

THE DESTRUCTION OF GRANTON CASTLE AND ROCK.

Erneston, Boswall Road,
Edinburgh, March 16, 1922.

SIR,—While the Town Council, the Cockburn Association, and many distinguished citizens and lovers of Edinburgh from all parts of the country are wrangling over the amenity of Princes Street, they have allowed one of the most charming and valuable of all its natural features and attractions, to the citizens themselves at least, to be almost irretrievably ruined—namely, its onetime enchanting seashore on the Firth of Forth from Leith to Cramond, which required no artificial nor expensive improvements to preserve its natural beauties, but simply to be left alone.

A boy from the Orkney Islands, though accustomed to wild and romantic scenery, was so transported by his first sight of Granton shore in 1866, with its winding, sandy bays, and the trees and ivy-hanging over the sea, that he still vividly remembers it as a glimpse of paradise.

We are, in this so-called "enlightened" twentieth century, actually allowing a private contractor to pull down the artistic remains of the ancient castle that was built in the 15th to the 17th centuries, and is the only mediæval building in the whole district, and to quarry even its ideal rocky site on the seashore for the purpose of making road metal and concrete, as if there were not enough rock in any other quarry hole that would serve that purpose.

It is not too late even yet to stop this destruction of one of the finest of all Edinburgh's assets in scenery and amenity and future development. The Gasworks cinders have a monetary value of 30s. per ton as fuel for bakers, as one of the numerous squatters on the seashore informed me yesterday, and it would therefore pay the Town Council, not only to sell these cinders without first polluting the sea with them, but to collect and sell the million tons or more they have already spread out on their Edinburgh children's favourite sea beach.

The hideous railway embankment from Trinity to Granton Harbour could surely be lowered several feet to allow the inhabitants behind it to get a glimpse of the sea, the shipping, and the Fife coast. By careful management the harbour walls and railway embankment and buildings, both east and west of Granton, and also all the manufactories at Caroline Park, could be made more or less attractive with the help of an artistic gardener; and, by the removal of the gas cinders, as already described, the miles of sandy beach between Granton Quarry and Cramond could be restored to the thousands of Edinburgh children as of yore, when they used to flock to it in spite of the want of our present tramway facilities.

But we must begin the good work by stopping at once the present rapid demolition of Granton Castle and the rock on which it stands, which, if once destroyed, can never be restored like most of the other beauties of the shore.

Although the massive and artistic old arched gateway and courtyard walls and the gable of the old vaulted kitchen have already been taken down, together with a large part of the rock on which they stood, all these could still be restored with care; and, in any case, the main buildings of the castle and its old-time garden walls and gateways are still intact, and require no other outlay than to be bought from their present owner and left alone.

And, if the Ancient Monuments Department of H.M. Board of Works (that had so successfully preserved to the nation hundreds of much less interesting ruins in outlandish districts, where they are seldom or never seen by any of us), cannot manage this much for us now, there are surely hundreds, if not thousands, of our citizens outside the Town Council and Cockburn Association who would readily subscribe the thousand pounds or so that would do this.—I am, &c.

CHARLES S. S. JOHNSTON.