

Letter from Erasmus Darwin to James Watt, 1800/11/20

Darwin writes to Watt asking him to purchase a corn-mill on his behalf.

Derby Nov 20 1800

Dear Sir

I wrote to a friend at Nottingham to inquire of Mr Lowe concerning Hand-cornmills with stones - who says, that he never knew of any such thing made at Nottingham.

Now in these times of scarcity I wish to grind my own corn, & shall be much obliged to you to chuse for me an iron cornmill either of 4-18-0 price, or of 6-6-0; which you think the best for the money. They are sold here at 4-18-0 from Birmingham, but I do not know the manufacturer. My Smith here, Mr Harrison, says Zachariah Parks of Motlane Birmingham is an excellent worker & he fancies that He makes these mjlls. But as life is short, & wheat is much adulterated, I wish to have as soon as may be.

That which I have seen here is said to grind a strike in 3 hours by one man. - but he has handles for two. This came from Chesterfield, - & But another from Birmingham which I saw, I was ask'd 4-18-0 for deliver'd here. But if they sell superior ones at 6-6-0, I should be glad to have one. If you can buy me a mill, I think it might be a better one than I can buy myself: & I could remit the money to you easily; but if it be too troublesome to you to do so, - pray say so, & I will take my chance by directing one here from the iron-shops, as time flies, & I would not wait a month to construct one myself of stones, & eat poison'd bread all the time.

My design is to make brown bread only, - & I have two Labourers, which I keep during the winter, & who have little to do. - these are motives.

Now what can I beg further? - nothing that can amuse [?] or inform you, I am sure; & I shall therefore only add that both myself & Mrs Darwin much laments your short stay, & hope Mrs. Watt & yourself will sometime make us a visit, or visitation, not a viz, like your last.

Adieu

from dear Sir

your affectionate friend

E Darwin

The mill I have seen is exactly a large coffee mill. I am told that a Mr Reynalds near Edgbaston Street makes these iron cornmills and also Zach. Parks of Mot-lane.

If you could see both the 4-18-0 ones, & the 6-6-0 ones, if they have both, & could purchase for me which you think best of the price & direct it to be sent me immediately, I shall much indebted to you. If you can can't [?] do this easily, please to give me a [?] that I may order one at the shops here.

adieu

Mrs Darwin & the young ladies beg to be remember'd to Mrs Watt & yourself.