

Vindication of the introduction in Edinburgh of vapour and medicated baths, for diseases of the skin, rheumatism, &c.;, about five years ago / [William Scott].

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VINDICATION

OF THE

*Introduction in Edinburgh of Vapour and Medicated Baths,
for Diseases of the Skin, Rheumatism, &c.*

ABOUT FIVE YEARS AGO,

BY MR SCOTT, No. 8. BROUGHTON STREET.

Edinburgh, July 1. 1824.

FROM what I have read of late in the public prints of this place, and other papers in circulation, if I had been a stranger to my chief occupation for the last five years, I should have been led to suppose that Vapour and Medicated Baths had been introduced into the practice of this place, for Diseases of the Skin, for the first time within the last three months; but, although all notice has been studiously avoided in the publications above alluded to, of what I have done or written for the introduction or advancement of this practice, I was perfectly astonished, knowing what I do, to hear that, upon an occasion when application was made for patronage to a new Dispensary for Diseases of the Skin, and some surprise expressed by the gentleman applied to, that any medical man in this place should be so little acquainted, as was professed by the person applying, with me or my Institution, that he should insinuate, and even assert, that mine were simple Vapour Baths, and that no *Medicated* Vapour Baths were administered at my Establishment. I have now before me my second paper, which was published by Waugh and Innes in the beginning of 1822, upon this subject,

and sent to every medical man in this town. It is entitled,—“ Appendix to a Proposal for establishing in Edinburgh and other Towns, a newly improved Apparatus for the application of the Vapour of Water, *Sulphur*, and *other Medicinal Substances*, found so efficacious in the cure of Rheumatism and Diseases of the Skin; published last year by Waugh and Innes, Booksellers, Hunter Square; together with a Paper, or First Number of a Work upon that subject, and particularly upon the difference between the Application of Heat by Vapour and by Water, and upon the virtue of *Sulphur and other Medicinal Substances* applied externally in the form of Vapour.”

As this publication has been long out of print, and as I do not know how widely or industriously these insinuations and assertions have been made, I feel myself called upon to give the public, as shortly as possible, some idea of its contents, and to vindicate my claim to the introduction of this ancient and important practice in this place, with the privity, and under the auspices, of its most eminent Medical Practitioners.

This Appendix gives a full account of the nature of my Establishment; of the different kinds of *Medicated* and Simple Vapour and Water Baths that are administered; of the cases that had occurred, and the cures performed; of an Establishment for the Poor formed by me at the Lyceum, in consequence of an agreement made between me and the Managers of the Old Town Dispensary to receive their patients at a low rate, and which is now removed to the New Town. The following extracts from the different periodical works wherein my first publication had been reviewed, are introduced in the following words:—

“ As the object of the present Proposal is to secure to the inhabitants of this city a permanency of this Establishment, and to procure for the poor and those who cannot

afford it the benefit of these remedies, the authority of a few able and well-known medical writers is here referred to.

In the Edinburgh Monthly Review for June 1820, the First Number of the Work on this subject (above alluded to,) with a Proposal for this Institution, is reviewed in a very full and superior manner, and is thus spoken of at page 389.

“ It (the Pamphlet) has for its object the restoration in an improved state, or rather, as it relates to this country, the introduction and establishment of a mode of treatment, which is known to have proved highly serviceable in former times, and in other countries, as a cure for several diseases. A brief notice of its contents is all that we think necessary to excite the public mind, so far as our influence extends, to a duly interested consideration of the subject, if not to decisive patronage.”—And again, at page 690: “ The manner in which this (Establishment) is to be conducted, is specified, and we think affords reasonable ground for hoping that some important benefits will be the result of public encouragement—more especially as the intention is avowed of extending its application to the poor, in the event of adequate subscriptions being obtained.”

Dr Johnson, in his Medico-Chirurgical Review for September 1820, speaks of it thus, (page 336.)

“ This is the First Number of a Work which is designed to be published, not exactly periodically, but as materials may accumulate or present themselves.

“ The Establishment for Vapour Baths in Edinburgh has been got up under the direction of Mr Scott, and we are informed is patronised by the Faculty, and likely to be generally encouraged by the public at large.

