

**An address to the professors of physic and surgery, in the cities of London and Westminster, proposing the institution of a society for investigating the cause, symptoms, and cure of the hydrophobia.**

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AN  
ADDRESS  
TO THE  
PROFESSORS  
OF  
PHYSIC AND SURGERY,  
IN THE CITIES OF  
LONDON AND WESTMINSTER,  
PROPOSING  
THE INSTITUTION  
OF  
A SOCIETY  
FOR INVESTIGATING  
THE CAUSE, SYMPTOMS, AND CURE,  
OF THE  
*Hydrophobia.*

HYDE (San)

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LONDON :

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1807.

AN ADDRESS

TO THE

PROFESSORS

OF PHYSIC AND SURGERY,

IN THE CITY OF

LONDON AND WESTMINSTER,

DELIVERED

AT THE INSTITUTION

OF

A SOCIETY

FOR THE

REMOVAL OF THE CAUSE OF RHEUMATISM AND GOUT,

BY

W. G. B. B. B.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR THE SOCIETY OF LONDON AND WESTMINSTER, BY

Lanc, Darling, and Co. Leadenhall-Street.

1801



## PREFACE.

THE present alarming apprehensions, from the reported prevailing Distemper among Dogs, led the writer of the ensuing Address to look over that of his papers on the *Rabies Canina*, which contained the substance of an Address, delivered by him to the London Medical Society, November 2, 1789. He then proposed the forming a committee from that Society, for the express purpose of investigating the cause and symptoms of the *Hydrophobia*, induced from the bite of a mad animal, and pursuing such measures as might be judged conducive to the discovery of a preventative and cure for that dreadful disease. The proposal was not adopted. Now, as then, the disease not only remains without



without a known remedy, but the afflicted, or supposed afflicted, become dupes to the delusive Arts of Quackery.

Surely to rescue our fellow-creatures from the horrid effects of the *Rabies Canina*, and snatch them from the pernicious dependance on inert or Quack Medicines, are objects highly interesting, and merit the most serious consideration, not only of the Professors of Physic and Surgery, but of the Public at large. Impressed with these sentiments, the Author has published the following Address, in hopes, should the plan proposed be carried into execution, that by the united assistance of many, means may be found to cure a disease, which a modern eminent and classical author \* asserts, is “disgraceful to the profession not to have been exterminated.”

\* Dr. Adams on Morbid Poisons.

TO THE  
PRACTITIONERS  
OF  
PHYSIC AND SURGERY,  
IN THE CITIES OF  
LONDON AND WESTMINSTER.

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GENTLEMEN,

THE noble Arts of Physic and Surgery, you well know, are no where more successfully exercised than in the cities of London and Westminster; nor can any place boast of men of more eminent abilities, or possessing greater ardor in the pursuits of study, for improving the various branches of the healing art. But notwithstanding the great improvements made and making by gentlemen of unrivalled talents,



talents, that dreadful disease, the *Hydrophobia*, originating from the bite of mad animals, remains the *opprobrium Medicorum*; no remedy has yet been found successful, either to cure, prevent, or mitigate that horrid malady. It therefore claims, from its peculiar distressing symptoms, and fatal event, the most unremitting attention, to investigate its cause and symptoms, and to discover its cure.

The writer is sensible that such important objects have employed, and continue to engage, the study and attention of the most eminent medical characters. But the numerous melancholy cases recorded in our medical books, evince how ineffectual those studies and attentions have proved; nevertheless, the prevention and cure of the disease are too important *desiderata* to the happiness of mankind, to cease searching for, merely because they have not hitherto been discovered.

May not the joint endeavours of many effect what has eluded the enquiries of the most industrious



dustrious and well-informed individuals, separately engaged in the same studies? Impressed with the possibility of such event, and sensible that no means should be left untried, which affords the most distant prospect of exterminating the *Hydrophobia*, the author, with great respect, submits to the consideration of those to whom this paper is addressed, the instituting a Society, for the sole purpose of investigating the cause and symptoms of the *Hydrophobia*, originating from the bite of mad animals, and for discovering preventative remedies, and a cure in the actual existence of the disease.

From a society, instituted for such purposes, formed of gentlemen of known abilities, the world might reasonably expect every information that is allotted to the confined abilities of man to obtain; and although the society should not meet with success equal to the wishes of the members, yet, from a studious investigation of the subjects of the institution, benefits may arise productive of essential service to the community; information may be obtained and dispersed,



persed, of high moment to the happiness of persons bitten; to their friends, and to the public at large, although the existing *Hydrophobia* may baffle the medical art.

The author has frequently been consulted by patients under the distressing apprehensions of being bitten by a mad dog, or cat; and although, from accurate enquiries into all circumstances, he has been in his own mind thoroughly satisfied that the animal was not mad, yet he rarely could satisfy his patients of such material fact. To patients unsatisfied, he acknowledges he has prescribed remedies, (even to the excision of the bitten part,) and enjoined a perseverance in them till the patient's fears subsided.

The author, when failing to convince his patients that their fears are unjustly excited, prefers the cheering them with assurance of their security, and prescribing a treatment to amuse them, and dissipate gradually their fears, to leaving them, (by doing nothing for them,) a prey to the deceitful Arts of Quackery, an expedient



pedient they will immediately have recourse to ; for when the mind of the patient bitten is impressed with the terrifying ideas of being liable to the *Hydrophobia*, however groundless may be the apprehensions, reason will rarely avail ; the patient will seek, anxious to alleviate his suffering mind, the cure, or promised security from the disease, in some advertised specific or family antidote, recommended by bold and fallacious assurances. To such remedies the patient will attribute his exemption from the dreaded disease ; hence medicines become extolled for the cure and prevention of a disease that neither could or did exist from the wound inflicted, and errors daily confirmed, and prejudices strengthened.

