

**A letter to Dr. Peter Shaw, concerning a very useful discovery and considerable improvement in the black epileptical powder, (Pulvis epilepticus niger) / [Diederick Wessel Linden].**

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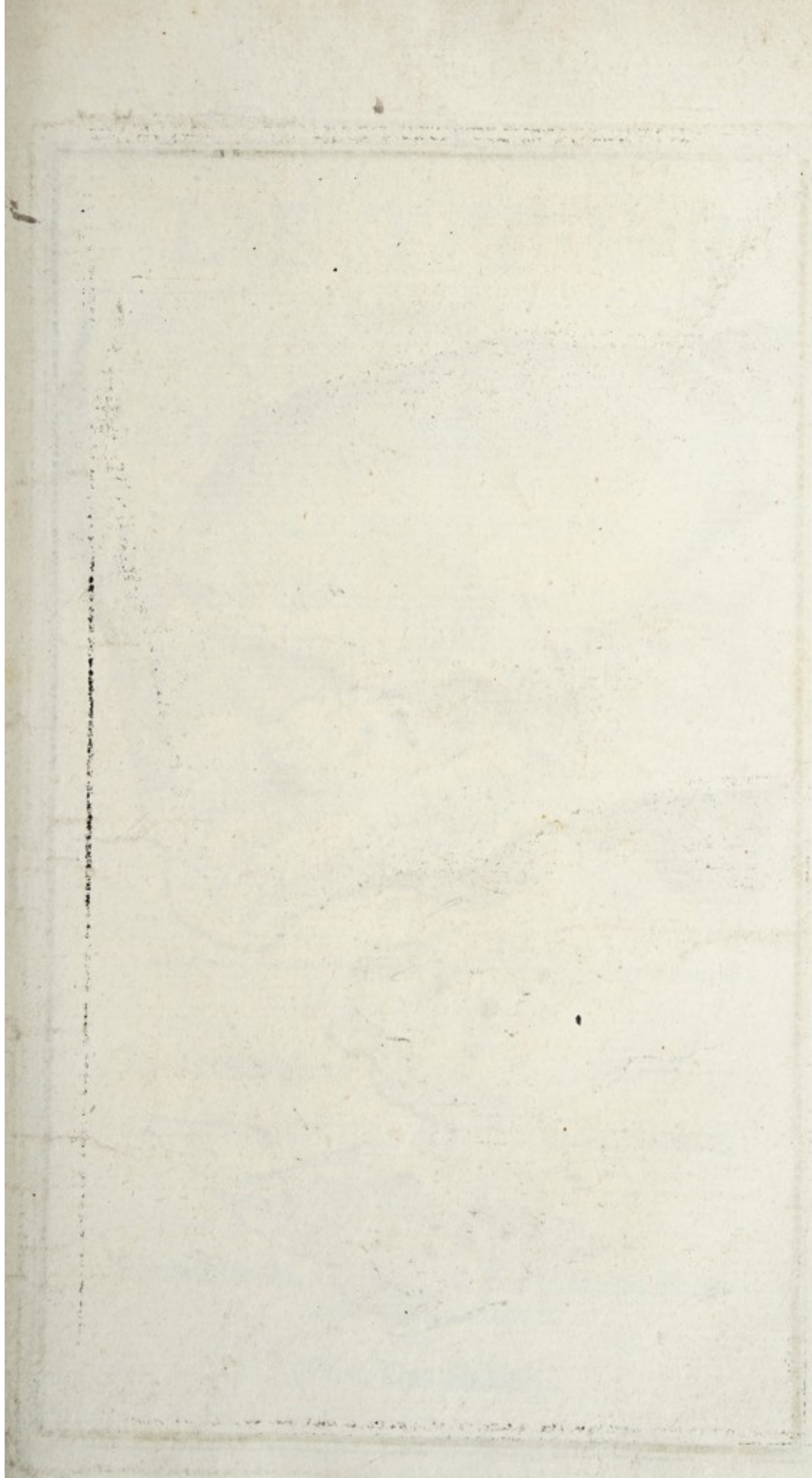
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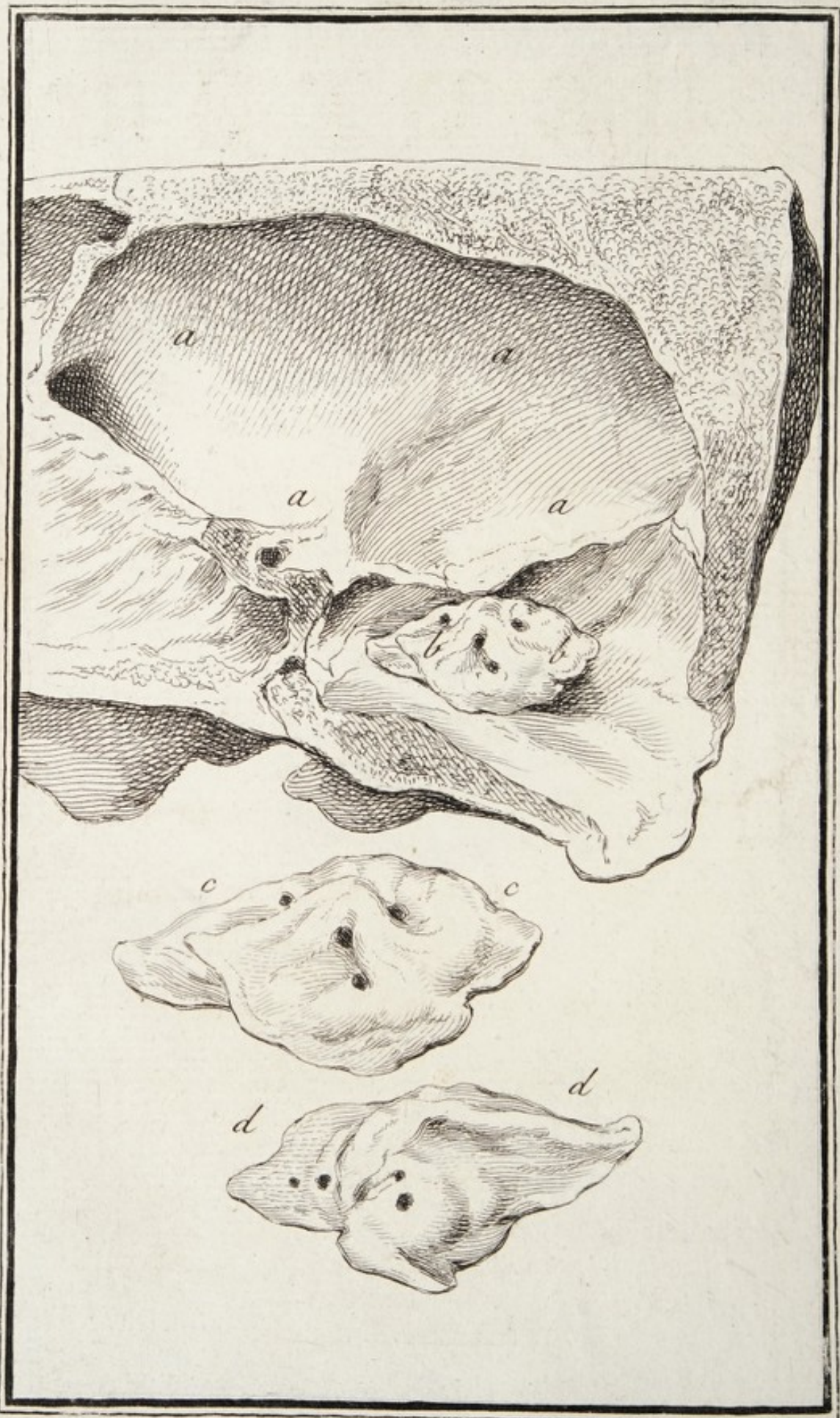
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A  
L E T T E R  
T O  
Dr. P E T E R S H A W,  
C O N C E R N I N G  
A very Useful D I S C O V E R Y and Con-  
siderable I M P R O V E M E N T  
I N T H E  
Black Epileptical P O W D E R,  
(*Pulvis Epilepticus Niger.*)

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W R I T T E N  
By D I E D E R I C H W E S S E L L I N D E N, M. D.