“ Mr Scott has traced the origin and importance of these Baths from Hippocrates downwards, and gives numerous extracts from, or rather an analysis of, Dr De Carro's work, *Sur les Fumigations Sulfureuses*, lately published at Vienna. The Pamphlet contains many judicious and

original observations besides, and is deserving of the reader's attention. The Institution itself is, we conceive, entitled to the grateful patronage of all classes in the Scottish Metropolis."

The Edinburgh Medical Journal for October 1820, speaks of this Institution in the following manner, (p. 612.)

" Vapour Baths in Edinburgh.

"The application of water, *sulphur*, *mercury*, and other medicinal substances, to the human body in a state of vapour, still continues to be employed at the newly erected Vapour Bath Establishment in this city. We understand that these Baths have been successfully used in some severe cases of catarrh, with symptomatic fever,—in gout, rheumatism, and stiff-joints,—in syphilis, and in lepra. They have also been used in some cases of paralysis, where apoplexy was threatened, and were found not to produce that determination of blood to the head which baths of hot water at a lower temperature had done: but, on the contrary, to give immediate relief to the giddiness and painful feelings in the head, and with decided benefit to the weak limbs.

"The vapour of *opium* has also been tried with good effect in a case of great irritability, and without any of the inconveniences which frequently follow when it has been received into the stomach. It is now trying in a case of neuralgia (*tic douloureux*.) The First Number of a Work upon the subject, by Mr Scott, has been recently published by Messrs Waugh and Innes: the second is in course of publication, in which cases illustrative of the practice will be given."

Medicated, and Sea-Water Baths, are thus announced: "There are other Baths administered at this Establishment, which have been considered useful in certain cases, by the most eminent physicians, from Hippocrates to the

present day, namely, Mineral and Sea-water Baths. We now find, from the discovery of the late Dr Murray, that, by the erroneous method of former chemists in evaporating the waters to dryness before the separation of their several solid contents, medical men were very much in the dark as to the medicinal substances that formed the component parts of even the most celebrated mineral waters:—and we also find, that, by adopting Dr Murray's analysis, we can produce, as nearly as possible, the mineral waters of Bath, of Cheltenham, of Harrowgate, Buxton, Barege, &c. These mineral waters are, therefore, ready to be administered whenever required, either in Baths, or by pumping, or for drinking; and for the latter purpose, the Harrowgate waters are got direct from thence. There are also mineral waters in the neighbourhood of this place that can be got for bathing if required; namely, those at St Bernard's Well, those at Bonnington, &c."

"Sea and Warm Water Baths, Shower Baths, &c.

"These are all to be had at this Establishment. Sea-water is regularly brought up from Portobello, from a perfect conviction of its great utility if properly applied, either when used by itself, or in the Vapour Bath, and sometimes in combination with other mineral waters.

"Such is the nature of the Institution that has been formed in this city. It was formed, and will always be conducted, with great deference and respect to the medical profession; with some of the most illustrious ornaments of which, including him, who, by the voice of all, stands so justly at their head,* the Founder of it has had the good fortune to live upon terms of intimacy all his life; but it has been formed, and will always be conducted, in perfect independence; '*amicus Socrates, amicus Plato; sed magis amicus veritas,*' being the principle upon which every man of science ought

* The late Dr Baillie.

to act in such matters. No medical man will be less honoured for not sending patients to this Establishment, for the benefit of remedies of which he has had no experience: neither will any pains be spared to vindicate these remedies, founded, as they are, on legal medicine, from the influence of prejudice; the baneful effects of which were once so great in this very profession, as to deprive the immortal Hervey of his practice, for having discovered and taught the circulation of the blood. Besides the respectable medical names that will be seen in the account of the cases now published, as having advised these remedies in different diseases, several medical men have themselves used the Vapour Bath generally and locally at this Establishment, for those chronic inflammations of the different tissues, which commonly pass under the name of rheumatism, or rheumatic gout, as Dr Farquharson, Dr M'Kenzie Grieves, Dr Smith, Dr Duncan, jun. after the late accident to his arm from the breaking down of his carriage, Mr Donald, and several medical men who have been in the East Indies, and in the army and navy. Although any person is allowed to take a simple vapour bath at a moderate temperature in the same manner as he may do a warm-water bath, no person, in case of disease, is permitted to use the powerful remedies practised at this Establishment, without the advice of some medical man, or of the Founder of the Institution: For having always made the study of medicine a part of his own general education, in attending the Lectures of Dr George Fordyce, Dr Baillie, and others in London many years ago; and having availed himself during a seven years residence at this school of medicine of the advantages it affords, and of devoting his studies almost exclusively to that science, so as to be in a situation, if it were at all worth his while, to offer himself for graduation any year he pleased, it would be folly in the author to hesitate about advising in that department of medicine, which he has considered with peculiar attention, and which

