

**Society for the Recovery of Persons Apparently Drowned. Instituted
MDCCLXXIV.**

Contributors

Royal Humane Society (London, England)

Publication/Creation

[London] : [publisher not identified], [1774]

Persistent URL

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ROYAL HUMANE SOCIETY

S O C I E T Y

FOR THE RECOVERY OF

P E R S O N S

APPARENTLY

D R O W N E D.

I N S T I T U T E D

M. DCC. LXXIV.



T H E

I N T R O D U C T I O N.

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 patients 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 among 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 as 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 otherways 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 orders for the treatment of *drowned* persons. The city of *Hamburg* appointed a similar ordinance

to be read in all their churches, extending their succour not only to the *drowned*, but to the strangled, to those suffocated by noxious vapours, and to the frozen. 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 the year 1769, the Empress of *Germany* 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 have abundantly confirmed the truth of the facts related in the Amsterdam Memoirs.

In the year 1773, Dr. *Cogan* translated these Memoirs *, in order to inform this part of the world of the practicability of recovering persons apparently *drowned*: And Mr. *Hawes* having also exerted his endeavours to excite the attention of the public to the same subject, these gentlemen united and proposed a Plan for the introduction of a similar institution into these kingdoms. This Plan was so well received, and met with so much encouragement from several gentlemen of influence, that they were soon enabled to form a Society to promote its laudable designs.

The Members of this Society flatter themselves, that the peculiar humanity and importance of such an Institution will sufficiently recommend it. They

* See the Memoirs of the Society instituted at *Amsterdam* in favour of drowned persons, published by Mr. G. *Robinson*, *Pater-noster-row*. These are earnestly recommended to the perusal of every one. They contain such a variety of cases, minutely related and well authenticated, as would render it unpardonable in us not to attempt a similar Institution.

rejoice in the encouragement it has already received, and doubt not its continuing to meet with that patronage from the Public, which it deservedly claims.

The objects these humane institutions attempt to relieve, are the most pitiable of any that can be imagined. Their view is, to restore such as have 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 *misery* 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 are intended 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 an honest livelihood 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 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,*

T H E P L A N.

I. The Society has undertaken to publish, in as extensive a manner as possible, the proper methods of treating persons in those unfortunate circumstances.

II. To distribute a premium of *two Guineas* among the first persons, not exceeding *four* in number, who will attempt to recover man, woman, or child, taken out of the water for dead, within the cities of *London* and *Westminster*, or the parts adjacent; provided they had not been longer than *two hours* under the water; and provided the Assistants persevere in the use of the means recommended, and no others, unless under the direction of a regular practitioner, 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 the necessary accommodations, the sum of *one Guinea* ; and also to secure them from the charge of burial, in unsuccessful cases.

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

They flatter themselves, 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

* Should the Society meet with due encouragement, it is proposed to present an honorary Medal to any medical gentleman or other, who might not accept of a pecuniary reward, in all those cases where they have been instrumental of success.

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. Suppose but *one* in ten restored, what man would think the designs of this society unimportant, were 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 those respective counties.

It

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 attempts actually made for the restoration of life. So that, if the accidents be few, the demands will be trivial. Yet, notwithstanding these advantages, the society is obliged to solicit the assistance of the generous. The sum already subscribed will enable them to assist but a very few of the numerous cases, which are likely to occur in the course of the year,—perhaps not enough to give the methods recommended a *just* trial. They are not so sanguine as to imagine *all* would recover by the most advantageous treatment; yet they flatter themselves, from the success of similar institutions abroad, that public benevolence will enable them to be productive of equal benefits to the community.

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

James Horsfall's, Esq; (Treasurer) *Middle Temple*.
 Mr. J. B. Rich, (Secretary) No. 4, *Field-Court*,
Gray's-Inn, Holborn—or at the
London Coffee-house, Ludgate-hill;
Chapter Coffee-house, Pater-noster-row;
New-York Coffee-house, Cornhill;
Ship Tavern, Radcliffe-Highway.

Signed by Order of the Society,

J. B. RICH, Secretary.

L I S T

A P P E N D I X.

Containing the METHODS of TREATMENT of Drowned Persons.

I. **I**N removing the body to a convenient place, great care must be taken that it be not bruised, nor shaken violently, nor roughly handled, nor carried over any one's shoulders with the head hanging downwards, nor rolled upon the ground, or over a barrel, nor lifted up by the heels, except with the greatest caution. For experience proves, that all these methods are injurious, and often destroy the small remains of life. The unfortunate object should be cautiously conveyed by two or more persons, or in a carriage upon straw, lying as on a bed with the head a little raised, and kept in as natural and easy a position as possible.

