing plentifully on each side of it,
 “ and in woods round it for many miles. And
 “ by the particulars for leases of crown lands in
 “ Kent, temp. Eliz. Roll III. N° 8. now in the
 “ Augmentation office, it appears that there is,
 “ in the same parish of Milton, a wood containing
 “ two hundred and seventy eight acres and a half,
 “ called Cheston, otherwise Chesnut wood. To
 “ conclude, my worthy friend, Edward Hasted, esq;
 “ of Sutton at Hone, near Dartford in Kent, F.R.S.
 “ and F.S.A. assures me that one of his tenants at
 “ Newington, a few years since grubbed up forty
 “ acres of wood, which were intirely chesnut.”

In the very out-set of the argument, Mr. Barrington imposes upon himself, by changing the terms of the question. “ Since you sent me, says he to Dr. Watson, the specimen of supposed chesnut, which was taken from the old hall of Clifford’s Inn, I have been at some pains to examine the authority for the prevailing notion, with regard to this being an indigenous tree” (p. 23.)—but in p. 24. he says, “ I shall begin by considering the proofs, which are commonly relied upon to the *Spanish* or *sweet* chesnut being indigenous in Great Britain.”—though not one word has preceded, though not one word follows, of the Spanish and the common chesnut being the same. He then alledges, “ that the very name of Spanish, seems strongly to indicate the country from which it was originally introduced here” (p. 24.) This is surely a striking instance of an inaccuracy of language; the whole controversy between us turns only upon that which is commonly called the chesnut tree, and which is therefore de-

nominated *Castanea Vulgaris*, by all the ancient Botanists. It is so called by Dr. Johnson in his *Mercurius Botanicus*: by the same author, in his *Iter Cantianum*; and by Blackstone, in his *Specimen Botanicum*; and in this true view of the controversy, let us examine the principal parts of it.

I have, Sir, in the abovementioned quotation, particularly noticed a large tract of chesnut woods, to continue to this day near Sittingborne, in Kent; in opposition to this, Mr. Barrington says, that he has taken a very minute inspection of these woods; and that, "finding them planted in rows, and without
"any scattering trees to introduce them, he is convinced that they are not natives." (p. 27 and 28) Such is the argument by which my assertion is endeavoured to be set aside.

I shall not here enter into an examination of the four general rules laid down by Mr. Barrington, "from which it may be decided, whether a tree is
"indigenous or not in any country," p. 23. That I leave to the consideration of two of my particular friends, who have entered into the Botanical reasons produced by Mr. Barrington, and whose letters to me on this subject are hereunto annexed. I confine myself to the fact. "Remember, says Dr. Plot
"in his MS. *Collectanea of Kent* (in the library of
"Edward Jacob, Esq; of Feversham) the iron oar
"smelted in Chesnut wood, in the confines of Borden
"and Newington." Dr. Johnson, in his *Iter Cantianum*, 1632, speaks of the *Castanea Vulgaris inter Sittingbourne et Rochester*. And this Chesnut wood is equally mentioned as early as the 22d of Elizabeth, under the title of *Quædam Sylva, vocata Chestenwode*,
in

in a conveyance, which the reader may see below (1). This wood then is not very modern; and if ever it was planted by any human hand, must have been planted two or three ages ago; but it was certainly never planted by any human hand; the whole wood

