

A plan of a charitable institution, intended to be established upon the sea coast : for the accommodation of persons afflicted with such diseases as are usually relieved by sea bathing / by John Latham.

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Publication/Creation

London : Printed for T. Longman, 1791.

Persistent URL

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P L A N

OF A

CHARITABLE INSTITUTION, &c.

P. L. A. N.

1840

CHARLES WATKINSON

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A
P L A N
OF A
CHARITABLE INSTITUTION,
INTENDED TO BE ESTABLISHED UPON THE
SEA COAST,
FOR THE ACCOMMODATION OF PERSONS AFF-
FLICTED WITH SUCH DISEASES AS ARE
USUALLY RELIEVED BY SEA BATHING.

By JOHN LATHAM, M. D.

FELLOW OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS,
AND PHYSICIAN TO THE MIDDLESEX AND
MAGDALEN HOSPITALS.

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L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR T. LONGMAN, PATER NOSTER ROW.
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CHARITABLE INSTITUTION

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FOR THE

RELIEF OF THE POOR

OF THE DISTRICT

OF THE CITY

OF LONDON

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS plan was addressed in the form of a letter several months ago to a gentleman well known, both in publick and private life, as a perfect character of integrity and independence, as well as of benevolence and humanity.—As I have now therefore, in some instances, been obliged to deviate from the manner of the original letter,—I must claim the indulgence of the publick for the following pages,

pages, which were an hasty production, intended only for private epistolary correspondence.

*Essex Street,
August 24, 1791.*

J. L.

A PLAN

A

P L A N, &c.

WHENEVER a proposition is supposed capable of becoming beneficial to Society, there seems to be no apology necessary for the introduction of it ; but as a bare proposal, without some reasons to recommend it, may not obtain perhaps all that attention which the subject of it deserves, I must hope that the great utility of the design will be an ample excuse for any defect of argument. The plan which I take the liberty of submitting to the publick has for its object the relief of the inferior classes
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of mankind ; and although it at present only professes to extend its comforts to the lower parts of the community, it will ultimately operate to the advantage of the whole.

This country indeed abounds with monuments of exemplary munificence in almost every instance where Philanthropy could discover any possible method of alleviating human misery ; and it is therefore a matter of astonishment as well as of regret, that a scheme to provide sea bathing as a remedy for those diseases of the poor, which may require it, although it is at once so obvious, and at the same time so easy in the execution, has never, upon the principle which I have adopted, as far as I yet know, been either proposed or attempted.

When

When a patient is promised any mitigation of his complaints, he for the most part readily submits himself to the opinion of his medical adviser ; and in a variety of diseases his confidence in his Physician will be repaid with relief : But unfortunately there are others where he feels himself immediately precluded from every probability of future health, by not being able to support the expences which must necessarily be incurred for the means of cure.

He therefore finds himself an unhappy object of distress, pitied indeed, but comfortless—and deprived of even the common consolatory aid of expectation, which is naturally and essentially attached to every other misfortune : Humanity seems to have erased his calamity from

the great catalogue of afflictions, and to leave him to linger still miserably in existence, neglected and forgotten.—In those orders of society which are very remote from absolute want, but which, in the pursuit and attainment of certain necessary purposes, can only be considered as in a state of comparative poverty, the same observations may with equal justice be applied—for if they are at last impelled to avail themselves of the only chance of alleviating their wretchedness, they immediately reflect that they must waste their little substance in the attempt, and thereby entail upon themselves and their family a certainty of future indigence.—Their lives, and the means by which they live, are truly to them synonymous expressions—and the loss of either is in effect nearly equal.

equal.—Every gentleman who is conversant in the management of hospitals very well knows that these scenes are often realized, and that such objects (who frequently present themselves for admission) are generally rejected as improper, although they are sometimes permitted to remain for a while, out of mere compassion to their sufferings ; and that in some charities even this occasional compassion cannot be exercised, as the very diseases themselves are previously determined by their laws and regulations to be a sufficient reason for the exclusion of the miserable wretches who are afflicted with them.