among the ancients held a separate, and the highest rank, namely, regimen and diatetics: and particularly in respect of remedies which he has ventured to introduce in this place, and upon which he has had the honour of being advised with by the most eminent practitioners—remedies which, if judiciously and extensively employed, he is sanguine enough to believe will produce a new æra in medicine. In this opinion he is joined by a man of the first rate science and learning, and one of the chief pillars of the reputation of this place—his friend, Dr Barclay.

“Such are the grounds of claim to public notice that are made on behalf of the present Institution. The Author has purposely stated his own medical pursuits, because having been bred to the profession of the law, and practised for ten years at the English Bar, it is not unnatural for persons at first sight to ask how he should know any thing upon medical subjects?—He has made the statement, because he would have considered it preposterous if he had not read Hippocrates with the same attention that he formerly read Lord Coke, to have ventured to introduce into this place such important and powerful remedies, and because he is fully impressed with the idea that this is not “a bow,” to use an expression of Milton’s, “for every man to shoot with:” for to do justice to the remedy, as well as to his patients, he must condescend to tread in the steps of the immortal father of medicine, and become nurse as well as physician. The danger of such establishments being conducted by ignorant persons, is most justly and forcibly repeated by Dr De Carro, and by Mr Wallis over and over again.—“We should take the greatest care,” says the former, “of comparing this remedy with a bathing tub, which one might use according to one’s pleasure, or under the superintendence of a director of baths.”

After giving some remarkable cases under the heads of Diseases of the Digestive Function—of Catarrh, Gout, Palsy, Dropsy, Rheumatism, and particularly the case of

Captain Sutherland of Leith, “ who had been confined to his bed for above two years, and unable to move a single joint in his body, and who, after being submitted to about ten or twelve *fumigations*, was so much benefited as to be able to sit up nearly half the day, and the motion of whose hands, fingers, elbow, and shoulder-joints was so much restored, that he actually played a rubber at whist;” and who may now be seen walking about Leith all day long. After cases in these, and some other diseases, the publication treats thus on

“ *Diseases of the Skin.*”

“ The Vapour Bath has been so extensively employed, and with such decided success, in most of those disorders which assume the chronic state, that no scientific medical man can now doubt of its being, beyond all comparison, the best application in such cases, more than he can doubt of the preventive power of vaccination. Assalini has published above 600 cures in one year.”

A few of the most remarkable cases are then given under the heads of “ Exanthematous or Rashy Genus, Papular or Pimply Genus, Scaly Genus, Vesicular Genus, Pustular Genus, Malis Genus, or Skin infested with Animalcules, Tubercular Genus, &c.” (Dr Good’s classification of diseases having been adopted in preference to Dr Willan’s.)

Some of the cases are thus reported :—

“ *Papular or Pimply Genus.*”

“ A few cases only of the papular character, according to Dr Willan’s definition, have occurred. These have all been cured; but many cases have occurred in which the papular have been mixed with the other kinds, and cured by the vapours employed for them.—One instance in particular of a young gentleman, where the disease had been very obstinate for many years—a patient of Mr Liston’s.

Scaly Genus.

A young person had been covered with the scaly eruption, which Dr Willan calls * *Lepra vulgaris*, over the whole of her face and body for above two years. No expense had been spared in trying every remedy that Mr George Bell, and afterwards Dr Abercrombie, could suggest. Dr Abercrombie sent the patient to this Establishment, and did the Author the honour to adopt every suggestion that he made. The case was extremely interesting from many circumstances, and, like all the scaly eruptions, very obstinate. The *medicinal substances were repeatedly changed*; but, at last, after about 40 or 50 applications, the patient was completely cured.