(1) Ex. Orig. penes Edw. Jacob Arm. de Feversham, S.A.S. Nov. 22, 1770. Sciunt p'sent. et futur. q'd ego Georgius Clyfforde, p'ochie de Bobbynge in com. Kanc. ar. p' quadam pecunie summa michi p'fato Georgio p' Georgium Ffylmer p' manibus solut. unde fateor me fore solut. et content. dictumq; Georgium Ffylmer hered. et exec. et admynystr. suos fore exonerat. et acquietat. p' p'sent. dedi concessi vendidi et hac p'sent. carta mea confirmavi eidem Georgio Ffylmer quinque acr. ter. et bosc. five majus five minus scituat. jacen. et existen. in pochia de Borden in com. p'dicto videl't ad quandam silvam ib'm, voc. Chesten woode versus West ad ter.* Garret, gen'; versus Southe ad ter. hered. Alexandr. Cotte; versus Est ad boscu hered. Henrici Droumfylde; versus Northe; Est et West ad boscu Thome Pettenden, versus North; H'end. et Tenend. predict. quinque acr. ter. et bosc. cum omnibus et syngulis suis p'tin. p'fat. Georgio Ffylmer hered. et assign. suis ad opus et usum ipsius Georgii Ffylmer hered. et assign. suor. imp'petu Caplitib. d'no feodi p' servis inde eis prius debit. et de jur. consuet. Et ego p'dict. Georgius Clyfford et hered. mei p'dict. quinque acr. ter. et bosci cum omnibus et singulis suis p'tin. p'fat. Georgio Ffylmer hered. et assign. suis contra omnes gentes warrantizabimus et imp'petu defendemus p' p'sentes. In cujus rei testimonium ego p'dictus Georgius Clyfford huic p'sent. cart. mee sigillum meum apposui; dat. vicesimo octavo die Maii anno regni dñe ñre Elizabeth dei gra' Angl. Frauncie, et Hib. Regine fidei defensoris, &c. vicesimo secundo.

Georgius Clyfforde, (L. S.)

Sealed and delivered
in the presence of

German Wake, &
Henry Whithead.

* Sic Orig.

covers

covers more than three hundred acres of land. In one part of Chesnut wood, upon the hanging banks of Chesnut-street, and in the way from Kay-street to Stockbury, are now the remains of large chesnut trees and pollards, which were plainly planted by the bold irregular hand of nature.

I had also mentioned a grant (or rather a confirmation of a grant) made to the abbey of Flexeley, which was the tithe of chesnuts in the forest of Dean; "*totam Decimam Castanearum de Denâ.*" But Mr. Barrington objects to the supposition "of "Dena, in the record, meaning the forest of Dean, "as there are so many places of the name of Dean "in the kingdom." This however is surely an objection of no weight. The Cistercian abbey of Flexeley, or Dene, was actually situated in the forest of Dean (2), and was anciently called Flaxlyn abbey of St. Mary de Dean (3). This abbey, together with Dean Magna (alias Mitchell Dean), and Dean Parva, all lie in the same hundred with the forest (the hundred of Saint Briannell), and are included in the ecclesiastical deanery, called Forest: where, therefore can the Dene of Flexely be placed, but at the forest in which it was situated, and from which it derived half of its appellation? And what pretence can a Dene in Hampshire, or a Dean in Lancashire, have to a place in a record, which relates only to the abbey of Saint Mary de Dene, in the forest of Dean? But all such reasonings are unnecessary: the point is ascertained beyond the possibility of a doubt, by Henry the Second's confirmation of the original

(2) Tanner's Notitia, p. 147.

(3) Atkin's Gloucestershire, p. 288. Edit. 1768.

grant,

grant, which may be seen below (4). The king, by this record, confirms to the monks, *locum qui dicitur Flexleia*

- (4) Flexleyensis Abbatia, in agro Gloucestrensi. Carta Henrici Normannorum Ducis, Donatorum concessiones recitans et confirmans.

