

SIR ROBERT SOUTHWELL TO MR. EVELYN.<sup>1</sup>

King's Weston, near Bristol, 3rd November, 1684.

Honoured Sir,

Since my retirement hither I have been so much in the mortar as to multiply walks and walls, and have begun to be a planter. Your fine holly hedge tempted me to an essay for the like in a length of above 300 feet; but the last winter and summer gave me a severe rebuke, killing, as I fear, half the sets. The rest are alive, and many of them with leaf, and I will persist to cultivate with care and patience till all be restored and in a way of growth.

My next desire is to abound in hedges of yews. I would plant it against the walls of two large courts,<sup>2</sup> and in other places, so as now and here-

<sup>1</sup> This and the following letter are in the collection of Mr. Upcott.

<sup>2</sup> The yew-trees referred to in this and the following letter no longer exist in their original number. At the time referred to by Sir Robert Southwell, the public high road went close in front of King's Weston House. It was subsequently thrown far away into its present position in the centre of the park; and the road to the house being carried through the Courtyard, many of these cherished yew-trees were sacrificed to modern taste.

after to extend it for 5 or 600 yards, or more. My seat is somewhat bleak, and therefore I choose this green as that which no cold will hurt, and I am told it will grow as much in three years as holly in five.

Now, seeing I need so much, it had been good husbandry to have begun with seeds, and to have raised my sets, but that I omitted, and you note in your book that they peep not up till the second year.

Wherefore, calling at a gardener, who has a nursery of them, he demands at the rate of 12*d.* for every set of a foot high. Pray cannot you put me into better hands, and tell me where to be supplied on such reasonable terms as I may find it easy to further this design of having store of yews?

Next I desire to know how far asunder I may plant these sets, so as in time to rush and close into a hedge, and whether I may not plant philareas between them, which grow fast, and may be cut away as the others grow up, and capable by spreading to fill the room. This I chiefly propose in the two courts, where I would have the walls lined with this future tapestry of yews. But here I meet in opposition the opinion of the country of its noxious quality to cattle, who will be browsing

the greens they can come at. If this be experimentally true, then I must be at the charge of railing in where it is possible the cattle may come at it.

I have a nursery of firs from seeds I had from Coningsberg, of two or three years' growth. I am thinking, in April, to transplant them, and desire to know if the distance of ten feet be not sufficient for this naked tree. For the next place, I desire to know if these trees will by their dropping endanger the holly hedge which I have set, and which is to grow up close by them.

Pardon, I pray, the impertinency of a young Planter, who, having the honour of your book, and that in gift, is encouraged to bring his doubts and scruples to you.

My son gives his most humble duty, and I am ever

Your most obedient and most humble servant,

ROBERT SOUTHWELL.

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SIR ROBERT SOUTHWELL TO MR. EVELYN.

King's Weston, 8th January, 1684-5.

Honoured Sir,

I will not trouble you with the accidents of this late acknowledgment to so full and so obliging

a letter as I had from you of the 11th of November last. I will fall directly to our plants, which, perhaps, will pass with you as the properest commutation.

I am here in a bleak situation, which has inclined me to affect such greens as best resist all weathers. I shall, in the Spring, proceed by all those cautions you give in reference to the holly. I have King's Wood near at hand, and so can with ease take reprisals for what I lost the last winter, which, perhaps, was full one half of what I planted. With my cypress-trees I had much better fortune, for of twenty-two I lost but one, having exposed the rest as you prescribe. I had a bay-tree, and so beautiful as it deserved painting; the body thereof was of the thickness of my leg, quite cloven through with the cold; but, being cut close to the ground, I have this year several shoots of two feet high. I have most flourishing laurels, which were not touched; and, though the artichokes and rosemary quite quick round me were destroyed, yet I have hopeful offsprings of both, which did escape. Thus you see I brag of<sup>1</sup>

, but I take the better aim to proceed in the future, and to become most conversant with

<sup>1</sup> Illegible.

that which will best take care for itself—I mean the propagation of yew.

Upon the receipt of your letter, which did truly enlighten me how to proceed herein, and to avoid the extravagant demands of the gardeners, which from London was 16*d.*, and from Oxford at 6*d.* the slip, and these at last not to be had, it came into my head at last to send two fellows into the Forest of Deane, which is but ten or twelve miles off, but on the other side of the Severn. This I did; and in one week they brought me home 360 plants, all admirably rooted, and in size from one to four and five feet high, though generally from two to three.