It must be acknowledged that no society, for whatever purposes it may have been instituted, can totally prevent the effects of false impressions on weak and credulous minds—such minds are prone to the impositions of Quackery ; but it is to be lamented, that people, well-informed, of strong minds, and solid understanding,



ing, shall, under the fears of the *Rabies Canina*, place reliance on boasted specifics. A society formed, as the author suggests, would, from well-authenticated facts now on record, or from communications, or from observations made from cases under their own immediate inspection, report what remedies have been found ineffectual. Reports of that nature, from such truly respectable and indubitable authority, would gradually lessen, and perhaps eventually destroy the undeserved reputation of those banes to society, and scientific improvements, quack remedies and nostrums, raised to unjust celebrity by fear, fraud, credulity, and ignorance. The public, instructed by the publications of the society, would no longer rely, (as many now do), or give countenance to inert useless drugs and applications, however supported by pompous declamations, or meretricious advertisements; but would seek relief in their distress from (whence it can rationally be expected) the regular practitioners in Physic and Surgery. Opinions delivered from the society proposed for your consideration, would not only (should it take place)

stem



stem the tide of prejudice and fashion, strongly flowing in favour of never-failing preventatives and cures, but give more opportunities to introduce the trial of such remedies as may be thought by the society worthy experiment.

In the year 1774, the late justly eminent Dr. Fothergill, with that benevolence which formed a prominent trait in his character, published directions for the treatment of persons bitten by mad animals. In the publication he exhorts those under whose care the unfortunate patient may fall, to note every incident attending the progress of the disease, and whether they pursue the directions he has laid down, or pursued a mode in their opinion more eligible, to communicate the event to the public.—“ By this method,” the Doctor adds, “ the field of conjecture would be contracted, and our successors directed to new objects of investigation.”

The advice and deduction are becoming the character of him who published them; but the benefits hoped to arise from Dr. Fothergill's recommendation,



commendation, the author imagines, would be more extensively useful, were the result of every gentleman's observation and experience transmitted to the public, through the medium of a medical society, especially instituted to collect, receive, and convey intelligence and information respecting the *Hydrophobia*.

Whatever might come from such a society, regarding so deplorable a disease, bids fairer to attract professional and public attention, and consequently be more productive of general utility, than cases and observations dispersed in various medical publications, (many of which are read only by a few): Practitioners in Physic and Surgery (now at a loss what course, under the dismal disease, to advise,) would be authorised to pursue any plan of treatment the society might recommend, whether recommended as the result of experience, or proposed as an experiment.

It would very much operate towards an effectual preventative of the disease, could it be ascertained



ascertained what were the threatening and preceding symptoms of the *Rabies Canina*. Such symptoms, once well defined and known, would induce every owner or keeper of dogs, immediately to confine or destroy the animal. It would be a matter of equal, if not more universal benefit to the community, if a criterion could be fixed on, whereby it might be discovered if the animal, being alive, is under the distemper of the *Rabies Canina*, or, if dead, it died from its influence. It is well known, that on every alarm that mad dogs are about, very many of the species, free from the *Rabies*, are hunted down and killed, from ignorance and wanton barbarity; and while the rabble are exercising their cruelties, the poor animal, heated by his exertions to escape from his pursuers, will slaver at the mouth, and bite all that come in his way, which to his inhuman pursuers is a confirmation of his being mad; thus the alarm of mad dogs increase the terror of the neighbourhood.

What consolation then would it afford to the bitten, to know, from an established criterion, whether



whether the animal inflicting the bite was or was not at the time mad!—If not mad, the patient's fears would vanish; if mad, he would feel a satisfaction of having immediately recourse to the advice of a society, formed by gentlemen of unimpeachable veracity and abilities, who would cheerfully administer what their knowledge and experience might dictate.

Gentlemen, upon a retrospective view of the preceding lines, you will perceive, that the author offers to your consideration the establishing a society, for the sole purpose of investigating the cause and symptoms of the *Hydrophobia*, arising from the bite of mad animals, and to discover its prophylactic and curative remedy, under the impression, that no means should be left untried, to eradicate that hitherto indomptable disease. The author entertains sanguine hopes that an union of eminent talents may crown the society with success, although success has not followed the study and attentions of individuals.

The author augurs, that if the investigation  
of



of the projected society should prove, in the main point of the institution, unsuccessful, it may lay a foundation, from which hereafter the grand *desiderata* may spring. At all events, it bids fair to be of great public utility, in publishing the many cases dispersed in various books, or cases, that being well authenticated, may be communicated to the society, by exposing the inutility of relying for a cure or preventative on remedies that have repeatedly disappointed the expectations of patient and friends, and yet are held in public estimation. The medical profession, generally taken, will learn and practise the recommendation of the society, having from experience no knowledge of the disease, or any settled ideas how to treat it; and what is earnestly to be wished, the investigation may ascertain the previous and actual symptoms of the *Rabies Canina*.

Should, in consequence of what has been advanced, any gentlemen form themselves into a society, for the recited purposes of this address, the author will be highly gratified; and although



a consciousness of his own inferiority of talents, and residence in the country, will not entitle him to a seat in the society, or enable him duly to attend, yet he will liberally subscribe according to his circumstances, towards defraying contingent expences.

I am, Gentlemen,

With true respect,

Your most humble Servant,

MEDICUS.





