

**FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, &C.,  
BEING AN EXPOSURE OF THE  
MISREPRESENTATIONS OF THE  
AUTHOR'S TREATISE ON  
PLANTING**

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Facts, observations, &c., being an exposure of the misrepresentations of the author's treatise on planting by William Billington

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**WILLIAM BILLINGTON**

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MISREPRESENTATIONS OF THE  
AUTHOR'S  
TREATISE ON PLANTING**



**FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, &c.**

BEING AN

**EXPOSURE OF THE MISREPRESENTATIONS**

**OF THE AUTHOR'S**

**TREATISE ON PLANTING,**

CONTAINED IN

**MR. WITHERS'S LETTERS TO SIR WALTER SCOTT,  
BARONET,**

AND TO

**SIR HENRY STEUART, BARONET;**

**WITH REMARKS**

ON

**SIR WALTER SCOTT'S ESSAY ON PLANTING,**

AND ON CERTAIN PARTS OF

**SIR HENRY STEUART'S PLANTER'S GUIDE;**

ALSO,

**OBSERVATIONS ON THE MODE ADOPTED IN THE ROYAL FORESTS  
OF RAISING TIMBER FOR FUTURE NAVIES,**

AND ON THE

**QUALITY OF THE TIMBER,**

**AS AFFECTED BY THE TRENCHING AND MANURING SYSTEM, OR THE MORE  
COMMON METHOD;**

WITH SOME

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, HINTS, &c.**

**BY WILLIAM BILLINGTON,**

Author of a Series of Facts, Hints, Observations, and Experiments, on the different  
modes of Raising, Pruning, and Training, Young Trees in Plantations; Superin-  
tendant of the Planting of the Forest of Dean, and the Hopwell Woods,  
belonging to His Majesty.

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FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, &c.

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"When a rich man speaketh, every man holdeth his tongue, and look what he saith; they *extol it to the clouds*. But if the poor man speak, they say *what fellow is this*; and if he stumble they will help to overthrow him."

*Ecclesiasticus, Chap. xiii. v. 23.*

"TRUTH IS GREAT AND WILL PREVAIL."

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HAVING been employed many years in the Royal Forests, in the raising of young Plantations of Oaks for future Navies, and having sometime since published a book on the subject, which has caused considerable discussion among planters on the *mode adopted* by the Commissioners of His Majesty's Woods, Forests, &c. And as some of my statements have been misunderstood, misrepresented, and others wilfully omitted by a Mr. Withers, an attorney at Holt, in Norfolk, in his Letter to Sir Walter Scott, on the two modes of Planting, to serve certain purposes, whereby the blame, where it may be deserving, is endeavoured to be fixed upon me, who was a subordinate officer.

Therefore I feel it incumbent upon me, in justification of my own Character, as well as to the Commissioners who adopted that mode of planting which has occasioned such discussion, and animadversion from Mr. Withers; and to endeavour to make things appear in their *true light*, as they ought always to appear. I have been accused of obscurity in my writing, (it may appear so to some,) but I had my reasons, which might be inferred from my book, entitled "*Facts, Hints, &c.*" Having been thus

PUBLICLY CENSURED for acts I could not controul, I feel it my duty to God, my Country, and myself, to explain and refute those charges; and as the same reasons in some measure still exist, (if I should still be thought obscure to some,) all I have to say at present is, that I have documentary evidence ready for the press if it should become necessary, which would shew some men and things in their true colours.

It might not be amiss before I enter upon the main subjects, to state my reasons for presuming to become an author. I had the misfortune, (if misfortune it may be called,) to be *envied* by a superior officer, because I happened to know more about my business than he did, and possessed a little more zeal and anxiety for the *real* "benefit of the public." Consequently, through that hateful vice—*envy*, he thwarted me in every endeavour to promote the success and welfare of the plantations under my charge; and from that *first cause*, though not in his lifetime, I was finally requested (*I could say something more*;) to *retire* from my employment in the Royal Forests. Not satisfied with heaping every indignity and insult upon me, for anxiously exerting all my powers for the success of the plantations and the "public benefit," and it being very visible the plantations were making rapid progress under my management, as regards *economy*, *profit*, and *quick growth*; which in spite of all the obstacles thrown in my way could not but be acknowledged by *his* superiors.

When I found my representations and zealous endeavours for improvement should not be listened to, and that I should have no merit for bringing them into that promising state as described in my publication, but that those who thwarted me were to have the merit of my labour, discoveries, and *real* improvements. I had no other resource, in justice to myself, to prevent such a robbery, as I may justly term it, but to make it known to the Public, and to call the attention of the Commissioners by that means, (as all my other endeavours had failed,) to pursue the course I had so earnestly recom-

mended, not only for the "benefit of the public," but their own *true honour*. For it has since been candidly and honourably acknowledged to me by a son of the person who was the cause of it, that he knew my system was right, and had no doubt the Commissioners would adopt it in a little time after I was removed, expressing his surprise at their conduct.

Such was the cause and origin of my publication, as I never thought of such a thing but a very short time before I began to write it. And when I clearly saw it was fully determined to deprive me of my just merit, and "contemptuously trample upon me," as Sir Henry Stewart has justly observed respecting Mr. Withers's conduct towards me. If such circumstances had not occurred, whatever merit may have been, would naturally have devolved upon the Commissioners of woods, &c. and I had never been heard of in a public manner; and it is very likely those experiments, discoveries, and improvements, would not have been made, at least, not by me. Thus we see, from "seeming evil good is still educed."