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L O N D O N:

Printed for M. COOPER, at the *Globe* in *Pater-*  
*noster-Row.* 1746.

(Price One Shilling.)

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LETTER

TO

A CONCERNING

A NEW METHOD OF

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A

LETTER

TO

Dr. *PETER SHAW.*

*S I R,*

**H**A V I N G had the Oppor-  
tunity, during my late Tra-  
vels, to make some Observa-  
tions worth your Notice ; I thought  
myself under an indispenfable Obli-  
gation, to communicate them to  
you, as foon as a fhort Recess from  
Business would permit. If in fo do-

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ing I should enlarge a little too much, or seem to vary from my main Subject, I hope you'll excuse it, and attribute it to the Pleasure I feel in imparting and submitting my Sentiments to your candid and impartial Judgment.

According to *Hippocrates* and *Paracelsus's* Opinion, Men are born with the Seeds of Diseases, or a Disease in themselves; which Opinion, upon a little Speculation, seems not to be ill-grounded; especially if it be presuppos'd, that those great Princes in Physic did not mean the whole Frame of Nature, but only the specifical Matter, the human Body is compos'd of and nourish'd by; in which the outward concomitant Circumstances, which frequently through Ignorance or Luxury

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ury are increas'd, are the principal Causes, whereby Nature is debilitated and often suppress'd.

It is by these Circumstances, that that part of the Study of Physic styl'd *Pathology* is become so abstruse and difficult, that the most skilful Physician frequently finds himself in a Maze, out of which he can hardly extricate himself through the several turnings and windings, especially by the present System in Fashion; because almost every body has a peculiar way of managing his Constitution as Fancy or Conceit guides him: which Evil, at the same time that it gives Room to every ignorant Pretender and Half-Doctors (whose chief Skill consists in a formal *Diploma* of their Degree, and a Smattering of uncouth  
B 2 Jargon,



Jargon, of Mechanical Powers, the Impression of the Atmosphere, and the Degrees of Heat and Cold in this or that Drug or Medicine) to excuse their want of Discernment in the primary Cause of their Patient's Disease, and the proper Remedies, whereby the corrupt Juices are to be corrected : It also promotes the Apothecaries Trade, and fills their Purses, by continually preaching up to their brain-sick Patients, that they know their Constitution ; how should the Doctor, who comes but once or twice ? Thus Mankind often are play'd with, till the Grave covers the incoherent Practice of both !

Nor can this Evil be thoroughly remedied, whilst Luxury and Wantonness encreases, altho' this (commonly

monly styled) second Part of the Study of Physic, or Pathology, might receive considerable Additions and Amendments, would the Gentlemen of the Faculty renounce certain received Hypotheses, (too much in Vogue at present) not regard Chemistry so superficially, or confine it in so narrow a Compass; and instead of adhering too strictly to Mechanical and Systematical Principles, would search more deeply into the Property of the various Juices in the human Body in the several Ventricles, and the occult Specifical Virtue of every individual Product of Art and Nature.

Tho' this, Sir, may seem a Digression from my present Scope, which is, to treat on a Subject properly belonging to that part of Physic

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fic called *Materia Medica*; yet as the one is so interwoven and closely connected with the other, I could not omit making this short Reflection, especially, as it accounts partly for the Causes, why the best-concerted, long-approv'd of, and often-experienc'd Specifics against certain Diseases, have frequently proved unsuccessful by unskilful Administration; whereby, in process of Time, they first fall into Discredit, and at last become as it were obliterated, to the no small Decay of Physic and the Art of Healing.