In another very interesting case of that species called *Psoriasis*, a young person was recommended to this Establishment by Dr Gairdner, and, after a long attendance, (this case being also very obstinate,) was quite cured.

The same success attended a patient of Mr William Wood's, who was always subject to this affection in the winter, but never in the summer.

Several very interesting cases in the two species mentioned above have been sent from the Dispensary by Dr Aitken, and have been cured.

* It may be proper enough, in technical language, to call this *lepra*, because λεπρός is Greek for "scaly;" but there cannot be a greater abuse of language than in common parlance to call it *leprosy*; the idea attached to which is that terrible disease we read of in the Bible, and to which the common scaly eruption has no more affinity than it has to the plague. So rare is the leprosy of the Jews in this country, that the late Dr Gregory told me he had never seen but one case of it in his life. In Morocco, leprosy is well known, and there I saw the disease above thirty years ago. The Greeks never called it λεπρη, but λευκη, the *leuce*. It is tubercular and contagious, which the common scaly eruption is not.

In that species called *Pityriasis*, (scales like bran) a man, who had been a soldier, had been troubled with this disease for nine years : he had tried every remedy, and had been pronounced incurable : he was brought by Dr Aitken to Drummond Street, and was perfectly cured in a week. The same success has occurred with patients of Mr Liston's, and with a gentleman to whom this remedy was recommended before he left London by Dr Baillie.

Vesicular Genus, i. e. containing lymph.

Diseases of this kind commonly yield with great facility, if the proper vapours and temperature are employed. In one case the disease had begun as *Eczema rubrum* ; and though very much changed, it still retained the vesicular character, and having resisted all the remedies that could be thought of for two years, was extremely distressing to the patient. Mr Barker brought the gentleman to Drummond Street, and from what had been seen before, a speedy cure was promised. In truth, the very first *fumigation* destroyed the disease ; but the patient continued using the Bath for a week afterwards, and was completely cured, to his own great comfort, and to the surprise of his surgeon.

RINGWORM.—In that variety of herpetic eruption called *Ringworm*, though in general so obstinate, every case has yielded almost immediately to the application of vapour. In one instance, a whole family of children were sent hither by Dr Abercrombie, one after another, from the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, and all speedily cured.

PORRIGO.—In all the different varieties of this species, the general or partial application of vapour has been found eminently successful, particularly in that called **SCALLED HEAD** ; not a single case of which has failed, though in some it has required more time than in others, principally from the necessary caution in cases of very long

standing of not curing too speedily. In four very obstinate cases, (patients of Mr Joseph Bell's,) the head was cured without the vapour being applied to any other part of the body, though in general it is recommended to immerse the whole body, head and all; and from this method, a patient of Dr Hunter's, in a very bad and obstinate case, where there was great dryness and intense heat of the forehead, and hairy scalp, derived the greatest benefit.

The late Dr Gregory took a particular interest in the introduction of this practice, as it is well known; indeed, it was at his express desire that the first paper I wrote upon the subject was published. Above 400 Medicated Vapour Baths were administered to the poor for Diseases of the Skin, at the Lyceum, and every case was cured. I know that Dr Home, and Dr Duncan junior, and Dr Alison, have spoken of this Establishment, and of the cures that have been performed at it, in the most handsome manner, from their respective chairs; and the principal Practitioners in this place, particularly Dr Abercrombie, Dr Alison, Mr Bryce, Mr Russell, Mr Law, Mr Joseph Bell, Dr Sanders, Dr Thatcher, Mr Newbigging, Dr Hunter, Dr Aitken, Dr Ballingal, Dr Bielby, Mr Gillespie, Mr Walker, Dr Borthwick, Dr Reid, Mr Allen, Mr Liston, Mr George White, Mr Barker, Mr Caird, Dr Miller, and Dr Adams, are in the perfect knowledge, that their patients have been using *Medicated Vapour Baths*, and with the greatest success, at this Establishment.

