

The plan of an institution for affording immediate relief to persons apparently dead, from drowning. And also for diffusing a general knowledge of the manner of treating persons in a similar critical state, from various other causes.

Contributors

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P L A N
O F A N
I N S T I T U T I O N

For affording immediate Relief to Persons
apparently dead, from DROWNING.

A N D A L S O

For diffusing a general Knowledge of the
manner of treating Persons in a similar
critical State, from various other Causes;

S U C H A S

Strangulation by the Cord, Suffocation by noxious
Vapours, &c. &c.

Published by Order of the SOCIETY.

ROYAL HUMANE SOCIETY

L O N D O N :

Printed in the Y E A R 1774.



T H E

P L A N

O F A N

I N S T I T U T I O N , &c.

MANY and indubitable are the instances of the possibility of restoring to life persons apparently struck with sudden death, whether the evil proceeded from a stroke of apoplexy, convulsive fits, suffocation by noxious vapours, strangulation by the cord, or *drowning*; although the party had remained senseless, and without any the least signs of life, for a considerable time *. Cases of this nature have occasionally presented themselves in every country; and although they could not fail to surprise for a season, yet they were considered and *neglected* as very singular and extraordinary phenomena, from which no salutary consequences could be drawn.

* The memoirs of the society, instituted at *Amsterdam*, mention several cases, well attested, where the patient continued *upwards of an hour*, without any signs of life, after they were taken out of the water, and were yet restored.

These repeated instances at length attracted the attention of some benevolent Gentlemen in *Holland*; where, from the great abundance of canals and inland seas, the inhabitants are particularly exposed to accidents by water. They perceived with deep regret, that numbers, and those principally amongst the most laborious and deserving part of the community, were annually drowned: and they justly conjectured that *some* at least might have been saved, had they not been entirely abandoned for dead, or very superficially treated. They carefully collected the hints that were dispersed through various publications, concerning the method of treating persons in this critical state. These they made public, and proposed rewards to those who should put them into execution. Their humane attempts far exceeded their most sanguine expectations. They became instrumental in the restoration of several, who must otherwise have perished inevitably. This surprising success engaged the general notice, and was so universally countenanced, that they were at length enabled to form themselves into a respectable society, and extend their plan over the seven provinces. And it must afford real pleasure to every friend of the unfortunate to be informed, that about 150 persons, of whom the lives of many were very important to their families, and to the community, have been redeemed from death in the space of a few years.

The authentic testimonies produced of their remarkable success, instigated other countries also to imitate their example. In the year 1768, the magistrates of health at *Milan* and *Venice* issued out orders for the treatment of *drowned* persons. The city of *Hamburg* appointed a similar ordinance to

to be read in all their churches, extending their succour not only to the *drowned*, but to the strangled, to these suffocated by noxious vapours, and to the frozen *. In the year 1769, the Empress of GERMAN Y published an edict, extending its directions and encouragement to every case of accidental death that afforded a possibility of relief. In the year 1771, the magistrates of the city of *Paris* founded an institution also in favour of the *drowned*. And the repeated instances of success in each country has abundantly confirmed the truth of the facts related in the Amsterdam Memoirs.

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Every man, who feels for the distresses of his fellow creatures, must both wonder and lament, that this nation, so *forward* in every *other* cause of humanity, should have been so *backward* in *this*; that we, who have set an example of charity to the rest of the world in most other cases, have hitherto been so reluctant to imitate theirs in the case before us. This remissness can, we believe, be attributed to no other cause than to the multitude of charitable institutions constantly soliciting the aids of the community, which renders it difficult for any new plan, however useful, to share their regard. We please ourselves with the thoughts that this difficulty is now removing; that the attention of the public begins to turn towards this important subject; nor can we doubt but that the more it is considered and canvassed, the more interesting it will appear.

The objects those humane institutions attempt to relieve, are the most pitiable of any that can be imagined. Their view is, to restore such as have

* The first part of the Dutch memoirs was presented to the Imperial academy at Petersburg, and was translated into the *Russian* language, by command of the Empress.

in an instant *been numbered amongst the dead*, by some dreadful disaster, or by some sudden impulse of phrensy.

With respect to the latter class, although it is *miser*y in one shape or other that drives any one to commit the horrid crime of *suicide*, yet every serious and considerate mind must earnestly wish to snatch them from such a destruction; that their souls may not rush into the presence of their Creator, *stained with the guilt of murder*; and that their relations may also be rescued from the *shame* as well as *loss* to which such rashness exposes them. In some cases, perhaps, they may repeat their attempts, and elude all endeavours to save them; yet as their horrid designs are mostly the effect of a temporary phrensy, there is greater reason to expect, that when returned to their senses, they will rejoice in their escape, and cordially thank their deliverers.

Another class whom these institutions mean to befriend, are the industrious *Poor*. These, from working upon the water, and in mines, &c. are necessarily exposed to the disasters mentioned above; and surely they have a kind of demand upon us, to step in, and avert, if possible, the fatal consequences to which they are exposed, by serving the community with their labours, and gaining honest bread for themselves and families.