It was about the middle of the last month when I received this stock, and I presently set 200 of them in a court and elsewhere, in order to the lining of the walls, and because they cost me, all charges borne, but three farthings per plant. I sent my leathern ambassadors once more again that so I might have choice to my mind; and they, in one other week, brought me home a like quantity as before. 'Tis true the frost and Xmas have hitherto hindered our further proceedings; but I resolve to line all my walls with this plant, which you so celebrate, and do hope, though you do

recommend the shade as most propitious to them, yet, considering from how barren a nursery they are taken, and how well I am provided to load them with water, that they may prosper even against a south wall. But now give me leave to own to you a prospect that I am almost intoxicated withall, and which has sprung from this choice and plenty of yew-trees, which I find at hand. My parlour-garden has a fair opening into my orchard, and in the middle of this there is a space left of 120 yards long and 20 feet broad, in which I designed a walk of the black walnuts, but now I resolved to take rather what is at hand, and to erect in this place a close walk of yews, which, if I can arrive to, it will be the only close winter-walk that I have here.

In order hereunto, I will hold the breadth of 20 feet, but in the rows the trees shall stand only at 6 feet distance. Every second tree shall have the principal or master branch left growing straight, as for ornament; but all the rest to be banded in due time, till they meet from either side and fulfil the close covering or canopy pretended. This is the thing in general I would be at, and I tell it to you with earnest expectation of your opinion and

assistance. I would know how high the roof ought to be for this length and breadth, or how high we may expect it, and what care is to be exercised to have all things prosper.

The trees I am going to plant are, some of them, four, some five foot high, and strippt to the two upper stories. I take the greatest care of those from whom we may expect a topping branch, and less of each second tree, which is to be wholly bent over, and I venture on him, though his top or head branch be broken off. I consider when any fail, we can send to the forest for just the true size we want; and if you think the bottoms of all these trees will remain naked and so admit more sun and wind than would be fit, we may for remedy place between each four either the same brushy plants or some slips which will come up soon enough for the rest. This walk runs E.S.E. and W.N.W., and the soil is a good rich land which produces excellent apples, and in the meadows adjoining very good hay.

But, while I am triumphing in these rustic attempts, as a courtier turned clown, I received from my Lord Weymouth a terrible mortification, for he tells me it is more than probable all my trees will

die; that the sap of evergreens is now more up than in any other season, and that March or August are the only fit times to remove them. His Lordship has this last season put into the ground of all sorts not less than ten thousand plants. He deals with the four Cardinal gardeners, and I fear it is from one of them this sentence against my yews is directed. If they prove fallible I suffer not, but if otherwise, I hope by March next I may see my fault, and then return and take new councils from the good Forest of Deane. Sir, I take the boldness to expound all this matter before you, that you may kindly animadvert and instruct me in what you see amiss.

I have two generations of fir-trees, which I raised from slender cones, which I procured from —the one are of three years' growth, the other of two, which I found of the same kind the year after. The first I am thinking to transplant in April next into their proper stations, as being ten feet high; the others are still very low, which makes me fear my land's rich soil may be too good for them; and if you judge it necessary for me to alloy it, pray let me have your advice, though the gardeners here think very well of it, and in Ger-



many I saw nothing for five or six hundred miles but sand, in which they grow.

I know I have tired you, and yet, for a little variety, give me leave to acquaint you that here in my neighbourhood is one Rogers, a learned famous Quaker. He has erected a cider-mill, which I went, a while since, being four miles off, to visit. 'Tis seated on the Severne, and he buys up all the apples, pears, and crabs of the forest or elsewhere. He has the river his friend for exporting as well as importing. His mill goes with three horses; the apples are squeezed by two iron rollers, somewhat indented; he grinds 500 bushels in a day. He could make one thousand hogsheads in a season if he had vent for it, but had yet not exceeded 680 in one year. He has some rare skill in making it generally good and in all kinds. He sends it to the West Indies, as well as to Ireland and the neighbourhood of Bristol, and is himself an export merchant. His general price is £4 per hogshead, and for some £5; and if any fail of being excellent in the kind, he is so tender of his credit, which is in order to his greater gain, that he converts all the inferior sort to vinegar or brandy, in which also he drives a vigorous trade. He squeezes all in en-

gines, so as in some to equal the weight or pressure of forty tons.

My son is not a little proud that you vouchsafe to make mention of him. He says he will strive to deserve it. He has lately been dealing with the square and cube roots, and is now going to taste of Euclid.

May you and your Lady and prosperous offspring live as happy a year as either my wishes or your own conversation can afford.

I am ever, with great acknowledgment of your favours,

Sir, your most affectionate

And most humble servant,

ROBERT SOUTHWELL.

MR. BENTINCK TO MR. SIDNEY.

De la Haye, 24e Februaire, 1685.

Notre surprise n'a pas été mediocre, en apprenant la mort du Roy devant que d'avoir rien appris de sa maladie. Notre perte est assez grande pour nous occuper toutes nos pensées, et pour remplir nos esprits de crainte pour la religion Protestante. Mais le bon Dieu, qui en est le protecteur, tient les