I know the bare mentioning a Specific in this present Age, gives immediately a handle to every Medicastre, Critic, or Wise-acre, to sneer at it, and give it the Name of

a Quack Remedy, and to stigmatize the Person, who broaches that Doctrine, with the Name of Empiric or High *German* Doctor. I am not inclin'd to stand up as a Champion in defence of Specifics, nor enter into Contest with those Gentlemen, who, from a Motive of Self-Interest, Presumption, or Want of Experience, are pleas'd indiscriminately to exterminate all Specifics out of the Practice of Physic: I am satisfied to have the Sanction of skilful and able Practitioners in all Ages, who have admitted a specific occult Property in Numbers of Remedies against certain Diseases. Neither should I be at a Loss to prove, by undoubted Testimonies, the Virtues of several Specifics in many Diseases incident to the human

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man Body, and from thence to draw a Conclusion *de Minori ad Majus*; That every Disease has its certain Remedy, numbers whereof are intirely lost, to the no small Detri- ment of Mankind, whilst others are wrapped up in Oblivion, or are only to be met with in the Hands of the Vulgar, and so are neglected.

The only Reason I can assign for this Loss or Neglect, is, That *Paracelsus* being possess'd of several valuable chemical Secrets, performed miraculous Cures; which others seeing, and People growing weary of swallowing large nauseous Doses of *Galenical* Decoctions, Confections, Bolusses, and Electuaries, with which they were cramm'd often to little purpose, Chemicals  
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became in great Esteem by reason of their small Doses and powerful Operations; this forc'd most Physicians in those Times, to attempt the same Method, and to lay aside *Galenical* Prescriptions, whereby the study and use of Simples became soon neglected, and as it were, entirely despis'd; Herbs and Roots became of no Account; spagyric Preparations from Metals and Minerals were cried up as infallible Remedies; Alchemy was the darling Object of every body; and tho' it must be confess'd that the excellent Discoveries which have been made in Chemistry, are owing to that Infatuation, and to the Search after the universal Medicine, yet few being able to pierce through the Veil of the enigmatical and mysterious

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rious Writings of *Paracelsus*; and the Ability of some of his Followers not being adequate to their Zeal for his Doctrine, several useles and idle Processes were gradually introduc'd into that otherwise sublime Science, which afterwards brought the same in its Turn into Contempt.

Thus a Cloud was spread for a while over the whole Practice of Physic, Theoretical and Practical, until of late Years, that through the indefatigable Labours and Study of several bright Genius's, this Darknes has, in a great measure, been dispell'd; especially in Chemistry, which now appears with more Splendor than ever, and furnishes us with such excellent Lights as former Ages could never boast of. It is to be lamented,

mented, that Indolence, Self-Interest and Avarice should obstruct its resplendent Beams, and debar Mankind from reaping the full Benefit thereof. That this is the Case at present in this great Metropolis, is manifest from the infinite Adulterations which Craft and Subtilty have introduc'd in all manner of chemical Preparations; a Crime horrid in itself, as it absolutely tends to the Prejudice of both Physician and Patient, yet publickly avowed and confess'd; for there is hardly one Preparation which can be relied on to be genuine according to the original Prescription, especially in those which require a peculiar Nicety, Care, and Trouble, and which are attended with some extraordinary Expence. These Sophistications are



supported by two Reasons: The first, that *idem facit idem*, which Aphorism, tho' plausible, yet will not hold true in many Cases, as I could prove by several Instances. The second is, that some Chemists to gain Customers, have reduc'd the Price so low, that it is impossible to afford them for that Price; that Apothecaries, Surgeons, and Understrappers, whose only Business is to get Money, (*honestly if they can*) being used to such low Prices, will not recede from it, because one Man's Word for the Genuineness of its Preparations is no more to be taken than another's; so that those who would not submit to the Custom introduc'd, and go with the Torrent, must starve or break. Thus the Corruption is become general,