H. Dux Normanniæ et comes Andegaviæ archiepisc, &c. Salutem. Sciatis me concessisse et confirmasse Deo et Sanctæ Mariæ, et monachis ordinis Cisterciensis, pro salute antecessorum meorum, et mea propria, in elemosinam perpetuam, omnes illas donationes quas Rogerus Comes Herefordiæ eisdem monachis in elemosinam dedit, juxta testimonium cartarum suarum, scilicet, locum quendam in valle Castiart, quæ dicitur Flexleia, ad construendam abbatiam, et totam terram illam quæ dicitur Wastadene, quæ fuit Wulfrici, et quandam fabricam ferrariam apud Edlandam, et totam terram sub veteri Castello de Dena ad sartandam, et illam quæ est assartata, et quandam piscariam apud Redliam, quæ dicitur Newerra, et quoddam pratum in Pulmede, et omnia assiamenta sua in foresta de Dena, et dominicum totum de Dimmoc, et terram illam quæ fuit Uthredi clerici, et terram Ernaldi, et terram Wulfrici, ita scilicet, quod ipse Uthredus clericus remaneat in manu abbatis, cum escambio suo, scilicet duabus virgatis terræ quod nemini inde respondeat nisi abbati; et dimidium nemus apud Dimmoc; et singulis annis *totam decimam Castanearum de Dena*, et terram illam quam adquisivit ipse Comes Herefordiæ de Gaufrido filio predicti Wulfrici, et aliam quam ipse Comes adquisivit de Leffrico, de Strattra. Quare volo, &c. Nos autem has prædictas donationes non tantum eis confirmo, sed etiam omnes alias quas idem Rogerus Comes Herefordiæ illis in elemosinam daturus est. Testibus Rogero Comite Herefordiæ, Willielmo de Crivecuer, Ricardo de Humet, Constab. Philippo de Columbariis, Roberto de Ivigum, Willielmo de Angervill, Willielmo Cumin, apud Evesham.

Cart. Antiq. X. Num. 4.

Carta regis Henrici Secundi.

Henricus, Dei gratia, Rex Angliæ, et Dux Normanniæ et Acquitanniæ, et Comes Andegaviæ, Archiepiscopis, &c. et omnibus fidelibus suis Anglis et Normannis, tam præsentibus, quam

Flexleia ubi abbatia fundata est, by the title of Locum quendam in foresta de Lenâ. He afterwards goes on, to

quam futuris, salutem. Sciatis me dedisse et confirmasse Deo et Beatæ Mariæ et Monachis meis de Dena, quos in propria protectione suscepi, pro salute mea et antecessorum meorum, in elemosinam perpetuam, locum quendam in foresta de Dena, videlicet, totam vallem de Castiard, et locum qui dicitur Flexleia, ubi abbatia fundata est de ordine Cisterciensi, in honore beatæ virginis Mariæ, pro amore Dei, et pro anima regis Henrici avi mei, et Comitis Gaufridi Andegaviæ patris mei, et Matildis imperatricis matris meæ, et aliorum parentum et antecessorum meorum, et pro salute mea, et hæredum meorum, et pro stabilitate et pace regni Angliæ. Concessi etiam eis et confirmavi omnes illas donationes quas Rogerus comes Herefordiæ eisdem in elemosinam dedit sicut cartæ ejus testantur. Præterea dedi eis et confirmavi omnia aisiamenta in eadem foresta mea de Dena, scilicet pasturam juvenis suis et porcis suis, et omnibus aliis pecoribus suis, et ligna et materiem ad domos suas et ad ædificia sua facienda, et ad alias res usui suo necessarias, sine vasto in eadem foresta mea. Et de eadem foresta dedi eis *decimam castanearum mearum*, et grangeam quæ dicitur Wastedena, et unam forgeam ferrariam, ita liberam et quietam et operantem, per omnia, sicut meæ dominicæ forgeæ. Et totam terram sub veteri castello de Dene ad sartandam, et illam quæ est assartata; videlicet, centum acras, et quandam piscariam apud Reidleiam, que dicitur Nolwera, et quoddam pratum apud Reidleiam, quod vocatur Pulmede; scilicet quatuor acras, et terram quam illis dedit in elemosinam Leuvericus de Staura, et grangiam quam eis dedi apud Wallemere, de assartis meis; videlicet, ducentas acras, cum pratis et pascuis, et omnibus aliis aisiamentis, et quatuor acras de Northwoda, et totam dominicatum meum de Dimmoch, et quinque virgatas terræ et dimidiam, præter dominicatum, et dimidium nemus meum de Dimmoch, et dimidium retium in manu mea, propter aisiamenta hominum meorum, ea scilicet de causa, ut monachi mei habeant suam partem nemoris in bene et in pace, et sine omni communione aliorum hominum; et firmiter præcipio, ut nullus eos super hoc inquietet. Præterea dedi eis essartum quoddam subtus Castiard, quod vocatur Terra Vncentii. Hæc omnia dedi

