

kills the very Flies. *Micheli* describes a Species, which, upon eating them, almost kill'd the Painter he usually employed, and an old Woman, the Painter's Mother. This Man, being sent by the Author to delineate some of these *Fungus's*, and being taken with their Appearance, order'd some of them to be fried, and he and his Mother eat thereof; but were, in about Two Hours, seized with violent Pains in their Bowels, from which they were with great Difficulty relieved. I might produce many other Instances of this Sort; but the above, I believe, are sufficient.

I presume I have set these Matters in a clear Light; but, fearing I have already taken up too much of your Time, I conclude myself,

Gentlemen,

Your most devoted,

London, May 12.

1744.

humble Servant,

W. Watfon.

VIII. *Two Letters from Mr. Thomas Preston to Mr. Joseph Ames, F. R. S. concerning the Island of Zetland.*

Dear Sir,

Zetland, Jan. 31. 1744³/₄.

Read May 31.
1744.

THIS Island has very rarely any Correspondence with the rest of the World for the Six Winter Months; I should say, for
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Six of the Winter Months; for the Year may be said to contain ten Months of Winter, and two of cold raw Weather. I thought it very absurd, to hear the Inhabitants complain of Heat, at the same Instant that I complain'd of Cold, and wish'd for a great Coat. They are so accusom'd to stormy bad Weather, that they will venture to Sea in small Boats, when you would not venture to cross the *Thames*.---- I shall give you a short Description of this Island.

It is the Northermost belonging to *Scotland*, situated between the Latitudes of 60 and 61 Degrees: its Length is, *N.* and *S.* 60 Miles; its Breadth 30; and so divided into Head-lands and smaller Islands, Creeks, Bays, Inlets, and Coves, &c. that you cannot place a Compass on any the most inland Parts of its Chart that shall be Two Miles from the Sea; which makes it extreme difficult to make a good Draught of the Island; of which there is no Chart extant worth naming.

During my long Stay, I have devoted some of my (otherwise) idle Time to the making of Observations, and surveying the Place; by which, and suitable Informations, &c. gain'd from the Inhabitants, I have attempted a Sea Chart, which, I flatter myself, may be of Use to our Navigators; who are all Strangers to the many safe and good Harbours in this Island; and several of them capable of receiving many large Ships.

The Land is wild, barren, and mountainous, nor is there so much as a Tree or Bush to be seen. The Shores are difficult, and, in many Places, inaccessible, rude, steep, and Iron-like; the Sight of which strikes the Mind with Dread and Horror; and such monstrous

strous Precipices, and hideous Rocks, as bring all *Brobdingnag* before your Thoughts.

I doubt not but you are now listening out for some Account of Curiosities of Art and Nature, which most here are Strangers to ; and yet this Island is not quite barren. In Winter the Sun sets soon after it rises ; and in Summer it rises again soon after its Setting ; so that the Nights at that Season are near as light as the Day ; as, on the contrary, the Day in *December* is near as dark as the Night. About the Solstice, we see, almost every Night, the *Aurora Borealis*, as I think you call it ; but we Seamen, the Northern Lights ; which spreads a broad glaring Appearance over the whole Northern Hemisphere, and looks somewhat terrifying to them that are not used to it.

I shall only just mention, that a Comet has appear'd to us for some time from the West, large and plain to the naked Eye.

S I R,

Leith, May 12. 1744.

IN my last from *Zetland*, I gave you a short Account of that Country. I shall now give you some more Particulars, as they occur to my Memory.

The Island is called by the *Dutch*, *Hitland* ; by Us, commonly, *Shetland* ; but the proper Name of it is *Zetland* ; wherein there are thirty Parish-Churches, and about eighty Gentlemens Houses, besides the Towns of *Lerwick* and *Scalloway* : It was first inhabited by the *Pights* or *Picts*, who were driven out by the *Danes*. *Christian*, King of *Den-*

mark and *Norway*, whose Daughter *Margaret* was given in Marriage to King *James* the Third of *Scotland*, in the Year 1468, agreed, That the Islands of *Orkney* and *Zetland* should remain in the Possession of the said King *James*, until he had paid to him 50,000 *Rhenish* Florins for his Daughter's Dower; and *Christian* afterwards, upon the Birth of a young Prince his Grandson, call'd *James*, renounced his Title to the said Island, in Favour of King *James*; which has ever since belonged to *Scotland*.

The Longitude of *Zetland* differs but little from the Eastern Part of *Scotland*; and its Latitude is from 60 to 61 Degrees North: The longest Day is near twenty Hours. I have read a very small Print in my Chamber at Midnight with the Windows shut. The Air is temperate, considering the Country lies so far North; and agrees tolerably well with those that can endure Cold and a thick Fog. I must own, I have not found the Winters so cold as in some other Parts of *Great Britain*; nor are the Summers near so warm; for which, indeed, the Length of the Days makes some amends. I have heard, that some Fishermen have affirmed, that at Sea they have seen the Sun's Body at Midnight: But that is impossible; since the Sun in the shortest Day in *December* is four Hours above the Horison; and it must certainly be depressed as long under it in *June*. The Winters are more subject to Rain than Snow; nor do the Frost and Snow continue so long on the Ground, as upon the main Land of *Britain*; yet I saw it wholly cover'd with Snow the 20th of *May* the last Year. The Winds, during the long Winter season, continue to blow most boisterously generally between the South and
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the West ; which occasions many Shipwrecks. There have been three or four on the Island in the Time I was there.

The Land is mountainous and moorish, abounding with Moss and Heather ; under which they dig Peat (or Turf) for Firing ; under that is hard Rock.