neral, and unless a speedy Stop is put to it, this noble Science must by degrees fall again into Contempt. But what Remedy to apply, I shall not now take upon me to point out, being foreign to my present Purpose. Thus much I thought proper to mention, to shew how uncertain the Practice of the ablest Physician in this great City must be, unless he now and then puts his Hand to the Plow, and prepares some Remedies; such as Effences, Extracts, Magisteries, Tinctures, &c. himself, according to his Intention; for how can he otherwise be sure either of the Patient's Disease, or the *Metodus curandi*? He frames his Judgment of the Disease according to the outward Symptoms, and what Information he can collect from the Patient's

Patient's Mouth, who often is not able to declare his Case; he prescribes to the best of his Ability, the Remedy he thinks will be effectual; but the same, by reason of a Defect in the Preparation, does not answer his Wishes. Must he then not be at a Loss in both, and have Recourse to a different Method, by which his Patient may perhaps be more injured than benefited? Thus People's Healths are dallied and play'd with by those, in whom the greatest Trust and Confidence ought to be repos'd; I mean the Chemists, whose Profession ought to be the most sacred; for Apothecaries, who make up the Prescriptions, never prepare their Chemicals; they have no leisure for it, being now-a-days all turn'd  
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into petty Doctors, nor would the Expence of preparing small Quantities answer their Ends in point of Interest.

I could here expatiate largely upon the various Abuses now generally practis'd, but shall leave that for the Subject of another Letter, and return to my former Purpose.

I observ'd before, how by the too strict Adherence to Chemicals, according to *Paracelsus's* Doctrine, several valuable Specifics were neglected and lost, which perhaps may never be recovered.

These Followers of that great Master of Physic, did not consider, what he in several Places mentions of occult Properties, nor the Method he himself pursued and strongly recommends in some of his Writings,  
which

which was to enquire in his Travels of all Degrees of Men, the Quack or Empiric, the Country Squire, the Farmer, the Publican, and every old Woman, what Remedy they made use of for themselves, their Children, or their Neighbours. This he examined naturally and cabalistically, by the Rules of Art and *Signatura rerum*; which Method they thought, and most Physicians now-a-days may think idle and ridiculous, and below the Dignity of a Graduate Physician. But, Sir, give me Leave to say, that great Advantages may often accrue from this Method, even according to the simple *English Proverb, That Wisdom may be learned of a Fool, and Workmanship of a Botcher.*



Wife; the Farmer, the Publican; every body of what Degree soever, is sollicitous to know what is good for this or that Sickness; which is handed down from Father to Son, and carefully remembered and preserved as Family-Remedies. They often in appearance, are very simple, but some of them prove frequently of great Efficacy.

To this Inquisitiveness of mine it is owing, that I have been enabled to make a remarkable Improvement and Addition in the *Pulvis Epilepticus niger*, which induc'd me to trouble you with this Letter, and which is the principal Subject of it. And as, to the best of my Knowledge, the Composition of this Powder has never yet been publish'd in any Dispensatory, but only been handed

handed about in Manuscripts under various Forms and Shapes. I have the Honour to present you here with the best Prescription, as approv'd of by the late Eminent Dr. *Stabl* and Dr. *Neuman*; which is as follows, viz.