to give them *omnia asiamenta in eadem foresta mea de Dená*; and then he particularly subjoins, *et de eadem foresta dedi eis Decimam Castanearum mearum*. Can any words possibly be more explicit than these? And can Mr. Barrington aver against the testimony of an authentic record? But, though the Dena of the record does mean the forest of Dean, Mr. Barrington has still an objection in reserve; and asserts that “there are not the least vestiges of any such trees in this forest at present.” (p. 29.) But is Mr. Barrington sure there are no vestiges of chestnut trees in the forest? Did Mr. Barrington inspect into every part of this ample area? And did no trees, no stumps, no stools, escape his eye in this wide unbounded range? But the fact appears otherwise. There are not merely stumps, not merely stools, of chestnut trees; but actual and absolute trees of chestnut existing at this day, in the forest of Dean.

In a letter to me, dated Dec. 10, 1770, from the Rev. Mr. William Crawley, resident at, and minister of Flaxley (uncle to Thomas Crawley Bovey, Esq; the present owner of Flaxley abbey); is the following account:—“In this very forest and
“near Flaxley is a parcel of land, about three or

dedi Deo et beatæ Mariæ et monachis meis Deo devote servientibus, habenda et tenenda imperpetuum, soluta et quieta ab omni reguardo et exactione seculari. Quare volo, &c. Teste Ricardo de Humet, Willielmo de Creveca, Philippo de Columbariis, Willielmo de Anzervill, apud Evesham. (Monasticon Anglicanum, Tom. I. p. 884).

Pat. 22 R. II. part 3. m. 16. per Inspex. Vide Cart. antiq. N. N. 30. Et pat. 27 H. VI. par. I. m. 9.

“ four hundred acres, which is still denominated
 “ *chesnut* : though neither chesnut, nor any other
 “ kind of tree is to be seen there, excepting what
 “ we call underwood or coppice, mostly hazel. In-
 “ deed in many places of the forest, I find chesnut
 “ trees are (sparingly) to be met with ; but within
 “ a few yards of the above spot, in a wood of my
 “ nephew, are many of remarkable fine growth.”

But, even if the fact had been as Mr. Barrington hath stated it, the faith of a record attesting the existence of chesnut trees formerly, in the forest of Dean, was surely not to be superseded by the non-existence of such trees at present ; they might have existed formerly, though they do not exist at present. And the record explicitly assures us that they did exist, and as early at least as the reign of Henry the Second.

The chesnut tree, therefore, may still claim a natural relation to this island, notwithstanding the two arguments of Mr. Barrington against it : and if we look into this kingdom, we see the chesnut tree, not confined to Sittingbourne woods, or to Dean forest ; but scattered with a free hand, through many parts thereof ; shooting up with all the healthy vigour of genuine natives, and giving denomination to several places amongst us. Thus the chesnut wood of Sittingbourne, has given the name of Chesnut-street, to the neighbouring road ; and the old Saxon half of the name, Street, strongly intimates the other half to be very ancient. The appellation occurs in the first map, that notices the names of the roads, the map of Kent by Morden. In Hertfordshire is a town, called in old writings, Cheston, Chesthunte, Shesterhunte, and Cestrehunt ; and Norden (in his description

discription of Hertfordshire, p. 15,) says, Cur non
(5) Cherzin? Castanetum of Chesse-nut trees?