Now to the main subject, Mr. Withers's letter to Sir Walter Scott, at the beginning of my publication. Mr. Withers seems to have misunderstood the nature of my appointment, as well as in other parts of it, owing, as I have before observed, that the design of it was for the conviction of *certain persons*, who I well knew could understand the *hints*; and the public I knew could understand the *facts* and descriptive parts. In the introduction to my book, I have said "Having been appointed by the late Lord Glenbervie, Surveyor General of his Majesty's Woods, &c. to superintend the enclosing, fencing, draining and planting of Dean Forest, in the year 1810." I should have said, "Having been appointed by the late Lord Glenbervie, *the* Surveyor General of His Majesty's Woods, &c." at that time. Thus it appears, by the omission of the single article, *the*, Mr. Withers misunderstood, or rather affected to misunderstand it, and clothed me with all the dignity



of *Surveyor General*, or rather *responsibility* for all the "shame and virtuous indignation," that he tells us he felt, at what I had stated in my publication, respecting the planting of the Forest of Dean; when throughout the whole work, it is evident enough I was acting under, and controlled by superior orders.

Respecting Sir Walter's able essay on planting of waste lands, I in the main much admire it, except in some few particulars, which I shall take the liberty to state; as respects "the plants losing all difference of appearance in their growth, at the period of ten or twelve years after either mode of planting"—that depends upon circumstances, but that it will disappear after a short period, I have no doubt, which depends upon soils, situations, and after-management, not necessary to particularize at present, as I may have occasion to advert to it by-and-by. I coincide with him entirely where he speaks of the manner of thinning plantations, as that is the way I have practised; and how he describes elevated situations having been wooded by nature, from the the lower and sheltered situations upwards. Then, if we would but copy nature in her operations, surely we may get woods upon many, at present bare uncultivated tracts; and as he justly observes, the more sheltered and genial situations will first be covered, and afford shelter to the barren and exposed parts, and recommends hedges of larches, as shelter to the most exposed parts; I would also strongly recommend rows of Scotch firs to break off the winds, which if disposed in that form, according to my system, by breaking out the terminal buds, and shortening or cutting in the terminal branches, at an early age, would thicken the branches, foilage, or spines, on both the windward and leeward sides of the hedge, and extend the branches parallel to the prevailing winds, and afford shelter and room to the other tenderer deciduous kinds, which might be planted at first, or in a few years afterwards, as may be judged best according to the situation. I would recommend planting all at the same time, par-

ticularly if the plants were well *set off*. Where the soil is very shallow and sterile, by putting a little good soil to the roots, at the time of planting, which can be done much cheaper than attempting to trench such parts, as I shall shew by *example*, from what I have seen effected upon bare rocks.

Respecting what Sir Walter has said about pruning, he does not seem clearly to understand it, by saying that "Mr. Pontey's principles are indisputable," whereas they are quite erroneous, in saying, the taking off the side branches increases the weight of timber in the stem, which I have clearly proved it does not, by the experiments published in my "Facts, Hints, &c." nor can I agree with him that "all authors are agreed, that to "prune a tree when the sap is in motion, is the ready way to bleed it to death," nor that the sap all descends into the roots in the autumn, and reascends in the spring: see my reasons in my publication; but I agree that spring and summer are the best seasons for pruning, if you wish to invigorate a tree; and also, where he so justly observes, when speaking of the utility of judicious pruning:—"We must not leave trees to nature; human skill and art avail themselves of the operations of nature, by encouraging and directing them towards such results as are most useful to mankind. When we see *nature* raise a field of wheat, we may expect to see her raise whole forests of clear straight profitable trees; till then we must be content to use the plough and harrow in one case, and the hatchet and pruning knife in the other." How just is the reasoning; but the rude hatchet in most cases may be dispensed with, when my system is fully understood and practised. Sir Walter says, that it may be considered as a maxim, that he who spares the axe hates the wood, but I say he who spares the knife and the finger and thumb, by neglecting to break out the terminal buds, and pinching or cutting off a part of the strongest terminal shoots, at an early growth, "hates the wood;" as by my method, that rude instrument, the hatchet,

would scarcely ever be necessary, except for cutting them down.

But the main question on which Mr. Withers has so fiercely attacked Sir Walter, and cited my "bad practice," as he is pleased to term it, to corroborate his own *correct* notions, is where Sir Walter says, that "the difference betwixt the growth of plantations, supposing the soil and situation alike, and the plants put in with equal care, seem to disappear after the ten or twelve first years; that the plant enjoys the benefit of having its roots placed among earth, which has been rendered loose and penetrable; at a certain period the fibres reach the subsoil, which the spade and plough has not disturbed, and then the final growth of the tree which has enjoyed this advantage is often no greater than that on which no such indulgence has been bestowed"

To ridicule and expose the above opinion of Sir Walter, Mr. Withers has taken the liberty to cull from my book, certain passages to prove, as he flatters himself, the fallacy of that opinion; at the same time holding me up to ridicule, and endeavouring to bring me into contempt for the conduct of others, over whom I had no controul; but has scrupulously omitted to notice those parts that told against his system. A more ungentlemanly and unfair attack cannot be conceived, both as it regards myself, and that important national subject, but it is *Attorney like!* as it is too much the practice of his profession in their anxiety to gain their cause, (no matter whether right or wrong,) by tactic and distorting facts, and holding out their opponent to ridicule, and endeavouring by artifice to make the "worse appear the better reason." But I will appeal to the public, if such conduct is becoming any man; such mean, unfair dealing, I have no fear of exposing.

In page 12, of his letter to Sir Walter, he gives a sneer at the description, as he says, I have given of myself, and of my capacity as *Surveyor General*, with which he was pleased to dub me, although I distinctly