℞ *Talor. Lepor. ad nigred. calcin.*  
*Eboris usti nigri, ana ʒv.*  
*Rad. Vincetoxici,*  
*Pæoniæ,*  
*Valerianæ,*  
*C. Cerv. S. Igne calc.*  
*Corallor. rubr. præp.*  
*Ungular. Alcis,*  
*Succini præp.*  
*Glaciei mariæ calcin. ana ʒiss.*  
*Conchar Ostrear. S. Igne præp. ʒij.*  
*Herb. Card. bened.*  
*Sem. Aquilegiæ, ana ʒj.*

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*Extr.*



*Extr. Papav. errat. ʒiſs. \**

*Sal Succin. depurati,*

*C. Cervi ana ʒj,*

*Ol. Macis,*

*Chamomillæ vulg. ana gr. xv.*

*M. f. Pulv. subtil.*

The aforeſaid Powder truly prepared, has, in the Practice of Phyſic, gained a high Reputation by the wonderful Succeſs it has met with, not only in the Falling Sickneſs, in which no other hitherto known Remedy or Preſcription whatſoever can equal it in Efficacy, but alſo in all Spasmodic, Convulſive, Hyſteric, and Hypochondriac Diſeaſes. It has likewiſe proved very beneficial in the Wind-Colic, Gripping of the Bowels,

\* Note, The beſt Method of preparing this Extract, is, according to *Hoffman's* Direction in his *Clavis Pharmaceutica Schræderiana*.

Bowels, and the inward Piles; as also in *Calculo Renum*, or the Gravel, which it carries off plentifully through the urinary Passages; especially, if in these last Cases, the *Antimonium Diaphor. Martiale* and *Nitrum depuratum* be added to it. In Children it takes away all sharp Humours in *primis Viis*, opens the Obstructions of the Mesentery, kills and resists the Worms, promotes Perspiration, and gives rest. Sometimes it has likewise proved beneficial in the *Atrophia* and Sweating-Sickness, especially in Children.

Every prudent Practitioner who has a mind to make use of it, will, according to his own Judgment, and the *Indicantia curativa* know how to exhibit it. I shall therefore only observe, that with regard to  
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the Extract of Poppies, the same does in no wise operate like Opium, by stupifying; so that this Powder may be safely given from gr. vj. to to ʒj. and upwards, according to the Age and Constitution of the Patient.

I now come to that part of my Subject which relates to the Improvement I made in the above Powder. In my Travels thro' several parts of my native Country, I observed that the common People preserved a particular little Bone of an odd Shape, which is found in a Hog's Head, in one Corner of the Bone adjoining to the *Dura Mater* at the Bottom sideways, so that each Head has two of these little Bones parallel to one another; and having  
never

never heard before the same mentioned by any learned Man, and no Notice being taken thereof by any Author antient or modern I have read, I enquired the Use thereof; when, to my great Surprize, I was told, that the same was an infallible Remedy against the Falling-Sickness, which they used in the following manner, *viz.*

They dry these Bones gradually on the Stoves (by which the Rooms in *Germany* are warmed) and after being dried thoroughly, they reduce them to a Powder, which they divide in nine equal Parts, and give one Powder each Morning fasting, for nine successive Mornings. For a young Child at the Breast of one Month old or upwards, they take three of these Bones; for a Child  
from

from one Year to five Years old, they take five of these Bones ; and for one of five Years and upwards, seven or nine, gradually encreasing the Number by two and two, as far as seventeen of these Bones, according to the Age of the afflicted Person, to their full Age ; always observing the odd Number, and dividing the whole in nine equal Parts.

The Infallibility which was ascribed to this specific Remedy by the common People who had it in their Possession, (and as it is usual amongst them in the like Cases) induced me to make Trial thereof in three or four different slight Epileptical Cases, wherein I met with the wish'd for Success. But in a stubborn and deep-rooted Epilepsy, they would

would not answer my Expectation, or produce any sensible Effect.

This made me frequently reflect on the Nature and occult Property of these Bones, and the Manner in which they operated. I conceived, that as they performed their Operation in Cases where the Malady was not of long standing or deeply rooted; if the specific Virtue which was the Cause of their Effects in some Cases, could in any wise be exalted or meliorated, they might probably prove more beneficial in all Cases, and where the Disease was of ever so long standing or deeply rooted.