The Saxons were well acquainted with this tree, and, according to Skinner and Lye, called it Cýrtel and Cýrz-beam; the same word evidently with our present Ches-nut. Dr. Johnson, in his *Mercurius Botanicus*, 1634, remarks the chesnut to have been not unfrequent in the woods, as well as in the plantations, of his own times; *Castanea Vulgaris in sylvis nonnullis et viridariis*;—Mr. Dale, in his *History of Harwich*, mentions various chesnut trees to be growing in Stour wood, within the parish immediately adjoining to Harwich. Blackstone, in his *Specimen Botanicum*, p. 12. speaks of chesnut trees growing in (6) Bulwin woods, between Dartford and Bexley, in Kent, plentifully; not twenty miles distant from London. Mr. Philipot, in his *Villare Cantianum*, which was printed in 1659, says in p. 237. “There
“ is a manor, called Northwood Chasteners, which
“ name complies with the situation; for it stands North
“ from the town, in a wood where chesnut trees
“ formerly grew in abundance.” “The noble ches-
“ nut tree, says Morton, (Northamptonshire, p. 397.)
“ belonging to the Worshipful Thomas Tryst, Esq;
“ of Marford, is the largest of that kind I have any
“ where seen: the body of it is no less than fifteen
“ feet eight inches in circumference; and it extends
“ its branches proportionably.” “On the outside of
“ the Roman station at Temple Brough, near Sheffield,
“ in Yorkshire, says Gibson’s Camden, (Vol. II. p.
“ 847.) “ is a large bank, upon which are huge trees,
“ and upon the side of the bank of the highway,

(5) Chestin.

(6) Now Baldwyn Woods.

“ there grew a chesnut tree that had scarce any bark
 “ upon it, but only upon some top branches which
 “ bore leaves ; it was not tall, but the bole could
 “ scarcely be fathomed by three men.” “ There was
 “ standing, says Evelyn (in his *Sylva*, Fol. London,
 “ 1706, p. 223.) an old and decayed chesnut at
 “ Fraiting, in Essex, whose very stump did yield
 “ thirty sizeable loads of logs. I could produce you
 “ another of the same kind in Gloucestershire, which
 “ contains within the bowels of it, a pretty wain-
 “ scotted room, enlightened with windows, and
 “ furnished with seats, &c.” And to these we may
 add two great chesnut trees flourishing at Tortworth,
 in Gloucestershire, and at Writtlepark, in Essex ; the
 former is allowed, even by Mr. Barrington, “ to be
 “ the oldest tree that we have any account of, per-
 “ haps in Europe.” (p. 30.) And the following de-
 scription of both, was published about twelve or
 thirteen years ago (7) ; “ At the seat of the Lord
 “ Ducie, at Tortworth, in Gloucestershire, there is
 “ now growing an English chesnut, which measures
 “ fifty one feet about, at the height of six feet above
 “ the ground. This tree divides itself, at the crown,
 “ into three limbs, one of which measures twenty
 “ eight feet and half in the girt, and five feet above
 “ the crown of the tree. The soil is a soft clay,
 “ somewhat loomy ; the situation is the North West
 “ side of a hill ; this tree was stiled, in King John’s
 “ time, the great and old chesnut tree at Tortworth ;
 “ so it is supposed to be now above one thousand
 “ years old.”

(7) London Magazine, 1758, p. 482.

“ There

“ There is another stately chesnut (8), but little
 “ inferior to that at Torteworth, in Writtle park,
 “ three miles to the left of Ingatestone, in Essex.
 “ The late Lord Petre measured this tree, and found
 “ it forty five feet girth, five feet from the ground;
 “ this vast trunk supports a lofty head, which, at a
 “ distance, affords a noble prospect, and well de-
 “ serves to be surveyed by all that admire such
 “ wonderful productions.” At Little Wymondley,
 near Hitchin, in Hertfordshire, is an old decayed
 chesnut tree, the trunk whereof (measured within
 these two years) was found to be forty two feet cir-
 cumference in one part, and forty eight feet in an-
 other, as I am credibly informed.(9) And, to give
 additional force to an argument which is already
 decisive of itself, we may observe, that in the New
 Forest, there are very many chesnuts irregularly scat-
 tered among the oaks and other trees; and now to
 be seen in the road from Limington to Southampton.

