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Nesbitt himself lectured on anatomy at the Surgeons' Theatre and published a sound book on *Human osteogeny* in 1736. He was a Censor of the Royal College of Physicians in 1733 and again in later years; and he collected a fine library. He was associated with Hales in the inquiry into the merits of a supposed solvent for calculus put forward by a certain Mrs. Stephens. This letter shows that he also joined Hales in chemical experiments. Both Hales and Nesbitt were Fellows of the Royal Society. The letter, which is self-explanatory, brings to the mind's eye a picture of friendly collaboration between the simple, earnest country clergyman and the fashionable, scholarly London physician. Both were inspired with true scientific curiosity.

*Autograph of Stephen Hales*

For Dr. Nisbit in Basing-Hall Street London—  
Carriage paid

Teddington Sept. 11, 1735

Sir

Since I saw you last, I put some large pieces of Cork into an inverted Bottle of Sunning Hill water, after nine days the corks were very black but the water gave a good Tincture with Galls: this and some other considerations have led me to try if the tinging virtue of chalybeate [*i.e. iron*] waters cannot be preserved for some time by the following method viz: by filling the Bottle [*The manuscript contains a sketch of a spherical bottle with a fairly long and wide neck stopped by a cork through which a narrow tube passes and is extended into the body of the bottle, the upper opening of the tube being level with the top of the bottle and of the cork*] brim full of water and then putting in the cork which has the Glass Tube cemented fast into it: by this means the Bottle will be full of Water, without any Air, neither can the outward Air communicate with it only at the small orifice; while at the same time the Bottle is secured from bursting, tho' full. It might be of great use to

Londoners, if Islington Waters could be made to retain, by this means, their virtue but 2 or 3 days, viz: till they had deposited their sediment, for then the cork might be pulled out and the water drawn off clear by a crane [*i.e. siphon*], which would prevent, what I have heard Londoners complain of, its being very turbid when brought to them.

I have therefore herewith sent you four corks with Tubes, to which you will adapt Bottles. Please to leave two of the Bottles at the Wells, and carry the other two home and place them in your cellar, you may try one of each after 3 days and the other two after 6 days, if they retain their virtue so long, you may then repeat the experiment for a longer time. I have found Sunning Hill water to continue sweet much longer this way, than in inverted Bottles, but in the hottest day of this summer it would not bear carriage to me viz: 12 miles in such Bottles with Tubes.

Hampstead water will not retain its tinging virtue in inverted Bottles, and I suspect the same of the Islington Water.

I am Sir

Your Humble Servant

STEPHEN HALES

I shall be glad to know the event of this experiment. I shall try the same on Bath, Tunbridge and Sunning Hill waters. After which I intend to give over these enquiries, but shall be glad if by this means these waters might be preserved good for a few days, which would benefit all those who live at a distance from any of 'em. Tunbridge water sent in common Bottles loses its tinging virtues, yet kept two months last Winter in Tunbridge Town [*the end of the paper is damaged; Hales evidently means that the water kept well in bottles such as he has designed*].

W. R. LE FANU

*Librarian, Royal College of Surgeons of England.*

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