Thus ponderating and reflecting by myself, I remembered the well-grounded and useful Observations, which the famous Dr. *Neuman* makes

makes in his Chemical Lectures on the aforesaid black Epileptical Powder ; where, pag. 521, this most able Chemist gives this Caution, not to prepare at once too much of the said Composition for Use ; to the Intent that the *Tali Leporis* may always be put to it newly calcin'd, by reason that the principal Virtue lies in the therein remaining urinous and empyreumatic (or fuliginous) Oil ; a Caution the more remarkable, as it plainly demonstrates what Care and Nicety is required in the Preparation of Medicines, and that the Power and Efficacy thereof may be either increas'd or debilitated by the least trifling Circumstance in the modelizing of it.

Hereupon having an Opportunity to make a further Experiment of  
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this specific Bone on a Boy of 15 Years of Age, who from his tender Infancy had been afflicted with this Disease, and of whom all hopes for a Cure seem'd to be lost: therefore, pursuant to the aforesaid Reflections which I had made, I calcin'd these Bones to a Blackness, and having finely powdered them, gave ʒss. thereof to the Boy without the Addition of any one thing. This I continued for the Space of a Fortnight, during which time I had the Pleasure to observe a considerable Alteration for the better every Day; so that at the Fortnight's End the Boy, to my agreeable Surprize, was radically cured.

I afterwards exhibited the said Bones, calcined in the manner aforesaid, and reduced to a fine Pow-



der, several times in the like Cases with equal Success : at first solely by themselves, without any addition ; but that proving frequently too troublesome, by reason of the Quantities required, which I could not always readily come at, I added the *Pulvis epilepticus niger* to it, leaving the *Talos Leporis* out of it, and substituted in lieu of them these calcined Bones. By which Method the Virtue of the one and the other became more conspicuous and visible to the Eye, especially in Cases where reasonably a Cure might be expected ; and where the whole Frame of Nature was not, through the long continuance of the Disease, disabled from co-operating with the Medicine, or where the Texture of the Nerves, Sinews, and capillary Vessels, &c.

was

was not destroyed, so that the restoring them to their former Tone was morally impossible. Nevertheless, in these obdurate and inveterate Cases, this so corrected and amended *Pulvis Epilepticus* performed its Operation so far, as to make the Disease more tolerable.

The repeated Experience I have had of the aforesaid Powder, and the considerable Amendment I have found in it by substituting in lieu of the *Tali Leporis*, the *Ossicula Epileptica*, or . . . . . as for the future I shall beg leave to call these Bones out of the Hog's Head, made me take the liberty to address these Observations to you, and humbly to submit them to your Judgment; thinking it a Crime to conceal so valuable a Remedy any longer

longer from the World: For, as a Physician, I think it my indispensable Duty to succour my afflicted Fellow-Creatures, not only by my own Practice, but also by imparting to the World those Lights which Labour or Experience has, or hereafter may furnish me with.

The annexed Plate shews the Situation of these Bones and their Shape.

a. a. a. a. *Represent the Skull of the Hog.*

b. b. *The Places where the little Bones are found.*

c. *The upper Part of the Bone.*

d. *The lower Part of the Bone.*

I shall not here enter into a Discussion of the primary Cause effect-

ing the Falling-Sickness; but only observe, that all Remedies against that Disease, consisting principally of hard Concretes, such as *Cranium humanum*, *Ungulæ Alcium*, *Corallia*, *Succinum*, &c. operate all alike. For where the Constitution is strong, Nature by the inward Heat and Motion works them into the same urinous Quality, to which the Calcination by a material Fire reduces them. But this being difficult, and few Constitutions strong enough to perform this Office, it is for this Reason, I conceive, that the antient Prescriptions seldom produce the desired Effect, besides that Nature by such strong Efforts is very much weaken'd.