In this great abundance of chesnut trees formerly
 among us, we need not wonder that chesnut timber
 was frequently used in old houses, preferable to oak;
 it was then the timber most esteemed by our joiners
 and carpenters. And, though very lasting, yet it
 has been justly discredited, in these later ages, for
 houses, because, when it begins to decay, the con-
 sumption commences at the core, and the heart is
 the first destroyed. And we can produce some

(8) In a News Paper, called The Citizen, or General Adver-
 tizer, Sept. 21. 1758.

(9) This tree is situate in the grounds, and near the house of
 Little Wymondley Bury, late the estate of Lord Grosvenor,
 but purchased within two or three years by Col. Cracherode.

proofs, additional to the many that have been formerly produced, of chesnut timber actually employed in buildings. "The old houses in the city of Gloucester (as the Reverend Mr. Crawley informs me that he has often been assured) are constructed of chesnut, derived assuredly from the chesnut trees in the forest of Dean." In many of the oldest houses at Feversham is much genuine chesnut, as well as oak, employed. In the nunnery of Davington, near Feversham (now entire), the timber consists of oak intermingled with chesnut. And the great chesnut beam which supported the leads of the church tower at Feversham, when it was lately taken down, was found rotted for many feet at the extremity; and had, as it were, a mere shell of sound timber remaining about it.

Thus have I endeavoured, with all the respect due to genius and truth, to point out some of the mistakes into which, I apprehend, Mr. Barrington has fallen. I might have dwelt more largely upon the antiquarian part of my subject; but the botanical was more immediately my point. And in the examination of this, I have shewn, that the chesnut tree flourishes greatly in this kingdom; that it appears wildly scattered over the face of the country; that it was actually settled among us many centuries ago; and used by our ancestors in buildings; and that it was even familiarly known to the Saxons. All these united evidences strongly co-operate to prove it a native of this island, and must absolutely be allowed to prove it, till Mr. Barrington, or some other person, can produce superior evidence to the contrary.

I beg

I beg leave to submit these observations to your
considerations ; and have the honor to remain,

S I R,

Your most faithful

humble servant,

Doctors Commons,
Jan. 5, 1771.

And. Coltee Ducarel.

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

Dear Sir,

Read March 8, 1771. **H**AVING 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 foregoing rules ; I shall endeavour to prove the
 chesnut to be an indigenous tree, in this island ; and
 ist, 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 chesnuds, 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 plan-
 tations, 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 per-
 son 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 some-
 what 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 chesnuds, at Newington.

The woods, called the Chesnut woods, the pro-
 perty 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 chefnut 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 chefnut, intermixed with other trees, in which are very large chefnut 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 chefnut, 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.

In

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 common fort Chataignier, and the improved one “ Maronier.” If so, the latter may be the fort 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, nescimus.” 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 Mascall, 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 dearth, is now little used in publick buildings; fir-timber 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 of a Letter from Edward Hafted, Esq; F. R. S. and F. S. A. to Dr. Ducarel, concerning Chesnut Trees.*

Dear Sir,

Read March 8, 1771. **I**N answer to Mr. B's 1st rule—I must remark, instances are exceeding frequent of woods and coppices breaking off, by a sudden change, to other trees, and that where the situation and strata are entirely the same; sometimes without any mark of division, and sometimes with a ditch only, an old stub for a boundary, or perhaps distinguished only by the difference in the growth of the underwood, or the like. It is a known fact, that particular sorts of trees have grown in large tracts and masses in a country, which have been in succeeding times almost extirpated from thence, either from others being more diligently encouraged and preserved, or from the present destructive method of too frequent cutting them down; and only scattered stubs or trees have remained of the sort, thinly dispersed in woods and hedges. The wick, elm, maple, and others, are indigenous trees; and yet seldom, if ever, grow in large masses, or cover considerable tracts of ground; the reason of which

which is, they never shoot from the stool so as to make any considerable progress.