II. The body being well dried¹ with a cloth, should be placed in a moderate degree of heat,² but not too near a large fire. The windows or door of the room should be left open,³ and no more persons be admitted into it than those who are absolutely necessary, as the life of the patient greatly depends upon their having the benefit of a pure air. The warmth most promising of success is that of a bed or a blanket, properly warmed.⁴ Bottles of hot water should be laid at the bottoms of the feet,⁵ in the joints of the knees, and under the arm-pits; and a warming-

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a warming-pan, moderately heated, or hot bricks wrapped in cloths, should be rubbed over the body, and particularly along the back. The natural and kindly warmth of a healthy person lying by the side of the body,⁶ has been found in many cases very efficacious. The shirt or clothes of an attendant,⁷ or the skin of a sheep fresh killed, may also be used with advantage. Should these accidents happen in the neighbourhood of a warm bath, brew-house, baker, glass-house, saltern, soap-boiler, or any fabrick where warm lees, ashes, embers, grains, sand, water, &c. are easily procured,⁸ it would be of the utmost service to place the body in any of these, moderated to a degree of heat, but very little exceeding that of a healthy person.

III. The subject being placed in one or other of these advantageous circumstances as speedily as possible, various stimulating methods should next be employed. The most efficacious are,—to blow with force into the lungs,⁹ by applying the mouth to that of the patient, closing his nostrils with one hand, and gently expelling the air again by pressing the chest with the other, imitating the strong breathing of a healthy person.—Whilst one assistant is constantly employed in this operation, another should throw the smoke of tobacco up by the fundament into the bowels, by means of a pipe or fumigator, such as are used in administering tobacco clysters; a pair of bellows may be used until the others can be procured. A third attendant should, in the meantime, rub the belly, chest, back and arms, with a coarse cloth or flannel dipped in brandy, rum, gin, or with dry salt,¹⁰ so as not to rub off the skin: spirits of hartshorn, volatile salts, or any other stimulating substance,¹² must also be applied to the nostrils, and rubbed upon the temples very frequently. The
body

body should at intervals be shaken also,¹³ and varied in its position.

IV. If there be any signs of returning life, such as sighing, gasping, twitching, or any convulsive motions, beating of the heart, the return of the natural colour and warmth; bleeding¹⁴ either in the arm or jugular vein, or temporal artery, now becomes particularly necessary. The throat should be tickled with a feather,¹⁵ in order to excite a propensity to vomit; and the nostrils also with a feather, snuff, or any other stimulant,¹⁶ so as to provoke sneezings. A tea-spoonful of warm water may be administered now and then, in order to learn whether the power of swallowing be returned;¹⁷ and if it be,¹⁸ a table-spoonful of warmed wine, or brandy and water, may be given with advantage: but not before; as the liquor might get into the lungs before the power of swallowing returns. The other methods should be continued with vigour, until the patient be gradually restored.

We have been as circumstantial as possible in the above directions, that if one conveniency should be wanting, the attendants may not be at a loss for others. Where the patient has lain but a short time senseless, blowing into the lungs or bowels has been, in some cases, found sufficient: yet a *speedy* recovery is not to be expected in general. On the contrary, the above methods are to be continued with spirit for *two hours, or upwards*, although there should not be the least symptoms of returning life. The vulgar notion that a person will recover in a few minutes, or not at all; and the ignorant, foolish ridiculing, of those who are willing to persevere, as if they were attempting impossibilities, has most certainly caused the death of many who might otherwise have been saved.

Most

Most of the above rules are happily of such a nature, that they may be begun *immediately*, and that by persons who are not acquainted with the medical art; yet it is always adviseable to seek the assistance of some regular practitioner as soon as possible; not only as bleeding is always proper, and sometimes essentially necessary; but as it is to be presumed that such a one will be more skilful and expert, and better able to vary the methods of procedure as circumstances may require.

The Society think it proper to observe, that these means of restoration are applicable to various other cases of apparent deaths; such as hanging, suffocation by damps and noxious vapours, whether proceeding from coal-mines, the confined air of wells, cisterns, caves, or the Must of fermenting liquors; to those seized with apoplectic and convulsive fits, and also to the frozen. And they hope that some persons of influence in the parts where such accidents mostly happen, will form a similar institution for the recovery of the unhappy victims.

Wherever any good has been produced by the means recommended, the person who has superintended the cure is desired to write a circumstantial account of it to James Horsfall, Esq; Treasurer, Middle Temple, or Mr. J. B. Rich, No. 4, Field-court, Gray's-inn, Holborn, Secretary to the Society.

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