In the tenth edition of Dr Duncan junior's Dispensatory, published in 1822, page 46, the following attestation will be found:—"At Mr Scott's private Establishment, I have seen cutaneous diseases (*lepra vulgaris*), which had resisted for years every other treatment, yield in a short time to the use of the Vapour Bath. Its action in

relaxing stiff-joints is also striking. Its immediate effects are to accelerate the circulation, and to excite profuse sweating. In general, the vapour of water alone is sufficient, but more frequently it is *medicated with the vapours of sulphur or mercury.*"

Every thing done at this Establishment for the poor has been as open as the day, and medical men, as well as every man of science, have been invited to watch the practice, and make themselves master of all its details. Many Students and others have availed themselves of this permission, and will be always welcome to do so, as well as to every information in my power to give them.

Since my second publication, many additional cases have occurred, proving the extensive power of the Vapour Bath, by which term I mean water, or any medicinal substance applied in a state of vapour moist or dry to the body generally, or partially. As in acute Rheumatism, as soon as the plethoric symptoms have been reduced; in Diabetes, which I had heard the late Dr Gregory say he never saw cured but once, and that was by the Vapour Bath; in Gall-stones, and where there was an evident deficiency of bile in the intestines; in Calculous affections of the Urinary organs, in Strictures, in allaying irritable tumours of the Inguinal Glands, produced by Syphilis, or Mercury, or both, according to two of Assalini's Ten Indications for its use; namely,

3. "To act as a Sedative upon the Nervous System, when it is in a state of too great sensibility.

6. "To shorten and render more certain the cure of Syphilis."

In a late case, where Dr Duncan jun. and Dr Duffin were attending, the irritability was very great in spite of all that could be done, and the gentleman confined to his bed above a fortnight, one gland inflaming after another. I was requested to inform them of the success I had witnessed from the Vapour Bath, in not less

than fifty instances of the same kind; and I did so by letter, offering, if they approved it, to take my Portable Vapour Bath into the bed-room of the patient, as it was impossible for him to be removed to this Establishment. They immediately desired the Vapour Bath to be administered twice a-day, which was done, and the tumours in the groin speedily healed, and in about a week the gentleman left his bed, and went to Glasgow. In this letter I remember saying, that in such cases I was quack enough to use the vapour of *poppies and marsh-mallows*, and that Assalini did the same.

During the last winter, seven cases of Asthma were greatly benefited by total immersion in the vapour of coffee, which I tried with such success for a widow lady who had been afflicted with it for eleven years, (Mrs Forsyth of Buccleuch Place) and who has given me leave to mention her name, without which no such liberty would be taken, that I now constantly use it in that complaint, although I never heard of its being so used before. A patient of Dr Bielby's also derived much benefit from this remedy. I mention the fact now; because five years hence, some person may think it worth his while to cause it to be universally believed, that he has introduced it for the first time in this place.

I have been told by a young Doctor, that if I studied my own interest, I ought never to open my mouth before a patient sent here by any medical man. I do not intend following this young Doctor's advice, however my own interest may suffer. I feel that my paramount duty is to promote the cure with safety; for the degree of heat and duration of time in the Bath, &c. proper and necessary in one case, might do great mischief in another; and this can oftentimes only be judged of by the person who administers the remedy. I know that I am utterly incapable of designedly saying or doing any thing to injure or supplant any medical man in the confidence of his patient. I have no

motive to do so, if I were even disposed to act so much unlike a gentleman; for I lay myself out for no practice without the doors of this house, and accept of none except where my attendance is desired to administer the Portable Vapour Bath; but the truth is, that the most eminent medical men were so unacquainted with the administration of this remedy, that they have in general left it entirely to me; and even where I requested them to give directions, they have declined it. Whenever they think proper to give directions, they will be literally followed, and I shall be relieved of all responsibility. I have repeatedly invited them to superintend the application of the remedy to their patients themselves, that they may understand it in all its details; for the better it is understood, the more it will be employed. But it never entered my head, that any medical man could be so squeamish as to take offence at any information that I might communicate to him or to his patient, as the result of my observation in the application of a remedy so new in this place.

With most of the medical men I am too intimately acquainted to be suspected of any intention to injure them in their practice, or to do any thing unhandsomely or dishonourably by them, whatever attempts may have been made to insinuate the contrary, from a quarter, the very last, under all circumstances, from which I could have suspected such conduct.

WILLIAM SCOTT.