As to the 2d—A tree, or particular wood, may grow very kindly in a coppice, and yet in process of time, by the continual felling of the wood, may be entirely worn out, when other sorts, which bear the woodman's cutting-bill more kindly, will increase, and overrun the former, so as to fill every vacancy made by it. Besides, there are some kinds of wood which are poisoned, and in time decay by the near affinity of others. The ash is a particular instance of this poisonous quality towards other trees.

As to the 3d rule of seeds ripening kindly; I must disagree in this too, as I find very few, if any, whether indigenous or not, whose seeds do not ripen here sufficient to continue the tree easily; and where it is not in profusion, the indigenous tree will be found as deficient as some others, which are known to be otherwise.

Mr. B's last rule, of places taking their name from indigenous trees which grow there, may serve as well to prove all trees whatsoever so: there being but few trees which have grown in Britain, but our very ingenious etymologists have derived the names of some places from them.—Singular instances, I own, I do not recollect.

All kinds of things in general adopt the name of that country where they grow, or are made in the greatest perfection.—Instances of this are obvious in every necessary of life. The chesnut, whose fruit ripens in Spain in much more perfection than in this variable and colder climate, has gained the additional name of Spanish to it, among the merchants

and venders of them, though in the country villages the woodmen will yet talk of the growth of this right ENGLISH CHESNUT. And as to Pliny's telling us that chesnuts were brought from Sardis to Italy long before his time; that does not make it less probable that they might have been the growth of Britain, at the very time they were brought from thence to Rome.

The ancient Norman buildings are mostly of this wood, which in all probability was fetched from this country; most of the stone wherewith our monasteries and buildings of such sort were erected came from Normandy. This seems to have been a mutual traffick for some centuries between the two countries.

How the notion arose first, that the forest mentioned by Fitz-Stevens to the Northward of London, was mostly of chesnut, I do not know, nor could I ever find any authority for it; though it continues the assertion of most literary men. If I might conjecture, I should think it to have arisen from a blunder and mistake of the name of Norwood; there being many decayed stubbs of chesnuts in the archbishop of Canterbury's Norwood, not far from London; which is, no doubt, the place Mr. Miller means, when he mentions such having been seen in the neighbourhood of the metropolis.

Most antiquarians assert that Old London was built of chesnut: that this tree grew near London, has been proved above from Norwood, and may from the name of Cheshunt, in Hertfordshire; that it may have done so in former times in great plenty, might be supposed from what I have said before; but one

reason of its decay may be assigned to the great increase of the metropolis, which consumed most of the chesnut timber near it; and the stubbs of such being much subject to decay, few, if any of them, could naturally last to this time, so as to bring any profit to the owner, but have been grubbed up from time to time, till they are now almost totally eradicated; and I think, there is great probability that the universal decay and destruction of this kind of timber, throughout the realm, appeared in so serious a light to the legislature, as to give the first rise for our laws for the preservation of timber in general.

Oak timber is so entirely different from chesnut, in the rings and spaces, which appear when cut transversely, that it is impossible to mistake the one from the other.

In a note, p. 96. of the Anglo-Norman antiquities, mention is made, of a large tract of chesnut woods, near Sittingbourne, in Kent (and in the North West part of East Kent, as it should be printed), which is certainly right; these woods are a very large tract, which more or less have chesnut stubbs spread over the whole space of them. They extend some miles, from the environs of the town of Milton, by the old highway (now disused), leading from thence to Maidstone. The general name of the whole tract, is Chesnut or Chestney Woods. The 40 acres mentioned in the said note to have been grubbed up, were only felled; and were of such a size and growth, as to be mostly used as timber. On the top of Chesnut Hill between Newington and Sittingbourne, there stood a chesnut tree of prodigious size, which has been felled within these few

years, the stool of which may now be seen close to the high road.