But these establishments intend a general benefit. They provide a possibility of restoration, which may affect individuals in any sphere of life, either in their own persons or in their connections. There is scarcely any one but what is exposed to accidents by water, where business or pleasure may call them. And how many a parent is hourly subject to the danger of seeing a sprightly and adventurous son brought home to him a breathless corpse! What would

would they not give at that instant for the most distant hopes of a recovery !

These few hints may convince every thinking man of the great importance, and peculiar humanity of such establishments ; nor can we harbour a doubt, but that (as soon as the general attention shall be properly fixed upon this object) the same benevolent spirit that has made provision for every other case of distress, will be eager to restore *a father to the fatherless, a husband to the widow, and a living child to the bosom of its mournful parents.*

Inspired by these hopes, we are induced to lay before the public a plan, for the introduction of a similar institution into this nation, which although we have attempted to *commence*, cannot be continued with any prospect of extensive success, without their concurrence.

Our Plan is as follows.

I. We have undertaken to publish, in as extensive a manner as possible, the proper method of treating persons in those unfortunate circumstances.

II. To distribute a premium of *two Guineas* amongst the first persons, not exceeding *four* in number, who will attempt to recover man, woman, or child, taken out of the water for dead, in any part within the bills of mortality, provided there be no signs of putrefaction upon the body ; and provided they persevere in the use of the means recommended, and no others, for the space of two hours : This reward to be given though they may not prove successful.

III. To distribute in like manner *four Guineas* wherever the patient has been restored to life.

IV. To give to any publican or other, who shall admit the body into his house without delay, and furnish

furnish the necessary accommodations, the sum of *one Guinea* ; and also to secure them from the charge of burial, in unsuccessful cases.

V. It is proposed, that a certain number of medical gentlemen, stationed near to the places where disasters by water are most frequent, be engaged to give their assistance *gratis* ; these gentlemen to have a fumigator, and other necessaries, always in readiness *.

We flatter ourselves, that by these regulations many individuals, in and about this metropolis, will be secure of the best and most immediate assistance in this critical state : And, where it should not prove successful, their relations will always have the satisfaction of reflecting, that the last efforts have not been neglected.

The *general* advantages arising from this plan are many, and must be obvious to every one. Although accidents by water may not be so frequent in or about this city as in some parts of *Holland*, yet they are sufficiently numerous to awaken the concern of every compassionate breast. The bills of mortality inform us, that no less than *one hundred and twenty three* persons were drowned within their limits in the course of the last year. It is true some few of them, being carried off by the tide, were not found for some days, and their recovery became

* Although the society deems it necessary, at present, to confine their premiums to the cases of drowned persons only, as these instances most frequently occur in and about this metropolis, and seem most entitled to their humane assistance ; yet it is their desire to be *extensively* useful, by informing the public, that the means of restoration are equally applicable to supposed deaths from various other causes, such as strangulation by the cord, suffocation by damps and noxious vapours, to those seized with convulsive and apoplectic fits, and to the frozen.

totally

totally impossible. But the majority were in more favourable circumstances, and several of them might, in all probability, have been restored by a speedy and judicious treatment. Were but *one* in ten restored, what man would think the designs of this society unimportant, was himself, his relation, or his friend——*that one*?

But farther, The public in general will be instructed in what manner to proceed, in *these* and *other* cases of apparent deaths, *wherever* they may happen; and they will be excited to exert their utmost endeavours, when they are assured upon the *best* authority, that of repeated and incontestible facts, that persons have been recovered, after there was not one sign of life remaining, and after the means have been employed for upwards of *an hour*, without any visible success. It is not to be imagined that they will any longer satisfy their own minds, with the same superficial attention they would bestow upon a favourite animal in the like circumstances. There is every reason to hope, that a general spirit of trying these salutary experiments, with vigour and perseverance, will be diffused over the whole kingdom; productive of the most happy consequences to multitudes.

May we not expect also, that other parts of the nation will imitate the example set them in this metropolis, and form similar institutions, to avert the evils to which the inhabitants may be peculiarly liable, by their situation or employ? How beneficial they might prove in *sea ports*, in any large town by the side of a river, and particularly in countries abounding with *mines*, where numbers have been, in an instant, suffocated by sudden damps; we must leave to the consideration of the powerful and opulent in these respective counties.

It plainly appears also, from the above plan, that when the first and extraordinary charges are defrayed, the current expences will only bear an exact proportion to the good immediately intended. So that, if the accidents are few, the demands will be trivial. Yet, notwithstanding these advantages, the society is obliged to solicit the assistance of the generous. The very moderate sum of *thirty* guineas would not have been proposed as sufficient for the *commencement* of our design, were it not from a justifiable presumption, that it was formed to engage the attention, and secure the patronage of every humane heart. The sum already in hand will enable us to assist but a very few of those numerous cases, which are likely to present themselves in the course of the year,—perhaps not enough to give the methods recommended a *just* trial. For although we are not so sanguine as to imagine *all* would recover with every advantage of treatment; yet we might naturally expect that some of the first essays will fail, through the inexpertness of the attendants: And how deeply must it be regretted, should so good a design prove abortive, through want of the timely aid of the benevolent!

Those who are willing to encourage this humane design, are informed that subscriptions are taken in at the following places.

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