The benefits of sea bathing, with the advantages from air and exercise, are daily felt and acknowledged.—In scrophula, and a variety of diseases which are deducible from it, as well as in a

number of others also, Physicians have always recommended this as the best, and in some cases the only possible remedy from which a cure or an alleviation of the disorder might be expected.—I need not attempt to prove what the concurrence of all reasonable and well-informed practitioners effectually demonstrates.—The very concourse of people upon every corner of the coast during the seasons most suitable for bathing certainly seems to indicate something more than amusement,—and the general and daily immersions (which cannot be supposed pleasant alike to all) abundantly confess that the object of pursuit is sometimes health, and not always recreation.

The idea of building an hospital for this particular purpose has been often
 2 conceived,

conceived, and has likewise as often proved abortive.—The difficulties which arise in the management of hospitals for the sick and lame poor, too frequently soon operate to the prejudice of such institutions,—for when the voluntary contributions of individuals begin to slacken, the ardor even of the first most sanguine promoters generally experiences a reciprocal diminution, and zeal terminates in indifference. Therefore, although I had long ago, in common perhaps with every other Medical Gentleman, been convinced of the necessity of such receptacles for the indigent, yet I could never form any just or perfect conclusion from those principles upon which other hospitals have been conducted. The propriety of the plan was evident, but the method of executing it,

so

so that it should become permanently capable of dispensing its benefits, was not quite so obvious.—The Charitable Fund established at Buxton (which is formed from a very small contribution solicited by a gentleman, who acts as a steward, in each lodging house, from every visitor who frequents the place, and which has been found, under the management of an active treasurer, adequate to the accommodation of a few objects during six months of the year) presented me with some ideas favourable to my project,—and I once thought of recommending an establishment of a similar kind in most of the principal places of resort upon the sea-shore; but as there are many inconveniences attending the execution of it, and a greater extension of good may in my opinion be easily

easily effected by another method, I have retained only so much of that plan as may be found useful in the arrangement of mine. However, as there may probably be many benevolent persons who may wish to encourage an institution for sea bathing in different parts of the kingdom, I have taken the liberty of thus introducing an account of the Buxton charity, that wherever my scheme should not be approved, or cannot be adopted, there may be an opportunity of doing good upon a smaller scale, and of forming a perfect and perpetual establishment, by selecting something from both.

My plan then is the following.—That so much of the Buxton plan as respects the boarding of persons amongst the inhabitants

habitants in the vicinity of Margate, or of any other convenient place upon the sea coast, be adopted.

That a certain number of persons who may be deemed proper objects shall be admitted amongst such families as are willing to accommodate them with board and lodging.

That there shall be paid for each person, whether pauper or otherwise, to the managing committee three shillings and sixpence per week, towards defraying the expences of board and lodging.

That each person shall pay always at least one month in advance.

That

That he shall have the advice of a physician and a surgeon, with all necessary medicines, gratis—and shall incur no other expences whatever, except in his conveyance to and from the sea coast.

That this is the utmost which can at present be proposed; but it is hoped, that from the benevolent exertions of the community, a committee, chosen from the subscribers at large, may be enabled in a few years (perhaps sooner) to propose to the publick a more effectual accommodation, by building a general hospital for the reception of *all* the proper objects who may offer.

That whenever there shall be found to be a greater annual subscription, than is

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necessary

necessary for defraying the expences which shall be incurred, in aid of the weekly payments of patients for their board and lodging,—and that a principal has accumulated sufficient for building an hospital, that one be then erected in a convenient situation for that purpose.

That Margate or its vicinity would then be a proper place for the erection of such hospital,—being preferable to any other situation, on account of the convenience and easy expence of water-carriage from London.

That all patients shall then continue to pay per week for board.

That the wards shall be differently appropriated,—for a class paying their own subsistence money,—for paupers living upon

upon parish charity,—and for another class, consisting of women with their children, which may be subdivided according as they subsist themselves, or are subsisted, upon a parish allowance.

That no person shall be admitted who is an inhabitant of any place within seven miles of the sea,—unless under very particular circumstances, but may receive advice as an out-patient.

That no person shall be admitted without the signature of a physician and a surgeon, — certifying in consultation that the person is likely to receive relief.

That a certain number of physicians and surgeons may be appointed, who shall attend gratis.