Their Horses are very little, but strong, and well mettled, which they call *Shelties*. Their Oxen, Swine, and Sheep, of which last they have Plenty, and their Cattle of all Kinds, are small. The Price of a Horse is a Guinea ; an Ox somewhat less ; a Sheep half a Crown ; a Calf Six-pence. Rabbits they have in some Parts of the Country. Frogs and Toads there are none ; nor, perhaps, any poisonous Animals. There are many Otters, which they call *Tikes* ; and Seals, which they call *Selkies* : Sometimes there are many young Whales, which they call *Pellacks*, or Spout-Whales : They run into the Creeks, and so intangle themselves among the Rocks, that they are cast on the Shore, or easily taken.

There are Plenty of Sea-weeds, called *Tangle*, growing on the Rocks, of which might be made *Kelp* for the making of Soap. There is Plenty of Shell-fish of most Kinds : Their Oysters are the best I ever eat. In the Sea they catch Cod, Ling, Haddock, Whiting, Scate, Turbut, Herrings, Cole-fish, Flukes, Trouts, &c.

There are many Sorts of Wild-fowl ; namely, the *Dunter* Goose, *Clark* Goose, *Solan* Goose, Swans, Ducks, Teal, Whaps, Toists, Lyres, Kittiwaks, Maws, Plovers, Scarfs, &c. there is like wise the Ember-Goose, which is said to hatch her Egg under her Wing : This is certain, that none ever saw her on the Land, or out of the Water ;
and

and that they have a Cavity or hollow Place under one of their Wings only, capable of containing a large Egg.

There are very large Eagles, which they call *Earns*, which prey upon the young Lambs, &c. There is a Law in Force, That whoever kills one of these Eagles, is to have a Hen out of every House in the Parish wherein it is killed (tho' it is never now demanded).

I don't doubt but that there are Mines of Silver, Tin, and Lead, in the Country; for several Sorts of Minerals are to be found: And I have been credibly informed, that Pieces of pure massy Silver, of considerable Bigness, have been turned up by the Plough: But such Treasures are neglected, or not improved, through the Poverty or Carelessness of the Proprietors. In many Places, Marl, Quarries of excellent Freestone, Lime-stone, and Slate, are found, and some Veins of Marble.

Sometimes there are cast up by the Sea, Timber, Pieces of Wreck, Hogsheads of Wine, Brandy, &c. which are frequently grown over with the Shells of a Fish called *Cleck Geese*, which I take to be the *Conchæ anatiferæ*; and sometimes *Sperma Ceti*, Ambergrise, Water-Sponges, and Camshells (*Os Sepiæ*) are found on the Shore.

There is no Forest or Wood, nor so much as a Tree, or hardly a Bush of any Sort in the whole Country, except in some Gentlemens Gardens; and those never dare to peep over the Garden-Wall, for the Blast of the North Wind.

The Country is so divided by the Sea, that it cannot be expected there should be in it any Rivers; yet there are many small Brooks, and little Runs of
Water

Water call'd *Bourns*, and *Loches* or Lakes; many of which afford Trouts; and I have eaten excellent Cod-fish, that have been taken in one of these *Loches* or Lakes of perfect fresh Water, which has been very near the Sea.

The People are generally civil, sagacious, of a ready Wit, and of a quick Apprehension, piously inclin'd, much given to Hospitality, civil and liberal in their Entertainments, and exceeding kind to Strangers; which I may say indeed from Experience; for I never met with more Civility in any Part of the World.

They are generally of a dark Complexion, personable, and comely enough. The Women are lovely; and the Gentry of them go well dress'd, are genteel in Carriage, well-behav'd in Company, and smart and pleasant in Conversation, even to a Miracle, considering they live in such a remote Island, which has so little Correspondence with the rest of the World: They delight more in the Conversation of Men, than in the common Tittle-tattle of their own Sex; they are Strangers to Plays, Opera's, Masquerades, Balls, Assemblies, Set Visiting-Days, extravagant Dress, Gallantry, &c. and are free from those fashionable Vices which so much disgrace their Betters: In a Word, they are modest Virgins, and virtuous Wives: Adultery is not so much as known among them: With the common Sort Fornication sometimes happens; but their Constancy is such, that they are sure to marry each other after; nevertheless, if a Child happens to come in less than nine Months after the Marriage, they are both obliged, by the Law of *Scotland*, to

do Penance in the *Kirk*. This heinous Sin the pious Priest calls *Antenuptial Fornication*.

The Country is most commodious for Navigation; which makes me wonder it has been so long neglected, and that we have not even so much as a Map of it. There are more than twenty safe Harbours, of easy Access, capable of receiving large Ships; the most remarkable of which are *Lerwick* or *Bressay* Sound; *Dura Voc* and *Balta* Sound on the East Side, and *Scalloway*, *Olisvoe*, and *Valley* Sound on the West Side of the Country. The Coast is all high and bold, and may be seen many Leagues from Sea. There are no Sands round the whole Island, and but few sunken Rocks, and those very near the Shore; except one dangerous Shoal on the West Side, called *Have de Grind*, and some Rocks on the N. W. above Water; both which, as well as the whole Island, I have exactly survey'd; and I think I may say, without Vanity, that I can produce a very good Map of *Zetland*, which, I believe, may be of good Service to Navigation, especially this War-Time. --- I fear I have now tried your Patience with my long incoherent Epistle: I shall therefore conclude with my kind Love to all Friends; who am,

Dear Sir,

Your most affectionate,

Humble Servant,

Tho. Preston.

N. B. The Author has lately published a very accurate Map of these Islands.