The production of nature in this vast tract of woods is so plain, that it would be absurd to use arguments to defend it; nor shall I bring examples of it from other countries, which might be had: I shall only take notice, with Dr. Ducarel, that in the ancient forests of Kent, which lay to the south of it, adjoining to Suffex and Surry, there remain large old chesnut stubs or brocks, now almost worn out, and perished, which are left by the woodmen as termini or boundaries, either of parishes or of private property; which is the universal custom every where made use of to distinguish the wood of different owners, and are never cut down or altered; so that they must have stood sacred to this use, from the first introduction of private property into this island; and were no doubt even then of considerable age, by their being made choice of for this use, in preference to any others.

But to return to the neighbourhood of Milton.—The manor of Norwood, within that parish, is called, in the highest records we are acquainted with, Norwood-Chestney, Chastney, and Castney, no doubt from the great plenty of chesnut within its bounds, even in those early times. Nor is this a singular instance of any place in England being named from the chesnut tree; Cheshunt, in Suffolk; and Cheshunt, in Hertfordshire, having both their names from the plenty of chesnuds near them: the last of these places, Chancy tells us, seems in old time to have abounded with them; and that most of the ancient houses in that vill were built of them; and in the venerable

nerable book of Doomſday, we have an account of a quantity of woodland in this pariſh, ſufficient for the feeding of 1200 hogs, which ſhews us that this conſiderable tract of wood was of ſuch ſort, as to afford plenty of good food for ſwine; as it certainly muſt be to afford pannage for ſo large a number; and that theſe woods were cheſnuts, may in all probability be preſumed from the above circumſtances.

The ſame venerable record likewise mentions the village of Box, alias Boxbury, in Hertfordſhire; which, the learned Serjeant tells us, was ſo called from a large wood, which retains the name to this day; and I have now before me the names of more than a dozen pariſhes and places, which have taken their names from the box tree, and retain it to this time. The fir, no doubt, from every evidence that can be had of former times, and by the evidence of our own eyes, from the numbers of them which have been dug up in almoſt every part of Britain, was an indigenouſ tree of this county; notwithstanding Cæſar's aſſertion to the contrary, who appears to have been but little acquainted with it, when he tells us, "this iſland had every kind of "tree the ſame as Gaul, except the fir and the "beech;" both of which were in the greateſt plenty here at that very time; the latter was particularly ſo within the county of Kent, the only ſpot he might be ſaid to be acquainted with: and yet, after this, no one ſure will aſſert that either of theſe trees are not indigenouſ; though the former of them is entirely extirpated (as the production of nature) from the Southern part of Britain, which the cheſnut is not; though it is made uſe of as an argument againſt
its

its being the natural product of this country. The elm bears every mark of its being indigenous ; and, according to one of Mr. B's general rules, it must be so, for there are near 40 places in England, which take their name from this tree, most of which are mentioned in the book of Doomsday.

Whoever has been much acquainted with the woods and tracts of ground lying on our Chalky Hills, will surely never contend that the yew is not the indigenous growth of this country. I am,

Dear Sir,

Yours, &c.

Huntingfield, in Kent,
Nov. 29, 1770.

Edw. Hafted.



Ducarel, Andrew Coltee, Thorpe, J., and Hasted, Edward. 1771. "A letter from Dr. Ducarel, F.R.S. and F.S.A. to William Watson, M.D. F.R.S. : concerning chestnut trees ; with two other letters to Dr. Duracel, on the same subject." *Philosophical transactions of the Royal Society of London* v.61 (1771), 136–166.

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