

35 To THEOPHILUS LINDSEY, 20/21 March 1788

MS: Dr. Williams's Library, MS. 12.12, f. 72-73

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ADDRESS: The Rev^d Mr Lindsey Essex Street London

POSTMARK: Birmingham, Mar 22 1788

Birm. 21 [//20//] March 1788¹

Dear friend

I ask your pardon for seeming so long to neglect your request with respect to the Character of Mr Kirwan² as a philosopher. At first, not knowing the object of it, I did not know how to do it, but for the purpose of your work, it may be sufficient to say some ~~thing~~ such thing as this

“For an extensive knowledge of philosophy, and especially of Chemistry, for quickness of apprehension, and a retentive memory; for sagacity in devising new experiments, and perseverance in the prosecution of them, Mr Kirwan has few, if any, superiors. His situation in life long prevented his application to experiments, but there are few examples of men who have done so much since he has applied to them; and his success has been so great, that he is universally considered as one of the first chemists in this, or any other country. His Temper, which is modest and unassuming, free from ~~envy~~ //envy// or jealousy, and his candour with respect to others, at the same time that it fits him, in a peculiar manner, for philosophical researches, makes him no enemies. He is one of the //very// few / who seem to enjoy the discoveries of others as much as they do their own.”

This has, perhaps, the air of an encomium but it is really just. However, you may lower it if you think proper, as it may be right not to appear extravagant.

I begin now to be impatient to hear from you, and hope ~~you~~ soon to receive the Memoirs,³ that I may make the alterations I have mentioned, and write a few additions. But I shall not do much in that way, nor be in haste to transcribe them, as I can make the present copy sufficiently answer the purpose, if it should be wanted soon.

There is in the Supplement to the Gentleman[’s] [M]agazine an account of Mr Wilkinson⁴ and myself, false in every particular and which may be of disservice to me, but there is no remedy for things of this nature. He has seen it, and perhaps in consequence of it has ~~give~~ promised to give me a share in ~~?~~ //his// ~~?~~ //Cornish// Copper ~~?~~ works, which, some say, he ought just to ensure me from being a loser by: However, I take it for granted he will take care of that; and in turn may do more. Yours & M^{rs} Lindsey’s

most affectionately

J Priestley.

¹ Rutt’s edition dates the letter ‘20 March 1788’ and includes only the fourth paragraph of the full text, beginning ‘I begin now to be impatient to hear from you’.

² Richard Kirwan (1733-1812), chemist and mineralogist [ODNB].

³ See 9 Sept 1787.

⁴ John Wilkinson (1728-1808), see 17 May 1786.