I am the more confirm'd in this Opinion, by the Effects the unprepar'd

par'd *Officula Epileptica* have produc'd in this Disease among the lower Class, or labouring People, and whereby they have gain'd such high Repute among them: for where are the Constitutions stronger or the natural Heat greater, than in such sort of People? And from hence I may safely draw this Conclusion, that Chemistry is the truest and best Hand-maid to a Physician, whereby he best may assist Nature in its Operation. In this Point I entirely appeal to you; and to your Judgment only, as a perfect Proficient in this noble and divine Science, I refer it, whether any one ought to boast of being a good Physician, who is not sufficiently skill'd in this Art?

I cannot omit quoting here the Authority of *Matthiolus*, who, in his *Ep. Medic.* says, *Nemine Medicum absolutum esse posse, imo nec mediocre, nisi in Chemica arte sit exercitatus.* Which is confirmed by most Moderns, at least in foreign Parts, where Physic flourishes; especially by the learned Dr. *Zimmerman*, who in his Preface to the *Chemical Letters* of the herein before-mentioned excellent Chemist and Physician Dr. *Neuman*, which he revis'd and publish'd after the Decease of the Author, *inter alia* says, " Without the Knowledge  
 " of Chemistry, no Physician or  
 " Surgeon can practise rationally,  
 " for the *Medicamenta cum usu sex*  
 " *rerum non-naturalium*, are the  
 F " chief

“ chief Instruments : for when you  
 “ come to consider the human Bo-  
 “ dy, the Physiology (under which  
 “ Anatomy is comprehended) is  
 “ grounded on Chemistry ; for  
 “ how otherwise can you explain  
 “ on the Mixture of Bodies, its  
 “ solid and fluid Parts, the Di-  
 “ gestion, Chylification, Sanguifi-  
 “ cation, *commutationem Lymphæ*  
 “ *in Sanguinem, & iterum Sangui-*  
 “ *nis in Serum & Lympham ;* but  
 “ by *Syncriffin & Diacrisin Chemi-*  
 “ *cam.*

“ Neither can any Progress be  
 “ made in Pathology without  
 “ Chemistry ; for if the *Vitia pri-*  
 “ *marum*

“ *marum viarum a Digestione læsa*  
 “ *aut labefacta* comes under Con-  
 “ sideration, and you understand  
 “ not the Art of Fermentation,  
 “ you can do but little in *The-*  
 “ *rapeia.*

“ Further, to explain the vari-  
 “ ous Effervescences and Corrup-  
 “ tions of the different Juices, from  
 “ whence spring putrid, stinking  
 “ Exulcerations, Sphacelous Tu-  
 “ mours and Inflammatory Diseases,  
 “ it is absolutely necessary to have  
 “ recourse to Chemistry; and by  
 “ what Rules can any one exa-  
 “ mine, what Food is hurtful or



“ beneficial to the human Body, but  
 “ by Chemistry ? ”

It were to be wish'd some Gentlemen of the Faculty would enter more seriously into the Disquisition of these Truths, and not rest contented with a superficial Theory, but sometimes exert themselves in the Practical Part: They would then not fall into such Errors and commit those Mistakes, which too frequently they are liable to.

Had (that otherwise learned and skillful Man) Dr. *Quincy*, been more conversant in this noble Science, and known how to inform his Judgment by this Touchstone; he

he would in his *Dispensatory* not have given an indifferent Character to most of the Ingredients, of which the *Pulvis Epilepticus Niger* is composed, as he has done; some whereof he totally condemns without Reason.

I might enlarge more upon this Subject, but fearing I have already exceeded the Bounds of a Letter, and made too free with your Patience, and the Liberty you are pleased to indulge me with in writing to you; I shall therefore in Conclusion only observe, that the *Cranium humanum*, *Tali Leporis*, *Ungulæ Alcium*, or any other  
other

other Thing of a bony Nature, will in my humble Opinion never be of that Efficacy in Epileptical Diseases as the above-mentioned *Officula Epileptica*. Which therefore I recommend above all others.

I am, &c.

March the 10th,

1748.