That as the institution will extend its benefits principally to the metropolis, the committee which shall be established at Margate, or wherever the hospital may be situated, shall keep a number of beds vacant for the persons who shall be approved by the committee of examination in London, which shall likewise receive petitions, (certified as above by at least one physician and one surgeon in consultation) and give orders for admission into the hospital.

That patients shall not remain longer than four months, except in particular cases, where it may be thought necessary, and where it may be approved by a general board.

That there shall be a general visitation of the hospital, and a consultation upon every

every patient on the day previous to each quarterly court, at which every medical officer will be expected to attend.

That an apothecary shall live in the hospital, who shall act also as steward and secretary.

That one matron—one nurse to each ward—one cook—one laundry woman—and one man servant be appointed.

That patients shall be required to assist in every reasonable occupation.

That subscriptions shall be received constituting annual and perpetual governors.

That

That small subscriptions shall be solicited from every visitor, at Margate and other towns upon the sea-coast, by the proprietors of boarding-houses—taverns—libraries, places of amusement, &c. and be applied to the uses of the charity.

Such are the regulations which might be made for the execution of a plan, which is not fondly adopted upon speculative opinion, but formed upon a conviction of its practicability.—The principle of it is founded upon long experience of the beneficial effects which are produced in a very excellent institution (the lunatic hospital in Manchester, which is indeed a perfect model of its kind) to which I had formerly the honour of rendering my services as one of its physicians, and where I have repeatedly

edly observed its influence in the ease and regularity with which that charity was always conducted.

These are the ideas which I have upon a subject certainly of some importance to society.—I offer them freely to the publick for their judgment and decision, and am convinced that if they shall seem to merit any protection, they will not want it. For myself, I am willing to devote a considerable share of my time to the purpose of carrying this, or any other scheme into execution, which will eventually and equally relieve those diseases which are the objects of the proposed charitable foundation.—A few worthy friends will readily cooperate with me in the design,—who have long ago been convinced of the necessity of
some

some such institution as a measure of national utility; and it is by one gentleman in particular (a surgeon of eminence) in frequent conversations upon the subject, that I have at last been impelled to propose my opinions in the present form.

Before I conclude, I beg to be understood that in giving these hints for a particular establishment, I am influenced by no other motive, than a sincere desire of promoting what I conceive to be essentially connected with the publick welfare,—inasmuch as it tends to remove diseases, obviate mutilation, prevent deformity, and render even the very lowest members of the community again useful and serviceable in their several stations.--If the plan meets with approbation,
my

my highest wishes will be gratified ; and even if it fails, I shall never repent what I have done, as I shall always feel a satisfaction in having discharged what appeared to me to be an incumbent duty.

The gentleman to whom this plan was originally communicated consulted several very excellent promoters of every act of benevolence, whose approbation would alone perhaps be a sufficient recommendation.—However, that there might not be any argument wanting which might assist so laudable an undertaking, the plan was laid before the Royal College of Physicians, who (in the hopes that it might at last grow into a perfect and perpetual establishment) came to the following unanimous resolution, “ That a

“ plan for building and maintaining an
 “ hospital upon the sea-coast for the re-
 “ ception of persons afflicted with such
 “ diseases as are usually relieved by sea-
 “ bathing, would, in our opinion, if car-
 “ ried into effect, become a measure of
 “ great publick utility.”

Under the influence of such authori-
 ties, there can be no doubt, but the
 compassionate feelings of a generous
 nation will be actuated to make a mu-
 nificent contribution for the relief of
 indigence and misery thus combined,—
 and to raise at last a comfortable ray
 of hope in the breast of many a de-
 spairing sufferer, who has hitherto only
 expected a termination of his disease
 either in death or deformity.

Since writing the above, a plan has been circulated, and considerable progress made towards building an hospital at Margate, by several gentlemen of fortune and benevolence.—I am happy to find that their ideas have been employed upon a similar subject,—but as their plan is totally different, and as the principle of mine has lately received also the approbation and sanction of a very high authority, I feel myself now compelled to lay it before the publick,—not with the least intention of impeding any design which the above gentlemen may have in contemplation; but fairly and openly to communicate to them and to others who may be benevolently disposed to join them in promoting such an institution,

tution, my sentiments upon a plan
 which, in the opinion of many of my
 friends, seems preferable:—This how-
 ever let the world judge and determine.

F I N I S