

A Letter from Mr. Nich. Waite Merchant of London, to Dr. Rob. Plot; concerning some Incombustible Cloth, lately exposed to the Fire before the Royal Society.

Sir,

THE great respect and honour I bear to the learned and ingenious Gentlemen of the *Royal Society*, prevailed with me, within few days after my arrival in this *City*, to expose to their sight & examination a piece of *Linnen Cloth*, which by their experiment consumed not in the fire: and you being then desirous I would give a short narrative of what *Substance*, and in what *parts* it is said to be made; I here send you the same account I received of it, from one *Conco*, a natural *Chinesse*, resident in the *City of Batavia* in the North-East parts of *India*. Who, by means of *Keay-arear Sukradana* (likewise a *Chinesse*, and formerly chief *Customer* to the old *Sultan of Bantam*) did after several years diligence, procure, from a great *Mandarin* in *Lanquin* (a province of *China*,) near ³/₄ of a yard of the said cloth; and declared that he was credibly informed, that the Princes of *Tartary*, and others adjoyning to them, did use it in burning their dead; and that it was said and believed by them, to be made of the under part of the root of a tree growing in the Province of *Sutan*; and was supposed, in like manner, to be made of the *Todda* trees in *India*: and that, of the upper part of the said root, near the surface of the ground, was made a finer sort, which in three or four times burning I have seen diminish almost half: They report also, that out of the said tree there distills a liquor, which not consuming, is used with a *Wiek* made of the

same material with the *cloth*, to burn in their *Temples* to posterity. This, Sr, is the true *relation* I received of the nature and substance of it from the *Chinesse* above mention'd; if as a *vegetable* it agree not with your Experiments or Judgment, your own commands obligeing me to render you this *account*, I hope there will not any ill construction be made there of, which is all the Favour is desired by

London,

Your most assured Humble

Sept. 10th 1684.

Servant NICH. WAITE.

The *Handkerchief* or pattern of this *Incombustible Linen*, which was shewn the *Royal Society*, (part whereof is engraven *Fig. 3.*) being measured, was found in length 9 Inches, between the *fringe* or *tassells*; the *fringe* at each end being 3 Inches more; so that the whole was just a foot in length; and the breadth was just $\frac{1}{2}$ a foot.

There were two *proofs* of its resisting fire, given at *London*: one, before some of the Members of the *R. Society*, privatly, *Aug. 20. 1684*; when *Oyl* was permitted to be poured upon it whilst red hot, to enforce the violence of the fire: before it was put into the fire this first *trial*, it weighed one ounce, six drams, sixteen grains, and lost in the burning two drams, five grains.

The second *Experiment* of it was publick before the *Society*, *Nov. 12* following, when it weighed (as appears by the *Journal* of the *Society*) before it was put into the fire, one ounce, three drams, 18 grains. Being put into a clear *Charcoal fire*, it was permitted to continue red hot in it, for several minutes: when taken out (though red hot) it did not consume a piece of white *paper*, on which it was layd: it was presently cool, and upon weigh-
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ing it again, was found to have lost one dram, 6 grains.

Dec. 3, Mr. *Arthur Bayly*, one of the *Fellows* of the *R. Society*, presented them with a piece of this *Linnen* in the name of Mr. *Waite*. At the same time, the same Mr. *Bayly* presented Dr. *Plot* with another piece of it, which being brought to *Oxford* the *Experiment* was again repeated on it (Dec. 16.) it being put into a strong *Charcoal fire* in the *Natural History School*, in a full meeting of the *Philosophical Society* of that *University*; where after it had continued red hot for some considerable time, it was taken forth again little altered when cold, saving that it seemed a little *whiter* and *cleaner* than before it was put in; as appears upon the *Journal* of that *Society*. Concerning which, Dr. *Plot*, being desired to offer his thoughts, drew up the following *Discours*, which was read before the said *Society*, June the 23^d An. 1685.

A Discourse concerning the Incombustible Cloth above mentioned; Address't in a Letter to Mr. *Arthur Bayly Merchant*, and Fellow of the *R. Society*; and to Mr. *Nicholas Waite, Merchant* of *London*; by Rob. Plot. LL. D.

Worthy Gentlemen.

THE Historical account of the *incombustible Linnen Cloth* above mention'd, being sent me by the one of You; and a noble present made me of part of it by the other; with a desire from both, that I would search the old *Authors* and see how agreeable their *relations* are to this; give you Both a just right to the following Discourse: which I desire you would believe I address to you, not so much out of *Complement*, as true *gratitude* for so valuable